Statement of Theological Imperatives
For Diversity

Prepared by

Pete C. Menjares, Chair
Ed Curtis
Matt Jenson
Joanne Jung
Doug Pennoyer
Benjamin Shin
And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Revelation 5:9-10
Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 3
FRAMING THE STATEMENT 3
STATEMENT OF CORE AFFIRMATIONS 5
THEOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES 7
MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD 8
OUR SIN 11
JESUS 13
THE HOLY SPIRIT 18
SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION 21
THE CHURCH 23
THE MISSION OF GOD 27
JUSTICE AND KINDNESS 31
THE ESCHATOLOGICAL VISION 33
STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS 35
Introduction

The following is a statement of theological imperatives for diversity developed to guide decision-making in practical terms at Biola University. The document is comprised of four parts: (1) Framing the Statement; (2) Statement of Core Affirmations, (3) Theological Imperatives; and (4) Community Expectations.

Rationale
The statement of theological imperatives for diversity has grown out of the need to ground the university’s stated commitment to diversity and subsequent programs and initiatives in a biblical framework that is distinct from a predominantly humanistic and secular approach characteristic of much of American higher education today. And though we can affirm many of the goals of diversity in the broader academy, as a Christ-centered institution it is imperative that our commitments more closely reflect the priorities of the kingdom of God, God’s plan of redemption, the love of God and neighbors, the unity of the church, and institutional mission. Further, a robust statement of theological imperatives is needed to challenge paradigms and the tendency to view any effort in diversity as primarily motivated by political correctness, postmodernism, cultural relativism, or accreditation.

Framing the Statement

Defining Who We Are
Throughout the process of developing the statement it was our intention to craft a document that affirms our core values and definition of who we are as a community. As a result, the statement is rooted in (1) our mission of biblically centered education, scholarship, and service, equipping men and women to impact the world for the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) our vision of being a community characterized by grace, personal life transformation, and global and cultural leadership and influence; (3) the values of truth, testimony, and transformation; and (4) our identity as a Protestant, theologically conservative, Christian liberal arts university that is interdenominational in composition. The statement is also rooted in our historic commitments to glorify God in each of our endeavors, evangelism and participation in the Great Commission, discipleship, equipping students to serve and minister in diverse settings, and being responsive to those in need.

University Plan
This statement of theological imperatives is also intertwined with the core principles outlined in the working draft of the University Planning Document, and specifically, with being intentional about fostering a community that loves the Lord and loves our neighbor by serving the world.

Statement Characteristics
A “narrative” versus a “prescriptive” format was employed in an attempt to draw the heart and mind of the reader to the Scriptural truths contained in the statement. It was also our intention to create a tone and adopt an approach that would invite the reader to reflect upon these truths, pray, and search the Scriptures further.
Another important feature of the statement is the pertinent commentary offered by each of the authors. The commentary is included in the body of the text and is distinguished by indentation and italics. Since we recognize the statement to serve as a “bridge” document to assist campus leaders in making decisions in practical terms, the commentary intends to amplify and illustrate the theological imperatives by making direct application to our community.

Also, numerous “community voices” (enclosed in text boxes) from students, staff, and faculty of Biola University appear throughout the document. These voices are intended to animate the text and to focus the reader on the reality that our community is comprised of women and men from all walks of life and individually made in the image of God.

Additionally, the task force recognized the need to craft a statement that was foundational yet broad enough to address any number of diversity issues impacting our community while at the same time not minimizing the significance and importance of singular issues such as biblical justice, racial reconciliation, or working toward a more equitable environment for women on our campus.

Therefore, the statement seeks to delineate those biblical principles that are central for Christians living, working, and relating to one another in a diverse community. As a result, we realize that no single document is able to adequately address the full range of diversity concerns let alone hope to offer recommendations capable of guiding each of the practical decisions needing to be made in response. Consequently, we have approached this task with humility as we recognize our own limitations as authors in this regard.

Further, the process of identifying the biblical principles articulated in the statement were the result of intense inductive study of relevant biblical texts identified in the course of discussing campus issues and current events, interactions with students, staff and faculty, and personal experiences and subject matter expertise. As a result, references to biblical commentaries and secondary sources do not appear in the statement. And finally, all Scripture references used in the statement are in the English Standard Version of the Bible.

Finally, in the process of completing the Statement of Theological Imperatives for Diversity document, several peer reviewers from a variety of departments and disciplines were involved in reading and making recommendations. As a result, extensive feedback was submitted regarding perspectives on topics relating to diversity, reconciliation, and justice in a theological context. Comments regarding style, format, and selection of topics were also submitted. We are grateful for those who provided critical feedback and who assisted in the preparation of the final document, Peer Feedback: Glen Kinoshita, Ivan Chung, Debbi Taylor, Phil Taylor, Ken Berding, Dennis Dirks, Murray Decker, Allen Yeh, Walt Russell; Administrative Assistance: Jackie Beatty, Holly Reyes, and Elizabeth A. Choi. In the end, most of the recommendations were appropriated in the final version of the paper. It is our belief that this document is intended to be a beginning, a theological reflection that is still very much in process. We believe that greater scope and understanding on how the Scriptures speak to our current society, and specifically to our institution, will be forthcoming as we continue to engage this process from all levels of the university.
Statement of Core Affirmations
Statement of Core Affirmations

"From first to last, in all we do, we are completely dependent upon the grace, gifts, and presence of God.
And so, to begin, we pray: Come, Holy Spirit."

As imitators of Christ…

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth of the image of God, uniquely and solely found in all of humanity, and that imparts the sacred and thus dignity, value and worth to all people.

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth that in sin, we turn to ourselves, blocking, denying or rejecting our relationship with God and others; we choose to follow our own way and are proud, exalting our own concerns over others’, and lazy, refusing to take responsibility for our lives and instead blaming others.

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, uniting enemies to himself and to one another at the cross; we, in turn, are called to follow Jesus by carrying out the ministry of reconciliation in announcing what God has done in Christ and loving sacrificially.

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth that the Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus, enabling us to confess him as Lord and that the Spirit gives to the Church a diversity of gifts, thereby building it up into a beautifully diverse people gathered around one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms our commitment to individual spiritual formation and corporate growth in Christ-likeness that deepens our love for God and others.

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth of the Missio Dei as God’s mission and God’s Son as the central part of God’s plan; therefore we seek to embody the Christological paradigm of mission, an incarnational lifestyle that enters a diverse society with humility and grace to offer his peace and cleansing to all who come to his Son for sustaining spiritual and emotional healing.

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the reconciliation work of the Body of Christ, the Church, as a visible work of God in and to the world.

We will model and champion a campus environment committed to practicing justice, to living according to kindness and to every biblical value that characterizes God and brings him delight, and who living according to hesed, and functioning as the New Covenant Hasidim, seeks to impact our world and move all of our members toward conformity to the image of Christ.

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth that God intends for his people to live together in unity in light of Revelation 5:9-10 and 7:9 that envisions a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation in worship and life together; a kingdom and priests where the power of the Spirit unifies and glorifies his Son forever.

We will model and champion a campus environment that incorporates intentional effort toward greater inclusion into the Biola community, that creates a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere of learning from one another, and that fosters an appreciation of all people on this campus so that each member of the community grows and our community as one moves toward our common goal of glorifying God and ministering to those around us.

We will model and champion a campus environment that celebrates achievements in diversity with humility while also acknowledging the reality of ongoing challenges and momentary setbacks leading to a renewed and heightened commitment to the theological imperatives that form the basis of our diverse community.

"In the end, though, our hope does not lie in our ability to perfectly reflect God’s kingdom. Our hope lies in the King of Kings. While our best efforts will, at times, fail the kingdom, while sin, death and the devil will continue to press in on us, we nevertheless pray with hope: Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus."
Theological Imperatives
Made in the Image of God

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth of the image of God, uniquely and solely found in all of humanity, and that imparts the sacred and thus dignity, value and worth to all people.

