

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

A group of representatives nominated from 23 fellowships gathered in Sandy, Utah on June 10th, 2017 to finalize a document written for those who desire to follow the doctrine of Christ, to be submitted to the entire body of believers for inclusion in the scriptures. The group voted to start with a document drafted by Jeff Savage as a base text and spent the day in review of said document. Those in attendance made various proposals to edit, add to, or delete from the language of the document and everyone present voted on each proposal. The labor took many hours, and several individuals had to leave prior to the conclusion of the editing process. While not all of the original participants could come to unity on the result, those who stayed petitioned the Lord and received an outpouring of the Spirit that both unified them and confirmed to them that the Lord was pleased with the results of their labor. These principles are presented given by way of wisdom rather than commandment and serve as an example to the believers to be applied internally to each individual and fellowship.

PREAMBLE

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has declared that today is once again a day of salvation. He has set His hand to gather His sheep from the four corners of the earth, to free them from the bonds of Babylon, to re-enthroned the agency of man, to free the believing captives from the chains of false religion, and to reestablish the New and Everlasting Covenant with a people who will have Him to be their God. His invitation to His sheep is to awake and arise, to repent and return, and to organize themselves, accepting the Lord's invitation to come to Him and ascend back into the presence of the Father. Fellowships are a means the Lord has given to prepare a people for this great undertaking. Unlike rules that only preoccupy, principles ennoble, inviting people to learn higher truths, develop wisdom, and govern themselves after the pattern of Heaven and according to the dictates of their own conscience. Those who labor in this work with all their heart, might, mind, and strength will become glorious in the eyes of the Lord.

Concerning the Doctrine of Christ:

Christ stated, "And again I say unto you, ye must repent and be baptized in my name and become as a little child or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto you that this is my doctrine and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil and is not built upon my rock" [3 Nephi 5]. Full acceptance of this doctrine is the primary governing principle of followers of Jesus Christ.

Concerning Baptism and the Sacrament:

Baptize and administer the Sacrament as set forth in the Book of Mormon [Mosiah 9, 3 Nephi 5; Moroni 4-5]. None should be received unto baptism unless they have understood and accepted the Doctrine of Christ, and none, except little children, are considered worthy to partake of the sacrament if they have not repented and been baptized. Baptisms should be performed in living water if possible. Baptism should be offered freely to all willing souls and their names recorded. If possible, they should be liberally welcomed into fellowship.

Provided the proper prayer, and if possible, position and emblems are used [Moroni 4-5], the Sacrament may be administered to the body of the church in a number of ways. The officiator may break and bless the bread, immediately blessing the wine, so that all may partake of the sacramental emblems together, or the emblems may be blessed and consumed separately; either is acceptable so long as it is done with an

eye single to God's glory. The Lord, in turn, promises to reciprocate, filling us with His Spirit. The Lord provides these ordinances as the means by which He may fill us with His Spirit.

Concerning the Government of Fellowships:

The principles required to elevate a body of believers into the body of Christ are found within the Book of Mormon and the former commandments. *Therefore verily I say unto you my friends, Call your solemn assembly as I have commanded you, and as all have not faith, seek ye diligently, and teach one another words of wisdom, yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study and also by faith [D&C 30].*

Repentance, which includes turning from error and ignorance to face God, is the guiding principle of God's house. To produce fruit meet for the Father's kingdom, groundwork must be provided by God. Part of the progression toward that end is fellowshipping as family and friends into independently governed groups. A fullness of charity, the greatest of all virtues, can only be gained as we reach outside ourselves and our families to become one through the love of God.

Fellowships of saints should be patterned after the order of heaven. Thus, there should be no compulsion or contention, nor strife, envy, or malice in our meetings, but they should be full of long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, love unfeigned and pure knowledge [D&C 47]. All are free to organize as best suits the needs of the group, seeking not only to accurately say, but also to do what the Lord commands [D&C 27]. Therefore, organize so as to reflect determination to serve God; trust in the scriptures, bear one another's burdens, and associate with others as equals.

It is not necessary to set up a lasting supervisory structure among believers when all are animated by the Mind of God. Let there be no permanent hierarchy, but a group of equals, and let decisions be made in councils, guided by the scriptures, and governed by common consent [D&C 111]. If a job needs to be filled within the fellowship, people may volunteer and be accepted. When people cooperate with one another and willingly agree, they are free and are acting according to their own agency to bring to pass great things without compulsion and without command. That is required if we are to become equal and remain free. It is ever thus with the Lord.

