



# Community of Christ

## Bylaws of Community of Christ

### Article I – Name

The name of this church shall be “Community of Christ.” \*

### Article II - Purpose

The purpose and mission of the church is to proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. The church envisions a time when the promise of God’s kingdom shall be fulfilled. We have a vision of that kingdom where the name of Jesus Christ is truly honored, where God’s will is done on earth, where the hungry are fed, poverty is alleviated, sinners are repentant, and sin is forgiven. We believe that love is the proper foundation of our relationship with others, that opportunity to grow in the likeness of Christ should be fostered, and that the resources of the world can be managed to respect and preserve their creation and purpose. We have a vision of a time when all evil is overcome and peace prevails. We will be an international community of prophetic vision, faithful to the risen Christ, empowered by hope, spending ourselves courageously in the pursuit of peace and justice.

### Article III - Theocratic Democracy

**Section 1. Definition.** The church, as defined by President Joseph Smith III, is a theocratic democracy. It was brought into being by divine initiative, is guided and administered by divine authority, is sustained by the light of the Holy Spirit, and exists for divine purposes. In response to divine initiative, members share responsibility for governing the church. “. . . all things must be done in order and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 27:4).

**Section 2. Priesthood.** The government of the church is by divine authority through priesthood. It should be noted that the government of the church is through priesthood, not by priesthood. The distinction is important. Ministers must first of all be disciples. Disciples are those who seek to transform this world into the kingdom of God and Christ. In no other way can their claim to divine authority become rich and meaningful.

**Section 3. Priesthood Calls.** The basic principles pertaining to priesthood calls are that all calls shall be initiated by appropriate administrative officers, shall receive necessary administrative approvals, shall be presented to the candidate for acceptance, and shall be approved by an appropriate conference of members. Specific procedures are established by the First Presidency.

**Section 4. Common Consent.** A basic principle of decision-making in the Community of Christ is common consent. Common consent respects the rights of the people to assent to the general conduct of business within the church and to sustain those called of God to provide leadership. Common consent is exercised when members assemble in conferences in congregations, mission centers, and at the World Conference. Leadership is exercised through the responsibility of presiding officers and members to make

proposals to the various conferences to which they are responsible and through recognizing that these conferences have the responsibility to review such proposals, to share points of view, and to vote as they feel led by the Holy Spirit.

The rights of the body are safeguarded through the process of common consent as follows:

- a. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit in calling members to the priesthood. All priesthood members are to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto them, and they are to be ordained by the power of the Holy Spirit which is in those who ordain them.
- b. By the requirement that calls to the priesthood be presented for approval to an appropriate conference.
- c. By the right of approval and disapproval which rests with the people who are asked to sustain World Church leaders at World Conference, and local leaders at local conferences.
- d. By the requirement that all things be done with due regard for the duties and privileges of other ministers and members and in harmony with the legislative enactments of the body.
- e. By the provisions for correcting disorder (Doctrine and Covenants 122:10, 126:10).
- f. By the understanding that, for the good of all, properly selected leaders must be allowed to do their work without undue interference, subject always to the provisions made to cover special situations.

**Section 5. Leadership and Administrative Functions.** Leadership and administration is through members of the priesthood, acting according to their several callings and with the consent of the church. Supervisory leadership of the ministries of the church is vested in the following groups:

- a. The *First Presidency* is composed of the president and two counselors, and they preside over the whole church. This includes responsibility for the World Conference, field ministries, priesthood quorums and orders, and headquarters functions.
- b. The *Council of Twelve Apostles* is responsible for the evangelistic witness of the church. Individual apostles may be assigned to various responsibilities of church leadership, including field administration.
- c. The *Presiding Bishopric* is composed of the presiding bishop and two counselors. They are the chief financial officers and trustees of the church, and are responsible for the administration of the temporal affairs of the whole church.

Together these groups function as the leadership body of the church known as the World Church Leadership Council. To this council, from time to time, additional persons are added because of the unique contribution they make to the administrative, programmatic, or missionary ministries of the church.

Other leadership functions are vested in the following councils, quorums, and orders:

- Council of Presidents of Seventy
- Quorums of Seventy
- Quorum of High Priests
- Order of Bishops
- Order of Evangelists

**Section 6. Legislative Functions.** Legislation is considered and enacted in World Conference, field conferences, national conferences, cultural area conferences, mission center conferences, and in congregational conferences. These conferences meet at the call of the responsible administrative officers, at times and places determined by the bodies concerned, or without such provisions at times and places set by the responsible administrative officers.