The theological imperatives for diversity are embedded in the truth of who God is. God is the triune One who makes us what we are. Though all created things and beings are dependent on God (Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 104), he took great pleasure in ordaining a unique relationship with human beings; our very being and meaningful existence are subsistent on God. Not only is mankind a creature (Romans 9:21), but also a created person (Galatians 6:7-8), who does not exist autonomously or independently of God. By virtue of the nature of the Creator, humanity is established as God’s representative in its distinct position and nature relative to the rest of creation and the Creator. Whereas God holds ownership, humankind is assigned stewardship, as Genesis 1-3 emphatically affirms man’s dignity and pre-eminence over the rest of creation. It is a stewardship based on dependence and surrender.

All humanity is uniquely created in the image of God, the *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:26-28; 5:1-3, 9:6). Being created in the *imago Dei* means that God has endowed every human being with the ability to relate to and reflect him, to represent his way of being, and ultimately to be responsible to God as Creator and Ruler. To be human is to bear the image of God.

*The Bible is clear that love is central to who God is. Not only is his perfect holy love essential to who he is, it is also the motivation for all he does (1 John 4:8-10). God cannot but act in a loving way. We as human beings will not always understand the depth and intensity of his love, but that does not detract from the truth that it is his dynamic and relational love that characterizes the person of God and the people of God. Humanity images God insofar as we love.*

The certainty of fellowship with God imparts the sacred on human life and is the basis for the unquestionable dignity of every human person. The likeness of God is found in all men (James 3:9), therefore, every human being is of value, worth, significance, and dignity, even as a fallen being. We are mirrors of God’s nature in some particulars; we have been given a Christian perspective on being human. We are made in the image of God.
Jesus is the *imago Dei* in all fullness (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; 2:9). God incarnate completely reveals the invisible God, the inner essence of God, to all humankind. As the Son of God is the exact representation of God (Hebrews 1:3), he is the only human being who lived out the existential aspects of this image in all its relationships and is the representative head of a new redeemed humanity. To speak of the image of God is to speak of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, human personhood is fully and finally realized. Those who are “in Christ” share his destiny and their lives are characterized by righteousness, faith, and love. Those who share in the relationship of being in Christ are a new creation (1 Corinthians 5:17), clothed with the “new self” (Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10), and are being conformed to his likeness (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10). As we walk in the Spirit, beholding his glory, we are transformed in increasing measure into the image of God who is Christ Jesus.

*But the knowledge of who we are in Christ and living these truths out is susceptible to external forces of media, harmful relationships, and our own internal busyness and lack of recall. When we forget who we are in Christ we suffer from insecurity, doubt, the need to control, loneliness, hopelessness, unworthiness, anger, confusion, counterfeit living, slander, gossip, and hate. It is difficult to be like Christ and to reflect him in the world if we lack the knowledge or have forgotten who we are in him.*

It is in the purpose and by the power of God that human beings have been made one with him and each other (John 17:11, 21-23). When experiencing the indwelling presence of God, the spiritual reality of Christ in us, Christians can express outward a true God-like spirituality. Just as Christ, the complete image of God, revealed the Father in a perfect way, the believer, though imperfect, is enabled by his Spirit to reveal certain attributes of God and to represent God on earth. The reality of being children of God in Christ is to give evidence to the transforming power of the gospel that transcends any distinction that seeks to alienate another.
God always does the initiating. This is evident in the faithful responses of his people to his benevolent kindnesses. Loved people can love people. Those who recognize how much they have been forgiven, find it easier to forgive. Those who have found their completeness in Christ can have a diminished need to exalt self by marginalizing others. It is a kingdom value for believers to know who they are in Christ both as individuals as well as a corporate body. The effects are to be wide in range and profound in depth.

The image of God can only be seen in humankind as a whole, inclusive of humanity’s uniqueness and grand diversity. This corporate dimension involves considering different individuals and groups from a spectrum of social, cultural, economic, gender, ability, and ethnic contributions.

In Christ we are the image of God and therefore long after what God pleases and desires. He practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness (Jeremiah 9:23-24) and delights when his people exercise the same.

Community Voice: I often feel trapped by the assumptions others make about me. What you see is not always what you get. I am a hidden minority, white-skinned and green-eyed, yet born and raised in Latin America. I am a woman, yet my interests and ways of approaching the world often reflect what our culture considers “masculine.” I am the mother of two young boys, and am passionate about them and my involvement in their lives. Yet parts of me are best expressed, not through mothering, but through my career. I often feel like I don’t fit the mold. But God created me, determined the circumstances of my upbringing, and shaped my personality and callings. I reflect him in all these things. I am made in the image of God. Liz H.
Our Sin

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth that in sin, we turn to ourselves, blocking, denying or rejecting our relationship with God and others; we choose to follow our own way and are proud, exalting our own concerns over others', and lazy, refusing to take responsibility for our lives and instead blaming others.

It belongs to the dignity of humanity that only we among all God’s creatures are capable of sin. As those who have been called to image God in the world, we can – and do – refuse to respond in obedience. Sin is, at its heart, a blocking, denial or rejection of our relationship with God and others. In the garden, Adam and Eve succumb to the temptation to “be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). Where God had given abundant freedom to eat from any other tree, Adam and Eve directly violate his one restriction in an attempt to be like him on their own terms. Not content in having been made in the image of God and called to represent his reign on earth, they seek to assert themselves and establish their own reign.

Nothing is better than doing things for ourselves and by ourselves – or at least, so we think. Such radical autonomy is a constant temptation in contemporary American society and in southern California, and it is a temptation to sin. One of the more significant gifts international students, staff and faculty at Biola offer the larger community is the ability to see such individualism and over-independence for what it is – the sin of idolatry.

In refusing obedience, we choose to follow our own way, which ends in frustration. Thinking to achieve autonomy in our sin, hoping to escape the cumbersome calling of representing another, we descend instead into slavery. Sin is self-contradiction, a futile and hapless attempt to live as something – anything else than we are.

Soon after this first sin, “they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8). Sin leads to hiding, first from God and then later from others. The shifting of blame that takes place when the Lord exiles Adam and Eve from Eden is a case in point of our tendency to hide and, we hope, justify ourselves behind excuses.

Community Voice: I was born in the Midwest United States to parents who were Cantonese immigrant graduate students. In elementary school, I was one of only 5 non-whites in my entire K-8 school. I was made fun of constantly by my peers because of my Chinese ethnicity. I wanted very badly to relate to the majority culture, and for an entire stage of life, I despised my Asian upbringing, though now I love and think deeply about it more than ever. I am made in the image of God. Ivan C.

In sin, we turn in on ourselves, isolating ourselves as much as possible from relationship with God and others. The most familiar form of this turn to self is pride. In direct mockery
of Christ’s humility, we consider ourselves better than others (cp. Philippians 2:5-11). We do things for our own sakes, on our own terms, in our own good time, with our own ends in mind.

Any time our first inclination is toward self-defense, self-maintenance or self-establishment, we are guilty of pride. Rights language, at times, is merely an acceptable form of the infant’s insistent cry: ‘Mine!’ A black Evangelical Christian leader once said that he didn’t believe black Christians should fight for their own rights, but that he did believe white Christians should fight on their behalf. My business, as one who follows Jesus, is to place your concerns at the top of the list of my concerns. When we are proud, we presume.

At other times, our turning towards ourselves is sloth, a refusal to take responsibility for ourselves. It is to not take seriously Paul’s exhortation: “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

The passivity of sloth is akin to pride in that it similarly insists on getting its way; but instead of an over-assertion of self, sloth involves a refusal to budge. Where pride swells to fill a room, running roughshod over others in the process, sloth shrinks into a corner. This may be an even more dangerous sin than pride when it comes to issues of diversity. When we blame others for our problems, we are slothful. When we turn past brokenness into future destiny, we are slothful. Brokenness, as one pastor puts it, has its privileges. The Latina who suggests that her inability to make it through college is due to being dealt a “bad hand” and being treated unfairly is guilty of sloth, as is the white woman who insists that she isn’t the problem and wonders why ‘they’ can’t get over what’s bothering them. When we are slothful, we despair.

