

18.

Meetings in the Church

This chapter summarizes information about Church meetings. Meetings that are specific to an organization, such as quorum, Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School meetings, are described in that organization's chapter of this handbook.

In addition to the meetings outlined in the handbooks, presiding authorities occasionally may call other meetings and define their composition and purpose.

18.1

Guidelines for Planning and Conducting Meetings

Leaders plan and conduct meetings “as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:45; see also Moroni 6:9; Doctrine and Covenants 46:2).

Leaders prepare an agenda for each meeting or assign someone else to prepare it under their direction. An agenda helps participants focus on the meeting's purposes and use time effectively. It should be prioritized to ensure that the most important matters are discussed first.

Leadership meetings should focus on strengthening individuals and families. Time spent on calendaring, program planning, and other administrative business should be minimal.

For guidelines on counseling together in meetings, see 4.6.1.

The presiding officer may conduct a meeting or ask a counselor or someone else to conduct it under his or her direction.

Meetings should not be longer than needed.

Leaders should ensure that Sunday meetings are not so numerous that there is little time for parents and children to be together on that day. Where possible, leaders should avoid scheduling Sunday meetings other than those in the standard two-hour schedule, leadership meetings in the early mornings, and occasional meetings in the evenings.

18.2

Ward Meetings

The bishop oversees ward meetings. He presides at these meetings unless a member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy, or a General Authority attends. His counselors may conduct ward meetings and may preside if he is absent. Presiding authorities and visiting high councilors should be invited to sit on the stand. High councilors do not preside when attending ward meetings.

If the bishop and his counselors are all absent, the stake president designates who presides at sacrament meeting. Normally he designates the elders quorum president, but he could authorize another priesthood holder instead.

18.2.1

Schedule for Sunday Meetings

Sunday meetings provide vitally important time for members to increase their faith in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, as they partake of the sacrament, worship, learn the gospel, learn their duties, and give service. Those learning about the Church are invited to attend these meetings.

Wards are to hold the following Sunday meetings in one two-hour period, as outlined below. (For meeting schedule options, see the “Sunday Meeting Schedule” chart, 18.9):

1. Sacrament meeting weekly
2. Priesthood quorum meetings on the second and fourth Sundays (for all priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age; young men typically join the deacons quorum in January of the year they turn 12; see 18.2.4)
3. Relief Society on the second and fourth Sundays (for women ages 18 and older and for younger women who are married)
4. Young Women on the second and fourth Sundays (for young women ages 11 to 18; young women typically join the Young Women organization in January of the year they turn 12)
5. Primary weekly (for children ages 3 through 11; also for children ages 18 months through 2 years if a nursery is organized and parents want their children to attend)
6. Sunday School on the first and third Sundays (for those ages 11 and older; youth typically join Sunday School in January of the year they turn 12)

During the week, leaders are encouraged to invite members to worship together on Sunday. They can send invitations via email, text, social media, or other means. Invitations can remind members of the meeting schedule for the next Sunday and include topics for discussion for quorum and class meetings. A reminder might be as simple as “This week we will hold Sunday School. We will study Luke 2 and Matthew 2.”

18.2.2 Sacrament Meeting

18.2.2.1 Purposes of Sacrament Meeting

The primary purpose of sacrament meeting is for Church members to remember the Savior by

partaking of the sacrament. Members renew their commitment to take upon them His name, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. This ordinance is the center of members’ worship on the Sabbath.

Each sacrament meeting should be focused on deepening conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Other purposes of sacrament meeting are to worship, provide gospel instruction, perform ordinances, conduct ward business, and strengthen faith and testimony.

18.2.2.2 Planning and Conducting Sacrament Meeting

Members of the bishopric plan sacrament meetings and conduct them in a reverent and dignified manner. They oversee the administration of the sacrament, select subjects for talks and music, select and orient participants, and invite members to give opening and closing prayers. It is not necessary to hold a prayer meeting before sacrament meeting.

The bishopric ensures that sacrament meetings begin and end on time. Meetings should not be overprogrammed. A sample agenda follows:

1. Prelude music (see 14.4.3 for guidelines)
2. Greeting and welcome
3. Acknowledgment of presiding authorities or visiting high councilors who are attending
4. Announcements (most announcements should be printed or electronically distributed so they do not take time in sacrament meeting; the bishopric may give essential announcements briefly before the opening hymn)
5. Opening hymn and prayer
6. Ward and stake business, such as:
 - a. Sustaining and releasing officers and teachers (see 19.3 and 19.5)

- b. Recognizing 8-year-old children who have been baptized and confirmed (see “Introducing New Members,” 18.2.8)
 - c. Presenting names of brethren to receive or advance in the Aaronic Priesthood (see *Handbook 1*, 16.7.2)
 - d. Recognizing young women as they advance in their classes
 - e. Presenting names of new ward members (see “Introducing New Members,” 18.2.8)
7. Naming and blessing children (usually in fast and testimony meeting) and confirming and bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost on new members
 8. Sacrament hymn and administration of the sacrament
 9. Gospel messages and congregational singing or special musical selections
 10. Closing hymn and prayer
 11. Postlude music

Occasionally something unexpected may occur during the meeting that the presiding officer feels a need to clarify. In this situation, he should make any clarification that is needed, being careful not to cause embarrassment.

18.2.2.3

Time before Sacrament Meeting

Leaders set an example of reverence during the time before sacrament meeting. The bishopric and the speakers should be in their seats at least five minutes before the meeting begins. This is not a time for conversation or transmitting messages. Setting an example of reverence encourages the congregation to be spiritually prepared for a worshipful experience.

