

21.

Selected Church Policies and Guidelines

Most of the following policies are selected from the “Church Policies” and “Physical Facilities” chapters of *Handbook 1*. Questions about these and other Church policies should be referred to the bishop.

This chapter consists of four sections. Each section includes subtopics in alphabetical order:

1. Administrative policies
2. Policies on using Church buildings and other property
3. Medical and health policies
4. Policies on moral issues

21.1

Administrative Policies

21.1.1

Accident Prevention and Response

See 13.6.20.

21.1.2

Activities Policies

See 13.6.

21.1.3

Adopted Children and Their Biological Parents

Questions regarding the exchange of information and contact between adopted children and their biological parents should be handled with sensitivity. The legal rights and emotional needs of all relevant parties should be considered.

21.1.4

Adoption and Foster Care

Members who are seeking to adopt children or provide foster care should strictly observe all legal requirements of the countries (and their governmental subdivisions) that are involved. They are encouraged to work through licensed, authorized agencies.

21.1.5

Audiovisual Materials

Members may use audiovisual materials, such as CDs, DVDs, and computer presentations, in Church settings with the following restrictions:

1. They may not be used in sacrament meetings or in the general session of stake conference (however, appropriate recorded musical accompaniment may be used if a piano, organ, or accompanist is not available).
2. They may not be used if such use is restricted by copyright (see 21.1.12).
3. They may not be used if they contain material that is not suitable for Church settings.

Audiovisual materials that meet these criteria may be used in the chapel during meetings other than sacrament meeting or the general session of stake conference if they are an important part of the meeting.

21.1.6

Autographs and Photographs of General Authorities and Area Seventies

Church members should not seek the autographs of General Authorities or Area Seventies, including signing in their scriptures, hymnals, or programs. Doing so detracts from their sacred callings and the

spirit of meetings. It also could prevent them from greeting other members.

Members should not take photographs of General Authorities or Area Seventies in chapels.

21.1.7 Bible

English-speaking members should use the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible. This edition includes the Topical Guide; footnotes; excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation; cross-references to other passages in the Bible and to the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price; and other study aids. Although other versions of the Bible may be easier to read, in doctrinal matters, latter-day revelation supports the King James Version in preference to other English translations.

Spanish-speaking members should use the Latter-day Saint edition of the Reina-Valera Bible. This edition includes study aids similar to those in the Latter-day Saint edition in English.

In many other non-English languages, the Church has approved a non-Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible for use in Church meetings and classes. Members should use these editions of the Bible.

The most reliable way to measure the accuracy of any biblical translation is not by comparing different texts, but by comparison with the Book of Mormon and modern-day revelations.

Printed copies of approved editions of the Bible are available from Church Distribution Services. Electronic text and audio recordings of Latter-day Saint editions are also available at scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

21.1.8 Book of Mormon

The Church discourages rewriting the Book of Mormon into familiar or modern English. The First Presidency has said:

“When a sacred text is translated into another language or rewritten into more familiar language, there are substantial risks that this process may introduce doctrinal errors or obscure evidence of its ancient origin. To guard against these risks, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve give close personal supervision to the translation of scriptures from English into other languages and have not authorized efforts to express the doctrinal content of the Book of Mormon in familiar or modern English. (These concerns do not pertain to publications by the Church for children.)” (*Ensign*, Apr. 1993, 74).

21.1.9 Church Magazines

The First Presidency has consistently encouraged members of the Church to read the Church magazines. Local Church leaders should encourage members to have the Church magazines in their homes. These magazines contain the Lord’s guidance given through latter-day prophets. Church magazines strengthen faith in the Savior and provide inspired direction for personal challenges.

The stake president and bishop may assign their executive secretaries to coordinate Church magazine subscription efforts (see *Handbook 1*, 13.3.4 and 13.4.4). Bishoprics may also call a ward magazine representative and appoint others to assist. If a ward magazine representative is called, he helps plan and direct Church magazine campaigns, helps members begin or renew subscriptions, and teaches members the benefits of subscribing to the Church magazines.

Members can subscribe to the Church magazines through Church Distribution Services. In some areas, members can subscribe by filling out the subscription form on the Church magazines' web pages.

21.1.10

Church Name and Logotype

The Church's name and logotype are key Church identifiers. They are registered as trademarks or are otherwise legally protected worldwide. They should be used only according to the following guidelines.

Local units may use the written name of the Church (not the logotype) when all of the following conditions are met:

1. The activity or function with which the name is associated is officially sponsored by the unit (for example, a sacrament meeting program).
2. The name of the local unit is used as a prelude to the name of the Church (for example, Canyon View Ward of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).
3. The typeface does not imitate or resemble the official Church logotype.

The Church's official logotype (see the front cover of this handbook) is to be used only for items approved by the Correlation Department at Church headquarters. Examples of these items are:

1. Official Church publications and stationery.
2. Missionary name tags.
3. Meetinghouse exterior signs.

The logotype may not be used as a decorative element or a computer screen saver. Nor may it be used in any personal, commercial, or promotional way, such as on family history books, T-shirts, buttons, or banners. Questions may be directed to:

Intellectual Property Office
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0005
Telephone: 1-801-240-3959 or 1-800-453-3860,
extension 2-3959
Fax: 1-801-240-1187
E-mail: cor-intellectualproperty@
ChurchofJesusChrist.org

21.1.11

Computers

As authorized by the Church's presiding councils, some Church units are provided computers for purposes such as record keeping and family history. The stake president oversees the placement and use of computers in the stake. Guidelines for obtaining and managing Church computers are available from Church headquarters or the assigned administrative office. These guidelines provide information about matters such as hardware and software, donated computers, Internet connections, repairs, disposal of computers, stolen or damaged computers, security, and use by members.

Where necessary, stake presidents arrange to make ward and stake computers available for members to use family history programs. Ward and stake computers are not authorized for other personal uses.

To protect confidential information on computers, leaders and clerks should use the password features of Church record-keeping systems. Additional instructions about protecting confidential information are provided in *Handbook 1*, 13.8 and 13.9.

Computers should be placed so members of the bishopric and clerks can process members' weekly contributions in privacy.

For restrictions on duplicating computer software, see 21.1.12.

21.1.12

Copyrighted Materials

The laws governing creative works and their permissible use vary from one country to another. The Church policies outlined in this section are consistent with international treaties that are applicable in most countries. For simplicity, this section refers to a creator's rights as "copyright." However, certain of these rights may be known by different names in some countries.

Copyright is protection given by law to the creators of original works of authorship that are expressed in a tangible form, including:

1. Literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works.
2. Works of art, photography, and sculpture.
3. Audio and audiovisual works (such as movies and videos, CDs, and DVDs).
4. Computer programs or games.
5. Internet and other databases.

