



Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

Letter from the First Presidency *Accompanying the Bylaw Survey Summary*

April 2026

Dear Members and Friends of Community of Christ,

In October 2025, the church was invited to participate in an online survey about the bylaws of Community of Christ. This survey was conducted as part of leadership's response to World Conference Resolution (WCR) 1335. A total of 249 members and friends from multiple nations responded.

The First Presidency extends our deep gratitude to everyone who participated in the survey. Your thoughtful responses and honest reflections have provided essential information that will help the First Presidency, the World Church Leadership Council, and the Conference Organization and Procedures Team (COPT) consider possible directions for updating the World Church's bylaws.

The Bylaw Survey Summary is being provided for your review. We encourage you to read the summary input and reflect on the insights and perspectives that have been shared. As World Church leaders respond to WCR 1335, ongoing conversations with the church will be needed to ensure that any bylaw changes considered reflect the different governance needs for the church to legally function within various contexts around the world and are aligned with our identity and mission. Your voices matter deeply in this process.

If you have additional reflections after reviewing the summary, please email the First Presidency at FP@CofChrist.org. Your continued engagement is a blessing to the church.

Onward in gratitude and hope,

The First Presidency
Community of Christ

Bylaw Survey Summary Report

Participation Overview

- **Total Respondents:** 249
- **Language Breakdown**
 - English: 235
 - Español: 9
 - Français: 5
- **Statistical Confidence**
 - Based on a total estimated population of **250,000** and a sample size of **249**, the survey results have a **Margin of Error of ± 6.21%** with a **95% Confidence Level**.
- **Why does this matter?**
 - We've provided this information to clarify that if everyone in the church were surveyed, the actual results would likely be within **6.2%** of these reported figures.

How Bylaws and Policies differ in the life of the church

Bylaws are a legal document that describes the framework or core structure of the church - who provides leadership, how decisions are made, and the governing principles that define purpose and authority. Policies define how decisions and governing principles are applied on a daily basis. Together, bylaws provide the legal structure, and policies offer the procedures needed for the church to function in diverse communities around the world. The church also has other formational principles and documents that shape our discipleship and help us understand the church's Identity, Mission, Message and Beliefs.

Survey Results

As you review the survey results, you will see percentage values that indicate how respondents rated their level of support for specific questions.

The survey also included questions requesting a written, narrative response. For these questions—identified as **Comments Summary**—the number shown in the summary indicates how many respondents provided a narrative response.

This brief explanation is offered to help you understand the difference between the use of percentage values and the use of actual numbers in the Comments Summary.

General Impressions

What is the main purpose of the current bylaws in the life of the church?

- **61.5%** view the bylaws as "A necessary set of rules for governance," while **29.5%** see them as "A helpful guide that empowers mission." Only **4.5%** find them restrictive.

How easy are the current bylaws to understand and use?

- Opinions are split; **45.0%** find them "Very user-friendly," while **48.8%** find them only "Somewhat user-friendly."

Comments Summary—Which parts of the bylaws are unclear to you?

Across the 65 responses, most members find the bylaws generally clear and well-written, though several expressed that the bylaws are too long or difficult for those without administrative experience. Several sections of the bylaws consistently raise questions. Some question the relevance of mission center councils when more shared leadership models are being used in mission centers. Congregational structures, for some, appear outdated, as many communities now operate with leadership teams, very small membership, or online expressions not adequately reflected in the bylaws.

Concerns were also expressed about the priesthood call processes, the 2800 delegate representation at World Conference, and undefined terms such as "membership in good standing." Some respondents highlight outdated or overly complex language—especially in Articles II and VI—and suggested updated wording that better reflects Community of Christ today. Language barriers and difficulty locating the bylaws, limit global engagement.

Despite these issues, many affirm the bylaws' intent and values, noting they provide consistent guidance across diverse contexts.

Governance Structure (Article III-Theocratic Democracy)

How relevant is the idea of 'theocratic democracy' for our church today?

