

Priesthood



The priesthood is the power and authority of God. Through it, He accomplishes His work and glory, which is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Jesus Christ permits worthy male members of the Church to hold His priesthood. When they are ordained to the priesthood, they can be authorized to do the Lord’s work, such as preach the gospel, perform priesthood ordinances, and minister, as called, in the kingdom of God on earth.

“There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic” (D&C 107:1). Heavenly mes-

sengers restored priesthood authority to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Melchizedek Priesthood

The Melchizedek Priesthood is the greater priesthood. Its name comes from the name of a great high priest who lived during the time of Abraham (see D&C 107:2–5). Brethren who hold this priesthood have the power and authority to hold positions of leadership in the Church and to direct the preaching of the gospel. They may preside, as called, over missions, districts, branches, and quorums.

Before a man can be ordained to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood, he must first have the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon him. Then he is ordained to an office in that priesthood. These offices are elder, high priest, patriarch, seventy, and apostle. Mission or district priesthood leaders organize brethren who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood into quorums of elders in the mission or district. A president presides over each elders quorum. He teaches quorum members their duties and encourages brotherhood among quorum members. All brethren in the branch who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood are members of the elders quorum.

Elder and Elders Quorum Presidency

Elders are to teach, expound, baptize, and watch over the Church. In addition to having the authority and responsibilities of Aaronic Priesthood offices, elders may bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost, administer to the sick, and perform other ordinances (see “Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings” in the *Family Guidebook*). When authorized by their priesthood leaders, elders may preside over Church meetings when no authorized high priest is present. (See D&C 20:42–45; 107:11.)

When a branch has worthy men who bear the Melchizedek Priesthood, the

mission or district presidency, as guided by the Spirit, may organize an elders quorum in the branch, calling and setting apart a quorum president from among quorum members. As the number of elders in the branch increases, the mission presidency may call and set apart two counselors to the elders quorum president. Each elders quorum may consist of up to 96 members. The quorum provides example, help, and direction to fathers and other quorum members.

The elders quorum president serves under the direction of the district or mission president and is accountable to him. The quorum president works also under the direction of the branch president as a member of the branch priesthood executive committee and as a member of the branch council. The quorum president presides over quorum members in the branch and sets an example for them. He works with the branch president to organize and administer home teaching to ensure that the Church remains in active contact with all branch members.

The quorum president teaches quorum members the gospel and their Melchizedek Priesthood duties (see D&C 107:89). He encourages them to serve with joy and humility, especially in their responsibilities as husbands and fathers. He teaches them how to perform priesthood ordinances, and

plans service projects and activities that assist members and build quorum brotherhood. He is responsible for the spiritual and temporal well-being of quorum members.

The elders quorum president assigns home teachers who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and adults (19 and older) who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, and with the approval of the branch president, he assigns young men as home teachers who are teachers and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood. Home teachers are assigned in companionships of two during private interviews. As approved by the branch president, the elders quorum president may assign the wife of a man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to accompany her husband on visits where a couple is specifically needed.

The quorum president teaches quorum members the purposes of home teaching (see pages 6–7) and inspires them to fulfill them well. A member of the quorum presidency interviews home teachers regularly to receive an accounting of their visits and to learn of members' needs.

The elders quorum president supervises home teaching and keeps the branch president informed of home teaching visits and of member needs and concerns learned through home teaching visits.

The quorum president encourages quorum members to participate in Church meetings and activities and to give service. He helps unordained men and those over 18 years of age who hold the Aaronic Priesthood prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances. Home teachers help with these efforts, but often the president needs to minister personally to his quorum members.

High Priest, Patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle

For information about the offices of high priest, patriarch, seventy, and apostle, see *Gospel Principles*, chapter 14.

Home Teaching



Home teachers are brethren who bear the priesthood and are called to help priesthood leaders watch over and strengthen branch members. Males who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and Aaronic Priesthood, with the exception of deacons, may serve as home teachers.

Home teachers are to visit members regularly, showing love for them, teaching them the gospel, and inviting them to come unto Christ. Home teachers should encourage fathers to pray and take proper care of their families. Home teachers help members in times of illness, loss, loneliness, unemployment, and at times of other special needs. (See D&C 20:51, 53, 59.)

Home teachers represent the Lord, branch president, and quorum president as they visit their assigned families. They learn about the interests and needs of family members and show a genuine interest in them. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, home teachers seek to teach the gospel and to develop and strengthen the faith of the individuals and family members they visit. If possible, each home teacher should have a companion.

Home teachers:

- Stay in active contact with each assigned member.
- Recognize the father as the head of the family (or the mother or single member where no father is in the home) and help him lead his family members on their journey toward immortality and eternal life.

- Help members to have faith in Jesus Christ by sharing a message from the scriptures or from the living prophets as contained in the *First Presidency Message, Liahona, or Ensign*.
- Pray with and bless those they visit.
- Inform the family of meetings, quorum and branch activities, and special projects, and help them participate.
- Report to the elders quorum president (or to the branch president if the branch does not have an elders quorum) on the progress of members.
- Encourage and help family members receive all essential gospel ordinances and keep the associated covenants.
- Encourage members to do missionary work and family history and temple work.

