

# GENERAL HANDBOOK

---

## Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

JULY 2020



JULY 2020

# General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Published by  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
Salt Lake City, Utah



# Contents

0. Introductory Overview . . . . .	xiv
0.0. Introduction . . . . .	xiv
0.1. This Handbook . . . . .	xiv
0.2. Adaptation and Optional Resources . . . . .	xiv
0.3. Updates . . . . .	xv
0.4. Questions about Instructions . . . . .	xv
0.5. Terminology . . . . .	xv
0.6. Contacting Church Headquarters or the Area Office . . . . .	xv
<b>Doctrinal Foundation</b>	
1. God's Plan and Your Role in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation . . . . .	1
1.0. Introduction . . . . .	1
1.1. God's Plan of Happiness . . . . .	2
1.2. The Work of Salvation and Exaltation . . . . .	2
1.3. The Purpose of the Church . . . . .	4
1.4. Your Role in God's Work . . . . .	5
2. Supporting Individuals and Families in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation . . . . .	6
2.0. Introduction . . . . .	6
2.1. The Role of the Family in God's Plan . . . . .	6
2.2. The Work of Salvation and Exaltation in the Home . . . . .	9
2.3. The Relationship between the Home and the Church . . . . .	11
3. Priesthood Principles . . . . .	13
3.0. Introduction . . . . .	13
3.1. Restoration of the Priesthood . . . . .	13
3.2. Blessings of the Priesthood . . . . .	14
3.3. Melchizedek Priesthood and Aaronic Priesthood . . . . .	15
3.4. Priesthood Authority . . . . .	15
3.5. Priesthood Power . . . . .	18
3.6. The Priesthood and the Home . . . . .	20
4. Leadership in the Church of Jesus Christ . . . . .	21
4.0. Introduction . . . . .	21
4.1. The Purpose of Leadership in the Church . . . . .	21
4.2. Principles of Leadership in the Church . . . . .	22
4.3. Evaluation of Progress . . . . .	26

**Church Organization**

5. Stake Leadership ..... 27

    5.0. Introduction ..... 27

    5.1. Stake Presidency ..... 27

    5.2. Stake Clerk, Assistant Stake Clerks, and Stake Executive Secretary ..... 31

    5.3. High Council ..... 31

    5.4. Stake Organizations ..... 32

    5.5. Stake Specialists ..... 34

    5.6. Adapting to Local Needs ..... 34

6. Ward Leadership ..... 35

    6.0. Introduction ..... 35

    6.1. Presiding High Priest ..... 35

    6.2. President of the Aaronic Priesthood ..... 37

    6.3. Common Judge ..... 37

    6.4. Welfare ..... 37

    6.5. Records, Finances, and the Meetinghouse ..... 38

7. Councils in the Church ..... 39

    7.1. Councils in the Church ..... 39

    7.2. Bishopric ..... 39

    7.3. Priesthood Executive Committee ..... 39

    7.4. Ward Council ..... 39

    7.5. The Work of the Ward Council ..... 40

    7.6. Ward Council Meetings ..... 40

    7.7. Preventing and Responding to Abuse ..... 43

8. Elders Quorum ..... 44

    8.1. Purpose and Organization ..... 44

    8.2. Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation ..... 44

    8.3. Elders Quorum Leaders ..... 48

    8.4. Helping Prospective Elders Prepare to Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood ..... 50

    8.5. Additional Guidelines and Policies ..... 51

9. Relief Society ..... 52

    9.1. Purpose and Organization ..... 52

    9.2. Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation ..... 52

    9.3. Relief Society Leaders ..... 55

    9.4. Helping Young Women Prepare to Participate in Relief Society ..... 58

    9.5. Stake Relief Society Leaders ..... 58

    9.6. Additional Guidelines and Policies ..... 58

10. Aaronic Priesthood Quorums . . . . .	59
10.1. Purpose and Organization . . . . .	59
10.2. Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation . . . . .	61
10.3. Bishopric . . . . .	65
10.4. Youth Quorum Leaders . . . . .	66
10.5. Advisers and Specialists . . . . .	68
10.6. Helping Young Men Prepare to Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood . . . . .	68
10.7. Stake Young Men Leaders . . . . .	69
10.8. Additional Guidelines and Policies . . . . .	69
11. Young Women . . . . .	71
11.1. Purpose and Organization . . . . .	71
11.2. Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation . . . . .	73
11.3. Ward Young Women Leadership . . . . .	77
11.4. Helping Young Women Prepare to Join Relief Society . . . . .	81
11.5. Stake Young Women Leaders . . . . .	81
11.6. Additional Guidelines and Policies . . . . .	82
12. Primary . . . . .	83
12.1. Purpose and Organization . . . . .	83
12.2. Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation . . . . .	85
12.3. Ward Primary Leadership . . . . .	89
12.4. Stake Primary Leaders . . . . .	92
12.5. Additional Guidelines and Policies . . . . .	92
13. Sunday School . . . . .	94
13.1. Purpose . . . . .	94
13.2. Ward Sunday School Leadership . . . . .	94
13.3. Sunday School Classes . . . . .	95
13.4. Improving Learning and Teaching in the Ward . . . . .	96
13.5. Improving Learning and Teaching in the Home . . . . .	96
13.6. Stake Sunday School Leaders . . . . .	96
13.7. Additional Guidelines . . . . .	96
14. Single Members . . . . .	98
14.0. Introduction . . . . .	98
14.1. Caring for Single Adult Members (Ages 31 and Older) . . . . .	98
14.2. Caring for Young Single Adult Members (Ages 18–30) . . . . .	99
14.3. Young Single Adults in Conventional Stakes and Wards . . . . .	99
14.4. Young Single Adult Wards . . . . .	103
14.5. Young Single Adult Stakes . . . . .	103

14.6. Guidelines and Policies for Young Single Adult Wards and Stakes . . . . . 103

14.7. Use of Senior Couple Missionaries with Young Single Adults . . . . . 105

15. Seminaries and Institutes of Religion . . . . . 106

    15.0. Introduction . . . . . 106

    15.1. Seminary . . . . . 106

    15.2. Institute . . . . . 108

    15.3. Church Schools . . . . . 109

**The Work of Salvation and Exaltation**

Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

16. Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . . . 110

17. Teaching the Gospel . . . . . 111

    17.1. Principles of Christlike Teaching . . . . . 111

    17.2. Home-Centered Gospel Learning and Teaching . . . . . 111

    17.3. Leaders’ Responsibilities . . . . . 112

    17.4. Teacher Council Meetings . . . . . 112

18. Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings . . . . . 113

    18.0. Introduction . . . . . 113

    18.1. Ordinances of Salvation and Exaltation . . . . . 113

    18.2. Other Ordinances and Blessings . . . . . 114

    18.3. Participation in an Ordinance or Blessing . . . . . 115

    18.4. Ordinances for Minor Children . . . . . 116

    18.5. Ordinances Performed for and by Persons Who Have Disabilities . . . . . 116

    18.6. Naming and Blessing Children . . . . . 116

    18.7. Baptism . . . . . 118

    18.8. Confirmation and Gift of the Holy Ghost . . . . . 120

    18.9. The Sacrament . . . . . 122

    18.10. Conferring the Priesthood and Ordaining to an Office . . . . . 125

    18.11. Setting Apart Members to Serve in Callings . . . . . 127

    18.12. Consecrating Oil . . . . . 127

    18.13. Administering to the Sick . . . . . 128

    18.14. Blessings of Comfort and Counsel, including Father’s Blessings . . . . . 129

    18.15. Dedicating Homes . . . . . 130

    18.16. Dedicating Graves . . . . . 131

    18.17. Patriarchal Blessings . . . . . 131

    18.18. Temple Endowment and Sealing . . . . . 132

19. Music . . . . . 133

    19.1. Purpose of Music in the Church . . . . . 133

19.2. Ward Music Leadership . . . . .	133
19.3. Adapting Ward Music to Local Conditions and Resources . . . . .	134
19.4. Music in the Ward . . . . .	134
19.5. Stake Music Leadership . . . . .	136
19.6. Music in the Stake . . . . .	137
19.7. Music Training . . . . .	138
19.8. Music in the Home. . . . .	138
19.9. Additional Music Policies and Guidelines . . . . .	139
19.10. Online Music Resources . . . . .	140
20. Activities . . . . .	141
20.1. Purposes of Church Activities . . . . .	141
20.2. Planning Activities . . . . .	141
20.3. Stake, Multistake, and Area Activities . . . . .	144
20.4. Youth Conference . . . . .	146
20.5. Optional Activities . . . . .	147
20.6. Policies and Guidelines. . . . .	147
Caring for Those in Need	
21. Ministering . . . . .	155
21.0. Introduction . . . . .	155
21.1. Responsibilities of Ministering Brothers and Sisters . . . . .	155
21.2. Coordinating Ministering . . . . .	156
21.3. Organizing Ministering to Meet Local Needs . . . . .	157
21.4. Ministering Interviews . . . . .	157
22. Providing for Temporal Needs and Building Self-Reliance. . . . .	159
22.1. Purposes of Church Welfare . . . . .	159
22.2. Welfare Leadership in the Ward . . . . .	161
22.3. Welfare Leadership in the Stake . . . . .	163
22.4. Confidentiality . . . . .	164
22.5. Welfare Duties of the Stake Presidency. . . . .	164
22.6. Welfare Duties of the Bishopric. . . . .	167
22.7. Stake Bishops' Welfare Council . . . . .	174
Inviting All to Receive the Gospel	
23. Participating in Missionary Work, Retention, and Activation . . . . .	175
23.1. Member Missionary Work . . . . .	175
23.2. Convert Retention . . . . .	178
23.3. Activation . . . . .	181
24. Preparing and Recommending Missionaries . . . . .	184



24.0. Introduction . . . . .	184
24.1. The Call to Serve. . . . .	184
24.2. Preparing Missionaries . . . . .	184
24.3. Age and Term of Service for Missionaries . . . . .	185
24.4. Members Who Are Not Eligible for Missions. . . . .	186
24.5. Ensuring Worthiness and Ability to Serve . . . . .	186
24.6. Financing Missionary Service. . . . .	189
24.7. Submitting Recommendation Forms for Missionaries . . . . .	192
24.8. After Missionaries Are Called. . . . .	192
24.9. Missionaries in the Mission Field. . . . .	194
24.10. Release of Missionaries . . . . .	196
24.11. Missionary Assignments for Senior Couples and Sisters . . . . .	199
24.12. Church-Service Missionaries . . . . .	200
24.13. Volunteer Service. . . . .	203
Uniting Families for Eternity	
25. Temple and Family History Work in the Ward and Stake . . . . .	204
25.1. Introduction . . . . .	204
25.2. Bishop and His Counselors . . . . .	204
25.3. Ward Council. . . . .	205
25.4. Organizing Temple and Family History Work in the Ward. . . . .	205
25.5. Temple and Family History Classes and Resources. . . . .	207
25.6. Stake Leaders . . . . .	207
25.7. Temple and Family History Resources in the Stake . . . . .	208
25.8. Recommending Temple Workers . . . . .	208
26. Temple Recommends . . . . .	211
26.0. Introduction . . . . .	211
26.1. Recommends to Enter a Temple. . . . .	211
26.2. General Guidelines for Issuing Temple Recommends. . . . .	212
26.3. Issuing Temple Recommends . . . . .	213
26.4. Issuing Limited-Use Temple Recommends . . . . .	215
27. Temple Ordinances for the Living . . . . .	218
27.0. Introduction . . . . .	218
27.1. Preparing to Receive Temple Ordinances . . . . .	218
27.2. Making Plans to Go to a Temple . . . . .	218
27.3. Temple Clothing and Garments. . . . .	219
27.4. Verifying Ordinances to Receive the Endowment . . . . .	221
27.5. Temple Marriage . . . . .	221

28. Temple Ordinances for Ancestors . . . . .	224
28.0. Introduction . . . . .	224
28.1. General Guidelines . . . . .	224
28.2. Baptisms and Confirmations for the Dead . . . . .	224
28.3. Specific Circumstances . . . . .	224
28.4. Verifying Ordinances to Receive the Endowment . . . . .	226
28.5. Restoration of Temple Blessings . . . . .	226

### **Church Administration**

29. Meetings in the Church . . . . .	227
29.0. Introduction . . . . .	227
29.1. Guidelines for Planning and Conducting Meetings . . . . .	227
29.2. Ward Meetings . . . . .	227
29.3. Stake Meetings . . . . .	233
29.4. Visual Aids and Audiovisual Materials in Church Meetings . . . . .	238
29.5. Prayers in Church Meetings . . . . .	239
29.6. Funerals and Other Services at a Time of Death . . . . .	239
29.7. Chart of Ward Meetings . . . . .	i
29.8. Chart of Stake Meetings . . . . .	i
29.9. Sunday Meeting Schedule . . . . .	247
29.10. Overlapping Meeting Schedule for Units with Different Languages . . . . .	248
29.11. Coordinating Council Meetings . . . . .	249
30. Callings in the Church . . . . .	250
30.0. Introduction . . . . .	250
30.1. Determining Whom to Call . . . . .	250
30.2. Extending a Calling . . . . .	251
30.3. Sustaining Members in Church Callings . . . . .	252
30.4. Setting Apart Officers and Teachers . . . . .	252
30.5. Releasing Members from Church Callings . . . . .	252
30.6. Calling, Ordaining, and Setting Apart Bishops . . . . .	253
30.7. Chart of Callings . . . . .	254
31. Interviews and Counseling . . . . .	264
31.1. Interviews . . . . .	264
31.2. Counseling . . . . .	268
31.3. Keeping Confidences . . . . .	270
31.4. Protecting against Misunderstandings . . . . .	270
31.5. Responding to Abuse . . . . .	271

32. Repentance and Church Membership Councils . . . . .	272
32.0. Introduction . . . . .	272
32.1. Repentance and Forgiveness. . . . .	273
32.2. Purposes of Church Membership Restrictions or Withdrawal. . . . .	273
32.3. The Role of Judges in Israel . . . . .	274
32.4. Confession, Confidentiality, and Reporting to Government Authorities . . . . .	276
32.5. Settings for Helping a Person Repent . . . . .	278
32.6. Severity of the Sin and Church Policy. . . . .	280
32.7. Circumstances of the Person. . . . .	286
32.8. Personal Counseling and Informal Membership Restrictions . . . . .	288
32.9. Participation and Responsibility . . . . .	291
32.10. Procedures for Membership Councils. . . . .	294
32.11. Decisions from Membership Councils. . . . .	297
32.12. Notifications and Announcements . . . . .	300
32.13. Appeal of a Decision . . . . .	302
32.14. Reports and Membership Records. . . . .	302
32.15. Continue to Minister . . . . .	305
32.16. Removing Formal Restrictions or Being Readmitted to the Church. . . . .	305
32.17. Church Activity, Ordination, and Restoration of Blessings after Readmission . . . . .	308
33. Records and Reports . . . . .	310
33.1. Overview of Church Records . . . . .	310
33.2. General Instructions for Clerks . . . . .	310
33.3. Stake Records and Reports . . . . .	310
33.4. Ward Records and Reports . . . . .	314
33.5. Reports on Member Participation. . . . .	316
33.6. Membership Records . . . . .	317
33.7. Historical Records . . . . .	322
33.8. Confidentiality of Records. . . . .	322
33.9. Records Management. . . . .	323
34. Finances and Audits . . . . .	324
34.1. Use of Church Funds. . . . .	324
34.2. Stake Financial Leadership. . . . .	324
34.3. Ward Financial Leadership. . . . .	325
34.4. Contributions . . . . .	326
34.5. Confidentiality of Tithing and Other Offerings . . . . .	329
34.6. Handling and Accounting for Funds . . . . .	329
34.7. Budget and Expenditures. . . . .	332

34.8. Fundraising . . . . . 334

34.9. Audits . . . . . 335

34.10. Taxes . . . . . 336

35. Physical Facilities . . . . . 337

    35.1. Purpose . . . . . 337

    35.2. Organization . . . . . 337

    35.3. Administration of Physical Facilities . . . . . 338

    35.4. Policies on Using Church Buildings and Other Property . . . . . 340

36. Creating, Changing, and Naming New Units . . . . . 345

    36.0. Introduction . . . . . 345

    36.1. Creating or Changing Stakes and Districts . . . . . 346

    36.2. Creating or Changing Wards and Branches in Stakes . . . . . 346

    36.3. Creating or Changing Branches in Missions . . . . . 347

    36.4. Naming Church Units . . . . . 348

    36.5. Implementing Proposed Changes . . . . . 350

    36.6. Basic Unit Program . . . . . 350

37. Specialized Stakes, Wards, and Branches . . . . . 352

    37.0. Introduction . . . . . 352

    37.1. Language Wards and Branches . . . . . 352

    37.2. Young Single Adult Wards and Branches in a Conventional Stake . . . . . 353

    37.3. Young Single Adult Stakes and Their Wards and Branches . . . . . 355

    37.4. Married Student Stakes and Wards . . . . . 357

    37.5. Single Adult Wards . . . . . 358

    37.6. Wards and Branches for Members in Special Circumstances . . . . . 359

    37.7. Groups in Stakes, Missions, and Areas . . . . . 359

    37.8. Church Units at Military Installations . . . . . 360

38. Church Policies and Guidelines . . . . . 361

    38.1 Church Participation . . . . . 361

    38.2 Ordinances and Blessings Policies . . . . . 362

    38.3 Civil Marriage . . . . . 377

    38.4 Issuing Temple Recommends in Specific Circumstances . . . . . 379

    38.5 Sealing Policies . . . . . 380

    38.6 Policies on Moral Issues . . . . . 384

    38.7 Medical and Health Policies . . . . . 395

    38.8 Administrative Policies . . . . . 397

    38.9 Stake Patriarch . . . . . 416

    38.10 Military Relations and Chaplain Services . . . . . 418

# Summary of Recent Updates

July 2020

## Chapter 5: Stake Leadership

- 5.1.1.4. Stake Patriarch
- 5.1.1.8. Communication (Public Affairs)
- 5.4.1. Stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School Presidencies
- 5.4.2. Stake Young Men Presidency

## Chapter 8: Elders Quorum

- Chapter 8 has been revised. It is now organized around the work of salvation and exaltation. The content has also been simplified, reduced, and oriented around the needs of smaller units.

## Chapter 9: Relief Society

- Chapter 9 has been revised. It is now organized around the work of salvation and exaltation. The content has also been simplified, reduced, and oriented around the needs of smaller units.

## Chapter 12: Primary

- 12.1.1. Purposes
- 12.1.4. Singing Time
- 12.1.5. Nursery
- 12.2.1.3. Service and Activities

## Chapter 13: Sunday School

- Chapter 13 has been revised. It is now organized around the work of salvation and exaltation. The content has also been simplified, reduced, and oriented around the needs of smaller units.

## Chapter 15: Seminaries and Institutes

- 15.1.2. Class Options

## Chapter 17: Teaching the Gospel

- Chapter 17 has been revised. It is now organized around the work of salvation and exaltation. The content has also been simplified, reduced, and oriented around the needs of smaller units.

## Chapter 18: Ordinances and Blessings

- 18.3. Participation in an Ordinance or Blessing

## Chapter 24: Preparing and Recommending Missionaries

- 24.5.1. Interviews
- 24.10.3.1. Interviews

## Chapter 26: Temple Recommends

- 26.2.2. Branches in Districts

## Chapter 29: Meetings in the Church

- 29.11. Coordinating Council Meetings

## Chapter 30: Callings in the Church

- 30.7.1. Stake Callings

## Chapter 32: Repentance and Church Membership Councils

- 32.9.7. Participation in Unusual Circumstances

## Chapter 35: Physical Facilities

- 35.4.3. Dedicating Buildings

## Chapter 38: Church Policies and Guidelines

- 38.1.5. Unwed Parents under Age 18
- 38.6. Policies on Moral Issues
- 38.6.4. Birth Control
- 38.6.7. Donation of Sperm or Eggs

- 38.6.9. Fertility Treatments
- 38.6.12. The Occult
- 38.6.16. Sex Education
- 38.6.19. Suicide
- 38.6.21. Surrogate Motherhood
- 38.7.8. Medical Marijuana

## March 2020

### Chapter 0: Introductory Overview

#### 0.4. Questions about Instructions

### Chapter 5: Stake Leadership

#### 5.1.1.8. Communication (Public Affairs)

#### 5.4.1. Stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School Presidencies

#### 5.4.2. Stake Young Men Presidency

#### 5.4.3. Stake Sunday School Presidency

#### 5.4.4. Stake Organization Secretaries

### Chapter 10: Aaronic Priesthood Quorums

Chapter 10 has been revised. It is now organized around the work of salvation and exaltation. The content has also been simplified, reduced, and oriented around the needs of smaller units.

### Chapter 11: Young Women

Chapter 11 has been revised. It is now organized around the work of salvation and exaltation. The content has also been simplified, reduced, and oriented around the needs of smaller units.

### Chapter 12: Primary

Chapter 12 has been revised. It is now organized around the work of salvation and exaltation. The content has also been simplified, reduced, and oriented around the needs of smaller units.

### Chapter 18: Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings

#### 18.9.1. Approval to Administer the Sacrament

### Chapter 33: Records and Reports

#### 33.3.3. Assistant Stake Clerks

#### 33.4.3. Assistant Ward Clerks

#### 33.6. Membership Records

### Chapter 38: Church Policies and Guidelines

#### 38.6.2.1. Abuse Help Line

#### 38.6.2.2. Counseling in Cases of Abuse

#### 38.8.4. Adoption and Foster Care

## 0.

# Introductory Overview

## 0.0

### Introduction

The Lord taught, “Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:99). As a leader in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you should seek personal revelation to help you learn and fulfill the duties of your calling.

Studying the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets will help you understand and fulfill your duties. As you study the words of God, you will be more receptive to the influence of the Spirit (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:85).

You also learn your duties by studying the instructions in this handbook. These instructions can invite revelation if they are used to provide an understanding of principles, policies, and procedures to apply while seeking the guidance of the Spirit.

## 0.1

### This Handbook

*General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* provides guidance for general and local Church leaders. It is divided into four sections:

- *Doctrinal Foundation:* These chapters present doctrine and principles fundamental to serving in the Church. They explain:
  - God’s plan of happiness, the work of salvation and exaltation, and the purpose of the Church.
  - The role of the family in God’s plan, the work of salvation and exaltation in the home, and the relationship between the home and the Church.

- Priesthood principles.
- Principles for leading in the Savior’s Church.

- *Church Organization:* These chapters provide instructions for stake presidencies and bishops, priesthood quorum leaders, stake and ward organization leaders, and others who serve in the Church.
- *The Work of Salvation and Exaltation:* These chapters instruct on the core work of the Church:
  - Living the gospel of Jesus Christ
  - Caring for those in need
  - Inviting all to receive the gospel
  - Uniting families for eternity
- *Church Administration:* These chapters present additional guidelines for administering the Church. Subjects include meetings, callings, records, finances, and policies.

The headings and subheadings in this handbook are numbered to make topics easy to find and reference. For example, instructions about temple marriage are provided in 27.2.1. The number 27 refers to the chapter, the number 2 refers to a section in that chapter, and the number 1 refers to a subsection.

## 0.2

### Adaptation and Optional Resources

Not all stakes and wards have the same needs. This handbook contains guidelines for adaptation as well as optional resources:

- *Guidelines for adaptation* (📌) provide direction on how to adapt Church organizations and programs to units with differing needs and resources.
- *Optional resources* (📖) contain additional information and direction that may be helpful to stake and ward leaders.

Leaders seek inspiration about which guidelines and optional resources to use to meet members' needs.

### 0.3

## Updates

This handbook will be updated periodically. A list of recent changes is available in the “Summary of Recent Updates.”

### 0.4

## Questions about Instructions

When questions arise that are not addressed in the scriptures, the words of the living prophets, or this handbook, Church members should rely on their covenants with God, the counsel of their local leaders, and the inspiration of the Spirit for guidance.

If leaders have questions about information in this handbook or about issues it does not address, they counsel with their immediate presiding authority.

### 0.5

## Terminology

Except where indicated otherwise:

- The terms *bishop* and *bishopric* in this handbook refer also to branch presidents and branch presidencies. The terms *stake president* and *stake presidency* refer also to district presidents and district presidencies.

- References to wards and stakes also apply to branches, districts, and missions.
- References to Sunday apply to whichever day the Sabbath is observed locally.

References to parents generally also apply to legal guardians.

The callings of bishop and branch president are not equivalent in authority and responsibility, nor are the callings of stake president and district president. The bishop is an office in the priesthood, and ordination is authorized only by the First Presidency. Stake presidents are called by General Authorities and Area Seventies.

### 0.6

## Contacting Church Headquarters or the Area Office

Some chapters in this handbook include instructions to contact Church headquarters or the area office. The instruction to contact Church headquarters applies to those in the United States and Canada. The instruction to contact the area office applies to those outside the United States and Canada.







## 1.

# God's Plan and Your Role in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation

### 1.0

## Introduction

You have been called to serve in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thank you for your service. You will bless lives and experience joy as you serve faithfully.

This handbook will help you learn principles of Christlike service and understand your responsibilities. You will be most effective when you align your service in the Church with the work of God the

Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This chapter will help you gain a vision of:

- God's plan of happiness.
- The work of salvation and exaltation.
- The purpose of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**1.1**

## God's Plan of Happiness

Heavenly Father provided the plan of happiness to enable us to enjoy all His blessings. His work and glory is to “bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Immortality is to live forever with a resurrected physical body. Eternal life, or exaltation, is to become like God and live in His presence eternally as families.

### God's Work and Glory

“For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

We cannot obtain immortality and eternal life without God's help. In this life, we are subject to sin and death, which separate us from Heavenly Father and prevent us from becoming more like Him.

Jesus Christ is central to God's plan. Because of Heavenly Father's infinite love for us, He sent His Son to redeem us from sin and death through His atoning sacrifice (see John 3:16). Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ ensures that each of us born on earth will be resurrected and gain immortality. His Atonement also makes it possible for us to be cleansed from sin and have our hearts changed so we can receive eternal life and a fulness of joy.

To receive eternal life, we must “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32). This invitation extends to all who have lived or will ever live on the earth. Heavenly Father wants all of His children to choose to return to Him.

**1.2**

## The Work of Salvation and Exaltation

As we come unto Christ and help others do the same, we participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation. This work is guided by the two great commandments to love God and to love our neighbors (see Matthew 22:37–39). We show our love for God as we keep His commandments and serve His children (see John 14:15).

The work of salvation and exaltation focuses on four divinely appointed responsibilities. These are outlined below.

### The Work of Salvation and Exaltation

We come unto Christ and assist in God's work by:

- Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Caring for those in need.
- Inviting all to receive the gospel.
- Uniting families for eternity.

This handbook will help you understand these four aspects of God's work. The Holy Ghost will guide you as you do your part in fulfilling them (see 2 Nephi 32:5).

**1.2.1**

#### Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Living the gospel of Jesus Christ includes:

- Exercising faith in Christ, repenting daily, making covenants with God as we receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation, and enduring to the end by keeping those covenants (see 3.5.1).
- Learning and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ at home and at church.



- Becoming self-reliant in providing for ourselves and our families, both spiritually and temporally.

- Helping new and returning Church members progress along the covenant path.

### 1.2.2 Caring for Those in Need

Caring for those in need includes:

- Serving and ministering to individuals, families, and communities.
- Sharing resources, including Church assistance, with those in need.
- Helping others become self-reliant.

### 1.2.3 Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

Inviting all to receive the gospel includes:

- Participating in missionary work and serving as missionaries.

### 1.2.4 Uniting Families for Eternity

Uniting families for eternity includes:

- Making covenants as we receive our own temple ordinances.
- Discovering our deceased ancestors and performing ordinances for them in the temple so they can make covenants with God.
- Going to the temple regularly, where possible, to worship God and perform ordinances for His children.

### 1.3

## The Purpose of the Church

Jesus Christ established His Church to enable individuals and families to do the work of salvation and exaltation (see Ephesians 4:11–13; see also section 2.2). To help accomplish this divine purpose, the Church and its leaders provide:

- Priesthood authority and keys.
- Covenants and ordinances.
- Prophetic direction.
- Scriptures.
- Gospel learning and teaching support.
- Service and leadership opportunities.
- A community of Saints.

### 1.3.1

## Priesthood Authority and Keys

Through the priesthood, God accomplishes the work of salvation and exaltation. The priesthood authority and keys needed to direct God’s work on earth were restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16; 112:30; see also 3.1). These keys are held by Church leaders today. They call and authorize others to assist in God’s work (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:8, 65–67).

### 1.3.2

## Covenants and Ordinances

In Heavenly Father’s plan, we make covenants as we receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation, such as baptism (see John 3:5; see also chapter 18). These covenants and ordinances are essential for us to become more like God and return to dwell in His presence (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22).



**1.3.3****Prophetic Direction**

Through His chosen prophets, God reveals truth and provides inspired guidance and warnings (see Amos 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 1:4). This guidance helps us enter and remain on the path leading to eternal life.

**1.3.4****Scriptures**

Under the direction of the Lord's prophets and apostles, the Church provides and preserves the word of God as found in the holy scriptures. The scriptures testify of Christ, teach His gospel, and help us exercise faith in Him (see Jacob 7:10–11; Helaman 15:7).

**1.3.5****Gospel Learning and Teaching Support**

The Church supports individuals and families in their responsibility to learn the truths of the gospel and teach these truths to family members and others (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:77–78, 118; see also 2.2.3).

**1.3.6****Service and Leadership Opportunities**

Through callings and assignments in the Church, God gives members opportunities to serve and lead. The Church provides structure to help care for members in need and to give humanitarian relief to others (see Mosiah 18:27–29).

**1.3.7****A Community of Saints**

As a community of Saints, Church members gather regularly to worship God and to remember the Savior by partaking of the sacrament (see Moroni 6:4–6; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77). Members also care for and minister to one another (see Ephesians 2:19).

**1.4****Your Role in God's Work**

As a leader in the Church, you are called to teach and support those you serve as they engage in the work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2). You are accountable to fulfill your calling and “teach . . . the word of God with all diligence” (Jacob 1:19). Laboring with the Lord in His vineyard will bring you great joy (see Jacob 5:70–72).

Having a clear understanding of God's work, of what He invites you to do, and of the purpose of His Church will help you focus your efforts in bringing souls to Christ. Keeping this vision in mind will align you with the Savior and guide all that you do as a leader in the Church.

Refer often to the principles in this chapter. Prayerfully seek to know how you can help bring about God's purposes in the lives of those you serve. God will direct you through the promptings of the Holy Ghost.



2.

## Supporting Individuals and Families in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation

2.0

### Introduction

As a leader in the Church of Jesus Christ, you support individuals and families in accomplishing God’s work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2). The ultimate purpose of this work is to help all of God’s children receive the blessings of eternal life and a fulness of joy.

Much of the work of salvation and exaltation is accomplished through the family. For all Church members, this work is centered in the home. This chapter will help you gain a vision of:

- The role of the family in God’s plan.
- The work of salvation and exaltation in the home.
- The relationship between the home and the Church.

2.1

### The Role of the Family in God’s Plan

The family is ordained of God and is central to His plan. Each of us “is a beloved spirit son or daughter

of heavenly parents [with] a divine nature and destiny (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org). We are part of their family. We lived with them before we were born on earth.

As part of His plan, Heavenly Father has established families on earth. He intends for families to bring us happiness. Families provide opportunities to learn, grow, serve, repent, and forgive. They can help us prepare for eternal life.

In this life, many people have limited opportunities for loving family relationships. No family is free from challenges, pain, and sorrow. Individuals and families exercise faith in the Lord and strive to live according to the truths He has revealed concerning the family. The Savior has promised that He will help bear the burdens of all who come unto Him (see Matthew 11:28–30).

Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness ensures that all His children will have the opportunity to accept His gospel and receive His greatest blessings (see Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–10). All who make and keep covenants with God can experience joy and “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:23; see also Mosiah 2:41). God’s promise of eternal life includes eternal marriage, children, and all other blessings of an eternal family.

### 2.1.1 Eternal Families

Eternal families are formed when Church members make covenants as they receive the sealing ordinances in the temple. The blessings of an eternal family are realized as members keep those covenants and repent when they fall short. Church leaders help members prepare to receive these ordinances and honor their covenants.

Each person may fulfill a number of roles in an eternal family. All family roles are sacred and important.

These roles may include mother and father, daughter and son, sister and brother, aunt and uncle, and grandmother and grandfather. Fulfilling these roles in love helps God’s children progress toward eternal life.

An additional aspect of establishing eternal families is performing ordinances in the temple that allow members to be sealed to their deceased ancestors.

With an understanding of God’s plan, members seek the blessings of an eternal family. This includes preparing to become a worthy, loving spouse and parent.

### 2.1.2 Husband and Wife

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God (see Doctrine and Covenants 49:15). A husband and wife are intended to progress together toward eternal life (see 1 Corinthians 11:11).

One of the requirements for obtaining eternal life is for a man and a woman to enter the covenant of celestial marriage (see Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4). A couple makes this covenant when they receive the marriage sealing ordinance in the temple. This covenant is the foundation of an eternal family. When faithfully kept, it allows their marriage to endure forever. Ultimately, they can become like God (see Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20).

God has commanded husbands and wives to cleave to each other (see Genesis 2:24; Doctrine and Covenants 42:22). In this context, the word *cleave* means to be completely devoted and faithful to someone. Married couples cleave together by loving and serving each other.

Cleaving also includes total fidelity between husband and wife. Physical intimacy between husband and wife is intended to be beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife.



Tenderness and respect—not selfishness—should guide their intimate relationship.

God has commanded that sexual intimacy is to be reserved for marriage between a man and a woman. Remaining sexually pure before marriage and faithful within marriage helps individuals be truly happy and avoid spiritual, emotional, and physical harm. Parents and Church leaders are encouraged to do all they can to reinforce this teaching (see 38.6.5).

A couple seeks to be unified in establishing their family (see Genesis 2:24). Being united in marriage requires a full partnership, sharing responsibilities. A husband and wife are equal in God’s eyes. One should not dominate the other. Their decisions should be made in unity and love, with full participation of both.

Adam and Eve set an example for husbands and wives. They worked, prayed, and worshipped together (see Moses 5:1, 4). They taught their children the gospel and mourned together over their trials (see Moses 5:12, 27). They were united with each other and with God.

### 2.1.3

#### Parents and Children

Before God’s children can receive “immortality and eternal life,” they must receive a mortal body (Moses 1:39). God’s first commandment to Adam and Eve as husband and wife was to have children (see Genesis 1:28). Latter-day prophets have taught that “God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”; see also Doctrine and Covenants 49:16–17).

It is a sacred privilege and responsibility for a husband and wife to care for the children they are able to bear or adopt. Adoptive parents have the same blessings and responsibilities as biological parents.

A loving husband and wife together provide the best setting for rearing and nurturing children.

Individual circumstances may prevent parents from rearing their children together. However, the Lord will bless them as they seek His help and strive to keep their covenants with Him.

Parents have the vital responsibility to help their children prepare to receive the blessings of eternal life. They teach their children to love and serve God and others (see Matthew 22:36–40). They teach them to pray to Heavenly Father and study the word of God (see Alma 37:36–37, 44–46). They help their children understand the doctrine of faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:25). They also help them prepare to make covenants as they receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.

“Fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). When there is not a husband or father in the home, the mother presides over the family.

Presiding in the family is the responsibility to help lead family members back to dwell in God’s presence. This is done by serving and teaching with gentleness, meekness, and pure love, following the example of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 20:26–28). Presiding in the family includes leading family members in regular prayer, gospel study, and other aspects of worship. Parents work in unity to fulfill these responsibilities.

“Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). To nurture means to nourish, teach, and support, following the example of the Savior (see 3 Nephi 10:4). In unity with her husband, a mother helps her family learn gospel truths and develop faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Together they foster an environment of love in the family.

“In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal

partners” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). They prayerfully counsel together and with the Lord. They make decisions together in unity and love, with full participation of both.

## 2.2

### The Work of Salvation and Exaltation in the Home

The First Presidency said, “The home is the basis of a righteous life” (First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999). In their homes, individuals and families engage in the work of salvation and exaltation. This work consists of four divinely appointed responsibilities:

- Living the gospel of Jesus Christ (see 1.2.1)
- Caring for those in need (see 1.2.2)
- Inviting all to receive the gospel (see 1.2.3)
- Uniting families for eternity (see 1.2.4)

To support members in doing the work of salvation and exaltation at home, Church leaders encourage them to establish a home where the Spirit is present. They also encourage members to honor the Sabbath day, study and learn the gospel at home, and hold weekly home evening. Leaders give special emphasis to supporting individuals who may lack assistance or encouragement from family members.

#### 2.2.1

##### A Home Where the Spirit Is Present

Church members are encouraged to make their homes a place of spiritual strength and joy. They can invite the Spirit of the Lord into their homes through simple efforts. Every home can be a “house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:119).



**2.2.2****Sabbath Observance**

God has commanded His children to “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). Church members gather on the Sabbath to partake of the sacrament in remembrance of Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see Doctrine and Covenants 59:12). The Sabbath is a day of gospel learning and teaching at church and at home. Members can be strengthened on the Sabbath as they engage in activities such as:

- Personal worship through prayer and fasting.
- Gospel study and learning.
- Ministering and service to others.
- Family history.
- Joyful family time.
- Other appropriate gatherings.

**2.2.3****Gospel Study and Learning at Home**

Gospel teaching and learning are home-centered and Church-supported. Church leaders encourage all members to study the gospel at home on the Sabbath day and throughout the week. Gospel study at home strengthens individuals and families. It deepens conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A study of the scriptures as outlined in *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* is the suggested course of gospel study at home. *Come, Follow Me* aligns lessons in Primary, Sunday School, Young Women, Aaronic Priesthood quorums, and seminary with gospel study in the home.

Individuals and families seek inspiration as they choose to study what will best meet their needs. In addition to the scripture passages suggested in *Come, Follow Me*, they might prayerfully consider studying:

- The Book of Mormon and other scriptures.
- General conference messages.
- Church magazines and other edifying content.

**2.2.4****Home Evening and Other Activities**

Latter-day prophets have counseled Church members to hold a weekly home evening. This is a sacred time for individuals and families to learn the gospel, strengthen testimonies, build unity, and enjoy one another.

Home evening is flexible according to members’ circumstances. It may be held on the Sabbath or other days and times. It may include:

- Gospel study and instruction (the *Come, Follow Me* materials may be used as desired).
- Serving others.
- Singing or playing hymns and Primary songs (see chapter 19).
- Supporting family members in Children and Youth development.
- A family council to set goals, resolve problems, and coordinate schedules.
- Recreational activities.

Single members and others can gather in groups outside the normal Sabbath worship services to participate in home evening and strengthen one another through gospel study. *Come, Follow Me* may be a resource for those who desire to study together.

Leaders give special attention to helping those who are new to holding home evening and studying the gospel.

In addition to home evening, leaders encourage families to prioritize time together throughout the

week. This could include sharing meals, working and serving together, and recreational activities.

To provide time for families to be together, leaders should keep Monday evenings free from Church meetings and activities.

Leaders encourage members to be consistent in holding home evening and spending time together as families (see Doctrine and Covenants 64:33).

### 2.2.5

#### Supporting Individuals

Church leaders assist members who lack family support. Members who may need additional support include:

- Children, youth, and adults whose families are not actively participating in Church meetings and activities.
- Single adults of all ages, including single parents and widowed members.

Leaders help these members and their families have opportunities for fellowship, wholesome social experiences, and spiritual growth. Leaders encourage and assist them in their efforts to learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Leaders also give them opportunities to serve in the Church.

### 2.3

#### The Relationship between the Home and the Church

The work of salvation and exaltation is centered in the home and supported by the Church. The following principles apply in the relationship between the home and the Church.

- Leaders and teachers honor the role of parents and assist them. Leaders and teachers establish and maintain effective communication with parents.
- Leaders seek to ensure that Church meetings, activities, and programs support individuals and



families in doing the work of salvation and exaltation in their homes.

- Some Church meetings are essential in each ward or branch. These include sacrament meeting and the classes and quorum meetings held on the Sabbath. Many other meetings, activities, and programs are not essential. Leaders organize them as needed to help meet the needs of individuals and families. Leaders take into account local circumstances and resources.
- Individuals and families consider their circumstances when making decisions about participating in Church programs that are not essential.
- Church service and participation entail a measure of sacrifice. The Lord will bless members as they

serve and sacrifice in His Church. However, the amount of time given to Church service should not detract from members' ability to fulfill their responsibilities at home, at work, and elsewhere. Leaders and members should not be overwhelmed with too many Church responsibilities. Nor should they be asked to make excessive sacrifices to support Church programs or activities.

As members follow these principles and the promptings of the Spirit, Heavenly Father will bless their efforts.



### 3.

## Priesthood Principles

### 3.0

#### Introduction

The priesthood is the authority and power of God. It has always existed and will continue to exist without end (see Alma 13:7–8; Doctrine and Covenants 84:17–18). Through the priesthood, Heavenly Father accomplishes His work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). God grants authority and power to His sons and daughters on earth to help carry out this work (see chapter 1).

### 3.1

#### Restoration of the Priesthood

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only organization on earth with priesthood authority. The Prophet Joseph Smith received the Aaronic Priesthood and its keys from John the Baptist (see Doctrine and Covenants 13:1). He received the Melchizedek Priesthood and its keys from the Apostles Peter, James, and John (see Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13).

In the Kirtland Temple, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and committed to him the further authority necessary to accomplish God’s

work in the latter days (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16).

- Moses committed the keys of the gathering of Israel (see Guide to the Scriptures, “Israel”).
- Elias committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham. This includes the restoration of the Abrahamic covenant (see Abraham 2:9–11; Guide to the Scriptures, “Abrahamic Covenant”).
- Elijah committed the keys of the sealing power (see Guide to the Scriptures, “Seal, Sealing”). These keys provide the authority that allows ordinances performed on earth to be binding in the next life (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:9–10).

Each member of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles holds all these priesthood keys today. Only the President of the Church, who is the senior Apostle, is authorized to exercise all these keys. These leaders call and authorize other Church members to use God’s priesthood authority and power to assist in the work of salvation and exaltation.

For information about priesthood keys, see 3.4.1.

### 3.2

## Blessings of the Priesthood

Through covenants and priesthood ordinances, God makes great blessings available to all His children. These blessings include:

- Baptism and membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- The gift of the Holy Ghost.
- Partaking of the sacrament.
- Authority and power to serve in Church callings and assignments.
- Receiving patriarchal blessings and other priesthood blessings of healing, comfort, and guidance.
- Being endowed with God’s power in the temple.



- Being sealed to one’s family members for eternity.
- The promise of eternal life.

God’s children can receive these blessings of the priesthood and experience great joy as they live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 3.3

## Melchizedek Priesthood and Aaronic Priesthood

In the Church, the priesthood has two parts: the Melchizedek Priesthood and the Aaronic Priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:1).

#### 3.3.1

### Melchizedek Priesthood

The Melchizedek Priesthood is “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:3). It is the power by which the sons and daughters of God can become like Him (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21; 132:19–20).

“The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency.” It has “power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:8). Through this authority, Church leaders direct and administer all the spiritual work of the Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:18). “All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:5).

The President of the Church is the presiding high priest over the Melchizedek Priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:65–67). The stake president is the presiding high priest in the stake (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:8, 10; see also chapter 5). The bishop is the presiding high priest in the

ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:17; see also chapter 6).

For information about the offices and responsibilities of the Melchizedek Priesthood, see 8.1.

#### 3.3.2

### Aaronic Priesthood

The Aaronic Priesthood is “an appendage to . . . the Melchizedek Priesthood” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:14). It includes the keys of:

- The ministering of angels.
- The gospel of repentance.
- Administering in outward ordinances, including baptism for the remission of sins.

(See Doctrine and Covenants 13:1; 84:26–27; 107:20.)

The bishop is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:15).

For information about the offices and responsibilities of the Aaronic Priesthood, see 10.1.3.

### 3.4

## Priesthood Authority

Priesthood authority is the authorization to represent God and act in His name. In the Church, all priesthood authority is exercised under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys.

Worthy male Church members receive priesthood authority through priesthood conferral and ordination to priesthood offices. All Church members can exercise delegated authority as they are set apart or assigned to assist in accomplishing God’s work. Members are accountable to God and to those He has appointed to preside for how they exercise His authority (see 3.4.4).



### 3.4.1

## Priesthood Keys

Priesthood keys are the authority to direct the use of the priesthood on behalf of God’s children. The use of all priesthood authority in the Church is directed by those who hold priesthood keys (see Doctrine and Covenants 65:2).

### 3.4.1.1

## Those Who Hold Priesthood Keys

Jesus Christ holds all the keys of the priesthood. Under His direction, priesthood keys are given to men to use in specific callings for accomplishing God’s work, as explained below.

The Lord has conferred on each of His Apostles all the keys that pertain to the kingdom of God on earth. The senior living Apostle, the President of the Church, is the only person on earth authorized to exercise all of those priesthood keys (see Doctrine and Covenants 81:1–2; 107:64–67, 91–92; 132:7).

Under the direction of the President of the Church, priesthood leaders are given keys so they can preside in their areas of responsibility. These leaders include:

- Stake and district presidents.
- Bishops and branch presidents.
- Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents.
- Temple presidents.
- Mission presidents and missionary training center presidents.
- Church historic site presidents.

These leaders receive priesthood keys when they are set apart to their callings.

Priesthood keys are not given to others, including counselors to local priesthood leaders or presidents of Church organizations. Rather, these leaders are given delegated authority when they are set apart and when they receive assignments under



the direction of those who hold priesthood keys. Presidents of Church organizations preside under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys (see 4.2.4).

#### 3.4.1.2

##### **Order to the Lord’s Work**

Priesthood keys ensure that the work of salvation and exaltation is accomplished in an orderly manner (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:11; 132:8). Those who hold priesthood keys direct the Lord’s work within their areas of responsibility. They do so in love and righteousness. This presiding authority is valid only for the specific responsibilities of the leader’s calling. When priesthood leaders are released from their callings, they no longer hold these keys.

All who serve in the Church are set apart or assigned under the direction of one who holds priesthood keys. When members are set apart or assigned, they are authorized by God to serve in His work.

#### 3.4.2

##### **Priesthood Conferral and Ordination**

Under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys, the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood are conferred on worthy male Church members (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:14–17). After the appropriate priesthood is conferred, the person is ordained to an office in that priesthood, such as deacon or elder. A priesthood holder exercises the priesthood according to the rights and duties of that office (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:99).

Each man in the Church of Jesus Christ should strive to be worthy to receive and use the Melchizedek Priesthood to serve others. When a man receives this priesthood, he makes a covenant to faithfully fulfill his priesthood responsibilities. He also receives from God an oath, or promise, of eternal blessings (see Doctrine and Covenants

84:33–44; see also Guide to the Scriptures, “Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood”).

For more information about priesthood conferral and ordination, see 8.1.1, 10.6, 18.10, and 38.2.5.

#### 3.4.3

##### **Delegation of Priesthood Authority to Serve in the Church**

Priesthood authority to serve in the Church is delegated to members in the following ways:

- By setting apart to a Church calling
- By assignment from presiding Church leaders

#### 3.4.3.1

##### **Setting Apart**

When men and women are set apart under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys, they are given authority from God to act in that calling. When they are released from a calling, they no longer have the authority associated with it.

Some callings are associated with offices and quorums of the priesthood. For example, a man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may be called as an elders quorum president. When he is set apart by the stake president, he is given priesthood keys, authority, and responsibility to direct the work of the elders quorum (see 3.4.1).

Many other Church callings are not associated with priesthood offices and quorums. But all Church members who are set apart to serve are given divine authority and responsibility to act in their callings. For example:

- A woman who is called and set apart by the bishop as ward Relief Society president is given authority to direct the work of Relief Society in the ward.

- A man or woman who is called and set apart by a member of the bishopric as a Primary teacher is given authority to teach Primary children in the ward.

All who are called and set apart serve under the direction of those who preside over them (see 3.4.1.2).

For more information about setting apart members for Church callings, see 18.11.

#### 3.4.3.2

##### Assignment

Presiding Church leaders can delegate authority by assignment. When men and women receive these assignments, they are given authority from God to act. For example:

- The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles delegate authority to Seventies who are assigned to administer areas and to preside at stake conferences.
- Mission presidents delegate authority to male and female missionaries who are assigned to lead and train other missionaries.
- Authority is delegated to Church members to serve as ministering brothers and ministering sisters. This occurs when they are assigned under the bishop's direction by the elders quorum president or Relief Society president.

Authority that is delegated by assignment is limited to the specific responsibilities and duration of the assignment.

For more information about assignment through delegation, see 4.2.6.

#### 3.4.4

##### Exercising Priesthood Authority Righteously

Church leaders and members use conferred or delegated priesthood authority to bless the lives of others.

This authority can be used only in righteousness (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:36). It is exercised by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love, and kindness (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42). Leaders counsel with others in a spirit of unity and seek the Lord's will through revelation (see Doctrine and Covenants 41:2). For information about counseling with others, see 4.2.5.

Those who exercise priesthood authority do not force their will on others. They do not use it for selfish purposes. If a person uses it unrighteously, “the heavens withdraw themselves [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:37).

Some Church callings include a responsibility to preside. For information about presiding in the Church, see 4.2.4.

#### 3.5

##### Priesthood Power

Priesthood power is the power by which God blesses His children. God's priesthood power flows to all members of the Church—female and male—as they keep the covenants they have made with Him. Members make these covenants as they receive priesthood ordinances. (See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–20.)

The blessings of priesthood power that members can receive include:

- Guidance for their lives.
- Inspiration to know how to serve family members and others.
- Strength to endure and overcome challenges.



- Gifts of the Spirit to magnify their abilities.
- Revelation to know how to fulfill the work they are ordained, set apart, or assigned to do.
- Help and strength to become more like Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father.

### 3.5.1 Covenants

A covenant is a sacred promise between God and His children. God gives the conditions for the covenant, and His children agree to obey those conditions. God promises to bless His children as they fulfill the covenant.

Members make covenants with God as they receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation (see 18.1). All who endure to the end in keeping their covenants will receive eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:17–20; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7). Enduring to the end includes exercising faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and repenting each day.

Parents, Church leaders, and others help individuals prepare to make covenants as they receive the ordinances of the gospel. They ensure that the person understands the covenants he or she will make. After a person makes a covenant, they help him or her keep it. (See Mosiah 18:8–11, 23–26.)

### 3.5.2 Ordinances

An ordinance is a sacred act performed by the authority of the priesthood. Ordinances have always been part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The first ordinances on earth were performed in the days of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 1:28; Moses 6:64–65).

In many ordinances, individuals make covenants with God. Examples include baptism, the sacrament, the endowment, and the marriage sealing ordinance. In other ordinances such as patriarchal blessings or blessings on the sick, individuals do not make covenants, but they do receive guidance and strength to keep covenants.

Ordinances have symbolic meaning that point individuals to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. In the ordinances that include covenants, the symbolism helps individuals understand the promises they make and the blessings they receive through their faithfulness.

Each ordinance allows individuals to receive rich spiritual blessings. The Lord revealed, “In the ordinances [of the priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:20). Ordinances of salvation and exaltation are essential for eternal life. For more information, see 18.1.

Living individuals receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation for themselves. Where possible, they then return to the temple to perform these ordinances vicariously for those who have died. For more information about performing ordinances for the dead, see chapter 28.

### 3.6

## The Priesthood and the Home

All Church members who keep their covenants—women, men, and children—are blessed with God’s priesthood power in their homes to strengthen themselves and their families (see 3.5). This power will assist members in doing God’s work of salvation and exaltation in their personal lives and families (see 2.2).

Men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood can give priesthood blessings to family members to provide direction, healing, and comfort. When needed, Church members can also seek these blessings from extended family members, ministering brothers, or local Church leaders. For more information about priesthood blessings, see 18.13 and 18.14.

For information about presiding in the family, see 2.1.3.



#### 4.

## Leadership in the Church of Jesus Christ

### 4.0

#### Introduction

You have been called by inspiration through the Savior’s authorized servants. As a leader in the Church, you have the privilege of assisting in Heavenly Father’s work of “bring[ing] to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). You do this by encouraging members to engage in the work of salvation and exaltation for themselves, their families, and others (see chapter 1). You will find joy as you serve God’s children.

### 4.1

#### The Purpose of Leadership in the Church

Leaders encourage members to engage in God’s work by becoming “true followers of . . . Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48). To do this, leaders first strive to be the Savior’s faithful disciples by following His teachings and example (see Luke 18:22). Then they can help others draw nearer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. In the process of helping others, they become better disciples (see Mosiah 18:26; Doctrine and Covenants 31:5).

Being a faithful disciple in order to help others become faithful disciples is the purpose behind every calling in the Church. Each calling includes opportunities to lead, serve, and strengthen others.

## 4.2

### Principles of Leadership in the Church

During His earthly ministry, the Savior set the example of leadership for His Church. His central focus was on serving Heavenly Father and helping others understand and live His gospel (see John 5:30). He loved those He led and showed that love by serving them (see John 13:3–5).

The Savior built the capacity of others by giving them responsibility and opportunities to grow (see Matthew 10:5–8; John 14:12). He encouraged and corrected with clarity and love (see John 21:15–17).

The Lord said, “Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:99). These words apply to all who receive responsibility to serve and lead in the Savior’s Church.

Seek personal revelation to help you learn and fulfill the duties of your calling. As you study the scriptures, look for leadership principles the Savior demonstrated and taught. Applying the principles in this chapter will also help you lead more effectively in the Savior’s Church.

#### 4.2.1

##### Prepare Spiritually

Jesus prepared Himself spiritually for His earthly mission (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1–2, in Matthew 4:1, footnote *b* and Matthew 4:2, footnote *c*; see also Matthew 14:23). You likewise prepare spiritually by drawing close to Heavenly Father through prayer, scripture study, and obedience to His commandments. Following His prophets

also helps you prepare spiritually (see Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–6).

Seek revelation to understand the needs of those you lead and how to fulfill the work God has called you to do. Through your efforts to draw close to the Lord, you can receive guidance in your personal life, family responsibilities, and Church calling.

The Lord has also promised to bestow spiritual gifts upon those who seek them (see Doctrine and Covenants 46:8). As you humbly call upon Heavenly Father to receive power and gifts from Him, He will increase your ability to lead and lift those you serve.

#### 4.2.2

##### Minister to All of God’s Children

Jesus ministered personally to people, reaching out to lift and teach those who felt alone, hopeless, or lost. By His words and actions, He showed people that He loved them. He recognized the divine nature and eternal worth of each person.

Love the people you serve as Jesus did. Pray “with all the energy of heart” to be filled with His love (Moroni 7:48). Establish sincere friendships. Reach out to those who may be lonely, need comfort, or have other needs. Your love will bless their lives and help people desire to come unto Christ.

Help members strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Help them prepare to make covenants as they receive their next ordinance. Warn against sin, and encourage members to keep their covenants and partake of the blessings of repentance. Help them know they can act to fulfill their divine potential regardless of the challenges they face.

#### 4.2.3

##### Teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ

All leaders are teachers. Strive to follow the Savior’s example as a teacher (see chapter 17; *Teaching in*

*the Savior's Way*). Through your words and actions, teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the principles of His gospel (see 3 Nephi 11:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 42:12–14). Effective teaching inspires people to strengthen their relationship with God and live the gospel, progressing toward eternal life.

Teach from the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets (see Doctrine and Covenants 52:9). Remember that “the preaching of the word [has] more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than . . . anything else” (Alma 31:5).

Seek the influence of the Spirit as you prepare and teach. The Holy Ghost carries the truth unto the hearts and minds of those you teach (see 2 Nephi 33:1).

Teach members to devote themselves to studying the gospel both personally and with their families.

If you lead a Church unit, priesthood quorum, or other organization, ensure that the teaching is edifying and doctrinally correct.

#### 4.2.4

### Preside in Righteousness

Presiding in the Church includes the responsibility to help God’s children prepare to dwell in His presence. Those who preside serve and teach with gentleness, meekness, and pure love, following the example of Jesus Christ (see John 13:13–15).

The Lord revealed that “of necessity there are presidents, or presiding officers” in His Church (Doctrine and Covenants 107:21). Each unit, priesthood quorum, and other organization in the Church is led by a presiding officer. He or she is called and set apart by one who holds priesthood keys or someone he has authorized. Each presiding officer serves under the direction of a person who holds priesthood keys (see 3.4.1). This structure provides order and clear lines of responsibility and accountability in doing the Lord’s work.

A calling or assignment to preside does not make the person who receives it more important or valued than others.





If you have been called or assigned to preside, follow the Savior’s teaching that “whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:27; see verses 26–28). Counsel with others and seek unity in accomplishing the Lord’s will (see 4.2.5).

Do not aspire to preside in any organization in the Lord’s Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:37). Rather, humbly and faithfully serve in the position to which you are called. Strive to accomplish the Lord’s work with an eye single to His glory (see Doctrine and Covenants 4:5).

#### 4.2.5

### Counsel Together and Build Unity

The Lord directs the leaders of His Church to counsel together to receive knowledge from Him (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:27–31). He also emphasizes the need for unity (see John 17:6–11, 20–23; 3 Nephi 11:28–30). He said, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27).

In councils, leaders meet under the direction of presiding officers to discuss ways to help individuals and families. They prayerfully seek to know God’s will (see Doctrine and Covenants 41:2–3). Guided by the Holy Ghost, they work together to determine effective ways to serve members of their organizations.

As a Church leader, seek to build unity among those you serve, helping them be “of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18). If you are part of a council or presidency, build unity by counseling together, sharing honest feelings and ideas, and listening (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:122; see also chapter 7).

If you are a council member, unite to support and sustain the decisions of the person who presides in the council.

#### 4.2.6

### Delegate Responsibility and Ensure Accountability

The Savior gave His disciples meaningful assignments and responsibilities. He also held them accountable by following up and asking them to report on the work they were assigned to do. (See Luke 10:1–17.)

As a leader, determine how to use your time most effectively. One aspect of managing your time is delegating assignments to others who can assist in the work.

Delegating will make your service more effective. If you try to do too much, you will “surely wear away” (Exodus 18:18). Seek the Spirit’s guidance about what to delegate so you can focus on your highest priorities.

Delegating also blesses others, helping them grow and receive the blessings that come from serving. Strive to engage all members in doing God’s work.

Delegating is more than giving an assignment. It also includes teaching and trusting another person to fulfill the assignment. It usually includes the following elements:

- Meet with the person to explain the assignment and its purposes.
- Discuss ways the assignment could be done, who else could be involved, and when it should be finished. Ensure that the person understands and willingly accepts the assignment. Express confidence in his or her abilities.
- Trust the person to receive inspiration about how to develop plans and fulfill the assignment. Provide encouragement, direction, and support.
- Meet as needed for the person to report on the assignment. Accept the person’s best efforts, and express appreciation for what he or she has done.

**4.2.7****Prepare Others to Be Leaders and Teachers**

The Savior prepared His Apostles to become leaders in His Church. You likewise help others prepare to be leaders and teachers.

When prayerfully considering who could serve in Church callings or assignments, remember that the Lord will qualify those He calls. What is most important is that they are willing to serve, will humbly seek the Lord's help, and are striving to be worthy. Callings and assignments can help them grow by providing opportunities to exercise their faith, work hard, and feel God magnifying their efforts. Provide guidance and assistance to new members and others who may need extra support in fulfilling their callings.

Sometimes the same small group of people are called repeatedly to leadership positions. This can overburden them and their families and take opportunities away from others. Seek to give all members opportunities to serve and grow.

For guidelines on recommending members to serve in Church callings, see chapter 30.

**4.2.8****Plan Meetings, Lessons, and Activities with Clear Purposes**

Seek the Spirit's guidance in planning meetings, lessons, and activities that have clear purposes. These purposes should strengthen individuals and families, bring them closer to Christ, and help accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation (see chapters 1 and 2). When planning, follow the principles in chapters 20 and 29.

Make long-term plans for your organization. Keep an annual calendar. Focus on encouraging members' spiritual growth.



### 4.3

## Evaluation of Progress

Your consecrated service requires a sacrifice of time, but do not neglect your own needs and the needs of your family. Seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost to help you maintain priorities (see Mosiah 4:27).

Regularly review your responsibilities and spiritual growth as a leader. Consider also the growth of those you lead. Unit, priesthood quorum, and other organization leaders can review the key indicators

and the quarterly report to see where they show progress and where there is potential for growth.

Your success as a leader is measured primarily by your commitment to helping God's children become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Because all people have agency, some may choose to depart from the covenant path. At times this may discourage you, but as you turn to the Lord, He will lift and comfort you (see Alma 26:27). You can know that the Lord is pleased with your efforts as you feel the Spirit working through you.

## 5.

# Stake Leadership

## 5.0

### Introduction

The stakes of the Church are established “for a defense, and for a refuge” for the Saints in the latter days (Doctrine and Covenants 115:6). The term *stake* comes from the prophecies of Isaiah, who described latter-day Zion as a tent or a tabernacle that would be secured by stakes (see Isaiah 33:20; 54:2).

## 5.1

### Stake Presidency

The stake president holds the priesthood keys to direct the work of the Church within the stake. He and his counselors form a stake presidency. They care for stake members with love and concern, helping them become true followers of Jesus Christ.

The stake president has four principal responsibilities in presiding over a stake:

1. He is the presiding high priest.
2. He is a common judge.
3. He oversees welfare matters.
4. He oversees records, finances, and properties.

Because the stake president holds priesthood keys, he has some responsibilities that are his alone.

To enable him to concentrate on these duties, he delegates many other assignments to his counselors, high councilors, the stake clerk, the stake executive secretary, and assistant stake clerks.

If the stake president is absent, ill, or otherwise unable to perform his duties, a counselor may act in his place temporarily except as noted in this handbook. The counselor consults with the Area

President if he has questions about acting for the stake president.

The stake clerk and stake executive secretary work closely with the stake presidency, but they are not members of the presidency and do not need to be released when the presidency is reorganized. Responsibilities of the stake clerk and executive secretary are outlined in 33.3.2 and 33.3.4.

## 5.1.1

### Presiding High Priest

This section outlines the stake president’s responsibilities as the presiding high priest in the stake.

#### 5.1.1.1

##### Leadership

Church members look to their stake president as the primary spiritual leader in the stake. He sets the spiritual tone for the stake by doing the Lord’s work “with holiness of heart” (Mosiah 18:12). He teaches and uplifts members after the example of the Savior.

A stake president is a faithful disciple and witness of Jesus Christ. He is true to his covenants. He is loyal to his wife and considerate of her. He sets an example of righteousness for his children, the stake, and the community. His counselors are men of the same character.

The stake president provides guidance and counsel to bishops and other leaders in the stake. He meets with new bishoprics as soon as reasonable after their callings to instruct them. Thereafter, he instructs and encourages bishops in regular priesthood interviews, in meetings with bishoprics, and in other settings.

The stake president helps members increase their spiritual strength. He teaches them to pray, study the scriptures, and prepare to make covenants as they receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.

In addition to strengthening individuals, the stake president strengthens families. He teaches that the family is the most important organization in time and eternity. He encourages them to participate in regular prayer and gospel instruction, including scripture study and home evening. He also encourages families to be considerate of one another. He ensures that Church callings do not unduly infringe on family responsibilities. He also ensures that Church activities support parents' efforts to raise righteous children.

The stake president emphasizes the importance of members having and accessing the scriptures and the Church magazines in their homes.

#### 5.1.1.2

#### **The Work of Salvation and Exaltation**

The stake president presides over the work of salvation and exaltation in the stake (see chapter 1). His responsibilities for this work are outlined in chapters 22–26.

#### 5.1.1.3

#### **Priesthood**

*Melchizedek Priesthood.* Members of the stake presidency preside over those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood in the stake.

The stake president is the stake high priests quorum president. He and his counselors comprise the presidency of the stake high priests quorum. That quorum consists of the high priests who currently serve in the following callings: the stake president and his counselors, all bishops and their counselors in the stake, high councilors, and functioning patriarchs.

The stake presidency oversees elders quorums (see 8.3.1).

The stake president oversees the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordinations to the offices of elder and high priest (see 38.2.5.1).

*Aaronic Priesthood.* Members of the stake presidency instruct bishoprics in their responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood holders and young women.

The stake president assigns one of his counselors to preside over the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee (see 29.3.9). This counselor also has responsibility for the work of the stake Young Men and Young Women presidencies.

#### 5.1.1.4

#### **Stake Patriarch**

The stake president presides over the stake patriarch and should develop a close relationship with him. For information about calling and supervising the stake patriarch, see 38.9.

#### 5.1.1.5

#### **Councils, Committees, and Meetings**

*Councils and Committees.* The stake president presides over the high council and the stake council. He assigns his counselors to preside over the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee, the stake young single adult committee, and the stake single adult committee (where organized).

Each stake president is a member of a coordinating council. An Area Seventy chairs the council. The Area Seventy may invite stake Relief Society presidents and other stake officers to attend these meetings. For more information, see 29.11.

*Meetings.* The stake presidency plans the stake meetings listed in chapter 29. The stake president presides at stake meetings unless an Area Seventy or General Authority attends. The stake president's

counselors may conduct these meetings and may preside if the stake president is absent.

#### 5.1.1.6

### Callings and Releases

The stake president's responsibilities for callings and releases are outlined in chapter 30. He may assign his counselors and high councilors to extend callings and releases as outlined in the Chart of Callings (30.7). The stake president, or a person with higher authority, personally extends the following callings:

- *Counselors in the stake presidency.* The stake president recommends brethren to be called or released as his counselors. He submits recommendations through Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR). The stake president may interview, call, and set apart a counselor or release a counselor after receiving approval from the First Presidency.
- *Stake patriarch.* The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles directs the calling of stake patriarchs (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:39). The stake president may recommend whom to call. Recommendations should be submitted through LCR. The stake president may interview, call, and ordain a patriarch after receiving approval from the Quorum of the Twelve (see 38.9).
- *Bishops.* The stake presidency recommends brethren to be called or released as bishops. Recommendations should be submitted through LCR. The stake president may call, ordain, and set apart a bishop or release a bishop after receiving approval from the First Presidency (see 30.6).
- *Elders quorum presidents.* The stake president calls and sets apart elders quorum presidents because he is the person who is authorized to bestow the priesthood keys associated with their callings.
- *Stake clerk.* Because of the importance of the stake clerk's responsibilities and the need for him to

be a man of unquestionable integrity, the stake president personally calls him and sets him apart.

Units that are not able to use LCR should contact the area office.

#### 5.1.1.7

### Stake Organizations and Programs

The stake president personally has responsibility for the stake Relief Society. He assigns his counselors responsibility for the other stake organizations: Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School. These counselors ensure that members of organization presidencies are instructed in their duties.

The stake president also assigns his counselors to oversee efforts with stake activities, young single adults, single adults (as needed), Church magazines (as needed), communication (as needed), music, seminary and institute, and physical facilities.

Members of the stake presidency meet regularly with the presidencies of the organizations to which they are assigned. In these meetings, participants counsel together about the progress and needs of members in the organizations.

Members of the stake presidency also meet regularly with committees and specialists in the other programs to which they are assigned.

#### 5.1.1.8

### Communication (Public Affairs)

The stake presidency directs communication efforts in the stake. Members of the stake presidency have primary responsibility for the Church's good standing in the community. They also have the main responsibility for relationships with civic and community leaders.

The stake president serves as the primary Church spokesman to the news media on matters that pertain to the stake. He may delegate this as needed.

The stake president or an assigned counselor may organize and oversee a stake communication council. This council helps priesthood leaders build relationships with civic and community leaders. It also helps these leaders communicate effectively with Church members and the public.

The stake presidency may call and set apart a stake communication director, assistant directors, and specialists as needed.

The stake communication council receives support and training from a communication director at the coordinating council level. This communication council is under the direction of the Area Seventy. It helps coordinate relationships, events, and issues that go beyond stake boundaries (see 29.11).

For information about communication callings, see [GCN.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://GCN.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

### 5.1.2

#### Common Judge

The stake president has the following responsibilities as the common judge in the stake:

- Conduct worthiness interviews as outlined in 31.1.3. He may also authorize his counselors to conduct interviews as outlined in 31.1.4. For guidelines on worthiness interviews, see 31.1.1.
- As needed or requested by the bishop, counsel stake members who seek spiritual guidance, who have weighty personal problems, or who have committed serious sins. For guidelines on counseling, see 31.2.
- Provide personal counseling and hold membership councils when members have committed serious sins, as outlined in chapter 32.

### 5.1.3

#### Welfare

The stake president has the following responsibilities for welfare in the stake:

- Provide welfare leadership by teaching the doctrine and principles relating to welfare, instructing bishops and other leaders in their welfare responsibilities, directing the welfare work of the stake council, and serving as the agent stake president for Church welfare operations when assigned.
- Oversee welfare assistance (1) when a bishop or members of his immediate family need assistance and (2) in special circumstances that go beyond what the bishop is authorized to provide (see 22.5.2).
- Direct the stake's efforts to prepare for and respond to emergencies (see 22.5.3).

For information about welfare responsibilities and principles, see chapter 22.

### 5.1.4

#### Records, Finances, and Properties

The stake president oversees records, reports, finances, and properties in the stake. He may assign much of the work with records, reports, and finances to his counselors and clerks. He assigns a high councilor to be the stake physical facilities representative and to help oversee properties.

For information about records and reports, see chapter 33. For information about finances, see chapter 34. For information about physical facilities, see chapter 35.

**5.2**

## Stake Clerk, Assistant Stake Clerks, and Stake Executive Secretary

The responsibilities of the stake clerk, assistant stake clerks, and stake executive secretary are outlined in 33.3.2, 33.3.3, and 33.3.4.

**5.3**

## High Council

The stake presidency calls 12 high priests to form the stake high council (see Doctrine and Covenants 102:1). If an elder is called to serve on the high council, he must be ordained a high priest before he is set apart.

Under the direction of the stake presidency, high councilors help oversee the work of the Church in the stake. They have advisory and administrative responsibilities as described in the following sections.

**5.3.1**

### Represent the Stake Presidency

High councilors counsel about and sustain the stake presidency's decisions to ordain brethren to the offices of elder and high priest. The stake president may authorize high councilors to represent him when men are ordained to the offices of elder and high priest.

High councilors also counsel about and sustain the stake presidency's decisions to issue callings to members. For some callings, the stake presidency may authorize high councilors to represent them in issuing the callings, presenting members to be sustained, and setting members apart as indicated in chapter 30.

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to represent them in each elders quorum, ward, and branch in the stake. In this role, high councilors orient newly called elders quorum presidencies. They

also provide ongoing encouragement, support, and instruction for these leaders, including instruction based on chapters 1–4 and 7 of this handbook. They meet with these leaders regularly to learn of their needs, teach them their duties, and communicate information from the stake presidency. They periodically attend elders quorum meetings and quorum presidency meetings. They also attend bishopric and ward council meetings if invited or assigned.

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to be the stake Young Men president (see 5.4.2). They assign another high councilor to be the stake Sunday School president (see 5.4.3).

The stake presidency assigns high councilors to work with the stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary organizations. When a member of the stake presidency meets with the stake Relief Society, Young Women, or Primary presidency, the assigned high councilor attends this meeting. Assigned high councilors also attend the stake leadership meetings for these organizations.

The stake presidency assigns high councilors to work with the programs listed in 5.1.1.7.

The stake presidency assigns high councilors to help oversee missionary work and temple and family history work in the stake (see 23.1.9.2; 25.6.2).

The stake presidency may assign high councilors to represent them by speaking in sacrament meetings and other settings. The stake presidency determines the frequency of these speaking assignments. It is not necessary for high councilors to speak in sacrament meeting every month.

**5.3.2**

### Serve on Stake Councils and Committees

All high councilors serve on the stake council.

In limited situations, high councilors participate in stake membership councils (see 32.9.2).



The stake presidency may assign high councilors to serve on other committees as needed. For example, high councilors who are assigned to work with elders quorums may meet as a Melchizedek Priesthood committee.

High councilors with assignments relating to Aaronic Priesthood quorums, the Young Women organization, the Primary, and, when invited, the Sunday School, serve on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee (see 29.3.9).

The high council does not meet unless a member of the stake presidency is present.

#### 5.4

### Stake Organizations

The stake Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School organizations are each led by a president or presidency that serves under the direction of the stake presidency. The stake presidency may call only a president for each organization, or they may also call one or two counselors and a secretary. Counselors and a secretary are usually called if a stake is large enough.

The principal responsibilities of these leaders are to assist the stake presidency and to instruct and support ward organization presidencies. They do not fulfill assignments that should be fulfilled on the ward or family level.

#### 5.4.1

### Stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School Presidencies

Members of the stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies have the following responsibilities:

- They orient newly called ward organization presidencies. They also provide ongoing encouragement, support, and instruction for presidencies and teachers. They base some of their instruction

on chapters 1–4 and 7 in this handbook and the chapter for their organization.

- They meet with ward organization presidencies regularly to learn of their needs, discuss the needs of the members they serve, and communicate information from the stake presidency. Periodically they visit ward meetings and classes as arranged with ward leaders.
- They instruct ward organization leaders in stake leadership meetings. These are generally held once a year. If local circumstances and travel time do not put undue burdens on leaders, the stake presidency may authorize a second leadership meeting each year. (See 29.3.11.) Bishops may request additional instruction for ward organization presidencies.
- They counsel together regularly in their own presidency meetings. They also meet regularly with the member of the stake presidency who has responsibility for their service. Additionally, the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies each meet with the high councilor assigned to their organization as needed.
- The organization presidents serve on the stake council. As members of this council, they participate in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families in the stake.
- The stake Relief Society presidency identifies the needs of local sisters and considers whether stake or multistake activities would help meet those needs. These leaders then recommend activities to the stake presidency. Occasionally stake or multistake activities for women may include young women and girls ages 8 and older. The stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies counsel together to recommend such activities to the stake presidency (see 20.3.1). Other responsibilities that are unique to the stake Relief Society presidency are outlined in 9.5.

- The stake Young Women presidency and secretary serve on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee (see 29.3.9).
- Under the direction of the stake presidency, the stake Young Women presidency may plan and coordinate stake Young Women activities and camps.
- Presidents submit recommendations to the stake presidency about counselors and other members who may be called to serve in their organizations. They follow the guidelines in 30.1.1 and 30.1.2. The Chart of Callings (30.7) indicates who may call and set apart members to serve.
- Presidents attend coordinating council meetings when invited by the Area Seventy (see 29.11).

Only women serve in the stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies. Only men serve in the stake Sunday School presidency.

#### 5.4.2

### Stake Young Men Presidency

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to be the stake Young Men president. The high council members assigned to the Young Women and Primary may serve as his counselors. Or, if a stake is large enough, other Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the stake may be called as counselors. In this case, the stake Young Men president recommends whom to call. These counselors are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor.

A brother from the membership of the stake may be called as the stake Young Men secretary.

Members of the stake Young Men presidency have the following responsibilities:

- They help bishoprics by teaching them their duties for Aaronic Priesthood quorums. They serve as a resource to the bishopric and the Aaronic Priesthood quorums in much the same way that other high councilors serve as a resource to elders quorums.
- They counsel together regularly in their own presidency meetings. They also meet regularly with the member of the stake presidency who has responsibility for their service.
- The president serves on the stake council. As a member of this council, he participates in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families in the stake.
- The presidency and secretary serve on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee (see 29.3.9).
- Under the direction of the stake presidency, they may plan and coordinate stake Aaronic Priesthood activities and camps.
- Presidents attend coordinating council meetings when invited by the Area Seventy (see 29.11).

The stake Young Men presidency does not hold a stake leadership meeting. Instead, bishoprics attend stake priesthood leadership meetings (see 29.3.3). Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and specialists also attend as needed.

#### 5.4.3

### Stake Sunday School Presidency

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to be the stake Sunday School president. He can serve with or without counselors. In a large stake, the stake presidency may decide that counselors are needed. In that case, the stake Sunday School president may recommend one or two priesthood holders from the membership of the stake. If possible, counselors should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. They should not be members of the high council. The stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor calls them and sets them apart.

The stake presidency may invite the stake Sunday School president to serve on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee (see 29.3.9).

In addition to the responsibilities outlined in 5.4.1, the stake Sunday School presidency has the responsibilities outlined in 13.6.2.

#### 5.4.4

### Stake Organization Secretaries

Under the direction of stake organization presidents, stake organization secretaries have the following responsibilities:

- They prepare agendas for presidency meetings.
- They attend presidency meetings, take notes, and keep track of assignments.
- They keep other records and prepare reports as the presidency requests.
- They help prepare the annual budget for their organization and account for expenses.
- They provide training for ward organization secretaries as assigned. This training may include instruction on recording and reporting attendance.

#### 5.5

### Stake Specialists

The stake presidency may call and set apart specialists to help with activities (see 20.3.2), music (see 19.5.4), welfare (see 22.3.3), and other initiatives to help stake members.

The stake presidency may also call and set apart communication specialists to help increase positive awareness of the Church and to build bridges of friendship and understanding in the community. Information for communication specialists is available at [PublicAffairs.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://PublicAffairs.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). These specialists serve under the direction of the stake communication director (see 5.1.1.8).

#### 5.6

### Adapting to Local Needs

If distances, travel costs, communication resources, or leadership resources make the administration of stake programs challenging, the stake presidency may adapt the guidelines in this chapter. In doing so, they ensure that ward leaders receive the instruction and support they need.

Instructions for adapting to local needs are provided in each organization's chapter.

## 6.

# Ward Leadership

## 6.0

### Introduction

Wards are the basic congregations of the Church. In wards, Church members worship together, partake of the sacrament, learn the gospel, and serve and strengthen each other.

The bishop holds the priesthood keys to direct the work of the Church within the ward. He and his counselors form a bishopric, which works under the direction of the stake presidency. They care for ward members with love and concern, helping them become true followers of Jesus Christ.

The bishop has five principal responsibilities in presiding over a ward:

1. He is the presiding high priest.
2. He is president of the Aaronic Priesthood.
3. He is a common judge.
4. He oversees welfare matters.
5. He oversees records, finances, and the use and security of the meetinghouse.

Because the bishop holds priesthood keys, he has some responsibilities that are his alone. To enable him to concentrate on these duties, he delegates many other assignments to his counselors, the ward clerk, the ward executive secretary, assistant ward clerks, and quorum and organization leaders.

If the bishop is absent, ill, or otherwise unable to perform his duties, a counselor may act in his place temporarily except as noted in this handbook. The counselor is to consult with the stake president if he has any questions about acting for the bishop.

The ward clerk and ward executive secretary work closely with the bishopric, but they are not members

of the bishopric and do not need to be released when the bishopric is reorganized. Responsibilities of the ward clerk and executive secretary are outlined in 33.4.2 and 33.4.4.

## 6.1

### Presiding High Priest

This section outlines the bishop's responsibilities as the presiding high priest in the ward.

#### 6.1.1

### Leadership

Ward members look to their bishop as the primary spiritual leader in the ward. He sets the spiritual tone for the ward by doing the Lord's work "with holiness of heart" (Mosiah 18:12). He teaches and uplifts members after the example of the Savior.

A bishop is a faithful disciple and witness of Jesus Christ. He is true to his covenants. He is loyal to his wife and considerate of her. He sets an example of righteousness for his children, the ward, and the community. His counselors are men of the same character.

The bishop provides guidance and counsel to other leaders in the ward. He instructs them in their duties and encourages them.

The bishop helps members increase their spiritual strength. He teaches them to pray, study the scriptures, and receive the saving ordinances.

In addition to strengthening individuals, the bishop strengthens families. He teaches that the family is the most important organization in time and eternity. He encourages them to participate in regular prayer and gospel instruction, including scripture study and home evening. He also encourages

families to be considerate of one another. He ensures that Church callings do not unduly infringe on family responsibilities. He also ensures that Church activities support parents' efforts to raise righteous children.

The bishop emphasizes the importance of members having and accessing the scriptures and the Church magazines in their homes.

### 6.1.2

#### The Work of Salvation and Exaltation

The bishop directs the work of salvation and exaltation in the ward (see chapter 1). Responsibilities for this work are outlined in chapters 17, 23, and 25.

### 6.1.3

#### Priesthood

The bishop and his counselors direct the work of the elders quorum president in watching over quorum members and their families, building strength in the quorum, and ensuring that the work of the priesthood is accomplished. Under the bishop's direction, the elders quorum president may be assigned to oversee member missionary work and temple and family history work in the ward.

The bishop also directs the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents in overseeing ministering. He meets with both presidents together at least quarterly to address the needs of individuals and families (see 21.2).

The bishop's Aaronic Priesthood responsibilities are outlined in 6.2.

### 6.1.4

#### Ordinances and Blessings

The bishop directs the administration of the following ordinances and blessings in the ward: the sacrament, naming and blessing of children, baptism and confirmation of 8-year-old children of record, and

conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordination to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest.

For information about ordinances and blessings, see chapter 18.

### 6.1.5

#### Councils, Committees, and Meetings

##### 6.1.5.1

#### Councils and Committees

The bishop presides over the ward council and the ward youth council. If a ward young single adult committee is organized, the bishop assigns a counselor to preside over it.

The bishop uses the ward council and the ward youth council as resources for counseling together. He also uses these councils to delegate elements of the Lord's work to organizations and officers in the ward. (See chapter 7.)

##### 6.1.5.2

#### Meetings

The bishopric plans sacrament meetings and other ward meetings listed in chapter 29. The bishop presides at ward meetings unless a member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy, or a General Authority attends. The bishop's counselors may conduct these meetings and may preside if the bishop is absent.

### 6.1.6

#### Callings and Releases

The bishop's responsibilities for callings and releases are outlined in chapter 30. He may assign his counselors to extend callings and releases as outlined in the Chart of Callings (30.7).

**6.1.7****Ward Organizations and Programs**

The bishop has responsibility for the ward Relief Society, Aaronic Priesthood quorums, and Young Women. He assigns his counselors responsibility for the work of the Sunday School and Primary presidencies and other ward programs. (See 9.3.1, 10.3, 11.3.1, 12.3.1, and 13.2.1.)

**6.2****President of the Aaronic Priesthood**

“The bishopric is the presidency of [the Aaronic] priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:15). The bishop has the following responsibilities as the president of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward. His counselors assist him.

- Members of the bishopric support parents in watching over and nurturing children and youth in the ward. They help children and youth serve faithfully, make and keep sacred covenants, and receive the ordinances of the temple. They help all youth live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. They also help young men progress in the priesthood.
- The bishopric has responsibility for Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women classes. The bishop is president of the priests quorum (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:87–88). His first counselor has responsibility for the teachers quorum; his second counselor has responsibility for the deacons quorum.
- The bishop has responsibility to counsel with the ward Young Women president. He does not give this assignment to a counselor.

**6.3****Common Judge**

The bishop has the following responsibilities as the “common judge” in the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:72–74):

- Conduct worthiness interviews as outlined in 31.1.5. He may also authorize his counselors to conduct interviews as outlined in 31.1.6. For guidelines on worthiness interviews, see 31.1.1.
- Counsel ward members who seek spiritual guidance, who have weighty personal problems, or who have committed serious transgressions. For guidelines on counseling, see 31.2.
- Provide personal counseling and hold membership councils when members have committed serious sins (see chapter 32).

**6.4****Welfare**

The purposes of welfare are to help members become self-reliant, care for the poor and needy, and give service. The bishop has the following responsibilities for welfare in the ward:

- Provide welfare leadership by teaching the doctrine and principles relating to welfare, instructing leaders in their welfare responsibilities, and directing the welfare work of the ward council.
- Seek out the poor and provide assistance to those in need.
- Direct the ward’s efforts to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

For information about welfare responsibilities and principles, see chapter 22.

**6.5**

## Records, Finances, and the Meetinghouse

The bishop oversees records, reports, finances, and the meetinghouse. He may assign much of the work with records, reports, and finances to his counselors and clerks. He may assign one of his counselors to serve as the ward building representative, or he may call another member to do so.

For information about records and reports, see chapter 33. For information about finances, see chapter 34. For information about meetinghouses, see chapter 35.

## 7.

# Councils in the Church

### 7.1

## Councils in the Church

The Lord's Church is governed through councils at the general, area, stake, and ward levels. These councils are fundamental to the order of the Church.

Under the keys of priesthood leadership at each level, leaders counsel together for the benefit of individuals and families. Council members also plan the work of the Church pertaining to their assignments. Effective councils invite full expression from council members and unify their efforts in responding to individual, family, and organizational needs.

### 7.2

## Bishopric

The bishopric has responsibility for all ward members, organizations, and activities. The bishopric usually meets at least weekly. The ward clerk and ward executive secretary attend. For suggested agenda items, see 29.2.6.

The bishop's decisions are better informed and implemented when made after discussions with his counselors and, when appropriate, the ward council. In these discussions the bishop does not share information that he should keep confidential.

### 7.3

## Priesthood Executive Committee

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

### 7.4

## Ward Council

As the presiding high priest of the ward, the bishop presides over the ward council. This council includes the bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, and presidents of the elders quorum, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School.

The ward mission leader (if called), the ward temple and family history leader (if called), and counselors in the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies may be invited to attend ward council meetings as needed. The bishop may also invite full-time missionaries to meet with the ward council as needed.

Members of the ward council strive to help individuals build testimonies, receive saving ordinances, keep covenants, and become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ (see Moroni 6:4–5). All members of the ward council have a general responsibility for the well-being of ward members. These ward officers also have a specific responsibility to watch over and strengthen each member in their organization.

Typically, the full ward council considers only matters that (1) would benefit from coordination among organizations, (2) would benefit from the discussion and unified efforts of the council, or (3) are of general concern for the ward as a whole. Most matters that are specific to a priesthood quorum or organization should be addressed by its leaders, not by the entire ward council. Additionally, individual ward council members may raise sensitive or confidential matters privately with the bishop.



## 7.5

# The Work of the Ward Council

### 7.5.1

#### Help Each Individual Progress

Members of the ward council do most of their work outside of ward council meetings. They work with their counselors and with ministering brothers, ministering sisters, and others to care for those in their organizations and others who need assistance.

Ward council members strive to stay informed about the needs, well-being, and spiritual progress of members in their organizations. They also stay informed about members who face special challenges or changing circumstances. This information allows them to strengthen those who most need their help. At the same time, they respect individual and family privacy. Only the bishop deals with matters of personal worthiness.

The following resources can help ward council members be aware of the progress of members and investigators:

- *Reports on member participation, such as the ward's Quarterly Report.* These reports are prepared by the ward clerk. They provide information about Church activity, ordinance status, and trends for individuals, age-groups, and the entire ward. In wards that use Church record-keeping software, the clerk can also provide other reports that have helpful information.
- *Information from ministering interviews* (see 21.4).
- *New and Returning Member Progress form.* Ward council members use this form to plan specific ways to teach and strengthen new members from the time of their baptism and confirmation until they receive the temple endowment. Ward council members may also use this form to plan how to help less-active members prepare to receive the ordinances that are appropriate for their age, including temple ordinances.

- *Progress Record.* Full-time missionaries use this form to record each investigator's progress. Missionaries share this information with the ward mission leader (if called) or with the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work in the ward. He shares this information with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents, who may report it to the ward council.

### 7.5.2

#### Help Strengthen the Ward

Members of the ward council work together to build spiritual strength and unity in the ward. The ward council also oversees the planning of activities for the ward. Activities should be planned to fulfill gospel-centered purposes. For more information about activities, see chapter 20.

## 7.6

# Ward Council Meetings

The ward council normally meets weekly but may meet less frequently. The meeting usually does not last longer than one hour.

The bishop presides over the meeting. If he is absent, he may assign a counselor to preside. However, major decisions are not made in the bishop's absence.

### 7.6.1

#### Guiding Principles

Ward officers attend ward council meetings in two capacities: (1) as ward council members who help the bishop address needs and concerns in the ward and find solutions and (2) as representatives of their organizations. These leaders seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost as they unite in love and concern for those they serve.

Ward council meetings should focus on matters that will strengthen individuals and families. The council spends minimal time on calendaring, activity planning, and other administrative business.

During the meeting, the bishop explains each matter being considered, but he does not normally decide how to resolve the matter until he has heard the discussion. He encourages discussion without dominating it. He asks questions and may ask particular council members for their suggestions. He listens carefully before making a decision. These discussions should foster a spirit of inspiration.

