

The Law, the Gospel, and Living in Community at Dordt

For 60 years, followers of Jesus have been gathering in a distinctively Christian learning community on the Northwest Iowa property of a former mink farm. Today, we call this place Dordt University, and the reach of our 19,000+ alumni span the globe and a vast array of vocational fields. Over those 60 years, countless people have sacrificed and invested innumerable hours and dollars to make Dordt University one of the best possible communities of learning and discipleship on the planet. An ever-increasing number of people are taking notice too, including *The Wall Street Journal*, naming Dordt, for four years in a row, the best school in the country for student engagement.

This means that our campus culture is strong because it has been painstakingly nurtured for decades by the generations who have preceded us here. Now, taking up the office of student at Dordt, you'll solidify your place within Defender Nation as it shapes you and as you shape it. At Dordt, we refer to the role of the student as one of our five offices (along with president, faculty, staff, and board member). We all play collaborative roles in forming this campus culture and who we are as individuals in Christ. Iron sharpens iron here as the body of Christ grows together.

As a flourishing community, we all have the opportunity to make one another stronger, wiser, more refined, even holier. However, the inverse can also be true. Each one of us can potentially hurt ourselves, others, or even our broader community because of the decisions we make. Today, perhaps we are aware of this interdependency more than ever before, living in the midst of a global health pandemic. As we covenant together in community, we will only be as strong or as healthy as our shared, worst decisions.

The Gospel compels us to extend great care toward all in the margins of society. Jesus demonstrated with piercing insight regularly in the Gospels. His heart broke for those who were on the outside of society looking in or for those whose health was compromised—the sick, the lonely, the leper, the most vulnerable. He often risked his reputation and safety; eventually, he gave his own life so that the arms of the kingdom of Heaven would be extended to enfold all who would accept him as the way, the truth, and the life.

Christianity is a path of cruciform living, one that starts with the call to deny ourselves. Following in the path of Jesus has never been easy, but in 2020, new dynamics yet again have been added to that call. Many comforts that we once took for granted have been removed in this season of history and our uncertainties about the future have caused a heightened sense of collective anxiety. It's into this fray that the Christian is called—to live in the awkward tension of a kingdom that is here, but not fully come as we continually pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.”

As we walk together into the coming academic year, we will all be asked to endure a certain amount of discomfort for the sake of others. We'll have to keep more distance from people than normal, we'll have to miss certain events we're used to being able to enjoy, we'll have to wear masks in public and common spaces, and we'll maybe wait longer in lines than we'd like to. Worst of all, we may well have to adopt even more additional measures as our knowledge grows concerning how we best maintain our collective health in response to this COVID-19 virus.

This is an act of discipleship, of self-sacrifice. It's a broadening of the definition of what it means to be pro-life, and the more we all look out for one another and for “the least of these,” the higher the likelihood we can return to normalcy sooner. Moreover, the better we care for ourselves and for one

another and the more we all go the extra mile, the higher the likelihood that we all get to enjoy this year in its entirety, face-to-face—the way we ALL want to be learning.

No doubt, this is an extra-grace-required season and because of that, more than likely, we will be remembered more for how we treated one another during this trying time, than we will for who was right or wrong about the precautions that we were all asked to enact for the sake of others and for ourselves. We won't likely be remembered for our barstool prophecies, but we will for our love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, and self-control. Thankfully, God promised us that one of the three persons of the Trinity would help bring these about inside each of us!

So, you'll probably be asked this year to "die to yourself" a little more than normal. You'll be put out of your comfort zone, and you'll likely be flustered, just like everyone else, that we can't just be "over this" already. But we cling to the fact that God is always working in our waiting (sometimes, it's where he works best) and that we were built for this. God's people have historically shone the brightest when they were tested to the limits. And his name became more famous. And the church grew. And so did his kingdom.

It's against the backdrop of this cultural moment that we find ourselves. We'll likely be tested but we'll also be refined. It's into this kind of community and this kind of covenant that you've been invited. By us. By God. And for those reasons, we ask you to make the following covenant with us . . .

- I will follow the guidelines of Dordt's leadership regarding COVID-19 mitigation, even if they have to change mid-year.
- I will take extra care and responsibility for my own health, acknowledging that there are likely many around me who don't share the same blessing of strength and health that I do.
- I embrace this season as a time of the Spirit's refinement within me of his fruit, and I'll seek to walk in step with him daily as I learn more and more to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- I will do everything in my power (and then maybe a little extra from the Lord), to love and care for my neighbor as much as I do for myself.
- I readily acknowledge that sin is real, and COVID-19 is one more manifestation of it in a broken world. Therefore, I won't blame my community members or its leaders if COVID-19 messes with the way we anticipate the school year to go.
- I acknowledge that if learning has to transition all online this year, Dordt's leaders will treat me fairly in terms of any possible refunds or tuition discounts.
- I am asking Jesus to be seen this year in what I do and what I say.

