

# Maintaining the Course

*Members of the new First Presidency bring their past experience to bear on the Church's future direction.*

BY ADAM C. OLSON  
Church Magazines

The day after he was ordained and set apart as 16th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, President Thomas Spencer Monson addressed the media on Monday, February 4, 2008, honoring his predecessor and expressing his desires that his administration be one of unity, cooperation, and reaching out.

With his newly called counselors, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, sitting at his right and left, President Monson paid homage to President Gordon B. Hinckley, who died Sunday, January 27, 2008, after serving as President of the Church for nearly 13 years.

"President Hinckley's passing has affected all of us," he said. "We shall miss him, yet we know that he has left us with a wonderful legacy of love and goodness."

Though following in President Hinckley's footsteps might seem daunting, President Monson said it would not be difficult because, "He blazed the trail."

## Continuing the Course

The two men served together in the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for more than 40 years and met together on an almost daily basis while in the First Presidency, making decisions and discussing goals.

Having worked with President Hinckley so closely, President Monson said, "It is inevitable that our thinking

would be similar. Therefore there will be no abrupt change from the courses we have been pursuing. . . . We will continue the commitment of those who have gone before us in teaching the gospel, in promoting cooperation with people throughout the world, and in bearing witness to the life and mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Among the hallmarks of President Hinckley's administration that President Monson said he hopes to continue are temple building, traveling, and the Perpetual Education Fund.

There is no doubt that the Church's building of new temples will continue, President Monson said, "because the Church keeps growing, and we must provide that holy edifice in areas where the Church is sufficiently large to justify it."

President Monson, who has traveled to dedicate seven temples and attended the dedications of others in many countries, said, "I love to meet the people and be out among them."

"I do plan to travel," said President Monson, who will serve in the wake of the most widely traveled President in

**President Thomas S. Monson, center, became the 16th President of the Church on February 3, 2008. His counselors in the new First Presidency are President Henry B. Eyring, left, and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.**



Church history. “Traveling is difficult when you go for long stretches at a time, but you always come back refreshed, feeling that you have accomplished something.”

President Monson feels that the Church is accomplishing something with the Perpetual Education Fund and proclaimed that it will continue “far into the future.”

“[The fund] is expanding,” he said. “And those young people are finding jobs, and they’re able to repay the loans. It is a *perpetual* education fund. It has lifted them out of poverty to a life comparable with others who otherwise had the chance and the money to provide an education [for themselves]. It’s a miracle.”

### Working Together

Though President Monson announced no abrupt changes to policies or programs, he made it clear what he hoped the tenor of his administration would be—working together in the spirit of cooperation and reaching out in the spirit of love.

“It has been my opportunity to work somewhat closely with leaders of other faiths in solving some of the challenges facing our community and indeed the entire world,” he said. “We will continue this cooperative effort.”

President Monson said he believes each member has a responsibility to be active in his or her community and to work cooperatively with people of all faiths and organizations to bless lives.

“It is important that we eliminate the weakness of one standing alone and substitute for it the strength of people working together,” he said.

President Monson applies that same principle to Church administration. Expressing gratitude for his counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he explained, “Our purpose is united, and we work together in complete harmony in a spirit of love and cooperation.”

President Monson was ordained an Apostle on October 10, 1963, and has served as an Apostle for more than 44 years, including his time as Second Counselor to President Ezra Taft Benson and Howard W. Hunter and as First Counselor to President Hinckley.



However, in spite of his long experience in Church leadership, he said he plans to rely heavily upon the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric in moving forward.

“This is not a one-man or three-man leadership situation in the Church,” he said. “These are very competent and vastly different individuals in their backgrounds and in their training.”

Known for his tender stories of caring for individuals, President Monson hopes that members will also reach out to those in need both temporally and spiritually.

“As a Church we reach out not only to our own people but also to those people of goodwill throughout the world in the spirit of brotherhood which comes from





the Lord Jesus Christ,” he said. “We desire to cultivate a spirit of kindness, of understanding, of love. We seek always to follow our Savior, ‘who went about doing good’ ” (Acts 10:38).

Among those who stand in spiritual need are those Church members who are not actively participating. Addressing them directly, President Monson said, “Don’t give up. We need you.” He then explained, “My purpose is to provide ways that we as active members can put our arms around those who are less active and bring them back to the fold. I am dedicated to that principle.”

#### **Pursuing the Spirit of Helping Others**

President Monson attributed his desire to lift those in need to the example of his mother.

