

FAITH STATEMENT

As people created in the image of the covenant-keeping God, we covenant together to discover the mind of Christ and to become like Christ. We pursue this mission as people called by Jesus to live holy lives, according to the values, expectations, and goals of the kingdom of God.

Affirmation of our Faith

1. **The Word of God.** We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
2. **The Trinity.** We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption.
3. **God the Father.** We believe in God the Father, an infinite personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of each person, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.
4. **Jesus Christ.** We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth.
5. **The Holy Spirit.** We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher, and guide.
6. **Regeneration.** We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
7. **The Church.** We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work, and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.
8. **Christian Conduct.** We believe that Christians should live for the glory of God and the well-being of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves and others the full stature of maturity in Christ.
9. **The Ordinances.** We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. **Religious Liberty.** We believe that every human being has direct relations with God and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore, Church and State

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must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

11. **Church Cooperation.** We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether a regional or district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary basis.
12. **The Last Things.** We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.

Doctrinal Position

Theological studies at Bethel are set within the framework of historic evangelical theology, such as the reliability of the Scriptures as the authority for Christian living and church order; the depravity of humanity, making divine redemption necessary through personal regeneration; the virgin-born Christ as the incarnate Redeemer; the vicariously atoning death of Jesus Christ; the historicity of the resurrection; and the certainty of the return of Christ. We combine the continuing foundational truths of evangelicalism with the best insights of contemporary thought. While preserving our own distinctive theology, there is healthy interaction of faculty and students with the larger ecumenical world of theological discussion.

Spiritual Life

Individuals who are called into Christian ministry are called to continually pursue their own spiritual growth so that their ongoing study, prayer, and experience contributes to their ministry to others. Each student must examine his or her own ways of providing for this growth. We expect students to participate in corporate and individual, inward and outward, Christian disciplines and service. Their choices will vary depending on individual maturity in Christ, the call of God in their lives, their church fellowship, and expectations of the seminary for the development of ministering persons.

Reflecting on these goals as well as goals of their own, students should plan, semester by semester, how they will attend to these priorities and seek to be accountable for their intentions. Many opportunities are available to students for spiritual formation. They include:

- Classes
- Chapel programs with emphasis on worship and becoming a whole, holy community, praise, or scriptural challenge
- Retreats for the whole seminary community, for couples, and for singles
- Prayer groups
- Days of prayer
- Women's organizations
- Periodic seminars on caring, time and stress management, and finances
- Personal one-day retreats
- Small special interest groups
- Appointments with special visitors to campus
- Referrals to spiritual directors and/or therapists who practice from a Christian framework
- Connection with a faculty mentor.

All aspects of life at Bethel Seminary are intended to be part of the student's ongoing growth in relationship with God, including academic study and a life of prayer and service. The call to be a

student is a serious Christian commitment, no less spiritual than aspects considered to be devotional. It is expected that students enter into all aspects of life at Bethel as “unto God.”

Statement on Women and Men

With respect to women and men in our community, the faculty and staff of Bethel Seminary represent a range of positions on the issue of how we may best interpret biblical passages regarding gender roles in the church and home. Nonetheless, we are all committed to cultivating a supportive and affirming climate for women called to all levels of ministry leadership and ordination. We are committed to principles that provide all students (1) a rich theological education, (2) equal opportunities to engage with faculty and receive professional development, and (3) faculty and staff who operate with conduct that creates a climate of Christian care and concern that undergirds the well-being of everyone and respects and affirms the imago Dei in all of us.

Furthermore, we recognize that our women students come from a wide variety of church backgrounds with different standards and practices concerning women in ministry. This can present unique challenges for women in seminary, especially when their sense of gifting or calling may not exactly coincide with the commitments of their home denomination or church community. We are committed to helping our women students navigate the spiritual, personal, and professional aspects of these challenges as best we can, and are also supportive of each person's individual quest for discernment.

Finally, we are committed to facilitating classroom environments characterized by mutual respect, where even as our efforts to be faithful may result in disagreements we may still “love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10). Not just in the classroom, but in all aspects of seminary life, we encourage and indeed expect both colleagues and students to exhibit loving care, mutual respect, and the presumption of equal value and honor.

Multiculturalism

Bethel does not discriminate against any worthy student on the basis of age, gender, race, color, ethnic or national origin, or physical disability. Bethel values diversity in its student body and strives to create an environment that welcomes all students, uniting them around a common allegiance to Jesus Christ. Students become equipped with the theological knowledge and ministry skills to address the kingdom concerns of personal salvation, reconciliation, and biblical justice.

