

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.

The process of formal discipline begins when a presiding priesthood leader calls for a disciplinary council. The purposes of disciplinary councils are to save the souls of transgressors, protect the innocent, and safeguard the purity, integrity, and good name of the Church.

Church discipline is an inspired process that takes place over a period of time. Through this process and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, a member can receive forgiveness of sins, regain peace of mind, and gain strength to avoid transgression in the future. Church disciplinary action is not intended to be the end of the process. It is designed to help Heavenly Father's children continue in their efforts to return to full fellowship and the full blessings of the Church. The desired result is that the person make whatever changes are necessary to repent completely.

*See also* Forgiveness; Repentance

## **Civil Government and Law**

Section 134 of the Doctrine and Covenants outlines Latter-day Saints' "belief with regard to earthly governments and laws in general" (D&C 134, section heading). The section includes the following statements:

"We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society. . . .

"We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience.