

Mormon President Says God Told Him to Stop Calling the Religion 'Mormonism'

Leaders of the Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Thursday called on people to stop referring to the faith as Mormonism, although the church acknowledged one of its central texts would still be called the Book of Mormon.

An online guide accompanying a pronouncement from the church president also asked people to stop referring to followers of the religion as Mormons and not to use the name "LDS" as a shorthand way of describing the faith.

"The Lord has impressed upon my mind the importance of the name He has revealed for His Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," church President Russell Nelson said in a statement. "We have work before us to bring ourselves in harmony with His will."

Leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have long proclaimed their faith as Christian and fought any association with polygamy, which was practiced by early members of the church before they abandoned it more than 100 years ago.

Their latest campaign is related to those twin goals, said professor Patrick Mason, the chair of Mormon studies at Claremont Graduate University.

"For many years now, the church has wanted to insist that it is a Christian church," Mason said, "and a common formulation, especially among evangelical Christians, is that Mormons are not Christians."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has about 16

million followers worldwide.

Thousands of others in North America, who are often called fundamentalist Mormons, practice polygamy, Mason said.

The emphasis on the full name of the church is one way for its leaders to distance themselves from those breakaway groups, he said.

The push by Nelson, who became president of the church in January, to discourage use of the term Mormon follows a similar campaign ahead of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah, according to the Salt Lake Tribune.

But that campaign had limited staying power, even within the church. The latest statement from Nelson was posted at [the church's website](#), despite its disavowal of the term "LDS."

A representative for the church could not be reached for comment.

Mason, who is Mormon, said he still expected to use the term Mormon, despite the campaign by church leaders.

"I think the likelihood of it sticking outside the church is low to negligible," Mason said. {eo}

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