I'm in. _____ . Date _____

So, that was how we all agree to live in community and in covenant with one another, under the Lordship of Christ. It might sound like "Christianese" to others but to us followers of Jesus, it's how we live and die. But since we also live in the here and now, let's examine some of the nuts and bolts too...

Dordt University Student Covenant for Life Together in COVID-19 Times

Dordt University life in the 2020-21 academic year will be different than previous years, due to the impact of COVID-19 on our campus and our community.

Our life together will be governed by this motto: “Love God, love your neighbor, love yourself, love Dordt.” In order for us to have a successful semester together, we all need to agree to help protect each other and to protect our campus. This is an agreement in which we all must participate, with a view of serving each other.

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets and aerosols released when individuals talk, cough, or sneeze. At this point, there is no generally accepted therapeutic treatment, nor a vaccination to protect humans from COVID-19. At Dordt, you will be studying on a campus where you will share space with others outside of your immediate household. As a consequence, you need to agree to live within reasonable constraints. There will be additional constraints for those of you who are residential students.

Please review and acknowledge the below expectations and processes before beginning the fall semester on the Dordt University campus:

Student Name: _____ Student ID#: _____

Please initial next to each item and then sign below (*if you are under 18, your parent or guardian must sign also*):

_____ I attest that at the time of the start of classes (or the move-in date for residential students), and within the last 14 days that:

- 1) I have not been confirmed to have COVID-19,
- 2) I have not exhibited symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, shortness of breath, fever greater than 100.3 degrees Fahrenheit, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea)
- 3) I have not been exposed to anyone confirmed to have COVID-19, and
- 4) None of my close contacts (e.g. members of my household in which I have been living for the last two weeks, or intimate partner) have exhibited symptoms of COVID-19

_____ I will adhere to all signage, verbal, and written directives regarding physical distancing, wearing of masks, and other COVID-19 best practices while residing on Dordt University’s campus. I understand that these practices may evolve as the public health crisis evolves and acknowledge that it is my responsibility to stay informed and comply with any developments.

_____ I will comply with any travel restrictions Dordt may choose to impose upon its students, due to COVID-19 conditions in other locales.

_____ I will self-report via u.dordt.edu/covid if I experience any of the above symptoms at any time after moving in.

_____ I understand that if I become symptomatic or am identified as a close contact of someone who is symptomatic, testing, quarantine, and or isolation may be necessary. I will comply with the direction of both the Student Health and Counseling Center and Residence Life.

_____ I understand that if I experience symptoms of COVID-19 or am advised by the Student Health and Counseling Center or their area partners to be tested for COVID-19, I will have to be in isolation for a period of time. The isolation protocol will be such that if my permanent residence is within a 250-mile drive and arrangements can be made, I will return home to my permanent residence for the duration of my isolation and will not return to Dordt’s campus until released by the Student Health and Counseling Center to do so.

_____ I understand that if I cannot return to my permanent residence or do not live within a 250-mile drive, I will be housed in an isolation location on or near campus; I will have to temporarily move out of my current room and will be advised as to what steps I need to take to do that.

_____ I understand that if Dordt requires me to vacate campus housing, I will be responsible for removing my personal possessions and/or furnishings. Dordt will not be responsible for loss or damage to my personal items that must be moved and stored if I do not remove them.

_____ I understand and acknowledge the ongoing possibility that due to public health or safety emergency, including COVID-19, I may be unable to occupy campus housing, or my use of campus housing facilities may be significantly restricted. I further understand that Dordt reserves the right to adjust the housing services it provides to me as necessary in its sole discretion to preserve the health and safety of residents and the campus community. I acknowledge that, in the event of such closures, restrictions, and/or adjustments to the housing Dordt provides to me, Dordt has the discretion to issue, or not issue, a refund or credit, partial or otherwise.

_____ I understand that Dordt has implemented new safety rules and precautions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and that those rules and precautions may evolve as the public health crisis evolves. While acknowledging that these rules and precautions may or may not be effective in mitigating the spread of COVID-19, I agree to comply with such rules and precautions and any modifications or amendments to them. I understand that failure to do so is a violation of Dordt's Student Code of Conduct and that failing to comply could subject me to disciplinary sanctions, including, but not limited to, probation, suspension, dismissal, and being denied further entry onto Dordt's campus.

_____ I understand that for public health reasons, Dordt may require me to have an influenza vaccination this year (limited exemptions may be available for individuals with specific religious or health reasons). I also understand that, should an effective vaccine for COVID-19 be developed which could significantly reduce the impact of this disease on our community, Dordt may require me to be vaccinated.

The Student Health and Counseling Center as well as Residence Life are committed to supporting your health and wellness while living on campus. If you have any questions before acknowledging this agreement, you may contact Student Services at 712-722-6076.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if under age 18): _____