



Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

2024 Draft Statement on Nonviolence

BACKGROUND

The 2019 World Conference adopted World Conference Resolution (WCR) 1319: Nonviolence on April 12, 2019. It reads:

Whereas, the call of Jesus Christ has led Community of Christ to learn from acts of violence in its early history and to seek to embody the peace of Christ in the world; and

Whereas, any discussion on the ethics of violence in the current political and social context can polarize people and provoke worries, concerns, and strong emotions; and

Whereas, Community of Christ has declared itself to be a peace church in the Restoration tradition, affirming the Worth of All Persons and lifting up the cause of Zion; and

Whereas, Community of Christ independently and ecumenically already is exploring different positions on the use of violence; be it therefore

Resolved, That over the next three years Community of Christ members and leaders discuss the role nonviolence plays in the pursuit of “peace on and for the Earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:1d) and in the life and mission of the church; be it further

Resolved, That scriptural, theological, and historical discussion resources on the principles of nonviolence be produced and suggested for members and friends of Community of Christ as part of our continued commitment to peace education and advocacy; and be it further

Resolved, That, the position of Community of Christ on nonviolence be referred to the First Presidency for a report and/or statement to be presented to the 2022 World Conference.

Since the 2019 World Conference, the church has explored nonviolence in response to WCR 1319, utilizing the alternative common-consent process. Various study resources have been made available in English, French, and Spanish. Classes, as well as discussion groups, have been conducted at gatherings within the church. Feedback from the church regarding the content of a statement has been sought.

At the 2023 World Conference, delegates addressed the question:

Should the First Presidency continue to develop a statement on the role of nonviolence in the pursuit of “peace on and for the Earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:1d) and in the life and mission of the church?

Survey Results:

Level of Support	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
1. No support	62	4%
2. Limited support	98	6%
3. Tentative support	131	8%
4. Moderate support	232	14%
5. Full support	1,092	68%
6. Undecided	17	1%
TOTAL	1,610	100%

INVITATION

Given the overwhelming support at the 2023 World Conference, the First Presidency has crafted a draft Statement on Nonviolence. This draft is informed by feedback received from the church since 2019, as well as input from the Standing High Council, World Church Teams, and World Church Leadership Council.

Your input is important. The statement is presented to the church for feedback, with a deadline of 28 February 2025. To provide additional information in considering the statement, an introduction is provided ahead of the statement, and a section titled “Further Context” is provided after the statement. The “Introduction” section begins following this section.

You are invited to provide feedback on the “Introduction,” “Statement on Nonviolence,” and “Further Context” sections. The survey is provided in English, French, and Spanish. Choose the language of your choice in the upper-right corner of the survey available here: <https://forms.office.com/r/FQcZpPzchL>

In March 2025, the First Presidency will review the feedback and update all three sections as necessary. The latest versions of the “Introduction,” “Statement on Nonviolence,” and “Further Context” will be distributed to the church by 1 May 2025. The delegates of the 2025 World Conference will consider just the section titled, “Statement on Nonviolence” using elements of the alternative common-consent process. Plan to be part of this historic experience.

INTRODUCTION

The “Statement on Nonviolence” was created in response to World Conference Resolution 1319. If adopted by the World Conference, it will serve as a guiding document for Community of Christ.

This statement acknowledges the realities of a broken and incomplete world while encouraging the use of nonviolence whenever possible. As depicted in the church seal, the lion, lamb, and child together reveal the peace at the core of our identity. This statement is another step in our journey to understand and implement fully the role nonviolence plays in pursuing “peace on and for the Earth” (Doctrine and Covenants 165:1d) and in the life and mission of the church.

God calls us to engage actively with the world's realities, fully aware of our limitations and shared brokenness as humans. This divine calling inspires us to alleviate suffering, promote justice, protect the most vulnerable, and work toward the good of all creation.