Council members are encouraged to speak honestly, both from their personal experience and from their positions as organization leaders. Both men and women should feel that their comments are valued as full participants. The bishop seeks input from Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary leaders in all matters considered by the ward council. The viewpoint of women is sometimes different from that of men, and it adds essential perspective to understanding and responding to members' needs.

After open discussion, the bishop may make a decision, or he may wait to discuss the matter further with his counselors. After he makes a decision, council members should support it in a spirit of unity and harmony.

If council members have strongly unsettled feelings about an important decision, the bishop may wait for another council meeting to consider the matter further and seek spiritual confirmation and unity.

Council members must keep confidential any private or sensitive information about members, families, and subjects that are discussed.

### 7.6.2

#### Sample Agenda

Under the bishop's direction, the executive secretary prepares an agenda for ward council meeting. The bishop invites council members to contact the

executive secretary to place items on the agenda. The executive secretary may also suggest agenda items, including those from previous meetings that may need additional discussion or follow-up. The executive secretary may also prepare a calendar of upcoming ward events for council members to review.

A list of items that could be included on the agenda is provided below. The bishop should not try to consider all of these items in every meeting. Instead, he prioritizes each meeting's agenda to address the most important matters first. Rather than discussing too many subjects in a superficial way, it is better to focus on a few that will bless the most individuals and families. The bishop relies on inspiration to know which subjects matter most at a particular time.

1. *Report on assignments.* Brief reports on assignments from the last meeting.
2. *Spiritual and temporal welfare.* Discuss the spiritual and temporal well-being of selected individuals and families and how their needs are being met through ministering. Make plans to help meet needs, including long-term needs. Discuss how to strengthen individuals and families and to support ministering brothers and sisters in their efforts. For more information, see 22.2.2.
3. *Missionary.* Develop and review the ward mission plan (see 23.1.8). Using the Progress Record, review baptismal candidates and currently progressing investigators. The bishop may invite the ward mission leader to attend and lead this review (if called), or he may invite the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work to do so. For more information, see 23.1.2.
4. *Convert retention.* Review the progress of each new member listed on the New and Returning Member Progress form; plan ways to help them continue progressing (see 23.2.1). For

information on limited-use temple recommends and priesthood ordination for new converts, see 23.2.2.

5. *Activation.* Review the progress and fellowshiping of less-active members listed on the New and Returning Member Progress form; plan ways to help them continue progressing (see 23.3).
6. *Temple and family history.* Review the progress of individual members who are preparing to receive the ordinances of the temple. As the bishop senses the need, discuss how to encourage members to participate more fully in temple and family history work. The bishop may invite the ward temple and family history leader (if called) to attend and lead this review, or he may invite the member of the elders quorum presidency assigned to temple and family history work to do so. For more information, see 25.3.
7. *Gospel learning and teaching.* Discuss how to improve gospel learning and teaching in Church settings and in the home (see chapter 17). Also discuss how to improve the effectiveness of teacher council meetings.
8. *Organization reports.* Reports on the work of the ward organizations. This part of the meeting should be brief so it does not distract from the council's main focus on individuals. Organization reports may be given in writing to allow sufficient communication without occupying extended time in the meeting.
9. *Planning.* Calendar and activity planning to help meet the spiritual, temporal, and social needs of ward members (see chapter 20).
10. *Perpetual Education Fund* (where the program is approved). Review the progress of participants in the program.
11. *Concluding instruction* from the bishopric.

### 7.6.3

#### Undertaking a Course of Action

The ward council seeks inspiration in developing a course of action to bless the lives of members. The council's focus is on helping people, not administering programs.

Leaders use their own presidency meetings and meetings of their organizations to prepare for ward council, review ward council decisions, and enlist the help of others to fulfill council assignments.

When undertaking a course of action, council members should be careful to avoid overburdening individuals and families (see Mosiah 4:27; Doctrine and Covenants 10:4). Each member's first priority is to his or her family. The ward council ensures an appropriate balance between the member's family obligations and his or her responsibilities in the Church.

Ward council members regularly evaluate each course of action and report on their assignments. In most instances, progress will require sustained attention and follow-up assignments.

### 7.6.4

#### Responsibilities of the Ward Clerk

The ward clerk keeps a record of assignments and decisions made during ward council meetings. He makes sure that information used by the ward council is accurate and timely. He provides the most recent copies of the New and Returning Member Progress form. He also provides relevant statistical information from Church record-keeping software. He takes initiative to inform the bishopric and ward council members about information he finds in these sources rather than waiting for them to ask him.

Other responsibilities of the ward clerk are outlined in 33.4.2.

**7.6.5****Responsibilities of the Executive Secretary**

The executive secretary prepares agendas for ward council meetings as outlined in 7.6.2. The bishop may also ask him to help follow up with ward council members on their assignments. In addition, the bishop may ask him to obtain reports from ward council members on the status of investigators, new members, members returning to activity, and other matters.

Other responsibilities of the ward executive secretary are outlined in 33.4.4.

**7.7****Preventing and Responding to Abuse**

In stake and ward council meetings, stake presidencies and bishoprics regularly review Church policies and guidelines on preventing and responding to abuse (see 38.6.2). They teach the key messages in “Preventing and Responding to Abuse,” an enclosure to the First Presidency letter dated March 26, 2018. They invite discussion from council members. Leaders and council members should seek the guidance of the Spirit as they teach and discuss this sensitive subject.

Council members should also take and discuss the course “Protecting Children and Youth.”

Council members then discuss this material in their presidency meetings and, as needed, with others.

Often a report of abuse will come to a trusted teacher or adviser. Members of stake and ward councils help leaders, teachers, and members take proper steps in preventing and responding to abuse, including reporting the abuse to appropriate civil authorities.

## 8.

# Elders Quorum

### 8.1

## Purpose and Organization

The Melchizedek Priesthood helps God’s children prepare to return to His presence. It holds “the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:18).

The offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood are elder, high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle. This chapter contains information about elders and elders quorums.

#### 8.1.1

### Purpose

Worthy men 18 and older may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained to the office of elder. A man ordained to that office enters into a sacred covenant to assist God in accomplishing His work (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44).

Each elder is part of an organized group of priesthood holders called an elders quorum. Members of the elders quorum work together to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. They serve others, fulfill priesthood duties, build unity, and learn and live doctrine.

#### 8.1.2

### Membership in the Elders Quorum

Each ward has an elders quorum. It includes the following brethren:

- All elders in the ward.
- All prospective elders in the ward (see 8.4).
- All high priests in the ward, except those who are currently serving in a stake presidency, in a

bishopric, on a high council, or as a patriarch. These leaders are members of the stake high priests quorum. For information about the stake high priests quorum, see 5.1.1.3 and 29.3.4.

A young man may begin attending elders quorum meetings when he turns 18, even if he has not yet been ordained an elder. He counsels with his parents and bishop to make this decision. By age 19 or when moving from home, such as to attend a university or serve a mission, he should be ordained an elder if he is worthy. See 10.6.

Married men under 18 are prospective elders and are also members of the elders quorum.

For information about unwed parents under age 18, see 38.1.5.

#### 8.1.3

### 🔄 Adapting to Local Needs

Some wards have a very large number of active Melchizedek Priesthood holders. For these wards, the stake presidency may organize an additional elders quorum (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:89). Each quorum has its own presidency. If possible, each quorum should have members with a variety of ages and experience.

### 8.2

## Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation

God invites all to come unto Christ and participate in the work of salvation and exaltation by:

- Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Caring for those in need.

- Inviting all to receive the gospel.
- Uniting families for eternity.

Elders quorum leaders plan Sunday meetings, activities, ministering, service, and other interactions to help brethren participate in the work of salvation and exaltation. Members of the elders quorum and Relief Society work in unity to accomplish this work.

For more information about the work of salvation and exaltation, study chapter 1.

### 8.2.1 Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Elders quorum leaders support members in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. They emphasize exercising faith, repenting, increasing in self-reliance, and making covenants with God by receiving ordinances. Such ordinances include the temple endowment. See 1.2.1.

#### 8.2.1.1 Gospel Learning at Home

When members learn and live the gospel at home, their conversion to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ deepens. Elders quorum leaders encourage brethren to study the scriptures and the words of living prophets, individually and with their families. *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* and other resources can supplement their study.

Home evenings are an important way to learn the gospel at home. They are usually held weekly on Sunday, on Monday evening, or at another time. They could include prayers, gospel study, testimonies, singing, and fun activities.

#### 8.2.1.2 Gospel Learning in Quorum Meetings

Elders quorums meet on Sundays for the following purposes:

- Strengthen faith.
- Build unity.
- Strengthen families and homes.
- Make plans to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.

Meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. They last 50 minutes. The elders quorum presidency plans these meetings. A member of the presidency conducts.

The meeting begins with a presidency member conducting any quorum business. For example, the quorum may counsel together about aspects of accomplishing the work of salvation and exaltation. Sufficient time should then be given to meaningful gospel instruction and discussion.

Quorum meetings focus on topics in one or more talks from the most recent general conference. The elders quorum presidency prayerfully selects messages to discuss based on members' needs. Hymns may be sung to enhance a lesson. Meetings should end with a prayer.

For more information, see [ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 8.2.1.3 Activities

Elders quorum presidencies may plan activities. These activities strengthen quorum members and give them opportunities to serve together. Most activities are held at times other than on Sundays or Monday evenings.

The elders quorum president oversees these activities. He may ask a counselor or another quorum

member to take the lead in planning and carrying them out (see 8.3.5). Presidencies discuss activities with the bishop as part of their planning.

### 8.2.2

#### Caring for Those in Need

As followers of Jesus Christ, elders quorum members have a responsibility to reach out in love to those in need. Individually and as a quorum, they seek ways to serve others in the ward and community. Where available, JustServe.org suggests community service opportunities.

For more information about how members of the elders quorum and Relief Society care for those in need, see 22.2.4.

#### 8.2.2.1

##### Ministering

Ministering is caring for others as the Savior would. Members of the elders quorum receive ministering assignments from the quorum presidency. For more information, see chapter 21.

#### 8.2.2.2

##### Short-Term Needs

Ministering brothers seek to understand and respond to the needs of those they serve. Members may need short-term assistance at times of illness, births, deaths, job loss, and other circumstances.

When needed, ministering brothers ask the elders quorum presidency for help. With the bishop's approval, the presidency may call a service coordinator to organize these efforts (see 8.3.5).

The elders quorum and Relief Society coordinate efforts to address short-term needs (see 22.2.4.1). The bishop may provide fast-offering assistance if needed.

In some locations, bishops have the option to provide members in need with a bishop's order for food and other basic goods. The bishop generally assigns the Relief Society president to meet with the members and fill out the order form. However, he may also assign the elders quorum president. A counselor in the Relief Society or elders quorum presidency may be assigned if the president is unavailable. The assigned leader submits the completed form to the bishop for his approval.

For more information, see 22.6.4.3 and "Welfare Resources" in Leader and Clerk Resources.

#### 8.2.2.3

##### Long-Term Needs and Self-Reliance

Under the bishop's direction, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies help members with long-term needs and self-reliance. They teach principles of temporal and spiritual self-reliance. See chapter 22 and "Self-Reliance" in the Gospel Library app.

If a person or family needs assistance, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents counsel together under the direction of the bishop about how to help (see 22.6.3).

The elders quorum president, Relief Society president, or another leader helps the person or family develop a Self-Reliance Plan. Ministering brothers or sisters can also help with the plan. Often, other members of the elders quorum or Relief Society have skills or experience that can help. All who assist treat information with confidentiality. For more information, see 22.2.4.2 and 22.2.4.5.

#### 8.2.2.4

##### When a Ward Member Dies

When a ward member dies, elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies offer comfort and assistance. Under the direction of the bishop, they can help with the funeral.

If possible, deceased members who were endowed are buried in temple clothing. The bishop may ask the elders quorum president to assign an endowed man to dress or oversee the dressing of a deceased endowed man. For more information, see 27.3.9.

Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies, ministering brothers and sisters, and others continue to offer comfort and assistance after the funeral.

### 8.2.3

#### Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

Melchizedek Priesthood holders have a duty to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Doctrine and Covenants 53:3). They do this by sharing the gospel, strengthening new members, and reaching out to those who are less active.

In presidency and quorum meetings, the elders quorum presidency discusses ways the brethren can invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel.

The elders quorum president assigns a member of the presidency to help lead member missionary work in the ward. He works with the assigned member of the Relief Society presidency to coordinate these efforts.

This member of the elders quorum presidency may fulfill the role of the ward mission leader. If the bishopric has called a ward mission leader, this presidency member oversees his work. See 23.1.1 and 23.1.3.

The assigned member of the elders quorum presidency and the ward mission leader (if called) conduct brief, informal discussions to coordinate inviting all to receive the blessings of the gospel. These discussions are held weekly. They also include the assigned member of the Relief Society presidency, ward missionaries, an assistant in the priests quorum, a presidency member of the oldest Young Women class, and full-time missionaries.

### 8.2.4

#### Uniting Families for Eternity

Melchizedek Priesthood holders support members in uniting families for eternity. This includes:

- Making covenants with God by receiving ordinances, including the temple endowment.
- Doing temple and family history work (see 1.2.4).

In presidency and quorum meetings, the elders quorum presidency discusses ways the brethren can participate in these efforts.

The presidency encourages quorum members to learn about their family history and about temple covenants and ordinances. They also encourage brethren to attend the temple regularly where possible.

The elders quorum president assigns a member of the presidency to help lead temple and family history work in the ward. He works with the assigned member of the Relief Society presidency to coordinate these efforts.

This member of the elders quorum presidency may fulfill the role of the ward temple and family history leader. If the bishopric has called a temple and family history leader, this presidency member oversees his work. See 25.4.1.

The assigned member of the elders quorum presidency and the ward temple and family history leader (if called) conduct brief, informal discussions to coordinate temple and family history work. These discussions are held regularly. They also include the assigned member of the Relief Society presidency, an assistant in the priests quorum, a presidency member of the oldest Young Women class, and temple and family history consultants.



**8.3****Elders Quorum Leaders****8.3.1****Stake Presidency and Bishop**

The elders quorum president is directly responsible to the stake presidency. He meets regularly with a member of the presidency to receive direction and report on his responsibilities.

The elders quorum president also receives direction from the bishop, who is the presiding officer in the ward. They meet regularly. They discuss the work of salvation and exaltation, including the service of ministering brothers. They also discuss (1) the progress and needs of ward members and (2) elders quorum meetings, instruction, and activities.

**8.3.2****High Councilor**

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to represent them in each elders quorum. His responsibilities are outlined in 5.3.1.

**8.3.3****Elders Quorum Presidency****8.3.3.1****Calling an Elders Quorum Presidency**

After consulting with the bishop, the stake president calls an elder or high priest to serve as the elders quorum president.

If the unit is large enough, the elders quorum president recommends to the stake president one or two elders or high priests to serve as his counselors. He does this in consultation with the bishop. The stake presidency considers the recommendations. A member of the stake presidency or high council extends the calls.

All recommendations for calling members of elders quorum presidencies require the approval of the stake presidency and high council.

A member of the stake presidency presents members of the elders quorum presidency in a sacrament meeting for a sustaining vote. The stake presidency may also assign a high councilor to do this.

A member of the elders quorum presidency presents brethren who are called to other quorum callings for a sustaining vote in a quorum meeting (see 8.3.4 and 8.3.5).

The stake president sets apart the elders quorum president and confers on him the keys of his calling. For more information about priesthood keys, see 3.4.1. A member of the stake presidency or high council sets apart the counselors.

**8.3.3.2****Responsibilities**

The elders quorum president has the following responsibilities. His counselors assist him.

- Serve on the ward council. He serves as (1) a member of the council who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the elders quorum (see 7.6.1).
- Lead the quorum's efforts to participate in the work of salvation and exaltation (see chapter 1).
- Organize and oversee the service of ministering brothers. Coordinate ministering assignments with the Relief Society presidency, meeting at least quarterly. Seek the bishop's approval for ministering assignments. Hold ministering interviews at least quarterly. See chapter 21.
- Under the direction of the bishop, counsel with adult members of the ward about matters other than those that are the bishop's responsibility, such as worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds. See [CounselingResources.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

- With the Relief Society presidency, help lead efforts in the ward to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel (see 9.2.3). Oversee the ward mission leader if one is called.
- With the Relief Society presidency, help lead temple and family history work in the ward (see 9.2.4). Oversee the ward temple and family history leader if one is called.
- Coordinate the elders quorum's efforts to strengthen young adult brethren, both single and married.
- Meet with each quorum member individually at least once a year. Discuss priesthood duties and the well-being of the member and his family.
- Teach quorum members their priesthood duties (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:89). This includes teaching them how to exercise their priesthood in performing ordinances and blessings.
- Oversee and help improve teaching in the quorum (see chapter 17).
- Plan and conduct quorum meetings.
- Oversee elders quorum activities (see 8.2.1.3).
- Help young men and prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood (see 8.4).
- Oversee quorum records, reports, and finances (see LCR.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). A secretary may help (see 8.3.4).

The stake presidency and assigned members of the high council teach the elders quorum presidency about these responsibilities. They may do this during stake priesthood leadership meetings and quorum presidency meetings (see 29.3.3).

Through his service, the elders quorum president supports the bishop in focusing on the youth and on the bishop's unique responsibilities.

### 8.3.3.3

#### Presidency Meeting

The elders quorum presidency and secretary meet regularly. The president conducts these meetings. The high councilor assigned to the quorum periodically attends.

The agenda could include the following items:

- Plan how to strengthen quorum members (including prospective elders) and their families.
- Plan how to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.
- Coordinate missionary work and temple and family history work.
- Respond to counsel and assignments from the bishop.
- Respond to assignments from ward council meetings.
- Prayerfully consider ministering assignments.
- Review information from ministering interviews. Plan ways to identify strengths and help meet needs. (See chapter 21.)
- Consider brethren to serve in callings and assignments.
- Plan quorum meetings and activities.

### 8.3.4

#### Secretary

With the bishop's approval, a member of the elders quorum presidency may call a quorum member to be the quorum secretary. He presents him for a sustaining vote in a quorum meeting and sets him apart.

The secretary's responsibilities could include the following:

- Prepare agendas for presidency meetings and quorum meetings.
- Take notes in meetings and keep track of assignments.
- Schedule ministering interviews (see 21.4).
- Prepare and submit quarterly reports of attendance and the number of ministering interviews held.
- Help prepare an annual budget and keep track of expenses (see 34.7).

### 8.3.5

#### Additional Callings

The following additional callings may be helpful. The bishop and elders quorum president discuss whether they are needed.

- Elders quorum teachers to teach in Sunday quorum meetings
- A service coordinator to help plan and carry out service to people in need (see 8.2.2.2). Assistants and committee members may also be called.
- An activity coordinator to help plan and carry out elders quorum activities (see 8.2.1.3). Assistants and committee members may also be called.
- Assistant secretaries to help the elders quorum secretary
- Ministering secretaries to organize ministering interviews and help prepare quarterly reports

If these or other callings are needed, the elders quorum presidency recommends brethren to serve. They make these recommendations to the bishopric. If the bishopric approves, a member of the quorum presidency calls them. He presents them for a sustaining vote in a quorum meeting and sets them apart.

As needed, the elders quorum presidency may assign brethren to help with elders quorum efforts in other ways. Brethren with short-term assignments do not need to be called and set apart.

### 8.4

#### Helping Prospective Elders Prepare to Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood

A prospective elder is a male Church member who has not received the Melchizedek Priesthood and (1) is 19 or older or (2) is younger than 19 and married.

Helping prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood is one of the quorum presidency's highest priorities. The presidency gives prospective elders opportunities to serve and share their strengths. Dedicated ministering brothers should be assigned to prospective elders.

The quorum presidency and ministering brothers teach prospective elders about:

- The oath and covenant of the priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44).
- The duties of an elder, including the duty to minister (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:38–45; 42:44; 107:11–12). Prospective elders who are teachers or priests can serve as ministering brothers.
- The purposes of priesthood ordinances and blessings and how to perform them (see chapter 18).
- How men and women work together to accomplish God's work.

For information about these topics, see “Melchizedek Priesthood,” “Priesthood,” and “Women in the Church” (Gospel Topics, topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

This instruction may occur individually or in a class held outside of regular Sunday meetings.

As soon as the bishop and stake president determine that a prospective elder is prepared and worthy, he may be ordained an elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

## **8.5**

### Additional Guidelines and Policies

#### **8.5.1**

#### **Members with Disabilities**

The elders quorum presidency gives particular care to members with disabilities. For information about helping these members, see disability .ChurchofJesusChrist.org and 38.8.31.

## 9.

## Relief Society

## 9.1

### Purpose and Organization

Relief Society helps God’s children prepare to return to His presence. As daughters of heavenly parents, members of Relief Society “expound scriptures,” “exhort the church,” lift hearts, and “cleave unto the covenants [they have] made” (Doctrine and Covenants 25:7, 13).

## 9.1.1

#### Purpose

Relief Society is a divinely instituted organization for all adult women in the Church. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the purpose of Relief Society is to save souls and relieve suffering. He stated that the Church of Jesus Christ was not fully organized until the sisters were so organized.

Members of Relief Society work together to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. They serve others, fulfill covenant responsibilities, build unity, and learn and live doctrine.

The motto of Relief Society is “Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:8). This motto is reflected in the Relief Society’s seal.



## 9.1.2

#### Membership in Relief Society

Relief Society is a lifelong sisterhood. All adult sisters 18 and older are members of Relief Society. They are members even if they cannot attend Relief Society meetings.

A young woman may begin attending Relief Society when she turns 18. She counsels with her parents and bishop about the timing. By age 19 or when moving from home, such as to attend a university or serve a mission, she should participate in Relief Society.

Married women under 18 are also members of Relief Society.

For information about unwed parents under age 18, see 38.1.5.

## 9.1.3

#### Adapting to Local Needs

Some wards have a very large number of active adult women. For these wards, the bishop and stake president may authorize having more than one ward Relief Society. Each Relief Society has its own presidency. If possible, each Relief Society should have members with a variety of ages and experience.

## 9.2

### Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation

God invites all to come unto Christ and participate in the work of salvation and exaltation by:

- Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Caring for those in need.

- Inviting all to receive the gospel.
- Uniting families for eternity.

Relief Society leaders plan Sunday meetings, activities, ministering, service, and other interactions to help women participate in the work of salvation and exaltation. Members of the Relief Society and elders quorum work in unity to accomplish this work.

For more information about the work of salvation and exaltation, study chapter 1.

### 9.2.1

#### Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Relief Society leaders support members in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. They emphasize exercising faith, repenting, increasing in self-reliance, and making covenants with God by receiving ordinances. Such ordinances include the temple endowment. See 1.2.1.

#### 9.2.1.1

##### Gospel Learning at Home

When members learn and live the gospel at home, their conversion to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ deepens. Relief Society leaders encourage sisters to study the scriptures and the words of living prophets, individually and with their families. *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* and other resources can supplement their study.

Home evenings are an important way to learn the gospel at home. They are usually held weekly on Sunday, on Monday evening, or at another time. They could include prayers, gospel study, testimonies, singing, and fun activities.

#### 9.2.1.2

##### Gospel Learning in Relief Society Meetings

Relief Societies meet on Sundays for the following purposes:

- Strengthen faith.
- Build unity.
- Strengthen families and homes.
- Make plans to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.

Meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. They last 50 minutes. The Relief Society presidency plans these meetings. A member of the presidency conducts.

The meeting begins with a presidency member conducting any business. For example, the sisters may counsel together about aspects of accomplishing the work of salvation and exaltation. Sufficient time should then be given to meaningful gospel instruction and discussion.

Relief Society meetings focus on topics in one or more talks from the most recent general conference. The Relief Society presidency prayerfully selects messages to discuss based on sisters' needs. Hymns may be sung to enhance a lesson. Meetings should end with a prayer.

For more information, see [ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 9.2.1.3

##### Activities

Relief Society presidencies may plan activities. These activities strengthen sisters and give them opportunities to serve together. Most activities are held at times other than on Sundays or Monday evenings.

The Relief Society president oversees these activities. She may ask a counselor or another sister to take the lead in planning and carrying them out (see 9.3.4). Presidencies discuss activities with the bishop as part of their planning.

**9.2.2****Caring for Those in Need**

As followers of Jesus Christ, sisters have a responsibility to reach out in love to those in need. Individually and as a Relief Society, they seek ways to serve others in the ward and community. Where available, JustServe.org suggests community service opportunities.

For more information about how members of the Relief Society and elders quorum care for those in need, see 22.2.4.

**9.2.2.1****Ministering**

Ministering is caring for others as the Savior would. Sisters receive ministering assignments from the Relief Society presidency. For more information, see chapter 21.

**9.2.2.2****Short-Term Needs**

Ministering sisters seek to understand and respond to the needs of those they serve. Members may need short-term assistance at times of illness, births, deaths, job loss, and other circumstances.

When needed, ministering sisters ask the Relief Society presidency for help. The presidency may recommend calling a service coordinator to organize these efforts (see 9.3.4).

The Relief Society and elders quorum coordinate efforts to address short-term needs (see 22.2.4.1). The bishop may provide fast-offering assistance if needed.

In some locations, bishops have the option to provide members in need with a bishop's order for food and other basic goods. The bishop generally assigns the Relief Society president to meet with the members and fill out the order form. However, he may also assign the elders quorum president. A counselor

in the Relief Society or elders quorum presidency may be assigned if the president is unavailable. The assigned leader submits the completed form to the bishop for his approval.

For more information, see 22.6.4.3 and “Welfare Resources” in Leader and Clerk Resources.

**9.2.2.3****Long-Term Needs and Self-Reliance**

Under the bishop's direction, the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies help members with long-term needs and self-reliance. They teach principles of temporal and spiritual self-reliance. See chapter 22 and “Self-Reliance” in the Gospel Library app.

If a person or family needs assistance, the Relief Society and elders quorum presidents counsel together under the direction of the bishop about how to help (see 22.6.3).

The Relief Society president, elders quorum president, or another leader helps the person or family develop a Self-Reliance Plan. Ministering sisters or brothers can also help with the plan. Often, other members of the Relief Society or elders quorum have skills or experience that can help. All who assist treat information with confidentiality. For more information, see 22.2.4.2 and 22.2.4.5.

**9.2.2.4****When a Ward Member Dies**

When a ward member dies, Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies offer comfort and assistance. Under the direction of the bishop, they can help with the funeral.

If possible, deceased members who were endowed are buried in temple clothing. The bishop may ask the Relief Society president to assign an endowed sister to dress or oversee the dressing of a deceased endowed sister. For more information, see 27.3.9.

Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies, ministering brothers and sisters, and others continue to offer comfort and assistance after the funeral.

### 9.2.3

#### Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

Members of Relief Society have a responsibility to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 18:9). They do this by sharing the gospel, strengthening new members, and reaching out to those who are less active.

In presidency and Relief Society meetings, the Relief Society presidency discusses ways the sisters can invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel.

The Relief Society president assigns a member of the presidency to help lead member missionary work in the ward. She works with the assigned member of the elders quorum presidency to coordinate these efforts (see 23.1.1).

The assigned member of the Relief Society presidency participates in brief, informal discussions to coordinate inviting all to receive the blessings of the gospel. These discussions are held weekly. They are led by the assigned member of the elders quorum presidency and the ward mission leader (if called). They also include ward missionaries, an assistant in the priests quorum, a presidency member of the oldest Young Women class, and full-time missionaries.

### 9.2.4

#### Uniting Families for Eternity

Members of Relief Society support members in uniting families for eternity. This includes:

- Making covenants with God by receiving ordinances, including the temple endowment.
- Doing temple and family history work (see 1.2.4).

In presidency and Relief Society meetings, the Relief Society presidency discusses ways the sisters can participate in these efforts.

The presidency encourages sisters to learn about their family history and about temple covenants and ordinances. They also encourage sisters to attend the temple regularly where possible.

The Relief Society president assigns a member of the presidency to help lead temple and family history work in the ward. She works with the assigned member of the elders quorum presidency to coordinate these efforts (see 25.4.1).

The assigned member of the Relief Society presidency participates in brief, informal discussions to coordinate temple and family history work. These discussions are held regularly. They are led by the assigned member of the elders quorum presidency and the ward temple and family history leader (if called). They also include an assistant in the priests quorum, a presidency member of the oldest Young Women class, and temple and family history consultants.

## 9.3

### Relief Society Leaders

#### 9.3.1

##### Bishop

The bishop usually meets with the Relief Society president monthly. They discuss the work of salvation and exaltation, including the service of ministering sisters. They also discuss (1) the progress and needs of sisters in the ward and (2) Relief Society meetings, instruction, and activities.



**9.3.2****Relief Society Presidency****9.3.2.1****Calling a Relief Society Presidency**

The bishop calls a woman to serve as the ward Relief Society president. If the unit is large enough, she recommends to him one or two women to serve as her counselors. The bishopric considers her recommendations and extends the callings.

A member of the bishopric presents presidency members in a sacrament meeting for a sustaining vote. The bishop sets apart the Relief Society president. A member of the bishopric sets apart her counselors.

The bishop or one of his counselors presents sisters who are called to other Relief Society callings for a sustaining vote in a Relief Society meeting. See 9.3.3 and 9.3.4.

Some small units may not have a Young Women or Primary president. In these units, the Relief Society president may help parents plan instruction for youth and children.

**9.3.2.2****Responsibilities**

The Relief Society president has the following responsibilities. Her counselors assist her.

- Serve on the ward council. She serves as (1) a member of the council who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Relief Society (see 7.6.1).
- Lead the Relief Society's efforts to participate in the work of salvation and exaltation (see chapter 1).
- Organize and oversee the service of ministering sisters. Coordinate ministering assignments with the elders quorum presidency, meeting at least quarterly. Seek the bishop's approval for

ministering assignments. Hold ministering interviews at least quarterly. See chapter 21.

- Under the direction of the bishop, counsel with adult members of the ward about matters other than those that are the bishop's responsibility, such as worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds. See [CounselingResources.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- With the elders quorum presidency, help lead efforts in the ward to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel (see 9.2.3).
- With the elders quorum presidency, help lead temple and family history work in the ward (see 9.2.4).
- Coordinate the Relief Society's efforts to strengthen young adult sisters in the ward, both single and married (see 14.3.3.2).
- Meet with each member of Relief Society individually at least once a year. Discuss the well-being of the sister and her family.
- Teach sisters their covenant responsibilities.
- Oversee and help improve teaching in the Relief Society (see chapter 17).
- Plan and conduct Relief Society meetings.
- Oversee Relief Society activities (see 9.2.1.3).
- Help young women prepare to participate in Relief Society (see 9.4).
- Oversee Relief Society records, reports, and finances (see [LCR.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.LCR.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)). A secretary may help (see 9.3.3).

The stake Relief Society presidency teaches the ward Relief Society presidency about these responsibilities. They may do this during stake leadership meetings and by visiting ward Relief Society presidency meetings (see 29.3.11).

Through her service, the ward Relief Society president supports the bishop in focusing on the youth and on his unique responsibilities.

### 9.3.2.3

#### Presidency Meeting

The Relief Society presidency and secretary meet regularly. The president conducts these meetings. The agenda could include the following items:

- Plan how to strengthen sisters and their families.
- Plan how to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.
- Coordinate missionary work and temple and family history work.
- Respond to counsel and assignments from the bishop.
- Respond to assignments from ward council meetings.
- Prayerfully consider ministering assignments.
- Review information from ministering interviews. Plan ways to identify strengths and help meet needs. (See chapter 21.)
- Consider sisters to serve in Relief Society callings and assignments.
- Plan Relief Society meetings and activities.

### 9.3.3

#### Secretary

The Relief Society presidency may recommend a sister to serve as the Relief Society secretary. A member of the bishopric calls her, presents her for a sustaining vote in a Relief Society meeting, and sets her apart.

The secretary's responsibilities could include the following:

- Prepare agendas for presidency meetings and Relief Society meetings.
- Take notes in meetings and keep track of assignments.
- Schedule ministering interviews (see 21.4).
- Prepare and submit quarterly reports of attendance and the number of ministering interviews held.
- Help prepare an annual budget and keep track of expenses (see 34.7).

### 9.3.4

#### Additional Callings

The following additional callings may be helpful. The bishop and Relief Society president discuss whether they are needed.

- Relief Society teachers to teach in Sunday meetings.
- A service coordinator to help plan and carry out service to people in need (see 9.2.2.2). Assistants and committee members may also be called.
- An activity coordinator to help plan and carry out Relief Society activities (see 9.2.1.3). Assistants and committee members may also be called.
- Assistant secretaries to help the Relief Society secretary.
- Ministering secretaries to organize ministering interviews and help prepare quarterly reports.

If these or other callings are needed, the Relief Society presidency recommends sisters to serve. They make these recommendations to the bishopric. If the bishopric approves, a member of the bishopric calls them. He presents them for a sustaining vote in a Relief Society meeting and sets them apart.

As needed, the Relief Society presidency may assign sisters to help with Relief Society efforts in other ways. Sisters with short-term assignments do not need to be called and set apart.

#### 9.4

### Helping Young Women Prepare to Participate in Relief Society

The Relief Society presidency works with young women, their parents, and Young Women leaders to help young women prepare to participate in Relief Society.

Leaders also provide ongoing opportunities for young women and Relief Society sisters to develop relationships. Serving together as ministering sisters is one valuable way to make connections.

Leaders help young women understand their covenant responsibilities. When it would be helpful to have a young woman minister to a particular sister, she may be assigned as a ministering sister when she is willing, able, and mature. She may be assigned beginning in the year she turns 14. Young women serve as companions to Relief Society sisters (see 21.3).

When young adults join Relief Society, the Relief Society presidency gives them opportunities to serve and share their strengths. The presidency also helps them prepare to make and keep sacred temple covenants (see 27.1).

#### 9.5

### Stake Relief Society Leaders

The stake president calls and sets apart a woman to serve as the stake Relief Society president. If a stake is large enough, she recommends one or two women to serve as counselors and another to serve as secretary. These women are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high

councilor. For information about the responsibilities of the stake Relief Society presidency and secretary, see 5.4.1 and 5.4.4.

The stake president meets regularly (usually monthly) with the stake Relief Society president or presidency. They counsel together about the work of salvation and exaltation. They also discuss (1) the progress and needs of sisters in the stake and (2) Relief Society meetings, instruction, and activities.

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to work with the stake Relief Society presidency (see 5.3.1).

The stake Relief Society presidency instructs ward Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities for missionary work and temple and family history work. They do this under the direction of the stake presidency. High councilors are assigned to assist. See 23.1 and 25.4.

If the stake has a young single adult committee, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency serves on it (see 14.3.2).

#### 9.6

### Additional Guidelines and Policies

#### 9.6.1

#### Members with Disabilities

The Relief Society presidency gives particular care to members with disabilities. For information about helping these members, see disability .ChurchofJesusChrist.org and 38.8.31.

#### 9.6.2

#### Literacy

As needed, the Relief Society presidency works with the bishop, elders quorum presidency, and ward council to help members learn to read and write.



10.

## Aaronic Priesthood Quorums

10.1

### Purpose and Organization

The Aaronic Priesthood helps God’s children prepare to return to His presence. It holds “the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism” (Doctrine and Covenants 13; see also 3.3.2).

10.1.1

### Purpose

Aaronic Priesthood quorums help young men make and keep sacred covenants and deepen their conversion to Jesus Christ and His gospel.

A quorum is an organized group of priesthood holders. The purpose of a quorum is to help priesthood holders work together to accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. In their quorums, Aaronic Priesthood holders serve others, fulfill priesthood duties, build unity, and learn and live doctrine.

**10.1.2****Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Theme**

The Aaronic Priesthood quorum theme can help each young man understand his divine identity and his purpose as a priesthood holder. Young men and their leaders repeat the theme at the beginning of quorum meetings and at other quorum gatherings. The theme reads as follows:

“I am a beloved son of God, and He has a work for me to do.

“With all my heart, might, mind, and strength, I will love God, keep my covenants, and use His priesthood to serve others, beginning in my own home.

“As I strive to serve, exercise faith, repent, and improve each day, I will qualify to receive temple blessings and the enduring joy of the gospel.

“I will prepare to become a diligent missionary, loyal husband, and loving father by being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

“I will help prepare the world for the Savior’s return by inviting all to come unto Christ and receive the blessings of His Atonement.”

**10.1.3****Quorums**

The bishop organizes Aaronic Priesthood holders into quorums as described below. (See also Doctrine and Covenants 107:85–88.)

**10.1.3.1****Deacons Quorum**

Young men join the deacons quorum beginning in January of the year they turn 12. At this time they are also eligible to be ordained deacons if they are prepared and worthy.

A member of the quorum who is an ordained deacon serves as the quorum president. Where possible, one or two counselors and a secretary may serve

with him. The counselors and secretary must also be deacons.

The duties of a deacon are described in Doctrine and Covenants 20:57–59; 84:111. Other duties include passing the sacrament and assisting the bishop in “administering all temporal things” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:68).

**10.1.3.2****Teachers Quorum**

Young men join the teachers quorum beginning in January of the year they turn 14. At this time they are also eligible to be ordained teachers if they are prepared and worthy.

A member of the quorum who is an ordained teacher serves as the quorum president. Where possible, one or two counselors and a secretary may serve with him. The counselors and secretary must also be teachers.

Teachers have the same duties as deacons. They also prepare the sacrament and serve as ministering brothers. Additional duties are described in Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–59; 84:111.

**10.1.3.3****Priests Quorum**

Young men join the priests quorum beginning in January of the year they turn 16. At this time they are also eligible to be ordained priests if they are prepared and worthy.

The bishop is the president of the priests quorum (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:87–88). He calls one or two quorum members to serve as his assistants. A secretary may also be called. The assistants and secretary should be ordained priests.

Priests have the same duties as deacons and teachers. Additional duties are described in Doctrine and Covenants 20:46–52, 73–79.

**10.1.4****Priesthood Keys**

Each quorum is led by a president who holds priesthood keys. The deacons quorum president, teachers quorum president, and bishop hold priesthood keys. For more information about these keys, see 3.4.1.

**10.1.5****📌 Adapting Quorums to Local Needs**

In a ward or branch with few young men, Aaronic Priesthood quorums may meet together for instruction and activities.

If a ward has more than 12 deacons, the bishop may divide the deacons quorum. The same is true if there are more than 24 teachers (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:85–86). When making this decision, the bishop considers the effect on quorum members.

**10.2****Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation**

God invites all to come unto Christ and assist in His work by:

- Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Caring for those in need.
- Inviting all to receive the gospel.
- Uniting families for eternity.

The bishopric and youth quorum leaders, supported by advisers (see 10.5), counsel together about how to accomplish this work. For more information about the work of salvation and exaltation, study chapter 1.

**10.2.1****Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ****10.2.1.1****Roles of Parents and Leaders**

Parents are responsible to teach their children the gospel and help them live it (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28). The bishopric and youth quorum leaders, with help from advisers, support parents in this responsibility as follows:

- Encourage communication between young men and their families.
- Ensure that youth activities support and bless families.
- Help parents prepare their sons for priesthood ordinations and to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.
- Help parents prepare their sons for the temple endowment, full-time missionary service, temple marriage, and fatherhood.

Leaders should be sensitive to youth who lack family support for gospel living.

Parents and leaders strive to be good examples to the youth. They mentor youth in their efforts to become more like Jesus Christ. The Children and Youth program can help in these efforts (see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

**10.2.1.2****Gospel Learning**

The bishopric, youth quorum leaders, and advisers encourage young men and their families to learn the gospel at home. Leaders and advisers study the gospel and share with the young men what they learn. They invite quorum members to share at church what they are learning at home.

Aaronic Priesthood quorums meet on Sundays to strengthen faith, build unity, strengthen families

and homes, and make plans to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. The bishopric and youth quorum leaders, supported by advisers, plan Sunday meetings.

Quorum meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. They last 50 minutes. A member of the quorum presidency (or one of the bishop's assistants in the priests quorum) conducts. He leads the quorum in reciting the theme and counseling together about assignments, duties, and other matters.

A quorum member or adult leader then leads gospel instruction. Quorum leaders counsel with advisers about who should teach. Meeting outlines are found in *Come, Follow Me—For Aaronic Priesthood Quorums and Young Women Classes* (see [ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).


Normally, each Aaronic Priesthood quorum meets separately (see 10.1.5). Young men and young women may occasionally combine for a Sunday lesson, as directed by the bishopric.

Young men are encouraged to participate in seminary (see 15.1).

### 10.2.1.3

#### Service and Activities

The bishopric and youth quorum leaders, supported by advisers, plan service and activities. These should help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. Service and activities should build testimonies, strengthen families, foster quorum unity, and provide opportunities to bless others. They should be balanced among four areas of personal growth: spiritual, social, physical, and intellectual.

Most youth activities are held at times other than on Sundays or Monday evenings. They are usually held weekly. In some areas, distance, safety, or other factors make weekly activities impractical. In these areas, activities may be held less often, but they should generally be held at least monthly.  Activities can be planned on the Sample Service and




Activity Planner, available on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).


Some service and activities should include both young men and young women, especially for older youth.

Youth can benefit from socializing in larger groups. The youth in two or more wards may occasionally meet together for service and activities. Stakes or districts may occasionally plan service and activities for youth.

Adult leaders help ensure that activities are safe (see [safety.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://safety.ChurchofJesusChrist.org); see also 20.6.20). At least two responsible adult leaders should be present at all activities (see 10.8.1).

For more information, see [AaronicPriesthoodQuorums.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://AaronicPriesthoodQuorums.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).  See also [JustServe.org](http://JustServe.org) where it is available. These resources provide service and activity ideas.

*Annual Activities.* In addition to regular youth activities, young men may also participate in the following each year:

- A meeting for youth and their parents near the beginning of the year. It can be held for young men and young women separately or together. It can also be held at the ward or stake level. It is planned and led by the assistants to the bishop in the priests quorum and the presidency of the oldest Young Women class. Young men turning 12 during the year may receive their emblems of belonging during this meeting (see 10.8.3). For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- An Aaronic Priesthood quorum camp (see *Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Camp Guide*). Young men may participate in additional overnight camps, events, and activities throughout the year, where feasible.
-  A ward or stake youth conference or a For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conference (see [FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

- At least one activity emphasizing the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. This event could include both young men and young women. Parents may also be invited.

*Age Requirements.* With their parents' approval, young men may attend overnight Aaronic Priesthood camps beginning in January of the year they turn 12. They may attend dances, youth conferences, and FSY conferences beginning in January of the year they turn 14. However, they should be at least 16 before dating (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 4).

*Paying for Activities.* Activities, including supplies, are paid for by the ward budget. Travel and expenses should not be excessive.

As an exception, if the ward budget does not have enough money to pay for multiday activities, such as camps, leaders may ask participants to help pay for them. However, a young man should not be prevented from participating if he cannot help pay. If more money is still needed, the bishop may authorize one fundraising activity each year (see 20.2.8).

The bishopric ensures that the budget and activities for young men and young women are sufficient and equitable. Budget for Aaronic Priesthood quorums is based on the number of young men in the ward. Budget for the young women is based on the number of young women in the ward.

See [FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) for information about funding for FSY conferences.



#### 10.2.1.4

### Personal Development


In their efforts to become more like the Savior, youth are invited to set goals to grow spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually (see Luke 2:52). Youth seek inspiration to discover what they need to work on. With help from parents, they make plans, act on their plans, and reflect on what they learn. Leaders and advisers also offer support as needed. However, they should not track the young men’s goals or progress. Parents and leaders may suggest goals, but they allow youth to seek their own inspiration about what goals to pursue.

Youth are encouraged to complete at least two goals in each of the four areas each year. They can use *Personal Development: Youth Guidebook* or the Gospel Living app to set and record goals.

For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 10.2.2

### Caring for Those in Need

Aaronic Priesthood holders assist the bishop in “administering all temporal things” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:68). They should have regular opportunities to serve others in and with their families, during youth activities, and on their own. Ideas for service are available at [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Where available,  [JustServe.org](http://JustServe.org) suggests opportunities for service in the community.

#### 10.2.2.1

### Ministering

Ministering is caring for others as the Savior would. Aaronic Priesthood holders receive ministering assignments beginning in January of the year they turn 14. For more information, see chapter 21.



**10.2.3****Inviting All to Receive the Gospel**


Aaronic Priesthood holders have a duty to “invite all to come unto Christ” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:59). Some ways they can do this are listed below:

- Set a good example as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Share their testimonies with friends and family members.
- Minister to less-active members of their quorums.
- Invite friends to attend church or youth activities.
- Invite friends to participate in the Children and Youth program. Leaders work closely with parents of these youth to help them understand the program and determine how they and their children would like to be involved.
- Invite friends to be taught by the missionaries.

Parents and leaders encourage young men to prepare to serve full-time missions and to share the gospel throughout their lives. Some ways they can do this are listed below:




- Encourage young men to gain a personal testimony of Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the restoration of His gospel.
- Teach young men about the blessings of serving missions and what will be expected of them.
- Provide opportunities to serve in the Church.
- Provide opportunities to teach the gospel in quorum meetings and other settings.

As part of this preparation, the bishopric or stake presidency may organize a missionary preparation class. The main resources for this class are the scriptures, *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ*, and *Preach My Gospel*. This class is not held during regular Sunday meetings.

 [Missionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.Missionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) provides additional resources that can help young men as they prepare to serve as missionaries. See chapters 23 and 24 for more information.

**10.2.4****Uniting Families for Eternity**

Aaronic Priesthood holders can help unite families for eternity in many ways. Some of these ways are listed below:

- Honor their parents and set an example of Christlike living in their home.
- Prepare to have their own eternal family.
- Be worthy of a limited-use temple recommend.
- Prepare to receive temple ordinances, including eternal marriage.
- Learn about their extended families and ancestors (see  *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together*).
- Identify ancestors who need temple ordinances (see  [FamilySearch.org](https://www.FamilySearch.org)).
- Participate in baptisms and confirmations for the dead as often as circumstances allow.
- Participate in indexing (see  [FamilySearch.org/indexing](https://www.FamilySearch.org/indexing)).
- Serve as temple and family history consultants, as called by the bishopric (see 25.4.4).

**10.3****Bishopric**

The bishopric is the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:13–15). They direct the work of Aaronic Priesthood quorums. The bishop’s foremost responsibility is to care for the young men and young women in his ward. He learns their names and

understands their home circumstances. He attends their activities and Sunday meetings regularly.

The bishop is the president of the priests quorum. His duty “is to preside over [the] priests, and sit in council with them, to teach them the duties of their office” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:87).

The first counselor in the bishopric has responsibility for the teachers quorum. The second counselor has responsibility for the deacons quorum.

When a bishopric member attends a quorum meeting, he presides in the meeting.

The bishopric has the following additional responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood quorums:

- Mentor quorum presidencies and the bishop’s assistants in the priests quorum. Help them understand and fulfill their duties as leaders. To do this, the bishopric uses the scriptures and “Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women Class Presidency Orientation” (see AaronicPriesthoodQuorums.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). They may also use chapter 4 of this handbook.
- Interview each young man at least twice a year (see 31.1.7).
- Oversee teaching in the Aaronic Priesthood quorums.
- Help young men prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood (see 10.6).
- Oversee the records, reports, and finances of Aaronic Priesthood quorums.


Quorum advisers and specialists help with these responsibilities as requested (see 10.5).

## 10.4

### Youth Quorum Leaders

#### 10.4.1

#### Calling, Sustaining, and Setting Apart

 The bishop calls one or two priests to be his assistants in leading the priests quorum. A member of the bishopric may also call a quorum secretary.

A member of the bishopric calls the deacons and teachers quorum presidents. When there are enough Aaronic Priesthood holders to serve, these young men prayerfully consider quorum members to recommend as counselors and a secretary. The bishopric considers their recommendations and extends the callings.

Before asking a young man to serve in any of these callings, the bishopric member asks permission from the young man’s parents.

After extending these callings, a member of the bishopric presents the youth quorum leaders for a sustaining vote in their quorum meeting. The bishop sets apart his assistants and the deacons and teachers quorum presidents. He confers priesthood keys on the quorum presidents. He may assign his counselors to set apart other presidency members and secretaries.

A member of the bishopric announces these callings in sacrament meeting. He does not ask for a sustaining vote.

#### 10.4.2

#### Responsibilities

Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents, including the bishop, have the following responsibilities. Their counselors and the bishop’s assistants in the priests quorum share in these responsibilities.

- Lead the quorum’s efforts to participate in the work of salvation and exaltation (see chapter 1).

- Get to know and serve each quorum member, including those who do not attend quorum meetings. Be aware of their needs and circumstances.
- Serve on the ward youth council (see 10.4.4).
- Teach quorum members their priesthood duties (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:85–88). Support them in fulfilling those duties.
- Plan and conduct quorum meetings (see 10.2.1.2).
- Plan and carry out quorum service and activities (see 10.2.1.3).

When quorum secretaries are called, they prepare agendas for meetings and take notes. They also help the ward clerk or a quorum adviser or specialist keep track of attendance.

Members of the bishopric teach the young men about their responsibilities (see 10.3). Quorum advisers and specialists should actively help (see 10.5).

### 10.4.3

#### Quorum Presidency Meeting

Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies meet regularly. The quorum president conducts these meetings. At least two adults attend—a member of the bishopric, an adviser, or a specialist. During these meetings, leaders counsel together and seek revelation about the Lord’s will for their quorum. The agenda could include discussion of the following items:

- Accomplishing the work of salvation and exaltation
- Serving quorum members, with special attention to supporting new members and rescuing less-active members
- Reaching out to those of other faiths and beliefs
- Planning quorum meetings, service, and activities
- Leadership instruction from quorum leaders or advisers



A Sample Presidency Meeting Agenda is available on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 10.4.4

### Ward Youth Council

The purpose of the ward youth council is to help the youth bring others to Jesus Christ and to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.

The bishop presides over the ward youth council. This council's members include:

- The bishopric.
- One of the bishop's assistants in the priests quorum, the teachers quorum president, and the deacons quorum president.
- The Young Women class presidents (or the entire class presidency if the ward has just one Young Women class).
- The Young Women president.

The ward youth council discusses ways to help others build testimonies, receive saving ordinances, keep covenants, and become followers of Jesus Christ (see Moroni 6:4–5). They counsel together about the needs of the young men and young women in the ward. They may discuss activities to meet these needs. However, detailed planning of activities should happen in quorum or class presidency meetings.


See 29.2.9 for more information about the ward youth council.

#### 10.5

### Advisers and Specialists

A member of the bishopric calls and sets apart men to be Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers. These advisers support the bishopric in their responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood quorums. They give special emphasis to mentoring the young men, teaching

them how to lead by inspiration, and helping them become more like Jesus Christ.

 The bishopric may also call quorum specialists to assist the advisers. In some cases, these callings may be limited to a particular event, such as a camp, a youth conference, or sports. A specialist may also be called to fill a specific assignment, such as recording attendance.

At least two responsible adult men should be present at each quorum meeting and activity. Having advisers and specialists present makes it possible for bishopric members to also visit Young Women and Primary classes and activities. Advisers and specialists must complete the training at [ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) (see 10.8.1).

#### 10.6

### Helping Young Men Prepare to Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood


When a young man is 18 or older, he is eligible to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained an elder if he is prepared and worthy. He counsels with his parents and the bishop to make this decision.

By age 19 or before leaving home (such as to attend college or serve in the military), he should be ordained an elder if he is worthy. Even if he is not ordained an elder by age 19, he is invited to attend elders quorum meetings.

Parents have the primary responsibility to help their sons prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. The bishopric and quorum advisers can also help by providing Aaronic Priesthood holders with experiences that will prepare them for a lifetime of service as elders. The best preparation to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood is to fulfill Aaronic Priesthood duties.

Those who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood should strive to understand:

- The oath and covenant of the priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44).
- The duties of an elder (Doctrine and Covenants 20:38–45; 42:44; 107:11–12).
- The purposes of priesthood ordinances and blessings and how to perform them (see chapter 18).
- How men and women work together to accomplish God’s work.

 For information about these topics, see “Melchizedek Priesthood,” “Priesthood,” and “Women in the Church” (Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

The elders quorum presidency and ministering brothers can help provide this instruction. It may occur individually in young men’s homes or in a class held outside of regular Sunday meetings.

## 10.7

### Stake Young Men Leaders

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to be the stake Young Men president. The high council members assigned to the Young Women and Primary may serve as his counselors. Or, if a stake is large enough, other Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the stake may be called as counselors (see 5.3.1).

The stake Young Men president serves under the direction of the stake presidency. He and his counselors and secretary serve on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee (see 29.3.9). He and his counselors help bishoprics by teaching them their duties for Aaronic Priesthood quorums.

A brother from the membership of the stake may be called as the stake Young Men secretary.

For more information about the responsibilities of the stake Young Men presidency and secretary, see 5.4.2 and 5.4.4.

## 10.8

### Additional Guidelines and Policies

#### 10.8.1

#### Safeguarding Youth


When adults are interacting with youth in Church settings, at least two responsible adults should be present. It may be necessary for quorums to meet together to make this possible.

All adults who work with youth must complete the children and youth protection training within one month of being sustained (ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). They repeat the training every three years thereafter.

For information about how these guidelines apply to ministering companions, see 21.3.

#### 10.8.2

#### Young Men with Disabilities

Quorum leaders give special care to young men with disabilities.  For information about helping these young men, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

#### 10.8.3

#### Children and Youth Emblems

Young men receive emblems as part of the Children and Youth program. When a young man becomes a member of his first Aaronic Priesthood quorum, he receives an emblem of belonging from his quorum leaders. He also receives a copy of *Personal Development: Youth Guidebook*. This could be done when quorum leaders meet with him to welcome him to the quorum. It could also be done at an



annual meeting for youth and their parents (see 10.2.1.3).

In January of the year a young man turns 18, he receives an additional emblem of belonging.

Young men may earn an emblem of achievement by striving to become more like the Savior.

For more information about emblems, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 10.8.4

### Gathering Fast Offerings

⬇ In wards that are geographically concentrated, the bishop may direct Aaronic Priesthood holders to

visit members each month and invite them to contribute fast offerings. In making this decision, the bishop considers the number of Aaronic Priesthood holders available, their safety, and the blessing to members who might not otherwise contribute.

Priesthood holders should go in pairs when gathering fast offerings. Those who gather fast offerings deliver them promptly to a member of the bishopric.

Members should not give other contributions, such as tithing or other offerings, to those who gather fast offerings.



11.

## Young Women

11.1

### Purpose and Organization

The Young Women organization helps God’s children prepare to return to His presence. As they strive to keep their covenants with God, young women will be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:14).

11.1.1

### Purpose

The Young Women organization helps young women make and keep sacred covenants and deepen their conversion to Jesus Christ and His gospel.

The purpose of a Young Women class is to help young women work together to accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. In their classes, young women serve others, fulfill covenant responsibilities, build unity, and learn and live doctrine.





### 11.1.2 Young Women Theme

The Young Women theme can help each young woman understand her divine identity and become converted to Jesus Christ. Young women and their leaders repeat the theme at the beginning of Sunday meetings and at other Young Women gatherings. The theme reads as follows:

“I am a beloved daughter of heavenly parents, with a divine nature and eternal destiny.

“As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I strive to become like Him. I seek and act upon personal revelation and minister to others in His holy name.

“I will stand as a witness of God at all times and in all things and in all places.

“As I strive to qualify for exaltation, I cherish the gift of repentance and seek to improve each day. With faith, I will strengthen my home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, and receive the ordinances and blessings of the holy temple.”

### 11.1.3 Classes

Young women become members of a Young Women class beginning in January of the year they turn 12.

Young women classes are organized by age-groups. An age-group is all young women who will turn the same age during a calendar year. A class may include more than one age-group. Young women progress to a new class in January of the year they turn the age of the young women in that new class.

Bishoprics and adult Young Women leaders prayerfully decide how to organize classes according to age. They consider leadership opportunities for young women. Each class should have a president and, where possible, one or two counselors and a secretary. Where possible, classes should be large enough so class presidencies have class members to serve.

Classes are referred to by the unifying title of “Young Women.” If a ward has more than one class,

age-groups are used to distinguish classes—for example, “Young Women 12–14.”

## 11.2

### Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation

God invites all to come unto Christ and assist in His work by:

- Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Caring for those in need.
- Inviting all to receive the gospel.
- Uniting families for eternity.

Class presidencies, supported by adult leaders, counsel together about how to accomplish this work. For more information about the work of salvation and exaltation, study chapter 1.

#### 11.2.1

#### Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

##### 11.2.1.1

##### Roles of Parents and Leaders

Parents are responsible to teach their children the gospel and help them live it (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28). The bishopric, Young Women leaders, and class presidencies support parents in this responsibility as follows:

- Encourage communication between young women and their families.
- Ensure that youth activities support and bless families.
- Help parents prepare their daughters for the temple endowment, full-time missionary service (if the young women desire), temple marriage, and motherhood.

Leaders should be sensitive to youth who lack family support for gospel living.

Parents and leaders strive to be good examples to the youth. They mentor youth in their efforts to become more like Jesus Christ. The Children and Youth program can help in these efforts (see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

##### 11.2.1.2

##### Gospel Learning

Young Women leaders and class presidencies encourage young women and their families to learn the gospel at home. Leaders study the gospel and share with the young women what they learn. They invite class members to share at church what they are learning at home.

Young Women classes meet on Sundays to strengthen faith, build unity, strengthen families and homes, and make plans to accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. Class presidencies, supported by adult leaders, plan Sunday meetings.

Class meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. They last 50 minutes. A member of the class presidency conducts. She leads the class in reciting the theme and counseling together about assignments and other matters.



A class member or adult leader then leads gospel instruction. Class presidencies counsel with adult leaders about who should teach. Meeting outlines are found in *Come, Follow Me—For Aaronic Priesthood Quorums and Young Women Classes* (see [ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ComeFollowMe.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

If a ward has more than one Young Women class, they meet separately. However, they may meet together when there is a special need. Young women and young men may occasionally combine for a Sunday lesson, as directed by the bishopric.

Young women are encouraged to participate in seminary (see 15.1).

**11.2.1.3****Service and Activities**


Class presidencies, supported by adult leaders, plan service and activities. These should help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. Service and activities should build testimonies, strengthen families, foster class unity, and provide opportunities to bless others. They should be balanced among four areas of personal growth: spiritual, social, physical, and intellectual.

 Most youth activities are held at times other than on Sundays or Monday evenings. They are usually held weekly. In some areas, distance, safety, or other factors make weekly activities impractical. In these areas, activities may be held less often, but they should generally be held at least monthly.  Activities can be planned on the Sample Service and Activity Planner, available on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).


Some service and activities should include both young men and young women, especially for older youth.

Youth can benefit from socializing in larger groups. The youth in two or more wards may occasionally meet together for service and activities. Stakes or districts may occasionally plan service and activities for youth.

Adult leaders help ensure that activities are safe (see [safety.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://safety.ChurchofJesusChrist.org); see also 20.6.20). At least two responsible adult leaders should be present at all activities (see 11.6.1).

For more information, see [YoungWomen.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://YoungWomen.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).  See also [JustServe.org](http://JustServe.org) where it is available. These resources provide service and activity ideas.

*Annual Activities.* In addition to regular youth activities, young women may also participate in the following each year:

- A meeting for youth and their parents near the beginning of the year. It can be held for young men and young women separately or together. It can also be held at the ward or stake level. It is planned and led by the assistants to the bishop in the priests quorum and the presidency of the oldest Young Women class. Young women turning 12 during the year may receive their emblems of belonging during this meeting (see 11.6.3). For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- A Young Women camp (see *Young Women Camp Guide*). Young women may participate in additional overnight camps, events, and activities throughout the year, where feasible.
-  A ward or stake youth conference or a For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conference (see [FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).
- At least one activity emphasizing the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*. This event could include both young men and young women. Parents may also be invited.

*Age Requirements.* With their parents' approval, young women may attend overnight Young Women camps beginning in January of the year they turn 12. They may attend dances, youth conferences, and FSY conferences beginning in January of the year they turn 14. However, they should be at least 16 before dating (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 4).

*Paying for Activities.* Activities, including supplies, are paid for by the ward budget. Travel and expenses should not be excessive.

As an exception, if the ward budget does not have enough money to pay for multiday activities, such as camps, leaders may ask participants to help pay for them. However, a young woman should not be prevented from participating if she cannot help pay. If more money is still needed, the bishop may authorize one fundraising activity each year (see 20.2.8).



The bishopric ensures that the budget and activities for young women and young men are sufficient and equitable. Budget for the young women is based on the number of young women in the ward. Budget for Aaronic Priesthood quorums is based on the number of young men in the ward.

📌 See [FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) for information about funding for FSJ conferences.

#### 11.2.1.4

##### Personal Development

In their efforts to become more like the Savior, youth are invited to set goals to grow spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually (see Luke 2:52). Youth seek inspiration to discover what they need to work on. With help from parents, they make plans, act on their plans, and reflect on what they learn. Leaders also offer support as needed. However, they should not track the young women's goals or progress. Parents and leaders may suggest goals, but

they allow youth to seek their own inspiration about what goals to pursue.

Youth are encouraged to complete at least two goals in each of the four areas each year. They can use *Personal Development: Youth Guidebook* or the Gospel Living app to set and record goals.

For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 11.2.2

##### Caring for Those in Need

Young women should have regular opportunities to serve others in and with their families, during youth activities, and on their own. Ideas for service are available at [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). 📌 Where available, [JustServe.org](https://JustServe.org) suggests opportunities for service in the community.

**11.2.2.1****Ministering**

Ministering is caring for others as the Savior would. Young women may receive ministering assignments beginning in January of the year they turn 14. For more information, see chapter 21.

**11.2.3****Inviting All to Receive the Gospel**

Young women invite all to receive the gospel as they “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9). Some ways they can do this are listed below:

- Set a good example as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Share their testimonies with friends and family members.
- Minister to less-active members of their classes.
- Invite friends to attend church or youth activities.
- Invite friends to participate in the Children and Youth program. Leaders work closely with parents of these youth to help them understand the program and determine how they and their children would like to be involved.
- Invite friends to be taught by the missionaries.


Parents and leaders can help young women prepare to share the gospel throughout their lives. Some ways they can do this are listed below:

- Encourage young women to gain a personal testimony of Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the restoration of His gospel.
- Provide opportunities to serve in the Church.
- Provide opportunities to teach the gospel in class meetings and other settings.

If young women desire to serve full-time missions, parents and leaders help them prepare. This




includes teaching them about the blessings and expectations of full-time missionary work.

As part of this preparation, the bishopric or stake presidency may organize a missionary preparation class. The main resources for this class are the scriptures, *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ*, and *Preach My Gospel*. This class is not held during regular Sunday meetings.

 [Missionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://Missionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) provides additional resources that can help young women who desire to prepare to serve a mission. See chapters 23 and 24 for more information.

**11.2.4****Uniting Families for Eternity**

Young women can help unite families for eternity in many ways. Some of these ways are listed below:

- Honor their parents and set an example of Christlike living in their home.
- Prepare to have their own eternal family.
- Be worthy of a limited-use temple recommend.
- Prepare to receive temple ordinances, including eternal marriage.
- Learn about their extended families and ancestors (see  *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together*).
- Identify ancestors who need temple ordinances (see  [FamilySearch.org](https://FamilySearch.org)).
- Participate in baptisms and confirmations for the dead as often as circumstances allow.
- Participate in indexing (see  [FamilySearch.org/indexing](https://FamilySearch.org/indexing)).
- Serve as temple and family history consultants, as called by the bishopric (see 25.4.4).



### 11.3 Ward Young Women Leadership

#### 11.3.1 Bishopric

The bishop's foremost responsibility is to care for the young women and young men in his ward. He and his counselors learn their names and understand their home circumstances. They interview each young woman at least twice a year (see 31.1.7).

The bishop has responsibility for the ward Young Women organization. He meets regularly with the Young Women president. He reports on Young Women matters in bishopric meetings.

The bishop and his counselors regularly participate in Young Women meetings, service, and activities. If there are multiple Young Women classes, the bishop may assign himself and his counselors to work with specific classes.

#### 11.3.2 Adult Young Women Presidency

The bishop calls and sets apart an adult woman to serve as the ward Young Women president. If the unit is large enough, she recommends one or two adult women to be called as her counselors (see chapter 30). The bishopric considers her recommendations and extends the callings.

Ⓢ In a small unit, the Young Women president may be the only called adult leader in the Young Women organization. In this case, she works with parents to organize instruction and activities for the young women. She also ensures that at least two responsible adults are present at all meetings and activities. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called.

If a branch does not have a Young Women president, the Relief Society president may organize instruction for the young women until a Young Women president is called.

The Young Women president has the following responsibilities. Her counselors assist her.

- Serve on the ward council. She serves as (1) a ward council member who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Young Women (see 7.6.1).
- Serve as a member of the ward youth council (see 29.2.9).
- Minister to individual young women.
- Submit recommendations to the bishopric for sisters to serve in Young Women.
- Teach other Young Women leaders and class presidencies their responsibilities.
- Counsel with young women about challenges that do not require the bishop or involve abuse (see 32.3; 32.6.1.1).
- Mentor class presidencies in their leadership responsibilities. Each class is assisted and overseen by a specific member of the Young Women presidency.
- Support young women who serve as companions to adult sisters in ministering (see 21.3).
- Regularly hold Young Women presidency meetings and meet with the bishop.
- Oversee the records, reports, budget, and finances of the Young Women organization.

### 11.3.3

#### Secretary

If the unit is large enough, the Young Women president recommends to the bishop an adult sister to serve as Young Women secretary. The secretary may have the following responsibilities:

- Help the Young Women presidency prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She attends

these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

- Instruct class secretaries and help them keep attendance records.
- Help the Young Women presidency (1) prepare a budget and (2) account for expenses.


### 11.3.4

#### Class Presidency and Secretary

##### 11.3.4.1

#### Calling, Sustaining, and Setting Apart

Each Young Women class should have a class presidency. The Young Women presidency may recommend young women to serve as class presidents. Members of the bishopric prayerfully counsel together to determine whom to call.

A member of the bishopric calls a young woman to serve as a class president.  When there are enough young women to serve, she prayerfully considers class members to recommend as counselors and a secretary. The bishopric considers her recommendations and extends the callings.

Before asking a young woman to serve in any of these callings, the bishopric member asks permission from the young woman's parents.

After extending these callings, a member of the bishopric presents the young women to their class for a sustaining vote. The bishop or an assigned counselor sets the young women apart.

A member of the bishopric announces these callings in sacrament meeting. He does not ask for a sustaining vote.

Shortly after class presidencies are set apart, a member of the bishopric should teach them their responsibilities. See “Aaronic Priesthood Quorum and Young Women Class Presidency Orientation”



at [YoungWomen.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://YoungWomen.ChurchofJesusChrist.org); see also chapter 4 of this handbook.

#### 11.3.4.2

##### Responsibilities

Class presidents serve on the ward youth council (see 11.3.4.4). Class presidencies also have the following responsibilities:

- Lead the class's efforts to participate in the work of salvation and exaltation (see chapter 1).
- Get to know and serve each young woman, including those who do not attend class meetings. Be aware of their needs and circumstances.
- Plan and conduct class meetings (see 11.2.1.2).
- Plan and carry out class service and activities (see 11.2.1.3).

⬆️⬆️ When class secretaries are called, they prepare agendas for meetings, take notes, and keep track of attendance.

Members of the Young Women presidency teach the class presidencies about their responsibilities (see 11.3.2). Class advisers and specialists should actively help (see 11.3.5; 11.3.6).

#### 11.3.4.3

##### Class Presidency Meeting

Young Women class presidencies meet regularly. The class president conducts these meetings. The adult Young Women leaders assigned to support the class presidency also attend. During these meetings, leaders counsel together and seek revelation about the Lord's will for their class. The agenda could include discussion of the following items:

- Accomplishing the work of salvation and exaltation
- Serving class members, with special attention to supporting new members and rescuing less-active members
- Reaching out to those of other faiths and beliefs





- Planning class meetings, service, and activities
- Leadership instruction from adult Young Women leaders or a member of the class presidency

📄 A Sample Presidency Meeting Agenda is available on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 11.3.4.4

### Ward Youth Council

The purpose of the ward youth council is to help the youth bring others to Jesus Christ and to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.

The bishop presides over the ward youth council. This council's members include:

- The bishopric.
- One of the bishop's assistants in the priests quorum, the teachers quorum president, and the deacons quorum president.

- The Young Women class presidents (or the entire class presidency if the ward has just one Young Women class).
- The Young Women president.

The ward youth council discusses ways to help others build testimonies, receive saving ordinances, keep covenants, and become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ (see Moroni 6:4–5). They counsel together about the needs of the young women and young men in the ward. They may discuss activities to meet these needs. However, detailed planning of activities should happen in quorum or class presidency meetings.

See 29.2.9 for more information about the ward youth council.

#### 11.3.5

### 📄 Advisers

The Young Women presidency may recommend that the bishopric call Young Women advisers. Each

adviser works with a specific age-group of young women. Each class should have only one adviser.

Advisers have the following responsibilities:

- Help the Young Women presidency with their responsibilities.
- Support and guide class presidencies as they learn and carry out their responsibilities.
- Teach Sunday lessons as needed. Help young women who have been invited to teach a lesson to effectively prepare and teach.
- Attend class activities.
- Attend ward Young Women presidency meetings as invited.

At least two responsible adult women should be present at each class meeting and activity. Advisers must complete the training at [ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) (see 11.6.2).

#### 11.3.6

#### Specialists

Where needed, the Young Women presidency may recommend that the bishopric call specialists to assist presidency members and advisers. In some cases, these callings may be limited to a particular event, such as a camp, a youth conference, or sports.

All specialists serve under the direction of the ward Young Women presidency.

Specialists must complete the training at [ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) (see 11.6.2).

#### 11.4

### Helping Young Women Prepare to Join Relief Society

A young woman may join the Relief Society when she is 18. By age 19, each young woman should be fully participating in Relief Society. In some cases, a young woman may come into Relief Society earlier than her 18th birthday. Each young woman counsels with her parents and the bishop to decide what will best help her continue to strengthen her faith in Jesus Christ.

Parents and Young Women and Relief Society leaders work together to help each young woman successfully progress into Relief Society. These leaders provide ongoing opportunities for young women and Relief Society sisters to make connections and develop relationships.

#### 11.5

### Stake Young Women Leaders

A member of the stake presidency calls an adult woman to serve as the stake Young Women president. If a stake is large enough, she recommends one or two adult women to serve as counselors and another to serve as secretary. These women are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. For information about the responsibilities of the stake Young Women presidency and secretary, see 5.4.1 and 5.4.4.

A counselor in the stake presidency has responsibility for the Young Women organization in the stake. He also has responsibility for the work of the stake Young Women presidency. He also instructs bishops in their responsibilities for young women.

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to work with the stake Young Women presidency (see 5.3.1). This high councilor and the Young Women presidency and secretary serve on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee (see 29.3.9).

## 11.6

### Additional Guidelines and Policies

#### 11.6.1

#### Safeguarding Youth

When adults are interacting with youth in Church settings, at least two responsible adults should be present. It may be necessary to combine classes to make this possible.

All adults who work with youth must complete the children and youth protection training within one month of being sustained (ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). They repeat the training every three years thereafter.

For information about how these guidelines apply to ministering companions, see 21.3.

#### 11.6.2

#### Young Women with Disabilities

Class presidencies give special care to young women who have disabilities.  For information about

helping these young women, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

#### 11.6.3

#### Children and Youth Emblems

Young women receive emblems as part of the Children and Youth program. Every young woman should receive an emblem of belonging from her class presidency when she becomes a member of Young Women. She also receives a copy of *Personal Development: Youth Guidebook*. This could be done when the class presidency and adult Young Women leaders meet with her to welcome her to Young Women. It could also be done at an annual meeting for youth and their parents (see 11.2.1.3).

In January of the year a young woman turns 18, she receives an additional emblem of belonging.

Young women may earn an emblem of achievement by striving to become more like the Savior.

For more information about emblems, see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



12.

## Primary

12.1

### Purpose and Organization

Primary is a home-centered, Church-supported organization. It is for children ages 18 months to 11 years. At home, parents teach children the gospel. At church, Primary leaders and teachers support parents through lessons, music, and activities.

12.1.1

#### Purposes

Primary helps children:

- Feel their Heavenly Father's love and learn about His plan of happiness.
- Learn about Jesus Christ and His role in Heavenly Father's plan.
- Learn and live the gospel.
- Feel, recognize, and act on the influence of the Holy Ghost.
- Prepare for, make, and keep sacred covenants.
- Participate in the work of salvation and exaltation.

**12.1.2**

**Primary Theme**

It is a sacred privilege to teach children. Jesus Christ taught, “Behold your little ones” and “feed my lambs” (3 Nephi 17:23; John 21:15). By following these invitations, Primary leaders love and teach children in the Savior’s way.

The Primary theme is a reminder of the blessings of serving in Primary:

“All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isaiah 54:13; 3 Nephi 22:13).

**12.1.3**

**Classes**

Primary classes are organized by age and the number of teachers available. Units with fewer children or teachers may combine two or more age-groups into one class. In larger units, Primary leaders may form more than one class for an age-group and more than one nursery.

When there are enough children, they are divided into classes based on their age on December 31 of the previous year, as shown on the following chart:

<b>Age on December 31 of the Previous Year</b>	<b>Class on January 1</b>
2	Nursery (children join nursery at 18 months)
3	Sunbeam
4	CTR 4
5	CTR 5
6	CTR 6
7	CTR 7
8	Valiant 8
9	Valiant 9
10	Valiant 10

Children generally advance from Primary into Young Women or the deacons quorum in January of the year they turn 12. They may receive a certificate of advancement. These certificates may be generated in Leader and Clerk Resources.

In some circumstances, an 11-year-old may not be ready to leave Primary. The bishop, parents, and child counsel together about the timing.

Children may not complete Primary before January of the year they turn 12. Nor may young men be ordained deacons before that time.

**12.1.4**

**Singing Time**

Singing time helps children feel Heavenly Father’s love and learn about His plan of happiness. As children sing about gospel principles, the Holy Ghost testifies of their truthfulness. The words and music will stay in the children’s minds and hearts throughout their lives.

For more information, see “Instructions for Singing Time and the Children’s Sacrament Meeting Presentation,” 12.2.1.2, and 12.3.4.

**12.1.5****Nursery**

Nursery helps children 18 months to 3 years feel Heavenly Father's love and learn about His plan of happiness.

At least two people should be called for each nursery class. If the nursery leaders are not husband and wife, they should be of the same gender. The nursery leaders ensure the safety and well-being of the children.

Nursery lasts the entire time scheduled for Primary. For more information, see 12.1.3 and 12.3.5.

**12.2****Participating in the Work of Salvation and Exaltation**

God invites all to come unto Christ and assist in His work by:

- Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Caring for those in need.

- Inviting all to receive the gospel.
- Uniting families for eternity.

Primary helps children, families, leaders, and teachers accomplish this work. For more information about the work of salvation and exaltation, study chapter 1.

**12.2.1****Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ****12.2.1.1****Roles of Parents and Leaders**

Parents are responsible to teach their children the gospel and help them live it (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28). Primary leaders and teachers support parents in this responsibility as follows:

- Ensure that Primary lessons, singing time, and service and activities bless children and their families.
- Help children prepare for baptism and confirmation.



- Help boys prepare for priesthood ordination.
- Help children prepare to receive a limited-use temple recommend and temple ordinances.
- Teach children about the blessings of sharing the gospel, including full-time missionary service.

Leaders should be sensitive to children who lack family support for gospel living.

Parents and leaders strive to be good examples to children. They mentor children in their efforts to become more like Jesus Christ. The Children and Youth program is a resource to help children ages 8–11 (see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

Part of Meeting	Length
Opening (prayer, scripture or Article of Faith, and talk)	5 minutes
Singing time	20 minutes
Transition to classes	5 minutes
Classes and closing prayer	20 minutes

⬆️⬆️ In wards with many children, Primary leaders may divide children into two groups. One group is in classes while the other group is in singing time. Then the two groups change places. Leaders adjust the time as needed.

Nursery for children ages 18 months to 3 years lasts 50 minutes. *Behold Your Little Ones* provides a suggested schedule. Children may start attending nursery when they are 18 months old.

*Children’s Sacrament Meeting Presentation.* The annual children’s sacrament meeting presentation is held during the last few months of the year. The children present what they have learned at home and at church during the year. They help the congregation focus on Heavenly Father, the Savior, and Their teachings.

### 12.2.1.2 Gospel Learning

Primary leaders and teachers encourage children and their families to learn the gospel at home. These leaders and teachers study the gospel and share with the children what they learn. They invite children to share at church what they are learning at home.

*Sunday Primary Meetings.* Sunday Primary meetings help children fulfill the purposes of Primary (see 12.1.1). A member of the Primary presidency conducts the opening. The music leader conducts singing time. Primary teachers teach children during classes.

Primary meetings for children ages 3–11 are held every Sunday for 50 minutes while adults and youth attend their classes. The schedule is as follows:

The Primary presidency and music leader prayerfully plan the presentation. The bishopric gives direction. Children may sing, give talks, and share stories, scriptures, or testimonies.

⬆️⬆️ The presentation may take all or part of the meeting time after the sacrament. Units with few children may invite children’s family members to participate.

Because of the sacredness of sacrament meeting, the presentation should not include visuals, costumes, or media presentations.

See “Instructions for Singing Time and the Children’s Sacrament Meeting Presentation” in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary* for more information.

*Temple and Priesthood Preparation Meeting.* Parents have the primary responsibility to teach their

children about the temple and the priesthood. To support them, the Primary presidency plans a Temple and Priesthood Preparation meeting each year. The bishopric gives direction. The meeting is for children in the Valiant 10 class. Parents are invited. This meeting has the following purposes:

- Help children understand priesthood purposes, responsibilities, and blessings.
- Help children participate in temple and family history work and prepare to make and keep sacred covenants.
- Help boys prepare to receive the Aaronic Priesthood.
- Help children prepare to receive a limited-use temple recommend.

The meeting may be held during Primary on Sunday, at another time on Sunday, or at a different time. A member of the bishopric conducts. At least one member of the Primary presidency attends.

⬆️⬆️ If a unit has few children, the meeting may be held under the direction of the stake presidency. Some or all of the wards in the stake meet together.

See Temple and Priesthood Preparation on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org) for more information.

### 12.2.1.3

#### Service and Activities

Beginning in January of the year they turn 8, children may begin attending Primary activities.

Primary activity leaders plan service and activities that help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. Service and activities should build testimonies, strengthen families, and provide opportunities to bless others. They should be balanced among four areas of personal growth: spiritual, social, physical, and intellectual.

Primary activities are held at times other than Sundays or Monday evenings. Adult leaders help ensure that activities are safe (see safety [.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org); see also 20.6.20). At least two responsible adult leaders should be present at all activities (see 12.5.1).

⬆️⬆️ The following guidelines may be adapted to local circumstances:

- Primary activities are held two times a month when possible. They can be held more or less frequently. Leaders consider family circumstances, travel distance and costs, and safety.
- Generally, children are organized by age-groups. Boys and girls normally meet separately. However, they may combine for certain activities or in locations with few children.
- Leaders may choose to plan and hold annual day camps for Primary children ages 8–11. Such camps are optional. Primary activities, including day camps, do not include overnight stays.

All supplies and activities, including optional day camps, are paid for by the ward budget. Travel and expenses should not be excessive.

The bishopric ensures that the budget and activities for boys and girls in Primary are sufficient and equitable. Budget is allocated according to the number of children.

For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). See also [JustServe.org](http://JustServe.org), where available. These resources provide service and activity ideas.

### 12.2.1.4

#### Personal Development

In their efforts to become more like the Savior, children—beginning in the year they turn 8—are invited to set goals to grow spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually (see Luke 2:52). With help from






parents, children seek inspiration to discover what to work on. They make plans, act on their plans, and reflect on what they learn. Leaders offer support as needed. However, they should not track the children's goals or progress.

Beginning in the year they turn 8, children are encouraged to complete at least one goal in each of the four areas each year. They can use *Personal Development: Children's Guidebook* to set and record goals.

For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

### 12.2.2 Caring for Those in Need

Children should have regular opportunities to serve others in and with their families and during Primary activities. Ideas for service can be found at [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).  Where available, [JustServe.org](https://JustServe.org) suggests opportunities for service in the community.

### 12.2.3 Inviting All to Receive the Gospel




Children can invite all to receive the gospel in many ways. Some of these ways are listed below:

- Set a good example as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Share their testimonies with friends and family members.
- Minister to less-active class members.
- Invite friends to attend church, activities, or baptisms or to be taught by the missionaries.
- Invite friends to participate in the Children and Youth program. Leaders work closely with parents of these children to help them understand the program and determine how they and their children would like to be involved.
- Invite friends and family members to attend the annual children's sacrament meeting presentation.

#### 12.2.4

### Uniting Families for Eternity

Children can help unite families for eternity in many ways. Some of these ways are listed below:

- Honor their parents and set an example of Christlike living in their home.
- Prepare to have their own eternal family.
- Strive to be worthy to receive a limited-use temple recommend at the appropriate age.
- Prepare to receive ordinances, including eternal marriage.
- Learn about their extended families and ancestors (see  *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together*).
- Identify ancestors who need temple ordinances (see  FamilySearch.org).
- Prepare to participate in baptisms and confirmations for the dead.
- Participate in indexing with a family member (see  FamilySearch.org/indexing).

### 12.3

## Ward Primary Leadership

#### 12.3.1

### Bishopric

The bishop is responsible for Primary. He may assign this responsibility to one of his counselors. The bishop or his counselor meets regularly with the Primary president.

The bishop and his counselors respond promptly to recommendations from the Primary presidency for those to be called to serve in Primary. The bishopric works with the presidency to maintain continuity in teachers and music leaders. When possible, members in these callings should serve long enough to

establish loving, trusted relationships with the children. Such relationships help nourish testimonies in the hearts of children.

The bishop and his counselors regularly attend Primary. They also learn the names and understand the home circumstances of each child in the ward.

#### 12.3.2

### Primary Presidency

The bishop calls and sets apart an adult woman to serve as the ward Primary president. If the unit is large enough, she recommends one or two adult women to be called as her counselors (see chapter 30). The bishopric considers her recommendations and extends the callings.

The Primary presidency receives orientation and ongoing support from the stake Primary presidency.

In a small unit, the Primary president may be the only called leader in Primary. In this case, she works with parents to organize lessons, singing time, and activities. She also ensures that at least two responsible adults are present at all meetings and activities. If the unit is large enough, additional callings should be filled in this order: counselors, music leader, teachers and nursery leaders, secretary, and activity leaders.

If a branch does not have a Primary president, the Relief Society president may help parents organize instruction for children until a Primary president is called.

The Primary president has the following responsibilities. Her counselors assist her.

- Serve on the ward council. She serves as (1) a ward council member who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Primary (see 7.6.1).
- Regularly hold Primary presidency meetings and meet with the bishop or his assigned counselor.

- Submit recommendations to the bishopric for adult men and women to serve in Primary.
- Plan and conduct the opening of Sunday Primary meetings.
- Minister to individual children, teachers, and leaders in Primary.
- Teach Primary leaders and teachers their responsibilities and support them in those responsibilities by orienting them to their callings (see *Teaching in the Savior's Way* [2016], 38).
- Help Primary leaders and teachers during class time, singing time, and transitions.
- Visit Primary classes and arrange for teachers to attend teacher council meetings.
- Help introduce the Children and Youth program to children turning 8 and to their parents. This could occur in their homes or their Primary class (see 12.5.7).
- Oversee the records, reports, budget, and finances of Primary.

### 12.3.3

#### Secretary

If the unit is large enough, the Primary president recommends to the bishopric an adult woman to serve as the secretary. She has the following responsibilities:


- Help the Primary presidency prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.
- Work closely with teachers and leaders to keep accurate attendance records.
- Make sure the Primary presidency is aware of:
  - New children and visitors.
  - Children coming into nursery and children moving from nursery to the Sunbeam class.

- Children who are eligible for baptism.
- Girls who will advance to Young Women and boys who will be ordained deacons.
- Assign children to give prayers, scriptures, and talks during the opening of Sunday Primary meetings (under the presidency's direction). She also notifies parents.
- Help the Primary presidency prepare a budget, account for expenses, and track Children and Youth materials.

### 12.3.4


#### Music Leader and Pianist

The music leader and pianist teach children the gospel of Jesus Christ through music during singing time. Music reinforces weekly *Come, Follow Me* study.

 The following resources may be used:

- *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*
- *Instructions for Singing Time and the Children's Sacrament Meeting Program*
- *Children's Songbook*
- *Hymns*
- Primary Music Collections on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- “Primary Singing Time—Music Can Teach Doctrine” (MediaLibrary. [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org))

The bishopric must approve the use of any other music in Primary.

If a pianist or piano is not available, instrumental music is available on the music library app and website.  Children can also sing without accompaniment.



The music leader can help with music for nursery when invited. An additional music leader may be called if needed.

The music leader works with the Primary presidency to help the children prepare for the annual children's sacrament meeting presentation (see 12.2.1.2).

See *Singing Time* on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org) for more ideas and resources.

### 12.3.5 Teachers and Nursery Leaders

The Primary presidency recommends to the bishopric men and women to serve as Primary teachers and nursery leaders. The bishopric considers these recommendations and extends the callings. These members are called to teach specific age-groups of children.

Primary teachers and nursery leaders teach from *Come, Follow Me—For Primary* (ages 3–11) and *Behold Your Little Ones* (nursery). They follow the principles

in *Teaching in the Savior's Way* and chapter 17 of this handbook.

When adults teach children in Church settings, at least two responsible adults should be present. The two adults could be two women, two men, or a married couple. If this is not possible, leaders should combine classes. Leaders and teachers must complete the training at [ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) (see 12.5.1).

Youth should not teach in Primary, including as substitutes.

Primary teachers and nursery leaders stay with the children throughout Primary, including singing time and transitions. During singing time, teachers participate with their classes. Teachers should remain with young children after Primary until a family member comes for them.

Teachers and nursery leaders attend quarterly teacher council meetings (see 13.4).

**12.3.6****Activity Leaders**

Primary activity leaders plan service and activities for children beginning in January of the year children turn 8 (see 12.2.1.3). Service and activities focus on the work of salvation and exaltation. They are fun and engaging. They build testimonies, strengthen families, and foster personal growth.

Primary activity leaders can be the children's Primary teachers. They can also be other members the Primary presidency recommends and the bishopric calls. At least two leaders attend each activity. Leaders can be two women, two men, or a married couple. Leaders must complete the training at [ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) (see 12.5.1).

**12.4****Stake Primary Leaders**

The stake presidency calls an adult woman to serve as stake Primary president. If a stake is large enough, she recommends one or two adult women to serve as counselors and another to serve as secretary. These women are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. For information about the responsibilities of the stake Primary presidency and secretary, see 5.4.1 and 5.4.4.

A counselor in the stake presidency has responsibility for Primary in the stake. He also has responsibility for the work of the stake Primary presidency. He also instructs bishops in their responsibilities for Primary.

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to work with the stake Primary presidency (see 5.3.1). He serves on the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee (see 29.3.9).

**12.5****Additional Guidelines and Policies****12.5.1****Safeguarding Children**

When adults are interacting with children in Church settings, at least two responsible adults should be present. It may be necessary to combine classes to make this possible.

All adults who work with children must complete the children and youth protection training within one month of being sustained ([ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)). They repeat the training every three years thereafter.

**12.5.2****Children Who Have Special Needs**

When a child has a long illness, disability, or special need, Primary leaders talk with parents and the bishopric. Together they make a plan to support the family and help the child participate in Primary.

Children with disabilities typically attend their regular Primary class. As necessary, additional teachers may be called.

Children with disabilities or other special needs typically complete Primary at the beginning of January in the year they turn 12. Some children may not complete Primary on this schedule. The bishop and parents work together to decide what is best for each child.

For more information, see [ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and 38.8.31.

**12.5.3****Men Serving in Primary**

The bishopric and Primary presidency should remember the positive influence of worthy men serving in Primary. Men may serve as teachers, nursery



leaders, music leaders and pianists, and Primary activity leaders.