Church members should strictly observe all copyright laws. Generally, only copyright owners may authorize duplication (copying), distribution, public performance, public display, or derivatives of their work. Using a work in any of these ways without authorization from the copyright owner is contrary to Church policy and may also subject the Church or the user to legal liability.

A user of a work should assume that it is protected by copyright. Published works usually include a copyright notice, such as "© 1959 by John Doe." (For sound recordings, the symbol is ®.) However, a copyright notice is not required for legal protection. Similarly, the fact that a publication is out of print does not nullify its copyright or justify duplicating, distributing, performing, displaying, or making derivatives of it without permission.

The Church's Intellectual Property Office (IPO) assists in processing requests to use copyrighted Church materials or programs, including materials that are copyrighted by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. (IRI). IRI is a separate, nonprofit corporation that owns the intellectual property used by the Church. Additional information on requesting the use of Church-owned materials can be found by following the "Terms of Use" link on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

The following questions and answers may help members understand and abide by copyright laws when using copyrighted materials at church and at home. If members have questions that are not answered in these guidelines, they may contact:

Intellectual Property Office
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0005
Telephone: 1-801-240-3959 or 1-800-453-3860,
extension 2-3959
Fax: 1-801-240-1187
E-mail: cor-intellectualproperty@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

Can I copy pictures from Church magazines? Pictures in Church publications may usually be copied for noncommercial Church, home, and family use. However, they may not be copied for commercial purposes without specific written permission from the IPO. If a picture is restricted from being copied, words such as "may not be copied" will appear in the credits for the image.

Can I copy published Church materials? Church publications may usually be copied for noncommercial Church, home, and family use. No commercial use may be made of Church materials without specific written permission from the IPO.

Can I copy music? Special copyright laws apply to music. A person may copy music from *Hymns*, the *Children's Songbook*, and Church magazines for non-commercial Church, home, and family use except where a restriction is expressly noted on the hymn

or song. Duplicating printed or recorded music without authorization from the copyright owner is contrary to Church policy. Music that has been duplicated contrary to this policy must not be used for Church purposes.

Can I alter, copy, or segment Church-produced audiovisual materials? Not unless such use is specifically authorized by the IPO. Church-produced audiovisual materials should be used in accordance with prescribed instructions in the manuals and on the packaging materials.

Can I copy materials that are not owned by the Church? Generally not. Copyright laws govern the use of privately owned materials. Usually there are restrictions that give the conditions the public must follow before copying non-Church materials. These restrictions are usually listed near the beginning of a publication. Members should strictly observe all copyright laws.

Can I show commercial audiovisual products at Church functions? Generally not. Church members should not violate warnings and restrictions that are placed on commercial audiovisual products. Using commercial audiovisual products at Church functions generally requires permission from the copyright owners.

Can I download or duplicate computer software and other programs for Church use? Generally not. Computer programs and other software may not be duplicated or downloaded unless all licenses have been appropriately purchased. As an exception, Church family history programs may be downloaded at no charge.

Can I download or distribute materials that I find on Church websites? The Church has created several websites, such as ChurchofJesusChrist.org, ComeUntoChrist.org, and FamilySearch.org. Unless otherwise indicated, all material on Church-owned websites, including visuals, text, icons, displays, databases, and general information, may be viewed, downloaded, and printed for noncommercial Church, home, and family use only. Material

from these sites may not be posted, transcribed, or distributed to other websites or computer networks without permission from the IPO.

Church-owned sites and any information on these sites, including the names and addresses of those who have submitted information, may not be used for selling or promoting products or services, soliciting clients, or any other commercial purpose.

For additional information, see the terms of use associated with the websites.

What permission is needed to present musical and theatrical productions? Productions that are owned by the Church or IRI may be performed in Church settings without permission from Church headquarters. If a copyrighted production is not owned by the Church, members must obtain the copyright owner's permission to perform all or part of it in a Church setting. Usually the copyright owner requires fees or royalties even if no charge is made for the performances. All presentations should have the approval of local priesthood leaders.

21.1.13

Curriculum Materials

The Church makes available scriptures, magazines, manuals, books, and other materials to help members learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders encourage members to obtain copies of the scriptures and *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* to support gospel study at home.

Leaders ensure that teachers use Church-approved materials for quorum and class instruction. The publication *Instructions for Curriculum* provides information about how to organize Sunday classes and which materials to use for lessons.

21.1.14**Dating or Get-Acquainted Businesses for Single Members**

Dating and get-acquainted businesses often promote their services to single members of the Church. Church meetinghouses, classes, or programs may not be used to promote any private business venture, including dating and get-acquainted businesses or services. Lists of Church groups or other information about members should not be given to such businesses.

21.1.15**Directories**

Stake and ward directories may be published according to the following instructions:

Names, addresses, and phone numbers may be included in a directory only if they are listed in a commercial telephone directory or, if they are unlisted, if the member gives permission. E-mail addresses may be included only with the member's permission.

Stake or ward budget funds are used to pay for directories. Directories may not contain advertising.

Leaders should not distribute directories outside the stake or ward boundaries or permit their use for commercial or political purposes.

The beginning of each directory should include a statement that it is to be used only for Church purposes and should not be copied without permission of the bishop or stake president.

21.1.16**Emigration of Members**

Generally, members are encouraged to remain in their native lands to build up and strengthen the Church. Opportunities for Church activity and for receiving and sharing the blessings of the gospel are increasing greatly throughout the world. As

members remain in their homelands and work to build the Church there, great blessings will come to them personally and to the Church. Stakes and wards throughout the world will be strengthened, making it possible to share the blessings of the gospel with an even greater number of Heavenly Father's children.

Experience has shown that those who emigrate often encounter language, cultural, and economic challenges, resulting in disappointment and personal and family difficulties.

Missionaries should not ask their parents, relatives, or others to sponsor members who wish to emigrate to other countries.

Members who emigrate to any country should comply with applicable laws.

When coming to the United States or other countries on student or tourist visas, members should not expect to find jobs or obtain permanent visas after entering that country.

To be considered for Church employment in any country, a person must meet all conditions of immigration and naturalization laws. The Church does not sponsor immigration through Church employment.

21.1.17**Fast Day**

A proper fast day observance typically includes abstaining from food and drink for two consecutive meals in a 24-hour period, attending fast and testimony meeting, and giving a generous fast offering to help care for those in need.

21.1.18**Fund-Raising**

See 13.6.8.

21.1.19**Gambling and Lotteries**

The Church opposes gambling in any form, including government-sponsored lotteries.

21.1.20**Guest Speakers or Instructors**

For most Church meetings, speakers and instructors should belong to the local ward or stake.

The bishop's approval is required before guest speakers or instructors may participate in any ward meeting, including auxiliary meetings. The stake president's approval is required for such participation in stake meetings.

