

# ***Bylaws of the MVCS Association***

*(Latest Revision March 4, 2002)*

## **Preamble**

Believing in the desirability of concerted efforts in providing Christian instruction, we do hereby make and adopt the following By-Laws to-wit:

## **ARTICLE I Basis (Revised 5/12/97)**

The basis of the Association is the infallible Word of God as interpreted in the confessions of the Reformed Churches, namely: The Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, and the Westminster Confession. All members must show this confession in walk and life.

## **MOUNT VERNON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL ASSOCIATION MEMBERS SUBSCRIBE TO THE FOLLOWING FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS:**

1. We believe in one God, eternal in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the only living and true God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.
2. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only inspired, infallible, and inerrant written revelation of God to man, and that these Scriptures are the supreme authority in all matters of life and faith.
3. We believe in the universal sovereignty of God over all that he has created and maintains.
4. We believe in the providence of God, whereby He sustains the universe, governs the world, supplies the needs of His people, and brings His will to pass.
5. We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, to have dominion over the earth, and to do all things to the glory of God.
6. We believe in man's universal fall into sin through Adam's transgression and in his subsequent disobedience, guilt, condemnation, and judgment before God.
7. We believe that God by His grace, and according to His good pleasure, restores to Himself and to His service, all who in true faith call on, and confess, the name of Jesus Christ.
8. We believe in one holy and universal church which Christ the Lord and Head, chooses, gathers, preserves, and defends for Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race.
9. We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, crucified as a ransom for many, died and was buried, was raised from the dead, and ascended into Heaven.
10. We believe in the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to apply the benefits of Christ's redemption to individual sinners, working in them regeneration, faith, repentance, sanctification, and glorification.

## **THE CENTRAL AIM OF MOUNT VERNON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IS TO PROMOTE AND IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING DISTINCTIVE WORLD VIEW:**

### **1. MAN'S LIFE AND TASK**

WE CONFESS that all things are created by God (*Genesis 1 and 2*) and as His creation remain under His rule, are upheld by His power, and exist for His glory (*Psalms 19:1*); that mankind, as the creature uniquely made in God's image (*Genesis 1:27*), is given dominion over creation to rule it and develop it under God (*Genesis 1:28-30; Westminster Confession, Chapter IV*).

WE CONFESS that man is called to experience and confess creation's God-given order and meaning (*Colossians 2:10*).

WE CONFESS that human life in its entirety is a response to the true God, either in obedience or disobedience to that God

*(1 John 3:7-10)*, and that in fulfillment of his task man is called to discern the many ways in which God calls each of His creatures to serve Him *(1 John 4:1-3)*, so that man may cultivate creation in all its richness in obedience to God's commands and in harmony with the laws in which God in His faithfulness maintains His creation *(Romans 8:18-21)*.

WE CONFESS that education is the process of nurturing and directing the child, as a creature made in God's image, to the responsible and obedient exercise of this dominion, in fulfillment of his calling under God *(Ephesians 4:11-13)*.

## **2. THE WORD OF GOD**

WE CONFESS that the whole creation finds its coherence and meaning in the only begotten Son of the Father, the living Word of God through Whom all things were made and are continually upheld (*Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 9, 10; Colossians 1:15-20*).

WE CONFESS that the supreme standards for all matters of education are the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, God's Word written, by whose light alone we can study creation and know its God-given meaning (*Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I; Belgic Confession of Faith, Article VII*).

WE CONFESS that creation is God's handiwork (*Psalms 24: 1-2*), that He governs all things by His providence (*Hebrews 1:3*), that every creature is subject to His will (*Job 1:12*), and that through general revelation God reveals truth to all people, both believers and unbelievers (*Romans 1:20; Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 2*).

WE CONFESS that while the study of the Scriptures is no substitute for the study of God's creation, Scripture remains indispensable and determinative for our knowledge of God, of mankind and of the rest of creation, and thus for the whole educational task (*Hebrews 4:12-13; Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 3*).