- a. **Authority of Conferences.** Each conference has authority to legislate for those it represents, insofar as it does not usurp rights lawfully centered elsewhere. Accordingly, no congregational conference can legislate for its mission center, such as requiring certain acts on the part of mission center leaders and no congregational or mission center conference can enact binding legislation on matters of World Church importance.
- b. **Limits.** No legislative body can rightfully take to itself administrative or judicial functions.
- c. **Right to Nominate.** It is the right of all members to make nominations in filling elective offices in the jurisdictions of the church, but this action in no sense denies the right of presiding officers to present concurrent nominations for the filling of such elective offices nor does it suppose that every office should be filled by election. Often program assistants are appointed by presiding officers and sustained by the appropriate conference.

**Section 7. Judicial Functions.** When conflicts between members or on issues of church polity arise, every attempt should be made to resolve them through the ministry of reconciliation. When these attempts have not been successful, in extreme cases, members of the church have right of access to the courts of the church for protection or redress. Bishop's courts, or where these are not feasible, elders' courts, are standing courts and have original jurisdiction. The Standing High Council exists at the World Church level. It has original jurisdiction in some matters and may hear appeals from bishop's courts. However, the First Presidency has the authority to determine whether any case is subject to a court hearing or a rehearing on appeal.

## **Article IV – Conferences**

**Section 1. Conferences.** Conferences are the legislative bodies of the church. They may be regular or special. Generally, regular conferences shall be held annually or otherwise as agreed upon by those who constitute their membership. They may represent the church at large, a mission center, or a congregation. They are subject to the jurisdiction of the First Presidency, members of the Council of Twelve, and appropriate mission center presidents or congregational pastors.

**Section 2. World Conference.** The World Conference is the highest legislative body in the church and should be organized with primary reference to its legislative functions. The World Conference is constituted according to the provisions of the rules of representation and is empowered to act for the entire church. In the World Conference and in a general assembly, the First Presidency shall preside. In case of the absence or disqualification of the First Presidency, the Council of Twelve shall so function.

- a. **Leadership in the World Conference.** Members of the First Presidency, the Council of Twelve Apostles, the presiding evangelist, the Presiding Bishopric, the church secretary, the presidency of the Quorum of High Priests, and the presidents of Seventy shall have voice and vote in the World Conference and shall not be eligible to serve as delegates from any jurisdiction. The functioning of the quorums, councils, and orders is considered important to the World Conference; they shall have access to the conference through their presiding officers. The presiding officer of the conference may grant voice to those whose contribution is considered to be beneficial to the conference.

- b. **Delegates to the World Conference.** Mission centers are authorized to elect delegates to the World Conference. Delegates are members of the World Conference to which they are elected and are entitled to voice and vote at its meetings.
- c. **Basis of Representation.** The number of delegates to the World Conference shall be apportioned to approximate a total of 2,800 persons. Each mission center shall be entitled to two delegates. Additional delegates, in a number adequate to bring the total to approximately 2,800, shall be apportioned among the mission centers according to their membership enrollment.
- d. **Notification.** The Credentials Committee shall determine enrollment of each jurisdiction as of one year prior to the convening of the World Conference and shall use that enrollment as a basis for allocating delegates from each jurisdiction. At least ten months prior to the convening of the World Conference, the Credentials Committee shall inform the president of each mission center of the number of delegates to which that mission center is entitled.
- e. **Qualifications for delegates.** The only qualification for eligibility as a delegate to the World Conference shall be membership in good standing in the church.
- f. **Certification.** Delegates shall be seated as members of the conference and entitled to vote in the conference's proceedings upon registering with the Credentials Committee. Each mission center should provide the Credentials Committee with a certified list of the delegates and alternates according to procedures approved by the First Presidency.
- g. **Delegate voting.** In general, each person seated as a delegate at the World Conference shall be entitled, when present, to cast one vote each time a vote is taken. In extraordinary circumstances, or in situations where a jurisdiction cannot send to the World Conference the number of delegates to which it is entitled, the First Presidency is authorized to implement alternate voting procedures subject to the consent of the World Conference.

**Section 3. Field Jurisdiction Conferences.** Conferences of mission centers or congregations are regular gatherings authorized by a congregation, a mission center, or by the presiding officer of these jurisdictions. The member of the Council of Twelve who has administrative supervision may also call a conference if the need arises. These conferences have to do with the common interests of the church members within the specified areas. Mission centers have the option of providing for delegate conferences. In such cases the mission center conference is authorized to determine the basis for representation.

