

Community of Christ

Release of Counsel: Questions & Answers

This is the first in a series of Question & Answers that will be released to the church.

PREPARING FOR WORLD CONFERENCE

1. Why was the counsel to the church released in January instead of at World Conference?

The prophet-president can bring inspired counsel to the church anytime. By receiving this counsel several months before Conference, the church has more opportunity to continue in prayer, discussion, education, and discernment with World Church leaders about important issues before and during World Conference.

2. Will the World Conference consider the counsel to the church for inclusion in the Doctrine and Covenants?

Yes, the 2010 World Conference will consider the counsel for inclusion in the Doctrine and Covenants.

3. How can delegates prepare for making decisions at World Conference?

- Be as informed as possible about issues to be considered at the Conference, including the counsel to the church, quorum changes, and legislative items.
- Intentionally share in prayer, discussion, and discernment activities, using the support resources the church provides. “Yearning for God: Discernment and Spiritual Practice” is available on the church Web site for download, with PowerPoint presentations, articles, and more.
 - www.CofChrist.org/discernment/yearning.asp
 - Read the *Herald* and the church Web site for more information and updates.

4. What kind of experiences at Conference will help delegates consider the counsel to the church and the resolutions?

- The World Conference schedule is designed to model ways to prayerfully approach counsel to the church and other issues.
- Experiences will include worship services, spiritual-formation and discernment activities, and non-legislative discussions with all delegates. The quorum, order, and caucus sessions will include spiritual practices to prepare the delegates to deliberate together.
- *Delegates who actively engage in all aspects of the World Conference will be best prepared to sense the Spirit’s presence, be open to God’s direction, and effectively join in decision-making.*

5. How can friends, members, and congregations who will not be at Conference continue to support the World Conference?

- February 21 is a day of prayer, fasting, and special offering to support Conference.
 - Use the World Conference special-offering envelopes, if you have received them. Please designate your offering for World Conference.
 - If you have not received a special-offering envelope, check with your congregational or mission center financial officer about how to designate an offering to support World Conference.
 - You can contribute online at www.CofChrist.org/give.
- Join in with the World Church Leadership Council each day in intentional prayer for World Conference.
- Register off-site to participate. Visit www.CofChrist.org/wc2010/registration2010.asp. Click on the links. When you reach the form, under “Registration Type” choose “Off-site Supporter.”
- Share in prayer, discussion, and discernment activities using the support resources the church provides. “Yearning for God: Discernment and Spiritual Practice” is available on the church Web site for download, with PowerPoint presentations, articles, and more.
 - www.CofChrist.org/discernment/yearning.asp
- Read the *Herald* and the church website for more information and updates.
- Participate in worship services via live webcasts from www.CofChrist.org. See the schedule at www.CofChrist.org/wc2010/schedule.asp. Get daily updates, photos, official minutes, and more during the Conference at www.CofChrist.org/wc2010.

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

6. What will the church’s practice of baptism be if the counsel is approved?

The church will continue to teach and practice baptism by immersion by authorized Community of Christ priesthood. Candidates must be at least eight years old.

7. Will the Presidency provide policies for accepting individuals into Community of Christ membership who have been baptized in other Christian settings?

Yes. If Conference approves the counsel, the Presidency will release a timeline and policies.

- The timeline will be released at Conference.
- The timeline will describe a period of preparation and training for staff, priesthood, pastors, and other church leaders before implementing new policies.
- *Current policies remain in place until new policies are available.*

8. Are there different processes for confirmation for those baptized by Community of Christ priesthood and those baptized in other Christian settings?

- No, the process will be the same.

9. Some people who have been baptized in other Christian settings want to be rebaptized before being confirmed into Community of Christ. Will this be allowed?

- Yes, the church will continue to allow rebaptism by immersion for those who are joining the church and want to be rebaptized.

10. If Conference approves this counsel, what does that mean for Doctrine and Covenants Sections 17 and 20 and others that address baptism and confirmation?

The most-recent counsel, if approved, provides the authoritative direction for the church today on baptism, rebaptism, confirmation, and related matters.

- The church and its leadership value, interpret, and understand previous sections of the Doctrine and Covenants in their historical contexts. These sections share principles that continue to inform and inspire the church even if they do not describe some of its current practices.
- Approval of this counsel does not remove sections from the Doctrine and Covenants.

HUMAN SEXUALITY AND CHURCH POLICIES

11. If the counsel is approved, what happens to all of the resolutions that have come to the Conference involving sexual orientation, ordination, and marriage?

- Issues raised by the legislation will be addressed early in the week in all-delegate non-legislative discussions, so the Conference can hear from many perspectives.
- The Presidency will provide a statement on the status of each resolution related to sexual orientation, marriage, and ordination at the appropriate time.
- Approval of the counsel would provide a way to deal with some issues on a national or field level, and conferences can provide additional consideration where appropriate and possible.

12. If the counsel is approved, will the boundaries for performing marriages and ordinations change in some parts of the church, while not changing in other parts of the church?

- First, the World Conference must consider and consent to principles for ethical behavior and relationships as presented in the counsel.
- The counsel provides a process for interpreting those principles in various contexts throughout the world:
 - Church officers, acting in their callings as already provided in church law, to create and interpret policies to meet the needs of the church today in harmony with the principles contained in the counsel.
 - Where possible and appropriate, convene national or field conferences to provide opportunities for broader dialogue, understanding, and support.
 - The possibility of decentralized (more localized) policies in some nations is provided in the counsel

OTHER QUESTIONS

13. Counsel says it is not proper for the Conference to decide specific policies for all nations when those decisions likely will cause serious harm in some. Please explain.

- Understandings and legalities on many issues vary greatly throughout the world. In some cultures and nations it is difficult or even “taboo” to speak about some issues, especially in public.
- Requiring the entire church to address certain issues would create serious conflict and possible fracturing of the church in various parts of the world.
- Some countries have laws that could put the church organization in jeopardy if the local church teaches views of human sexuality and marriage that are contrary to the official national policy.
- It is extremely difficult for large multinational, multicultural, and multilingual groups like World Conference to have the background, cultural awareness, and time to effectively resolve issues that involve such fundamental differences of perspective, especially when using parliamentary procedure.

- Because of increasingly rigid United States border-protection rules, it is more and more difficult to have a World Conference that has desired levels of representation from all nations where the church is established. The church needs to develop a different approach to decision-making that recognizes fundamental cultural differences and evident global realities.
- Issues of sexual orientation are highly visible in national politics and religious debate in Western cultures such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, etc. However, it is not appropriate for these issues to dominate the World Conference agenda simply because they are contentious issues in nations that have better access to mission center legislative and World Conference decision-making opportunities.
- The counsel provides a way to deal with issues in a more localized (decentralized) way, asking the Conference to consider fundamental principles while allowing church leaders to fashion appropriate policy and procedures for vastly different national contexts. Dialogue on issues is more relevant and applicable at the national or field level, and conferences can provide for that conversation where appropriate and possible.

(To Be Continued)