PART I: Theological Foundations

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Introduction

This material provides the conceptual theological and organizational foundation for the support ministries, administrative processes, and educational resources to be developed related to ministry and priesthood. Educational courses, administrative policies and procedures, motivational events, and all communications related to ministry and priesthood should be aligned with its contents.

The information is presented in two parts. Part I focuses on theological foundations. Part II focuses on support ministries, including administrative structure and processes.
PART I: Theological Foundations

Theological Foundation: God’s Nature and Redemptive Activity

Understanding ministry and priesthood in Community of Christ begins with exploring God’s nature and redemptive activity in creation.

We start by humbly recognizing that fully comprehending God’s nature is beyond our ability to grasp completely. However, it is important to establish a basic understanding of God’s nature on which more particular beliefs and faithful actions can be built. Our Basic Beliefs statement on God provides such a foundation:

We believe in one living God who meets us in the testimony of Israel, is revealed in Jesus Christ, and moves through all creation as the Holy Spirit. We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons. All things that exist owe their being to God: mystery beyond understanding and love beyond imagination. This God alone is worthy of our worship.


Many books have been written on the background and meaning of the concepts in this paragraph. In this material we will focus on the meaning of the sentence: “We affirm the Trinity—God who is a community of three persons.”

The “three persons” referred to—using classical theological language—are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are one God. The “three persons” have distinct “identities” that exist in inseparable relationship. The meaning of “persons” is not what commonly is used to refer to individual humans. When we use “persons” to describe the Trinity, we mean that God is personal, and we experience God’s personal character through God’s triune nature.

One way to illustrate God’s nature comes from Christian teachings originated by Gregory of Nyssa (335–396 CE). Think and then speak a loving thought. The “thought” is like God, the source of all that is. The spoken word is like Jesus Christ, the word made
tangible. The breath that carries the word into the world is like the Holy Spirit. However, we must not stop here. We also must understand that the source, the word, and the breath are one God.

Of course, any analogy ultimately falls short of the truth. Despite our best efforts to explain it, God’s nature is a mystery. If we think we have completely comprehended God, then what we have comprehended is not God.

Nevertheless, affirming God’s triune nature is important to our exploration of ministry and priesthood. Belief in God’s triune nature stresses that God is relational and that God is divine community. Daniel L. Migliore puts it well:

In all eternity God lives and loves as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In God’s own eternal being there is movement, life, personal relationship, and giving and receiving of love.

—Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology, pg. 77

The word community means “with unity” or “in oneness.” God, a “community of three persons,” means that God “in three persons” lives eternally in mutual love, purpose, devotion, and communion. Community also means God’s nature has room for distinct “identities” that are united in boundless love and are fully inclusive. This insight has clear implications for how we understand ministry and congregational life.

So, it is not only appropriate, but important, to profess that God’s nature has been revealed as divine community—God/Jesus Christ/Holy Spirit. Of course, we are not talking about the imperfect communities populated by human beings. We are highlighting our belief that God’s nature embodies the blessings of love, relationships, Unity in Diversity, and true community.

God’s relationship to humanity involves calling for expressions of divine nature in creation. Relationships of receiving and giving love, devotion, Unity in Diversity, and shared vision are the foundation of sacred community.

True community bears witness to God’s nature and ultimate purpose for creation. The purpose of creation is to share in God’s love, generosity, and inclusiveness of differences. God is present and acts in human history to reconcile the whole creation to God’s purposes through loving relationships in sacred communities that reflect God’s true nature.

Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection reveal God’s nature and purposes. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh through suffering and sacrificial love to reconcile and redeem creation. Jesus’ acts of compassion, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, sacrifice, and promoting true community reveal God’s way of bringing salvation and peace to the whole creation.

Our understanding of God as triune has major implications for our beliefs about ministry and priesthood. God lives in the divine triune community. God acts to redeem creation from destruction and death through suffering love, as seen in the crucifixion of Jesus, and the birth of human communities that reveal to the greatest degree possible
God’s nature and will. Community of Christ understandings of ministry and priesthood arise from the fundamental “in community” and “for community” nature of God revealed in Jesus Christ and confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

As we experience and respond to God’s nature and redemptive activity, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, we become devoted disciples of Jesus Christ in community with others. We understand the importance of coming to faithful discipleship through community in Christ or Christian community.

