

LDS Church reverses policy regarding children of LGBT parents, designation of LGBT marriage as apostasy

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More than three years after putting a policy in place that restricts membership of children with LGBT parents, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced a reversal of that policy Thursday effective immediately.

According to a press release by the church, President Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the church's First Presidency, stated that children who have LGBT parents may be baptized into the faith without prior approval of the church's First Presidency if the parents give permission and understand the doctrine children will be taught.

Also announced was that nonmember parents, including LGBT parents, may request baby blessings by another Melchizedek Priesthood holder in the church.



Even more significant, the church's Handbook — which local leaders abide by to govern local congregations — will no longer classify gay marriage as “apostasy” in regards to church discipline.

The church categorizes apostasy as “when individuals or groups of people turn away from the principles of the gospel ...”

However, the church still considers gay marriage to be a “serious transgression” and the “immoral conduct in heterosexual or homosexual relationships will be treated the same way.”

The church's press release categorized these announcements as “very positive policies announced this morning should help affected families.” The church reiterated that its changes are not an indication it is shifting its doctrine related to gay marriage, chastity or morality.

“We are optimistic that a majority of people — whatever their beliefs and orientations — long for better understanding and less contentious communications,” the statement from Oaks reads.

Jason Stevenson, the communications manager with ACLU of Utah, said in an emailed statement regarding the changes, “The ACLU of Utah always appreciates the adoption of policies that promote tolerance and inclusivity in our communities.”

In November 2015, the abrupt policy change brought about backlash from members within the church, as well as those outside, who felt children of LGBT parents were being unjustly punished for their parents' sexual identities. The 2015 policy said children living with LGBT parents were barred from being

baptized into the church until 18 years of age, and approved by top church leadership, and only if they disavowed same-sex relationships.

“We don’t want the child to have to deal with issues that might arise where the parents feel one way and the expectations of the church are very different,” D. Todd Christofferson, a member of the faith’s Quorum of the Twelve governing body, said in a video explaining the 2015 policy.

The church will hold its semiannual general conference during the upcoming weekend in Salt Lake City, which it broadcasts worldwide, on Saturday and Sunday. Prior to the conference, leaders of the church from around the world gathered in Salt Lake City in a leadership session.

According to a press release Thursday, President Henry B. Eyring taught during that leadership session “that we need the Lord’s direction to meet changing circumstances, and He has guided changes in practice and policy throughout the history of the Church.”