



Community of Christ

Priesthood Calling, Ordination, and Ministry

Policies for the USA: Ordination of Priesthood in Same-Sex Marriages and Officiating Same-Sex Marriage Ceremonies

The sacrament of Marriage is available in the USA to all monogamous couples regardless of sexual orientation.

Members of Community of Christ in the USA are eligible to serve in the priesthood according to established policies and procedures, regardless of sexual orientation.

Preface

The following updated policies are approved for implementation in the USA beginning December 22, 2022 and replace the USA interim policy dated March 31, 2014. These policies are implemented in accordance with all World Church policies regarding marriage and ordination.

This document is an overview of administrative policies for priesthood calling, ordination, and ministry. It offers guidance for administrators and priesthood as the church generously shares the sacraments of the church. Additional policy details and First Presidency official statements are found on *Our Ministry Tools*, <https://CofChrist.org/our-ministry-tools/>.



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POLICY FOR USA: AUTHORIZING AND OFFICIATING SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

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]
[*Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry*]
[*Community of Christ Sexual Ethics Statement* 2019]
[*Commentary on Covenant Principles* 2017]
[*Social Media Ethics Statement* 2019]

Policy Number: National Policy-USA 70.01
Effective Date: March 31, 2014
Revision Date: December 22, 2022

POLICY BACKGROUND

In 2015, the Supreme Court (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) ruled the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and its territories. In 2022, the “Respect for Marriage Act” was signed into law in the USA. This updated policy reflects the impact of this ruling and no longer includes provision for covenant commitment services where same-sex marriage is not legal.

USA POLICY FOR RECOGNIZING SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

Introduction to Recognizing Same-Sex Marriages

The church has a long-standing policy of recognizing and recording civil or legal marriages, whether sacramental or not.

POLICY

The sacrament of Marriage is available in the USA to all monogamous couples regardless of sexual orientation.

Same-sex and heterosexual marriages that are valid under applicable law and in accordance with this policy are treated the same within the church in the USA. Community of Christ upholds the principle of monogamy in all types of committed relationships.

USA POLICY FOR AUTHORIZING AND OFFICIATING SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

Introduction to Same-Sex Marriage Ceremonies

For information concerning preparation for all legal and sacramental marriages, recording requirements, ceremonial language, and other administrative topics, see the relevant sections on marriage in *Our Ministry Tools*, <https://CofChrist.org/our-ministry-tools/>.

Covenant Vows

Community of Christ prescribes certain procedures within the marriage relationship ceremony itself. The following covenant statement options approved by the First Presidency may be used for couples during the celebration of marriage.

Do 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?

Do 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 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 state and authority vested in them. Then, the officiating minister typically offers this blessing:

May God bless and keep you to fulfill your covenants from henceforth and forever. Amen.

1. In the USA, Community of Christ Aaronic priests and Melchisedec priesthood members are eligible to officiate at ceremonies that establish or recognize the establishment of same-sex marriages, when they have met the legal requirements to officiate at such ceremonies.
2. Nothing in this policy is intended, or should be construed, to violate or oppose the federal or state laws of the USA. A couple in a same-sex marriage must satisfy the current legal definition of the state where the couple resides. With respect to that marriage, a couple must abide by the legal rights and responsibilities defined by the state where the couple resides.
3. Official guidelines for officiating online sacraments including marriage can be located at Community of Christ *Our Ministry Tools* [<https://bit.ly/3jpdOgg>].
4. If there are conflicts between the provisions of this policy and the laws of the USA, immediately contact your mission center president and apostle.

INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES OF THE CHURCH

Priesthood Ministry and Performing Same-Sex Marriage Ceremonies

If a nation has an officially approved policy that permits priesthood members to perform same-sex marriages where they are legal, Community of Christ priesthood are authorized to provide the sacrament of marriage according to established policies and procedures that are the same for all persons (see prescribed procedures above).

1. Priesthood members are not authorized to perform same-sex marriages in nations where 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.

2. 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 to include compliance with all relevant national and local government regulations and certifications.
3. Priesthood members are always responsible for exercising pastoral wisdom and preparation according to established best practices for officiating the sacraments of the church.



