

11.

## Primary

The Primary is an auxiliary to the priesthood. All auxiliaries exist to help Church members grow in their testimonies of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel. Through the work of the auxiliaries, members receive instruction, encouragement, and support as they strive to live according to gospel principles.

11.1

### Theme and Purposes of Primary

Primary is for children ages 18 months through 11 years. The Primary theme is “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (3 Nephi 22:13). The purposes of Primary are to help children:

1. Feel Heavenly Father’s love for them.
2. Learn and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Feel and recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost.
4. Prepare to make and keep sacred covenants.

Parents have the first responsibility for the spiritual and physical welfare of their children (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28). The bishopric, Primary leaders, and Primary teachers support but do not replace parents in this responsibility.

11.2

### Ward Primary Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering the Primary in a way that will strengthen individuals and families. Primary leaders frequently review chapter 3, which outlines general principles of leadership. These principles include preparing spiritually,

participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

11.2.1

#### Bishopric

The bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Primary.

11.2.1.1

##### Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop calls and sets apart a sister to serve as Primary president. He oversees the calling and setting apart of all other Primary workers. He may assign his counselors to call and set them apart.

The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts interviews for the baptism and confirmation of 8-year-old children who are members of record and 8-year-old children who are not members of record but have at least one parent or guardian who is a member. The full-time missionaries teach and interview 8-year-old children whose parents are not members and children who will be 9 years old or older at the time of baptism.

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews children before January of the year they turn 12 and complete Primary.

11.2.1.2

##### Counselor Assigned to Oversee the Ward Primary

The bishop assigns one of his counselors to oversee the ward Primary. This counselor has the following responsibilities:

He meets regularly with the ward Primary presidency. He reports on Primary matters in bishopric meetings.

He guides efforts to prepare the annual children's sacrament meeting presentation.

He directs the planning of the Temple and Priesthood Preparation meeting in coordination with the Primary presidency (see 11.5.5).

He coordinates efforts to have members of the bishopric visit Primary.

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, he oversees Scouting for boys ages 8 through 11.

### 11.2.2

#### Ward Primary Presidency

The ward Primary presidency consists of a president and two counselors. They work under the direction of the bishopric. They receive orientation and ongoing support from the stake Primary presidency.

#### 11.2.2.1

##### Ward Primary President

The Primary president has the following responsibilities:

She serves as a member of the ward council. As a member of this council, she participates in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families (see chapter 4).

She submits recommendations to the bishopric for ward members to be called to serve as leaders and teachers in the Primary. In making these recommendations, she follows the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

She teaches other Primary leaders and teachers their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

She oversees the use of the *Faith in God* guidebooks as described in 11.5.1.

She oversees the records, reports, budget, and finances of the ward Primary. The Primary secretary helps with this responsibility.

#### 11.2.2.2

##### Ward Primary President and Her Counselors

Members of the ward Primary presidency work together to fulfill the following responsibilities. The Primary president may assign her counselors to oversee some of these responsibilities.

They learn the children's names and become familiar with their talents, interests, and challenges. They look for ways to strengthen children individually and help them participate in Primary.

They orient newly called teachers and oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in Primary. They participate in and encourage other leaders to participate in teacher council meetings (see 5.5.7). In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4.

They also support Primary teachers, music leaders, and nursery leaders by (1) visiting with them occasionally to address their questions and concerns and to discuss ways to serve the children; (2) helping them maintain reverence during singing time, class time, and transitions; (3) visiting their classes; and (4) arranging for them to attend teacher council meetings (see 5.5.7).

They oversee the programs, activities, and events listed in 11.5.

They hold Primary presidency meetings. They also meet regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees Primary.

#### 11.2.3

##### Ward Primary Secretary

The ward Primary secretary has the following responsibilities:

She consults with the presidency to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

At least quarterly, she compiles attendance information, reviews it with the Primary president, and submits it to the ward clerk.

She ensures that the Primary president and ward executive secretary are aware of children who will soon be eligible for baptism and who will soon advance from Primary to the Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women.

She helps the Primary presidency prepare an annual budget and account for expenses.

She assists children, teachers, and parents as requested by the Primary presidency. For example, she may help monitor classes and maintain reverence during singing time. She may also assign children to give prayers and talks and to share scriptures and articles of faith in Primary. She informs the children's parents of the assignments.

#### 11.2.4

### Ward Primary Music Leader(s) and Pianist(s)

Under the direction of the Primary presidency, Primary music leaders and pianists have the following responsibilities:

They plan, teach, and direct the music for singing time, including songs that reinforce principles the children are learning in their classes and at home. A list of songs that reinforce these principles is found at [ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). These songs are also listed in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*.

