

LeTourneau University's Community Covenant

A VISION FOR LIFE TOGETHER

⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7)

LeTourneau University is an institution of higher learning with a rich history of preparing students for meaningful work across the globe, a life of faithfulness to Jesus Christ, a particular vocational calling, and the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The University's Purpose Statement reflects the history, mission, vision, and goals of the school and its own vocation as a Christian organization.

As an academic faith community in the evangelical Christian tradition, LeTourneau University offers a residential and online community experience conducive for Christian growth. The institution has always been committed to Christian discipleship through strong academics and hands-on training, mutual spiritual encouragement of faculty and staff, intentional mentorship of students, and devotion to Christian practices in accordance with the Scriptures. As an interdenominational institution with a broadly Christian and evangelical Statement of Faith, LeTourneau is a community bonded by the essentials of historic and orthodox Christian beliefs and practices that are common to Christians across the world and through the ages. Holy Scripture is the institution's cornerstone for faith, life, and practice. LeTourneau University exists to serve the local and universal Church by offering particular gifts to the world that are possible through a healthy academic faith community. LeTourneau University is a collection of trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff, committed to its evangelical Christian heritage and mission, who seek to show Christian charity and hospitality to people of all backgrounds, perspectives, and faith walks. Therefore, we are an institution that welcomes students and guests who identify with our Christian faith, and we also welcome those who may not—those who may be devoted to another religion or are unsure of faith and religion as a whole, and who also desire to contribute to LeTourneau's particular academic and Christian faith community.

For the sake of fulfilling the community's purposes, its diverse members and guests voluntarily enter into a social compact. At LeTourneau we call this social compact our *Community Covenant*. For LeTourneau's Community Covenant to serve its stated purposes, it is crucial that each person understand and embrace it as the guiding document for life and work together. In joining this covenant we are joining in a compact with others of the LeTourneau University community. If one does not wish to abide by the provisions of this compact, they should not participate in the LeTourneau University community. But if we do agree to it, it should be with the full intention of living with integrity under its provisions.

COMMUNITY LEADERS: TRUSTEES, ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, AND STAFF

Community Aspirations

Christians believe that when God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, calls us, he gathers us into community and promises to live in our midst. By the grace of God, this community becomes godly and in this way participates in the Triune God's mission by becoming a beacon of light and hope like a candle on a stand or a city on a hill. In response to this gracious call, the community cultivates virtues: qualities, habits, and dispositions that shape us for membership in community and sharing in God's mission to bless all nations through his people. All of the behavioral policies at LeTourneau, whether stated positively or negatively, aim at this blessing: godly life in community, that is, human flourishing.

The Scriptural foundation of this godly community is represented in Jesus' two great commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-40). Jesus himself perfectly demonstrated this pattern of loving God and loving others in obedience to God's Word. Acknowledging our dependence on the power and grace of God, the leaders of the LeTourneau University community humbly covenant to live according to this ideal.

The goal of academic life at LeTourneau University is to live, work, serve, and worship together as an educational community in response to this vision of loving God and neighbor as human flourishing. For this reason, our aim as an academic community is not merely the transmission of information; it is the development of whole persons who will build the church and benefit society worldwide, "...who see life's work as a holy calling with eternal impact." Along with the privileges and blessings of membership in such a community come responsibilities. The leaders of the LeTourneau University community take these responsibilities seriously.

With that context, the trustees, administration, faculty, and staff of LeTourneau University aspire to:

- Cultivate a teaching and learning atmosphere that is committed to Christian growth and virtues;
- Fulfill this vision for human flourishing for life within community at LeTourneau;
- Clarify and affirm the institution's perspective on social and moral issues that bear upon life within the LeTourneau community;
- Remove whatever may hinder us from our calling as a Christ-centered academic community;
- Foster a healthy Christian environment that is sensitive to students who may not self-identify as Christian or personally align with the institution's position on particular social issues or community ideals;
- Encourage one another to see that living for Christ involves dependence on God's Spirit and obedience to his Word, rather than a passive acceptance of prevailing practices.

