

Community of Christ

Priesthood Calling, Ordination, and Ministry in All Nations

Interim Policies for Canada: Ordination of Priesthood of Same-Sex/Gender Orientation Authorizing and Officiating at Same-Sex/Gender Marriages

Preface

This document is an overview of administrative policies for priesthood calling, ordination, and ministry **in all nations**. Additional policy details are found in the most current edition of the *Church Administrator's Handbook* and First Presidency official statements.

Introduction

Priesthood is a covenant relationship with God and the church community. It involves committing one's life to bring blessing to others through the sacraments and an exemplary life of discipleship devoted to Christ's mission.

Priesthood calling and ordination involve God's grace-filled initiative in human life and people's humble response. Ordination is a sacred act of covenant-making that includes God's promise to bless priesthood members and the church community as priesthood members faithfully serve in their roles.

The following foundational principles relate to faithful priesthood ministry. Consistent application of these principles results in fulfilling, effective, and joyous priesthood ministry. These principles define "active" priesthood ministry.

Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry

(For all priesthood members and ordinands)

Priesthood faithfulness begins with faithful discipleship. Faithful discipleship emerges from ongoing faith and spiritual formation. The constant call is to follow the Living Christ and to abide in increasing measure in God's love and vision for creation. Being comes before doing.

The following expectations will help me serve as a faithful priesthood member. In response to God's sacred call and priesthood authority granted by Community of Christ, **I covenant to...**

- Engage in ongoing faith and spiritual practices to deepen my relationship with God and others through study and spiritual formation.
- Affirm and promote Christ's mission of invitation, compassionate ministries, and justice and peacemaking; helping prepare others for Christ's mission; and partnering with other priesthood in leading congregations in Christ's mission.
- Provide ministry consistent with the church's identity, mission, message, and beliefs as expressed in *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs, 3rd Ed.* (www.CofChrist.org/ourfaith/SharingCofChrist-3ed.pdf) and other current official documents.

- Model an ethical, moral, and holistic lifestyle.
- Model generosity as a regular contributor to local and world mission tithes, according to my true capacity.
- Protect the safety and well-being of children and youth, including, where applicable, being a Registered Children and Youth Worker.
- Actively participate in congregational life or similar church expressions when congregational life is not available.
- Participate annually in educational or spiritual formation experiences offered by my congregation, mission center, apostolic mission field, or World Church.
- Develop and implement a plan for ministry that uses my gifts to advance Christ’s mission.

Administrative Procedures

The following statements highlight church policies regarding priesthood matters. They are provided to help church officers fulfill their responsibilities and to inform all priesthood members.

Priesthood Calls

The priesthood calling process includes:

1. Recommendation for ordination by the appropriate administrative officer in response to the spirit of discernment, wisdom, and divine direction. Full attention should be given to all elements of the “Recommendation for Ordination Form” in the *Church Administrator’s Handbook: 2005 Edition*, on page 88.
2. Confirmation of necessary administrative approvals as specified in current policies.
3. Presentation of call to the candidate for prayerful consideration once administrative approvals are received.
4. Demonstration of support by a vote in a conference of the appropriate church jurisdiction.

Priesthood Ordination

1. The sacrament of ordination provides formal authority to function within a specific priesthood office in the church.
2. An ordination normally is performed by two members of the priesthood authorized to ordain people to a specific office. In some cases situations in local areas may require the ordination to be performed by one authorized priesthood member.
3. The ordinand and the administrative officers will choose the ordaining priesthood members. Qualifications for priesthood who can officiate in the sacrament of ordination can be found in the *Church Administrator’s Handbook: 2005 Edition*, page 28.
4. The ordination is reported by the congregation or mission center recorder. Where possible, the congregation or mission center recorder should report details of the ordination to the Office of Membership Records at International Headquarters.
5. Recording of the ordination at International Headquarters results in the World Church secretary issuing a priesthood license, which certifies the individual as an ordained minister in Community of Christ.

Priesthood Ethics

1. The ethical standards expected of those who are called and ordained to serve in the priesthood are presented in the “Priesthood Standards and Qualifications” portion of the “Recommendation for Ordination Form” in the *Church Administrator’s Handbook: 2005 Edition*.
2. In addition, Doctrine and Covenants 164:6a provides clear guidance for moral behavior and relationships by listing ethics principles: **Christ-like love, mutual respect, responsibility,**

justice, covenant, and faithfulness. To ensure clarity, Section 164:6b identifies types of behaviors and relationships that are not moral: **selfish, irresponsible, promiscuous, degrading, or abusive.**

3. Additional priesthood ethics statements will be developed in the future and will be considered part of priesthood policies when made available.