**Section 4. Special Conferences.** Special conferences may be called by the First Presidency for the World Conference; by the mission center president for mission center conferences; and by the pastor for congregational conferences. In emergencies special conferences may also be called by the supervising administrative officer having jurisdiction. The call for special conferences shall specify the purpose of the conference and only business mentioned in the call of the conference may be transacted.

**Section 5. Field, National or Cultural Area Conferences.** From time to time field, national or cultural area conferences may be convened on the authority of the field apostle(s) concerned, with the approval of the First Presidency. These conferences are by their nature special conferences and so the call for a field, national or cultural area conferences will specify the purpose of the conference and only business mentioned in the call of the conference may be transacted. Field, national or cultural area conferences can be called with at least twelve (12) weeks notice to the congregations concerned.

**Section 6. Electronic Conferences and Meetings.** All organized units of Community of Christ may hold conferences and meetings electronically if such is determined to be the most suitable method within a given context. Electronic conferences and meetings must be approved by appropriate next-level supervisory administrators and must be in harmony with requirements unique to each body (i.e., World

Conference, Mission Center Conference, Congregation Conference, etc.) detailed elsewhere in these bylaws.

For the purposes of this section, an electronic conference or meeting includes any conference or meeting in which some or all members participate by virtual or other electronic means.

## **Article V – Congregations**

**Section 1. Organization of congregations.** Congregations are the foundational missional units of the church where participants live out their discipleship. While numbers, complexity, and style may vary significantly, the ability and commitment to meet regularly as a community of disciples with a sense of common identity is the hallmark of each congregation. Congregations are formed by the authority of the field apostle in consultation with local church leaders, and with a vote of those who will make up the proposed congregation. Congregations are disorganized by the authority of the field apostle following consultation with local church leaders. Congregations should be primarily responsible for their own operations and ministries. Support for congregations beyond their ability to provide (e.g., legal, information systems, risk management, real estate, and human resource services) is the responsibility of the mission center and/or the World Church. Congregations are responsible for maintaining current membership data according to World Church guidelines.

**Section 2. Congregational officers.** Congregations have the freedom to organize themselves in ways that functionally promote the congregation's vision of Christian mission. Even so, annually each congregation shall elect a presiding officer, known as the pastor, and sustain the appointment of a financial officer. The appointment is made by the mission center financial officer. This should be done at a regular congregational conference or at one specifically called for that purpose of which due notice shall have been given. Congregational leaders should keep the mission center leaders fully informed of the condition of the congregation and should have frequent consultation with the mission center leaders.

**Section 3. Congregational conferences.** Congregational conferences shall be convened at least once annually and at such other times as are determined by action of the body. Congregations may consider legislation relating to congregational affairs. They may also consider legislation relating to the affairs of their mission center and recommend its enactment by that mission center's conference. Congregational conference actions shall be in harmony with, and subject to, mission center conference actions, World Conference action, and subject to the advice of the mission center leaders and World Church officers concerned.

Special conferences may be called by the congregational pastor. All congregational conferences shall be scheduled by the pastor in cooperation with the mission center president. The mission center president shall receive adequate notice and should be invited to offer any suggestions or nominations he or she may desire to present. In emergencies, and especially when a congregational pastor is incapacitated or the congregation shall have fallen into disorder, the mission center president may request or call a congregational conference; in this or any other necessary situation the mission center president may recommend procedure, present nominations for office, or do such other things as will best protect the interests of the church. When these interests shall require, the mission center president may take over direction of the congregation for a time, administering the work thereafter - either directly or indirectly - until a more permanent arrangement can be made. If the mission center president is thought to have proceeded unlawfully in any of these matters, appeal is to the supervising field apostle.

**Section 4. Notice of Conferences.** Normally notice of all congregational conferences should be given to the members of the congregation at least two weeks prior to congregational conference and should also be sent to the mission center president and to such other officers as might be concerned with the business to be transacted.

**Section 5. Quorum.** For the transacting of all business at a congregational conference, unless otherwise provided by the conference, six or more members present at any properly called meeting shall constitute a quorum. However, it is the responsibility of every member of the congregation to attend congregational conferences, both regular and special.

**Section 6. Presiding.** The pastor presides over congregational conferences. At the request of the pastor, or in the pastor's absence, the counselors may preside. Members of the First Presidency, Council of Twelve, or mission center staff may be asked to preside as a courtesy or in view of special circumstances.

