

Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings

This chapter outlines instructions for performing priesthood ordinances and blessings. Stake presidents and bishops should also be aware of the ordinance policies that are outlined in *Handbook 1*, chapter 16.

20.1

General Instructions

An ordinance is a sacred act, such as baptism, that is performed by the authority of the priesthood. The ordinances of baptism, confirmation, Melchizedek Priesthood ordination (for men), the temple endowment, and temple sealing are required for exaltation for all accountable persons. These are called the saving ordinances. As part of each saving ordinance, the recipient makes covenants with God.

Performance of a saving ordinance requires authorization from a priesthood leader who holds the appropriate keys or who functions under the direction of a person who holds those keys. Such authorization is also required for naming and blessing a child, dedicating a grave, giving a patriarchal blessing, and preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament. Melchizedek Priesthood holders may consecrate oil, administer to the sick, give father's blessings, and give other blessings of comfort and counsel without first seeking authorization from a priesthood leader.

Brethren who perform ordinances and blessings should prepare themselves by living worthily and striving to be guided by the Holy Spirit. They should perform each ordinance or blessing in a dignified manner, making sure it meets the following requirements:

1. It should be performed in the name of Jesus Christ.
2. It should be performed by the authority of the priesthood.
3. It should be performed with any necessary procedures, such as using specified words or using consecrated oil.
4. It should be authorized by the presiding authority who holds the proper keys (normally the bishop or stake president), if necessary according to the instructions in this chapter.

A priesthood leader who oversees an ordinance or blessing ensures that the person who performs it has the necessary priesthood authority, is worthy, and knows and follows the proper procedures. Leaders also seek to make the ordinance or blessing a reverent and spiritual experience.

When ordinances or blessings are performed in sacrament meeting, the bishop ensures that they are performed properly. To avoid embarrassing a priesthood holder, the bishop quietly corrects errors only if essential elements of the ordinance or blessing are incorrect.

Those who give priesthood blessings speak words of blessing (“I [or we] bless you that . . .”) rather than saying a prayer (“Heavenly Father, please bless this person that . . .”).

20.1.1

Participation in Ordinances and Blessings

Only brethren who hold the necessary priesthood and are worthy may perform an ordinance or blessing or stand in the circle. Those who participate are usually limited to a few, including priesthood leaders, close family members, and close associates such as ministering brothers. Inviting large numbers of family, friends, and leaders to assist in an ordinance or blessing is discouraged. When too many

participate, it can become cumbersome and detract from the spirit of the ordinance. Those who perform an ordinance and those who preside are the only ones required. Others provide support and sustain the spokesman.

When several brethren participate in an ordinance or blessing, each one places his right hand lightly on the person's head (or under the baby being blessed) and his left hand on the shoulder of the brother to his left.

Even though only a limited number of brethren stand in the circle when a person receives an ordinance or blessing, family members are usually invited to attend.

Leaders encourage worthy brethren who hold the necessary priesthood to perform or participate in ordinances and blessings for their family members.

20.1.2

Worthiness to Participate in an Ordinance or Blessing

Only a Melchizedek Priesthood holder who is worthy to hold a temple recommend may act as voice in confirming a person a member of the Church, conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood, ordaining a person to an office in that priesthood, or setting apart a person to serve in a Church calling.

As guided by the Spirit and the instructions in the next paragraph, bishops and stake presidents have discretion to allow priesthood holders who are not fully temple worthy to perform or participate in some ordinances and blessings. However, presiding officers should not allow such participation if a priesthood holder has unresolved serious sins.

A bishop may allow a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to name and bless his children even if the father is not fully temple worthy. Likewise, a bishop may allow a father who is a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder to baptize his children or to ordain his sons to offices in the

Aaronic Priesthood. A Melchizedek Priesthood holder in similar circumstances may be allowed to stand in the circle for the confirmation of his children, for the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood on his sons, or for the setting apart of his wife or children. However, he may not act as voice.

20.1.3

Performing an Ordinance or Blessing in Another Ward

To act as voice when naming and blessing a child, baptizing or confirming a person, ordaining a person to a priesthood office, or dedicating a grave, a priesthood holder who is outside his own ward should show the presiding officer a current temple recommend or a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance form that is signed by a member of his bishopric.

