

Faithful Disagreement

Definition and Principles

World Church Leadership Council, March 2013

Definition

Faithful disagreement is defined as actions and/or responses by a person holding a different view about a specific policy, belief, principle, or other position of Community of Christ. This disagreement with a Community of Christ position or direction is helpful, responsible, faithful, and bounded by loyalty and commitment to the identity, mission, message, and beliefs of Community of Christ. A person who faithfully disagrees is welcome to share about the church position with which she or he disagrees. The intent of the sharing is to improve the overall faithful response of the church to God's intended direction without classifying others as unfaithful.

Principles

1. Community of Christ's Enduring Principles—Blessings of Community, Worth of All Persons, Responsible Choices, and Unity in Diversity—allow for faithful disagreement.
2. The commitment, in general, to the overall identity, mission, message, and beliefs of Community of Christ may serve to keep a person in the faith community even when that person strongly disagrees with a particular position. One's love for the faith community is stronger than any particular disagreement.
3. Holding a differing view from the Community of Christ position on a specific matter does not lessen in any way a person's participation as a faithful, generous, committed, and responsible disciple. Nor does having a differing view impact a person's eligibility to hold a priesthood office or partake in the sacraments.
4. A person with a differing viewpoint on a particular position is to be respected by the body. She or he may share a viewpoint as a personal opinion during discussions, meetings, training, and other conversations where it is suitable to share personal opinions.
5. A person is not to be excluded by a congregation or mission center because of holding a differing viewpoint on a specific Community of Christ position.
6. A member or a priesthood member with a differing viewpoint is not to use public-ministry opportunities to speak against the identity, mission, message, or beliefs of Community of Christ. Nor should a member or priesthood member publicly criticize the Community of Christ stance on the particular position with which the person disagrees. Public ministry must focus on proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in ways that align with Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs.
7. Agreeing with Community of Christ positions, official and unofficial, is not a test of faith for priesthood, members, and friends.
8. A person cannot ignore policies because he or she disagrees with a particular policy. Ethically, administrators must consistently apply the official policies and procedures of the church.
9. At no time is any action that harms the body of the church considered in harmony with the principles in this document.
10. In seeking to create genuine signal communities, we listen respectfully to one another's viewpoints. In addition, we try to see from each other's perspective. We trust in each person's commitment to Christ and motivation to see the mission of Community of Christ flourish. We seek to celebrate our unity while learning from our diversity.
11. As a community that embraces Continuing Revelation, we strive always to remain open to the Holy Spirit. We understand that sometimes both individually and collectively we respond wisely to the Holy Spirit's guidance, and sometimes we do not fully understand. Through our vulnerability to the Holy Spirit, we trust God will continue to guide us in refining positions held by Community of Christ.
12. Various legislative conferences and consent-building methods used by Community of Christ, allow a person holding a differing viewpoint to continue to seek change to the position with which she or he disagrees.

Background Information

Doctrine and Covenants 131:4 a–b; 164:5–6

1988 Standing High Council Statement on Ethical Dissent

National Conferences: General Questions and Answers, June 2012