There is good news, however. God’s first response to sin – in Eden and ever since – is to take the initiative in seeking out his people. “But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:9). Happily, God does not leave us alone. The first words following Adam and Eve’s desertion reflect God’s commitment to seek out fellowship with his people. So began a long, often sad, but finally jubilant history of God’s seeking and finding his people – a history that runs through Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, through the exodus, establishment, exile and return of Israel, and finally to Jesus, the one in whom we are found. Even today, the Father daily works to draw us sinners out of ourselves by the power of his Spirit into new life in Christ with the diverse family of God. And so, even though we are sinful, we hope.

Community Voice: I grew up as a foster youth in San Francisco because my biological parents were abusive and addicted to drugs. Eventually, I was taken in by my aunt and uncle, yet I still struggled to find my place. People stereotyped me as a typical inner-city youth. I can never deny my past. I am made in the image of God.

LaShunte R.
Jesus

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, uniting enemies to himself and to one another at the cross; we, in turn, are called to follow Jesus by carrying out the ministry of reconciliation in announcing what God has done in Christ and loving sacrificially.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14)

That the Word would become anything – that the one who “was with God” and “was God” (John 1:1) would take to himself a form of existence other than his own – scandalized all who heard of it. It was foolish to speak of God becoming a man. What’s more, if God were to become a man, he would never have become this kind of man, one whose end was in humiliation and death.

In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). That it took God to accomplish this work speaks to the depths to which humanity had fallen, to the war-torn character of our relation to God and one another. That God chose to accomplish this work through the incarnation of Jesus speaks of the depth of his commitment to his creation. Rather than abandon the project and start over, the Father vindicated his creation by sending his Son to fulfill humanity’s vocation as priests of creation and Israel’s call to walk in the way of the righteous.

In his baptism, Jesus identified with sinful Israel and sinful humanity (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22; also see John 1:32). At that point, the Father spoke of his pleasure in his Son and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus. Immediately after, the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness for a time of testing in which Jesus responded faithfully in the face of temptation.

When the Word took on flesh, he assumed the entire human predicament (yet without sin) as his own. This culminated at the cross, as Jesus suffered in our place. He “died for us” (Romans 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:10), more specifically “for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 John 2:2; also see Isaiah 53), taking our sin and its effects as his own.

Who is this “us”? In short, all who trust in Jesus to reconcile them to the Father and to one another. For as long as people have followed Jesus, the answers to this question have been contentious. Many of Jesus’ first disciples hesitated to see Gentiles as an appropriate part of “us”. We are more sophisticated in our exclusions, but to this day we continue to suspect that certain people are not the kind of people who belong to “us”.

At Biola, the “us” refers to a community of people who are committed “to impact the world for the Lord Jesus Christ.” We have distinctive characteristics. Some are negotiable; others are not. Navigating this line between negotiability and non-negotiability is a vital one, however. When faced with difference, institutions often shift too many items from being negotiable to being non-negotiable. A biblical and theological commitment to intentional diversity requires vigilant attention to the way
we understand and communicate what it means to be “one of us” at Biola University. In times of confusion, it is best to return to the simple answer that the “us” is first and foremost a reference to those who trust in Jesus to reconcile them to the Father and one another through the Spirit.

We noted above, Jesus assumed the entire human predicament, but it’s important to note that he assumed a particular, concrete human predicament. He came, as the Gospels are eager to point out, at a particular time, in a particular place. He was a Palestinian Jew in the first century. If he is “the desire of the nations,” (Haggai 2:7) it is only as the fulfillment of Israel’s hopes. In the old covenant, Israel was the locus of God’s blessing and life. In the new covenant, God blesses and gives life to those who are in Christ.

Nor is this an unusual way for God to work. Consider the example of Abraham. When the Lord first called Abram to leave his homeland and his father’s house, he promised to “make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3). The logic of blessing is always oriented toward blessing others. Simply put: God never blesses his people only for their sake, but always also for the sake of others. Blessing carries not just the privilege of status, but also the burden of responsibility.

God begins with particular individuals, but always with an eye to the ever-increasing expansion of his blessing. He blessed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he blessed Israel, he blessed Jesus and those whose lives are in Christ, “blessed...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3) in order that others might be drawn into this blessed life of God and his people.

The basic orientation of the Christian life, then, is toward self-giving love. Conversations about intentional diversity must begin, continue and end with all parties committed to loving their neighbors as themselves. Discerning the shape of sacrificial love is difficult and may at times be even counter-intuitive. But that this is at the heart of the life of God’s people should go without saying.

Community Voice: By the age of ten, I had lost my mother and father to substance abuse. I have lived in 26 different homes before my freshman year in college. I have suffered abuse and abandonment and left without hope. Since becoming a Christian in my sophomore year of high school, I have been on a quest to know Jesus more as my savior and God as my Father. I am made in the image of God. Terrell C.

Since the earliest days of the church in Acts (2:38, 5:31, 10:43, 13:38, 26:18), forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name has been proclaimed as the heart of the gospel to all people. The good news of the kingdom is the announcement that all who come to Jesus the King are released from their captivity in the kingdom of darkness. They are forgiven and become part of the family of God.

Statement of Theological Imperatives for Diversity
It is certain that when God’s people come together in a diverse community that offenses will occur and the need to practice forgiveness is called for. One of Jesus’ harder words about forgiveness comes in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35). Having told Peter that one must forgive another seventy times seven times, Jesus goes on to describe a man released from an impossibly large debt by a merciful master who then turns around and refuses mercy for a small debt owed him by a fellow servant. The angry master then sends the servant to prison, and Jesus concludes: “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

There is an uncomfortably close relationship here between God’s forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of one another. It is certainly worth asking whether I can truly know God’s forgiveness if I do not forgive my brother or sister. Surely, at the very least, forgiveness of others is evidence that one has experienced forgiveness from God.

Three small points about forgiveness are worth making. First, it begins with a choice. I can choose to forgive you, choose to pray for you. Second, this choice leads rather than serves our emotional states. I can forgive, but I may not feel very warmly toward you. I may be very angry, in fact. And so, I may need to forgive you again – which suggests that, third, forgiveness is a process. It is naive and pastorally wayward to expect deep wounds to be healed in the instant I first say, “I forgive you.” But this does not render such a statement meaningless. When I tell you I forgive you, I do something with my words, and I do something in hope that God will provide for me in the areas of pain and fear that continue to plague me. I continue to trust God and avail myself of his resources as I engage in the process of forgiving you.

Community Voice: My past includes being strongly involved in gangs for the majority of my high-school years. I would deal with tough circumstances like getting into fights and dealing with being constantly followed. He [Jesus] has given me a new identity and I have never felt so secure of myself and so loved by Him. God continues to shape my identity in Him by granting Him the willingness in my life to form me as a true man of God. The experiences that I went through were tough and unbearable, but I am made in the image of God.

Christian A.

Jesus is the beginning and end of creation. “All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17). Christ is the agent of creation, the one in whom creation coheres and the goal or reason for creation.

That in Christ “all things hold together” is true in creation as well as redemption. It is not enough, then, to appeal to a principle of creation (“the brotherhood of man”) or redemption (“the fellowship of believers”) as the ground of unity among people without specifying that both find their meaning in the context of Christ, the one in whom all things hold together.
Jesus is the beginning and end of redemption. He is “the firstborn from the dead,” the one through whom God reconciled the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). It is in and through his life, death and resurrection that the Father accomplishes his reconciling work of us to himself and to one another.

*That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ does not invite Christian passivity. While it is true that Christ has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles “in one body to God through the cross” (Ephesians 2:16), it is likewise true that followers of Jesus have been entrusted with the message and ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). While Christ’s work has accomplished that reconciliation, it remains to be applied to men and women in the power of the Spirit through the preaching and living out of the gospel. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20)*.