20.1.4

Performing Ordinances by and for Persons Who Have Disabilities

Guidelines for performing ordinances by and for persons who have disabilities are provided in *Handbook 1*, 16.1.8 and 16.1.9.

For guidelines on interpreting ordinances for those who are deaf or hearing impaired, see 21.1.26 in this handbook.

20.1.5

Translating Ordinances and Blessings

Guidelines for translating ordinances and blessings are provided in *Handbook 1*, 16.1.2.

20.1.6**Instructions on Performing Ordinances and Blessings**

The following publications provide instructions on performing ordinances and blessings:

1. This chapter of the handbook
2. *Family Guidebook*, pages 18–25
3. *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part B*, pages 42–47

Using these publications, priesthood leaders teach brethren how to perform ordinances and blessings. Leaders ensure that each priesthood holder has the *Family Guidebook* or *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part B*, so he can have his own copy of these instructions.

Leaders should not produce or use other publications that give instructions for ordinances, blessings, or prayers unless the First Presidency has authorized such publications.

20.2**Naming and Blessing Children****20.2.1****General Guidelines**

“Every member of the church of Christ having children is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:70). In conformity with this revelation, only Melchizedek Priesthood holders may participate in naming and blessing children. Priesthood leaders should inform members of this instruction before their children are named and blessed. While preserving the sacred nature of the blessing, leaders should make every reasonable effort to avoid embarrassment or offense to individuals or families.

Children are normally named and blessed during fast and testimony meeting in the ward where the parents are members of record.

20.2.2**Instructions for Naming and Blessing a Child**

When blessing a baby, Melchizedek Priesthood holders gather in a circle and place their hands under the baby. When blessing an older child, brethren place their hands lightly on the child’s head. The person who gives the blessing:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father.
2. States that the blessing is performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives the child a name.
4. Gives words of blessing as the Spirit directs.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

20.2.3**Blessing Record and Certificate**

Before a child is blessed, the ward clerk prepares a Child Blessing Record. After the blessing, the clerk ensures that this form is complete, and he processes or distributes it according to instructions with the form. The clerk also prepares a blessing certificate. The bishop signs the certificate, and he or the clerk gives it to the child’s parent(s) or guardian(s).

If a baby is born out of wedlock, the name on the membership record and certificate of blessing should match the name on the birth certificate or civil birth registry. If a birth certificate or civil birth registry does not exist, the naming conventions of the local culture are used.

20.3**Baptism and Confirmation****20.3.1****Children Who Are Members of Record**

Under the direction of the presiding authority, children who are members of record should be baptized and confirmed on or as soon after their 8th birthday as reasonable. These are children for whom Church membership records already exist.

Bishops give special attention to 7-year-old children in the ward, ensuring that their parents, Primary leaders and teachers, and those assigned to minister to their families help them prepare for baptism and confirmation. Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders also encourage parents to teach and prepare their children for these ordinances. When children reach age 8, the bishop makes sure they have every opportunity to accept the gospel and be baptized and confirmed.

20.3.2**Converts**

Converts should be baptized and confirmed when they have met the qualifications outlined in “Interview Instructions” in *Handbook 1*, 16.3.3.

Convert baptisms are defined as baptisms of (1) persons ages 9 and older who have never been baptized and confirmed and (2) children age 8 whose parents are not members or are being baptized and confirmed at the same time as the children.

20.3.3**Baptism and Confirmation Interviews**

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.

Full-time missionaries interview converts (as defined in 20.3.2) for baptism and confirmation.

Interview instructions are provided in *Handbook 1*, 16.3.3.

20.3.4**Baptismal Services**

Baptismal services should be simple, brief, and spiritual. Normally, ward or stake leaders conduct monthly baptismal services for all 8-year-old children of record in the ward or stake. Members should not request special or individual times or prescribe the content of baptismal services.

People who may be invited to a baptismal service include family members, other relatives, friends, priesthood leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, auxiliary officers and teachers who will be working with the new member, and investigators who are being taught. Other ward members may also attend.

Baptismal services should not be scheduled on Monday evenings.

20.3.4.1**Services That Involve Only One Ward**

For Eight-Year-Old Children of Record. A member of the bishopric presides over baptismal services for 8-year-old children of record when the services involve only one ward.

