

WE ARE!

BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

Who is using the priesthood to prepare for the future? Young men in North Carolina know the answer.

Andrew Hill, David Christison, and Lauren DellAquila (left to right, this page) tell how fellowshiping led Lauren back to church and into the waters of baptism. Andrew Roberts and Hope Riner (next page, bottom) experienced fellowshiping within their own family when he baptized her.

This story about the Aaronic Priesthood begins with a young woman, 16-year-old Lauren DellAquila of the Cary Second Ward, Apex North Carolina Stake. Lauren hadn't come to Church for years. She had never been baptized and confirmed, "but I just knew in my heart that the Church was true."

She also knew David Christison, 16, and Andrew Hill, 15, who attend the same school, are Latter-day Saints. "I'm in marching band with David and had a couple of classes with Andrew last year," she says. And she knew they stood by their beliefs. "It meant a lot to see their example, because most teens at our school don't have values like they do," Lauren explains.

An Invitation

Then one day after band, some other classmates were making unkind comments about the Church. Lauren told them if they really wanted to know the truth, they shouldn't repeat rumors; they should find out for themselves. Afterward, David thanked her and asked how she knew so much about the Church. "She said that when she was really young she went to Church, but then her parents divorced and she stopped coming," David says. "So I invited her to come again."





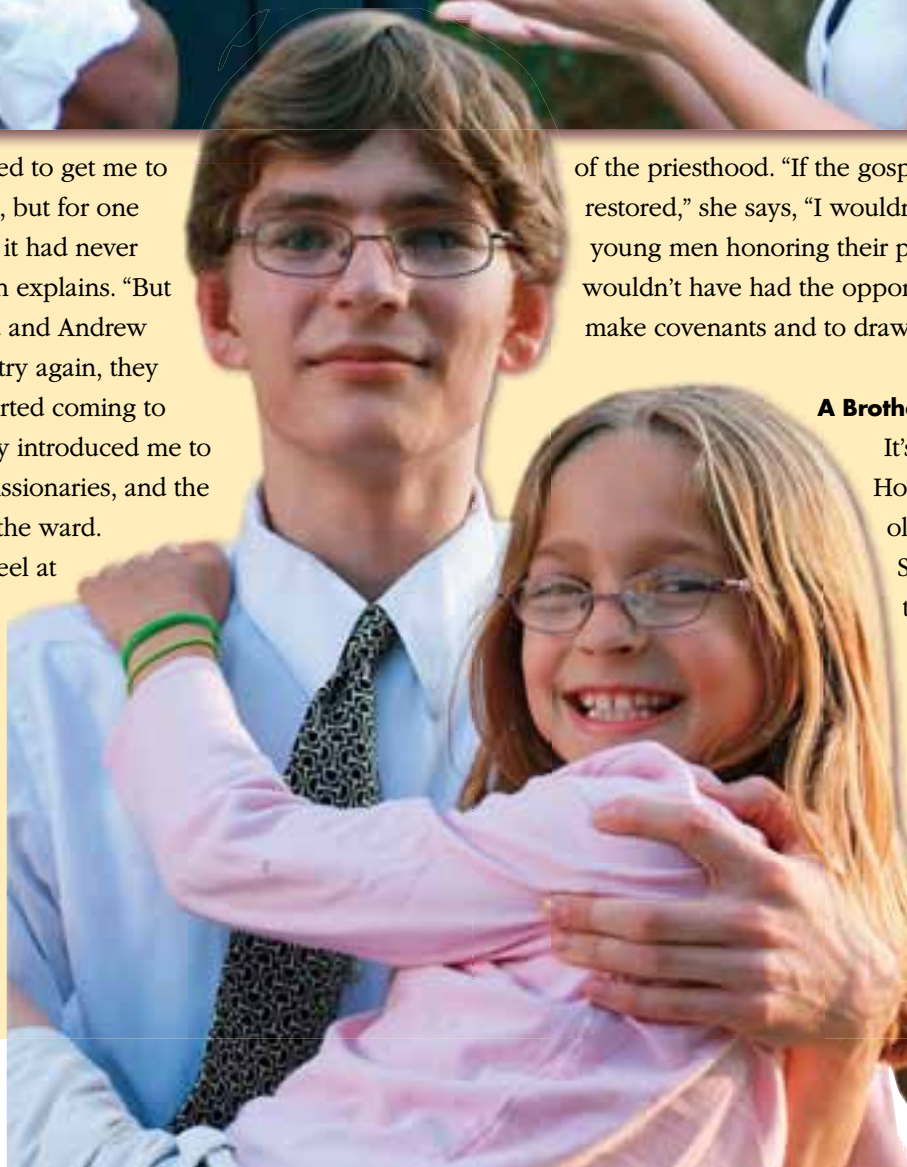
“People had tried to get me to come back before, but for one reason or another it had never happened,” Lauren explains. “But when I told David and Andrew that I did want to try again, they were excited. I started coming to meetings, and they introduced me to the bishop, the missionaries, and the young women in the ward. They helped me feel at home.”