#### 12.5.4 Restroom Safety

Leaders and teachers should encourage parents to take their children to the restroom before Primary. During Primary, a young child must be taken to the restroom by a parent or legal guardian. Leaders and teachers should not take children into the restroom.

#### 12.5.5 Role-Playing Activities

Leaders and teachers should be careful when acting out sacred events in Primary. Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost are not portrayed. Children may portray the Savior only in a Nativity scene. For additional guidelines, see 20.6.15.

#### 12.5.6 CTR Rings

When children begin the CTR 4 class, the Primary presidency or their Primary teacher may remind the children to “choose the right” and give them a green CTR ring.

#### 12.5.7 Introducing the Children and Youth Program

At the beginning of each year, the bishop, one of his counselors, or the Primary presidency may visit the home or Primary class of each child who will turn 8 during the year. They introduce children and their parents to the Children and Youth program. Each child receives the emblems of belonging and a copy of *Personal Development: Children’s Guidebook*.

For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

## 13.

# Sunday School

### 13.1

## Purpose

The Sunday School helps accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation. It does this by helping God’s children learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sunday School leaders, teachers, and classes:

- Strengthen faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ by teaching “the doctrine of the kingdom” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:77).
- Support home-centered and Church-supported gospel learning and teaching.
- Help members teach in the Savior’s way.

### 13.2

## Ward Sunday School Leadership

#### 13.2.1

### Bishopric

The bishopric oversees the Sunday School. Usually the bishop assigns one of his counselors to fulfill this responsibility under his direction.

This assigned counselor meets with the Sunday School president regularly. They counsel about the needs of the Sunday School, how it is accomplishing its purpose, and the responsibilities outlined in 13.2.2.

#### 13.2.2

### Sunday School President

#### 13.2.2.1

### Calling a Sunday School President

The bishop calls and sets apart a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to be the ward Sunday School president. They discuss whether counselors should be called. If counselors are needed, and if there are enough men to serve in these positions, the Sunday School president may recommend one or two counselors. If the bishopric approves, a member of the bishopric calls them and sets them apart.

A member of the bishopric presents Sunday School presidency members in sacrament meeting for a sustaining vote of ward members. A member of the bishopric also sets them apart.

In a large ward, the bishopric may call and set apart a man to be the Sunday School secretary. The Sunday School president may recommend whom to call. The secretary can help the presidency keep track of assignments or attendance, if desired.

#### 13.2.2.2

### Responsibilities

The Sunday School president has the following responsibilities. If he has counselors, they assist him.

- Serve on the ward council. He serves as (1) a member of the council who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Sunday School (see 7.6.1).
- Oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching at home and at church.
- Organize Sunday School classes, with the bishopric’s approval (see 13.3). Recommend to

the bishopric adult members to serve as Sunday School teachers.

- Support, encourage, and instruct Sunday School teachers. Help them become more effective gospel teachers by following the principles in the scriptures and *Teaching in the Savior's Way*. Encourage them to study *Teaching in the Savior's Way*.
- Lead teacher council meetings as directed by the bishop (see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 3).
- Encourage teachers to reach out to members who do not attend classes.

### 13.2.3

#### Sunday School Teachers

The Sunday School president may recommend members to serve as Sunday School teachers. If the bishopric approves, a member of the bishopric calls them and sets them apart.

Sunday School teachers get to know class members, including those who do not attend classes. Teachers support them in their efforts to learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To prepare to teach, Sunday School teachers use the scriptures, *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*, and *Come, Follow Me—For Sunday School*. They follow the principles in *Teaching in the Savior's Way* and chapter 17 of this handbook.

Sunday School teachers attend quarterly teacher council meetings (see 17.4).

### 13.3

#### Sunday School Classes

Sunday School classes are held on the first and third Sundays of the month. They last 50 minutes.

With the bishopric's approval, the Sunday School president organizes classes for adults and youth. If he has counselors, they assist him.

The number of classes depends on (1) how many members are in the ward and (2) the number and size of rooms that are available. Usually, smaller classes make it easier for more people to participate actively and learn. The ward council can help the Sunday School president decide how many Sunday School classes to organize.

Young men and young women typically start attending a youth Sunday School class at the beginning of the year they turn 12. They may start attending an adult class when they turn 18.

The Sunday School president organizes as many youth classes as are needed. Youth should be assigned to classes according to their age. If there are few youth in an age-group, they may be combined in a class with a similar age-group. They stay in that same class until January of the next year.

At least two responsible adults should be present in each youth class. The adults could be two men, two women, or a married couple. To meet this requirement, classes may need to be combined.

All adults who work with youth must complete the children and youth protection training within one month of being sustained (ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). They repeat the training every three years thereafter.

### 13.3.1

#### Small Branches

In a small branch, the Sunday School president may be the only Sunday School leader and teacher. He teaches a Sunday School class for all youth and adults in the branch.



**13.3.2****Sunday School Classes for Specific Groups**

As needed, the Sunday School president may organize Sunday School classes for specific groups. The curriculum for these classes is *Come, Follow Me—For Sunday School*.

Groups that could benefit from their own Sunday School class include:

- Young single adults.
- Members who do not speak the ward’s primary language.
- New members, returning members, and those who are learning about the Church.
- Other groups, as directed by the bishop.

**13.4****Improving Learning and Teaching in the Ward**

Ward leaders are responsible for improving learning and teaching in their organizations. This includes orienting newly called teachers (see *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, 38). They can ask the ward Sunday School president for help if needed.

Teacher council meetings are held quarterly during the 50-minute class time on Sunday (see 17.4). Their purpose is to help improve learning and teaching. *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* is the main resource for these meetings.

The ward council oversees and schedules teacher council meetings. The Sunday School president usually leads the meetings. However, the bishopric may ask another member to lead them.

For more information, see *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, 3, or [teaching.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://teaching.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

**13.5****Improving Learning and Teaching in the Home**

Parents are responsible for teaching the gospel to their children. They can ask the Sunday School president to help them improve as teachers.

The ward council may organize teacher council meetings for parents to help them improve gospel teaching in the home. Like other teacher council meetings, these are held during the 50-minute class time on Sunday. *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* is the main resource for these meetings.

**13.6****Stake Sunday School Leaders**

The stake president assigns one of his counselors to oversee the Sunday School in the stake. He also assigns a high councilor to be the stake Sunday School president.

The responsibilities of the stake Sunday School president are outlined in 5.4.1 and 5.4.3. If counselors are called, they assist him.

**13.7****Additional Guidelines****13.7.1****Members with Disabilities**

Sunday School teachers give special care to class members who have disabilities. For information about teaching members who have disabilities, see [disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

**13.7.2****Resource Center**

Some meetinghouses have a resource center (library) to help members learn and teach the gospel. The ward Sunday School president oversees the resource center. Wards that share a meetinghouse also share the resource center. Seminary and institute classes and family history centers share the resource center with the wards.

In meetinghouses that have a resource center, the bishopric calls a resource center specialist. The Sunday School president may recommend someone to call. Or the bishopric could ask a member of the Sunday School presidency to be the specialist. This person:

- Organizes and cares for the resources.
- Helps leaders, teachers, and other members obtain and use these resources.

The Sunday School president consults with the resource center specialist to determine if an annual budget is needed for the resource center. He then makes a recommendation to the bishopric.

The resource center specialist should attend sacrament meeting each week and other Sunday meetings regularly. If necessary, the bishopric may call an assistant to the specialist.

For more information, see [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

## 14.

# Single Members

## 14.0

### Introduction

Men and women who have not married or who are divorced or widowed make up a significant portion of Church membership. Leaders reach out to these members and include them in the work of the Church. Worthy single members should be given opportunities to hold leadership and teaching positions, including positions in elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies and in other organization presidencies.

Leaders support single members by helping them draw near to the Lord, strengthen their testimonies, and take responsibility for their own spiritual, social, and temporal well-being.

In caring for single members, leaders seek to strengthen family life, not compete with it or detract from it. They teach and testify of the importance of marriage and parenthood. Even when young single adults are not living with their parents, Church leaders encourage them to honor and nourish their relationships with their parents. Leaders also support single parents in their efforts to teach and nurture their children.

Single members are divided into two groups: single adults (ages 31 and older) and young single adults (ages 18–30).

## 14.1

### Caring for Single Adult Members (Ages 31 and Older)

Leaders encourage single members ages 31 and older to participate in the regular activities and programs of their conventional stakes and wards. These stakes and wards can provide a full range of

Church experiences and can offer opportunities to serve, teach, lead, and associate with people of all ages. Conventional wards can also reinforce the important role of the family and the home in the gospel plan. As an exception, stake presidents may recommend the creation of a single adult ward for single adults ages 31–45 according to the guidelines in 37.5.

Leaders should make special efforts to understand and address the needs of single adults. Leaders should recognize that single adults' circumstances and interests are varied. Leaders should also be sensitive that single adults sometimes feel out of place when they attend family-oriented activities and classes.

## 14.1.1

### Stake Single Adult Leadership

The stake presidency seeks to understand the needs of single adults and to provide ways to address those needs. The stake presidency may determine that single adults in the stake need opportunities to come together for service, gospel learning, and sociality beyond what their wards provide.

The stake president may assign one of his counselors to oversee the work with single adults in the stake. The stake president may also assign a high councilor to assist in this work. The same member of the stake presidency and the same high councilor may be assigned to work with young single adults as well.

## 14.1.2

### Stake Single Adult Committee

The stake presidency may organize a stake single adult committee. A counselor in the stake presidency presides over this committee. The committee

also includes a high councilor, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, and several single adults. Normally this committee is organized separately from the stake young single adult committee.

The committee meets as needed. Committee members may plan ways to give single adults opportunities to come together for service, gospel learning, and sociality beyond their wards.

#### 14.1.3

### Multistake Activities

When multistake activities can provide single adults with needed opportunities for service, leadership, and social interaction, Area Seventies work with stake presidents to establish committees to plan and organize such activities.

#### 14.1.4

### Participation in Single Adult Activities

Participation in single adult activities is limited to single adult members, assigned Church officers, and single adult nonmembers who are willing to abide by Church standards. A person who is separated from his or her spouse or is seeking a divorce may not participate until the divorce decree has become final according to law.

#### 14.1.5

### Home Evening and Gospel Study

Bishoprics may organize one or more home evening groups for single adults who do not have children in the home and do not live with their parents. These groups are not referred to as families.

Informally and as organized by participants, single adults may gather to strengthen one another through gospel study. *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* may be a resource for those who desire to study together.

#### 14.2

### Caring for Young Single Adult Members (Ages 18–30)

Stake and ward leaders work continually to identify, locate, and shepherd young single adults in the following ways:

- They help young single adults find and fellowship those in their age-group who are less active in the Church.
- They create opportunities for young single adults to associate together in meaningful service, gospel learning, and social activities. A central purpose of these activities is to help young single adults find marriage partners and prepare to marry in the temple and raise righteous families.
- They support young single adults in fulfilling worthy personal goals and in making decisions about marriage, education, careers, and finances.
- They ensure that each young single adult has a copy of *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*. Young single adults are encouraged to use the book as a resource as they study gospel principles, prepare talks, teach classes, and answer questions about the Church.

#### 14.3

### Young Single Adults in Conventional Stakes and Wards

#### 14.3.1

### Stake Leadership

The leadership of the stake presidency is particularly important in the effort to care for young single adults. Young single adults are highly mobile. They may be unevenly distributed across the wards in the stake, and they may be difficult to locate. Because of these challenges, opportunities for social

interaction, gospel learning, and service are often most effective at the stake or multistake level.

In his regular interview with each bishop, the stake president asks for a report on the progress of young single adults in the bishop's ward.

The stake president assigns one of his counselors to oversee the work with young single adults in the stake. The stake president also assigns a high counselor to assist in this work.

Stake leaders prayerfully consider what programs and activities will best serve the needs of the young single adults in the stake. A variety of options are listed in 14.3.5.

While most young single adults live in conventional wards (many with their parents), priesthood leaders may recommend the organization of a young single adult ward when the circumstances make this desirable (see 14.4).

#### 14.3.2

### Stake Young Single Adult Committee

A counselor in the stake presidency presides over the stake young single adult committee. This committee also includes the high counselor assigned to young single adults, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, a couple called to serve as young single adult advisers, and the young single adult leaders from each ward. If wards do not have young single adult leaders, other worthy young single adults are called to serve on the committee. Normally the committee is organized separately from the stake single adult committee.

The committee meets as needed. Committee members may plan ways to give young single adults opportunities to come together for service, gospel learning (see chapter 17), and sociality beyond their wards (see 14.3.5). As they plan young single adult activities, they maintain a focus on spiritual growth and service, not just social experiences. In areas where campus institute programs are not accessible,

this committee may serve needs that would ordinarily be met by the institute advisory council.

The committee helps ensure that ward young single adult committees are functioning well in the wards where they are established.

#### 14.3.3

### Ward Leadership

#### 14.3.3.1

### Bishopric

To understand and address the needs of young single adults in the ward, a bishopric member interviews each young single adult at least annually. The bishopric works with the ward council to find meaningful callings for all young single adults. The bishopric may also organize a ward young single adult committee.

A counselor in the bishopric oversees the young single adults in the ward. He receives regular reports from the counselors in the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who are assigned to work with young single adults in the ward. He may report on specific young single adults in ward council meeting.

#### 14.3.3.2

### Elders Quorum and Relief Society Counselors Assigned to Young Single Adults

The elders quorum president and Relief Society president each assign a counselor to lead out in their organization's effort to care for young single adults. These counselors periodically visit with young single adults to provide encouragement and help. They provide the assigned bishopric counselor with information about young single adults based on ministering interviews and their own visits. They also report to the elders quorum president or Relief Society president. The elders quorum president and

Relief Society president may report on these efforts in ward council meeting.

#### 14.3.3.3

#### **Young Single Adult Leaders**

In a ward with a sufficient number of young single adults, the bishopric may call a young single adult brother and a young single adult sister to serve as young single adult leaders. These leaders report to a counselor in the bishopric. They also serve on the ward young single adult committee if one is formed. They meet with the elders quorum presidency or Relief Society presidency regularly to ensure that assignments to serve as ministering brothers and sisters help meet the needs of young single adults. They may be assigned to serve on the stake young single adult committee.

#### 14.3.3.4

#### **Young Single Adult Advisers**

The bishopric may call a worthy married couple as ward young single adult advisers. These advisers report to a counselor in the bishopric. They serve on the ward young single adult committee if one is formed. They may also be assigned to serve on the stake young single adult committee. They help young single adults have opportunities to gather for friendship, service, and gospel learning.

#### 14.3.4

#### **Ward Young Single Adult Committee**

In a ward with a significant number of young single adults, the stake president and bishop may feel that a ward young single adult committee is needed. A counselor in the bishopric presides over the committee. Other committee members include the elders quorum and Relief Society counselors assigned to young single adults, the young single adult leaders, and the couple called to serve as young single adult advisers.

This committee meets as needed. Committee members discuss ways to help young single adults participate in service, leadership, gospel learning, and social activities. They also find and fellowship less-active young single adults.

#### 14.3.5

#### **Meetings, Classes, and Activities (Stake and Ward)**

Young single adults should be offered a variety of gospel learning, service, cultural, and social activities. These activities can take place at the ward, stake, or multistake level. These activities may include temple visits, priesthood or temple preparation courses, missionary work, community service, choirs, cultural events, dances, and sports.

The stake presidency establishes meetings, classes, and activities that will best meet the needs of young single adult members. The stake young single adult committee and ward leaders support the stake presidency in these efforts. The stake presidency also determines whether activities should take place at the ward level, the stake level, or some combination of both.

Young single adult activities should comply with the policies and guidelines in chapter 20. Participation in these activities is limited to young single adult members, assigned Church officers, and young single adult nonmembers who are willing to abide by Church standards. A person who is separated from his or her spouse or is seeking a divorce may not participate until the divorce decree has become final according to law.

In planning young single adult activities, ward and stake leaders may consider the following options.

#### 14.3.5.1

#### **Finding and Inviting**

Because many young single adults change residence frequently, the stake may periodically organize

activities designed to find and fellowship young single adults in the stake. These activities may be done in connection with efforts of neighboring stakes. Active young single adults are the most valuable resource in such efforts, guided by ward and stake young single adult committees. Institute personnel may also assist at times.

#### 14.3.5.2

#### **Young Single Adult Service Committees**

Young single adults should frequently be called to serve together on service committees. These committees report to a ward or stake leader assigned by the bishopric or by the ward or stake young single adult committee. Local leaders determine the nature of the committees' service. The service often focuses on Church programs such as welfare, family history, public outreach (communication), missionary work, activation efforts among young single adults, or support for Church facilities or projects. This service may also focus on humanitarian needs locally or elsewhere. Service committees provide opportunities to develop friendships and meet potential marriage partners. They also teach leadership and social skills.

#### 14.3.5.3

#### **Home Evening and Gospel Study**

Priesthood leaders may organize one or more home evening groups for young single adults who do not live with their parents and do not have children in their homes. If possible, priesthood leaders appoint a young single adult priesthood holder to lead each group. In stakes with few young single adults, stake leaders may organize home evening groups that cross ward boundaries. Home evening group leaders are accountable to assigned priesthood leaders. These groups are not referred to as families.

Informally and as organized by participants, young single adults may gather to strengthen one another through gospel study. *Come, Follow Me—For*

*Individuals and Families* may be a resource for those who desire to study together.

#### 14.3.5.4

#### **Sunday School Classes**

Wards with enough young single adults may have a separate Sunday School class for young single adults (see 13.3.2).

#### 14.3.5.5

#### **Weekday Gospel Study Classes**

All young single adults are encouraged to enroll in institute classes (see 15.2).

If institute classes are not available, local leaders may contact the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion area office for assistance. As needed, local leaders may organize other group opportunities for weekday gospel study.

#### 14.3.6

#### **Multistake and Area Activities**

Multistake and area activities can give young single adults opportunities for social interaction, leadership, and service without leaving the ecclesiastical care of their bishops.

Area Seventies work with stake presidents to establish multistake committees to organize such activities. These Area Seventies work under the direction of the Area Presidency. Multistake committees should include young single adult leaders.

Multistake committees should plan activities that are varied, simple, and inexpensive and that allow for ample social interaction. These committees coordinate with young single adult wards and institutes of religion to achieve an appropriate balance of activities and to avoid duplication and scheduling conflicts.

For additional guidelines on organizing these activities, see 20.3.1.

#### 14.3.7

### Funding for Activities

Normally, funding for young single adult activities comes from the stake or ward budget. When multistake or area activities are held, the responsible priesthood leader ensures a fair allocation of funding among the stakes.

Funding for activities should be consistent with the policies in 20.2.8. As an exception, when large multistake or area events are held, young single adults may occasionally be asked to pay some costs themselves. However, leaders should ensure that all young single adults have the opportunity to participate without incurring unreasonable personal costs.

#### 14.4

### Young Single Adult Wards

Where local circumstances and the number of young single adult members make it desirable, priesthood leaders may recommend the creation of a young single adult ward according to the guidelines in 37.2.

Eligible members may, in consultation with their parents, choose to be members of the young single adult ward or to remain in their conventional ward. The stake president may authorize the young single adult ward to find and fellowship other young single adult members of the stake who are less active. Those who become active may then choose to belong to the young single adult ward or to their conventional ward.

With approval from the stake president, the bishop of a young single adult ward may organize a second Relief Society for young single adult women and a second elders quorum for young single adult men

to provide additional opportunities for young single adults to serve and associate with each other.

Membership in a young single adult ward is temporary. Leaders help young single adults prepare to return to a conventional ward when they marry or reach age 31. This transition should provide sufficient time and communication to help the bishop of the conventional ward plan for a calling that helps each transitioning young single adult feel welcome and needed.

#### 14.5

### Young Single Adult Stakes

Priesthood leaders may recommend the creation of a young single adult stake according to the guidelines in 37.3. That section also provides guidelines for membership and leadership in these stakes.

#### 14.6

### Guidelines and Policies for Young Single Adult Wards and Stakes

#### 14.6.1

#### Church Programs

Young single adult wards use the regular program of the Church as much as possible. Stake presidents and bishops of young single adult stakes and wards follow the principles and instructions in this handbook. This includes instructions for welfare assistance, finances, and budget.

#### 14.6.2

#### Cooperation When Members Are Called to Serve in Young Single Adult Units

Officers of conventional stakes and wards should cooperate fully when their members are requested by authorized priesthood leaders to serve as leaders in young single adult stakes and wards. However,



these stake and ward officers should consult with the authorized priesthood leaders if they feel that a member's current Church responsibilities or family circumstances would make such a calling unwise or inappropriate.

#### 14.6.3

### Home Evening and Gospel Study

The bishopric of a young single adult ward may organize home evening groups as outlined in 14.3.5.

Informally and as organized by participants, young single adults may gather to strengthen one another through gospel study. *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* may be a resource for those who desire to study together.

#### 14.6.4

### Ministering

In a young single adult ward, each brother is assigned ministering brothers. Each sister is assigned ministering sisters and ministering brothers.

#### 14.6.5

### Membership Records of Leaders

The membership records of young single adult ward bishopric members and their families normally remain in their home wards. The same is true for those who serve in the stake presidency, on the high council, or in the stake Relief Society presidency of a young single adult stake. These leaders and their families pay tithing and offerings through their home wards. They also go to their home ward and stake leaders to be interviewed for temple recommends.

#### 14.6.6

### Membership Records of Young Single Adults

The membership records of young single adults should be in the wards where they are members. Leaders and clerks take special care to keep records current. To avoid delays and to avoid losing track of records or people, clerks may also keep an unofficial record for young single adults who move frequently.

#### 14.6.7

### Missionary Recommendations

For information about missionary recommendations, stake presidents and bishops may refer to chapter 24.

#### 14.6.8

### Priesthood Ordinations

See 18.10.

#### 14.6.9

### School Breaks

If possible, young single adult wards should continue to function during school breaks. A young single adult ward that has few members during school breaks may meet with an adjacent young single adult ward. In such a circumstance, the wards keep separate records, reports of attendance, and finances.

#### 14.6.10

### Temple Recommends

In most cases, the stake president interviews members who are receiving their own endowment and members who are planning to be married in a temple. As an exception, in a young single adult stake, the stake president may authorize his counselors to interview those who are receiving their own endowment or being married in a temple.

**14.6.11****Tenure of Service**

Normally, brethren who are called to serve in the stake presidency, on the high council, or in the bishopric of a young single adult stake or ward serve no more than three to five years in callings that keep them away from their home wards. This limitation includes cumulative service in different callings.

**14.6.12****Young Single Parents**

Young single parents who have children at home normally remain in their conventional ward so the children will have the benefit of Primary and youth programs. However, the parents may attend the activities of the young single adult ward.

**14.7****Use of Senior Couple Missionaries with Young Single Adults**

When needed, missionary couples (local Church-service missionaries or full-time missionaries) may be called to assist in retention and rescue efforts. They encourage service, build institute enrollment, assist with social activities, and mentor young single adults during this important stage of their lives.

Information on missionary opportunities for couples is available on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org). For information about Church-service missionary opportunities, see “Church-Service Missionary.” See also chapter 24.



15.

## Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

15.0

### Introduction

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) assists parents and Church leaders in helping youth and young adults increase their faith in Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. This is done by supporting a home-centered study of the scriptures and the words of living prophets and other Church leaders.

Seminary and institute programs are governed by policies established by the Church Board of Education, which is directed by the President of the Church. The stake presidency carries out these programs in the stake and wards. Stake and ward

leaders regularly review the participation of their youth in seminary and institute programs.

An S&I representative is assigned to each stake to help leaders administer S&I programs.

15.1

### Seminary

Seminary is a four-year program in which youth study the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets. Seminary students are generally 14–18 years old.

The bishopric, youth leaders, and quorum and class presidencies encourage every youth to participate fully in seminary. The bishopric encourages parents to register their children each year before seminary classes start. For more information, see Seminary Registration on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

### 15.1.1

#### Teachers

Seminary teachers should be Church members who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a testimony of His restored gospel. They should live the principles they teach and work well with youth. When possible, teachers should be worthy of a temple recommend.

A member of the stake presidency counsels with the bishop, stake supervisor, and S&I representative about potential seminary teachers. A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor calls, sets apart, and releases stake seminary teachers and stake supervisors. After the person has been called

and set apart, the S&I representative trains and supports him or her.

To protect teachers and students, two adults should be present in the building or home where a seminary class is being taught. A team teacher may be called, or another responsible adult may be assigned to be present. The second adult could be the teacher's spouse or the parent of a class member. He or she should be the same gender as the teacher, unless that person is an adult member of the teacher's family. A teacher should never be alone in a classroom, building, or vehicle with a student unless the student is the teacher's child.

### 15.1.2

#### Class Options

Seminary is most helpful when students can meet with a teacher each weekday. However, this may not be possible due to safety issues, travel distance, and other factors. Local leaders have the following options for holding seminary.

Option	Number of Weekly In-Class Lessons	Number of Weekly Home Study or Online Lessons
A	5 (50 minutes)	None
B	4 (60 minutes)	None
C	4 (50 minutes)	1
D	3 (50 minutes)	2
E	2 (90 minutes)	1
F	2 (50 minutes)	3
G	1 (50 minutes)	4

Church leaders counsel with their S&I representative to decide which option will:

- Best help students learn the gospel and grow spiritually.
- Keep students safe.
- Not burden families unnecessarily.

If meeting with a teacher during the week is difficult, using technology for virtual meetings may be considered.

Classes should not be held on Sunday. Exceptions require approval from the Church Board of Education.

A stake president may recommend to the local S&I representative changes to which seminary option the stake uses. The S&I representative takes the recommendation to the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion administration. Approval from the administration is necessary before implementing the change.

### 15.1.3 Buildings, Equipment, and Materials

Stake and ward leaders ensure that locations such as meetinghouses or members' homes are available for seminary classes. Buildings or rooms should not be rented for seminary classes. If classes meet in a meetinghouse, teachers should have access to the equipment in the resource center.

The S&I representative provides materials for teachers and students for each class. Students should bring their own scriptures, printed or digital.

### 15.1.4 Class Officers and Activities


A seminary teacher may choose class officers, such as a president, vice presidents, and a secretary. The teacher first contacts each student's parents and bishop for approval. Class officers are not sustained or set apart. They can help the teacher with routine classroom duties and encourage other students to attend and participate.

Seminary teachers should not provide activities outside of normal class time or away from the classroom. Exceptions require approval from local priesthood leaders.

### 15.1.5 Credit and Graduation

Seminary students can learn more effectively and deepen their conversion if they regularly attend class, participate, and study the scriptures outside

of class. As they do these things, they also earn seminary credit each year and can graduate from seminary.

 Some students may have difficulty earning seminary credit due to reading challenges or other reasons. The teacher may adapt the requirements to the needs of these students. Adaptations for an entire program can be requested by the S&I representative. These adaptations require approval from the S&I Central Office.

To graduate from seminary, a student must earn four years of credit and receive an ecclesiastical endorsement from a bishopric member. This endorsement verifies that a student is worthy and committed to living the standards of the gospel.

Each year the stake holds a seminary graduation. This event is planned by a stake presidency member or a high councilor. The S&I representative may help. For more information, see *A Guide to Seminary and Institute Graduation Exercises*.

### 15.1.6 Released-Time Seminary

In some areas of the United States and Canada, local laws allow students to leave school and attend seminary during school hours. The Church Board of Education approves where this type of seminary is used. For more information on released-time seminary, see Released-Time Seminary on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

## 15.2 Institute

Institute provides weekday gospel study classes that strengthen faith and testimony in Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. All young single adults ages 18–30 should be encouraged to attend institute classes, whether they are attending school or not.



Campus-based institute classes are not available in many areas. In these cases, stake presidents may establish stake-based institute classes. Priesthood leaders and S&I personnel coordinate the arrangements.

Additional guidelines for establishing and operating stake-based institute classes, planning for facilities, calling teachers, and recognizing student achievement are available at Stake Institute on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 15.2.1

### Other Religion Classes

Stake presidencies may desire to provide religion classes for adults ages 31 years and older. These

classes are not a function of S&I and are not called institute classes. However, institute curriculum materials may be used for the classes.

#### 15.3

### ➤ Church Schools

For information on Church primary and secondary schools, BYU–Pathway Worldwide, and institutions of higher education, see [CES.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://CES.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Information about ecclesiastical endorsements to attend these schools is also provided there.

16.

## Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

God's work of salvation and exaltation focuses on four divinely appointed responsibilities (see 1.2). The first of these is living the gospel of Jesus Christ. We live the gospel as we:

- Exercise faith in Jesus Christ.
- Repent daily.
- Make covenants with God as we receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.
- Endure to the end by keeping those covenants.

As we live the gospel and experience the influence of the Holy Ghost, we desire to help family members and others receive God's blessings (see 1 Nephi 8:10–12). We learn and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ at home and at church. We also seek to become self-reliant in providing for ourselves and our families, both spiritually and temporally.

Living the gospel encompasses the other aspects of the work of salvation and exaltation. These include caring for those in need, inviting all to receive the gospel, and uniting families for eternity.

17.

## Teaching the Gospel

We teach the gospel to help people strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. We seek to help people become more like the Savior, receive His power in their lives, and ultimately obtain eternal life. When the word of God is taught and received by the Spirit, it has the power to change hearts and inspire conversion. It has a “more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than . . . anything else” (Alma 31:5).

17.1

### Principles of Christlike Teaching

When teaching the gospel, parents, teachers, and leaders follow the example of Jesus Christ, who is the Master Teacher. Teaching in the Savior’s way is a sacred trust and responsibility.

Leaders share the following principles of Christlike teaching with teachers in their organizations. These principles are explained in more detail in *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*.

17.1.1

#### Love Those You Teach

Everything the Savior does is an expression of His love (see 2 Nephi 26:24). Leaders and teachers follow His example by showing love for those they teach. They pray for those they teach by name, seek to connect with and understand them, and focus on individual needs. They reach out to members of their class or quorum who do not attend.

17.1.2

#### Teach by the Spirit

To inspire people to have faith in Jesus Christ, teachers must teach by the Spirit. Teachers seek the

Spirit’s guidance as they prepare and teach, and they strive to live worthy of His influence each day.

17.1.3

#### Teach the Doctrine

The Savior taught His Father’s doctrine. Following the Savior’s example, teachers focus on the essential, saving truths of the gospel. They teach using the scriptures, the teachings of latter-day prophets, and approved curriculum materials. Teachers lead inspired discussions and ensure that their teaching is edifying and doctrinally sound. Approved materials are listed in the current *Instructions for Curriculum* on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

17.1.4

#### Invite Diligent Learning

Teachers encourage members to be responsible for their own learning. They support members in their efforts to learn the gospel individually and with their families. They invite members to share what they are learning and to act on it. A person’s faith grows when he or she actively participates in learning the gospel and applies its principles in daily life.

17.2

### Home-Centered Gospel Learning and Teaching

To become converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, each member of the Church is responsible to learn the gospel for himself or herself. In addition, parents are responsible to teach the gospel to their children. Gospel learning and teaching should be centered in the home. Church leaders and teachers encourage and support home-centered gospel learning and teaching.



Leaders and teachers encourage members to seek their own inspiration about how to study and teach the gospel. Their main resources should be the scriptures and general conference messages. Supporting resources can include *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* and Church magazines.

### 17.3

## Leaders' Responsibilities

Leaders are responsible for teaching and learning in their organizations. Some of the ways they fulfill this responsibility are outlined below.

- Set an example by learning the gospel and teaching it in the Savior's way.
- Ensure that the teaching in their organizations builds faith and is doctrinally correct.
- If leaders are members of the ward council, discuss with other council members how to improve gospel learning and teaching in the ward. The bishop may invite the Sunday School president to lead these discussions.
- As needed, recommend names to the bishopric of ward members to call as teachers in their organizations, following the guidelines in 30.1.
- Meet with newly called teachers and help them prepare for their callings (see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 38).
- Give ongoing support to the teachers in their organizations. Talk to the teachers regularly about their efforts to build faith in the people they teach. If needed, ask the Sunday School president for help.

### 17.4

## Teacher Council Meetings

In teacher council meetings, teachers counsel together about principles of Christlike teaching. They

also counsel about how to improve gospel learning and teaching. They use *Teaching in the Savior's Way* as a resource.

Teacher council meetings are held quarterly during the 50-minute class time on Sunday.

- Meetings for priesthood, Relief Society, and Young Women teachers can be held on a first or third Sunday.
- Meetings for Sunday School teachers can be held on a second or fourth Sunday.

The Primary presidency counsels with a member of the bishopric to determine how to strengthen teaching in the Primary. The Sunday School president can help as needed. Some options are listed below:

- Primary teachers could attend teacher council meetings with teachers from other organizations.
- Separate teacher council meetings could be held for Primary teachers. These meetings could be held during the 20-minute Primary singing time. As an alternative, they could be held before or after regular Sunday meetings or on another day during the week.
- Members of the Primary presidency could visit Primary classes and counsel with teachers afterward about teaching in the Savior's way.

The ward council may organize teacher council meetings for parents to help them improve gospel teaching in the home. Like other teacher council meetings, these are held during the 50-minute class time on Sunday.

The ward council oversees and schedules teacher council meetings. The Sunday School president usually leads the meetings. However, the bishopric may ask another member to lead them.

For more information, see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 3, or [teaching.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://teaching.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



18.

## Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings

18.0

### Introduction

Ordinances and blessings are sacred acts performed by the authority of the priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ. As priesthood holders perform ordinances and blessings, they follow the Savior's example of blessing others. Priesthood ordinances and blessings provide access to God's power (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:20).

Ordinances and blessings are to be performed with faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and according to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Leaders ensure that they are performed with proper

approval (where necessary), with the required priesthood authority, in the proper way, and by worthy participants (see 18.3).

For policies on priesthood ordinances and blessings, see 38.2.

18.1

### Ordinances of Salvation and Exaltation

The priesthood includes the authority to administer gospel ordinances that are necessary for salvation and exaltation. People make sacred covenants with

God as they receive these ordinances. The ordinances of salvation and exaltation are listed below:

- Baptism
- Confirmation and gift of the Holy Ghost
- Conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordination to an office (for men)
- Temple endowment
- Temple sealing

The ordinances of salvation and exaltation are not performed for persons who have intellectual disabilities that make them not accountable and unable to make covenants with God. Nor are these ordinances performed for children who die before age 8. These persons are “saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven” (Doctrine and Covenants 137:10; see also Moroni 8:8–12).

## 18.2

### Other Ordinances and Blessings

Other ordinances and blessings make it possible for God’s children to receive His power, healing, comfort, and guidance. These ordinances and blessings are listed below:

- Naming and blessing children
- The sacrament
- Conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordination to an office (for young men and men)
- Setting apart members to serve in callings
- Consecrating oil
- Administering to the sick
- Blessings of comfort and counsel, including father’s blessings
- Dedicating homes



- Dedicating graves
- Patriarchal blessings by ordained patriarchs

**18.3**

## Participation in an Ordinance or Blessing

Those who perform or participate in an ordinance or blessing must have the necessary priesthood authority and be worthy. Generally, the standard of worthiness is that associated with holding a temple recommend. However, as guided by the Spirit and the instructions in this chapter, bishops and stake presidents may allow fathers and husbands who hold the necessary priesthood office to perform or participate in some ordinances and blessings even if they are not fully temple worthy. A priesthood holder who has unresolved serious sins should not participate.

Generally, only priesthood leaders and other priesthood holders who are close family members and friends participate in an ordinance or blessing.

When only one or two priesthood holders participate, each of them places both hands lightly on the person's head. When several participate, they stand in a circle around the person receiving the ordinance or blessing. Each one places his right hand lightly on the person's head (or under the baby) and his left hand on the shoulder of the brother to his left. One acts as voice to perform the ordinance or give the blessing.

Performing or receiving some ordinances and blessings requires approval from a presiding leader who holds the necessary priesthood keys (see 3.4.1). As needed, approval may be given by a counselor he authorizes. See the following charts. References to stake presidents apply also to mission presidents. References to bishops apply also to branch presidents.

## Which Leaders Hold Keys to Give Approval to Perform or Receive the Ordinances of Salvation and Exaltation?

Ordinance	Who Holds Keys
Baptism	Bishop (for 8-year-old children who are members of record) Mission president (for converts)
Confirmation and gift of the Holy Ghost	Bishop (for 8-year-old children who are members of record) Mission president (for converts)
Conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordination to an office (for men)	Stake president
Temple endowment	Bishop and stake president
Temple sealing	Bishop and stake president

## Which Leaders Hold Keys to Give Approval to Perform or Receive Other Ordinances and Blessings?

Ordinance or Blessing	Who Holds Keys
Naming and blessing children	Bishop
The sacrament	Bishop
Conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordination to an office (for young men and men)	Bishop
Setting apart members to serve in callings	See the “Chart of Callings” (30.7)
Consecrating oil	Approval not needed
Administering to the sick	Approval not needed
Blessings of comfort and counsel, including father’s blessings	Approval not needed
Dedicating homes	Approval not needed
Dedicating graves	The priesthood leader who presides over the service
Patriarchal blessings	Bishop

### 18.4

#### Ordinances for Minor Children

A minor child may be blessed, baptized, confirmed, ordained to a priesthood office, or set apart to a calling only with the consent of (1) parents who have a legal right to participate in the decision or (2) legal guardians. For questions about the legal rights of noncustodial parents, the bishop or stake president seeks legal advice from the Church’s Office of General Counsel or from the area office (see 38.8.26).

For guidelines about baptizing and confirming minor children, see 38.2.3.6.

### 18.5

#### Ordinances Performed for and by Persons Who Have Disabilities

See 38.2.1.8 and 38.2.1.9.

### 18.6

#### Naming and Blessing Children

“Every member of the church of Christ having children is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:70).

Children are typically named and blessed during fast and testimony meeting in the ward where their parents reside. If the parents do not reside together, the ordinance is usually performed in the ward where the child will primarily live.

Exceptions to the typical place of the child’s blessing must be approved by the bishop. Possible exceptions include blessings not on fast Sunday, especially in wards with many new babies; blessings in another ward where the child’s grandparents or many family members live; and blessings in the home.

**18.6.1****Who Gives the Blessing**

The ordinance of naming and blessing a child is performed by Melchizedek Priesthood holders, in conformity with Doctrine and Covenants 20:70. Priesthood leaders inform members of this before their children are named and blessed. Leaders should make every effort to avoid embarrassment or offense to individuals or families.

A person or family who desires that a child receive a name and a blessing coordinates the ordinance with the bishop. He holds the priesthood keys for naming and blessing children in the ward.

A bishop may allow a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to name and bless his child even if the father is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3). Bishops encourage fathers to prepare themselves to bless their own children.

To act as voice in blessing a child, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the presiding leader. Or he may show

a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

**18.6.2****Instructions**

Under the direction of the bishopric, Melchizedek Priesthood holders gather in a circle to name and bless a child. They place their hands under a baby, or they place their hands lightly on an older child's head. Then the one acting as voice:

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



**18.6.3****Child Record Form and Blessing Certificate**

Before a child is blessed, a clerk uses Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR) to prepare a Child Record Form. After the blessing, he creates the membership record in that system and prepares a Blessing Certificate. This certificate is signed by the bishop and given to the child's parents or guardians.

The name on the membership record and certificate should match the birth certificate, civil birth registry, or current legal name.

**18.7****Baptism**

Baptism by immersion in water by one having authority is necessary for a person to become a member of the Church and receive the Holy Ghost. All who seek exaltation must follow the example of the Savior by receiving these ordinances. (See Matthew 3:13–17; John 3:3–7; Acts 2:37–38; 2 Nephi 31:5–10.)

**18.7.1****Approval for a Person to Be Baptized and Confirmed****18.7.1.1****Children Who Are Members of Record**

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for baptizing 8-year-old children who are members of record in a ward. These children should be baptized and confirmed on or as soon after their 8th birthday as is reasonable (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:27). These are children for whom Church membership records already exist (see 33.6.2). When they reach age 8, the bishop makes sure they have every opportunity to accept the gospel and be baptized and confirmed.

The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts interviews for the baptism and confirmation of:

- Children age 8 who are members of record.
- Children age 8 who are not members of record but have at least one parent or guardian who is a member.

Instructions for interviews are provided in 38.2.3.3. For information about filling out the Baptism and Confirmation Record, see 18.8.3.

Bishops give special attention to 7-year-old children in the ward, ensuring that their parents, their Primary leaders and teachers, and those who minister to their families help them prepare for baptism and confirmation. Elders quorum and Relief Society leaders also encourage parents to prepare their children for these ordinances.

**18.7.1.2****Converts**

The mission president holds the priesthood keys for baptizing converts in a mission. Convert baptisms are defined as baptisms of:

- Persons ages 9 and older who have never been baptized and confirmed.
- Children ages 8 and older whose parents (1) are not members or (2) are being baptized and confirmed at the same time as the children.

Full-time missionaries interview converts for baptism and confirmation. Instructions are provided in 38.2.3.3. For information about filling out the Baptism and Confirmation Record, see 18.8.3.

**18.7.2****Baptismal Services**

A baptismal service should be simple, brief, and spiritually uplifting. It may include the following:

1. Prelude music

2. A brief welcome from the brother who is conducting the service
3. An opening hymn and prayer
4. One or two short messages on gospel subjects, such as baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost
5. A musical selection
6. The baptism
7. A time of reverence while those who participated in the baptism change into dry clothes (hymns or Primary songs may be played or sung during this time)
8. The confirmation of 8-year-old members of record; the confirmation of converts if determined by the bishop (see 38.2.3.2)
9. Bearing of testimonies by new converts, if desired
10. A closing hymn and prayer
11. Postlude music

When a baptismal service for 8-year-old children who are members of record involves only one ward, a member of the bishopric plans and conducts it. He may ask Primary leaders to help with planning.

When a baptismal service for these children involves more than one ward, a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor plans and conducts it. He may ask Primary leaders to help with planning. A member of the bishopric from each ward with a child being baptized should attend.

Members should not request individual times for the baptism of a child. Nor should they prescribe the content of the service.

Baptismal services for converts should be scheduled as soon as they have met the qualifications in 38.2.3.3. Baptism of a family member should not be delayed until a father can receive the priesthood and perform the baptism himself.

Under the direction of the bishopric, the ward mission leader (if one is called) or the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work in the ward plans and conducts baptismal services for converts.

### 18.7.3

#### Who Performs the Ordinance

The ordinance of baptism is performed by a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder. The person who performs a baptism must be approved by the bishop (or by the mission president if a full-time missionary is performing the baptism).

A bishop may allow a father who is a priest or a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to baptize his child even if the father is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3). Bishops encourage fathers to prepare themselves to baptize their own children.

To perform a baptism, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the presiding leader. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

### 18.7.4

#### Where to Perform the Ordinance

Baptisms should be performed in a baptismal font if one is available. If there is not a font, a safe body of water may be used. It should be large enough for both the person performing the ordinance and the person being baptized to stand in. Water is not dedicated for baptisms.

If a font is used, it is scheduled through an assigned member in the agent bishop's ward.

For safety, a responsible adult must be present while a font is being filled and remain until it is drained, cleaned, and secured. The font should be drained immediately after each baptismal service. The doors to the font should be locked when it is not in use.



### 18.7.5 Clothing

A person who performs a baptism and a person who is being baptized wear white clothing that is not transparent when wet. An endowed person wears the temple garment under this clothing while performing a baptism. Local units purchase baptismal clothing with budget funds and do not charge for its use.

Baptismal clothing may be ordered at store  
.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

### 18.7.6 Witnesses

Two witnesses, approved by the presiding leader, observe each baptism to make sure it is performed properly. Baptized members of the Church, including children and youth, may serve as witnesses.

A baptism must be repeated if the words are not spoken exactly as given in Doctrine and Covenants 20:73. It must also be repeated if part of the person's body, hair, or clothing is not completely immersed.

### 18.7.7 Instructions

To perform the ordinance of baptism, a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder:

1. Stands in the water with the person being baptized.
2. Holds the person's right wrist with his left hand (for convenience and safety). The person being baptized holds the priesthood holder's left wrist with his or her left hand.
3. Raises his right arm to the square.
4. States the person's full name and says, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son,

and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:73).

5. Has the person hold his or her nose with the right hand (for convenience); then places his right hand high on the person's back and immerses the person completely, including clothing. Immersion is easier if the person bends his or her knees.
6. Helps the person to come up out of the water.

### 18.7.8 Baptism Record

For information about making a record of a baptism, see 18.8.3.

## 18.8 Confirmation and Gift of the Holy Ghost

After a person is baptized, he or she is confirmed a member of the Church and receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:41; Acts 19:1–7). The person becomes a member of the Church after both of these ordinances are completed and properly recorded (see John 3:5; Doctrine and Covenants 33:11; 3 Nephi 27:20).

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for confirming 8-year-old members of record in a ward. The mission president holds the keys for confirming converts in a mission (for a definition of a convert baptism, see 18.7.1.2). However, the bishop oversees this ordinance for 8-year-old children of record and for converts.

Eight-year-old children are typically confirmed on the day they are baptized. Converts are typically confirmed in any sacrament meeting in the ward where they live, preferably on the Sunday after their baptism. However, the bishop may grant exceptions

for converts to be confirmed at the baptismal service as explained in 38.2.3.2. Bishops should follow the guidelines in 29.2.2.8 when introducing new members.

### 18.8.1

#### Who Performs the Ordinance

The ordinance of confirmation is performed by Melchizedek Priesthood holders. The one who acts as voice must be approved by the bishop (or by the mission president if a full-time missionary is performing the confirmation).

Only a Melchizedek Priesthood holder who is temple worthy may act as voice for a confirmation. However, a bishop may allow a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to stand in the circle for the confirmation of his child even if the father is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3).

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

To act as voice in this ordinance, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the presiding leader. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

### 18.8.2

#### Instructions

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

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that the ordinance is being performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Confirms the person a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4. States “receive the Holy Ghost” (not “receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”).



5. Gives words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

### 18.8.3

#### Baptism and Confirmation Record and Certificate

Before a child who is a member of record is interviewed for baptism, a clerk uses LCR to prepare a Baptism and Confirmation Form. The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts the interview and signs the form. After the baptism and confirmation, a clerk uses this form to update the child's membership record in LCR.

When a full-time missionary interviews a convert for baptism, he fills out the Baptism and Confirmation Record except for the information about confirmation. At the baptismal service, the missionaries give this form to the bishop or one of his counselors. After the confirmation, the bishop, a counselor, or a clerk completes the confirmation information and gives two copies of the form to the missionaries. The missionaries send one copy to the mission office so a membership record can be created.

After the membership record is created, a clerk prepares a Baptism and Confirmation Certificate. This certificate is signed by the bishop and given to the person.

The name on the membership record and certificate should match the birth certificate, civil birth registry, or current legal name.

### 18.9

#### The Sacrament

Church members meet on the Sabbath day to worship God and partake of the sacrament (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:75; 59:9; Moroni 6:5–6). During this ordinance, they partake of the bread and water to remember the Savior's sacrifice of His

flesh and blood and to renew their sacred covenants (see Matthew 26:26–28; Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:20–25; Luke 22:15–20; 3 Nephi 18; Moroni 6:6). Everyone should be reverent during the blessing and passing of the sacrament.

### 18.9.1

#### Approval to Administer the Sacrament

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for administering the sacrament in the ward. All who participate in preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament must receive approval from him or someone under his direction.

If members of his ward are unable to partake of the sacrament because they are confined to a home, care center, or hospital, the bishop may authorize priesthood holders to administer the sacrament to them. He may authorize this even if they are temporarily outside his ward boundaries. However, he may not authorize the sacrament to be given to members outside his ward boundaries in other circumstances.

In rare circumstances, sacrament meeting might not be held for an extended time. In these situations, a bishop may authorize worthy priesthood holders in his ward to prepare and administer the sacrament in their homes each Sabbath. Bishops may also authorize them to prepare and administer the sacrament to ward members who do not have priesthood holders in their homes.

When the bishop authorizes the sacrament to be prepared and administered outside of standard Church services, the instructions in 18.9.2 about who performs the ordinance still apply.

### 18.9.2

#### Who Performs the Ordinance

- Teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may prepare the sacrament.
- Priests and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may bless the sacrament.

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

When there are enough Aaronic Priesthood holders, they usually perform these duties. When there are not enough deacons to pass the sacrament, the deacons quorum president counsels with the bishop about whom to invite to assist. Generally, he asks teachers and priests to help before asking elders and high priests.

### 18.9.3 Guidelines for the Sacrament

Because of the sacred nature of the sacrament, priesthood leaders should prepare carefully so it is orderly and reverent. Sacrament tablecloths should be white, clean, and pressed. Sacrament trays should be clean. Sacrament trays and cups should be ordered well in advance.

Sacrament supplies may be ordered at store  
.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Those who administer the sacrament should do so in a dignified manner, realizing that they are representing the Lord. The bishopric encourages them to ponder the Savior's Atonement as they prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament.

Those who administer the sacrament should be well groomed and clean. They should not wear clothing or jewelry that might detract from the worship and covenant making that are the purpose of the sacrament. If the bishop needs to counsel a priesthood holder about such matters, he does so with love. He also takes into account the person's maturity in the Church.

The passing of the sacrament should be natural and not overly formal. For example, certain actions (such as holding the left hand behind the back) or appearances (such as dressing alike) should not be required.

The congregation sings a sacrament hymn while the bread is being broken. Vocal solos or instrumental music should not replace this hymn. No music should be played during the passing of the sacrament or immediately after.

If members have gluten intolerance, they discuss with a member of the bishopric what adaptations to make for the sacrament. Members may provide allergen-free bread or another broken bread-like substitute in a sealed plastic bag or cup. They give this to a priesthood holder to place on a separate tray. The bishopric helps those who pass the sacrament know which members to whom the allergen-free item should be passed. The bishopric may modify the procedure as necessary.

Although the sacrament is for members of the Church, nothing should be done to prevent others from partaking of it.

### 18.9.4 Instructions

1. Those who prepare, bless, or pass the sacrament first wash their hands with soap or other cleanser.
2. Teachers, priests, or Melchizedek Priesthood holders make sure that bread trays with unbroken bread, water trays with cups of clean water, and clean tablecloths are in place before the meeting.
3. As ward members sing a sacrament hymn, those who will bless the sacrament reverently stand, remove the cloth that covers the bread trays, and break the bread into bite-sized pieces.
4. After the hymn, the person blessing the bread kneels and says the sacrament prayer for the bread (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77).
5. The bishop makes sure the sacrament prayers are spoken clearly, accurately, and with dignity. If someone makes an error in the wording and corrects himself, no further correction is needed.

If the person does not correct his error, the bishop kindly asks him to repeat the prayer. The bishop uses discretion when asking for the prayer to be repeated. He ensures that doing so does not cause undue embarrassment or detract from the ordinance. Another person at the sacrament table can help as needed.

6. After the prayer, priesthood holders reverently pass the bread to the members. The presiding leader receives it first, after which there is no set order. Once a tray is handed to members, they may pass it to one another.
7. Members partake with their right hand when possible.
8. When the bread has been passed to all members, those passing the sacrament return the trays to the sacrament table. Those blessing the sacrament place a cloth over the bread trays and uncover the water trays.
9. The person blessing the water kneels and says the sacrament prayer for the water (see Doctrine

and Covenants 20:79). He substitutes the word *water* for *wine*.

10. After the prayer, priesthood holders reverently pass the water to the members. The presiding leader receives it first, after which there is no set order.
11. When the water has been passed to all members, those passing the sacrament return the trays to the sacrament table. Those who blessed the sacrament place a cloth over the trays, and those who blessed and passed the sacrament reverently take their seats.
12. After the meeting, those who prepared the sacrament clean up, fold the tablecloths, and remove any unused bread.



**18.10**

## Conferring the Priesthood and Ordaining to an Office

There are two divisions of the priesthood: the Aaronic and Melchizedek (see 3.3; Doctrine and Covenants 107:1, 6). When the priesthood is conferred on a person, he is also ordained to an office in that priesthood. After either of these priesthoods has been conferred, a man need only be ordained to other offices in that priesthood.

The stake president holds the priesthood keys for conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordaining to the offices of elder and high priest. However, the bishop usually provides recommendations for these ordinations.

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for conferring the Aaronic Priesthood and ordaining to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. Worthy brethren are typically ordained to these offices at the following ages, but not earlier:

- Deacon at the beginning of the year they turn 12
- Teacher at the beginning of the year they turn 14
- Priest at the beginning of the year they turn 16

Instructions for recommending a person for ordination and presenting him for a sustaining vote are given in 38.2.5.1 and 38.2.5.2.

**18.10.1**

### Who Performs the Ordinance

The stake president or a Melchizedek Priesthood holder under his direction may ordain a man to the office of elder. Only Melchizedek Priesthood holders may stand in the circle.

The stake president or a high priest under his direction may ordain a man to the office of high priest. Only high priests may stand in the circle.

A person who ordains a man to a Melchizedek Priesthood office should be temple worthy. The



stake president or someone he designates must be present.

A priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder may ordain a brother to the office of deacon, teacher, or priest. He must be authorized by the bishop. The bishop or someone he designates must be present.

To participate in an Aaronic Priesthood ordination, a person must be a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

A bishop may allow a father who is a priest or a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to ordain his son to the office of deacon, teacher, or priest even if the father is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3). Bishops encourage fathers to prepare themselves to ordain their own sons.

To act as voice in this ordinance, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the presiding leader. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

### 18.10.2

#### Instructions

To confer the priesthood and ordain a person to a priesthood office, one or more authorized priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one acting as voice:

1. Calls the person by his full name.
2. States the authority he holds to perform the ordinance (Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood).
3. Confers the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood, unless it has already been conferred.
4. Ordains the person to an office in the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood and bestows the rights, powers, and authority of that office. (Priesthood keys are not bestowed when conferring the priesthood or ordaining to an office, except when ordaining a bishop.)

5. Gives words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.

6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

To ordain a person to a priesthood office after he has already had the appropriate priesthood conferred upon him, the person who performs the ordination omits step 3.

An ordination is an opportunity to give a blessing. Detailed counsel and instruction about a person's duties are given before and after the ordination. They should not be the focus of the blessing. It is not necessary to have prayers, testimonies, or instruction when someone is ordained.

### 18.10.3

#### Ordination Record and Certificate

Before a man is interviewed to be ordained to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood, a clerk uses LCR to prepare a Melchizedek Priesthood Ordination Record. The stake president or an assigned counselor conducts the interview and signs the form if all worthiness conditions are met.

After the ordination, the stake president or his assigned representative completes the form and gives it to a clerk. He records the ordination in LCR and prepares an ordination certificate. This certificate is signed by the stake president and given to the person.

Before a brother is interviewed to be ordained to an office in the Aaronic Priesthood, a clerk uses LCR to prepare an Aaronic Priesthood Ordination Record. The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts the interview and signs the form if all worthiness conditions are met.

After the ordination, the bishop or an assigned counselor completes the form and gives it to a clerk. He records the ordination in LCR and prepares an ordination certificate.

A person's current legal name should be used on the ordination record and certificate.

### 18.11

## Setting Apart Members to Serve in Callings

Members who are called and sustained to most Church positions should be set apart to serve in that position (see 3.4.3.1; John 15:16; Doctrine and Covenants 42:11). During the setting apart, the person is given (1) authority to act in the calling and (2) words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.

Stake presidents, bishops, and quorum presidents receive keys of presidency when they are set apart (see 3.4.1.1). However, the word *keys* should not be used when setting apart members to serve in other callings, including counselors in presidencies.

For information about calling, ordaining, and setting apart bishops, see 30.6.

### 18.11.1

#### Who Performs the Setting Apart

A setting apart is performed by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He must receive approval from the leader who holds the appropriate priesthood keys. Those who are authorized to perform a setting apart are indicated in the “Chart of Callings” (30.7). An elder should not act as voice or stand in the circle when a man is set apart to an office that requires him to be a high priest.

Under the direction of the presiding leader, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders may participate in a setting apart. Presidents are set apart before their counselors.

A presiding leader may allow a husband or father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to stand in the circle for the setting apart of his wife or children even if he is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3).

### 18.11.2

#### Instructions

One or more authorized Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one acting as voice:


1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Sets the person apart to the calling in the stake, ward, quorum, or class.
4. Confers keys if the person should receive them.
5. Gives words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

A setting apart is not a formal meeting with prayers or testimonies. Nor is it a time for giving detailed instructions. Those are given during training, not as part of the blessing.

### 18.12

## Consecrating Oil

Melchizedek Priesthood holders must consecrate olive oil before it is used to anoint the sick or afflicted (see James 5:14). No other oil may be used.

 Oil vials are available at [store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

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

### 18.12.1

#### Who Performs the Ordinance

One or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders may consecrate oil. They do not need to seek approval from a priesthood leader.



### 18.12.2

#### Instructions

To consecrate the oil, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder:

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

### 18.13

#### Administering to the Sick

Usually, administering to the sick should be done at the request of the person receiving the blessing or at the request of others who are concerned so the

blessing will be according to their faith (see James 5:14; Doctrine and Covenants 24:13–14; 42:43–44, 48–52).

Administering to the sick “by the laying on of hands” has two parts: anointing with oil and sealing the anointing with a blessing. If consecrated oil is not available, a blessing may be given by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood without an anointing.

If a person requests more than one blessing for the same illness, another anointing is not necessary. A priesthood holder can give another blessing by the laying on of hands and the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. However, another anointing may also be done.

Priesthood holders who visit hospitals should not solicit opportunities to administer to the sick.



**18.13.1****Who Gives the Blessing**

Only worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders may administer to the sick or afflicted. They do not need to seek approval from a priesthood leader. If possible, a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood administers to sick members of his family.

Normally, two or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders administer to the sick. However, one may perform both the anointing and sealing.

**18.13.2****Instructions**

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

Anointing with oil is done by one Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He:

1. Puts a drop of consecrated oil on the person's head.
2. Places his hands lightly on the person's head and calls the person by his or her full name.
3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. States that he is anointing with oil that has been consecrated for anointing and blessing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

To seal the anointing, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one who seals the anointing:

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

**18.14****Blessings of Comfort and Counsel, Including Father's Blessings****18.14.1****Who Gives the Blessing**

Melchizedek Priesthood holders may give blessings of comfort and counsel to family members and to others who request them. These blessings are typically given by family members, ministering brothers, or priesthood leaders.

A father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may give father's blessings to his children. These may be especially helpful when children go to school, go on missions, get married, enter military service, or face special challenges. Parents encourage their children to seek father's blessings in times of need. Father's blessings may be recorded for personal use.

A Melchizedek Priesthood holder does not need to seek approval from a priesthood leader to give a blessing of comfort and counsel or a father's blessing.

**18.14.2****Instructions**

To give a blessing of comfort and counsel or a father's blessing, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one acting as voice:

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

**18.15**

## Dedicating Homes

Church members may have their homes dedicated by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Homes do not need to be owned or free of debt to be dedicated. Unlike Church buildings, homes are not consecrated to the Lord.

**18.15.1**

### Who Performs the Dedication

A home is dedicated by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. If there is not a Melchizedek Priesthood holder in the home:

- A family may invite a close friend, relative, or ministering brother who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to dedicate the home. The person does not need to seek approval from a priesthood leader.

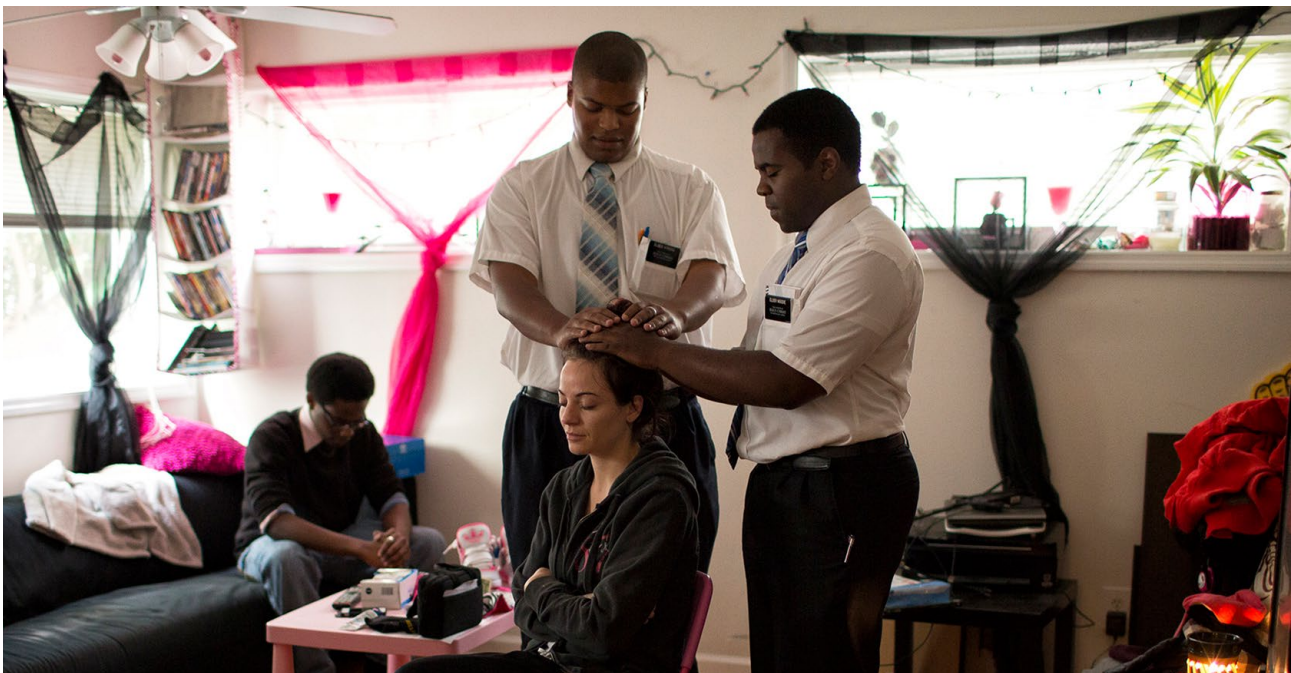
- A family might gather and offer a prayer as guided by the Spirit. The prayer could include the elements mentioned in 18.15.2, number 3.

**18.15.2**

### Instructions

To dedicate a home, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father as in prayer.
2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Dedicates the home as a sacred place where the Holy Spirit can reside and gives other words as guided by the Spirit. For example, he might bless the home to be a place where family members can worship, find safety from the world, grow spiritually, and prepare for eternal family relationships.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.



**18.16****Dedicating Graves****18.16.1****Who Dedicates the Grave**

A person who dedicates a grave should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and be authorized by the priesthood leader who conducts the service.

If the family prefers, a graveside prayer may be offered instead of a dedicatory prayer. It may be offered by anyone the family chooses.

To act as voice in dedicating a grave, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the priesthood leader who presides over the service. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

**18.16.2****Instructions**

To dedicate a grave, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder:

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

If a Church member's body is cremated, the presiding leader uses his judgment to decide whether to dedicate the place where the ashes are kept. He

takes into account the family's wishes and local customs and laws. The brother who acts as voice adapts the instructions for dedicating a grave.

**18.17****Patriarchal Blessings**

Every worthy, baptized member is entitled to receive a patriarchal blessing, which provides inspired direction from Heavenly Father (see Genesis 48:14; 49; 2 Nephi 4:3–11). Parents and Church leaders encourage members to prepare spiritually to obtain their patriarchal blessings.

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews members who desire to receive a patriarchal blessing. If the member is worthy, the interviewer prepares a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend. He submits it through the Patriarchal Blessing System on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

**18.17.1****Receiving a Patriarchal Blessing**

After receiving a recommend, the member contacts the patriarch to set up an appointment to receive a patriarchal blessing. On the day of the appointment, the member should go to the patriarch with a prayerful attitude and in Sunday attire. Members may fast, but fasting is not required.

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

A person who receives a patriarchal blessing should treasure its words, ponder them, and live to be worthy to receive the promised blessings in this life and in eternity.

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



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

#### **18.17.2** **Obtaining Copies of Patriarchal Blessings**

A person who has received a patriarchal blessing should carefully safeguard the printed copy. However, if this copy is lost or destroyed, the person may request a new one. He or she can make this request at Patriarchal Blessings on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). If this is not possible, the person contacts his or her bishop for assistance.

#### **18.17.3** **More Information**

For more information about patriarchal blessings, see 38.2.12 and “Patriarchal Blessings.”

#### **18.18** **Temple Endowment and Sealing**

For information on the temple endowment and sealing ordinances, see chapter 27.

## 19.

# Music

### 19.1

## Purpose of Music in the Church

In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said, “My soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (Doctrine and Covenants 25:12).

The First Presidency said:

“Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.

“Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end” (*Hymns*, ix).

### 19.2

## Ward Music Leadership

#### 19.2.1

### Bishopric

The bishop and his counselors oversee ward music. They have the following responsibilities:

- They call and set apart ward members to serve in music callings as outlined in this section.
- They consult regularly with the ward music chairman to ensure that musical selections and instruments used in Church meetings are appropriate (see guidelines in 19.4.2).

- They support a ward choir by encouraging members to participate and by making available a rehearsal time that is free of other ward conflicts.
- They encourage members to participate in congregational singing.
- They encourage members to use uplifting music in their homes (see 19.8).

#### 19.2.2

### Ward Music Adviser

A member of the bishopric serves as the ward music adviser. He supervises the music program in the ward, advises the ward music chairman, and represents the music program in leadership meetings.

#### 19.2.3

### Ward Music Chairman

A man or woman may serve as the ward music chairman. Under the direction of the ward music adviser, the ward music chairman has the following responsibilities:

- Serve as a resource to the bishopric on music matters.
- Arrange for effective, appropriate music in sacrament meetings and other ward meetings.
- Serve as a resource to ward leaders in providing music training and in meeting other music needs as requested.
- Recommend and supervise music training programs in the ward (see 19.7).
- Recommend and implement ward music activities as requested.

- Recommend members to fill ward music callings as requested by the ward music adviser. Supervise those who serve in ward music callings.

The ward music chairman receives training and support from the stake music chairman as needed.

#### 19.2.4

### Ward Music Director

Under the direction of the ward music chairman, the music director recommends and conducts the congregational hymns for sacrament meetings and for other ward meetings as requested. One person may serve as both the ward music chairman and ward music director.

#### 19.2.5

### Ward Organist or Pianist

The ward organist or pianist provides prelude and postlude music and accompaniment for hymns at sacrament meeting and at other ward meetings as requested.

#### 19.2.6

### Ward Choir Director and Choir Accompanist

The ward choir director recommends music to be sung by the choir, directs choir rehearsals, and conducts choir performances (see 19.4.5).

The ward choir accompanist plays for choir rehearsals and performances.

#### 19.2.7

### Priesthood Music Director and Pianist or Organist

The priesthood music director and pianist or organist callings have been discontinued.

## 19.3

### Adapting Ward Music to Local Conditions and Resources

The guidelines in this chapter may be adapted according to local needs. For example, in a small branch, the ward music chairman might also direct the choir and lead the music in sacrament meetings and other settings. A pianist could play for sacrament meetings, choir, and other meetings.

When no one can play the piano, the following resources may be useful:

1. CDs of hymns and children's songs are available on [store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
2. Hymns and children's songs can be downloaded in MP3 format at [music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
3. Some meetinghouses are equipped with digital pianos that have hymns programmed into them.

Music training and keyboards may be available for those who serve in music callings or who may serve in the future (see 19.7).

## 19.4

### Music in the Ward

Appropriate music is a vital part of Church meetings, particularly sacrament meetings. Music that is carefully selected and properly presented can greatly enhance the spirit of worship. Music should be worshipful and fit the spirit of the meeting. Priesthood leaders determine what is suitable.

#### 19.4.1

### Planning Music for Church Worship Services

Members who serve in ward music callings work together to select appropriate music for worship

services. When feasible, the bishop and his counselors choose meeting topics well in advance. This allows the music chairman, music director, and choir director to plan hymns, special selections, and choir performances that complement and reinforce the meeting topics. This also allows time for the bishopric to approve the musical selections in advance.

#### 19.4.2

### Guidelines for Choosing Appropriate Music for Church Worship Services

All Church music should be consistent with the following guidelines.

The hymns are the basic music for worship services and are standard for all congregational singing. In addition, other appropriate selections may be used for prelude and postlude music, choir music, and special musical presentations. If musical selections other than the hymns are used, they should be in keeping with the spirit of the hymns. Texts should be doctrinally correct. (See “Hymns for Congregations,” *Hymns*, 380–81.)

Secular music should not replace sacred music in Sunday meetings. Some religiously oriented music presented in a popular style is not appropriate for sacrament meetings. Also, much sacred music that is suitable for concerts and recitals is not appropriate for a Latter-day Saint worship service.

Music in Church meetings should not draw attention to itself or be for demonstration. This music is for worship, not performance.

Organs and pianos, or their electronic equivalents, are the standard instruments used in Church meetings. If other instruments are used, their use should be in keeping with the spirit of the meeting. Instruments with a prominent or less worshipful sound, such as most brass and percussion, are not appropriate for sacrament meeting.

Live accompaniment is normally used in sacrament and other ward meetings. If a piano, organ, or

accompanist is not available, appropriate recordings may be used (see 19.3).

Music in Church meetings should usually be sung in the language of the congregation.

#### 19.4.3

### Standard Musical Elements in Church Worship Services

#### 19.4.3.1

#### Prelude and Postlude Music

Quiet prelude and postlude music creates an atmosphere of worship that invites the Spirit into Church meetings. The organist or pianist usually plays hymns or other appropriate music for 5–10 minutes before and after a meeting. Playing hymns can help members review gospel teachings in their minds.

#### 19.4.3.2

#### Congregational Singing

Most Church meetings are enhanced by the singing of hymns. Music provides a primary means by which members participate in Church worship services. Congregational singing has a unique and often underused power for unifying members as they worship together.

As appropriate, a priesthood leader may ask a congregation to stand for an intermediate hymn or a national anthem (see “Hymns for Congregations,” *Hymns*, 380–81).

#### 19.4.3.3

#### Special Musical Selections

Musical selections may be presented by choirs, vocal and instrumental soloists, and small groups. Hymns and other appropriate selections may be used (see 19.4.2).



**19.4.4****Sacrament Meetings**

The bishopric approves music for sacrament meetings. Music and musical texts are to be sacred, dignified, and otherwise suitable for sacrament meeting. Music in sacrament meeting is for worship, not for a performance that draws attention to itself.

Opening and closing hymns are usually sung by the congregation (see “Selecting the Right Hymn,” *Hymns*, 380). In addition to using hymns that are already known and loved, members are encouraged to become acquainted with new or less familiar hymns. Music leaders should try to achieve a good balance between familiar favorites and hymns that are not as well known (see “Hymns for Congregations,” *Hymns*, 380–81).

The sacrament hymn is always sung by the congregation. It should refer to the sacrament itself or to the sacrifice of the Savior. Vocal solos or instrumental music may not replace this hymn. No music should be played during the sacrament prayer, while the sacrament is being passed, or as a postlude after the sacrament is passed.

Special musical selections or a congregational hymn may be scheduled after the sacrament or between speakers (see 19.4.3.3).

If a musical program is presented, it should be simple, reverent, and short enough to allow a spoken message. Sacrament meetings should not be turned over to outside musical groups. Recitals, concerts, and pageantry are not appropriate in sacrament meeting.

**19.4.5****Choirs**

Every ward should make an effort to have an active ward choir that sings in sacrament meeting at least once a month. Ward members may participate voluntarily in the choir, or the bishopric may invite or call them to participate.

In a very small branch, a choir might consist of the entire congregation. In a large ward with many resources, the bishopric may call choir officers, such as a president, a secretary, a librarian, and section leaders.

Church choirs are encouraged to use the hymnbook as their basic resource because the hymns teach the truths of the restored gospel. Hymn arrangements and other appropriate choral works may also be used (see 19.4.2).

Information about using the hymns for choirs is provided in *Hymns*, pages 381–83. Additional information about conducting choirs is in the *Conducting Course* manual, pages 73–83.

Auditions are not held when organizing ward and stake choirs. Rehearsals usually do not exceed one hour.

In addition to the ward choir, Relief Society, priesthood, youth, children, and family choirs may be invited to sing hymns and other appropriate musical selections in Church meetings.

**19.4.6****Using Music in the Classroom**

Hymn singing can be an effective way to introduce or reinforce gospel principles taught in the classroom. Leaders should encourage teachers to use the hymns to enhance classroom instruction.

**19.5****Stake Music Leadership****19.5.1****Stake Presidency**

The stake president and his counselors oversee stake music. They call and set apart stake members to serve in stake music callings as outlined in this section.

**19.5.2****Stake Music Adviser**

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to be the stake music adviser. Under the presidency's direction, he supervises the music program in the stake, advises the stake music chairman, and represents the music program in stake council meetings.

With the stake presidency's approval, the stake music adviser may call and set apart stake members to serve in stake music positions.

**19.5.3****Stake Music Chairman**

A man or woman may serve as the stake music chairman. Under the direction of the stake presidency, the stake music chairman has the following responsibilities:

- Serve as a resource to the stake presidency on music matters.
- Arrange for music and musicians for stake conference sessions and other stake meetings and events as requested.
- As needed, provide training and support for ward music chairmen and serve as a resource to stake leaders.
- Recommend and supervise music training programs in the stake (see 19.7).
- Recommend and implement stake music activities as requested.

**19.5.4****Stake Music Specialists**

Stake music specialists, including a stake organist, may be called as needed. These specialists may be assigned to provide music for a particular stake meeting every time that meeting occurs. They may

also be assigned to provide music training (see 19.7) or to assist with music in stake activities.

**19.6****Music in the Stake****19.6.1****Stake Conferences**

Music for stake conference should be planned with the purpose of strengthening faith and testimony. The presiding authority at a stake conference reviews all proposed musical selections for the conference early in the planning stage.

Music for the general session of stake conference normally includes four selections. The congregation sings the opening and intermediate hymns. A choir may sing the other two selections, perhaps immediately before the first speaker and at the close of the meeting. At least one of the choir's selections should be a Latter-day Saint hymn or hymn arrangement. Choirs may be composed of ward choirs, or they may be special choirs of children, youth, priesthood holders, Relief Society sisters, or families.

For guidelines on choosing appropriate music, see 19.4.2.

**19.6.2****Stake and Multistake Choirs**

With priesthood leaders' approval, stake and multistake choirs may be organized for stake conferences, regional conferences, and other occasions, such as community events. After the performance, the choir is disbanded until other occasions arise. These choirs should not interfere with members' participation in ward choirs.

Standing community choirs directed by and consisting primarily of Church members are not sponsored by the Church. These choirs should not use references to the Church such as "LDS," "Latter-day

Saint,” or “Mormon” in their names (see 38.8.39). If stake priesthood leaders approve, community choirs may use Church buildings for rehearsals and performances, provided they follow Church standards and policies related to activities and finances.

### 19.7

## Music Training

Learning basic music skills allows members to use their talents to serve in the Church. With the approval of priesthood leaders, stake and ward music chairmen may arrange for music training courses, seminars, and workshops. Music training programs may be provided for those who currently serve in music positions and those who may serve in the future. Participants could include stake and ward music directors, choir directors, pianists, and organists. Other interested adults and youth, including prospective missionaries, could also participate. No fee is charged for Church-sponsored training.

An annual pattern of music training could include music conducting courses, training for choir directors, ward keyboard courses, and stake or ward organ training courses. Music chairmen may consult with priesthood leaders and recommend qualified instructors who could provide this training. If a stake music specialist is not called to provide training, ward choir directors could meet together to exchange ideas, or the stake presidency could request help from outside the stake.

The Conducting Course Kit and the Keyboard Course Kit provide instruction in basic music skills. The *Conducting Course* manual also provides instruction for organizing and conducting choirs. These resources are available on [store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

When there is not a reasonable alternative, priesthood leaders may authorize the use of meetinghouse pianos and organs for practice, paid private instruction, and recitals involving members of the

units that use the meetinghouse. No admittance fee should be charged for recitals.

Ward music chairmen help find opportunities for developing musicians to use their talents and encourage them to continue developing their skills.

### 19.8

## Music in the Home

Priesthood leaders and music leaders encourage Church members to use uplifting music in their homes, to have a copy of the hymnbook and the *Children's Songbook*, and to sing this music as families. Concerning music in the home, the First Presidency said:

“The hymns can bring families a spirit of beauty and peace and can inspire love and unity among family members.

“Teach your children to love the hymns. Sing them on the Sabbath, in home evening, during scripture study, at prayer time. Sing as you work, as you play, and as you travel together. Sing hymns as lullabies to build faith and testimony in your young ones” (*Hymns*, x).

Members may use Church-produced recordings to accompany singing and to help them learn the hymns and Primary songs. These recordings are available on [store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Members may also visit [music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) to learn and listen to Church music, learn basic music skills, and find other helpful music resources.

Parents should encourage their children to receive instruction in musical skills, enabling them to use their talents to serve in the Church.

The bishopric may occasionally assign sacrament meeting speakers to talk about using music in the home. Occasionally a family may sing a favorite hymn or Primary song as a musical selection in sacrament meeting.

**19.9****Additional Music Policies and Guidelines****19.9.1****Other Music in the Chapel**

Some cultural and recreational music may be presented in the chapel on weekdays. However, the cultural hall is usually a more appropriate setting for such music. Local priesthood leaders resolve questions about what music is appropriate in the chapel. Applause is not usually appropriate in the chapel.

**19.9.2****Obtaining and Using Music**

An initial supply of hymnbooks is provided to new meetinghouses. Additional hymnbooks, choral music, and other music may be purchased with stake or ward budget funds. Priesthood leaders may invite stake and ward music chairmen to submit annual budgets for this music. Music that is purchased with budget funds is usually kept in the resource center and belongs to all units that share the resource center. The stake or ward music chairman may help resource center specialists create an index of this music.

**19.9.3****Pianos, Organs, and Keyboards**

Where an organ is available, it is normally used for prelude and postlude music and hymn accompaniment. A piano may be used for these purposes when an organ or an organist is not available.

Using the piano and organ at the same time is not standard for Church meetings. However, these instruments may be used together occasionally.

A portable electronic music keyboard may be used when a piano or organ is not available.

**19.9.3.1****Obtaining Musical Instruments**

Church buildings are usually supplied with an organ, pianos, or electronic music keyboards. Priesthood leaders may consult the Purchasing Division at Church headquarters or the area office for information about acquiring new or replacement instruments.

**19.9.3.2****Maintaining Musical Instruments**

The agent bishop for each meetinghouse and the stake physical facilities representative (a high councilor) are to see that pianos and organs are tuned, maintained, and repaired as needed.

**19.9.4****Copyright Guidelines**

See 38.8.13.

**19.9.5****Music for Weddings**

A wedding ceremony that is held in a home or Church building might include prelude music, hymns, special musical selections, and postlude music. Civil marriage ceremonies should be simple, conservative, and without pomp in the proceedings. When a wedding ceremony is held in a Church building, a wedding march is not appropriate.

**19.9.6****Music for Funerals**

See 29.6.5.

**19.9.7****Music for Baptismal Services**

See 18.7.2.

**19.10**

## Online Music Resources

For additional resources, visit [music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and “Music Callings” on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

20.

## Activities

20.1

### Purposes of Church Activities

Activities at the ward, stake, and multistake levels bring Church members together as “fellowcitizens with the saints” (Ephesians 2:19). In addition to providing fun and entertainment, activities should build testimonies, strengthen families, and foster unity and personal growth.

Activities strengthen members by giving them a sense of belonging and mutual support. Activities should help members feel connected to others their age, to their leaders, and to their families. Activities should also help members see how living the gospel brings “the joy of the saints” (Enos 1:3).

Church activities should be planned to fulfill gospel-centered purposes. In addition to the general purposes mentioned above, these include:

- Participating in service projects that bless others and build community relationships.
- Developing talents and appreciation for cultural arts.
- Improving fitness and learning sportsmanship.
- Gaining education and vocational training.
- Celebrating special occasions and commemorating Church or local historical events.
- Developing leadership skills.
- Developing self-reliance.
- Participating in missionary work, retention, activation, temple work, and family history work.

20.2

### Planning Activities

20.2.1

#### Responsibility for Planning Activities

Before planning an activity, leaders consider the spiritual and temporal needs of members. Leaders seek the guidance of the Spirit to determine what kind of activity would help meet those needs. Careful planning is necessary to ensure that activities accomplish gospel-centered purposes and meet the needs of those who participate.

Under the direction of the bishopric, the ward council oversees the planning of ward activities. When an activity is for a specific organization or group in the ward, it is planned under the direction of the leaders who are responsible for the organization. When an activity is for the entire ward, the bishop may assign responsibility for it to one or more organizations represented on the ward council. He may also assign responsibility for an activity to other individuals or to a committee, working under the direction of the ward council. Normally these assignments are temporary for a specific activity.

Under the direction of the stake presidency, the stake council oversees the planning of stake activities. For more information about stake activities, see 20.3.

20.2.2

#### Strengthening Families

Leaders ensure that activities strengthen the family rather than compete with it. Some activities can be family centered, giving families opportunities to participate together. Activities should support

parents by teaching their children to be faithful followers of Christ.

Leaders also ensure that activities do not become so numerous that they put undue burdens on members.

### 20.2.3

#### Encouraging Participation

Those who plan activities strive to have participants be actively involved, since participating is usually more beneficial than just observing. One way to encourage participation is to have members use their gifts, skills, and talents in the activity.

Those who plan activities should make a special effort to reach out to new members, less-active members, youth, single adults, people with disabilities, and people of other faiths. Leaders should be sensitive to any special circumstances of participants, such as physical limitations, family concerns, and cultural and language differences.

### 20.2.4

#### Standards

Church activities should follow and teach Church standards. They should provide a wholesome environment where participants can develop friendships with others who have similar beliefs and standards. Activities should be uplifting and emphasize things that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13). Activities are not to include anything that is immoral or suggestive or that makes evil appear acceptable and normal. Leaders ensure that any entertainment is in keeping with the teachings of the Savior.

Dress and grooming should be modest, tasteful, and appropriate for the activity. The bishopric or stake presidency determines the dress standards for activities. Leaders who plan an activity may recommend dress standards that are consistent with gospel principles.

Substances that are contrary to the Word of Wisdom are not permitted at Church activities or on Church premises. Persons who are obviously under the influence of alcohol or other drugs must not be admitted to Church activities.

For more information on Church standards, see *For the Strength of Youth*.

### 20.2.5

#### Safety

See 20.6.20.

### 20.2.6

#### Balance and Variety

Leaders should plan a balanced activities program that includes a variety of activities. Members should have opportunities to participate in activities that appeal to their interests. Members should also have opportunities to support others in their interests. Planning a yearly calendar helps leaders achieve a balance of service, cultural arts, and physical activities without creating excessive demands on members’ time.

The following paragraphs provide some examples of worthwhile activities.

### 20.2.6.1

#### Service

Service activities provide opportunities for members to show love for those in need, whether or not they are members of the Church, and feel the joy of helping them. These activities could include visiting the sick or lonely, fulfilling welfare assignments, beautifying Church buildings and grounds, and participating in community projects.

**20.2.6.2****Cultural Arts**

Cultural arts activities provide opportunities for members to develop their talents and interests. These activities also nurture creativity, confidence, communication, and cooperation. They could include talent shows or performances in dance, music, and drama. They could also include the celebration of local or general Church history.

**20.2.6.3****Sports, Recreation, Health, and Fitness**

For information about Church sports activities, see 20.6.21.

Recreational activities can vary according to the resources available in the area. These activities may include historical commemorations, camping, hiking, or pursuit of hobbies. Recreational activities can often be planned so that families can participate together.

As individuals, as families, and as Church groups, members are encouraged to participate in activities that contribute to their health and fitness. These activities may include walking, jogging, aerobic and other exercise programs, health classes, and fitness training (see 20.6.25, number 2).

**20.2.7****Scheduling Activities**

Church activities should be planned as far in advance as reasonable. They should be included on the stake or ward calendar. Leaders should keep parents informed of activities for children and youth.

If an activity will be held at a meetinghouse or another Church facility, planners reserve the facility in advance to avoid conflicts with other activities or meetings. Each meetinghouse has an agent bishop assigned by the stake presidency. He oversees the scheduling of the meetinghouse facilities, though

he usually appoints another person to do the actual scheduling.

Monday nights are reserved for home evening and family activities (see 20.6.10).

**20.2.8****Funding for Activities**

Leaders ensure that expenses for activities are in accordance with the current budget and finance policies of the Church. The following principles apply.

Most activities should be simple and have little or no cost. Expenditures must be approved by the stake presidency or bishopric before they are incurred.

Stake and ward budget funds should be used to pay for all activities, programs, and supplies. Members should not pay fees to participate. Nor should they provide materials, supplies, rental or admission fees, or long-distance transportation at their own expense. Activities in which members provide food may be held if doing so does not place undue burdens on them.

Possible exceptions to the funding policy in the preceding paragraph are listed below. If the ward budget does not have sufficient funds to pay for the following activities, leaders may ask participants to pay for part or all of them:

- One annual extended camp or similar activity for young men.
- One annual young women camp or similar activity.
- One annual day camp or similar activity for Primary children ages 8–11.
- Optional activities as outlined in 20.5.

If funds from participants are not sufficient, the bishop may authorize one group fundraising



activity annually that complies with the guidelines in 20.6.8.

In no case should the expenses or travel for an annual camp or similar activity be excessive. Nor should the lack of personal funds prohibit a member from participating.

For a possible exception in funding large multistake or area events for young single adults, see 14.3.7.

For guidelines about funding travel that is associated with activities, see 20.6.24.

### 20.2.9

#### Funding for Equipment and Supplies

If possible, equipment and supplies that the ward needs for annual youth camps are purchased with ward budget funds. If these funds are not sufficient, the bishop may authorize one group fundraising activity annually that complies with the guidelines in 20.6.8.

Equipment and supplies purchased with Church funds, whether from the ward budget or a fundraising activity, are for Church use only. They are not for the personal use of individuals or families.

### 20.3

#### Stake, Multistake, and Area Activities

##### 20.3.1

#### General Guidelines

Most Church activities are held at the ward level. However, local leaders are encouraged to hold periodic stake and multistake activities when these activities are better able to accomplish the purposes outlined in 20.1. Area activities may also be held, as approved by the Area Presidency. These activities are under the direction of an Area Seventy.

Stake and multistake activities are particularly beneficial for youth, young single adults, and women, especially in areas where there are few members or where members seldom associate in large groups. Well-planned stake and multistake activities can give members confidence in their Church membership and a wider circle of friendships.

The leaders who begin the process of planning stake and multistake activities are generally the stake Young Men, Young Women, and Relief Society presidencies. The stake young single adult committee begins the process of planning stake and multistake activities for young single adults. These leaders identify the needs of those they serve and consider whether stake or multistake activities would help meet those needs. These leaders then recommend activities to the stake presidency.

For information about multistake activities for single adults ages 31 and older, see 14.1.2 and 14.1.3.

Occasionally stake or multistake activities for women may include young women and girls ages 8 and older. The stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies counsel together to recommend such activities to the stake presidency.

To help meet the needs of young single adults, multistake activities should be held for them wherever they are able to gather at reasonable time and expense. Such activities should be varied, simple, and of moderate frequency. Larger events for young single adults may also be held periodically.

All stake activities must be approved by the stake presidency and are coordinated in stake council meetings. Stake leaders notify ward leaders of stake activities well in advance. They also ensure that stake activities supplement ward activities rather than compete with them.

If stake presidents feel that a multistake activity would benefit the members of their stakes, they may request permission from the Area Presidency. Special occasions such as holidays or

the commemoration of a significant local event may provide opportunities for such activities. Youth conferences (see 20.4), service activities, cultural arts activities, and sports or recreational activities can all be held on a multistake level. Such activities are often coordinated in coordinating council meetings (see 29.11).

Before proposing a multistake activity, stake presidents determine whether it is the best way to meet the needs they have identified. The stake presidents also consider the cost, time, and travel the activity would require. In addition, the stake presidents consider safety factors and the availability of needed resources.

The Area Presidency may assign Area Seventies or stake presidents to be chairmen of committees that plan and carry out multistake or area activities. Stake presidencies may call members of their stakes to serve on these committees. These members report to their stake presidencies.

