

Church Asks Members to Understand Policies

By Sarah Jane Weaver

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Church leaders are asking Latter-day Saints to learn and better understand the Church's family history policies on submitting names for temple ordinances.

The conditions of use for the New.Family Search.org website were set in place "for reasons of common sense, reasons of doctrine, and reasons of respect," said Dennis C. Brimhall, managing director of the Church's Family History Department.

The conditions are simple and straightforward. "Users should not submit the names of nonrelated persons for vicarious temple ordinances, including names of celebrities or famous people, or those gathered from unapproved extraction projects," state the terms all users must accept every time they log onto the site.

The reemphasis on the guidelines, which are also stated in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, follows violations of the Church's proxy baptism policy.

"One of the things we need to remember is that the searching out of our family and preparing the names for the work to be done in the temple is, yes, a responsibility, but it is also a privilege," said Brother Brimhall. "That privilege is extended to the members by those who hold the keys to the work. The keys to this work are held by the First Presidency of the Church."

Church leaders have asked the members who are submitting names for proxy baptisms for the deceased to:

1. Work only on their own family lines.
2. Not submit names of celebrities.
3. Not submit names of unauthorized groups, such as Jewish Holocaust victims.



Church leaders have asked members who are submitting names for baptisms for the deceased to work on their own family lines, not to submit names of celebrities, and not to submit names of unauthorized groups, such as Jewish Holocaust victims.

Church leaders issued a statement on February 21, 2012, in response to questions about violations of the Church policy, which was established in 1995 after discussions with leaders of the Jewish faith.

The statement repeated the Church's firm commitment to not accept the names of unauthorized groups for proxy baptism and noted that in order to bypass safeguards already in place a submitter would have to use "deception and manipulation."

He said in order to help members of the Church understand the conditions of use, the Church will make them more prominent.

"We are going to see a season of education," Brother Brimhall said. "We will remind ourselves again of rights and responsibilities, and keys and privileges, and whose work this is and how it should be done, and who directs the work. If we just remember that, I think we are going to be fine. . . . We can make the system better for everyone."

For more on this story, visit news.lds.org and search using keywords "proxy baptism." ■