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POLICY FOR USA: ORDINATION OF PRIESTHOOD IN SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

Reference: [WCR]
[*Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition* 6G;]
[*Doctrine and Covenants* 17; 163; 164]
[*Priesthood Manual* 2004]
[Ministry and Priesthood planning]
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[*Social Media Ethics Statement* 2019]

Policy Number: National Policy-USA 40.00
Effective Date: March 31, 2014
Revision Date: December 22, 2022

Introduction for Ordination

God calls church members to the priesthood according to God's freedom, wisdom, and purposes. Sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, socioeconomic status, size, and physical ability 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 church members.

Ordination of church members in same-sex marriages in the USA is authorized and follows the same policies established by the church for heterosexual couples. Policies and procedures for initiating calls are provided on *Our Ministry Tools* [<https://cofchrist.org/our-ministry-tools/>]. The First Presidency also provides guidelines for ethics and behaviors that are applicable for all priesthood, such as:

- Covenant Principles of Faithful Priesthood Ministry:
<https://bit.ly/covenant-principles>
- Community of Christ Sexual Ethics Statement:
<https://bit.ly/sexual-ethics-statement>
- Commentary on Covenant Principles:
<https://bit.ly/commentary-covenant-principles>
- Social Media Ethics Statement:
<https://bit.ly/social-media-ethics-statement>

POLICY

Members of Community of Christ in the USA are eligible to serve in the priesthood regardless of sexual orientation.

1. The sacrament of ordination for a church member in a same-sex marriage should occur within the legal jurisdiction of the USA. Any exception to this policy must be specifically approved by the supervising apostle or apostles involved.
2. Aaronic priests and Melchisedec priesthood members may travel to the USA to officiate the sacrament of ordination for those in same-sex marriages according to established procedures. This includes having approval from the pastor, the mission center president, and the field apostle of the jurisdiction of residence, as well as the jurisdiction in which the ordination is to take place (see page 2).
3. This policy pertains to the ordination of Aaronic and Melchisedec priesthood members from among church members whose church membership is recorded in residence in the USA.
4. Nothing in this policy is intended, or should be construed, to violate or oppose the federal or state laws of the USA.
5. If there are conflicts between the provisions of this policy and the federal or state laws of the USA, immediately contact your mission center president and apostle.

INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES OF THE CHURCH

Ordination of Priesthood in Same-sex Marriages

1. If a policy is approved for a nation that permits church members in same-sex marriages or long-term committed relationships (applicable in some nations outside the USA) to be ordained, that policy is valid only in that nation.
2. If a nation has a policy that permits church members in same-sex marriages or long-term committed relationships (applicable in some nations outside the USA) to be ordained, the person must be registered as a church member in that nation to be considered for a priesthood call.
3. If an ordained church member in a same-sex marriage or long-term committed relationship (applicable in some nations outside the USA) moves to a nation with policies that do not allow for ordination of such persons, their priesthood license will not be removed due to the relocation. However, some nations do not authorize the priesthood ministry of ordained persons in same-sex marriages or long-term committed relationships (applicable in some nations outside the USA).
4. Priesthood members will be allowed to ordain church members in same-sex marriages or long-term committed relationships (applicable in some nations outside the USA) 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.
5. Priesthood members can travel to a nation where church policy allows ordination for those in same-sex marriages or long-term committed relationships (applicable in some nations outside the USA) and be the officiating priesthood minister, provided they have approval from the pastor, the mission center president, and the field apostle 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 president and field apostle must approve.
6. 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.



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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: NATIONAL DIVERSITY IN COMMUNITY OF CHRIST

It is important to recognize that national conferences allow nations to address pressing needs which cannot sufficiently be addressed at world conferences. That means that national conference recommendations may not be authorized in all the nations of the church. It is imperative to be aware of that information when traveling to other nations. This information is provided to assist you.

To insure current and accurate national information, always consult the World Church Secretary or locate current national policies at Community of Christ *Our Ministry Tools*, <https://CofChrist.org/our-ministry-tools/> and in the search bar type – National Policies.