The bishop or stake president carefully screens guest speakers or instructors and the subjects of their presentations. This may include contacting the person's bishop. The bishop or stake president ensures that:

1. Presentations are in harmony with Church doctrine.
2. Guest speakers or instructors are not paid a fee, do not recruit participants, and do not solicit customers or clients.
3. The travel expenses of guest speakers or instructors are not paid, either with local unit budget funds or by private contributions.
4. Presentations comply with the guidelines for using Church facilities (see 21.2).

21.1.21**Income Taxes**

Church members are obligated by the twelfth article of faith to obey the tax laws of the nation where they reside (see also Doctrine and Covenants 134:5). Members who disapprove of tax laws may try to have them changed by legislation or constitutional

amendment. Members who have well-founded legal objections may challenge tax laws in the courts.

Church members who refuse to file a tax return, pay required income taxes, or comply with a final judgment in a tax case are in direct conflict with the law and with the teachings of the Church. Such members may be ineligible for a temple recommend and should not be called to positions of principal responsibility in the Church. Members who are convicted of willfully violating tax laws are subject to Church discipline to the extent warranted by the circumstances.

21.1.22**Internet**

When carefully used, the Internet can help coordinate the work of the Church, strengthen faith, and minister to the needs of others. The Internet can also help people connect with one another and share Church content with friends and family. However, members should remember that electronic communication should not replace opportunities for in-person contact, where feasible.

21.1.22.1**Official Church Internet Resources**

The Church provides a number of official websites, blogs, and social media profiles for general use. These sites and resources are clearly identified as official either by the use of the Church logo or in some equivalent manner. They also comply with legal requirements and the Church's intellectual property and privacy policies.

Temples, missions, and visitors' centers are not authorized to create websites.

21.1.22.2**Members' Use of the Internet in Church Callings**

Members may not create websites, blogs, or social media profiles on behalf of the Church or to officially represent the Church and its views. However, they may create websites, blogs, or social media profiles to assist with their callings. When doing so, members must include a disclaimer such as “This is not an official website of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” and comply with the following guidelines:

1. Local priesthood leaders must first approve the creation of calling-related websites, blogs, or social media profiles.
2. The Church logo may not be used or imitated.
3. The name and contact information of the member who is responsible for the website, blog, or social media profile should be posted publicly.
4. Members should not state or imply that their online resource's content, images, or other materials are sponsored or endorsed by the Church or officially represent the Church in any way.
5. Church-owned artwork, videos, music, and other materials should not be posted unless such use is clearly authorized by the “Terms of Use” page of an official Church website or by the Church's Intellectual Property Office.
6. Photographs of other individuals or personal information should not be displayed without consent.
7. Social media properties must be properly maintained and actively moderated to ensure that any inappropriate content is promptly removed.
8. The website, blog, or social media profile should not be the name of a Church unit. For example, “First Ward News” or “Friends of the First Ward” is acceptable, while “First Ward” is not.

Please see internet.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for additional examples and clarification.

For help with the calendar, directory, and other tools on ChurchofJesusChrist.org, please visit tools.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

21.1.22.3**Personal Internet Use**

Members are encouraged to use the Internet to flood the earth with testimonies of the Savior and His restored gospel. They should view blogs, social networks, and other Internet technologies as tools that allow them to amplify their voice in promoting the messages of peace, hope, and joy that accompany faith in Christ.

Members are encouraged to share messages from official Church websites and social accounts, as well as their own words, images, and media. As members express their own thoughts and feelings, they should not give the impression that they represent or are sponsored by the Church.

As members use the Internet to hasten the work of the Lord, they should exemplify civility and focus on sharing praiseworthy messages that strengthen those with whom they come in contact.

Search “Internet Usage Helps for Members” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org to find additional guidelines.

21.1.23**Laws of the Land**

Members should obey, honor, and sustain the laws in any country where they reside or travel (see Doctrine and Covenants 58:21–22; Articles of Faith 1:12). This includes laws that prohibit proselyting.

21.1.24**Members' Communication with Church Headquarters**

Members of the Church are discouraged from making telephone calls or writing letters to General Authorities about doctrinal issues or personal matters. With an ever-increasing Church membership, responding personally to these inquiries presents an almost insurmountable task and would make it difficult for General Authorities to fulfill the duties for which they alone are responsible. The General Authorities love the members of the Church and do not want them to feel that they are without the support and guidance they need. However, all things need to be done with wisdom and order.

The Lord has organized His Church so every member has access to a bishop or branch president and a stake, district, or mission president who serve as spiritual advisers and temporal counselors. By reason of their callings, these local leaders are entitled to the spirit of discernment and inspiration to enable them to counsel members within their jurisdiction.

Members who need spiritual guidance, have weighty personal problems, or have doctrinal questions should make a diligent effort, including earnest prayer and scripture study, to find solutions and answers themselves. Church members are encouraged to seek guidance from the Holy Ghost to help them in their personal lives and in their family and Church responsibilities.

If members still need help, they should counsel first with their bishop. If necessary, he may refer them to the stake president.

In most cases, correspondence from members to General Authorities will be referred back to their local leaders. Stake presidents who need clarification about doctrinal or other Church matters may write in behalf of their members to the First Presidency.

21.1.25**Members' Occupations, Professions, and Affiliations**

Baptism into the Church, priesthood ordinations, and the issuing of temple recommends are based on the personal worthiness of each individual as established by a careful interview by that person's local priesthood leaders. Members of the Church should endeavor to be involved in activities and employment upon which they can in good conscience ask the blessings of the Lord and which are consistent with the principles of the gospel and the teachings of the Savior.

21.1.26**Members with Disabilities**

Church members are encouraged to follow the Savior's example of offering hope, understanding, and love to those who have disabilities. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders should get to know those who have disabilities and show genuine interest and concern.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders also identify members who may need additional care because a parent, child, or sibling has a disability. Caring for a family member who has a disability can be a refining process that builds faith. But it can also contribute to financial, marital, and family challenges.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders also seek out members with disabilities who are living in group homes or other facilities away from family members.

21.1.26.1**Increasing Awareness and Understanding**

Leaders, teachers, and other members should seek to understand a person's disability and any needs that may be associated with it. They can increase their understanding by talking with the person and his or her family members. They can also

read talks by Church leaders, articles in Church magazines, and online resources at [disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).

21.1.26.2

Giving Assistance

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders assess the needs of those who have disabilities and those who are caregivers. These leaders determine how ward or stake resources could be used to help meet the needs as appropriate. Leaders encourage members to give assistance and reach out in love and friendship. The bishopric or stake presidency may call a ward or stake disability specialist to help individuals and families.

Leaders may also identify appropriate community resources that could help individuals who have disabilities and their families.

For additional information on assisting persons who have disabilities, leaders and members may go to [disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org). Leaders may also contact LDS Family Services (where available).