**Section 7. Responsibilities of the presiding officer.** It is the responsibility of the presiding officer to bring to the attention of the body such matters as may require consideration or action; to enforce observance of the rules of order with decorum and propriety; to secure, as far as possible, a due respect and regard for the laws governing the church as contained in the scriptures, mission center, and World Conference enactments, as well as administrative procedures approved by the First Presidency.

**Section 8. Emerging Congregations.** In the early stages of congregational development, groups such as house churches, expansion groups, cell groups, etc., may be established by the mission center president or the field apostle. By definition, such groups are not fully self-sufficient and require significant support from other congregations or the mission center. The groups may have conferences from time to time as necessary with the approval of the mission center president. Lines of administration shall be established by the mission center leadership with the approval of the field apostle. Lines of financial accountability shall be established by the mission center leadership based on guidelines established by the Presiding Bishopric and with the approval of the field apostle. Such groups may be granted full congregational status by the field apostle in consultation with the mission center leadership and with a vote of those who will make up the proposed congregation.

## **Article VI - Mission Centers**

**Section 1. Purpose.** Mission centers exist to support congregations, facilitate church expansion, and provide linkage between World Church ministries and congregations. Mission centers may vary in size and composition and may be organized on the basis of contiguous congregations, congregations within the same political boundary, congregations that share similar cultural or social identities, or such other criteria as may be determined by the World Church Leadership Council. Key functions include, but are not limited to:

- pastoral support of congregational leaders;
- leadership skill development;
- congregational consultant ministries;
- missionary ministries;
- church planting;
- congregational crisis support;
- financial resource development and support;
- specialized ministries (e.g., children, youth, young adult, singles);
- coordination of periodic celebration events (e.g., reunions, camps, conferences, etc.);
- technical assistance to congregations (e.g., legal, risk management, real estate, etc.);
- human resources; and
- essential administrative functions (e.g., implementation of World Church policies, priesthood administration, pastoral supervision, etc.)

Mission centers shall provide for the networking and grouping of congregations to encourage mutual support, foster church identity, pursuit of common causes, and to provide fellowship, leadership

development, and celebration opportunities (e.g., reunions, camps, retreats, and leadership development programs).

Mission centers are responsible for coordinating the management, creation, maintenance, and disposition of campgrounds, administrative offices, and other ancillary facilities and entities that exist within the scope of the mission center's responsibility. Multi-jurisdictional associations may exist for these purposes as well.

**Section 2. Formation of Mission Centers.** Mission centers are formed by the approval of the World Church Leadership Council with appropriate consultation. Factors to be considered when determining the configuration of mission centers shall include, but not be limited to:

- former jurisdictional ties (e.g., district, stake, and regional configurations);
- shared congregational interests, styles, and concerns; and
- geographic proximity.

**Section 3. Mission Center Organization.** Mission center organization should be kept as simple as possible. The primary purpose is to support the ministry of congregations and promote the expansion of the church. Therefore, the mission center's focus should be on ministry and witness rather than on administration. In areas of relatively high membership density, leadership availability, and financial capacity, it may be necessary for mission centers to be more highly structured. Such a decision should be made with the concurrence of the field apostle. The principles of stake and district organization as described in various sections of the Doctrine and Covenants may serve, where helpful, in guiding mission center organization.

- a. Mission Center President.** Mission center presidents are appointed by the World Church through procedures established by the First Presidency. They are sustained by the Mission Center Conference and are supervised by the field apostle. The mission center president is the primary representative of the World Church to the congregations that compose the mission center. The mission center president is entrusted with the care and direction of the center's congregations through the properly selected pastors of these congregations and of the nonresident members of the mission center directly or through a nonresident pastor. It is the responsibility of the mission center president to plan the extension and development of the work of the church within the mission center. Mission center staff members and congregational pastors report to and are supervised by the mission center president.
- b. Mission Center Financial Officer.** Mission center financial officers are appointed by the World Church through procedures established by the First Presidency. They are sustained by the Mission Center Conference and are supervised by the mission center president. Mission center financial officers have specific trustee responsibilities in which they are subject to the direction and counsel of the Presiding Bishopric. They are responsible for such trusteeship to the appropriate conference and to the president of the mission center according to the provisions of the related budget.

**Section 4. Mission Center Councils.** Each mission center shall establish a mission center council, a standing body whose primary purpose is to advise mission center officers and staff on matters affecting the core functions of the mission center. Mission center councils shall be established according to World Church guidelines.