Funding for most multistake activities comes from the budget funds of the participating stakes. Funding for larger activities, such as cultural celebrations associated with temple dedications, may come from area or Church headquarters budgets when approved.

Stake, multistake, and area activities should comply with Church standards and with Church travel policies (see 20.2.4; 20.6.24). These activities require effective leadership, careful planning, and adequate resources.

### 20.3.2

#### Stake Activities Committee

Stake activities are planned according to the guidelines in 20.2. The stake presidency may organize a stake activities committee to help the stake council and stake organization leaders plan stake activities. The stake activities committee consists of a chairman

(a high councilor), one or more stake activities directors, and stake activities specialists (if needed).

In addition to helping plan stake activities, members of the stake activities committee may advise, support, and instruct ward leaders in their efforts to plan ward activities.

Unlike the temporary committees that plan ward activities, the stake activities committee usually plans more than just one stake activity.

#### 20.3.2.1

##### Stake Activities Committee Chairman

If the stake presidency organizes a stake activities committee, they assign a high councilor to be the committee chairman. As determined by the stake presidency, the committee chairman may be given the following responsibilities:

- He coordinates and maintains a calendar of stake activities that are approved by the stake presidency.
- He supervises committee members in helping plan stake activities.
- He recommends a detailed stake activities budget to the stake presidency before the beginning of each year. This budget does not include activities that are planned by stake organizations.
- He serves as a resource to stake organization leaders when they plan activities.
- He keeps a current list of talents and interests of stake members. In creating and maintaining this list, he may be assisted by the high councilors assigned to the wards in the stake. He may use the Talent and Interest Survey form for this purpose.

**20.3.2.2****Stake Activities Directors and Specialists**

A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor may call stake activities directors. They serve on the stake activities committee under the direction of the committee chairman. Stake activities directors may help plan and organize service activities, cultural arts activities, sports and fitness activities, and other types of activities.

A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor may also call stake activities committee specialists. These specialists are not sustained or set apart. They serve under the direction of the stake activities committee chairman.

**20.4****Youth Conference**

Beginning in January of the year they turn 14, young men and young women are invited to participate together in an activity or series of activities called youth conference. Youth conferences are usually held once each year on a ward or stake level. They may also be held on a multistake or area level. Stake youth conferences are not held during a year that the stake is participating in a For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conference.

The purposes of youth conferences are to help youth build faith in Jesus Christ, strengthen their testimonies, develop talents, make new friends, and have fun with youth who share similar beliefs and standards. Youth can also learn leadership skills as they assist in planning youth conferences.

Ward youth conferences are planned and carried out by the ward youth council, under the direction of the bishopric. The bishopric obtains the stake presidency's approval of plans for a ward youth conference.

Stake youth conferences are planned and carried out by the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women

committee, under the direction of the stake presidency. Youth should take the lead in planning stake youth conferences with the support of adult leaders. The stake presidency may invite youth to attend the committee's meetings as needed.

Youth conferences are to be funded from the stake or ward budget. Members should not be asked to pay for youth conferences.

As leaders and youth plan a youth conference, they should observe the policies in this chapter and the following guidelines:

- Select a gospel theme, such as a scripture, that will inspire the youth and help them understand the expectations of the conference. The annual youth theme could be used as the youth conference theme. The bishopric or stake presidency should approve the theme.
- Plan activities such as devotionals, group meetings, learning experiences, and service projects that are consistent with the theme.
- Obtain approval of the bishopric or stake presidency for all speakers and activities. Speakers should be Church members who teach by the Spirit. Speakers who primarily entertain, with only casual reference to the gospel, should not be selected. Nor should speakers who would have to travel long distances be selected. See 38.8.22 for other guidelines concerning speakers.
- Avoid scheduling events for Sunday that are not appropriate for the Sabbath day. Testimony meetings, bishopric youth discussions, or similar meetings are permitted. However, sacrament meetings are not to be held—and the sacrament is not to be administered—outside the boundaries of the ward or stake where the priesthood leaders preside. Any exceptions must be approved by the Area Presidency. Groups should not travel to or from youth conference on a Sunday.
- Ensure that adequate adult supervision is present at all times (see 20.6.2).

Members of the bishopric or stake presidency are invited to attend as much of the conference as possible. Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and Young Women presidencies are encouraged to attend the entire conference.

## 20.5

### Optional Activities

Units may sponsor optional activities that are presented by Church-related entities. Such activities include Church university performance groups, special youth programs, and periodic major cultural events. As authorized by the Area Presidency, members may be charged a modest fee to defray the costs of such events if (1) the program is entirely optional, (2) the cost is not burdensome, and (3) the event is not used to raise funds. Budget funds may be used to help those who want to attend but are unable to pay.

## 20.6

### Policies and Guidelines

Leaders ensure that the following policies and guidelines are observed in all Church activities.

#### 20.6.1

#### Accident Prevention and Response

See 20.6.20.

#### 20.6.2

#### Adult Supervision

At least two adult supervisors must be present at all Church-sponsored activities attended by children, youth, and young single adults. Additional adults may be needed depending on the size of the group, the skill level of the group (for activities requiring certain skills), anticipated environmental

conditions, and the overall degree of challenge of the activity. Parents should be encouraged to help.

All adults participating in activities for children and youth are to complete children and youth protection training ([ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)) before the activity.

#### 20.6.3

#### Commercial or Political Activities

Activities that would use Church facilities for any commercial or political purpose are not permitted. For policies on using Church buildings and other property, see 35.4.

#### 20.6.4

#### Copyrighted Materials

See 38.8.13.

#### 20.6.5

#### Curfew Laws

Activities should comply with community curfew laws.

#### 20.6.6

#### Dances and Music

In all dances, the dress, grooming, lighting, dancing styles, lyrics, and music should contribute to an atmosphere where the Spirit of the Lord can be present (see *For the Strength of Youth*). Those who oversee dances should carefully follow the policies outlined below.

Leaders use the Performance Contract form when hiring a band, orchestra, or disc jockey. This contract helps ensure that conduct and music are appropriate for Church dances. Those who provide music should not use inappropriate lyrics and should not dress or talk immodestly. Leaders hold auditions and make firm, clear agreements in

writing that commit the persons who provide music to follow Church standards when performing for Church activities.

The beat of the music, whether instrumental or vocal, should not overshadow the melody. The volume should be low enough to allow two people who are standing side by side to hear each other as they carry on a normal conversation.

Lights should be bright enough for people to see across the room. Strobe lighting and psychedelic lighting that pulsate with the beat are not acceptable. Lights on the floor, in the corners of the room, or spotlighting wall and ceiling decorations are appropriate.

#### 20.6.7

### Devotionals for Participants in Activities

A brief devotional program may be held as part of an activity. Devotionals typically include a prayer, a hymn or musical selection, remarks by a leader, and a spiritual thought, testimony, or scripture by one or more participants. Such programs can help invite the Spirit and keep activities in perspective.

#### 20.6.8

### Fundraising Activities

Fundraising activities are not usually approved, because expenses for stake and ward activities are paid with budget funds. As an exception, a stake president or bishop may authorize one group fundraising activity each year. Such an activity may be held to raise funds for the following purposes only:

- To help pay the cost of one annual camp or similar activity as outlined in 20.2.8.
- To help purchase equipment that the unit needs for annual camps as outlined in 20.2.9.

If a fundraising activity is held, it should provide a meaningful value or service. It should be a positive experience that builds unity.

Contributions to fundraising activities are voluntary. Priesthood leaders should take special care to ensure that members do not feel obligated to contribute.

Stakes and wards that sponsor fundraising activities should not advertise or solicit beyond their boundaries. Nor should they sell products or services door to door.

Examples of fundraising activities that are not approved include:

- Activities that would be taxable.
- Activities completed with paid labor, either by employees or by contract.
- Entertainment for which the stake or ward pays performers for their services, when admission is charged, and when the intent of the activity is to raise funds.
- The sale of commercial goods or services, including food storage items.
- Games of chance, such as raffles, lotteries, and bingo.

Any exceptions to these instructions must be approved by the Area Presidency.

#### 20.6.9

### Insurance

#### 20.6.9.1

### Automobile Insurance

See 20.6.24.

**20.6.9.2****Personal Health and Accident Insurance**

In many parts of the world, health and accident insurance coverage is available to Church members through employer-sponsored, personal, or government programs. Where such coverage is available, members are responsible to access all available benefits provided through it if they incur an injury during a Church activity.

**20.6.9.3****Church Activity Medical Assistance Program**

In the United States and Canada, the Church Activity Medical Assistance Program provides secondary medical and dental benefits and specific death and dismemberment benefits. This program is primarily designed to supplement, not replace, a person's own health and accident insurance.

Members who plan, conduct, and supervise activities in these countries should be knowledgeable about the Church Activity Medical Assistance Program, including its restrictions and limitations. The program is outlined in the *Church Activity Medical Assistance Handbook*, which may be obtained by contacting:

Deseret Mutual Benefit Administrators

P.O. Box 45530

Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0530

Telephone: 1-801-578-5650 or 1-800-777-1647

Email: churchactivity@dmba.com

Website: www.dmba.com/churchactivity

**20.6.9.4****Personal Liability Insurance**

Where possible, those who oversee activities should protect themselves by carrying reasonable amounts of liability insurance. Such insurance may be

available through homeowners insurance or other policies.

**20.6.10****Monday Nights**

Members are encouraged to hold home evening on Sunday or at other times as individuals and families choose. A family activity night could be held on Monday or at other times. No Church activities, meetings, baptismal services, games, or practices should be held after 6:00 p.m. on Mondays. Other interruptions on Monday nights should be avoided. An exception may be made when New Year's Eve is on a Monday (see 20.6.11).

Leaders ensure that Church buildings and other facilities are closed on Monday nights. Receptions and other similar activities may not be held in Church facilities on Monday nights. Members are also discouraged from holding receptions in other facilities on Monday nights.

Where practical, members may want to encourage community and school leaders to avoid scheduling activities on Monday evenings that require children or parents to be away from their homes.

**20.6.11****New Year's Eve Parties**

When New Year's Eve falls on Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, and when Church activities are planned, leaders should observe the following guidelines:

- *Saturday.* The stake president schedules an alternate Sunday for observing fast day. Dancing and similar activities are discontinued at midnight, but refreshments or a meal may be served afterward. Participants should not be kept past a reasonable hour so they can be available for Sunday meetings.
- *Sunday.* (1) Dancing and similar activities may be planned for Saturday, December 30, using the

guidelines in the previous paragraph. (2) Instead of Church units planning activities, families may be encouraged to celebrate New Year's Eve in their homes. Activities should be appropriate for the Sabbath day. (3) Special meetings could be held at a reasonable hour on Sunday evening.

- *Monday.* No local Church-sponsored New Year's Eve activities should be scheduled before 9:00 p.m. The stake president or bishop may authorize the use of Church buildings on Monday evening in this instance.

#### 20.6.12

### Overnight Activities

Parental permission is required for all Church-sponsored overnight activities involving youth (see 20.6.13).

Church-sponsored overnight activities for combined groups of young men and young women or for combined groups of male and female single adults are not authorized unless approved by the stake president and bishop. Such activities are only rarely held, such as for a youth conference or temple visit.

On Church-sponsored overnight activities, leaders arrange sleeping accommodations so that male and female participants do not sleep in immediate proximity to each other. Male and female leaders must have separate sleeping facilities. Married couples may share the same quarters if appropriate facilities are available.

On Church-sponsored overnight activities, a child or youth may not stay in the same tent or room as an adult unless (1) the adult is his or her parent or guardian or (2) there are at least two adults in the tent or room who are the same gender as the children or youth.

If adult leaders and children or youth share other overnight facilities, such as a cabin, there must be at

least two adults in the facility, and they must be the same gender as the child or youth.

All Church-sponsored overnight activities must include at least two adult leaders.

A sufficient number of adult priesthood leaders must be present at all times during overnight activities to provide support and protection. In the case of Young Women activities, priesthood leaders must stay in facilities separate from the young women.

Leaders fill out an Event and Activity Plan form for all overnight activities.

Overnight activities at Church meetinghouses or meetinghouse grounds are not approved.

Overnight activities at commercial buildings such as sports malls or gyms are not approved. With approval from priesthood leaders, dances or other activities may be held in commercial buildings after closing hours if the activities end at midnight.

#### 20.6.13

### Parental Permission

Parents or guardians should be informed and give consent when youth participate in a Church activity. Written consent is necessary if an activity involves travel outside the local area (as determined by local leaders) or staying overnight. Leaders may also request written consent for other activities when they feel it is appropriate.

Parents and guardians give this consent by signing the Permission and Medical Release form. The person who leads the activity should have a signed form for each participant for each activity that requires written consent.

**20.6.14****Participation of Youth under 14 Years of Age**

Before January of the year they turn 14, youth do not usually participate in youth conferences or in dances that are held at times other than the regularly scheduled youth activity night.

Members of the bishopric or stake presidency determine to what extent youth may participate in other activities before January of the year they turn 14. Leaders consider such factors as late hours, the subject of the discussion, the nature of the activity, and the maturity of the participants.

**20.6.15****Portrayal of Deity**

God the Father and the Holy Ghost are not to be portrayed in meetings, dramas, or musicals.

If the Savior is portrayed, it must be done with the utmost reverence and dignity. Only brethren of wholesome personal character should be considered for the part. The person who portrays the Savior should not sing or dance. When speaking, he should use only direct quotations of scriptures spoken by the Savior.

At the end of the performance, the person should not wear the costume in the foyer or elsewhere. He should change immediately into street clothes.

The Savior should not be portrayed by children in dramatization except in a Nativity scene.

**20.6.16****Prayers at Activities**

All activities should be opened and, when appropriate, closed with prayer.

**20.6.17****Renting Non-Church Facilities for Activities**

When Church facilities are inadequate for a stake or multistake activity, facilities may be rented with approval from the bishop or stake president and from Church physical facilities representatives.

Local units may be asked to show evidence of liability insurance when renting or using facilities that are not owned by the Church. The bishop or stake president may obtain a certificate showing evidence of insurance from the Risk Management Division at Church headquarters or from the area office. Requests should include the name and address of the requester (normally the owner of the facility), a description and location of the facility, the liability limits required, and other pertinent information. Leaders should plan well in advance to allow time to prepare and mail the certificates.

**20.6.18****Reports of Abuse**

If a leader becomes aware of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of someone during a Church activity, he or she should contact the bishop immediately. Instructions for bishops are provided in 38.6.2.1.

**20.6.19****Sabbath-Day Observance**

No Church-sponsored sports events (such as games, practices, or travel) or recreational events (such as camping or hiking) are to be scheduled on Sunday. Nor should youth groups and others travel to or from camps or youth conferences on Sunday.

When security risks or travel costs are serious issues, leaders can schedule some youth activities on Sunday. Such activities should be separate from the Sunday meeting schedule and in keeping with the spirit of the Sabbath.



**20.6.20****Safety Precautions and Accident Response and Reporting****20.6.20.1****Safety Precautions**

Activities should involve minimal risk of injury or illness to participants. Activities should also involve minimal risk of damage to property. During activities, leaders make every effort to ensure safety. By planning effectively and following safety precautions, leaders can minimize the risk of accidents.

Activities should include appropriate training and proper supervision. They should also be appropriate for the participants' age and maturity.

Leaders should be prepared for emergencies that may occur. They should also know in advance how to contact local law enforcement and emergency services.

**20.6.20.2****Accident Response**

If an accident or injury occurs on Church property or during a Church-sponsored activity, leaders observe the following guidelines, as applicable:

- Render first aid. If a person needs medical care beyond simple first aid, contact emergency medical services, the bishop or stake president, and the parent, guardian, or other next of kin.
- In case of a missing person or fatality, immediately notify local law enforcement authorities and cooperate fully with them.
- Provide emotional support.
- Do not encourage or discourage legal action against the Church, and do not make commitments on behalf of the Church.

- Gather and preserve witness names and information, accounts of what happened, and photographs.

**20.6.20.3****Accident Reporting**

The bishop, stake president, or designated member with knowledge of the incident should promptly report the following online at incidents.ChurchofJesusChrist.org if:

- An accident, injury, or illness requiring medical attention occurs on Church property or during a Church-sponsored activity.
- Damage to private, public, or Church property occurs during a Church-sponsored activity.
- Legal action is threatened or anticipated.

If there is a fatality or missing person, the stake president (or a bishop or designated member under his direction) immediately takes one of the following actions:

- In the United States and Canada, he first calls the Risk Management Division at Church headquarters (1-801-240-4049; after business hours or on weekends, call 1-801-240-1000 and the operator will contact someone immediately) and then the Area Presidency.
- Outside the United States and Canada, he notifies the Area Presidency.

Leaders also report injuries and damage involving Church facilities or property to the facilities manager.

**20.6.20.4****Insurance and Questions**

Leaders should review the applicability of the Church Activity Medical Assistance Program if an injury occurred during a Church-sponsored activity,

event, or assignment. For information about insurance, see 20.6.9.

The stake president (or a bishop under his direction) refers questions about safety issues or claims against the Church to the Risk Management Division or to the area office.

### **20.6.21 Sports**

Church sports activities provide opportunities for wholesome physical activity, fellowship, and sportsmanship. The emphasis in Church sports is on participation, sportsmanship, and skill development, not competition. All team members should have regular opportunities to play.

The stake presidency approves the rules for sports activities sponsored within their stake. If area or multistake sports activities are held, the Area Presidency approves rules for all participating units. Rules used in local school and community sports activities may be consulted.

If multistake sports activities are held, they are administered by sports specialists who are called by agent stake presidents designated by the Area Presidency. Area sports tournaments are not approved.

Participants in Church-sponsored sports activities do not need to be Church members. However, they should live in the stake's boundaries and agree to follow Church standards and policies.

The stake presidency establishes guidelines that specify the ages at which players may participate in Church sports. These guidelines should take into account the local culture, geographical setting, school system, and rules of governing sports organizations. Such decisions should be made before the start of a season so everyone who is involved understands the age and eligibility rules.

Schools, states, provinces, and national sports organizations often establish rules about playing on school teams and Church teams in the same sport season. Church leaders and participants in Church sports ensure that they follow these rules. Violating them can result in the loss of eligibility for school teams and individuals.

In the United States and Canada, a person who is a member of a school sports team generally is not eligible to participate in the same sport in the same season in the Church sports program. School teams include those associated with junior high or middle schools, high schools, and colleges and universities, including junior colleges. This guideline does not apply to those who participate in intramural sports. If two schedules of play are either concurrent or overlapping, they are considered to be in the same season. Leaders encourage youth who play on school teams to assist with Church sports programs in ways other than as players.

Team uniforms should be simple, inexpensive, modest, and appropriate for the activity. Colored T-shirts or pullover reversible shirts are usually sufficient. Uniforms should be paid for from the stake or ward budget.

The presentation of team or individual awards or trophies is discouraged.

### **20.6.22 Taxable Activities**

Leaders ensure that activities do not jeopardize the Church's tax-exempt status. For guidelines, see 34.10.1.

### **20.6.23 Temple Visits**

Temple visits are organized on the ward or stake level within the assigned temple district. Organized ward or stake visits to temples outside the assigned temple district are not encouraged. Such visits

would require the approval of the stake presidency. Overnight temple visits also require the approval of the stake presidency.

Temple visits must comply with the travel policies in 20.6.24. Overnight temple visits must also comply with the policies in 20.6.12.

#### **20.6.24 Travel**

Members who travel in Church-sponsored groups should have the approval of the bishop or stake president. Travel for activities should not place undue burdens on members.

Long-distance travel for activities is discouraged. If a stake president or bishop feels that such travel may be justified, he prayerfully considers the potential spiritual benefits of the activity, the cost of the travel, and the effect on families before approving it.

If long-distance travel for an activity is approved, members should not provide it at their own expense. Nor should significant portions of the stake or ward budget allowance be retained from one year to the next to cover travel expenses.

Travel practices and the application of guidelines in this section should be consistent among units in the same coordinating council. Stake presidents may discuss and agree on general consistency in travel practices during coordinating council meetings (see 29.11).

Leaders fill out an Event and Activity Plan form for activities that involve travel outside the local area.

When a Church activity for youth involves travel outside the local vicinity or staying overnight, parents should give written permission for their children to participate (see 20.6.13). Responsible adult supervision must be provided (see 20.6.2).

When feasible, Church groups should use commercial transportation that is licensed and is protected by liability insurance.

When Church groups travel in private passenger vehicles, each vehicle should be in safe operating condition, and each person should use a seat belt. Each driver should be a licensed, responsible adult. All vehicles and drivers should be covered with reasonable amounts of automobile liability insurance.

Church organizations may not own or acquire automobiles or buses for group travel.

A man and a woman should not travel alone together for Church activities, meetings, or assignments unless they are married to each other or are both single.

#### **20.6.25 Unapproved Activities**

Church units may not sponsor the following activities. Leaders, parents, and others who plan or participate in Church activities should be aware of these restrictions.

- Activities that have a high risk of injury or illness or that require unusual expense or travel (see 20.6.20 and 20.6.24).
- Exercise programs that have music, lyrics, dress, or other elements that are not in harmony with Church standards.
- Activities that involve wearing masks, except in dramatic productions.
- Debutante balls, coming-out parties, or activities that include selecting kings and queens.
- Any other activities that are not in harmony with the guidelines in this chapter.

If a bishop has a question about whether an activity is appropriate, he directs it to the stake president. Stake presidents may address questions to the Area Presidency.

## 21.

# Ministering

## 21.0

### Introduction

The Savior showed by example what it means to minister as He served out of love for His Father and for His Father’s children (see John 15:9–10). He loved, taught, prayed for, comforted, and blessed those around Him, inviting all to follow Him (see Mark 8:34). Ministering brothers and sisters prayerfully seek to serve as He would. To provide such care, each member household has priesthood brethren assigned as ministering brothers to watch over the family or individuals who live there (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:47, 59). Each adult sister has ministering sisters assigned to watch over her.

Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies instruct ministering brothers and sisters in how to care for and strengthen individuals and families. Presidency members can give this instruction in ministering interviews, in Sunday meetings, or in another meeting.

Serving as a ministering brother or sister is part of the covenant made at baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–11). Accordingly, ministering brothers and sisters are not called, sustained, or set apart.

Because stake presidencies and bishoprics are responsible for all members of the stake or ward, these brethren are not generally assigned as ministering brothers to specific individuals or families. High councilors and functioning patriarchs may be assigned, based on local circumstances, as determined by the stake president. If they are assigned, a member of the elders quorum presidency makes the assignment.

Members of the stake high priests quorum, their wives, and their families have ministering brothers and sisters assigned to them by their elders quorum

and Relief Society presidencies, under the direction of the bishop.

## 21.1

### Responsibilities of Ministering Brothers and Sisters

Ministering brothers represent the Lord, the bishop, and quorum leaders. They “visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:51). They are assigned to families and individuals to “watch over . . . and be with and strengthen them” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:53). They “warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:59).

Ministering sisters represent the Lord, the bishop, and Relief Society leaders. As sisters minister, they prayerfully seek to serve as the Lord would, “comfort[ing] those that stand in need of comfort” and helping each become a true disciple of Jesus Christ (Mosiah 18:9; see also John 13:35).

Ministering brothers and sisters seek to be led by the Spirit as they provide Christlike caring. They counsel with those they are assigned and seek inspiration about how best to meet their needs, using the time and resources available.

Ministering brothers and sisters are flexible in how they minister. They customize their contacts, service, and any messages to meet the needs of members. Personal visits are important when they can be made. Ministering brothers and sisters may also reach out through phone calls, texts, emails, letters, contacts at church, attendance at family events, and service.

Meeting individual needs starts with prayerful consideration and with a conversation with the assigned individuals and families. Ministering brothers and sisters listen so they can understand how best to serve. They discuss the frequency and type of contact members desire. They also discuss the kind of messages members would like.

Ministering brothers and sisters can be an important source of help to members. Some ways are listed below:

- They help members strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
- They help members prepare to make the covenants associated with the next ordinance they receive. They may help parents (1) ensure that their children are blessed and (2) prepare their children to be baptized and confirmed. They may also help parents prepare their sons to have the Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon them and be ordained to priesthood offices at the appropriate ages.
- They become acquainted with members' interests and needs, and they recognize special events in their lives.
- They offer help when members are unemployed, ill, lonely, moving, or have other needs.
- They help members become self-reliant.

## 21.2

### Coordinating Ministering

Ministering is a coordinated effort between the elders quorum and the Relief Society. Working under the direction of the bishop, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies prayerfully coordinate ministering as follows:

- The elders quorum presidency recommends to the bishop ministering companionships and ministering assignments for the individuals and

families of the ward. The Relief Society presidency recommends ministering companionships and ministering assignments for Relief Society sisters. Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies discuss specific assignments before recommending them to the bishop.

- As appropriate, the ministering brothers and sisters of an individual or family may discuss together their efforts to meet needs. When necessary, they may counsel with their quorum or Relief Society presidencies for additional help and resources.
- Elders quorum presidencies hold interviews with ministering brothers at least quarterly. Relief Society presidencies hold interviews with ministering sisters at least quarterly. (See 21.4.)
- Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies meet together at least quarterly to discuss the strengths and needs of individuals and families learned through ministering interviews. Elders quorum and Relief Society presidents share in the responsibility of organizing and conducting the meeting. As needed, the presidencies work together to coordinate ministering assignments. Following that meeting, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents meet together quarterly with the bishop to address the needs of individuals and families. They may also discuss changes in ministering assignments and obtain the bishop's approval for their recommendations.
- As needed, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents discuss with the ward council the strengths and needs identified in ministering interviews. Members of the ward council make plans to serve and bless ward members.

**21.3**

## Organizing Ministering to Meet Local Needs

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies prayerfully recommend to the bishop assignments for ministering brothers and sisters to care for individuals and families in the ward. Presidency members discuss the strengths and needs of individuals and families. They recommend dedicated ministering brothers and sisters for new members, less-active members who may be receptive, and others such as single parents, widows, and widowers.

After the bishop has given approval, a member of the elders quorum or Relief Society presidency meets with ministering brothers or sisters to give them their assignments and to counsel about the strengths, needs, and challenges of those to whom the brothers or sisters minister. This conversation may take place in a ministering interview or whenever needed.

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies normally assign brothers or sisters into companionships of two. A married couple may be assigned to minister together if that would most effectively meet the needs of a particular individual or family.

Teachers and priests serve as companions to Melchizedek Priesthood holders. After consulting with parents and leaders, a member of the elders quorum presidency extends ministering assignments to teachers and priests.

Young Women may serve as companions to Relief Society sisters beginning in January of the year they turn 14. Parents and leaders counsel with each young woman, who may be assigned as a ministering sister when she is willing, able, and sufficiently mature to serve. A member of the Relief Society presidency extends ministering assignments to young women.

A young woman serving as a companion to an adult sister does not have ministering sisters assigned

specifically to her. She is ministered to by those who minister to her family and is also cared for by her Young Women class presidency and adult leaders.

The guideline that two responsible adults be present with youth does not apply to the assignment of ministering companions. However, under the direction of their bishop, leaders should use wisdom and seek inspiration when assigning youth as companions to adults.

Adult companions should avoid situations that might be misunderstood. They should use care regarding isolated one-on-one situations so that youth have a safe and rewarding experience with ministering. Additionally, leaders should use wisdom in not assigning youth to difficult home or family situations.

When a youth is assigned to a companion who is not his or her parent, leaders should confirm that parents do not object to the assignment.

Elders quorum leaders in young single adult wards recommend to the bishop ministering brothers for each member in the ward. Single members who live together as roommates may have the same ministering brothers. However, ministering brothers should focus on serving the individuals and should report on each person separately.

With approval from the mission president, leaders may consider asking full-time missionaries to help with ministering on a limited basis. The mission president communicates this approval to the stake president, who informs bishops. When such approval is given, full-time missionaries are assigned primarily to visit new members, part-member families, and less-active members.

**21.4**

## Ministering Interviews

Members of the elders quorum presidency hold interviews with companionships of ministering

brothers (including teachers and priests, as circumstances are appropriate). Members of the Relief Society presidency hold interviews with companionships of ministering sisters (including young women with ministering assignments, as circumstances are appropriate).

Interviews are held at least once each quarter; they may be held throughout the quarter and need not be long to be effective. Preferably, these interviews are held in person and with both members of the companionship. A married couple assigned to minister together can meet with elders quorum leaders, Relief Society leaders, or both.

Ministering interviews are held to:

- Counsel about the strengths, needs, and challenges of assigned families and individuals.
- Determine what needs the elders quorum, Relief Society, ward council, and others might assist with.
- Teach and encourage ministering brothers and sisters.

Between interviews, ministering brothers and sisters communicate information as needed—in person or through phone calls, texts, or emails. Ministering brothers share confidential information only with the elders quorum president or directly with the bishop. Ministering sisters share confidential information only with the Relief Society president or directly with the bishop.

22.

## Providing for Temporal Needs and Building Self-Reliance

22.1

### Purposes of Church Welfare

The purposes of Church welfare are to help members become self-reliant, to care for the poor and needy, and to give service.

22.1.1

#### Self-Reliance

Self-reliance is the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family. As members become self-reliant, they are also better able to serve and care for others.

Church members are responsible for their own spiritual and temporal well-being. Blessed with the gift of agency, they have the privilege and duty to set their own course, solve their own problems, and strive to become self-reliant. Members do this under the inspiration of the Lord and with the labor of their own hands.

When Church members are doing all they can to provide for themselves but cannot meet their basic needs, generally they should first turn to their families for help. When this is not sufficient or feasible, the Church stands ready to help.

Some of the areas in which members should become self-reliant are outlined in the following sections.

22.1.1.1

##### Health

The Lord has commanded members to take care of their minds and bodies. They should obey the Word of Wisdom, eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, control their weight, and get adequate sleep. They

should shun substances or practices that abuse their bodies or minds and that could lead to addiction. They should practice good sanitation and hygiene and obtain adequate medical and dental care. They should also strive to cultivate good relationships with family members and others.

22.1.1.2

##### Education

Education provides understanding and skills that can help people develop self-reliance. Church members should study the scriptures and other good books. They should improve in their ability to read, write, and do basic mathematics. They should obtain as much education as they can, including formal or technical schooling where possible. This will help them develop their talents, find suitable employment, and make a valuable contribution to their families, the Church, and the community.

22.1.1.3

##### Employment

Work is the foundation upon which self-reliance and temporal well-being rest. Members should prepare for and carefully select a suitable occupation or self-employment that will provide for their own and their families' needs. They should become skilled at their work, be diligent and trustworthy, and give honest work for the pay and benefits they receive.

22.1.1.4

##### Home Storage

To help care for themselves and their families, members should build a three-month supply of food that is part of their normal diet. Where local laws and



circumstances permit, they should gradually build a longer-term supply of basic foods that will sustain life. They should also store drinking water in case the water supply becomes polluted or disrupted.

#### 22.1.1.5

##### **Finances**

To become financially self-reliant, members should pay tithes and offerings, avoid unnecessary debt, use a budget, and live within a plan. They should gradually build a financial reserve by regularly saving a portion of their income.

#### 22.1.1.6

##### **Spiritual Strength**

Spiritual strength is essential to a person's temporal and eternal well-being. Church members grow in spiritual strength as they develop their testimonies, exercise faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, obey God's commandments, pray daily, study the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets, attend Church meetings, and serve in Church callings and assignments.

#### 22.1.2

##### **Members' Efforts to Care for the Poor and Needy and Give Service**

Through His Church, the Lord has provided a way to care for the poor and needy. He has asked Church members to give generously according to what they have received from Him. He has also asked His people to "visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief" (Doctrine and Covenants 44:6). Church members are encouraged to give personal compassionate service to those in need. They should be "anxiously engaged in a good cause," serving without being asked or assigned (see Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–27).

The Lord has established the law of the fast and fast offerings to bless His people and to provide a way

for them to serve those in need (see Isaiah 58:6–12; Malachi 3:8–12). When members fast, they are asked to give to the Church a fast offering at least equal to the value of the food they would have eaten. If possible, they should be generous and give more. Blessings associated with the law of the fast include closeness to the Lord, increased spiritual strength, temporal well-being, greater compassion, and a stronger desire to serve.

Some opportunities to care for those in need come through Church callings. Other opportunities are present in members' homes, neighborhoods, and communities, such as those coordinated by JustServe (in the United States and Canada, see JustServe.org). Members can also help the poor and needy of all faiths throughout the world by supporting the Church's humanitarian efforts, by participating in disaster response through Helping Hands (where applicable), and by individual efforts to serve others in need.

Providing in the Lord's way humbles the rich, exalts the poor, and sanctifies both (see Doctrine and Covenants 104:15–18). President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught:

"The real long-term objective of the welfare plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this church" (in special meeting of stake presidents, Oct. 2, 1936).

#### 22.1.3

##### **The Lord's Storehouse**

In some locations the Church has established buildings called bishops' storehouses. When members receive permission from their bishop, they may go to the bishops' storehouse to obtain food and clothing. But the Lord's storehouse is not limited to a building used to distribute food and clothing to the

poor. It also includes Church members' offerings of time, talents, compassion, materials, and financial means that are made available to the bishop to help care for the poor and needy. The Lord's storehouse, then, exists in each ward. These offerings are "to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, . . . every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 82:18–19). The bishop is the agent of the Lord's storehouse.

## 22.2

### Welfare Leadership in the Ward

#### 22.2.1

##### Bishop

The bishop directs welfare work in the ward. He has a divine mandate to seek out and care for the poor (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:112). His goal is to help members help themselves and become self-reliant.

The bishop's counselors, the Relief Society president, the elders quorum president, and other members of the ward council assist the bishop in fulfilling these responsibilities.

The bishop maintains confidentiality about the welfare assistance that members receive. He carefully safeguards the privacy and dignity of members who receive assistance. When he feels that other ward leaders can help members in need, he may share information according to the guidelines in 22.4.

More information about the bishop's welfare responsibilities, including guidelines for administering assistance from fast-offering funds, is provided in 22.6.

#### 22.2.2

##### Ward Council

In ward council meetings, the bishop teaches welfare principles and instructs council members in their welfare responsibilities. Council members consider spiritual and temporal welfare matters as follows:

They counsel together about ways to help ward members understand and follow principles of welfare.

They report on spiritual and temporal welfare needs in the ward, drawing information from personal visits and from ministering interviews. When information may be too confidential to share with the entire ward council, leaders speak privately with the bishop (see 22.2.3).

They plan ways to help specific ward members meet their spiritual and temporal needs, including long-term needs. They determine how to assist members who have disabilities or other special needs. They keep these discussions confidential (see 22.4).

They coordinate efforts to ensure that members who receive Church assistance have opportunities to work or give service. They compile and maintain a list of meaningful work opportunities. If Church welfare operations exist in the area, these operations may provide work opportunities and training for people who need Church assistance.

They compile and maintain a list of ward members whose skills might be useful in responding to short-term, long-term, or disaster-caused needs.

They develop and maintain a simple written plan for the ward to respond to emergencies (see 22.6.11).

They coordinate this plan with similar plans in the stake and community.

**22.2.3****Ward Priesthood Executive Committee**

The ward priesthood executive committee (PEC) has been discontinued. Agenda items for PEC meetings are now included in ward council meetings and, if needed for a sensitive issue, in expanded bishopric meetings.

**22.2.4****Elders Quorum and Relief Society**

Welfare is central to the work of the elders quorum and the Relief Society. In elders quorum and Relief Society presidency meetings, leaders plan ways to teach principles of self-reliance and service and to address welfare needs. Under the direction of the bishop, these leaders help members become self-reliant and find solutions to short-term and long-term welfare concerns.

**22.2.4.1****Short-Term Welfare Needs**

As the bishop provides short-term assistance, he may give assignments to elders quorum or Relief Society presidencies.

The bishop normally assigns the Relief Society president to visit members who need short-term assistance. She helps assess their needs and suggests to the bishop what assistance to provide. The bishop may ask her to prepare a Bishop's Order for Commodities form for him to approve and sign.

The Relief Society president's role in making these family-needs visits is explained more fully in 9.2.2.2.

**22.2.4.2****Long-Term Welfare Needs**

Many short-term problems are caused by long-term difficulties such as poor health, lack of skills, inadequate education or employment, lifestyle habits, and emotional challenges. Elders quorum and Relief

Society leaders have a special responsibility to help members address these concerns. Their goal is to address long-term concerns in ways that lead to lasting change.

As elders quorum and Relief Society leaders become aware of long-term needs, they respond compassionately to help individuals and families. They use resources available in their organizations and in the ward. They pray for guidance to know how to provide assistance.

To gain a better understanding of how to help, elders quorum and Relief Society leaders normally visit members who have welfare needs. They may use the Self-Reliance Plan or otherwise follow its principles to help members plan ways to respond to welfare needs.

As leaders help members respond to long-term needs, they counsel with the bishop. In some cases, elders quorum and Relief Society leaders work together.

**22.2.4.3****Reporting to the Bishop and Seeking His Continued Direction**

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidents regularly report to the bishop on actions they and their organizations are taking to address short-term and long-term welfare needs in the ward. They seek the bishop's continued direction on their welfare efforts.

If individuals and families have short-term problems that they cannot resolve themselves and that elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies cannot resolve, these leaders inform the bishop immediately.

If the elders quorum or Relief Society presidencies learn of possible concerns with worthiness or sensitive family matters, they refer the members to the bishop.

**22.2.4.4****Ministering**

Assistance with spiritual and temporal welfare often begins with those who serve as ministering brothers and sisters. In a spirit of kindness and friendship, these brothers and sisters help individuals and families. They report the needs of those they serve to their elders quorum or Relief Society presidencies.

**22.2.4.5****Seeking Service from the Elders Quorum, Relief Society, and Others**

Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies may seek the service of people whose skills or experience could help those in need. Members may provide short-term service such as providing meals or childcare or sharing information about available employment. Members may also provide guidance to help with long-term welfare needs, such as health, sanitation, nutrition, preparing for a career, finding opportunities for education, starting a small business, or managing family finances.

After leaders ask others to provide assistance, they remain in contact with the needy individual or family to provide encouragement and to help in other ways as necessary.

Leaders may assist the bishop when he refers members to Church welfare operations such as bishops' storehouses, Church employment resource centers, Deseret Industries, and Family Services. Leaders may also help members receive assistance through community and government agencies.

**22.2.5****Ward Welfare Specialists**

Welfare specialists serve as resources to help the bishopric and to help elders quorum and Relief Society leaders perform their welfare duties.

The bishopric may call an employment specialist to help members prepare for and find suitable employment. The bishopric may also call other welfare specialists to help members with needs such as education, training, nutrition, sanitation, home storage, health care, family finances, and the Perpetual Education Fund.

**22.3****Welfare Leadership in the Stake****22.3.1****Stake President**

The stake president oversees welfare work in the stake. More information on his welfare responsibilities is provided in 22.5.

**22.3.2****Stake Council**

In stake council meetings, leaders consider spiritual and temporal welfare matters as follows:

- They identify welfare concerns in the stake and seek ways to address those concerns. However, they do not assume responsibility to resolve ward welfare matters.
- They plan ways to teach welfare principles to stake and ward leaders.
- They discuss ways to make ward leaders aware of people in the stake who can serve as resources to help with welfare needs.
- They develop and maintain a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies (see 22.5.3). This plan should be coordinated with similar plans of other stakes in the coordinating council and with plans in the community (see 29.11).
- They plan welfare activities, taking care not to place undue burdens on ward leaders.

- They plan ways to respond to stake welfare assignments.
- When assigned by the Area Presidency, they provide leadership and support for a welfare operation.

If a bishop has been assigned to handle requests for assistance to people who are transient or homeless, members of the stake council determine how to make stake resources available to that bishop.

### 22.3.3

#### Stake Welfare Specialists

A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor may call a stake employment specialist and other welfare specialists. These stake specialists serve as resources for bishops and other ward leaders. The specialists may help with welfare needs such as those listed in 22.2.5.

### 22.4

#### Confidentiality

As the bishop and other ward leaders learn of members' welfare needs and assistance that has been provided, they maintain the confidentiality of that information. They carefully safeguard the privacy and dignity of members who receive assistance. They are careful not to embarrass members who need assistance.

There may be times when it would be helpful for the entire ward council, and perhaps other ward members, to know about the welfare needs of an individual or family. For example, when a member is unemployed or looking for a better job, others may be able to help the member find a job more quickly. In such cases, the bishop and other leaders generally seek the needy members' permission to share information about their situations.

When leaders ask others to help, they share only the information needed to fulfill the assignment. Leaders also instruct them to maintain confidentiality.

### 22.5

#### Welfare Duties of the Stake Presidency

##### 22.5.1

#### Welfare Leadership and Councils

##### 22.5.1.1

#### Teach Welfare Doctrine and Principles

The stake president and his counselors ensure that the doctrine, principles, and blessings related to spiritual and temporal welfare are taught regularly to stake members.

##### 22.5.1.2

#### Teach Leaders Their Welfare Responsibilities

The stake president and his counselors teach leaders their welfare responsibilities. The stake president takes special care to instruct bishops in the principles and policies of administering Church welfare assistance. As part of this responsibility, he organizes the stake bishops' welfare council (see 22.7).

The stake president ensures that bishops administer Church welfare properly. In his regular interviews with bishops, he asks about the welfare of individual ward members and discusses the use of welfare assistance, including fast offerings, to help those in need.

Welfare matters may also be discussed in the stake presidency's training meetings with bishoprics, in stake priesthood leadership meetings, and in other similar settings.

**22.5.1.3****Attend Coordinating Council Meetings**

Stake presidents attend coordinating council meetings to receive instruction in various Church matters, including welfare principles and duties. In these meetings, presided over by an assigned Area Seventy, leaders consider ways to foster self-reliance, care for the needy, and encourage fast-offering donations. For information about these meetings, see 29.11.

**22.5.1.4****Preside over the Welfare Work of the Stake Council**

The stake president directs the welfare work of the stake council. In stake council meetings, leaders consider spiritual and temporal welfare matters as follows:

- They identify welfare concerns in the stake and seek ways to address those concerns. However, they do not assume responsibility to resolve ward welfare matters.
- They plan ways to teach welfare principles to stake and ward leaders.
- They discuss ways to make ward leaders aware of people in the stake who can serve as resources to help with welfare needs.
- They develop and maintain a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies (see 22.5.3).
- They plan welfare activities, taking care not to place undue burdens on ward leaders.
- They plan ways to respond to stake welfare assignments.
- When assigned by the Area Presidency, they provide leadership and support for a welfare operation.

If a bishop has been assigned to handle requests for assistance to people who are transient or homeless, members of the stake council determine how to make stake resources available to that bishop.

**22.5.1.5****Serve as the Agent Stake President for Church Welfare Operations**

The Area Presidency appoints an agent stake to each bishops' storehouse, cannery, home storage center, employment resource center, production project, Deseret Industries store, and other Church welfare operation or project in the area. This assignment may change periodically.

All stakes that are served by a welfare operation, not just the agent stake, may be called on to provide volunteer labor for it. These efforts are coordinated in coordinating council meetings. The president of the agent stake represents the welfare operation in these meetings (see 29.11).

The president of the agent stake organizes an agent stake operating committee to oversee the welfare operation. This committee is composed of the stake president or an assigned counselor, the stake bishops' welfare council chairman, the stake Relief Society president, the manager of the operation, and other specialists as needed. The committee meets regularly to provide priesthood guidance and support to the manager of the operation, to make sure the operation serves needy members appropriately, and to coordinate volunteer labor.

**22.5.1.6****Call Stake Welfare Specialists**

A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor may call a stake employment specialist and other welfare specialists. These stake specialists serve as resources for bishops and other ward leaders. They may help with welfare needs such as job placement, education, training, nutrition,

sanitation, home storage, health care, family finances, and the Perpetual Education Fund.

## 22.5.2

### Welfare Assistance

Generally, welfare assistance is administered by bishops. However, the stake president has a role in providing assistance in the following circumstances.

#### 22.5.2.1

##### Assistance for Bishops

The stake president should be aware of the temporal circumstances of bishops and their families. When a bishop or members of his immediate family need welfare assistance, he reviews the needs and the proposed assistance with the stake president. The stake president's written approval is required before the bishop may:

- Sign a bishop's order for Church welfare assistance for himself or his immediate family members.
- Use fast offerings to assist himself or his immediate family. If fast-offering funds are used, the stake president reviews the bills and other expenses before authorizing payment.
- Obtain help for himself or his immediate family through Church welfare operations.

When authorizing the use of fast offerings for the bishop or his immediate family, the stake president ensures that the instructions in 22.6.4.5 are followed, particularly with regard to signing checks. In summary, the bishop may not sign a check that is for welfare assistance for himself or his immediate family.

#### 22.5.2.2

##### Medical Expenses That Exceed Authorized Amounts

The Church has specific amounts that are authorized for medical expenses. For guidelines and exceptions, see "Medical Expenses That Exceed Authorized Amounts."

#### 22.5.2.3

##### Other Special Medical Circumstances

See 22.6.6.

#### 22.5.2.4

##### Assistance for Members Who Are Transient or Homeless

Where there are two or more wards in the vicinity, the stake president may appoint one bishop to handle all requests from people who are transient or homeless. This helps avoid duplication and confusion.

Where there is a concentration of stakes with large numbers of people who are transient or homeless seeking assistance, the Area Presidency may call a Church-service missionary to handle such requests. This man should have served as a bishop. He should also be experienced in helping the needy and be familiar with the use of Church welfare resources. Exceptions to these guidelines must be approved by the Presiding Bishopric.

#### 22.5.2.5

##### Support to Members in Prisons, Hospitals, and Other Institutions

See 38.8.46.

### 22.5.3 Emergencies

The stake president directs the stake council in preparing a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies. This plan should be coordinated with similar plans of other stakes in the coordinating council and with plans in the community (see 29.11).

The stake council makes assignments for carrying out the stake's emergency response plan. The council periodically reviews and updates these assignments.

Care should be exercised so emergency planning does not promote fear. Mock emergency exercises should not be conducted.

During an emergency, the stake presidency receives reports from bishops on the condition of Church members and Church property. The stake presidency then reports to the Area Presidency.

During an emergency, Church leaders make the services of the Church available to civil authorities. Church leaders also take independent action in behalf of Church members as needed.

With approval from the Area Presidency, Church buildings (except temples) may be used as shelters, first-aid stations, feeding locations, and recreation centers during emergencies. Stake and ward council members ensure that those using the buildings observe Church standards of conduct, including the Word of Wisdom, while they are in the buildings.

During an emergency, the stake president oversees public information that is released locally by the Church. He ensures that it is accurate and timely. He may respond to questions from the media, or he may assign a stake communication director or assistant director to do so. He may also serve as the local Church spokesman, or he may designate a spokesperson. The stake president reviews and approves all news releases given by the spokesperson. He also

gives proper recognition to civil authorities and relief agencies.

## 22.6 Welfare Duties of the Bishopric

### 22.6.1 Welfare Leadership and Councils

#### 22.6.1.1 Teach Welfare Doctrine and Principles

The bishop and his counselors ensure that the doctrine, principles, and blessings related to spiritual and temporal welfare are taught regularly to ward members.

#### 22.6.1.2 Teach Leaders Their Welfare Responsibilities

The bishop and his counselors teach ward officers their welfare responsibilities to (1) encourage self-reliance, (2) care for the poor and needy, and (3) help members resolve long-term welfare needs. The bishopric teaches these responsibilities in personal interviews, in ward council meetings, and in other similar settings.

#### 22.6.1.3 Encourage Members to Live the Law of the Fast

The bishopric and members of the ward council encourage members to live the law of the fast. Typically this includes (1) fasting each fast Sunday for two consecutive meals and (2) giving a fast offering that is at least the equivalent value of the meals not eaten. Members are encouraged to be generous and give much more than the value of two meals if they are able.

When members live the law of the fast and contribute fast offerings, their lives and the lives of the needy will be blessed (see Isaiah 58:6–12). The



importance of living the law of the fast should be taught in sacrament meetings; quorum, Relief Society, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary meetings; home visits; temple recommend interviews; and tithing settlement interviews.

#### 22.6.1.4

#### **Oversee the Gathering and Accounting of Fast Offerings**

See 34.4.2.

#### 22.6.1.5

#### **Preside over the Welfare Work of the Ward Council**

The bishop directs the welfare work of the ward council. He ensures that in ward council meetings, leaders consider spiritual and temporal welfare matters as outlined in 22.2.2.

#### 22.6.1.6

#### **Participate in the Stake Bishops' Welfare Council**

See 22.7.

#### 22.6.1.7

#### **Call Ward Welfare and Employment Specialists**

See 22.6.4.

#### 22.6.2

#### **Overview of Welfare Assistance**

Through the Church, the Lord has established a way to care for the poor and needy and help them regain their self-reliance. When Church members are doing all they can to provide for themselves but cannot meet their basic needs, generally they should first turn to their families for help. When this is not sufficient or feasible, the Church stands ready to help.

The objectives of Church welfare assistance are to strengthen needy members as follows:

- Help them become self-reliant and stand independent of all welfare assistance, regardless of its source.
- Help them become stronger spiritually and learn to provide for others.
- Help them maintain their self-respect and dignity.

#### 22.6.3

#### **Principles and Guidelines for Rendering Assistance**

The Lord has described His way for caring for the poor and needy. He instructed the Saints to “impart of your substance unto the poor, . . . and [it] shall be laid before the bishop . . . [and] shall be kept in my storehouse, to administer to the poor and the needy” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:31, 34).

The Lord further explained that these offerings should include members' talents. These talents are “to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, . . . every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:18–19).

In some locations the Church has established buildings called bishops' storehouses. When members receive permission from their bishop, they may go to the bishops' storehouse to obtain food and clothing. But the Lord's storehouse is not limited to a building used to distribute food and clothing to the poor. It also includes Church members' offerings of time, talents, compassion, materials, and financial means that are made available to the bishop to help care for the poor and needy. The Lord's storehouse, then, exists in each ward. The bishop is the agent of the Lord's storehouse.

The bishop is entrusted with the responsibility of using the resources of the Lord's storehouse to care for the poor and needy members of the ward. He

uses the gift of discernment, sound judgment, and compassion in determining how best to help those in need. Each circumstance is different and requires inspiration.

The bishop seeks the guidance of the Spirit and applies the following welfare principles to help him determine who should receive assistance, what kind and amount of assistance to provide, and how long to provide it.

#### 22.6.3.1

##### **Seek Out the Poor**

The bishop has a divine mandate to seek out and care for the poor (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:112). It is not enough to assist only when asked. He should be aware of the temporal circumstances of needy ward members and ensure that those in need receive proper care. He encourages priesthood and Relief Society leaders and those who minister under their direction to help identify members who need assistance.

#### 22.6.3.2

##### **Promote Personal Responsibility**

Before providing Church welfare assistance, the bishop reviews with members what resources and efforts they and their family can provide to meet their needs. Teaching principles of provident living and committing members to live by these principles will often help members do much to resolve their needs themselves.

When appropriate and feasible, those in need should seek help from family members before seeking help from the Church.

Church welfare assistance is normally given to meet temporary needs as members work to become self-reliant. It is intended to help members develop independence, not dependence. The bishop encourages even those who may require long-term assistance,

such as some who are disabled or aged, to do all they can to help themselves.

#### 22.6.3.3

##### **Sustain Life, Not Lifestyle**

The bishop provides basic life-sustaining necessities. He does not provide assistance to maintain an affluent living standard.

Members who are temporarily unable to provide for themselves may need to alter their standard of living until they are self-reliant. They should not rely on Church welfare to insure them against temporary hardship or to allow them to continue their present standard of living without interruption.

#### 22.6.3.4

##### **Provide Commodities before Cash**

When possible, the bishop provides members with commodities or services instead of giving them money or paying their bills. Members can then use their own money to pay other obligations. Where bishops' storehouses are not available, fast offerings may be used to buy essential commodities.

#### 22.6.3.5

##### **Give Work Opportunities**

The bishop asks those who receive assistance to work to the extent of their ability for what they receive. He teaches the importance of work and gives meaningful work assignments. If members are reluctant to work, the bishop helps them understand that work assignments are given to bless them. When they work for assistance, they remain industrious, maintain self-respect, and increase their ability to be self-reliant.

The ward council compiles and maintains a list of meaningful work opportunities. If Church welfare operations exist in the area, these operations may

provide work opportunities and training for people who need Church assistance.

#### **22.6.3.6**

##### **Other Guidelines**

Completing a Self-Reliance Plan may help the bishop determine what assistance to provide.

The bishop should bear in mind that the temporal circumstances and needs of members vary from country to country. A family that might be considered needy in one location might not be considered so if they lived elsewhere. Also, members who are considered poor by some often do not view themselves as being poor.

When the bishop does not know a member, he contacts the member's previous bishop before giving welfare assistance.

Generally, the bishop assists only those members who currently live within his own ward's boundaries. Individuals who are not members of the Church are usually referred to local community resources if they need welfare assistance. However, on rare occasions the bishop, under the inspiration of the Spirit, may assist individuals who are not members of the Church, particularly if they are parents or caregivers of member children. He should be discerning about the type and amount of assistance he gives.

Providing welfare assistance should not be based on the activity level or worthiness of those who need it. Using the welfare principles outlined in this handbook, the bishop administers assistance to all members in need. He encourages less-active members who receive assistance to improve their spiritual well-being by attending church, praying, reading the scriptures, and increasing their activity in the Church.

In some situations, providing welfare assistance may be contingent on members fulfilling simple assignments from the bishop, such as doing assigned

work, looking for a job, and eliminating unnecessary expenses. However, some members who are widowed, orphaned, elderly, or disabled may be unable to fulfill assignments. The bishop provides compassionate care to these members based on their situations and capabilities.

When a stake president or members of his immediate family need welfare assistance, he contacts the bishop of his ward. The bishop follows the principles and guidelines that govern welfare assistance as he would for any other Church member.

#### **22.6.4**

##### **Church Resources Available to Help the Poor**

The bishop prayerfully determines how to use the following Church resources to help those in need.

##### **22.6.4.1**

###### **Ward Council**

Members of the ward council help the bishop meet members' welfare needs. For information about the welfare work of the ward council, see 22.2.2.

##### **22.6.4.2**

###### **Elders Quorum and Relief Society**

Welfare is central to the work of the elders quorum and the Relief Society. Elders quorum and Relief Society leaders ensure that they regularly consider welfare matters in their leadership meetings.

Under the direction of the bishop and quorum or Relief Society leaders, ministering brothers, ministering sisters, and others help needy members find solutions to welfare needs and become self-reliant. The time, talents, and skills of ward members are an important resource for the bishop to use in caring for the needy.

The welfare work of Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and the Relief Society is explained more fully in 22.2.4.

#### 22.6.4.3

##### **Relief Society President**

The bishop normally assigns the Relief Society president to visit members who need welfare assistance. She helps assess their needs and suggests to the bishop what assistance to provide. This may include preparing a Bishop's Order for Commodities form for the bishop to approve and sign.

The Relief Society president's role in making these visits is explained more fully in 9.2.2.2.

#### 22.6.4.4

##### **Ward Welfare Specialists**

The bishopric may call an employment specialist to help members prepare for and find suitable employment. The bishopric may also call other welfare specialists to help members with needs such as education, training, nutrition, sanitation, home storage, health care, family finances, and the Perpetual Education Fund.

#### 22.6.4.5

##### **Fast Offerings**

Each week the Church consolidates fast-offering contributions into a worldwide general fast-offering fund. Bishops then draw on this fund as needed to provide short-term shelter, medical assistance, and other life-sustaining aid.

Guidelines for the bishop in using fast offerings to administer assistance are outlined below:

- Personally approve all fast-offering expenditures.
- If a bishops' storehouse is not available, use fast offerings to buy essential commodities (see 22.6.3).

- When possible, make payments to providers of goods and services rather than to the person being assisted or to other individuals.
- Do not loan fast offerings to members. Members are not required to repay welfare assistance they receive from the Church. Encourage members to contribute to the fast-offering fund when they are again able to do so.
- Do not use fast offerings to pay members' consumer debt or obligations incurred in business failures or speculative ventures.
- Ensure that any fast-offering assistance to the bishop or his immediate family members is first approved in writing by the stake president (see 22.5.2) and complies with the following instructions for preparing checks.
- When preparing a check for fast-offering assistance (or a payment approval form, where used), ensure that:
  - Two authorized signers always sign the check or form.
  - The persons signing the check or form are not related to either the payee or the person being assisted.
  - Neither the payee nor the person being assisted signs the check or form.

#### 22.6.4.6

##### **Stake and Other Church Resources**

If the stake presidency has called stake welfare specialists, the bishop may ask them to provide expertise or other assistance.

In some parts of the world, the Church has established welfare operations such as bishops' storehouses, canneries, employment resource centers, Deseret Industries stores, and Family Services agencies. Where these operations exist, they provide resources that bishops can use to help the poor and

needy. If a bishop needs information about such resources in his area, he contacts the chairman of the stake bishops' welfare council or the stake president.

#### 22.6.4.7

### Perpetual Education Fund

Where the Perpetual Education Fund is available, members in need can work with their bishop to qualify and apply for a loan that will help fund vocational or technical training. Requirements can be found on the priesthood endorsement form in Leader and Clerk Resources or on the Perpetual Education Fund website.

#### 22.6.5

### Non-Church Resources Available to Help the Poor

Members may choose to use resources in the community, including government resources, to help meet their basic needs. The bishop and members of the ward council should become familiar with these non-Church resources. Such resources may include:

- Hospitals, physicians, or other sources of medical care.
- Job training and placement services.
- Help for people with disabilities.
- Professional counselors or social workers.
- Addiction treatment services.

Even when members receive assistance from non-Church sources, the bishop helps them avoid becoming dependent on these sources. He also advises them to comply with any laws associated with receiving non-Church assistance, especially while receiving Church welfare assistance. Bishops should be careful not to duplicate non-Church welfare assistance.

#### 22.6.6

### Members Who Need Medical Care

Before the bishop pays medical expenses for needy members, including mental health care, he determines whether the care is necessary based on sound medical advice. The bishop also determines whether family members are able to assist and whether the member is fully using insurance, government assistance, and other available benefits.

If the bishop feels that the Church should help pay a needy member's medical expenses, he uses fast-offering funds. He ensures that the records of health care providers designate the member or family as the party responsible for payment, not the Church.

In general, fast offerings may only be used to pay for medical treatment that is consistent with the standard quality of care available in the country where the member resides. Fast offerings are not to be used to pay for medical care provided by practitioners or facilities outside the administrative area of the Church where the member's ward is located (or, in the case of the United States or Canada, outside the country where the member's ward is located). Exceptions to this policy should be rare and require authorization from the Presiding Bishopric.

If the member's bishop feels that an exception may be justified, he counsels with the stake president. If the stake president agrees, he may submit a recommendation for the Presiding Bishopric to consider an exception. He submits his recommendation through Welfare Services (1-801-240-3001 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-3001).

Fast offerings may not be used to pay for medical care that is morally, ethically, or legally questionable.

#### 22.6.7

### Members Who Are Transient or Homeless

The bishop may assist members and others who are transient or homeless, but he should be discerning

about the type and amount of assistance he gives. When possible, he contacts the bishop of the person's home ward before providing assistance.

For instructions when there are two or more wards in the vicinity, see 22.5.2.4.

#### **22.6.8 Confidentiality**

The bishop maintains confidentiality about the welfare assistance that members receive. He carefully safeguards the privacy and dignity of members who receive assistance. When he feels that other ward leaders can help members in need, he may share information according to the guidelines in 22.4.

#### **22.6.9 Welfare Abuse and Fraud**

Bishops should protect against welfare abuse and fraud. In the United States and Canada, bishops who have concerns about welfare abuse or fraud should call the bishops' help line (1-801-240-7887 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-7887). Bishops may also call the help line to verify a person's membership in the Church before giving welfare assistance.

Outside the United States and Canada, bishops should contact the area office.

#### **22.6.10 Members with Social and Emotional Needs**

Some members may experience serious social and emotional challenges, such as mental illness; unwed pregnancies; marriage and family problems; drug, alcohol, and pornography addictions; and same-sex attraction.

Members who face these and other similar challenges require increased sensitivity, understanding, compassion, and confidentiality. Bishops can be instrumental in helping members heal and recover. In many instances, members with challenges such

as pornography and other addictions may have additional moral and spiritual needs that the bishop can help them resolve. Bishops should offer spiritual solutions by helping individuals understand the basic doctrine of hope and redemption through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

The behavior of individuals with social and emotional challenges often adversely affects spouses and family members. The bishop and others whom he asks to assist should meet with those who are adversely affected and extend support and understanding to them.

The bishop may consult with Family Services agencies, where available, for help in assessing needs, determining the need for professional counseling, and identifying resources to assist members with social and emotional challenges.

#### **22.6.11 Emergencies**

The bishopric directs the ward council in preparing a simple written plan for the ward to respond to emergencies. This plan should be coordinated with similar plans in the stake and community.

The ward council makes assignments for carrying out the ward's emergency response plan. The council periodically reviews and updates these assignments.

Care should be exercised so emergency planning does not promote fear. Mock emergency exercises should not be conducted.

When emergencies arise, the bishop should receive reports from quorum leaders concerning the conditions and needs of members. Quorum leaders receive these reports from ministering brothers. The bishop then reports to the stake presidency on the condition of members and Church property. This system may also be used to communicate messages from the stake presidency or bishopric.

During an emergency, Church leaders make the services of the Church available to civil authorities. Church leaders also take independent action in behalf of Church members as needed. For information on using Church buildings during emergencies, see 22.5.3.

Supplemental equipment, food, clothing, and services are available through bishops' storehouses, Deseret Industries stores, and Family Services agencies where they are established. During emergencies, the bishop should request these commodities or services as needed.

During emergencies, full-time missionaries can help with communication, ensuring that all members receive needed information and are accounted for.

## 22.7

### Stake Bishops' Welfare Council

The stake bishops' welfare council is composed of all bishops and branch presidents in the stake. The stake president appoints one bishop to be chairman of the council. In consultation with the stake president, the chairman arranges meetings, prepares agendas, leads discussions, and arranges for instruction. The stake president may attend these council meetings occasionally to give instruction. A stake clerk also attends and keeps a record of assignments and decisions. As needed, welfare specialists occasionally may be invited to attend.

The council meets at least quarterly. Agenda items for these meetings may include the following:

- Receive instruction in welfare matters. This may include reviewing instructions the stake president received at coordinating council meetings.
- Exchange ideas and experiences relating to welfare responsibilities.
- Review trends in fast-offering contributions, welfare needs and resources, and welfare assistance.
- Identify work opportunities for members who receive welfare assistance.
- Identify ways for priesthood quorums and the Relief Society to help meet welfare needs in the stake.
- Identify agencies and services in the community that could be called on to assist members.
- Evaluate the services and management of Church welfare operations in areas where they exist.
- Discuss coordination of assistance to people who are transient or homeless if the stake president has assigned one bishop to oversee this assistance.
- Review bishops' storehouse procedures where one exists.
- Coordinate welfare farm and other welfare operations labor assignments.

23.

## Participating in Missionary Work, Retention, and Activation

23.1

### Member Missionary Work

23.1.1

#### Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop holds the keys for the work of salvation and exaltation in the ward. With his counselors, he oversees member missionary work in the ward. However, he may assign the elders quorum president to lead member missionary work under his direction. Generally, the elders quorum president delegates this assignment to one of his counselors.

The member of the elders quorum presidency who leads member missionary work may function as the ward mission leader or may supervise the ward mission leader. Through inspiration, the bishop determines whether to call a ward mission leader or to have a member of the elders quorum presidency function in this role.

The Relief Society presidency may follow the pattern of the elders quorum, with a member of the presidency assigned to help with member missionary work.

The bishop directs the ward council in preparing and following a ward mission plan, as described in 23.1.8.

The bishop and his counselors may call and set apart other members to serve as ward missionaries.

The bishop and his counselors give priority to member missionary work. They teach the doctrine of missionary work regularly. They encourage ward members to work with full-time missionaries to find, teach, and baptize investigators. They set an

example by finding and preparing individuals and families for the missionaries to teach.

The bishop and his counselors help prospective full-time missionaries, including sisters and couples, prepare to serve missions.

23.1.2

#### Ward Council

Member missionary work is most effective when ward council members are fully engaged in the missionary effort. In quorums and organizations, they encourage members to participate in missionary work in the following ways:

- Find and prepare people to be taught.
- Assist the missionaries when they teach (in members' homes, if possible).
- Fellowship investigators.
- Prepare themselves and their children to serve as full-time missionaries.

In ward council meetings, members of the council develop and review the ward mission plan (see 23.1.8). They review baptismal candidates, other investigators, and other matters from the Progress Record form prepared by the full-time missionaries. They make plans to help each investigator progress. They offer counsel about those who might serve as ministering brothers or sisters to investigators who are preparing to be baptized and confirmed.

The bishop may occasionally invite full-time missionaries to meet with the ward council.



**23.1.3****Ward Mission Leader**

For information about calling a ward mission leader or having a member of the elders quorum presidency fill that role, see 23.1.1. If a ward mission leader is called, he should be a Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

The person who serves in the role of ward mission leader has the following responsibilities:

- He coordinates the ward's efforts to find, teach, and baptize investigators. He coordinates this work with the work of the full-time missionaries and ward missionaries. He may attend ward council meetings when invited. The bishop may ask him to lead discussions on missionary work.
- He conducts missionary coordination meetings and directs the work of ward missionaries.
- He arranges as many teaching opportunities for the full-time missionaries as possible each week.
- He organizes convert baptismal services, assisted by the full-time missionaries (see 18.7.2).
- He helps coordinate the confirmations of new members in sacrament meetings.
- He participates with full-time missionaries in teaching and fellowshipping investigators.
- He helps ensure that, soon after their confirmations, new members of appropriate ages receive limited-use temple recommends and brethren of appropriate ages are ordained to offices in the Aaronic Priesthood.

**23.1.4****Ward Missionaries**

The bishopric determines how many ward missionaries are needed in the ward. They counsel with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies in making this decision. Ward missionaries serve under

the direction of the bishopric and the ward mission leader (if called) or a member of the elders quorum presidency.

Priesthood holders, sisters, and married couples may serve as ward missionaries. They need not have assigned companions, but they should not go alone when visiting in homes. A man and a woman do not make visits together as ward missionaries unless they are husband and wife.

Ward missionaries are called to a specified term of service, such as two years. They normally do not have other Church responsibilities, except for assignments as ministering brothers and sisters, preferably to part-member or less-active families. They do not wear name tags.

Ward missionaries find and prepare people for the full-time missionaries to teach. They also assist in fellowshipping and teaching investigators.

Ward missionaries visit members' homes to encourage members to seek missionary experiences, identify people the missionaries could teach, and prepare people to be taught.

**23.1.5****Missionary Coordination Meeting**

The ward mission leader (if called) or the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work conducts a missionary coordination meeting with the ward missionaries and the full-time missionaries. A member of the Relief Society presidency may assist. The meeting is held regularly. If full-time missionaries serve in several wards, they attend as often as circumstances allow.

In this meeting, the ward mission leader (if called) and assigned members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who lead missionary work coordinate the work of the full-time missionaries and the ward members. They may discuss implementing the ward mission plan, scheduling as many teaching appointments for the missionaries as

possible, and arranging to have members present as often as possible when investigators are taught.

#### 23.1.6

### Members and Full-Time Missionaries Working Together

The mission president holds the keys for baptizing and confirming converts. Under his direction, full-time missionaries have the primary responsibility for teaching investigators. Full-time missionaries also conduct baptism and confirmation interviews for each candidate and authorize the ordinances to take place.

The bishop becomes acquainted with all investigators and follows their progress. Although he does not interview baptismal candidates, he meets with them personally before they are baptized. He also oversees ward members' efforts to fellowship them. Investigators are more likely to be baptized and confirmed and remain active when they have close friendships with Church members.

Normally, full-time missionary companionships are not separated to work with ward members. However, they may be separated to work with members when necessary to fill a large number of teaching appointments. In such cases, the ward mission leader (if called) or the members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who lead missionary work ensure that those who work as companions to full-time missionaries understand and accept mission rules. These leaders instruct ward members that they must never leave a full-time missionary without an authorized companion.

#### 23.1.7

### Baptismal Services and Confirmations

Baptismal services should be scheduled as soon as an investigator has committed to be baptized. The services should not normally be delayed past this date unless a person is not prepared. Baptisms of

family members should not be delayed so the father can receive the priesthood and perform the baptisms himself.

A baptismal service offers the opportunity to find and encourage other investigators. Converts should be encouraged to invite their family members, other relatives, and friends. Church leaders and missionaries may also invite other investigators who are being taught, potential investigators, and leaders and members who will be working with the new members. Other ward members may also attend.

Guidelines for confirming converts are provided in 38.2.3.2.

Guidelines for baptismal services and confirmations, including guidelines for baptisms and confirmations of 8-year-olds, are found in 18.7.2 and 18.8.

#### 23.1.8

### Ward Mission Plan

Under the direction of the bishop, the ward council develops a ward mission plan. The ward mission leader (if called) or a member of the elders quorum presidency may lead this effort. A member of the Relief Society presidency may also help create and implement the plan.

The plan should be brief and simple. It should include specific goals and activities to help members of ward organizations participate in member missionary work, retention, and activation. The ward council coordinates the ward mission plan with the plans of the full-time missionaries assigned to the ward. The following steps may be helpful in this planning process:

1. Consider the needs and resources of the ward in member missionary work, retention, and activation, including the availability of full-time missionaries.

2. Set specific goals for member missionary work, retention, and activation to be accomplished within the next year.
3. Determine how to accomplish the goals. Leaders could plan ways to lift the ward's overall vision and attitude about missionary work. They could develop ideas for activities to help the full-time missionaries find, teach, and baptize more investigators. They could also plan ways to befriend and strengthen new members and improve the activation of less-active members.

The ward council reviews the ward mission plan regularly and revises it as needed.

### 23.1.9

#### Stake Leaders

##### 23.1.9.1

#### Stake President and His Counselors

The stake president and his counselors give priority to missionary work. They teach the doctrine of missionary work regularly and encourage stake members to work with full-time missionaries to find, teach, and baptize investigators. They set an example by finding and preparing individuals and families for the missionaries to teach.

In his regular interview with each bishop, the stake president asks for a report on the progress of investigators in the bishop's ward.

The stake president meets regularly with the mission president to coordinate the work of full-time missionaries in the stake. Matters to discuss include the number and location of missionaries, the role of members in missionary work, the assistance of missionaries in retention and activation efforts, the assistance of missionaries in training local members, and meals, housing, and transportation for missionaries.

##### 23.1.9.2

#### High Councilor Assigned to Missionary Work

The stake presidency assigns a missionary-oriented high councilor to assist them in overseeing the stake's efforts to find, teach, baptize, and confirm investigators. He may lead discussions on these topics in high council meetings, stake council meetings, stake priesthood leadership meetings, and other stake meetings.

The high councilor assigned to missionary work orients ward mission leaders (if called) and members of elders quorum presidencies who lead missionary work. He also provides ongoing instruction and encouragement. With the stake president's approval, he may train ward leaders and ward missionaries.

### 23.2

#### Convert Retention

New Church members need the support and friendship of Church leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, and other members. This support helps new members become firmly "converted unto the Lord" (Alma 23:6).

##### 23.2.1

#### Needs of New Members

The transition to Church membership is challenging for most people. It often involves embracing new religious teachings and a new way of life. All members of the Church, particularly new members, need three things to help them stay active in the Church: friendship, opportunities to mature and serve in the Church, and nourishing by the word of God (see Moroni 6:4). Under the bishopric's direction, leaders help new members in these areas.

**23.2.2****Bishop and His Counselors**

The bishop has overall responsibility for convert retention. He interviews newly baptized brethren who are at least age 11 and turning 12 during the year to be ordained to the appropriate Aaronic Priesthood office. Brethren who are worthy to be baptized and confirmed are also worthy to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. The bishop also interviews new members who are at least age 11 and turning 12 during the year to receive a limited-use temple recommend soon after their confirmation. Both of these interviews are normally held within a week after confirmation. For male converts, the limited-use temple recommend interview should be held as part of the interview to receive the Aaronic Priesthood.

See 26.4.1 for instructions on issuing limited-use recommends for new members. See 38.2.5.2 for instructions on ordaining recently baptized and confirmed brethren.

The ward council assists the bishop in preparing new members to participate, where possible, in vicarious baptisms and confirmations for their deceased ancestors (see 23.2.3).

To help new members remain active in the Church, the bishop and his counselors have the following responsibilities. The bishop may assign one of his counselors or the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies to lead these efforts under his direction.

- They oversee efforts to ensure that each new member receives fellowship.
- They ensure that each new adult member receives a calling or other opportunities to serve.
- They ensure that brethren who are at least age 11 and turning 12 during the year are ordained to the appropriate Aaronic Priesthood office soon after their confirmation, normally within a week. They also see that these brethren receive opportunities to exercise the priesthood. Brethren who

are worthy to be baptized and confirmed are also worthy to receive the Aaronic Priesthood.

The bishop and his counselors oversee the work of the elders quorum president in helping brethren ages 18 and older prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Recently baptized brethren ages 18 and older are ordained elders after they have served as priests, developed sufficient understanding of the gospel, and demonstrated their worthiness. No specific time as a member is required.

**23.2.3****Ward Council**

Ward council members give special attention to the retention of new members throughout their first year of membership.

In ward council meetings, members of the council review their goals for convert retention as outlined in the ward mission plan (see 23.1.8). They discuss the progress of each new member and identify areas where he or she may need more support. They may use the New and Returning Member Progress form as a guide for this discussion. They counsel about ways to help new members feel the love of other members, the joy of serving in the Lord's kingdom, and the peace that comes through living gospel principles.

The ward council discusses ways to strengthen new converts. Ward council members may also suggest opportunities for service, such as temple and family history work.

**23.2.4****Leaders**

As directed by the bishopric, leaders provide opportunities that help new members mature spiritually and remain active in the Church. This is particularly true of those who lead quorums, Relief Society, Sunday School, Young Women, and Primary. For

example, the Relief Society president assists adult female converts. The elders quorum president assists adult male converts. When more than one family member joins the Church, ward officers coordinate their efforts in ward council meetings.

Leaders may help new members in the following ways:

- They help new members understand and apply the doctrine and principles in the missionary lessons.
- They ensure that new members learn basic Church practices, such as how to:
  - Bear testimony.
  - Pay tithing and other offerings.
  - Live the law of the fast.
  - Give a talk.
  - Perform priesthood ordinances.
  - Participate in family history work.
  - Perform baptisms and confirmations for the dead (where possible).
  - Serve as ministering brothers and sisters.
- They ensure that new members have access to the scriptures, the Church magazines, and any manuals they may need for the Church classes they attend.
- They encourage new members to receive a limited-use temple recommend and to participate, where possible, in vicarious baptisms and confirmations for their deceased ancestors.
- If new members are eligible for seminary or institute, leaders help them enroll.
- When new members become eligible to receive temple ordinances, leaders help them prepare, either in a temple preparation course or in some other way.

Leaders may prayerfully assign experienced members to help fellowship new members. Leaders might consider assigning members who relate well with the new members because of similar interests or because they have faced similar challenges.

Ward officers (or members they assign) note each week whether recently baptized members who belong to their organization are present in sacrament meeting. They make assignments to visit those who are not attending and invite them to attend the following week.

#### 23.2.5

### Ministering Brothers and Sisters

Ministering brothers and sisters have important responsibilities to establish friendships with and care for new members. In consultation with the bishop, elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies assign dedicated members to serve as ministering brothers and sisters to new members.

When authorized by the mission president, full-time missionaries may assist in ministering to new members.

#### 23.2.6

### Ward Missionaries and Full-Time Missionaries

While retention is primarily the responsibility of ward leaders, ward missionaries and full-time missionaries assist in this work. Full-time missionaries take the lead in teaching all five lessons again to all new members (see *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 3).

#### 23.2.7

### Influence of Other Ward Members

Leaders encourage ward members to strengthen new members by showing love and establishing friendships. Ward members could invite recent converts to participate in gospel study and home

evening in their homes. Ward members could also invite them to attend Church meetings, classes, and activities, providing transportation if needed.

### 23.2.8

#### **Instruction for New Members**

The Gospel Principles class is no longer held. On Sunday, all new members and friends of the Church are invited to attend classes and quorum meetings with the other children, youth, and adults in the ward.

Ward and full-time missionaries teach the lessons in chapter 3 of *Preach My Gospel* before and after baptism. Ministering brothers and sisters and other members may attend these lessons to provide fellowship.

### 23.2.9

#### **Stake Leaders**

##### 23.2.9.1

#### **Stake President and His Counselors**

Members of the stake presidency oversee efforts to strengthen new members in the stake. They instruct and encourage other leaders in these efforts. They meet new members when they visit wards. They may occasionally hold a meeting for new members in connection with a stake conference.

In his regular interview with each bishop, the stake president asks for a report on the progress of new members in the bishop's ward.

In his regular meeting with the mission president, the stake president may give a report on the progress of new members in the stake.

### 23.2.9.2

#### **High Councilors**

The high councilor assigned to missionary work may help teach and fellowship new members. He works with ward mission leaders (if called) and members of elders quorum presidencies who lead missionary work. He may also help prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.

### 23.2.9.3

#### **Stake Organization Presidencies**

Stake organization presidencies may occasionally work with ward leaders in teaching and fellowshiping new members.

## 23.3

### Activation

Ward leaders strive continually to help less-active members return to Church activity. The Savior said, "Unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them" (3 Nephi 18:32).

Less-active members usually still believe in the gospel, but they may be experiencing difficult trials that make them feel uncomfortable attending church. They also tend to have fewer friendships in the Church, so they are less likely to feel they are among friends when they go to ward meetings. Those who return to activity often do so when they see that something is missing from their lives. As a result, they realize that they need to make changes in the way they live. At such times, they need the love and friendship of caring, active Church members who accept them as they are and show genuine personal interest in them.

**23.3.1****Bishop and His Counselors**

The bishop and his counselors have the overall responsibility for activation. They direct the efforts of priesthood quorums and organizations to help less-active members rekindle faith and to ensure that returning members receive fellowship and support. They help returning brethren advance in the priesthood, and they help brethren and sisters receive temple ordinances or become worthy to enter the temple again.

The bishop may assign one of his counselors or the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies to lead activation efforts under his direction.

**23.3.2****Ward Council**

Under the bishopric's direction, members of the ward council review their goals for activation as outlined in the ward mission plan (see 23.1.8). They share recommendations for ministering to less-active members in their organizations. By being continually aware of the needs and circumstances of less-active members, ward council members can discern when families and individuals might be ready to respond to an invitation to receive Church visitors, attend a Church activity, or participate in a temple preparation course.

The ward council prayerfully identifies the less-active members who are the most likely to return to activity. They also decide which leaders and members could best strengthen less-active members and build personal relationships with them. When more than one family member is less active, leaders coordinate their efforts in ward council meetings.

Ward council meetings regularly include reports on the progress of these members. As some members return to activity or decline invitations to return, the ward council identifies others who may be receptive.

Leaders may use the New and Returning Member Progress form to keep track of these efforts.

**23.3.3****Ministering Brothers and Sisters**

In consultation with the bishop, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies assign dedicated ministering brothers and sisters to less-active members. These leaders focus their efforts on the less-active members who are most likely to respond to invitations to return to activity.

**23.3.4****Full-Time Missionaries and Ward Missionaries**

The ward mission leader (if called), members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who lead missionary work, full-time missionaries, and ward missionaries assist with activation efforts. Teaching less-active members may create opportunities to teach their nonmember friends or relatives.

**23.3.5****Gospel Principles Class**

The Gospel Principles class is no longer held. On Sunday, all new members and friends of the Church are invited to attend classes and quorum meetings with the other children, youth, and adults in the ward.

**23.3.6****Stake Leaders****23.3.6.1****Stake President and His Counselors**

In his regular interview with each bishop, the stake president asks for a report on the progress of less-active members in the bishop's ward. The stake

president and the bishop discuss the plans and goals prepared by the ward council for these members.

When the stake president and mission president meet to discuss missionary work, they may also discuss the assistance full-time missionaries can give in working with less-active members.

#### **23.3.6.2**

##### **High Councilors**

High councilors who work with ward Melchizedek Priesthood leaders may help teach and fellowship less-active members. They may also participate in efforts to help prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.

#### **23.3.6.3**

##### **Stake Organization Presidencies**

Stake organization presidencies may occasionally work with ward leaders in teaching and fellowshiping less-active members.



## 24.

# Preparing and Recommending Missionaries

## 24.0

### Introduction

In this chapter, each mention of missionaries and missions refers to full-time missionary service unless otherwise noted.

## 24.1

### The Call to Serve

Full-time missionary service is a privilege for members who are called through inspiration by the President of the Church. Missionary service is literally service to the Lord and His Church. Its objective is not primarily the personal development of a missionary, although righteous service invariably produces that result.

Missionaries who represent the Lord and His Church must be properly called and set apart (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:11). This calling is extended only to those who are worthy and able to accomplish it. Missionary service demands faith, desire, and consecration. Missionary candidates should have an eagerness and a desire to serve the Lord as His ambassadors. They should be filled with “faith, hope, charity and love” and have “an eye single to the glory of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 4:5).

## 24.2

### Preparing Missionaries

The Lord expects each able young man to prepare spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially for missionary service. Personal preparation includes studying the gospel and the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, and building a testimony.

Preparing missionaries should be a high priority for parents, leaders, and teachers. Bishops and stake presidents have an especially important responsibility to identify and prepare worthy, qualified members for missionary service. They give special attention to helping young men prepare, especially those who seem uncertain about serving, and to helping young women prepare when they have a desire to serve.

The following suggestions will guide bishops and stake presidents in preparing missionaries:

1. Work with young men beginning at an early age, and with their parents, to help the young men develop the desire and worthiness to serve a mission.
2. Teach young members what will be expected of them when they serve missions. Let parents know what will be expected so they can help their children prepare for service. Share “Standard Interview Questions for Prospective Missionaries” with young members and their parents as part of their preparation (see the Missionary Online Recommendation System).
3. Call youth leaders who love missionary work and will help youth learn the gospel, build faith, and desire to serve the Lord.
4. Invite exemplary returned missionaries to speak about missionary work in sacrament meetings and on other occasions. Consider calling returned missionaries to serve with the Aaronic Priesthood quorums or the young women.
5. Encourage youth to attend seminary to strengthen missionary preparation.
6. Provide opportunities for prospective missionaries to serve in the Church, including service as ministering brothers and sisters.

Ensure that young men and young women have opportunities to teach the gospel in quorum or class meetings and in other settings.

7. Encourage young people to have and, where possible, regularly use a limited-use temple recommend.
8. Arrange for prospective missionaries to participate in missionary preparation classes that are held outside regular Sunday meetings. The main resources for missionary preparation classes are the scriptures, *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ*, and *Preach My Gospel*.
9. Encourage young people to share the gospel with friends and family members.

See 10.2.3 for additional suggestions.

In elders quorum and Relief Society meetings, leaders and teachers regularly discuss how parents can help their children prepare to serve as missionaries.

The bishop reviews *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ* with each missionary candidate and his or her family. The bishop makes sure the candidate understands and is committed to abiding by the guidelines in that handbook. These guidelines concern personal conduct; language; dress and grooming; music and other media; computers; finances; staying together as companions; refraining from inappropriate contact—including with all children, with members of the opposite sex, and with members of the same sex; obeying local laws and customs; and communicating with family members.

## 24.3

### Age and Term of Service for Missionaries

#### 24.3.1

##### Men

Worthy single men ages 18–25 who are physically, mentally, and emotionally able are encouraged to serve missions. Missionary service is a priesthood responsibility of these brethren. Young men should be encouraged to begin preparing at a young age for missionary service. Once eligible, they should be encouraged to begin service as soon as they are prepared.

Single men ages 18–25 are called to serve for 24 months. Single men ages 26 and older are not called as missionaries.

#### 24.3.2

##### Women

Worthy single women ages 19 and older who are physically, mentally, and emotionally able may be recommended to serve missions.

Single women ages 19–39 usually are called to serve for 18 months. These sisters can make a valuable contribution in the mission field, and there is a continuing need for them to serve. Bishops may initiate discussions about missionary service with these sisters but should not pressure them to serve.

Single women ages 40 and older usually are called to serve for 12 or 18 months. Those assigned to serve outside their country of residence are called for 18 months. Bishops and stake presidents make sure these sisters are in good enough health to serve effectively as missionaries.

**24.3.3****Couples**

Couples usually are called to serve for 12, 18, or 24 months. A 6-month term of service is considered only for those in special situations, such as seasonal occupations. Couples serving outside their country of residence are called for at least 18 months. Qualifications and assignments for couples are outlined in 24.11.1 and 24.11.3.

**24.4****Members Who Are Not Eligible for Missions**

Members are not eligible to serve missions if they:

- Are not worthy as outlined in 24.5.2.
- Would have to leave dependent children in the care of someone else.
- Have been members of the Church for less than one year.
- Are in debt and have not made definite arrangements to meet their obligations.
- Are on legal probation or parole.
- Are HIV positive, except when the disease is in remission.
- Have been convicted of sexual abuse.

If priesthood leaders have questions about any of these restrictions, such as for a person who is on probation for a minor offense, they may contact the Missionary Department.

Couples who are still in childbearing years or who have unresolved marital problems are not called to serve missions.

In addition, the following members are not normally recommended to serve missions:

- Brethren ages 25 and younger and sisters ages 39 and younger who have been divorced.
- Sisters who have submitted to an abortion or brethren or sisters who have performed, arranged for, paid for, or encouraged an abortion. This policy does not apply to persons who were involved in an abortion before they were baptized or for one of the reasons outlined in 38.6.1.
- Brethren who have fathered or sisters who have given birth to a child out of wedlock, regardless of whether they have any current legal or financial responsibility for the child.
- Members who are not physically, mentally, or emotionally able to withstand the rigors of missionary service (see 24.5.3).

If the bishop and stake president can strongly recommend that an exception is warranted because of unusual circumstances, the stake president may submit a recommendation for the First Presidency to consider. He submits the recommendation through the Missionary Department and includes specific details of the situation. Bishops and stake presidents should not request exceptions that are unwarranted or that they do not endorse without reservation.

When members do not qualify for missionary service, priesthood leaders give them Church callings in their stake or ward to help them grow and experience the blessings of service. Priesthood leaders could also recommend them as Church-service missionaries (see 24.12).

**24.5****Ensuring Worthiness and Ability to Serve**

Bishops and stake presidents have the serious responsibility of identifying worthy, qualified members who are spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared for missionary service.

The bishop and stake president should not submit a recommendation until they are fully satisfied that a candidate is prepared in each of these ways. They should be able to recommend each candidate without reservation.

While it is important to ensure that missionary candidates are well prepared, bishops and stake presidents should not impose preparatory or other requirements on candidates beyond those stated in this handbook.

#### 24.5.1

### Interviews

The bishop and stake president conduct thorough, searching interviews with each missionary candidate. If the bishop and stake president have concerns about whether a person is able or worthy to serve a mission, they counsel together and discuss the concerns with the individual and his or her parents. This will help avoid the negative feelings that can result if a recommendation is returned or a missionary is sent home for failure to meet these standards.

If the bishop and stake president have questions about a person's worthiness or ability to serve, the stake president may inquire of the Missionary Department (1-801-240-2179 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2179) or the Area Presidency.

Only in the most urgent cases when the stake president or bishop is absent may either of them authorize a counselor to conduct a missionary recommendation interview. In a member district, the mission president may authorize his counselors to conduct missionary recommendation interviews as needed.

#### 24.5.2

### Worthiness

Missionary work demands clean hands and a pure heart. Missionary candidates are to be morally clean

in every way and otherwise worthy to be the Lord's representatives (see Doctrine and Covenants 38:42). They should be living exemplary lives. If the life of a missionary candidate needs reforming, that must happen well before he or she is recommended for missionary service. Because genuine, thorough repentance may take some time, some young men may need to wait until they are older than 18 to serve missions.

Those who are recommended to serve as missionaries must meet the qualifications outlined in section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants (see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:121–26).

#### 24.5.2.1

### Repentance of Serious Sins

A person who has committed adultery, fornication, or other serious sin, or who has committed a serious violation of civil law, must repent before he or she may be recommended for missionary service. A prospective missionary must also overcome any addictions before being considered for missionary service.