- There is strong support for this concept, with **82.4%** calling it "Very relevant and helpful." **5%** perceive the concept is outdated or confusing.

Comments Summary—Share any experiences or perspectives that shaped your answer about theocratic democracy.

The 96 responses expressed deep appreciation for the church's theocratic democracy, seen as central to identity, mission, and discernment. Many value the balance of divine guidance and member participation, recognizing that the Holy Spirit, prophetic leadership, and common consent as essential to shared decision making. Others highlighted tensions: confusion about terminology, perceived top down control, declining transparency, and inconsistent opportunities for genuine member voice. Several note cultural, theological, and structural challenges—ranging from global diversity and following social trends rather than divine initiative. Yet many affirm that the theocratic democracy model empowers members, fosters accountability, and supports continuing revelation. Across contexts, respondents stress the need for clarity, education, inclusion, and renewed commitment to discerning God's will together.

How well does the principle of common consent work in your context?

- It is seen as working "Very Well" most often in Congregations (**54.5%**), followed by World Conference (**47.9%**) and Mission Centers (**46.8%**). While experiences vary by setting, the overall pattern suggests that members see common consent as a workable and meaningful practice in church governance, though not without occasional challenges.

Comments Summary—Share examples of where you have seen common consent work effectively to advance our mission or pose a challenge.

The 103 responses show that common consent is valued for fostering participation, dialogue, and spiritual discernment across the church. Many named positive experiences at World Conference, national conferences, and congregational or mission center meetings. In these experiences where dialogue, level of support indicators, and extended discussion helped communities navigate complex issues such as LGBTQ inclusion, non violence statements, leadership selection, budgeting, and campground decisions. These processes often deepened understanding, reduced conflict, and strengthened unity.

At the same time, respondents identified significant challenges. Concerns include inadequate representation, limited time for discernment at World Conference, inconsistent use of common consent in congregations, and perceptions of predetermined outcomes or top down decision making by leadership. Some note barriers created by lack of transparency, rushed processes, or dominant individuals or families. Others highlight global inequities, digital access limitations, and the difficulty of achieving broad consensus on sensitive issues.

Conferences and Representation (Article IV-Conferences)

Given our smaller membership today, do you support reducing the number of World Conference delegates?

- A significant majority (**68.4%**) agree or strongly agree that the number of delegates (2,800) should be reduced to improve efficiency and reduce costs. **32%** disagree or strongly disagree.

Comments Summary—What are the missional advantages or disadvantages of a larger or smaller World Conference?

The 141 responses offered a wide range of views on the missional implications of changing the size of World Conference. Many note that declining membership, financial strain, visa barriers, and difficulty filling delegations suggest a smaller conference could improve efficiency, reduce costs, and better reflect current realities. Others emphasize that broad representation—especially from non U.S. contexts—is essential for global legitimacy, diversity of voice, and shared discernment. Several highlight that technology and remote participation could expand access without reducing delegate numbers.

Concerns include overrepresentation of the U.S., the risk of concentrating decision making power in fewer hands, and the potential loss of the formative, intercultural experience that large gatherings provide. Some advocate proportional or percentage based representation rather than a fixed number. Overall, the tension lies between stewardship and the church’s commitment to global participation, equity, and common consent.

Are our electronic conference procedures adequate for today’s online and global church?

- The respondents were divided on digital adaptability. **42%** feel current rules are adequate, while **41%** believe more flexibility and guidance are needed. **5%** perceive the procedures are a barrier to mission. **12%** had no opinion.

- **Comments Summary—Are there additional provisions needed in the bylaws for electronic conferences?**

78 respondents expressed broad agreement that electronic and hybrid conferences are valuable for expanding global participation, reducing travel barriers, and increasing equity across mission centers. Several believe additional bylaw provisions are needed for ways to verify participants, secure online voting, translation support, time zone challenges, and accessibility for regions with limited connectivity. Others emphasized the need for clearer procedures, flexibility as technology evolves, and safeguards against hacking or unequal access to the speaker queue.

