



PRAIRIE COLLEGE

Community Covenant

Revision 2020

Introduction

Prairie's motto is "To Know Christ and Make Him Known." Our sole purpose and vision is "To be, and invite others to be, lovers of God—who make disciples, who influence culture, and who build His kingdom. Prairie's mission as a post-secondary educational community is "To help establish God's kingdom by equipping and mentoring individuals through biblically integrated education for life and careers that will meet the greatest needs of the world for the glory of God."

To realize this motto, vision and mission, Prairie has chosen an educational model that involves a Christian formation process forged within the environment of authentic Christian community. Prairie intends to live as such a community that is committed to the following values:

- **Christ-Centred** – Christ is the life-transforming centre of and reason for our learning community. We lovingly follow Him, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and gratefully depend on the Lord Almighty for all our needs.
- **Bible Based** – The Bible is the God-breathed Truth through which He nourishes our community. We willingly obey it and humbly submit our lives, community, and program to its authority.
- **Discipleship Directed** – We are a faith community being disciplined by one another as followers of Jesus. We diligently teach and eagerly learn His truth to be transformed together into His likeness.
- **Mission Mandated** – God is on mission to bring redemption and reconciliation, sending His Church as ambassadors to the world. We actively respond through lives of servanthood and sacrifice to honour God and for the good of others.

As a Christian community, we seek to live according to the biblical standards laid down by Jesus Christ for His body, the Church. The biblical foundation of Christian community is expressed 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 neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-40). Jesus Himself perfectly demonstrated the pattern: love for God, acted out in love for others, in obedience to God's Word.

Our Community Covenant

The Christian community we aspire to be like is described fully in the Bible. More succinctly, the biblical community is summarized within this Community Covenant. Covenant is a term that describes relational commitment and thus the Community Covenant expresses the relational commitments that we have to God and to one another at Prairie College.

All members of the Prairie educational community are expected to live out the relational commitments of the Covenant. Members voluntarily enter into the Covenant by joining the Prairie community as a board member, staff member or student. Joining the Prairie community assumes the member has full intention of living the responsibilities of the Covenant with integrity.

We desire that the Prairie community be a covenant community of Christians marked by integrity, responsible freedom, and dynamic Christ-like love where we lovingly encourage one another in our spiritual growth; a place where the name of Jesus Christ is honoured in all that we do. The purposes of this Community Covenant are as follows:

- to glorify our great God
- to cultivate a campus atmosphere that encourages spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth
- to integrate our lives around Christian principles and devotion to Jesus Christ
- to remove whatever may hinder us from our calling as a Christ-centered community
- to encourage one another to see that living for Christ involves dependence on God's Spirit, and
- to embrace passionate obedience to his Word.

Affirming Biblical Standards

The Bible is the supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and conduct. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, this Covenant is rooted in basic biblical standards for godly Christian character and behaviour.

We believe that these biblical standards will show themselves in a distinctly Christian way of life; an approach to living we expect of ourselves and of one another. This lifestyle involves practicing those attitudes and actions the Bible portrays as virtues and avoiding those the Bible portrays as sinful.

Living the Christian Life

We understand that our calling includes:

- The 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 and our relationships (Deut. 6:5-6; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 1:18; Col. 3:17).
- The call to love God in every aspect of our lives with our whole being, and to love our neighbour 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 live a crucified life through identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Gal. 2:20).
- The call to pursue holiness in every aspect of our thought and behaviour (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:7; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).
- The call to humbly submit ourselves to one another (1 Pet. 5:5; Eph. 5:21).
- The call to practice loving regard for the needs of others, including exercising our Christian freedom responsibly within the framework of God's Word (Phil. 2:3-11; 1 Thess. 4:9; Rom. 14:1-23).
- The call to treat our bodies, and those of others, with the honour due to the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:17-20; Rom. 6:12-14).
- The call to gathering and active responsibility within 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).

According to the Scriptures, followers of Jesus Christ will:

- show evidence of the Holy Spirit who lives within them, 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, most importantly, love (Col. 3:12-14)
- seek righteousness, mercy, and justice, particularly for the helpless and oppressed (Prov. 21:3; Prov. 31:8-9; Micah 6:8; Matt. 23:23; Gal. 6:10)
- 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; Rom. 16:19)
- uphold the God-given worth of human beings, from conception to death, as the unique image bearers of God (Gen. 1:27; Psalm 8:3-8; Psalm 139:13-16)
- uphold chastity among the unmarried (1 Cor. 6:18)
- uphold the sanctity of marriage between a man and woman (Heb. 13:4; Gen. 2:24)
- 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)
- demonstrate respect and appropriate submission to those in authority (Heb. 13:17; Rom. 13:1-5; Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17)
- be ministers of reconciliation and forgiveness (Matt. 5:23-25; 6:15; Mark 11:25; Luke 11:2-4; 17:3-4; Rom. 4:7; 5:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:11-21; Eph. 2:14-18; Col. 1:15-21)
- practice good works toward all (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 10:24; 1 Pet. 2:11)
- be faithful stewards of life and resources (Gen.1:26-28; 2 Thess. 3:6-9)

- and live lives of prayer and thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:17-18; James 5:16; Titus 2:7-8; Eph. 6:18).