Mere confession and refraining from a sin for a period of time do not on their own constitute repentance. There must also be evidence of a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and a lasting change of behavior (see Mosiah 5:2). The bishop and stake president are to confirm that the member is free of transgression for a sufficient time to manifest genuine repentance and to prepare spiritually for the temple and for a sacred mission call. This period could be as long as three years for multiple serious sins and should not be less than one year from the most recent serious sins. Questions about specific individuals may be directed to a General Authority in the Missionary Department, the Area Presidency, or a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

**24.5.2.2****Extended Pattern of Serious Sins**

A person who has been promiscuous with several partners or with one partner over an extended period of time in a relationship outside of marriage will not be considered for missionary service. Stake presidents and bishops help these individuals repent and provide them with other meaningful ways to serve the Lord.

If priesthood leaders believe that unusual circumstances or situations warrant an exception, the stake president may submit a recommendation for the First Presidency to consider. He submits the recommendation through the Missionary Department and includes specific details of the situation and a letter from the candidate describing the nature of his or her repentance. Bishops and stake presidents should not recommend exceptions that are unwarranted or that they do not endorse without reservation.

**24.5.2.3****Same-Sex Activity**

A recommendation for a candidate who has participated in same-sex activity during or after the last three teenage years will be reviewed by the Missionary Department.

**24.5.2.4****Belated Confessions**

Bishops and stake presidents teach prospective missionaries that to qualify for the needed guidance of the Spirit, they must resolve serious sins before entering the mission field. These leaders explain to missionary candidates that unless there are unusual circumstances, missionaries who are found to have entered the mission field without resolving serious sins with the bishop will be released early and returned home.

**24.5.3****Physical, Mental, and Emotional Challenges**

Missionary work is demanding. Members who have physical, mental, or emotional challenges that would prevent them from serving effectively are not called to missionary service. Experience indicates that those who, for example, suffer from serious emotional instability, are severely impaired visually, require a wheelchair or crutches, or are dependent on others to perform normal daily tasks should not be recommended for missionary service.

Missionary candidates who have previously had significant emotional challenges must be stabilized and confirmed to be fully functional before being recommended. A candidate who is dependent on medication for emotional stability must have demonstrated that he or she can fully function in the demanding environment of a mission with the medication before being recommended. The candidate must also commit to continue taking the medications unless otherwise authorized by a professional health care provider. The bishop includes in the recommendation forms a list of medications the person is taking.

Young missionaries who are significantly overweight experience difficulties dealing with the rigorous physical demands of a mission. These difficulties also affect their companions. Bishops and stake presidents should be sensitive and wise in considering whether individuals should be recommended for missions when their weight will adversely affect their service. If prospective missionaries are significantly overweight, local leaders should counsel with them about reducing their weight before the missionary recommendation forms are submitted. For weight guidelines, the bishop or stake president may contact the Missionary Department or the area office.

If the bishop and stake president are unsure about recommending a member who has any of these challenges, they may consult with the Missionary Department (1-801-240-2179 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2179). They should not recommend

exceptions that are unwarranted or that they do not endorse without reservation.

If a member who has serious challenges strongly desires to serve a mission but does not qualify, the bishop and stake president express love and gratitude for the member's willingness to serve and explain that because of the circumstances, the member is honorably excused from missionary service for his or her own benefit and to avoid placing undue demands on mission leaders and companions.

These members should be encouraged to pursue such important endeavors as education, career development, temple preparation, and temple marriage. For those who have a strong desire to serve, the bishop may counsel with the stake president to identify local opportunities for Church or community service. See 24.12 for information about Church-service missionaries.

#### **24.5.4 Medical Limitations**

A prospective missionary who has a serious medical limitation, including any due to injury or illness, can be considered only with the recommendation of a competent medical authority. Before submitting the recommendation forms, the stake president should consult with the Missionary Department (1-801-240-2179 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2179).

#### **24.5.5 Review by the Area Medical Adviser**

Outside the United States and Canada, missionary recommendation forms are submitted through the Area Presidency. Under their direction, the area medical adviser reviews all recommendation forms and identifies any unresolved medical and dental conditions or immunization issues that could affect the candidate's ability to serve or the nature of the assignment.

If the area medical adviser feels that treatment is needed before a person is able to serve, he reviews the situation with the Area Presidency. They may return the missionary recommendation forms to the stake president, who ensures that the necessary treatment is arranged for. When the medical condition is resolved, the stake president may resubmit the forms.

### **24.6 Financing Missionary Service**

The primary responsibility to provide financial support for missionary service lies with the individuals serving and their families. Generally, missionaries should not rely entirely on people outside of their families to finance missionary service.

Missionaries and their families should make appropriate sacrifices to help cover the cost of missionary service. It is better for a person to delay a mission for a time and earn money toward the cost of missionary service than to rely entirely on others. However, worthy missionary candidates should not be prevented from serving missions solely for financial reasons when they and their families have sacrificed according to their capability.

#### **24.6.1 The Ward Missionary Fund**

The ward missionary fund is used solely for donations relating to ward members who are serving as full-time missionaries. Ward missionary funds should not be sent directly to individual missionaries. Nor should ward missionary funds be used for any missionary activities in the ward or stake.

Stake presidents and bishops inform missionaries and others who contribute to the ward missionary fund that these contributions, including those that are prepaid (see 34.4.9), will not be refunded.

Members who wish to help missionaries whose home wards are in the members' country of residence to meet their contribution commitments may donate to the missionary's home ward missionary fund. Members who wish to help missionaries whose home wards are not in the members' country of residence should donate instead to the General Missionary Fund (see 24.6.2).

#### 24.6.2

### The General Missionary Fund

The Church uses contributions to the General Missionary Fund in missionary efforts worldwide. These contributions may be used either to support missionaries or to finance other aspects of the Church's missionary program. Contributions made to the General Missionary Fund will not be refunded and cannot be designated to cover the costs or contribution commitments of particular missionaries.

#### 24.6.3

### Financing Single Teaching Missionaries

#### 24.6.3.1

#### Contribution Commitment

Missionaries, parents, other family members, and friends make commitments to contribute a specific amount to the Church's ward missionary fund. This commitment amount is equalized in certain countries (see 24.6.3.2). In other countries, the commitment amount is not equalized (see 24.6.3.3). If necessary, the stake president or bishop may ask members within the stake or ward boundaries to contribute to the ward missionary fund. Budget and fast-offering funds may not be used to meet missionary contribution commitments.

The contribution commitment applies only to the following teaching missionaries:

- Single men ages 18–25

- Single women ages 19–39

The contribution commitment does not apply to missionary couples, sisters ages 40 and older, or Church-service missionaries.

The bishop ensures that the monthly contribution commitment amount for each missionary serving from his ward is available in the ward missionary fund. These contributions need to be available regardless of whether it is an equalized or nonequalized amount. Each month, Church headquarters withdraws the contribution commitment from the ward missionary fund. The Church uses such funds to cover overall missionary costs, which varies by location.

#### 24.6.3.2

#### Equalized Contribution

The Church has equalized the contribution commitment requested to help cover the overall costs for the service-related expenses of missionaries whose home wards are in designated countries. (Contact the area office for a list of these countries.) The commitment is the same regardless of where these missionaries serve. The equalized contribution amount is identified in instructions from Church headquarters.

#### 24.6.3.3

#### Nonequalized Contribution

Missionaries whose home wards are not in designated countries work with their stake presidents and bishops to establish a specific contribution commitment. The commitment amount will be determined according to guidelines established by the Area Presidency and based on appropriate sacrifice by the missionary and the family. This contribution commitment will apply regardless of where these missionaries serve.

**24.6.3.4****Personal Funds**

The service-related expenses of the missionaries listed under the previous headings are covered through contributions; however, additional expenses are paid with personal funds. These expenses include clothing purchases and repairs, bicycle purchases and repairs, medical costs not paid by the mission, and approved telephone calls home. Other personal expenses, which should be kept to a minimum, might include cameras, souvenirs, gifts, traffic fines, and damage to apartments or vehicles caused by the missionary's misconduct or negligence. Bishops should encourage family members to donate the contribution commitment before sending personal funds to their missionaries.

For missionaries from countries that do not participate in the equalized contribution program, personal expenses for needed items while in the mission field may be paid by the mission if approved by the mission president. These items may include replacement clothing, bicycles, or medical and dental care.

**24.6.4****Financing Couples and Sisters Ages 40 and Over**

Except as noted in the following paragraph, missionary couples and sisters ages 40 and older may not contribute to the ward missionary fund connected to their own missionary service.

Regardless of where they serve, missionary couples and sisters ages 40 and older whose home wards participate in the equalized contribution program contribute an assigned monthly housing and vehicle (if applicable) amount to their home ward missionary fund. The bishop ensures that the monthly housing and vehicle amounts are available in the ward missionary fund for each couple or sister. Each month, Church headquarters withdraws the housing and vehicle amounts from the ward missionary fund.

Church headquarters uses these funds to help cover the costs of missionary housing, transportation, and similar costs worldwide. The bishop may use other general contributions to the ward missionary fund to help cover the monthly housing and vehicle amounts for missionary couples and sisters ages 40 and older when they meet all of the following requirements:

1. The missionary's home ward is in a country that is designated by the Church to participate in the equalized contribution program.
2. The missionary does not have adequate means to provide support.
3. Funds are available in the ward missionary fund.

Missionary couples whose home wards do not participate in the equalized contribution program contribute at least a minimum monthly amount to help cover missionary housing costs. This amount is established by the Area Presidency. Missionaries make their contributions to the General Missionary Fund through the ward or branch they attend in the mission field.

Missionary couples and sisters ages 40 and older are responsible for all personal expenses of missionary service that are not covered by the Church using ward missionary fund donations.

Sisters ages 40 and older from countries that are not designated to participate in the equalized contribution program are not called as full-time missionaries unless they can fully support themselves financially.

**24.6.5****Medical Insurance**

All missionaries are strongly encouraged to maintain their existing medical insurance while serving. Maintaining medical insurance conserves Church funds and helps missionaries avoid the need to prove insurability after their missions.



**24.7**

## Submitting Recommendation Forms for Missionaries

The bishop and stake president ensure that all missionary recommendation forms are prepared completely and accurately. The bishop or stake president sends these forms to the Missionary Department up to 120 days before the candidate's birthday or availability date (whichever is later). Recommendation forms for couples may be submitted up to six months before their availability date. Instructions are provided on the recommendation forms.

When recommending couples for missions, leaders may confidentially recommend specific types of assignments for consideration. However, leaders should not make commitments about the assignment candidates will receive. Missionary candidates should be willing to accept any assignment.

Missionaries are called from their home ward. However, the bishop of an away-from-home ward, such as a young single adult ward, may process a missionary recommendation for the home ward. To do so, he must:

1. Obtain permission from the bishop of the home ward.
2. Ask him about the candidate's worthiness, in preparation for conducting a worthiness interview.
3. Ask him for a letter endorsing the recommendation.

The name of the home ward and stake, the names of the bishop and stake president of those units, and the unit number of the home ward should be included on the recommendation.

A young single adult ward should never be assigned as the home ward for a missionary candidate. If a missionary candidate does not have a home ward, a family ward within the local stake or the ward to

which the missionary plans to return after his or her mission should be designated as the home ward.

By following this procedure, the bishop of the away-from-home ward can ensure that all issues pertaining to worthiness; physical, mental, and emotional health; financial support; and point of departure are resolved before he submits a missionary recommendation. The president of the away-from-home stake ensures that this procedure is followed and that the letter from the home-ward bishop is submitted with the recommendation.

If a bishop processes a recommendation for a missionary candidate who has not lived in the ward continuously for at least one year, he confers with the bishop of the previous ward before proceeding.

The stake president, the bishop, the missionary candidate, and the family should not make any announcement about a mission call before the call is received.

**24.8**

## After Missionaries Are Called

The bishop continues to monitor the missionary's progress after the mission call is received to help the missionary remain worthy of the sacred calling and continue his or her preparation. Bishops and stake presidents instruct newly called missionaries clearly regarding the seriousness and the consequences of transgressions after receiving the call.

The bishop also makes sure newly called missionaries comply promptly with all instructions from Church headquarters, such as securing passports, applying for visas, and acquiring appropriate clothing.

Newly called missionaries should also read or reread the Book of Mormon before they begin their missions.

**24.8.1****Sacrament Meetings, Open Houses, and Publicity**

The bishopric usually invites newly called missionaries to speak in sacrament meeting just before they depart. The bishopric should make it clear that this is a regular sacrament meeting and is not to be a missionary farewell. The bishopric plans and conducts these meetings. Family members and friends of the missionary are not invited to speak. However, other departing or returning missionaries or other members may be invited to speak. As in all sacrament meetings, talks and music should be worshipful, faith promoting, and gospel oriented. The bishopric ensures that each missionary has sufficient time to deliver a spiritual message. The regular time of the sacrament meeting should not be extended.

Although it is valuable to have newly called missionaries speak in sacrament meeting, such talks should not dominate the sacrament meeting schedule to the exclusion of other valuable subjects and speakers.

Members should avoid practices that may detract from the sacred nature of a mission call or create unnecessary expense. Such practices include holding open houses for missionaries (except for family gatherings), sending formal printed announcements or invitations, printing special sacrament meeting programs, and forming reception lines at the meetinghouse after sacrament meeting.

Bishops review these guidelines with newly called missionaries and their families well before the departure date.

**24.8.2****Personal Temple Endowment**

Where possible, unendowed missionaries should receive their own temple endowment after they receive their mission call (see 26.3.2).

**24.8.3****Setting Apart Missionaries**

The stake president sets apart all missionaries before they depart for a missionary training center (MTC) or directly to the field. Only in the most urgent cases when he is absent may the stake president assign one of his counselors to set apart a missionary.

The mission president sets apart missionaries who are called from districts in his mission. However, if it is not feasible for him to do so, he may assign one of his counselors to set apart a missionary. The district president does not set apart missionaries.

A young man should have the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon him and be ordained an elder before he is set apart as a missionary. If he needs to be set apart before his ordination can be sustained in a stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting, he is presented for a sustaining vote in his ward sacrament meeting. His name is then presented in the next general stake meeting to ratify the ordination.

A missionary is set apart as close as possible to his or her departure date. Even if the missionary will be traveling for some time between departure from home and arrival at the MTC or in the field, neither MTC leaders nor other priesthood leaders should be expected to set apart the missionary.

A day or two before a missionary is set apart, the stake president conducts an interview to confirm the missionary's worthiness. This interview is also a good opportunity to review the missionary's current medical status. If the missionary is not worthy or if there are serious unresolved medical problems, he or she is not set apart. The stake president notifies the Missionary Department (1-801-240-2179 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2179).

The setting apart should be a special occasion. Family members and close friends may attend. The stake president speaks briefly to help them feel the sacredness and importance of the call.

The stake president follows the usual procedure for setting apart (see 18.11). First he sets the person apart as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints assigned to labor in the mission to which he or she has been assigned. Then he adds a priesthood blessing as the Spirit directs. He may invite worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders, such as the missionary's father, to stand in the circle.

When a missionary is set apart, the setting apart should not be recorded. However, the missionary is encouraged to record in a personal journal the date of the setting apart, the name of the stake president who officiated, and parts of the blessing that were especially meaningful.

The stake president advises the missionary that after being set apart, he or she is a missionary and should live by missionary standards.

#### **24.8.4 Transportation**

The Church pays the expenses of missionaries to travel to and from the field. For those who go to an MTC, the Church pays for their travel to the MTC and to the field. Travel arrangements are sent soon after the mission call.

When serving in their country of residence, couples and single women ages 40 and older may take their own vehicles with them. They are responsible for the operating and maintenance expenses for their vehicles, including insurance, repairs, and fuel. These missionaries will be given a travel allowance for the expense of driving their own vehicles to or from the field. Information on this reimbursement is available from the Church Travel Office. For questions, call 1-800-537-3537 or 1-801-240-5149.

#### **24.8.5 Missionary Departures**

Parents or other immediate family members may bring a missionary to an MTC but are not expected

to do so. Those who must travel long distances are discouraged from going to an MTC. Family members will say farewell as the missionary's luggage is unloaded from the vehicle. The MTC does not have an orientation or other meeting for families.

Families are discouraged from going to airports when missionaries leave the MTC.

#### **24.8.6 Transporting Items to a Mission**

Missionaries should not transport personal belongings of others to the mission field. Occasionally members ask missionaries to take items such as medications or special eyeglasses to the mission field if they are not available there. If such requests are made, the bishop or stake president directs them to the Missionary Department.

### **24.9 Missionaries in the Mission Field**

#### **24.9.1 Placement of Missionaries**

The mission president determines the placement of missionaries within the mission. However, stake presidents consult with bishops and recommend the number and location of missionaries to be assigned within the stake. The mission president then assigns missionaries according to available resources.

#### **24.9.2 Housing and Meals**

The stake president and mission president determine whether and to what extent Church members should provide housing and meals for missionaries.

**24.9.3****Missionaries Working with Less-Active Members**

See 23.3.4.

**24.9.4****Missionaries in Branch Leadership Positions**

With the approval of the mission president, missionary couples may on occasion serve in branch leadership positions. However, it is generally preferable for them to serve in a training capacity to help the local members fulfill these responsibilities.

In rare situations, younger missionaries may be assigned to serve in branch leadership positions. However, such assignments require the approval of the mission president and are made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration of all other options. If couples or younger missionaries are given such assignments, they serve only until a suitable local member can be called.

If missionaries are assigned to leadership positions in branches that are in a mission, including branch president, they are not set apart. The authority to act in any position in the mission is inherent in their setting apart as a missionary. If they perform a function that requires priesthood keys, such as conducting a baptism interview or presiding over a branch, they do so by assignment and the delegation of authority.

If missionaries are assigned to leadership positions in branches that are in a stake, they are set apart under the direction of the stake presidency. They are not members of the high priests quorum.

**24.9.5****Requests to Support Members Financially**

Missionaries and their families must not be asked to provide financial support for members who live in areas where the missionaries are serving.

**24.9.6****Fasting**

Missionaries should not ask friends, relatives, or members of their home wards to join them in special fasts.

**24.9.7****Missionaries' Communication with Their Families****24.9.7.1****Telephone Calls**

The Church encourages missionaries to communicate weekly with their families using whatever approved method works best for them and their family and is cost effective. This may vary based on their circumstances and schedules each week. It is not expected that all missionaries will call or video chat with their parents weekly.

**24.9.7.2****Email**

As an alternative to regular mail, missionaries may use email to communicate with their families on preparation day, according to guidelines that have been approved in the mission.

**24.9.8****Medical Disability**

If a missionary in the field (including an MTC) suffers a physical or emotional disability that prevents effective missionary service, he or she is

returned home for treatment. A representative of the Missionary Department will explain to the stake president whether the missionary has been released or placed on medical leave and what steps should be taken.

#### **24.9.9**

### **Death of a Family Member**

If a member of a missionary's immediate family dies, the Church encourages the missionary to remain in the field. However, with approval from his or her mission president, the missionary may view the funeral services via streaming (see 29.6.4).

If the missionary and his or her family choose to have the missionary return home, he or she may be allowed to return at the family's expense. The stake president may request such an exception through the Missionary Department.

#### **24.9.10**

### **Membership Records, Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, and Contributions**

#### **24.9.10.1**

#### **Missionaries Who Serve under the Direction of a Mission President**

The home ward retains the membership records, accepts any tithing contributions, and records the tithing status of missionaries who serve under the direction of a mission president. Missionaries pay fast offerings through the ward in which they are serving.

#### **24.9.10.2**

#### **Missionaries Who Serve under the Direction of a Temple President or Area President**

The home ward retains the membership records, accepts any tithing contributions, and records the tithing status of missionaries who serve under the

direction of a temple president or Area President. These missionaries receive any needed ecclesiastical support, including counseling, from the temple president or Area President. They receive temple recommends from their home priesthood leaders or from local priesthood leaders.

#### **24.9.10.3**

#### **Missionaries at Church Headquarters Who Do Not Serve under the Direction of a Mission President**

Membership records of full-time missionaries at Church headquarters who do not serve under the direction of a mission president should be in the ward where they live during their service. Normally they pay tithing and other offerings through that ward. However, if they move from their home ward to serve at Church headquarters, they may pay tithing through their home ward if they desire. The bishop of the ward in which they live during their service interviews them for temple recommend renewals and provides any other needed ecclesiastical support.

#### **24.9.10.4**

#### **Mission Presidents**

See 33.6.5.1.

#### **24.10**

### **Release of Missionaries**

Missionaries should complete the full term of service for which they are called. Under normal circumstances, neither they nor their parents should request early releases or extensions of service.

Missionaries should travel directly home from their missions. Any other travel is permitted only when the missionary is accompanied by at least one parent or guardian.

The Church discourages parents from picking up missionaries. However, if parents request this privilege, they should understand that:

- Their plans must be based on the release date established by the mission president.
- They should not request a change in the release date to accommodate other travel plans or commitments.
- They should inform the mission president or the Church Travel Office at least three months in advance if they plan to travel with their missionary.
- They are expected to make their own travel arrangements, including lodging and meals.

Missionaries must dress and conduct themselves according to missionary standards during travel from their missions because they are not released until they report to their stake presidents. They should not impose on members, mission presidents, missionaries, or other missions as they travel home.

#### 24.10.1

### Temple Recommends

All qualified, endowed missionaries should have a valid temple recommend when they are released. The procedure for issuing a temple recommend to a returning missionary varies depending on the age of the missionary.

#### 24.10.1.1

### Young Missionaries

When young missionaries are released, they benefit from frequent interviews with priesthood leaders during the time when they are making the transition from the intense spiritual focus of missionary service to the varied pursuits of daily life.

To help facilitate this, the mission president conducts a worthiness interview with each young returning missionary and issues a temple recommend

that is valid for only 90 days. The mission president writes an issue date on the temple recommend that will cause it to expire in 90 days. Such a recommend requires only the interview by the mission president and the signatures of the president and the missionary. If the missionary already has a valid temple recommend at the time of this interview, the mission president requests it and destroys it when he issues the 90-day recommend.

Local priesthood leaders interview the returned missionary near the conclusion of the 90-day temple recommend expiration period. If the returned missionary is worthy, a new temple recommend is issued with the normal expiration period of two years.

#### 24.10.1.2

### Senior Missionaries

If a returning senior missionary's temple recommend is about to expire, the mission president conducts a temple recommend interview as part of the final interview and issues a new recommend. Such a recommend requires only the interview by the mission president and the signatures of the president and the missionary.

#### 24.10.1.3

### Missionaries Who Are Not Worthy of a Recommend

If a missionary who is sent home early because of a belated confession or a serious sin holds a temple recommend, the mission president requests the recommend. The bishop and stake president may issue a new temple recommend when the person is worthy.

#### 24.10.2

### Arrivals at Airports

It is recommended that only immediate family members go to the airport to pick up missionaries who are returning at the completion of their missions.

**24.10.3****Interviews, Reports, Sacrament Meetings, and Callings****24.10.3.1****Interviews**

The stake president releases returning missionaries from missionary service and gives them the release certificate he has received from the mission president. He commends them for their service and invites them to report on their mission. He also inquires about their conduct while traveling home.

In a member district, the mission president may authorize his counselors to interview and release returning missionaries as needed.

When releasing missionaries, the stake president also interviews them. This interview is an important opportunity to help missionaries build on their mission experiences and commit to continue on a lifelong path of spiritual growth and service. The stake president should devote enough time to these interviews to:

1. Discern missionaries' strengths and needs, then help them set goals and make plans that will build on the good habits they have developed and that will have power in their daily lives.
2. Review the importance of doing what is necessary to continue feeling the Spirit daily.
3. Encourage missionaries to choose and prepare for their life's work.
4. Ask missionaries to commit to pay a full tithing, be active in the Church, and serve faithfully in Church callings and assignments throughout their lives.
5. Encourage them to maintain high standards of conduct, including dress and grooming.

The stake president also encourages young returning missionaries to live worthy of and prepare for

marriage in the temple. However, he should not suggest or imply that they should be married within a specified time.

**24.10.3.2****Reports and Sacrament Meetings**

In addition to their interview with the stake president, missionaries report to the stake presidency and high council in a high council meeting.

As soon as practical, the bishopric of the home ward schedules missionaries to speak in a sacrament meeting. Missionaries should be given sufficient time to share spiritual experiences and bear testimony. Their talks should build faith and encourage youth to serve missions. The stake presidency may also assign them to speak in other sacrament meetings as companions to high councilors.

The stake president counsels returning missionaries to teach the gospel in the talks they give. As missionaries speak in sacrament meetings, they should share experiences that strengthen faith in Jesus Christ, build testimonies, encourage members to live and share the gospel, and illustrate gospel principles. They should avoid travelogues, inappropriate stories about their companions or others, disparaging remarks about the areas in which they served, and other matters that would be inappropriate for a servant of the Lord to discuss in the sacred setting of a sacrament meeting.

**24.10.3.3****Callings**

Priesthood leaders promptly call recently returned missionaries to Church positions. Elders quorum and Relief Society leaders also assign every returned missionary as a ministering brother or ministering sister.

**24.11****Missionary Assignments for Senior Couples and Sisters****24.11.1****Identifying Prospective Missionary Couples**

Bishops and stake presidents prayerfully consider which couples in their units could be called to serve as missionaries. Bishops may interview them to determine availability, ask them to prepare for mission calls, and help them complete and submit the recommendation forms as outlined in 24.7.

Couples who are recommended for missionary service must no longer be engaged in full-time employment. If they will be serving away from home, they must not have any dependent children living at home. Bishops and stake presidents take special care to make sure that couples are in good enough health to serve effectively as missionaries.

Information on missionary opportunities for couples can be found at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Stake presidents and bishops can use this information to identify opportunities for members they are encouraging to serve. The bishop may confidentially recommend specific assignments for these members. However, he should not make commitments about the assignments a member will receive. Missionary candidates should be willing to accept any assignment.

General Authorities, mission presidents, temple presidents, and Church department heads may also identify couples who might be recommended for missionary service. The names of these members should be submitted to the Missionary Department. Representatives of the Missionary Department will then contact the stake president. He confers with the bishop to consider each prospective missionary's health, ability and willingness to serve, and other circumstances. The bishop then meets with the members and encourages them to complete the

missionary recommendation forms. If the recommendation is approved, the President of the Church issues a letter of call.

Where there are large concentrations of members, the Area Presidency coordinates with stake presidents to identify couples who could fill local missionary needs in mission offices, visitors' centers, employment centers, family history centers, temples, and Church Educational System offices. Couples for these assignments could include those who are not able to leave their homes but desire to serve at least 32 hours per week. These missionaries may receive live-at-home mission calls from the President of the Church. Recommendations for such missionaries are submitted in the normal manner.

Those who can serve fewer than 32 hours per week may still be given local assignments and are called by their stake president, as specified in 24.12.

Bishops, stake presidents, and others who are encouraging couples to serve missions should understand that these members may have some anxiety because of inaccurate preconceptions about what will be expected of them. Leaders can reassure prospective missionary couples that they will not be asked to meet the same standards in work hours or other activities that are expected of younger missionaries. Couples will be allowed some flexibility in setting their own goals and schedules based on personal needs, the requirements of their assignments, and guidance from the person who presides over them.

**24.11.2****Health Insurance for Senior Missionaries**

Missionary couples and sisters ages 40 and older are responsible for their own health care expenses and must have adequate health insurance for their mission assignments. If the insurance coverage of those living away from home is not adequate for their assignment, Deseret Mutual Benefit Administrators (DMBA) will send them information on additional



insurance they may purchase. Missionaries who need additional coverage but do not enroll in the DMBA plan must provide proof of adequate coverage before they begin serving.

### 24.11.3

#### Assignments for Senior Missionaries and Some Sister Missionaries

To the extent possible, all missionaries should participate in sharing the gospel. Senior missionaries may also be asked to help train leaders, fellowship new members, and work with less-active members. In addition to these basic assignments, senior missionaries, sister missionaries over the age of 40, and some sisters under age 40 may receive one or more of the following assignments as part of their mission call:

- Leadership
- Church Educational System
- Family history
- Humanitarian services
- Mission offices
- Area offices
- Facilities management
- Farm management
- Communication
- Temples
- Visitors' centers and historic sites
- Welfare services
- Perpetual Education Fund

In response to local needs, mission presidents may change these assignments in consultation with the headquarters departments that supervise the original assignment.

For information about senior missionaries serving as officers in local units, see 24.9.4.

### 24.11.4

#### Releases of Senior Missionaries

Release letters and certificates for senior missionaries are prepared under the direction of the person who oversees their assignment. As with all missionaries, these missionaries are released by their stake president.

### 24.12

#### Church-Service Missionaries

The Church-service missionary program provides service opportunities for worthy members around the world. Church-service missionaries typically work for Church departments. Except for those serving in mission offices, they do not usually serve under the direction of a full-time mission president. The use of Church-service missionaries is not intended to diminish emphasis on full-time missionary service.

Church-service missionaries are normally called for 6–24 months. They serve at least 8 hours a week and typically fewer than 32 hours. They usually live at home while they are serving. Men should be at least 18 years of age, and women should be at least 19. There is no maximum age.

Church-service missions are often a good alternative when worthy members are not able to serve full-time missions because of health, financial, family, or other challenges (see 24.5.3).

Church-service missionaries are called by their stake president and set apart by their bishop as outlined in 24.12.3.

**24.12.1****Identifying Church-Service Missionary Opportunities**

The bishop may counsel with the stake president to identify local opportunities for members who desire to serve as Church-service missionaries. Examples of possible assignments are listed below:

- Welfare: bishops' storehouses, canneries, Deseret Industries, and employment resource centers. Additional opportunities in the Salt Lake City area: Deseret Manufacturing, Humanitarian Center, and Welfare Square
- Church Educational System: receptionist, office work, and computer support; student recruiting and enrollment; institute hosting; training; teaching some classes at seminaries and institutes
- Church-owned farms, ranches, and recreational properties
- Physical Facilities: building inspection and maintenance
- Special local projects
- Church History: Church History Museum and Church History Library in Salt Lake City, including Library Services, Collections Development, Preservation Services, and Joseph Smith Papers
- Family History: Family History Library in Salt Lake City, regional family history libraries, and worldwide FamilySearch support
- Materials Management: distribution centers, food services, and fleet services (primarily in Salt Lake City)
- Other departments and operations unique to Church headquarters: member locator services, building hosting, Conference Center events, and area offices

Stake presidents, bishops, and members are encouraged to use the following resources to identify and

obtain information about Church-service missionary opportunities:

In the United States and Canada:

Internet: [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/csm](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/csm)

Telephone: 1-801-240-4914

Email: [csm-support@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:csm-support@ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

Outside the United States and Canada:

Internet: [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/csm](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/csm)

Email: [csm-support@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:csm-support@ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

As with full-time missionaries, the bishop and stake president ensure that each prospective Church-service missionary is worthy to hold a temple recommend. They also ensure that he or she is physically, mentally, and emotionally able to perform the duties of the calling. Prospective missionaries should be able to support themselves financially, including all living expenses, insurance, and medical and dental expenses. Members should not be called on a Church-service mission if the mission responsibilities would keep them from fulfilling their responsibilities to care for dependent children who live at home.

**24.12.2****Recommending Church-Service Missionaries**

A member, bishop, or stake president may initiate an inquiry into a suitable Church-service missionary opportunity. After an opportunity has been identified, the bishop or the member contacts a representative of the department or other entity that posted the position to determine whether it is still available and whether the member is able to fulfill the requirements. The representative's contact information is posted on the website with the position.

If the Church-service opportunity is still available and the member meets the requirements, the bishop conducts a worthiness interview. The bishop and the member complete a Recommendation for Church-Service Missionary form. The bishop notes the recommended service opportunity, signs the form, and

forwards it to the stake president. The stake president then interviews the member for worthiness, signs the form if he approves, and sends it to the director of Church-service missionaries at Church headquarters or to the Church-service missionary coordinator in his area.

#### 24.12.3

### Calling Church-Service Missionaries

Church-service missionaries are called by their stake president. They are set apart by their bishop. After the recommendation form has been processed at Church headquarters or with the local coordinator, the stake president is notified so he can extend the calling. At this time, the stake president also gives the missionary a call letter that is provided by the Church-service missionary coordinator in his area. The stake president advises the bishop of the calling and asks him to set the missionary apart.

After the calling is issued, the missionary contacts the Church department representative to work out pertinent details.

Bishops and stake presidents give appropriate recognition to members who are called as Church-service missionaries. This recognition includes communicating their callings to members of the ward or stake. It also could include inviting missionaries to report on their service in appropriate meetings.

#### 24.12.4

### Transportation

Church-service missionaries should provide their own transportation to their primary workplace. If a mission assignment requires additional travel, those expenses may be reimbursable.

#### 24.12.5

### Training and Supervision

Church-service missionaries are supervised by and trained under the direction of the department in which they serve. Normally they are not trained at a missionary training center.

#### 24.12.6

### Medical Expenses

All Church-service missionaries are entirely responsible for their own medical needs, including dental and eye expenses and prescription drugs.

#### 24.12.7

### Extensions

Near the end of the assigned period, the term of service may be extended if the missionary wants to extend and the service is still needed. The extension may be for varying increments, not to exceed 30 months in total service. The department coordinator reviews the extension request with the stake president. If the stake president approves the request, he advises the missionary and notifies the missionary's bishop.

#### 24.12.8

### Release of Church-Service Missionaries

Toward the end of a Church-service mission, the department coordinator informs the stake president when the mission will end. At the conclusion of the mission, the stake president releases the missionary and advises the bishop. The stake president also gives the member a release certificate that is provided by the Church-service missionary coordinator in his area.

At least six months should pass before those who are released receive another Church-service mission call. Any exceptions must be approved by the stake president.

**24.12.9****Church-Service Missionaries in Stake and Ward Callings**

Church-service missionaries are encouraged to serve in stake or ward callings at the discretion of local leaders as long as these callings do not interfere with the Church-service missionary assignment.

**24.12.10****Callings That Are Not Processed as Church-Service Missions**

Callings to assist with activation efforts or to help strengthen members in wards are made by local leaders. These callings are not processed as Church-service mission calls. This guideline applies even if members will serve outside their home wards.

**24.13****Volunteer Service**

Many opportunities for Church service are available for members, including those who do not hold a current temple recommend, and for nonmembers. These individuals are volunteers rather than missionaries. Volunteers may serve in areas such as family history centers, FamilySearch indexing, and welfare production projects and canneries.

25.

## Temple and Family History Work in the Ward and Stake

25.1

### Introduction

In temples, Church members make sacred covenants as they receive ordinances that are essential for exaltation. Church members also go to temples to perform ordinances in behalf of deceased persons who have not received them.

Leaders teach members about the responsibilities and blessings of temple and family history work as follows:

- They encourage members to receive their own temple ordinances and help family members receive theirs. Leaders teach members that the purpose of the endowment is to prepare for exaltation, not merely to prepare for marriage or a mission.
- They encourage each endowed member to hold a current temple recommend and go to the temple as often as circumstances and family needs allow. Leaders also encourage youth and unendowed adults, including new members, to have limited-use temple recommends and go to the temple often to be baptized and confirmed for the dead. Leaders do not establish quotas or reporting systems for temple attendance. Each member determines his or her own level of participation in temple work.
- They teach members to participate in family history work by identifying their ancestral family members, requesting temple ordinances for them if needed, and providing these ordinances in the temple themselves if possible.
- They help members understand that they should not request that temple ordinances be performed

for any unrelated person without the approval of the person's closest living relative. Leaders also help members understand that they should not make such requests for famous people who are not related to them or for people whose information has been gathered from unapproved indexing projects.

For information about calling a ward temple and family history leader or having a member of the elders quorum presidency fill that role, see 8.2.4.

25.2

### Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop holds the keys for the work of salvation and exaltation in the ward. With his counselors, he oversees temple and family history work in the ward. However, he may assign the elders quorum president to lead this work under his direction. Generally, the elders quorum president delegates this assignment to one of his counselors.

The member of the elders quorum presidency who leads temple and family history work may function as the ward temple and family history leader or may supervise the ward temple and family history leader. Through inspiration, the bishop determines whether to call a temple and family history leader or to have a member of the elders quorum presidency function in this role.

The Relief Society presidency may follow the pattern of the elders quorum, with a member of the presidency assigned to help with temple and family history work.

The bishop and his counselors ensure that the doctrine and blessings of temple and family history

work are taught regularly in ward meetings. They are assisted by members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who lead temple and family history work and the ward temple and family history leader (if called).

As the bishop meets with members, he helps them prepare to receive the ordinances of the temple and qualify to continue going to the temple as often as circumstances allow.

The bishop and his counselors encourage members to identify their ancestral family members and provide temple ordinances for them.

Other responsibilities of the bishopric related to temple work are outlined in 27.1.

### 25.3

## Ward Council

In ward council meetings, leaders consider matters relating to temple and family history work. The ward temple and family history leader (if called) or members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies assigned to temple and family history work may be invited to discuss topics such as the following:

- They discuss ways to help individuals and families receive the ordinances of the temple and go to the temple as often as circumstances allow.
- They prayerfully consider ward members who may be invited to participate in a temple preparation course or work with temple and family history consultants.
- They discuss ways to help members participate in family history work.
- They may discuss ways to use family history work to find people for the full-time missionaries to teach and to reach out to new members and less-active members.

### 25.4

## Organizing Temple and Family History Work in the Ward

### 25.4.1

#### Elders Quorum Presidency and Ward Temple and Family History Leader

The bishop may assign the elders quorum presidency to coordinate temple and family history work for the ward council. The Relief Society presidency may work closely with the elders quorum presidency and the temple and family history leader (if called) to encourage temple and family history work in the ward.

For information about calling a ward temple and family history leader or having a member of the elders quorum presidency fill that role, see 8.2.4.

The Melchizedek Priesthood holder who serves in the role of ward temple and family history leader has the following responsibilities:

- He coordinates the ward's temple and family history efforts, including the development and implementation of the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.4.2). He may attend ward council meetings when invited.
- He conducts temple and family history coordination meetings and directs the work of temple and family history consultants.
- He directs the work of helping members prepare for the temple and organizes temple instruction, activities, and trips.
- He coordinates with members of the ward council, the ward mission leader, and the full-time missionaries to provide family history experiences, especially for those learning the gospel, new and returning members, and children and youth preparing to receive a limited-use temple recommend.

- Under the direction of the bishop, he works with the elders quorum presidency to assign consultants to serve in the family history center as needed.

#### 25.4.2

### Ward Temple and Family History Plan

Under the direction of the bishop, the ward council develops a ward temple and family history plan that is brief, simple, and specific. The plan helps ward members gain a vision of temple and family history work.

The ward temple and family history leader or a member of the elders quorum presidency may lead the plan's development. A member of the Relief Society presidency may assist. These leaders:

- Consider needs and resources.
- Set specific goals for temple and family history work for the year without establishing quotas or reporting systems for temple attendance.
- Determine how to accomplish the goals.

Plans should be brief and simple. They could include:

- Involving new members, youth, and children.
- Helping members enter four generations into FamilySearch.
- As invited by the bishop, helping members prepare to attend the temple.

The ward council reviews and updates the plan regularly.

#### 25.4.3

### Ward Temple and Family History Coordination Meeting

To help coordinate temple and family history work, a ward temple and family history coordination meeting may be held regularly. The ward temple and family history leader, if called, conducts the meeting with ward temple and family history consultants. As often as circumstances allow, a member of the Relief Society presidency and a member of the elders quorum presidency attend. On occasion, full-time missionaries could be invited.

The coordination meeting should not be long and focuses on helping people. The meeting need not always be held in person. Coordination can also happen through electronic means.

#### 25.4.4

### Temple and Family History Consultants

Ward temple and family history consultants serve under the direction of the ward temple and family history leader or a member of the elders quorum presidency. These consultants:

- Help individuals and families discover their ancestors and gather names for temple ordinances.
- Help members prepare to attend the temple and may participate in temple instruction, activities, and trips.
- Attend temple and family history coordination meetings.
- Provide family history experiences, especially for those learning the gospel, new and returning members, and children and youth preparing to receive a limited-use temple recommend.
- Serve in a local family history center when assigned.

**25.5****Temple and Family History  
Classes and Resources****25.5.1****Temple Preparation Course**

The temple preparation course helps members prepare to receive the ordinances and blessings of the temple. This course is planned under the bishop's direction. It is taught outside of regular Sunday meetings at a time that is convenient for members. It is organized under the direction of the bishopric and may be held at the meetinghouse or in a home.

The temple preparation course is especially helpful for new members, less-active members returning to Church activity, and endowed members who have not renewed their recommends for an extended time. The course may also be helpful for active members who are preparing to receive the endowment.

Under the bishop's direction, ward council members, assisted by members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who lead temple and family history work, prayerfully select members to invite to each course.

The bishopric calls one or more teachers, who may be a husband and wife. Lessons and instructions for organizing the course are in *Endowed from on High: Temple Preparation Seminar Teacher's Manual*. Participants in the course should receive their own copies of the booklet *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*.

**25.5.2****Access to Online Family History Resources**

FamilySearch is the Church's website for temple and family history work. It is a tool for the following activities:

- Searching historical documents and discovering ancestors

- Documenting family relationships
- Preserving family photographs, stories, and histories
- Preparing family names for temple ordinances

The FamilySearch Family Tree app and FamilySearch Memories app allow people to perform temple and family history work from their phones.

When computers and internet services are provided in ward buildings, they should be available at convenient times for people to use. Any membership or financial information stored on the computers should be protected.

**25.6****Stake Leaders****25.6.1****Stake President and His Counselors**

The stake president and his counselors oversee temple and family history work in the stake. They ensure that the doctrine and blessings of this work are taught regularly in stake meetings.

As the stake president meets with members, he helps them prepare to receive the ordinances of the temple and qualify to continue going to the temple as often as circumstances allow.

The stake president and his counselors encourage members to identify their ancestral family members and provide temple ordinances for them.

Other responsibilities of the stake presidency related to temple work are outlined in 27.1.



**25.6.2****High Councilor(s) Assigned to Temple and Family History Work**

The stake presidency may assign one or more high councilors to train the ward temple and family history leader (if called) and members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who lead temple and family history work. As needed, these high councilors also coordinate the stake's efforts in FamilySearch indexing and at family history centers. They may be assisted by a stake temple and family history consultant.

**25.7****Temple and Family History Resources in the Stake****25.7.1****Indexing in the Stake**

Indexing is the process of entering information from a historical record into a searchable database on FamilySearch. Those who index provide an important service. They make it possible for other people to discover their ancestors and perform temple ordinances on their behalf.

Anyone can index. This includes youth, members who are homebound or less active, and people who are not Church members.

If the stake presidency desires to encourage members to index, they may assign a stake temple and family history consultant to coordinate this work.

For more information about indexing, see "Indexing Overview" on FamilySearch.org.

**25.7.2****Family History Centers**

If resources are available, a stake may have one or more family history centers to facilitate inspiring

experiences that bring joy as visitors discover, gather, and connect their family on both sides of the veil. Anyone is welcome to use these centers.

The stake president assigns a stake temple and family history consultant to coordinate efforts in the family history center. As an exception, large regional libraries are overseen by an Area Presidency.

A family history center should be open at convenient times for people to use. It is staffed by ward temple and family history consultants.

**25.8****Recommending Temple Workers****25.8.1****Service in the Temple**

Local priesthood and Relief Society leaders help members recognize and understand the blessings of temple service. These leaders encourage members to do ordinance work. They also encourage members to serve in the temple as ordinance workers and volunteers, as appropriate.

With the guidance of the Spirit, leaders seek out members whose lives would be blessed by serving in the temple, which may include endowed members of all ages. In addition to blessing the member, this service is essential for operating each temple. Much of the work done in temples is done by members of the Church who volunteer their time and talents.

Members who are called as temple workers normally commit to a standard shift of a specified duration. Temple workers include ordinance workers as well as regularly scheduled volunteers. Once members have been called and set apart to serve in the temple, local priesthood leaders should avoid issuing additional callings that would conflict with the calling to serve in the temple.

**25.8.2****Process of Calling**

Recommendations for prospective temple workers may come to a temple president from ward or stake leaders and other temple workers. The temple presidency, the matron, and assistants to the matron may also recommend members to be approved through the bishop and stake president.

When a stake president or bishop identifies a member who he feels should be called as an ordinance worker or temple volunteer, he logs in to ChurchofJesusChrist.org and uses the Recommend Temple Worker tool. He reviews the requirements, and if he feels that the calling would be suitable, he completes the information and submits the recommendation. After the bishop and the stake president provide a recommendation, the information is sent to the temple president.

A temple president may also submit the name of a member to be approved as an ordinance worker or temple volunteer. He submits the name to the bishop and stake president using the Recommend Temple Worker tool on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. The bishop and stake president review the recommendation. If they feel it is appropriate, they approve it in the system, which returns the approved submission to the temple president.

After the temple president receives the approval, a member of the temple presidency interviews the person. When so inspired and as appropriate, he calls those who are able to serve and sets them apart. He or a staff member records the setting apart in the system. The Recommend Temple Worker tool includes a report that shows to each bishop and stake president the members from their ward or stake who are serving in the temple.

**25.8.3****Requirements for Ordinance Workers**

To be recommended for a calling as a temple ordinance worker, a member should reside in the temple district of the temple where he or she will serve. The member should also meet each of the following qualifications:

- Be endowed, comply with temple covenants, and hold a current temple recommend
- Have a mature knowledge of the restored gospel
- Be respected in the Church and the community
- Work well with others
- Be dependable, in good health, and emotionally stable
- If ever a recipient of formal Church membership restrictions or withdrawal, have had the restrictions removed or have received a restoration of blessings at least five years ago
- Not currently have an annotation on his or her membership record

**25.8.4****Requirements for Volunteers**

Regularly scheduled temple volunteers may be called to serve under the direction of the temple presidency. Depending on the services offered at the temple, volunteers may serve in the temple office, laundry, cafeteria, youth center, and baptistry, as well as at the recommend desk. They may also perform tasks such as cleaning or maintaining the temple.

To be recommended as a regularly scheduled temple volunteer, a member should reside in the temple district of the temple where he or she will serve. The member should also meet each of the following qualifications:

- Be endowed, comply with temple covenants, and hold a current temple recommend
- Work well with others
- Be dependable, in good health, and emotionally stable
- Not currently have an annotation on his or her membership record

As an exception to the above requirements, members who volunteer to work outside the temple, such as those who work on the grounds, do not need to be endowed.

See 25.8.2 for information about the process of calling volunteers.

26.

## Temple Recommends

26.0

### Introduction

A bishop should consult with his stake president if he has questions about temple recommends that are not answered in this chapter or in 38.4. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency.

26.1

### Recommends to Enter a Temple

The opportunity to enter a temple is a sacred privilege. It is also an indication that a member is willing to obey God and follow His prophets. Priesthood leaders encourage all members who are of age to prepare themselves to enter the house of the Lord. This sacred privilege allows those who are properly prepared to make sacred covenants and receive promised blessings.

26.1.1

#### Types of Temple Recommends

A valid recommend admits a member to all temples. The three types of temple recommends are listed below:

1. *Limited-use recommend* for unendowed members (see 26.3.2).
2. *Temple recommend* for previously endowed members. This recommend, issued from recommend book 1, authorizes a member to participate in all temple ordinances for the deceased. This recommend is also used when a member is sealed to living or deceased parents or children.

3. *Recommend for living ordinances* for members receiving their own endowment, those being sealed to a spouse, and those being married in a temple for time only. This recommend, issued from recommend book 2, includes a recommend for living ordinances and is attached to a valid temple recommend, which is retained by the member and used when the member returns to the temple (described above).

Children under the age of 8 who are to be sealed to their parents or are to observe the sealings of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents do not need temple recommends.

26.1.2

#### Safeguarding Temple Recommend Books

Priesthood leaders who have temple recommend books should safeguard them carefully. No unauthorized individuals should have access to these books. When Church headquarters updates temple recommend books, the outdated books should no longer be used and should be destroyed.

26.1.3

#### Disposal of Outdated Temple Recommends

Stake, mission, and temple presidents (and their counselors who are authorized to conduct temple recommend interviews) should retrieve expired temple recommends when issuing new recommends to worthy Church members. These expired recommends should be shredded.

**26.1.4****Lost or Stolen Recommends**

The bishop should ask members to notify him promptly if a recommend is lost or stolen. If the bishop learns of a lost or stolen recommend, he uses Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR) to cancel the recommend as soon as possible. If he is not able to cancel the recommend in a timely manner, he asks one of his counselors or the ward clerk to cancel it. If LCR is not available, the bishop or stake president contacts the temple recorder of the temple to which the stake is assigned.

**26.1.5****Unworthy Recommend Holders**

If the bishop determines that a member who has a current recommend is unworthy, he immediately requests the recommend from the member. He uses LCR to cancel the recommend according to the guidelines in 26.1.4.

**26.2****General Guidelines for Issuing Temple Recommends**

Authorized Church officers conduct worthiness interviews for temple recommends as outlined in the temple recommend book. Church officers make every effort to see that only worthy members enter the house of the Lord. This requirement is both to protect the sanctity of the temple and to avoid placing that which is sacred before those who are unprepared (see Doctrine and Covenants 97:15–16).

Temple recommend interviews follow the pattern set by the Lord, “that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16). The interview allows a member to attest that he or she is living according to God’s commandments and he or she is prepared to enter the house of the Lord. Priesthood leaders also attest, through

an interview, that the member is worthy and understands the sacred responsibility he or she assumes by making covenants and participating in temple ordinances.

Temple recommend interviews should not be rushed. They should be private. However, the person being interviewed may invite another adult to be present.

Interviewers should not add to or remove any requirements from those that are outlined in the temple recommend book. (See 31.1.7.5 for an exception to this policy when interviewing youth.)

A member of the stake presidency or a stake clerk activates the temple recommend in LCR (where it is available) soon after it is issued and before the member attends the temple. Limited-use recommends for baptisms and confirmations are printed under the direction of a member of the bishopric using LCR. The temple recommend remains the property of the Church and is not transferable.

**26.2.1****Wards and Branches in Stakes**

The bishop, his counselors as authorized by him, or the branch president interviews ward or branch members and issues temple recommends to those who are worthy.

The bishop or branch president personally interviews members who (1) are preparing to receive their own endowment, (2) are planning to be married or sealed in a temple, or (3) have not lived in the ward or branch continuously for at least one year. Only in the most urgent cases when the bishop is absent may he authorize one of his counselors to issue recommends in these circumstances.

Before issuing a recommend in any of the three above-listed circumstances, the bishop carefully reviews the membership record to verify that it does not include a notation about a sealing or

ordinance restriction or formal Church membership restrictions.

Following the interview by a member of the bishopric or by the branch president, a member of the stake presidency interviews the person and signs the recommend if he determines that the person is worthy. The stake president personally interviews members who are receiving their own endowment and members who are planning to be married or sealed in a temple. Because of the large number of such interviews in a young single adult stake, as an exception the stake president may authorize his counselors to interview those who are receiving their own endowment or being married in a temple.

#### **26.2.2 Branches in Districts**

In districts, the branch president interviews branch members and issues temple recommends to those who are worthy. Before issuing a recommend to a member who is to receive the endowment or be married or sealed in a temple, the branch president carefully reviews the membership record to verify that it does not include a notation about a sealing or ordinance restriction or formal Church membership restrictions.

Following the interview by the branch president, a member of the mission presidency interviews the person and signs the recommend if he determines that the person is worthy. The mission president interviews members who are receiving their own endowment and members who are planning to be married or sealed in a temple. He may also authorize his counselors to conduct these interviews as needed.

The district president does not interview members for temple recommends unless authorized by the First Presidency.

#### **26.2.3 Isolated Areas**

A temple president may interview and sign a recommend for a member who lives in an isolated area that would require unusual travel expense or difficulty for the member to meet with a member of the stake or mission presidency. The temple president first confers with the stake or mission president. In these cases, the bishop, an authorized counselor, or the branch president should have already interviewed the member and signed the recommend. This policy also applies to members in the military who are in isolated areas and have been interviewed by the bishop of their home ward or the unit that supports their duty station.

A temple president may interview and sign a recommend for a member who lives outside an organized stake or mission. No other interview is needed.

### **26.3 Issuing Temple Recommends**

#### **26.3.1 Newly Baptized Members**

The bishop interviews new members who are of an appropriate age to receive a limited-use recommend soon after their confirmation, normally within a week, according to the guidelines in 26.4.1. For male converts, this interview may be held as part of the interview to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. A limited-use recommend should not be issued to a brother until after he has been ordained to an office in the priesthood.

A waiting period of at least one full year after confirmation is required before a worthy adult may receive his or her own endowment. When issuing temple recommends for new members to receive their own endowment, priesthood leaders ensure that the date the endowment will be received is at least one full year from the member's date of

confirmation, not from the date of baptism. Only the First Presidency may authorize exceptions.

### 26.3.2

#### Members Receiving Their Own Endowment

Instructions for issuing a recommend to a person who is receiving his or her own endowment are provided in the temple recommend book. A man must hold the Melchizedek Priesthood to receive his endowment. In addition, members should not receive their own endowment until they (1) have reached the age of 18 and (2) are no longer attending high school, secondary school, or the equivalent.

Adult members can be interviewed for a recommend to receive their own endowment when they are called as missionaries, when they are to be married in a temple, or when they feel a desire to make these sacred covenants. The bishop and stake president determine whether they are sufficiently mature to understand and keep the sacred covenants made in a temple. Such eligibility is determined individually for each person. Bishops and stake presidents should not define eligibility by outward criteria such as reaching a certain age, leaving home for college or employment, or desiring to observe the temple marriages of siblings or friends.

In assessing questions of maturity, preparation, and timeliness, the bishop and stake president take into account a single adult's personal circumstances and conduct over time. They ensure that responses to the temple recommend questions meet the requirements for worthiness. They should also consider matters such as the person's:

- Depth of gospel understanding and testimony.
- Faithfulness in Church service.
- Appreciation of the implications of entering into sacred temple covenants.
- Commitment to wear the temple garment appropriately.

A worthy member who is married to an unendowed spouse, whether the spouse is a member or non-member, may receive his or her own endowment when both of the following conditions are met:

- The bishop receives written consent from the spouse.
- The bishop and stake president are satisfied that the responsibility assumed with the covenants of the endowment will not impair marital harmony.

### 26.3.3

#### Full-Time Missionaries

Before a full-time missionary completes his or her service, the mission president may provide a temple recommend to the missionary. The mission president interviews the missionary and signs the recommend in place of the bishop and the stake president. A temple recommend issued in this way should be activated in the mission office so that it expires three months from the date the missionary leaves full-time missionary service. Missionaries should meet with their bishop within three months of their release to receive a new temple recommend.

### 26.3.4

#### Members Who Have Not Lived in the Same Ward for at Least One Year

If a member has not lived in the same ward continuously for at least one year, the bishop contacts the prior bishop to certify the member's worthiness before interviewing him or her for a temple recommend. Members of young single adult wards and single adult wards are included in this policy. Members who seek limited-use recommends are also included, except new converts.

**26.3.5****Members Who Have Disabilities****26.3.5.1****Endowment**

Members who have physical disabilities may receive their own endowment.

Melchizedek Priesthood holders and sisters who have intellectual disabilities may receive their own endowment if the bishop determines that they have sufficient intellectual capacity to understand, make, and keep the associated covenants. The bishop seeks the direction of the Spirit in making this determination. If the member lives with his or her parents, the bishop counsels with them. If priesthood leaders determine that a member is not accountable, they should record this designation in LCR.

**26.3.5.2****Sealing to Parents**

Persons with intellectual disabilities who are the age of 8 or older and are sufficiently accountable must be baptized and confirmed before they can be sealed to their parents. Those who are not accountable do not need to be baptized and confirmed before they can be sealed. Bishops refer questions about specific situations to the stake president. He may refer the questions to the Office of the First Presidency.

Members older than 21 who do not have sufficient intellectual capacity to understand the endowment may be sealed to parents without being endowed.

**26.3.5.3****Work for the Dead**

Members who have disabilities may do temple work for the dead if they:

- Have sufficient intellectual capacity to understand the ordinance.

- Can care for themselves without help or are accompanied by relatives or friends who can provide the help they need.

**26.3.5.4****Blind Members**

Blind members should have members of the same gender accompany and assist them. Guide dogs are not permitted in temples.

**26.3.6****After Divorce, Separation, or Annulment**

If a member has been divorced or legally separated or has had a marriage annulled since last receiving a temple recommend, the bishop and stake president may feel impressed to interview the member to strengthen him or her spiritually and emotionally and to ensure continued temple worthiness. If the member has not committed any serious sin contributing to the divorce or separation, a temple recommend may be retained by the member or renewed according to the usual procedure.

**26.3.7****In Specific Circumstances**

See 38.4.

**26.4****Issuing Limited-Use Temple Recommends****26.4.1****General Guidelines**

The bishop, his counselors as authorized by him, or the branch president may issue limited-use recommends to worthy unendowed members as follows:



- For members ages 11 and older to be baptized and confirmed for the dead. (Young women and ordained young men are eligible for a limited-use recommend beginning in January of the year they turn 12.)
- For single members ages 8–20 to be sealed to their parents.
- For single members ages 8–20 to observe sealings of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents.

The same standards of worthiness apply to those who receive limited-use recommends as to those who receive other temple recommends. Male Church members who are old enough to hold the priesthood must be ordained to an office in the priesthood before being issued a temple recommend. The bishop interviews new members, including 11-year-old new members who will turn 12 during the current year, to receive a limited-use recommend soon after their confirmation, normally within a week. Members who have been previously endowed are not issued limited-use recommends.

When issuing a limited-use recommend, a member of the bishopric or the branch president interviews the person individually. A member of the stake presidency or mission presidency does not interview the person if the recommend is being issued only for baptisms and confirmations for the dead.

When interviewing newly baptized and confirmed members, the bishop helps them understand the importance of testimony, sustaining the President of the Church and other leaders, and keeping the commandments. These commandments include obeying the law of chastity, keeping the Sabbath day holy, and attending Sabbath meetings.

Because new members typically have not had sufficient time to establish a pattern of paying tithing, the bishop asks if they are willing to pay tithing, rather than if they are full-tithe payers. He helps new members understand the blessings of paying a

full tithe. As needed, he invites them to start paying tithing and to attend tithing settlement.

If a member has not lived in the same ward continuously for at least one year, the bishop contacts the prior bishop to certify the member's worthiness before interviewing the member for a limited-use recommend.

#### 26.4.2

### Limited-Use Recommends for Baptisms and Confirmations for the Dead

Limited-use recommends that are issued to perform baptisms and confirmations for the dead may be used only for that purpose. These recommends are printed using the LCR where it is available.

For information about scheduling baptisms and confirmations for the dead, see 28.2.

#### 26.4.3

### Limited-Use Recommends for Sealing Living Children to Parents

Single members ages 8–20 are issued limited-use recommends to be sealed to their parents or to observe the sealing of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents. Those who are issued limited-use recommends for the purpose of being sealed to parents or to observe such sealings are interviewed by both a member of the bishopric and a member of the stake presidency. Based on the age and maturity of the member, this interview could cover the eternal nature of families and the significance of the sealing ordinance. For a basic understanding of temple ceremonial clothing, members may view the video titled “Sacred Temple Clothing” on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

All children under the age of 21 must be born in the covenant or have been previously sealed to their parents to observe a sealing of living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to parents. Members who are married or are 21 or older may not be sealed to their

parents or observe the sealing of living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents unless they are endowed.

Limited-use recommends may be issued for individual children or for a group of children in the same family. The same recommend may be used to list children who are being sealed and children who are observing. Children under age 8 do not need recommends to be sealed to their parents or to observe such sealings.

Some children desire to observe the sealing of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents or to a natural parent and a stepparent. If the children who want to observe the sealing do not live the majority of the time in the same home as the children who are being sealed, local priesthood leaders should obtain permission from the children's custodial parent or guardian.

First Presidency approval is necessary if a person who is not baptized or endowed at the required ages due to intellectual disabilities would like to observe the sealing of his or her living siblings. The stake president sends a request with the relevant information to the Office of the First Presidency.

Unendowed children are not permitted to observe the sealing of their parents.

27.

## Temple Ordinances for the Living

27.0

### Introduction

A bishop should consult with his stake president if he has questions about temples and temple work that are not answered in this chapter or in 38.4 and 38.5. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency.

27.1

### Preparing to Receive Temple Ordinances

Temple ordinances and covenants are sacred. Members who enter a temple should be worthy and should understand the purposes and eternal significance of temples. They should also understand the solemn and sacred responsibilities they assume as they participate in temple ordinances and make covenants.

Stake presidents and bishops help individuals prepare to receive the sacred ordinances of the temple at the appropriate time. Relief Society presidents and elders quorum presidents assist stake presidents and bishops by helping ensure members are prepared to make the covenants and receive the blessings of the temple. Youth leaders and parents also help young people prepare to make and keep temple covenants. They do this through both formal teaching opportunities and by example.

27.1.1

#### Temple Preparation Course

The bishop oversees the temple preparation course for members who are preparing to receive their own endowment. The purpose of this course is to help members prepare to receive the ordinances and

blessings of the temple. Instructions are provided in 25.5.1.

27.1.2

#### Temple Orientation

Members who are preparing to receive their endowment or who are preparing to be sealed should carefully read the booklet *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*. Leaders may use the booklet as a basis for counsel and instruction when interviewing and orienting these members.

27.2

### Making Plans to Go to a Temple

Each stake and mission is included in a temple district. While individual members may attend any temple they desire, organized ward or stake visits to temples outside the assigned temple district are not encouraged. Such visits require the approval of the stake presidency and should be coordinated with the temple.

27.2.1

#### Endowment, Marriage, or Sealing

Members who are planning to go to a temple to receive their own endowment, to be married, or to be sealed should contact the temple in advance to schedule the ordinances.

27.2.2

#### Plans to Do Baptisms and Confirmations for the Dead

See 28.2.

**27.2.3****Quotas for Temple Attendance**

Leaders encourage members to set personal goals for temple attendance and to go to the temple as often as circumstances allow. However, leaders should not establish reporting systems or set quotas for temple attendance.

**27.2.4****Translation Assistance**

If members will need translation assistance in a temple, they should contact the temple in advance to ensure that such assistance is available.

**27.2.5****Child Care at Temples**

Temples are equipped to care only for children who come to be sealed to parents or to observe sealings of living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings. Other children should not be brought to a temple.

**27.3****Temple Clothing and Garments****27.3.1****Clothing to Wear to a Temple**

Members who go to a temple should wear the type of clothing that they typically wear to sacrament meeting. They should avoid wearing casual clothes, sports attire, and tuxedos. This instruction is best taught by local priesthood and Relief Society leaders as members prepare to attend the temple. See also 27.5.3.

**27.3.2****Obtaining 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.

Temples maintain a limited supply of temple clothing that full-time missionaries may use without charge when they receive their own endowment, while they are in missionary training centers, and when they are authorized to participate in temple ordinances while serving in the mission field.

Distributing and selling garments requires the authorization of the First Presidency. Garments are available in a variety of styles and fabrics. They may be purchased through Distribution Services. Relief Society presidents may assist sisters with questions concerning garment fabric and style. Members who have special needs may contact Distribution Services about special orders.

When needed, bishops, Relief Society presidents, and stake presidents instruct members in how to purchase temple clothing and garments. Stake and ward clerks may help members order the clothing.

**27.3.3****Making Temple Ceremonial Clothing**

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.

**27.3.4****Clothing to Wear for a Temple Marriage**

See 27.5.3.

**27.3.5****Wearing and Caring for the Garment**

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.

It is a sacred privilege to wear the temple garment. Doing so is an outward expression of an inner commitment to follow the Savior Jesus Christ.

The garment is a reminder of covenants made in the temple. When worn properly throughout life, it will serve as a protection against temptation and evil.

The garment should be worn beneath the outer clothing. It is a matter of personal preference whether other undergarments are worn beneath the temple garment.

The garment should not be removed for activities that can reasonably be done while wearing the garment. It should not be modified to accommodate different styles of clothing.

The garment is sacred and should be treated with respect. Endowed members should seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to answer personal questions about wearing the garment.

**27.3.6****Garments and Temple Clothing for Members Who Have Disabilities**

Garments for members who are bedridden or who have severe physical disabilities are available by special order from Beehive Clothing. Bishops, Relief Society presidents, and elders quorum presidents may assist members with these orders.

Shorter temple robes are available for members who are in wheelchairs or who have other special needs. These are also available by special order from Beehive Clothing.

**27.3.7****Wearing the Garment in the Military**

See 38.10.8.

**27.3.8****Disposing of Garments and Temple Ceremonial Clothing**

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. Priesthood and Relief Society leaders can identify those who might need such clothing. Members should not give garments or temple ceremonial clothing to Deseret Industries, bishops' storehouses, or charities.

**27.3.9****Temple Burial Clothing**

If possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried in temple clothing. If cultural traditions or burial practices make this inappropriate or difficult, the clothing may be folded and placed next to the body in the casket.

Only members who were endowed in life may be buried in temple clothing. An endowed person who stopped wearing the garment before his or her death may be buried in temple clothing if the family so requests. However, persons whose blessings have not been restored after withdrawal or resignation of Church membership may not be buried in temple clothing. A person who was endowed in life and who died by suicide may be buried in temple clothing.

Temple clothing that is used for burial need not be new, but it should be clean. The member's own temple clothing may be used.

A member who is to be buried in temple clothing may be dressed by an endowed family member of the same gender or by the spouse. If a family member is not available or would prefer not to dress the body of an endowed man, the bishop invites an endowed man to dress the body or to oversee the proper dressing. If a family member is not available or would prefer not to dress the body of an endowed woman, the bishop asks the Relief Society president to invite an endowed woman to dress the body or to oversee the proper dressing. Leaders ensure that this assignment is given to a person who will not find it objectionable.

A man's body is dressed in temple garments and the following white clothing: a long-sleeved shirt, necktie, pants, socks, and shoes or slippers. A woman's body is dressed in temple garments and the following white clothing: a dress (or a skirt and blouse), socks or hosiery, and shoes or slippers.

Temple ceremonial clothing is placed on the body as instructed in the endowment. The robe is placed on the right shoulder and tied with the drawstring at the left waistline. The apron is secured around the waist. The sash is placed around the waist and tied in a bow over the left hip. A man's cap is usually placed beside his body until it is time to close the casket. The cap is then placed with the bow over the left ear. A woman's veil may be draped on the pillow at the back of her head. The matter of veiling a woman's face prior to burial is optional and may be determined by the family.

In some areas only a licensed funeral director or an employee of the director is allowed to handle a deceased body. In these cases, an endowed family member or an endowed person who is invited by the bishop or Relief Society president ensures that the clothing has been properly placed on the body.

Some countries require that deceased persons be dressed in biodegradable clothing when they are buried. In such cases, biodegradable temple clothing is available through Church Distribution Services.

The Church does not normally encourage cremation. However, if the body of an endowed member is being cremated, it should be dressed in temple clothing if possible.

In areas where temple clothing may be difficult to obtain in time for burial, stake presidents should keep on hand at least two complete sets of medium-sized clothing, one for a man and one for a woman.

If temple clothing is not available, a deceased endowed member is clothed for burial in the garment and other suitable clothing.

#### 27.4

### Verifying Ordinances to Receive the Endowment

A living person whose baptism and confirmation are not recorded on Church membership records may not be endowed until the baptism and confirmation are verified, ratified, or performed again. Brethren whose Melchizedek Priesthood ordination is not recorded must also have it verified, ratified, or performed again. Procedures are outlined in 38.2.1.10. That section also explains the procedure to follow if a living person is endowed without a valid record of baptism and confirmation or if a male is endowed without a valid record of Melchizedek Priesthood ordination.

#### 27.5

### Temple Marriage

Church leaders encourage members to qualify for temple marriage and be married and sealed in a temple. Where temple marriages are not legally

recognized, leaders can perform civil marriages that are followed by a temple sealing. This process may also be followed when a temple marriage would cause parents or immediate family members to feel excluded.

A couple must obtain a legal marriage license that is valid in the place where the marriage is to be performed.

The purpose of a temple marriage, referred to in the scriptures as “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage,” is to seal a husband and wife for time and eternity, subject to their faithfulness. This ordinance is necessary to enter the highest degree of celestial glory (Doctrine and Covenants 131:2). Only a marriage that has been performed in the temple with the proper authority and sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise can be eternal (see Doctrine and Covenants 132:7). Through this ordinance, a couple’s children may also be part of their eternal family.

A man and woman must each be endowed before they may be married and sealed in a temple. They must each have a valid temple recommend and a recommend for living ordinances.

### 27.5.1

#### Who Performs a Temple Marriage

Bishops and stake presidents encourage members to have temple sealers perform their marriages rather than asking General Authorities.

### 27.5.2

#### Who May Attend a Temple Marriage

Only members who have received their own endowments and have valid recommends may attend a temple marriage. Couples should invite only family members and close friends to be present for a temple marriage.

### 27.5.3

#### Appropriate Dress for a Temple Marriage

The bishop reviews the following guidelines with each bride and bridegroom well in advance of the wedding. It is especially important to review the guidelines for temple wedding dresses with each bride and her parents before they make or purchase the dress. The bishop also makes the following information about brides’ dresses available to the Relief Society and Young Women presidencies so they can help members be informed of the expectations far in advance of the actual events.

#### 27.5.3.1

##### Brides’ Dresses

All dresses that are worn in the temple should be white, modest in design and fabric, and free of elaborate ornamentation. Sheer fabric should be lined. Three-quarter-length sleeves are acceptable. Brides’ dresses should not have a train unless the train can be pinned up or removed for the temple ceremony. The temple may provide a dress if needed or desired.

#### 27.5.3.2

##### Formal Wear and Flowers

Those being sealed in the temple should be made aware in advance that neither they nor their guests should wear tuxedos, dinner jackets, cummerbunds, formal headwear, boutonnieres, or corsages during a sealing ceremony. Formal wear and flowers may be worn outside for photographs after the ceremony.

#### 27.5.3.3

##### Wedding Guests

Couples should not ask their wedding guests to dress in white unless the sealing room must be entered through the celestial room. Members who come to a wedding directly from an endowment session may wear temple ceremonial clothing.

**27.5.4****Exchanging Rings**

Exchanging rings is not part of the temple marriage ceremony. However, couples may exchange rings after the ceremony in the sealing room. To not detract from the marriage ceremony, couples should not exchange rings at any other time or place in a temple or on temple grounds.

For those who are married and sealed in the same ceremony, a ring exchange at a later time is permissible to accommodate those unable to attend a temple marriage. The proceedings of the ring exchange should be consistent with the dignity of a temple marriage.

If a couple is married civilly before their temple sealing, they may exchange rings at their civil ceremony or at their temple sealing.

**27.5.5****Marriage of Members Who Need a Cancellation of Sealing or a Sealing Clearance**

See 38.5.1.4.

**27.5.6****Marriage after a Spouse's Death or after a Divorce or Annulment**

A member who has been sealed to a spouse may remarry after the spouse's death or following a divorce or annulment. A member's divorce proceedings must be final according to law before he or she may remarry. Worthy members in these circumstances may also be sealed in the temple according to the guidelines in 38.5.1.

**27.5.7****Marriage in a Temple for Time Only**

Marriage in a temple for time only may be performed only when all of the following requirements are met:

1. The man and the woman are each already sealed to a spouse who is deceased.
2. Neither the man nor the woman has been involved in a divorce while a member of the Church.
3. The man and the woman each has a valid temple recommend and a recommend for living ordinances.
4. Temple marriages are legal marriages in the country where the temple is located.
5. The couple has a valid marriage license.

A marriage in the temple for time only will not be authorized for a woman who is in the process of seeking a cancellation of sealing.

For the policy on sealing a couple who were married in the temple for time only, see 38.5.1.6.



28.

## Temple Ordinances for Ancestors

28.0

### Introduction

A bishop should consult with his stake president if he has questions about temples and temple work that are not answered in this chapter or in 38.5. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency.

Stake presidents and bishops help members prepare to have positive experiences performing ordinances for their deceased ancestors. They do this by teaching the doctrinal basis of temple work and ensuring members understand waiting periods and other policies related to temple work.

28.1

### General Guidelines

Generally, members may perform temple ordinances for deceased persons no sooner than one year after the date of death. If the deceased was born within the last 110 years and the person desiring to perform the ordinances is not a close relative (undivorced spouse, adult child, parent, sibling), he or she should request permission from a close relative before reserving temple ordinances.

Ordinances that are performed for the dead are effective only if the deceased person chooses to accept them and becomes qualified to receive them (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:19, 32–34).

For sealing policies, see 38.5.

28.2

### Baptisms and Confirmations for the Dead

Organized groups, such as families, wards, and stakes, who desire to participate in ordinances in the baptistry normally make arrangements with the temple in advance. One or more adults should accompany organized groups, making sure that there are a reasonable number of leaders representing each gender in the group. These adults should have valid temple recommends.

Brethren and sisters who assist in the baptistry do not need to be set apart as temple ordinance workers. Endowed brethren, unendowed Melchizedek Priesthood holders, and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood may perform baptisms.

Only endowed brethren may officiate in confirmations and serve as the recorder at the font or in the confirmation room.

Any member who holds a current temple recommend, including a limited-use recommend, may serve as a witness to a proxy baptism. These adults and youth may also help with baptistry assignments such as assisting patrons, distributing clothing and towels, and, where possible, recording baptism and confirmation ordinances in the computer system.

28.3

### Specific Circumstances

28.3.1

#### Members Unable to Go to a Temple before Death

The one-year waiting period for proxy temple ordinances does not apply to deceased worthy members

who would have gone to a temple but were prevented from doing so in life for reasons beyond their control. This may include children ages 8 and older and youth who were worthy at the time of death but had not received their endowment because they had not reached an appropriate age (see also 28.3.4). Such children and youth are not buried in temple clothing.

To have the ordinance performed, family members must have either the deceased person's temple recommend that was valid at the time of death or a letter from the deceased person's bishop certifying the person's worthiness. The temple recommend or the letter should be presented at the temple before the ordinance is performed.

### 28.3.2

#### Members Who Died within One Year of Baptism

If a worthy member dies within the year after being baptized and confirmed, temple ordinances may be completed when one year has passed from the date he or she was confirmed (see 28.3.1).

### 28.3.3

#### Stillborn Children (Children Who Die before Birth)

Temple ordinances are not performed for stillborn children, but no loss of eternal blessings or family unity is implied. The family may record the name of a stillborn child in FamilySearch and indicate that the child was stillborn. Requests for help with recording a stillborn child in FamilySearch may be directed to a ward temple and family history consultant. For more information about stillborn children, see 38.7.12.

### 28.3.4

#### Children Who Died before Age Eight

No baptism or endowment is performed for a child who died before age 8. Only sealings to parents are performed for such children. If the child was sealed to parents while he or she was living or if the child was born in the covenant, no vicarious ordinances are performed.

### 28.3.5

#### Deceased Persons Who Had Intellectual Disabilities

Temple ordinances for deceased persons who had intellectual disabilities and whose mental age and accountability are unknown are performed the same as for other deceased persons.

If it is known that a deceased person had intellectual disabilities and did not have a mental age of 8 or older, even if their chronological age was greater than 8, only the sealing-to-parents ordinance is performed for him or her. Additional proxy temple ordinances are not performed for people who were not accountable in life. (See Moroni 8:11–12; Doctrine and Covenants 137:10.)

### 28.3.6

#### Persons Who Are Presumed Dead

Temple ordinances may be performed for a person who is presumed dead after 10 years have passed since the time of the presumed or declared death. This policy applies to (1) persons who are missing in action, are lost at sea, or have been declared legally dead; and (2) persons who disappeared under circumstances where death is apparent but no body has been recovered.

In all other cases of missing persons, temple ordinances may not be performed until 110 years have passed from the time of the person's birth.

**28.3.7****Persons Who Have Taken Their Own Lives**

Persons who have taken their own lives may have temple ordinances performed for them one year or more after the date of death.

**28.3.8****Persons Whose Church Membership Was Withdrawn or Who Resigned Membership**

First Presidency approval is required to perform temple ordinances for deceased persons who, at the time of their death, had their Church membership withdrawn or had resigned membership. A family member should write a letter to the Office of the First Presidency. No form is required. The bishop or stake president may assist with this request as needed.

Such persons are not ordained to any priesthood office or endowed again, since these blessings are restored through this ordinance. For information about performing this ordinance for the living, see 32.17.2.

First Presidency approval is required to perform this ordinance for the dead. Family members of the deceased person may request a restoration of priesthood and temple blessings for the deceased family member by writing a letter to the Office of the First Presidency. The bishop or stake president may assist with this request as needed.

Some persons were not endowed but were born in the covenant or sealed to parents before their membership was withdrawn or before they resigned membership. These persons do not need to be sealed again after being readmitted by baptism and confirmation.

**28.4****Verifying Ordinances to Receive the Endowment**

Sometimes a deceased person's baptism and confirmation that were performed while he or she was living cannot be verified after a diligent search. If a person received the endowment by proxy but the baptism and confirmation they received while living cannot be verified, the person must be baptized and confirmed by proxy. It is not necessary to perform the endowment and sealings again after the proxy baptism and confirmation.

**28.5****Restoration of Temple Blessings**

Endowed persons whose Church membership was withdrawn or who resigned membership and were later readmitted by baptism and confirmation can receive their priesthood and temple blessings only through the ordinance of restoration of blessings.

29.

## Meetings in the Church

29.0

### Introduction

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

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

29.1

### Guidelines for Planning and Conducting Meetings

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

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

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

For guidelines on counseling together in meetings, see chapter 7.

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

Meetings should not be longer than needed.

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

29.2

### Ward Meetings

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

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

29.2.1

#### Schedule for Sunday Meetings

Sunday meetings provide vitally important time for members to increase their faith in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, as they partake of the sacrament, worship, learn the gospel, learn their duties,

and give service. Those learning about the Church are invited to attend these meetings.

Wards are to hold the following Sunday meetings in one two-hour period, as outlined below. (For meeting schedule options, see 29.9):

- Sacrament meeting weekly
- Priesthood quorum meetings on the second and fourth Sundays (for all priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age; young men typically join the deacons quorum in January of the year they turn 12; see 29.2.4)
- Relief Society on the second and fourth Sundays (for women ages 18 and older and for younger women who are married)
- Young Women on the second and fourth Sundays (for young women ages 11–18; young women typically join the Young Women organization in January of the year they turn 12)
- Primary weekly (for children ages 3–11; also for children ages 18 months through 2 years if a nursery is organized and parents want their children to attend)
- Sunday School on the first and third Sundays (for those ages 11 and older; youth typically join Sunday School in January of the year they turn 12)

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

## 29.2.2

### Sacrament Meeting

#### 29.2.2.1

##### Purposes of Sacrament Meeting

The primary purpose of sacrament meeting is for Church members to remember the Savior by partaking of the sacrament. Members renew their commitment to take upon them His name, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. This ordinance is the center of members’ worship on the Sabbath.

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

#### 29.2.2.2

##### Planning and Conducting Sacrament Meeting

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

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

1. Prelude music (see 19.4.3.1 for guidelines)
2. Greeting and welcome
3. Acknowledgment of presiding authorities, General Officers, visiting high councilors, or other leaders who are attending
4. Announcements (most announcements should be printed or electronically distributed so they do not take time in sacrament meeting; the

bishopric may give essential announcements briefly before the opening hymn)

5. Opening hymn and prayer
6. Ward and stake business, such as:
  - a. Sustaining and releasing officers and teachers (see 30.3 and 30.5)
  - b. Recognizing 8-year-old children and converts who have been baptized and confirmed (see 29.2.2.8)
  - c. Presenting names of brethren to receive or advance in the Aaronic Priesthood; brethren do not come to the podium but stand in the congregation as their names are presented and they are sustained (see 38.2.5.2)
  - d. Presenting names of new ward members (see 29.2.2.8)
7. Naming and blessing children (usually in fast and testimony meeting) and confirming new converts (unless they were confirmed at the baptismal service; see 38.2.3.2)
8. Sacrament hymn and administration of the sacrament
9. Gospel messages and congregational singing or special musical selections
10. Closing hymn and prayer
11. Postlude music

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

#### **29.2.2.3**

#### **Time before Sacrament Meeting**

Leaders set an example of reverence during the time before sacrament meeting. The bishopric and the

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

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

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

#### **29.2.2.4**

#### **Blessing and Passing the Sacrament**

The bishopric ensures that the sacrament is blessed and passed in a reverent and orderly manner. The sacrament table should be prepared before the meeting begins. For instructions on preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament, see 18.9.

#### **29.2.2.5**

#### **Selecting Subjects for Talks and Music**

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

#### **29.2.2.6**

#### **Selecting and Orienting Participants**

*Selecting Participants.* The bishopric selects members to participate in sacrament meetings. Most opportunities to participate are given to ward members. If the bishopric invites members from outside the ward to speak, the guidelines in 38.8.22 should be followed.

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

talks, though the bishopric may encourage parents to help.

The bishopric usually invites missionaries to speak in sacrament meeting just before they depart and when they return (see 24.8.1; 24.10.3.2). The bishopric makes it clear that this is a regular sacrament meeting and is not to be a missionary farewell or homecoming. The bishopric plans and conducts these meetings. Family members and friends of the missionary are not invited to speak. However, other departing or returning missionaries or other members may be invited to speak.

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

The bishopric schedules one sacrament meeting each year for the Primary children to take part in a Primary program (see 12.2.1.2).

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

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

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

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

When inviting members to speak, a member of the bishopric clearly explains the subject and the length of time the person should speak. He counsels speakers to teach the doctrine of the gospel, relate faith-promoting experiences, bear witness

of divinely revealed truths, and use the scriptures (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:12; 52:9). Speakers should teach in a spirit of love after prayerful preparation. They should not speak on subjects that are speculative, controversial, or out of harmony with Church doctrine.

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

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

#### **29.2.2.7**

##### **Music**

See 19.4.3 and 19.4.4.

#### **29.2.2.8**

##### **Introducing New Members**

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

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

**29.2.2.9****Visual Aids and Audiovisual Materials**

See 29.4 and 38.8.5.

**29.2.2.10****Sacrament Services in Unusual Situations**

Every member needs the spiritual blessings that come from partaking of the sacrament. If members are unable to attend sacrament meeting because they are confined to a home, nursing home, or hospital, the bishop may assign priesthood holders to prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament to these members. For instructions on administering the sacrament in other unusual circumstances, see 18.9.1.

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

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

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

**29.2.3****Fast and Testimony Meeting**

Usually on the first Sunday of the month, sacrament meeting is a fast and testimony meeting. When

general conference, stake conference, or New Year's Day (see 20.6.11) is on a Sunday, fast and testimony meeting may need to be on a different Sunday.

Under the bishop's direction, in this meeting children may be named and blessed and confirmations may be performed before the administration of the sacrament.

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

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

**29.2.4****Priesthood Quorum Meetings**

Priesthood quorum meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays. In these meetings, priesthood holders conduct business, learn priesthood duties, strengthen individuals and families, study the gospel of Jesus Christ, counsel together, and organize to meet local needs. Bishopric members normally attend Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings. They also regularly attend Young Women classes and occasionally attend Primary. When attending Young Women and Primary, they ensure that each Aaronic Priesthood quorum has two adult leaders present.

On a fifth Sunday, the bishopric may direct the Aaronic Priesthood quorums or all priesthood holders to hold a combined meeting. The bishopric may also plan a fifth-Sunday meeting for all youth or all adults or for youth and adults together.



For more information about priesthood quorum meetings, see 8.2.1.2 and 10.2.1.2.

### 29.2.5

#### Ward Conference

The stake presidency schedules and directs a ward conference once a year in each ward. A ward conference may be held on any Sunday of the month except fast Sunday. Members of the stake presidency, high council, and stake organization presidencies take part in ward conference sessions as the stake president directs. The purposes of ward conference are to strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, conduct business, and evaluate activity.

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

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

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

### 29.2.6

#### Bishopric Meeting

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

During a bishopric meeting, members of the bishopric counsel together about ward matters. They plan ways to strengthen individuals and families. They focus on their responsibility to the children and youth in the ward and as the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood.

In addition, they discuss quorums, organizations, programs, and activities. They also make plans to implement instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and handbooks.

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

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

### 29.2.7

#### Ward Priesthood Executive Committee Meeting

The ward priesthood executive committee (PEC) has been discontinued. Agenda items for PEC meetings are now included in ward council meetings. A sensitive matter could also be addressed in an

expanded bishopric meeting that includes the elders quorum president, Relief Society president, or both.

#### 29.2.8

### Ward Council Meeting

See 7.6.

#### 29.2.9

### Ward Youth Council Meeting

The bishop presides over the ward youth council. This council is composed of the bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants, the teachers and deacons quorum presidents, the Young Women class presidency (if just one class) or presidents (if multiple classes), and the Young Women president.

The bishopric may invite others to attend the council's meetings as needed. These may include the other priests quorum assistant, counselors in quorum and class presidencies, quorum and class secretaries, counselors and secretary in the Young Women presidency, and the Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers.

The purpose of the ward youth council is to help individuals build testimonies, receive saving ordinances, keep covenants, and become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ (see Moroni 6:4–5).

The council usually meets monthly. The bishop may conduct this meeting, or he may assign one of his counselors, one of his priests quorum assistants, or the president of the oldest Young Women class to conduct it. Before each meeting, the bishop reviews and approves the agenda with the person who will be conducting. The agenda may include the items shared with the ward council. These items could include ministering, spiritual and temporal welfare, missionary work, convert retention, activation, temple and family history work, and gospel learning and teaching (see 7.6.2). The following items specific to youth may also be considered:

- Orient newly called quorum and class presidencies.
- Identify questions, concerns, and challenges facing youth. Counsel together about ways to address them.
- Plan ways to encourage individual youth to participate in Church meetings and activities, including seminary. Plan and report on fellowshipping efforts for youth who are less active, youth who recently have been baptized, and youth who are investigating the Church.
- Schedule and plan youth activities that are consistent with the needs that have been identified. These activities include combined Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women activities and ward youth conferences. Youth should have a primary role in planning and carrying out these activities.
- Evaluate past activities to see if the intended purposes were fulfilled.

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

#### 29.2.10

### Ward Young Single Adult Committee Meeting

See 14.3.4.

#### 29.2.11

### Missionary Coordination Meeting

See 23.1.5.

### 29.3

## Stake Meetings

The stake president oversees stake meetings. He presides at these meetings unless an Area Seventy or General Authority attends. His counselors may conduct stake meetings and may preside if he is absent.

Stake meetings should not conflict with Sunday ward meetings.

### 29.3.1

#### Stake Conference

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

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

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

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

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

If stake officers are called or released between stake conferences, they should be presented for a sustaining vote or an expression of thanks in the next stake conference unless this has been done in a stake

general priesthood meeting (for callings indicated in the Chart of Callings, 30.7) or in ward sacrament meetings (as outlined in 30.3).

Brethren who have been recommended for ordination to the offices of elder and high priest are normally presented for a sustaining vote in a stake conference or a stake general priesthood meeting. Instructions are provided in 38.2.5.1.

Each stake conference normally includes the following meetings:

1. A meeting of the Area Seventy or General Authority (if assigned), stake presidency, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary.
2. A priesthood leadership meeting attended by the Area Seventy or General Authority (if assigned) and the brethren listed in 29.3.3. This meeting may be held on either Saturday or Sunday as determined by the presiding authority.
3. A Saturday evening session for all members of the stake who are 18 years of age and older. Temple presidents, stake patriarchs, and full-time mission presidents or their representatives who attend should sit on the stand. Depending on local circumstances, this session may be held on Sunday if approved by the presiding authority.
4. A general session held on Sunday for all members and interested nonmembers. Temple presidents, stake patriarchs, and full-time mission presidents or their representatives who attend should sit on the stand. More than one Sunday general session may be held if facilities are not adequate to seat everyone in the same session. Primary children attend this session with their families, not in a separate meeting.

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

When the stake president will preside, he and his counselors select subjects for instruction.

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

#### 29.3.1.1

### Planning and Conducting Stake Conference

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

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

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

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

#### 29.3.1.2

### Music for Stake Conference

See 19.6.1.