Priesthood Ministry and Ordination

1. The church's general policy is that ordination authorizes priesthood members to provide priesthood ministry wherever they live or travel. There is also a policy that priesthood ministry coming from outside a church jurisdiction should be approved by the appropriate church officers serving both the jurisdiction of residence and the jurisdiction in which the priesthood member will travel. Usually, this applies to ministry from outside one's mission center, but mission centers may establish their own procedures for congregations within the mission center (See: *Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition*, page 20). The basic principle is that requesting or receiving priesthood ministry is the responsibility of pastors, mission center presidents, supervising apostles, and other presiding officers of the church.
2. Priesthood members are not required to accept an invitation to officiate in an ordination. If, for any reason, a priesthood member is unable or unwilling to officiate in an ordination, the priesthood candidate should be referred to another priesthood member in an appropriately sensitive and pastoral manner.

Ordination of Individuals in Same-sex/Gender Marriages or Long-term Committed Relationships

1. If a policy is approved for a nation that permits people in same-sex/gender marriages or long-term committed relationships to be ordained, that policy is applicable only in that nation. In nations where same-sex/gender relationships are not legal serious harm and disruption to individuals, church organization, and mission could be caused by offering ministry from people in same-sex/gender marriages or long-term committed relationships. Therefore, there will be nations where the priesthood ministry of people in same-sex/gender marriages or long-term committed relationships should not be offered and will not be accepted (see Appendix).
2. If a nation has a policy that permits people in same-sex/gender marriages or long-term committed relationships to be ordained, a person in such a relationship must be a citizen or permanent resident of the nation, reside in the nation, and be registered as a church member there, to be considered for a priesthood call. If an ordained person in a same-sex/gender marriage or long-term committed relationship moves to a nation with policies that do not allow for ordination of such persons, the person's priesthood license will not be removed simply because of that move. However, as stated above, there will be nations where the priesthood ministry in committed, same-sex/gender relationships should not be offered and will not be accepted.
3. Priesthood members will be allowed to ordain those in same-sex/gender marriages or long-term committed relationships only in nations where civil law and church policy permit such marriages or long-term committed relationships as legally recognized. Priesthood members must always abide by church policies and civil laws in the nation where they are offering ministry.
4. Priesthood members can travel to a nation where church policy allows ordination for those in same-sex/gender marriages or long-term committed relationships and be the officiating priesthood minister, provided they have approval from the pastor and the mission center president of the jurisdiction of residence as well as the jurisdiction in which the ordination is to take place. If no congregational participation is involved, only the mission center presidents must approve.
5. In mission centers that have congregations in two or more nations that have different national policies, congregations must abide by the policies of the nation where the congregation is physically located.

6. Priesthood members are always responsible for determining how their involvement in ordination for those in same-sex/gender relationships will impact their ability to bring effective ministry in their home congregation, mission center, field, or nation.

Priesthood Ministry and Marriage

Aaronic priests and Melchisedec priesthood members are eligible to perform wedding ceremonies in all nations, subject to any legal restrictions of the governmental jurisdiction in which the wedding will occur. In addition, the following policies apply:

1. Marriage preparation should begin six months to one year before the marriage ceremony. While exceptions may occur, adequate time must be provided for premarital discussions between the officiating minister and the couple.
2. All marriages should be reported by the congregation or mission center recorder, and the officiant should follow all reporting requirements established by civil authorities.
3. For information concerning marriage standards, preparation, reporting requirements, marital discord, termination, remarriage, and other related topics, see the relevant sections on marriage in the *Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition*. In the case of previous divorce, the officiant must confirm the divorce is recorded with the church authorities prior to solemnizing the marriage, if the marriage involves a Community of Christ member or members. In situations of multiple divorces, the minister also should check with World Church officers for any additional information or guidance.
4. Priesthood members traveling into an area to perform a marriage must receive approval from the mission center president and apostle of the jurisdiction of residence, as well as from the jurisdiction in which the marriage is to take place. When a Community of Christ congregation is involved, approval by the pastor of the congregation where the sacrament is to take place is also required.