As we continue our journey of discipleship—in and through Christian community—we become more and more aware of our giftedness and growing capacity to respond to God’s generosity. We hear more clearly God’s call for us to contribute to the fulfillment of divine purposes. This growing sense of call is often experienced as a desire or even urgency to engage more fully in ministries of witness, compassion, reconciliation, justice, peacemaking, and community-building that reflect God’s nature and will.

Abiding in God’s Love

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

—1 John 4:16

Perspectives on ministry and priesthood often emphasize what we should be “doing.” We tend to equate doing and achievement with faithfulness. Actually, ministry and priesthood should initially and then, continually, be grounded in “being.” Being is about who we are and who we are becoming in relationship with others and God.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new.

—2 Corinthians 5:16–17

True discipleship and faithful ministry are neither sustainable nor fruitful unless they flow from “abiding in God’s love” and immersion in the “living waters” of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ as confirmed by the Holy Spirit and expressed through the church community. Consistently living or dwelling in God’s holy and just love, which is much more than any human love, frees disciples to share divine love in the world more faithfully and fully.

Before Jesus began his public ministry he was shaped by the scripture, teaching, sacred rituals, and spiritual practices of his faith community. This spiritual formation occurred in his home, synagogue, at the temple, and in nature. It included prayer, fasting, study, solitude, conversation, and genuine community life.

When Jesus was baptized he experienced himself from God’s perspective as the “beloved son” and received the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit. These encounters
with God’s presence, holy love, and calling were not isolated events. They were aspects of ongoing spiritual formation over several years. Even the rigors of desert solitude and wrestling with temptations of human ego and willfulness were essential to his emergence as God’s Messiah.

When Jesus publicly announced his identifying mission (Luke 4:18–19), what he said he would do came from his awareness that “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me and has anointed me…” His ministry was not motivated by human ego or good intentions. Jesus’ call to mission emerged from abiding in God’s love, Spirit, and vision for creation.

Those who engage in Christ’s mission are to spend ample time abiding in the life and love of God. The following scripture expresses this principle especially well:

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

—Ephesians 3:16–19

Being rooted and grounded in God’s love is essential to faithful discipleship and ministry. We do this by having our inner beings strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit, and having Christ increasingly dwell in our hearts. Intentionally abiding in divine love results in the “doing” of effective ministry aligned with Christ’s mission.

The church offers resources for seekers, disciples, and priesthood members to help them grow spiritually and dwell deeply in the life of God. Find helpful resources at:


**Jesus Christ’s Mission**

God’s nature is relational. The mission and ministry of Jesus Christ are relational. Mission and ministry focus on reconciling people to God and one another through loving, just, and peaceable relationships. Reconciling and redeeming people, relationships, social systems, cultures, and the whole creation is Jesus Christ’s mission.

We look to Jesus Christ to show us how to engage in relationships that express God’s nature and purposes. We need to understand Jesus’ vision of mission to understand ministry and priesthood.

While many scripture passages could be cited, the most comprehensive statement of Jesus Christ’s vision of mission is found in the Gospel of Luke:

*When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,*
prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

—Luke 4:16–21

Faithful ministry and priesthood are rooted in the mission of Jesus Christ, which is none other than God’s vision for the world. The phrases in Jesus’ mission statement define the types of ministry to which we are called as disciples and priesthood members. If we truly experience our “belovedness” through the Spirit’s witness and sense God’s call, then we will find ourselves increasingly engaged in Christ’s mission.

Community of Christ’s Mission

We do not engage in mission alone, but in community with others. Community of Christ’s mission is based on Jesus’ mission (Luke 4:16–21) and how he conducted his mission. This is highlighted in our worldwide mission statement: We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace.

Our mission statement calls us to initiate and nurture relationships that witness of Jesus Christ through word and action. This is coupled closely with the call to promote communities of Christ’s peace that demonstrate all aspects of the gospel in real life.

Our mission can be summed up in an even shorter phrase: “Share the peace of Jesus Christ.” This phrase is used with the understanding that the “peace of Jesus Christ” includes personal, interpersonal, and global dimensions of the gospel.

