

12.

Sunday School

The Sunday School 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.

12.1

Purposes of Sunday School

All youth and adult Church members are members of Sunday School. Youth begin attending Sunday School at the beginning of January in the year they turn 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.

People of other faiths are also welcome to attend and participate in Sunday School classes.

The purposes of the Sunday School organization are to:

1. Strengthen individuals' and families' faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ through teaching, learning, and fellowshiping.
2. Help Church members "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:77) at church and at home.

12.2

Ward Sunday School Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering the Sunday School in a way that will strengthen individuals and families. Sunday School 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.

12.2.1

Bishopric

The bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Sunday School.

The bishop calls and sets apart the Sunday School president. He also oversees the calling and setting apart of other Sunday School workers. He may assign his counselors to call and set them apart.

The bishop assigns one of his counselors to oversee the ward Sunday School, including the meeting-house library. This counselor meets regularly with the ward Sunday School presidency. He reports on Sunday School and meetinghouse library matters in bishopric meetings.

12.2.2

Ward Sunday School Presidency

Members of the ward Sunday School presidency are priesthood holders. Where possible, the president holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. They work under the direction of the bishopric. They receive orientation and ongoing support from the stake Sunday School presidency.

12.2.2.1

Ward Sunday School President

The Sunday School president has the following responsibilities:

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

prepared to suggest ways members can improve learning and teaching at church and in their homes. As invited by the bishop, he conducts training in ward council meeting to help improve gospel learning and teaching in the ward.

He submits recommendations to the bishopric for ward members to be called to serve as counselors in the Sunday School presidency, as Sunday School teachers, and as ward librarian and assistant librarians. If needed, he also recommends a ward member to serve as Sunday School secretary. In making these recommendations, he follows the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

He teaches other Sunday School leaders their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

12.2.2.2

Ward Sunday School President and His Counselors

Members of the ward Sunday School presidency work together to fulfill the following responsibilities:

They oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in Sunday School. In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4. They also support Sunday School teachers by (1) visiting with them occasionally to address their questions and concerns and to discuss ways to serve class members and (2) arranging to visit their classes.

They serve as specialists in the ward's efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching (see 12.5).

They participate in and encourage other leaders to participate in teacher council meetings. The ward council, with assistance from the Sunday School presidency, oversees teacher council meetings. In most cases, a member of the Sunday School presidency leads the meetings (see 12.5.2).

They oversee the meetinghouse library. This includes (1) orienting newly called librarians,

(2) providing ongoing support and training, and (3) recommending an annual budget for the library after consulting with the ward librarian.

They hold Sunday School presidency meetings. They also participate in meetings with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Sunday School.

The Sunday School president assigns his counselors to oversee some areas of responsibility. For example, he may delegate the responsibilities for organizing Sunday School classes for different age-groups, orienting teachers, supervising the meetinghouse library, and helping Sunday School teachers arrange for substitute teachers as needed. The counselors frequently report to him on their efforts.

12.2.3

Sunday School Teachers

Sunday School teachers teach classes as assigned by the bishopric and the Sunday School presidency. They follow the principles outlined in 5.5.4.

12.2.4

Ward Sunday School Secretary

If needed, the bishopric may call a brother to serve as ward Sunday School secretary. The secretary may be given the following responsibilities:

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

He compiles attendance information and reviews it with the Sunday School president to help determine ways to encourage members to participate in Sunday School. Teachers should receive copies of this information.

12.2.5**Sunday School Class Presidents**

With the approval of the bishopric, the Sunday School presidency may invite members to serve as Sunday School class presidents. Class presidents may be male or female. They may be asked to extend a brief welcome at the beginning of class, introduce new class members and visitors, and invite class members to offer the opening and closing prayers. They may also be asked to help with efforts to keep track of attendance and fellowship class members who do not attend regularly.

12.3**Leadership Meetings****12.3.1****Ward Council Meeting**

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

12.3.2**Ward Sunday School Presidency Meeting**

The Sunday School presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The president presides at the meeting and conducts it. The secretary may attend, take notes, and keep track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to their callings.
2. Discuss the effectiveness of Sunday School classes and plan ways to help teachers and class members improve.
3. Plan ways to respond to requests to help improve learning and teaching in other priesthood or auxiliary organizations.

4. Review attendance records. Plan ways to encourage increased participation in Sunday School.

12.3.3**Meeting with a Counselor in the Bishopric**

The Sunday School presidency meets regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Sunday School. In these meetings they counsel together about learning and teaching in Sunday School and the ward. Members of the Sunday School presidency give reports, make recommendations, and review plans for meetings.

12.3.4**Stake Sunday School Leadership Meeting**

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

12.4**Sunday School Classes**

Sunday School classes are held on the first and third Sundays of each month. They last 50 minutes. Classes are organized for adults and for youth. As needed, more than one class may be organized for adults. For more information about youth classes, see 12.4.1.

Teaching materials for adult and youth classes are found in *Come, Follow Me—For Sunday School*.

Before Sunday School classes begin, leaders from Young Women, Relief Society, and priesthood quorums may make brief announcements. Classes begin with a brief welcome and a reminder of the *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* home

study materials for that day and the following week. The teacher uses the remainder of the class time for gospel instruction and discussion. Sunday School classes do not begin with a hymn or prayer, but they conclude with a prayer.

At the bishop's discretion and based on local needs, optional courses may be taught outside of regular Sunday meetings. These courses include self-reliance, marriage and family relations, temple preparation, missionary preparation, priesthood preparation, and family history.

More information about Sunday School classes can be found at ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

12.4.1 Classes for Youth

The Sunday School presidency generally organizes youth ages 11 to 18 into classes. For consistency with ordination ages and age-group progression in Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women classes, youth are normally divided into classes based on their age on December 31 of the previous year. Classes could be organized for each age-group, or they could be combined for more than one age-group.