Born on August 21, 1927, to G. Spencer and Gladys Condie Monson, President Monson spent his younger years living near railroad tracks on the west side of Salt Lake City. Young men coming west to seek employment during the Great Depression would frequently stop at their home, having heard that food or help was available there.

“I saw my mother minister to those men, totally unafraid, no fear in her at all,” he said. “In fact, she gave them each a lecture that he

***The new First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles meet with members of the media.***

should write his mother and tell her where he was and that everything was going to be all right.

“That same spirit carried forward with me,” he said. “I have had great satisfaction in pursuing that same spirit of helping others.”

President Monson’s desire to serve others has blessed the lives of many both in and out of the Church. He has served as a member of the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America since 1969. In 1981, U.S. President Ronald Reagan appointed him to serve one year on the President’s Task Force for Private Sector Initiatives.

As bishop of the ward with the largest welfare load in the Church at age 22, he spent one week of personal vacation time each Christmas to visit each of the 84 widows in his ward. These visits continued decades after President Monson was given other Church assignments for as long as the widows lived.

“Each would ask me to speak at her funeral,” he said. But concerned about how much traveling he did, he would reply, “Good heavens, I’m overseas sometimes five weeks at a time, and I won’t be here.”

“No,” they would say, “we pray that you’ll be here.”

Between 1950 and 2000, President Monson spoke at the funerals of all 84.

### **Looking to the Future**

As he looks at the road ahead, President Monson said he recognizes challenges but remains optimistic.

“Our young people live in a world of many challenges, and they should be prepared to meet them and not be overcome by them,” he said. He laid the responsibility upon parents to teach their children how to pray.

“Sometimes the best answers that young people can



**President Thomas S. Monson addresses the media after being introduced as President of the Church.**

give to the questions of life are found when they are upon their knees, calling upon our Heavenly Father. I testify that if they will remember that the Lord is mindful of them and will answer their prayers, they will be able to meet every challenge that comes to them.”

President Monson expressed optimism based on the strength of Church members. “How grateful we are for the dedication, the faith, and the strength of the people of the Church, who now number more than 13 million in 176 nations and territories throughout the world.

“We’re proud of our young people. . . . They stand as beacons of goodness in a world of shifting values and standards. We know the future of this work will be in good hands.”

Of that work, President Monson testified that it is the Lord’s. “I have felt His sustaining influence,” he said.

Following the death of President Hinckley, President Monson said he went to his knees, “thanking my Heavenly Father for life, for experience, for my family, and then directly asking Him to go before my face, to be on my right hand, to be on my left hand, and His Spirit in my heart, and His angels round about me to bear me up” (see D&C 84:88).

Buoyed by the strength of the Lord and in good health—“I still do a day’s work, and half a night’s as well”—President Monson said, “I know that He will direct our efforts as we serve Him with faith and diligence. . . . You can rest assured we’ll be giving due attention to the present and the future but not forgetting the past. For the past is prelude to the future.” ■



# PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

*First Counselor in the First Presidency*

**T**hough his service as Second Counselor to President Gordon B. Hinckley lasted just less than four months, President Henry Bennion Eyring, recently sustained as First Counselor in the First Presidency, is well seasoned among General Authorities in the Church.

As the only man to date to have served in the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Quorum of the Seventy, and Presiding Bishopric, President Eyring brings broad experience to his new calling.

During his years of service, he has had ample opportunity to work closely with President Monson.

"I am humbled and honored to have been invited to serve as a counselor to President Monson," said President Eyring at a media conference announcing the new First Presidency.

"For many years in the Presiding Bishopric and in the Quorum of the Twelve and in the wonderful experience that I've had in the First Presidency with President Monson, I have had the chance to come to know him, his goodness, his great capacities, his love of the people," President Eyring said.

"I pledge my whole heart to serve with him, knowing



as I do his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his power to receive revelation and to know what it is we should do."

President Eyring was born on May 31, 1933, in Princeton, New Jersey, the second of three sons born to world-renowned chemist Henry Eyring and his wife, Mildred. After serving two years in the U.S. Air Force, he enrolled in the Harvard Graduate School of Business, where he earned

advanced degrees in business administration. In July 1962, President Eyring became an assistant professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, where he taught from 1962 to 1971.