Ordinances and Blessings

Priesthood ordinances are sacred acts revealed by the Lord and performed by the authority of the priesthood. Priesthood blessings are given for healing, comfort, and encouragement. Baptizing and blessing and passing the sacrament are examples of priesthood ordinances. Some ordinances

may be performed by brethren who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, but most ordinances are performed by men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood (see “Aaronic Priesthood” in this guidebook and the *Family Guidebook*). Branch presidents and elders quorum presidents are to teach the brethren how to perform ordinances. These leaders should help fathers prepare and be worthy to perform ordinances for family members. Brethren who perform ordinances and blessings are to prepare themselves by living according to gospel principles and striving to be guided by the Holy Spirit. They perform each ordinance and blessing in a dignified manner. Each ordinance should be performed:

1. In the name of Jesus Christ.
2. By the authority of the priesthood.
3. With any necessary procedures, such as specified words or consecrated oil.
4. With authorization of the designated priesthood leader who holds the proper keys, if necessary.

Ordinances that require priesthood leader authorization are naming and blessing children, performing baptisms and confirmations, conferring the priesthood and ordaining to a priesthood office, blessing and passing the sacrament, and dedicating graves.

See the *Family Guidebook* for instruction on specific ordinances and blessings.

Aaronic Priesthood



The Aaronic Priesthood “is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood” (D&C 107:14). It is named after Aaron, Moses’ brother, because it was conferred on him and his descendants. Brethren who hold the Aaronic Priesthood have authority to perform certain priesthood ordinances. Priests may perform baptisms, bless the sacrament, and ordain priests, teachers, and deacons. Priests and teachers may prepare the sacrament. Priests, teachers, and deacons may pass the sacrament. (See D&C 107:13–14, 20.)

When the Aaronic Priesthood is conferred on a person, he is ordained to an office in that priesthood. The offices are deacon, teacher, and priest. As guided by the Spirit and as numbers warrant, the branch president, who is president of the Aaronic

Priesthood in the branch, organizes brethren who hold the same office into quorums of deacons (ages 12–13), teachers (ages 14–15), and priests (ages 16–18).

The branch president, holding the keys of presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, is president of the Aaronic Priesthood in the branch. He is president of the priests quorum and may call two worthy priests to serve as his assistants in the priests quorum. He may call a worthy teacher and a worthy deacon to serve as presidents of the teachers and deacons quorums, respectively. He or an assigned counselor may call two counselors to the teachers and deacons quorum presidents to complete the presidencies of these quorums. When quorums have a sufficient number of young men, a member of the branch presidency may call a young man in each quorum to serve as quorum secretary. The branch president sets apart his assistants in the priests quorum and the presidents of the teachers and deacons quorums. A member of the branch presidency sets apart counselors in quorum presidencies and secretaries.

Following the opening exercises of priesthood meeting, the Aaronic Priesthood meets, under the direction of the branch president, separately from those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood.

When the branch president organizes Aaronic Priesthood quorums, he calls, as guided by the Spirit, and sets apart a man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood or the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood to serve as Young Men president. The Young Men president works with the branch presidency and Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies to help each quorum member strengthen his faith in Jesus Christ and increase his understanding of and commitment to live in harmony with the principles of the restored gospel.

The purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood are to help each one ordained to that priesthood:

- Become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live by its teachings.
- Serve faithfully in priesthood callings and fulfill the responsibilities of each priesthood office.
- Give meaningful service.
- Prepare and live worthily to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances.
- Prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission.
- Obtain as much education as possible and prepare to become a worthy husband and father.
- Give proper respect to women, girls, and children.

The branch president works with Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies to plan quorum meetings, service projects, and activities to help accomplish these purposes. Activities are to provide a wholesome environment in which young men can make friends, provide service, and develop skills with others who share similar beliefs and standards.

Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and Young Women class presidencies, in cooperation with Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women adult leaders, may plan combined Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women activities under the supervision of the branch president. The combined activities are called Mutual.

Deacon

A worthy young man who has been baptized and confirmed may be ordained a deacon when he is at least 12 years old. Deacons usually are assigned to pass the sacrament, care for Church buildings and grounds, help care for the needy, and complete special assignments, such as gathering fast offerings.

A deacons quorum may consist of up to 12 deacons (see D&C 107:85).

Teacher

A worthy young man may be ordained a teacher when he is at least 14 years old. In addition to all of the authority and responsibilities of deacons, teachers prepare the sacrament and serve as home teachers.

A teachers quorum may consist of up to 24 teachers (see D&C 107:86).

Priest

Worthy brethren may be ordained priests when they are at least 16 years old. Normally, adult male converts are ordained priests until they have had sufficient experience to be ordained elders.

In addition to all of the authority and responsibilities of deacons and teachers, priests may baptize and administer the sacrament and may conduct meetings when no one who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood is present (see D&C 20:46–51).

A priests quorum may consist of up to 48 priests (see D&C 107:87–88).