

Handouts

Discernment Principles

1. Discernment is both a spiritual discipline and a lifelong spiritual posture for Christian disciples.
 2. Discernment is based on the trust that God is the Source of all we are and are trying to do. God already knows what we are seeking and wants to communicate with us. Letting God be larger, wiser, and greater than us is a key shift in our awareness. We think we know this and then find ourselves still trying to understand or worrying about finding the one true solution.
 3. Discernment includes head, heart, spirit, and body work. We think and speak, we listen and wait, we feel and are moved; we have physical sensations and responses. It is a whole-person process.
 4. Intentional Group Discernment usually incorporates attention to:
 - Setting a context of openness to the Spirit and maintaining that focus.
 - Setting aside personal agendas, conflicts, and preconceived ideas. This is called holy indifference and does not mean we don't care; rather we trust God to know more than we do and are willing to let go of answers we already have.
 - Getting clear about the question to be discerned.
 - Reviewing and sharing relevant history and background.
 - Reflecting on relevant scriptures.
 - Setting times of silent reflection and receptive listening.
 - Using spiritual practices that encourage reflection and listening, including silence, journaling, *lectio divina* (reflective reading of scripture), imaging, centering prayer/breath prayer, and others.
 - Sharing open, honest, nonjudgmental insights from reflection. Listening and relational skills are critical at this time. Each person carefully should be heard and listened to with respect.
 - Opening creative, intuitive gifts to the impress of the Spirit through art, music, movement, or poetry. Insight may come in words, images, symbols, or sounds.
 - Reaching tentative consensus. Please note that this resource is not designed to create final consensus; rather it's a tool in an ongoing discernment process related to conditions of membership that eventually may include deliberation at World Conference.
 - Understanding that more discernment will be necessary before the group feels it has heard what was needed and has been faithful in receiving what the Spirit offered.
-

Reflecting on Scripture

Choose one or two of the following scripture texts to read in a reflective, receptive way. Read slowly and prayerfully, pausing to listen, take in, and “digest” the text at the mind, heart, and spirit levels. Choose several journaling questions at the end and write responses.

Psalm 119:102–106 NRSV

I do not turn away from your ordinances, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and have confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.

Doctrine and Covenants 147:7

I am further permitted to say by the Spirit: Instruction which has been given in former years is applicable in principle to the needs of today and should be so regarded by those who are seeking ways to accomplish the will of their heavenly Father. But the demands of a growing church require that these principles shall be evaluated and subjected to further interpretation. This requisite has always been present. In meeting it under the guidance of my spirit, my servants have learned the intent of these principles more truly.

Doctrine and Covenants 161:5

Be respectful of tradition. Do not fail to listen attentively to the telling of the sacred story, for the story of scripture and of faith empowers and illuminates. But neither be captive to time-bound formulas and procedures. Remember that instruction given in former years is applicable in principle and must be measured against the needs of a growing church, in accordance with the prayerful direction of the spiritual authorities and the consent of the people.

II Timothy 3:16–17 NRSV

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in

righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Doctrine and Covenants 162:2c–e

As a prophetic people you are called, under the direction of the spiritual authorities and with the common consent of the people, to discern the divine will for your own time and in the places where you serve. You live in a world with new challenges, and that world will require new forms of ministry. . .

You have already been told to look to the sacraments to enrich the spiritual life of the body. It is not the form of the sacrament that dispenses grace but it is the divine presence that gives life. Be respectful of tradition and sensitive to one another, but do not be unduly bound by interpretations and procedures that no longer fit the needs of a worldwide church. In such matters direction will come from those called to lead.

Again you are reminded that this community was divinely called into being. The spirit of the Restoration is not locked in one moment of time, but is instead the call to each generation to witness to essential truths in its own language and form. Let the Spirit breathe.

Hebrews 4:12 NRSV

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Doctrine and Covenants 163:7a–d

Scripture is an indispensable witness to the Eternal Source of light and truth, which cannot be fully contained in any finite vessel or language. Scripture has been written and shaped by human authors through experiences of revelation and ongoing inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the midst of time and culture.

Scripture is not to be worshiped or idolized. Only God, the Eternal One of whom scripture testifies, is worthy of worship. God’s nature, as revealed in Jesus

Where Do I Stand?

Activity One

At this time, where would you place yourself on a spectrum of possible viewpoints regarding conditions of membership? If none of the statements describes your perspective, insert your own words. Then mark your position on the spectrum.

(See optional activity for an approach that may be preferred for your group.)

1. I would keep current understandings and practices of baptism in the church.
2. I am comfortable with the church's current practices, but I want to hear more about other viewpoints.
3. I am uncertain about the church's current practices, and I need to hear more about other possible approaches.
4. I would allow persons who have been baptized by immersion in other Christian churches to have the choice of being rebaptized in Community

of Christ. Then, whether they are rebaptized or not, confirm them members of the church.

5. I would accept the baptisms of those who have been baptized by immersion in other Christian churches and confirm them members of the church.

6. I would accept any type of Christian baptism (immersion, pouring, and sprinkling), except infant baptism, and confirm people members of the church.

7. I would accept any type of previous Christian commitment (believer's baptism, infant baptism) and confirm people members of the church after a time of preparation.

8. I would accept any previous Christian commitment and receive people as members of the church who want to join.

9. I would not have any conditions for membership other than desire to join.

Activity One

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Optional Activity

At this time, state as clearly and briefly as possible your viewpoint on conditions of membership. Place yourselves in relation to each other on the following spectrum with "1" being "no change" and "9" being "no requirements for church membership other than a desire to join."

Optional Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Where Do I Stand?-2

Activity Two

Use the space below to make a positives and negatives list. In one column list the positive results of no longer requiring rebaptism as a condition of church membership. In another column list the negative results.

What consequences will there be if the church stops requiring rebaptism?

Positive Results/Consequences

Negative Results/Consequences

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Take a moment to sit with your list and check physical, emotional, and mental responses. Do you feel you have expressed your true feelings and understandings? Do you sense you have been as open to God's guidance as possible? Offer God what you have written and ask for continued openness and blessing.



Conditions of Membership Spectrum

Group Activity

At this time, where would you place yourself on a spectrum of viewpoints regarding conditions of membership? If none of the statements describes your perspective, insert your own words. Then mark your position on the spectrum.

(See optional activity for an approach that may be preferred for your group.)

1. I would keep current understandings and practices of baptism in the church.

2. I am comfortable with the church's current practices, but I want to hear more about other viewpoints.

3. I am uncertain about the church's current practices, and I need to hear more about other possible approaches.

4. I would allow persons who have been baptized by immersion in other Christian churches to have the choice of being rebaptized in Community of Christ. Then, whether they are rebaptized or not, confirm them members of the church.

5. I would accept the baptisms of those who

have been baptized by immersion in other Christian churches and confirm them members of the church.

6. I would accept any type of Christian baptism (immersion, pouring, and sprinkling), except infant baptism, and confirm people members of the church.

7. I would accept any type of previous Christian commitment (believer's baptism, infant baptism) and confirm people members of the church after a time of preparation.

8. I would accept any previous Christian commitment and receive people as members of the church who want to join.

9. I would not have any conditions for membership other than desire to join.

Optional Activity

At this time, state as clearly as possible your viewpoint on conditions of membership and re-baptism. As a group, place yourselves in relation to each other on the following spectrum with "1" being "no change" and "9" being "no requirements for church membership other than a desire to join."

Group Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Optional Activity

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