They help with music for the nursery class and other Primary classes as requested.

They may organize and direct a children's choir as requested.

Members of the Primary presidency help the ward Primary music leaders and pianists understand how music contributes to Primary. The melodies, words, and messages of Primary songs can teach children the doctrines of the gospel and stay in their hearts throughout their lives.

Music in Primary should invite reverence, teach the gospel, and help children feel the influence of the Holy Ghost and the joy that comes through singing. While the children sing some songs, music leaders give them opportunities to move physically and stretch when needed.

The *Children's Songbook* is the basic resource for music in Primary. Hymns from the hymnbook and songs from the *Friend* and *Liahona* are also appropriate. Occasionally children may sing patriotic or holiday songs that are suitable for Sunday and for the children's ages. The use of any other music in Primary must be approved by the bishopric.

For information about teaching music to children, see the *Children's Songbook*, pages 300–304. See also chapter 14 in this handbook.

#### 11.2.5

### Primary Teachers and Nursery Leaders

Primary teachers and nursery leaders work with specific age-groups of children. These teachers and leaders follow the principles outlined in 5.5.4.

Primary teachers and nursery leaders remain with the children during the entire Primary time on Sunday, including singing time and transitions. During singing time, they sit with their assigned classes, sing the songs with the children, and help the children participate reverently.

#### 11.2.6

### Activity Days Leaders and Scout Leaders

If a ward Primary holds activity days and Scouting activities for children ages 7 through 11, the

activities may be planned and conducted by the teachers of these children or by other leaders the bishopric calls (see 11.5.2 and 11.5.3). Children may begin attending activity days in January of the year they turn 8. Cub Scouts remains associated with a boy's birthday.

### 11.3

## Leadership Meetings

#### 11.3.1

### Ward Council Meeting

The Primary president serves as a member of the ward council (see chapter 4).

#### 11.3.2

### Ward Primary Presidency Meeting

The Primary presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The president presides at the meeting and conducts it. The secretary attends, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Plan ways to strengthen individual children and teachers in the Primary.
2. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to their callings.
3. Discuss the effectiveness of Sunday Primary, including music. Also discuss the effectiveness of weekday activities. Plan ways to improve.
4. Make plans to instruct other Primary workers in their responsibilities.
5. Review attendance records. Make plans to help children who have recently entered Primary and children whose families are less active.
6. Review the Primary budget and expenditures.

The Primary presidency may invite other Primary workers to attend these meetings as needed.

#### 11.3.3

### Meeting with a Counselor in the Bishopric

The Primary presidency meets regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Primary organization. In these meetings they counsel together about the progress and needs of individual children. Members of the Primary presidency give reports, make recommendations, and review plans for meetings and activities. When appropriate, other Primary workers may be invited to attend this meeting to give reports and receive instruction.

#### 11.3.4

### Stake Primary Leadership Meeting

Stake Primary leadership meeting is generally held once a year, as explained in 18.3.11. Ward Primary presidencies and secretaries attend. Other Primary leaders and teachers, as well as the bishopric member assigned to the Primary, may be invited to attend as needed.

### 11.4

## Sunday Primary

#### 11.4.1

### Schedule

Primary is normally held on Sunday while adults and youth attend priesthood quorum meetings, Relief Society meetings, Young Women classes, and Sunday School. It lasts 50 minutes.

Children in the nursery stay in their nursery class for the entire time, as outlined in the nursery manual, *Behold Your Little Ones*. The other children attend two sessions. In one session, children meet together for 25 minutes for singing time. In the other session,

they divide into smaller classes for 20-minute lessons taught by their Primary teachers.

The children and teachers who attend singing time and classes have a 5-minute transition between the two sessions. During this transition, they prepare for the next session. Children may use the restroom or get a drink of water. Teachers supervise the children throughout the break.

The 50-minute Primary meetings are held every Sunday, following the schedule below:

5 minutes	Prayer, scripture or article of faith, talk
20 minutes	Singing time: music that supports the scriptures studied in class
5 minutes	Transition to classes
20 minutes	Classes: lesson from <i>Come, Follow Me—For Primary</i>

*Note:* If a Primary is large enough to separate into two groups, the schedule above may be reversed for half of the children and the times adjusted as needed. Older children may begin with singing time while younger children begin with classes. Or the younger children may begin with singing time.

