



## **Theological Context for Bushnell Community Life**

Bushnell University is an academic community comprised of students, faculty and staff who are created in the image of God. It is our privilege to honor each individual in the spirit of Christian charity, compassion, and mutual accountability. As a decidedly Christian institution of higher education, we exercise our mission within the covenants and freedoms inspired and informed by our faith tradition.

We are committed to a biblical understanding of the world that recognizes Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of every aspect of creation and human activity to the glory of God the Father. This has important implications with regard to how we as an institution exercise our Christ-centered mission, define and discuss important issues of faith, and view the behavior of the members of this community. Each member of the Bushnell community (student and employee) enters into a community covenant committing to standards of living that we believe are harmonious with biblical authority and encouraging of a life of Christian integrity.

In keeping with Bushnell's tradition in the Stone-Campbell/Restoration Movement the University embraces the important relational position that communicates, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things love." Although we come from a deep appreciation for our tradition that shies away from creedal language, which can be divisive, we understand ourselves and our identity in light of the historical theology of the Church, stating:

We believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, God's only son, our Lord; Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified died, and was buried. He descended into hell [to the dead]. The third day He arose again; He ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He will come again to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of all believers, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

In light of our specific church heritage, we unite with each other around the common confession that:

"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God; and we proclaim Him Lord and Savior of the world."

Furthermore, we as a community understand:

- God is the Creator and sustainer of the universe who relates to all in a covenant of love. All truth has its source in God.
- God is revealed in a general way through one's reflection on the works of creation, the laws of nature, and human experience, but especially in the person of Jesus, "the image of the invisible God."
- The Holy Spirit is God, dynamically present in the world. Through the work of the Spirit, Christians are guided in obedience to Christ, gifted for service, and joined to one another in fellowship.

- All human beings, created in the image of God, have become alienated from themselves, others, and God, by sin and can be restored to wholeness through the acceptance of Christ's work of redemption.
- The church has been established by Christ to make known the Gospel through proclamation worship, baptism, the Lord's Supper, service, and through working for reconciliation, peace and justice. The Lord commissions the Church to witness to its faith both individually and corporately to all peoples.
- The Bible bears witness to God and Jesus Christ as God Incarnate. It is in the scriptures that one discovers the revealed will of God in creation, judgment, and gracious redemption. The Bible serves as the authoritative witness to the life and teaching of Jesus, who is himself the only authority for the Church. The biblical testimonies provide inspiration, wisdom, and essential teachings for Christian conduct, individually and corporately.
- The assurance of Christian faith and hope is that the gifts of God experienced in this life in part shall be ours fully and forever with Christ's return and the consummation of God's reign.

Bushnell operates the entirety of its mission within the framework of an unapologetically and historically Christian perspective. As such all policies and decisions are created and made through the lens of our biblically informed, historical faith perspective. This perspective also informs our ethical and behavioral expectations for members of the Bushnell community. This is particularly important with regard to sexual ethics.

In the context of society and church discussion about human sexuality often results in polarization and bitter division. We are committed to serious, pastoral engagement that preserves the bond of Christian peace in the unity of the Holy Spirit and which seeks to keep individuals and groups engaged in fellowship with one another in life-giving and life-changing communion with Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that individual Christians and collective church bodies throughout the world do not agree on a universal scriptural understanding of issues on same-sex relationships that often endorse diverse and contradictory stances on sexual expression, particularly as it relates to congregational life and practice. We recognize that the broader Bushnell community – including faculty, staff, and students, alumni, and church/community constituencies – represents a microcosm of this diverse opinion.

In the spirit of Jesus (e.g., John 8), we seek neither to condemn nor to condone individuals or groups, either on the basis of differing opinions or on the basis of their convictions. Rather, we challenge all members of our community to wrestle together with the issues, both deeply theological and deeply interpersonal, with the view of seeking the mind of Christ through the faithful study of Holy Scripture and an openness to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, who transforms human lives and makes all things new.

Notwithstanding dialogue and debate, as a university that strives to be like Christ, we affirm the sanctity of the bond of marriage. Our understanding of marriage as the singularly appropriate context for sexual intimacy is rooted in the Genesis account of creation, reflected in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and maintained consistently throughout Scripture and in the history of the Church. It therefore forms the basis and foundation for the expectation we set for our university community. We affirm that infidelity in relationships and sexual promiscuity are manifestations of sin, requiring repentance and forgiveness. We expect Bushnell students and employees to uphold this moral standard and lead chaste lives.