

News of the Church

New Handbooks Introduced During Worldwide Training

President Thomas S. Monson and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles introduced the Church's new handbooks and some of the significant changes they contain during a worldwide leadership training meeting on November 13, 2010.

The leadership training that introduced the new handbooks—*Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* and *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*—was broadcast in 22 languages to priesthood and auxiliary leaders in 95 countries.

Importance of the Handbooks

“There is safety in the handbooks,” President Monson said, warning against aberrations that can creep into Church programs when leaders aren't familiar with Church policies and procedures. “They will be a blessing to you and to those you serve as you read them, understand them, and follow them.”

The handbooks provide greater simplification and flexibility to avoid two great dangers, according to President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The first is the danger of regimenting the influence of the Holy Ghost out of Church programs. “It is a spiritual work that we are about,” he said, “and a spiritual work must be guided by the Spirit.”

The second is the danger of “establishing the Church without establishing the gospel,” he said.

“We need to have the Church in the lives of the members and the gospel established in the hearts of the members.”

Important Changes

Most of the text of *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* remains unchanged from the 2006 update to the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1*. Instructions contained in the most recent First Presidency letters have been incorporated, chapters on the duties of the stake president and bishop have been shortened and clarified, and some material has been reorganized for easier reference.

Changes to *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* are more extensive. A principle-based approach is meant to reduce the complexity of

Church programs and allow some local adaptation where necessary without sacrificing the uniformity of policies, procedures, and programs.

Other changes of note include reduction of the bishop's workload by enhancing the role of the ward council and its members, the possible increase in the frequency of ward council meetings, a clarification of the mission of the Church, folding the work of the ward welfare committee into the discussions of the priesthood executive committee (to which the Relief Society president may be invited as necessary) and ward council, eliminating a standing ward activities committee and handling activities through the ward council, and other changes.

The Mission of the Church

The new handbooks clarify confusion regarding what the First Presidency referred to in 1981 as the three-fold mission of the Church—proclaiming, perfecting, and redeeming.

Handbook 2, section 2.2, reaffirms the First Presidency's intent in 1981 that these three applications were part of one great work, stating: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized by God to assist in His work to bring to pass the salvation and





exaltation of His children” (see Moses 1:39).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned against giving “excessive attention to definitions and boundaries among these three applications of the Lord’s work” or “excluding other essential elements such as caring for the poor.”

He said, “The general principle, stated in section 2.2, is that ‘the programs and activities of the Church [are intended to] support and strengthen individuals and families.’”

Uniformity and Adaptation

The principles and doctrines found in the first three chapters of *Handbook 2* “are foundational to the administration of the Church and must undergird everything [leaders] do,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. However, the chapters of the book that follow, particularly a new chapter called “Uniformity and Adaptation,” help explain where flexibility exists in Church policies and programs.

This chapter helps “set forth clearly which matters must be uniform everywhere in the Church” and also “contains exceedingly important principles setting forth the conditions that may permit . . . local adaptation,” Elder Cook said.

Examples of where adaptations may be appropriately made include in the staffing and programs of the auxiliaries and in the format and frequency of leadership meetings and activities. Circumstances to be considered include family circumstances, transportation and communication, small numbers of members, and security.

Elders M. Russell Ballard, Jeffrey R. Holland, and David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president; and Walter F. González of the Presidency of the Seventy discuss principles in the new Church handbooks during a November 2010 worldwide leadership training.

“When considering what adaptations may be appropriate, leaders should always seek the guidance of the Spirit and counsel with their immediate presiding authority,” Elder Cook said.

Moving Forward

In leading a panel discussion, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggested that studying the instructions one chapter at a time and discussing the principles in council meetings may lead to more meaningful learning.

If leaders have questions regarding policies and programs that cannot be answered by the handbooks, they should discuss them with their presiding priesthood leader, Elder Oaks counselled. If there are unresolved questions, he said, “only the most senior priesthood leaders should be checking with the Office of the First Presidency.”

A second worldwide leadership training meeting will be held in February 2011 to focus in detail on the responsibilities of stake presidents and bishops, the work of quorums and auxiliaries, and the special challenges of units that lack sufficient members and leaders to carry out the full programs of the Church.

Watch the archived broadcast at www.lds.org/leadership-training. ■