

Community Covenant

William Jessup University

October, 2020

William Jessup University
Chapters of the Community Covenant
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INTRODUCTION

As a Christ-centered liberal arts university engaging the professions, arts, and sciences, William Jessup University's organizing documents create a theological, Biblical, philosophical, and organizational foundation upon which we build the institution's corporate identity and its unique societal role.

This statement intentionally begins with a series of community-based understandings which we hold and affirm and through which we invite others into our organization. The *Community Covenant* chapters reflect a series of topical understandings and behavioral expectations. The chapters are theological in nature and reflect the basis for the way in which we have agreed to live, work, and study together. They represent what we believe William Jessup University to be as its best self and to this end its statements are both actual and aspirational.

Together, the Community Covenant, Statement of Faith, and corporate Mission Statement define the University's societal posture, role within the Church, and its operational authority as an accredited University occupying a particular role within culture and history. They are intended to inform and complement each other, inextricably linked to establish a firm foundation from which the University's regulatory guidelines, operations, policies, and development are built upon.

PREAMBLE

William Jessup University is a Christ-centered institution of higher learning dedicated to the holistic formation of students—their academic, mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual formation.

This *Community Covenant* presents who we are and who we continually strive to be—a wonderfully diverse community set apart by faith and for faith. It reflects our best collective self, and the vision of community we want to affirm and build.

Our University community is comprised of many different groups of people including students, faculty, staff, and others. We represent a range of theological positions within the Christian tradition, and the members of the community reflect many different stages in Christian growth. Thus, it is important that we have a common set of expectations, principles, and values for our life together. These core principles and values form our social compact—our *Community Covenant*.

The *Community Covenant* is derived from, predicated on, and emanates out of the teachings of Scripture and the University's Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Statement of Faith, and adopted Board policies. Collectively, these foundational documents represent the framework and Biblical principles upon which the University is built. As such, every effort shall be made to interpret the chapters of the *Community Covenant* consistent with, and complementary to, the University's Mission and Vision Statements, its Statement of Faith, and adopted Board policies. Nothing contained, herein, shall be interpreted to contradict, supersede, invalidate, or undermine these foundational tenets of the University

All members of the University community – board members, students, and employees - are required to agree to this Covenant and asked to annually reaffirm their agreement. Students are asked to affirm this *Covenant*, not as a statement of personal spiritual conviction but as an affirmation and recognition of our community vision and with an agreement to conduct themselves consistent with its principles. This *Covenant* is your invitation to join us; it is structured broadly around the Great Commandments: Love God. Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40).

Love God

We affirm the historic orthodox view of the Trinity and the Lordship of Christ (Acts 2:36) and the authority of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

As the William Jessup University community, we acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ and recognize Him as God come in the flesh. We submit to the teachings and values of Jesus Christ as the guide for our actions and programs as much as humanly possible, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our community has chosen Him and the authority of His words, His atoning sacrifice on the cross, and His life as our supreme authority. Furthermore, the words of Scripture provide the authoritative, ethical, and spiritual foundation for our community. Jesus is Lord and the Bible is our authority.

Love Others

We value all persons as created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)—honoring, loving, and serving one another.

We cannot love God and hate our neighbor. We are to love God and show it by how we live and interact with each other. We value all people—and life—as Jesus did, and we see each other as having a God-given purpose. We speak and act respectfully and with an attitude of service towards each other. Because of what Scripture exhorts, we love and encourage others towards Christ, even when people live in disobedience or disbelief. Christ urged us to serve rather than be served, so we commit to have this approach with each other in the University community.

We support the weak (Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:17)—continually seeking to help the wounded, the oppressed, and the needy.

We come from many backgrounds and many of us have had to overcome significant challenges in life. Christ said we should help those around us, especially the weak and the wounded; so we look with extra care to those who are hurting. This includes the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized in our society. Christ calls us to show care and compassion toward one another and to all in need. We do this with those on our campus and in our local community.

We respect authority (Romans 13:1-4)—affirming the God-given authority of those in leadership over us in the University and beyond.

