



Community of Christ

## OFFICIAL POLICY CONSUMPTION OF INTOXICANTS BY PRIESTHOOD

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**Reference:**

[WCR 1300]

[*Church Administrator's Handbook: 2005 Edition*]

[Doctrine and Covenants 152]

[*Priesthood Manual 2004*]

[Ministry and Priesthood planning]

**Policy Number: 40-**

**Effective Date: January 1, 2018**

**Revision Date:**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The 2013 World Conference approved World Conference Resolution (WCR) 1300 – *Drinking of Intoxicants*. This resolution requested the First Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles to review the policy requiring complete abstinence from alcohol consumption by members of the priesthood, and confirm and/or revise the policy and administrative guidelines so there is a clear understanding of expectations for priesthood on this issue throughout the church.

Since 2013, the First Presidency has engaged World Church leadership teams in extensive discussion on scriptural, theological, historical, ethical, legal, cultural, pastoral and health issues related to drinking intoxicants. As a result of this study and review of existing policy, the World Church Leadership Council approved this updated policy on consumption of intoxicants by priesthood in Community of Christ. This updated policy is effective beginning January 1, 2018.

### **PRINCIPLES**

1. An “attitude of wholeness of body, mind, and spirit [is] a desirable end toward which to strive.” (D&C 156:5c)
2. “Priesthood is a sacred covenant involving the highest form of stewardship of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.” (D&C 163:6a)
3. “As revealed in Christ, God, the creator of all, ultimately is concerned about behaviors and relationships that uphold the worth and giftedness of all people and that

protect the most vulnerable. Such relationships are to be rooted in the principles of Christ-like love, mutual respect, responsibility, justice, covenant, and faithfulness.” (D&C 164:6)

4. Priesthood policies developed through wisdom and inspiration provide a clear way for disciples to respond to calling. They also define the difference between a sense of call as potential and the need to align one’s life with principles of moral behavior and relationships that promote the well-being of the church community.” (D&C 165:4b.)
5. Priesthood members should “model an ethical, moral, and holistic [health of body, mind, spirit] lifestyle.” (*Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry*)
6. Priesthood members should “protect the safety and well-being of children...” (*Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry*)
7. “We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.” (*Enduring Principles*, “Responsible Choices” – Luke 19:1-10)
8. We value our connections and share a strong sense of trust in and belong with one another – even if we never have met.” (*Enduring Principles*, “Blessings of Community”- Acts 2:41-47)
9. “True community upholds the worth of persons while providing a healthy alternative to self-centeredness, isolation, and conformity.” (*Enduring Principles*, “Blessings of Community”- Ephesians 4:11-13)

The church promotes health and wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships for all disciples and priesthood members. The risk of causing harm to self and others through the consumption of intoxicants is great and may result in the “the loss of power to minister effectively” (WCR 1192).

Priesthood members are accountable to choose responsibly what they do and say in their public and private lives, always keeping in mind the nature of their calling and stewardship for the well-being of the church community.

To support these principles the following policy is developed to provide for a clear way for priesthood and disciples to respond to their call in promoting the well-being of the church community.

## **DEFINITIONS**

These definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

1. “**Intoxicant**” is any beverage that contains an intoxicating element such as alcohol.
2. “**Established procedures**” refer to administrative actions and priesthood status categories currently in effect as described in the church’s official documents.

3. “**The most vulnerable**” includes children, youth, and those prone to addictions or recovering from addictions and others who are influenced by priesthood member behavior.
4. “**Presiding officer**” is a church leader at any level of church organization responsible for priesthood supervision such as pastors, mission center presidents, and apostles or their designees.
5. “**Loss of power to minister effectively**” is lessening of spiritual, sacramental, moral, and leadership authority in the eyes of the people being served by the priesthood member and presiding officers.
6. “**Community wellbeing**” upholds the safety and wholeness of all members of the faith community especially the most vulnerable.

## **POLICY**

**For the well-being of individuals and the church community, especially the most vulnerable, disciples and priesthood members are urged to refrain from drinking intoxicants.**

## **APPLYING THE POLICY**

1. All presiding officers should utilise the principles and definitions in this document for self-awareness and when determining the appropriateness of priesthood behavior in relationship to this policy.
2. In all instances, pastoral ministry to clarify and resolve issues should be offered before administrative action is taken. Pastoral ministry may include helping people seek professional services to treat dependence and addiction.
3. It is the responsibility of priesthood to uphold the principles of faithful priesthood in all aspects of their ministry, witness, and lives. The loss of power to minister effectively may result from socially inappropriate behavior (examples of which may include consuming intoxicants in public and displays of intoxicant consumption on social media all of which may have far-reaching impacts that can negatively influence the church in different nations).
4. If a presiding officer determines that a priesthood member’s behavior caused by drinking intoxicants results in loss of power to minister effectively, the presiding officer should explain the process of administrative action the priesthood member will encounter if the behavior continues.
5. The following administrative action applies under this policy:
  - a. Prior to administrative action, presiding officers should always consult with the next level presiding officer in considering pastoral support and administrative action most appropriate to the situation. The intent of

consultation is support and not direction in order to maintain the integrity of the appeal process.

- b. If the behavior continues, administrative action should be taken to remove the priesthood member from active ministry according to established procedures, which include the right of appeal.
- c. If a priesthood member attempts to provide ministry or participate in a church activity while under the influence of intoxicants, the presiding officer should remove the priesthood member from active ministry according to established procedures, which include the right of appeal.