## **3. SIN**

WE CONFESS that in sin man has rejected God in favor of "gods" and priorities of his own making, and has therefore cut himself off from all true knowledge of God, of himself, and of the meaning of creation, so that the light that he supposes he has is darkness and his wisdom is folly (*Belgic Confession of Faith, Article XV*);

that apart from the one sinless Man, Jesus Christ, all men alike grope in darkness; that since man cannot be neutral in relationship to God, neither can his acquisition of knowledge be so; it will be either pleasing or displeasing to His Creator (*Romans 5:19; Belgic Confession of Faith, Article XV*).

that disobedience to God is inherently destructive of man and of the creation over which man is given dominion, but that the creation remains continually upheld in grace in subjection to God's law (*Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter V; Belgic Confession of Faith, Article XIII*).

that no human activity, including the educational task, can enable man of himself to fulfill his destiny or bring himself to salvation, but the redemption and renewal of human life lies in the power of the blood and Spirit of Christ alone (*Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XVI; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 23*).

that true education is possible only where the fear of God is re-established by God's grace in the heart of man, as the indispensable foundation of all wisdom and knowledge (*Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12*).

## **4. REDEMPTION IN CHRIST**

WE CONFESS that God in Christ by the Cross has restored the whole Creation to harmony with Himself, making all things new in Christ (*Belgic Confession of Faith, Article XXI*);

that although the fulfillment of this restoration awaits the future revelation of Christ in glory, yet, in principle, by the present work of the Holy Spirit in the world, it is a present reality to be reckoned with in faith in every area of life (*Romans 8:37-40; Belgic Confession of Faith, Article XXIV*);

that Christ in His redemption, by the Holy Spirit, is creating from among the old humanity in Adam a new humanity in Christ, united in the Church which is His body, the covenant community bound to Him as Head (*1 Peter 2:9-10*);

that the covenant community is the gathering of those who, having received the sign of God's redemption in the sacrament of Baptism, claim the promises of God and trust Jesus for their salvation (*Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 27*);

that the covenant community is God's appointed means, through the power of the Holy Spirit within the community, for communicating the redemption of Christ to our children and then to the world (*Matthew 28:19-20; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 26, Belgic Confession, Article XXVIII*);

that although by the grace of God, men who reject the Word of God as the ordering principle of life provide many valuable insights into the structure of reality, yet, because the religious direction of their thought remains radically opposed to that of the covenant community in Christ, there can be no possibility of a synthesis of their systems of thought with the Scripturally-directed thought which Christ's covenant community is called to pursue (*II Peter 1:3-21*).

### **ARTICLE II Purpose (Revised 5/12/97)**

The purpose of the Association is to provide for and give to our covenant youth that weekday instruction which is in agreement with Article I and which is necessary if they as children of God are to occupy their places worthily in society, church, and state. Instruction and education within the contemplation of these Bylaws includes and extends from kindergarten through grade twelve which is further defined as elementary, middle school, and high school education.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

**MOUNT VERNON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COMMITTED TO EDUCATION BASED ON THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD, SEEKS TO SERVE GOD BY PREPARING STUDENTS TO RESPOND IN LOVING SERVICE TO GOD AND THEIR NEIGHBORS.**

**AS AN EXTENSION OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME WE ASSIST PARENTS IN NURTURING THEIR CHILDREN IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD AND OF HIS CREATION, THEREBY EQUIPPING STUDENTS TO EMBRACE BIBLICAL VALUES WHILE BEING CHRIST'S AGENTS OF RENEWAL IN THE WORLD.**

#### **1. THE SPECIAL TASK OF PARENTS**

WE CONFESS that God has given parents the responsibility for the nurture of their children by discipline and instruction according to the Word of the Lord; that in accordance with this responsibility, God has given parents authority over their children to guide them and direct them in the way of righteousness;

that God has given children on their part a corresponding responsibility to honor, respect, and obey their parents in the Lord;

that faithful training of children means instructing them in the covenant revealed in Scripture by which God binds His people to Himself in whole-hearted love, which covenant is the key to the fulfillment of all man's life;

that while parents may invite others to share with them in the nurture of their children, the responsibility for this nurture remains the responsibility of the parents, whose task it always remains to determine the character and religious direction of the children's nurture in every aspect.