Members should be taught to make the time before sacrament meeting a period of prayerful meditation as they prepare spiritually for the sacrament.

The bishopric encourages families to arrive on time and to sit together.

18.2.2.4

Blessing and Passing the Sacrament

The bishopric ensures that the sacrament is blessed and passed in a reverent and orderly manner. The sacrament table should be prepared before the meeting begins. For instructions on preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament, see 20.4.

18.2.2.5

Selecting Subjects for Talks and Music

The bishopric selects subjects for talks and music in sacrament meetings. Talks and music should focus on gospel subjects that help members build faith and testimony.

18.2.2.6

Selecting and Orienting Participants

Selecting Participants. The bishopric selects members to participate in sacrament meetings. Most opportunities to participate are given to ward members. If the bishopric invites members from outside the ward to speak, the guidelines in 21.1.20 should be followed.

Members of the bishopric regularly invite youth to speak in sacrament meeting. Youth should speak briefly (about five minutes each) on assigned gospel subjects. They should prepare their own talks, though the bishopric may encourage parents to help.

The bishopric usually invites missionaries to speak in sacrament meeting just before they depart and when they return (see *Handbook 1*, 4.8.1 and 4.10.3). The bishopric makes it clear that this is a regular

sacrament meeting and is not to be a missionary farewell or homecoming. The bishopric plans and conducts these meetings. Family members and friends of the missionary are not invited to speak. However, other departing or returning missionaries or other members may be invited to speak.

The bishopric schedules high councilors to speak as assigned by the stake president. The stake president determines the frequency of such assignments. It is not necessary for high councilors to speak in sacrament meeting every month.

The bishopric schedules one sacrament meeting each year for the Primary children to take part in a Primary program (see 11.5.4).

Occasionally the bishopric may invite the full-time missionaries who are serving in the area to speak.

The bishopric may not turn sacrament meetings over to auxiliaries or outside musical groups. However, auxiliaries may be invited to participate in the meeting under the bishopric's direction.

Members of the bishopric should extend invitations to speak in sacrament meeting well in advance of the meeting.

Orienting Participants. Members of the bishopric orient sacrament meeting participants. They review the purposes of sacrament meeting and explain that all talks and music should be in harmony with the sacred nature of the sacrament.

When inviting members to speak, a member of the bishopric clearly explains the subject and the length of time the person should speak. He counsels speakers to teach the doctrines of the gospel, relate faith-promoting experiences, bear witness of divinely revealed truths, and use the scriptures (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:12; 52:9). Speakers should teach in a spirit of love after prayerful preparation. They should not speak on subjects that are speculative, controversial, or out of harmony with Church doctrine.

To maintain an atmosphere of reverent worship in sacrament meetings, when speakers use scriptures as part of their talks, they should not ask the congregation to open their own books to the scriptural references.

Members who participate in sacrament meeting should stay until the meeting ends.

18.2.2.7

Music

See 14.4.3 and 14.4.4.

18.2.2.8

Introducing New Members

When membership records are received in a ward and when converts are baptized and confirmed, a member of the bishopric introduces and welcomes the members in the next sacrament meeting. He reads each person's name, invites the person to stand, and asks members of the congregation to show by the uplifted hand that they accept the members in full fellowship in the ward. Records of family members are read together. If a member knows any reason why a person may not be entitled to full fellowship, he or she should talk to the bishop privately.

After children who are members of record are baptized and confirmed, a member of the bishopric announces each child's baptism and confirmation in sacrament meeting. These children are not presented for acceptance into the ward because they are already members.

18.2.2.9

Visual Aids and Audiovisual Materials

See 18.4 and 21.1.5.

18.2.2.10**Sacrament Services in Unusual Situations**

Every member needs the spiritual blessings that come from partaking of the sacrament. If members are unable to attend sacrament meeting because they are confined to a home, nursing home, or hospital, the bishop may assign priesthood holders to prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament to these members.

Occasionally members may be unable to attend sacrament meeting because of distance to the meetinghouse. Under unusual circumstances, the bishop may occasionally give authorization for a sacrament service to be held away from the meetinghouse. He may authorize such a service only within his ward boundaries. The person whom the bishop authorizes to conduct the service must hold the Melchizedek Priesthood or be a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. He also must be worthy to bless and pass the sacrament. The priesthood holder who directs the service reports to the bishop when the service has been held.

When members are traveling or temporarily residing away from their home wards, they should make an earnest effort to attend sacrament meeting and other Sunday meetings in a ward or branch of the Church.

Sacrament services should not be held in conjunction with family reunions or other outings.

18.2.3**Fast and Testimony Meeting**

Usually on the first Sunday of each month, sacrament meeting is a fast and testimony meeting. When general conference, stake conference, or New Year's Day (see 13.6.11) is on a Sunday, fast and testimony meeting may need to be on a different Sunday.

Under the bishop's direction, in this meeting children may be named and blessed and confirmations

may be performed before the administration of the sacrament.

After the sacrament, the bishopric member who is conducting the meeting bears a brief testimony. He then invites members to bear heartfelt testimonies and to relate faith-promoting experiences. The bishopric encourages members to keep their testimonies brief so more people may have the opportunity to participate.

It may be best to have young children learn to share their testimonies in settings such as gospel study at home, home evening, or when giving talks in Primary until they are old enough to do so in a fast and testimony meeting without assistance from a parent, sibling, or other person.

