



# NCF

NEW COLLEGE FRANKLIN  
FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

## MISSION AND VISION

Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, New College Franklin disciples students through the liberal arts for wisdom, virtue, and service.

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

### TRINITY

We believe in one, true and living God, infinite in being and holy perfection, immutable, eternal, and incomprehensible. In Him is all life, glory, and goodness for He alone is in Himself all-sufficient. In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

### INCARNATION

Christ, the Son of God, is of one substance and equal with the Father. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and took on flesh yet without sin, being in two whole, perfect and distinct natures, one person, fully God and fully man.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE

We hold Scripture as our highest authority. We believe that God's inerrant, infallible, and inspired Word, the Bible—including the Old and New Testaments—is altogether sufficient as our guide for life, practice, and godliness. As a people we are committed to read it, study it, sing it, pray it, teach it, preach it, obey it, and practice it.

### CREATION

Not of any necessity, but of His own pleasure, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. All things were created out of nothing in the span of six days, all very good. We believe that science and theology are compatible disciplines that both must operate under the authority of the Holy Scriptures.

### FALL

Adam, our federal head, fell from original righteousness by disobeying God, and sin entered the whole world. In choosing rebellion and lawless separation from God, our first parents became dead in sin, and their original sin is passed on to all mankind.

### SALVATION

Our loving and merciful Father has called a numberless elect out of spiritual death in Adam into eternal salvation and life in Christ. Those whom He effectually called are united to Christ's death, burial and resurrection by no work of their own but by God's free gift.

### COVENANT

God's elect, united in Christ, are His children, and He is a gracious, loving Father. God's children, moved by the proclamation of the gospel, are gathered together as the visible and invisible catholic Church.

### ESCHATOLOGY

As Christ bore God's love to the world, so Christ's Church bears the gospel unto the farthest corners of the world. God works through the Church to preach and to embody the gospel, and we long for the day that "the earth will be filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Habakkuk 2:14

## CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

*We believe in word-centered education that involves reading and processing ideas verbally for the purpose of integration into life practice.*

We read and talk about ideas to gain wisdom for life. Empty philosophy is self-centered and ultimately useless. The Apostle John tells us, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18) Jesus shows us He loves us by His actions. We are called to imitate Christ in our deeds, not just our words. However, we have to know what constitutes right action, which is where reading and talking find their appropriate roles. We read great works of literature, history, and philosophy, and discuss the ideas in these works, evaluating all claims to wisdom and truth with the purifying fire of the Word of God.

*We believe that discussion-based instruction and its interaction enables professors to carefully guide a student in their thinking and this has greater affect and longevity than lecture-based methodology.*

Discussion-based instruction and its interaction provide an ideal environment for those more mature in the faith and the liberal arts to guide students along the path to knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is difficult, and only those who desire her will have the necessary persistence and focus to obtain her. The Gospels are filled with the phrases, "Jesus asked his disciples," "Jesus answered his disciples," and "Jesus told his disciples." Jesus' disciples received the blessing of conversation. Conversation brings the ideas from the page into the mind and heart, and transforms information into knowledge. Conversation fosters community and discipleship by tailoring conversation for the specific intellectual and spiritual growth of particular hearts and minds.

*True intellectual growth is only possible with corresponding spiritual growth, for wisdom comes from the fear of the Lord and as a gift of grace.*

Grace is a key principle that shapes our attitude toward education. Out of His grace, God has blessed us with a holy fear of Him, which is the beginning of wisdom. This understanding fundamentally redefines intellectual pursuits. The writer of Proverbs exhorts us to get wisdom and get understanding (Proverbs 4:7). This means that intellectual growth is an act of obedience, but an act of obedience we are only able to fulfill because we have been given the gift of the fear of the Lord. The principle of grace, therefore, instills Christian education with an attitude of humility and reverence.

*Education is a communal activity in which we learn from one another, spur one another on to love and good deeds, and provide accountability.*

New College Franklin is a community of learners, growing together, serving, and providing accountability. The fellows, students, administration, and staff are all learners. As we grow in grace and try to learn, we come to understand more fully that wisdom and service are inextricable. As Jesus said, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (John 13:12-17) As learners in a community, we have a responsibility to regard each other as brothers and sisters, warning those who are idle in doing good. Whenever we fail to hold a brother or sister accountable, we treat that one as an enemy. (II Thessalonians 3:13-15)

*A student becomes like his master; therefore, the sharing of life together in discipleship and mentoring is an essential component in learning.*

Fellows and students at New College Franklin walk together in a discipleship and mentoring relationship. College is one of the most

exciting, tumultuous, and dynamic times in a person's life. This allows great opportunity for growth in wisdom. Mentoring and discipleship provide a measure of protection by means of dialogue and accountability. This model also recognizes the basic truth that the teacher shapes the student. Remembering Jesus' rhetorical question, "can a blind man lead a blind man?" reminds us how important it is to choose our teachers carefully.

*Life is body, mind, and spirit, and education must engage more than the mind and more than the classroom.*

The college, a community of learners, is part of a larger community. The church and the families that comprise the church provide opportunities for growth, service, and accountability. Just as a liberal arts education is training for all of life, all of life is part of a liberal arts education. Community engagement is part of the definition of "pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God," which is to "visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." (James 1:27) It is also important for students to get out a bit. The relationships forged in college are some of the most enduring, and these bonds are strengthened by time spent together in extra-curricular activities. An essential part of developing a sense of wonder about God's creation is to be out in it. Hiking, collegial games, and our own peculiar sports deepen that sense of collegial community and transform the hills of Middle Tennessee and the stars in the night sky into a grand classroom.