Christian Commitments

The leaders of our community affirm the Bible as our standard for life and worship both within the LeTourneau University community and for the universal church. We believe that the Bible is the rule of faith and practice and, while application requires wisdom and care, Scripture outlines a vision of true human flourishing and is the ultimate standard for answering questions of character and behavior in community (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In turn, we believe that Scripture outlines a human being's proper posture toward God, creation, oneself, and others. Trusting God's grace and power, we are committed to heeding God's manifold call to:

- Acknowledge the Lordship of Christ over all of life and thought. This involves a wholehearted obedience to Jesus and careful stewardship in all dimensions of life: our time, our possessions, our God-given capacities, our opportunities (Deut. 6:5-6; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 1:18; 3:17);
- Love God with our whole being, including our minds, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Christ-like love should be the motive in all decisions, actions, and relationships (Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8-10; 1 John 4:7-12); The call to pursue holiness in every aspect of our thought and behavior (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:7; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15-16);
- Exercise our Christian freedom responsibly within the framework of God's Word, humbly submitting ourselves to one another (1 Pet. 5:5; Eph. 5:21) with loving regard for the needs of others (Phil. 2:3-11; Rom. 14:1-23; 1 Thess. 4:9);
- Treat our own bodies, and those of others, with the honor due the very temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17-20);
- Show evidence of the Holy Spirit who lives within Christians, such as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23);
- "Put on" compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and supremely, love (Col. 3:12-14);
- Seek righteousness, mercy and justice, particularly for the helpless and oppressed (Prov. 21:3; 31:8-9; Micah 6:8; Matt. 23:23; Gal. 6:10);
- "Love your enemies" and pursue peace and reconciliation even when suffering wrongdoing (Matt 5:43-44; Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 5:18; 13:11; Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 2:19; 3:8-9);
- Love and side with what is good in God's eyes, and abhor what is evil in God's eyes (Amos 5:15; Rom. 12:9, 16:19);
- Uphold the God-given worth of human beings, from conception to natural death, as the unique image-bearers of God (Gen. 1:27; Psalm 8:3-8; 139:13-16);
- Pursue unity and embrace ethnic diversity as part of God's design for humanity and practice racial reconciliation as one of his redemptive purposes in Christ (Isa. 56:6-7; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26; Eph. 2:11-18; Col. 3:11; Rev. 7:9-10);
- Uphold chastity among the unmarried (1 Cor. 6:18) and the sanctity of marriage between a man and woman (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5; Eph 5:31; Heb. 13:4);
- Be people of integrity whose word can be fully trusted (Psalm 15:1-4; Matt. 5:33-37);
- Give faithful witness to the Gospel (Acts 1:8; 1 Pet. 3:15), practice good works toward all (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 10:24; 1 Pet. 2:11; Titus 2:7-8), and live lives of prayer and thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:17-18; James 5:16).
- Obey the laws of our land in so far as they cohere with the laws of God as revealed in Scripture (Rom 13:1; Dan 3:14-18; Psalm 94:20; Acts 5:29; Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet 2:13);
- Keep Sabbath by resting and pausing for restoration, recreation, and worship within a particular week (Gen 2:2-3; Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Levs 26:34-25; Deut 5:12-17; Mark 2:27; Luke 6:5; Heb 4:1-4).
- The call to participate in the worship and activities of the local church, which forms the basic biblically-mandated context for Christian living (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:25; 1 Tim. 3:14-15).

ALL COMMUNITY LEADERS, STUDENTS AND GUESTS OF LETOURNEAU UNIVERSITY

Embracing Campus Standards

We believe the aspirations and commitments of LeTourneau's leaders expressed above will manifest in a distinctly Christian way of life personally and corporately, an approach to living we expect students and guests to honor and respect. To foster the kind of

atmosphere most conducive to becoming the Christian community of faith, learning, and living that LeTourneau University desires to be, the University has adopted institutional standards for all leaders, students, and guests. This involves exemplifying those attitudes and actions the Bible teaches as virtues and avoiding those the Bible portrays as sinful.

