

## **Ecclesiastical Policy**

### *Clarifying Monastic Vows within the Order of Lehb*

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### **Be it known,**

*that the Nehm Tiwehkthihmpt makes this declaration, on behalf of the Tehk Tiwehkthihmpt, and at his behest, to those members who have decided to enter into the monastic life through sacred Vows of Consecration (sometimes referred to by the IRS as a "vow of poverty") and abstain from engaging in commerce by charging fees for their ministerial services, and also to correct any misconceptions and confusion pertaining to these sacred vows in general. To these members, and the world, we make a beginning of speaking!*

In the past, our indigenous traditional organization, and Native American Church, has relied on the published instructions of the IRS (see the "Taxpayer Bill of Rights," Publication 517, IRS Form 4361, *inter alia*) regarding ministry and "vows of poverty." The IRS instructs in these documents, and many others, that there is no working definition for "vow of poverty" within the IRS Code, leaving it to the institutions of churches and sacred orders to adequately define the practice themselves, and attempt to implement poorly clarified procedures within their ecclesiastical administration. Within Nemenhah, in an effort to reduce and eliminate unnecessary altercations with the IRS and its agencies, we have adopted the policy of relying solely upon the IRS for instructions regarding the correct procedures for seeking tax exemption for churches and ministers and reporting ministerial earnings.

Pursuant to the results of an internal investigation of this matter, begun by the Nehm Tiwehkthihmpt personally in the month of November of 2014, it is the conclusion of this Office and that of the Tehk Tiwehkthihmpt that, due to lack of suitable guidance from the IRS, there is simply no safe instruction regarding vows of poverty upon which our minister may rely, therefore such vows may only be made if also accompanied by an individual understanding of the inherent risks. The Nemenhah Church has always taught the sacred principles and doctrines of the Fourth Pillar of the Tuhhuhl Nuhmihn (High Place), which is the Law of Consecration, and has sought to offer adherents to this ancient religious practice a modern means by which one might enter into a sacred covenant within that principle and attempt to emulate the life-ways of our ancestors in a specific manner.

Notwithstanding the Church's clear instructions to individual adherents over the years, in connection with this covenant, extreme abuses to this sacred practice have been cited arising out of private interpretations and misconceptions.

### **Policy**

It is important, therefore, for ministers who choose to abstain from commerce and accept Sacred Giveaway instead, which the individual supplicant and/or parishioner agrees is customary and appropriate, to know that they may enter into this monastic covenant only by and through the following:

- I. Consecrated Ministers must surrender all ownership of the ministry itself, thereby placing themselves under the Rule of the Order, and,
- II. Consecrated Ministers surrender legal ownership of all personal property and possessions of any kind associated in any fashion with that ministry, and,
- III. Must vow to work diligently to complete any and all obligatory curriculum in a timely manner, as prescribed by the Tehk Tiwehkthihmpt and administrated by the University of Nemenhah, and,
- IV. Consecrated Ministers do absolutely declare that their desire to enter into this monastic covenant is in demonstration of their dedication to Nemenhah Religion and also their adamant insistence to hold themselves, and be held by the Order, to a higher spiritual and temporal standard than the rest of the world, and,
- V. Nemenhah Ministers who enter into the monastic covenant in good faith, and thereafter breach that faith by failure to sincerely practice their religion, may find that their Nemenhah Membership may actually be used against them in a Court of Law as evidence of the absence of sincerity in general, and disqualify any claim they (the Ministers) may believe they may put forward in any such action to the rights guaranteed within United States Law (RFRA, USC TITLE 42 CHAPTER 21B § 2000BB-1), and,
- VI. Consecrated Ministers **shall not** wrest this doctrine to the benefit of their own personal beliefs, principles or prejudices, nor use this covenant relationship in the business of "getting of gain," or to justify government protest of any kind, and,
- VII. It is generally understood by Consecrated Ministers that any breach of the covenant after the fact desecrates the covenant, exposing the individual to severe consequences both within the Church and without, and that, in such instances, these Ministers should expect the officers of the Church to be subpoenaed to testify against them by a Court of Law when necessary.

## **Mandate**

The Native American Church of Nemenhah (Oklevueha Native American Church of Nemenhah as was, and Numi'Pu Tsupehli Chopunish as was) has always taught this doctrine and no other doctrine concerning the *monastic* covenants within the Law of Consecration. It is the mandate of the Tehk Tiwehkthihmpt that the Native American Church of Nemenhah as currently constituted shall continue to teach this doctrine now and in the future, as it has done in the past, without alteration.

## **Conclusion**

There are many ways through which the Fourth Pillar of the Tuhhuhl Nuhmihn, the Law of Consecration, makes impact upon the lives of the modern day Nemenhah, and many ways, in turn, that Nemenhah Ministers do engage in the study, understanding and application of this sacred principle. Taking Orders within a monastic Consecrated Ministry is only one of these methods.

This "doctrine" pertaining to monastic covenants is very specific and pertains only to adherents of the distinct religion once practiced by our ancient Nemenhah progenitors, from which many of the universal religious tenets of modern Nemenhah Religion are derived, but the full restoration of which only a small circle of Pehli within the Order of Lehb practice in fact.

However, the choice to refrain from entering into these sacred monastic vows does not disqualify any Nemenhah Minister, who does not seek to understand the Law of Consecration in this fashion, from receiving the blessings and benefits of Nemenhah Membership and Ministry in general. It simply signifies that this monastic covenant in particular, within the Law of Consecration is not suited for most Nemenhah Ministers personally, which is appropriate in the eyes of the Church and in accordance with the tenets of the Sahaptan Healing Way. It is for this reason that the covenants, rituals and vows pertaining to consecrated monastic relations, such as those associated with the Pillars of the High Place within the Sacred Order of Lehb, have not been published in the Uniform Curriculum for Nemenhah Ministry (UCNM) and are provided through direct mentoring, in private, between the monastic hopeful and the Tehk Tiwehkthihmpt personally.

All inquiries regarding these practices should be remitted to the Nehm Tiwehkthihmpt at the address provided above. Both members of the Nemenhah ITO, and officers and agencies outside the Nemenhah, are instructed to refer to this letter when addressing any concerns pertaining to consecrated monastic vows.

In the spirit of peace and clarity, we Walk in a Sacred Manner, we Talk in a Sacred Manner, and we make an end of speaking!

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