Leaders and members should not attempt to explain why the challenge of a disability has come to a family. They should never suggest that a disability is a punishment from God (see John 9:2–3). Nor should they suggest that it is a blessing to have a child who has a disability.

21.1.26.3

Providing Ordinances

When considering whether to perform ordinances for a person who has an intellectual disability, priesthood leaders follow the guidelines in *Handbook 1*, 16.1.8.

21.1.26.4

Providing Opportunities to Serve and Participate

Many members with disabilities can serve in nearly any Church assignment. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders prayerfully consider the abilities and desires of each person and then provide appropriate opportunities to serve. Leaders also counsel with the person's family and consider the effects of a Church calling on the person and his or her family or caregiver.

When considering Church assignments or callings for caregivers of people with disabilities, leaders carefully consider the circumstances of the individuals and their families.

Leaders and teachers should include members with disabilities in meetings, classes, and activities as fully as possible. Lessons, talks, and teaching methods should be adapted to meet each person's needs. For information about adapting lessons, see [disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).

The bishopric may call an assistant teacher to help a person in a class. The bishopric may also ask someone to help a person in a meeting or activity.

If a person cannot participate in a meeting, class, or activity, leaders and teachers may consult with the family about how to meet his or her needs. The stake president or bishop may approve organizing special classes or programs for members with disabilities (see "Organizing Special Classes, Programs, or Units" below). If a person is not able to attend Church meetings, printed materials or recordings of lessons and talks may be provided.

Priesthood leaders encourage males who hold the priesthood to participate in ordinances when appropriate. Beginning in January of the year they turn 12, priesthood holders and young women who have been baptized and confirmed and who are worthy may be baptized and confirmed for the dead in a temple. Guidelines about members with disabilities

receiving their own temple ordinances are provided in *Handbook 1*, 3.4.8.

21.1.26.5

Organizing Special Classes, Programs, or Units

Members who have disabilities and special needs are encouraged to attend Sunday meetings in their home wards unless they live in a care facility where Church programs are organized.

When members who have similar disabilities live in a ward, group of wards, stake, or group of stakes, leaders may organize special Mutual or Primary classes or programs for them. Leaders may also organize special Sunday School classes or other classes. These classes or programs supplement a person's home ward program.

To organize a special class or program on a multistake level, approval is required from the Area Presidency. These leaders appoint an agent stake president to oversee the initial organization and the continuing operation of a class or program for a specified time.

To organize a special class or program on a multiward level, the stake presidency's approval is required. The stake president assigns an agent bishop to oversee the initial organization and the continuing operation of a class or program for a specified time.

The agent stake president or bishop consults with other participating stake presidents or bishops to establish a policy for financial support for these classes or programs. Parents or caregivers are responsible for transportation.

If a multistake class or program is organized, the president of each participating stake may appoint a high councilor to help coordinate efforts to enroll members who want to participate, provide leaders and teachers, and administer the financial policy established by the agent stake president.

Members who serve in a special class or program are called and set apart by or under the direction of the agent stake president or bishop. These leaders follow normal Church procedures for extending callings and releases. Leaders and teachers of a special class or program share information about members' activities and accomplishments with leaders of home wards, where permanent records are kept and recognition can be given.

As invited by the agent stake president or bishop, leaders of a special class or program may attend stake or ward leadership meetings. They may also conduct their own meetings to plan the activities of the class or program.

Leaders may contact Seminaries and Institutes of Religion administrators to learn about classes for members with disabilities that can be established within the Church Educational System.

Wards or branches may be created for members who are deaf or hearing impaired. Or a ward may be asked to host a group for those who are deaf or hearing impaired within a specified geographic area. Such wards, branches, or groups help these members participate fully in service and gospel learning. Instructions for organizing these units are provided in *Handbook 1*, 9.1.4 and 9.1.10.

Members who use sign language, and their families, may choose to have their Church membership records in one of the following places: (1) their home ward, (2) a ward that is designated to host a group for members who are deaf or hearing impaired, or (3) a ward or branch that is organized for members who are deaf or hearing impaired.

21.1.26.6

Interpreters for Deaf or Hearing-Impaired Members

Members who are deaf or hearing impaired face communication obstacles in learning gospel principles and doctrines. If they use sign language, they

need interpreters to help them participate fully in Church meetings, priesthood ordinances, temple work, testimony bearing, interviews, and activities.

Members who are deaf or hearing impaired are encouraged to be self-reliant and take the initiative to work with their priesthood leaders in coordinating the interpreting services they need. In preparation for sensitive situations such as personal interviews or Church disciplinary councils, priesthood leaders consult with the member to determine whether to use an interpreter. In these circumstances, leaders should seek an interpreter who is not a family member (if possible) and emphasize confidentiality.

If sufficient interpreters are not available, leaders may organize ward or stake classes to teach the sign language that is used in their area. Leaders may call qualified members to teach these classes. Members who are deaf or hearing impaired and use sign language as their native language should be considered first to teach the classes. A helpful resource is *Dictionary of Sign Language Terms for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

Only worthy members should interpret during sacrament meetings, priesthood meetings, and interviews. If a priesthood holder is not available to interpret during priesthood meeting, a presiding officer may ask a woman to do the interpretation. Nonmember interpreters may be used temporarily as volunteers in activities and most other meetings until members develop the skills to interpret.

A presiding officer may ask a priesthood holder to interpret an ordinance or blessing if the recipient is deaf or hearing impaired. If a priesthood holder is not available, a presiding officer may ask a woman to do the interpretation.

During a class or meeting, interpreters should be at the front of the classroom or chapel but not on the stand. They should also be to the side of the speaker so they do not create a visual distraction. Because understanding is enhanced by seeing the lips and body language of the person who is speaking, the

deaf or hearing-impaired members should be able to see the interpreter and also be able to see the speaker or teacher peripherally. If enough interpreters are available, leaders ask them to rotate approximately every 30 minutes to avoid fatigue.

During a priesthood ordinance or an interview, the interpreter should be close to the person who performs the ordinance or conducts the interview.

If deaf or hearing-impaired members do not use sign language and need an oral interpreter to help them read lips, leaders use the same procedures they follow to find an interpreter who uses sign language.

21.1.26.7

Privacy

Leaders should respect the privacy of members with disabilities during and after leadership meetings where individual needs may be discussed.

21.1.26.8

Resources

Resources for members with disabilities, for their families and caregivers, and for leaders and teachers are available at disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. This website provides:

1. Information to help increase understanding of the challenges faced by those who have disabilities.
2. Sections on specific disabilities and answers to frequently asked questions.
3. Comfort for members who have disabilities and for their families through scriptures, quotations, and links to helpful information.
4. Listings of materials that will help members with disabilities as they strive to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and serve in the Church.