Our statement of mission incorporates all aspects of Jesus Christ’s mission. Our mission is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to promote Christ-centered communities where those who are poor, captive, and in despair can experience joy, hope, love, justice, and peace. When we pursue the whole mission of Jesus Christ we are being faithful to the nature and will of God.

To help us understand how to implement mission, we have taken key phrases in Jesus’ mission statement (Luke 4:16–19) and expressed them as Mission Initiatives that can be understood in many languages throughout the church.

1. Invite People to Christ
2. Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
3. Pursue Peace on Earth
To accomplish these Mission Initiatives we:

4. Develop Disciples to Serve
5. Experience Congregations in Mission

The Living Christ calls Community of Christ to pursue his whole mission by focusing on these five Mission Initiatives. Focusing our mission through the five Mission Initiatives in all aspects of the church’s life is very important! Inspired counsel to the church stresses that “The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f).

The five Mission Initiatives are long-term, church-wide initiatives. They clearly define what the focus of our efforts should be if we desire to be fully faithful to Christ’s mission. Just as Christ incarnated or embodied the nature and will of God, we are called to incarnate or embody the mission of Christ in our lives.

**Membership, Discipleship, and Mission**

Jesus Christ invites people to be disciples who share in his life and mission. The primary call of Christ is to faithful discipleship in community with other disciples. The call of this faithful community of disciples is to express to the greatest degree possible the nature and love of God. All other callings, including priesthood calls, come from the eternal call of Jesus Christ to “follow me” in mission.

People respond to Christ’s call through baptism and, in Community of Christ, confirmation. The prayer of confirmation bears “witness to the ministry of the Holy Spirit” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:2e) and confers membership in the church. Through baptism and confirmation the call to discipleship in community with other disciples is recognized and publicly expressed. People offer their lives in loving ministry patterned after Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit’s promise that as Christ lives in us we find ourselves living in Christ. Again, it is important to emphasize that we come to genuine discipleship in and through the church community! Baptism includes a basic commitment to live the life of Christ in community with other followers. Discipleship is never just an individual or private pursuit.

True discipleship involves growing in Christ-like character, love, concern, generosity, and mission. It includes discovering and generously sharing one’s giftedness through the faith community to support Christ’s mission. As stated in Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b:

> All are called according to the gifts of God unto them; and to the intent that all may labor together…

Discipleship is an inward journey of development, formation, and becoming. It is also an outward journey where disciples are sent into the world to be Jesus’ hands, feet, and voice.
Disciples pursue Christ’s mission through ministries that are focused on inviting others to Christ, abolishing poverty and ending needless suffering, pursuing peace on Earth, developing others to serve, and responding with others in the church community in mission.

In summary, here is a key principle: God calls people into a way of life where one covenants with God and the faith community to follow the message and ministry of Jesus Christ. This is discipleship!

Disciple Ministry, Mission, and Priesthood

Some disciples are called by God and ordained through the church to particular priesthood responsibilities. Priesthood offices and callings are gifts from God to the church for the sake of the church’s life and mission. These gifts are given to provide for consistent and effective proclamation of the gospel and for equipping the whole community of disciples (church) for ministries that support Christ’s mission.

Ordination to priesthood involves a covenant relationship with God and the church community. It involves committing one’s life to bring blessing to others. Bringing blessing to others occurs through the sacraments and through leading an exemplary life of discipleship, including aspects of inward and outward formation.

Some may ask, “Why priesthood?” Throughout scripture we encounter stories of God’s movement in the lives of individuals, calling them to positions of ministry and leadership. In Hebrew scriptures the call often came in the form of a covenant. In New Testament scriptures Jesus called 12 individuals to provide leadership and ministry to the church as a broader expression of God’s movement in the world. As the Christian movement evolved many others were called to responsibilities of servant leadership and ministry.

Community of Christ rests on this rich foundation of particular calling and response. All are called to express their gifts as disciples for the enrichment of the faith community and world. Priesthood members covenant to provide specific forms of ministry and servant leadership necessary to sustain and lead the community as an expression of God’s mission in the world. Those called to priesthood responsibility stand with—not apart from—those seeking to live out the gospel in community. By committing to a life of servant leadership, priesthood members create pathways of hope and opportunity for others to respond to the call to ministry.