18.2.4**Priesthood Quorum Meetings**

Priesthood quorum meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays. In these meetings, priesthood holders conduct business, learn priesthood duties, strengthen individuals and families, study the gospel of Jesus Christ, counsel together, and organize to meet local needs. Bishopric members normally attend Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings, though occasionally they attend Young Women classes. On a fifth Sunday, the bishopric may direct the Aaronic Priesthood quorums or all priesthood holders to hold a combined meeting. The bishopric may also plan a fifth-Sunday meeting for all youth or all adults or for youth and adults together.

For more information about priesthood quorum meetings, see 7.8 and 8.11.

18.2.5**Ward Conference**

The stake presidency schedules and directs a ward conference once a year in each ward. A ward conference may be held on any Sunday of the month except fast Sunday. Members of the stake presidency,

high council, and stake auxiliaries take part in ward conference sessions as the stake president directs. The purposes of ward conference are to strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, conduct business, and evaluate activity.

The main session of ward conference is held during sacrament meeting. Normally the agenda is similar to that of other sacrament meetings. The stake president presides, and the stake presidency usually plans the meeting. A member of the bishopric usually conducts. Before the sacrament, a member of the stake presidency or a high councilor uses the Officers Sustained form (prepared by a ward clerk) to present the names of general, stake, ward, quorum, and class officers to ward members for their sustaining vote. After the sacrament, speakers normally include the bishop and stake president.

The ward usually holds regular priesthood and auxiliary meetings as part of ward conference. Stake leaders may give instruction and assistance. These meetings no longer include the sustaining of quorum and class officers because all are sustained in the sacrament meeting portion of ward conference.

In connection with ward conference, the stake presidency meets with the bishopric to review the progress of individuals and organizations in the ward. This meeting may be held on ward conference Sunday or at another time.

18.2.6 Bishopric Meeting

The bishopric usually meets at least weekly. The ward clerk and ward executive secretary attend; the clerk keeps a record of assignments and decisions. The bishop may invite others to attend as needed. For example, a sensitive matter could be addressed in an expanded bishopric meeting that includes the elders quorum president, Relief Society president, or both.

During a bishopric meeting, members of the bishopric counsel together about ward matters. They plan ways to strengthen individuals and families. They evaluate quorums, auxiliaries, programs, and activities. They also make plans to implement instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and handbooks.

In this meeting, members of the bishopric identify members to call to serve in the ward. They also identify which members are coming of age to be eligible for ordinances, including priesthood ordinations, and which brethren to recommend to the stake president to be ordained elders and high priests and to serve as missionaries.

Other agenda items for this meeting may include reporting on assignments, planning meetings, reviewing the ward calendar, and reviewing the ward budget.

18.2.7 Ward Priesthood Executive Committee Meeting

The ward priesthood executive committee (PEC) has been discontinued. Agenda items for PEC meetings are now included in ward council meetings. A sensitive matter could also be addressed in an expanded bishopric meeting that includes the elders quorum president, Relief Society president, or both..

18.2.8 Ward Council Meeting

See 4.6.

18.2.9 Bishopric Youth Committee Meeting

The bishop presides over the bishopric youth committee. This committee is composed of the bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants,

the teachers and deacons quorum presidents, the Young Women class presidents, and the Young Men and Young Women presidents.

The bishopric may invite others to attend the committee's meetings as needed. These may include the other priests quorum assistant, counselors in quorum and class presidencies, quorum and class secretaries, counselors in the Young Men and Young Women presidencies, and Young Men and Young Women secretaries.

The committee usually meets monthly. The bishop may conduct this meeting, or he may assign one of his counselors, one of his priests quorum assistants, or the Laurel class president to conduct it. Before each meeting, the bishop reviews and approves the agenda with the person who will be conducting. The agenda may include the following items:

1. Identify needs and interests of individual youth in the ward. Plan ways to help meet those needs. Plan ways to help youth live and promote Church standards.
2. Plan ways to encourage individual youth to participate in Church meetings and activities, including seminary. Plan and report on fellowshiping efforts for youth who are less active, youth who recently have been baptized, and youth who are investigating the Church.
3. Schedule and plan youth activities that are consistent with the needs that have been identified. These activities include combined Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women activities and ward youth conferences. Adult leaders should include youth as much as possible in planning and carrying out these activities.
4. Evaluate past activities to see if the intended purposes were fulfilled.

These committee meetings should provide leadership opportunities and instruction for youth.

18.2.10

Ward Young Single Adult Committee Meeting

See 16.3.4.

18.2.11

Missionary Coordination Meeting

See 5.1.5.

18.3

Stake Meetings

The stake president oversees stake meetings. He presides at these meetings unless an Area Seventy or General Authority attends. His counselors may conduct stake meetings and may preside if he is absent. Stake meetings should not conflict with Sunday ward meetings.

18.3.1

Stake Conference

Each stake holds two stake conferences during the year as scheduled by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve. In most parts of the world, the stake president presides at one stake conference and an assigned Area Seventy or General Authority presides at the other.

In some stake conferences, a satellite broadcast may be incorporated into the Sunday general session. This broadcast will include instruction by General Authorities. When a satellite broadcast is used, that conference takes the place of the stake conference at which an Area Seventy or General Authority would have presided.

When a new stake president must be called before a regularly scheduled stake conference, a special stake conference may be held.

The primary purpose of stake conference is to strengthen faith and testimony. All talks and music should be planned with this purpose in mind.

Another purpose is to conduct stake business. In one stake conference each year, a member of the stake presidency presents general, area, and stake officers to be sustained, using the Officers Sustained form. He also presents the names of stake officers who have been released so the congregation can give an expression of thanks for their service. This business is normally conducted in the first stake conference each year unless a satellite broadcast is incorporated into that conference. In that case, the business is conducted in the second stake conference.