Church materials for members with disabilities are listed in the *Church Materials Catalog* and at disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Questions about materials for members with disabilities may be addressed to:

Members with Disabilities
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024
Telephone: 1-801-240-2477
E-mail: specialcurriculum@
ChurchofJesusChrist.org

21.1.27

Other Faiths

Much that is inspiring, noble, and worthy of the highest respect is found in many other faiths. Missionaries and other members must be sensitive and respectful toward the beliefs of others and avoid giving offense. Stake and mission presidents who have questions about relationships with non-Christian faiths should contact the Area Presidency. Other local leaders who have such questions should contact the stake or mission president.

21.1.28

Overnight Activities

See 13.6.12 and 21.2.8.

21.1.29

Political and Civic Activity

As citizens, Church members are encouraged to participate in political and governmental affairs, including involvement in the political party of their choice. Members are also urged to be actively engaged in worthy causes to improve their communities and make them wholesome places in which to live and rear families.

In accordance with the laws of their respective governments, members are encouraged to register to

vote, to study issues and candidates carefully, and to vote for individuals whom they believe will act with integrity and sound judgment. Latter-day Saints have a special obligation to seek out, vote for, and uphold leaders who are honest, good, and wise (see Doctrine and Covenants 98:10).

While affirming the right of expression on political and social issues, the Church is neutral regarding political parties, political platforms, and candidates for political office. The Church does not endorse any political party or candidate. Nor does it advise members how to vote. However, in some exceptional instances the Church will take a position on specific legislation, particularly when it concludes that moral issues are involved. Only the First Presidency can speak for the Church or commit the Church to support or oppose specific legislation or to seek to intervene in judicial matters. Otherwise, stake presidents and other local leaders should not organize members to participate in political matters or attempt to influence how they participate.

Church members are encouraged to consider serving in elected or appointed public offices in local and national government. Candidates for public office should not imply that their candidacy is endorsed by the Church or its leaders. Church leaders and members should also avoid statements or conduct that might be interpreted as Church endorsement of any political party, platform, policy, or candidate.

Members are encouraged to support measures that strengthen the moral fabric of society, particularly those designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

Church records, directories, and similar materials may not be used for political purposes.

Church facilities may not be used for political purposes. However, facilities may be used for voter registration or polling where there is not a reasonable alternative (see 21.2).

21.1.30**Postal Regulations**

In the United States and some other countries, it is a violation of postal regulations to place any material without postage in or on mailboxes. This restriction applies to ward or stake newsletters, announcements, flyers, and other Church-related materials. Church leaders should instruct members and missionaries not to place such items in or on mailboxes.

21.1.31**Privacy of Members**

Church leaders are obligated to protect the privacy of members. Church records, directories, and similar materials may not be used for personal, commercial, or political purposes (see also 21.1.15).

21.1.32**Privately Published Writings**

Members should not ask General Authorities or Area Seventies to coauthor or endorse Church books or other Church writings.

21.1.33**Recording Talks or Addresses of General Authorities and Area Seventies**

Church members should not record the talks or addresses that General Authorities and Area Seventies give at stake conferences, missionary meetings, or other meetings. However, members may record broadcasts of general conference on home equipment for personal, noncommercial use.

21.1.34**Referring to the Church and Its Members**

As the Church grows across boundaries, cultures, and languages, the use of its revealed name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see

Doctrine and Covenants 115:4), is increasingly important in the responsibility of the Church and its members to proclaim the name of the Savior throughout all the world. Accordingly, references to the Church should include its full name whenever possible. Following an initial reference to the full name of the Church, the contractions “the Church” or “the Church of Jesus Christ” are acceptable.

Referring to the Church as “the Mormon Church,” “the Latter-day Saints Church,” or “the LDS Church” is discouraged.

When referring to Church members, it is preferable to use the phrase “members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” As a shortened reference, “Latter-day Saints” is preferred and “Mormons” is acceptable.

The word *Mormon* will continue to be used in proper names like the Book of Mormon. It will also continue to be used as an adjective in phrases such as “Mormon pioneers.” In addition, it may be necessary to use the word *Mormon* to identify the Church as it is commonly known in some countries.

21.1.35**Research Studies in the Church**

The only authorized research agency of the Church is the Correlation Research Division of the Correlation Department. Representatives of this division use questionnaires and interviews to obtain information on issues of concern to General Authorities. When Church-authorized researchers contact members, they provide the Church’s toll-free number and a contact name at headquarters. In addition, they always allow the respondent the option of not answering any or all of the questions on a survey.

Church meetings may not be used for collecting information by unauthorized persons or agencies. Nor should the names of Church members be made available to such persons or agencies. If local

leaders want to verify the authorization of questionnaires or interviews, they should contact the Correlation Research Division (1-801-240-2727 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2727).

21.1.36

Sales Agents

Local leaders should not accept the claims of sales agents that the Church or a Church leader has authorized them to call on local leaders or members to sell their products.

21.1.37

Satellite and Video Equipment

Church satellite and video equipment may be used only for noncommercial, Church-related purposes as authorized by the stake presidency or bishopric. This equipment may not be used to record television, cable, or satellite programs that are not sponsored by the Church. Nor may Church satellite equipment be used to view non-Church programs. Members may not direct the antenna from one satellite or transponder to another without authorization from Church headquarters.

Only people who are trained to operate the equipment may do so. Youth may help operate it only if they are supervised.

All equipment is to be locked securely when not in use. It may not be removed from the building for home or personal use.

21.1.38

Solicitation of Funds

The established programs of the Church provide financial assistance for worthy individuals and appropriate causes. Church assistance is administered by bishops, who are familiar with the circumstances and can prevent duplicate assistance and abuses. Therefore, members should not solicit additional

financial assistance from Church headquarters or from local leaders or members.

If members receive such a request for funds, they could respond by saying that they have contributed in their own wards to provide funds for assistance according to established principles of Church welfare.

21.1.39

Statements Attributed to Church Leaders

From time to time, statements are circulated that are inaccurately attributed to leaders of the Church. Many such statements distort current Church teachings and are based on rumors and innuendos. They are never transmitted officially, but by word of mouth, e-mail, or other informal means. Church members should not teach or pass on such statements without verifying that they are from approved Church sources, such as official statements, communications, and publications.

Any notes made when General Authorities, Area Seventies, or other general Church officers speak at stake conferences or other meetings should not be distributed without the consent of the speaker. Personal notes are for individual use only.

21.1.40

Symposia and Similar Gatherings

The Church warns its members against symposia and similar gatherings that include presentations that (1) disparage, ridicule, make light of, or are otherwise inappropriate in their treatment of sacred matters or (2) could injure the Church, detract from its mission, or jeopardize its members' well-being. Members should not allow their position or standing in the Church to be used to promote or imply endorsement of such gatherings.