By contrast, Scripture condemns the following:

- Sinful attitudes and practices such as pride, dishonesty, injustice, prejudice, immodesty in dress or behaviour, slander, harassment, gossip, vulgar or obscene language, blasphemy, greed and materialism, covetousness, the taking of life, and illegal activities (Prov. 16:18; 1 Cor. 6:10; Ex. 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; Gal. 5:19-21)
- hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and legalism (Acts 15:5-11; Matt. 23:13-36; Col. 2:20-23)
- pre-marital sex, adultery, lust, homosexual behaviour, all sexual relations outside the bounds of marriage between a man and woman, and other forms of sexual immorality such as the use of pornography (Rom. 1:21-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31; Matt. 5:27-28).

Exercising Christian Freedom

Beyond explicit biblical commands, we foster the practice of responsible Christian freedom (Gal. 5:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:16-17). Christian freedom is not the right to do whatever one pleases, but rather the power and capacity both to will and to do as one ought. The freedom of Christian liberty is the freedom from sin in order to be like Jesus Christ. Christian liberty is never freedom from responsibility.

Because we have personal freedom to do something does not mean we have the Christian freedom to do so. Christian responsibility requires a wise stewardship of mind, body, time, abilities and resources on the part of each community member through thoughtful biblically guided choices in matters such as behaviour, entertainment, and interpersonal relationships.

Responsibility for choices on issues that are not explicitly biblical imperatives should be based on at least the following principles:

- *Love* – Will exercising my freedom in this choice build the body of Christ? Will it cause someone to use my actions as license for the misuse of liberty? Am I causing division in the body of Christ? Liberty should not cause another person to stumble, to be made weak, or to turn from Christ. This principle of love applies to both the weaker and the stronger one in faith. The stronger need to consider the sensitivity of the weaker; likewise the weaker must consider the freedom of the stronger (Rom. 14-15; 1 Cor. 8; 10:23-33).
- *Conscience* – Will this choice offend my conscience? (Rom. 14:22-23)
- *Edification* – Will this choice be profitable to my spiritual life, to God's goals for me, to my health, to my testimony to the lost, and my life as an example to other believers? (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23)
- *Control* – Will this choice enslave me? Has it enslaved me? Will this choice be evidence of, or does it contribute to, my enslavement? (1 Cor. 6:12b)
- *Temple* – Will this choice help or hinder my body as an instrument of serving God? The New Testament teaches us that the body is the temple, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and should be cared for accordingly. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
- *Exaltation* - Will this choice glorify or exalt the Lord and His glory? (1 Cor. 10:31)
- *Constraint* – Is this choice beneficial for building the kingdom of God or is it simply an act of selfishness? (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

While there are challenges with living out our Christian freedom, there are also dangers with legalism. There are three problems which have been condemned by Scripture and the Church throughout its history.

- Holding to a merit-based approach to salvation; that one must do good deeds to accrue merit before God to attain or maintain salvation.

- Adding regulations to clear biblical teaching and elevating these additional regulations to the status of authority held by Scripture.
- Emphasizing outward conduct as the measure of genuine Christian maturity without regard to inward thoughts and motivations.

Spiritual Formation

At the core of our educational community is a passionate pursuit to know and to love God. We are called to deliberate involvement in this pursuit of learning to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength. With a sincere desire to be a community that pursues God with passion, Prairie has designed these intentional spiritual formation activities and exercises.

Community Worship

The practice of worshipping corporately has been a critical component of the historical community of Christ (Heb. 10:25) and it has a rich heritage at Prairie College. Again and again, God has met His gathered people, and this experience has been important to developing deeper desire and loyal love for God. Therefore, chapel is not merely a relic from our distant past (i.e. we have just always done it this way) but it is our current purposeful commitment. Chapel is an intentionally carved out sacred space within our busy lives for worship, developing relationship with God, and prioritizing the seeking of His kingdom.

Chapel is not a substitute for either personal worship or the worship service of the local church. Students are required to participate in daily chapel and employees are required to participate in the weekly Community Chapel. Prairie students and employees are required to participate in conferences designed for the Prairie community (e.g. Christian Life Week, Global Connections Conference).

Service

Once a week we serve together for one hour by cleaning the campus. We deem it both a privilege and responsibility to serve God in this educational community. We delight in our pursuits of thinking, listening, study, teaching, research, writing, practice, performance, field education, manual labour, and witness as a worship offering to God. We engage these commitments with integrity, humility, diligence, and excellence to submit our best to God (Col. 3:17).

Community

The Triune God has existed eternally in perfect community. Created in His image, humanity is designed to live and work in community with Him and others. We are called to grow together as His body. Christian maturity is not nurtured in a life of isolation. Prairie employees are expected to pursue relationships that foster and encourage their spiritual growth. Prairie students are required to participate in tangible face-to-face community within the organized small-group ministry.