The risen Jesus is Lord of all (Philippians 2:11). After Jesus gave himself up to death, the Father vindicated his Son by raising him from the dead in the power of his Spirit (Romans 8:11). He is the one before whom all must bow, the one whose name is above every name (Philippians 2:9). The ascended Jesus is “the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18). Though as the eternal Son Jesus was himself always and ever glorious, Paul still sees fit to proclaim his lordship as the fitting end, the crown of the humiliation of the incarnation. In a perfect, blessed undoing of Adam’s sin, Jesus, “though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

Jesus is the second, or last Adam (see 1 Corinthians 15, Romans 5). Where the first Adam made a shamble of things, Jesus re-directed humanity, living the perfect human life before God in the world. Where the first Adam, and all of us in his train, failed to image God in the world, offering only a distorted and distorting picture of God, the last Adam showed us the Father (John 14:8-11). It is he who has “exegeted the Father” (John 1:18), he who is himself ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Colossians 1:15).

The first Adam, though he was not in the form of God, thought it right and good to grasp at divinity, to seek to be like God (see Genesis 3:5). Jesus, the last Adam, refused to horde equality with God, instead making “himself nothing, taking the form of a servant.” His way is cruciform, and so is the way of his followers.

*Paul introduces this famous passage in Philippians 2 with an exhortation: “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...” (Vv. 3-5) The mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), then, is one in which others’ interests – their concerns, values and flourishing – are exalted above our own. What if the greatest advocates for*
women were men? What if able-bodied individuals brought the needs of disabled individuals before building and curriculum committees? What if Korean-Americans spoke out on behalf of African-Americans? For one, this might free (to take our first example) women to advocate for men rather than have to fight for themselves. At times marginalized communities feel compelled to secure themselves, precisely because their brothers and sisters in Christ are not “counting others more significant than” themselves.

Not that the ascending Jesus left us alone. He promised that he would not leave us as orphans, but would come to us (John 14:18); and we wait for the day when he will come in glory to judge the living and the dead. Only in that day, in the new heavens and the new earth, will we live fully reconciled to one another.

In the meantime, the Father and Son have given us their Spirit (himself one way in which Jesus fulfills his promise to come), the Spirit who leads and guides us into all truth (John 16:13) and applies in and among us what was accomplished in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. And even as he reigns as king, Jesus serves as priest, living to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). In short: we are not alone in seeking to live faithfully in Christian community.

Community Voice: I was raised in Delhi, India from when I was 4 till I graduated from high school. Through local, home, and international schools, I was blessed in having a diverse group of friends who took pleasure in who I was: an American Chinese boy, with a cleft lip and palate who followed a man called Jesus. I will never be fully accepted by any of the cultures that make up who I am, as being “one of them,” but I take comfort in the fact that the Most High God crafted me in just the way He wanted. I am loved. I am made in the image of God.

Nathan Y.
The Holy Spirit

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth that the Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus, enabling us to confess him as Lord and that the Spirit gives to the Church a diversity of gifts, thereby building it up into a beautifully diverse people gathered around one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Jesus’ words to the disciples in John 14-16 are set in the context of continuing God’s redemptive work when Jesus is no longer present on earth. He sends the Holy Spirit to help equip the disciples to do what is needed to continue this new phase of God’s redemptive mission.

Near the end of his life, Jesus uttered these striking words: “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you” (John 16:7). This Helper is the “Spirit of truth” who will glorify Jesus by guiding his people into all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit testifies as to whom Jesus/God really is, showing others what God is like (Colossians 3; Ephesians 4—the communicable attributes), and loving others.

It is a small, but significant, point that the Spirit is described as a guide here. This suggests that followers of Jesus need someone who knows the terrain to lead them to the place where truth is found. It also suggests a process of guidance. These are comforting words for a university seeking the truth about living as an intentionally diverse community. Jesus’ promise is that the Spirit will guide us, and he encourages us to cultivate the patience required for the journey.

The disciples were to wait in Jerusalem until Jesus sent the Spirit and they were “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). They waited, and the Spirit came in awesome power at the feast of Pentecost. But to understand Pentecost, we have to look back.

In a time when all humanity still spoke one language, a group of people spoke with one voice: “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). The Lord, being aware of the power of a unified people (“this is only the beginning of what they will do...” – Genesis 11:5), confused their language and scattered them.

A cursory reading of the tower of Babel might suggest that diverse languages (and, we might imply, cultures) are only ever to be regretted. They reflect God’s punishment of sinful humanity and are, at best, only useful to check human arrogance. To do this, however, is to read the passage in isolation from the canon of Scripture. The Lord’s confusion of the people at Babel stayed their God-denying project of self-exaltation. Like the exile from Eden, the multiplying of languages and scattering of the people protected those at Babel from going from bad to worse.

Later, Joel prophesies concerning the last days:

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and your young men shall see visions.  
Even on the male and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.”

God “will show wonders” in those days, and “it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls” (Joel 2:28-32).

At Pentecost, Joel’s prophecy about the Spirit being poured out on all flesh is fulfilled and Babel is undone. Jerusalem was packed with Jews who had gathered for the feast (notice the re-gathering of those scattered at Babel), and a group of Jewish followers of Jesus “were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). A piercing noise draws the attention of those Jews gathered for the festival “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5), and they stand amazed and perplexed to hear these Galilean followers of Jesus speaking in the language of every nation represented. In the midst of their confusion, Peter explains that this is what Joel was talking about. The Spirit has filled these followers of Jesus, so that “we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God” (Acts 2:11).

What Pentecost represents – and in this it marks the beginning of the mission of the Church – is the unity of the gospel (“one Lord, one faith, one baptism” – Ephesians 4:5) communicated in a diversity of languages, all in the power of the Holy Spirit. Note, too, that the unity of proclamation does not require – we might even say, does not allow for – a unified language.

*Neither unity nor diversity is good or bad in themselves. There is a certain unity of spirit that can serve evil ends, just as there is a diversity of spirit that merely proves the failure of a community to live in harmony. The Scriptures invite us to live out a distinctively Christian unity-in-diversity focused on Jesus, in obedience to the Father, empowered by the Spirit. This unity is neither uniformity nor unanimity, but a unity of the Spirit in which each of us gives himself away to others and the world in the name of Jesus. This diversity is neither political correctness nor relativism, but a Spirit-directed, Spirit-filled flourishing of the many – as many – as they are united to the one Lord.*

Acts 2 finds its further fulfillment, much to his surprise, in Peter’s proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles in Acts 10. There, Peter begins by noting, “God shows no partiality” (v. 34). God had anointed Jesus “with the Holy Spirit and with power,” and even as Peter announces this to the Gentiles “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (vv. 38, 44). And, how does Peter respond? “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (v. 47)

The Spirit is the one who enables us to confess Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Spirit unites us to Christ (hence Peter’s insistence that baptism, or identification with
Christ, accompany reception of the Spirit). The Spirit applies the work of Christ to believers in this union, making us participants in Jesus’ death and resurrection (Colossians 3:1-4; Ephesians 2:5-6). By the power of the Spirit we are made sons and daughters of God in Christ, and we know this by the witness of the Spirit, who enables us to cry, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:6-7; Romans 8:15-17)

As it was in the power of the Spirit that Jesus lived faithfully before the Father, performed great works of healing, exorcised demons, preached the gospel of the kingdom, suffered and died and, on the third day, was raised to new life, so it is in the power of the Spirit that we live faithfully as God’s people and do the work we have been called to do. By the Spirit we are raised to new life with Christ and empowered to put to death the deeds of the flesh (Romans 8:11-13). It is the Spirit, after all, who “gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6) and renews us (Titus 3:5).

The Spirit gives to the church its diversity of gifts. Paul offers a beautiful description of the unity-in-diversity created by the Father, Son and Spirit: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good…. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11-13).

Christian unity, then, is both gift and task. It is gift, in that we are “made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13) such that “God’s Spirit dwells in you” (1 Corinthians 3:16). It is the Spirit who is building us into a dwelling place for God in Christ (Ephesians 2:22). We would be wrong to ignore the unity that God gives. In fact, we would be arrogant, even foolhardy, to presume unity is only a task and not also God’s gift, as it is just not something we can do in our own strength. But that it is our task is just as evident. We cannot simply assume our unity will work itself out in our lives; too much division and dissension exists to warrant that assumption. No, unity is what we are commanded to seek; and we have every reason to assume we will continue to need to seek it until the Last Day. But it is a unity worth seeking, one in which God is glorified, the Church flourishes, and the world sees God reflected in the face of his people. After all, it is our love by which the world will know we are Christians.