As a Christian institution that draws on the best of the nearly twenty-one centuries of Christian life and reflection, LeTourneau emphasizes the importance of practices and habits that embody discipleship and offer up our hearts, minds and bodies to God. In the history of ethical reflection, “virtue” is often used to speak of a way of life that is in accord with the purpose or goal of humanity. It is for this reason that LeTourneau’s mission speaks of “cultivating Christian virtue.” LeTourneau seeks to orient human persons toward the goal revealed in Jesus Christ—a goal spoken of in various ways in Scripture: walking with God, friendship with God, life in the Spirit, membership in the body of Christ, participation in God, life in Christ, in short, salvation and redemption.

At the very center of virtuous Christian life is love—the love demonstrated in Jesus’ birth, life, crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, and poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Before the final coming of Jesus Christ, this love is supported by faith and hope—the three theological virtues (1 Cor 13:13). Alongside these stand the qualities praised in Jesus’ teaching and those of his apostles, and the virtue lists of the early church: humility, generosity, kindness, purity, temperance, diligence, etc. These lists build upon the declarations of God’s character and the calls for human behavior that correspond to God’s character in the Old Testament (Exodus 34:6; Isaiah 11:1-3a; Hosea 2:19-20; and Micah 6:8) as well as the descriptions of virtue in other texts (notably Psalms and Proverbs). We believe the LeTourneau community—leaders, students, and guests—are called to contribute to the good of one another by seeking these virtues of the Christian tradition.

Scripture also condemns a range of vices, attitudes and behaviors that run against the grain of his vision for human flourishing and community thriving. We believe the LeTourneau community is called to avoid what Scripture prohibits, such as the following:

- Pride, dishonesty, stealing, injustice, prejudice, immodesty in dress or behavior, slander, gossip, vulgar or obscene language, blasphemy, greed and materialism, covetousness, the taking of innocent life, and illegal activities (Prov. 16:18; 1 Cor. 6:10; Exod. 20:7; Rom. 13:9; Col. 3:8-9; James 2:1-13; Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Tim. 2:8-10; Heb. 13:5-6);
- Violence, intimidation, harassment, or verbal and/or physical assault, including subjecting another person or group to abusive, threatening, intimidating, or harassing actions, including, but not limited to, those based on race, religion, gender, disability, age, economic status, ethnicity, national origin or sexual orientation. This includes any communication that attacks or interferes with a person conducting his or her customary affairs, puts the person in fear for his or her safety, or causes actual physical injury (Psalm 7:9; Isaiah 60:18; Eph 4:29; Gal 3:27-29).
- Hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and legalism, understood as the imposition of extra-biblical standards of godliness by one person or group upon another (Acts 15:5-11; Matt. 16:6; 23:13-36);
- Sinful attitudes and behaviors such as "impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like" (Gal. 5:19-21);
- Sexual immorality, such as the use of pornography (Matt. 5:27-28), pre-marital sex, adultery, homosexual behavior and all other sexual relations outside the bounds of marriage between a man and woman (Rom. 1:21-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31). This includes a resolution of tension between one’s biological sex and one’s experience of gender by the adoption of a psychological identity discordant with one’s birth sex, as well as attempts to change one’s given biological birth sex via medical intervention in favor of the identity of the opposite sex or of an indeterminate identity.

We also believe that there are community practices that are wise to standardize in light of the University’s particular setting. These are foundational principles that embody self-control, relinquishing personal rights for the benefit of the corporate body, and sensitivity to the heritage and practices of other Christians and those of other faiths.

