

## Theological Identity of Western Theological Seminary

### **Preamble**

Western Theological Seminary, as led by the board of trustees, the administration and the faculty, sincerely confesses the historic Christian faith, approached from within the Reformed tradition. We celebrate as well our commonality in Christ with Christians of other denominations and of no denomination. As such, we welcome students from a variety of Christian traditions and partnerships from a range of Christian ministries, without requiring them to agree with these faculty commitments. And yet, we also embrace the Reformed tradition as a gift to the larger church. In light of Western Theological Seminary's mission and identity, together with our faculty statement on women in ministry, we present this as a statement of our faculty commitments as we teach, write, and serve Christ's church.

### **Commitment to the Historic Christian Faith**

Together with the church through the ages, we worship and glorify the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, gladly confessing God as Trinity as expressed in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed. We confess that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully human in one person, the one mediator and Savior of the world. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, living in perfect communion with the Father. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate and arose bodily from the grave. He ascended into heaven from where he reigns over all things as living Lord and serves as our high priest and advocate. In his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ redeems us from our sin, and wins victory over the finality of death and the powers of darkness. Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead, and to establish the fullness of his reign in the new creation.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we receive forgiveness and new life in Christ to live as adopted children of the Father. Trusting in the Spirit rather than our own strength or righteousness, we seek to live lives that love God supremely and others sacrificially as we participate in the redeeming work that the Spirit is doing in all of creation. We proclaim the gospel with love and boldness, calling people from all nations to repentance, faith, and new life in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit joins us to the body of Christ, the church, through which we are nourished by word and sacrament and sent out in mission. We are called to seek reconciliation of the alienated in Christ, to pursue justice for the poor and the oppressed, and to care well for God's good creation. Until Christ returns to make all things new, we hope in God's promise and lament sin and injustice, we sing for joy and cry tears of sorrow, praying for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

### **Commitment to the Reformed Theological Tradition**

We embrace the Reformed theological tradition as our way of confessing the historic Christian faith. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God. The Bible is the supreme authority in faith and life, infallible in what it intends to teach. Illumined by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are central to our life, for we encounter the living God as we receive them in myriad ways, including as we hear, read, sing, study, and meditate upon them. We also accept these Reformed confessions – the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Belhar Confession – as secondary authorities, and as historic and faithful witnesses to the word of God in Scripture. They exposit the historic Christian faith, expressing distinctive Reformed positions on the sacraments, salvation, the church, and many other points of doctrine. Recognizing that not all of our partners in ministry share a commitment to these Reformed

confessions, we seek to act generously toward those who belong to other Christian traditions, especially as this relates to doctrines in dispute. Nevertheless, we celebrate the wide and spacious scope of Reformed doctrine expressed in the Reformed confessions, and we value them as witnesses to the gospel and to God's word in Scripture. We seek to learn from others, as we also eagerly share the gifts of the Reformed tradition for the larger church.

### **Embodying our Faith**

We also understand that Christian traditions are not simply things of the past but are lived out in communities of faith empowered by the Holy Spirit to live according to the word of God to the glory of the Father in the present. Therefore, we are also committed to faithfully and creatively embodying the historic treasures we have received in our scholarship, teaching, and life together. We joyfully acknowledge that all that we do flows from worship and returns to worship. WTS is simultaneously an academic community and a worshiping community, committed to soaking in the word alongside our study of it and to celebrating the Lord's Supper every week in chapel. We also seek to be a community that gives and receives gospel hospitality in a variety of ways, such as the Community Kitchen, the Friendship House, and our growing ecumenical, intercultural, and international connections. These commitments flow from our calling to be a deeply formational community, inside and outside the classroom, across and beyond the teaching curriculum. In this way we seek to foster practices and ways of being that will enable students to be formed as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and to engage faithfully in a variety of ministries. In these ways and more, we desire to live out our historic Christian and Reformed identity in ways that are faithful, creative, generative, and generous.