**Section 5. Mission Center Conferences.** Ideally, mission centers should convene conferences at least annually. Mission center conferences are authorized to transact business relating to the enhancement of ministry and expansion of the work within the mission center. Enactments of a mission center conference are confined to matters of concern to the mission center, including the approval of mission center budgets, the election of World Conference delegates, and the approval of legislation to be proposed for World Conference consideration. Mission center conference actions shall be in harmony with, and subject to,

World Conference action and subject to the advice of the World Church officers concerned. Mission centers may convene special conferences as needed. If in the determination of the mission center president in consultation with the field apostle, the mission center is unable to convene a mission center conference at least annually (e.g., geographic distance, prohibitive cost, etc.), then the mission center council shall be responsible for establishing procedures through which necessary conference decisions shall be made subject to the approval of the field apostle within World Church guidelines and policies.

Mission centers have the option of providing for delegate conferences. In such cases the mission center conference is authorized to determine the basis for representation. The field apostle shall receive notice of the mission center conference and should be invited to offer any suggestions or nominations he or she may desire to present. In emergencies, and especially when a mission center president is incapacitated or the mission center shall have fallen into disorder, the field apostle may request or call a mission center conference; in this or any other necessary situation the field apostle may recommend procedure, present nominations for office, or do such other things as will best protect the interests of the church. When these interests shall require, the field apostle may take over direction of the mission center for a time, administering the work thereafter—either directly or indirectly—until a more permanent arrangement can be made. If the field apostle is thought to have proceeded inappropriately in any of these matters appeal through the administrative line.

**Section 6. Notice of Conferences.** Normally notice of all mission center conferences should be given to the various congregational pastors within the mission center at least four weeks prior to the mission center conference and should also be sent to the supervising field apostle and to such other officers as might be concerned with the business to be transacted.

**Section 7. Quorum.** For the transacting of all business at a mission center conference, unless otherwise provided by the conference, six or more members present at any meeting for which proper notice has been given shall constitute a quorum. However, it is the responsibility of every member of the mission center to attend mission center conferences, both regular and special.

**Section 8. Presiding Officer.** The mission center president presides over the mission center conference. At his/her request or absence, another member of the mission center staff may be chosen to preside. Members of the First Presidency, Council of Twelve, or their authorized representatives may be asked to preside as a courtesy or in view of special circumstances.

**Section 9. Responsibility of the presiding officer.** It is the responsibility of the presiding officer to bring to the attention of the conference such matters as require the consideration or action of the mission center; to require observance of the rules of order with decorum and propriety; and to secure, insofar as he or she is able, a due respect and regard for the laws governing the church as contained in the scriptures and World Conference enactments.

## **Article VII - World Church Fields**

**Section 1. Nature of Fields.** World Church fields are established by the First Presidency and are groupings of mission centers. Fields are flexible in nature and their configuration will change periodically. The focus of ministry at the field level is to support mission centers in their efforts to support congregations and grow the church.

**Section 2. Supervising Ministers.** The First Presidency appoints members of the Council of Twelve to supervise fields.

**Section 3.** Field conferences or in some cases national or cultural area conferences may be called on the authority of the apostle(s) concerned and under rules approved by the Council of Twelve, with the



approval of the First Presidency. Such conferences will be special conferences. Only such business described in the notice of the conference can be considered.

## **Article VIII - Organization of Additional Jurisdictional Units**

As “the leading interpreters and teachers of the laws” (WCR 386), the First Presidency has the authority to organize additional forms of organizational units not currently foreseen. Such units may be based on national, other physical boundaries, or on no such geographical designations.

## **Article IX - Parliamentary Authority**

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern all conferences of the church in all cases where they are culturally appropriate and where they are not in conflict with these rules of order or any special rules of order adopted by the appropriate conference. In cultures where Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised is not known or generally used, locally appropriate rules shall be utilized to guarantee the rights of individual members and groups to participate fully in the deliberative process.

## **Article X – Amendments**

These rules of order may be amended at any World Conference by a two-thirds vote, provided that the full text of such proposed amendments are published in the *Herald* at least sixty days prior to the convening of the World Conference during which they will be considered.

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*\* Note: The name “Community of Christ” was established by the World Conference through WCR 1268 (April 7, 2000) and the new name became effective April 6, 2001. WCR 1268 also provided that “the name ‘Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints’ remain legally binding and be retained for legal purposes.”*

## **CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY**

I, the undersigned, certify that I am presently serving as World Church Secretary of Community of Christ, an unincorporated religious association headquartered in Independence, MO, and that these Bylaws have been duly adopted, in accordance with applicable Church rules and regulations, as the Bylaws of Community of Christ, and remain in full force and effect.

Executed at Independence, Missouri, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

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Susan K. Naylor  
World Church Secretary