

# Community of Christ

November 2010

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I greet you in the grace and peace of Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God. I give thanks daily for your faithfulness and your commitment to the mission of the church today.

Official policies about baptism, confirmation, and church membership are enclosed. The *Interim Policy* will run from January 1 to August 31, 2011, for people who are ready to be confirmed. The *Official Policy* will be effective from September 1, 2011, into the future. The World Church Leadership Council and First Presidency created the policies for use throughout the church. They will fulfill the provisions of Doctrine and Covenants 164:2b–c:

God's grace, revealed in Jesus Christ, freely moves throughout creation, often beyond human perception, to achieve divine purposes in people's lives. In harmony with God's will, the Holy Spirit leads some people already committed to Jesus Christ through Christian baptism to further focus their response through church membership.

Individuals previously baptized of water in an attitude of humility and repentance and as an expression of faith in Jesus Christ may become church members through the sacrament of confirmation of the Holy Spirit.

Doctrine and Covenants 164 is the result of a significant experience I had with God's Spirit, following an extended time of study and prayer. I recognize that some received this counsel with anticipation and joy, while others felt apprehension and a sense of loss.

As prophet-president, my sacred calling and responsibility is to offer my clearest sense of God's will for the church today and into the future. It is then the church's responsibility to prayerfully consider what is offered and decide whether to include it in the Doctrine and Covenants. If it is included, it becomes authoritative direction for the whole church.

Through prayerful study and deliberation that was blessed by the undeniable presence of the Holy Spirit at World Conference, the church clearly expressed its consent and support of Doctrine and Covenants 164. Therefore, Doctrine and Covenants 164 provides the most-current authoritative direction on baptism and confirmation.

Nothing within the "Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership" policy statements lessens the importance of baptism in Community of Christ belief or practice. In fact, Doctrine and Covenants 164:3 calls church members to "examine the depth of your baptismal commitment" and "become fully immersed in the servant life of Christ." It urges disciples to "live the meaning of your baptism daily." Also, the Living Christ invites those not yet baptized to follow in the "way of righteousness and peace" and be "baptized of water and the Spirit."

Baptism remains an essential sacramental part of establishing sacred covenant with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The church will continue to teach and practice baptism by immersion in

water, conducted by authorized priesthood, followed by the sacrament of confirmation. This will be standard practice throughout the church.

Following the provisions of Section 164, we also will accept people who previously expressed commitment to Jesus Christ through Christian baptism into church membership through confirmation. This path to membership is allowed in response to the evident action of the Holy Spirit to draw some Christians, who have strong testimonies of the power of their original baptisms, to seek church membership.

While I was prayerfully considering this direction, I sought more confirmation. Like many others, for years I was taught that rebaptism was required to become a church member. On several occasions the Spirit impressed on me that the church should not unnecessarily “hinder” those who had experienced the power of baptism through the grace and authority of Jesus Christ from responding to the Spirit guiding them to membership.

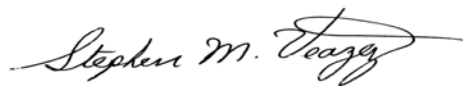
An experience I had while traveling in Asia reinforced this understanding. I talked with a man who had been baptized secretly in a cave pool years before Community of Christ became accessible to him. He described the suffering and persecution he and others experienced because of their Christian commitment. I sensed the witness of the Spirit that his baptism should “be respected” and that his commitment far exceeded that of some church members who viewed their baptisms in casual terms.

Since Doctrine and Covenants 164 received approval, I have heard a growing number of testimonies from people throughout the world. The Spirit is moving people to become church members through confirmation based on their original baptism.

All pastors will receive orientation on the “Baptism, Confirmation, and Church Membership” policies from mission center officers. If you have questions now or in the future, please contact your mission center president.

Let us move into the future with confidence, trusting the Eternal One who has guided the church in the past will continue to provide light for the journey. Bright days are ahead for the church if we continue to walk together in love and faith, always trusting God to lead us further than we can see.

In the Peace of Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen M. Veazey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Stephen M. Veazey, President