In 1971, President Eyring became president of Ricks College, now BYU–Idaho. He became deputy commissioner of the Church Educational System six years later and CES commissioner three years after that, serving until his call in April 1985 as First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric. In September 1992 he was renamed CES commissioner, simultaneously serving in that position and as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, to which he was called a month later. He was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on April 1, 1995, and as Second Counselor in the First Presidency on October 6, 2007. ■

# PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF

*Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

“Joyfully overwhelmed” is how President Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf described his feelings upon being called as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

“I am very humbled by the call to serve as one of the counselors of President Monson,” he said. “I know this call must have come from God, because human beings might have had a difficult time to do the same.”

President Uchtdorf comes to his new calling after having served as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles since October 2, 2004. But his association with President Monson began years before, first as a stake president in Germany and later as a member of the Quorums of the Seventy.

Speaking of President Monson, President Uchtdorf said: “I know of his heart, his soul, his commitment, his wonderful love for the people, his capacity. I have seen him focusing on the one *and* bridging nations. . . . He is a wonderful leader.”

President Uchtdorf—born in Mährisch-Ostrau, Czechoslovakia, on November 6, 1940, and raised in Germany—is the first person born outside of North America to be sustained to the First Presidency since



President Charles W. Nibley of Scotland was sustained in 1925. But he points out that “we are not representing a nation or a country or an ethnic group.”

He explained, “Especially in the callings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, . . . we are representing the Church of Jesus Christ. We are representatives of Him.”

President Uchtdorf praised President Monson as an example of bridging countries, cultures, and languages by reaching

out to others around the world regardless of nationality or ethnic group. “There are no more foreigners; we are all citizens in the kingdom of God,” he said (see Ephesians 2:19).

“Church membership is going all across the world,” President Uchtdorf said. “Recently I was asked whether it is a global church. No, it’s a universal church. It is a message of universal power. It is the message that will connect and combine and unite and bless all the countries, all the nations, all the ethnic groups.”

President Uchtdorf was sustained to the Second Quorum of the Seventy on April 2, 1994; sustained to the First Quorum of the Seventy on April 6, 1996; and called to the Presidency of the Seventy on August 15, 2002. ■

## WHEN THE PROPHET DIES

**T**he Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is led by 15 men in two bodies: the First Presidency, consisting of the President of the Church and his two counselors, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who are called by and serve under the direction of the First Presidency. The members of the Church sustain each of these men as prophets, seers, and revelators.

When a prophet dies, a new prophet and President of the Church is chosen in an orderly manner by a process put in place through revelation and used throughout the history of the Church.

- Upon the death of the President, the First Presidency is dissolved, and the counselors revert to their places of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, determined by the date they were ordained to the Quorum.
- The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles becomes the leading body of the Church with the senior Apostle, or President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, at its head.
- The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles meets to decide whether the First Presidency should be reorganized or whether the Quorum should preside over the Church.
- If a motion to reorganize the First Presidency is passed, the members of the Quorum unanimously select the new President of the Church. The senior Apostle has always become the new President. The President then chooses two counselors to form the new First Presidency.
- Following the reorganization of the First Presidency, the Apostle who has served the second longest is sustained as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. If he has been called as a counselor in the First Presidency, the Apostle next to him in seniority serves as the Acting President of the Quorum.
- The new President of the Quorum of the Twelve and the other Apostles set apart the new President of the Church. ■

## PRESIDENT BOYD K. PACKER

*President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*



PHOTOGRAPH BY JED CLARK

**O**n February 3, 2008, President Boyd Kenneth Packer was set apart as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Though the title is new to President Packer, the responsibilities are not.

President Packer has served as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles twice for a little more than a combined 13 years and 7 months. Only three men in the history of the modern Church have served as President of the Quorum for longer than President Packer served as Acting President—Orson Hyde (1805–78) from 1847 to 1875, Rudger Clawson (1857–1943) from 1921 to 1943, and Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) from 1951 to 1970.

President Packer is the only man to have served as Acting President twice. He was first set apart on June 5, 1994, when President Gordon B. Hinckley was the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles but served as First Counselor in the First Presidency to President Howard W. Hunter. The next senior Apostle, President Thomas S. Monson, was also serving in the First Presidency as Second Counselor.

President Packer's first tenure ended upon the death of President Hunter. He was set apart as Acting President the second time on March 12, 1995, when President Hinckley became President of the Church and President Monson, the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and President of the Quorum, accepted the call to serve as First Counselor to President Hinckley.

President Packer was sustained as an Assistant to the Twelve on September 30, 1961. He was sustained to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on April 6, 1970, and ordained three days later. ■