Priesthood calling is misunderstood if it is seen as a private matter or a personal right apart from the church’s life in Jesus Christ. The meaning of priesthood is inseparably linked to the life of the church and its mission, which is Christ’s mission. Doctrine and Covenants 163:6a states:

The priesthood shall be composed of people of humility and integrity who are willing to extend themselves in service for others and for the well-being of the faith community.
Priesthood is not about elevating oneself above others, be they seekers, members, or other priesthood members. It is a call to humbly serve others and to equip them for Christ’s mission.

It is important to emphasize that no one priesthood member can fully represent Jesus Christ adequately. It takes all disciples and priesthood members to begin to represent Jesus Christ in the world. Priesthood members are called as a team of servants to make Christ real and believable in the world.

Paul’s brilliant theology of the church as the “body” is especially relevant to this point.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

—1 Corinthians 12:12–19, 27–31

What do we learn about Christian community, discipleship, and priesthood ministries from this passage?

- Disciples of Jesus Christ come from many backgrounds. We come from many cultures. We come as poor or rich. We come as male and female. All are invited. None is excluded.
- We become one through baptism in the one Spirit of Christ. We become Christ’s one body. Old divisions are done away in a new humanity, a new community.
- In the one body disciples are like different organs: arms, legs, eyes, noses. We are the hands, feet, and eyes of Jesus. There is diversity and specialization in the body, but no superiority or inferiority. All organs (members) are dignified, useful, and needed. There is no room for jealousy or rivalry.
Some disciples are called to particular responsibilities according to giftedness. There is a God-appointed order, but equal respect is accorded to all members of the body.

The passage ends with these words: “And I will show you a still more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:31). What is the more excellent way? What follows is Paul’s “hymn to love” that begins with these verses:

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

—1 Corinthians 13:1–2

At the heart of ministry is agape love, a love that is patient and kind—not envious, boastful, or arrogant. A love that is not irritable or resentful, that does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. A love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4–7). Love, expressed in different ways and through different gifts and roles, is the heart of all priesthood callings.

The different priesthood offices also have this purpose according to the writer of Ephesians:

The gifts [Christ] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

—Ephesians 4:11–13

Our task as ministers is therefore to equip members to serve, to build up the church, and to bring all to unity of faith and knowledge of Christ. The task of ministry is to enable all of us, together, to become more like Jesus.

One-person ministry is not faithful to the New Testament. One-team ministry is faithful, especially when each office expresses an aspect of Christ’s love for all. Partnerships in ministry are necessary, or the body suffers and is diminished.

If Trinity is the beginning of Christian community, revealing God’s nature and will, then becoming the body of Christ is its end and fruit.

**Priesthood: Gift and Response**

God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us…

—1 John 4:9–10
God is love (1 John 4:8). God loves us before we love God. All loving begins and ends with God through an eternal cycle of receiving, giving, and receiving.

Divine love reveals itself in many ways seen and unseen. However, the clearest revelation of God’s love is Jesus Christ. Christ is God’s never-ending gift to the world that brings hope, forgiveness, reconciliation, and fullness of life to all who graciously receive and generously respond.

Provision for priesthood offices and callings is a divine gift given to and through the church. They are continuing expressions of God’s grace and eternal purposes in creation. God, who loves us beyond understanding, whose love was dramatically revealed in Jesus Christ, continues to love us by providing for grace-filled sacraments, compassionate ministries, and sacred communities that draw us close to God and others so the church can fulfill its calling in the world.

Priesthood is a divine gift graciously given to and through the church to empower the whole community of disciples to engage in Christ’s mission. Therefore, priesthood does not belong to an individual. Priesthood belongs to Jesus Christ, who desires to share every good gift of God with the church and creation.

God acts to call people to priesthood through the discernment and approval of the church community. In no sense does ordination to priesthood make a person independent of the church because it is through the church and for its mission that individuals are called.

God not only calls people to priesthood in general, God calls people according to the particular gifts and potential God graciously has given them. The phrase, “all are called according to their gifts,” is not an affirmation of human merit, but of God’s grace that is expressed in this truth: God does not call people to ministry and priesthood unless God already has placed in their lives the capacity to respond. Priesthood ministry is first and foremost a stewardship of response to the grace of God, the giver of all good gifts.