#### 29.3.2

### Stake General Priesthood Meeting

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

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

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

- Presenting the names of brethren who have been recommended for ordination to the offices of elder and high priest and asking for a sustaining vote (see 38.2.7.1).
- Presenting the names of newly called stake officers and asking for a sustaining vote (see the Chart of Callings, 30.7, for guidelines about who is to be presented for this vote).

#### 29.3.3

### Stake Priesthood Leadership Meeting

The stake presidency convenes a stake priesthood leadership meeting in connection with each stake conference (see 29.3.1, number 2). The presidency also convenes one other stake priesthood leadership meeting during the year, for a total of three such meetings annually. The purposes of these meetings are to teach priesthood leaders their duties, increase their abilities, and strengthen their faith.

Brethren who attend this meeting include the stake presidency; high council; stake clerk (and assistant clerks as needed); stake executive secretary; stake Young Men presidency (and secretary as needed); bishoprics; ward clerks (and assistant clerks as needed); ward executive secretaries; elders quorum presidencies and secretaries; and, as needed, Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and specialists. The stake presidency may invite others to attend, including ward mission leaders and ward temple and family history leaders (if called).

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

- Bishopricks and other Aaronic Priesthood leaders could meet together.
- Elders quorum leaders could meet together.
- The high councilor assigned to missionary work or a member of the stake presidency could meet with ward mission leaders (if called) and members of elders quorum presidencies who lead missionary work.
- The high councilor(s) assigned to temple and family history work or a member of the stake presidency could meet with ward temple and family history leaders (if called) and members of elders quorum presidencies who lead temple and family history work.
- The stake executive secretary usually meets with ward executive secretaries.
- The stake clerk usually meets with ward clerks.

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

#### **29.3.4 Stake High Priests Quorum Meeting**

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

#### **29.3.5 Stake Presidency Meeting**

The stake presidency meets regularly. The stake clerk and stake executive secretary attend; the clerk keeps a record of assignments and decisions.

The stake president may invite others to attend as needed.

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

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

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

#### **29.3.6 High Council Meeting**

The stake president presides over the high council meeting, which is attended by the stake presidency, high council, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary. The stake presidency may invite others to attend as needed.

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

1. Receive instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and priesthood duties.
2. Counsel together about how to strengthen individuals and families, solve problems in the stake, and improve in areas such as leadership, ministering, member missionary work, retention, activation, temple and family history work, welfare, and gospel instruction.
3. Receive instruction pertaining to assignments with the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, Aaronic Priesthood quorums, and wards.

4. Report on assignments to wards and elders quorums. Report on stake organizations as needed.
5. Ask high councilors to sustain the stake presidency's decisions to ordain brethren to the offices of elder and high priest and to issue callings.
6. Report on other assignments.
7. Hear reports from returning missionaries.
8. Plan stake priesthood leadership meetings.

### 29.3.7

#### Stake Council Meeting

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

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

1. Receive instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and duties.
2. Counsel together about how to strengthen individuals and families, solve problems in the stake, and improve in areas such as leadership, retention, activation, and gospel instruction.
3. Plan and report on the missionary efforts and temple and family history efforts in the stake.
4. Counsel together about welfare matters. Plan how to encourage members to be self-reliant. Ensure that welfare resources within the stake are made available to the wards as needed. Develop and maintain a simple written plan for

the stake to respond to emergencies. Additional information is provided in 22.5.3.

5. Report on stake organizations and on stake activities and programs as needed.
6. Coordinate the planning of stake programs and activities.
7. Review the progress of the Perpetual Education Fund program where it is approved.

### 29.3.8

#### Meeting with Bishoprics

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

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

### 29.3.9

#### Stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women Committee Meeting

The stake president assigns a counselor to preside over the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee. Other committee members are the high councilors assigned to the stake Young Women and Primary organizations, the stake Young Men presidency and secretary, and the stake Young Women presidency and secretary. The stake presidency may also invite the stake Sunday School president to serve as a member of the committee.

The stake presidency may invite youth to attend the committee's meetings as needed. The high councilor who serves as the stake activities committee chairman and others may also be invited to attend.

This committee meets as needed to plan stake-sponsored combined activities for young men and

young women. Youth should be included as much as possible in planning and carrying out activities such as youth conferences, dances, devotionals, and multistake events. Youth may also participate in discussions about challenges that the youth in the stake are facing.

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

#### **29.3.10**

### **Stake Bishops' Welfare Council Meeting**

Information on the stake bishops' welfare council is provided in 22.7.

#### **29.3.11**

### **Stake Leadership Meetings**

The stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies each plan and conduct one stake leadership meeting each year. If local circumstances and travel time do not place undue burdens on leaders, the stake presidency may authorize a second meeting each year. Each organization schedules its own meeting unless the stake presidency decides to combine all meetings into the same time and place.

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

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

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

The stake Young Men presidency does not hold a stake leadership meeting. Instead, bishoprics attend stake priesthood leadership meetings (see 29.3.3). Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and specialists also attend as needed.

#### **29.3.12**

### **Stake Young Single Adult Committee Meeting**

See 14.3.2.

#### **29.3.13**

### **Stake Single Adult Committee Meeting**

See 14.1.2.

#### **29.4**

### **Visual Aids and Audiovisual Materials in Church Meetings**

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

For guidelines about using audiovisual materials in Church meetings, see 38.8.5.

**29.5**

## Prayers in Church Meetings

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

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

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

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

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

**29.6**

## Funerals and Other Services at a Time of Death

Church leaders and members seek to make the services associated with a person's death a dignified, solemn, and spiritual experience for all who

participate. These services are generally held under the direction of the bishop.

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

**29.6.1**

### Death and Mourning

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

### 29.6.2

#### Planning and Assistance

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

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

The bishop notifies the elders quorum president so he and other brethren, including ministering brothers, can assist the bereaved family. Such assistance may include dressing the body of a deceased male for burial, safeguarding the home during the funeral, and providing other support (see 8.2.2.4).

The bishop also notifies the Relief Society president so she and other sisters, including ministering sisters, can assist the family. Such assistance may include dressing the body of a deceased female for burial, helping with flowers, tending small children, safeguarding the home during the funeral, and preparing meals (see 9.2.2.4).

### 29.6.3

#### Viewings (Where Customary)

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

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

### 29.6.4

#### Funeral Services

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

A funeral conducted by the bishop, whether in a Church building or another location, is a Church meeting and a religious service. It should be a spiritual occasion in addition to a family gathering. The

bishop urges members to maintain a spirit of reverence, dignity, and solemnity during a funeral service and at gatherings connected with the service.

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

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

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

Funerals should start on time. As a matter of courtesy to those who attend, services should not be too long. Funerals that last more than 1½ hours place an undue burden on those attending and participating.

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

Funeral services are not normally held on Sunday.

#### **29.6.5 Music**

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

#### **29.6.6 Burial or Cremation**

Where possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried in temple clothing. Where cultural traditions or burial practices make this inappropriate or difficult, the clothing may be folded and placed next to the body in the casket. Additional instructions on temple burial clothing and dressing the dead are provided in 8.2.2.4, 9.2.2.4, and 27.3.9.

If possible, at least one member of the bishopric accompanies the cortege to the cemetery. If the grave will be dedicated, he consults with the family and asks a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to do so according to the instructions in 18.16. If the family prefers, a graveside prayer rather than a dedicatory prayer may be offered.

The Church does not normally encourage cremation. However, if the body of an endowed member is being cremated, it should be dressed in temple clothing if possible. For information about dedicating the place where the ashes are kept, see 18.16.2.

#### **29.6.7 Financial Policies**

Church members who conduct or take part in funeral services should not accept fees or

contributions, whether the service is for a member or a nonmember.

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

#### 29.6.8

### Funeral Services for Nonmembers

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

#### 29.7

### Chart of Ward Meetings

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Sacrament meeting	Partake of the sacrament, worship, provide gospel instruction, perform ordinances, conduct ward business, and strengthen faith and testimony.	All ward members	Each Sunday
Fast and testimony meeting	Partake of the sacrament, worship, perform ordinances, conduct ward business, and bear testimonies.	All ward members	Usually the first Sunday of the month
Priesthood quorum meetings	Conduct quorum business, learn priesthood duties, strengthen individuals and families, and teach the gospel.	All priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age	Second and fourth Sundays
Sunday Relief Society meeting	Conduct business, teach the gospel, increase in faith and righteousness, and strengthen individuals and families.	Women in the ward ages 18 and older (and younger women who are married)	Second and fourth Sundays

**Chart of Ward Meetings (continued)**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Additional Relief Society meetings and activities	Learn and apply principles and skills that will help Relief Society sisters increase in faith and righteousness, strengthen individuals and families, and seek out and help those in need.	Women in the ward ages 18 and older (and younger women who are married)	Usually monthly at a time other than on Sunday or on Monday evening; can also be scheduled quarterly
Young Women	Conduct class business, strengthen individuals and families, and teach the gospel with an emphasis on applying gospel principles in daily life.	Young women and Young Women leaders	Second and fourth Sundays
Primary	Teach the gospel and help children feel Heavenly Father's love for them.	Children ages 18 months through 11 years and Primary leaders and teachers	Each Sunday
Sunday School	Strengthen faith and help Church members teach one another.	Adult and youth members and Sunday School leaders and teachers	First and third Sundays
Ward conference	Strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, conduct business, and evaluate activity.	Stake presidency, stake organization leaders, assigned high councilors, bishopric, and ward members	Once each year
Bishopric meeting	Plan, review, and consider matters affecting the ward. Address the bishopric's work as the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood.	Bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, and others as invited	Usually at least weekly

**Chart of Ward Meetings (continued)**

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

## 29.8

**Chart of Stake Meetings**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Stake conference	Strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, and conduct stake business.	General Authority or Area Seventy (if assigned), stake presidency, and all members in the stake	Twice each year
Stake general priesthood meeting	Instruct and inspire priesthood holders and conduct stake priesthood business.	All priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age in the stake	Once each year
Stake priesthood leadership meeting	Teach priesthood leaders their duties, increase their abilities, and build their faith.	Stake presidency; high council; stake clerk (and assistant clerks as needed); stake executive secretary; stake Young Men presidency (and secretary as needed); bishoprics; ward clerks (and assistant clerks as needed); ward executive secretaries; elders quorum presidencies and secretaries; ward mission leaders and ward temple and family history leaders (if called and as needed); Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and specialists (as needed); and others as invited	Three times a year (twice in connection with stake conference)
Stake high priests quorum meeting	Conduct quorum business and instruct quorum members in their duties.	High priests quorum (this meeting is not held in districts)	At least once each year
Stake presidency meeting	Review, plan, and consider matters affecting the stake.	Stake presidency, stake clerk, stake executive secretary, and others as invited	Regularly
High council meeting	Receive instruction, give reports, conduct business, and counsel together.	Stake presidency, high council, stake clerk, stake executive secretary, and others as invited	Twice monthly, where feasible

**Chart of Stake Meetings (continued)**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Stake council meeting	Receive instruction, counsel together, give reports, and coordinate planning of stake programs and activities.	Stake presidency; high council; stake clerk; stake executive secretary; stake Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidents; and others as invited	Two to four times a year as needed
Meeting with bishoprics	Instruct bishoprics, review policies, and counsel together.	Stake presidency, bishoprics, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary	One to four times a year as needed
Stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee meeting	Plan stake-sponsored combined activities for young men and young women.	A counselor in the stake presidency, high councilors assigned to the Young Women and Primary, stake Young Men presidency and secretary, stake Young Women presidency and secretary, stake Sunday School president (as needed), and youth and others (as invited)	At least quarterly
Stake bishops' welfare council meeting	Receive instruction in welfare matters. Exchange ideas and experiences. Review trends in fast-offering contributions, welfare needs, and welfare assistance. Identify work opportunities for those who receive assistance. Identify welfare resources in the community. Evaluate Church welfare operations. Coordinate welfare assignments.	All bishops and branch presidents in the stake (the stake president appoints one bishop to be chairman); stake president (occasionally); welfare specialists as needed	At least quarterly

**Chart of Stake Meetings (continued)**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Stake leadership meeting (for Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School)	Teach ward organization leaders their duties, instruct them in teaching and leadership skills, strengthen their faith, and share ideas.	Stake presidency member (if desired); high councilor assigned to the organization; stake organization presidency and secretary; ward organization presidencies and secretaries; other ward organization leaders, teachers, advisers, and specialists (as needed); bishopric members assigned to the organization (as needed)	Once each year for each organization, or twice with the stake president's approval (see 29.3.11)
Stake young single adult committee meeting	Address the needs of young single adults in the stake. Provide opportunities for young single adults to come together for service, gospel learning, and sociality beyond their wards. Ensure that ward young single adult committees are functioning well in wards where they are established.	A counselor in the stake presidency, the high councilor assigned to young single adults, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, stake young single adult advisers, and ward young single adult leaders (if they are called) or other young single adults in the stake	As needed
Stake single adult committee meeting	Address the needs of single adults in the stake. As needed, provide opportunities for single adults to come together for service, gospel learning, and sociality beyond their wards.	A counselor in the stake presidency, a high councilor, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, and several single adults	As needed

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

60 min.	Sacrament meeting
10 min.	Transition to classes or meetings



**Plan 1 (2 hours)**

50 min.	All Sundays: Primary, including nursery (see 12.2.1.2 for details)  First and third Sundays: Sunday School  Second and fourth Sundays: Priesthood quorum, Relief Society, and Young Women meetings  Fifth Sundays: Youth meetings, adult meetings, or youth and adult meetings under the direction of the bishop. The bishopric determines the subject to be taught and the teacher or teachers (usually members of the ward or stake). They also determine whether youth and adults, men and women, and young men and young women meet separately or combined.
---------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Plan 2 (2 hours)**

50 min.	All Sundays: Primary, including nursery (see 12.2.1.2 for details)  First and third Sundays: Sunday School  Second and fourth Sundays: Priesthood quorum, Relief Society, and Young Women meetings  Fifth Sundays: Youth meetings, adult meetings, or youth and adult meetings under the direction of the bishop. The bishopric determines the subject to be taught and the teacher or teachers (usually members of the ward or stake). They also determine whether youth and adults, men and women, and young men and young women meet separately or combined.
10 min.	Transition to sacrament meeting
60 min.	Sacrament meeting

**29.10**

## Overlapping Meeting Schedule for Units with Different Languages

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

Youth from the Spanish branch could also join with the English ward for youth activities. Children could join with the English ward for Primary activities.

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

The bishopric and the branch presidency also meet together to determine which members from each unit should be called to serve in the organizations. Leaders also discuss the calling of Aaronic

Priesthood quorum and Young Women class leaders. After the plan has been implemented, priesthood leaders continue to meet regularly to coordinate their efforts and resolve any concerns.

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

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

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

**29.11**

### Coordinating Council Meetings

The Area Presidency establishes coordinating councils. They also ensure that coordinating council meetings are held. They designate an Area Seventy to serve as chairman of each council.

Stake and mission presidents attend these meetings. Temple presidents are invited and attend when practical. District presidents are not usually asked to attend.

The Area Seventy convenes a coordinating council meeting soon after each quarterly area council meeting. Additional meetings may be held when needed.

The purpose of coordinating council meetings is to help leaders encourage members to engage in becoming true followers of Jesus Christ. The Area Seventy directs the meetings and facilitates the discussion. All who attend counsel together as equal participants.

In these meetings, participants:

- Invite revelation about implementing the teachings of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve.
- Instruct and edify one another.
- Coordinate the work of salvation and exaltation.
- Coordinate multistake matters, some of which are referenced below.
  - Activities (see 20.3.1; 20.6.24)
  - Welfare and self-reliance resources and emergency response efforts (see 22.3.2)
  - Finances and audits (see 34.9.4)

Several stake Relief Society presidents and other stake officers may be invited to attend these meetings as necessary. They may participate in part or all of the meeting. Their perspective as stake officers may be needed. Their participation may also be helpful when discussions relate to their organizations (see 5.1.1.5). Area Seventies consider distance, family, and travel when making these invitations.

30.

## Callings in the Church

30.0

### Introduction

This chapter provides information about calling and releasing members to serve in the Church. The Chart of Callings (30.7) lists selected callings and specifies who recommends a person, who approves the recommendation, who sustains the person, and who calls and sets apart the person. Callings on the chart are filled according to need and as members are available.

30.1

### Determining Whom to Call

30.1.1

#### General Guidelines

A person must be called of God to serve in the Church (see Articles of Faith 1:5). Leaders seek the guidance of the Spirit in determining whom to call. They consider the worthiness that may be required for the calling. They also consider the member's personal or family circumstances. Each calling should benefit the people who are served, the member, and the member's family.

Although service in Church callings requires sacrifice, it should not compromise a member's ability to fulfill family and employment responsibilities. Before calling a married person to an assignment that requires a significant time commitment, Church leaders consider the effect of the calling on the marriage and family.

If possible, a member is called to serve in only one calling, in addition to serving as a ministering brother or sister.

Leaders keep information about proposed callings and releases confidential. Only those who need to know, such as an organization president who has responsibility for the person, are informed before the person is presented for a sustaining vote. A person who is being considered for a calling is not notified until the calling is issued.

When a calling will be extended by or under the direction of the stake president, the bishop should be consulted to determine the member's worthiness and the family, employment, and Church service circumstances. The stake presidency then asks the high council to sustain the decision to call the person, if necessary according to the Chart of Callings.

When a young man or young woman will be called to a Church position, a member of the bishopric obtains approval from the parents or guardians before issuing the calling.

Leaders may extend a Church calling only after (1) a person's membership record is on file in the ward and has been carefully reviewed by the bishop or (2) the bishop has contacted the member's previous bishop to determine that the member is worthy for the calling and to verify that his or her membership record does not include an annotation or formal membership restrictions.

New converts should be given an appropriate calling or another responsibility to serve as soon as possible. Some new members may be ready for callings as soon as they are baptized and confirmed. Others may need to receive simple assignments that would help them prepare to receive callings. A member of the bishopric interviews new converts before calling them to teach children or youth.

People who are not members of the Church may be called to some positions, such as organist and music director. However, they should not be called to

teaching or administrative positions or as Primary music leaders. The allowance to call nonmembers to some positions does not apply to those whose membership has been withdrawn, who may not have any callings.

### 30.1.2 Recommendations and Approvals for Callings

The Chart of Callings indicates who may make recommendations for each calling and who gives approval. In some cases, priesthood and organization leaders are asked to make recommendations to their stake presidency or bishopric. They should approach this responsibility prayerfully, knowing that they can receive guidance from the Lord about whom to recommend. However, they should remember that final responsibility to receive inspiration on whom to call rests with the stake presidency or the bishopric.

Stake presidents and bishops should carefully evaluate each recommendation, recognizing that it has been prayerfully considered. As needed, they may request another recommendation.

Brethren who are actively serving as sealers in a temple have been called to that responsibility under the direction of the President of the Church. For this reason, active sealers should not be called to serve in any of the following callings: Area Seventy; stake, mission, district, or branch president or bishop; or counselor to any of these.

### 30.1.3 Stake Callings

The stake president oversees the calling of members who serve in most stake positions, as shown in the Chart of Callings.

### 30.1.4 Ward Callings

The stake presidency recommends brethren to be called or released as bishops (see 30.6). The stake president also oversees the calling of counselors in the bishopric, ward clerks, assistant ward clerks, and ward executive secretaries. The bishop oversees other callings in the ward, as shown in the Chart of Callings.

### 30.1.5 Elders Quorum Callings

The stake president oversees the calling of elders quorum presidents and their counselors, as shown in the Chart of Callings.

The elders quorum president oversees the calling of quorum secretaries and those who serve in other elders quorum callings. The bishop's approval is required before brethren may be called to these positions.

## 30.2 Extending a Calling

The Chart of Callings outlines who may extend each calling. After receiving the necessary approvals, an authorized leader conducts a personal interview to determine the member's faithfulness and willingness to serve. If the member is willing, the leader extends the calling. The leader may invite the spouse of a married person to be present and give support when the calling is extended.

A leader who extends a Church calling explains its purpose, importance, and responsibilities. He encourages the member to seek the Spirit of the Lord in fulfilling the calling. He tells the member the name of the person to whom he or she is directly accountable and emphasizes the need to support leaders. As needed, he outlines the meetings the person should attend and describes any resource

materials that are available. He may identify special concerns or challenges of the calling and invite the member to ask questions about it.

If the calling is to a position that includes working with children or youth, he explains that the member will need to complete children and youth protection training (ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) within one month of being sustained and every three years thereafter.

Leaders ensure that the manner in which they extend a calling is consistent with its sacred nature. Callings should be extended in a dignified, formal manner, not in a casual setting or manner.

### 30.3

## Sustaining Members in Church Callings

Members who are called to most Church positions should receive a sustaining vote before they begin serving. The Chart of Callings indicates whether a sustaining vote is needed and what congregation should give it. The leader who oversaw the calling, or a priesthood officer he authorizes, presents a person to the congregation for a sustaining vote.

The person who conducts the sustaining first announces who was released from the position and asks members to give an expression of thanks for the person's service (see 30.5 for suggested language).

When presenting a person for a sustaining vote, an authorized priesthood officer asks him or her to stand. The officer may say:

“[Name] has been called as [position], and we propose that he [or she] be sustained. Those in favor may manifest it by the uplifted hand. [Pause briefly for the sustaining vote.] Those opposed, if any, may manifest it. [Pause briefly to allow for a dissenting vote, if any.]”

The person who is being presented should participate in the sustaining vote. If more than one person is being presented, they may usually be sustained as a group.

If a member in good standing gives a dissenting vote when someone is presented to be sustained, the presiding officer or another assigned priesthood officer confers with the dissenting member in private after the meeting. The officer determines whether the dissenting vote was based on knowledge that the person who was presented is guilty of conduct that should disqualify him or her from serving in the position. Dissenting votes from nonmembers need not be considered.

When, as an exception, new stake officers need to begin their service before the next stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting in which they would normally be sustained, they should be sustained in the sacrament meetings of the wards and branches of the stake. These sustainings should be kept to a minimum. Members of the stake presidency or high council present the sustainings.

### 30.4

## Setting Apart Officers and Teachers

See 18.11.

### 30.5

## Releasing Members from Church Callings

Releases from Church callings should come by inspiration, except when a person's change of residence necessitates a release or when a calling is for a specific time period, such as full-time missionary service.

Releases from Church callings are made by the same level of authority that extended the callings. To

issue a release, an authorized leader meets with the member personally, informs him or her of the release, and expresses appreciation for the service. The leader also asks the person to return any current, usable materials so they can be given to the successor. Only those who need to know are informed of a release before it is announced publicly.

The same congregation that sustained a person gives a vote of thanks when the person is released. An authorized priesthood officer may say:

“[Name] has been released as [position], and we propose that he [or she] be given a vote of thanks for his [or her] service. Those who wish to express their appreciation may manifest it by the uplifted hand.” No dissenting vote is called for.

When a president or bishop is released, the counselors are released automatically. Others who hold positions in the organization, such as clerks, secretaries, and teachers, are not released automatically.

### 30.6

## Calling, Ordaining, and Setting Apart Bishops

The stake presidency recommends brethren to be called or released as bishops. Recommendations should be submitted through Leader and Clerk Resources. A member of the stake presidency, a clerk, or the executive secretary may prepare the recommendation. However, only the stake president may submit it.

When recommending a person to serve as bishop, the stake presidency carefully observes the principles set forth in 1 Timothy 3:2–7. It is not appropriate to solicit recommendations or to conduct surveys among ward members with respect to who might be considered for a call to serve as bishop.

Before a new bishop may be interviewed, called, ordained, or set apart, his recommendation must be approved by the First Presidency. The stake

president may extend the calling after he receives written approval from the First Presidency. With this approval, the stake president may also ordain and set apart a bishop after ward members have given a sustaining vote. The approval of the First Presidency is also required before a stake president may release a bishop. The stake president may not assign these responsibilities to a counselor.

If a man who is called as bishop is not a high priest, the stake president ensures that he is ordained a high priest before ordaining him a bishop. If the man was ordained a bishop previously, he needs only to be set apart as bishop of the ward.

After the First Presidency has approved the recommendation of a man to serve as bishop, they authorize a stake president, Area Seventy, or General Authority to ordain him and set him apart. The authorized priesthood officer:

1. Calls the man by his full name.
2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Ordains the man a bishop (unless he was previously ordained).
4. Sets him apart to preside over the ward and to be the president of the Aaronic Priesthood and the priests quorum, emphasizing his responsibilities for the Aaronic Priesthood and for young women in the ward.
5. Confers on him all the keys, rights, powers, and authority of the office of bishop, referring specifically to the bishop’s duties as a common judge in Israel and as the presiding high priest in the ward.
6. Gives words of blessing as the Spirit directs.
7. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

**30.7**

## Chart of Callings

**30.7.1****Stake Callings**

The following chart includes a list of selected stake callings. For other callings and service opportunities, see individual chapters in this handbook. Callings are filled according to need and as members are available.

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Stake president	An assigned General Authority or Area Seventy	An assigned General Authority or Area Seventy	Members in stake conference	An assigned General Authority or Area Seventy
Counselors in the stake presidency	Stake president	An assigned General Authority or Area Seventy, or written notification from the First Presidency	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	An assigned General Authority or Area Seventy, or the stake president with written approval from the First Presidency
Stake clerk	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Stake president
Assistant stake clerks	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Stake executive secretary	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Stake president or an assigned counselor
High councilors	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Stake patriarch	Stake presidency	Quorum of the Twelve	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	A member of the First Presidency or Twelve, or the stake president with approval from the Quorum of the Twelve

**Stake Callings (continued)**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Stake patriarch who is already ordained but has moved to another stake	Presidency of the stake into which he has moved	Quorum of the Twelve	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Not ordained but set apart to begin service in a new stake
Stake Relief Society president	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president
Stake Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidents	Stake presidency (high councilors are assigned as the stake Young Men president and the stake Sunday School president)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Counselors in stake organization presidencies, secretaries, and other organization leaders	President of the stake organization (in consultation with the assigned high councilor)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake physical facilities representative (high councilor)	Assigned by the stake presidency; not called, sustained, or set apart.			
Stake activities committee chairman (high councilor)	Assigned by the stake presidency; not called, sustained, or set apart.			
Temple and family history consultant(s)	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake music chairman	Stake music adviser (high councilor)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake auditors	Chairman of the stake audit committee (counselor in the stake presidency)	Stake presidency and high council	Not sustained	Stake president or an assigned counselor <sup>2</sup>
Stake welfare specialists (including stake employment specialist)	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Not sustained	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor <sup>2</sup>



**Stake Callings (continued)**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Stake seminary and institute teachers and supervisors	Stake presidency (after counseling with the bishop and the seminary and institute representative)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake communication director, assistant directors, and specialists	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor

<sup>1</sup> When, as an exception, new stake officers need to begin their service before the next stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting in which they would normally be sustained, they should be sustained in the sacrament meetings of the wards and branches of the stake (see 30.3).

<sup>2</sup> The stake president determines whether members who are called to serve in these positions should be set apart.

**30.7.2****Melchizedek Priesthood Callings**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Presidency of the stake high priests quorum (stake presidency)	See 30.7.1.			
Elders quorum president	Stake presidency (in consultation with the bishop)	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president
Counselors in the elders quorum presidency	Quorum president (in consultation with the bishop)	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Elders quorum secretaries, teachers, and other callings	Quorum president (in consultation with the bishop and the counselors to the elders quorum president)	Bishop	Quorum members	Quorum president or an assigned counselor
Ministering brothers	Serving as a ministering brother is a priesthood responsibility of high priests and elders. Accordingly, these brethren are <i>assigned</i> as ministering brothers by the elders quorum presidency, under the direction of the bishop. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.			

## 30.7.3

**Aaronic Priesthood Callings in Wards**

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Priests quorum president (bishop)	See 30.7.5.			
Assistants to the priests quorum president	Bishop (priests quorum president)	Bishopric	Quorum members	Bishop
Teachers and deacons quorum presidents	Bishopric	Bishopric	Quorum members	Called by the bishop or an assigned counselor; set apart by the bishop
Counselors in the teachers and deacons quorum presidencies and quorum secretaries	Quorum presidents	Bishopric	Quorum members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Priests, teachers, and deacons quorum advisers and specialists	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ministering brothers	Serving as a ministering brother is a priesthood responsibility of teachers and priests. Accordingly, these brethren are <i>assigned</i> as ministering brothers by the elders quorum presidency, under the direction of the bishopric. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.			

## 30.7.4

**Aaronic Priesthood Callings in Branches in Stakes**

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Priests quorum president (branch president, who acts as the priests quorum president)	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Branch members	Stake president
Other Aaronic Priesthood callings	See 30.7.3, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			

## 30.7.5

**Ward Callings**

The following chart includes a list of selected ward callings. For other callings and service opportunities, see individual chapters in this handbook. Callings are filled according to need and as members are available.

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Bishop	Stake presidency	First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve	Ward members	A General Authority or Area Seventy, or the stake president with written approval from the First Presidency
Counselors in the bishopric	Bishop	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Ward clerk	Bishopric	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Assistant ward clerks	Bishopric	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Ward executive secretary	Bishopric	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Ward mission leader (a counselor in the elders quorum presidency may fill this calling)	Bishopric (in consultation with the elders quorum president)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward missionaries	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward temple and family history leader (a member of the elders quorum presidency may fill this role)	Bishopric (in consultation with the elders quorum president)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward organization presidents (Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop

**Ward Callings (continued)**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Counselors in ward organizations	Organization president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Secretaries in ward organizations (except Relief Society)	Organization president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Advisers, teachers, specialists, music directors, and other callings in ward organizations (except Relief Society)	Organization presidency	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Secretaries in the ward Relief Society presidency; teachers and other callings in the ward Relief Society	Relief Society presidency	Bishopric	Relief Society members (presented in a Relief Society meeting by the bishop or an assigned counselor)	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ministering sisters	Relief Society sisters are <i>assigned</i> as ministering sisters by the Relief Society presidency, under the direction of the bishop. After consulting with parents and leaders, the Relief Society presidency may assign young women (beginning in January of the year they turn 14) as companions to adult sisters. Ministering sisters are not called, sustained, or set apart.			
Temple preparation course teacher(s)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Young Women class presidents	Bishopric (in consultation with the Young Women presidency)	Bishopric	Class members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Counselors in Young Women class presidencies and class secretaries	Class president	Bishopric	Class members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward music chairman	Ward music adviser (member of the bishopric)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward music director, ward organist or pianist, ward choir director and accompanist, and ward choir president	Ward music chairman	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor

**Ward Callings (continued)**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Ward resource center specialist	Sunday School president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Assistant resource center specialists	Sunday School president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward temple and family history consultant(s)	Bishopric (in consultation with the elders quorum president)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward young single adult leader(s)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward magazine representative	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor <sup>1</sup>
Ward welfare specialists (including ward employment specialist)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The bishop determines whether members who are called to serve in these positions should be set apart.

**30.7.6****Branch Callings in Stakes**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Branch president	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Branch members	Stake president
Other branch callings	See 30.7.5, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			

**30.7.7****Mission Callings**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Mission president	General Authority or Area Seventy	First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve	Not sustained	Member of the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve

**Mission Callings (continued)**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Counselors in the mission presidency	Mission president	Area Presidency	Ratified in district conference in all districts	Member of the Area Presidency, or the mission president under their direction
Mission clerk and mission executive secretary	Mission president	Mission presidency	Ratified in district conference in all districts	Mission president
Organization presidencies	Organization presidencies are not recommended at the mission level. If the mission president feels that branch organization leaders need training from more-experienced organization leaders, he may assign individuals to provide it.			

**30.7.8****District Callings**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
District president	Mission president	Area Presidency	Members in district conference	Mission president
Counselors in the district presidency	District president	Mission presidency	Members in district conference or district general priesthood meeting	Mission president or an assigned counselor
District councilors and district clerk, assistant clerks, executive secretary, and organization leaders	See 30.7.1, substituting <i>district president for stake president</i> and <i>district for stake</i> .			

**30.7.9****Elders Quorum Callings in Branches in Missions**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Elders quorum president	Mission presidency or district presidency	Mission presidency or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president

**Elders Quorum Callings in Branches in Missions (continued)**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Counselors in the elders quorum presidency	Quorum president (in consultation with the branch president)	Mission presidency or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president or another priesthood officer
Elders quorum secretary, teacher(s), and other callings	Quorum president (in consultation with the branch president and counselors to the quorum president)	Branch president and quorum presidency	Quorum members	Quorum president or an assigned counselor
Ministering brothers	Serving as a ministering brother is a priesthood responsibility of Melchizedek Priesthood holders. Accordingly, these brethren are <i>assigned</i> as ministering brothers by the elders quorum presidency, under the direction of the branch president. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.			

**30.7.10****Aaronic Priesthood Callings in Branches in Missions**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Priests quorum president (branch president, who acts as the priests quorum president)	Mission presidency or district presidency	Mission presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president
Other Aaronic Priesthood callings	See 30.7.3, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			

**30.7.11****Branch Callings in Missions**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Branch president	Mission presidency or district presidency	Mission presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president

**Branch Callings in Missions (continued)**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Counselors in the branch presidency	Branch president	Mission presidency or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, one of his counselors, the district president, or one of the district president's counselors
Branch clerk, assistant clerk, and executive secretary	Branch presidency	Mission presidency or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency	Branch members	District president or a priesthood officer he assigns
Branch organization leaders and other callings	See 30.7.5, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			

**30.7.12****Military Service Member Group Callings**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Called and Set Apart By</b>
Service member group leader	Stake presidency or mission president	Stake presidency and high council or mission presidency	Group members	Stake president or mission president, where possible <sup>1</sup>
Assistants to the service member group leader	Group leader	Stake presidency and high council or mission presidency	Group members	Stake president or mission president or a priesthood leader either of them assigns <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a war zone or remotely isolated area, it may not be possible for a stake president or mission president to call and set apart service member group leaders and assistants. Instructions that apply in these circumstances are provided in 38.10.5.



31.

## Interviews and Counseling

31.1

### Interviews

Each stake president and bishop is “a judge in Israel” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:72). By this authority he conducts worthiness interviews and priesthood interviews. He represents the Lord in conducting these interviews. Accordingly, he should seek to bless members and help them live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

31.1.1

#### General Instructions for Worthiness Interviews

Stake presidents, bishops, and (when authorized) their counselors conduct worthiness interviews as outlined in this section. They should prepare spiritually so they can be guided by the Spirit during these interviews. They should also seek the power of discernment. This is a spiritual gift that will help them discern truth, as well as a member’s needs (see Doctrine and Covenants 46:27–28).

Worthiness interviews should be private. However, the person being interviewed may invite another adult to be present.

Careful listening is important during worthiness interviews. The member of the stake presidency or bishopric should give full and sincere attention to the person being interviewed. The interviewer also makes sure the member understands the questions being asked. He sets aside enough time to conduct the interview in a dignified, unhurried manner.

31.1.2

#### General Instructions for Priesthood Interviews

Stake presidents, bishops, and their counselors regularly interview the priesthood leaders who report to them. One purpose of these interviews is to receive an accounting of the leader’s responsibilities. Another purpose is to help the leader set goals and make plans to accomplish them. Where applicable, budgets and expenditures are also reviewed during these interviews.

The person who conducts a priesthood interview should instruct, encourage, and inspire leaders in their efforts to fulfill their callings. He should also express gratitude and strengthen the leader in his personal and family life.

31.1.3

#### Interviews Conducted by the Stake President

The stake president conducts the following interviews with stake members:

- For temple recommends for those who are receiving their own endowment or are being married or sealed in a temple (see 26.3.2).
- For recommendation of full-time missionaries (see 24.5.1).
- For release of full-time missionaries after they have returned home (see 24.10.3.1).
- For callings to serve as counselors in the stake presidency, as patriarchs, and as bishops, when authorized.
- For callings to serve as elders quorum presidents and stake clerks.

- For helping members repent of serious sins (see chapter 32).

The stake president also interviews each bishop regularly to encourage and instruct him. He interviews the stake patriarch at least twice a year (see 38.9.4).

#### 31.1.4

### Interviews Conducted by the Stake President or Assigned Counselors

The stake president or assigned counselors conduct the following interviews with stake members. Before interviewing a person for any of the following purposes, the member of the stake presidency ensures that the person has been interviewed or cleared by the bishop or an assigned counselor in the bishopric.

- For renewal of temple recommends (see 26.2.1).
- For ordination to the offices of elder and high priest (see 38.2.5.1).
- For callings to serve in Church positions as indicated in the Chart of Callings (30.7).
- For an endorsement to enroll at a Church university or college (see 15.3).
- For an endorsement to participate in the Perpetual Education Fund loan program, where the program is approved (see 22.6.4.7).
- For temple recommends for those who are receiving their own endowment, are being married or sealed in a temple, or have lived in the ward for less than one year (see 26.3).
- For limited-use recommends for new converts (see 26.4).
- For recommendation of missionary candidates (see 24.5.1).
- For ordination to the offices of elder and high priest, when authorized by the stake presidency (see 38.2.5.1).
- For annual tithing settlement (see 34.4.1.5).
- For callings to serve as ward organization presidents.
- For ordination to the office of priest (see 38.2.5.2).
- For ordination of male converts to offices in the Aaronic Priesthood (see 38.2.5.2).
- For callings to serve as assistants in the priests quorum.
- Of youth (see 31.1.7).
- For fast-offering assistance (see 22.6.4.5).
- For an endorsement to enroll or continue enrollment at a Church university or college (see 15.3).
- For helping members repent of serious sins (see chapter 32).

If a counselor in the stake presidency encounters serious matters in an interview, such as transgressions that require confession, he refers the member to the bishop without delay.

#### 31.1.5

### Interviews Conducted by the Bishop

The bishop conducts the following interviews with ward members:

#### 31.1.6

### Interviews Conducted by the Bishop or Assigned Counselors

The bishop or assigned counselors conduct the following interviews with ward members. Only the bishop addresses concerns about chastity, associated

moral matters, and other serious transgressions in these interviews. If a counselor encounters serious matters, such as transgressions that require confession, he refers the member to the bishop without delay.

- For renewal of temple recommends and limited-use recommends (see 26.2.1).
- For callings to serve in Church positions as indicated in the Chart of Callings (30.7.5).
- For baptism and confirmation of 8-year-old children who are members of record or, if they are not members of record, have at least one parent or guardian who is a member (see 38.2.3.3).
- For callings to serve as the deacons quorum president, counselors, and secretary; teachers quorum president, counselors, and secretary; priests quorum secretary; and Young Women class presidents, counselors, and secretaries. However, only the bishop may set apart the deacons and teachers quorum presidents.
- For 11-year-olds as they move from Primary. During this interview, the bishop or his assigned counselor also interviews the young men to determine whether they are worthy and prepared to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. He interviews the young women in preparation for entering the Young Women program.
- For ordination to the office of deacon or teacher (see 38.2.5.2).
- Of youth and young single adults (see 31.1.7 and 31.1.8).
- For patriarchal blessings (see 38.2.12).
- For a priesthood holder who desires to act as voice in a priesthood ordinance in another ward but does not have a temple recommend. If the person is worthy, the bishopric member fills out and signs a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance form.
- For members who are entering military service (see 38.10.2).
- For an endorsement to participate in the Perpetual Education Fund loan program, where the program is approved (see 22.6.4.7).

### 31.1.7

## Guidelines for Youth Interviews

### 31.1.7.1

#### Role of Parents

Parents have the primary responsibility for teaching their children the gospel of Jesus Christ. They help their children grow spiritually and prepare to make and keep sacred covenants. Parents also counsel with their children regarding worthiness and help them repent and improve. Bishops and other Church leaders support parents in these efforts.

### 31.1.7.2

#### The Bishop's Communication about Interviews

As a young woman prepares to become part of the Young Women organization and as a young man prepares to receive the Aaronic Priesthood, the bishop shares with youth and their parents the following information about interviews. He could do this as part of the annual Temple and Priesthood Preparation meeting or at other times as needed.

- Parents have the primary responsibility to teach and nurture their children.
- The bishop or one of his counselors will interview the young man or young woman at least twice a year for the reasons outlined in 31.1.7.3. A bishopric member may also meet with youth to answer questions, give support, or extend assignments.
- To help youth prepare spiritually, interviews are required for sacred matters such as temple recommends, priesthood ordinations, and mission calls.

Leaders work with parents to help youth prepare for these interviews.

- Parents encourage their children to meet with the bishop when they need his help with spiritual guidance or with repentance.
- If a youth desires, he or she may invite a parent or another adult to be present when meeting with the bishop or one of his counselors.

### 31.1.7.3

#### Purposes of Interviews

Bishops and their counselors have a sacred responsibility to lead, teach, and inspire youth. Effective personal interviews are one important way they do this. During these interviews, the bishop and his counselors teach youth about becoming disciples of the Savior. They help youth consider how well they are following the Savior and His teachings. Interviews should be uplifting spiritual experiences.

Interviews provide an opportunity to reaffirm each youth's limitless potential as a child of God. Interviews also provide an opportunity to inspire youth to develop plans to draw closer to Heavenly Father and to improve in all areas of their lives.

As representatives of the Savior, bishops are divinely appointed judges in Israel. In this role, they conduct interviews to determine worthiness and to help youth repent of transgressions.

Those who conduct interviews express love and listen carefully. They encourage youth to talk rather than doing most of the talking themselves.

### 31.1.7.4

#### Frequency of Interviews

The bishop interviews each young man and young woman at least annually. If possible, he interviews each 16- and 17-year-old twice a year. If this is not

possible, he assigns a counselor to conduct some of these interviews.

After the annual interview with the bishop, each young man and young woman ages 11–15 usually has an interview at another time during the year with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Aaronic Priesthood quorum or Young Women class in which the youth participates.

Acting with inspiration and wisdom, bishops may adjust the frequency of interviews. Some youth may need added attention, while others may need less frequent interviews than are suggested, though all should be interviewed at least annually. Ward size, geography, schedules, and other circumstances may also affect the frequency of interviews.

### 31.1.7.5

#### Matters for Discussion

Key matters for discussion include the growth of the young person's testimony of Heavenly Father, the mission and Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel. The bishop and his counselors emphasize the importance of keeping baptismal covenants. They teach youth to prepare to make and keep temple covenants through daily righteous living. Bishopric members encourage youth to pray regularly in private and with their family and to study the scriptures. They also encourage youth to stay close to their parents.

When discussing obedience to the commandments, the bishop and his counselors make appropriate use of the limited-use temple recommend interview questions and the standards and explanations in *For the Strength of Youth*. Leaders adapt the discussion to the understanding and questions of the youth. They ensure that discussions about moral cleanliness do not encourage curiosity or experimentation.

The bishop and his counselors may also address the matters listed below:

*Priesthood ordination.* With young men, they discuss the blessings and duties of holding the Aaronic Priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:46–60; 84:31–48; recent general conference addresses on the subject; and 10.1.1 and 10.1.2).

*Seminary.* For youth of the appropriate age, they encourage regular seminary attendance and emphasize the blessings that come from regular participation.

*Missionary service.* They give special attention to preparing young men to serve a full-time mission (see 24.5.1). Young men are encouraged to serve (see 24.3.1), and young women, when they desire, may be recommended to serve (see 24.3.2). They discuss preparing spiritually by being worthy, studying the gospel, and building a testimony. They also discuss preparing physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially.

Standard interview questions for full-time missionary candidates are available at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/mss](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/mss). The bishop reviews these questions with the candidates and their parents before the mission interview.

Members of the bishopric should be sensitive to the circumstances under which young men are honorably excused from full-time missionary service (see 24.10.3.1). The bishop discusses opportunities for service missions with young men and young women, as applicable (see 24.12.2).

*Temple.* They ensure that youth understand the blessings of temple covenants and temple marriage and the requirements for receiving these blessings. To issue or renew a temple recommend, they ask the standard limited-use temple recommend questions. As needed, they adapt the questions to the age and circumstances of youth.

### 31.1.8

#### Interviews of Young Single Adults

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews each young single adult. These interviews are usually

held annually. However, acting with inspiration and wisdom, the bishopric may adjust the frequency of these interviews.

### 31.1.9

#### Interviews of Persons to Be Readmitted by Baptism and Confirmation

For instructions about interviewing persons who had their Church membership withdrawn or have resigned membership and want to be readmitted by baptism and confirmation, see 32.16.2.

## 31.2

### Counseling

#### 31.2.1

##### General Guidelines

Stake presidents and bishops counsel stake and ward members who seek spiritual guidance, who have weighty personal problems, who have doctrinal questions, or who have committed serious sins. Stake presidents and bishops may delegate some of this counseling to their counselors, though not when a member has committed serious sins. In appropriate cases, such as when a family has financial struggles, a bishop or stake president may also delegate some counseling to Melchizedek Priesthood holders who are qualified to assist. A person whom a bishop or stake president assigns to counsel a member reports regularly to the leader who made the assignment. The person also maintains confidentiality.

Church members should make a diligent effort, including earnest prayer and scripture study, to find solutions and answers themselves. If they still need help, they should counsel first with their bishop. If necessary, he may refer them to the stake president. Local leaders should discourage members from calling, visiting, or writing to Church headquarters about personal matters (see 38.8.29).

The stake president and bishop are entitled to the discernment and inspiration necessary to be spiritual advisers and temporal counselors to ward members who need such help. They should prepare spiritually before counseling a member by seeking the power of discernment and the guidance of the Spirit. This guidance usually comes as impressions, thoughts, or feelings. The Spirit often prompts leaders to remember teachings from the scriptures and from latter-day prophets.

Leaders should frequently use the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets in offering counsel. These inspired words should be used with sensitivity, love, and warmth. They should be used to inspire and encourage, not to coerce or cause fear.

Leaders should schedule adequate time for appointments. Members should not feel that leaders are too busy and can devote only a few minutes to them. Leaders should also help members feel comfortable as an appointment begins.

If the stake president or bishop does not feel prepared to counsel a member, he schedules another appointment. Between appointments he seeks guidance through study, prayer, and, if necessary, fasting. He may also confer with his priesthood leader.

### 31.2.2 Spiritual Self-Reliance

Leaders encourage members to develop spiritual self-reliance. Leaders avoid making decisions for those whom they counsel. Instead, leaders help them make their own decisions with the Lord's guidance.

The stake president or bishop should also avoid immediately offering solutions to those he counsels. To the extent possible, he helps them analyze and resolve their own problems or questions in the context of the doctrine of the gospel and the plan of salvation. Ideally, he teaches members how to

find solutions and strength from the scriptures on their own.

### 31.2.3 Questions and Listening

When counseling, the stake president or bishop asks questions to help him understand the member's situation. He avoids unnecessary probing. Questions usually should bring out feelings and thoughts rather than *yes* or *no* replies. Members should do most of the talking.

While members talk, the stake president or bishop listens carefully, giving full and sincere attention. Listening is vital in establishing confidence and trust. People often need someone they trust to listen to them as they work through their challenges and problems.

### 31.2.4 Repentance and Resisting Temptation

If a member has committed a serious sin, the stake president or bishop firmly and lovingly helps him or her repent. He teaches that repentance includes exercising faith in Jesus Christ, having a broken heart and contrite spirit, recognizing and forsaking sin, seeking forgiveness, making restitution, and demonstrating a renewed commitment to keep the commandments. If necessary, he informally restricts some Church membership privileges. He should be familiar with the circumstances that may necessitate holding a Church membership council and the procedures for initiating it (see chapter 32).

When counseling members, leaders help them take preventive action to resist temptations. For example, members who are courting, are having difficulty in their marriages, are separated or divorced, or are struggling with minor moral problems may be protected and strengthened by counseling that is designed to help them guard against transgression.

Presiding officers need not wait for members to seek such help but may call them in for counseling.

### 31.2.5

#### Marriage, Divorce, and Separation

No priesthood officer is to counsel a person whom to marry. Nor should he counsel a person to divorce his or her spouse. Those decisions must originate and remain with the individual.

When a marriage ends in divorce or if a husband and wife separate, they should always receive counseling from Church leaders. Church membership councils may be necessary if they have committed serious sin in connection with the divorce or separation (see chapter 32).

A member who is separated from his or her spouse or is going through a divorce should be counseled not to date until the divorce decree has become final according to law.

### 31.2.6

#### Professional Counseling

In addition to the inspired help of Church leaders, members may need professional counseling. In the United States and Canada, stake presidents and bishops may contact Family Services to identify resources to provide such counseling in harmony with gospel principles (1-801-240-1711; 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-1711; or FamilyServices.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Outside the United States and Canada, leaders may contact Family Services or the Family Services person in the area office.

### 31.2.7

#### Priesthood Blessings

The stake president or bishop may give a priesthood blessing if the member who is being counseled sincerely wants one.

### 31.3

#### Keeping Confidences

During and after their term of service in a calling, leaders must keep confidences about matters discussed when interviewing and counseling. A breach of confidence can damage trust, testimonies, and faith. A leader must not discuss confidential matters with others, including his counselors and wife, unless he receives consent from the person he is interviewing or counseling.

If a counselor in the bishopric or stake presidency encounters matters that need to be discussed with the bishop or stake president, he explains this to the member and refers him or her to the bishop or stake president without delay.

If a person moves to a new ward or stake, the presiding officer of the unit from which he or she moved may need to share information about membership actions or other serious concerns that are pending with the person's new presiding officer (see also 32.4.4). Doing so is not considered a violation of confidentiality. However, the presiding officer should not share information about sins that have been resolved.

### 31.4

#### Protecting against Misunderstandings

When a member of a bishopric or stake presidency or another assigned leader meets with a child, youth, or woman, he or she should ask a parent or another adult to be in an adjoining room, foyer, or hall. If the person being interviewed desires, another adult may be invited to be present during the interview. Leaders should avoid all circumstances that could be misunderstood.

**31.5**

## Responding to Abuse

While interviewing or counseling a person, a priesthood leader may become aware of incidents of abuse of a child, spouse, or other person. Abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Guidelines for reporting and responding to abuse are provided in 38.6.2.1.





32.

## Repentance and Church Membership Councils

32.0

### Introduction

Most repentance takes place between an individual, God, and those who have been affected by a person's sins. However, sometimes a bishop or stake president needs to help Church members in their efforts to repent.

When assisting members with repentance, bishops and stake presidents are loving and caring. They follow the example of the Savior, who lifted individuals and helped them turn away from sin and turn toward God (see Matthew 9:10–13; John 8:3–11).

As outlined below, this chapter is organized to guide leaders through the key decisions and actions necessary to help someone repent of a serious sin and to help protect others.

- *The Church's Role in Helping a Person Repent.* Sections 32.1–32.4 explain the Lord's doctrine of repentance and forgiveness. These sections also explain the three purposes of Church membership restrictions or withdrawal. Additionally, they explain the role of bishops and stake presidents in helping with repentance.
- *Determining the Setting for Helping a Person Repent.* Sections 32.5–32.7 provide guidelines for

deciding if a membership council or personal counseling is the appropriate setting for helping someone repent.

- *Administering Personal Counseling.* Section 32.8 provides guidelines for personal counseling by the bishop or stake president. It also explains informal Church membership restrictions.
- *Administering Church Membership Councils.* Sections 32.9–32.14 explain who has responsibility for membership councils, how to conduct them, and the possible decisions. The results of those decisions are also explained.
- *Returning Church Membership Privileges.* Sections 32.15–32.17 explain how a person can have Church membership privileges restored through repentance.

Unless otherwise noted, references to stake presidents apply also to mission presidents. References to bishops apply also to branch presidents.

## THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN HELPING A PERSON REPENT

### 32.1

## Repentance and Forgiveness

The Lord said that “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven” (Alma 11:37; see also 3 Nephi 27:19). Our sins make us unclean—unworthy to dwell in the presence of our Heavenly Father. They also bring us anguish in this life.

God’s law of justice requires a consequence when we sin (see Alma 42:14, 17–18). However, His great plan of mercy “can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles [us] in the arms of safety” (Alma 34:16; see also Mosiah 15:9).

To bring about His plan of mercy, Heavenly Father sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins (see Alma 42:15). Jesus suffered the

penalty that the law of justice requires for our sins (see Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–19; see also Alma 42:24–25). Through this sacrifice, both the Father and the Son showed Their infinite love for us (see John 3:16).

When we exercise “faith unto repentance,” Heavenly Father forgives us, granting mercy through the Atonement of Jesus Christ (Alma 34:15; see also Alma 42:13). When we are cleansed and forgiven, we can ultimately inherit the kingdom of God (see Isaiah 1:18; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42).

Repentance is more than changing behavior. It is turning away from sin and toward Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It leads to a change of heart and mind (see Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14; Helaman 15:7). Through repentance, we become new persons, reconciled to God (see 2 Corinthians 5:17–18; Mosiah 27:25–26).

The opportunity to repent is one of the greatest blessings Heavenly Father has given us through the gift of His Son.

### 32.2

## Purposes of Church Membership Restrictions or Withdrawal

When a person is baptized, he or she becomes part of the “household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). The baptismal covenant includes a promise to strive to live according to Christ’s teachings and commandments. When a person falls short, he or she exercises faith in Jesus Christ and repents, relying on His mercy to strengthen and forgive.

If a member commits a serious sin, the bishop or stake president helps him or her repent. As part of this process, he may need to restrict some Church membership privileges for a time. In some situations, he may need to withdraw a person’s membership for a time.

Restricting or withdrawing a person's membership is not intended to punish. Rather, these actions are sometimes necessary to help a person repent and experience a change of heart. They also give a person time to prepare spiritually to renew and keep his or her covenants again.

The bishop or stake president oversees membership restrictions or withdrawal as outlined in 32.5–32.14. These actions are accompanied by conditions of repentance. As a person sincerely repents, he or she may have the privileges of Church membership restored.

When membership restrictions or withdrawal is necessary, the bishop or stake president follows the guidance of the Holy Ghost and the instructions in this chapter. He acts in a spirit of love (see 32.3).

Church membership restrictions are ecclesiastical, not civil or criminal. They affect only a person's standing in the Church. (See Doctrine and Covenants 134:10.)

The three purposes of membership restrictions or withdrawal are as follows.

### Three Purposes of Church Membership Restrictions or Withdrawal

1. Help protect others
2. Help a person access the redeeming power of Jesus Christ through repentance
3. Protect the integrity of the Church

#### 32.2.1 Help Protect Others

The first purpose is to help protect others. Sometimes a person poses a physical or spiritual threat. Predatory behaviors, physical harm, sexual abuse, substance abuse, fraud, and apostasy are

some of the ways this can occur. With inspiration, a bishop or stake president acts to protect others when someone poses a threat in these and other serious ways (see Alma 5:59–60).

#### 32.2.2 Help a Person Access the Redeeming Power of Jesus Christ through Repentance

The second purpose is to help a person access the redeeming power of Jesus Christ through repentance. Through this process, he or she may again become clean and worthy to receive all of God's blessings.

#### 32.2.3 Protect the Integrity of the Church

The third purpose is to protect the integrity of the Church. Restricting or withdrawing a person's Church membership may be necessary if his or her conduct significantly harms the Church (see Alma 39:11). The integrity of the Church is not protected by concealing or minimizing serious sins—but by addressing them.

### 32.3 The Role of Judges in Israel

Bishops and stake presidents are called and set apart to be judges in Israel (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:72–74). They hold priesthood keys to represent the Lord in helping Church members repent (see Doctrine and Covenants 13:1; 107:16–18).

Often bishops and stake presidents assist with repentance through personal counseling. This assistance may include informally restricting some privileges of Church membership for a time. (See 32.8.)

For some serious sins, leaders assist with repentance by holding a membership council (see 32.6 and 32.9–32.14). This assistance may include formally restricting some privileges of Church membership

or withdrawing a person's membership for a time (see 32.11.3 and 32.11.4).

Bishops and stake presidents help Church members understand that God loves all His children, regardless of their sins. Because He wants them to be happy and receive blessings, He also cares immensely about their obedience.

Bishops and stake presidents are loving and caring as they help members repent. The Savior's interaction with the woman taken in adultery is a guide (see John 8:3–11). Although He did not say her sins were forgiven, He did not condemn her. Instead, He told her to “sin no more”—to repent and change her life.

These leaders teach that there is “joy . . . in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7). They are patient, supportive, and positive. They inspire hope. They teach and testify that because of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, all can repent and become clean.

Bishops and stake presidents seek guidance from the Spirit to know how to help each person repent. Only for the most serious sins does the Church have a set standard on what actions its leaders should take (see 32.6 and 32.11). No two situations are the same. The counseling that leaders give and the process of repentance they facilitate must be inspired and may be different for each person.

The Lord knows each person's circumstances, capacity, and spiritual maturity. The Holy Ghost will help leaders discern how to help members make the necessary changes so they can heal and resist the temptation to repeat the sin.

Helping someone repent, turn back to God, and be healed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ is one of the most joyous experiences a person can have. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–13 explains:

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain



of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

“And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!”

### 32.4

## Confession, Confidentiality, and Reporting to Government Authorities

### 32.4.1

#### Confession

Repentance requires that sins be confessed to Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ said, “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:43; see also Mosiah 26:29).

When Church members commit serious sins, their repentance also includes confession to their bishop or stake president. He is then able to exercise the keys of the gospel of repentance on their behalf (see Doctrine and Covenants 13:1; 84:26–27; 107:18, 20). This helps them heal and return to the gospel path through the power of the Savior’s Atonement.

The purpose of confession is to encourage members to unburden themselves so they can fully seek the Lord’s help in changing and healing. Developing a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” is aided by confession (2 Nephi 2:7). Voluntary confession shows that a person desires to repent.

When a member confesses, the bishop or stake president follows the guidelines for counseling in 32.8. He prayerfully seeks guidance about the appropriate setting for helping the member repent (see 32.5). He considers whether a membership council would

be helpful. If Church policy requires a membership council, he explains this (see 32.6 and 32.10).

Sometimes a member has wronged a spouse or another adult. As part of repentance, he or she should usually confess to that person and seek forgiveness. A youth who commits a serious sin is usually encouraged to counsel with his or her parents.

### 32.4.2

#### Serious Sins That Are Not Confessed or Are Denied

A bishop or stake president typically learns about a serious sin through confession or from another person. He may also receive promptings about a potential serious sin through the Holy Ghost. If he feels prompted by the Spirit that someone may be struggling with sin, he may schedule an interview. During the interview, he shares his concerns in a kind, respectful way. He avoids any tone of accusation.

If a member denies committing a serious sin that the bishop or stake president has information to support, a membership council may still be held. However, a spiritual impression alone is not sufficient to hold a council (see Doctrine and Covenants 10:37). The leader may gather additional information if needed. He follows the guidelines in 32.4.3 and 32.10.2.

### 32.4.3

#### Gathering Information

Before holding a membership council, the bishop or stake president gathers as much information as he needs. Information from a member’s confession is often sufficient. Information may also come from a family member, another Church leader, a victim, or a participant in the sin.

When gathering information, the bishop or stake president should only use methods that are appropriate for a priesthood leader. He should not keep

a watch on a person's home or record him or her without consent. Nor should he use any practices that are against the law.

False accusations are rare but can occur. Priesthood leaders should be cautious when there is limited information besides one person's word. For example, a member who is accused of adultery may deny the charge. The scriptures explain that "every word shall be established against him or her by two witnesses of the church" (Doctrine and Covenants 42:80). "Two witnesses" means two separate sources of information. This could include the knowledge of a participant and some other reliable source. At times a priesthood leader may need to wait to act until more information becomes available.

When a Church leader is gathering information for a membership council, he should immediately stop if he learns that law enforcement is actively investigating the member. This is done to avoid possible claims that the leader may have obstructed justice. For legal advice about these situations in the United States and Canada, the stake president contacts the Church's Office of General Counsel:

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-6301  
1-801-240-6301

Outside the United States and Canada, the stake president contacts the area legal counsel at the area office.

Normally a membership council is not held to consider conduct being examined by a civil or criminal trial court until the court has reached a final judgment. In some cases it may also be appropriate to delay a membership council until the period of legal appeal has expired or the appeal has been rejected.

#### 32.4.4 Confidentiality

Bishops, stake presidents, and their counselors have a sacred duty to protect all confidential information shared with them. This information may come in

interviews, counseling, and confessions. The same duty of confidentiality applies to all who take part in membership councils. Confidentiality is essential because members may not confess sins or seek guidance if what they share will not be kept confidential. Breaching a confidence betrays members' trust and causes them to lose confidence in their leaders.

Consistent with their duty of confidentiality, a bishop, stake president, or their counselors may share such information only as follows:

- They need to confer with the member's stake president, mission president, or bishop about holding a membership council or related matters. The stake president may also confer with his assigned Area Seventy. If needed, the Area Seventy refers the stake president to the Area Presidency. Only the stake president decides if a council should be held or its outcome.
- The person moves to a new ward (or the priesthood leader is released) while membership action or other serious concerns are pending. In these cases, the leader notifies the new bishop or stake president about the concerns or pending action (see 32.14.7). He also informs the leader if the member may pose a threat to others.
- A bishop or stake president learns that a Church member who lives outside the ward or stake may have been involved in a serious sin. In that instance, he confidentially contacts that member's bishop.
- It is necessary to disclose information during a membership council. All information gathered and shared as part of a membership council is confidential.
- A member chooses to give permission for the leader to share information with specific persons. These may include parents, Church leaders, or others who may provide support. The leader does not share information beyond the permission the member has given.

- It may be necessary to share limited information about the decision of a membership council (see 32.12.2).

In all other situations, the leader should refer to 32.4.5. These cases include when the law may require that a crime, such as child abuse, be reported to government authorities.

To assist leaders in protecting others and complying with the law, the Church provides help from trained professionals. To receive this guidance, leaders promptly call the Church's abuse help line where it is available (see 32.4.5; 38.6.2.1). Where it is not available, the stake president contacts the area legal counsel at the area office.

In only one situation should a bishop or stake president disclose confidential information without first seeking such guidance. That is when disclosure is necessary to prevent life-threatening harm or serious injury and there is not time to seek guidance. In such cases, the duty to protect others is more important than the duty of confidentiality. Leaders should contact civil authorities immediately.

If leaders keep notes or communicate with each other electronically, they safeguard access to this information. They also delete or destroy the information when they no longer need it. They do not unnecessarily share personal information.

Civil authorities might challenge the confidentiality required of a priesthood leader. If this occurs in the United States and Canada, the stake president seeks legal advice from the Church's Office of General Counsel:

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-6301  
1-801-240-6301

Outside the United States and Canada, the stake president contacts the area legal counsel at the area office.

### 32.4.5

#### Reporting to Government Authorities

Repentance of some sins requires a person to report to government authorities if he or she has broken a civil law. Bishops and stake presidents encourage members to follow the law and report such matters. They also counsel members to obtain competent legal advice when reporting. The Church's policy is to obey the law.

In many places, priesthood leaders are required by law to report some illegal behaviors of which they become aware. For example, some states and countries require that child abuse be reported to law enforcement authorities.

In some countries, the Church has established a confidential abuse help line to assist bishops and stake presidents. These leaders should promptly call the help line about every situation in which a person may have been abused—or is at risk of being abused (see 38.6.2.1). It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In countries that do not have a help line, a bishop who learns of abuse should contact his stake president. He will seek guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office.

For more information about reporting abuse, see 38.6.2.1 and 38.6.2.7.

#### DETERMINING THE SETTING FOR HELPING A PERSON REPENT

### 32.5

#### Settings for Helping a Person Repent

After becoming aware that a member has committed a serious sin, a bishop or stake president takes steps to protect others. He also seeks the guidance of the Holy Ghost in determining the setting for helping the person repent and draw closer to the Savior.

**32.5.1****Overview of the Settings**

The following table lists three settings for helping a person repent. It also summarizes some of the

considerations for leaders when deciding which setting to use.

**Settings for Helping a Person Repent**

<b>Setting</b>	<b>Some Considerations (see also 32.7)</b>
Stake Membership Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For members who have received the temple endowment.</li> <li>• Is required if a man or woman who has been endowed will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn for any of the serious sins or actions addressed in 32.6.1, 32.6.2, or 32.6.3.</li> </ul>
Ward Membership Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For any member.</li> <li>• Is required for the serious sins addressed in 32.6.1.</li> <li>• May be necessary for the serious sins and actions addressed in 32.6.2 and 32.6.3.</li> <li>• Is insufficient if a man or woman who has been endowed will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn for any of the serious sins or actions addressed in 32.6.1, 32.6.2, or 32.6.3.</li> </ul>
Personal Counseling (see 32.8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For any member.</li> <li>• May include informal Church membership restrictions.</li> <li>• May be insufficient for serious sins or actions for which a membership council would be helpful in the repentance process (see 32.6.2; 32.6.3).</li> <li>• Is insufficient for serious sins that require a membership council (see 32.6.1).</li> <li>• Is insufficient if a man or woman who has been endowed will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn for any of the serious sins or actions addressed in 32.6.1, 32.6.2, or 32.6.3.</li> </ul>

Personal counseling and informal restrictions by the bishop or stake president are sometimes not sufficient to help a person repent of serious sins. The Lord has provided membership councils to assist

a judge in Israel in these situations. (See Exodus 18:12–27; Mosiah 26:29–36; Doctrine and Covenants 42:80–83; 102.) For some serious sins, a council is required by Church policy (see 32.6.1). Violating



temple covenants increases the likelihood of a membership council being necessary (see 32.7.4).

In a ward, the bishop's counselors assist in membership councils. In a stake, the stake president's counselors assist. In some stake membership councils, the high council also participates (see 32.9.2). In a membership council, the bishopric or stake presidency meets with the person in a spirit of love.

### 32.5.2

#### Determining the Setting and Timing

When deciding which of these settings would best help a person repent, leaders seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. They also consider the following factors:

- The severity of the sin and Church policy about whether a council is required (see 32.6)
- The person's circumstances (see 32.7)

A bishop counsels with the stake president about specific situations. He must receive approval from the stake president before holding a membership council.

On difficult matters, the stake president may seek counsel from his assigned Area Seventy. The stake president must counsel with the Area Presidency on the matters outlined in 32.6.3. However, only the stake president decides if a council should be held to address the conduct. If a council is held, the stake president or bishop decides the outcome.

If a bishop or stake president determines that personal counseling is sufficient, he follows the guidelines in 32.8. If he determines that a membership council is needed, or if Church policy requires a council, the one who conducts it follows the procedures in 32.9–32.14.

Before holding the council, the bishop or stake president may determine that informal membership restrictions would be best for a time. He holds the

council when it would best encourage the member's sincere repentance. However, he should not delay a council if it is necessary to protect others.

### 32.6

#### Severity of the Sin and Church Policy

The severity of a sin is an important consideration in determining the setting that will (1) help protect others and (2) help a person repent. The Lord has said that He “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:31; see also Mosiah 26:29). His servants must not ignore evidence of serious sin.

Serious sins are a deliberate and major offense against the laws of God. Categories of serious sins are listed below.

- Violent acts and abuse (see 32.6.1.1 and 32.6.2.1)
- Sexual immorality (see 32.6.1.2 and 32.6.2.2)
- Fraudulent acts (see 32.6.1.3 and 32.6.2.3)
- Violations of trust (see 32.6.1.4 and 32.6.2.4)
- Some other acts (see 32.6.1.5 and 32.6.2.5)

The following sections describe when a membership council is required, when it may be necessary, and when it is not necessary.

#### 32.6.1

##### When a Membership Council Is Required

The bishop or stake president must hold a membership council when information indicates that a member may have committed any of the sins described in this section. For these sins, a council is required regardless of a member's level of spiritual maturity and gospel understanding.

See 32.11 for potential outcomes of councils that are convened for the sins listed in this section. Informal

membership restrictions are not an option for these councils.

## Sins That Require Holding a Membership Council

- Murder
- Rape
- Sexual assault conviction
- Child or youth abuse
- Abuse of a spouse or another adult (as outlined in 38.6.2.4)
- Predatory behavior (violent, sexual, or financial)
- Incest
- Child pornography (as outlined in 38.6.6)
- Plural marriage
- Serious sin while holding a prominent Church position
- Most felony convictions

### 32.6.1.1

#### Violent Acts and Abuse

*Murder.* A membership council is required if a member murders someone. As used here, *murder* is the deliberate, unjustified taking of human life. Withdrawing a person's Church membership is required.

Murder does not include police or military acts in the line of duty. Abortion is not defined as murder in this context. If death was caused by accident or by defense of self or others, the taking of a human life might not be defined as murder. This may also be true in other situations, such as when a person has limited mental capacity.

*Rape.* A membership council is required for rape. As used here, *rape* is forced sexual intercourse or intercourse with someone who cannot legally give

consent due to diminished mental or physical capacity. As used here, *rape* does not include consensual sexual intercourse between two minors who are close in age.

*Sexual Assault Conviction.* A membership council is required if a member is convicted of sexual assault.

*Child or Youth Abuse.* A membership council is required if a person abuses a child or youth as explained in 38.6.2.3.

*Abuse of a Spouse or Another Adult.* There is a spectrum of severity in abusive behavior. See 38.6.2.4 for when a membership council is required for abuse of a spouse or another adult.

*Violent Predatory Behavior.* A membership council is required if an adult repeatedly harms people physically through violent behavior and is a threat to others.

### 32.6.1.2

#### Sexual Immorality

*Incest.* A membership council is required for incest as defined in 38.6.10. Withdrawing a person's Church membership is almost always required.

*Child Pornography.* A membership council is required if a person is involved in child pornography as outlined in 38.6.6.

*Plural Marriage.* A membership council is required if a person knowingly enters into a plural marriage. Some plural marriages may occur in secret, with a spouse not knowing about one or more other spouses. Withdrawing a person's Church membership is required if a person knowingly enters into plural marriage.

*Sexual Predatory Behavior.* A membership council is required if an adult repeatedly harms people sexually and is a threat to others.

**32.6.1.3****Fraudulent Acts**

*Financial Predatory Behavior.* A membership council is required if an adult has a history of deliberately and repeatedly harming people financially and is a threat to others (see 38.6.2.4). This includes investment fraud and similar activities. Unintended financial losses due to economic conditions are not considered fraudulent. If litigation is involved, priesthood leaders may decide to wait until the outcome is final.

**32.6.1.4****Violations of Trust**

*Serious Sin While Holding a Prominent Church Position.* A membership council is required if a member commits a serious sin while holding a prominent position. These include a General Authority, General Church Officer, Area Seventy, temple president or matron, mission president or his companion, stake president, patriarch, or bishop. This does not apply to branch presidents. However, a branch president's Church membership privileges can be restricted or withdrawn the same as for other members.

**32.6.1.5****Some Other Acts**

*Felony Conviction.* A membership council is required in most cases when a person is convicted of a felony.

**32.6.2****When a Membership Council May Be Necessary**

A membership council may be necessary in the following instances.

**32.6.2.1****Violent Acts and Abuse**

The Lord commanded, “Thou shalt not . . . kill, *nor do anything like unto it*” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:6; italics added). Violent acts and abuse for which a membership council may be necessary include (but are not limited to) those listed below.

*Attempted Murder.* Deliberately trying to kill someone.

*Sexual Abuse, Including Assault and Harassment.*

Sexual abuse covers a broad range of actions (see 38.6.17). A membership council may be necessary for a person who has sexually assaulted or abused someone. See 38.6.17 for when a council is required.

*Abuse of a Spouse or Another Adult.* There is a spectrum of severity in abusive behavior (see 38.6.2.4). A membership council may be necessary for a person who has abused a spouse or another adult. See 38.6.2.4 for when a council is required.

**32.6.2.2****Sexual Immorality**

The Lord's law of chastity is abstinence from sexual relations outside of a marriage between a man and a woman according to God's law (see Exodus 20:14; Doctrine and Covenants 63:16). A membership council may be necessary for sexual immorality as described in 38.6.5. See 32.6.1.2 for when a council is required.

**32.6.2.3****Fraudulent Acts**

The Ten Commandments teach, “Thou shalt not steal” or “bear false witness” (Exodus 20:15–16). A membership council may be necessary for acts such as robbery, burglary, theft, embezzlement, and perjury. See 32.6.1.3 for when a council is required for fraudulent acts.

**32.6.2.4****Violations of Trust**

A membership council may be necessary if a member:

- Commits a serious sin while holding a position of authority or trust in the Church or the community.
- Commits a serious sin that is widely known.

See 32.6.1.4 for when a council is required.

**32.6.2.5****Some Other Acts**

King Benjamin taught, “I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are

divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them” (Mosiah 4:29). A council may be necessary if a person:

- Shows a pattern of committing serious sins (see Doctrine and Covenants 82:7).
- Deliberately abandons family responsibilities, including nonpayment of child support and alimony.
- Sells illegal drugs.
- Commits other serious criminal acts.

A membership council may be necessary if a member submits to, performs, arranges for, pays for, or encourages an abortion. See 38.6.1 for guidelines.

## When a Membership Council Is Required or May Be Necessary

Type of Sin	Membership Council Is Required (see 32.6.1)	Membership Council May Be Necessary (see 32.6.2)
Violent Acts and Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Murder</li> <li>• Rape</li> <li>• Sexual assault conviction</li> <li>• Child or youth abuse</li> <li>• Violent predatory behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempted murder</li> <li>• Sexual abuse, including assault and harassment (see 38.6.17 for when a council is required)</li> <li>• Abuse of a spouse or another adult (see 38.6.2.4 for when a council is required)</li> </ul>
Sexual Immorality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incest</li> <li>• Child pornography</li> <li>• Plural marriage</li> <li>• Sexual predatory behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adultery, fornication, and same-sex relations</li> <li>• Cohabitation, civil unions and partnerships, and same-sex marriage</li> <li>• Intensive or compulsive use of pornography that has caused significant harm to a member's marriage or family</li> </ul>

Type of Sin	Membership Council Is Required (see 32.6.1)	Membership Council May Be Necessary (see 32.6.2)
Fraudulent Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial predatory behavior, such as fraud and similar activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robbery, burglary, theft, or embezzlement</li> <li>• Perjury</li> </ul>
Violations of Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serious sin while holding a prominent Church position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serious sin while holding a position of authority or trust in the Church or the community</li> <li>• Serious sin that is widely known</li> </ul>
Some Other Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most felony convictions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abortion</li> <li>• Pattern of serious sins</li> <li>• Deliberate abandonment of family responsibilities, including nonpayment of child support and alimony</li> <li>• Sale of illegal drugs</li> <li>• Other serious criminal acts</li> </ul>

**32.6.3**  
**When the Stake President Counsels with the Area Presidency about Whether a Membership Council or Other Action Is Necessary**

Some matters require extra sensitivity and guidance. To know how to best help, the stake president must counsel with the Area Presidency about the situations in this section. However, only the stake president decides if a council should be held to address the conduct. If a council is held, the stake president or bishop decides the outcome.

If a membership council is held for one of the matters outlined in this section, the decision of the council must be “remains in good standing,” “formal membership restrictions,” or “withdrawal of membership.” First Presidency approval is required to remove formal restrictions or readmit the person into the Church (see 32.16.1, number 9).

**32.6.3.1**  
**Other Action**

If a membership council is not held, other action could include:

- Informal membership restrictions (see 32.8.3).
- Membership record annotation (see 32.14.5).
- Ordinance restrictions, which restrict a person from receiving or exercising the priesthood or receiving or using a temple recommend.

A stake president counsels with the Area Presidency before one of these actions is taken.

**32.6.3.2**  
**Apostasy**

Issues of apostasy often have an impact beyond the boundaries of a ward or stake. They need to be addressed promptly to protect others.

The bishop counsels with the stake president if he feels that a member's action may constitute apostasy. The bishop or stake president may place informal membership restrictions on the member (see 32.8.3). The stake president promptly counsels with the Area Presidency. However, only the stake president decides whether a membership council or other action is necessary.

As used here, *apostasy* refers to a member engaging in any of the following:

- Repeatedly acting in clear and deliberate public opposition to the Church, its doctrine, its policies, or its leaders
- Persisting in teaching as Church doctrine what is not Church doctrine after being corrected by the bishop or stake president
- Showing a pattern of intentionally working to weaken the faith and activity of Church members
- Continuing to follow the teachings of apostate sects after being corrected by the bishop or stake president
- Formally joining another church and promoting its teachings (Total inactivity in the Church or attending another church does not by itself constitute apostasy. However, if a member formally joins another church and advocates its teachings, withdrawing his or her membership may be necessary.)

The Savior taught the Nephites that they should continue to minister to a person who has sinned. “But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people” (3 Nephi 18:31).

### 32.6.3.3

#### **Embezzling Church Funds**

If a person embezzles Church funds or steals valuable Church property, the stake president counsels

with the Area Presidency about whether a membership council or other action may be necessary. Leaders consider:

- The amount embezzled or stolen.
- Whether repayment has occurred.
- The person's level of remorse.

Generally, if a Church member embezzles Church funds or steals valuable Church property, his or her membership record will be annotated. When repentance is complete, a stake president may request removal of the annotation (see 32.14.5).

### 32.6.3.4

#### **Transgender Individuals**

Bishops and stake presidents working with persons who identify as transgender should follow the guidelines in 38.6.22.

### 32.6.4

#### **When a Membership Council Is Not Normally Necessary**

A membership council is not normally necessary in the following instances.

### 32.6.4.1

#### **Failure to Comply with Some Church Standards**

A membership council is not held for the actions listed below. However, note the exception in the last item.

- Inactivity in the Church
- Not fulfilling Church duties
- Not paying tithing
- Sins of omission
- Masturbation

- Not complying with the Word of Wisdom
- Using pornography, except for child pornography (as outlined in 38.6.6) or intensive or compulsive use of pornography that has caused significant harm to a member's marriage or family (as outlined in 38.6.13).

#### 32.6.4.2

##### **Business Failures or Nonpayment of Debts**

Leaders should not use membership councils to settle business disputes. Business failures and nonpayment of debts are not reasons to hold a membership council. However, a council must be held for serious fraudulent activities or other serious deceptive financial practices (see 32.6.1.3).

#### 32.6.4.3

##### **Civil Disputes**

Membership councils are not held to resolve civil disputes (see Doctrine and Covenants 134:11).

### 32.7

## Circumstances of the Person

The Lord said, "Mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me" (3 Nephi 9:14). A person's circumstances are an important consideration in determining:

- The appropriate setting for helping him or her repent of serious sins (see 32.5 and 32.6).
- The decisions made in personal counseling or membership councils (see 32.8 and 32.11).

## Considerations That May Influence Decisions

- Magnitude of the sin
- Interests of the victim
- Evidence of repentance
- Violation of temple covenants
- Position of trust or authority
- Repetition
- Age, maturity, and experience
- Mental capacity
- Voluntary confession
- Time between sin and confession

Bishops and stake presidents seek the mind and will of the Lord for each situation. They consider the following factors in determining which setting to use and what the outcome will be. These factors do not dictate a particular decision. Rather, they are aids to a decision that leaders must make prayerfully and as guided by the Spirit.

#### 32.7.1

##### **Magnitude of the Sin**

The seriousness of a sin is measured by its magnitude. This may include the number and frequency of sins committed, the severity of the harm resulting from them, and the number of people hurt by them.

#### 32.7.2

##### **Interests of the Victim**

Leaders consider the interests of victims and others. These may include a person's spouse and other family members. Leaders also consider the severity of the harm.

**32.7.3****Evidence of Repentance**

Spiritual guidance is needed to discern whether a person has sincerely repented. Such repentance is shown more reliably by righteous actions over time rather than by intense sorrow during a single interview. Factors to consider include:

- Strength of faith in Jesus Christ.
- The nature of the confession.
- The depth of sorrow for the sin.
- Restitution to injured persons.
- Compliance with legal requirements.
- Success in forsaking the sin.
- Faithfulness in obeying the commandments since the sin.
- Honesty with Church leaders and others.
- Willingness to follow the counsel of Church leaders.

**32.7.4****Violation of Temple Covenants**

The Lord declared, “For of him unto whom much is given much is required” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3). A person who has received the temple endowment has made covenants to live a higher standard. Violating these covenants magnifies the seriousness of the sin. It increases the likelihood of a membership council being necessary.

**32.7.5****Position of Trust or Authority**

The seriousness of a sin is magnified if a person committed it while in a position of trust or authority, such as a parent, leader, or teacher.

**32.7.6****Repetition**

A pattern of repeating the same serious sin may indicate deeply rooted behavior or addiction that





impedes progress toward true repentance. In addition to membership restrictions that may be necessary, addiction recovery programs and professional counseling may be helpful (see 32.8.2).

### 32.7.7

#### Age, Maturity, and Experience

Leaders consider age, maturity, and experience when counseling a member or deciding the outcome of a membership council. Leniency is often appropriate for those who are immature in the gospel. For example, leniency may be appropriate for young members who engage in immoral conduct if they forsake the sin and show sincere repentance. However, more serious action may be needed if they persist in the conduct.

### 32.7.8

#### Mental Capacity

Mental illness, addiction, or limited mental capacity does not excuse a person who has committed a serious sin. However, these are factors to consider. As part of helping a person repent, leaders seek the Lord's guidance about the person's understanding of gospel principles and level of accountability.

### 32.7.9

#### Voluntary Confession

A voluntary confession and godly sorrow for one's actions show a desire to repent.

### 32.7.10

#### Time between Sin and Confession

Confession is part of repentance and should not be procrastinated. Sometimes a sin is followed by a long period of restitution and faithful living. If a member confesses a sin and has not repeated it, that can show that he or she has forsaken it. In that

instance, confession may complete rather than start the process of repentance.

## ADMINISTERING PERSONAL COUNSELING

### 32.8

#### Personal Counseling and Informal Membership Restrictions

Personal counseling is often sufficient to help protect others and help a person access the redeeming power of Jesus Christ's Atonement through repentance. Such counseling can also help members guard against more serious sins. In personal counseling, leaders can also give informal membership restrictions to help a member repent of some serious sins (see 32.8.3).

Serious sins should not be treated lightly (see Doctrine and Covenants 1:31). Violating temple covenants increases the likelihood of a membership council being necessary (see 32.7.4).

Guidelines to help leaders know when counseling and informal restrictions may be sufficient are listed below (see also 32.7):

- A person has not committed a sin that would require a membership council (see 32.6.1).
- A person has confessed voluntarily and is genuinely repentant.
- A person is repenting of a serious sin that he or she has not committed before.
- A person's sin has not violated temple covenants.
- A person has significant mitigating circumstances.

**32.8.1****Personal Counseling**

The following guidelines apply when a bishop or stake president is counseling a member to help him or her repent.

- Ask for only enough information to determine (1) the member's attitude toward the sinful behavior and (2) the nature, frequency, and duration of the behavior. Do not ask for details beyond what is necessary to understand the situation. Do not ask questions that arise from personal curiosity.
- Ask how the conduct has affected others.
- Focus on positive conditions that deepen the member's conversion and commitment to the Lord. Encourage the member to take specific actions to bring about the change of behavior and change of heart to repent. Invite him or her to draw close to the Savior, seeking His strength and to feel of His redeeming love.
- Encourage uplifting activities such as praying, studying the scriptures, and attending Church meetings. Teach that family history and temple work can reduce the influence of the adversary. Encourage serving others and sharing the gospel.
- Encourage making restitution to those harmed by sins and asking for forgiveness
- Encourage turning away from bad influences. Help members take preventive action to resist specific temptations.
- Recognize that you are an ecclesiastical leader, not a professional counselor. In addition to the counseling you provide, some members would benefit from behavioral counseling. Some suffer from mental illness. As needed, counsel members to seek help from qualified medical and mental health professionals.
- Be prayerful and seek guidance from the Spirit before giving informal membership restrictions. Some members may benefit from exercising the privileges of Church membership more actively rather than having them restricted.
- Follow up to give encouragement, fortify spiritual strength, and monitor progress.

After a member has confessed to a bishop or stake president, follow-up counseling may occur in several ways. The leader himself can provide it. Or, with the member's permission, he may assign one of his counselors to provide it.

With the member's consent, a bishop or stake president may assign members of the elders quorum or Relief Society to assist in specific ways. For youth, he may assign the Young Women presidency or Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers to assist. Those who are assigned to assist are entitled to inspiration to fulfill that assignment (see 4.2.6).

When assigning someone to assist with follow-up counseling, the leader gives only enough information necessary to help the member. The assigned person must maintain confidentiality. He or she also informs the bishop of the member's progress and needs.

## Uplifting Activities to Help with Repenting and Building Spiritual Fortifications

- Prayer
- Scripture study
- Church attendance
- Daily family history and temple work, including name indexing
- Serving others
- Sharing the gospel

**32.8.2****Helping People with Addictions**

Personal counseling sometimes involves helping members repent of sins related to or caused by addictions. These addictions may include substances or a wide range of behaviors. Addictions harm individuals, marriages, and families. Bishops may counsel members to seek help from Church addiction recovery programs and from qualified medical and mental health professionals.

An increasingly common addiction is pornography use. Whether an addiction or an occasional behavior, pornography use of any kind is harmful. Using it drives away the Spirit. It weakens the ability to draw on power that comes from keeping covenants. It also harms precious relationships.

Personal counseling and informal membership restrictions are usually sufficient for helping a person repent of using pornography. Membership councils are not usually held. For exceptions, see 38.6.6 and 38.6.13. Professional counseling may be helpful.

Stake presidents and bishops support family members as needed. Parents could be included when counseling youth about pornography use. The spouse may be included when counseling a married person.

For more information about counseling members who are involved with pornography, see 38.6.13.

**32.8.3****Informal Membership Restrictions**

In addition to encouraging positive actions when counseling, a bishop or stake president may informally restrict some Church membership privileges for a time. Wisely administered, these restrictions can help with repentance and spiritual progress. They are considered *informal* because they are not noted on a membership record.

Informal restrictions may last a few weeks, several months, or longer if necessary for the person to repent fully. In unusual circumstances, the time could be longer than one year.



Leaders seek the guidance of the Spirit about which restrictions would best help a person repent. These could include (but are not limited to) suspending the privilege of serving in a Church calling, exercising the priesthood, or entering a temple. The leader could also restrict the person from giving a talk, lesson, or prayer in Church settings. If the leader suspends the right to enter a temple, he cancels the temple recommend in Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR).

Partaking of the sacrament is an important part of repentance. It should not be the first restriction given to a repentant person who has a broken heart and contrite spirit. However, if a person has committed serious sins, a leader may suspend this privilege for a time.

Leaders normally do not tell anyone else about informal restrictions unless there is a need to know (see 32.12.2).

The bishop or stake president may remove informal restrictions as guided by the Spirit when the person makes specified progress in genuine repentance. If the member continues in the pattern of sin, it may be helpful or necessary to hold a membership council.

### ADMINISTERING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COUNCILS

Church membership councils are held when the bishop or stake president determines that they would be helpful or when they are required by Church policy (see 32.6). They are held at the ward, stake, branch, district, or mission level. This section provides information about how to administer them.

#### 32.9

### Participation and Responsibility

The following table shows who normally participates in membership councils.

<b>Participants in Membership Councils</b>	
<b>Ward Membership Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person for whom the council is being held</li> <li>• Bishop and his counselors</li> <li>• Ward clerk</li> <li>• Elders quorum or Relief Society president (optional; see 32.10.1)</li> </ul>
<b>Stake Membership Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person for whom the council is being held</li> <li>• Stake president and his counselors</li> <li>• Stake clerk</li> <li>• High councilors (in limited situations as explained in 32.9.2)</li> <li>• Bishop of the person for whom the council is being held (optional; see 32.9.3)</li> <li>• Elders quorum or Relief Society president (optional; see 32.10.1)</li> </ul>

**32.9.1****Stake President**

The stake president:

- Has authority over membership councils in the stake; however, most of these councils are held by bishops.
- Must give approval before a bishop may hold a membership council.
- Holds a stake membership council if a man or woman who has received the temple endowment will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn.
- May hold a council if a member appeals the decision of a ward membership council.
- Must give approval before a ward membership council's recommendation to withdraw an unendowed person's membership is final.

**32.9.2****High Council**

Members of the high council do not normally participate in stake membership councils. However, the high council may participate in difficult situations (see Doctrine and Covenants 102:2). For example, the stake presidency may invite the high council to participate when:

- There are contested facts.
- They would add value and balance.
- The member requests their participation.
- A member of the stake presidency or his family is involved (see 32.9.7).

**32.9.3****Bishop (or Branch President in a Stake)**

The bishop:

- Has authority over ward membership councils.
- Confers with the stake president and obtains his approval before holding a council.
- May not hold a council if a man or woman who has received the temple endowment will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn. A stake membership council must be held in those situations.
- May be invited to attend a stake membership council for a ward member whose membership is being reviewed. His attendance must be approved by the stake president and the person.