Community Voice: I was raised in a church setting that did not embrace the power of the Holy Spirit. Through my Bible classes and personal reading I came to learn that I am equipped and enabled to do much through the Holy Spirit. It has been a journey for me to understand the way in which the Holy Spirit works in me and through me. I am learning to be more sensitive to how the Holy Spirit is leading me in times of seeking, prayer, ministry and fellowship. I am made in the image of God. Liz C.
Spiritual Transformation

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms our commitment to individual spiritual formation and corporate growth in Christ-likeness that deepens our love for God and others.

God desires to mature his people; it is a major part of God’s redemptive plan (Philippians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7). It is a divine-human process that involves both dwelling in the power of his Spirit in our inner being and the gradual formation of Christ-like character and behavior (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:22-24; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 2:5-11). This is a process of becoming in our character and actions the new creations we already are in Christ (Romans 12:2; Philippians 2-3; 1 John 2:28; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Through our union with him, Jesus infuses us, fills us, and shows through us (Galatians 2:20), so that his life, the perfect image of God, also may be manifested in our body (2 Corinthians 4:10).

The God-given, lifelong process by which a believer engages in this renewing work with God in the growth that manifests the image of God is spiritual transformation.

All the persons of the Trinity are involved in the believer's spiritual transformation. It is God’s design that the believer be conformed to Christ by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. It is primarily God’s work, yet it is a task that involves our own effort. The implications of this work in us are furthered by the fact that one is enabled to do this in community, critical in God’s plan. God knows that to be truly human, one needs to be in community. By this he purposes to impact those in the world who have no idea what an intimate, dependent relationship with the triune God looks like.

This process of transformation is grounded in one’s relationship to the Trinity and occurs in the heart, where mind, emotion, and will are found. Scripture describes the heart as swollen with pride and prone to deceit. One of the strongest statements on the deceitfulness of the human heart is that of Jeremiah (17:9), "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" It is crooked like a twisting road and "incurable." Humans are desperately ill because they have a heart that lies, not only to God and others, but even to self. The most frequent way the Bible expresses the unresponsiveness of the heart is to call it a hard heart or a heart of stone. But this does not describe the heart of a Christ-follower.

The kind of heart God desires is quite the opposite: a heart of truth and integrity, one that is faithful, gentle, and humble (Matthew 11:29). It is a heart like Jesus’. When God transforms a person, he gives her a new heart (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:16), one that would know and fear him (Jeremiah 24:7; 32:40), one where his law or instruction is written (Jeremiah 31:33). Transformation is not just change, it is a radical change. The believer is called a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), and is said to have put on a new self (Colossians 3:10). The newness of the believer’s heart means that the deepest desire of the heart has been made new. Though the remnants of the turning inward remains, a new heart with a new love for God becomes the dominant love at the core of the heart.

Statement of Theological Imperatives for Diversity
God’s heart for how people are to relate to him and to each other is revealed in the vertical and horizontal relationship aspects of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:1-21). His design is for unity, transparency, and commitment in and among his people. Throughout the writings of the Prophets, the consequence of God’s people walking away from him was idolatry and the result of the fractured relationship between members of humanity was injustice.

Having gained a new value system through biblical instruction or teaching, Christ-followers become reoriented toward a lifestyle of righteousness (1 Timothy 1:5). Not only does this reorientation cause Christians to refrain from certain attitudes (bitterness, racial prejudice) and practices (stealing, cursing), but now they are compelled to obey the biblical mandates to “do justice,” “love kindness,” and “walk humbly” (Micah 6:6-8). Expressed in theological, ethical, and social dimensions, the enjoyed friendship of God now becomes a friendship to be extended to all, a fellowship intended to enrich the lives of others.

In any given day, we are presented with countless opportunities to authenticate our new creation self. It is no surprise that God uses these opportunities to foster growth in humility. Often this involves forgiveness, sought and given, for attitudes and practices that have intentionally or unintentionally contributed to discrimination, alienation, or indifference due to ability, gender, culture, ethnicity, and social class standing, or in any way that we may not be like another.

Community Voice: From my roots in the parsonage began my own journey of faith that has taken me through spiritual seasons—valleys and mountaintops—and have shaped my pilgrimage with the Lord. Among these were seasons of finding my identity and discerning God’s call to ministry as a teenager in a Catholic high school; of discovering that all of truth belongs to God as my intellectual curiosity grew in a Christian liberal arts college; of immersing myself as a follower of Christ into the world of a research university for my graduate studies; of entering the life of the poor while living among the world’s marginalized during a year researching educational systems in Bangladesh; of becoming one with my wife and the early years of marriage; of trying to raise children in a way that is nurturing and Christ honoring; and of living vocationally among the breadth of the Christian leaders whom I have come to know and befriend while serving in Christian higher education on both the East and the West Coasts. These have been wonderful and formative seasons during which my faith has matured. The odyssey for each of us has been uniquely designed by a loving and intimate God. I am made in the image of God. Barry C.
The Church

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the reconciliation work of the Body of Christ, the Church, as a visible work of God in and to the world.

To be a Christian is to be “in Christ,” that is, to be baptized into one body, sharing the life of Christ with all believers as the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). Scripture uses a wide range of metaphors to describe the dynamic nature of the church, our relationship in Christ and in his family. Images for the church include branches on a vine (John 15:5), an olive tree (Romans 11:17-24), a field of crops (1 Corinthians 3:6-9), a building (1 Corinthians 3:9), and a harvest (Matthew 13:1-30; John 4:35). The church is also viewed as a new temple built with Christian men and women who are “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5), “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). We are also viewed as God’s house (Hebrews 3:6) with Jesus Christ as the builder of the house (Hebrews 3:30).

Four images are particularly important as we consider the biblical and theological basis for diversity. In the first image, we learn that the church is the people of God. Peter writes “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10). Here we see that just as God chose Israel to display his character and purposes, so he is now working in and through his church that is composed of both Jews and Gentiles to proclaim his excellencies in the world.

The church at Antioch of Acts 11 is the first time the church goes multi-ethnic, when Gentiles are included. This is also the first time that the believers are called “Christians.” To be Christian is to have a vision for multi-ethnicity. On a personal level, Christians today ought to be firm believers in multi-ethnicity because if it were not for God going to the nations, we would not be saved, since almost all of us are Gentiles. That the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God presented immense difficulty to Jews of the first century suggests God’s characteristic way of making room for the unexpected. So we should not be surprised if life in the people of God involves a similar – and similarly difficult – making room for those with whom we have little in common. And yet Jewish and Gentile believers were not simply and utterly different. After all, they were believers. They were one people worshiping the Father in the name of his Son and in the power of their Spirit.

Secondly, the New Testament refers to the church as the family of God. In his model prayer, Jesus invites his disciples to call God “our Father” (Matthew 6:9). Paul follows suit: God is our heavenly Father (Ephesians 3:14) and we are his sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18). That makes us brothers and sisters in God’s family. Paul tells Timothy that church members are to act as members of a larger family (1 Timothy 5:1-2).
It would be easy to miss the call to discipleship enfolded in this image of the church as God’s family. In his insistence that “whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother,” (Mark 3:35) Jesus shuffles expectations and priorities, calling his disciples to identify primarily with one another rather than with their natural families. Not that Jesus undoes the commandment to honor father and mother, but his difficult words challenge our tendency to flock to those who are like us.

Community Voice: I was born and raised in Hong Kong to Indian parents who didn’t grow up in India. Most of my friends were Chinese, and I always wished I could be like them so that I would feel fully accepted; sometimes, I even believed I did. I came to the United States thinking I would fit right into the melting pot, only to feel as foreign as ever. I have gradually, and sometimes painfully, come to understand that my differences make me uniquely beautiful as I try to embrace every part of the rich cultural identity that God has given me. I am made in the image of God. Avina K.

Using a different family metaphor, Paul calls the church the bride of Christ. The relationship between a husband and wife “refers to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32), who are now in a time of engagement (2 Corinthians 11:2). Paul is looking forward eschatologically to the time, at Christ’s return, when the church will be presented to him as his beautiful bride.