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

—1 Peter 4:10

Priesthood Ordination

Priesthood is conferred on an individual—after necessary approvals—in the sacrament of ordination through the laying on of hands. The sacrament of ordination is not the end, but the beginning of the journey of priesthood ministry. Priesthood may or may not be a lifetime calling. Sometimes a priesthood member’s calling is for a period of time to meet a particular need.

Essentially, ordination means that one commits oneself—the totality of one’s life—in response to God’s call issued through the church, to faithful servant ministry for the benefit of the church and its mission. Priesthood calling is not something just in effect when a person is functioning in a formal priesthood role. Priesthood calling is expressed...
through all aspects of one’s life on a daily basis. Opportunities for priesthood ministry abound when one sees each day as an opportunity to serve the needs of others in the Spirit of the Living Christ.

Priesthood calling and ordination involve God’s grace-filled initiative in human life and humble human response. Therefore, ordination is a sacred act of covenant-making that includes God’s promise to faithfully bless priesthood members and the church community as priesthood members faithfully serve in their roles.

Since the process leading to calling and ordination involves the discernment and affirmation of the church, and the purpose of priesthood is ministry to and through the church, another dimension of covenant-making occurs. Through ordination, priesthood members covenant with the church to function according to the roles and expectations for priesthood ministry established by the church.

Because priesthood members are authorized by the church to represent it publically and privately, they become official representatives of the church. Therefore, priesthood members are accountable for communicating and upholding the church’s public faith as expressed in its official documents and statements.

In preaching, worship, and celebration of sacraments, priesthood members are responsible for seeing the gospel of Jesus Christ is responsibly, consistently, and affirmatively shared. This does not mean private opinions or disagreements have no place in the church; rather, it means personal opinions and disagreements have no place in the public proclamation and sacramental sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ.

**Priesthood Authority**

People often talk about authority when discussing priesthood structure, offices, ordination, and ministries. When speaking of authority we should keep first things first, or our perception of authority can too easily become ego-centered and self-serving.

Priesthood authority originates with God, especially through God present with us in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the great “high priest” whose ministry is permanent. Christ is the author and sustainer of a “better covenant” that does not end (Hebrews 7:22–24).

Consequently, he [Jesus Christ] is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

—Hebrews 7:25

The foundation of priesthood authority is humility and ministerial competency through which Jesus Christ is re-presented to people time and time again. The primary purpose of such ministry is to bless people’s lives and to reconcile the world with God’s purposes and vision for the future.

Priesthood authority is the opposite of how authority generally is understood. Instead of authority based on power and position, genuine priesthood authority is based
on the example of Jesus Christ, who humbly knelt before his disciples and lovingly washed their feet before blessing all creation through his sacrifice on the cross.

Truly authoritative priesthood ministry emerges from a growing capacity to bring blessing to others.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:6b

It is my will that my priesthood be made up of those who have abiding faith and desire to serve me with all their hearts, in humility and with great devotion.

—Doctrine and Covenants 156:8a

Another aspect of priesthood authority is sacramental authority. Ordination to priesthood designates people who are authorized by the church to administer the sacraments. Some sacraments have legal, as well as spiritual, implications. The authority to represent Christ and the church through sacramental ministry is a sacred trust that demands a high level of integrity and faithfulness to the policies and procedures of the church.

One dimension of priesthood authority we must not overlook is moral authority. This is the authority that comes from the alignment of one’s private and public life with the church’s mission, Enduring Principles, beliefs, and ethics. A lack of such alignment diminishes the credibility and effectiveness of the church’s witness of Jesus Christ. It reduces one’s spiritual standing in the eyes of members and friends to truly represent Christ in the world.

Stressing the importance of moral authority does not mean priesthood members must be perfect, which is not possible anyway. Nor does it mean priesthood members must avoid mistakes. We all disappoint ourselves and others at times when we fall short of our potential and aspirations. A central theme of the good news of the gospel is forgiveness and reconciliation through Jesus Christ in the present. This is as true for priesthood members as it is for others.