A ward or branch membership council may recommend withdrawing a person's Church membership if he or she has not been endowed. However, the stake president's approval is required before the decision is final.

Sometimes a ward membership council is held for an endowed member and the proceedings reveal that the member will likely have his or her membership withdrawn. In these situations, the bishop refers the matter to the stake president.

**32.9.4****Mission President**

The mission president:

- Has authority over membership councils in mission branches and districts.
- Must give approval before a district or branch president may hold a membership council.
- Holds a membership council if a man or woman who has received the temple endowment will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn. If time or distance prevents this, he may assign one of his counselors to preside over the council. He appoints two other Melchizedek Priesthood holders to participate.

- Where possible, holds membership councils for those who have not been endowed. If time or distance prevents this, he may authorize three Melchizedek Priesthood holders to hold it. In this case, the member's district president or branch president normally conducts the council.
- May hold a council if a member appeals the decision of a district or branch membership council.
- With approval of a General Authority from the Missionary Department, holds a membership council if a missionary commits a serious sin in the mission field (see 32.9.8). He also reviews the matter with a member of the Area Presidency and counsels with the stake president of the missionary's home stake.
- Must give approval before a branch or district membership council's recommendation to withdraw an unendowed person's membership is final.

If a missionary confesses a serious sin that he or she committed before serving a mission, the mission president contacts his in-field representative in the Missionary Department for direction.

When a mission president holds a membership council, he appoints two Melchizedek Priesthood holders to assist him. Only in unusual circumstances should he appoint young missionaries to assist. He follows the same procedures as in a stake membership council (see 32.10). However, a high council or district council does not participate.

### 32.9.5

#### District or Branch President in a Mission

A district or branch president in a mission may hold a membership council when authorized by the mission president. The district council does not participate.

A district or branch membership council may recommend withdrawing a person's Church membership if he or she has not received the temple

endowment. However, the mission president's approval is required before the decision is final.

### 32.9.6

#### Stake or Ward Clerk

The stake or ward clerk:

- Keeps written notes of the council only for as long as is necessary to submit the Report of Church Membership Council form.
- Prepares the form if asked by the leader who conducted the council.
- Does not participate in the discussion or decision in the council.

### 32.9.7

#### Participation in Unusual Circumstances

If a counselor in the stake presidency is unable to participate in a membership council, the stake president asks a high councilor or another high priest to take his place. If the stake president is unable to participate, the First Presidency may authorize one of his counselors to preside in his place.

If a counselor in the bishopric is unable to participate in a membership council, the bishop may ask a high priest in the ward to take his place. If the bishop is unable to participate, he refers the matter to the stake president, who convenes a stake membership council. The bishop may not assign a counselor to convene a membership council.

If a membership council is being held for a family member of the bishop or one of his counselors, it is held at the stake level. If it is being held for a family member of one of the stake president's counselors, the stake president assigns another high priest to take the counselor's place. If a council is being held for a family member of the stake president, he consults with the Office of the First Presidency.

If a member objects to the participation of the bishop or his counselors, the membership council is held at the stake level. If a member objects to the participation of one of the stake president's counselors, the stake president assigns another high priest to take the counselor's place. If the member objects to the participation of the stake president, or if the stake president feels that he cannot be impartial, he consults with the Office of the First Presidency.

### 32.9.8

#### Determining Which Leader Holds a Council in Special Circumstances

Membership councils are almost always held in the geographical Church unit that has the person's membership record.

Sometimes a membership council is necessary for a person who moves. If the move is within the same stake, the stake president confers with the bishops of both wards and decides where it should take place.

If the member moves outside the stake, the stake presidents of both stakes confer and decide where the council should take place. If they decide that it should be held in the former ward or stake, the membership record is retained in that ward until the council is complete. Otherwise, the record is transferred to the new ward. The bishop or stake president confidentially informs the member's current bishop or stake president about why a council is needed.

Sometimes a membership council is necessary for a member who is living away from home temporarily. For example, a council may be needed for a student or a member in the military. The bishop where the member temporarily lives can provide counsel and support. However, he should not hold a membership council unless the membership record is in his unit and he has counseled with the bishop of the home ward.

Sometimes a missionary commits a serious sin in the mission field that is not revealed until after he or she is released. The bishop and stake president confer about which of them should hold the membership council. One of them confers with the former mission president before holding it.

### 32.10

#### Procedures for Membership Councils

##### 32.10.1

#### Give Notice and Prepare for the Council

The bishop or stake president gives a member written notice of a membership council that will be held in his or her behalf. He signs the letter. It includes the following information:

“The [bishopric or stake presidency] is holding a membership council in your behalf. The council will be held on [date and time] at [place].

“This council will consider [summarize the misconduct in general terms, but do not give details or evidence].

“You are invited to attend the council to give your response. You may provide written statements from persons who could provide relevant information. You may invite such persons to speak to the council in your behalf if approved in advance by the stake president or bishop. You may also invite [the ward Relief Society president or the elders quorum president] to be present and provide support.

“Anyone who attends must be willing to comply with the respectful nature of the council, including its procedures and confidentiality. Legal counsel and supporters beyond those referred to above may not be present.”

A final paragraph could include an expression of love, hope, and concern.

Guidelines about whom the person may invite to speak to the council are provided in 32.10.3, number 4.

If the letter cannot be delivered in person, it may be sent by registered or certified mail, with a return receipt requested.

The bishop or stake president schedules a membership council at a time that is convenient for the person. He also ensures that there has been time to obtain statements from victims of the misconduct if they desire to provide them (see 32.10.2).

The bishop or stake president prepares the member for the council by explaining its purpose and procedures. He also explains the decisions the council may reach and their results. If a member has confessed, the leader explains that the confession will need to be used in the membership council.

### **32.10.2**

#### **Obtain Statements from Victims**

When a Church member is a victim (such as for incest, child abuse, spouse abuse, or fraud), the bishop or stake president contacts that person's current bishop or stake president. These leaders determine whether it would be helpful to give the victim an opportunity to provide a written statement about the misconduct and its effects. These statements may be read in a membership council (see 32.10.3, number 3). Church leaders do not have authority to initiate contact with victims who are not members of the Church.

Any meeting with a victim for this purpose is held by his or her current bishop or stake president. If a victim provides a statement, this leader gives it to the bishop or stake president who holds the membership council. Leaders must take great care to avoid further trauma.

Any inquiry about a victim who is under 18 is made through the child's parents or legal guardians, unless doing so could put the victim at risk.

For information about bishops and stake presidents receiving guidance in cases of abuse, see 32.4.5 and 38.6.2.1.

### **32.10.3**

#### **Conduct the Council**

Immediately before the council begins, the bishop or stake president tells the participants whom the council is for and what the reported misconduct is. If necessary, he explains the procedures of the council.

The person, if present, is then welcomed into the room. If the bishop has been invited to attend a stake membership council, he is also invited into the room at this time. If the person invited the ward Relief Society president or the elders quorum president to be present and provide support, she or he is also welcomed into the room.

The bishop or stake president conducts the council in a spirit of love, as outlined below.

1. He invites someone to offer an opening prayer.
2. He states the reported misconduct. He gives the person (if present) an opportunity to confirm, deny, or clarify this statement.
3. If the member confirms the misconduct, the bishop or stake president proceeds to number 5 below. If the member denies it, the bishop or stake president presents information about it. This may include presenting reliable documents and reading aloud any written statements from victims (see 32.10.2). If he reads such a statement, he protects the identity of the victim.
4. If the member denies the misconduct, he or she may present information to the council. This could be written. Or the member may ask persons who could provide relevant information to speak to the council, one at a time. Such persons should be Church members unless the bishop or stake president has determined



in advance that a nonmember may attend. They wait in a separate room until they are asked to speak. Each person leaves the council room when he or she is finished. They must be willing to comply with the respectful nature of the council, including its procedures and confidentiality. Members may not have legal counsel present. Nor may they have supporters beyond those referred to in the first paragraph in this section.

5. The bishop or stake president may ask questions of the member in a polite and respectful way. He may also ask questions of other persons the member has asked to provide information. Counselors in the bishopric or stake presidency may also ask questions. Any questions should be brief and limited to the essential facts.
6. After all relevant information has been presented, the bishop or stake president excuses the member from the room. The clerk is also excused, unless the high council has participated in a stake membership council. If the member's bishop is present for a stake membership council, he is excused. If the Relief Society president or the elders quorum president is attending to provide support, she or he is also excused.
7. The bishop or stake president asks for comments or insights from his counselors. If the high council has participated in a stake membership council, he asks for their comments and insights.
8. With his counselors, the bishop or stake president prayerfully seeks the Lord's will about the matter. Only the stake president and his counselors or the bishop and his counselors should be in the room during this time. If a stake membership council includes the high council, the stake presidency usually goes to the stake president's office.
9. The bishop or stake president tells his counselors of his decision and asks them to sustain it.

If a stake membership council includes the high council, the stake presidency returns to the room and asks the high council to sustain it. If a counselor or high councilor has a different opinion, the bishop or stake president listens and seeks to resolve the differences. Responsibility for the decision rests with the presiding officer.

10. He invites the person back into the room. If the clerk was excused, he is also invited into the room. If the member's bishop is present for a stake membership council, he is also invited into the room. If the Relief Society president or elders quorum president is attending to provide support, she or he is also welcomed back.
11. The bishop or stake president shares the council's decision in a spirit of love. If the decision is to formally restrict the person's Church membership privileges or withdraw membership, he explains the conditions (see 32.11.3 and 32.11.4). He also explains how to overcome the restrictions and gives other instruction and counsel. A bishop or stake president may adjourn a council for a time to seek more guidance or information before making a decision. In that case, he explains this.
12. He explains the person's right to appeal (see 32.13).
13. He invites someone to offer a closing prayer.

Whether the person is present or not, the bishop or stake president notifies him or her of the decision as explained in 32.12.1.

No participant in a membership council is permitted to make an audio, video, or written recording. A clerk may take notes for the purpose of preparing the Report of Church Membership Council. However, such notes are not to be a word-for-word record or transcript. After the report is prepared, he promptly destroys any notes.

**32.11**

## Decisions from Membership Councils

The decisions from membership councils should be directed by the Spirit. They should reflect the love and hope offered by the Savior to those who repent. Possible decisions are described below. When making these decisions, leaders consider the circumstances that are outlined in 32.7.

After any membership council, the bishop or stake president promptly submits a Report of Church Membership Council form through LCR (see 32.14.1).

Possible decisions from membership councils are outlined in the following sections.

**32.11.1**

### Remains in Good Standing

In some instances, a person may be innocent and remains in good standing. In some instances, a person

may have committed the sin, repented sincerely, and be in good standing. The bishop or stake president may give counsel and caution about future actions. After the council, he continues to give support as needed.

**32.11.2**

### Personal Counseling with the Bishop or Stake President

In some membership councils, leaders may determine that the member is not in good standing—but that formal membership restrictions are not warranted. In these instances, the council may decide that the person should receive personal counseling and correction from the bishop or stake president. This counseling may include informal membership restrictions as outlined in 32.8.3.

Personal counseling and informal membership restrictions are not an option when a council is held for the sins listed in 32.6.1.



**32.11.3****Formal Membership Restrictions**

In some membership councils, leaders may determine that it is best to formally restrict a person's Church membership privileges for a time. Formal restrictions may be adequate for all but the most serious sins or situations, for which membership would be withdrawn (see 32.11.4).

Those who have formal membership restrictions are still members of the Church. However, their Church membership privileges are restricted as follows:

- They may not enter a temple. However, they may continue wearing the temple garment if endowed. If the member has a temple recommend, the leader cancels it in LCR.
- They may not exercise the priesthood.
- They may not partake of the sacrament or participate in the sustaining of Church officers.
- They may not give a talk, lesson, or prayer in Church settings. Nor may they serve in a Church calling.

They are encouraged to attend Church meetings and activities if their conduct is orderly. They are also encouraged to pay tithes and offerings.

The bishop or stake president may add other conditions, such as staying away from pornographic materials and other evil influences. He usually adds positive conditions. These may include regular Church attendance, regular prayer, and reading the scriptures and other Church materials.

If a person's Church membership privileges are formally restricted, that is noted on the membership record.

The time of formal restriction is usually at least one year and may be longer. When the member makes specified progress in genuine repentance, the bishop or stake president holds another council to consider removing the restrictions (see 32.16.1).

If the member continues in the pattern of sin, the leader could hold another council to consider other measures.

**32.11.4****Withdrawal of Membership**

In some membership councils, leaders may determine that it is best to withdraw a person's Church membership for a time (see Mosiah 26:36; Alma 6:3; Moroni 6:7; Doctrine and Covenants 20:83).

Withdrawing a person's Church membership is required for murder (as defined in 32.6.1.1) and plural marriage (as explained in 32.6.1.2). It is almost always required for incest as explained in 32.6.1.2 and 38.6.10.

As directed by the Spirit, withdrawing a person's membership may also be necessary as follows:

- For those whose conduct makes them a serious threat to others.
- For those who have committed especially severe sins.
- For those who do not demonstrate repentance of serious sins (see considerations in 32.7).
- For those who commit serious sins that harm the Church.

A ward, branch, or district membership council may recommend withdrawing Church membership from a person who has not received the temple endowment. However, the approval of the stake or mission president is necessary before the decision is final.

Those whose Church membership has been withdrawn may not enjoy any privileges of membership.

- They may not enter a temple or wear the temple garment. If the person has a temple recommend, the leader cancels it in LCR.
- They may not exercise the priesthood.

- They may not partake of the sacrament or participate in the sustaining of Church officers.
- They may not give a talk, lesson, or prayer in Church settings or lead an activity in church. Nor may they serve in a Church calling.
- They may not pay tithes and offerings.

They are encouraged to attend Church meetings and activities if their conduct is orderly.

Those whose Church membership has been withdrawn can be considered for readmission by baptism and confirmation. Usually, they first need to show genuine repentance for at least one year. The bishop or stake president holds another membership council to consider readmission (see 32.16.1).

## Membership Council Decisions and Results

Decision	Results
Remains in Good Standing (see 32.11.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
Personal Counseling with the Bishop or Stake President (see 32.11.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have some membership privileges informally restricted.</li> <li>• Restrictions are usually less than one year; in unusual circumstances, they may be longer.</li> <li>• Informal restrictions are removed after genuine repentance.</li> <li>• Action is not recorded on the membership record.</li> </ul>
Formal Membership Restrictions (see 32.11.3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership privileges are formally restricted.</li> <li>• Restrictions are usually at least one year and may be longer.</li> <li>• Action is recorded on the membership record.</li> <li>• Formal restrictions are removed after genuine repentance, a membership council, and, if necessary, First Presidency approval.</li> <li>• The membership record indicator is removed if restrictions are removed after a membership council (except required annotations; see 32.14.5).</li> </ul>

<b>Decision</b>	<b>Results</b>
Withdrawal of Membership (see 32.11.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All ordinances are revoked.</li> <li>• All membership privileges are withdrawn, usually for at least one year.</li> <li>• A person is eligible for readmission by baptism and confirmation only after genuine repentance, a membership council, and, if necessary, First Presidency approval.</li> <li>• A previously endowed person is eligible to receive a restoration of blessings only with First Presidency approval and after at least one full year from readmission (see 32.17.2).</li> <li>• For a previously endowed person, the “Restoration of Blessings Required” indicator is removed from the membership record only after the ordinance is performed (required annotations remain; see 32.14.5).</li> </ul>

**32.11.5**  
**Questions about Deciding Difficult Matters**

Bishops direct questions about handbook guidelines for membership councils to the stake president.

On difficult matters, the stake president may seek counsel from his assigned Area Seventy. The stake president must counsel with the Area Presidency on the matters outlined in 32.6.3. However, the stake president should not ask an Area Seventy or General Authority how to decide difficult matters. The stake president decides if a council should be held to address the conduct. If a council is held, the stake president or bishop decides the outcome.

**32.11.6**  
**First Presidency Authority**

The First Presidency has final authority over all Church membership restrictions and withdrawal.

**32.12**  
**Notifications and Announcements**

The decision of a membership council is communicated to the person—and to others as necessary—as explained below.

**32.12.1**  
**Notifying a Person of the Decision**

The bishop or stake president normally tells the person the outcome of the council when it concludes. However, he may adjourn a council for a time to seek more guidance or information before making a decision.

A ward, branch, or district membership council may recommend withdrawing Church membership from a person who has not received the temple endowment. However, the approval of the stake or mission president is necessary before the decision is final.

The bishop or stake president explains the effects of the decision as outlined in 32.11. Normally he also gives counsel on the conditions of repentance

so restrictions can be removed or the person can be readmitted into the Church.

The bishop or stake president gives the person prompt written notice of the decision and its effects. This notice consists of a general statement that the action was taken in response to conduct contrary to the laws and order of the Church. It could also include counsel about having membership restrictions removed or being readmitted into the Church. It should notify the person that he or she may appeal the decision (see 32.13).

If the person does not attend the council, written notice may be sufficient to inform him or her of the decision. The bishop or stake president may also meet with the person.

The bishop or stake president does not give the person a copy of the Report of Church Membership Council form.

### 32.12.2

#### Informing Others about a Decision

If a bishop or stake president informally restricts a person's membership privileges in personal counseling, he normally does not inform anyone else (see 32.8.3). However, these leaders communicate with each other about informal restrictions as they help members.

If a person's membership privileges are formally restricted or withdrawn in a membership council, the bishop or stake president communicates the decision only to those who need to know. The following guidelines apply.

- He considers the needs of victims and potential victims and the feelings of the person's family.
- He does not communicate the decision if the person is appealing it. However, he may communicate that it is being appealed if he feels it is necessary to protect potential victims. He may also communicate it to support the healing of victims (although he does not give victims' names) or to protect the integrity of the Church.
- As needed, the bishop communicates the decision in confidence to ward council members. This is to inform leaders who might consider the person to be available for callings, teaching lessons, or giving prayers or talks. It is also to encourage leaders to offer care and support to the member and his or her family.
- With approval from the stake president, the bishop may communicate the decision in his ward's elders quorum and Relief Society meetings if the situation involves:
  - Predatory behaviors that may threaten others.
  - Teaching false doctrine or other forms of apostasy.
  - Flagrant sins such as practicing plural marriage or using cultist teachings to attract a following.
  - Publicly contradicting the actions or teachings of general or local Church leaders.
- In such cases, the stake president may also need to authorize a communication to members of other wards in the stake.
- In some cases, the bishop or stake president may feel it would be helpful to notify some or all of the victims and their families that a membership council has been held for the person. He does this through their bishop or stake president.
- If a person's predatory tendencies put others at risk, the bishop or stake president may give warnings to help protect others. He does not reveal confidential information and does not speculate.
- In all other cases, the bishop or stake president limits any communication to a general statement. He simply states that the person's Church membership privileges have been restricted or withdrawn for conduct that is contrary to the laws

and order of the Church. He asks those present not to discuss it. He does not ask for a sustaining vote.

- If a member is in good standing after a membership council (see 32.11.1), the bishop or stake president may communicate that to dispel rumors.

### 32.12.3

#### Communicating Resignation of Membership

In some cases, a bishop may need to communicate that a person has resigned his or her membership in the Church (see 32.14.9). The bishop does not provide any other detail.

### 32.13

#### Appeal of a Decision

A member may appeal the decision of a ward membership council to the stake president within 30 days. The stake president holds a stake membership council to consider the appeal. He may also ask a bishop to reconvene a council and reconsider a decision, particularly if there is new information.

A member may appeal the decision of a stake membership council by writing a letter to the First Presidency within 30 days. The member gives the letter to the stake president to submit to the First Presidency.

In a mission, a member may appeal the decision of a branch or district membership council to the mission president within 30 days. The mission president holds a membership council to consider the appeal. If time or distance prevents him from doing this, he follows the instructions in 32.9.4.

If a mission president conducted the council, the member may appeal the decision by writing a letter to the First Presidency within 30 days. The member

gives the letter to the mission president to submit to the First Presidency.

A person who appeals a decision specifies in writing the alleged errors or unfairness in the procedure or decision.

If a membership council is held to consider an appeal, one of two decisions is possible:

- Let the initial decision stand.
- Modify the initial decision.

First Presidency decisions are final and cannot be appealed again.

### 32.14

#### Reports and Membership Records

##### 32.14.1

#### Report of Church Membership Council

After any membership council, the bishop or stake president promptly submits a Report of Church Membership Council form through LCR. He may ask the clerk to prepare the report. He ensures that no hard copy or electronic copy of the form is retained locally. He also ensures that any notes used to prepare the report are promptly destroyed.

##### 32.14.2

#### Formal Church Membership Restrictions

Formal Church membership restrictions are noted on a person's membership record. Church headquarters makes this notation after receiving the Report of Church Membership Council. When a member has repented, the leader must hold another council to consider removing these restrictions (see 32.16.1).

**32.14.3****Records after a Person's Church Membership Is Withdrawn**

If a person's Church membership is withdrawn, Church headquarters removes the membership record after receiving the Report of Church Membership Council. If the person desires, leaders help him or her prepare to be readmitted to the Church by baptism and confirmation (see 32.16.1).

**32.14.4****Records after Readmission to the Church**

After a person is readmitted to the Church, the bishop submits a Report of Church Membership Council form. A Baptism and Confirmation Certificate is not created. Rather, the baptism and confirmation are recorded on the Report of Church Membership Council form.

If the member was not endowed, Church headquarters assigns a membership record that shows the dates of his or her original baptism and other ordinances. The record makes no reference to the loss of Church membership.

If the member was endowed, Church headquarters updates the membership record to show the new baptism and confirmation dates. This record also includes the message "Restoration of Blessings Required." After the member's blessings are restored (see 32.17.2), the membership record is updated to show the dates of the original baptism and other ordinances. It makes no reference to the loss of Church membership.

**32.14.5****Membership Records with Annotations**

As authorized by the First Presidency, Church headquarters annotates a person's membership record in any of the situations listed below.

1. The bishop or stake president submits a Report of Church Membership Council form indicating that the person's membership was formally restricted or withdrawn for any of the following conduct:
  - a. Incest
  - b. Sexual abuse of a child or youth, sexual exploitation of a child or youth, or serious physical or emotional abuse of a child or youth
  - c. Involvement with child pornography as outlined in 38.6.6
  - d. Plural marriage
  - e. Adult sexual predatory behavior
  - f. Transgender—actions to transition to the opposite of a person's birth sex (see 38.6.22)
  - g. Embezzling Church funds or stealing Church property
  - h. Church welfare abuse
  - i. Threatening behavior (such as sexual, violent, or financial) or conduct that harms the Church
2. The bishop and stake president submit written notification that the person:
  - a. Has admitted to or has been convicted of a crime involving one of the actions listed above.
  - b. Has been found liable in a civil action of fraud or other illegal acts involving one of the actions listed above.

When a bishop receives an annotated membership record, he follows the instructions in the annotation.

Only the First Presidency may authorize removing an annotation from a membership record. To recommend removing an annotation, the stake president



uses LCR. The Office of the First Presidency notifies him if the recommendation is approved or not.

#### 32.14.6

### Reporting Theft of Church Funds

If a person's membership is restricted or withdrawn for embezzling Church funds, the bishop or stake president reports it as outlined in 34.9.5.

#### 32.14.7

### Move Restrictions on Membership Records

Sometimes a Church member moves while membership action or other serious concerns are pending. Sometimes a bishop needs to share information with the new bishop before transferring the membership record to the new unit. In these cases, the bishop (or clerk if authorized) may place a move restriction on the membership record. The record remains in the unit until the bishop (or clerk if authorized) removes the restriction. This allows an opportunity for the bishop to communicate concerns and information.

#### 32.14.8

### Records of Those Who Are Incarcerated

Some members have been convicted of a crime and are incarcerated. The bishop or stake president of the unit where the person lived when the crime was committed proceeds with any necessary action for formal membership restrictions or withdrawal. If membership privileges were restricted, the leader (or clerk if authorized) forwards the membership record to the unit that is responsible for the place where the person is incarcerated. If membership was withdrawn, the bishop or stake president contacts the leader of that unit. (See 32.15.)

#### 32.14.9

### Requests to Resign Membership

If a member asks to resign his or her membership in the Church, the bishop reaches out to see if he or she is willing to discuss the concerns and try to resolve them. The bishop and member may also counsel with the stake president. The leader ensures that the member understands the following results of resigning Church membership:

- It revokes all ordinances.
- It removes all membership privileges.
- Readmission by baptism and confirmation can occur only after a thorough interview and, in many cases, a membership council (see 32.16.2).
- A previously endowed person is eligible to receive a restoration of priesthood and temple blessings only with First Presidency approval and after at least one full year from readmission (see 32.17.2).

If the member still wants to resign Church membership, he or she gives the bishop a written, signed request. The bishop submits the request to the stake president through LCR. The stake president then reviews and submits the request through that system. Leaders should act on requests promptly.

A person can also resign membership by sending a signed, notarized request to Church headquarters.

A minor who wishes to resign his or her Church membership follows the same procedure as an adult, with one exception: the request should be signed by the minor (if over the age of 8) and by the parent(s) or guardian(s) who have legal custody of the minor.

If a member resigning membership threatens legal action against the Church or its leaders, the stake president follows the instructions in 38.8.26.

A request to resign membership should be acted on even if priesthood leaders have information about a serious sin. Any information about unresolved sins is noted when the request is submitted through

Leader and Clerk Resources. This allows priesthood leaders to resolve such matters in the future if the person applies for readmission into the Church (see 32.16.2).

A priesthood leader should not recommend resigning Church membership in order to avoid holding a membership council.

Leaders continue to minister to those who resign their membership unless they request no contact.

### **RETURNING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP PRIVILEGES**

If a person's Church membership privileges have been restricted or withdrawn, leaders fellowship, counsel, and support the person as he or she allows. This section explains how those privileges can be returned.

#### **32.15**

### Continue to Minister

The bishop or stake president's role as a common judge does not end when a member has received membership restrictions or had his or her Church membership withdrawn. He continues to minister, as the person allows, so he or she may again enjoy the blessings of Church membership. The bishop regularly meets with the person and, when helpful and applicable, his or her spouse. The Savior taught the Nephites:

“Ye shall not cast him out of . . . your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them” (3 Nephi 18:32).

The time just after a person's membership has been restricted or withdrawn is difficult and critical for his or her family. Leaders should be sensitive to these needs and encourage and assist family members.

The bishop ensures that caring members are assigned to minister to a person whose Church membership has been restricted or withdrawn, as the person allows. They also minister to other family members.

If the person moves from the ward, the bishop informs the new bishop and explains what still needs to occur before Church membership restrictions can be removed. If the person's membership was withdrawn from the Church or the person resigned membership, the bishop makes this same contact if the person has consented to be assisted by Church leaders.

#### **32.16**

### Removing Formal Restrictions or Being Readmitted to the Church

#### **32.16.1**

#### **Membership Councils to Remove Formal Restrictions or Readmit a Person**

When membership privileges are restricted or withdrawn in a membership council, another council must be held to consider removing the restrictions or readmitting the person to the Church. This council should also have the same level of authority (or higher) as the initial council. For example, if a stake or mission president presided over the initial council, a stake or mission president presides over the council to consider removing the restrictions or readmitting the person.

The current bishop or stake president holds the council. He first ensures that the person has repented and is ready and worthy to enjoy the blessings of Church membership.

Those who have had their Church membership formally restricted usually need to show genuine repentance for at least one year before consideration is given to removing the restrictions. Those who have had their Church membership withdrawn almost

always need to show genuine repentance for at least one year before they can be considered for readmission. For a member who held a prominent Church position at the time of the serious sin, the period is generally longer (see 32.6.1.4).

A council to consider removing restrictions or readmitting a person to the Church follows the same guidelines as other membership councils. A bishop needs approval from the stake president to hold the council. In a mission, a branch or district president needs approval from the mission president.

The following guidelines apply when holding a membership council to consider removing Church membership restrictions or readmitting a person to the Church. Not all of these guidelines may apply in each case.

1. *Review the initial membership council.* The bishop or stake president reviews the Report of Church Membership Council form. He requests a copy through LCR. After reviewing the form, he may contact the bishop or stake president where the initial council was held to seek clarification.
2. *Interview the person.* The bishop or stake president interviews the person thoroughly to discern the strength of his or her faith in Jesus Christ and the extent of repentance. He also determines whether the person has met the conditions outlined in the initial action.
3. *Determine the status of criminal or civil court action.* Sometimes a person has admitted to or has been convicted of a crime. Sometimes a person has been found liable in a civil action of fraud or other illegal acts. In these cases, the leader generally does not hold a council until the person has fulfilled all the conditions of any sentence, order, or judgment made by legal authorities. These conditions may include imprisonment, probation, parole, and fines or restitution. Exceptions require the approval of the First Presidency before holding a membership council. These exceptions
  4. *Contact the priesthood leaders of the victims.* The bishop or stake president contacts the current bishop or stake president of any victims (see 32.10.2).
  5. *Give notice of the council.* He notifies the person of the date, time, and place of the council.
  6. *Conduct the council.* He conducts the council according to the guidelines in 32.10.3. He asks the person what he or she has done to repent. He also asks about his or her commitment to Jesus Christ and the Church. When all relevant matters have been presented, he excuses the member. With his counselors, he prays to consider what action to take. The three possible decisions are:
    - a. Continue membership restrictions or withdrawal.
    - b. Remove restrictions or authorize readmission.
    - c. Recommend to the First Presidency that restrictions be removed or readmission be authorized (if necessary according to “Apply for First Presidency approval” below).
  7. *Share the decision.* After the council makes a decision, the presiding officer shares it with the person. If approval from the First Presidency is necessary, he explains that the decision is a recommendation to the First Presidency.
  8. *Submit a report.* The bishop or stake president submits a Report of Church Membership Council form through LCR. He may ask the clerk to prepare this report. He ensures that no hard copy or electronic copy is retained locally. He also ensures that all notes used to prepare the report are promptly destroyed.

9. *Apply for First Presidency approval (if necessary).* In the following circumstances, the approval of the First Presidency is necessary to remove formal membership restrictions or readmit the person into the Church. This approval is required even if the conduct occurred *after* Church membership was formally restricted or withdrawn.

- a. Murder
- b. Incest
- c. Sexual abuse of a child or youth, sexual exploitation of a child or youth, or serious physical or emotional abuse of a child or youth by an adult or by a youth who is several years older
- d. Involvement with child pornography when there is a legal conviction
- e. Apostasy
- f. Plural marriage
- g. Committing a serious sin while holding a prominent Church position
- h. Transgender—actions to transition to the opposite of a person’s birth sex (see 38.6.22)
- i. Embezzling Church funds or property

10. *Give written notice of the decision.* The bishop or stake president ensures that the person receives prompt written notice of the decision and its effects.

11. *Baptize and confirm.* If a person’s Church membership was withdrawn in the initial council, he or she must be baptized and confirmed again. If First Presidency approval is necessary, these ordinances may be performed only after this approval is received. A Baptism and Confirmation Certificate is not created (see 32.14.4).

### 32.16.2

#### Being Readmitted after Resigning Church Membership

If a person formally resigns Church membership, he or she must be baptized and confirmed to be readmitted into the Church. For adults, readmission is not usually considered until at least one year after resigning membership.

When a person requests readmission, the bishop or stake president obtains a copy of the Report of Administrative Action form that accompanied the request for resignation. He can obtain this through LCR.

The bishop or stake president then interviews the person thoroughly. He asks about the reasons for the original request and the desire for readmission. In a spirit of love, he asks about serious sins the person may have committed either before or after resigning membership. The leader does not proceed with readmission until he is satisfied that the person has repented and is ready and worthy to enjoy the blessings of Church membership.

Guidelines for readmission after resignation follow:

- A membership council is held if the person’s membership was formally restricted at the time of resignation.
- A membership council is held if the person committed a serious sin, including apostasy, before resigning membership.

In other circumstances, a membership council is not held unless the bishop or stake president determines that it would be needed.

When a membership council is necessary for a person who had received the temple endowment, the stake president holds it. When a council is necessary for a person who was not endowed, the bishop holds it, with approval from the stake president.



If the person engaged in any of the conduct in 32.16.1, number 9, either before or after resigning Church membership, First Presidency approval is required for readmission. If the person engaged in any of the conduct in 32.14.5, number 1, either before or after resigning membership, an annotation will be made on the membership record.

A person who requests readmission must meet the same qualifications as others who are baptized. When the bishop or stake president is satisfied that the person is worthy and sincere in wanting to be readmitted, the person may be baptized and confirmed. A Baptism and Confirmation Certificate is not created (see 32.14.4).

### **32.17**

## **Church Activity, Ordination, and Restoration of Blessings after Readmission**

### **32.17.1**

## **Church Activity and Ordination**

The following chart indicates the appropriate level of Church activity for a person who has been readmitted by baptism and confirmation.

	<b>Not Previously Endowed</b>	<b>Previously Endowed</b>
<b>Previous Priesthood Holders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately after baptism and confirmation, may have the priesthood conferred on them and be ordained to the priesthood office they held when their Church membership was withdrawn or resigned. A sustaining vote is not required.</li> <li>• May be issued a limited-use temple recommend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be ordained to any priesthood office. When their priesthood and temple blessings are restored, their previous priesthood office will be restored as outlined in 32.17.2. They may not perform ordinances until that time.</li> <li>• May participate in any Church activity that is permissible for an unendowed member who does not hold the priesthood.</li> <li>• May not wear the temple garment or receive any kind of temple recommend until their blessings are restored.</li> </ul>
<b>Other Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May participate in Church activity as a new convert would.</li> <li>• May be issued a limited-use temple recommend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May participate in any Church activity that is permissible for an unendowed member who does not hold the priesthood.</li> <li>• May not wear the temple garment or receive any kind of temple recommend until their blessings are restored (see 32.17.2).</li> </ul>

**32.17.2****Restoration of Blessings**

Persons who previously received the temple endowment and were readmitted by baptism and confirmation can receive their priesthood and temple blessings only through the ordinance of restoration of blessings (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:21). They are not ordained to priesthood offices or endowed again. These blessings are restored through the ordinance. Brethren are restored to their former priesthood office, except the office of Seventy, bishop, or patriarch.

Only the First Presidency can approve the performance of the ordinance of restoration of blessings.

They will not consider an application for this ordinance sooner than one year after the person is readmitted by baptism and confirmation. The bishop or stake president applies for a restoration of blessings through LCR.

If the First Presidency approves the restoration of blessings, they assign a General Authority or the stake president to interview the person. If the person is worthy, this leader performs the ordinance to restore the person's blessings.

For information about membership records and the restoration of blessings, see 32.14.4.

## Records and Reports

### 33.1

#### Overview of Church Records

Accurate records help Church leaders know members and identify their needs. For example, records can help leaders identify who may need special care to become more active in the Church or to become worthy of temple blessings. Accurate records also help leaders evaluate progress and make plans for improvement.

Another important purpose of Church records is to identify which saving ordinances a person has received.

The following types of records are kept in Church units:

- *Reports on member participation* include information about meeting attendance, ministering interviews, activity and priesthood office of new members, and temple recommend status of endowed members (see 33.5).
- *Membership records* include members' names and addresses, as well as ordinance information and other vital information (see 33.6).
- *Historical records* include information about accomplishments, challenges, faith-building experiences, and other notable events in the unit (see 33.7).
- *Financial records* include information about tithes and other offerings and costs for activities and supplies (see chapter 34).

### 33.2

#### General Instructions for Clerks

All clerks should have unquestionable integrity and demonstrate a willingness to follow the Lord's

commandments. They should be honest and careful record keepers. They should also be capable teachers and administrators. The clerk who is assigned to finances should be qualified to handle financial matters. Calling clerks who meet these qualifications will help ensure that they have the Spirit of the Lord with them as they work with Church finances and records.

Clerks should carefully follow current policies and procedures to safeguard Church funds and to ensure that Church records are current and accurate. Clerks should immediately notify priesthood leaders of any improprieties affecting Church funds or records.

The duration of clerks' service should be sufficient for them to learn their duties, magnify their callings, and preserve continuity in their work. Because they are not members of the stake presidency or bishopric, they do not need to be released when a stake presidency or bishopric is reorganized.

Responsibilities of stake and ward clerks are outlined in 33.3.2, 33.3.3, 33.4.2, and 33.4.3.

### 33.3

#### Stake Records and Reports

##### 33.3.1

##### Stake Presidency

The stake president oversees stake record keeping. He may assign his counselors and clerks to do much of this work under his direction. He ensures that they follow Church policies and procedures in fulfilling their responsibilities.

**33.3.2****Stake Clerk**

Every stake should have a qualified, functioning stake clerk. He is called and set apart by the stake president. He should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and be worthy to have a temple recommend. He is a member of the stake council and attends high council meetings. He is not a member of the high priests quorum.

The stake clerk is trained by the stake presidency and works under their direction. The stake president may assign him responsibilities such as those outlined in this section. Assistant stake clerks may be called to help (see 33.3.3).

**33.3.2.1****Record-Keeping Responsibilities**

The stake clerk provides administrative support to the stake presidency. He keeps a record of assignments and decisions in stake leadership meetings. He also reminds the stake presidency of items that need follow-up or further consideration.

The stake clerk (and assistant stake clerks as assigned) prepares stake records and reports. These include financial records (see chapter 34), reports on member participation (see 33.5), membership information (see 33.6), and historical records (see 33.7). The stake clerk ensures that records and reports are accurate, complete, and on time.

The stake clerk (and assistant stake clerks as assigned) meets with the stake president to review records and reports. The clerk provides information from these materials to help leaders identify (1) the needs of members and organizations, (2) the availability of resources, such as finances and priesthood strength, and (3) trends, strengths, and weaknesses.

The stake clerk should become familiar with the record-keeping programs on Church computers where they are available.

Other record-keeping duties the stake presidency may give the stake clerk or an assistant stake clerk include:

- Ensuring that certificates for Melchizedek Priesthood ordination are prepared and distributed and that the ordinations are properly and promptly recorded.
- Recording temple recommend information.
- Preparing the Officers Sustained form for stake conference.
- Designing and printing boundary models to use in proposing realignment of stake and ward boundaries.
- Overseeing the transfer of ward records, correspondence, and accounts when a new ward is created, a ward is discontinued, or a bishop is released.
- Recording information for stake membership councils (see 32.9.6).
- Maintaining and updating the stake's website if the stake has a Church-approved site (see 38.8.24).

**33.3.2.2****Review of Ward Records and Reports**

The stake clerk (and assistant stake clerks as assigned) reviews ward records and reports to ensure that they are accurate and complete. He resolves record-keeping problems before giving reports to the stake president. He works directly with ward clerks and assistant ward clerks to resolve minor problems. He discusses serious problems with the stake president or, at his request, the bishop.

The stake clerk meets with each ward clerk twice each year. The stake clerk or assistant stake clerks may also meet with assistant ward clerks as needed. These meetings are held to ensure that:



- Membership records are updated promptly and accurately to include all baptisms and confirmations, priesthood ordinations, endowments, marriages, and deaths.
- Certificates of blessing, baptism and confirmation, and priesthood ordination are given to ward members.
- The ward's annual history is kept current and is submitted to the stake at the end of each year (see 33.7).

### 33.3.2.3

#### Record-Keeping Instruction

As requested by the stake president or a bishop, the stake clerk instructs assistant stake clerks, ward clerks, and assistant ward clerks to ensure that they receive all the training they need to accomplish their record-keeping responsibilities.

Instruction on record keeping is especially important when clerks are newly called, when a Church record-keeping program is introduced or updated, and when records are not completed properly. New assistant stake clerks, ward clerks, and assistant ward clerks should be instructed within 30 days after they are called.

### 33.3.2.4

#### Audits

The stake clerk should be knowledgeable of audit procedures and reports. Assistant stake clerks should also be knowledgeable of audit procedures and reports for their area of responsibility. For information about audits of membership records, see 33.6.24. For information about audits of Church finances, see 34.9.

### 33.3.2.5

#### Stake Historical Records

See 33.7.

### 33.3.3

#### Assistant Stake Clerks

The stake president or an assigned counselor may call and set apart assistant stake clerks as needed. Assistant stake clerks should be Melchizedek Priesthood holders who are worthy to have a temple recommend. They work under the direction of the stake presidency and the stake clerk.

If needed, one assistant stake clerk may be called to each of the following positions:

- Stake assistant clerk
- Stake assistant clerk—finance (see chapter 34)
- Stake assistant clerk—membership (see 33.5 and 33.6)

The stake presidency may also assign an assistant stake clerk to gather historical records (see 33.7).

### 33.3.3.1

#### Church Materials

The stake presidency may assign an assistant stake clerk to become familiar with Church resource materials and know how to order them from Church Distribution Services. This clerk coordinates efforts to help stake members be informed about these materials and know how to obtain them.

### 33.3.3.2

#### Computers and Technology

The stake presidency may assign an assistant stake clerk to be the stake technology specialist. The stake clerk could be given this assignment if necessary. The stake technology specialist has the following

responsibilities for managing Church computers in the stake, including those in family history centers:

- He takes direction from the stake presidency about placing, sharing, reassigning, and scheduling all stake computers.
- He serves as the primary contact for technology services and electronic devices in all Church meetinghouses in the stake. As requested, he provides support for all who use computers in Church meetinghouses.
- He maintains a current inventory of all computer hardware, with serial numbers, models, capacities, and physical locations.
- He ensures that (1) computers, software, and confidential information are secure, (2) data files are backed up regularly, and (3) backup files are stored away from the building (see 33.8 and 33.9).
- He should be familiar with the general policies for Church computers in 38.8.12. He should also be familiar with guidelines for obtaining and managing Church computers. These guidelines are available from Church headquarters or the area office. They 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.

To assist the stake technology specialist, the stake presidency may assign worthy youth and adults (brethren or sisters) to serve as assistant technology specialists. These individuals may be organized by building, ward, or other criteria determined by the stake presidency. They are referred to as assistant technology specialists, not assistant stake technology specialists.

The stake technology specialist oversees and coordinates the work of assistant technology specialists. If the stake does not have a stake technology specialist, the stake clerk or an assistant stake clerk oversees the assistant technology specialists

and communicates assignments from the stake presidency.

#### **33.3.4 Stake Executive Secretary**

The stake president or an assigned counselor calls and sets apart a stake executive secretary. The executive secretary should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and be worthy to have a temple recommend.

The executive secretary is an administrative assistant to the stake presidency. He meets with them and prepares agendas as assigned. He is also a member of the stake council and attends high council meetings. As directed by the stake presidency, he follows up on assignments made in these meetings. He is not a member of the high priests quorum.

He coordinates stake business between the stake presidency, high council, and other stake leaders. He also schedules appointments for the stake presidency. He distributes copies of Church publications and correspondence promptly.

If assigned by the stake presidency, he encourages and assists ward executive secretaries with Church magazine subscription efforts.

He may help the stake presidency encourage and monitor the participation of eligible stake members in Church Educational System programs (see chapter 15).

He advises the stake presidency of members who are entering the military or are already in military service. Under the direction of the stake presidency, he may help coordinate Church orientation for stake members who are entering the military (see 38.10.1 and 38.10.3).

He orients new ward executive secretaries as soon as reasonable after they are called. He provides ongoing instruction to them as needed.

**33.4****Ward Records and Reports****33.4.1****Bishopric**

The bishop oversees ward record keeping. He may assign his counselors and clerks to do much of this work under his direction. He ensures that ward clerks and quorum and organization leaders are taught their record-keeping responsibilities. He also ensures that they follow Church policies and procedures in fulfilling these responsibilities.

**33.4.2****Ward Clerk**

Every ward should have a qualified, functioning ward clerk. He is recommended by the bishopric and called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency. He should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and be worthy to have a temple recommend.

The ward clerk is trained by the bishopric and by stake clerks. He works under the direction of the bishopric. The bishop may assign him responsibilities such as those outlined in this section. Assistant ward clerks may be called to help (see 33.4.3).

For additional responsibilities of the ward clerk, see 7.6.4.

**33.4.2.1****Record-Keeping Responsibilities**

The ward clerk provides administrative support to the bishopric. He keeps a record of assignments and decisions made in ward leadership meetings. He also reminds the bishopric of items that need follow-up or further consideration.

The ward clerk (and assistant ward clerks as assigned) prepares ward records and reports. These include financial records (see chapter 34), reports

on member participation (see 33.5), membership records (see 33.6), and historical records (see 33.7). The ward clerk ensures that records and reports are accurate, complete, and on time.

The ward clerk (and assistant ward clerks as assigned) meets regularly with the bishop to review records and reports. The clerk provides information from these materials to help leaders identify (1) the needs of members and organizations, (2) the availability of resources, such as finances and priesthood strength, and (3) trends, strengths, and weaknesses.

When compiling reports on member participation, the clerk reviews information submitted by ward organizations to ensure that it is accurate and complete. He resolves record-keeping problems before giving the report to the bishop. He works directly with secretaries to resolve minor problems. He discusses serious problems with the bishop or, at his request, the organization leader.

The ward clerk should become familiar with the record-keeping programs on Church computers where they are available. He or an assistant ward clerk provides membership directories, lists, and rolls to the bishopric, to other priesthood leaders, and to leaders of ward organizations.

As requested, the ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk provides members copies of their Individual Ordinance Summary for their personal records and for help in accessing family history and other Church services. He prints these summaries using Church record-keeping software. In areas that do not have this software, he may request copies from the area office.

Other record-keeping duties the bishopric may give the ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk include:

- Ensuring that certificates for blessing, baptism and confirmation, and priesthood ordination are given to ward members and that these ordinances are properly and promptly recorded.

- Preparing the Officers Sustained form for ward conference.
- Recording information for ward membership councils (see 32.9.6).
- Maintaining and updating the ward’s website if the ward has a Church-approved site (see 38.8.24).

#### 33.4.2.2

##### **Record-Keeping Instruction**

The ward clerk coordinates record-keeping instruction for assistant clerks and for quorum and organization secretaries. He makes sure they receive instruction when they are newly called, when a Church record-keeping program is introduced or updated, and when records are not completed properly.

When instructing assistant clerks or secretaries, the ward clerk helps them understand how information from records and reports can help leaders.

#### 33.4.2.3

##### **Ward Historical Records**

See 33.7.

#### 33.4.3

##### **Assistant Ward Clerks**

Assistant ward clerks may be called as needed. They are recommended by the bishopric and called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. These brethren should be priesthood holders who are worthy to have a temple recommend. If an assistant ward clerk is assigned to finances, he should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. Assistant ward clerks work under the direction of the bishopric and the ward clerk.

If needed, one assistant ward clerk may be called to each of the following positions:

- Ward assistant clerk
- Ward assistant clerk—finance (see chapter 34)
- Ward assistant clerk—membership (see 33.5 and 33.6)

The bishopric may also assign an assistant ward clerk to gather historical records (see 33.7) and become familiar with Church resource materials and know how to order them from Church Distribution Services. This clerk coordinates efforts to help ward members be informed about these materials and know how to obtain them.

#### 33.4.4

##### **Ward Executive Secretary**

The ward executive secretary is recommended by the bishopric and called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. He should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and be worthy to have a temple recommend.

The executive secretary is an administrative assistant to the bishopric. He meets with the bishopric and prepares agendas as assigned. He is also a member of the ward council. As directed by the bishopric, he follows up on assignments made in these meetings (see 7.6.5).

He coordinates ward business between the bishopric and other leaders.

He schedules appointments for the bishopric. He also distributes Church publications and correspondence promptly.

If assigned by the bishop, he coordinates the ward’s Church magazine subscription efforts, helping members receive the blessings of having Church magazines in their homes. He may be assisted by the ward magazine representative and others appointed by the bishopric.

He may help the bishopric with seminary and institute matters, such as registration for classes (see chapter 15).

He keeps a current list of the names and addresses of ward members who are in the military and circulates this list to the ward council. He also informs the stake executive secretary when members plan to enter the military.

#### 33.4.5

### Priesthood and Organization Leaders

Priesthood and organization leaders oversee record keeping in their organizations. They may assign secretaries to do much of this work under their direction. They meet regularly with secretaries to ensure that records are accurate, complete, and on time.

#### 33.5

### Reports on Member Participation

Reports on member participation consist of weekly, monthly, and quarterly information that helps leaders focus on the progress and needs of members. All members of record (as defined in 33.6.2) are included in these reports.

#### 33.5.1

### Components of Reports

#### 33.5.1.1

#### Attendance Reports

*Sacrament Meeting.* Attendance at sacrament meeting is recorded by the ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk. The attendance count is the number physically present in the meeting, even if they are not members of the ward. Ward members who are not present because they have another assignment or are attending another ward are not counted.

*Sunday Priesthood and Organization Meetings.*

Attendance at elders quorum and Relief Society meetings is recorded by the quorum or Relief Society secretary. Attendance at Young Women classes is recorded by class secretaries and compiled by the Young Women secretary. Attendance at Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings is recorded by quorum secretaries and compiled by an Aaronic Priesthood quorum specialist or the ward clerk (see 10.4.2). Attendance at Primary is recorded by the teachers and compiled by the Primary secretary.

#### 33.5.1.2

#### Ministering Interview Reports

See 21.4.

#### 33.5.1.3

#### Quarterly Report

The Quarterly Report generally includes information for only the last month of each quarter. An exception is the report of ministering interviews, which are reported for the entire quarter. The stake president or bishop may request some information monthly.

The ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk prepares the report under the direction of the bishop. By the 10th of the month following the end of each quarter, quorum and organization leaders or secretaries give attendance information for the previous month to the clerk so he can include it in the report. The elders quorum and Relief Society give ministering interview reports for the quarter. The bishop reviews the report for accuracy and makes sure the clerk submits it on time.

*Units That Use Church Record-Keeping Software.* A clerk from each ward prepares the report on the computer and transmits it electronically to Church headquarters according to instructions on the report. Clerks print, distribute, and retain copies as needed.

*Units That Do Not Use Church Record-Keeping Software.*

Each ward receives a paper copy of the Quarterly Report from the area office at the end of each quarter. This copy has membership and enrollment numbers preprinted on it. A clerk from each ward fills in the blank spaces and sends the completed report to the stake according to the instructions on the report. Clerks distribute and retain copies as needed.

The stake also receives a paper copy of the Quarterly Report from the area office. This copy has membership and enrollment numbers preprinted on it for each ward in the stake. After receiving reports from the wards, the stake clerk or an assistant stake clerk completes the stake report, reviews it with the stake president, and sends it to the area office within 30 days of the end of the quarter.

**33.5.2****Membership Lists**

Membership lists are produced by ward computers or by the area office. These lists provide important supplemental information to reports on member participation. They help leaders identify which members are of age for ordinances, which young men are of missionary age, which men hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, which members are endowed, and which youth need to be scheduled for bishopric interviews. Quorum and organization leaders should have access to lists of those who belong to their quorum or organization.

**33.5.3****Using the Information**

Every number and statistic in a report represents an individual member who has unique needs. Leaders should seek direction from the Lord as they consider who may need their help and what help to provide.

Information from these reports is especially important for the bishopric and ward council to use in tracking the progress of ward members and deciding how to bless and strengthen them. For example, these reports can help leaders determine which adult converts did not attend priesthood or Relief Society meetings during the month.

Percentages in participation reports may be used to show trends, such as whether activity is increasing or decreasing. However, percentages should not be used to compare one ward with another, one quorum with another, or one person with another. Ward and individual circumstances are unique.

**33.6****Membership Records**

Membership records include members' names and addresses, as well as ordinance and other vital information. The ward should have a membership record for each member living within the ward boundaries.

Membership records are to be kept in the ward where the member lives. Exceptions, which should be few, require the consent of the bishops and stake president(s) involved and the approval of the Office of the First Presidency. To request an exception, the stake president(s) sends a letter to the Office of the First Presidency for approval.

Membership records are the only means of recording ordinances and other official actions in the permanent records of the Church. Therefore, the bishop makes sure that clerks keep accurate records and send updated information promptly to Church headquarters or the area office. It is especially important to record ordinance information, promptly request records of members who move into the ward, and promptly transfer records of members who move from the ward.

Before a member is interviewed for a Church calling, ordination to a Melchizedek Priesthood office, or a temple recommend, the bishop ensures that the

membership record does not include an annotation, a comment about a sealing or ordinance restriction, or formal membership restrictions.

Official Church membership records should not be shown or given to members. Nor may they be copied for members. Under no circumstances may membership records be given to anyone other than the bishop or a clerk.

Members are encouraged to have copies of the Individual Ordinance Summary for themselves and for any dependent children living at home. Each year, clerks or bishopric members review these summaries with members in accordance with the data privacy policies in 33.8 and 33.9. This review could be done as part of the annual tithing settlement. If errors are found, a clerk ensures that they are corrected on the membership records.

In units that use Church record-keeping software, clerks can print each member's Individual Ordinance Summary. In other units, leaders or clerks may request copies of these summaries from the area office.

See Create Record in Leader and Clerk Resources for instructions on how to create a membership record.

### 33.6.1

#### Names Used in Church Records

A person's full legal name, as defined by local law or custom, should be used on membership records and ordinance certificates.

### 33.6.2

#### Members of Record

For statistical and reporting purposes, the following individuals are members of record. Each of them should have a membership record:

- Those who have been baptized *and* confirmed.

- Those under age 9 who have been blessed but not baptized.
- Those who are not accountable because of intellectual disabilities, regardless of age.
- Unblessed children under 8 when (1) at least one parent or one grandparent is a member of the Church and (2) both parents give permission for a record to be created. This includes children of converts. (If one parent does not have legal custody of the child, the permission of the parent who has custody is sufficient.)

A person age 9 or older who has a membership record but has not been baptized and confirmed is not considered a member of record. However, the ward in which the person lives retains the membership record until the person is 18. At that time, if the person chooses not to be baptized despite being given every opportunity, the bishop, with written permission from the stake president, cancels the membership record. However, records of unbaptized members who are considered not accountable because of intellectual disabilities are not canceled.

### 33.6.3

#### Records of New Ward Members

The ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk meets with new ward members soon after their membership records arrive to review the Individual Ordinance Summary for accuracy.

For instructions about introducing new members after their records are received or after they are baptized and confirmed, see 29.2.2.8.

### 33.6.4

#### Records of Members Who Move or Are Temporarily Away from Home

Ward leaders, ministering brothers, ministering sisters, or clerks obtain the forwarding addresses of members as soon as they become aware that

members intend to move. Leaders of the new ward should contact members as soon as possible after they move in.

If, after sufficient effort, a clerk cannot find out where members have moved, he obtains the bishop's approval to send the membership records to Church headquarters or the area office, where efforts to locate the members will continue.

When a person moves from a ward for more than three months, a clerk moves the membership record to the new ward. As an exception, the record is not moved if the member intends to return after leaving for temporary or seasonal employment purposes that may last longer than three months.

When a person moves from the ward for less than three months and plans to return, the membership record is kept in the home ward. The home ward also maintains the member's financial records.

If leaders are uncertain about where a membership record should be (such as for a member in prison), they make sure it is kept in the ward that can best meet the person's needs.

### **33.6.5 Records of Members Serving outside Their Home Ward**

#### **33.6.5.1 Mission Presidents and Temple Presidents**

The membership records of a mission president and his wife are kept in their home ward unless their children accompany them in the assignment. If children accompany them, the records of the mission president, his wife, and his children are moved to the ward where they live during their mission.

The membership records of a temple president and his wife should stay in their home ward.

#### **33.6.5.2 Other Church Assignments**

If members have Church assignments outside of their home ward, their membership and financial records are kept in the home ward. If assignments require members to move from their home ward for three months or more and if their children accompany them, their membership records are moved to the new ward.

#### **33.6.5.3 Full-Time Missionaries**

See 24.9.10.

#### **33.6.6 Records of Young Single Adults**

See 14.6.6.

#### **33.6.7 Records of Members Who Live in Hospitals or Homes for the Aged**

The records of members who live in hospitals or homes for the aged and infirm should be in the ward that can best serve them. In most cases this is the ward where the hospital or home is located. Ward leaders make sure these members receive the full program of the Church to the extent possible.

#### **33.6.8 Records of Members in Military Service**

When a member enters military service for training, the membership record is kept in the home ward until the member is assigned to a more long-term duty station. At that time the member should contact the home ward and provide the name and address of the new ward so a clerk can move the membership record.



If a member is at sea for an extended time, is deployed in a war zone, or is not within the boundaries of a stake or mission, the record is usually kept in the ward that supports the duty station.

### **33.6.9**

#### **Records of Members Who Do Not Have a Permanent Address**

Members who travel extensively and do not have a permanent address should consult with the bishop at their place of primary residence and designate a home ward. That ward keeps the membership records, and ward leaders should maintain contact with the members. Financial contributions and tithing declarations are made to that ward.

### **33.6.10**

#### **Records of Members Who Have Intellectual Disabilities**

If the bishop determines that a person who is at least 8 years old is not accountable, he instructs a clerk to indicate “Not Accountable” in the baptism section of the person’s membership record (see 38.2.3.5). The clerk sends the update to Church headquarters or the area office. The membership record should not be canceled.

### **33.6.11**

#### **Records of Members Who Are Deaf or Hearing Impaired**

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 the deaf or hearing impaired within a specified geographic area, or (3) a ward or branch that is organized for members who are deaf or hearing impaired.

### **33.6.12**

#### **Records of Adopted Children**

Records of adopted children may be created or updated only after an adoption is final. The name on the record should conform to the decree of adoption. Records of adoptive parents may be updated only after an adoption is final.

### **33.6.13**

#### **Records of Babies Who Were Born out of Wedlock**

See 18.6.3.

### **33.6.14**

#### **Records of Children of Divorced Parents**

If a child’s parents are divorced, his or her legal name, as defined by local law or custom, should be recorded on the membership record and on certificates of priesthood ordinances and blessings.

### **33.6.15**

#### **Records with Annotations**

See 32.14.5.

### **33.6.16**

#### **Records with Special Comments**

These records no longer exist.

### **33.6.17**

#### **Records with Bishop’s Request for Contact**

These records no longer exist.

### **33.6.18**

#### **Move Restrictions on Membership Records**

If a member moves while formal membership restrictions or another serious concern is pending,

the bishop, or the ward clerk with the bishop's authorization, may contact Church headquarters or the area office and ask for a move restriction on the membership record. A move restriction may also be requested in cases of welfare abuse.

A record that has a move restriction will not be moved to a new unit until the priesthood leader who requested the restriction authorizes it to be removed.

### 33.6.19

#### Records from the "Address Unknown" File

When a member is located after his or her record has been in the "address unknown" file, the membership record is sent to the ward with a message encouraging the bishopric and quorum leaders to visit the person as soon as possible and to provide fellowshiping. Full-time missionaries may also be asked to visit and fellowship these members.

### 33.6.20

#### Recording and Correcting Ordinance Information

See chapter 18.

### 33.6.21

#### Preparing Certificates for Ordinances and Blessings

Priesthood leaders ensure that clerks prepare and distribute ordinance and blessing certificates as soon as possible after the blessing of a child, a baptism and confirmation, and a priesthood ordination. Leaders encourage members to safeguard these certificates, explaining that they may be irreplaceable if they are lost or destroyed.

### 33.6.22

#### Recording and Correcting Civil Information

Membership records include a person's civil information (name; parents' names; date of birth; marriage information; date of divorce, if applicable; and places where these events occurred). If members see that this information is incorrect on their Individual Ordinance Summary, they may ask the clerk to have it corrected on their membership records. If official documents are available, a bishop may want to review them to verify the accuracy of a requested correction.

### 33.6.23

#### Special Situations

For special situations that are not addressed in this section, such as records for common-law marriages, leaders should see membership records instructions or contact Church headquarters or the area office.

### 33.6.24

#### Audits of Membership Records

Each year the stake clerk or an assistant stake clerk ensures that an audit of membership records in each ward is conducted. The stake president may assign this task to the stake clerk, an assistant stake clerk, the ward clerk, an assistant ward clerk, or a combination of these brethren, depending on the circumstances in his stake. The stake president may call others who are experienced in membership record keeping to assist with these audits. Audits should be completed by June 30 of each year.

In addition to these audits, the bishop assigns one or more clerks in the ward to conduct an annual review of the Individual Ordinance Summary with members as explained in 33.6. If errors are found, a clerk ensures that they are corrected on the membership records.

**33.7**

## Historical Records

**33.7.1**

### Ward and Stake Histories

Each unit in the Church is to document all the important things concerning the unit, including accounts from unit leaders (see Doctrine and Covenants 69:3, 5). Identifying important things is best accomplished by:

- Reflecting on efforts to help individuals and families.
- Recognizing meaningful experiences that show God’s influence in the lives of His children.
- Recording these experiences and the lessons learned.

Keeping a history is a spiritual work that will strengthen the faith of those who write and read it. Documenting stories throughout the year will improve the quality of the history. It will also allow them to be shared quickly with unit members through [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

The stake presidency directs the stake clerk or an assistant stake clerk in preparing the stake’s history. The stake presidency may also call a history specialist to help the assigned clerk prepare it. The bishopric follows a similar approach for the ward. Instructions are available at Stake, District, and Mission Annual Histories on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

**33.7.2**

### Church History

The Church History Department selectively collects historical records, including personal records, art, and artifacts “for the good of the church, and for the rising generations” (Doctrine and Covenants

69:8). Questions about the historical value of records may be addressed to:

Church History Library  
15 East North Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600  
Telephone: 1-801-240-5696  
Email: [history@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:history@ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

**33.8**

## Confidentiality of Records

The records of the Church are confidential, whether they exist on paper, in computers, or in other electronic media. These include membership records, financial records, notes of meetings, official forms and documents (including records of membership councils), and notes made from private interviews.

Leaders and clerks are to safeguard Church records by handling, storing, and disposing of them in a way that protects the privacy of individuals. Leaders ensure that information that is gathered from members is (1) limited to what the Church requires and (2) used only for approved Church purposes.

Information from Church records and reports may be given only to those who are authorized to use it.

Information that is stored electronically must be kept secure and protected by a password (see 33.9.1). Leaders ensure that such data is not used for personal, political, or commercial purposes. Information from Church records, including historical information, may not be given to individuals or agencies conducting research or surveys.

Stake and ward directories that are distributed to members must follow the guidelines in 38.8.16. Membership lists that have more information, such as age and membership status, may be given only to authorized stake and ward leaders.

**33.9****Records Management**

Stake and ward leaders should make effective records management a part of their record-keeping procedures. Three important areas of records management are outlined in the following paragraphs.

**33.9.1****Protection**

All information should be protected against unauthorized access, change, destruction, or disclosure. Church records, reports, and backup copies of computer software programs and data should be kept in a safe place. Highly sensitive records, including computer printouts and electronic storage media, should be kept in a locked drawer or cabinet in the leader's office when they are not being used.

To protect confidential information on computers, leaders and clerks should use the password features of Church record-keeping systems. Passwords should be written down and kept in locked files away from the computer. They should be changed periodically, and they should always be changed when leaders or clerks are released. If members use stake and ward computers for family history work, they should not have access to membership or financial information.

Many countries have enacted data protection laws that regulate the processing of personal data, such as the information that is contained in membership records and other records that identify individuals. To determine the extent to which such laws govern local management of Church records or to obtain direction in specific instances, leaders may contact the Church data privacy officer at [dataprivacyofficer@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:dataprivacyofficer@ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

**33.9.2****Retention**

Records should be kept only as long as they are needed for administrative, legal, and historical purposes. Leaders who have questions about how long to keep records should consult record-keeping instructions or contact Church headquarters or the area office.

**33.9.3****Disposition**

Records that are outdated or no longer needed should be destroyed in such a way that the information cannot be retrieved or reconstructed. When deleting membership or financial information that is stored on a hard drive or another electronic storage device, a person must ensure that it cannot be recovered through any technical means.

Records that have potential historical value should not be discarded, destroyed, or placed in the resource center. Questions about the historical value of records may be addressed to the Church History Library (see contact information in 33.7.2).

## 34.

# Finances and Audits

### 34.1

## Use of Church Funds

Church funds are sacred and must be carefully accounted for and protected. These funds may be used only by authorized members for authorized Church purposes. Church leaders must protect against the embezzlement and any other misuse of Church funds. These funds may not be used for personal purposes or “borrowed.” Nor may Church funds be mixed with personal funds or deposited into the account of an individual. These and other misuses of Church funds are serious offenses that may result in Church membership restrictions or withdrawal (see 32.6.3.3 and 34.9.5).

### 34.2

## Stake Financial Leadership

#### 34.2.1

### Stake Presidency

This section outlines the stake president’s responsibilities for stake finances. He may delegate some of this work to his counselors and clerks.

- He ensures that stake funds are properly handled and accounted for (see 34.6).
- During their regular stewardship interview, the stake president and the bishop discuss important items reflected on the ward financial statements.
- He ensures that clerks, stake leaders, and ward leaders are taught their responsibilities for finances and that they complete available training. He also ensures that they follow Church policies and procedures in fulfilling these responsibilities. He regularly counsels with leaders and clerks concerning their responsibility for sacred Church

funds and ensures that passwords to access Church financial systems are never shared.

- He teaches members to pay a full tithe and give generous offerings (see 34.4).
- He manages the stake budget and expenditures (see 34.7). He regularly reviews budgets and expenditures with bishops, stake clerks, and stake leaders. He ensures that budget allowance guidelines are followed in the stake (see 34.7.2).
- He ensures that the stake and wards comply with all applicable tax laws to preserve the Church’s tax-exempt status (see 34.10.1).
- He ensures that the stake audit committee is organized and functioning properly. He also reviews audits of stake and ward financial records. He ensures that audit concerns are resolved (see 34.9).

#### 34.2.2

### Stake Clerk (or Assistant Stake Clerk)

The stake president assigns the stake clerk or an assistant stake clerk to help with stake financial record keeping. These duties are outlined in this section and explained further in instructions from Church headquarters or the assigned area office.

- With a member of the stake presidency, this clerk properly records any funds received. He or another Melchizedek Priesthood holder accompanies the member of the stake presidency who deposits the funds. Only members of the stake presidency—not clerks—may receive funds for the stake.
- This clerk makes sure stake financial obligations are paid promptly. He prepares checks or, in

locations where checks are not used, payment approval forms.

- He helps the stake presidency prepare the annual stake budget and keep track of the stake budget allowance (see 34.7.1 and 34.7.2). He informs the stake president of the status of stake expenditures in relation to the budget allowance.
- He reconciles the stake checking account each month as instructed in 34.6.7. As needed, he helps reconcile ward checking accounts.
- He ensures that the stake complies with all applicable tax laws (see 34.10). He also participates in periodic audits by stake auditors and takes corrective actions if needed (see 34.9).

For information about calling stake clerks and assistant stake clerks, see 33.3.2 and 33.3.3.

### 34.3

## Ward Financial Leadership

### 34.3.1

#### Bishopric

This section outlines the bishop's responsibilities for ward finances. He may delegate some of this work to his counselors and clerks.

- He ensures that ward funds are properly handled and accounted for (see 34.6).
- He ensures that all clerks in the ward and all ward leaders are taught their responsibilities for finances and that they complete available training. He also ensures that they follow Church policies and procedures in fulfilling these responsibilities. He regularly counsels with leaders and clerks concerning their responsibility for sacred Church funds and ensures that passwords to access Church financial systems are never shared.
- He teaches members to pay a full tithe and give generous offerings (see 34.4).
- He manages the ward budget and expenditures (see 34.7). He regularly reviews budgets and expenditures with ward clerks and ward leaders. He ensures that budget allowance guidelines are followed in the ward (see 34.7.2).
- He makes sure the ward complies with all applicable tax laws to preserve the Church's tax-exempt status (see 34.10.1).
- He should be available to answer questions during audits of ward financial records (see 34.9).

### 34.3.2

#### Ward Clerk (or Assistant Ward Clerk)

The bishop assigns the ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk to help with ward financial record keeping. These duties are outlined in this section and explained further in instructions from Church headquarters or the assigned area office.

- Each week this clerk helps a member of the bishopric account for all tithes and other offerings (see 34.6.2). He normally accompanies the bishopric member who deposits the funds in a bank, although another Melchizedek Priesthood holder may do so. He also submits or transmits the related donation reports to Church headquarters or the assigned area office. Only members of the bishopric—not clerks—may receive funds for the ward.
- This clerk makes sure ward financial obligations are paid promptly. He prepares checks or, in locations where checks are not used, payment approval forms.
- He helps the bishopric prepare the annual ward budget and keep track of the ward budget allowance (see 34.7.1 and 34.7.2). He informs the bishop of the status of ward expenditures in relation to the budget allowance.
- He reconciles the ward checking account each month as instructed in 34.6.7.

- Each year he prepares and organizes records to help the bishop conduct tithing settlement. He produces and distributes the year-to-date tithing and offerings statements and year-end summaries to members. He also helps the bishop prepare a year-end report of tithing status in the ward.
- He participates in financial audits by stake auditors and takes corrective actions if needed (see 34.9).

For information about calling ward clerks and assistant ward clerks, see 33.4.2 and 33.4.3.

### 34.4

## Contributions

Church leaders should teach members the principles of tithes and other offerings and encourage members to live these principles. Nonmembers may also make contributions to the Church. However, a person who has had their membership withdrawn may not pay tithing or other offerings to the Church.

### 34.4.1

## Tithing

### 34.4.1.1

#### Definition of Tithing

The First Presidency has written: “The simplest statement we know of is the statement of the Lord himself, namely, that the members of the Church should pay ‘one-tenth of all their interest annually,’ which is understood to mean income. No one is justified in making any other statement than this” (First Presidency letter, Mar. 19, 1970; see also Doctrine and Covenants 119:4).

### 34.4.1.2

#### Who Should Pay Tithing

All members who have income should pay tithing, with the following exceptions:

1. Members who are entirely dependent on Church welfare assistance.
2. Full-time missionaries. (However, missionaries should pay tithing on personal income beyond the amount they receive for their support.)

If mission presidents have income that should be tithed, they generally pay tithing in the ward where their membership records are located (see 33.6.5). However, if they are serving outside their own country and their membership records are in the ward where they are residing, they generally contribute their tithing directly to Church headquarters.

### 34.4.1.3

#### When and How to Pay Tithing

Leaders encourage members to pay tithing as they receive their income. However, members who wish to pay annually may do so.

Members give their tithing and a completed Tithing and Other Offerings form to the bishop or one of his counselors (see 34.6.1).

### 34.4.1.4

#### Use of Tithing Funds

Bishops may not use tithing funds for any purpose. All tithing funds must be remitted to Church headquarters or the assigned area office (see Doctrine and Covenants 120).

### 34.4.1.5

#### Tithing Settlement

The bishop holds tithing settlement near the end of each year. In urgent cases when the bishop is

absent, the stake president may authorize one of the bishop's counselors to conduct tithing settlement. However, such a need would be rare.

All members should attend tithing settlement to make sure their contribution records are correct and to declare to the bishop their status as tithe payers. If possible, all members of a family should attend tithing settlement.

In addition to reviewing records of members' tithing, fast offerings, and other donations, during tithing settlement the bishop can discuss the principle of tithing with them, encourage them to give a generous fast offering, and discuss other relevant matters. At the time of tithing settlement, a clerk or a member of the bishopric could also review the Individual Ordinance Summary with members (see 33.6).

Instructions for tithing settlement are provided by Church headquarters or the assigned area office.

#### 34.4.2

### Fast Offerings

Church leaders encourage members to live the law of the fast. Typically this includes (1) fasting each fast Sunday for two consecutive meals and (2) giving a fast offering that is at least the equivalent value of the meals not eaten. Members are encouraged to be generous and give much more than the value of two meals if they are able.

Where a ward is geographically concentrated and where safety conditions permit, the bishop may direct Aaronic Priesthood holders, especially deacons, to contact member households each month to give members the opportunity to contribute fast offerings. Even if members do not contribute, priesthood holders should continue to give them the opportunity to do so. If distances or other circumstances make it necessary, the bishop may limit or eliminate fast-offering collections from homes.

Priesthood holders should go in pairs when gathering fast offerings. Melchizedek Priesthood holders may accompany Aaronic Priesthood holders if necessary.

Members should not give other contributions, such as tithing, to those who collect fast offerings.

Those who gather fast offerings deliver them promptly to a member of the bishopric.

Some members may choose to contribute fast offerings by using the envelopes for tithing and other offerings and giving them directly to the bishopric.

Members should contribute fast offerings without designating how the funds should be used. Bishops may not enter into arrangements or make commitments to give a member's fast-offering contribution to an individual or family or to use it for a special purpose that the donor designates.

Mission and temple presidents contribute fast offerings to the ward where their membership records are located.

Guidelines for using fast-offering funds are provided in 22.2.4.

#### 34.4.3

### Missionary Funds

Contributions to the ward missionary fund are used primarily to meet the contribution commitments of full-time missionaries from the ward, as identified in 24.6.2 and 24.6.3. Excess amounts may be used to meet such commitments of other missionaries in the stake or coordinating council. Ward missionary funds should not be sent directly to individual missionaries. Ward missionary funds should not be used for any missionary activities in the ward or stake.

Contributions to the General Missionary Fund are used by the Church in its overall missionary efforts.



Stake presidents and bishops should send missionary funds that exceed reasonable stake and ward needs to the General Missionary Fund at Church headquarters or the assigned area office. Bishops or individuals may contact the Global Service Center (1-855-537-4357) for further information about contributions to the General Missionary Fund.

For additional information about missionary funds and financing missionary service, see 24.6.

#### 34.4.4

### Humanitarian Aid

Church humanitarian work assists people of all faiths throughout the world who are in dire need. Those who desire to contribute to the Church's Humanitarian Aid Fund may use the Tithing and Other Offerings form. The ward remits these contributions according to instructions from Church headquarters or the assigned area office. Donations may also be sent directly to Church headquarters at the following address:

Finance and Records Department  
Treasury Services Division  
Attention: Humanitarian Aid  
50 East North Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1521

Online donations may be made by going to [donate.ldsphilanthropies.org](http://donate.ldsphilanthropies.org).

#### 34.4.5

### Temple Construction Fund

Members who desire to contribute financially to the construction of temples are invited to do so as their circumstances permit. They may contribute by using the Tithing and Other Offerings form. They indicate the donation by writing "temple construction" in the "Other" category. If members want to designate the donation for a specific temple, they may note this on the form.

Leaders should not conduct fundraising efforts or establish assessments or goals for contributions to the temple construction fund.

#### 34.4.6

### Perpetual Education Fund

The Perpetual Education Fund program assists worthy young adults who need help in qualifying for employment opportunities in their own countries by providing loans for career training and education.

Those who desire to contribute to this fund may use the Tithing and Other Offerings form. The ward remits these contributions according to instructions from Church headquarters or the assigned area office.

For more information about the Perpetual Education Fund, see 22.6.4.7.

#### 34.4.7

### Philanthropies

Philanthropies of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a department of the Office of the Presiding Bishopric that correlates, encourages, facilitates, and accepts voluntary philanthropic contributions to the Church and its affiliated charities and activities. Assistance in making contributions may be obtained by contacting the Philanthropies office as follows:

Philanthropies  
1450 North University Avenue  
Provo, UT 84604-6080  
Telephone: 1-801-356-5300 or 1-800-525-8074  
Email: [philanthropies@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:philanthropies@ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

Online donations may be made at [ldsphilanthropies.org](http://ldsphilanthropies.org).

**34.4.8****In-Kind Donations, Including Tithing**

The Church normally discourages paying tithing and other donations in kind. It is preferable for members to dispose of the property themselves and then pay tithing and other donations in cash. However, in-kind donations may be accepted in certain cases and may be a common practice in some areas of the world.

The Church accepts (1) stocks, bonds, or other securities that are marketable immediately and (2) some marketable real estate. Before accepting these contributions, local leaders should receive approval from Church headquarters or the assigned area office. If members want to contribute other items, the bishop seeks approval from the stake president. The stake president contacts Church headquarters or the area office for approval before authorizing the bishop to accept the items.

**34.4.9****Contributions Not to Be Refunded**

Stake presidents and bishops should inform those who contribute tithes and other offerings that these contributions cannot be refunded. This policy applies also to missionary contributions that are prepaid.

When tithes and other offerings are given to the Church, they belong to the Lord, to whom they are consecrated. The essence of all such contributions is that they are freewill offerings, made without reservation of purpose, retention of control, ownership in any form, or expectation of any benefit by the donor other than the Lord's blessings. It is therefore improper to refund contributions given to the Church. Doing so would violate the spirit of freewill offerings. In some countries, refunding contributions could also cause legal and income tax complications for both the contributor and the Church.

**34.5****Confidentiality of Tithing and Other Offerings**

The amount of tithing and other offerings paid by a member is confidential. Only the bishop and those who are authorized to handle such contributions should know the amount. Stake presidents and bishops are not to announce the total amount of tithing received.

If necessary, the bishop may tell the elders quorum president whether individual quorum members are full-tithe payers, contributors to the tithing funds, or exempt. The elders quorum president must keep this information confidential.

**34.6****Handling and Accounting for Funds**

The stake president and bishop ensure that all Church funds are properly handled and accounted for according to current financial instructions. General principles are outlined in the following sections.

**34.6.1****Receiving Tithing and Other Offerings**

The Lord has given bishops the sacred trust of receiving and accounting for the tithes and other offerings of the Saints (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:30–33; 119). Only the bishop and his counselors may receive tithes and other offerings. Under no circumstances should their wives, other members of their families, clerks, or other ward members receive these contributions. The only exception is when Aaronic Priesthood holders are assigned to collect fast offerings (see 34.4.2).

Ward members give contributions to a member of the bishopric in a sealed envelope with a properly

completed Tithing and Other Offerings form enclosed. Church members should not leave their donations unattended, such as by placing them in a contribution box or under the door of the bishop's office.

Checks should be made payable to the ward, not to the bishop or the Church. In units where members make payments electronically (such as direct deposit or automatic bill pay), payments should be deposited in the Church's bank account as instructed by Church headquarters or the assigned area office.

Only the stake president and his counselors should receive funds for the stake. They should maintain custody of the funds until the funds are recorded and prepared for deposit by a member of the stake presidency and a clerk.

#### 34.6.2

### Verifying Tithing and Other Offerings

Contribution envelopes should be opened and verified on Sunday, except during tithing settlement, when they are opened and verified on the day they are received. Two persons—a member of the bishopric and a clerk, or two members of the bishopric—open each envelope together to verify that the funds enclosed are the same as the amount written on the Tithing and Other Offerings form. If the funds and the written amount differ, the contributor should be contacted as soon as possible to resolve the difference.

#### 34.6.3

### Depositing Tithing and Other Offerings

A bishopric member and another Melchizedek Priesthood holder, usually the clerk who helped verify the donations, prepare the deposit.

Those who deposit funds should use, where available, (1) deposit bags that are locked when funds are inserted and are opened only by the bank or (2) other tamper-resistant deposit bags. A clerk or

member of the bishopric checks with Church headquarters, the assigned area office, or the local bank for availability of such deposit bags.

Where a 24-hour bank depository is available, the bishopric member, accompanied by the other priesthood holder, deposits the funds in the bank on the same day the funds are opened and verified.

Where a 24-hour bank depository is not available and the bank is closed on Sunday, the bishop designates a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, normally a member of the bishopric, to make the deposit at the bank the next business day. The person who makes the deposit is accountable for these funds.

He should:

1. Ensure that the funds are kept secure until they are deposited at the bank.
2. Obtain a bank-certified deposit receipt showing the date and the amount of the deposit.

Furthermore, a bishopric member and a clerk should complete the following procedure on the next Sunday before processing any donations for that day:

1. Compare the bank-certified deposit receipt to the previous week's deposit records to verify that the correct amount was deposited.
2. Sign the bank-certified deposit receipt and file it with the previous week's donation information.

#### 34.6.4

### Safeguarding Church Funds

Members who are responsible for Church funds must never leave them in the meetinghouse overnight or leave them unattended at any time, such as during meetings and activities.

**34.6.5****Receipting Tithing and Other Offerings**

Church headquarters or the assigned area office sends instructions to stakes and wards for issuing receipts for tithing and other offerings.

Receipts to members who make donations in kind (noncash tithing and other offerings) are issued only by Church headquarters or the assigned area office. These receipts show no monetary value for the items contributed.

**34.6.6****Receiving and Managing Budget Allowance Funds**

See 34.7.2.

**34.6.7****Managing Stake and Ward Checking Accounts**

Each stake normally has one checking account. The stake president manages it, though his counselors and clerks may assist him. The counselor who serves as chairman of the stake audit committee generally should not sign checks or otherwise be involved in stake financial record keeping.

All ward funds are handled in one checking account. The bishop manages the account, though his counselors and clerks may assist him.

Each check must have two authorized signatures. Usually the stake president, his counselors, and the clerk assigned to finances are authorized to sign checks for the stake account. Usually the bishop, his counselors, and the clerk assigned to finances are authorized to sign checks for the ward account. An authorized check signer should not sign a check if he is the payee or the fast-offering beneficiary.

Although counselors may be authorized to sign checks, they should not do so unless the stake president or bishop has approved the expenditure.

A check should not be signed until it is filled out completely.

Each month the stake president or bishop promptly reviews the Church unit financial statement or the bank statement and gives it to a clerk to be reconciled.

Each month a stake clerk reconciles the stake checking account and the local deposit bank account (if one exists) and funds in the “Other” category (if any). Each month a ward clerk reconciles the ward checking account, funds in the “Other” category, and any other financial records required. The clerk signs the reconciliation. The stake president or bishop then reviews and signs the reconciliation.

Checkbooks and blank checks should be stored in a locked file or cabinet. They must not be left unattended when they are not locked securely. If any blank checks are missing, the stake president or bishop immediately reports the numbers of these checks to Church headquarters or the assigned area office. He also requests a stop payment on the missing checks.

Stakes and wards that have checking accounts may not have savings accounts.

Quorums and organizations may not have checking accounts, savings accounts, or petty cash funds. Their budgeted expenses are all paid through the stake or ward checking account.

**34.6.8****Managing Stake and Ward Funds Not Held in a Checking Account**

The following instructions apply to units outside the United States and Canada that do not manage their funds through a checking account. Instead, these units have cash working funds, savings accounts, or bank accounts accessed by a debit card.

The assigned area office provides specific guidelines for these units to follow. Some basic principles are outlined as follows:

- A unit should have only one cash working fund, savings account, or debit card bank account.
- The funds should be controlled by the stake president or bishop.
- Money from cash working funds, savings accounts, or debit cards should not be used until two authorized people have signed a payment approval form. They should not sign this form until it is filled out completely.
- Supporting documents such as invoices, bills, or receipts should be attached to the payment approval form. If funds are advanced to a member, he or she signs the form, acknowledging the receipt of the money and noting the date and the amount. The member then (1) provides supporting documentation for the funds spent and (2) returns any unspent funds.
- If there is a bank statement, it should be delivered directly to the stake president or bishop, not to the meetinghouse or a clerk. He opens each bank statement promptly, reviews it, and gives it to a clerk to be reconciled. The clerk signs the reconciliation. The stake president or bishop then reviews and signs the reconciliation.
- The stake president or bishop reviews any other financial reports and ensures that they are reconciled.
- The stake president or bishop maintains custody of cash working funds.
- Cash working funds should be separate from personal funds. Church funds must be physically safeguarded at all times.
- Cash working funds should be counted each month by two authorized signers. The counts and signatures should be documented on forms provided by the assigned area office. Any fund

shortages should be reported immediately to the area controller.

- All disbursements should be promptly recorded, and all bills, receipts, or other documents supporting the disbursements should be retained.

#### 34.6.9

### Keeping Financial Records

Each stake and ward should keep current, accurate financial records. These records help stake presidents and bishops account for and protect sacred Church funds. Accurate records are also necessary for preparing budgets, managing the budget allowance, and providing information to members on their financial contributions.

For information about the use and retention of records and reports, clerks should refer to instructions from Church headquarters or the assigned area office. Financial records should be retained for at least three years plus the current year. Local laws may require longer retention periods.

#### 34.7

### Budget and Expenditures

#### 34.7.1

### Stake and Ward Budgets

Every stake and ward prepares and operates on a budget. The stake president manages the stake budget, and the bishop manages the ward budget, though each may assign a counselor to supervise it under his direction. Each may also assign a clerk to help prepare and monitor the budget.

No stake or ward expenses may be incurred or paid without the presiding officer's authorization.

Stake presidencies and bishoprics begin preparing budgets well before the beginning of each calendar year as follows:

1. Review the amounts spent during the previous year to make sure that recurring expenses are considered.
2. Ask organizations to estimate their budget needs in detail.
3. Compile the budget, using wise budgeting practices, being equitable, and ensuring that projected expenses do not exceed anticipated budget allowance funds.

It is not necessary to call for a sustaining vote to accept the budget.

The stake president reviews ward expenditures as part of his interview with each bishop.

### **34.7.2 Budget Allowance**

The budget allowance program provides general Church funds to pay for the activities and programs of stakes and wards. It eliminates the need to receive budget contributions from members. Faithful payment of tithes has made the budget allowance possible.

#### **34.7.2.1 Allocation of Budget Allowance Funds**

Church headquarters or the assigned area office allocates budget funds based on attendance in the following categories:

- Sacrament meeting
- Young men
- Young women
- Primary children ages 8–11
- Young single adults

The stake president determines how much of the funds are allocated to the stake and to the wards.

He ensures that the stake and wards are funded fairly and adequately as permitted within these guidelines.

The stake president works with bishops in a unified, cooperative manner. If unforeseen changes occur that may justify altering original budget allocations, he makes sure that fair adjustments are made.

The bishop oversees the allocation of budget allowance funds in the ward. He ensures that organizations in the ward are funded fairly and adequately.

Priesthood leaders ensure that the level of budget allocations and activities for young men and young women is equitable. Budget is allocated according to the number of youth in each organization. The budget allocations and activities for boys and girls in Primary should also be sufficient and equitable. Budget is allocated according to the number of children.

#### **34.7.2.2 General Principles and Guidelines**

The budget allowance was created to reduce the financial and time burdens on members. If necessary, leaders should reduce and simplify activities to stay within the allowance. Most activities should be simple and have little or no cost. Expenditures must be approved by the stake presidency or bishopric before they are incurred. Expenditures should never be approved unless they are accompanied by supporting documentation.

Stake and ward budget funds should be used to pay for all activities, programs, manuals, and supplies. Members should not pay fees to participate. Nor should they provide materials, supplies, rental or admission fees, or long-distance transportation at their own expense. Activities in which many members provide food may be held if doing so does not place undue burdens on members.

Possible exceptions to the funding policy in the preceding paragraph may be made for annual camps or

similar activities (see 20.2.8), optional activities (see 20.5), and occasional young single adult activities (see 14.3.7).

Members who want to contribute additional funds to the Church may not designate them for the stake or ward budget. Instead, leaders encourage them to contribute the funds to fast offerings, missionary funds, or other authorized donation categories.

Stake presidents and bishops make sure budget allowance funds are spent wisely. Funds should be used to bless people and to further gospel purposes. Leaders also ensure that all expenditures are within the allowance. The success of the budget allowance depends on the efforts of local priesthood leaders to monitor and control Church finances and expenses.

Unneeded budget allowance funds should not be spent. Unneeded ward funds are returned to the stake. Unneeded stake funds are returned to Church headquarters or the assigned area office. As an exception, stakes and wards may retain some unspent funds if they are needed for specific activities that are planned for the next year, such as a youth conference. However, significant portions of the stake or ward budget allowance should not be retained from one year to the next to cover travel expenses. Nor should funds from the “Other” category be used to supplement the “Budget” category.

For the budget allowance to succeed, it is important that the Quarterly Report is accurate and on time.

The budget allowance does not include expenses for building construction, maintenance, telephones, utilities, computers, or priesthood leader travel. These expenses are paid from general Church funds according to current guidelines.

### **34.7.3**

## **Funding Special Activities and Equipment**

### **34.7.3.1**

#### **Stake and Multistake Activities**

Local leaders are encouraged to hold stake and multistake activities that provide opportunities to develop unity and friendships, especially among youth and young single adults. Leaders ensure that they budget adequate funds to support an appropriate number of stake and multistake activities. These funds should come from the budget allowance.

For more information about activities, see chapter 20.

### **34.7.3.2**

#### **Youth Conferences**

See 20.4.