The following areas have held national conferences to address the issues listed in this policy document (as of 2022):

- a. Australia
- b. British Isles Mission Centre
- c. Canada
- d. United States
- e. Western Europe Mission Center



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APPENDIX B: BRIEF SUMMARY FOR GENERAL MEMBER PURPOSES

BRIEF SUMMARY

POLICIES FOR THE USA:

AUTHORIZING AND OFFICIATING SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

ORDINATION OF PRIESTHOOD IN SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

The official policy statement is available at Community of Christ *Our Ministry Tools*, <https://CofChrist.org/our-ministry-tools/> and in the search bar type – National Policies.

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, Doctrine and Covenants 164:7a-d made provision for national and multinational conferences to address pressing national issues best resolved through national conferences, which can provide opportunities for broader dialogue, understanding, and consent. USA apostles accessed this avenue of decision making to determine the level of support for 1) same-sex marriage, and 2) the calling and ordination of those in a same-sex marriage (where legal) in Community of Christ USA Mission Fields. The USA National Conference was held in 2013 and the conference recommended policy change supporting marriage and ordination in the USA regardless of sexual orientation. Since then, several nations and fields have recommended policy changes and field apostles drafted interim policies that were approved by the First Presidency. The church committed to revising policy language if needed because of developments such as changes in national laws or evolving terminology. This revision of the 2014 USA Interim Policy upholds the recommendations of the 2013 USA National Conference body while considering current laws and contextual understandings of human sexuality and gender.

POLICY BACKGROUND

The USA National Conference Interim Policy published in 2014 pre-dated marriage equality, complicating the legal landscape of same-sex relationships across the country. In 2015, the Supreme Court (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) ruled the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and its territories. In 2022, the “Respect for Marriage Act” was signed into law in the USA.

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USA POLICY FOR AUTHORIZING AND OFFICIATING SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

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For information concerning preparation for all legal and sacramental marriages, recording requirements, ceremonial language, and other administrative topics, see the relevant sections on marriage at *Our Ministry Tools* [<https://cofchrist.org/our-ministry-tools/>]. Community of Christ upholds the principle of monogamy in all types of committed relationships.

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USA POLICY FOR THE ORDINATION OF PRIESTHOOD IN SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

Introduction for Ordination

God calls church members to the priesthood according to God's freedom, wisdom, and purposes. Sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, socioeconomic status, size, or physical ability 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.

POLICY

Members of Community of Christ in the USA are eligible to serve in the priesthood regardless of sexual orientation.

Policies and procedures for initiating calls are outlined at *Our Ministry Tools* [<https://cofchrist.org/our-ministry-tools/>]. The First Presidency also provides guidelines for ethics and patterns of behavior that are applicable for all priesthood:

- Covenant Principles of Faithful Priesthood Ministry:
<https://bit.ly/covenant-principles>
- Community of Christ Sexual Ethics Statement:
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- Commentary on Covenant Principles:
<https://bit.ly/commentary-covenant-principles>
- Social Media Ethics Statement:
<https://bit.ly/social-media-ethics-statement>

POLICY

- **Members of Community of Christ in the USA are eligible to serve in the priesthood regardless of sexual orientation.**
- The sacrament of ordination for church members in a same-sex marriage should occur within the legal jurisdiction of the USA. Any exception to this policy must be specifically approved by the supervising apostle or apostles involved.

Policies and procedures for initiating calls are outlined at *Our Ministry Tools* <https://CofChrist.org/our-ministry-tools>. The First Presidency provides guidelines for ethics and patterns of behavior that are applicable for all priesthood.

Resident Aaronic priests and Melchisedec priesthood members may travel across the USA to officiate the sacrament of ordination for those in same-sex marriages according to established procedures. This includes having approval from the pastor, the mission center president, and the field

apostle of the jurisdiction of residence, as well as the jurisdiction in which the ordination is to take place.

Traveling between nations requires prior consultation with your mission center president and field apostle. For detailed information about providing ministry in nations outside the USA, consult the World Church Secretary or locate current national policies at Community of Christ *Our Ministry Tools*, <https://CofChrist.org/our-ministry-tools> and in the search bar type – National Policies.