*Wisdom seeks to provide knowledge and understanding to the various passions and gifts that God has given for the purpose of greater clarity and service.*

An essential part of Christian education is repentance. We must repent of the idea that we exist to serve ourselves. We exist to worship, and service is central to worship. Paul tells the church in Rome to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind . . ." (Romans 12:1,2) He goes on to remind everyone among them "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to . . ." for, "having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them." Our gifts are not for our own benefit, but to benefit those around us. The only way we can know the source and right use of our gifts is by the renewal of our minds.

*We have much to learn through the tried and true ways embodied in the great minds of the past; therefore, we unapologetically study ancient texts for present application.*

C.S. Lewis warned us of the dangers of intellectual provincialism. In his Introduction to Athanasius's *On the Incarnation*, Lewis says that our characteristic blindness of the present is only made worse "if we read only modern books . . . The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same mistakes." We are not trying to revive the past, but to learn from it.

*We believe that true wisdom causes us to respond to the wonder of God's creation and providence with gratitude and awe.*

Ultimately, all of our endeavors should seek to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The educated man who is puffed up with knowledge has not been led out of darkness. As a student grows in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, he gains a clearer view of who he is, who God is, and what the world is. This vision reorients the student's attitudes and results in humble thankfulness and reverent awe.

#### THE LIBERAL ARTS AND BIBLICAL EDUCATION

In addition to Hebrew and Aramaic, Latin and Greek were the languages chosen to communicate the words King of the Jews on that cross outside Jerusalem. Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate. This historical fact emphasizes the pagan Greco-Roman world Christ redeemed. As Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, we have been called out of a philosophical and political paganism. The Roman Empire attempted to bring peace on earth. Just as the Roman soldiers unwittingly crowned Christ as King prior to his crucifixion, the Greeks and Romans prepared the world for the transmission of the Gospel.

This is not to say that the Christian story is the story of Western Civilization. The Christian story weaves in and through Western Civilization like the Hebrew story wove through ancient Mesopotamia. Just as we must know all that we can of the Mesopotamians to know fully the people of God in

the age of the Patriarchs, so too we study the greater cultural context in which Christ the Word was given and then flowered to understand the fullness of God's revelation in Christ. Hence, New College Franklin stands in the stream of Western Civilization to better understand the people of God in the modern age.

Christian education is uniquely equipped to illuminate and recover what C.S. Lewis called "the discarded image," and defined as "the medieval synthesis itself, the whole organization of their theology, science, and history into a single, complex, harmonious mental Model of the Universe." The principles of unity, complexity and harmony are inherent in the liberal arts and in Scripture.

## INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES

### Wisdom

**Lordship of Christ:** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. To submit all of learning, knowledge, institutional practice and identity to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to model that to our students.

**Unity of Truth:** Promote a vibrant, intellectual life that cherishes the liberal arts and which exhibits intellectual rigor and practical relevance.

**Faith and Practice:** Honor God and our religious heritage by applying the subject of our teaching and integrating it into the lives of students.

### Discipleship

**Lordship of Christ:** To use the liberal arts as a means to recover the "discarded image" of past eras in a manner that understands the connectedness of theology, learning, arts, and mission.

**Unity of Truth:** To disciple students in the academic process through means of discussion-based learning, integration, and application that adapts to individual needs.

**Faith and Practice:** Mentor and walk with students to focus on their whole development—educating the heart, soul, and mind, for the growing and maturing of their faith and understanding.

### Mission

**Lordship of Christ:** To respect, encourage, and draw out the specific and individual calling that God has placed on each student's life.

**Unity of Truth:** Recruit and retain diverse faculty, staff, and student body that reflect the diversity of the Body of Christ while staying rooted to our Reformed tradition.

**Faith and Practice:** To develop within students and the collegiate community the desire to missionally live out what they learn in the classroom in real-world application as fruitful members of a local Church.

## LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

### Wisdom

**Lordship of Christ:** Demonstrate knowledge of the decrees of God as executed in the work of providence in the progression of ideas, literature, and works through major epochs and periods of history.

**Unity of Truth:** Demonstrate knowledge of the decrees of God as executed in the works of creation as shown in the natural order expressed in the Quadrivium, art, music, and language.

**Faith and Practice:** Articulate the complex relationship between faith, learning, and practice.

### Discipleship

**Lordship of Christ:** Demonstrate academic expertise and proficiency in the liberal arts and engage in the process of academic discovery for the glory of God.

**Unity of Truth:** Recognize the connecting elements that unite all truth while respecting and exploring the diversity of application.

**Faith and Practice:** Develop and enact a compelling personal and professional vision that creates an environment for growth in virtue.

### Mission

**Lordship of Christ:** Practically apply the Word of God to all areas of life and learning with theological integrity by using Scripture as the ultimate authority in the education process.

**Unity of Truth:** Think critically and creatively, communicate clearly, and act with integrity.

**Faith and Practice:** Respond to the call to serve others. Demonstrate commitment to service and civic engagement. (Loving God and loving your neighbor.)