A member of the bishopric oversees the planning of these baptismal services. He may conduct the services or assign the ward mission leader (if called; see 5.1.1) or the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work to conduct. Primary leaders may help plan the services under the direction of the bishopric.

For Converts. If possible, a member of the bishopric attends each convert baptismal service. When the services involve only one ward, he presides unless a member of the stake presidency attends.

Under the direction of the bishopric, the ward mission leader (if called) or the members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who lead missionary work usually work with the full-time missionaries to plan these baptismal services. A member of the bishopric, the ward mission leader, or the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work usually conducts the services. If none of these ward leaders are available, full-time missionary district or zone leaders may plan and conduct the services with the approval of the mission president.

20.3.4.2

Services That Involve More Than One Ward

For Eight-Year-Old Children of Record. A member of the stake presidency usually presides over baptismal services for 8-year-old children of record when the services involve more than one ward. However, the stake presidency may authorize a high councilor to preside. A member of the bishopric from each of the wards involved should attend.

The stake presidency may assign a high councilor to oversee the planning of the services and to conduct them. Primary leaders may help plan these services under the direction of the presiding officers.

For Converts. A member of the stake presidency usually presides over baptismal services for converts when the services involve more than one ward. However, the stake presidency may authorize a high councilor to preside. A member of the bishopric from each of the wards involved should attend.

The stake presidency may assign a high councilor or a bishop to oversee planning of the services and to conduct them.

20.3.4.3

Scheduling Baptismal Services for Converts

Baptismal services should be scheduled as soon as an investigator has committed to be baptized. The services should not normally be delayed past this

date unless a person is not prepared. Baptisms of family members should not be delayed so the father can receive the priesthood and perform the baptisms himself.

Baptismal services for converts should be scheduled through the ward mission leader (if called; see 5.1.1) or the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work. If a service is scheduled on a Sunday, it should be held at a time that avoids interference with regular Sunday meetings.

20.3.4.4

Elements of a Baptismal Service

A baptismal service may include:

1. Prelude music.
2. A brief welcome by the priesthood leader who is conducting the service.
3. An opening hymn and prayer.
4. One or two short talks on gospel subjects, such as baptism and the Holy Ghost.
5. A musical selection.
6. Performance of the baptism (see 20.3.8).
7. A time of reverence while the people who participated in the baptism change into dry clothes. This could include interlude music or singing of well-known hymns and Primary songs. It could also include a brief gospel presentation by the full-time missionaries for nonmembers who may be present.
8. Performance of the confirmation (for 8-year-old members of record only, if they will not be confirmed in a fast and testimony meeting; see 20.3.9 and 20.3.10).
9. An opportunity for new converts to bear their testimonies, if desired.
10. A closing hymn and prayer.
11. Postlude music.

20.3.5**Baptismal Fonts**

Missionaries coordinate their use of a baptismal font with the agent bishop or with another person designated by the stake presidency. The schedule for using a font should permit missionaries to baptize once a week or more often, if necessary. However, missionaries should not expect to use a font at unreasonable times. No charge is made for using a baptismal font.

A responsible adult should be present while the baptismal font is filling and remain until it is empty and secured. The font should be drained and cleaned immediately after each baptismal service. Appropriate safety precautions should be taken whenever water is in the font.

When the font is not in use, all doors to it should be closed and locked.

When a baptismal font is not available, any body of water that is safe may be used for a baptism if it is large enough to immerse the person and to permit the priesthood holder who performs the baptism to stand in the water with the person. Water is not dedicated for baptisms.

20.3.6**Clothing for Baptism**

A person who performs a baptism and a person who is baptized wear white clothing that does not appear transparent when it is wet. An endowed person wears the temple garment under this clothing while performing a baptism.

Local units should have baptismal clothing available and should not charge for its use. This clothing is purchased with budget funds. The bishop may ask members to clean and mend the clothing.

20.3.7**Witnesses of a Baptism**

Two priests or Melchizedek Priesthood holders witness each baptism to make sure it is performed properly. The baptism must be repeated if the words are not spoken exactly as given in Doctrine and Covenants 20:73 or if part of the person's body or clothing is not immersed completely.

