

# Northwest Baptist Seminary

## Community Covenant Agreement

### Our Pledge to One Another

Northwest Baptist Seminary (NBS) is the primary leadership training arm of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches Pacific and Prairies regions.

#### 1. The NBS Community Covenant

The Seminary's mission, core values, curriculum and community life are formed by a firm commitment to the person and work of Jesus Christ as declared in the Bible. This identity and allegiance shapes an educational community in which members pursue truth and excellence with grace and diligence, treat people and ideas with charity and respect, think critically and constructively about complex issues, and willingly respond to the world's most profound needs and greatest opportunities.

The Seminary is an academic community rooted in the evangelical Baptist tradition; it is made up of Christian administrators, faculty and staff who, along with students choosing to study at NBS, covenant together to form a community that strives to live according to biblical precepts, believing that this will optimize the Seminary's capacity to fulfil its mission and achieve its aspirations.

The community covenant is a solemn pledge in which members place themselves under obligations on the part of the institution to its members, the members to the institution, and the members to one another. In making this pledge, members enter into a contractual agreement and a relational bond. By doing so, members accept reciprocal benefits and mutual responsibilities, and strive to achieve respectful and purposeful unity that aims for the advancement of all, recognizing the diversity of viewpoints, life journeys, stages of maturity, and roles within the NBS community. It is vital that each person who accepts the invitation to become a member of the NBS community carefully considers and sincerely embraces this community covenant.

#### 2. Christian Community

The Seminary's acceptance of the Bible as the divinely inspired, authoritative guide for personal and community life<sup>1</sup> is foundational to its affirmation that people flourish and most fully reach their potential when they delight in seeking God's purposes, and when they renounce and resist the things that stand in the way of those purposes being fulfilled<sup>2</sup> This ongoing God-enabled pursuit of a holy life is an inner transformation that actualizes a life of purpose and eternal significance.<sup>3</sup> Such a distinctly Christian way of living finds its fullest expression in Christian love, which was exemplified fully by Jesus Christ, and is characterized by humility, self-sacrifice,

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The Biblical passages cited in this document serve as points of reference for discussion or reflection on particular topics. NBS recognizes the necessity of giving careful consideration to the complexities involved in interpreting and applying biblical passages to contemporary issues and situations.

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:31-33; Romans 8:1-17; 12:1-2; 13:11-14; 16:19; Jude 20-23; 1 Peter 2:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter 1:3-8; 1 Peter 2:9-12; Matthew 5:16; Luke 1:74-75; Romans 6:11-14, 22-23; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, 4:3, 5:23-24; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:22-24, 5:8.

mercy and justice, and mutual submission for the good of others.<sup>4</sup>

This biblical foundation inspires NBS to be a distinctly evangelical seminary in which members and others observe and experience truth, compassion, reconciliation, and hope.<sup>5</sup> NBS envisions itself to be a community where members demonstrate concern for the well-being of others, where rigorous intellectual learning occurs in the context of whole person development, where members give priority to spiritual formation, and where service-oriented citizenship is modeled.

### 3. Community Life at NBS

The NBS community covenant involves a commitment on the part of all members to embody attitudes and to practise actions identified in the Bible as virtues, and to avoid those portrayed as destructive. Members of the NBS community, therefore, commit themselves to:

- cultivate Christian virtues, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, compassion, humility, forgiveness, peacemaking, mercy and justice<sup>6</sup>
- live exemplary lives characterized by honesty, civility, truthfulness, generosity and integrity<sup>7</sup>
- communicate in ways that build others up, according to their needs, for the benefit of all<sup>8</sup>
- treat all persons with respect and dignity, and uphold their God-given worth from conception to death<sup>9</sup>
- be responsible citizens both locally and globally who respect authorities, submit to the laws of this country, and contribute to the welfare of creation and society<sup>10</sup>
- observe modesty, purity and appropriate intimacy in all relationships, reserve sexual expressions of intimacy for marriage, and within marriage take every reasonable step to resolve conflict and avoid divorce<sup>11</sup>
- exercise careful judgment in all lifestyle choices, and take responsibility for personal choices and their impact on others<sup>12</sup>
- encourage and support other members of the community in their pursuit of these values and ideals, while extending forgiveness, accountability, restoration, and healing to one another.<sup>13</sup>

In keeping with biblical and NBS ideals, community members voluntarily abstain from the following actions:

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 22:37-40; 1 Peter 5:5; Romans 13:8-10; 1 John 4:7-10; Philippians 2:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:8a; Romans 12:1-3, 9-10; John 15:12-13, 17; 1 John 3:10-11, 14-16; Ephesians 5:1-2,21.