If stake officers are called or released between stake conferences, they should be presented for a sustaining vote or an expression of thanks in the next stake conference unless this has been done in a stake general priesthood meeting (for callings indicated in the Chart of Callings, 19.7) or in ward sacrament meetings (as outlined in 19.3).

Brethren who have been recommended for ordination to the offices of elder and high priest are normally presented for a sustaining vote in a stake conference or a stake general priesthood meeting. Instructions are provided in *Handbook 1*, 16.7.1.

Each stake conference normally includes the following meetings:

1. A meeting of the Area Seventy or General Authority (if assigned), stake presidency, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary.
2. A priesthood leadership meeting attended by the Area Seventy or General Authority (if assigned) and the brethren listed in 18.3.3. This meeting may be held on either Saturday or Sunday as determined by the presiding authority.
3. A Saturday evening session for all members of the stake who are 18 years of age and older. Temple presidents, stake patriarchs,

and full-time mission presidents or their representatives who attend should sit on the stand. Depending on local circumstances, this session may be held on Sunday if approved by the presiding authority.

4. A general session held on Sunday for all members and interested nonmembers. Temple presidents, stake patriarchs, and full-time mission presidents or their representatives who attend should sit on the stand. More than one Sunday general session may be held if facilities are not adequate to seat everyone in the same session. Primary children attend this session with their families, not in a separate meeting.

Instruction in all stake conference sessions is under the direction of the presiding authority. When an Area Seventy or General Authority will preside, he may invite the stake president to suggest subjects. When the stake president will preside, he and his counselors select subjects for instruction.

If necessary, conference sessions may be broadcast to other locations in the stake.

18.3.1.1

Planning and Conducting Stake Conference

The presiding officer directs all conference planning. He approves all conference participants and all musical selections well before the conference.

The stake president conducts the Sunday general session. His counselors may conduct other conference meetings.

The stake president speaks in the Sunday general session of the conference. His counselors speak in conference sessions as determined by the presiding authority.

Planning includes making arrangements for adequate seating, ushering, and parking. Stake leaders may assign priesthood quorums, including prospective elders, to provide these services.

18.3.1.2**Music for Stake Conference**

See 14.6.1.

18.3.2**Stake General Priesthood Meeting**

The stake presidency convenes one stake general priesthood meeting each year. All Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood holders in the stake are to attend.

The stake presidency uses these meetings to instruct and inspire priesthood holders. The presidency prayerfully selects the subjects and the speakers for these meetings.

In these meetings the stake presidency also conducts stake priesthood business, such as:

1. Presenting the names of brethren who have been recommended for ordination to the offices of elder and high priest and asking for a sustaining vote (see *Handbook 1*, 16.7.1).
2. Presenting the names of newly called stake officers and asking for a sustaining vote (see the Chart of Callings in chapter 19 for guidelines about who is to be presented for this vote).

18.3.3**Stake Priesthood Leadership Meeting**

The stake presidency convenes a stake priesthood leadership meeting in connection with each stake conference (see 18.3.1, item 2). The presidency also convenes one other stake priesthood leadership meeting during the year, for a total of three such meetings annually. The purposes of these meetings are to teach priesthood leaders their duties, increase their abilities, and strengthen their faith.

Brethren who attend this meeting include the stake presidency; high council; stake clerk (and assistant clerks as needed); stake executive secretary; stake

Young Men presidency (and secretary as needed); bishoprics; ward clerks (and assistant clerks as needed); ward executive secretaries; elders quorum presidencies and secretaries; and ward Young Men presidencies (and secretaries and advisers as needed). The stake presidency may invite others to attend, including ward mission leaders and ward temple and family history leaders (if called; see 5.1.1; 5.4.1).

The structure of this meeting is flexible to provide the most effective instruction possible. All brethren may remain together for the entire meeting. Or, after they have met together for stake business and general instruction, the stake presidency may have them separate into groups to counsel together and receive specific instruction in their assignments. For example:

Bishoprics and other Aaronic Priesthood leaders could meet together.

Elders quorum leaders could meet together.

The high councilor assigned to missionary work or a member of the stake presidency could meet with ward mission leaders (if called; see 5.1.1) and members of elders quorum presidencies who lead missionary work.

The high councilor(s) assigned to temple and family history work or a member of the stake presidency could meet with ward temple and family history leaders (if called; see 5.4.1) and members of elders quorum presidencies who lead temple and family history work.

The stake executive secretary usually meets with ward executive secretaries.

The stake clerk usually meets with ward clerks.

In these groups, the stake presidency may provide instruction or invite high councilors, the stake Young Men presidency, and others to assist.

18.3.4**Stake High Priests Quorum Meeting**

The stake presidency convenes a high priests quorum meeting for all members of the high priests quorum in the stake at least once a year. During this meeting, they teach quorum members the doctrine of the gospel (see Alma 13:1–6), instruct them in their duties, and conduct quorum business. An annual meeting of all ordained high priests in the stake is no longer held.

18.3.5**Stake Presidency Meeting**

The stake presidency meets regularly. The stake clerk and stake executive secretary attend; the clerk keeps a record of assignments and decisions. The stake president may invite others to attend as needed.

During this meeting, members of the stake presidency counsel together about stake matters. They plan ways to strengthen individuals and families. They evaluate wards, elders quorums, auxiliaries, programs, and activities. They also make plans to implement instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and handbooks.

During this meeting, members of the stake presidency identify members to call to Church positions. They also review bishops' recommendations of members to serve missions and of brethren to be ordained elders or high priests.

Other agenda items for this meeting may include reporting on assignments, planning meetings, reviewing the stake calendar, and reviewing the stake budget.

