

Church Administration

Jesus Christ stands at the head of the Church. The mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to help all people come unto Him (see Moroni 10:32). To fulfill this mission, the Church is organized according to the pattern revealed by the Lord “for the perfecting of the saints, . . . till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:12–13; see also verse 11). The following outline summarizes the organization of the Church.

Home and Family

The family is the fundamental unit in the Church, and home is the most important place for gospel learning. No other organization can take the place of the family. Even as the Church continues to grow, its purpose will always be to support and strengthen families and individuals in their efforts to live the gospel.

General Administration

The Lord guides His covenant people today through the President of the Church, whom we sustain as prophet, seer, and revelator. The President of the Church presides over the entire Church. He and his counselors, who are also prophets, seers, and revelators, form the Quorum of the First Presidency.

Members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are also prophets, seers, and revelators. They, along with the First Presidency, are “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23). They act under the direction of the First Presidency “to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations” (D&C 107:33). They “open the door [to the nations] by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 107:35).

Members of the Quorums of the Seventy are called to proclaim the gospel and build up the Church. They work under the direction of the Twelve Apostles. Members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy are designated General Authorities, and they may be called to serve anywhere in the world.

The Presiding Bishopric is the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood throughout the Church. The Presiding Bishop and his counselors serve under the direction of the First Presidency to administer the temporal affairs of the Church.

The Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School organizations all have presidencies on the general level to provide instruction and direction.

Area Administration

An area is the largest geographic division of the Church. Under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, an Area Presidency presides over each area. Area Presidents and their counselors are assigned from the Quorum of the Twelve and the Quorums of the Seventy.

Some brethren are ordained to the office of Seventy but do not serve as General Authorities. They are called Area Authority Seventies, and they are assigned to quorums other than the First or Second Quorums of the Seventy, according to geographic location. Their jurisdiction is limited to the general region in which they live. Some Area Authority Seventies serve in Area Presidencies.

Local Administration

Wards and Branches. Members of the Church are organized into congregations that meet together frequently for spiritual and social enrichment. Large congregations are called wards. Each ward is presided over by a bishop, assisted by two counselors.

Small congregations are called branches. Each branch is presided over by a branch president, assisted by two counselors. A branch may be organized when at least two member families live in an area and one of the members is a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder or a worthy priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. A stake, mission, or district presidency organizes and supervises the branch. A branch can develop into a ward if it is located within a stake.

Each ward or branch comprises a specific geographic area. Different organizations in the ward or branch contribute to the Lord's work: high priests groups; elders quorums; the Relief Society, for women ages 18 years and older; Aaronic Priesthood quorums, for young men ages 12 through 17; the Young Women program, for young women ages 12 through 17; Primary, for children ages 18 months to 11 years; and the Sunday School, for all Church members ages 12 and older. Each of these organizations fulfills important roles in teaching the gospel, giving service, and supporting parents in their sacred duty to help their children become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. These organizations also work together to help members share the gospel with others.

Stakes, Missions, and Districts. Most geographic areas where the Church is organized are divided into stakes. The term *stake* comes from the prophet Isaiah, who prophesied that the latter-day Church would be like a tent, held secure by stakes (see Isaiah 33:20; 54:2). There are usually 5 to 12 wards and branches in a stake. Each stake is presided over by a stake president, assisted by two counselors. Stake presidents report to and receive direction from their Area Presidency.

A mission is a unit of the Church that normally covers an area much larger than that covered by a stake. Each mission is presided over by a mission president, assisted by two counselors. Mission presidents are directly accountable to General Authorities.

Just as a branch is a smaller version of a ward, a district is a smaller version of a stake. A district is organized when there are a sufficient number of branches located in an area, permitting easy communication and convenient travel to district meetings. A district president is called to preside over it, with the help of two counselors. The district president reports to the mission presidency. A district can develop into a stake.

Programs for Single Members. Many Church members have never married or are divorced or widowed. These members comprise two groups: young single adults (ages 18 through 30) and single adults (ages 31 and older).

There is not a Churchwide program for young single adults and single adults. Instead, when enough single members live in an area, local priesthood leaders are encouraged to call single-member representatives, who work under their direction. Single-member representatives plan activities such as dances, service projects, and firesides. These activities give single members opportunities to meet with and strengthen one another. Single members are also encouraged to meet regularly with their priesthood leaders to discuss their needs and their opportunities for spiritual growth and service.

Additional reference: D&C 107

See also Priesthood; Relief Society

Church Disciplinary Councils

Bishops and branch presidents and stake, mission, and district presidents have a responsibility to help members overcome transgression through repentance. The most serious transgressions, such as serious violations of civil law, spouse abuse, child abuse, adultery, fornication, rape, and incest, often require formal Church discipline. Formal Church discipline may include restriction of Church membership privileges or loss of Church membership.