Several highlighted concerns that electronic formats can feel impersonal, exclude those without technological skills or equipment, or diminish informal relationship building. Across responses, there is strong desire for fairness between in person and remote delegates. This includes support for international hubs, and continued exploration of ways to ensure all members—especially elderly, remote, or economically limited—can participate meaningfully.

Congregations and Mission Centers (Articles V & VI)

Do the current bylaws give enough flexibility to support different kinds of gathered communities?

- **79%** of respondents believe the bylaws offer at least some flexibility, while **21%** feel they do not.

Comments Summary—What new types of gathered communities are vital for our future mission? What support would be needed in the bylaws?

The 94 narrative responses reveal broad agreement that Community of Christ must embrace more flexible, diverse forms of gathered community beyond traditional, building based congregations. Many highlight the growing importance of online, hybrid, and geographically dispersed groups, as well as house churches, small groups, camping ministries, mission focused gatherings, and communities organized around identity, interest, or social need. Several note that younger generations are especially drawn to less formal, more relational expressions of church.

A recurring theme is the need for clearer, more adaptable bylaws that recognize these emerging forms, address membership and leadership requirements, and allow smaller groups—even fewer than six people—to function meaningfully. Respondents call for guidance on jurisdiction, accountability, and support for virtual congregations, including technical, financial, and organizational resources. Others caution against creating unnecessary categories or hierarchy that could cause division. Overall, contributors seek a balance between flexibility, clarity, and unity as new models of community continue to emerge.

How well does congregational autonomy work in practice?

- While **25.3%** say autonomy works "Very well," the majority (**59.1%**) feel it "Mostly works, with some challenges." **15.6%** were unsure or believed it hindered mission.

Comments Summary—Where do congregations need more autonomy to pursue mission? What support would be needed in the bylaws and from world church leaders?

Of the 101 narrative responses, many feel that congregations express both a desire for autonomy and a need for stronger support. Many noted that administrative burdens—finances, property management, reporting, and leadership vacancies—overwhelm volunteer pastors and limit

mission-focused ministry. There is an increasing call for centralized or shared administrative services, improved financial transparency, easier access to local funds, and clearer bylaws that support small or aging congregations. Others emphasize the need for leadership training, mission planning support, conflict resolution assistance, and more consistent communication from mission centers and world church leaders.

Some worry that excessive autonomy leads to theological drift or congregational isolation, while others feel world church control—especially over property and finances—limits local innovation. Many highlight shrinking membership, burnout, and the challenge of sustaining traditional congregational models, suggesting more flexible expressions of community. Overall, respondents seek a balance: local freedom to pursue context-specific mission paired with accessible and responsive support from broader church structures.

Do the bylaws help mission centers fulfill their purpose?

- **79%** agree that bylaws effectively help Mission Centers support congregations and facilitate expansion. **21%** disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Comments Summary—Offer suggestions on how mission centers can be relevant to the needs of the church today. What support is needed in the bylaws?

According to the 90 respondents, mission centers are viewed as essential connectors between congregations and the wider church. Yet, many respondents noted a gap between the bylaws' intent and the actual execution at the local level. Common themes include the need for stronger support to congregations, more consistent leadership presence, improved communication, and clearer articulation of mission center roles—especially around training, spiritual formation, conflict resolution, and administrative guidance.

Many expressed concern about large geographic areas, limited staffing, volunteer burnout, and declining resources, which hinder mission centers' effectiveness. Some call for smaller or reorganized mission centers, paid staff, or renewed vision aligned with World Church priorities. Others highlight the need for financial sustainability, accountability mechanisms, and better onboarding for new leaders. A recurring tension appears between congregational autonomy and mission center oversight. While some feel mission centers foster connection and shared ministry, many report inconsistent support and desire more practical, responsive, and mission-focused engagement.

Should the number of members constituting a quorum for mission center conferences be larger to improve representation (currently it is 6 members)?