18.3.6**High Council Meeting**

The stake president presides over the high council meeting, which is attended by the stake presidency,

high council, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary. The stake presidency may invite others to attend as needed.

The high council meets twice monthly, where feasible. The agenda may include the following items:

1. Receive instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and priesthood duties.
2. Receive instruction pertaining to assignments with the Melchizedek Priesthood, Aaronic Priesthood, and wards.
3. Report on assignments to wards and elders quorums. Report on stake auxiliaries as needed.
4. Ask high councilors to sustain the stake presidency's decisions to ordain brethren to the offices of elder and high priest and to issue callings.
5. Counsel together about how to strengthen individuals and families, solve problems in the stake, and improve in areas such as leadership, ministering, member missionary work, retention, activation, temple and family history work, welfare, and gospel instruction.
6. Report on other assignments.
7. Hear reports from returning missionaries.
8. Plan stake priesthood leadership meetings.

18.3.7**Stake Council Meeting**

The stake president presides over the stake council. This council is composed of the stake presidency, high council, stake clerk, stake executive secretary, and stake Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidents. The stake presidency may invite others to attend as needed.

The stake council meets two to four times a year as needed. The agenda may include the following items:

1. Receive instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and duties.
2. Counsel together about how to strengthen individuals and families, solve problems in the stake, and improve in areas such as leadership, retention, activation, and gospel instruction.
3. Plan and report on the missionary efforts and temple and family history efforts in the stake.
4. Counsel together about welfare matters. Plan how to encourage members to be self-reliant. Ensure that welfare resources within the stake are made available to the wards as needed. Develop and maintain a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies. Additional information is provided in “Preside over the Welfare Work of the Stake Council” in *Handbook 1*, 5.1.1.
5. Report on stake auxiliaries and on stake activities and programs as needed.
6. Coordinate the planning of stake programs and activities.
7. Review the progress of the Perpetual Education Fund program where it is approved.

18.3.8 Meeting with Bishoprics

The stake presidency meets with bishoprics to instruct them in their duties, review Church policies, and counsel together. These meetings are held one to four times a year as needed.

The stake presidency, all bishoprics, the stake clerk, and the stake executive secretary attend this meeting. If desired, the stake president may limit the meeting to bishops only.

18.3.9 Stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women Committee Meeting

The stake president assigns a counselor to preside over the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee. Other committee members are the high councilors assigned to the stake Young Men and Young Women organizations, the stake Young Men presidency and secretary, and the stake Young Women presidency and secretary. The stake presidency may invite youth to attend the committee’s meetings as needed. The high councilor who serves as the stake activities committee chairman and others may also be invited to attend.

This committee meets as needed to plan stake-sponsored combined activities for young men and young women. Youth should be included as much as possible in planning and carrying out activities such as youth conferences, dances, devotionals, and multistake events. Youth may also participate in discussions about challenges that the youth in the stake are facing.

Stake activities should supplement ward activities, not compete with them. They are coordinated in stake council meetings. Ward leaders should be notified well in advance of the events.

18.3.10 Stake Bishops’ Welfare Council Meeting

Information on the stake bishops’ welfare council is provided in *Handbook 1*, 5.3.

18.3.11 Stake Auxiliary Leadership Meetings

The stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies each plan and conduct one stake auxiliary leadership meeting each year. If local circumstances and travel time do not place undue burdens on leaders, the stake presidency may authorize a second meeting each year.

Each organization schedules its own meeting unless the stake presidency decides to combine all meetings into the same time and place.

The high councilor assigned to the organization presides over the meeting unless a member of the stake presidency attends. All ward auxiliary presidencies and secretaries are invited to attend. Other ward auxiliary leaders, teachers, and advisers, as well as bishopric members assigned to the auxiliary, may be invited to attend as needed.

The purposes of these meetings are to teach auxiliary leaders their duties, instruct them in teaching and leadership skills, and strengthen their faith. These meetings can also be used to correlate activities, give reports, and share ideas.

The structure of these meetings is flexible to provide the most effective instruction possible. Leaders from an auxiliary organization may all meet together for instruction and sharing, or they may meet in smaller groups to consider specialized functions within their organization. If all auxiliary organizations meet at the same time, they may come together for general instruction and then meet in separate groups to receive instruction from their organization leaders.

The stake Young Men presidency does not hold a stake auxiliary leadership meeting. Instead, stake and ward Young Men presidencies attend stake priesthood leadership meetings (see 18.3.3).

18.3.12

Stake Young Single Adult Committee Meeting

See 16.3.2.

18.3.13

Stake Single Adult Committee Meeting

See 16.1.2.

18.4

Visual Aids and Audiovisual Materials in Church Meetings

Members should not use visual aids in sacrament meeting or stake conference. Such teaching methods are more appropriate in classroom settings and leadership meetings.

For guidelines about using audiovisual materials in Church meetings, see 21.1.5.

18.5

Prayers in Church Meetings

Men and women may offer both opening and closing prayers in Church meetings.

Prayers should be brief, simple, and spoken as directed by the Spirit. All members are encouraged to respond with an audible *amen* at the end of a prayer.

Members should express respect for Heavenly Father by using the special language of prayer that is appropriate for the language they are speaking. The language of prayer has different forms in different languages. In some languages, the intimate or familiar words are used only in addressing family and very close friends. Other languages have forms of address that express great respect. The principle, however, is the same: members should pray in words that speakers of the language associate with love, respect, reverence, and closeness. In English, for example, members should use the pronouns *Thee*, *Thy*, *Thine*, and *Thou* when addressing Heavenly Father.

