

Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

Statement of Faith and Ethics

The object and aims of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies shall be conducted in accordance with historic Biblical Christianity and in particular in the spirit of the following commitments:

1. We affirm God as Creator of the universe, a creation which reveals God's goodness, existence, power and glory. Human beings are created in the image of God, male and female, in order to love, worship and obey God, to relate to one another in love, justice and compassion, and to explore and care for his creation.
2. We are committed to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, God's supreme revelation, the Word made flesh in history. Affirming that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the Messiah uniquely appointed by God to bring the blessing of salvation to the world. God took our human nature in Jesus Christ, who taught and modelled the new life of the kingdom of God to which he calls his disciples. In his death on the cross he took upon himself the sin of the world, bearing its full cost and penalty so that we are put right with God through his grace by faith in Christ alone. On the cross Jesus also entered into our suffering, defeated the powers of evil and accomplished the reconciliation of all creation. In his bodily resurrection he defeated death and became the forerunner of redeemed humanity. Through his ascension he is exalted as reigning Lord. We affirm the hope in Jesus Christ's promise of his triumphal return when the Father will totally transform the created order by bringing together all things together under the rule of Jesus Christ as Lord, and God's judgment will be executed to destroy Satan, evil and death, and establish the universal reign of God.
3. We seek the power of the Holy Spirit to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the world in which we live. We seek to affirm and develop the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given to all members of the Body of Christ, and to build partnerships whereby the Spirit's gifts may be mutually given and received for enrichment and correction across boundaries and forces that divide the unity of Christ's mission.
4. In summary, the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the ground, the means and the goal of mission. The Church's participation in mission can only be participation in the *Missio Dei*.
5. We acknowledge the Bible as the Spirit-breathed and humanly narrated story of God's love for the whole of creation. From Genesis to Revelation, the whole Bible is the revelation of God's mission. We believe that it reveals God's identity, character and purpose as well as the identity, character and purpose of the entire created order. We submit to it as supremely and uniquely authoritative for our belief and behaviour.

We affirm the importance of inter-contextual reading of the Bible as part of a global family of Christ followers, and as we do so, we seek to discover, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, its meaning for our obedience today in each of our different situations and contexts.

While our primary theological commitments are expressed in the historic creeds and confessions of the Christian churches and denominations in which we are engaged, we commit to living our personal and communal stories in such a way that they may serve as daily expressions of God's life-giving story.

6. We acknowledge that human beings have sinned by rebelling against God, rejecting God's authority and disobeying God's word and so are alienated from God, from one another and from the created order. Sin deserves God's judgment and leads to eternal separation from God. The effects of sin and the power of evil have permeated the fabric of cultural, economic, social, political and religious life, impoverishing all of life and damaging the creation.
7. Although humanity is distorted by sin, we acknowledge the priceless worth of each individual. We are made in the image of God and this remains the basis of the uniqueness, dignity, sanctity and equality of all persons without distinction. God loves and cares for all people in their cultural and ethnic diversity and has reached out in grace to save them through Jesus Christ.
8. As those called by the grace of God the Father, redeemed through the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, and indwelt by his Holy Spirit, to be partners in God's mission, we make our commitments to all dimensions of life in our own contexts. This includes both personal and communal, spiritual and social, and the political and economic situations in which we live. We affirm our continuity with the worldwide Body of Christ throughout history and are committed to its local, national and global expressions in their appropriate context.
9. We seek to discern and participate in the work of God in Christ in history, to welcome his Kingdom by living out the Good News of God's reconciliation in Christ through the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit.
We are committed to the holistic mission of Jesus Christ, which is to establish God's kingdom of right relationship with Him and the whole created order, including our personal, religious, political and socio-economic relationships.
We recognise that our lives, individually and collectively, are the single most powerful witness to Jesus Christ. We, therefore, seek to live as the transformed people of God, reflecting his character in ever increasing measure.
This mission includes proclaiming the good news of the reconciliation of people with God and their neighbours, and of the renewal of all things in Jesus Christ, as well as God's judgement on human rebellion. It will include calling people to repent and believe in Jesus Christ and experience new birth in him through the Holy Spirit.
We pray, 'Your kingdom come' in the confident expectation that the whole of history is moving towards the fulfilment of God's complete salvation in Christ and the day when all things in heaven and earth come together under Jesus Christ as Lord.
10. We affirm God's justice and compassion, reflected in God's identification with the poor, the powerless, the alienated and the oppressed people of the world in which we live. We recognise that we ourselves are part of such situations and accept our complicity in this evil. Yet we seek to achieve justice with the victims of injustice and make all aware of God's judgement on such oppression.
11. We affirm this Lordship of Jesus Christ over all demonic powers of evil which possess persons and pervade structures, societies and the created order. We seek to take a prophetic stance against dominating and dehumanising power by exercising and encouraging Christ-like leadership among the people of God.

12. We are called to love God with all our being, including our minds. We affirm that discipleship includes the transformation of our minds. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In humble dependence on God, seeking Christ and empowered by the Spirit, we are committed to pursue the best research and scholarship in service of God's mission.

In the light of these commitments:

- We seek to embody the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in every part of our own lives.
- Since every gift we enjoy comes from God, we seek to live with radical generosity and in a spirit of openness and humility towards others.
- We seek to maintain the highest standards of moral and ethical integrity following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ as he embodied his radical lifestyle in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5).
- This integrity includes financial affairs, sexual behaviour, the ways we speak and write and a commitment to respect for others, compassion, love, reconciliation and forgiveness in humility and gentleness. It includes a commitment to living responsibly, caring for God's creation.