#### **2. THE SPECIAL TASK OF THE SCHOOL**

WE CONFESS that the covenant community redeemed in Jesus Christ expresses itself in many ways in every aspect of this temporal world; a school where Christ is confessed as Lord of the educational task in harmony with the Scriptures is one valid expression of the life of this covenant community, displaying in its own distinctive manner the rich fullness of Christ's redemption;

that it is the special task of the school to open out to the child the meaning and structure of the creation under the guidance of the Word of God, as part of the equipping of the child for the fulfillment of his calling in life in subjection to Christ as King;

that the school's team of teachers, as the body of educators in the Christian community, has the task, in obedience to Christ's calling, of articulating the content of the educational curriculum and seeking to implement it so as to lead each child as a responsible creature made in God's image, who must be accepted for who he is and as he is;

that the school, under Christ and by His Holy Spirit, is to advance the reign of Christ on earth in accordance with its special task so that His kingdom may come to expression here and now, though with very much imperfection and weakness, and so that our Lord may find us busy in His service when He comes in glory.

**A. The school, the child, and the curriculum**

Our primary concern is the child, but not in the traditional "child-centered" context of humanistic, permissive philosophy. The curriculum, the method, and the teacher must all focus attention on the child, and must bring to bear all of their combined influence to equip him to live in obedience to God's Word. He was created in God's image. He responds to God as a child, but is not qualitatively different from his parents. He is a vital, energetic, sensitive human being with a variety of loves and hates and fears and desires, who needs redeeming, because he, like us, has disobeyed his Lord. He must make a personal commitment to Christ, must submit to the complete Lordship of Christ in his life, and must enthusiastically pursue the challenge of working out the implications of that Lordship in his dealings with himself, the family of man, and the natural world.

If we believe that this is truly the nature of the child we teach, the curriculum begins to take shape quickly and with a great deal of clarity. There are three relationships which must be developed: (1) the relationship of the child to his Lord, (2) the relationship of the child to the family of man, and (3) the relationship of the child to the natural world. It is imperative that relationships (2) and (3) remain subordinate to relationship (1). This means that the child's perspectives with respect to the family of man and the natural world are determined in their true dimension only if the child's relation to God has its roots in Biblical truth. Should this ordering be reversed, or if the three relationships are regarded as equal, the educational effort will yield no more than the secular, humanistic efforts of the contemporary educational movement, with a little religious "icing".

Therefore, while it is not the primary task of the school to evangelize the child, it must provide a curriculum which will sensitize him to God's active presence in all areas of life, and to the Scriptures as the primary source of knowledge and wisdom regarding God, man, and the natural world.

### **B. The relation of the child to God**

Essential to the development of the child are courses which will bring him to grips with questions regarding the nature of God, the nature of man, and the way in which God and man are related on both an individual and societal basis. Those courses best suited for this purpose are:

- (1) *Biblical History*, which deals with what God has done for His redeemed, the people of God, how God dealt with and can be expected to deal with mankind, and what God expects of them.
- (2) *History*, which deals with the way God has dealt with man in society.
- (3) *Literature*, which deals with man's thoughts about God, other men, and life-relationships.

If taught from a Biblically principled framework, each of these subjects will provide insight into God and his relationship to the child.

### **C. The relation of the child to the family of man**

This group of subjects must bring discipline to the child's relationship to his fellow man. How does he regard the family of man? How does he see himself in the family? How can he influence others with those principles of life which are dictated by God in the Scriptures? What are the elements necessary for effective communication? How can he discriminate between the mores of society and those dictated by the Bible? What are his responsibilities to men? Questions such as these can be dealt with through the following courses:

- (1) *English and Literature*, which provide insights into the method and content of communication.
- (2) *History*, which provides a record of how man related to his fellow man historically, and evaluates this record in the light of God's purposes.
- (3) *Arts and Music*, which provide a record of man's joys, sorrows, frustrations, and successes in dealing with life's problems and situations through God-given communications skills and creativity.
- (4) *Geography and Economics*, which deal with the way in which man uses his God-given resources for survival and for influencing the shape of history.
- (5) *Physical Education and Health*, which give the child an opportunity to evaluate his confidence and his fears, and an opportunity to recognize and accept himself as he is.
- (6) *Languages*, which provide him with the discipline to think, to speak, and to write in another idiom, which leads to more effective communication in the world at large.

### **D. The relation of the child to the natural world**

This third relationship must develop in the child a sense of man's place in creation and his role in caring for natural resources. It must also provide the child with a method of communication to better understand scientific relationships and processes. Courses which provide the framework for these disciplines are:

- (1) *Science*, which provides the child with insights into the created world, which will lead him to recognize God as designer, creator, and maintainer of the universe. The child will also be encouraged to see his role as God's agent in caring for those resources which are his by God's grace, and he will be taught to see the necessity of the redemptive process in this relationship.
- (2) *Mathematics*, which helps to define and understand relationships in the natural world, provides an alternate method of communication, and cuts across all curriculum boundaries. It also is effective as a tool for the redemption of the child's capacity to

think in a logical and orderly fashion, and thus increases his ability to communicate effectively.