We affirm the teaching of Christ and the Scripture regarding those in authority over us. God places them in authority for our good. So, we follow the guidance of those authority structures to the extent that they are consistent with the rule of law, the character of God, and His Word.

We emphasize reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)—expressing grace and forgiveness in conflict.

We choose to act with maturity and grace towards those with whom we disagree. We value and pursue peace with others, wherever possible. We strive to model a community deeply committed to reconciliation and the practice of forgiveness.

Love Ourselves

We pursue spiritual formation (2 Corinthians 5:17)—willingly engaging in spiritual disciplines and activities.

We actively engage in practices that will draw us closer into a relationship with Christ, and actively avoid practices that will draw us away from Him. We affirm the historical practices of spiritual formation, belonging to a local church, and Christian service.

We practice holiness (Hebrews 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:3) and embrace purity (Philippians 4:8-9)—extending this to word, thought, and deed.

As a community we seek to:

1. Demonstrate the Christian virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
2. Love and support that which is good in God's eyes.
3. Embrace purity in all relationships and reserve sexual intimacy for marriage.
4. Practice speech that is edifying and uplifting.
5. Model self-control, modesty, and healthy lifestyle choices.

We live with integrity (Colossians 3:9-10)—committing ourselves always to truth and honesty.

For the community to flourish, it must rest on a foundation of trust and civility. We therefore covenant to practice authenticity and honesty. Integrity requires that we take ownership and responsibility for our mistakes.

This vision for Christian community presents a high standard. By God's grace we seek to embrace it and uphold it. While we strive to seek a redemptive and compassionate posture with members of the University whose conduct is inconsistent with the standards expressed herein, the University shall have the authority to pursue any corrective actions necessary to establish unity within the University community, up to and including separation from the University. More specific applications of this *Covenant* may also be expressed in the particular policies for faculty, staff, and students within the University. The final authority to adjudicate any disagreement regarding the interpretation or application of this *Community Covenant* shall rest with the Board of Trustees. Nothing contained, herein, shall establish any limitation upon the University to conduct its mission, operations, enrollment, or administration consistent with its deeply-held religious beliefs or to limit, waive, or surrender any rights of religious freedom or expression afforded to the University under State or Federal law.

The following *Community Covenant* chapters are consistent with both the teaching of Scripture and the Christian church tradition (and its origins in the Restoration Movement) that have defined the University since its inception as San Jose Bible College in 1939. We believe that the Holy Bible is God-breathed, true in all its teaching, and the final authority for all matters of faith and practice. We commit ourselves to the teachings, practice and defense of these truths until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

As a Christ-centered liberal arts community, *William Jessup University* shares a common set of beliefs, values, and goals.

This *Community Covenant* chapter on the *Sanctity of Human Life* guides the standards of conduct and behaviors expected of the board members, students, and employees of William Jessup University and is subject to the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and adopted Board policies.

This chapter shall also guide the University's participation in any benefit or health plan.

This *Community Covenant* chapter on *Sanctity of Human Life* is rooted in three foundational assumptions:

- Human life is uniquely sacred from conception to the grave.
- The sanctity of life and its protection is among the broadest and most inclusive of our moral obligations to other human beings.
- Life is precious and in God's hands.

(Jeremiah 1:4-5) (Genesis 1:26-27) (Psalm 139)

Therefore, we believe that:

- The intentional destruction of innocent human life is unbiblical and contrary to God's will.
- All human beings, at all stages of existence, with every quality of experience, reflecting every type of human diversity, and encompassing every possible quality of relationship have worth and dignity in God's eyes that cannot be measured and, therefore, should always be accorded love, respect and honor.
- The University is a community that is committed to engaging in dialogue about human life issues with humility, sensitivity, compassion, and prayerfulness.

(Proverbs 6:16-17)

II. HUMAN SEXUALITY

As a Christ-centered liberal arts community, *William Jessup University* shares a common set of beliefs, values, and goals.

This *Community Covenant* chapter on *Human Sexuality* guides the standards and behaviors expected of the board members, students, and employees of William Jessup University in their conduct and is subject to the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and adopted Board policies.