21.1.41**Taxable Activities**

Ward and stake leaders ensure that local Church activities do not jeopardize the Church's tax-exempt status. For guidelines, see 21.2.

21.1.42**Temple Clothing and Garments**

Local leaders encourage endowed members to purchase their own temple clothing for use when performing temple ordinances. This sacred clothing may be purchased through Church Distribution Services. Some temples also have temple clothing available for rent. If a temple does not have rental clothing, members need to bring temple clothing with them.

Members may make their own temple aprons only if they use the approved apron embroidery and sewing kit. This kit is available from Church Distribution Services. Other temple ceremonial clothing and temple garments may not be made.

Church members who have received the endowment have made a covenant to wear the garment according to the instructions given in the temple. When issuing temple recommends, priesthood leaders should read aloud the First Presidency statement on wearing the garment. Leaders also emphasize the blessings that are related to this sacred privilege. These blessings are conditioned on worthiness and faithfulness in keeping temple covenants.

The garment provides a constant reminder of the covenants made in the temple. When properly worn, it provides protection against temptation and evil. Wearing the garment is also an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow the Savior.

Members should not alter the garment from its authorized design or wear it contrary to instructions to accommodate different styles of clothing. Members should wear both parts of the two-piece garment.

The garment is sacred and should be treated with respect. The garment is worn beneath the clothing, and out of respect for its sacred significance, it is kept covered. Members normally care for their garments personally. Members should avoid displaying the garment publicly.

Members who have made covenants in the temple should be guided by the Holy Spirit to answer for themselves personal questions about wearing the garment.

To dispose of worn-out temple garments, members should cut out and destroy the marks. Members then cut up the remaining fabric so it cannot be identified as a garment.

To dispose of worn-out temple ceremonial clothing, members should destroy the clothing by cutting it up so the original use cannot be recognized.

Members may give garments and temple clothing that are in good condition to other worthy endowed members. The bishop can identify those who might need such clothing. Under no circumstances should members give garments or temple ceremonial clothing to Deseret Industries, bishops' storehouses, or charities.

Information about ordering temple clothing or ordering garments for those in special circumstances (such as members serving in the military, members who are bedfast, or members with disabilities) is provided in *Handbook 1*, 3.5.6.

21.1.43**Travel Policies**

See 13.6.24.

21.2

Policies on Using Church Buildings and Other Property

Church buildings and other property are to be used for worship, religious instruction, and other Church-related activities. Church property should not be used for commercial or political purposes, which would violate laws that permit its tax exemption. Nor may property be used for other purposes that would violate these laws. The following list provides examples of uses that are not approved:

1. Renting or leasing Church facilities for commercial purposes.
2. Promoting business ventures or investment enterprises, including posting commercial advertising or sponsoring commercial entertainment.
3. Buying, selling, or promoting products, services, publications, or creative works or demonstrating wares.
4. Holding unauthorized fund-raising activities (see 13.6.8).
5. Hosting speakers or instructors who are paid a fee, who recruit participants, or who solicit customers or clients while giving seminars, lessons, aerobics classes, and so on. Exceptions may be made to use meetinghouse pianos and organs for paid private instruction (see 14.7).
6. Holding organized athletic events that are not sponsored by the Church, including practices.
7. Holding political meetings or campaigns. As an exception, Church facilities may be used for voter registration and as polling places at the request of voting officials if:
 - a. There is no reasonable alternative.
 - b. The officials and voters maintain Church standards in the building.
 - c. The event will not pose physical danger to the building.
 - d. The event will not harm the image of the Church.

The use of Church property should not pose a significant risk of harm to participants or to the property. Nor should it unduly expose the Church to liability or disturb surrounding neighbors.

For more detailed instructions on using and caring for Church buildings and other property, see *Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property* or contact Church headquarters or the assigned administrative office.

21.2.1

Artwork

Church-approved artwork for meetinghouses is obtained through the facilities manager using the *Church Facilities Artwork* catalog. The facilities manager may also obtain artwork that is appropriate for meetinghouses through Church Distribution Services.

Pictures and other artwork may be placed in appropriate locations in the meetinghouse. However, they may not be placed in the chapel or near the baptismal font. Statues, murals, and mosaics are not authorized. This policy may not apply to works of art that have been on display for many years in the chapels of existing meetinghouses.

Artwork in meetinghouses should be properly framed.

21.2.2

Decorations

Decorations for Christmas, other holidays, and other similar occasions may be placed temporarily in the foyer or cultural hall of a meetinghouse, as approved under the direction of the stake presidency. With the exception of flowers, decorations

may not be placed in the chapel area of the meetinghouse. Nor should the exterior of the meetinghouse or the grounds be decorated.

Decorations should be modest and inexpensive and must not be a fire hazard. Hay, straw, palm fronds, other dehydrated materials, and lighted candles may not be used. If Christmas trees are used, they should be artificial or properly fireproofed and displayed without electric lights or candles. Local fire and safety codes and ordinances should be observed.

21.2.3 Emergencies

During an emergency, the stake presidency determines whether or not to hold regular ward meetings.

In a community-wide emergency or disaster, the stake president may assist legitimate disaster relief agencies by allowing meetinghouses to be used as emergency shelters. The Church retains control. Stake and ward leaders ensure that people who use the buildings observe Church standards of conduct, including the Word of Wisdom, while they are in the buildings.

21.2.4 Firearms

Churches are dedicated for the worship of God and as havens from the cares and concerns of the world. With the exception of current law enforcement officers, the carrying of lethal weapons on Church property, concealed or otherwise, is prohibited.

21.2.5 Fires and Candles

Open flames and lighted candles may not be used in Church buildings.

21.2.6 Flags

The national flag may be flown on the grounds of Church property at any time as long as it conforms to local custom and convention. The national flag may be displayed inside Church buildings on special occasions, such as patriotic programs. Genuine patriotism does not require displaying the national flag continuously at places of worship.

21.2.7 Monday Nights

See 13.6.10.

21.2.8 Overnight Lodging or Camping

Church meetinghouse properties may not be used for overnight lodging, camping, or slumber parties.

21.2.9 Parking Lots

Use of Church parking lots should comply with the guidelines at the beginning of section 21.2. In addition, Church parking lots should not be used for commuter parking without permission from the director for temporal affairs.

21.2.10 Photographs, Video Recordings, and Broadcasts in Chapels

Taking photographs or making video recordings in chapels is not permitted. Meetings and other events that are held in the chapel may not be broadcast over the Internet or by any other means (see 18.3.1 for an exception).

21.2.11**Serving Areas**

The serving area in Church meetinghouses is not intended for food preparation or cooking unless it is part of a lesson, demonstration, or other instruction. When food is to be served in the building or on the grounds, it should be prepared elsewhere and brought to the meetinghouse, where it may be kept warm or cold until it is served.

