

MISSION AND VALUES

The Wake Forest University School of Divinity is a graduate, professional school that is Christian by tradition, Baptist in heritage, and ecumenical in outlook. Consistent with Wake Forest's commitment to academic excellence and in the spirit of the University motto, *Pro Humanitate*, the School of Divinity prepares leaders informed by a theological understanding of vocation. Through imaginative courses and diverse programs of community engagement, students are equipped to be agents of justice, reconciliation, and compassion in Christian churches and other ministries.

Guiding Principles

Foster academic excellence: The School of Divinity faculty fosters critical scholarship across the varied disciplines of theological education through rigorous academic inquiry in the classroom and through research and publication.

Promote interdisciplinary exploration: The School of Divinity facilitates interdisciplinary studies that promote dialogue and learning through interaction with faculty and students in other schools and departments of the University.

Encourage global perspectives: Through theological reflection, critical inquiry, and ministry formation, the School of Divinity encourages students to explore diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic perspectives within both national and international contexts.

Embody hospitality: The School of Divinity seeks to cultivate a community of learners that celebrates diverse religious, racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, and sexual identities and that fosters accessibility for all its members.

Nurture spiritual growth: The School of Divinity provides opportunities for spiritual growth and exploration of personal and communal spiritual practices.

Collaborate with faith communities: The School of Divinity joins with churches and other faith communities to create opportunities for mutual learning and critical dialogue, including student internships and various forms of mentoring, consultation, community education, and shared advocacy.

Contribute to the University's mission: The School of Divinity shares in the University's commitment to *Pro Humanitate* through explorations of religious identity, vocation, social responsibility, and public engagement.

Hospitality and Language

The Wake Forest University School of Divinity seeks "to cultivate a community of learners that celebrates diverse religious, racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, and sexual identities and that fosters accessibility for all of its members."

Theological commitments lead the faculty to identify language use as one way we embody and practice hospitality. We invite all members of our learning community to join us in paying attention to how we use language and in exploring new language practices that cultivate hospitality. Each faculty member approaches language in different ways depending on our areas of academic expertise and our individual theological perspectives and commitments. We write and speak with an awareness of the historical, political, and societal contexts out of which theological language emerges and how language can impact readers and

listeners. Out of this diversity, faculty conversations about language are lively and vibrant. We invite students to participate in these intentional conversations and to learn to think theologically and creatively about language.

The following suggested practices represent academic expectations for language use in public speech and writing, including scholarly activity (lectures, presentations, discussions, handouts, and publications), communications (official and internal), and worship (sermons, liturgy, and music). The faculty offers these expectations in order to educate leaders who practice hospitality in a range of settings. Each faculty member is committed to discussing these expectations as they relate to course content and assignments and to including guidelines for classroom participation and written work in course syllabi.

Suggested Practices

Language about God: Theologians, ministers, and worship leaders have an opportunity to give voice to the variety and richness of God's presence with God's people. Language used in preaching and worship as well as in academic writing acknowledges and cultivates this richness when it explores diverse ways to write, speak, pray, and sing about and to God.

Examples:

1. Our language choices can reflect the richness of the divine. Varied metaphors can be used to speak to and about God. We can name God's attributes. Examples: Rock of Salvation, Fountain of Life, the First and the Last, Refuge and Strength, Shelter from the Storm. We can address God out of our experience of God. Examples: Creator, Mother, Giver of All Good Things, Teacher, Father, Guardian, Redeemer, Friend, Healer.
2. Writers and speakers are encouraged to seek balance when using pronouns to refer to God, for example, alternating between gendered pronouns.

Language about Creation and Humanity: Hospitable language acknowledges and affirms the value of all creation and the humanity of all people. While language about God is a theological choice, language about people needs to reflect standard grammatical practices of inclusivity.

Examples:

1. Hospitable language should acknowledge and reflect connections between humans and the non-human context upon which life depends.
2. Words like "people," "us," "humanity," "humankind," etc., should be used in place of words that identify all human experience with the experience of men.
3. Non-gendered language should be used whenever possible; for example, writers and speakers should use "clergy" or "clergy person" instead of "clergyman."
4. Writers and speakers should use person-first language such as "persons with disabilities" instead of "the disabled," or "people who live in poverty" instead of "the poor."
5. Language should affirm diverse and multiple racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, and sexual identities by acknowledging varied life narratives. Writers and speakers should avoid language that generalizes human experience (e.g., "all" or "we") and that stereotypes persons or groups. Writers and speakers should use specific examples, rather than generalizations about people or groups, when illustrating a point.