This *Community Covenant* chapter on *Human Sexuality* is rooted in three foundational assumptions:

- Consistent with *Community Covenant* chapter on the *Sanctity of Human Life*, we affirm the human dignity of all individuals, whether or not they agree with this chapter in the *Community Covenant* or choose to be part of our University community.
- Individual identities are not based primarily on gender identity or sexual orientation: God’s design for humanity is that our primary identity is in Christ.
- The University is a community that is committed to Biblical truth and desires to engage in redemptive dialogue about sex and human sexuality with humility, sensitivity, compassion, and prayerfulness.

A. On Marriage and Sexual Intimacy

We believe that:

1. Humans are “fearfully and wonderfully made” in the image of God as the biological gender in which they were born.
2. God created humans as sexual beings—intentionally and distinctly as male and female—to reflect His image and to complement each other.
3. God has created a framework for healthy human sexual relationships and the expression of sexual intimacy in the form of the covenantal commitment of marriage.
4. Only God, in His supreme authority, may define marriage; and He has done so as meaning a lifelong, faithful, and monogamous commitment between one biological male and one biological female as husband and wife, respectively. This framework of marriage is God’s good and perfect gift and reflects the complementary relationship between Christ and His Church.
5. We consider anything beyond God’s intention for sexual intimacy, expressed and enjoyed within this definition of marriage, to be sin and contrary to the teaching of Scripture
6. Members of the University community are called to steward the good gift of human sexuality, consistent with the convictions expressed above.

(Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 139; Matthew 19:4-9; Ephesians 5:31-32; Hebrews 13:4; Mark 10:4-12)

B. On Gender Identity

We believe that:

1. We have been “fearfully and wonderfully made” in the image of God expressed through an intentional and distinct biological gender.
2. That God, in His infallible nature, intentionally and specifically designed us to be either distinctly male or distinctly female, a gender binary identified at birth, in accordance with our DNA and biology.
3. We recognize the supremacy and authority of God to determine, define, and express our gender as that which is identified at birth and reflected in our DNA and biology and we believe that each of us can submit to His sovereign will.
4. While maintaining our compassionate and redemptive posture of Christian love and grace for all in our university community, including those who struggle with gender issues, we do not affirm and will not support any decision for members of the Jessup community to identify or express themselves as gendered or as ungendered, other than their gender identified at birth.
5. Members of the University community are called to live their lives consistent with the convictions expressed above.

(Titus 1:12; 1 Peter 1:13-15).

C. Implications

1. In our sin nature we can experience frailty, ambiguity, and perplexity of these issues and choosing to divert from God’s intention for our lives is committing sin. However, we are comforted that in seeking Him, God’s redemptive love guides us to Scriptural truth and creates Spiritual conviction towards confession and repentance of sin; and that doing so will ultimately lead to our forgiveness and restoration with Him.
2. We believe that Scripture teaches us to live full of grace and truth and to minister to those living apart from God’s intention for our lives with love and care, including those who struggle with sexual sin in our community.
3. As we demonstrate grace and love and compassion in ministry, we will not compromise the unequivocal and clear teaching of Scriptural truths that have been articulated in this Chapter.
4. While we recognize that living out these truths may cause the separation of those living against these truths from our University community, we will always endeavor to separate with love, compassion, and peace

III. SCIENCE AND FAITH

As a Christ-centered liberal arts community, William Jessup University shares a common set of beliefs, values, and goals.

This *Community Covenant* chapter on *Science and Faith* reflects our commitment to open dialogue and unity among Christians. Such unity is grounded first and foremost in the person of Christ Jesus, not our stance on creation and evolution.

We hold three foundational assumptions:

1. God's creative acts are trustworthily recorded in the Bible and necessary for our understanding of His redemptive purposes.
2. The Bible affirms that God created the universe, but it does not do so in scientific language nor does it fully disclose God's methods in creation.
3. The Christian scientific endeavor presupposes that the universe exists, that it is to some degree knowable through human rationality and the methods of the natural sciences, and that it reveals "the eternal power and divine nature" of its Creator (Romans 1:19-20).