Soon Lauren was baptized and confirmed, and today she’s a happy, confident Laurel who recently gave a sacrament meeting talk about the importance

of the priesthood. “If the gospel had not been restored,” she says, “I wouldn’t have seen two young men honoring their priesthood. And I wouldn’t have had the opportunities I have had to make covenants and to draw close to the Savior.”

A Brother’s Example

It’s a similar story for Hope Riner, an 8-year-old in the same ward. She benefited from the good example of her 17-year-old half-brother, Andrew Roberts. He joined the Church a little over a year ago and was recently ordained a priest, which meant he could baptize her.





“When we live up to our high and holy calling, when we show love for God through service to our fellowmen, when we use our strength and talents to build faith and spread truth, we magnify our priesthood. . . . As we lift and strengthen and build convictions of righteousness in those whose lives we touch, we magnify our priesthood.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Magnify Your Calling,” Ensign, May 1989, 47.

“I felt great about it, because we have a strong bond already,” Hope says. “I was glad my brother could use the priesthood to help me.”

“It was an incredible experience,” Andrew says. “I know I need to be an example to my sister, not only as a brother, but also as an example of the kind of young man she should have as friends and the kind of man she will marry one day. By my example, I’m preparing her to understand how the priesthood can bless her life.”

Both Lauren and Hope know that the young men in their ward—as well as in

the Cary Third Branch (Spanish speaking), which is dependent on their ward—take the priesthood seriously. “They don’t just talk about it,” Lauren says. “They live it.”

Deacons, Teachers, and Priests

Maxwell Guerra, 13, is another example. He’s a member of the branch but serves as the deacons quorum president of the ward. On any given Sunday, he’s meeting with the presidency and the quorum adviser to keep track of the quorum members, plan activities, and make sure all the deacons needed will be there to pass the sacrament. After church



CHLOE’S CREW

Every Sunday, priests from the Cary Second Ward visit one of their best friends. Chloe Hodge is 91 and lives in a care facility.

“We always come with a message from *Preach My Gospel*, because that’s what the bishop recommended,” Erick Wells says. “And she always has a message for us from the scriptures. Then we prepare and bless the sacrament so she can partake.” In fact, the last 15 young men to become priests in the ward have blessed the sacrament for the first time while visiting Chloe.

“I remember going to see her right after I was ordained a priest,” David Christison recalls. “I think it’s a real

blessing, because we sense how much joy the sacrament can bring into someone’s life.”

Sister Hodge, who joined the Church when she was 23, still remembers being baptized in a pond after waiting for the winter ice to melt. But what is obvious as she speaks today is the warmth she feels from these young men—and vice versa.

“Sunday is a perfect day for me because I look forward to them bringing me the emblems of the Lord’s Supper,” Sister Hodges says. “They tell me what happened at church, and for that short period of time, I feel like I’m at the ward again. It’s a wonderful feeling.”



As deacons quorum president, Maxwell Guerra (this page, top foreground) knows holding the Aaronic Priesthood means taking an active role. He keeps track of quorum members, welcomes new deacons, and follows the example of others, like the priests who visit Chloe Hodge (previous page).

on a recent fast Sunday, he helped another deacon collect fast offerings and then visited Alma Parraga, who is about to turn 12 and will soon be joining the quorum.

Andrew Hill, mentioned earlier, is president of the teachers quorum, and he loves the fellowship he finds there. "It's more than just getting along with each other," he stresses. "We strengthen each other and learn from each other." Any assignment, he has found, is easier with teamwork, and that includes home teaching. "One of the great things we do in the Church is to look after each other," he says. "It's a powerful thing when an Aaronic Priesthood holder and a Melchizedek Priesthood holder become a team, with a responsibility to watch over families and individuals."

The teachers also spend time preparing the sacrament, and Andrew says that has special significance for him. "Priests bless the sacrament," he says, "and deacons pass the sacrament. But teachers set a tone of reverence by having everything ready before the meetings begin." Being involved with something so sacred is a great privilege for the Aaronic Priesthood, Andrew says.

