

# Next Generation Christian Science Fellowship of St. Louis

*Encouraging growth in grace through worship, education, and service*

*in a joyfully inclusive and loving community<sup>1</sup>*

## Covenant Agreement

These convictions bring us together as a faith community. We hold in common that:

**The purpose of life** is to glorify God and joyfully to celebrate the defining, creative, and loving presence of God in everything we do.<sup>2</sup>

**The inspired Word**, Logos, or Christ revealed in the Bible is our sufficient guide to eternal life. This includes embracing not just Jesus' teachings but the fullness of his life -- which he said demonstrates the design of the Bible and God's intent for salvation, healing, and wholeness.<sup>3</sup>

**Following Christ** in the way of God's choosing is the means by which Mary Baker Eddy repeatedly said Christian Science could be correctly understood and her teachings broadly shared with humanity. "The school whose schoolmaster is not Christ, gets things wrong..."<sup>4</sup>

**Spiritual Healing** is a natural sign following the transformative power of the Spirit at work on one's character and the entirety of one's life and relationships. Physical healing alone is insufficient as the primary incentive for, or validation of, one's spiritual commitment.<sup>5</sup>

**The centrality of the cross**, consistent with the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy, embodies the essential evangelism of the human ego, the necessity for the surrender of any source of meaning and purpose apart from God. In the cross the inseparability of divinity's embrace of humanity is made clear, and individuals feel God's love right where they are in their experience.<sup>6</sup>

**Binding up the broken-hearted** and demonstrating extraordinary love is reflective of the highest practice of Christian Science. In consonance with the Bible and Christian Science, the genuine expression of our humanity is the primary indication of what we understand of God.<sup>7</sup>

"**Judge not** that ye be not judged" and "let every person examine himself or herself" are the hallmarks of biblical and Christian faith, and of the practice of Christian Science. Great perversion of Christian faith occurs when people feel criticism and judgment of their worth in the midst of Christian community.<sup>8</sup>

**Love** is *the* defining characteristic of primitive Christianity and must remain so in any reinstatement of it today. We strive to offer a witness of love so radical that the world may not understand it even while people are irresistibly drawn to it. Caring for the community involves inward nurture of those who are part of this fellowship and outward embrace of the larger community and world in which we live. Our ideals must be practiced in tangible expression as proof of our prayer for enriched affections.<sup>9</sup>

**Reaching Youth and Young Adults** with a ministry and fellowship that draws them to want to be involved in worship and service, spiritual education and growth opportunities, enhanced relationships and community, is a primary commitment of this Fellowship.

**Equipping "the saints" for ministry** is core to the mission of the Christian church and we strive to recognize the gifts of ministry given by the Holy Spirit to each individual, offer to support their development in service to the mission of this Fellowship, and afford opportunities for these gifts to be shared.<sup>10</sup>

**Evangelism**, sharing the good news of God's love, is central to the calling of every follower of Christ and fulfills Mary Baker Eddy's definition of her church as an evangelical order. This Fellowship devotes itself, individually and corporately, to making a witness to the world of the truths it espouses.<sup>11</sup>

## Explanatory Notes

<sup>1</sup> “What we most need is the prayer of fervent desire for growth in grace, expressed in patience, meekness, love, and good deeds.” *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, page 4

<sup>2</sup> This passage echoes the catechism of the Westminster Confession, which asks: “What is the purpose of man?” and answers, “The purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” Mary Baker Eddy knew and loved this Confession from girlhood – “At ten years of age I was as familiar with Lindley Murray’s Grammar as with the Westminster Catechism; and the latter I had to repeat every Sunday.” *Retrospection and Introspection* by Mary Baker Eddy, page 10

“...glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Corinthians 6:20 *King James Bible*

<sup>3</sup> The first tenet of Christian Science: “As adherents of Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal life.” *Science and Health*, page 497

“You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you’ll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about **me**! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren’t willing to receive from me the life you say you want.” John 5:39-40 *The Message Bible*