20.3.8**Instructions for Performing a Baptism**

Under the direction of the presiding authority, a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder may perform the ordinance of baptism. To do so, he:

1. Stands in the water with the person to be baptized.
2. Holds the person's right wrist with his left hand (for convenience and safety); the person who is being baptized holds the priesthood holder's left wrist with his or her left hand.
3. Raises his right arm to the square.
4. States the person's full name and says, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:73).
5. Has the person hold his or her nose with the right hand (for convenience); then the priesthood holder places his right hand high on the person's back and immerses the person completely, including the person's clothing.
6. Helps the person come up out of the water.

Convert baptisms are usually performed by a priesthood holder in the ward or by one of the missionaries who taught the person. A convert may also request that another qualified member perform the baptism.

20.3.9**Confirmation and the Gift of the Holy Ghost**

A person is confirmed a member of the Church and receives the gift of the Holy Ghost after being baptized (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:41). A person becomes a member of the Church only after the ordinances of baptism and confirmation are both completed and properly recorded (see John 3:5; Doctrine and Covenants 33:11).

The bishop holds the keys for confirming 8-year-old members of record. The mission president holds the keys for confirming converts. However, the bishop oversees the performance of this ordinance, whether it is for an 8-year-old member of record or a convert. The bishop ensures that it is performed soon after baptism.

Eight-year-old members of record may be confirmed at the baptismal service or in a sacrament meeting in the ward where they live, preferably a fast and testimony meeting.

Converts are confirmed in any sacrament meeting in the ward where they live, preferably on the Sunday following their baptism. Converts are not confirmed at the baptismal service.

At least one member of the bishopric participates in this ordinance. When missionary elders have taught a convert, the bishop should invite them to participate.

The bishop does not conduct a separate interview for this ordinance.

20.3.10**Instructions for Performing a Confirmation**

Under the direction of the bishopric, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders may participate in a confirmation. They place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the person who performs the ordinance:

1. States the person's full name.
2. States that the ordinance is performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Confirms the person a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4. Uses the words "Receive the Holy Ghost" (not "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost").
5. Gives words of blessing as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

20.3.11**Baptism and Confirmation Record and Certificate**

When the bishop or an assigned counselor interviews an 8-year-old child, he fills out the Baptism and Confirmation Record according to instructions with the form. After the baptism and confirmation, the ward clerk uses the information on the Baptism and Confirmation Record to update the child's membership record.

When a full-time missionary interviews a convert baptismal candidate, he completes all of the Baptism and Confirmation Record except the information about confirmation. At the baptismal service, the missionaries give this form to the bishop or one of his counselors. After the confirmation, the bishop or ward clerk completes the confirmation information. The ward clerk then returns two copies of the form to the full-time missionaries. The missionaries send one copy to the mission office for the creation of a membership record.

Proper completion and distribution of the Baptism and Confirmation Record are essential for updating or creating membership records.

After the confirmation, the ward clerk prepares a baptism and confirmation certificate. The bishop signs the certificate, and he or the clerk gives it to the new member.

A person's legal name, as defined by local law or custom, should be recorded on the Baptism and Confirmation Record and on the certificate.

20.4

Sacrament

20.4.1

General Guidelines

Church members meet on the Sabbath to worship God and partake of the sacrament (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:75; 59:9). During this holy ordinance, they partake of bread and water in remembrance of the Savior's sacrifice of His flesh and blood and to renew their covenants (see Matthew 26:26–28; Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:20–25; Luke 22:15–20; 3 Nephi 18; Moroni 6:6).

Under the direction of the bishopric, priesthood holders bless the sacrament and pass it to members of the congregation during each sacrament meeting. Aaronic Priesthood holders usually perform these duties. Under the direction of the bishopric, the deacons quorum president has the privilege and responsibility to invite others to help pass the sacrament. When there are not enough deacons, he counsels with a member of the bishopric to determine who may be asked to assist.

Generally, teachers and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood should be invited to pass the sacrament before Melchizedek Priesthood holders are invited to do so. Where there are enough Aaronic Priesthood holders, Melchizedek Priesthood holders should not be invited to bless and pass the sacrament on a regular schedule.

Every priesthood holder who participates in this ordinance should understand that he is acting on behalf of the Lord. The bishopric encourages priesthood holders to ponder the Savior's Atonement as they prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament. The bishopric also ensures that priesthood holders have

a reverent, dignified manner as they participate in this ordinance.