Moral authority is about the overall direction of our lives. How are we growing in Christ-like character and grace? Are we embodying the church’s Enduring Principles and ethics so that our priesthood ministry has integrity in the eyes of others? How do we show that Christ’s mission matters most, including resisting behaviors that do not contribute to moral life and relationships in Christ?

**Priesthood Faithfulness**

Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries.

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

—1 Corinthians 4:1–2

Most priesthood members are trustworthy and faithful to their responsibilities. As a result, people, families, congregations, and communities are blessed through sensitive,
competent, creative ministries of priesthood members who faithfully serve. The church is deeply grateful for such ministry because it magnifies the impact of our mission in the world.

Faithful priesthood ministry also blesses priesthood members. Nothing is more meaningful than growing in Christ-like service as we develop our giftedness and capacity to be living vessels for God’s grace to bless others. Through such response we find our truest selves created by God to participate in the fulfillment of divine purposes. As a result joy, hope, love, and peace become enduring qualities in the lives of faithful priesthood members.

*Priesthood faithfulness* is about trustworthy, accountable, and competent ministry. The church provides support and resources to help priesthood members find a fullness of joy, meaning, and effectiveness in their callings. Since God calls priesthood members through the church for the sake of the church’s mission, the church is called to nurture, equip, and support priesthood members for effective and faithful ministry.

Equipping and supporting priesthood members for faithful ministry takes many forms:

- Preparing and distributing resources for spiritual formation and growth in discipleship.
- Educating about ministry and priesthood calling in church life.
- Providing clear processes for pastors discerning and approving priesthood calls.
- Clarifying and upholding priesthood member expectations and accountabilities.
- Providing discernment, spiritual formation, mentoring, and educational opportunities prior to ordination.
- Offering spiritual, pastoral, educational, and mentoring support after ordination.
- Managing priesthood statuses to respond to changing life circumstances.
- Offering meaningful opportunities to reaffirm and deepen covenant commitments to priesthood ministry.

All priesthood ministries, processes, and opportunities have as their primary goal the effective functioning of priesthood members.
Foundations for Covenant Principles

All aspects of the church’s support for priesthood faithfulness are built on a foundation of **Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry.** The foundational principles listed below arise from our best understanding of what contributes to faithful priesthood ministry. Consistent application of these principles creates the maximum opportunity to experience fulfilling, effective, and joyous priesthood ministry throughout one’s life.

Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry

*for all priesthood members and ordinands*

Priesthood faithfulness begins with faithful discipleship. Faithful discipleship emerges from ongoing faith and spiritual formation. The constant call is to follow the Living Christ and to abide in increasing measure in God’s love and vision for creation. Being comes before doing.

The following expectations will help me serve as a faithful priesthood member. In response to God’s sacred call and priesthood authority granted by Community of Christ, I covenant to:

- Engage in ongoing faith and spiritual practices to deepen my relationship with God and others through study and spiritual formation.
- Affirm and promote Christ’s mission of invitation, compassionate ministries, and justice and peacemaking; help prepare others for Christ’s mission; and partner with other priesthood in leading congregations in Christ’s mission.
- Model an ethical, moral, and holistic lifestyle.
- Model generosity as a regular contributor to mission tithes (local, mission center, and worldwide ministries) according to my true capacity.
- Protect the safety and well-being of children and youth, including, where applicable, being a Registered Children and Youth Worker.
- Participate in congregational life or similar church expressions when congregational life is not available.
- Participate annually in educational or spiritual-formation experiences offered by my congregation, mission center, apostolic mission field, or World Church.
- Develop and implement a plan for ministry that uses my gifts to advance Christ’s mission.
Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission

Each day disciples choose to make Christ’s mission theirs as they engage in making the five Mission Initiatives a reality in their communities, congregations, and the world. All disciples are called to serve together to fulfill Christ’s mission.

Disciples and priesthood members holistically strive to achieve Christ’s mission. Each office has particular responsibilities and shared ministries with the other offices of disciple and priesthood. “Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission” illustrates how disciples and priesthood members serve together in seven essential, mission-focused areas. (See the Ministry and Priesthood flyer for detailed information.)

- Represent Christ primarily as ministers…
- Especially proclaim and promote…
- Particularly minister with…
- Support sacramental ministries by…
- Promote community by…
- Promote justice and peacemaking by…
- Create ministry partnerships with…