

Community of Christ

Priesthood Calling, Ordination, and Ministry in All Nations

Interim Policies for British Isles Mission Centre:

Authorising and officiating same-gender marriages

Authorising and officiating same-gender covenant commitment services

Ordination of priesthood of same-gender orientation

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.

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 mission tithes (local, mission centre, and worldwide ministries) 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 centre, 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 fulfil 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 authorised to ordain people to a specific office. In some cases situations in local areas may require the ordination to be performed by one authorised 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 centre recorder. Where possible, the congregation or mission centre 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 behaviour 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 behaviours 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 authorises 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 centre, but mission centres may establish their own procedures for congregations within the mission centre (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 centre 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-Gender Marriages or Long-term Committed Relationships

1. If a policy is approved for a nation that permits people in same-gender marriages or long-term committed relationships to be ordained, that policy is applicable only in that nation. In nations where same-gender relationships are not legal, serious harm and disruption to individuals, church organisation, and mission could be caused by offering ministry from people in same-gender marriages or long-term committed relationships. Therefore, there will be nations where the priesthood ministry of people in same-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-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-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-gender relationships should not be offered and will not be accepted.

3. Priesthood members will be allowed to ordain those in same-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 recognised. 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-gender marriages or long-term committed relationships and be the officiating priesthood minister, provided they have approval from the pastor and the mission centre 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 centre presidents must approve.
5. In mission centres 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-gender relationships will impact their ability to bring effective ministry in their home congregation, mission centre, 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 centre 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 solemnising 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 centre 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 companion, 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 the couple answers 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 fulfil your covenants from henceforth and forever. Amen.

Priesthood Ministry and Same-Gender Marriage

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

1. The following statement approved by the First Presidency will be used for same-gender 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 the couple answers 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 fulfil your covenants from henceforth and forever. Amen.

2. For statements to use with civil unions or legal relationships please refer to the British Isles interim policy for authorising and performing same-gender civil unions and legal relationships.
3. Priesthood members are not required to perform same-gender marriages.
4. Priesthood members will not be allowed to perform same-gender marriages in nations where World Church policy or 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.
5. Priesthood members can travel to a nation where the church policy allows priesthood members to perform same-gender marriages and be the officiating minister, if certain conditions are met: compliance with all relevant national and local government regulations and certifications.
6. Priesthood members are always responsible for determining how their involvement in solemnising same-gender marriages would impact their ability to bring effective ministry in their home congregation, mission centre, nation, or field.



Community of Christ

**INTERIM POLICIES FOR
BRITISH ISLES MISSION CENTRE
ONLY**

Preface

The following interim policies are approved for implementation in the British Isles Mission Centre beginning July 1, 2014. These interim policies will be implemented in accordance with all World Church policies regarding marriage and ordination. The church in the British Isles Mission Centre will follow these interim policies for two years. At the end of this time the interim policies will be evaluated and revised as needed.



Community of Christ

Reference: [WCR] Policy Number: National Policy-
[*Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition* 6G;] Effective Date: July 1, 2014
[*Doctrine and Covenants* 17; 163; 164] Revision Date:
[*Priesthood Manual* 2004]
[Ministry and Priesthood planning]
[National Conferences: General Questions and
Answers, May 22, 2012]

BRITISH ISLES MISSION CENTRE INTERIM POLICY FOR RECOGNISING SAME-GENDER MARRIAGES AND SAME-GENDER CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction for Same-gender Marriages and Civil Partnerships

The status of same-gender marriage differs amongst the nations of the British Isles. Legislation to allow same-gender marriage in England and Wales was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in July 2013 and came into force in March 2014. Legislation to allow same-gender marriage in Scotland has been introduced into the Scottish Parliament. There are currently no plans to introduce legislation allowing for same-gender marriage in the Irish nations. Civil partnerships, which give same-gender couples most, but not all, of the rights and responsibilities of civil marriage are legal throughout all of the British Isles apart from in the bailiwick of Guernsey.

Interim Policy

1. Same-gender marriages that are valid under applicable law will be recognised as marriages within the British Isles church.
2. Same-gender civil partnerships that are valid under applicable law in nations where same-gender marriage is not legal will be recognised as marriage-like relationships within the British Isles church.
3. Same-gender marriage terminations will be recognised as marriage terminations within the British Isles church.