#### 11.4.2 Singing Time

Singing time begins with a prayer, a scripture or article of faith, and a talk given by a child. However, if singing time is held after children have attended their classes, it ends rather than begins with prayer.

The Primary presidency and music leader select songs for each month to reinforce principles the children are learning in their classes and at home. A list of songs that reinforce these principles is found at [ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

These songs are also suggested in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*.

#### 11.4.3 Classes

As shown in the following guidelines, children are normally grouped in Primary classes according to their ages.

Parents, leaders, and teachers encourage older children to bring their personal copies of the scriptures to church where possible.

For information about adapting classes to local needs, see 11.7.

##### 11.4.3.1 Nursery Class

Children may begin attending the nursery class as soon as they reach the age of 18 months. They continue attending nursery until they are eligible to attend the Sunbeam class, as shown in the chart under the next heading.

##### 11.4.3.2 Primary Classes

During class, teachers and children focus on a study of the scriptures aligned to the Sunday School curriculum and *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*. Teaching materials are found in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*.

If classes are held before singing time, they begin with prayer. If they are held after singing time, they conclude with prayer.

Children begin attending a new Primary class on the first Sunday of each calendar year. For consistency with ordination ages and age-group progression in Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women classes, children are normally divided into

classes based on their age on December 31 of the previous year, as shown in the following chart.

Age on December 31 of the previous year	Class on January 1
3	Sunbeam
4	CTR 4
5	CTR 5
6	CTR 6
7	CTR 7
8	Valiant 8
9	Valiant 9
10	Valiant 10

#### 11.4.3.3

### Completing Primary

Children complete Primary at the beginning of January in the year they are 12. In areas of the world where January is not a natural transition date, a local transition date approved by the Area Presidency and assigned member of the Quorum of the Twelve may be used. Leaders may give them a certificate of advancement.

These children attend their youth Sunday School class on the first and third Sundays and their Aaronic Priesthood quorum meeting or Young Women class on the second and fourth Sundays.

In some circumstances, an 11-year-old may not complete Primary on this schedule due to his or her individual readiness. The bishop and parents counsel together to make a decision that is in the best interests of each child. However, children may not complete Primary and young men may not be ordained deacons *before* January of the year they turn 12.

## 11.5

### Primary Programs, Activities, and Events

#### 11.5.1

### Faith in God Program

The Faith in God program helps boys and girls ages 8 through 11 live gospel principles, develop testimonies, and prepare to be righteous Aaronic Priesthood holders and righteous young women. This program also encourages children to memorize the Articles of Faith.

The ward Primary president ensures that each child who reaches age 8 receives a copy of *Faith in God for Girls* or *Faith in God for Boys*. She helps parents understand that they can use these guidebooks as resources for activities with individual children and with the entire family.

#### 11.5.2

### Activity Days

Where practical, the Primary may hold activity days for boys and girls ages 7 through 11. Children may begin attending in January of the year they turn 8. Leaders and teachers use the *Faith in God* guidebooks as resources for activity days, supporting the work children and parents do at home to fulfill Faith in God requirements.

Activity days are held no more than twice each month. They may be held at the meetinghouse or in a home. As leaders determine the frequency and location of activity days, they consider the time constraints of the children's families, travel distance and costs, children's safety, and other local circumstances. Leaders ensure that activity days follow the guidelines in 11.8.1 and in chapter 13.

The children's Primary teachers conduct activity days unless the bishopric calls separate activity days leaders.

**11.5.3****Scouting Activities**

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, Scout activities take the place of activity days for boys ages 8 through 11. To maintain a gospel focus in Scout activities, leaders use the *Faith in God for Boys* guidebook as one of their resources. As boys fulfill requirements in the guidebook, they also qualify for religious awards in Scouting.

The children's Primary teachers may serve as Scout leaders, or the bishopric may call others to serve as Scout leaders. Leaders ensure that Scouting activities follow the guidelines in 11.8.1 and in chapter 13.

The Primary presidency ensures that all boys ages 8 through 11 are registered in the Scout program and that all Scout leaders are registered and receive proper training. For more information about Scouting, including guidelines for planning annual day camps, see the Church's *Scouting Handbook* and the *Day Camp Guide for Eleven-Year-Old Scouts*.

When 11-year-olds move into the Young Men program, they leave 11-year-old Scouts and join the Scout troop with those in the deacons quorum.

The Church has not adopted the Tiger Cub program (in the United States) or the Beaver program (in Canada) for Primary-age boys.

**11.5.4****Children's Sacrament Meeting Presentation**

The annual children's sacrament meeting presentation gives children an opportunity to share what they have learned in Primary. It is normally presented during the fourth quarter of the year.