Members of the bishopric should avoid the pattern of having a husband and wife pray in the same meeting. Such a pattern might convey an unintentional message of exclusion to those who are single. Members who are not often called upon should be included among those who are invited to pray. As needed, a member of the bishopric may

caution those who pray not to sermonize or pray at great length.

The person who offers a prayer should not be asked to read a scripture aloud before the prayer.

18.6

Funerals and Other Services at a Time of Death

Church leaders and members seek to make the services associated with a person's death a dignified, solemn, and spiritual experience for all who participate. These services are generally held under the direction of the bishop.

Services for people who die vary greatly around the world according to religion, culture, tradition, and legal requirements. Even services for Church members vary in different areas of the world. This section sets forth general principles that leaders should follow in funerals or other services for deceased members, regardless of tradition or culture. It also provides guidelines for determining which local traditions associated with death and mourning are appropriate to participate in and which are not.

18.6.1

Death and Mourning

Death is an essential part of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation (see 2 Nephi 9:6). Each person must experience death in order to receive a perfected, resurrected body. Teaching and testifying about the plan of salvation, particularly the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection, is an essential purpose of the services associated with a Church member's death.

Death brings a need to comfort the living. As disciples of Jesus Christ, Church leaders and members "mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9).

In many cultures, mortician services, viewings of the body, and funerals are customary to help comfort the living and pay respectful tribute to the deceased. Where more appropriate culturally, most of these purposes could be accomplished in a family gathering, a graveside service, or another dignified and solemn setting.

Many religions and cultures have rituals, ordinances, and customs associated with death and mourning for the dead. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ has no such rituals or ordinances. Church leaders should not incorporate rituals of other religions or groups into Church services for deceased members.

Church members should show respect for the rituals and practices of other religions. However, members are counseled not to join in rituals, practices, or traditions that compromise their ability to keep the commandments or to live the principles of the restored gospel.

In connection with mourning and services for people who die, members are counseled to avoid practices or traditions that are so expensive or prolonged that they impose a hardship on the living or impair them from proceeding with their lives. Such practices include expecting excessive travel, wearing special clothing for mourning, making elaborate public announcements, paying money to the family, holding elaborate and prolonged feasts at the funeral, and holding excessive commemorative or anniversary celebrations after the funeral.

Most governments have legal requirements that regulate what occurs when a person dies. Church leaders and members should be aware of these requirements and follow them.

18.6.2

Planning and Assistance

When a member dies, the bishop visits the family to comfort them and offer assistance from the ward.

He may ask his counselors to accompany him. The bishop offers help in notifying relatives, friends, and associates of the death. As appropriate, he also offers help in planning the funeral service, preparing a suitable obituary, and notifying newspapers of the death. If there will be a viewing of the body before the funeral service, the obituary should include the times it will begin and end.

The bishop may offer to help make mortuary and cemetery arrangements according to local laws and customs. As needed, he may offer help from the ward in providing local transportation for the family.

The bishop notifies the elders quorum president so he and other brethren, including ministering brothers, can assist the bereaved family. Such assistance may include dressing the body of a deceased male for burial, safeguarding the home during the funeral, and providing other support (see 7.10.2).

The bishop also notifies the Relief Society president so she and other sisters, including ministering sisters, can assist the family. Such assistance may include dressing the body of a deceased female for burial, helping with flowers, tending small children, safeguarding the home during the funeral, and preparing meals (see 9.10.3).

18.6.3 **Viewings (Where Customary)**

If a viewing of the body of the deceased is held just prior to the funeral, the bishop should conclude it at least 20 minutes before the funeral begins. After the viewing, a family prayer may be offered if the family desires. This prayer should conclude before the funeral is scheduled to begin so it does not impose on the time of the congregation assembled in the chapel. The casket should be closed before it is moved to the chapel for the funeral service.

Leaders should open the meetinghouse for funeral directors at least one hour before the scheduled times for the viewing and funeral.

18.6.4 **Funeral Services**

If a funeral for a member is held in a Church building, the bishop conducts it. If a funeral is held in a home, at a mortuary, or at the graveside, the family may ask the bishop to conduct it. A bishop's counselor may conduct if the bishop is unable to attend.

A funeral conducted by the bishop, whether in a Church building or another location, is a Church meeting and a religious service. It should be a spiritual occasion in addition to a family gathering. The bishop urges members to maintain a spirit of reverence, dignity, and solemnity during a funeral service and at gatherings connected with the service.

When a bishop conducts a funeral, he or one of his counselors oversees the planning of the service. He considers the wishes of the family, but he ensures that the funeral is simple and dignified, with music and brief addresses and sermons centered on the gospel, including the comfort afforded by the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection. Members of the family should not feel that they are required to speak or otherwise participate in the service.

A member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy, or a General Authority presides at funeral services he attends. The person who is conducting consults him in advance and recognizes him during the service. The presiding officer should be extended the opportunity to offer closing remarks if he desires.

Video recordings and computer or other electronic presentations should not be used as part of a funeral service. Nor should the service be broadcast on the Internet or in any other way. However, with approval from his or her mission president, a missionary may view the funeral services of an immediate family member via streaming.

Funerals should start on time. As a matter of courtesy to those who attend, services should not be too long. Funerals that last more than one and one-half hours place an undue burden on those attending and participating.

Funerals provide an important opportunity to teach the gospel and testify of the plan of salvation. They also provide an opportunity to pay tribute to the deceased. However, such tributes should not dominate a funeral service. Having large numbers of people share tributes or memories can make a funeral too long and may be inappropriate for a Church service. If family members want an extended time to share such memories, they may consider doing so in a special family gathering, separate from the funeral service.

Funeral services are not normally held on Sunday.