Those who bless and pass the sacrament should dress modestly and be well groomed and clean. Clothing or jewelry should not call attention to itself or distract members during the sacrament. Ties and white shirts are recommended because they add to the dignity of the ordinance. However, they should not be required as a mandatory prerequisite for a priesthood holder to participate. Nor should it be required that all be alike in dress and appearance. Bishops should use discretion when giving such guidance to young men, taking into account their financial circumstances and maturity in the Church.

The sacred nature of this ordinance justifies the greatest care and preparation to ensure order and reverence. Assignments to bless and pass the sacrament should be made in advance. Those who participate should be seated reverently before the meeting begins.

The passing of the sacrament should be natural and unobtrusive, not rigid or overly formal. Those who pass the sacrament should not be required to assume any special posture or action, such as holding the left hand behind the back. The process of passing the sacrament should not call attention to itself or detract from the purpose of the ordinance.

Priesthood holders should wash their hands thoroughly with soap, a disposable towelette, or another cleanser before preparing, blessing, or passing the sacrament.

For administering the sacrament to members with food allergies, such as gluten intolerance, see 20.4.2, and disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

A priesthood holder who has committed a serious transgression should not prepare, bless, or pass the sacrament until he has repented and resolved the matter with his bishop.

Although the sacrament is for Church members, the bishopric should not announce that it will be passed to members only, and nothing should be done to prevent nonmembers from partaking of it.

20.4.2

Preparing the Sacrament

Teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may prepare the sacrament. Before the meeting, those who prepare the sacrament ensure that bread trays with unbroken bread, water trays with cups filled with fresh water, and tablecloths are in place. After the meeting, these brethren clear away the trays and tablecloths.

Sacrament tablecloths should be white, nontransparent, clean, and pressed. Sacrament trays should be kept clean. Sacrament trays and cups are available from Church Distribution Services.

Members with food allergies, such as gluten intolerance, should inform a member of the bishopric. The bishopric discusses with the members what adaptations may be appropriate for the sacrament. Members may provide their own allergen-free bread or another broken breadlike substitute in a sealed plastic bag and give it to a priesthood holder to place on a separate tray.

The bishopric may modify the procedure as necessary and can help priesthood holders identify members to whom the allergen-free item should be passed.

See disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for more information.

20.4.3

Blessing and Passing the Sacrament

Priests and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may bless the sacrament. Deacons, teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may pass the sacrament.

As the congregation sings the sacrament hymn, the priesthood holders who will bless the sacrament reverently stand, remove the cloth that covers the bread trays, and break the bread into bite-sized pieces. When they finish breaking the bread, they sit down and join in singing the hymn. Vocal solos or instrumental music may not replace this hymn.

Following the hymn, the person who blesses the bread kneels and offers the sacrament prayer for the bread. The sacrament prayers were revealed by the Lord (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79; Moroni 4–5). The bishop makes sure they are spoken clearly, accurately, and with dignity. If the person who blesses the sacrament makes an error in the wording but corrects it himself, no further correction is required. If the person does not correct an error, the bishop indicates that he should repeat the prayer correctly. In doing so, the bishop should be careful to avoid causing embarrassment or distracting from the sacred nature of the ordinance.

After the prayer, deacons or other priesthood holders pass the bread to the congregation in a reverent and orderly manner. The presiding officer receives the sacrament first. The bishop (or a counselor in his absence) presides at the sacrament meeting unless a member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy, or a General Authority is sitting on the stand. A high councilor does not preside and does not receive the sacrament first.

While the presiding officer is receiving the sacrament, others who are passing the sacrament may walk to their designated places.

After a priesthood holder hands a sacrament tray to a member, others may pass the tray from one to another for convenience.

When brethren finish passing the bread, they return the trays to the sacrament table. Those officiating at the sacrament table place the cloth over the bread trays and uncover the water trays. The person who blesses the water then kneels and offers the sacrament prayer for the water (see Doctrine

and Covenants 20:79), substituting the word *water* for *wine*.

After the prayer, deacons or other priesthood holders pass the water to the congregation. When they finish, they return the trays to the sacrament table, wait for the officiators to cover the trays, then reverently take their seats.