Of course, the bishop of the ward is the

president of the Aaronic Priesthood. In the Cary Second Ward, Matthew Watkins is the first assistant to Bishop Charles N. Anderson. Matthew says he feels one of the most



POWER AND SERVICE

The Aaronic Priesthood quorums in the Cary Second Ward are experiencing first-hand the power of the priesthood and the joy of service. All Aaronic Priesthood holders are challenged to do the same.

"You have been called to make a difference in the world," the First Presidency has said. "As a son of God, with the power of the Aaronic Priesthood, you can be a wonderful force for good. You can provide service, giving of your time, talents, and energies without thought of reward" (*Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God, Deacon* [2001], 4.)

Having a strong quorum is more than just getting along together, according to teachers quorum president Andrew Hill (this page, top) and first assistant in the priests quorum Matthew Watkins (this page, below). “We strengthen each other and learn from each other,” Andrew says. The same is true for Erick and Michael Wells (next page) who strengthen each other as brothers in the priesthood and brothers at home.



important things the priests do is to study the gospel together. He is grateful when the bishop helps the priests to understand gospel principles. “The priests help teach each other, too,” he says. “Each Sunday I feel like I understand more and more.” In particular, he remembers a lesson about fasting. “It helped me see how important it is to get close to the Spirit.” He also enjoys providing music for priesthood meeting. “Music is another way of getting close to

the Spirit,” he explains.

Someone to Look Up To

Another priest, Erick Wells, 18, recently ordained his younger brother, Michael, 12, to the office of deacon. “I wanted Erick to ordain me,” Michael says, “because he’s one of the greatest examples in my life. He never does anything wrong that I’ve noticed, so everything he does, I know I can do too.”

Erick smiles at the tribute.





“I really enjoyed being able to use my priesthood to confer it on Michael,” he says. “I feel a great responsibility to be an example not only to my family but to other people as well so that I can share in the gospel with all of them.”

Erick says the goal of all young men in the Church should be “to obtain both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods, make covenants in the temple, be missionaries, prepare for a lifetime of service, and live faithfully with their families so that they can be together with Heavenly Father again.” Matthew agrees. “The Aaronic Priesthood lifts us to a higher sense of what we need to be doing,” he says.

And that’s what’s happening in the Cary Second Ward. Ask these young men who is using the priesthood to make a difference right now, and they can truthfully answer, “We are!” Ask them who is using the priesthood to prepare for the future, and the answer is the same. **NE**

How has the priesthood made a difference in your life? E-mail your experience to us at newera@ldschurch.org.

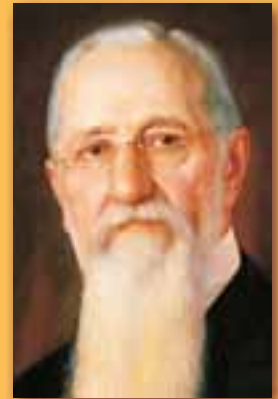


WHO SHOULD DO IT?

Section 20 of the Doctrine & Covenants spells out more than a dozen duties for deacons, teachers, and priests. See if you can match the following responsibilities with the appropriate office in the Aaronic Priesthood. (Hint: see D&C 20:46–60).

1. Invite all to come unto Christ.
2. Lead meetings when no Melchizedek Priesthood is present.
3. Ordain other priests, teachers, and deacons.
4. Receive assistance from deacons.
5. Encourage attendance at meetings.
6. Preach, teach, expound, exhort, and warn others.
7. Baptize.
8. Discourage members from sin and from being unkind, lying, gossiping, or saying mean things.
9. Administer the sacrament.
10. Go home teaching.
11. Remind members to pray and to take care of family duties.
12. Give assistance to the elders of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

- Answers:**
1. Deacons and teachers (verse 59).
 2. Priests, or teachers when no priest is present (verses 49 and 56).
 3. Priests (verse 48). Please note, however, that often fathers ordain their sons.
 4. Teachers (verse 57).
 5. Teachers (verse 55).
 6. Deacons, teachers, and priests (verses 46, 50, and 59).
 7. Priests (verse 50).
 8. Teachers (verse 54).
 9. Priests (verse 46).
 10. Priests and teachers (verses 47 and 53).
 11. Teachers (verse 55).
 12. Priests (verse 52).



“[The priesthood] is nothing more nor less than the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and act legitimately; not assuming that authority, nor borrowing it from generations that are dead and gone, but authority that has been given in this day in which we live by ministering angels and spirits from above, direct from the presence of Almighty God.”

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 139–40.