In our biological families, we are not given an opportunity to choose who is or is not a part of the family. Similarly, we don’t have any say as to who is or is not a part of God’s family. It is God’s prerogative; it is purely his choice. And just as it is an indication of maturity when family members grow in love toward one another, so it is in the family of God. It all begins with our incorporation into Christ. Because of Christ, full access is given for believers to share in the body; the boundaries of ability or disability, ethnicity, social class, and gender are not qualifications for inclusion and at the same time are not grounds for exclusion (Galatians 3:28).

Perhaps the most familiar metaphor is the church as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27), where the entire human body is taken as a metaphor for the church. In this passage, Christ is not viewed as the head joined to the body; the individual members are themselves the individual parts of the head. Christ is in this metaphor the Lord who is “outside” of that body that represents the church and is the one whom the church serves and worships.

Paul is quick to emphasize the variegated character of this body. There are different parts, some more “presentable” than others. But God surprises us by, “giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be not division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:24-26).
Paul uses this body metaphor differently elsewhere (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Colossians 2:19). He says that Christ is the head and the church is like the rest of the body as distinguished from the head. With Christ as our head, the properly functioning body grows together and is built up in love. Our Christian life cannot properly exist apart from that body. There is no such thing as a Christian in isolation. And so, living as a Christian is not a matter of individual personal development; it is growing in the body together with the other members of it.

Each metaphor in its individual and collective sense can help us appreciate more the privilege God has given by incorporating us into the church. The church is like a family whose love and fellowship with one another increases. Biola is not a church, but as a Christian academic institution we are a unique expression of the church, and the same sense of the organic unity of the body of Christ remains. After all, the understanding of a church moves beyond the four walls of a building; it is the people of God. Our increasing dependence on one another, as every member contributes through the ministries or gifts exercised within the body, fuels our appreciation for the diversity of individuals. In the process, we grow together. This growth is evident when we find ourselves hurting with others in their pain, and when we find ourselves celebrating when another rejoices. This is more than just our “working together,” it is an intimate relationship in the body of Christ that is foundational to our faith identity.

As Paul addressed his audience he knew the groups of people who were typically opposed to each other: Greeks, Jews, slave, or free. He also knew that the unity of these opposing groups was indicative of the new humanity, a people reconciled to God and to each other. Normally people are separated as seen in divisions, strife, and tension, but in Christ they become one. Differences are not irrelevant. In fact they are highlighted in this glorious mystery where human differences are transcended by an intimate relationship with God and with each other (Ephesians 3:4-6).

This was not an easy task for the people of God in the first century. It is not an easy task for the people of God in the 21st century. It is not a human propensity to yield, to not insist on our rights, and to be humble. In fact, our discomfort can be an indication of its importance and need. But that is what will be our witness; the witness and will of the Holy Spirit, of Christ imaged in the mystical body of the church; a church composed of diverse people from every ethnicity, ability, age, gender, and social class standing.

As the Biola community evidences a strong contrast to social or ethnic uniformity (which is often the charge made of religious institutions) by having a diversity that works together with unity, others will be amazed and astonished by the saving power and unifying grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This witness of “unity in diversity” gives credibility to the “good news” of the universality of the gospel in that God desires to save the whole world (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9) through his Son, Jesus Christ. So the diversified Christian university becomes a testimony of God’s work to save people from every background and walk of life (Romans 12:4, 5; Ephesians 4:4, 12, 16; 5:30; Colossians 1:24; 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5; Colossians 3:11). This diversity gives not only a “glimpse” of heaven but also demonstrates a witness of
hope to all who have trusted Jesus as Savior and Lord from all over the globe. This partnership also will demonstrate a picture of unity and love that Jesus taught in His ministry as a testimony and witness to the world (John 13:34-35; 17:20-24). May this earthly picture serve as an encouragement to many as we look forward to the masses of believers who together will be worshiping and praising the Lord in heaven.

Community Voice: I was born a princess into a royal line of a tribe in SE Asia but my parents are pastors and raised all their children with the desire to love God and people, and work to win the unsaved for Christ. This is very difficult on my island because extremist groups of the dominant religion rally against Christians and destroy churches and Christian businesses, and even harm or kill churchgoers. My father was taken and tortured; my sister and her husband were nearly killed in a wave of anti-Christian violence; a nephew was kidnapped and sent to a terrorist training camp but I was able to rescue him with God’s help. It is hard for me to return for my passport is marked and on trips to my country, I have been detained, imprisoned and asked to deny Christ—but still I have returned and was recently ordained by my denomination. I enjoy closeness of the international and American students at Biola. God has called me to ministry and is encouraging to see all these students preparing to go to countries like mine and win people for Christ. I am made in the image of God. Kate L.
The Mission of God

We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth of the Missio Dei as God’s mission and God’s Son as the central part of God’s plan; therefore we seek to embody the Christological paradigm of mission, an incarnational lifestyle that enters a diverse society with humility and grace to offer his peace and cleansing to all who come to his Son for sustaining spiritual and emotional healing.

We are made in the image of God (imago Dei) to carry out the mission of God (missio Dei). Missio Dei is God’s mission and the Messiah, the Christ, is God’s Son who is presented as the central part of God’s plan in the Old and New Testaments to carry out the mission. Christ was anointed by God the Father and sent to earth to preach the good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recover sight for the blind, release the oppressed, and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18,19). The mission of God, bringing Christ’s redemptive work to a world filled with sin and pain, takes place among all people regardless of skin color, ethnic roots, cultural values, language, gender, ability/disability, and social class standing.

Community Voice: I fully gave my life to the Lord when I was sixteen after a series of traumatic family and personal experiences. While in high school God sent me on a trip to South Africa to teach about God and AIDS in primary and junior high schools. As I shared in the schools about how God can use a broken person like me, eight little girls gave their lives to Jesus. After graduation I served in Japan with YWAM, and then went to the Middle East and joined a team that ministered in Syria, Turkey, and Jordan. At a Jordanian university while sharing the gospel in broken Arabic through a bilingual Bible with students, God spoke to me about my need of missions training. So I came to Biola to double major in Intercultural Studies and Biblical Studies. A semester’s trip back to Japan has convinced me that I should return there and get involved in church planting. I am made in the image of God. Michele B.

Around the globe, in rural towns or in great bustling cities, ethnicity often forms lines of distinction that creates walls of separation. Where a powerful cultural group dominates a particular people, the deculturalization of that people group can occur, including the loss of the aboriginal language and a stripping away of the unique features that once formed their tight boundary and identity. The result of such subjugation is years, and even centuries of pain, hatred, and resentment that requires repentance and reconciliation to restore a relationship between such groups. The mission of God and the kingdom of God move forward in a world of such turmoil offering peace and soul cleansing to those who accept the redemptive sacrifice of the One who provides the opportunity for sustaining spiritual and emotional healing. The mission of God has its origin in the heart of God and was planned before a loving Creator crafted the worlds and before races, languages, cultures, and power separated people.

Genesis moves rapidly from creation to the Fall, with the earliest statement about the Messiah given in 3:15, to the great diversity divide of Babel, and on to the listing of ethno-
linguistic groups, followed by the covenant promises to Abraham (Genesis 1-12). The promised blessings were pronounced so that “all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2-3). Israel was designed by God to be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6) on the pathway to a redeemed relationship with him. The Messiah is central to the mission of God and Christological images are evidenced throughout the Old Testament. Thus, when the Messiah comes and fulfills his earthly part in God’s plan the shadows of the Old Testament system give way to the mediator of the new covenant and the new High Priest makes a single sacrifice of himself, once and for all, “to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (Hebrews 9:28).

To fully understand the scope of the missio Dei in relationship to human diversity, it is necessary to begin with the ending of the biblical record. In Revelation 5:9 and 15:4, the near completion of the mission and that great gathering of the redeemed made up of people “...from every tribe and language and nation” is revealed, where “All nations will come and worship you.” This truth echoes the Abrahamic promise, “...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3), a concept reiterated in the New Testament by Peter (Acts 3:25) and Paul (Galatians 3:8).