21.2.12**Storage**

The only storage allowed in meetinghouses is for maintenance items and other approved supplies and equipment. Welfare commodities and other such items may not be stored in meetinghouses.

Materials such as gasoline, propane, matches, and camping gear should be stored in buildings that are separate from the meetinghouse.

Cars, recreational vehicles, and other personal equipment may not be stored on Church property.

21.3**Medical and Health Policies****21.3.1****Autopsies**

Autopsies may be performed if the family of the deceased gives consent and if the autopsy complies with the law.

21.3.2**Cremation**

The Church does not normally encourage cremation. The family of the deceased must decide whether the body should be cremated, taking into account any laws governing burial or cremation. In some countries, the law requires cremation.

Where possible, the body of a deceased member who has been endowed should be dressed in temple clothing when it is cremated. A funeral service may be held (see 18.6).

21.3.3**Euthanasia**

Euthanasia is defined as deliberately putting to death a person who is suffering from an incurable condition or disease. A person who participates in euthanasia, including assisting someone to commit suicide, violates the commandments of God. (See also 21.3.8.)

21.3.4**HIV Infection and AIDS**

Members who are infected with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) or who have AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) should be treated with dignity and compassion. Some people with HIV are innocent victims of the acts of others. For example, they may have become infected through a careless blood transfusion or an infected parent. If infection has resulted from transgressing God's laws, the Church advocates the example of the Lord, who condemned the sin yet loved the sinner and encouraged repentance. Members should reach out with kindness and comfort to the afflicted, ministering to their needs and helping them find solutions to their problems.

The principal safeguards against HIV and AIDS are chastity before marriage, total fidelity in marriage, abstinence from any homosexual relations, avoidance of illegal drugs, and reverence and care for the body.

Attendance at Church meetings by persons with HIV infection or AIDS does not pose a serious health problem. Public health authorities affirm that HIV has not been transmitted through casual contact in homes, schools, churches, or places of work.

Those who occasionally may need to clean up blood or render first aid should learn and follow the recommendations of local health officials.

With regard to baptism and confirmation, persons with HIV infection or AIDS are treated as anyone else who expresses faith in God, repents, and is living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

21.3.5

Hypnosis

The use of hypnosis under competent, professional medical supervision for the treatment of diseases or mental disorders is a medical question to be determined by competent medical authorities. Members should not participate in hypnosis for purposes of demonstration or entertainment.

21.3.6

Medical and Health Practices

Members should not use medical or health practices that are ethically or legally questionable. Local leaders should advise members who have health problems to consult with competent professional practitioners who are licensed in the countries where they practice.

21.3.7

Organ and Tissue Donations and Transplants

The donation of organs and tissues is a selfless act that often results in great benefit to individuals with medical conditions. The decision to will or donate one's own body organs or tissue for medical purposes, or the decision to authorize the transplant of organs or tissue from a deceased family member, is made by the individual or the deceased member's family.

A decision to receive a donated organ should be made after receiving competent medical counsel and confirmation through prayer.

21.3.8

Prolonging Life

When severe illness strikes, members should exercise faith in the Lord and seek competent medical assistance. However, when dying becomes inevitable, it should be seen as a blessing and a purposeful part of eternal existence. Members should not feel obligated to extend mortal life by means that are unreasonable. These judgments are best made by family members after receiving wise and competent medical advice and seeking divine guidance through fasting and prayer.

21.3.9

Self-Awareness Groups

Many private groups and commercial organizations have programs that purport to increase self-awareness, self-esteem, and spirituality. Some groups promise to enhance individual agency or improve family relationships. Some offer "experiential" or "empowerment" training.

Some of these groups falsely claim or imply that the Church or individual General Authorities have endorsed their programs. However, the Church has not endorsed any such enterprise, and members are warned against believing such claims. The fact that the Church has not formally challenged such an enterprise should not be perceived as a tacit endorsement or approval.

Church members are also warned that some of these groups advocate concepts and use methods that can be harmful. In addition, many such groups charge exorbitant fees and encourage long-term commitments. Some intermingle worldly concepts with gospel principles in ways that can undermine spirituality and faith.

These groups tend to promise quick solutions to problems that normally require time and personal effort to resolve. Although participants may experience temporary emotional relief or exhilaration, old problems often return, leading to added disappointment and despair.

Church leaders are not to pay for, encourage participation in, or promote such groups or practices. Also, Church facilities may not be used for these activities.

Leaders should counsel members that true self-improvement comes through living gospel principles. Members who have social or emotional problems may consult with priesthood leaders for guidance in identifying sources of help that are in harmony with gospel principles.

21.3.10

Stillborn Children (Children Who Die before Birth)

Temple ordinances are not performed for stillborn children. However, this does not deny the possibility that a stillborn child may be part of the family in the eternities. Parents are encouraged to trust the Lord to resolve such cases in the way He knows is best. The family may record the name of a stillborn child on the family group record, followed by the word *stillborn* in parentheses.

Memorial or graveside services may be held as determined by the parents.

It is a fact that a child has life before birth. However, there is no direct revelation on when the spirit enters the body.

21.3.11

Word of Wisdom

The only official interpretation of “hot drinks” (Doctrine and Covenants 89:9) in the Word of Wisdom is the statement made by early Church

leaders that the term “hot drinks” means tea and coffee.

Members should not use any substance that contains illegal drugs. Nor should members use harmful or habit-forming substances except under the care of a competent physician.

21.4

Policies on Moral Issues

21.4.1

Abortion

The Lord commanded, “Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:6). The Church opposes elective abortion for personal or social convenience. Members must not submit to, perform, arrange for, pay for, consent to, or encourage an abortion. The only possible exceptions are when:

1. Pregnancy resulted from forcible rape or incest.
2. A competent physician determines that the life or health of the mother is in serious jeopardy.
3. A competent physician determines that the fetus has severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

Even these exceptions do not justify abortion automatically. Abortion is a most serious matter and should be considered only after the persons responsible have consulted with their bishops and received divine confirmation through prayer.

Church members who submit to, perform, arrange for, pay for, consent to, or encourage an abortion may be subject to Church discipline.

As far as has been revealed, a person may repent and be forgiven for the sin of abortion.

21.4.2**Abuse**

Abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of others (such as a child or spouse, the elderly, or the disabled) in a way that causes physical, emotional, or sexual harm. The Church's position is that abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Those who abuse their spouses, children, other family members, or anyone else violate the laws of God and man. Members who have abused others are subject to Church discipline.

All members, especially parents and leaders, are encouraged to be alert and diligent and do all they can to protect children and others against abuse. If leaders or teachers become aware of instances of abuse, they should counsel with the bishop.

Church leaders and members should fulfill all legal obligations to report abuse to civil authorities. In some locations, leaders and teachers who work with children and youth are considered "mandated reporters" and must report abuse to legal authorities. Similarly, in many locations, any person who learns of abuse is required to report it to legal authorities.