Among existing councils, or in decisions among saints, votes should be taken openly. Let each stand as a witness of what he or she believes. Individuals should exercise self-restraint and humility and not speak too much and dominate the discussion; members should share their opinions to the best of their ability, then trust the Lord with the final outcome [D&C 30]. Decisions need not be made in haste, but must be built upon righteous principles for God to carry out His work with this people. It is better to defer for a time than to reach a hasty decision because the Lord condemns haste, which brings pestilence, including confusion [D&C 18, 37].

Every man and every woman is given gifts born of the Spirit, and all are called to build up the kingdom of God upon the earth. Let there be no covetousness in or among the fellowships, for each gift is needed. Talents and gifts are given to allow us to emulate the Lord, to serve and lift our neighbor, and to forward the cause of Zion. However, the earth is full of lying spirits. To avoid deception, study the thoughts and impressions you receive: if they fill with pride, vainglory, laziness, an ambition to control and lead, or suggest that you alone are faithful while all around you are in error, they are not of me, but are of the devil, saith the Lord. Yea, I say unto you, the humility and meekness required for those who would be my servants is hardly found on the earth. Repent, therefore, and adopt the ways of your Lord.

The Lord's name must not be invoked in vain [Exodus 4]. This means that unless He has explicitly directed to say, "Thus saith the Lord," we are obliged to persuade only by pure knowledge [D&C 47]. Pure knowledge should be shared through the medium of scripture. Grounded on the bedrock of scripture, personal revelations may lift and inspire the body, resulting in further light and truth. Man's thoughts and ways are lower than God's. If led by the Spirit, one may be led to share an experience, but it should not be

used to compel agreement; rather, inspiration by way of dream, vision, messenger, or His Spirit should be shared and judged by what is found in scripture, that we may remember not only to say, but also to do what was given us by God. Persuasion rather than domination is necessary to bring harmony between us.

Temporary councils may be formed to carry out endeavors extending in scope outside of fellowships. These should be organized, and run, according to common consent. This means that while men or women may be invited to join, they are given the latitude to determine their level of involvement and should always be free to leave. Above all, agency should be preserved and individuals should be allowed to bring their gifts and talents to the project as they feel directed by the Mind of God. Voluntary participation is necessary in the work of the Lord. Coercing help from friends and loved ones violates the pattern of Heaven and results in hurt and loss [D&C 47]. When beginning an endeavor, cast a net widely to allow all who feel so inspired to join. Once formed, take the time to come to an agreement about how the group will be run, make a commitment to see the project through, and then plead for Heaven's guidance and support. If the people in that group will work with an eye single to His glory and the welfare of Zion, rather than their own name and reputation, the Lord can take their weak effort and give it His strength. Once a project has gained momentum, and the group has achieved a shared vision, it is best to refrain from quickly and unwisely adding others who were not inspired to do the work in the first place. Rather, trust in the Lord; a small unified group working alongside Him is more powerful than a thundering crowd.

When it is hoped that the endeavor will be adopted by the body of believers, let the group take its work and present it to the body. While it is a righteous principle to not seek credit or glory of men, accountability is also a true principle. Therefore, let there be a spokesman and a witness for the council to the body. If the general body of believers do not vote to accept the product, they are not obligated to do so. Time must be given to the body to deliberate before a vote can be requested.

Fellowship among saints must be guided by the underlying principle of sacrifice [LoF 6]. It is the nature of almost all men to stand as sentinels, looking outwards to see what another may sacrifice, but the focus should be within our own hearts, asking God what more we can do. In fellowships we have the opportunity to do that, including alleviating the poor among us, bearing each other's burdens, and seeking to elevate all in our sphere.

Concerning Tithing and Sacrifice:

Tithes and offerings follow the principle of sacrifice. Tithes should be gathered within the fellowship and administered by the common consent of the fellowship. Women should contribute to the process so that decisions are made in wisdom and needs are considered which women alone may recognize. Tithing is for the poor [Gen 7], and should be collected to help those in need within a fellowship, including food, clothing, housing, medical and educational costs, and for such purposes as the fellowship determines to be appropriate, on a case by case basis. While tithes should not be used to support the idle, it is better to give freely than to judge the efforts of your fellow man [Mosiah 2]. In addition to tithing, we should be willing to give offerings to those who ask of us, and not turn the beggar away from our door.

The Lord has explained that the purpose of tithing was never to establish a wealthy general fund nor to invite the wrongful accumulation of wealth that has resulted from the long abuse of this law. The law was to be a light thing, easily borne by the faithful. Tithing was always to be taken from surplus (meaning unnecessary excess property), and increase (meaning what remains after all costs of the household have been paid). It was to be drawn out of the abundance in the possession of the giver, so that there may be enough and to spare, not from property required for their necessities. The tithes of this people are to be used for the poor among this people, if they want to become Mine.