<sup>5</sup> From TWU's "Envision the Century" Strategic Directions Document, p 5 ("Ends").

<sup>6</sup> Galatians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:12-17; Isaiah 58:6-8; Micah 6:8.

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 12:19; Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 4:25; Leviticus 19:11; Exodus 20:16; Matthew 5:33-37.

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 25:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 1:27-28; Psalm 139:13-16; Matthew 19:14; Proverbs 23:22.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Genesis 1:28; Psalm 8:5-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 2:24; Exodus 20:14,17; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 5:15-19; Matthew 19:4-6; Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:32.

<sup>12</sup> Proverbs 4:20-27; Romans 14:13,19; 1 Corinthians 8:9,12-13, 10:23-24; Ephesians 5:15-16.

<sup>13</sup> James 5:16; Jude 20-23; Romans 12:14-21; 1 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 3:13.

- communication that is destructive to NBS community life and inter-personal relationships, including gossip, slander, vulgar/obscene language, and prejudice<sup>14</sup>
- harassment or any form of verbal or physical intimidation, including hazing
- lying, cheating, or other forms of dishonesty including plagiarism
- stealing, misusing or destroying property belonging to others<sup>15</sup>
- sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman<sup>16</sup>
- the use of materials that are degrading, dehumanizing, exploitive, hateful, or gratuitously violent, including, but not limited to pornography
- drunkenness, under-age consumption of alcohol, the use or possession of illegal drugs, and the misuse or abuse of substances including prescribed drugs
- the use or possession of alcohol on campus, or at any NBS sponsored event, and the use of tobacco on campus or at any NBS sponsored event.

#### **4. Areas for Careful Discernment and Sensitivity**

A heightened level of discernment and sensitivity is appropriate within a Christian educational community such as NBS. In order to foster the kind of academic atmosphere most conducive to seminary ends, this covenant both identifies particular Christian standards and recognizes degrees of latitude for individual freedom. True freedom is not the freedom to do as one pleases, but rather empowerment to do what is best.<sup>17</sup> NBS rejects legalisms that mistakenly identify certain cultural practices as biblical imperatives, or that emphasize outward conduct as the measure of genuine Christian maturity apart from inward thoughts and motivations. In all respects, the NBS community expects its members to exercise wise decision-making according to biblical principles, carefully accounting for each individual's capabilities, vulnerabilities, and values, and considering the consequences of those choices to health and character, social relationships, and God's purposes in the world.

NBS is committed to assisting members who desire to face difficulties or overcome the consequences of poor personal choices by providing reasonable care, resources, and environments for safe and meaningful dialogue. NBS reserves the right to question, challenge or discipline any member in response to actions that impact personal or social welfare.

#### **Wise and Sustainable Self-Care**

The Seminary is committed to promoting and supporting habits of healthy self-care in all its members, recognizing that each individual's actions can have a cumulative impact on the entire community. NBS encourages its members to pursue and promote: sustainable patterns of sleep, eating, exercise, and preventative health; as well as sustainable rhythms of solitude and community, personal spiritual disciplines, chapel and local church participation,<sup>18</sup> work, study and recreation, service and rest.

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<sup>14</sup> Colossians 3:8; Ephesians 4:31.

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 20:15; Ephesians 4:28.

<sup>16</sup> Romans 1:26-27; Proverbs 6:23-35.

<sup>17</sup> Galatians 5:1,13; Romans 8:1-4; 1 Peter 2:16.

<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 5:19-20; Colossians 3:15-16; Hebrews 10:25.

## Healthy Sexuality

People face significant challenges in practicing biblical sexual health within a highly sexualized culture. A biblical view of sexuality holds that a person's decisions regarding his or her body are physically, spiritually and emotionally inseparable. Such decisions affect a person's ability to live out God's intention for wholeness in relationship to God, to one's (future) spouse, to others in the community, and to oneself.<sup>19</sup> Further, according to the Bible, sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage between one man and one woman, and within that marriage bond it is God's intention that it be enjoyed as a means for marital intimacy and procreation.<sup>20</sup> Honouring and upholding these principles, members of the NBS community strive for purity of thought and relationship,<sup>21</sup> respectful modesty,<sup>22</sup> personal responsibility for actions taken, and avoidance of contexts where temptation to compromise would be particularly strong.<sup>23</sup>

## Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

The use of illegal drugs is by definition illicit. The abuse of legal drugs has been shown to be physically and socially destructive, especially in its potential for forming life-destroying addictions. For these reasons, NBS members voluntarily abstain from the use of illegal drugs and the abuse of legal drugs at all times.