The Primary presidency and music leader(s) prepare the presentation under the direction of the bishopric. It should allow the children to present what they have learned from the scriptures at home and in Primary, including the Primary songs they have sung during the year.

In the sacrament meeting, the presentation comes after the administration of the sacrament and may take all or part of the remaining time. All Primary children ages 3 through 11 sing songs they have learned in singing time. Children may also participate by reading or reciting scripture passages, giving talks, singing in small groups, and sharing their testimonies. An adult leader in Primary may also share a brief message.

In keeping with the sacredness of sacrament meeting, the presentation should not include visuals, costumes, or media presentations. Practices should not take unnecessary time away from families or Primary classes.

**11.5.5****Temple and Priesthood Preparation**

Each year, the Primary presidency, under the direction of the bishopric, prepares a meeting called Temple and Priesthood Preparation. The meeting is held for the boys and girls in the Valiant 10 class before the January in which they move to Young Women and Young Men. Their parents are also invited. The purpose of this meeting is to help these children understand the blessings of temple service, priesthood service, and making and keeping sacred covenants.

Possible topics for the meeting include:

- Helping boys and girls understand priesthood purposes, responsibilities, ordinances, and blessings.
- Helping boys strengthen their commitment to prepare to receive the priesthood.
- Helping boys and girls understand their opportunities to participate in the work of salvation.
- Encouraging children to prepare to receive a limited-use temple recommend when they are eligible, beginning in January of the year they turn

12, and to participate worthily in proxy baptisms as their circumstances allow.

A member of the bishopric conducts the meeting, and at least one member of the Primary presidency attends. Other leaders who may attend include members of the deacons quorum and Beehive class presidencies.

If a ward has very few children in the Valiant 10 class, the meeting may be held, under the direction of the stake presidency, with other wards or with the entire stake. According to local needs, it may be held on a Sunday evening, as part of a Primary meeting on Sunday, or at another time.

## 11.6

### Stake Primary Leadership

#### 11.6.1

##### Stake Presidency

The stake presidency's responsibilities relating to auxiliary organizations in the stake are outlined in 15.1.

#### 11.6.2

##### High Councilor Assigned to the Stake Primary

The stake president assigns a member of the high council to work with the stake Primary presidency. This high councilor's responsibilities are outlined in 15.3. In addition to those responsibilities, he helps implement the Scouting program for boys ages 8 through 11 where it is authorized by the Church (see the Church's *Scouting Handbook*).

#### 11.6.3

##### Stake Primary Presidency

The responsibilities of the stake Primary presidency are outlined in 15.4.1.

#### 11.6.4

##### Stake Primary Secretary

The responsibilities of the stake Primary secretary are outlined in 15.4.2.

#### 11.6.5

##### Stake Primary Music Leader

Under the direction of the stake Primary presidency, a stake Primary music leader may help give instruction in stake Primary leadership meetings. He or she may also give individual instruction to Primary presidencies, music leaders, and pianists. When requested, the stake Primary music leader organizes and directs a stake children's choir.

Instruction should include demonstrating effective ways to teach the gospel to children through music. Resources include the *Children's Songbook*, pages 300–304. See also chapter 14 in this handbook and "Music Callings and Resources" in the Serving in the Church section of [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

## 11.7

### Adapting the Primary Organization to Local Needs

In a ward with many children in an age-group, Primary leaders may organize multiple classes for those children. This adaptation may be especially helpful in wards that have many nursery-age children.

In a ward with few children, Primary leaders may combine two or more age-groups into one class.

In a small ward or branch, the members of the Primary presidency may be the only Primary leaders and teachers. In a very small unit, the Primary president may be the only Primary leader and teacher. In this case, she conducts singing time and teaches a class for all the children. When possible, more



leaders and teachers should be called in the following order:

1. Counselors in the Primary presidency
2. Music leaders
3. Primary teachers and nursery leaders
4. Secretary
5. Activity days leaders and Scout leaders (where applicable)

In a very small branch that does not have a Primary president, the Relief Society president can help parents organize instruction for their children until a Primary president is called.

In a small stake or district, the Primary president may be the only stake or district Primary leader. When possible, other leaders should be called in the following order:

1. Counselors in the stake or district Primary presidency
2. Music leader
3. Secretary

For general information about adapting to local needs, see chapter 17.