Priesthood Ministry and Heterosexual Marriage

The following statement will be used for heterosexual marriages:

The sacrament of marriage as celebrated in Community of Christ should be aligned with Doctrine and Covenants 111:2b. Thus, during the exchange of vows, the couple should be asked:

You both mutually agree to be each other's companions, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others, during your lives?

After answering in the affirmative, the officiating minister pronounces the couple "husband and wife" in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by virtue of the laws of the country and authority vested in him/her. Then, the officiating minister typically offers this blessing:

May God add his blessings and keep you to fulfill your covenants from henceforth and forever.
Amen.

Priesthood Ministry and Same-sex/Gender Marriage

If a nation has an officially approved policy that permits priesthood members to perform same-sex/gender marriages where they are legal, the following policies apply:

1. The following statement approved by the First Presidency will be used for same-sex couples during their marriage:

You both mutually agree to be each other's marriage companion, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other and from all others during your lives?

After answering in the affirmative, the officiating minister pronounces the couple married in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by virtue of the laws of the country and authority vested in him/her. Then, the officiating minister typically offers this blessing:

May God add his blessings and keep you to fulfill your covenants from henceforth and forever.
Amen.

2. Priesthood members are not required to perform same-sex/gender marriages.
 3. Priesthood members will not be allowed to perform same-sex marriages in nations where World Church policy and civil laws do not allow it. Priesthood members must always abide by church policies and civil laws in the nation where they are offering ministry.
 4. Priesthood members can travel to a nation where the church policy allows priesthood members to perform same-sex marriages and be the officiating minister, if certain conditions are met: compliance with all relevant national and local government regulations and certifications.
 5. Priesthood members are always responsible for determining how their involvement in solemnizing same-sex marriages would impact their ability to bring effective ministry in their home congregation, mission center, nation, or field.
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INTERIM POLICIES FOR CANADA ONLY

Preface

The following interim policies are approved for implementation in Canada beginning June 1, 2013. These interim policies will be implemented in accordance with all World Church policies regarding marriage and ordination. The church in Canada will follow these interim policies for two years. At the end of this time the interim policies will be evaluated and revised as needed.



Reference: [WCR]
[Church Administrator's Handbook 6G; 4]
[Doctrine and Covenants 17; 156; 163; 164]
[Priesthood Manual 2004]
[Priesthood Faithfulness planning]
[National Conferences: General Questions and
Answers, May 22, 2012]

Policy Number: National Policy-Canada 40.00
Effective Date: June 1, 2013
Revision Date: April 8, 2013

CANADA INTERIM POLICY FOR ORDINATION OF PRIESTHOOD OF SAME-SEX/GENDER ORIENTATION

Preface

Ordination of members of same-sex/gender orientation in Canada is authorized and will follow the policies established by the church for ordination. Policies and procedures for initiating calls are outlined in the current *Church Administrator's Handbook*. The First Presidency provides guidelines for ethics and patterns of behavior that are applicable for all priesthood.

Introduction for Ordination

The following interim policy regarding ordination of priesthood members of same-sex/gender orientation is approved for implementation in Canada beginning 1 June 2013. This interim policy will be implemented in accordance with all World Church policies regarding priesthood calling, ordination, and ministry. The church in Canada will follow this interim policy for two years. At the end of this time the interim policy will be evaluated and revised as needed.

Interim Policy

1. God calls people to the priesthood according to God's freedom, wisdom, and purposes. Race, ethnicity, size, physical ability, sex/gender, and sexual orientation, are not grounds for deferring the calling of or for the approval of an ordination to any priesthood office if all other church policy expectations are met.
2. Church members in Canada in same-sex/gender marriages are eligible to be called to serve in the priesthood.
3. This policy pertains to the ordination of Aaronic and Melchisedec priesthood members from among church members who are citizens or permanent residents of Canada, residing in Canada, whose church membership is recorded in Canada.
4. If a person in a same-sex/gender marriage is approved for ordination, the sacrament of ordination for a person in such a relationship should occur within the legal jurisdiction of Canada. Any exception to this policy must be specifically approved by the supervising apostle or apostles involved.

5. Nothing in this policy is intended to, or should be construed to, violate or oppose the provinces, territories, or federal laws of Canada. A couple living in a same-sex/gender marriage must satisfy the current legal definition of the province or territory where they reside. With respect to that marriage, a couple must abide by the legal rights and responsibilities defined by the province or territory where they reside.
6. If there are conflicts between the provisions of this policy and the laws of Canada, immediately contact your mission center president and apostle.