It is amazing to envision the actual nature of the multitude standing before the throne of God in Revelation, especially given the vast numbers of people groups who have received the gospel of Jesus Christ over the centuries. Additionally, it is awe inspiring to imagine the possibility that we might be able to hear the praises of the Almighty God in over 8,000 languages around the throne as we witness the reality of the kingdom of God as displayed in the fullness of its multicultural and multi-linguistic dimensions.

While Israel and certain individuals in the Old Testament were mandated by God to be the witnesses of his plan of redemption, in the New Testament this task falls on the church and its members operating together as kingdom witnesses and workers serving at the will of the King. And the clarion call to God’s people to report for missional action is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The Great Commission phrase, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” is significant as the words “all nations” in the Greek is “panta ta ethne” which carries the implication of making disciples of all the people groups and ethno-linguistic groups of the world. This particular implication should not be interpreted, however, that the church’s work in fulfilling the mission of God is to only labor in new fields or to open up ministries exclusively where the gospel historically has never been preached or churches never established. In fact, we are called to evangelize and make disciples in each of our respective Jerusalems (whether they be urban, suburban, or rural), Judeas, and Samarias, in addition to the ends of the earth.
Therefore, the church everywhere is to be concerned about the lost and to reach out in various ministries to those who hurt in local and global arenas. Christ is the revealed center of the mission of God in the New Testament and the church is to be the extension of Christ’s ministry in the world today. As a result, the people of God should strive to emulate the ministry of Jesus by practicing justice and mercy, loving and having compassion for the lost, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, caring for the poor, having concern for the prisoner, and ministering to the blind, oppressed, and marginalized peoples of our world whenever and however these needs present themselves.

Biola is not Israel or the church but is a training ground for the development of missio Dei instruments, the people of God, the members of his body, and the ones who will join the mission of proclaiming the kingdom. In our supportive role as a Christian university we prepare our students who come from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds to shine the light of the gospel on the peoples of the world. And as we move toward increased diversity in our student, staff, and faculty populations, Biola potentially represents a microcosm of the diversity of the world’s people groups and social classes.

God’s demands on the character of both Israel and the church, in their relationships with surrounding cultures, are the same today for the Christian university. God’s mission of redemption has always included several features and among them are two fundamental principles:

1. Care and compassion for each other, and the outsider or stranger that serves as an attractive drawing point for people from all cultures (Exodus 22:11; Leviticus 19:33).

2. Commitment to biblical principles through conversion, and consistent righteous living, that sets the stage for effective proclamation (1 Kings 8:41-43).
Israel failed in its mission as it often lacked compassion and ignored the prophets’ warning against forgetting God’s commands, or they simply went through the motions of a religious system while failing to obey God at the heart level. The church today can also fall prey to the same problems exhibited by Israel through a lack of compassion and care internally and externally, and an erosion of the practice of biblical principles as well as a lack of passion to reach the lost. If our university is to be an effective missio Dei training ground for those who will carry out the mission of God, the institution must create an environment that values, practices, and advances these principles. As we live and learn together in a diverse community we should seek to adopt and model the Christological paradigm of mission, an incarnational lifestyle modeled by the one God sent to live among us. Jesus entered the multi-ethnic and stratified society of his time not with prestige and power but with humility and grace, and we must strive to do the same.

In view of the biblical teaching on the mission of God, several important questions need to be addressed by our community. For instance, how do our mission, vision, and values statements align with the mission of God as revealed in both Old and New Testaments? To what degree does our university mission reflect God’s heart and purpose for all people, including the poor and the marginalized at home, as well as the nations? To what degree does Biola’s current curricular and co-curricular programs advance the mission of God? How will all new programs and initiatives be measured in reference to the mission of God? To what degree do our diversity programs and initiatives, including our service to international students reflect the Missio Dei?

The reality is God is presently active in our world and society and the challenge for us as an educational enterprise is to craft programs and initiatives consistent with that Divine activity and to cultivate the spiritual awareness needed to discern this activity.
Justice and Kindness

We will model and champion a campus environment committed to practicing justice, living according to kindness and to every biblical value that characterizes God and brings him delight, and who living according to hesed, and functioning as the New Covenant Hasidim, seeks to impact our world and move all of our members toward conformity to the image of Christ.

“I am the LORD who practices steadfast love (hesed), justice (mishpat), and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”

Jeremiah 9:24

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice (mishpat), and to love kindness (hesed), and to walk humbly with your God?”

Micah 6:8

These verses identify values that characterize God and that bring delight to him when his people practice them. Mishpat means justice or what is right and fair, though it encompasses far more than what happens in the legal realm or the court of law. It reflects the moral order that Yahweh designed into the universe and describes a state of affairs that corresponds to the principles that God laid down for human beings. It describes a situation where life functions according to God’s order. One important dimension of mishpat in the Old Testament is that the litmus test for the culture is seen in whether the widow and orphan (i.e. those who have little in the way of wealth or political connections to help them secure justice) receive just and equitable treatment.

Hesed is kindness, loyal love, steadfast love and the normal context where it is expressed is in relationships. The hesed that is noteworthy is that which goes beyond what is required. So Ruth, a daughter-in-law and a foreigner walks away from any future that she has out of a commitment to show kindness to her mother-in-law. Boaz, too, treats Ruth with hesed in the field. Not only does he let her glean from his fields, as the law required, but he gave her special privileges designed to help meet her need. Hosea showed hesed to his unfaithful wife, though the human example was designed to show Israel something about God’s love for his people Israel. It is God’s hesed that serves as the paradigm for the hesed that should characterize God’s people.

Community Voice: I was born to Kadazan and Dusun parents in Malaysia, in a house where 3 different languages were spoken everyday. I went to a boarding school where the teachers were all British, the cooks were all Indian, and I was 1 out of maybe 10 Christians in the entire school. I was looked down upon because I carried my father’s name, a man who fought against majority culture for the rights of our indigenous peoples. I have learned to be content with my multiple cultures. I am made in the image of God.

Daros K.
The book of Ruth also shows God using people who live according to *hesed* (now more broadly understood as covenant loyalty) to work out his purposes in the world, even when those people are unlikely candidates for that (a Moabite woman and an otherwise unheard of man from a small town in Judah) as David and then Messiah are descendants of Ruth and Boaz.

*One supposes that a community committed to and practicing *hesed* will be used by God in significant ways and will be a community that transforms those who participate in it. A Biola community living according to *hesed* and functioning as the New Covenant Hasidim possesses immense power to impact our world and to move all its members toward conformity to the image of Christ.*
The Eschatological Vision

*We will model and champion a campus environment that affirms the truth that God intends for his people to live together in unity in light of Revelation 5:9-10 and 7:9 that envisions a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation in worship and life together; a kingdom and priests where the power of the Spirit unifies and glorifies his Son forever.*

God’s plan for salvation was always intended to reach the nations (Matthew 24:14), and the Gospels portray Jesus as the Savior of the entire world. His gospel message is for all people.

Early in his ministry, Jesus focuses on the Jewish people and then moves to include all people, including Gentiles, women, the poor, the sick, the sinners, and anyone else marginalized by society. Even in using Luke, a Gentile writer, to speak on behalf of these different groups of people affirms Jesus’ outreach to them. Luke continues this theme in Acts as the gospel moves through the different regions of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and even to the utmost parts of the world (Acts 1:8). These are strong evidences of God’s unfolding plan to gather to himself people from every tongue, tribe and nation.

Jesus also gives a foreshadowing and indicator of the end of the age: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). His final commission to his disciples is to pursue this goal as he instructs them to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Jesus desires to see all people come to a saving knowledge of the gospel of grace and only the power of the gospel message could unite such diversity into a new entity, the church.

To an audience that consisted of both Jews and Gentiles, the apostle Peter addresses the inclusiveness of God’s calling (1 Peter 2:9-10). This Gentile audience heard specific pronouncements, previously reserved only for Israel, now extended to them. The ideas of a “chosen race” (Deuteronomy 7:6); “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6); and a “treasured possession among all peoples” (Exodus 19:5) were now applied to Gentiles as well as Jews in the church. This is an astonishing truth that reiterates the idea of the diverse people of God being together in the body of Christ.