In youth classes, 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 consider combining classes.

12.4.2 Class for Young Single Adults

A ward may have a Sunday School class for young single adults. Teachers use the scriptures and *Come, Follow Me—For Sunday School*. They give special emphasis to the needs of young single adults.

12.4.3 Helping Class Members with Disabilities

For information about understanding, including, and teaching members who have disabilities, see 21.1.26 and disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

12.5 Improving Learning and Teaching in the Ward

Members of the ward Sunday School presidency serve as specialists in the ward's efforts to improve learning and teaching. As invited by the bishopric or by leaders of priesthood and auxiliary organizations, they provide counsel, training, and support. They help leaders orient newly called teachers and improve gospel learning and teaching in their organizations. For more information, see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*.

12.5.1 Orienting Newly Called Teachers

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders meet individually with newly called teachers in their organizations, preferably before each teacher's first lesson (see 5.5). Under the direction of the bishop, Sunday School presidencies may use *Teaching in the Savior's Way* to train priesthood and auxiliary leaders on how to orient newly called teachers.

12.5.2 Teacher Council Meetings

The ward council, with assistance from the Sunday School presidency, oversees teacher council meetings. In most cases, a member of the Sunday School presidency leads the meetings. Other ward members may be assigned to lead meetings on occasion. For more information, see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*.

Each ward holds quarterly teacher council meetings for teachers to counsel together about principles of Christlike teaching. Teachers attend teacher council meetings during the 50-minute class time on Sunday. The council meetings are held according to the following schedule:

- Priesthood, Relief Society, and Young Women teachers can attend on a first or third Sunday, as determined by local leaders.
- Sunday School teachers can attend on a second or fourth Sunday, as determined by local leaders.
- Primary teachers can attend on any Sunday, as determined by the ward Primary and Sunday School presidencies. If desired, Primary teachers may meet separately from other teachers to counsel about the unique needs of teaching children. More than one council may be held during a quarter for Primary teachers so they do not all miss Primary classes at the same time.
- In small units it may be difficult to hold teacher council meetings during regular Sunday meetings. In these units, teacher council meetings may be held quarterly in an expanded ward council that includes all teachers. Or they could be held outside of regular Sunday meetings.

For more information, see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*.

12.6

Meetinghouse Library

Each meetinghouse should have a library with resources to help members learn and teach the gospel. The ward Sunday School presidency oversees the meetinghouse library.

Meetinghouse libraries vary according to available space. They may provide some or all of the following items: scriptures, Church magazines, Church-produced pictures and audiovisual materials, chalk,

erasers, pencils, paper, television sets, DVD players, and a photocopier.

The stake presidency may authorize wards, institute classes, and family history centers to share the resources in meetinghouse libraries.

12.6.1

Ward Librarian and Assistant Librarians

The ward librarian helps leaders, teachers, and other members learn how to access and use the materials, supplies, and equipment that are available. He or she prepares a schedule for staffing the library. This schedule should ensure that all librarians can attend sacrament meeting each Sunday and that each librarian can attend either a Sunday School class or a Melchizedek Priesthood or Relief Society meeting every other Sunday.

As needed, the ward librarian works with other wards and organizations to coordinate the use of the library. He or she organizes and cares for the materials and equipment in the library and uses a simple system to allow members to borrow materials.

Assistant librarians work under the direction of the ward librarian and share many of his or her responsibilities.

12.6.2

Leadership for a Meetinghouse Library in a Multiward Building

In a multiward building, the wards usually share the same library. If this is the case, the agent bishop is responsible for the coordination of the library. He may appoint a committee to coordinate the use of the library and manage the budget funds allocated to it. The committee should include a member of the Sunday School presidency from each ward and the librarian from each ward.

12.6.3**Meetinghouse Library Policies**

Policies related to the meetinghouse library are found under “Sunday School” in the Serving in the Church section of ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

12.7**Stake Sunday School Leadership****12.7.1****Stake Presidency**

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

The counselor in the stake presidency who oversees the Sunday School also oversees meetinghouse libraries in the stake.

12.7.2**High Councilor Assigned to the Stake Sunday School**

The stake president assigns a member of the high council to work with the stake Sunday School presidency. This high councilor’s responsibilities are outlined in 15.3.

12.7.3**Stake Sunday School Presidency**

Members of the stake Sunday School presidency are priesthood holders. Where possible, the president holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. Their responsibilities as stake auxiliary leaders are outlined in 15.4.1. In addition, they have the following responsibilities:

They serve as specialists in the stake’s efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching.

They coordinate the use of meetinghouse libraries in the stake. This includes:

1. Helping orient newly called ward librarians, as invited by ward Sunday School presidencies.
2. Conducting other training meetings for ward librarians and assistant librarians in the stake.
3. Ensuring that meetinghouse libraries have the materials and equipment they need.
4. Ensuring that stake leaders have the meetinghouse library materials and equipment they need.

12.7.4**Stake Sunday School Secretary**

If needed, the stake presidency may call a brother to serve as stake Sunday School secretary. The responsibilities of the stake Sunday School secretary are outlined in 15.4.2.

12.8**Adapting the Sunday School Organization to Local Needs**

In a small ward or branch, members of the Sunday School presidency may also serve as teachers. Youth classes may be combined as needed. In a very small unit, the Sunday School president may be the only Sunday School leader and teacher. In this case, he teaches a Sunday School class for all youth and adults. When possible, more leaders and teachers should be called.

In a small stake or a district, the Sunday School president may be the only stake or district Sunday School leader. When possible, counselors should be called. A stake Sunday School secretary may also be called.

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