

2022 Church History Symposium

Latter-day Saints and Religious Liberty: Historical and Global Perspectives

The Department of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University together with the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announce the 2022 Church History Symposium to be held on March 10–11, 2022. The symposium will convene at Brigham Young University on March 10 and at the Assembly Hall in Salt Lake City on March 11. Keynote speakers include Elder Gerrit W. Gong, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Sarah Barringer Gordon, University of Pennsylvania Professor of Constitutional Law and History.

In 1842, Joseph Smith published the Wentworth Letter, which produced the following Articles of Faith:

11. We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.
12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

These statements occasionally stand in contrast to one another: ensuring free exercise of religion while upholding the law. Throughout its history, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has found itself operating in a wide variety of conditions, some sympathetic to these ideals and others less so. Because of the doctrinal and historical importance of religious freedom, the Latter-day Saint experience can provide a unique perspective on this principle.

We invite scholars of all backgrounds to submit proposals specifically addressing the theme of “Latter-day Saints and Religious Liberty: Historical and Global Perspectives.” Topics that could be explored include the following:

- Latter-day Saint historical and theological commitment to religious freedom
- Treatment of religious minorities in Latter-day Saint communities
- Wartime constraints on religious liberty
- The Church in state and federal courts
- Distinct episodes in Church history, e.g., Extermination Order, nineteenth-century polygamy, Council of Fifty, Ghana Freeze, Freiberg Germany Temple, BYU Jerusalem Center, and others
- Civil disobedience motivated by religious belief
- Defense of religious freedom by Latter-day Saint political and ecclesiastical leaders
- Promotion of religious conceptions of marriage and the family
- The teaching of Church values in public and private schools
- Modern Church assertions of the importance of religious freedom for itself and others

Proposals should consist of a brief abstract (no more than 500 words) and a current CV. Proposals may be sent to churchhistorysymposium2022@gmail.com. Deadline for submissions is September 15, 2021. Notification of acceptance will be given by October 15, 2021. Selected papers will be published by the BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book following the symposium.

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