Prayer

Prayer is intimate conversation with God. Prairie students and staff are learning to practice prayer daily, fostered by a variety of organized events and initiatives including student Impact Groups, staff prayer times, and Days of Prayer. Students and employees are required to participate in Days of Prayer.

Bible

The Bible is foundational to growth in Christ. We are learning to practice daily devotional reading of the Word.

Discipling

Discipling is the relational process of life-to-life influence. This concept is firmly rooted in the Scripture (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 2:3-5; Heb. 10:24). We practice both discipling and being disciplined toward maturity in Christ.

Embracing College Standards

To foster the kind of campus atmosphere most conducive to becoming the Christian community of living, learning, and serving that Prairie aspires to be, the college has adopted the following institutional standards.

These College standards are not viewed as codes of deeper spirituality, nor as capitulations to legalism; we follow these standards to help us achieve our Prairie community goals. Our intent is that the understanding and application of the standards within this Prairie context will equip us to serve well within the diverse communities in which God will place us.

Tobacco and Drug Use

We do not use illegal drugs. Because the use of tobacco in any form has been proven to be seriously addictive, and prolonged use is injurious to health we do not smoke or vape. We do not use non-medicinal marijuana in any form (e.g. edible, cigarettes).

Alcohol

Prairie's campus is alcohol free – we do not have or consume alcohol on campus. The same applies to all members of the college community when involved in any Prairie-sponsored off campus events or program.

In contexts other than campus or Prairie-sponsored events we, exercise Christian freedom carefully and in Christ-like love in our choices about social drinking. Drunkenness and over-indulgence is always understood as sin. We seek to abstain from *all* drugs, food, drink, and practice which bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith.

Entertainment

We practice responsible Christian freedom in matters of entertainment, including the places where we may seek it, such as television, movies, video, theater, clubs, pubs, concerts, dances, games and the Internet. If our community is to grow together in grace and knowledge, each member must be guided in entertainment choices by the godly wisdom of Philippians 4:8: "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."

Dancing

Instructional, cultural, liturgical and performance-based dance is permitted on campus with college permission, which can be requested through the Student Development personnel.

We demonstrate discretion in choices about dancing such as type, location and context.

Relationships and Sexuality

We have articulated our biblical understanding of sexuality in a correlated document, titled "Human Sexuality Statement." The Community Covenant assumes we will live by the attitudes and behaviours as provided in that Statement.

As God-created beings we are to respect ourselves and others in our relationships. To avoid exclusivity and discomfort amongst others, we are expected to be discrete, modest and polite in our expression of physical contact with others. We conduct ourselves in accordance with scriptural principles and in harmony with the spirit of the *Community Covenant*. "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or greed, for these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving" (Eph. 5:3-4).

Dress

Dress and fashion constantly change. We recognize that within a college community there is a broad range of values and opinions with respect to fashion and appearance. It is impossible to

issue a detailed dress code that is binding for all times and places. As individual Christians, as participants in a Christian community, and as members of the Christian church at large, we are often subject to the standards and expectations of others. While dress is largely a matter of taste and custom, we should be willing to forgo our liberties if the well-being of others will be served. We are to "be like-minded . . . in humility considering others better than ourselves. Each of us should look not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:2-4). Our appearance should not be immodest or draw inappropriate attention to ourselves. Our appearance should accentuate rather than distract from the inner qualities and character essential to a consistent testimony. This includes developing cultural sensitivity to appearance and the humility to give up personal preference to prevent barriers to ministry.

Creation Care

We are committed to God's mission of the stewardship of creation. We will continually seek to take measurable steps forward in teaching stewardship and addressing our alienation from creation. We acknowledge that redemption is for all of creation, and that we are called to exercise responsible dominion as a part of sharing the Gospel that Jesus is Lord of all creation.

Integrity and Grace

The Bible places high value on truth-telling and doing what we say we will do. Being faithful to one's word is a matter of integrity and godliness. "Lord, who may live on your holy hill?" asks the psalmist. "He who keeps his oath, even when it hurts" (Psa. 15:4), comes the reply. Christian integrity requires that if we have voluntarily become a member of the Prairie community, we must make every effort to fulfill our commitment by living according to the *Community Covenant*.

We recognize our constant, deep need for grace to participate in community, as we confess our failures and sins, accept His forgiveness, are restored to His fellowship and live in a godly way.

Accountability for Covenant Keeping

We need one another to assist in keeping our commitments to God and each other. We accept that we are dependent on others to keep us accountable; and we also accept our responsibility, according to the principles of Matthew 18 and Galatians 6:1, to restore those caught in sin.

Keeping our covenant may 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. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Such loving acts of confrontation are at times difficult, but when performed in the right spirit, they serve to build godly character for both the individuals involved and the community as a whole. Only in this way, as we are willing to speak the truth in love, will we "grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

We intend and desire to respond biblically to those who contravene this Covenant. A restorative discipline process, outlined in another document, is used in such cases.