A Covenant for Life Together: Becoming Whole and Holy Persons

Bethel University is an educational community committed to integrating evangelical Christian faith with learning and life. As people created in the image of the covenant-keeping God, we covenant together to discover the mind of Christ and to become like Christ. We pursue this mission as people called by Jesus to live holy lives, according to the values, expectations, and goals of the kingdom of God. A crucial part of our mission is to develop whole and holy persons who will go into the world to serve others.

To be whole and holy means to be dedicated to God with purity of thought and action. It means that we are to serve God using the gifts and abilities that we have been given. Our community has a special calling to discover, teach, learn, and live what is true. We strive to understand the world in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This gives us a distinctive worldview, educational mission, and calling.

Our calling includes a commitment to nurture one another. We strive to elevate kingdom values over personal agendas. We attempt to measure every decision and priority in terms of our loving submission

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to the lordship of Christ and our commitment to one another. Christ's power within us and a clear sense of our calling give us a joyful freedom to do God's will.

Jesus taught us that right motives and loving relationships are at the core of whole and holy living. His two greatest commands are to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.¹ These connect serving God and serving others. In grace, Scripture also gives us specific rules to guide us in living. Jesus taught that keeping these rules is an expression of love for God.² The Bible condemns legalistic rule-keeping. It emphasizes loving relationships and pure motives in living out these rules.³

Living a Biblical Lifestyle

The Bible frequently speaks about a holy lifestyle. Such passages are found throughout the Old and New Testaments.¹⁴ The Bible describes character qualities and actions that should be present in the lives of believers. These include prayer, evangelism, kindness, humility, compassion, forgiveness, hospitality, personal integrity, generosity to the poor, care for the oppressed, study of God's Word, accountability to one another, recognition of the rights of others, commitment to justice, regular gathering for worship, and living in harmony.

The Bible also identifies character qualities and actions that should not be present in the lives of believers, such as destructive anger, malice, rage, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, idolatry, slander, profanity, lying, homosexual behavior, drunkenness, thievery, and dishonesty.⁵

Special Expectations for the Bethel Community

Because of Bethel's commitment to Christ, our unique calling as an educational community and our understanding of what it means to live in today's world, we want to state clearly some of Bethel's rules and expectations. These are based on:

- Our understanding of the Bible and its importance;
- Our desire to promote wellness and health in all areas: social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual;
- Our theological and cultural heritage; and
- Our understanding of our mission and calling.

We recognize that not all devout Christians share these rules and expectations. However, certain issues are important for our educational missions and our life together at Bethel. They are designed to facilitate our growth, development, and learning as a community.

We view learning and the pursuit of truth as a special calling.

- We commit ourselves to integrity, excellence, consideration of different points of view, and collegiality in all of our academic work.
- We will not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty.⁶

We believe that life is sacred and people have worth because they are created in God's image.⁷

- We will value human life in all its diversity and fullness, recognizing that women and men of all races, ages, and ability levels reflect the creative genius of our Maker.
- We view racism and sexism as sinful and reflective of some of the most harmful aspects of our culture. We will abstain from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, and disability. We will also abstain from gossip, deliberate divisiveness, and malicious humor.

We believe that our relationships should reflect our connections in the body of Christ.⁸

- We affirm mutual respect and promise keeping in relationships among students, colleagues, teachers and learners, spouses, and friends.

- We grieve the hurt and destructiveness of broken relationships, especially those involving divorce and abuse. We will strive to be a community where healing occurs.

We believe our minds and bodies should be used in God-honoring ways.⁹

- We will promote the health of our bodies, minds, and emotions.
- We will abstain from illicit or non-medical use of drugs, narcotics, and other substances. We will also abstain from use or possession of tobacco in any form.

We view sexuality as one of God's good gifts.¹⁰

- We believe that sexual intercourse and other forms of intensely interpersonal sexual activity are reserved for monogamous, heterosexual marriage. We recognize that sexual purity involves right motives as well as right behaviors.
- We prohibit the possession and use of pornographic material. In addition, we condemn sexually exploitive or abusive behavior and sexual harassment in any form.

We value the wise stewardship of resources.¹¹

- We believe all human and natural resources are a trust from God. We value work, creative expression, and wise use of time, ability, and money. We believe in wise use of natural resources. We will use them to do God's work and to benefit God's creation.
- We prohibit gambling and vandalism. In addition we reject materialism and harmful exploitation of natural resources.

