

Community of Christ

2010 World Conference Legislation

World Church leaders acknowledge that the following resolutions may cause individuals and groups pain and frustration because of differences in their personal, scriptural, theological, legal, and sacramental perspectives. As an international community of faith, this issue is further complicated by the diverse customs and languages of our members.

As the body of Christ, it is imperative that the church approaches these legislative issues with great care, understanding, and sensitivity to the voices and perspectives of members throughout the world. As an international church represented in nearly fifty nations, it is important that we learn to talk about divisive issues without separating from the body.

We have been counseled as a church to “Listen together to one another, without judgment or predisposition. Do not assume that the answers to matters of conflict have yet been perceived. There is much labor to be done. Reason together in love, and the Spirit of truth will prevail” (Doctrine and Covenants 162:5c).

While the church seeks agreement or common consent in important matters, we must commit to ongoing dialogue and lovingly upholding our common faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church.

G-11 ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

From the Central USA Mission Center:

Whereas, The World Conference of Community of Christ has not passed legislation concerning nuclear weapons since 1982, at that time a) urging members and administrative representatives to “inform the appropriate governmental officials of the need for responsible reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear armaments,” b) encouraging members to “set aside one day per month to pray and fast for peace and disarmament,” c) urging “the conversion of resources of war to productive forms of human development,” and d) urging the church to “join with other organizations that are constructively promoting a reduction of instruments of mass destruction” (World Conference resolution 1178); and

Whereas, The threat of nuclear weapons in the nearly three decades since has grown significantly, as measured by the “Doomsday Clock” of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, which in 1980 was set at seven minutes to midnight to symbolically represent the imminent threat of catastrophic nuclear destruction, and has since advanced to five minutes to midnight when last adjusted in 2007 (www.thebulletin.org); and

Whereas, There are an estimated 20,000 nuclear weapons or more in the world’s arsenals today, most with destructive capacities far greater than the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan—even a thousand of which could arguably result in global nuclear winter and the omnicide of planet earth (*The New Nuclear Danger*, Dr. Helen Caldicott, p. 11); and

Whereas, The number of nations that have nuclear weapons has grown from six in 1982 to eight or more today, with numerous other nations and groups actively seeking to join them (Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, www.wagingpeace.org); and

Whereas, The possession of nuclear arms provokes proliferation, which in turn heightens the possibility of their acquisition and use by terrorist groups, leading many observers like Jonathan Schell to conclude that “with each year that passes, nuclear weapons provide their possessors with less safety while provoking more danger” (*The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger*, Jonathan Schell, p. 204); and

Whereas, Numerous informed policymakers from nuclear-weapons nations like the United States of America—such as former Secretary of Defense William Perry; former Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn; and former Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger—have in recent years declared in favor of “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” saying, “Reliance on nuclear weapons for [deterrence] is becoming increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective” (*The Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 2007); and

Whereas, The World Council of Churches, a global fellowship of some 340 denominations collectively representing about 550 million Christians, has declared: “We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds. Furthermore, we appeal for the institution of a universal covenant to this effect so that nuclear weapons and warfare are delegitimized and condemned as violations of international law” (www.oikoumene.org); and

Whereas, Numerous mainline Christian denominations have condemned the production, possession, or use of nuclear weapons, such as the United Methodist Church, declaring: “We reaffirm the finding that nuclear weapons, whether used or threatened, are grossly evil and morally wrong. As an instrument of mass destruction, nuclear weapons slaughter the innocent and ravage the environment. When used as instruments of deterrence, nuclear weapons hold innocent people hostage for political and military purposes. Therefore, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. Therefore, we reaffirm the goal of total abolition of all nuclear weapons throughout Earth and space” (*The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church*, p. 503); and

Whereas, Community of Christ has been specifically commissioned to “lift up an ensign of peace, and make a proclamation for peace unto the ends of the earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 102:11) and instructed to “be in the forefront of those who would mediate this needless destruction while there is yet day” (Doctrine and Covenants 150:7), therefore be it

Resolved, That Community of Christ calls for abolition of all nuclear weapons throughout Earth and space, and joins other faith communities in declaring, on ethical and theological grounds, that the production, deployment, use, or threatened use of nuclear weapons are crimes against humanity; and be it further

Resolved, That, wherever possible, Community of Christ administrators, members, and friends contact appropriate government officials in those nations where the church has a presence—particularly the nuclear-weapons nations—to convey the church’s support for abolition of all nuclear weapons, urging them to pass legislation and to adjust national policies toward that end; and be it further

Resolved, That Community of Christ administrators, members, and friends be urged to envision and support interim steps toward the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, such as (but not limited to) reduction of nuclear weapons stockpiles, no-first-strike pledges by nuclear-weapons states, election of

world leaders who envision a world without nuclear weapons, no expanded use of nuclear weapons, signing of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, additional nuclear-weapons-free zones like enacted in most of the southern hemisphere, and support for a mutual and verifiable freeze on the development, testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons and delivery systems; and be it further

Resolved, That resources be developed and made available for distribution by 2011 to church administrators, members, and friends to foster consciousness-raising and responses of conscience to the growing threat of nuclear weapons and the imperative of their abolition; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this legislation, approved by delegates of the 2010 World Conference and representing 240,000 members of the international church in more than 50 nations, be delivered as a witness of Community of Christ to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Conference to be held in New York City in May 2010 and other such events in ensuing years, as deemed appropriate by the First Presidency; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution become a part of the World Church Peace and Justice Team agenda.