The decision whether or not to consume alcohol or use tobacco is more complex. The Bible allows for the enjoyment of alcohol in moderation,<sup>24</sup> but it also strongly warns against drunkenness and addiction, which overpowers wise and reasonable behaviour and hinders personal development.<sup>25</sup> The Bible commends leaders who abstained from, or were not addicted to, alcohol.<sup>26</sup> Alcohol abuse has many long-lasting negative physical, social and academic consequences. The Bible has no direct instructions regarding the use of tobacco, though many biblical principles regarding stewardship of the body offer guidance. Tobacco is clearly hazardous to the health of both users and bystanders. Many people avoid alcohol and/or tobacco as a matter of conscience, personal health, or in response to an addiction. With these concerns in mind, NBS members will exercise careful discretion, sensitivity to others' conscience/principles, moderation, compassion, and mutual responsibility. In addition, NBS strongly discourages participation in events where the primary purpose is the excessive consumption of alcohol.

## Entertainment

When considering the myriad of entertainment options available, including print media, television, film, music, video games, the internet, theatre, concerts, social dancing, clubs, sports, recreation, and gambling, NBS expects its members to make personal choices according to biblical priorities, and with careful consideration for the immediate and long-term impact on one's own well-being, the well-being of others, and the well-being

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<sup>19</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:18-19.

<sup>20</sup> Genesis 2:24; Exodus 20:14,17; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 5:15-19; Matthew 19:4-6.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 5:27-28; 1 Timothy 5:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Job 31:1-4; Psalm 101:2-3.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 Timothy 2:9-10

<sup>23</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:13; 2 Timothy 2:22; James 4:7.

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 7:13, 11:14, Psalm 104:15; Proverbs 3:10; Isaiah 25:6; John 2:7-11; 1 Timothy 5:23.

<sup>25</sup> Genesis 9:20-21; Proverbs 20:1; 31:4; Isaiah 5:11; Habakkuk 2:4-5; Ephesians 5:18.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel 1:8, 10:3; Luke 1:15; 1 Timothy 3:3,8; Titus 2:3.

of the Seminary. Entertainment choices should be guided by the pursuit of activities that are edifying, beneficial and constructive, and by a preference for those things that are “true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy,”<sup>27</sup> recognizing that truth and beauty appear in many differing forms, may be disguised, and may be seen in different ways by different people.

## 5. Commitment and Accountability

This covenant applies to all members of the NBS community, that is, administrators, faculty and staff employed by NBS and its affiliates, and students enrolled at NBS or any affiliate program. Unless specifically stated otherwise, expectations of this covenant apply to both on and off NBS's (TWU) campus and *Immerse* ministry locations. Sincerely embracing every part of this covenant is a requirement for employment. Employees who sign this covenant also commit themselves to abide by policies published in their respective Faculty and Staff Handbooks. NBS welcomes all students who qualify for admission. Students sign this covenant with the commitment to abide by the expectations contained within the Community Covenant.

The stipulations of this agreement remain in effect as long as the student's admission status is active, and until such time as the student's degree is conferred.

Ensuring that the integrity of the NBS community is upheld may at times involve taking steps to hold one another accountable to the mutual commitments outlined in this covenant. As a covenant community, all members share this responsibility. The Seminary also provides formal accountability procedures to address actions by community members that represent a disregard for this covenant. These procedures and processes are outlined in the Student, Staff, and Faculty Handbooks, and the *Immerse* Manual and will be enacted by designated representatives of the Seminary as deemed necessary.

### By my agreement below I affirm that:

I have accepted the invitation to be a member of the NBS community with all the mutual benefits and responsibilities that are involved;

I understand that by becoming a member of the NBS community I have also become an ambassador of this community and the ideals it represents;

I have carefully read and considered NBS's Community Covenant and will join in fulfilling its responsibilities while I am a member of the NBS community.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>27</sup> Philippians 4:8.