



# YOUR CALL TO SERVE

Get ready. Get set. Go!  
Here's a guide to the  
application process, from  
your first talk with the bishop  
until the envelope arrives.

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**E**lder Ryan Morrison and his family will never forget the exciting moment when he opened that white envelope and learned he had been called to serve in the Pennsylvania Pittsburgh Mission. But a lot had to happen before that envelope arrived in their mailbox. Here's a look at what you'll need to do when you go through the same process from beginning to end.

### Preparing to Apply

Of course, you need to prepare to serve a mission long before you submit an application.

**Prepare temporally and spiritually.** You prepare temporally by saving money, staying healthy, and learning to be independent. You prepare spiritually by building a testimony of and commitment to the Savior and His restored Church. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles summed it up this way:

"You can increase in your desire to serve God (see D&C 4:3), and you can begin to think as missionaries think, to read what missionaries read, to pray as missionaries pray, and to feel what missionaries feel. You can avoid the worldly influences that cause the Holy Ghost to withdraw, and you can grow in confidence in recognizing and responding to spiritual promptings. Line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, you can gradually become the missionary you hope to be and the missionary the Savior expects" ("Becoming a Missionary," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 46).

**Remove any obstacles.** Make sure that you have properly resolved anything that could prevent you from serving or from becoming the kind of missionary the Lord wants you to be (such as unpaid debts, legal entanglements, weight problems, bad habits, and so on). If you need to clear

**R**yan Morrison's family joined him when he opened his call to serve in the Pennsylvania Pittsburgh Mission. It was an exciting moment for everyone and the culmination of a lot of preparation, which included studying Preach My Gospel and working closely with his bishop. If you're getting ready to do what Ryan did, here's a step-by-step review of how to get from where you are to where you want to be.

something up, it's best to do it now.

Do not delay seeking help from your bishop or branch president if needed. An unresolved transgression will impede the Spirit and hinder your work as a missionary. If you put off a confession until later in the process or after you're in the mission field, your mission call could be postponed or canceled or you could be sent home in order to allow time for full repentance.

### Completing Your Recommendation

Once you're ready to begin the formal application process, here are some things to remember.

**Start early.** At least four months before you're able to leave on a mission, set an appointment with your bishop for a personal interview. He will explain the steps to you and will give you the information you need to log on to the online missionary recommendation system, or, if the online system is not available in your area, he will give the recommendation forms to you. The online system speeds up the whole process. It allows you to give more complete and accurate information up front by automatically calling your attention to any required information you haven't filled in or any problems you need to resolve.

Make appointments right away with your dentist and doctor for evaluations. If you see them early, you'll have more time to

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resolve any problems that may arise during the evaluations.

**Be thorough.** In your recommendation you'll fill out background information about yourself, including your desire and ability to learn a language, your schooling, and how your mission will be financed. To make sure you portray yourself thoroughly and accurately, fill out this information yourself—don't just have your mom or dad do it. Be open and honest about your desires and abilities, and make sure you and your doctor are thorough and frank about your health.

**Get a good photo.** The recommendation asks that you attach a photo of yourself. Make sure that in this photo you are dressed and groomed according to missionary standards. Keep in mind that a member of the Quorum of the Twelve will look at this picture, along with the other information you fill in, as he seeks inspiration on where you are to be called. Also, this photo will be sent to your mission president.

**Set the last appointment.** After all of these forms are completed and any health problems resolved, set another appointment with your bishop for your last interview with him before your application is sent in. If he feels that you

are worthy and ready, he'll refer you to your stake president for an interview.

**U**sing the online system helped speed up Ryan's application. Following through on medical evaluations ensured that there were no unnecessary delays. And meeting with the stake president helped Ryan feel even more enthusiastic about becoming Elder Morrison. By taking care of the steps in a systematic way, Ryan always knew what he had done and what was left to accomplish.



#### Processing Your Recommendation

After your bishop and stake president have confirmed that you're worthy and ready to serve, they'll complete their part of the recommendation and send it to the Missionary Department at Church headquarters. After you've completed your end of the recommendation process, continue preparing for your mission. Read and study the Book of Mormon and *Preach My Gospel*, pray for the Lord's Spirit, attend your meetings, and follow the counsel of your leaders.