It takes time and intentionality to respond to this call and become a prophetic people focused on working for justice and peace. This statement invites us—collectively and individually—to explore, journey toward, and embody the meaning of this call to live the full breadth of divine love for the world. Divine love seeks the well-being and flourishing of all creation. It seeks to embed the notion of peace in all we do and say.

STATEMENT ON NONVIOLENCE

We affirm that nonviolence is a means to embody the gospel message modeled by the teachings and life of Jesus, the peaceful One. Pursuing God's justice, nonviolence seeks positive change through means guided by the Spirit that do not bring physical, emotional, spiritual, or relational harm to others, oneself, or creation. We believe that nonviolent actions often lead to transformative and peaceful results. We acknowledge that violent actions often can lead to more violence, making peace impossible. Nonviolence promotes healing and reconciliation, advocating for the most vulnerable, taking care of creation, and creating a just and peaceful society aligned with God's vision of shalom. Therefore, Community of Christ, recognizing and celebrating the Worth of All Persons and the Sacredness of Creation, encourages the use of nonviolence whenever possible. How we decide when nonviolence is possible is the ongoing work of the church as we follow Jesus the peaceful One.

FURTHER CONTEXT

Ongoing discernment about our response: Community of Christ strives to live Christ's mission and work for the transformation of the world into a more just, peaceful, and compassionate place, in alignment with God's vision of shalom. Part of this work for transformation is the ongoing discernment of what it means to embrace nonviolence whenever possible as part of following Jesus, the peaceful One. In response to our individual and collective discernment, we can continue to learn from our past, grow in our understanding, and embody nonviolence in our lives, relationships, and engagement with society and creation.

Addressing root causes of injustice: We support initiatives and movements that address root causes of injustice and work toward sustainable peace for all people and Earth. We grieve when faced with social structures or institutional practices that abuse power and perpetuate oppression, discrimination, and injustice that deny human rights or harm creation. Instead, we seek to establish social and economic structures that uphold Earth stewardship, human dignity, equality, fundamental rights, and the well-being of the most vulnerable. Every individual or group choice seeking justice and sustainable life together, however small, is important because our world is interconnected and interdependent.

Calling of individual disciples: We affirm everyone who through personal conscience and sense of call pursues justice and peace in ethical and diverse ways. We believe that all disciples are called to protect the most vulnerable, uphold human rights, and care for creation, avoiding the abuse of power in their

personal and professional endeavors. We recognize the sincerity of those who, on the grounds of conscience, work in professions focused on peacekeeping. In addition, we recognize the sincerity of those who refuse to work in these professions, also on the grounds of conscience. We are united in our common commitment to Christ even amid our diverse perspectives about and shortcomings in how we fulfill God's call to pursue peace.

Learning from the past: We encourage people to wrestle with the violence of many in human history and to learn repentantly from these stories. We grieve the trauma suffered by everyone involved in violence and seek to bring healing of minds, bodies, and spirits to all. We affirm just-war principles as a minimum ethic for those in military service, together with the protection of the most vulnerable. We also repent of times in our own church history when we have initiated or retaliated with unnecessary violence, or when we have turned a blind eye to injustice, including the dehumanization of others or the destruction of creation.

Promoting healthy relationships: We affirm that healthy and mutual relationships reflect God's love and, thus, are nonviolent. We reject all forms of violence, abuse, and power imbalances in interpersonal relationships. Nonviolent approaches that foster dialogue, understanding, peaceful resolutions, and reconciliations are encouraged.

Seeking understanding: We encourage open dialogue to seek understanding about ways to pursue justice through nonviolence within our faith community and with others. We grieve when conversations shut down, and individual and collective relationships are broken. We seek to create opportunities where people with differing views can respectfully explore the role nonviolence plays in the pursuit of "peace on and for the Earth" (Doctrine and Covenants 165:1d) and in the life and mission of the church.

Using the statement: We commit to using the Statement on Nonviolence as a disciple- and community-formation tool. It should not be used to judge or oppress another person. It should be used as guidance, recognizing that all disciples must interpret the statement and responsibly choose how it influences their personal choices.