

DENOMINATIONAL SENSITIVITY AT PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Although families at Providence Christian High School are members of churches that are unified on the essentials of the Christian faith, they may hold differing views on certain aspects of faith and practice. At times we in the PCHS community are challenged as we encounter these differences. Yet, our common mission of helping students grow as disciples of Jesus Christ empowers us to respond to these challenges with Christian love and maturity.

The purpose of this document is to outline areas of the Christian faith that PCHS believes are essential for faculty to integrate into the curriculum and daily practice. It also offers a brief explanation of some areas of faith and practice where families may hold differing views. If these issues arise in the classroom, teachers will refer students to their parents or their pastors. Teachers will model sensitivity and respect when speaking of various Christian denominations.

BAPTISM

The denominational spectrum extends from infant baptism, where the emphasis is on God making a family covenant with parents and their child, to believers' baptism, where the emphasis is on an individual's confession of faith in Christ. Some examples of churches that practice infant baptism include Congregational, Lutheran, Catholic, Episcopalian, Reformed, Christian Reformed, and Presbyterian. Churches that practice adult baptism include Baptists, Vineyard, Evangelical Free, Christian Missionary Alliance, and Assembly of God. All Christians believe that baptism was commanded by Jesus and is a mark of being a Christian.

THE LORD'S SUPPER/COMMUNION

The denominational spectrum extends from a belief that the bread and the wine become Christ's body and blood (transubstantiation-Catholic), to an understanding that Jesus' real presence in his body and blood is in the bread and the wine (Lutheran and Episcopalian), to the belief that it is a symbolic act in which Christ's sacrifice is remembered and the benefits of his death and resurrection are guaranteed to those who partake in faith (Reformed, Baptist, Assembly of God). All Christians believe that this is a special meal instituted by Jesus for his followers.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR PASTOR

Some denominations teach that only men may hold this position. Others believe that both men and women may serve as pastor. Finally others believe that it requires a celibate man.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Some churches believe that the Holy Spirit bestows gifts such as tongues, prophecy, and supernatural healing to the church today. All Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is the third

person of the Trinity who generates faith, convicts us of sin, leads us into truth, comforts us in times of trial, produces fruit in the lives of believers, and empowers us for ministry.

BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

Some denominations emphasize the importance of making a decision for Christ and praying a prayer that expresses such faith in Jesus and repentance of sin. Other denominations emphasize that God creates faith, whether in adults or children, and establishes a covenant of love with them, which is signified and sealed in baptism. This testifies to the one baptized that he or she is a member of the Christian family. However that faith must be nurtured throughout the child's lifetime until that point when a child says its own "yes" to following Jesus. This may be expressed through the Rite of Confirmation (Congregational, Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian) or Profession of Faith (Christian Reformed). We all recognize that it is Jesus who draws us to Himself and creates new life in us through His Spirit. Therefore, it is important to us at PCHS to be sensitive to this distinction during classroom devotions and Chapel presentations. Students should simply be encouraged to grow closer to Jesus and grow in their discipleship to Him. It is primarily the role of the family and the church to help young men and women become members of God's family. Our task at Providence Christian High School is to nurture faith and to nurture assurance of salvation in our students.

CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS

There are some other distinct differences between Protestants and Catholics. These would include prayer to Mary or the saints, the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary, the belief in purgatory, the teaching of apostolic succession and the papacy and the use of the Apocrypha. If these issues should arise in the classroom, teachers will speak with sensitivity, demonstrating respect for our Catholic students and Catholic families in PCHS without validating doctrines not in keeping with the PCHS statement of faith. Teachers will keep the focus on what unites us in Jesus Christ. We affirm that despite these differences, we are united through our faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

CREATION AND THE AGE OF THE UNIVERSE

Within the Christian community there is a wide range of opinions regarding the appropriate interpretations of Genesis 1 and 2. Some Christians teach that the Genesis account of creation depicts God creating the universe in six 24-hour days thus leading to the view that the earth is 6,000 years old. Other Christians believe in long creation days, a view which supports an old universe, while not accepting the evolutionist view of macroevolution (adaptation of species). Old Earth creationists believe that God created the earth and populated it with life in separate creative acts in the order of the fossil record. All Christians recognize that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and that we are to be stewards of God's world and treat it with care. We all recognize that humans are uniquely made in God's image. At Providence Christian High School we do not impose one view of how creation occurred. We do emphasize that God purposefully and carefully designed our world.