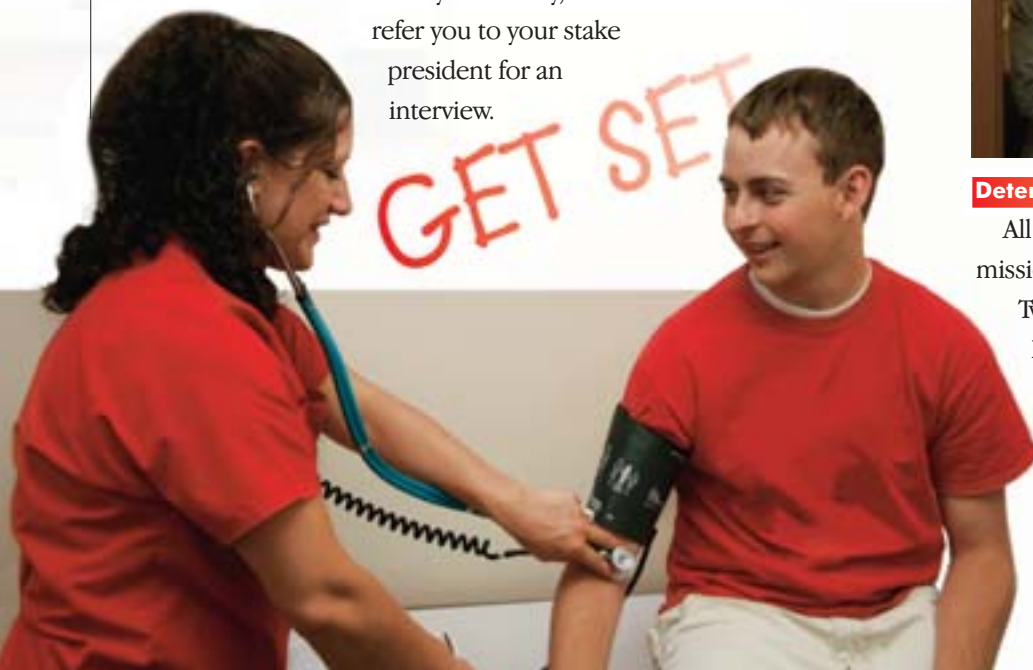
At Church headquarters a committee of doctors will review your health and dental records to confirm that you are physically and emotionally prepared to handle the rigors of a full-time mission. Once this is done, the next step is for you to be assigned to a mission.



#### Determining Your Assignment

All missionaries are assigned to specific missions by members of the Quorum of the Twelve, who have been authorized by the President of the Church.

Each week, depending on the number of calls to be assigned, two to four members of the Quorum of the Twelve go to separate rooms at



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Church headquarters. There, after kneeling in prayer and asking for divine guidance, each sits down before a computer screen. On that screen, one at a time, prospective missionaries' pictures and personal information appear, along with the current needs of all of the missions of the Church. Each missionary is then personally assigned to a specific mission and given a date on which to enter a missionary training center.

### Receiving Your Call

After you are called as a missionary and assigned to a mission, your call letter and call packet are prepared and mailed to you. The personalized call packet is the authoritative set of information on your assigned mission and what you need to do before you arrive there. It includes a mission map, a picture of your mission president and his wife, and a list of specific items you should bring with you to the mission. If something isn't listed in the call packet, you probably shouldn't bring it.

The call letter bears the signature of the President of the Church and extends to you the honor and opportunity of being called to serve as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It then informs you of the specific mission in which you are called to labor and explains some of the expectations and blessings associated with full-time missionary service.

Elder Morrison still remembers the excitement he felt all during the time he was preparing to serve. "There is a lot of anticipation," he recalls. "But wait until you're actually in the mission field. That's where you really learn that your call was inspired." **NE**

For more on this subject, see "Ready to Serve?" *New Era*, Feb. 2005, p. 15.



### EACH CALL IS INSPIRED

"All my life, from the time I have been a young boy and as far back as I can remember, I have had experiences feeling of the Holy Ghost. . . . But I've never felt what I have felt as I have . . . participated in the assigning of missionaries. . . .

"We go into a room, and . . . it will be a two- or three-hour session and sometimes longer. Because of technology, it is possible for us to have your picture and the information about you displayed. And then quickly, on that same screen, all the missions of the Church with all of their needs are displayed. Within minutes, and sometimes less than a minute, the impression comes so powerfully that it would be, if it were a single instance, something that you would never forget. Can you imagine sitting there for hours at a time, having that happen time after time without interruption? I testify to you that it is real. . . .

". . . In a world so large, the Creator . . . somehow not only knows you but loves you enough to ensure that your call is where He needs you to go to teach the children of our Heavenly Father."

**Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Called of God" (devotional address delivered at the Provo Missionary Training Center, Aug. 26, 1997).**