We believe that maturity calls for us to exercise discretion in our behaviors.

- We believe that God is honored by careful thinking and joyful use of our creativity and imagination. While the media and the arts can be valuable forms of recreation, our commitment to learning calls us to see them as empowering and liberating ways to understand truth and beauty.
- We believe that certain forms of leisure, entertainment, and recreation are not congruent with holy living. We will make choices that are consistent with our pursuit of holiness in activities such as theater, dance, and music, or in the use of media and technology such as film, television, radio, and computers.

At times we will need to follow the biblical mandate to sacrifice our individual liberty for the good of the community.¹² When differences arise, we will choose the course that demands greater personal restraint and self-discipline. We will strive to resolve those differences in a gracious and just manner.

Conclusions about Community Life

Community life at Bethel should be marked by mutual encouragement, sensitivity, and consideration for others. This is particularly important when dealing with our differences. One of the special values of this community is the opportunity to learn from one another, including those within other Christian faith traditions. We celebrate our diversity as well as what we hold in common.

Within committed Christian communities there are diverse views regarding the use of alcohol. Some choose a testimony of abstinence for a variety of legitimate and honorable reasons while others believe they can use alcohol occasionally and moderately without harm to body, spirit, or relationships with others. As a community that honors Holy Spirit-led diversity among Christians, Bethel University employees and students in the Seminary, Graduate School, and College of Adult & Professional Studies are not prohibited from using alcohol in moderation when away from campus and not engaged in official Bethel University activities. Further, employees are expected not to drink alcohol in the presence of Bethel students. Because of the special community nature of the College of Arts & Sciences and the ages of the majority of its students, students in the College of Arts & Sciences will abstain from the use or possession of alcoholic beverages during the school year or while participating in any Bethel-sponsored activity.¹²

Living out the call to whole and holy living is challenging. No one does it perfectly. Community members who struggle to follow Bethel's lifestyle expectations and who would

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like help in living within them are encouraged to talk with appropriate Bethel personnel to seek help in changing.

As a community we recognize that worship, fellowship, spiritual nurture, and Christian service are all essential to our growth in holiness. As members of the Bethel community, we are expected to participate in these types of activities regularly. Chapel stands out among these opportunities because it is a unifying spiritual experience for our Christian campus. All students, faculty members, and administrative leaders are expected to attend chapel regularly. Chapel is a learning experience that is enriched by the diversity of background and worship styles within the community.

As we join the Bethel community, we accept these responsibilities and conditions of membership. We agree to live according to this document and other stated expectations as they are applied to us in the student and employee handbooks. If we find ourselves unable to honor these commitments, withdrawal may be in order. We recognize that we have an obligation to hold each other accountable to biblical standards and to the commitments we have made. Appropriate action will be taken to teach, influence, discipline, or even dismiss those who disregard these community expectations. We will strive to have all disciplinary procedures characterized by Christian love and a redemptive spirit.

As we celebrate this covenant calling to whole and holy living, we encourage and challenge each other with these three verses.¹⁴

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Because of its crucial role in influencing the ethos of the school, this statement of expectations is subject to change only by action of the Board of Trustees. The board holds these standards to be binding for all who voluntarily choose to become a part of the Bethel community.

¹ Matthew 22:37-40.

² John 14:15, 21.

³ Micah 6:8, Matthew 23:23-24.

⁴ Examples of such passages are: Exodus 20; Proverbs 6:16-19; Matthew 5:7; Galatians 5:13-25; Ephesians 4:22-5:21; Colossians 3:1-17.

⁵ Colossians 3:5-8; I Corinthians 6:9-10. Employees and students will not practice, advocate, or affirm these and other biblically proscribed behaviors.

⁶ Exodus 20:15; Romans 13:9; I Corinthians 13:5-6; I Peter 1:22.

⁷ Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 4:1-7, 15-16; James 2:1-13.

⁸ Romans 12:3-21; I Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4.

⁹ Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 6:14-15; I Timothy 4:8.

¹⁰ Genesis 1:27-28, 2:24-25; Exodus 20:14; Song of Songs; Matthew 5:27-30; I Corinthians 6:15-20, 7:3-5.

¹¹ Genesis 1:28-31.

¹² Romans 14:1-23; I Corinthians 6:12, 10:23-24.

¹³ Ephesians 5:18.

¹⁴ Colossians 3:15-17.