18.6.5 Music

Music for funerals might include prelude music, an opening hymn, special musical selections, a closing hymn, and postlude music. Simple hymns and other songs with gospel messages are most appropriate for these occasions. Opening and closing hymns are usually sung by the congregation.

18.6.6 Burial or Cremation

Where possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried in temple clothing. Where cultural traditions or burial practices make this inappropriate or difficult, the clothing may be folded and placed next to the body in the casket. Additional instructions on temple burial clothing and dressing the dead are provided in 7.10.2, 9.10.3, and *Handbook 1*, 3.5.9.

If possible, at least one member of the bishopric accompanies the cortege to the cemetery. If the grave will be dedicated, he consults with the family

and asks a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to do so according to the instructions in 20.9. If the family prefers, a graveside prayer rather than a dedicatory prayer may be offered.

The Church does not normally encourage cremation. However, if the body of an endowed member is being cremated, it should be dressed in temple clothing if possible. For information about dedicating the place where the ashes are kept, see 20.9.

18.6.7 Financial Policies

Church members who conduct or take part in funeral services should not accept fees or contributions, whether the service is for a member or a nonmember.

In some cases, bishops can arrange with morticians to provide respectable burial services at cost when expenses are paid from fast-offering funds.

18.6.8 Funeral Services for Nonmembers

Bishops may offer the use of Church meetinghouses for the funeral services of nonmembers. Such services generally may be held in the manner prescribed by the deceased person's church. However, rituals of other churches or of outside organizations may not be performed in a Church meetinghouse. If the family desires, the service may be conducted by a clergyman of the person's church, provided it is dignified and appropriate.

18.7

Chart of Ward Meetings

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Sacrament meeting	Partake of the sacrament, worship, provide gospel instruction, perform ordinances, conduct ward business, and strengthen faith and testimony.	All ward members	Each Sunday
Fast and testimony meeting	Partake of the sacrament, worship, perform ordinances, conduct ward business, and bear testimonies.	All ward members	Usually the first Sunday of each month
Priesthood quorum meetings	Conduct quorum business, learn priesthood duties, strengthen individuals and families, and teach the gospel.	All priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age	Second and fourth Sundays
Sunday Relief Society meeting	Teach the gospel, increase in faith and righteousness, and strengthen individuals and families.	Women in the ward ages 18 and older (and younger women who are married)	Second and fourth Sundays
Additional Relief Society meetings and activities	Learn and apply principles and skills that will help Relief Society sisters increase in faith and righteousness, strengthen individuals and families, and seek out and help those in need.	Women in the ward ages 18 and older (and younger women who are married)	Usually monthly at a time other than on Sunday or on Monday evening; can also be scheduled quarterly
Young Women	Teach the gospel with an emphasis on applying gospel principles in daily life.	Young women and Young Women leaders	Second and fourth Sundays
Primary	Teach the gospel and help children feel Heavenly Father's love for them.	Children ages 18 months through 11 years and Primary leaders and teachers	Each Sunday
Sunday School	Strengthen faith and help Church members teach one another.	Youth and adults and Sunday School leaders and teachers	First and third Sundays
Ward conference	Strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, conduct business, and evaluate activity.	Stake presidency, stake auxiliary leaders, assigned high councilors, bishopric, and ward members	Once each year

Chart of Ward Meetings (continued)

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Bishopric meeting	Plan, review, and consider matters affecting the ward.	Bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, and others as invited	Usually at least weekly
Ward council meeting	Plan ways to strengthen individuals and families. Coordinate efforts in spiritual and temporal welfare, ministering, missionary work, retention, activation, temple and family history work, and gospel teaching and learning. Review and coordinate programs and activities.	Bishopric; ward clerk; ward executive secretary; elders quorum, Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidents; and others as needed (including counselors in the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies and, if called, the ward mission leader and ward temple and family history leader)	Normally weekly (but may meet less frequently)
Bishopric youth committee meeting	Identify needs of youth in the ward. Plan ways to meet needs, help youth live Church standards, and encourage participation in Church meetings and activities. Plan youth activities.	Bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants, teachers and deacons quorum presidents, Young Women class presidents, Young Men and Young Women presidents, and others (such as counselors in quorum and class presidencies) as invited	Usually monthly
Ward young single adult committee meeting	Recommend ways to help young single adults participate in service and leadership. Locate and befriend less-active young single adults.	A counselor in the bishopric, the Relief Society and elders quorum counselors assigned to young single adults, young single adult leaders, and the couple called as young single adult advisers	As needed

Chart of Ward Meetings (continued)

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Missionary coordination meeting	Coordinate missionary, retention, and activation efforts of full-time missionaries and ward members.	Members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who lead missionary work, ward mission leader (if called; see 5.1.1), ward missionaries, and full-time missionaries (where available)	Regularly

18.8**Chart of Stake Meetings**

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Stake conference	Strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, and conduct stake business.	General Authority or Area Seventy (if assigned), stake presidency, and all members in the stake	Twice each year
Stake general priesthood meeting	Instruct and inspire priesthood holders and conduct stake priesthood business.	All priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age in the stake	Once each year
Stake priesthood leadership meeting	Teach priesthood leaders their duties, increase their abilities, and build their faith.	Stake presidency; high council; stake clerk (and assistant clerks as needed); stake executive secretary; stake Young Men presidency (and secretary as needed); bishoprics; ward clerks (and assistant clerks as needed); ward executive secretaries; elders quorum presidencies and secretaries; ward mission leaders and ward temple and family history leaders (if called and as needed); ward Young Men presidencies (and secretaries and assistant advisers as needed); and others as invited	Three times a year (twice in connection with stake conference)