Instructions for stake presidents and bishops are provided in *Handbook 1*, 17.3.2.

21.4.3**Artificial Insemination**

The Church strongly discourages artificial insemination using semen from anyone but the husband. However, this is a personal matter that ultimately must be left to the judgment of the husband and wife. Responsibility for the decision rests solely upon them.

Artificial insemination of single sisters is not approved. Single sisters who deliberately refuse to follow the counsel of Church leaders in this matter are subject to Church discipline.

21.4.4**Birth Control**

It is the privilege of married couples who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for the spirit children of God, whom they are then responsible to nurture and rear. The decision as to how many children to have and when to have them is extremely intimate and private and should be left between the couple and the Lord. Church members should not judge one another in this matter.

Married couples should also understand that sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved not only for the purpose of procreation, but also as a way of expressing love and strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife.

21.4.5**Chastity and Fidelity**

The Lord's law of chastity is abstinence from sexual relations outside of lawful marriage and fidelity within marriage. Sexual relations are proper only between a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. Adultery, fornication, homosexual or lesbian relations, and every other unholy, unnatural, or impure practice are sinful. Members who violate the Lord's law of chastity or who influence others to do so are subject to Church discipline.

21.4.6**Homosexual Behavior and Same-Gender Attraction**

Homosexual behavior violates the commandments of God, is contrary to the purposes of human sexuality, and deprives people of the blessings that can be found in family life and in the saving ordinances of the gospel. Those who persist in such behavior or who influence others to do so are subject to Church discipline. Homosexual behavior can be forgiven through sincere repentance.

If members engage in homosexual behavior, Church leaders should help them have a clear understanding of faith in Jesus Christ, the process of repentance, and the purpose of life on earth.

While opposing homosexual behavior, the Church reaches out with understanding and respect to individuals who are attracted to those of the same gender.

If members feel same-gender attraction but do not engage in any homosexual behavior, leaders should support and encourage them in their resolve to live the law of chastity and to control unrighteous thoughts. These members may receive Church callings. If they are worthy and qualified in every other way, they may also hold temple recommends and receive temple ordinances.

21.4.7 In Vitro Fertilization

The Church strongly discourages in vitro fertilization using semen from anyone but the husband or an egg from anyone but the wife. However, this is a personal matter that ultimately must be left to the judgment of the husband and wife. Responsibility for the decision rests solely upon them.

21.4.8 Occult Affiliation

Church members should not engage in any form of Satan worship or affiliate in any way with the occult. “Such activities are among the works of darkness spoken of in the scriptures. They are designed to destroy one’s faith in Christ, and will jeopardize the salvation of those who knowingly promote this wickedness. These things should not be pursued as games, be topics in Church meetings, or be delved into in private, personal conversations” (First Presidency letter, Sept. 18, 1991).

21.4.9 Pornography

The Church opposes pornography in any form. Indulgence in pornography damages individual lives, families, and society. Such indulgence drives away the Spirit of the Lord. Church members should avoid all forms of pornographic material and oppose its production, dissemination, and use.

The booklet *Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts* provides counsel on how to avoid and overcome problems with pornography.

21.4.10 Same-Gender Marriages

As a doctrinal principle, based on the scriptures, the Church affirms that marriage between a man and a woman is essential to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

Sexual relations are proper only between a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. Any other sexual relations, including those between persons of the same gender, are sinful and undermine the divinely created institution of the family. The Church accordingly affirms defining marriage as the legal and lawful union between a man and a woman.

21.4.11 Sex Education

Parents have primary responsibility for the sex education of their children. Teaching this subject honestly and plainly in the home will help young people avoid serious moral transgressions. To help parents teach this sensitive and important information, the Church has published *A Parent’s Guide*.

Where schools have undertaken sex education, parents should seek to ensure that the instructions given to their children are consistent with sound moral and ethical values.

21.4.12**Single Expectant Parents**

Church members who are single and pregnant are encouraged to go to their bishop. By virtue of his priesthood office and calling, he can counsel with them as they make important decisions that affect their own well-being and that of the child. He can also help them begin the process of repentance, where appropriate. Instructions for the bishop are provided in *Handbook 1*, 17.3.12.

When a man and woman conceive a child outside of marriage, every effort should be made to encourage them to marry. When the probability of a successful marriage is unlikely due to age or other circumstances, the unmarried parents should be encouraged to give prayerful consideration to what would be in the best interests of their child.

Adoption is an unselfish, loving decision that blesses both the birth parents and the child in this life and in eternity. For unmarried parents wishing to place children for adoption or for married couples who are hoping to adopt, LDS Family Services may be of assistance in identifying reputable, licensed adoption services. Licensed services are designed to protect the interest of the child, screen adoptive couples before placement, and provide needed supervision and counseling.

Birth parents who do not marry should not be counseled to keep the infant as a condition of repentance or out of a sense of obligation to care for one's own. Additionally, grandparents and other family members should not feel obligated to facilitate parenting by unmarried parents, since the child would not generally be able to receive the blessings of the sealing covenant. Further, unmarried parents are generally unable to provide the stability and the nurturing environment that a married mother and father can provide. Unmarried parents should give prayerful consideration to the best interests of the child and the blessings that can come to an infant who is sealed to a mother and father (see First Presidency letter, June 26, 2002).

If an expectant parent decides to parent the child, Church leaders and other members should treat the parent and child with care and compassion and seek to strengthen parenting skills. LDS Family Services may help in these circumstances. Leaders encourage the parent to have the child given a name and a blessing (see 20.2).

For information about whether a pregnant young woman should attend Relief Society or Young Women meetings, see 10.12.4.

21.4.13**Sperm Donation**

The Church strongly discourages the donation of sperm.

21.4.14**Suicide**

It is wrong to take a life, including one's own. However, a person who commits suicide may not be responsible for his or her acts. Only God can judge such a matter.

The family, in consultation with the bishop, determines the place and nature of a funeral service for a person who has died under such circumstances. Church facilities may be used. If the person was endowed, he or she may be buried in temple clothing.

21.4.15**Surgical Sterilization (Including Vasectomy)**

The Church strongly discourages surgical sterilization as an elective form of birth control. Surgical sterilization should be considered only if (1) medical conditions seriously jeopardize life or health or (2) birth defects or serious trauma have rendered a person mentally incompetent and not responsible for his or her actions. Such conditions must be determined by competent medical judgment and in accordance with law. Even then,

the persons responsible for this decision should consult with each other and with their bishop and should receive divine confirmation of their decision through prayer.

21.4.16

Surrogate Motherhood

The Church strongly discourages surrogate motherhood. However, this is a personal matter that ultimately must be left to the judgment of the husband and wife. Responsibility for the decision rests solely upon them.