

Community of Christ

May 2013

Interim Policies Approved for Australia and Canada

After extensive discussion of national conferences' recommendations, interim policies regarding same-sex/gender orientation marriage and ordination have been approved by the Council of Twelve and the First Presidency for Australia and Canada only. The policies are effective June 1, 2013, and will be evaluated after two years to determine if any updates or revisions are needed to address questions not previously anticipated.

The policies have two parts. The first part outlines administrative direction that is applicable throughout the whole church. The second part provides details applicable only in the nation specified. Below is a summary of the basic provisions of the policies:

Applicable to the Whole Church

1. Unless revised policies for a nation have been formally approved according to the provisions of Doctrine and Covenants 164:7, the following statements are official church policy:
 - a. The sacrament of marriage is for one man and one woman who become husband and wife.
 - b. Community of Christ priesthood members are not authorized to perform same-sex/gender marriages even if they are legal in the civil jurisdiction where the marriage will be performed.
 - c. People of same-sex/gender orientation can be considered for priesthood calls, according to established standards and procedures, if they refrain from homosexual activity.
2. 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 of a church jurisdiction should be approved by appropriate church officers. Usually, this applies to ministry outside of one's mission center, but mission centers may establish their own procedures for congregations within the mission center. 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.
3. Same-sex/gender relationships are not legal in a number of nations, and people could be put in serious danger if ministers of same-sex orientation travel to those nations to offer ministry. Therefore, in those nations, the priesthood ministry of people in committed, same-sex/gender relationships should not be offered and will not be accepted.
4. Priesthood members must be aware of and abide by the policies of the nation where they are providing ministry regardless of the policies in their nation of residence.

Interim Policy for Authorizing and Officiating at Same-sex/gender Marriages in Canada Only

- Same-sex/gender marriage is legal throughout all the provinces and territories of Canada.
- In Canada, Community of Christ Aaronic priests and Melchisedec priesthood members are eligible to officiate at a wedding ceremony in any province/territory where they are licensed by the government to do so.
- Community of Christ and government prescribe certain procedures within the marriage ceremony itself. The following covenant statement approved by the First Presidency will be used for same-sex/gender couples during the celebration of their 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?*
- An Aaronic priest or Melchisedec priesthood member is not required to perform any marriage that he or she feels uncomfortable with. He or she should refer the engaged couple to another priesthood member in an appropriately sensitive, pastoral manner.
- According to existing policy, any marriage ceremony in a church facility must have administrative approval by the presiding officer.

Interim Policy for Recognizing Same-sex/gender Relationships in Australia Only

- A same-sex/gender *de facto* relationship is considered to be a legal, marriage-like relationship in Australia. Legal terminology used to identify and define same-sex/gender *de facto* relationships varies across Australian states and territories. For the purposes of policy administration, the terms “*de facto* relationship,” “long-term committed relationship,” “domestic partners,” and “marriage-like relationship” will all be included under the one term “*de facto* relationship,” regardless of specific local legal terminology.

Interim Policy for Ordination of Priesthood of Same-sex/gender Orientation in Canada and Australia Only

- 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 a person or approval of an ordination to any priesthood office. Calls to the priesthood are processed and approved according to established policies and procedures that are the same for all persons.
- Church members in same-sex/gender marriages in Canada or *de facto* relationships in Australia are eligible to be called to serve in the priesthood.
- An Aaronic Priest or Melchisedec priesthood member will not be required to perform any ordination that he or she is uncomfortable with. The priesthood ordinand should be referred to another priesthood member in an appropriately sensitive, pastoral manner.

Further Information

Previous communications have indicated a list of nations would be provided where priesthood ministry by people in same-sex/gender relationships would not be accepted. The following is a list of nations identified by members of the Council of Twelve Apostles:

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	

Following is the current status for USA and British Isles mission centers:

United States of America—A national conference recommended changes to the current policy. However, no policy changes have been implemented at this time.

British Isles Mission Centre—A multi-nations conference is scheduled for October 2013. At this time, no policy changes have been recommended or implemented for the nations of the mission center.