Chart of Stake Meetings (continued)

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Stake high priests quorum meeting	Conduct quorum business and instruct quorum members in their duties.	High priests quorum (see 7.1.2; this meeting is not held in districts)	At least once each year
Stake presidency meeting	Review, plan, and consider matters affecting the stake.	Stake presidency, stake clerk, stake executive secretary, and others as invited	Regularly
High council meeting	Receive instruction, give reports, conduct business, and counsel together.	Stake presidency, high council, stake clerk, stake executive secretary, and others as invited	Twice monthly, where feasible
Stake council meeting	Receive instruction, counsel together, give reports, and coordinate planning of stake programs and activities.	Stake presidency; high council; stake clerk; stake executive secretary; stake Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidents; and others as invited	Two to four times a year as needed
Meeting with bishoprics	Instruct bishoprics, review policies, and counsel together.	Stake presidency, bishoprics, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary	One to four times a year as needed
Stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee meeting	Plan stake-sponsored combined activities for young men and young women.	A counselor in the stake presidency, high councilors assigned to the Young Men and Young Women, stake Young Men presidency and secretary, stake Young Women presidency and secretary, and youth and others as invited	As needed
Stake bishops' welfare council meeting	Receive instruction in welfare matters. Exchange ideas and experiences. Review trends in fast-offering contributions, welfare needs, and welfare assistance. Identify work opportunities for those who receive assistance. Identify welfare resources in the community. Evaluate Church welfare operations. Coordinate welfare assignments.	All bishops and branch presidents in the stake (the stake president appoints one bishop to be chairman); stake president (occasionally); welfare specialists as needed	At least quarterly

Chart of Stake Meetings (continued)

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Stake auxiliary leadership meeting (for Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School)	Teach ward auxiliary leaders their duties, instruct them in teaching and leadership skills, strengthen their faith, and share ideas.	Stake presidency member (if desired); high councilor assigned to the auxiliary organization; stake auxiliary presidency and secretary; ward auxiliary presidencies and secretaries; other ward auxiliary leaders, teachers, and advisers (as needed); bishopric members assigned to the auxiliary (as needed)	Once each year for each organization, or twice with the stake president's approval (see 18.3.11)
Stake young single adult committee meeting	Address the needs of young single adults in the stake. Provide opportunities for young single adults to come together for service, gospel learning, and sociality beyond their wards. Ensure that ward young single adult committees are functioning well in wards where they are established.	A counselor in the stake presidency, the high councilor assigned to young single adults, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, stake young single adult advisers, and ward young single adult leaders (if they are called) or other young single adults in the stake	As needed
Stake single adult committee meeting	Address the needs of single adults in the stake. As needed, provide opportunities for single adults to come together for service, gospel learning, and sociality beyond their wards.	A counselor in the stake presidency, a high councilor, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, and several single adults	As needed

18.9**Sunday Meeting Schedule****Plan 1 (2 hours)**

60 min.	Sacrament meeting	
10 min.	Transition to classes or meetings	
50 min.	<p>First and third Sundays: Sunday School</p> <p>Second and fourth Sundays: Priesthood quorum, Relief Society, and Young Women meetings</p> <p>Fifth Sundays: Youth meetings, adult meetings, or youth and adult meetings under the direction of the bishop. The bishopric determines the subject to be taught and the teacher or teachers (usually members of the ward or stake). They also determine whether youth and adults, men and women, and young men and young women meet separately or combined.</p>	<p>Primary (including nursery)</p> <p>See 11.4.1 for details.</p>

Plan 2 (2 hours)

50 min.	<p>First and third Sundays: Sunday School</p> <p>Second and fourth Sundays: Priesthood quorum, Relief Society, and Young Women meetings</p> <p>Fifth Sundays: Youth meetings, adult meetings, or youth and adult meetings under the direction of the bishop. The bishopric determines the subject to be taught and the teacher or teachers (usually members of the ward or stake). They also determine whether youth and adults, men and women, and young men and young women meet separately or combined.</p>	<p>Primary (including nursery)</p> <p>See 11.4.1 for details.</p>
10 min.	Transition to sacrament meeting	
60 min.	Sacrament meeting	

18.10

Overlapping Meeting Schedule for Units with Different Languages

When two units whose members speak different languages meet in the same building, it may be desirable for the children and youth to attend classes together. For example, if an English-speaking ward and a Spanish-speaking branch meet in the same building, the Primary children of the Spanish branch could join with the Primary of the English ward. The youth of the Spanish branch could join with the Sunday School, Aaronic Priesthood, and Young Women classes of the English ward.

Youth from the Spanish branch could also join with the English ward for Mutual. Children could join with the English ward for Cub Scouting and activity days.

Using this plan requires the approval of the stake president. After receiving his approval, the bishopric and the branch presidency meet with priesthood and auxiliary leaders in their own units to seek their counsel and cooperation in implementing the plan.

The bishopric and the branch presidency also meet together to determine which members from each unit should be called to serve in the organizations. Leaders also discuss the calling of Aaronic Priesthood quorum and Young Women class leaders. After the plan has been implemented, priesthood leaders continue to meet regularly to coordinate their efforts and resolve any concerns.

One representative from the bishopric and one from the branch presidency attend bishopric youth committee meetings.

To implement this plan, meeting schedules for the two units need to overlap as shown in the chart below.

Ward or Branch A		Ward or Branch B	
60 minutes	Sacrament meeting		
10 minutes	Transition		
50 minutes	Primary, Sunday School, priesthood quorums, Young Women, Relief Society		
		10 minutes	Transition
		60 minutes	Sacrament meeting