A. On Origins of Life

We believe that:

1. One God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—exists as an intelligent, transcendent, holy, loving Being who existed prior to the formation of the material cosmos. God the Creator is completely, and essentially distinct from, His creation.
2. As supported by Scripture, all entities and phenomena have been brought into existence by God's powerful actions and in accordance with His purposes, not by chance.
3. God made His creation to be good (Genesis 1:31).
4. The purpose of all creation is to praise God (Psalm 148:7-13). Every element in creation is for the praise of God and praises God in a way appropriate to its created nature, in some cases merely by its existence.
5. God's distinct creative acts culminated in the first human beings whom He created "in His image" (Genesis 1:26-27); a characteristic that distinguishes human beings from all other creatures and bestows on them unique significance, value, and worth.
6. The first human beings fell into sin through a historical act of disobedience to God (Genesis 3:1-7) which brought death to humanity (Romans 5:12) and has affected all of creation in significant ways. Notwithstanding this "Fall," much evidence of the original goodness remains.
7. Even today, in our fallen condition, God intends humanity to manage, tend, and care for His earth according to His purposes (Genesis 1:28; 2:15). God opposes all abuse and exploitation of His creation.
8. We live under universal, created laws and moral absolutes.

9. The material world and cosmos are neither autonomous, eternal, nor self-generating. God is intimately involved in maintaining and upholding His creation. Indeed, all creation is sustained through God, Himself (Psalm 33:6-7; 104:27-30; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17). Thus, all progress—whether human or otherwise—depends upon the redemptive activity of God.

B. Implications

1. A Biblical view of the origins of life does not constrain legitimate scientific inquiry and research because we accept two sources of information: Biblical revelation and natural revelation in that Scripture itself tells us that God has revealed Himself in the created order (Romans 1:17)
2. God is the source of both Biblical and natural revelation with respect to His creation. Apparent discrepancies should result in deferring conclusions in favor of a careful and humble reexamination of the presuppositions, theories, and interpretations that led to the disagreement.
3. Different positions must be subject to ongoing honest evaluation and scrutiny, and respectful debate within the framework of a Biblical Christian perspective.
4. Members of the university community may differ on the timetable for creation in Genesis 1, conclusions about young earth or old earth, and the extent of changes in life forms over time (e.g. speciation). As we affirm our own convictions, we strive to maintain an attitude of respect and charity towards others who may hold different views on these matters. It is the University position that disagreements on the age of the earth and the mechanisms are not sufficient rationale for division between followers of Christ. We do believe, as a foundational minimum for Biblical theology and anthropology, that the Genesis story does establish the creation of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, as literal and fully human ancestors of all humankind.

IV. PRESERVATION OF UNITY AND COMMUNITY

As a Christ-centered liberal arts community, William Jessup University shares a common set of beliefs, values, and goals.

This *Community Covenant* chapter on *Preservation of Unity and Community* guides the standards and behaviors expected of the board members, students, and employees of William Jessup University regarding their conduct toward one another and is subject to the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and adopted Board policies.

We hold the following foundational assumptions:

- The University and its Board of Trustees are committed to restore fellowship, when possible and where reasonable, with members of the University whose conduct is inconsistent with the standards expressed in the University's Statement of Faith, this *Community Covenant*, or adopted University policies.
- The process of restoration is predicated on the Biblical doctrines of sin, grace, repentance, and restoration.
- We believe that, through a loving relationship with Christ, there is always a potential pathway by which differences or conflicts may lead to change, growth, and reconciliation.
- The commitment toward restoration shall never compromise, or be at the expense of, the integrity and religious mission of the University.

(Romans 3:23, Colossians 3:5, 1 John 1:16, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 2:11-14), Acts 3:19, 2 Corinthians 7:9, Jeremiah 31:19, Luke 17:3, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Galatians 6:1).

