

HOW SHALL WE LIVE DURING THE PANDEMIC?

The challenges of this pandemic are unprecedented in our time and responding to them is altering our lives in dramatic ways. However, the faith commitments that guide our Christian community are timeless and enduring, and they provide meaning for why we do what we do:

1. We Love through Sacrifice.

Followers of Jesus Christ seek to love *sacrificially* by prioritizing their neighbor's needs over their own, because Christian love always looks like the Cross in which Jesus freely chose to carry our need¹. Our neighbor is not an abstract someone, rather, they are the person before us: roommate, professor, the bagger at the grocery store, etc². **Therefore**, in the days of pandemic, we practice the sacrificial love of Jesus by temporarily accepting certain discomforts, forgoing certain conveniences, setting aside our preferred ways of interacting, and using our resources to meet our neighbor's physical needs³. (¹John 13:1-17, Ephesians 5:1-2, Romans 12:1-3; Philippians 2:1-13; ²Luke 10:25-37; ³Romans 14:1-23)

2. We Pray in Hope.

We turn to God in hopeful prayer in all circumstances, because we trust that God is always at work *around us, in us, and through us* to heal and restore our fractured world¹. Even as a deadly virus threatens us, we believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead marks the beginning of God's new creation work, in which disease and human cruelty are not the final word². **Therefore**, we pray in hope, *lamenting* to God in our anguish, grief, and despair; *appealing* to God for a swift end to the pandemic; *seeking* God for wisdom as we act; and *trusting* the Holy Spirit to pray for us when our words fail³. (¹Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 9:1, Romans 8:19-23; ²1 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Corinthians 15, Revelation 21; ³Matthew 6:9-13, Philippians 4:4-7, Ephesians 6:18; Romans 8:26)

3. We Live as Worship.

Our whole lives can be worship, because we can think, will, and act *toward God and for God* in everything, bringing glory to God and good to others¹. Living as worship does not prescribe a specific set of actions but sets a specific pattern of life to follow: the life of Jesus Christ, God's Son, who was entirely devoted to God and thus toward others in sacrificial love². **Therefore**, however we respond to the challenges of the pandemic, we are not guided by politics, preferences, or fears but by our commitment to conform ourselves to Jesus' life in obedience and service to God. (¹Romans 12:1-21, 1 Corinthians 10:31; ²Matthew 7:24-28, Matthew 22:39, Leviticus 19:18)

4. We Prioritize the Vulnerable.

Christians prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable, because it uniquely mirrors the love of God¹. Just as Israel was told to leave the corners of their fields unharvested for the sake of the widow, poor, orphan, and immigrant, Jesus commanded his followers to serve "the least" among them and demonstrated such love by healing the sick, touching untouchables, eating with outcasts, and giving his life for those who could not save themselves, namely us². **Therefore**, in the spirit of Christ, we make sacrifices great and small for those more vulnerable than ourselves: accepting inconveniences and discomforts, willingly forgoing certain freedoms, and embracing material sacrifices³. (¹John 13:34-35; ²Leviticus 19:9-10, Deut 24:19, Matthew 25, Mark 2, Luke 10:25-37, John 3:16; ³Matthew 20:20-28, Philippians 2:3, Romans 14)

5. We Value the Needs of Everyone.

Each person is a creature of immeasurable worth, because we believe everyone is created in the image of God and is extravagantly loved by God¹. This is true of those who are near and far away, just as it's true of those we love and our enemies². **Therefore**, as it concerns our response to the pandemic and all of its associated effects, we value the needs of people we may never meet, such as family members of faculty, staff, and commuter students; those who seem other than us, because of race,

politics, or religion; and people at greater risk because of compromised immune systems, special needs, homelessness, insufficient healthcare, etc. (¹Gen. 1-2, Psalm 8, John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4; ²Romans 5:1-11)

6. We Comfort the Suffering.

When we were lost, blind, and without hope, God graciously sought us, awakened us, and took all of our burdens onto himself in Jesus Christ to give us abundant and eternal life¹. We believe God calls us to imitate such love by comforting those who struggle, weeping with those who weep, and sharing the emotional, spiritual, and material burdens of those weighed down².

Therefore, we remain *alert* and *watchful* for those who are anxious about health or economic risks, lonely from isolation, anguished over loss, desperate that no end can be seen, or impoverished by economic fallout, and then we prayerfully and sincerely offer comfort: our tears, our shoulders to share their burden, and our resources to sustain them (¹Luke 15; 4:15-21, John 10:10; ²2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Galatians 6:2; Romans 12:15)

7. We Pursue Unity.

Jesus said that we should love each other, because love is the binding unity of God's own life and will be our greatest witness to a watching world¹. One expression of love is the hard work of pursuing unity in the power of the Holy Spirit². **Therefore**, in the days of pandemic, disagreement is inevitable but not discord and division. Rather than fuel discord by entrenching ourselves in our own views, in the spirit of love we do the hard, patient work of empathy: seeking to understand each other and to feel what each other feels. Rather than further division by turning away from each other, we lean into each other, even when it is hard³. (¹John 13:1-17, John 17; ²Ephesians 4:1-6, 1 Peter 3:8-12; ³1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Colossians 3:3-15).