4. For a same-gender couple's relationship to be in accordance with this policy, they are expected to establish the most equivalent relationship to marriage that applicable law permits. If applicable law later changes and permits a more equivalent relationship to marriage, a same-gender couple is expected to establish the most equivalent relationship to marriage that applicable law permits.
5. If a same-gender couple later establishes a more equivalent relationship to marriage they will be eligible (but not required) to have another Community of Christ ceremony that establishes or recognises the establishment of that relationship.



Community of Christ

Reference: [WCR]

[*Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition 6G;*
[Doctrines and Covenants 17; 163; 164]
[*Priesthood Manual 2004*]
[Ministry and Priesthood planning]
[National Conferences: General Questions and
Answers, May 22, 2012]

Policy Number: National Policy-

Effective Date: July 1, 2014
Revision Date:

INTERIM POLICY FOR AUTHORISING AND OFFICIATING SAME-GENDER MARRIAGES AND SAME-GENDER CIVIL PARTNERSHIP COVENANT BLESSING IN THE BRITISH ISLES MISSION CENTRE ONLY

Performing Same-gender Marriages

In the British Isles, Community of Christ Aaronic priests and Melchisedec priesthood members are eligible to officiate at a wedding ceremony where applicable law permits such marriages or a covenant blessing service where applicable law provides for civil partnerships. Aaronic priests and Melchisedec priesthood must meet the legal requirements to officiate at such ceremonies.

Interim Policy

1. Community of Christ and government prescribe certain procedures within the marriage ceremony itself.

Ceremonial Vows

The following covenant statement approved by the First Presidency will be used for same-gender couples during the celebration of marriage:

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?*

The following covenant statement approved by the First Presidency will be used for same-gender couples during the covenant blessing service for civil partnership:

Civil partnership—*You both mutually agree to be each other’s covenant companion, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition: that is keeping yourselves wholly for each other and from all others during your lives?*

2. An Aaronic priest or Melchisedec priesthood member is not required to perform any marriage or covenant blessing service that he or she feels uncomfortable with. In such a situation he or she should refer the engaged couple to another priesthood member in an appropriately sensitive, pastoral manner.
3. According to existing policy, any marriage or covenant blessing service at a congregational facility requires approval from the pastor of the congregation. Use of a church campground requires approval from the mission centre president. Using other church-owned property requires administrative approval from the First Presidency’s office.
4. Nothing in this policy is intended to, or should be construed to, violate or oppose the laws of the nations within the British Isles Mission Centre. A couple in a same-gender marriage or civil partnership must satisfy the current legal definition of the law where the couple resides.
5. If there are conflicts between the provisions of this policy and the laws of the nations within the British Isles Mission Centre, immediately contact your mission centre president and apostle.



Community of Christ

Reference: [WCR] Policy Number: National Policy-
[*Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition 6G;*] Effective Date: July 1, 2014
[*Doctrine and Covenants 17; 163; 164*] Revision Date:
[*Priesthood Manual 2004*]
[Ministry and Priesthood planning]
[National Conferences: General Questions and
Answers, May 22, 2012]

INTERIM POLICY FOR RECOGNISING SAME-GENDER COVENANT COMMITMENTS IN THE BAILIWICK OF GUERNSEY ONLY

Introduction for Recognising Same-gender Covenant Commitments Only in the bailiwick of Guernsey

Covenant commitment relationships are recognised only by Community of Christ and have no legal rights according to governmental laws. The provision for a covenant commitment relationship is to give opportunity to express the principle of sacred covenant between same-gender couples where nations in the mission centre do not allow for same-gender marriage or civil partnership.

Interim Policy

For purposes of policy administration:

1. Same-gender covenant commitments are available only in the bailiwick of Guernsey where applicable law does not permit same-gender marriage or civil partnership. Only same-gender couples are eligible to make covenant commitments, because marriage is available to all heterosexual couples.
2. Same-gender covenant commitments that are in accordance with this policy will be treated like marriages only within the bailiwick of Guernsey.
3. Same-gender covenant-commitment terminations will be treated like marriage terminations only within the church in the bailiwick of Guernsey.
4. For a same-gender couple's relationship to be in accordance with this policy, the couple is expected to establish the most equivalent relationship to marriage that applicable law permits. If applicable law in the bailiwick of Guernsey changes and permits a more equivalent relationship to marriage, a same-gender couple is expected

to establish the most equivalent relationship to marriage that applicable law then permits.

5. If a same-gender couple later establishes a more equivalent relationship to marriage, they will be eligible (but not required) to have another Community of Christ ceremony that establishes or recognises the establishment of that relationship.
6. Either or both persons in a same-gender couple may terminate their covenant commitment in accordance with guidelines provided by the First Presidency.