- **57%** believe the number should be increased. **43%** are satisfied with the current quorum of 6 members.

Comments Summary—If the number should be increased, how many would you suggest?

Many of the respondents agreed that a six-person quorum for mission center conferences is too small. Across the range of suggested changes, the most common recommendation was to increase the quorum to 20 members. Others proposed proportional models based on the number of congregations or the percentage of active members. Respondents consistently emphasized fair representation, avoiding dominance by a single congregation, and accommodating mission centers of different sizes.

Is the congregation–mission center–World Church structure still serving the church well?

- **76%** agree or strongly agree that the current structure (Congregation – Mission Center – World Church) still meets the church's needs. **24%** disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Comments Summary—Why do you hold the perspective expressed in the question above?

The 121 responses expressed that the three level structure of congregation, mission center, and World Conference is widely seen as valuable for maintaining unity, coordination, and shared identity across a global church. Many respondents affirm that congregations are where mission is lived, while mission centers provide essential support, leadership development, and camping ministries.

However, other concerns were raised: mission centers vary greatly in effectiveness, are often underfunded or understaffed, feel distant from congregations, or are too large geographically to offer meaningful support. Some believe technology reduces the need for a middle level, while others argue for more structure—such as national conferences or specialized boards—to address contextual needs and marginalized voices. Many noted declining membership, uneven accountability, and confusion about roles. Overall, respondents agree that the current structure can work but requires clearer purpose, stronger leadership, better resourcing, and adaptation to changing realities.

Parliamentary Process (Article IX-Parliamentary Authority)

Are Robert's Rules of Order effective in your context?

- **49%** find formal procedures "Very effective" for fairness, while **41%** find them "Somewhat effective." **10%** do not believe the procedures are effective.

Final Reflections

Comments Summary—Is there anything else you would change in the bylaws to help the church better live its mission? If so, what is it and how would you change it?

Across the 88 responses, many suggested no additional changes needed. Others offered several suggestions. A major focus is dissatisfaction with Robert's Rules of Order, viewed as culturally narrow, overly technical, and misaligned with common consent; many recommend replacing or simplifying it, or adopting alternative consensus building models. Others called for clearer definitions and processes—especially regarding congregational status, mission center leadership, co pastor elections, conference frequency, and roles across governance levels.

Several respondents emphasized inclusivity: stronger representation of youth, women, and global voices; recognition of diverse forms of community; and allowing committed non members to vote. Concerns about transparency, financial oversight, and local control of assets were also raised. Some advocate integrating Enduring Principles into the bylaws or updating theological language. Additional themes include better support for emerging areas, improved communication, expanded use of technology, and ensuring leadership selection reflects discernment rather than hierarchy.

Comments Summary—What part of the bylaws is most essential to our identity and must remain unchanged to preserve the soul and mission of Community of Christ?

Of the 99 responses, many identified Articles I, II, and III—especially the Purpose, Theocratic Democracy, and Common Consent—as the core elements of the bylaws that preserve the soul and mission of Community of Christ. Many emphasize that the church’s mission, identity, and Christ centered purpose must remain central, even if wording is refreshed for clarity or global relevance. Strong themes include protecting member voices, democratic governance led by the Spirit, and the belief that congregations are primary to mission.

Several stress the need for unity as a worldwide church, avoiding fragmentation into national bodies. Others highlighted divine calling, discernment, and the worth of all persons as essential. Some expressed skepticism about bylaws themselves, preferring flexibility or minimal constraints. A few raised concerns about politicization, leadership culture, or the corporate tone of governing documents. Overall, respondents value structures that safeguard identity while enabling Spirit-led adaptation.

Gratitude

Thank you to everyone who participated in this survey in response to World Conference Resolution 1335. Your feedback provides essential data that helps assess the church’s current governance structure and whether it is both representative and flexible enough to support the church’s mission in a changing world.

If you have additional reflections, please email the First Presidency at FP@CofChrist.org.