

Community of Christ

INTERIM POLICY

Reference: First Presidency

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Effective Date: January 1, 2011

Distribution: General

Revision Date:

Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership Interim Policy Summary Context for Administrators

Policy in effect from January 1, 2011, to August 31, 2011

This interim policy was developed after discussions at the 2010 World Conference. Church leaders reviewed the policy foundation presented to the Conference and considered the needs of the field. They recognized that the Holy Spirit has moved a number of individuals to want to become members of Community of Christ by confirmation, with as little delay as possible.

The ongoing policy will be implemented on the date shared with the 2010 World Conference: September 1, 2011. This interim policy has some additional guidance.

Community of Christ pastors and priesthood members involved in the confirmation are responsible for making sure people who are to be confirmed meet the criteria. Please consult with the mission center president if there are questions.

Those becoming members of the church through the sacrament of confirmation (without rebaptism) should meet certain criteria.

- **Active.** People should be actively involved in a Community of Christ congregation or ministry fellowship (typically at least six months) before being considered for becoming church members through confirmation. (It is understood that in some cases, a person may wish to join the church while living in an area that is isolated from other congregations. In these situations, the criteria of “active” will need to be interpreted by the mission center president, in consultation with the field apostle. The primary point is that people desiring to be confirmed should be as “active” as possible, given their circumstance. In some cases, where a person is isolated from the organized ministries of the church, the “activity” in the church may be lived out at the mission center level, or through ongoing contact with church officers.)
- **Baptism criteria.** People must have been baptized of water when they were 8 or older as a personal expression of faith in Jesus Christ by a Christian minister, clergyperson, or pastor.
 - **“Of water.”** Immersion, pouring, or sprinkling are acceptable.
 - These criteria describe how a person becomes a member of Community of Christ, not who is Christian.
 - Nothing in the recent counsel or policy should be used to malign the beliefs or practices of other churches.
- **“Shared Understanding of Previous Baptism” statement.** Candidates must complete a statement that documents the date or approximate date of their baptism, and the circumstances of their baptism.
 - The statement provides a way to get into the conversation about the church’s requirements.

- **Alignment of discipleship.** They must be familiar with and embrace the vision, mission, message, sacraments, and basic beliefs of the church.
 - They should be familiar with *Walking with Jesus: Disciples in Community of Christ* and *Sharing in Community of Christ* or *We Share: Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*.
- **Generosity.** They must be familiar with and embrace the principles of “Disciples Generous Response.” They must understand the responsibility of all church members to contribute to Local and World Ministries Mission Tithes according to their true capacity.

More information on resources for preparation for confirmation will be provided in the coming months.

If you have questions about this policy, please contact your mission center president.

Implementation of Policy

The implementation of the church’s revised baptism, confirmation, and membership policy will occur in two phases:

1. **Interim Phase.** From January 1, 2011, to August 31, 2011, people who are actively involved in a Community of Christ congregation, ministry fellowship (typically at least six months) or are isolated from organized ministries of the church but deemed active by the mission center president (in consultation with the apostle) and wish to become church members through confirmation may do so if the following criteria are met:
 - They were baptized of water when they were 8 or older as a personal expression of faith in Jesus Christ by a Christian minister, clergyperson, or pastor.
 - They complete the “Shared Understanding of Previous Baptism” statement provided by the church that documents the date and circumstances of their baptism.
 - They are familiar with and embrace the concepts in the following documents that describe the identity, mission, message, sacraments, and basic beliefs of the church:
 - *Walking with Jesus: Disciples in Community of Christ*
 - *Sharing in Community of Christ* or *We Share: Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*
 - Where these materials are not available in needed languages, other teaching methods may be used to assure familiarity with the concepts and principles.
 - They are familiar with and embrace the principles of “Disciples Generous Response,” including understanding that church members are expected to contribute to Local and World Ministries Mission Tithes, where possible.

The Community of Christ pastor and priesthood members involved in the confirmation are responsible for ensuring these criteria have been met before confirmation.

Information about recording church membership through confirmation will be provided to all congregations before November 1, 2010.

2. **Full Implementation.** Beginning September 1, 2011, people who wish to join the church through confirmation, whose baptism meets the official criteria, should complete a course of preparation, using resources that will be created for that purpose. More information will be provided in coming months.

Community of Christ

Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership Interim Policy Summary Process Summary

Policy in effect from January 1, 2011, to August 31, 2011

A person can become a church member one of three ways:

1. **Baptism and confirmation by Community of Christ priesthood.**

- Only those 8 or older can be baptized by Community of Christ priesthood (who baptize only by immersion).
- Community of Christ priests and Melchisedec priesthood perform the sacrament of baptism.
- Community of Christ Melchisedec priesthood perform the sacrament of confirmation.
- *Community of Christ ministers do not baptize persons without the understanding and expectation that they will be confirmed members of the church.*
- *Anyone already baptized in Community of Christ is not to be re-baptized, except in the very rare case in which a member was expelled.*

2. **Baptized Christians who desire to be rebaptized and confirmed by Community of Christ priesthood.**

- Baptized Christians may choose to be re-baptized by immersion by Community of Christ priesthood before being confirmed.
- Only those 8 or older can be baptized by Community of Christ priesthood.
- Community of Christ priests and Melchisedec priesthood perform the sacrament of baptism.
- Community of Christ Melchisedec priesthood perform the sacrament of confirmation.

3. **Baptized Christians may be confirmed by Community of Christ priesthood.**

- Baptized Christians may choose **not** to be re-baptized by Community of Christ priesthood before being confirmed.
- They must review and sign a statement (Shared Understanding of Previous Baptism), noting that their previous baptism met certain criteria.
 - Baptism must be of water (immersion, sprinkling, pouring).
 - Baptism must have represented a personal expression of faith in Jesus Christ.
 - The person must have been 8 or older when baptized.
 - Community of Christ tradition teaches that a person must be 8 or older to understand the commitment of discipleship.
 - Community of Christ will not accept infant baptism as meeting the church's criteria for becoming a member through confirmation.
 - People must have been baptized by a Christian minister, clergy person, or pastor.
- Community of Christ Melchisedec priesthood perform the sacrament of confirmation.

In every case, new members must:

- Have been baptized of water as a personal expression of faith in Jesus Christ when they were 8 or older.
- Have been baptized by a Christian minister, clergy person, or pastor.
- Be confirmed by Community of Christ Melchisedec priesthood.
- Be familiar with and embrace the vision, mission, message, sacraments, and basic beliefs of Community of Christ as expressed in the resources provided by the church.

- Be familiar with and embrace the principles of “Disciples Generous Response.” They must understand the responsibility of all church members to contribute to Local and World Ministries Mission Tithes according to their true capacity.
- Be actively involved in a Community of Christ congregation, ministry fellowship (typically at least six months), or if isolated from organized ministries of the church be deemed active by the mission center president (in consultation with the field apostle), before being considered for becoming church members through confirmation.

When the baptism and confirmation criteria are met, people become church members and share the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as all other members.