In Greek, the word for “to be saved” is the same as to be healed and to be made whole.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Baker Eddy gives the same exact instruction to the same audience twelve months apart: “Follow your Leader only so far as she follows Christ.” *Messages to The Mother Church for 1901 and 1902*, pages 34 and 4 respectively

“I am persuaded that only by the modesty and distinguishing affection illustrated in Jesus’ career, can Christian Scientists aid the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on the earth.” *Retrospection and Introspection*, page 94

Also twice repeated by Mary Baker Eddy: “The school whose schoolmaster is not Christ, get things wrong, and is ignorant thereof.” *Miscellaneous Writings*, page 365

“If the schoolmaster is not Christ, the school gets things wrong and knows it not...” *No and Yes*, page 18.

<sup>5</sup> Jesus was concerned that if one’s primary motive for coming to God was for “the loaves and fishes,” for physical relief, comfort, or convenience, it might obscure or distract from more selfless discipleship, from a primary emphasis on healing sin, reforming character, and experiencing God in the fullness of all one’s life and relationships. After Jesus had fed the multitude, they pursued him for more miracles and physical fixes. Jesus rebuked their motives and a methodology that uses God for convenience and comfort rather than character reformation and service: “You’ve come looking for me not because you saw God in my actions but because I fed you, filled your stomachs – and for free.” John 6:26 *The Message Bible*

<sup>6</sup> “The cross is the central emblem of history.” *Science and Health*, page 238

“I kiss the cross and wake to know a world more bright.” “Christ My Refuge” by Mary Baker Eddy

Mary Baker Eddy insisted that external outcomes (including healing) are signs that follow the inward transformation of self toward a desire to honor God more and serve humanity better. The cross serves to illustrate the coincidence of divinity embracing humanity. It illustrates how the absolute idea of Truth, Life, and Love becomes discernible, tangible, “made flesh,” to individuals in ways they can understand right where they are.

Her own love of the physical symbol of the cross was reflected in that, on at least a half dozen occasions, she required artists to add her cross at her neckline for pictures and illustrations.

<sup>7</sup> “If we would open their prison doors for the sick, we must first learn to bind up the broken-hearted...The tender word and Christian encouragement of an invalid, pitiful patience with his fears and the removal of them, are better than hecatombs of gushing theories, stereotyped borrowed speeches, and the doling of arguments, which are but so many parodies on legitimate Christian Science, aflame with divine Love.” *Science and Health*, page 366-367

Mary Baker Eddy did not feel that honoring the divine and absolute required a dismissal or denigration of genuine humanity or of relative care for practical needs. Rather she passionately advocated compassion that would touch and connect with an individual right where they currently were in their spiritual journey.

<sup>8</sup> “Love your enemies... If you only love the lovable, do you expect a pat on the back? Run-of-the-mill sinners do that. If you only help those who help you, do you expect a medal? Garden-variety sinners do that. If you only give for what you hope to get out of it, do you think that is charity? The stingiest of pawnbrokers does that.” Luke 6:27, 32-34 *The Message Bible*

<sup>9</sup> “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.” John 13:35 *New Kings James Bible*

“The test of all prayer lies in the answer to these questions: Do we love our neighbor better because of this asking?...” *Science and Health*, page 9

“...and may Thy Word enrich the affections of all mankind and govern them.” From the Daily Prayer in the *Church Manual*, page 41

<sup>10</sup> “God’s various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit...Each person is given something to do that shows who God is...The variety is wonderful...” I Corinthians 12 *The Message Bible*

“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Eph 4:10, 11 *King James Bible*

<sup>11</sup> “[The Church of Christ, Scientist’s] essence is evangelical. Its government will develop as it progresses.” *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, by Mary Baker Eddy, page 342

“God authorized and commanded me to commission you. Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20 (end of the gospel) *The Message Bible*

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Signing and dating below constitute your agreement with this Covenant

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please print your name \_\_\_\_\_