This understanding leads to Revelation 5:9 and 7:9-10, where we get a glimpse of heaven as the people of God are gathered together and singing a wonderful song of praise. They are singing of the Lamb of God, Jesus, as they are saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

*The finished work of Christ is worthy of praise in this celebration of the diverse spectrum of the people of God, a “choir” from “every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.” This picture gives us a vision of the ultimate consummation of the church in heaven, a diverse people representing every nation from all over the world, a vision to which we aspire as a Christian university.*
Community Voice: I was raised in a multi-cultural family and lived in a diverse atmosphere that cultivated my love of communicating and evangelizing people of different backgrounds. My family contains three different ethnicities and at one time or another there has been five nationalities represented among my parents and siblings. Through my love for Christ, God has given me a love for others. I wish the peoples of the world would have a passion for God and Worship Him from all corners of the earth. While at Biola, I have taught English to Chinese children in the bilingual church I attend; gone to China to teach adult learners; and, led church teams to Taiwan (teaching English) and to Mexico (street evangelism). I am now considering a teaching position in an international, bilingual school in Thailand. I am made in the image of God. Kim A.
Statement of Community Expectations
Statement of Community Expectations

Overview
The theological imperatives for diversity identified in this document should serve as a guide for decision-making, in practical terms, as well as set the expectations for living, learning, and working together in Christian community at Biola University.

As we look to the future, Biola has much to build upon with one of the longest standing Gospel Choirs in the Christian college movement, a nationally recognized Office of Multi-Ethnic Programs and Office of Diversity Leadership, the 25th Anniversary of the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, an increasingly diverse and inter-culturally competent faculty and staff, an increasing number of diverse graduates entering the workforce and ministry, numerous institutional studies conducted on diversity related topics over the last five years, the launching of an Urban Studies Major and a Social Justice Minor, an increasing willingness to engage diverse topics as a community, and numerous educational opportunities presenting themselves in the City of Los Angeles and its surrounding communities. Taken together these accomplishments have effectively positioned Biola University as a respected national leader in diversity and intercultural understanding.

However, our record of past achievements has not been without its challenges and difficulties. Persistent trials in the area of diversity are capable of humbling an institution while also presenting the opportunity for a community to renew and elevate its commitment to it. Thus, the challenge remains for Biola to balance past achievements in diversity with the humility that comes from setbacks in this area. Therefore, it is in a spirit of humility that we offer the following statements of expectation and in so doing call our community to a renewed commitment to the theological imperatives that form their basis.

In order to address the need to strengthen and sustain a healthy and welcoming campus environment, the task force has articulated numerous statements of expectation in the following sections:

- Loving God in a Diverse Community
- Loving Others in a Diverse Community
- Personal Transformation
- Fostering Christian Community
- Faculty Leadership in a Diverse Community
Loving God in a Diverse Community

- Growing in intimacy with God
- Deepening knowledge of God’s Word as he reveals his character and attributes
- Obeying the prompting of the Holy Spirit
- Cultivating a rich affection of gratitude and thankfulness for all God has created in this world
- Embracing a spirit of confession and repentance
- Actively seeking to discern and deepen one’s knowledge of God and the things he loves (who he loves and how he loves), and adopting them and aligning ourselves with them
- Nurturing the spiritual disciplines such as corporate worship, prayer, listening, service, and study
- Relinquishing rights for his sake
- Actively surrendering our entire being to him
- Laying down one’s life for a friend
- Nurturing the affections that imitate God
- Weeping, rejoicing, celebrating
- Being hopeful in Jesus’ second coming
- Resisting temptation
- Suffering for his name’s sake
- Being a witness, giving evidence to his Majesty
- Coming to him expectantly
- Exercising love-limiting liberty
- Tasting the kingdom of God as it comes to his diverse and beloved people
- Putting on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony
- Letting the peace of God rule in our hearts to which we are called to one body
- Putting on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony
- Letting the peace of God rule in our hearts to which we are called to one body
- Letting his word dwell richly in us

Loving Others in a Diverse Community

- Model and champion a campus climate that is loving and considerate of others, welcoming and respectful, and that affirms the individual value and worth of all who choose to study and work here
- Model and champion a campus climate where condescending language, self-righteous rigidity, and inflammatory rhetoric are not accepted
- Model and champion a campus climate in which the pain of individuals is acknowledged, where a nuanced understanding of the myriad of issues that divide communities is gained, and that is empathetic of those who hurt
- Model and champion a campus climate in which confession and forgiveness are normative
- Model and champion a campus climate where pain and discomfort are balanced with hope and optimism, and reconciliation and healing
- Model and champion a campus climate in which the practice of biblical justice is encouraged, social concerns are addressed, and human suffering in all of its forms is acknowledged as a demonstration of our commitment to neighbor love
**Personal Transformation**
- Engage in self-reflection, self-criticism, personal honesty, and to self-surrender
- Recognize our personal, cultural, and denominational limitations
- Recognize that we all have blind spots and that we define and address problems from personal and individual lenses
- Remain sensitive to the reality of hurt on campus, the hurt at multiple levels, including personal hurt and the pain that exists in others
- Hold in tension the reality of personal hurt and brokenness with the hope of healing and restoration that are in Jesus
- Recognize, nurture, and balance our fundamental identity in Christ with our respective ethnic, gender, ability/disability, class, and denominational identities
- Practice wisdom while practicing doctrine in the pursuit of general knowledge and biblical truth
- Take personal ownership and responsibility for the things that pain God and grieve the Holy Spirit

**Fostering Christian Community**
- Develop a mutual understanding and a common language regarding diversity and Christ-centered community
- Devise a mechanism to invite willing participants to the table for the discussion of difficult and complex issues, with emphasis on finding our common ground, and engage the issues for the sake of a liberal arts education and the kingdom of God
- Worship and read scripture together to illustrate the variety of traditions and expressions within Evangelicalism reflected on our campus
- Remain intentional about building meaningful relationships across lines of difference such as culture and ethnicity, gender, abilities/disabilities, and church affiliation
- Build healthy relationships and friendships in a safe, secure, and collegial environment
- Focus on our unity in Christ without minimizing the importance of our diversity as illustrated in the analogy and function of the body of Christ
- Understand that how we relate to one another in the body of Christ impacts how we live our lives, influences the decisions we make, and enables us to hold one another accountable to living lives consistent with biblical values
- Avoid using labels in a derogatory manner but instead, seek to live our lives in such a way that one cannot tell what we are or what our particular position is on divisive issues
- Intentionally create a climate for open and safe communication
- Intentionally build a foundation of trust
- Intentionally nurture a safe and supportive environment where people are able to express diverse opinions and feelings freely
Faculty Leadership in a Diverse Community

- Make the effort to learn the names and correct pronunciation for each of our students
- Pray for the countries of our international students
- Admit our own lack of compassion or ambivalence toward social issues or a particular form of human suffering
- Grow in personal approachability toward all students
- Affirm and validate all students: their position in Christ, being blessings and treasured ones
- Be sensitive and aware of how our comments have intended and unintended outcomes such as showing favoritism to some while marginalizing others
- Seriously consider all student opinions, personal stories, disappointments and hurts, and involve others in the process of working toward solutions to problems
- Foster our ability to love so well that the word "indiscriminate" characterizes how we love
- Acknowledge the fact that differences exist, but do not allow those differences to dictate a less-than-God-honoring behavior toward students, colleagues, and support staff
- We must see disagreement and even conflict, when it is constructive, as a good thing and something conducive to a rich Christian education and the mission of Biola University
- Recognize there will be difficult and sensitive topics that emerge on campus and in the broader society that we must be able to address in a manner that is thoughtful and nuanced, scholarly, respectful yet truthful, and in a spirit of love
- Read Scripture and engage in crucial discussions together across genders, ethnicities, classes, ability/disability status, as well as across academic disciplines in order to encourage diversity, and interdisciplinary and expanded forms of academic excellence