G-12 FULL INCLUSION

From the Headwaters USA/Canada Mission Center:

Whereas, Christianity's traditionally hostile view towards homosexuals and homosexual behavior has been a source of inhospitality, causing our homosexual brothers and sisters not only to feel unwelcome, but also devalued, invisible, and shamed; and many have left our fellowship; and the loss of these individuals deprives us of their unique witness, ministry, and gifts, making our community poorer by their absence; and

Whereas, We find that the few passages of scripture that suggest homosexuality is incompatible with Christian life reflect a cultural setting that did not understand homosexuality rather than speaking the truth of the gospel; and the overwhelming witness of scripture is that God's love is universal and is showered on each person without regard to sexual orientation; and

Whereas, Community of Christ has never taught that the scriptures are inerrant nor that they should be interpreted literally; and

Whereas, The church has been instructed (Doctrine and Covenants 163:3b) to "Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purpose of God;" and

Whereas, we recognize the need in the lives of many homosexuals for the ministry of the gospel, as well as the need of the church for the ministry of homosexuals; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the church affirms that homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered persons are fully welcome in our fellowship; and be it further

Resolved, That, where culturally acceptable, jurisdictions of the church are encouraged to publish the following or similar statement in appropriate media such as weekly bulletin, on posters, etc.:

“The community of Christ values diversity and celebrates differences as part of God’s Creation. We welcome and include persons from a variety of family structures, without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity.” Be it further

Resolved, That, where culturally acceptable, leaders are encouraged to contact homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered church members who have been inactive and invite them to return.

G-13 POLICY ON PRIESTHOOD

From the Headwaters USA/Canada Mission Center:

Whereas, Community of Christ is an international denomination providing ministry in diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds in many nations of the world; and

Whereas, The scriptural standard for calls to the priesthood is to be called of God and accepted by the people; and all other standards are cultural in nature and tend to vary from one culture to the next; and

Whereas, There is no record of Jesus giving any specific instruction about sexual orientation, but Jesus did instruct us to love one another, and in both word and action taught us to embrace marginalized persons; and

Whereas, The current World Church policy on sexual orientation with regards to priesthood ministry is inconsistent with World Conference Resolution 1226, which states that “human beings often fear, hate, and abuse each other because of ignorance about such factors as socioeconomic status, culture, race, gender, age, size, sexual orientation, gender identity, and mental or physical disability. Such prejudicial behavior undermines the personal and spiritual development of both abuser and abused, and denies the mutual benefits of shared giftedness;” therefore be it

Resolved, That this Conference affirm that the fundamental requirement for one to be called to priesthood office is that he or she be called by one having appropriate administrative authority and approved by the sustaining vote of the proper jurisdictional conference or business meeting; and, be it further

Resolved, That it is the sense of the World Conference that the Standing High Council Statement on Homosexuality (March 18, 1982), and the World Church Leadership Council document “Community, Common Consent, and the Issue of Homosexuality” (October 2002), which restrict the ordination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) members should be rescinded by those bodies responsible to do so; and, be it further

Resolved, That calls for priesthood for LGBT members should be processed through the normal procedures, and be it further

Resolved, that when appropriate calls to LGBT persons are approved through normal administrative and legislative channels, jurisdictions are encouraged to welcome those called as priesthood members, but in no way does this mandate priesthood calls for LGBT members in those jurisdictions where culture and understanding inhibit, or the law prohibits homosexuals from full participation.

G-14 LEGAL MARRIAGE AND THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

From the Southern California USA Mission Center:

Whereas, Community of Christ is an international denomination providing ministry in diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds around the world; and

Whereas, Marriage customs, traditions, and legal requirements vary throughout the world; and

Whereas, Marriage is a legal contract (marriage license) between the couple and the government which imparts to other parties certain prescribed rights and duties that are generally enforceable in various states and nations of the world, such as property rights, inheritance, and kinship; and

Whereas, The sacrament of marriage is a sacred covenant between a couple and God in which the church participates with sanction, blessing, support, and guidance; and

Whereas, In some locations the minister acts as both an agent of the government as well as a representative of the church, while in other locations a separate civil government agent must also be involved; and

Whereas, The sacrament of marriage institutes a sacred covenant between two persons seeking to make a lifelong committed relationship; therefore be it

Resolved, In jurisdictions where such is permissible by local law, that appropriate Community of Christ priesthood be authorized to perform the sacrament of marriage for two consenting individuals seeking to enter into a sacred covenant before God in a long-term monogamous committed relationship.