## 11.8

### Additional Guidelines and Policies

#### 11.8.1

#### Men Serving in Primary

When considering members who might serve in the Primary, the bishopric and the Primary presidency should remember the positive influence of worthy men in the ward. Children, especially those who do not have worthy priesthood holders in their homes, need to see examples of righteous, caring priesthood holders. Men may serve as teachers, music

leaders, pianists, activity days leaders, and Scout leaders. They may also assist in the nursery. See also 11.8.8.

#### 11.8.2

#### Baptismal Services for Eight-Year-Old Children of Record

See 20.3.4.

#### 11.8.3

#### Testimony Bearing in Primary

Parents, Primary leaders, and teachers bear simple and direct testimony when they teach, helping children learn what a testimony is and how to express a testimony.

Testimony meetings are discouraged in Primary. However, parents, Primary leaders, and teachers may provide other opportunities for testimony bearing. For example, children may share their testimonies during gospel study at home, when they give lessons in home evening, and when they give talks in Primary. Such opportunities help children prepare to share their testimonies in fast and testimony meeting when they are old enough to do so without assistance from a parent, sibling, or other person.

#### 11.8.4

#### Encouraging Reverence

Reverence is an expression of love and respect for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Primary leaders and teachers help children understand what reverence is and how to act reverently. They encourage reverence by personal example. They also encourage reverence by coming to church prepared to teach from the scriptures and to use visuals and learning activities that invite the influence of the Holy Ghost.

**11.8.5****Portrayals of Deity in Role-Playing Activities**

Leaders and teachers carefully maintain reverence when they choose to conduct role-playing activities, especially when people dramatize sacred events. God the Father and the Holy Ghost are not to be portrayed in any way. The Savior should not be portrayed by children except in a nativity scene. For additional guidelines, see 13.6.15.

**11.8.6****Children Who Have Special Needs**

When a child has a prolonged illness, a disability, or other special needs, Primary leaders consult with priesthood leaders and the child's parents to determine ways to help.

Children who have disabilities are normally included in their regular Primary classes. As needed, and where possible, a special teacher may be called to attend class with them or to teach them separately. If an illness or disability requires that a child stay at home, Primary teachers may help members of the child's family teach Primary lessons to him or her. The child is enrolled in Primary with his or her age-group, and the teacher marks the child present when a lesson is given.

Children with disabilities or other special needs normally complete Primary at the beginning of January in the year they turn 12. In some circumstances, a child may not complete Primary on this schedule due to his or her individual readiness. The bishop and parents counsel together to make a decision that is in the best interests of each child and family.

For information about understanding, including, and teaching children who have disabilities, see 21.1.26 and [disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

**11.8.7****Finances**

Activities for all aspects of Primary—including nursery, activity days, and Scouting—are funded from the ward budget. Supplies that are purchased for Primary activities, classes, or meetings belong to the ward. They are not for the personal use of Primary workers or their family members.

If the ward budget does not have sufficient funds to pay for an annual day camp or similar activity for children ages 8 through 11, leaders may ask participants to pay for part or all of it. In no case should the expenses or travel for an annual day camp or similar activity be excessive. Nor should the lack of personal funds prohibit a member from participating.

Church funds may not be used to purchase uniforms for individuals.

For more information about funding for activities, see 13.2.8.

**11.8.8****Two Responsible Adults**

When adults are teaching children or youth in Church settings, at least two responsible adults should be present. The two adults could be two men, two women, or a married couple. Where it may not be practical to have at least two adults in a classroom, leaders should consider combining classes.

**11.8.9****Age-Group Progression**

Children complete Primary and begin attending Sunday School and Young Women classes or Aaronic Priesthood quorums as age-groups at the beginning of January in the year they turn 12. Likewise, young women progress between Young Women classes and young men between Aaronic

Priesthood quorums as age-groups at the beginning of January in the year they turn 14 and 16.

In addition, young men are eligible for ordination to the appropriate priesthood office not earlier than January of the year they turn 12, 14, and 16. Young women and ordained young men are eligible for limited-use temple recommends beginning in January of the year they turn 12. Ordination to a priesthood office for young men and obtaining a limited-use temple recommend for young women and young men continue to be individual matters, based on worthiness, readiness, and personal circumstances.

Some children or youth may not move between organizations, classes, or quorums according to the typical schedule due to personal circumstances. The bishop and parents counsel together to decide what is in the best interest of each child or youth. However, children and youth may not move classes and young men may not be ordained before January of the year they turn 12, 14, and 16.

In areas of the world where January is not a natural transition date, a local transition date approved by the Area Presidency and assigned member of the Quorum of the Twelve may be used.