Distribution

This interim policy will be distributed to the following church leaders:

- WCLC members
- World Church Legal Services
- Canadian mission center officers, staff members, and employees
- All pastors in Canada
- All priesthood members in Canada
- Other field officers, staff and employees, as needed.



Reference: [WCR]
[Church Administrator's Handbook 6G; 4]
[Doctrine and Covenants 17; 156; 163; 164]
[Priesthood Manual 2004]
[Priesthood Faithfulness planning]
[National Conferences: General Questions and
Answers, May 22, 2012]

Policy Number: National Policy-Canada 70.00
Effective Date: June 1, 2013
Revision Date: April 8, 2013

CANADA INTERIM POLICY FOR AUTHORIZING AND OFFICIATING AT SAME-SEX/GENDER MARRIAGES

Preface

Aaronic priests and all Melchisedec priesthood are authorized to officiate at same-sex/gender marriages in Canada according to federal, provincial, and territorial laws, and church policy. Church policies and procedures for officiating marriage ceremonies are outlined in the current *Church Administrator's Handbook*.

Introduction for Officiating at Same-sex/Gender Marriages

The following interim policy is approved for implementation in Canada beginning 1 June 2013. This interim policy will be implemented in accordance with all World Church policies regarding marriage. The church in Canada will follow this interim policy for two years. At the end of this time the interim policy will be evaluated and revised as needed.

Interim Policy

1. Canadian law permits same-sex/gender marriage. Community of Christ Aaronic priests and all Melchisedec ministers are eligible to officiate at a wedding ceremony in any province or territory where they are licensed by the government to perform marriages. Nothing in this policy is intended to, or should be construed to, violate or oppose the provinces, territories, or federal laws of Canada.
2. For same-sex/gender marriages performed in Canada, the following covenant statement provided by the First Presidency will be used during the celebration of marriage vows:

You both mutually agree to be each other's marriage companion, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other and from all others during your lives?

3. This policy pertains only to same-sex/gender marriages in Canada.
 - a. Where Canadian law allows visiting non-Canadian couples to be married in Canada, Aaronic priests and all Melchisedec ministers are authorized to officiate same-sex/gender marriages only for couples who are citizens or permanent residents of nations where church policy has been changed to allow for same-sex/gender marriages.
4. If there are conflicts between the provisions of this policy and the laws of Canada, immediately contact your mission center president and apostle.

Distribution

This interim policy will be distributed to the following church leaders:

- WCLC members
- World Church Legal Services
- Canadian mission center officers, staff members, and employees
- All pastors in Canada
- All priesthood members in Canada
- Other field officers, staff and employees, as needed.

The nature of offering priesthood ministry by people in same-sex/gender relationships can be disruptive and even harmful in some nations. Following are lists of nations where ministry by priesthood in same-sex/gender relationships will not be accepted and nations where it may be accepted. These lists are provided to guide the church in its sensitivity to the different cultures that form the international body of Community of Christ.

Nations where priesthood ministry by people in same-sex/gender relationships would not be accepted:

Aruba	Republic of Haiti
Cayman Islands	Republic of Honduras
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico	Republic of India
Democratic Republic of Congo	Republic of Kenya
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	Republic of Liberia
Dominican Republic	Republic of Malawi
Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal	Republic of Mozambique
Federal Republic of Nigeria	Republic of Nicaragua
Federative Republic of Brazil	Republic of Peru
Georgia	Republic of Sierra Leone
Islamic Republic of Pakistan	Republic of South Korea
Jamaica	Republic of the Congo
Japan	Republic of the Fiji Islands
Kingdom of Thailand	Republic of the Philippines
New Caledonia	Republic of Togo
Republic of Angola	Republic of Venezuela
Republic of Bolivia	Republic of Zambia
Republic of Botswana	Republic of Zimbabwe
Republic of China (Taiwan)	Russian Federation
Republic of Colombia	Ukraine
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	United Mexican States
Republic of El Salvador	United Republic of Tanzania
Republic of Guatemala	

Nations where priesthood ministry by people in same-sex/gender relationships may be accepted, but requires administrative approval by appropriate church officers:

Argentine Republic	Kingdom of the Netherlands
Canada	New Zealand
Commonwealth of Australia	Republic of Chile
Federal Republic of Germany	Republic of Hungary
French Polynesia	Republic of South Africa
French Republic	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Kingdom of Norway	Northern Ireland
Kingdom of Spain	United States of America