Everyone who attends the meeting should be reverent during the entire ordinance of blessing and passing the sacrament.

No music should be played during the prayer, while the sacrament is being passed, or as a postlude after the sacrament is passed.

20.4.4

Sacrament for Members Who Are Unable to Attend

See “Sacrament Services in Unusual Situations” in 18.2.2.

20.5

Consecrating Oil

One or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders must consecrate olive oil before it is used to anoint the sick or afflicted. No other oil may be used. To consecrate oil, a priesthood holder:

1. Holds an open container of olive oil.
2. Addresses Heavenly Father.
3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. Consecrates the oil (not the container) and sets it apart for anointing and blessing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Members should not take consecrated oil internally or apply it on afflicted parts of the body.

20.6

Administering to the Sick

20.6.1

General Guidelines

Only Melchizedek Priesthood holders may administer to the sick or afflicted. Normally two or more priesthood holders administer to the sick, but one may perform both the anointing and the sealing alone if necessary. If consecrated oil is not available, a blessing may nevertheless be given by the authority of the priesthood without the anointing.

A father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood normally should administer to sick members of his family.

Brethren should administer to the sick at the request of the sick person or of those who are vitally concerned so the blessing will be according to their faith (see Doctrine and Covenants 24:13–14; 42:43–44, 48–52). Melchizedek Priesthood holders who visit hospitals should not solicit opportunities to administer to the sick.

If a person requests more than one blessing for the same illness, the priesthood holder need not anoint with oil after the first blessing. Instead, he gives a blessing by the laying on of hands and the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Administering to the sick has two parts: anointing with oil and sealing the anointing.

20.6.2

Anointing with Oil

The anointing is done by one Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He:

1. Puts a drop of consecrated oil on the person’s head.
2. Places his hands lightly on the person’s head and calls the person by his or her full name.

3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. States that he is anointing with oil that has been consecrated for anointing and blessing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

20.6.3

Sealing the Anointing

Normally, two or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the head of the person. The one who seals the anointing:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that he is sealing the anointing by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives words of blessing as the Spirit directs.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

20.7

Conferring the Priesthood and Ordaining to an Office

The stake president oversees the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordinations to the offices of elder and high priest. However, the bishop usually initiates recommendations for these ordinations. Instructions for recommending, interviewing, and presenting these brethren for a sustaining vote are outlined in *Handbook 1*, 16.7.1.

The bishop oversees the conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordinations to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. Worthy brethren are typically ordained to the following offices according to—but not earlier than—this schedule:

- Deacon in January of the year they turn 12
- Teacher in January of the year they turn 14

Priest in January of the year they turn 16

Instructions for interviewing these brethren and presenting them for a sustaining vote are outlined in *Handbook 1*, 16.7.2.

20.7.1

Instructions for Performing an Ordination

When the necessary interviews and approvals are completed:

1. The stake president (or someone under his direction) may ordain the person to the office of elder, or he may authorize another Melchizedek Priesthood holder to do so. Only Melchizedek Priesthood holders may stand in the circle.
2. The stake president (or someone under his direction) may ordain the person to the office of high priest, or he may authorize another high priest to do so. Only high priests may stand in the circle.
3. The bishop (or someone under his direction) may ordain the person to the office of deacon, teacher, or priest. Only priests and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may act as voice or stand in the circle.

To participate in an ordination, a person must (1) be a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder and (2) have equal or higher priesthood authority than is to be given in the ordinance. For instance, an elder should not stand in the circle when a high priest is ordained or when a man is set apart to an office that requires him to be a high priest.

To perform a priesthood ordination, one or more authorized priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the priesthood holder who performs the ordination:

1. Calls the person by his full name.
2. States the authority by which the ordination is performed (Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood).

3. Confers the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood, unless it has already been conferred.
4. Ordains the person to an office in the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood and bestows the rights, powers, and authority of that office. (Priesthood keys are not bestowed in conferring the priesthood or ordaining to one of these offices.)
5. Gives words of blessing as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

An ordination is an opportunity to give a blessing. Detailed counsel and instruction are normally provided when a person is taught his duties rather than during the ordination.

An ordination should not be expanded into a formal meeting. It is not necessary to have prayers, testimonies, or instruction when someone is ordained.