As excess funds are gathered, they can be donated to the temple or by common consent, decide to contribute to the needs of another fellowship. Stretching outward from one's group binds together hearts

and minds with cords of love and sacrifice. It is necessary for these bonds to form within and among fellowships, so that the Lord may transform individual members into a unified body.

Concerning Priesthood Ordination and Administering Blessings:

A man is free to perform ordinances in his own family. But outside his own family, the ordinances of the gospel require the following process:

Before a man can perform a public ordinance, such as baptism or the Sacrament, he must be ordained, receive authority from Christ, and be properly sustained. This allows the person to perform ordinances with authority given by Jesus Christ, not merely by taking the authority upon himself, and is the way we can have men called of God, as was Aaron [Heb 3], in our day. A man need not be re-ordained if he was ordained a priest before April 2014 and can trace his line of authority back to Christ through Joseph Smith. If ordained after, he should be ordained in a fellowship, and a proper record kept of his line of authority stemming from the fellowship's proceedings. In all cases, the ordination is not the end, but the means to which the end may be received; that is, to receive an errand from the Lord. Power in the Priesthood can only come from Christ. Therefore, a man should follow the pattern laid out in the Book of Mormon and get authority from Christ's word, spoken to him by the power of the Spirit, to ratify the ordination before acting.

As only men are to hold priesthood for public ordinances, only women are to vote to sustain them. As soon as an ordinance is needed, women are qualified to vote. They are in need of the ordinance, and they ought to be entitled to vote in order to receive that ordinance. The Lord has said, "There shall be a minimum of seven women to sustain the man in any vote, and if the man is married, his wife shall be one of them [CR-Seven Women]." If his wife will not sustain him, he is unworthy to provide priesthood service outside his family and in the fellowship. If a young man lives at home, with his mother, she must be the first of those to sustain him; she shall be his advocate with the women. His sisters, if of an appropriate age to understand these things, may also vote for him. If that young man's mother will not sustain her son, her view should be considered as better informed than the view of any other seven women, even if they would consent. A young man should have his mother's confidence before he is allowed to perform priestly functions for others outside his family.

When it is proposed that a man be sustained by at least seven women, before that sustaining vote is taken, there should be a discussion as to whether there are any opposed to the man being sustained. If there are, those opposing should be allowed to first express any concerns about the man, and the women should hear the reasons before they decide whether to proceed with sustaining the man. After the vote, all of the women who vote to sustain should follow the pattern of the early church by providing a written certificate. The women should not only sign a certificate, but also write about their sustaining vote in their personal records so that there may be an abundance of witnesses.

Sustaining is by women, and removing authority to act within a community or fellowship, is likewise to be done by the vote of women [CR-Seven Women *DS-add 12 women language to this?]. If a man's worthiness to function is called into question, then a conference can be convened to deal with the question. In removing authority, at least two witnesses should speak against the accused, and he should be allowed to speak on his behalf and call such witnesses as he chooses. Men can be witnesses, but only women are allowed to vote. Removal should be by unanimous vote of the women present, with at least 12 votes against a man to end his authority to act in the fellowship community. If a woman is present and cannot judge the matter she may abstain, and the vote of remaining women, if unanimous and there are 12 votes, will be sufficient.

Blessings of healing, counsel, and relief may be given by men and women according to their faith and the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit [D&C 35, 46, 84 LE; Moroni 10]. Blessings should be given meekly, not to support a craft, or for money, or to receive the praise of men, and should freely be given when solicited

by the beneficiary or the beneficiary's family. The administration of these blessings should follow the dictates of prudence, skill, and the Spirit.

Concerning Marriage and Sealings:

Marriage is to be between one man and one woman, as originally established by God between Adam and Eve. The children of Adam and Eve likewise were married as two, a man and a woman. The taking of multiple wives is not considered a reflection of the image of God, as originally revealed to Adam. The image of God was in the couple, Adam and Eve, which were one man and one woman. Likewise, the apostle confirmed that neither the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man, is approved of the Lord (1 Cor 11:11). Families already practicing plural marriage and wishing to join a fellowship can do so as long as they understand that they should not take another wife, nor abandon any wife they currently have and teach their children to end the practice (Hyrum's epistle; 1 Cor 7:10-16). The ceremony for contracting marriage should be as directed by the Spirit. We anticipate a fuller understanding of marriage, sealings and other ordinances to be revealed with the acceptance of the temple by the Lord.