- LeTourneau University and all LeTourneau University-related functions will be alcohol-free and tobacco-free. This means that the possession or consumption of alcohol or the use of tobacco in any form will be prohibited in, on, or around all campus properties, owned or leased. The same prohibition applies to all LeTourneau University vehicles, whether on or off campus, and to all LeTourneau University events or programs, wherever they may be held.
- All residential students, even if of legal age, are prohibited from the consumption of alcohol or the use of tobacco in all settings, during and in between academic semesters. This includes all undergraduate or graduate students living on campus or commuting to campus. This also includes any students technically registered as “global” (online) students but who engage in residential activities, resources, courses, or are a member of a LeTourneau athletic team or club sport.
- Other members of the University community will use careful and loving discretion in any use of alcohol. They will avoid the serving and consumption of alcohol in any situation that residential students of LeTourneau are or likely to be present.
- All members of the LeTourneau University community will take care to avoid any entertainment or behavior, on or off campus, which may be immodest, sinfully erotic, or harmfully violent. On-campus dances will take place only with official University sponsorship.

Other rules and regulations necessary for orderly community life are listed in the appropriate student, faculty, and employee handbooks, as well as in LeTourneau University policies.

Exercising Responsible Freedom

Commensurate with these campus standards, the LeTourneau University community seeks to foster the practice of responsible Christian freedom (Gal. 5:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:16-17). This requires a wise stewardship of mind, body, time, abilities and resources on the part of every member of the community. Responsible freedom also requires thoughtful, biblically-grounded choices in matters of behavior, entertainment, interpersonal relationships, and applications of Christian faith and practice.

"You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (I Corinthians 6:20)

Of particular concern in a collegiate environment are those issues related to alcohol, illegal drugs, and tobacco. While the use of illegal drugs or the abuse of legal drugs is by definition illicit, and the use of tobacco in any form has been shown to be injurious to health, the situation regarding beverage alcohol is more complex. The Bible requires moderation in the use of alcohol, not necessarily abstinence. Yet the fact that alcohol is addictive to many, coupled with the biblical warnings against its dangers, also suggests the need for caution. The abuse of alcohol constitutes one of our society's greatest substance abuse problems, not to mention the fact that many Christians avoid it as a matter of conscience. Thus the question of alcohol consumption, for example, represents a prime opportunity for Christians to exercise their freedom responsibly, carefully, and in Christ-like love. The LeTourneau University community also encourages responsible freedom in matters of entertainment, including the places where members of the University community may seek it, such as television, movies, video, theater, concerts, dances, gaming and the internet. The University assumes its members will be guided in their choices by the wisdom of Scripture, such as:

"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things." (Philippians 4:8) *"...And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."* (Colossians 3:17)

CONCLUSION

LeTourneau University's community leaders—trustees, administration, faculty, and staff—desire an academic faith community of people committed to Christian and biblical aspirations for human flourishing, marked by integrity, responsible freedom, and dynamic, Christ-like love; a place where the name of Jesus Christ is honored in all we do; a place where the Christian student can be nurtured in their faith; and a place where the non-Christian student and guest respect the Christian aspirations of this community while experiencing a safe and hospitable learning and living environment as a full community participant.

This requires that all members exhibit trustworthiness by taking the commitment to this covenant seriously as covenant keepers, whatever pressures we may face to do otherwise. Being faithful to one's word is a matter of integrity. "Lord, who may live on your holy hill?" asks the Psalmist. "He who keeps his oath, even when it hurts" (15:4), is the reply. Integrity dictates that if we have voluntarily placed ourselves under LeTourneau's Community Covenant we must make every effort to fulfill our commitment by living accordingly.

Keeping our covenant may also on occasion require that we take steps to hold one another accountable, confronting one another in love as we work together to live in faithfulness both to God's Word and to our own word (Col 3:16). Such loving acts of confrontation, repentance, and forgiveness are at times difficult, but when performed in the right spirit (Gal. 6:1) they serve to build godly character for both the individuals involved and the community as a whole.

"...speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)

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