20.7.2

Ordination Record and Certificate

After a Melchizedek Priesthood ordination, the stake clerk ensures that the Melchizedek Priesthood Ordination Record is complete, and he distributes it according to instructions with the form. The stake or ward clerk also prepares an ordination certificate, which the stake president signs. A priesthood leader or clerk gives the signed certificate to the member.

After an Aaronic Priesthood ordination, the ward clerk ensures that the Aaronic Priesthood Ordination Record is complete, and he processes or distributes it according to instructions with the form. The ward clerk also prepares an ordination certificate. The bishop signs the certificate, and he or the clerk gives it to the member.

A person's legal name, as defined by local law or custom, should be recorded on the ordination record and on the certificate.

20.8

Father's Blessings and Other Blessings of Comfort and Counsel

Father's blessings and other priesthood blessings are given to provide direction and comfort as guided by the Spirit.

A father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may give father's blessings to his children. These blessings may be especially helpful when children go to school, go on missions, get married, enter military service, or face special challenges. A family may record a father's blessing for family records, but these blessings are not preserved in Church records. Parents should encourage their children to seek father's blessings in times of need.

Melchizedek Priesthood holders may also give blessings of comfort and counsel to other family members and to others who ask for them.

To give a father's blessing or another blessing of comfort and counsel, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the priesthood holder who gives the blessing:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that the blessing is performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives words of blessing as the Spirit directs.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

20.9

Dedicating Graves

A person who dedicates a grave should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and be authorized by the priesthood officer who conducts the service. To dedicate a grave, he:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father.

2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Dedicates and consecrates the burial plot as the resting place for the body of the deceased.
4. Prays that the place will be hallowed and protected until the Resurrection (where appropriate).
5. Asks the Lord to comfort the family and expresses thoughts as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

If the family prefers, a graveside prayer rather than a dedicatory prayer may be offered.

If a Church member's body is cremated, the presiding officer may use his judgment in determining whether to dedicate the place where the ashes are kept. He takes into account the desires of the family, local customs, and local laws. If the place is dedicated, the priesthood holder may adapt the instructions for dedicating a grave.

20.10

Setting Apart Officers and Teachers

See 19.4.

20.11

Dedicating Homes

Church members may dedicate their homes as sacred edifices where the Holy Spirit can reside and where family members can worship, find safety from the world, grow spiritually, and prepare for eternal family relationships. Homes need not be free of debt to be dedicated. Unlike Church buildings, homes are not consecrated to the Lord.

A Melchizedek Priesthood holder may dedicate a home by the power of the priesthood. If there is

not a Melchizedek Priesthood holder in the home, a family might invite a close relative, a ministering brother, or another Melchizedek Priesthood holder to dedicate the home. Or a family might gather and offer a prayer that includes the elements mentioned in the preceding paragraph and other words as the Spirit directs.

20.12

Patriarchal Blessings

20.12.1

General Guidelines

Every worthy, baptized member is entitled to receive a patriarchal blessing, which provides inspired direction from the Lord. Church leaders and parents encourage members to prepare spiritually to obtain their patriarchal blessings.

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews members who desire to receive a patriarchal blessing. If a member is worthy, the interviewer prepares a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend and submits it through the Patriarchal Blessing System on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Stake presidents and bishops who need additional information about patriarchal blessings may see the following sources:

Handbook 1, 16.12

Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs

Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Patriarch

20.12.2

Receiving a Patriarchal Blessing

Members should go to the patriarch with a prayerful attitude and in Sunday attire. They may fast, but fasting is not required.

Each patriarchal blessing is sacred, confidential, and personal. Therefore, it is given in private except that a limited number of family members may be present.

Church members should not compare blessings and should not share them except with close family members. Patriarchal blessings should not be read in Church meetings or other public gatherings.

If a patriarchal blessing does not include a declaration of lineage, the patriarch may later give an addendum to declare lineage.

20.12.3

Obtaining Copies of Patriarchal Blessings

A person who has received a patriarchal blessing should carefully safeguard the copy he or she receives. However, if this copy is lost or destroyed, the recipient may log in to his or her account on ChurchofJesusChrist.org and request a new copy. If the recipient is unable to access ChurchofJesusChrist.org, he or she should contact his or her bishop.