

Community of Christ

OFFICIAL POLICY

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Applicable:	Australia, British Isles, Canada, Central and South America, French Polynesia, United States, Western Europe. Applied with culturally sensitive adaptations in all other fields.		

Tithing Policy for Consideration of Priesthood Ordination

Introduction

Faithful disciples eagerly live the principles of A Disciple's Generous Response and experience the joy of giving, according to their true capacity, in response to God's grace revealed in Jesus Christ.

The church expects that a member ordained to a priesthood office will already be a regular contributor, according to their true capacity, to local and world mission tithes. This expectation is an expression of the Guiding Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry.

Guiding Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry

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. Priesthood is a sacred covenant with God and the church. It is the full commitment of one's life. Priesthood members offer servant ministry that reflects Christ's love, generosity, and mission to equip the faith community (church) to express Christ's mission in the world.

In response to God's sacred call and priesthood authority granted by Community of Christ, I commit to the following expectations that will help me serve as a faithful priesthood member:

- a. Engage in ongoing faith and spiritual formation through study and spiritual formation practices.
- b. Affirm and promote Christ's mission of invitation, compassionate ministries, pursuit of peace on Earth, disciple formation, and engaging congregations in mission.
- c. Know about church priorities and provide ministry that is consistent with the church's identity, mission, message, and beliefs as expressed in its current official documents.*
- d. Model an ethical, moral, and holistic lifestyle.
- e. Model generosity as a regular contributor, according to my true capacity, to local and world mission tithes.
- f. Protect the safety and well-being of children and youth, including, where applicable, being a Registered Children and Youth Worker.
- g. Actively participate in congregational life or similar expressions of the church.
- h. Participate annually in an education experience or spiritual formation retreat.
- i. Develop and update a Plan for Ministry.

Policy

Pastors and mission center presidents, in consultation with mission center financial officers as needed, should carefully consider a person's financial giving pattern to local and world mission tithes before initiating a recommendation for ordination. In limited cases where an individual is not currently contributing to either local or world mission tithes, a priesthood call may be approved after the pastor or presiding officer reviews the Guiding Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry with the individual prior to ordination and receives a sincere commitment to the expectations.

The Guiding Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry contains a list of basic expectations for priesthood ministry in Community of Christ including tithing response. During the Period of Exploration and Discernment (up to one year) the individual needs to agree to the expectations. If an individual is unwilling to commit to all expectations the pastor or presiding officer is responsible for insuring that *ordination does not occur*.

Upon receipt of the names of potential ordinands, the Office of the First Presidency will review confidential file and contributor information. Any findings potentially affecting approval of the call will be shared with the recommending officer(s).

In terms of tithing response, presiding officers (such as pastors or mission center officers) may approve ordination for persons who: (a) show a regular pattern of giving to local and world mission tithes; or (b) agree to and demonstrate during the Period of Exploration and Discernment the expectations contained in the Guiding Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry which include being a regular contributor to local and world mission tithes.

A regular contributor is someone who shows a consistent pattern of giving to local and world mission tithes in one of the following ways:

- Weekly or monthly contributions (any amount) for at least one year; or
- Annual giving (any amount) for at least two consecutive years.

Additional Rationale

God calls priesthood through the church to serve Jesus Christ as servant leaders and ministers. Priesthood is an expression of faithful discipleship through ordained ministry roles. Faithful discipleship includes understanding and living the principles of A Disciple's Generous Response. These principles include sharing generously according to one's true capacity to local and world mission tithes. Teaching and modeling the principles of A Disciple's Generous Response is a responsibility of all priesthood members. Priesthood cannot teach these principles with integrity if they are not living the principles themselves.

The church is an international faith community with a mission expressed locally and globally through a variety of ministries. It is not just a collection of local congregations. Potential priesthood members should show commitment to the whole mission of the church and the Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity that makes mission possible. Regularly contributing to local and world mission tithes is a reasonable and proper standard for those recommended for ordination.

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints.... Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

—2 Corinthians 8:1–7 NRSV

Stewardship is the response of my people to the ministry of my Son and is required alike of all those who seek to build the kingdom.

—Doctrine and Covenants 147:5a

You have been given the principles of generosity, rightly interpreted for a new time. These principles call every disciple to tithe faithfully in accordance with means and capacity. Those values, deeply rooted in the Restoration faith, affirm that stewardship and discipleship cannot be divided and are dependent upon each other.

—Doctrine and Covenants 162:7c

*The expectation for priesthood to continually magnify their callings through spiritual growth, study, **exemplary generosity**, ethical choices, and fully accountable ministry is always present. How can the Spirit fill vessels that are unwilling to expand their capacity to receive and give according to a full measure of God's grace and truth?*

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:6c (emphasis added)

This policy recognizes people have different capacities to give according to their current circumstances. It emphasizes consistency of giving as evidence of commitment to the mission of the whole church, regardless of the amount given. At the same time, the policy recognizes some people are in situations where prudent and faithful management of their finances makes annual contributions more desirable. This policy recognizes that optional way of giving, as well.

An important standard for considering priesthood calls is giving to support local and world mission tithes designed to achieve the church's mission to proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. Pastors and congregational financial officers, mission center presidents and financial officers, apostolic leadership teams, the Presiding Bishopric, and the Office of the First Presidency will work closely together to uphold this standard.

Implementation

The intent of this policy is to be implemented in all apostolic fields of the church. In nations where priesthood calls are sent to the Office of the First Presidency for confidential file and contributor review, the Office of the First Presidency will indicate whether or not a candidate is cleared for continued consideration of a priesthood call. In other nations, church officers are responsible for creating processes that honor the principles of this policy.