#### **E. The teacher's beliefs and teaching methods**

These are fundamental to effective Christian Education. They cannot be separated, because the method comes from the teacher's heart. His understanding of the nature of the child, the curriculum, and himself dictate the broad principles of teaching which he will employ. In order that teachers do not determine their methods only in terms of their own security and comfort, it becomes extremely important that teachers who are employed by M.V.C.S. be wholeheartedly willing to adopt the following as their guiding principles, and be capable of applying them in the classroom:

- (1) The child is to be educated, not programmed. If the child of God is to be an effective communicator in his world, and effective in the Body of Christ, he must think, make decisions, implement those decisions, and be responsible for the outcomes. The teacher must provide an environment where the education needed to achieve these characteristics can take place.
- (2) The teacher must insist that the child submit to the Lordship of Christ in dealing with others, in executing his responsibilities, in attaining a level of excellence relative to his ability, and communicating with precision and clarity. This requires the exacting work of careful correction, patient re-teaching, and dogged pursuit of excellence in all necessary skills.
- (3) The child must be taught to develop sensitivity to other students, the broader community, and to life as he experiences it. The teacher must possess this sensitivity himself, and through compassionate, but firm, direction nurture the child, and make him aware of those around him. The teacher must encourage the child to act as God directs in His Word; that is, to love and have regard for all men, because they are God's creation, but especially to love those of the "household of faith".
- (4) In every respect, teaching must be redemptive, that is, corrective, with reason, mercy, and justice, and culminating in perceptible growth. To allow errors to go without correction for long periods of time violates the child's right to redemptive education. Problems must be dealt with quickly, constructively, justly and in a mature fashion.
- (5) Each child is unique, even though the subject matter is similar for all children. Therefore the methods must be tailored to make communication most effective. Each child requires stretching, and each child stretches differently.
- (6) The child must be encouraged to experiment and investigate, and he must be allowed to fail the experiment with dignity and respect for having experimented, always within the God-given parameters of life.
- (7) The teacher must provide the student with school experiences which enable him to be an organic part of the school and not just be in it. This can only be done by developing within the student Biblically based understanding of God, himself, others, and the earth. To be effective, the teacher must not only possess this understanding himself, but also be able to articulate it well.
- (8) The teacher must be ready to accept both inductive and deductive conclusions to problems.
- (9) The teacher must be able to articulate and implement his philosophy of the subject matter he teaches, and be able to defend it before the scrutiny of others.

### **3. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

WE CONFESS that parents, with their children, united in Christ for the special task of the school, together with the team of teachers and those who as members of the Christian School Association share with them a common profession of faith, constitute a Christian school

community that is not in subjection to state, institutional church, or any other human authority as regards its special task, but is subject to Christ who alone rules as King over all;

that the Administration under the authority of the Board of directors is expected to inform new families about the special task of Mount Vernon Christian School, and to educate them concerning its educational perspectives.

that while the school is entitled to expect freedom from interference in its special task, it is required to respect and uphold the authority of family, institutional church and state, and to encourage this respect in the child, according to the Word of God;

that the responsibility of parents for the nurture of their children including especially their responsibility for those aspects of the nurture that form the special task of the school, is to be fully recognized and safeguarded by the school at all times;

that without diminishing the responsibility or authority of parents, all members of the covenant community are bound by covenant oath to faithfully support, in every way possible, sound Christ-centered education for the youth of the covenant, not out of duty, but in thankful response to God's covenant-keeping work of salvation.

that the authority of the teacher, to which the student is subject within the school community, is to be upheld by the whole school community, is given for the effective nurture of the child within the limit of the special task of the school, and is to be used only for this purpose with the recognition that all authority is of God, to whom all who exercise authority must give account.

#### **4. CONFESSING CHRIST**

CONFESSING Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, who redeems and renews all our life; we pursue the educational task together, with confidence, hope, and humble reliance on God who, for Jesus' sake, sent His Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth, which is Christ, and with glad submission to God's Word as the guide for all our endeavors, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. AMEN!