Community of Christ

Reference: [WCR]

[*Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition 6G;*
[Doctrine and Covenants 17; 163; 164]
[*Priesthood Manual 2004*]
[Ministry and Priesthood planning]
[National Conferences: General Questions and
Answers, May 22, 2012]

Policy Number: National Policy-

Effective Date: July 1, 2014
Revision Date:

INTERIM POLICY FOR AUTHORISING AND PERFORMING SAME-GENDER COVENANT COMMITMENT SERVICES IN THE BAILIWICK OF GUERNSEY ONLY

Introduction for Performing Same-gender Covenant Commitment Services

In the bailiwick of Guernsey, Community of Christ Aaronic priests and Melchisedec priesthood members are eligible to officiate at ceremonies that establish same-gender covenant commitments where applicable law does not permit same-gender marriages or civil partnerships.

Interim Policy

1. Community of Christ prescribes certain procedures within the covenant commitment ceremony itself.

CEREMONIAL VOW

The following covenant statement approved by the First Presidency will be used for same-gender couples during the celebration of their covenant commitment:

Covenant commitment—*You both mutually agree to be each other's **covenant companion**, that is keeping yourselves wholly for each other and from all others during your lives?*

2. An Aaronic priest or Melchisedec priesthood member is not required to perform any covenant commitment ceremony with which he or she is uncomfortable. In such situations, he or she should refer the couple to another priesthood member in an appropriately sensitive, pastoral manner.

3. According to existing policy, a covenant commitment ceremony at a congregational facility requires approval from the pastor of the congregation. Use of a church campground requires the approval of the mission centre president. Use of other church-owned property requires administrative approval from the First Presidency's office.



Community of Christ

Reference: [WCR] Policy Number: National Policy-
[*Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition* 6G; 4] Effective Date: July 1, 2014
[Doctrine and Covenants 156; 163; 164] Revision Date:
[*Priesthood Manual* 2004]
[Ministry and Priesthood planning]
[National Conferences: General Questions and
Answers, May 22, 2012]

INTERIM POLICY FOR ORDINATION OF PRIESTHOOD OF SAME-GENDER ORIENTATION IN THE BRITISH ISLES MISSION CENTRE ONLY

Introduction for Ordination

Ordination of members of same-gender orientation in the British Isles Mission Centre is authorised 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: 2005 Edition*. The First Presidency provides guidelines for ethics and patterns of behaviour that are applicable for all priesthood.

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 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.
2. Church members in same-gender marriages, civil partnerships in nations where same-gender marriage is not legal, covenant commitments that are in accordance with this policy or in same-gender relationships in which they refrain from sexual activity are eligible to be called to serve in the priesthood according to established procedures.
3. This policy pertains to the ordination of Aaronic and Melchisedec priesthood members from among church members who are citizens or permanent residents of nations within the British Isles Mission Centre, reside in the British Isles Mission

- Centre, or whose church membership is recorded in the British Isles Mission Centre.
4. If a person in a same-gender marriage, civil partnership or covenant commitment is approved for ordination, the sacrament of ordination for a person in such a relationship should occur within the legal jurisdiction of the British Isles Mission Centre. Any exception to this policy must be specifically approved by the supervising apostle or apostles involved.
 5. An Aaronic priest or Melchisedec priesthood member is not required to perform any ordination that he or she is uncomfortable with. In such situations, the priesthood ordinand should be referred to another priesthood member in an appropriately sensitive, pastoral manner.
 6. Nothing in this policy is intended to, or should be construed to, violate or oppose the laws of the nations within the British Isles Mission Centre.
 7. If there are conflicts between the provisions of this policy and the laws of the nations within the British Isles Mission Centre, immediately contact your mission centre president and apostle.

Distribution

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

- WCLC members
- World Church Legal Services
- British Isles Mission Centre officers, staff members, and employees
- All pastors in the British Isles Mission Centre
- Other field officers, staff, and employees, as needed

The nature of offering priesthood ministry by people in same-gender relationships can be disruptive and even harmful in some nations. Following are lists of nations where ministry by priesthood in same-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-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 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-gender relationships may be accepted, but requires administrative approval by appropriate church officers:

Argentine Republic	Kingdom of the Netherlands
Federal Republic of Germany	New Zealand
French Polynesia	Republic of Chile
French Republic	Republic of Hungary
Kingdom of Norway	Republic of South Africa
Kingdom of Spain	

Nations where priesthood ministry by people in same-gender relationships has been approved by a national conference:

Canada

Commonwealth of Australia

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

United States of America