Therefore, we believe that:

- Members of the University should make every effort to live at peace with one another, resolving disputes with each other in accordance with Scripture, with discretion, within the tenets of the Christian faith where appropriate, and eschewing legal recourse where possible.
- Members of the University shall strive to maintain unity in the midst of disagreements with respect, empathy, and humility.
- Members of the University are encouraged to exhaust all internal administrative remedies available to them in seeking to resolve disputes, up to and including seeking redress through the Board of Trustees.
- Where private resolution of disputes in accordance with Scripture is not possible, members of the University shall make reasonable efforts to resolve disputes with each other, or the University, through Biblically-based mediation or similar alternative dispute resolution method.
- The Board of Trustees, in its sole authority, is the final determiner of whether restoration of fellowship within the University community is possible. In the event that separation of a member from the University community is necessary, all efforts will be made to do so with grace, compassion, and discretion.

(Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Galatians 5:22-23).

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Statement of Faith

Statement of Faith

We believe in one God, the maker of heaven and earth: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Holy Bible and made known in Jesus Christ our Lord;

We believe that Jesus the divine Son became human, was born of a virgin, ministered in word and miracle, died for our sin, was raised bodily from the dead, ascended to God's right hand and is coming again for His people;

We believe that the Holy Spirit is presently ministering through the Christian community, empowering lives of godliness and service;

We believe that the Holy Bible is completely God breathed, true in all its teaching, and the final authority for all matters of faith and practice;

We believe that Jesus Christ established His church on earth to carry out His saving mission among all ethnic groups and formed her to be one holy people;

We believe in God's saving grace that calls forth from all people: faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and new life and ministry through the Spirit; and

We commit ourselves to the teachings, practice and defense of these truths until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Appendix B: Mission and Vision

Mission

In partnership with the Church, the purpose of William Jessup University is to educate transformational leaders for the glory of God.

Vision

The William Jessup University vision is that our graduates will be transformed and will help redeem world culture by providing notable servant leadership; by enriching family, church, and community life; and by serving with distinction in their chosen career.

Appendix C: Scriptural References

Preamble

Matthew 22:36-40
Acts 2:36
2 Timothy 3:16-17
Genesis 1:27
Micah 6:8
Isaiah 1:17
Romans 13:1-4
2 Corinthians 5:18-19
2 Corinthians 5:17
Hebrews 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:3
Philippians 4:8-9
Colossians 3:9-10

Sanctity of Human Life

Jeremiah 1:4-5
Genesis 1:26-27
Psalm 139
Proverbs 6:16-17

Human Sexuality

Genesis 1:26-28
Matthew 19:4-9
Ephesians 5:31-32
Hebrews 13:4
Mark 10:4-12
Titus 1:12
1 Peter 1:13-15

Science and Faith

Romans 1:19-20
Genesis 1:31
Psalm 148:7-13
Genesis 1:26-27
Romans 5:12
Genesis 1:28
Genesis 2:15
Psalm 33:6-7
Psalm 104:27-30
Hebrews 1:3
Colossians 1:17

Preservation of Unity and Community

Romans 3:23
Colossians 3:5
1 John 1:16
2 Corinthians 12:9
Ephesians 2:8-9

Titus 2:11-14
Acts 3:19
2 Corinthians 7:9
Jeremiah 31:19
Luke 17:3
2 Corinthians 13:11
Galatians 6:1
Matthew 18:15-20,
I Corinthians 6:1-8

Unity Through Diversity

Genesis 1:27
Genesis 9:6
James 3:9
1 Corinthians 6:17
1 Corinthians 12:27
I John 2:2
John 3:16
Acts 2:42-47
Malachi 2:10
Psalm 133:1
1 Corinthians 12:13
Romans 8:17
Matthew 19:19
Mark 12:31
Luke 10:27
Genesis 1:27
Psalms 139:14
Galatians 3:28
John 17:21
Matt. 9:9-13
Mark 7:24-30
Luke 17:11-19
John 4:4-42
1 Corinthians 13:13
Galatians 5:22-23
Romans 12:5
Romans 12:18
Philippians 3:20
1 Corinthians 12:27
Galatians 3:28
Mark 16:14-15
I Corinthians 9:19-23
John 13:34-35
John 17:20-23
Matthew 21:22
1 Peter 2:17
Romans 12:2
2 Corinthians 3:18