

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
THE SEVENTY
47 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE STREET, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84150-1200

30 April 2019

Brett Wilcox
2105 Sawmill Creek Road
Sitka, Alaska 99835

Dear Brother Wilcox,

The First Presidency forwarded to me your letter of March 21, 2019 regarding vaccination policy. Thank you for reaching out with your concerns about vaccinations and immunization safety.

As you know, vaccinations have both strong advocates and strong opponents. The rhetoric in the vaccination conversation is filled with firmly held opinions and assumptions. It is my privilege to have been assigned to chair the Missionary Health Services. I assure you that we in the Missionary Department are aware of the concerns that opponents have and honor their opinions though we may disagree with them. To help us with current information about vaccinations, the Public Health Committee has several very experienced physicians who have special expertise in infectious disease regularly review our immunization guidelines and immunization safety.

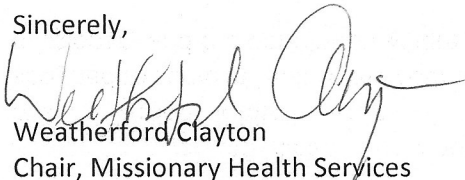
As you are aware, vaccinations are not required for missionary service. I fear this is often misunderstood. If missionary candidates choose not to be vaccinated, they may indeed serve and are assigned to serve in their home country, regardless of the country of origin. This helps protect both the missionary and the population where the missionary might serve.

Diseases that vaccines can prevent can be devastating. In 2017, the most recent year for which estimates are available, measles caused close to 110,000 deaths, mostly in countries that do not have vaccinations readily available. Even in high-income countries such as the US where vaccinations are available, those who contract it run the risk of significant complications that can lead to lifelong disability ranging from brain damage and blindness to hearing loss. Yellow fever, another very dangerous infection that recently had an outbreak in South America, is controlled with vaccinations. Ebola, a disease in west Africa that has killed thousands, now has a vaccine which has proven effective when it is administered properly.

Thank you for you letter. I know that President Nelson, who was a medical researcher in cardiac surgery before his call to the apostleship, is a prophet of God. The Lord is revealing His will to His Church through him and the other apostles. The Church supports the use of vaccinations but does not require them to be used. Should the Lord require a change in this direction, I am certain that He will reveal it to His prophets.

Thank you for the clear and compelling explanation of your concerns.

Sincerely,



Weatherford Clayton
Chair, Missionary Health Services
Assistant Executive Director, Missionary Department