### **34.7.3.3**

#### **Annual Camps or Similar Activities and Equipment**

See 20.2.8 and 20.2.9.

### **34.7.3.4**

#### **Optional Activities**

See 20.5.

## **34.8**

## **Fundraising**

See 20.6.8.

**34.9****Audits****34.9.1****Stake Audit Committee**

The stake president appoints a stake audit committee consisting of one of his counselors as chairman and two other stake members who understand financial matters. The counselor who serves as chairman generally should not sign checks or otherwise be involved in stake financial record keeping. Committee members should not be stake auditors and should not perform stake or ward financial record keeping.

**34.9.2****Stake Auditors**

The stake president or his counselor who is chairman of the stake audit committee calls at least two stake auditors. These auditors should be trustworthy brethren who hold current temple recommends. If possible, they should be experienced in accounting or auditing. They should be approved by the stake presidency and high council, but they are not sustained and are not usually set apart.

High councilors may also serve as stake auditors. However, the stake clerk and assistant stake clerks may not be called as auditors. Those who serve as auditors may also hold other callings.

**34.9.3****The Auditing Process**

Stake auditors audit financial records of the stake, wards, branches, and family history centers twice each year. Auditors also audit the financial records of recreational properties once each year.

Auditors ensure that tithing and other contributions are properly recorded; Church funds are properly used, accounted for, and protected; and

financial records are complete and accurate. The unit's presiding officer and the clerk assigned to finances should be available to answer questions during audits.

The stake president and stake audit committee review all audits. After their review, the stake audit committee chairman and stake president sign the audits. Audits may be signed and submitted before all of the exceptions are corrected. The stake president and stake audit committee ensure that any audit exceptions are promptly corrected.

**34.9.4****Area Auditors and Assistant Area Auditors**

The Area Presidency calls an area auditor as a member of the Area Audit Committee. The area auditor reports to the Area Audit Committee Chairman. Under the direction of the Area Audit Committee Chairman, an assistant area auditor is called for each coordinating council. Assistant area auditors report to the area auditor.

The primary responsibilities of area auditors and assistant area auditors are to:

- Provide training on audits and financial policies to priesthood leaders, clerks, audit committees, and stake auditors.
- Follow up on missing audits unresolved audit exceptions.
- Encourage financial oversight by leaders and clerks.
- Perform special audits as assigned.

**34.9.5****Loss, Theft, Embezzlement, or Misappropriation of Church Funds**

If Church funds have been lost or stolen, or if a leader has embezzled or misappropriated Church funds, the stake president or chairman of the stake



audit committee should be notified promptly. He notifies the Church Auditing Department (or the area controller if the unit is outside the United States and Canada). The Church Auditing Department (or area controller) sends a loss report form to the stake president or chairman of the audit committee. Under the direction of the Church Auditing Department (or the area controller), the stake president or chairman of the audit committee ensures that the matter is properly investigated and the loss form is properly completed and submitted.

If a major misuse of funds is discovered, the stake president or chairman of the audit committee also notifies the Area Presidency.

#### **34.9.6**

### **Stake Clerk or Assistant Stake Clerk Assigned to Finances**

When assigned by the stake audit committee, the stake clerk or the assistant stake clerk assigned to finances should train wards in proper financial policy and procedures related to exceptions disclosed by audits.

#### **34.9.7**

### **For More Information**

More information on audit committees, auditors, and audit procedures is available in the Help Center at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Stake audit committees may direct questions to their assistant area auditor.

#### **34.10**

### **Taxes**

The tax information in this section applies only in the United States and Canada. If priesthood leaders in the United States and Canada need additional information, they should contact:

Tax Administration  
50 East North Temple Street, Room 2225

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0022

Telephone: 1-801-240-3003 or 1-800-453-3860,  
extension 2-3003

Priesthood leaders outside the United States and Canada should contact the assigned area office to resolve questions on taxes.

#### **34.10.1**

### **Tax-Exempt Status**

The Church normally is exempt from paying sales, property, income, and other taxes because it is a religious organization. Church buildings and other property are to be used for the purposes of worship, religious instruction, and other Church-related activities. Stake and ward leaders ensure that Church facilities are not used for political, business, or investment purposes as outlined in 35.4. To do so would violate laws that permit tax exemption of Church property.

It is important that stake and ward leaders follow these guidelines to preserve the Church's tax-exempt status. If one stake or ward misuses the Church's tax-exempt status, other Church units could be affected.

#### **34.10.2**

### **Sales and Use Tax**

Sales and use tax laws and how they apply to the Church vary by country and by state. Leaders should contact the Church's Tax Administration Division or the assigned area office to see whether the Church is exempt or must pay such taxes.

#### **34.10.3**

### **Property Tax**

The Church's Tax Administration Division files all property tax exemptions and pays all required property taxes. No action is required by local leaders.

35.

## Physical Facilities

35.1

### Purpose

The Church purchases land and provides facilities to give Church members places where they can worship, teach, learn, pray together, make and re-new covenants, and receive sacred ordinances. Each Church facility should (1) provide a spiritual setting for members to worship and (2) present an image of reverence and dignity in the community.

35.2

### Organization

35.2.1

#### Meetinghouse Facilities Department

Under the direction of the Presiding Bishopric, the Meetinghouse Facilities Department establishes policies and operating procedures that assist in providing facilities for Church members worldwide.

35.2.2

#### Area Offices

Area Presidencies and directors for temporal affairs are responsible for the purchase and operation of Church property. These properties include meetinghouses, institutes of religion, mission homes and offices, welfare operations, and others.

Local facilities personnel serve under the direction of the director for temporal affairs.

35.2.3

#### Stake Presidency

Members of the stake presidency ensure that Church facilities are appropriately used, cared for,

and protected. They teach leaders and members their responsibilities for using and caring for these facilities. They assign a high councilor to be the stake physical facilities representative. They meet with him as needed to review needs and projects.

35.2.4

#### Stake Physical Facilities Representative

The stake physical facilities representative (a high councilor) assists the stake presidency in physical facilities matters as follows:

- He helps teach and implement meetinghouse use and care standards.
- He coordinates the distribution and control of keys.
- He coordinates the instruction of ward building representatives in their duties.
- He participates in annual meetinghouse inspections conducted by the facilities manager, unless the stake presidency designates an alternate to participate.

35.2.5

#### Agent Bishop

If more than one ward meets in a building, the stake presidency assigns one bishop to be the agent bishop. He coordinates assignments for member participation in meetinghouse care and maintenance. He also coordinates safety and security procedures for the meetinghouse. In addition, he coordinates scheduling of the building with the stake and other wards that use it, though he may assign another member to do the scheduling.

**35.2.6****Bishopric**

Members of the bishopric are responsible for the use, care, and security of the meetinghouse. They teach ward members how to use and care for it. They organize member participation in meetinghouse care and maintenance, making assignments as needed. They also distribute meetinghouse keys.

Members of the bishopric ensure that appropriate safety precautions are taken in the meetinghouse and on the grounds (see 35.3.5).

**35.2.7****Ward Building Representative**

Each ward should have a ward building representative. The bishop may appoint a member of the bishopric to serve in this position, or the bishopric may call another member to do so.

The ward building representative helps the bishopric with meetinghouse responsibilities such as energy conservation, safety, security, snow removal (if applicable), and member participation in cleaning and maintenance. He takes care of building-related needs during meetings, activities, and emergencies. If needed, he receives instruction from the stake physical facilities representative in operating sound, heating, air conditioning, and other building systems.

**35.2.8****Members**

Priesthood leaders emphasize that member participation is a key factor in meetinghouse care and maintenance. Members are encouraged to provide individual or group services, depending on their skills and abilities.

**35.3****Administration of Physical Facilities****35.3.1****Use and Care of Meetinghouses**

Local Church leaders and members are responsible for the use and care of meetinghouses. They are assisted by local facilities personnel. Leaders strive to ensure that meetinghouses and grounds are always neat, clean, attractive, and in good repair. Church facilities should reflect proper care and respect in every way.

Church members, including youth, should help clean and care for meetinghouses. As members provide such service, their reverence for the Lord's house deepens. Where possible, members should fulfill this responsibility as part of weekly events when they are already at the meetinghouse. Members may also be asked to help clean other Church facilities.

**35.3.2****Meetinghouse Maintenance and Inspection**

The facilities manager inspects each meetinghouse annually. The stake physical facilities representative, or an alternate who is designated by the stake president, participates in these inspections. He should have full authorization to act on behalf of the stake presidency in this capacity. Those who participate in these inspections identify building maintenance needs and make plans for repairing or renewing its systems and components and for making other needed improvements.

**35.3.3****Meetinghouse Planning**

The stake presidency provides information to the Area Presidency that will assist the director for

temporal affairs in preparing and updating a master plan of projected needs for future building sites and new or additional meetinghouse space.

#### 35.3.4

### Energy and Water Conservation

The Church incurs substantial utility costs for meetinghouses. Leaders can help reduce these costs substantially by teaching members to turn off lights and equipment when they are not needed and to follow other energy and water conservation practices. Leaders ensure that lighting, heating, air conditioning, equipment, and water are used as economically as possible.

As needed, a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor may call a stake building specialist for water and energy conservation for each meetinghouse and recreational property in the stake. These specialists work under the direction of the stake physical facilities representative.

Leaders are also encouraged to follow the energy and water conservation initiatives of local governments.

#### 35.3.5

### Safety and Security

Leaders instruct members—*especially women and youth*—not to be alone in Church buildings.

Leaders should take reasonable measures to keep hallways, stairs, stairwells, exit doors, utility rooms, and sidewalks free of obstructions and other hazards. Leaders also ensure that hazardous materials or flammable items such as equipment fuel, hay, straw, and cornstalks are not used or stored in meetinghouses (see also 35.4.2).

Leaders control key distribution and establish effective building lockup procedures. They also see that interior classrooms and other rooms that do not contain valuable items are left unlocked.

Leaders ensure that local emergency telephone numbers for the police, fire department, and ambulance are posted on or near each telephone with brief instructions. They report intruders to the police immediately.

#### 35.3.6

### Accident Reporting

Church activities should involve minimal risk of injury or illness to participants or of damage to property. During activities, leaders make every effort to ensure safety. By planning effectively and following safety precautions, leaders can minimize the risk of accidents.

The bishop or stake president should be notified promptly if:

- An accident, injury, or illness occurs on Church property or during a Church-sponsored activity.
- A person who was participating in a Church-sponsored activity is missing.
- Damage to private, public, or Church property occurs during a Church-sponsored activity.

If a person has been seriously injured or is missing, if property has been seriously damaged, or if legal action is threatened or anticipated, the stake president (or a bishop under his direction), promptly takes one of the following actions:

- In the United States or Canada, he notifies the Risk Management Division at Church headquarters (1-801-240-4049 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-4049; after business hours or on weekends, call 1-801-240-1000 or 1-800-453-3860, and the operator will contact someone immediately).
- Outside the United States and Canada, he notifies the area office.

Leaders also report injuries and damage involving Church facilities or property to the facilities manager.

Leaders should review the applicability of the Church Activity Medical Assistance Program if an injury occurred during a Church-sponsored activity, event, or assignment. For information about insurance, see 20.6.9.

The stake president (or a bishop under his direction) refers questions about safety issues or claims against the Church to the Risk Management Division or to the area office.

See 20.6.20 for additional instructions on how to proceed in case of an accident or emergency.

### 35.4

## Policies on Using Church Buildings and Other Property

Church buildings and other property are to be used for worship, religious instruction, and other Church-sponsored activities. Other meetinghouse uses are discouraged. On rare occasions the stake president may authorize credible, non-Church, non-profit groups to use a meetinghouse or its grounds temporarily (see *Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property*, 2). The following list provides examples of uses that are not approved:

- Renting or leasing Church facilities for commercial purposes.
- Promoting business ventures or investment enterprises, including posting commercial advertising or sponsoring commercial entertainment.
- Buying, selling, or promoting products, services, publications, or creative works or demonstrating wares.
- Holding unauthorized fundraising activities (see 20.6.8).
- 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 19.7).
- Holding regular community or club events that are not sponsored by the Church, such as Scout meetings and activities, or organized athletic events and practices.
- 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:
  - There is no reasonable alternative.
  - The officials and voters maintain Church standards in the building.
  - The event will not pose physical danger to the building.
  - 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 area office.

### 35.4.1

#### 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.

#### **35.4.2 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.

#### **35.4.3 Dedicating Buildings**

All new meetinghouses, as well as major additions that contain a chapel, a cultural hall, or an area larger than the existing structure, should be dedicated as soon as possible after the project is completed.

Smaller buildings such as mission homes, institutes, seminaries, and classroom or office additions to meetinghouses may also be dedicated if local leaders desire.

Final approval for dedication is given by the Area Presidency in coordination with the director for

temporal affairs. The Area Presidency works with the stake or mission president and indicates who is responsible for dedicating the building.

The program for a dedicatory service should be in keeping with the purpose of the event. It should not be lengthy or include extensive musical presentations. Sufficient time should be provided for the assigned leader to speak and to dedicate the building. Following the dedicatory prayer, there should be an appropriate hymn or musical selection and a short prayer to close the service.

Dedicatory prayers of buildings may be recorded with permission from the presiding authority.

Leased meetinghouses may be dedicated if all the following conditions are met:

1. All leased space, excluding necessary common areas (such as entries, hallways, and restrooms), is used exclusively by the Church.
2. The lease is for more than one year.
3. The Area Presidency approves of dedicating the leased meetinghouse.

If these conditions are met and the meetinghouse is dedicated, the prayer must include the language that the meetinghouse is dedicated “for the period of the lease.”

#### **35.4.4 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. For more information about emergencies, see 22.1.3.

#### **35.4.5 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, carrying lethal weapons on Church property, concealed or otherwise, is prohibited.

#### **35.4.6 Fires and Candles**

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

#### **35.4.7 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.

#### **35.4.8 Groundbreaking Services**

After a new building project is approved, local leaders may conduct a groundbreaking service in preparation for the construction. This service is not to be held on Sunday.

#### **35.4.9 Historic Preservation**

All questions about placing Church-owned property or buildings on national or local historic preservation lists or registries should be directed to Church

headquarters through the Area Presidency. For questions about marking, commemorating, or preserving other sites, artifacts, works of art, or documents, contact the Church History Department at 1-801-240-2272 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2272.

#### **35.4.10 Meetinghouse Construction, Rental, or Purchase**

For policies about construction, rental, or purchase of meetinghouses, see *Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property* or contact the director for temporal affairs.

#### **35.4.11 Meetinghouse Plans**

The Church has prepared a variety of standard meetinghouse plans to fit the circumstances and needs of members throughout the world. When a new meetinghouse is to be constructed, a suitable standard plan is selected. That plan outlines the policy for the rooms, features, and equipment that are included in the meetinghouse.

#### **35.4.12 Monday Nights**

See 20.6.10.

#### **35.4.13 Overnight Lodging or Camping**

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

#### **35.4.14 Parking Lots**

Use of Church parking lots should comply with the guidelines at the beginning of section 35.4. In addition, Church parking lots should not be used

for commuter parking without permission from the director for temporal affairs.

#### **35.4.15 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 29.3.1 and 29.6.4 for exceptions).

#### **35.4.16 Property Rights and Ownership**

All property assigned to or held for the benefit of local units belongs to the Church, not to the units. Nevertheless, local units have broad autonomy in using Church-owned property, including buildings, land, and other property, subject to the ownership and policies of the Church.

#### **35.4.17 Recreational Property Administration**

For information about administering recreational property, see *Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property* or contact the director for temporal affairs.

#### **35.4.18 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.

#### **35.4.19 Signs**

The name of the Church is to be displayed on all meetinghouses and other Church buildings in the approved language and logo. It is to be mounted on the building. Under certain conditions, the name of the Church may also be mounted on the grounds on a stand-alone sign.

#### **35.4.20 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.

#### **35.4.21 Using Meetinghouses outside of Stake Boundaries**

All meetinghouses within reasonable distance of a ward must be occupied to their designed capacity before additional facilities will be provided. When necessary, stake presidencies, in consultation with the Area Presidency, may assign wards to use meetinghouses in an adjacent stake. More than one stake may use a stake center if it is conveniently located.

#### **35.4.22 Weddings and Wedding Receptions**

A wedding ceremony or reception may be held in a Church building if it does not disrupt the schedule of regular Church functions. However, receptions may not be held in the chapel unless it is a



multipurpose area. Weddings and receptions should not be held on the Sabbath or on Monday evenings.

The Church does not permit its meetinghouses or other properties to be used for ceremonies, receptions, or other activities associated with same-sex marriages.

Those who are in charge of the wedding or reception are responsible for cleaning the areas they use in the building.



36.

## Creating, Changing, and Naming New Units

36.0

### Introduction

Church members belong to congregations based on where they live (see Mosiah 25:17–24). These congregations are necessary for organizing and doing the work of the Church under the proper priesthood authority. Leaders of congregations are given priesthood keys to authorize the performance of priesthood ordinances. Congregations also help members strengthen each other's faith as they worship God, learn the teachings of Jesus Christ, and serve.

Church congregations (also called units) include stakes, districts, wards, and branches. They are created, changed, or discontinued only as needed.

Leaders work to increase the spiritual strength of members before proposing to create a new unit or change a unit's boundary. New units should be created only when the existing units are sufficiently strong.

For support in the United States and Canada, call 1-801-240-1007. Outside the United States and Canada, call the area office.

**36.1**

## Creating or Changing Stakes and Districts

Stakes are created from districts or by dividing existing stakes. A stake or mission president may

propose creating a new stake. He first ensures that it will meet the minimum requirements shown in the following table.

### Minimum Requirements to Create a Stake

	<b>U.S. and Canada</b>	<b>All other countries</b>
Number of members (active and less active)	3,000	1,900
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	180	120
Number of wards	5	5

Districts are created from branches in a mission or an existing stake. There is not a minimum number of members or branches needed to create a district.

A district must have the level of strength needed for a stake for at least six months before a mission president can propose making it a stake.

Boundaries of a stake or district follow the boundaries of the units that are within it. To propose changing stake or district boundaries or transferring a unit to a neighboring stake or district, the stake or mission presidents involved plan and coordinate the recommendation.

A stake or mission president starts a new proposal at “Boundary and Leadership Proposals.” If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link.

Approval of proposed stake changes comes from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. Generally, they make a decision within six weeks of receiving a completed proposal.

**36.2**

## Creating or Changing Wards and Branches in Stakes

Wards and branches in stakes are created from existing units. A stake president may propose creating a new ward or branch in the stake. He first ensures that the new unit will meet the minimum requirements shown in the following tables.

## Minimum Requirements to Create a Ward

	U.S. and Canada	All other countries
Number of members (active and less active)	300	150
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	1 for every 20 members (active and less active). There must be a minimum of 20.	1 for every 20 members (active and less active). There must be a minimum of 15.

## Minimum Requirements to Create a Branch in a Stake

Number of members (active and less active)	20
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	4

A stake president may propose changing a branch into a ward when the unit meets the minimum requirements and he has identified a candidate who could serve as bishop.

A stake president may propose realigning or discontinuing wards and branches when there is a clear need.

A stake president starts a new proposal at “Boundary and Leadership Proposals.” If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link.

Only the First Presidency can approve the proposal. Generally, they make a decision within four weeks of receiving a completed proposal.

### 36.3

## Creating or Changing Branches in Missions

A mission president may propose creating new branches in a mission. There is not a minimum number of members needed to create a branch in a mission. However, new branches generally should

have at least four priesthood holders. At least one should be an active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

A mission president starts a new proposal at “Boundary and Leadership Proposals.” If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link.

The Area Presidency may give final approval or denial of a mission president’s proposal to:

- Create and name a new branch in a mission.
- Discontinue a branch in a mission.
- Change branch boundaries in a mission if the change does not affect a stake, a district, or another mission.

The Area Presidency must submit the approved proposal to Church headquarters for processing before the branch can be created or changed in the Church’s systems.

The Area Presidency may endorse *but not give final approval* of a mission president’s proposal to:

- Transfer a branch to another stake, district, or mission.
- Change the name of an existing branch in a mission.
- Change branch boundaries in a mission if the change would affect a stake, a district, or another mission.
- Create or change a mission branch for young single adults or single adults; members who do not speak the local native language; members who are in care centers, treatment programs, or prisons; or members in the military.

In these situations, the Area Presidency reviews the proposal, and if they endorse it, they submit it for approval. Only the First Presidency can give final approval. Generally, they make a decision within four weeks of receiving a completed proposal.

### 36.4

## Naming Church Units

The name of a unit should help identify it to those who live in the area. Generally, the names of existing units should not be changed.

If a stake or mission president desires only to change a unit name, he does not need to use the online system. He submits the proposal by calling 1-801-240-1007. Outside the United States and Canada, he calls the area office.

If a unit name needs to be changed because of a boundary realignment, the stake or mission president starts a new proposal by using the online system at Boundary and Leadership Proposals. If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link.

Only the First Presidency can approve these proposals.

Area Presidencies may approve proposals to create and name new branches in missions (see 36.3).



**36.4.1****Naming Stakes and Districts**

The first word in the stake or district name is one of the following:

- The city in which the stake or district headquarters is located
- Another city in the stake or district that is well known to the members
- A geographic feature within the stake or district boundaries

In the United States and Canada, the second word is the state or province in which the stake or district is located. In other countries, the second word is the name of the country.

When more than one stake or district is in the same city, the third word is an identifying characteristic within the unit boundaries. Some allowable identifying characteristics for stake and district names are shown below:

- Compass directions (north, south, east, or west)
- Community or neighborhood
- Geographic feature

Some identifying characteristics that are *not* allowed for stake and district names are shown below:

- Other directional terms (for example, southwest)
- Names of people

When the name of a city is the same as the state, province, or country, it is not repeated in the name. For example:

- Idaho Falls Taylor Mountain Stake, *not* Idaho Falls Idaho Taylor Mountain Stake
- México City Azteca Stake, *not* México City México Azteca Stake

**36.4.2****Naming Wards and Branches**

A ward or branch is named after an identifying characteristic within its boundaries. Some allowable identifying characteristics for ward and branch names are shown below:

- City
- Community or neighborhood
- Street
- Park
- School
- Geographic feature

Some identifying characteristics that are *not* allowed for ward and branch names are shown below:

- Compass directions (for example, east or northwest)
- Names of people
- Names based only on a view (for example, Temple View, Mountain View, or River View)
- Combining two names to create a new name

The name of only one identifying characteristic is used in the ward or branch name. If there is more than one ward or branch with the same name, a number is added as part of the name, such as Preston 1st Ward and Preston 2nd Ward.

The name of the ward or branch should be in the language of the area. If the language does not use the Roman alphabet, a translation using Roman characters should be included in the application.

## 36.5 Implementing Proposed Changes

### 36.5.1 Stake and District Changes

The approval letter for creating or discontinuing a stake or district generally indicates the date the changes will be made. This date should not be announced until the assigned General Authority discusses the details with the stake or mission president. The actual changes are not announced until the stake or district conference.

Stake or mission presidents notify Church headquarters or their area office after the changes have been made.

### 36.5.2 Ward and Branch Changes

After a stake or mission president receives approval for ward or branch changes, he generally has

90 days to present the changes to the members for their sustaining vote. If he needs to delay longer than 90 days, he requests permission from the Office of the First Presidency.

Stake or mission presidents notify Church headquarters or their area office after the changes have been made. Maps and units are not updated until they are recorded by Church headquarters.

## 36.6 Basic Unit Program

The Church has developed the Basic Unit Program for use by some small branches or small authorized gatherings of members, known as groups (see 37.7 for more information on groups). An Area Presidency may authorize the use of the Basic Unit Program in small branches or groups where any of the following conditions apply:

- The Church is in its beginning stages.
- Members are scattered geographically.



- The number of members is small, and leadership is just beginning to develop.
- Members have special language needs or are in care centers, treatment programs, or prisons.

An Area Presidency may also authorize the use of the Basic Unit Program in missions or stakes where these conditions exist.

Guidelines for this program are provided in the *Basic Unit Program Guidebook*. Other information is provided in the *Branch Guidebook*, *Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders' Guidebook*, *Family Guidebook*, and *Teaching Guidebook*.





37.

## Specialized Stakes, Wards, and Branches

37.0

### Introduction

A stake president may propose creating specialized stakes, wards, and branches to serve members as outlined in this chapter. For information about creating specialized units in a mission, see 36.3.

A stake president starts a new proposal at Boundary and Leadership Proposals. If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link. Only the First Presidency can approve the proposal.

For support in the United States and Canada, call 1-801-240-1007. Outside the United States and Canada, call the area office.

37.1

### Language Wards and Branches

A stake president may propose creating a language ward or branch for stake members (1) who do not speak the local native language or (2) who use sign language.

A stake president may also propose creating a language ward or branch that includes members

from one or more neighboring stakes. The stake presidents involved plan and coordinate the

recommendation. One of the participating stakes will be responsible for the ward or branch.

## Minimum Requirements to Create a Language Ward or Branch in a Stake

	Ward	Branch
Number of members (active and less active)	125	No minimum
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	1 for every 20 members (active and less active). There must be a minimum of 15.	4

Boundaries for language units generally follow the boundaries of conventional wards, branches, and stakes.

The children and youth of a language unit may combine classes with a conventional unit if desired (see 29.10).

See 36.3 for language branches in a mission. See 36.4.2 for ward and branch naming guidelines.

### 37.1.1

#### Membership in a Language Ward or Branch

- Members must live within the boundaries of the language ward or branch.
- Members may choose to be members of the language unit or their conventional unit.
- Each person's membership record should be in the unit he or she is attending.

### 37.1.2

#### Leadership in a Language Ward or Branch

- Generally, the bishop or branch president and his counselors are called from within the boundaries of the language unit. Exceptions may be made for leaders who do not live within the unit's

boundaries if they live within the stake that is responsible for it.

- First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop.
- Generally, other leaders and teachers are called from among the membership of the ward or branch.

### 37.2

#### Young Single Adult Wards and Branches in a Conventional Stake

A stake president may propose creating a young single adult ward or branch (for members ages 18–30) if the stake has enough active young single adults who would like to attend.

A stake president may also propose creating a ward or branch that includes members from one or more neighboring stakes. The stake presidents involved

plan and coordinate the recommendation. One of the participating stakes will be responsible for the ward or branch.

A conventional stake with boundaries that overlap those of a young single adult stake should not have its own young single adult unit.

## Minimum Requirements to Create a Young Single Adult Unit in a Stake

	Ward	Branch
Number of <i>active</i> members	125	50
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	1 for every 20 members (active and less active). There must be a minimum of 15.	4

A young single adult ward usually should not have more than 225 *active* members.

See 36.4.2 for ward and branch naming guidelines.

### 37.2.1

#### Membership in a Young Single Adult Ward or Branch in a Conventional Stake

- Members must be young single adults (ages 18–30) who live within the boundaries of the young single adult ward or branch.
- Young single adults may choose to be members of the young single adult unit or their conventional unit.
- Each person’s membership record should be in the unit he or she is attending.
- If the stake president feels that it would help a less-active young single adult in his stake, he may approve transferring the membership record from the conventional unit to the young single adult unit. When the less-active member becomes active, he or she may choose to attend the young single adult unit or the conventional unit.
- Young single adult parents (ages 18–30) who have children at home remain in their

conventional unit. The parents may attend the activities of the young single adult unit.

- Members do not attend a young single adult unit when they marry or reach the age of 31. See 37.5 for single adult members ages 31–45.

### 37.2.2

#### Leadership in a Young Single Adult Ward or Branch in a Conventional Stake

- The bishop or branch president should be a married man of mature judgment and experience. First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop.
- The bishop’s counselors may include young or older married men and must be high priests. The first counselor is usually a more experienced leader. A branch president and his counselors may be high priests or elders.
- Generally, the bishop or branch president and his counselors are called from within the boundaries of the young single adult unit. Exceptions may be made for young single adult units that serve universities and colleges.



- Other leaders and teachers are called from among the young single adults who are members of the unit.

**37.3**

**Young Single Adult Stakes and Their Wards and Branches**

Where large numbers of young single adults live in one area, usually near universities or colleges, one or more young single adult stakes may be organized.

**Minimum Requirements to Create a Young Single Adult Stake, Ward, or Branch**

Young single adult stake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,500 members (active and less active)</li> <li>• 5 wards</li> </ul>
Young single adult ward in a young single adult stake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 125 members (active)</li> <li>• 1 active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holder who is capable of serving in a leadership position for every 20 members (active and less active). There must be a minimum of 15.</li> </ul>
Young single adult branch in a young single adult stake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 members (active)</li> <li>• 4 active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders who are capable of serving in leadership positions</li> </ul>

A conventional stake with boundaries that overlap those of a young single adult stake should not have its own young single adult unit.

A young single adult unit that is in a conventional stake may be transferred to a young single adult stake only when:

- Its boundaries are adjacent to the young single adult stake.
- The presidents of both stakes recommend the transfer.

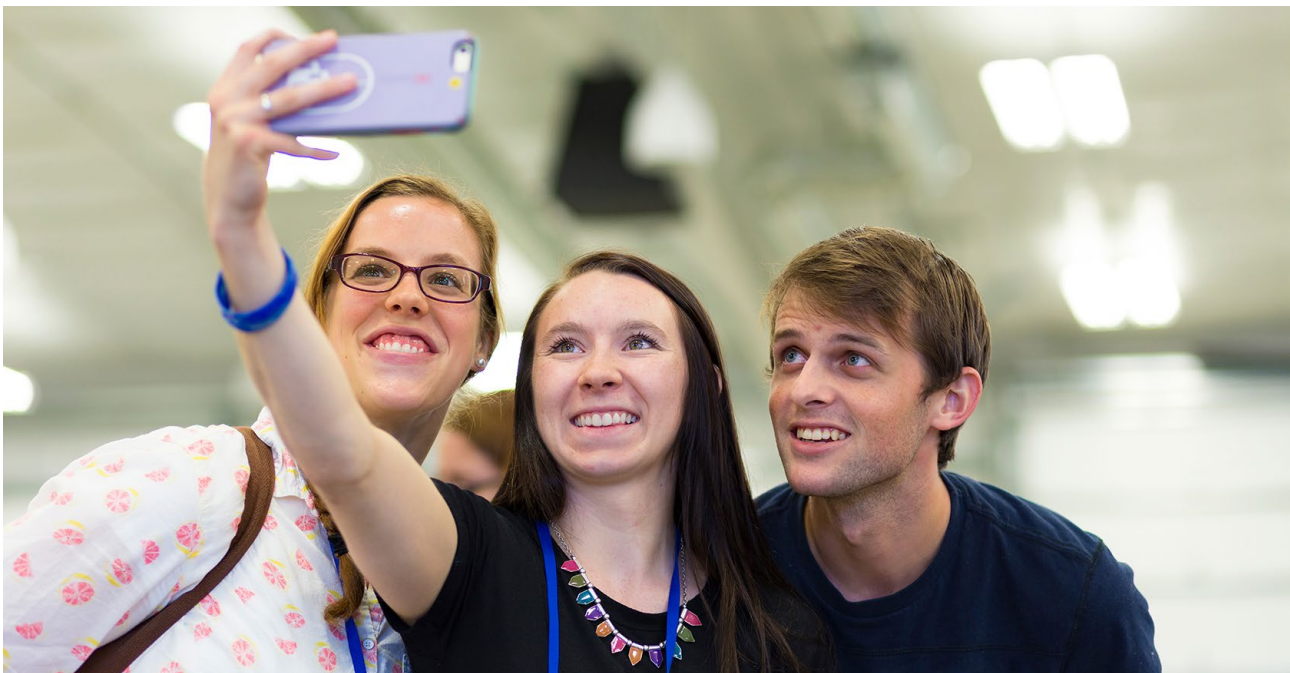
See 36.4.1 and 36.4.2 for stake and ward naming guidelines.

### 37.3.1

#### Membership in a Young Single Adult Stake and Its Wards or Branches

- Members must be young single adults (ages 18–30) who live within the boundaries of the young single adult ward or branch.

- All active and less-active young single adults within the stake boundaries who are not living at home with their parents are members of the young single adult stake unless they choose to attend their conventional unit.
- Young single adults who live at home with their parents may choose to be members of the young single adult unit or their conventional unit.
- Each person’s membership record should be in the unit he or she is attending.
- Young single adult parents (ages 18–30) who have children at home remain in their conventional unit. The parents may attend the activities of the young single adult unit.
- Members do not attend a young single adult unit when they marry or reach the age of 31. See 37.5 for single adult members (ages 31–45).



**37.3.2**

**Leadership in a Young Single Adult Stake and Its Wards or Branches**

- The stake presidency, high councilors, stake patriarch, bishoprics, branch presidencies, and stake Relief Society presidency should be married people of mature judgment and experience. First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop.
- A bishop’s or branch president’s counselors may include married students or young or older married men. *They may be high priests or elders.* The first counselor is usually a more experienced leader. A branch president and his counselors may be high priests or elders.
- The stake presidency, high councilors, stake patriarch, bishoprics, branch presidencies, and stake Relief Society presidency may be called from a broader geographical area than the boundaries of

the stake, as determined by the Area Presidency. Those who extend such callings first consult with the person’s stake president to obtain approval. For guidelines, see chapter 30.

- Quorum of the Twelve approval is required before calling a patriarch.
- In wards and branches, other leaders and teachers are called from among the young single adults who are members of the unit.

**37.4**

**Married Student Stakes and Wards**

Married student stakes and wards may be created to serve the married student members who live close to a university or college.

**Minimum Requirements to Create a Married Student Stake or Ward**

Married student stake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,500 members (active and less active)</li> <li>• 5 wards</li> </ul>
Married student ward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 125 members (active and less active)</li> <li>• 1 active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holder who is capable of serving in a leadership position for every 20 members (active and less active). There must be a minimum of 15.</li> </ul>

See 36.4.1 and 36.4.2 for stake and ward naming guidelines.

**37.4.1**

**Membership in Married Student Stakes and Wards**

- Members must be married students who live within the boundaries of the married student ward.

- Married students may choose to be members of the married student ward or their conventional unit.
- Membership records should be in the unit the family is attending.



**37.4.2  
Leadership in Married Student Stakes  
and Wards**

See 37.3.2 and apply the same guidelines.

**37.5  
Single Adult Wards**

Generally, single adult members (ages 31–45) are best served in conventional units. As an exception,

a stake president may suggest creating a single adult ward.

A stake president may also suggest creating a single adult ward with members from one or more neighboring stakes. The stake presidents involved plan and coordinate the recommendation. One of the participating stakes will be responsible for the ward.

**Minimum Requirements to Create a Single Adult Ward in a Stake**

Number of members (active and less active)	125
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	1 for every 20 members (active and less active). There must be a minimum of 15.

See 36.4.2 for ward naming guidelines.

**37.5.1****Membership in a Single Adult Ward**

- Members must be single adults (ages 31–45) who live within the boundaries of the single adult ward.
- Single adults may choose to be members of the single adult ward or their conventional unit.
- Each person's membership record should be in the unit he or she is attending.
- Single adult parents (ages 31–45) who have children at home remain in their conventional unit. The parents may attend the activities of the single adult ward.
- Members do not attend a single adult ward when they marry or reach the age of 46.

**37.5.2****Leadership in a Single Adult Ward**

- The bishop and his counselors should be married high priests of mature judgment and experience. First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop.
- Other leaders and teachers are called from among the single adults who are members of the ward.

**37.6****Wards and Branches for Members in Special Circumstances**

A stake president may suggest creating wards or branches for members in special circumstances, such as those who are in care centers, treatment programs, or prisons.

Generally, leaders who are called to serve in these units should live within the stake that is responsible for the unit.

See 36.3 for information about branches in a mission for young single adults or single adults; members who do not speak the local native language; members who are in care centers, treatment programs, or prisons; or members in the military.

See 36.4.2 for ward and branch naming guidelines.

**37.7****Groups in Stakes, Missions, and Areas**

Groups are small authorized gatherings of members overseen by a bishop, branch president, or mission president. The stake or mission president may recommend creating a group in the following circumstances:

- Travel for its potential members to meet with a ward or branch is difficult.
- A small number of members speak a language that is different from those in the ward or branch.
- Members in the military are best served by being in a group (see 38.10).

To propose creating a group, the stake or mission president submits a request to the Area Presidency. Only the Area Presidency can approve the request.

A group must have at least two members. One must be a worthy priest in the Aaronic Priesthood or a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

In stakes, the stake president assigns a bishop or branch president to organize and supervise the group. In missions, the mission president assigns a branch president to organize and supervise it.

Generally, a group can be created to serve members who live in one or more units within a stake or district. Group membership is limited to those who live within the boundaries of the participating unit or units. Groups do not cross stake or district boundaries.



The stake president, mission president, bishop, or branch president calls a group leader and sets him apart. The group leader organizes and conducts group meetings, which include the administration of the sacrament.

A group leader does not hold priesthood keys, and he is not authorized to:

- Receive tithes and offerings.
- Counsel members about serious sin.
- Give informal or formal membership restrictions.
- Perform other duties that require priesthood keys.

Typically, groups use the Basic Unit Program (see 36.6).

Membership records of group members are kept in the ward or branch that supervises the group.

Church headquarters does not assign a unit number to groups.

When a group qualifies, the stake or mission president may propose for it to become a branch.

### **37.8**

## Church Units at Military Installations

For instructions on creating wards, branches, and service member groups that meet on military installations, see 38.10.4.

38.

## Church Policies and Guidelines

38.1

### Church Participation

Our Father in Heaven loves all His children. “All are alike unto God,” and He invites all “to come unto him and partake of his goodness” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Church leaders and members are often asked who can attend meetings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who can become Church members, and who can attend a temple.

38.1.1

#### Attendance at Church Meetings

The Savior taught that His disciples should love their neighbors (see Matthew 22:39). Paul invited new converts to “no more be strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints” (Ephesians 2:19). The Savior also taught that Church members are not to “cast any one out from . . . public meetings, which are held before the world” (Doctrine and Covenants 46:3).

All are welcome to attend sacrament meeting, other Sunday meetings, and social events of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The presiding officer is responsible to ensure that all who attend are respectful of the sacred setting.

Those who attend should avoid disruptions or distractions contrary to worship or other purposes of the meeting. All age and behavior requirements of different Church meetings and events should be respected. That requires refraining from overt romantic behavior and from dress or grooming that causes distraction. It also precludes making political statements or speaking of sexual orientation or other personal characteristics in a way that detracts from meetings focused on the Savior.

If there is inappropriate behavior, the bishop or stake president gives private counsel in a spirit of love. He encourages those whose behavior is improper for the occasion to focus on helping maintain a sacred space for everyone present with a special emphasis on worshipping Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Church meetinghouses remain private property subject to Church policies. Persons unwilling to follow these guidelines will be asked in a respectful way not to attend Church meetings and events.

38.1.2

#### Becoming a Church Member

Membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is available to people who “come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits,” “are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ,” and desire to make and keep sacred baptismal covenants (Doctrine and Covenants 20:37).

A minor child age 8 or older may be baptized with the permission of his or her custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s). The custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should understand the Church doctrine their child will be taught and support the child in making and keeping the baptismal covenant.

38.1.3

#### Temple Attendance

Temples are holy places of worship in which essential ordinances are received and sacred covenants are made. To members of the Church, temples are houses of God. Because of this sacredness and the covenants made, only members of the Church with a current temple recommend may attend the temple. Members may receive a temple recommend when

they faithfully keep the required commandments and live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### 38.1.4

### Unmarried Member Participation and Blessings

All members, even if they have never married or are without family in the Church, should strive for the ideal of living in an eternal family. This means preparing to be sealed as a worthy husband or wife and to become a loving father or mother. For some, these blessings will not be fulfilled until the next life, but the ultimate goal is the same for all.

Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, provided they keep the covenants they have made with God (see Mosiah 2:41).

#### 38.1.5

### Unwed Parents under Age 18

An unwed young man under age 18 who is going to become a father may participate in his Aaronic Priesthood quorum or in the elders quorum. This decision is left to the prayerful discretion of the young man, his parents, and the bishop.

An unwed young woman under age 18 who is going to become a mother may participate in Young Women or in Relief Society. This decision is left to the prayerful discretion of the young woman, her parents, and the bishop.

In making this decision, youth, parents, and leaders consider the following:

- If the youth participates in youth classes and activities, the child should not accompany him or her.
- Older youth who choose to raise the child may benefit from being welcomed into the

elders quorum as prospective elders or into Relief Society.

#### 38.2

### Ordinances and Blessings Policies

Instructions for performing ordinances and blessings are outlined in the following publications:

- Chapter 18 of this handbook
- *Family Guidebook*, pages 18–25
- *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part B*, pages 42–47

Policies that pertain to temple ordinances are outlined in chapters 27 and 28 of this handbook.

#### 38.2.1

### General Policies

#### 38.2.1.1

### Performing or Participating in an Ordinance or Blessing

For information about who may perform or participate in an ordinance or blessing, see the instructions in chapter 18 for each ordinance and blessing.

#### 38.2.1.2

### Translating and Interpreting Ordinances and Blessings

If necessary, a presiding officer may ask a priesthood holder to translate or interpret orally an ordinance or blessing into a language that the recipient understands. If a priesthood holder is not available, a presiding officer may ask a capable man or woman to do the translation.

A presiding officer may also 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 capable man or woman to do the interpretation.

For information about translation and sign language interpretation of patriarchal blessings, see 38.2.12.4 and 38.2.12.5.

### **38.2.1.3 Records of Ordinances**

When a person receives a saving ordinance or a priesthood ordination, a clerk from the ward where the person's membership record is held:

- Obtains information about the ordinance or ordination.
- Ensures that this information is recorded on the person's membership record and on the certificate.

The complete date that the following ordinances were performed should be recorded on a person's membership record: baptism, confirmation, priesthood ordinations, temple endowment, sealing to parents, and temple sealing. For Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations, the name of the person who performed each ordination should also be recorded.

### **38.2.1.4 Performing an Ordinance or Blessing in Another Ward**

For information about a priesthood holder acting as voice when performing an ordinance outside his home ward, see the instructions in chapter 18 for each ordinance and blessing.

### **38.2.1.5 Recording the Words of Ordinances and Blessings**

Patriarchal blessings are recorded and transcribed. The exact wording of other ordinances and blessings

is not recorded in writing or by recording device. However, a family may record father's blessings.

### **38.2.1.6 Photographs and Video Recordings of Ordinances and Blessings**

No one should take photographs or video recordings of priesthood ordinances or blessings or of baptismal services.

### **38.2.1.7 Ordinances for Adopted Children**

After a legal adoption is final, adopted children receive ordinances in the surname of their adoptive parents. An older child who is adopted after baptism is not baptized again. A clerk changes the membership record to conform to the decree of adoption.

For information about the sealing of adopted or foster children, see 38.5.2.4.

### **38.2.1.8 Ordinances for Persons Who Have Intellectual Disabilities**

When considering whether to perform ordinances for a person who has an intellectual disability, priesthood leaders and parents prayerfully consider the person's wishes and degree of understanding. Ordinances should not be withheld if the person is worthy, wants to receive them, and shows an appropriate degree of responsibility and accountability.

The ordinances of salvation and exaltation are not performed for persons who have intellectual disabilities that make them not accountable and unable to make covenants with God. Nor are these ordinances performed for children who die before age eight. These persons are "saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven" (Doctrine and Covenants 137:10; see also Moroni 8:8–12).

A bishop consults with his stake president if he has questions about specific persons. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency if necessary.

If leaders determine that a person should receive an ordinance, they help him or her understand and prepare for it.

Information about individual ordinances for persons who have intellectual disabilities is provided as follows:

- For baptism, see 38.2.3.5.
- For priesthood ordination, see 38.2.5.4.
- For patriarchal blessings, see the fourth paragraph under 38.2.12.1.
- For temple ordinances, see 26.3.5.

#### 38.2.1.9

##### **Ordinances and Blessings Performed by and for Persons Who Have Physical Disabilities**

Persons who have physical disabilities, such as the loss of one or both arms, paraplegia, quadriplegia, deafness, or a hearing impairment, may perform and receive ordinances and blessings. Leaders make the necessary arrangements for these persons to participate in ways that their disabilities allow. If leaders have questions they cannot resolve, the stake president refers the questions to the Office of the First Presidency.

Persons who are deaf or hearing impaired may communicate through sign language when performing or receiving an ordinance or blessing. A priesthood leader who oversees an ordinance ensures that the recipient can understand it through an interpreter or by other means (see 38.2.1.2).

#### 38.2.1.10

##### **Procedure When an Ordinance Is Not Valid**

*Ordinances for Which There Is No Valid Record.* For record-keeping purposes, an ordinance is not considered valid unless at least the correct year it was performed is recorded on the membership record. If the date is missing or incorrect, the ordinance can be validated by the member showing the bishop the original certificate that was issued when the ordinance was performed. The bishop then asks a clerk to record this information on the membership record.

If the information cannot be found in Church records, the bishop or clerk may try to verify the ordinance by obtaining the testimony of two witnesses. The two witnesses should:

- Have been 10 years of age or older when the ordinance was performed.
- Have seen or heard the ordinance.
- Be Church members of record at the time they give their testimony.
- Give their testimony in writing, stating either (1) the complete date the ordinance was performed or (2) the year it was performed and the person who performed it.
- Sign their written testimony in the presence of a member of the bishopric or a higher Church authority.

If this testimony is obtained, the bishop may authorize a clerk to record or correct the date on the membership record. The written testimony may then be discarded.

If the ordinance is not verified by an original certificate, a search of Church records, or the testimony of witnesses, it must be performed again to be considered valid.

If the member has received other ordinances after having received an invalid ordinance, they must be

ratified by the First Presidency to be considered valid. To request ratification, the stake president sends a letter to the Office of the First Presidency.

*Ordinances That Were Received out of Sequence.* An ordinance is not valid if a person received it out of sequence. For example, the endowment of a man is not valid if he received it before receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood. However, the First Presidency may ratify such an ordinance. To request ratification, the stake president sends a letter to the Office of the First Presidency.

*Ordinances That Were Performed before the Appropriate Age.* An ordinance is not valid if it was performed before the appropriate age. For example, a baptism is not valid if it was performed before the person was 8 years old. If no other ordinances have been received based on the invalid ordinance, it should be performed again. If other ordinances, such as priesthood ordination, have been received based on the invalid ordinance, those ordinances and the invalid ordinance must be ratified by the First Presidency to be valid. To request ratification, the stake president sends a letter to the Office of the First Presidency.

*Records of Ordinances That Were Performed Again.* If an ordinance was performed again to become valid, a clerk records the date it was performed again on the membership record even if it will appear out of sequence with the dates of other ordinances on the record.

## 38.2.2

### Naming and Blessing Children

The following policies apply to naming and blessing children in special circumstances. See 18.6 for instructions on naming and blessing children.

#### 38.2.2.1

##### Children Who Were Born out of Wedlock

Children who were born out of wedlock may be blessed in a sacrament meeting, usually a fast and

testimony meeting. If a family prefers, the bishop may authorize Melchizedek Priesthood holders to bless the child in the home, with a member of the bishopric presiding.

#### 38.2.2.2

##### Babies Who Are Critically Ill

If a newborn infant is critically ill, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder may perform the naming and blessing in the hospital or at home without previous authorization from the bishop. A person who does this notifies the bishop promptly so necessary records can be made.

#### 38.2.2.3

##### Children with a Nonmember Parent or Parents

When one or both of a child's custodial parents or legal guardians are not members of the Church and request that a child be blessed, the bishop should obtain verbal permission from both persons before the blessing. He explains that a membership record will be prepared for the child after the blessing. He also tells them:

- Ward members will contact them periodically.
- He or the ward missionaries will visit them and propose that the child be baptized when he or she reaches age 8.

## 38.2.3

### Baptism and Confirmation

#### 38.2.3.1

##### Children Who Are Members of Record

See 18.7 and 18.8.

**38.2.3.2****Converts**

The mission president holds the priesthood keys for baptizing converts in a mission (see the definition of converts in 18.7.1). Under his direction, a full-time missionary conducts a baptism and confirmation interview for each candidate and authorizes the ordinances to take place. The mission president also oversees the recording of the ordinances by the mission staff so that a membership record can be created.

The full-time missionaries coordinate closely with the ward mission leader (if one is called) or the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work in the ward. Under the direction of the bishopric, this person plans and conducts baptismal services.

Converts are typically confirmed in any sacrament meeting in the ward where they live, preferably on the Sunday after their baptism. The bishop may grant exceptions for a convert to be confirmed at the baptismal service, for example if the number of confirmations would require too much time in sacrament meeting or to accommodate personal or family needs of the new convert.

Former members who are readmitted by baptism and confirmation after withdrawal or resignation of membership are not considered converts. Missionaries may not interview them for baptism. For information about readmitting former members by baptism and confirmation, see 32.16.

**38.2.3.3****Baptism and Confirmation Interviews**

An authorized priesthood leader or missionary interviews each person before baptism and confirmation as outlined in this section.

*Eight-Year-Old Children.* The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts interviews for the baptism and confirmation of:

- Children age 8 who are members of record.
- Children age 8 who are not members of record but have at least one parent or guardian who is a member.

The full-time missionaries teach and interview 8-year-old children whose parents are not members and children who will be 9 years old or older at the time of baptism.

A bishopric member who interviews a child for baptism ensures that he or she understands the purposes of baptism. He also ensures that each child understands the baptismal covenant and is committed to live by it. As guided by the Spirit, he could ask questions similar to the first two that are asked in convert baptism interviews (see “Convert Baptism Interviews” later in this section). In asking other questions, the interviewer should bear in mind that children are accounted as sinless before God until the age of 8.

*Converts.* The full-time missionary district leader normally interviews convert baptism candidates (as defined in 38.2.3.2). The zone leader conducts the interview if the person was taught by the district leader. Missionaries are authorized to conduct these interviews by delegation of authority from the mission president.

Each prospective convert should meet with the bishop before baptism and confirmation. However, the bishop does not interview such candidates for baptism, nor does he determine their worthiness.

Authorization from the mission president is required before a prospective convert may be baptized and confirmed if the person has ever committed a serious crime, participated in an abortion, or committed a same-sex sin. In these instances, the mission president conducts a searching interview and issues a Baptism and Confirmation Record if he determines that the person has repented and is worthy.

If necessary, the mission president may authorize one of his counselors to conduct the interview. Each interview must be authorized separately. The counselor who conducts it reports to the mission president, who may then authorize or deny the baptism and confirmation.

The mission president must conduct an interview and receive approval from the First Presidency before a prospective convert may be baptized and confirmed if the person:

- Has committed murder (see 38.2.3.13).
- Has been involved in the practice of plural marriage (see 38.2.3.8).
- Has completed transition to the opposite gender of his or her birth sex (see 38.2.3.14).
- Is currently on legal probation or parole (see 38.2.3.13).

*Convert Baptism Interviews.* The person who conducts a convert baptism and confirmation interview uses the following questions, with the guidance of the Spirit, to determine whether the candidate meets the qualifications described in Doctrine and Covenants 20:37 (see also Mosiah 18:8–10; Moroni 6:1–4). These questions should be adapted to the person's age and maturity.

1. Do you believe that God is our Eternal Father? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior and Redeemer of the world?
2. Do you believe that the Church and gospel of Jesus Christ have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith? Do you believe that [current Church President] is a prophet of God? What does this mean to you?
3. What does it mean to you to repent? Do you feel that you have repented of your past sins?
4. Have you ever committed a serious crime? If so, are you now on probation or parole? (For instructions if the person answers affirmatively,

see 38.2.3.13.) Have you ever participated in an abortion? Have you ever committed a same-sex sin?

5. You have been taught that membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints includes living gospel standards. What do you understand about the following standards? Are you willing to obey them?
  - a. The law of chastity, which prohibits any sexual relations outside the bonds of a legal marriage between a man and a woman
  - b. The law of tithing
  - c. The Word of Wisdom
  - d. Keeping the Sabbath day holy, including partaking of the sacrament weekly and rendering service to others
6. When you are baptized, you covenant with God that you are willing to take upon yourself the name of Christ and keep His commandments throughout your life. Are you ready to make this covenant and strive to be faithful to it?

After determining that a candidate is prepared for baptism, the interviewer fills out the Baptism and Confirmation Record according to instructions with the form. After a person is confirmed, the bishop and ward clerk ensure that the confirmation information is complete and correct. For more information about the Baptism and Confirmation Record, see 18.8.3.

#### **38.2.3.4**

#### **Baptismal Services and Baptism and Confirmation Guidelines**

For guidelines on baptismal services, see 18.7.2.

For guidelines on baptism and confirmation, see 18.7 and 18.8.



**38.2.3.5****Persons Who May Not Be Accountable**

Persons who have intellectual disabilities and cannot knowingly repent may be considered by the bishop as not accountable. These persons do not need to be baptized and confirmed, regardless of their age (see 38.2.1.8).

If a person later demonstrates an understanding of repentance and an appropriate degree of accountability and desire, he or she may be baptized and confirmed. If a person was baptized but later becomes intellectually disabled, the baptism and confirmation are still valid.

For additional guidelines, see 38.2.1.8. For information about the membership records of persons who may not be accountable, see 33.6.10.

**38.2.3.6****Minors**

A minor child, as defined by local laws, may be baptized and confirmed only when both of the following conditions are met:

1. Permission has been given by the custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s). They should understand the Church doctrine their child will be taught and support the child in making the baptismal covenant. The person who conducts the baptism and confirmation interview should ask for this permission to be in writing if he feels it will help prevent misunderstandings.
2. The person who conducts the interview discerns that there is clear evidence that the child understands the baptismal covenant and will make every effort to keep it through obeying the commandments, including faithfully attending Church meetings.

**38.2.3.7****Children Whose Parents Are Divorced**

A child whose parents are divorced may be baptized and confirmed only with the permission of the parent(s) with legal custody. If the mother has custody and has remarried and if the child is not formally adopted but has assumed the surname of the stepfather, the child may be baptized and confirmed in the name by which he or she is known. However, the child's legal name, as defined by local law or custom, should be recorded on the membership record and the baptism and confirmation certificate.

**38.2.3.8****Adults Involved in Plural Marriage**

An adult who has previously encouraged, taught, or been involved in the practice of plural marriage must receive approval from the First Presidency before he or she may be baptized and confirmed. The mission president may request this approval from the Office of the First Presidency. The request should provide information about the person's past involvement in plural marriage and his or her subsequent repentance and current family situation.

**38.2.3.9****Persons Who Are Married**

A married person must have the consent of his or her spouse before being baptized.

**38.2.3.10****Persons Who Have Been Cohabiting out of Wedlock**

A baptismal candidate who has been cohabiting out of wedlock with a person of the opposite gender must either marry the person or cease living with the person before he or she can be baptized.

**38.2.3.11****Persons Whose Church Membership Has Been Withdrawn or Who Resigned Membership**

Persons whose Church membership has been withdrawn or who resigned membership may be readmitted into the Church by baptism and confirmation. Instructions are provided in 32.16.

**38.2.3.12****Persons Who Have Been Involved in an Abortion**

See “Converts” in 38.2.3.3.

**38.2.3.13****Persons Who Have Been Convicted of Crimes**

Persons who have been convicted of crimes and seek baptism for the first time or baptism for readmission into the Church may not be baptized and confirmed until they complete their terms of imprisonment. Those who have been convicted of felonies or any crimes of immoral character may not be baptized and confirmed until they have also completed their terms of parole or probation resulting from their convictions (unless the First Presidency has granted an exception). They are encouraged to work closely with local priesthood leaders and to do everything they can to become worthy of baptism and confirmation.

Full-time missionaries are not to teach people who are in prison or jail.

A person who has been convicted of murder or who has confessed to it, even in private confessions to a priesthood leader, may not be baptized and confirmed unless the First Presidency gives permission. The request for permission must include all pertinent details as determined during a personal interview by the mission president (if the person is seeking baptism for the first time) or the bishop or stake president (if a former member is seeking readmission). As used here, murder does not

include police or military action in the line of duty. Abortion is not defined as murder for this purpose.

**38.2.3.14****Persons Who Identify as Transgender**

Mission presidents should counsel with the Area Presidency (see 38.6.22).

A person who is considering elective medical or surgical intervention for the purpose of attempting to transition to the opposite gender of his or her birth sex (“sex reassignment”) may not be baptized or confirmed.

Baptism and confirmation of a person who has completed sex reassignment through elective medical or surgical intervention requires the approval of the First Presidency. The mission president may request this approval if he has interviewed the person, found him or her to be otherwise worthy, and can recommend baptism. However, the person will be restricted from receiving or exercising the priesthood, receiving or using a temple recommend, and receiving some Church callings.

**38.2.4****The Sacrament**

See 18.9.

**38.2.5****Conferring the Priesthood and Ordaining to an Office****38.2.5.1****Melchizedek Priesthood Offices**

*Stake President’s and Bishop’s Responsibilities.* The stake president holds the priesthood keys for conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordaining to the offices of elder and high priest. However, the bishop usually initiates recommendations for these ordinations.

With the approval of the stake presidency, the bishop interviews the member as instructed on the Melchizedek Priesthood Ordination Record. Before doing so, he carefully reviews the person's membership record to verify that it does not include an annotation, an ordinance restriction, or a Church membership restriction.

After the bishop interviews the member, the stake president or one of his counselors conducts a thorough, searching interview as instructed on the Melchizedek Priesthood Ordination Record. He also makes sure the member understands the oath and covenant of the priesthood and agrees to live by it (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44).

After the interview, the stake presidency asks the high council to sustain the decision to ordain the person. A member of the stake presidency then presents the person for a sustaining vote in the general session of stake conference or in a stake general priesthood meeting (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:65, 67). The person should stand while the congregation gives a sustaining vote. The member of the stake presidency may say:

“We propose that [name] receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained an elder [or we propose that (name) be ordained a high priest]. Those in favor may manifest it by the uplifted hand. [Pause briefly for the sustaining vote.] Those opposed, if any, may manifest it. [Pause briefly to allow for a dissenting vote, if any.]”

The person who is being presented should participate in the sustaining vote. If more than one person is being presented, they usually may be sustained as a group.

If a member in good standing gives a dissenting vote, a member of the stake presidency confers with him or her privately after the meeting. The officer determines whether the dissenting vote was based on knowledge that the person is guilty of conduct that should disqualify him from being ordained to the priesthood office.

Some brethren may need to be ordained before they can be presented in a general stake meeting. When this occurs, they are presented in their ward sacrament meetings for a sustaining vote. Their names are then presented in the next stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting to ratify the ordination.

When the necessary interviews and approvals are completed, the ordination is performed according to the instructions in 18.10.

*Elders.* Worthy brethren may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained elders when they are 18 years old or older. Based on individual circumstances, such as a young man's testimony and maturity, school graduation, desire to continue with peers, and college attendance, the bishop determines whether a young man should be ordained an elder soon after his 18th birthday or remain with the priests quorum longer. In making this decision, the bishop consults first with the young man and his parents. By age 19 or prior to leaving home to attend college, serve in the military, or accept full-time employment, all worthy men should be ordained elders.

Recently baptized men ages 18 and older are ordained elders after they have served as priests, developed sufficient understanding of the gospel, and demonstrated their worthiness. No specific time as a member is required.

*High Priests.* Men are ordained high priests when they are called to a stake presidency, high council, or bishopric or when otherwise recommended by the bishop and approved by the stake president. As an exception, bishops' counselors in wards that are in young single adult stakes do not need to be ordained high priests (see in 37.3.2). When such counselors are elders, they are not members of the high priests quorum.

Only high priests may stand in the circle when ordaining a man to the office of high priest.

**38.2.5.2****Aaronic Priesthood Offices**

*Bishop's Responsibility.* The bishop holds the priesthood keys for conferring the Aaronic Priesthood and ordaining to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. Worthy brethren are typically ordained to these offices at the following ages, but not earlier:

- Deacon at the beginning of the year they turn 12
- Teacher at the beginning of the year they turn 14
- Priest at the beginning of the year they turn 16

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews those who are to be ordained deacons or teachers to determine if they are worthy. The bishop interviews those who are to be ordained priests. Before interviewing a young man for priesthood ordination, a member of the bishopric obtains permission from the young man's parents or guardians.

If a member is found worthy in an interview, the person who conducts the interview completes the Aaronic Priesthood Ordination Record. The bishop or one of his counselors presents the member in sacrament meeting for the sustaining vote of members (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:65). This should follow the pattern for presenting men for Melchizedek Priesthood ordination (see 38.2.5.1). If a member in good standing gives a dissenting vote, a member of the bishopric confers with him or her privately after the meeting.

After the sustaining vote, the ordination is performed by or under the direction of the bishop according to the instructions in 18.10.

*Young Men Whose Parents Are Divorced.* A young man whose parents are divorced may be ordained to Aaronic Priesthood offices only with the permission of the parent(s) with legal custody. If the mother has custody and has remarried and if the young man is not formally adopted but has assumed the surname of the stepfather, he may be ordained in the name by which he is known. However, the young man's legal

name, as defined by local law or custom, should be recorded on the ordination certificate.

*Those Who Have Been Recently Baptized and Confirmed.* Brethren who have recently been baptized and confirmed should receive the Aaronic Priesthood if they are at least age 11 and turning 12 during the year and should be ordained to the appropriate office soon after their confirmation, normally within a week. Before receiving the priesthood, they must be interviewed for worthiness and presented in sacrament meeting for a sustaining vote. They are typically ordained to the following offices when they are the following ages:

- Deacon, beginning in January of the year they turn 12
- Teacher, beginning in January of the year they turn 14
- Priest, beginning in January of the year they turn 16

Those ages 19 and older are also considered prospective elders (see 38.2.5.3).

Because brethren who have been recently baptized and confirmed need to be interviewed by the bishop and sustained by a vote of ward members before they are ordained to an Aaronic Priesthood office, they are not ordained on the day they are baptized or confirmed.

Baptisms of family members should not be delayed so the father can receive the priesthood and perform the baptisms himself.

**38.2.5.3****Prospective Elders**

A prospective elder is a male Church member age 19 or older who does not hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. Married brethren who are younger than 19 and do not hold the Melchizedek Priesthood are also prospective elders.

The bishop interviews prospective elders regularly and works closely with other priesthood leaders in the ward to prepare them to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. If a prospective elder is not already a priest, he should be ordained a priest as soon as he is worthy. He does not need to be ordained a deacon or teacher first. He may be ordained an elder when he has developed sufficient understanding of the gospel and demonstrated his worthiness.

For more information about prospective elders, see 8.4.

#### 38.2.5.4

##### Other Circumstances

*Those Who Have Not Lived in the Same Ward for at Least One Year.* If a man has not lived in the same ward continuously for at least one year, the bishop contacts the prior bishop to certify the man's worthiness before approving him for Aaronic Priesthood ordination or recommending him for Melchizedek Priesthood ordination.

If a person is ordained while he is living away from home temporarily and if his membership record is still in his home ward, the bishop of the ward where he is ordained advises the bishop of the home ward so the membership record can be updated. The ordination certificate is prepared in the ward where the ordination is performed.

*Those in Young Single Adult Wards and Single Adult Wards.* Worthy men ages 18 and older in young single adult wards and single adult wards should be ordained elders. Those who are not ordained elders are affiliated with the elders quorum as prospective elders.

*Military Servicemen in War Zones or Isolated Areas.* A military serviceman is normally interviewed and ordained in the ward that has his membership record. However, this may not be feasible if the serviceman is at sea for an extended time or is serving in a war zone or isolated area. In such cases, the serviceman

meets with his service member group leader. If the group leader feels that the serviceman is ready to be ordained, he makes a written recommendation to the presiding officer of the Church unit that oversees the service member group. That presiding officer contacts the bishop of the serviceman's home ward to determine if he has any concerns about worthiness.

For ordination to Aaronic Priesthood offices, the presiding officer may authorize the group leader or a Latter-day Saint chaplain to interview the person and oversee the ordination. For ordination to the office of elder, the stake or mission president may authorize a Latter-day Saint chaplain to interview the person and oversee the ordination. All ordinations should be sustained or ratified as explained in 38.2.5.1 and 38.2.5.2.

*Those Who Have Intellectual Disabilities.* Priesthood leaders decide whether those who have intellectual disabilities should receive the priesthood. If the member lives with his parents, priesthood leaders consult with them. To be ordained, a member who has an intellectual disability should first demonstrate an appropriate degree of accountability and an understanding of responsibility. Priesthood holders who have such disabilities should be assisted so they can participate as fully as possible.

*Those Who Have Been Readmitted by Baptism and Confirmation.* For instructions about ordaining those who have been readmitted by baptism and confirmation after withdrawal or resignation of membership, see 32.17.

*Members Who Identify as Transgender.* A member who has received elective medical or surgical intervention for the purpose of attempting to transition to the opposite gender of his or her birth sex ("sex reassignment"), or who has socially transitioned to the opposite gender of his or her birth sex, may not receive or exercise the priesthood. Area Presidencies will help local leaders sensitively address individual situations (see 38.6.22).

A male Church member who experiences gender incongruence, but who does not pursue medical, surgical, or social transition to the opposite gender of his birth sex and is worthy, may receive and exercise the priesthood.

### 38.2.6

#### Setting Apart Officers and Teachers

See 18.11.

### 38.2.7

#### Consecrating Oil

See 18.12.

### 38.2.8

#### Administering to the Sick

See 18.13.

### 38.2.9

#### Blessings of Comfort and Counsel, Including Father's Blessings

See 18.14.

### 38.2.10

#### Dedicating Homes

See 18.15.

### 38.2.11

#### Dedicating Graves

See 18.16.

### 38.2.12

#### Patriarchal Blessings

Information about patriarchal blessings is provided in the following paragraphs and in these additional sources:

- Sections 18.17 and 38.9 in this handbook
- *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*
- *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Patriarch*

### 38.2.12.1

#### General Guidelines

Every worthy, baptized member is entitled to receive a patriarchal blessing, which provides inspired direction from Heavenly Father. Parents and Church leaders encourage members to prepare spiritually to obtain their patriarchal blessings. The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews members who desire to receive a patriarchal blessing. If a member is worthy, the interviewer prepares a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend. He submits it through the Patriarchal Blessing System on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. If the blessing will be given by a patriarch who lives outside the person's stake, a member of both stake presidencies must also approve the recommend through the Patriarchal Blessing System. Such authorization may be given only as outlined in 38.2.12.2.

The person who issues a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend ensures that the member is of sufficient age and maturity to understand the significance and sacred nature of the blessing. Ideally the member should be young enough that many important decisions in life are still ahead, though older adults are also encouraged to receive their patriarchal blessings. Priesthood leaders should not establish a minimum age for a member to receive a patriarchal blessing.

A new convert should understand the basic doctrine of the gospel before receiving a patriarchal blessing.

If a baptized member has an intellectual disability, the bishop may issue a recommend only when, in consultation with the parents, he believes there is a sufficient level of understanding. Members should

keep in mind that a patriarchal blessing is for the recipient and not for the parents.

When possible, a missionary should receive a patriarchal blessing before beginning missionary service. A missionary who is in residence at a missionary training center may receive a patriarchal blessing only when all of the following apply:

- The missionary comes from an area where no patriarch is able to give a blessing in the missionary's native language.
- The missionary will serve in a mission where no patriarch is able to give a blessing in the missionary's native language.
- The missionary will return home to an area that does not have a patriarch.
- A patriarch near the missionary training center can provide a blessing in the missionary's native language.

If a missionary arrives in the mission field without having received a patriarchal blessing, the mission president is authorized to interview him or her, prepare a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend, and submit it through the Patriarchal Blessing System. The mission president ensures that the missionary can receive the blessing in his or her native language. If this is not possible, the missionary may need to wait until returning home to receive a patriarchal blessing.

#### 38.2.12.2

##### **Giving Patriarchal Blessings to Members outside the Stake**

A stake patriarch normally gives patriarchal blessings only to members in his stake. However, he may give blessings to members outside of his stake in the following circumstances:

- A patriarch may give patriarchal blessings to his lineal descendants (children, grandchildren,

and great-grandchildren) regardless of where they live. A member of the bishopric conducts an interview and submits a recommend through the Patriarchal Blessing System on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. If the recipient lives in a different stake than the patriarch, a member of both stake presidencies must approve the recommend through the Patriarchal Blessing System.

- A member who lives in a stake that does not have a functioning patriarch may go to a patriarch in a nearby stake. A member of the bishopric conducts an interview and submits a recommend through the Patriarchal Blessing System. A member of both stake presidencies must approve the recommend through the system.
- A member who lives in a district may go to a patriarch in a nearby stake. The branch president conducts an interview and submits a recommend through the Patriarchal Blessing System. A member of the mission presidency and the nearby patriarch's stake presidency must approve the recommend through the system.
- A member who speaks a language that is different from the language of the stake patriarch may go to a patriarch in a nearby stake to receive a blessing in his or her own language. A member of the bishopric conducts an interview and submits a recommend through the Patriarchal Blessing System. A member of both stake presidencies must approve the recommend through the system.

#### 38.2.12.3

##### **Patriarchal Blessings for Members Entering the Military**

When a worthy member enters military service, priesthood leaders encourage him or her to receive a patriarchal blessing before reporting for active duty.

If it is not possible for a member to receive a patriarchal blessing before leaving, he or she can

receive it from a patriarch where the temporary duty station is located. The stake president of the temporary duty station contacts a member of the home ward bishopric. The stake president then conducts an interview and submits a recommend through the Patriarchal Blessing System. The stake patriarch where the member is stationed then gives the patriarchal blessing. For more information, the stake president or other presiding priesthood leader where the member is stationed contacts the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve at [Q12Patriarchs@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:Q12Patriarchs@ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### **38.2.12.4**

##### **Translation of Patriarchal Blessings**

The Church does not provide translations of the text of patriarchal blessings. Nor are members encouraged to translate patriarchal blessings, since it is difficult to convey the inspired depth of meaning and feeling of a blessing. Nevertheless, if a member does not understand the language of the patriarch and desires to have a blessing translated into another language after it has been received, it is his or her responsibility to find a trusted and worthy member of the Church who can provide the translation. The translator should be carefully selected, skilled in the language, and capable of understanding the spiritual nature and confidentiality of the blessing. Translated copies of blessings are not filed at Church headquarters.

A stake president may request a braille transcription of a patriarchal blessing by contacting the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve.

#### **38.2.12.5**

##### **Sign Language Interpretation of Patriarchal Blessings**

If a member requires interpretation by sign language to understand the blessing as it is being pronounced, it is his or her responsibility to find a

trusted and worthy member of the Church who can provide the interpretation.

#### **38.2.12.6**

##### **Second Patriarchal Blessings**

In very rare circumstances, a member may request a second patriarchal blessing. However, this is generally not encouraged, and the request may not be approved. If a worthy member has an important reason for such a request, he or she discusses it with the bishop. If the bishop feels that a second blessing is necessary, he prepares a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend and submits it through the Patriarchal Blessing System on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org). The stake president then interviews the member and reads the original blessing with him or her. If he feels that a second blessing is necessary, the stake president contacts the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve.

If the request is approved, the stake president informs the recipient and the patriarch before approving the Patriarchal Blessing Recommendation in the Patriarchal Blessing System. The stake president also informs the recipient that the original blessing will be replaced by the second blessing. The patriarch may then give a second patriarchal blessing.

#### **38.2.12.7**

##### **Obtaining Copies of Patriarchal Blessings**

See 18.17.2.



**38.2.13****Chart of Ordinations****38.2.13.1****Chart of Ordinations**

<b>Office</b>	<b>Recommended By</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Sustained By</b>	<b>Interviewed and Ordained By</b>
Patriarch	Stake presidency	Quorum of the Twelve	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	A member of the First Presidency or Twelve, or the stake president with written approval from the Quorum of the Twelve
High priest	Bishop and stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Interviewed by the bishop and by the stake president or an assigned counselor; ordained under the direction of the stake president
Elder	Bishop	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Interviewed by the bishop and by the stake president or an assigned counselor; ordained under the direction of the stake president
Bishop	Stake presidency	First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve	Ward members in sacrament meeting	A General Authority or Area Seventy, or the stake president with written approval from the First Presidency
Priest	Bishop	Bishopric	Ward members in sacrament meeting	Interviewed by the bishop; ordained under the direction of the bishop
Teacher or deacon	Bishop	Bishopric	Ward members in sacrament meeting	Interviewed by the bishop or an assigned counselor; ordained under the direction of the bishop

**38.3****Civil Marriage**

Church leaders encourage members to qualify for temple marriage and be married and sealed in a temple. Where temple marriages are not legally recognized, leaders can perform civil marriages that are followed by a temple sealing. This process may also be followed when a temple marriage would cause parents or immediate family members to feel excluded.

This section provides instructions for leaders about performing civil marriages. A civil marriage is valid for as long as a couple lives. It does not endure beyond mortal life.

Civil marriages should be performed in accordance with the laws of the place where the marriage is performed.

Civil marriages and related religious ceremonies should not be performed on the Sabbath or at unusual hours.

A bishop should consult with his stake president if he has questions about civil marriage that are not answered in this section. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency.

**38.3.1****Who May Perform a Civil Marriage**

When permitted by local law, the following currently serving Church leaders may act in their calling to perform a civil marriage ceremony: stake president, mission president, district president, bishop, or branch president.

Latter-day Saint chaplains on active military duty may perform civil marriages without prior approval. Chaplains who are assigned to Reserve or National Guard units must receive prior approval from the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division to perform a civil marriage.

Nonmilitary chaplains who serve in hospitals, hospice organizations, assisted living centers, prisons, border patrol, or police or fire departments must receive prior approval from the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division to perform a civil marriage.

Retired chaplains are not authorized to perform civil marriages in their capacity as chaplains.

Those who perform marriages acting in their callings as Church leaders or endorsed chaplains should use the guidelines in this section and follow all legal requirements.

Latter-day Saint chaplains are not considered presiding Church officers unless they are serving as a stake president, bishop, or branch president. When a chaplain who is not a presiding Church officer performs a civil marriage, he or she functions as an agent of the government or civilian organization he or she serves. Thus, the wording of the civil marriage ceremony is changed slightly for these chaplains (see 38.3.6).

Church officers and Latter-day Saint chaplains are not to use their ecclesiastical authority to perform marriages between two people of the same sex.

Church officers and chaplains who perform civil marriages for members of the Church should provide the necessary marriage information to the ward or branch clerk. The clerk will then update the membership records.

A Church officer or chaplain who performs civil marriages in a Church capacity may not accept fees.

**38.3.2****Civil Marriage for Members from Other Units**

Church officers may not perform marriages for Church members when neither marriage partner belongs to the Church unit over which the officer presides. An exception is made for Latter-day Saint

chaplains. Any other exceptions require the approval of the First Presidency in each case.

### 38.3.3

#### Civil Marriage for Nonmembers

Authorized Church officers may perform marriages for nonmembers without receiving special approval.

### 38.3.4

#### Where to Perform Civil Marriages

Civil marriages are preferably performed in the home of a family member or in a Church building. Marriages in a Church building may be performed in the chapel, the cultural hall, or another suitable room. If the marriage will be performed by a priesthood leader but not in a home or a Church building, the priesthood leader approves the location after consulting with the couple. See 35.4.22 for policies on using Church buildings for weddings.

### 38.3.5

#### Civil Marriages That Must Be Performed by a Public Official or in a Public Place

Some areas require that a marriage ceremony be performed by a public official. Some require that the ceremony be performed in a public building or another public place. In these cases, an authorized priesthood officer may conduct a brief religious gathering after the civil marriage, where he provides counsel to the couple and Church acknowledgment of their marriage. When the couple is to be sealed in the temple, the sealing follows the civil marriage as soon as practical.

### 38.3.6

#### Civil Marriage Ceremony

A civil marriage performed by a Church officer should be simple and dignified. For example, there should be no extravagance in the decorations or

proceedings. When a wedding ceremony is held in a Church building, a wedding march is inappropriate. Video recorders and cameras may not be used if the ceremony is performed in the chapel (see 35.4.15).

Before performing a civil marriage, a Church officer may counsel the couple on the sacred nature of the marriage vows and may add other counsel as the Spirit directs.

To perform a civil marriage, a Church officer addresses the couple and says, “Please take each other by the right hand.” He then says, “[Bridegroom’s full name and bride’s full name], you have taken one another by the right hand in token of the vows you will now enter into in the presence of God and these witnesses.” (The couple may choose or nominate these witnesses.)

The officer then addresses the bridegroom and asks, “[Bridegroom’s full name], do you receive [bride’s full name] as your lawfully wedded wife, and do you of your own free will and choice solemnly promise as her companion and lawfully wedded husband that you will cleave unto her and none else; that you will observe all the laws, responsibilities, and obligations pertaining to the holy state of matrimony; and that you will love, honor, and cherish her as long as you both shall live?”

The bridegroom answers, “Yes” or “I do.”

The Church officer then addresses the bride and asks, “[Bride’s full name], do you receive [bridegroom’s full name] as your lawfully wedded husband, and do you of your own free will and choice solemnly promise as his companion and lawfully wedded wife that you will cleave unto him and none else; that you will observe all the laws, responsibilities, and obligations pertaining to the holy state of matrimony; and that you will love, honor, and cherish him as long as you both shall live?”

The bride answers, “Yes” or “I do.”

The Church officer then addresses the couple and says: “By virtue of the legal authority vested in me

as an elder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I pronounce you, [bridegroom's name] and [bride's name], husband and wife, legally and lawfully wedded for the period of your mortal lives.”

[Alternate wording for a chaplain not serving as a presiding Church officer: “By virtue of the legal authority vested in me as a chaplain in the [branch of military or civilian organization], I pronounce you, [bridegroom's name] and [bride's name], husband and wife, legally and lawfully wedded for the period of your mortal lives.”]

“May God bless your union with joy in your posterity and a long life of happiness together, and may He bless you to keep sacred the vows you have made. These blessings I invoke upon you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.”

The invitation to kiss each other as husband and wife is optional, based on the cultural norms of the couple being married.

### 38.4

## Issuing Temple Recommends in Specific Circumstances

A bishop should consult with his stake president if he has questions about issuing temple recommends that are not answered in this section. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency.

#### 38.4.1

### Members Who Have Been Readmitted by Baptism and Confirmation after Church Membership Withdrawal or Resignation

*Members Who Were Not Previously Endowed.* After baptism and confirmation, these members may be issued limited-use recommends to do baptisms and confirmations for the dead as outlined in 26.4.2—usually within a week of being confirmed. Brethren

must be ordained to an office in the priesthood before they may be issued limited-use recommends.

These members may not be issued recommends to receive their own endowment until one full year after the date of their readmission to the Church by baptism and confirmation.

*Members Who Were Previously Endowed.* These members may not be issued recommends, including limited-use recommends, until their temple blessings are restored through the ordinance of restoration of blessings (see 32.17.2).

#### 38.4.2

### Members Who Have Committed a Serious Sin

A member who has committed a serious sin may not receive a temple recommend until he or she has repented. The waiting period between the sin and the issuing of a recommend is left to the bishop's discretion. It should be sufficient to determine that the person has genuinely repented.

#### 38.4.3

### Members Who Identify as Transgender

A member who has received elective medical or surgical intervention for the purpose of attempting to transition to the opposite gender of his or her birth sex (“sex reassignment”), or who has socially transitioned to the opposite gender of his or her birth sex, may not receive a temple recommend. Area Presidencies will help local leaders sensitively address individual situations (see 38.6.22).

A member who does not pursue medical, surgical, or social transition to the opposite gender and is worthy may receive a temple recommend and temple ordinances.

**38.4.4****Members Whose Close Relatives Belong to Apostate Groups**

Members receive temple recommends based on their own worthiness. Some members have parents or other close relatives who belong to apostate groups. Such affiliations of close relatives do not affect a member's temple worthiness. However, to be issued a temple recommend, these members must confirm that they do not agree with the teachings of apostate groups.

**38.5****Sealing Policies**

Sealing ordinances include covenants that can bind families together for eternity. These ordinances include (1) sealing of a husband and wife and (2) sealing of children to parents.

Members who have concerns about the eternal nature of the sealing ordinance and their associated family and spousal relationships can find peace in the knowledge that Heavenly Father is loving and just. Faithful children who are sealed to parents or born in the covenant retain the blessing of eternal parentage. This is so even if their parents cancel their marriage sealing, have their Church membership withdrawn, or resign their membership.

Members who are divorced but still sealed to the former spouse are often troubled by the thought of that sealing. The sealing will not be compulsory in the postmortal life for either a man or a woman. If temple covenants are broken and no repentance is made, the sealing between the husband and wife is revoked. However, those who keep their covenants will retain the individual blessings provided by the sealing. This is the case even if the spouse has broken the covenants or withdrawn from the marriage.

Once a cancellation of sealing has been approved by the First Presidency, individual blessings pertaining to that sealing are no longer in force. Priesthood

leaders counsel with members seeking a cancellation of a sealing to help them understand these principles. However, priesthood leaders should honor the agency of the member in these decisions.

A bishop should consult with his stake president if he has questions about sealing policies that are not answered in this section. Stake presidents contact the Office of the First Presidency or the temple in their temple district for guidance in special circumstances related to sealings that are not covered in these instructions.

**38.5.1****Sealing of a Man and Woman****38.5.1.1****Sealing of Living Members after Civil Marriage**

A man and woman who were married outside a temple and have been members of the Church for one year may be sealed in the temple when they are prepared and worthy of a temple recommend. They do not need to wait a year after a civil marriage and can be sealed as soon as circumstances permit.

When issuing recommends for a couple to be sealed, priesthood leaders make sure the marriage is legally valid.

**38.5.1.2****Sealing of Living Members after Divorce**

*Women.* A living woman may be sealed to only one husband. If she is sealed to a husband and later divorces him, she must receive a cancellation of that sealing from the First Presidency before she may be sealed to another man in her lifetime (see 38.5.1.4).

A living woman who is not currently married may be sealed to a deceased husband, even if they were divorced in life. A living woman who is currently

married may not be sealed to a deceased husband without First Presidency approval.

*Men.* If a husband and wife have been sealed and later divorced, the man must receive a sealing clearance from the First Presidency before another woman may be sealed to him (see 38.5.1.4). A sealing clearance is necessary even if (1) the previous sealing has been canceled or (2) the divorced wife is now deceased.

A sealing clearance is needed if a man is divorced from the woman who was most recently sealed to him. For example, if a man received a sealing clearance to be sealed to a second wife after a divorce and his second wife dies, he would not need a sealing clearance to be sealed again.

### 38.5.1.3

#### **Sealing of Living Members after a Spouse's Death**

*Women.* After a living woman has been sealed to a husband in the temple, she may not be sealed again unless she receives a cancellation of the first sealing.

*Men.* If a husband and wife have been sealed and the wife dies, the man may have another woman sealed to him if she is not already sealed to another man. In this circumstance, the man does not need a sealing clearance from the First Presidency unless he was divorced from his previous wife before she died (see 38.5.1.2 for the policy in cases of divorce).

Before a living spouse can be sealed to a deceased spouse, he or she must receive signed consent from the deceased spouse's widow or widower (if there is one).

### 38.5.1.4

#### **Applying for a Cancellation of Sealing or a Sealing Clearance**

A woman who has previously been sealed must receive a cancellation of that sealing from the First

Presidency before she may be sealed to another man in her lifetime. A man who has been divorced from a woman who was sealed to him must receive a sealing clearance from the First Presidency before another woman may be sealed to him (see 38.5.1.2).

When the bishop and stake president recommend that a cancellation of sealing or a sealing clearance be granted, they submit an application to the First Presidency using Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR). Leaders who do not have access to LCR may obtain an Application to the First Presidency form by contacting the Confidential Records Office at Church headquarters. Leaders should not contact the Office of the First Presidency to obtain a copy. Instructions are on the form.

Before submitting the application, the stake president makes sure that the divorce is final. He also makes sure that the applicant is current in all legal requirements for child and spousal support related to the divorce.

If a member has requested a cancellation of sealing or a sealing clearance, he or she may not schedule an appointment for a temple marriage or sealing until receiving a letter from the First Presidency giving notice that the cancellation or clearance has been granted. The person presents this letter at the temple.

### 38.5.1.5

#### **Removing a Restriction against Temple Sealing**

If a person commits adultery while married to a spouse to whom he or she has been sealed, he or she may not be sealed to the partner in the adultery unless the sealing is authorized by the President of the Church. Such authorization may be requested after the couple have been married for at least five years. The request may be submitted with an application for cancellation of sealing or sealing clearance.

A couple who desires to have a sealing restriction removed may seek interviews with their bishop and

stake president. If these leaders feel to recommend removal of the restriction, they may write letters to the First Presidency summarizing their recommendations and commenting on the applicants' temple worthiness and the stability of their marriage for at least five years. The couple should also write a letter of request to the First Presidency. The stake president submits all of these letters to the First Presidency.

#### **38.5.1.6**

##### **Sealing after Temple Marriage for Time Only**

Couples who are married in a temple for time only are not usually sealed at a later time. For such a sealing to occur, the woman must first receive from the First Presidency a cancellation of her previous sealing. Such requests are considered only in exceptional circumstances. If a bishop and stake president feel that a cancellation may be justified, they may submit an application to the First Presidency using LCR.

#### **38.5.1.7**

##### **Sealing of Deceased Members**

*Deceased Women.* A deceased woman may be sealed to all men to whom she was legally married during her life. However, if she was sealed to a husband during her life, all her husbands must be deceased before a deceased woman may be sealed to other men to whom she was married. This includes former husbands from whom she was divorced.

*Deceased Men.* A deceased man may have sealed to him all women to whom he was legally married during his life if they are deceased or if they are living and are not sealed to another man.

*Deceased Couples Who Were Divorced.* Deceased couples who were divorced may be sealed by proxy. These sealings often provide the only way for children of such couples to be sealed to parents. See 28.3.8 for a restriction if either the husband or wife

had Church membership withdrawn or had resigned membership at the time of death. First Presidency approval is required for the sealing of a deceased couple who obtained a cancellation of their sealing in life.

#### **38.5.1.8**

##### **Effects of Withdrawal of Membership or Resignation**

After a husband and wife have been sealed in a temple, if Church membership is withdrawn from one of them or if one of them has resigned membership, his or her temple blessings are revoked. However, personal blessings of the sealing for the spouse and children remain in force if they remain worthy.

Children who are born to a couple after one or the other has had Church membership withdrawn or has resigned membership are not born in the covenant. See 38.5.2.8.

#### **38.5.2**

##### **Sealing Children to Parents**

#### **38.5.2.1**

##### **Children Who Are Born in the Covenant**

Children who are born after their mother has been sealed to a husband in a temple are born in the covenant of that sealing. They do not need to receive the ordinance of sealing to parents. Being born in the covenant entitles children to an eternal parentage, depending on their faithfulness.

If a woman who has been sealed to a former husband remarries, the children of her later marriage are born in the covenant of the first sealing unless they were born after the sealing was canceled or after it was revoked due to withdrawal or resignation of Church membership.

**38.5.2.2****Children Who Are Not Born in the Covenant**

Children who are not born in the covenant can become part of an eternal family by being sealed to their natural or adoptive parents. These children receive the same right to blessings as if they had been born in the covenant.

A child may be sealed only to two parents—a husband and wife—and not to one parent only.

Males who are at least 11 and turning 12 during the year of the ordinance must hold the priesthood and be ordained to the office appropriate to their age before they may be sealed to their parents. Members who are married or are 21 or older may not be sealed to their parents unless they are endowed.

A deceased person is usually sealed to his or her birth or adoptive parents. However, a deceased child may also be sealed to:

- A birth father and stepmother.
- A birth mother and stepfather.
- Foster parents or grandparents who raised the child.
- A couple who intended to adopt the child but could not complete the adoption before the child died.

These sealings may be done even if a deceased child is already sealed to his or her birth or adoptive parents. First Presidency approval is not necessary. Sealings to nonbiological or nonadoptive parents in circumstances other than those listed above require First Presidency approval.

**38.5.2.3****Observing Sealings of Living Brothers and Sisters**

To observe the sealing of living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents, children

under the age of 21 must be born in the covenant or sealed to their parents. In addition, children ages 8 and older must be baptized and confirmed, and males who are at least 11 and turning 12 during the year of the ordinance must hold the priesthood and be ordained to the office appropriate to their age.

Members who are married or are 21 or older must be endowed to observe such sealings.

**38.5.2.4****Adopted or Foster Children Who Are Living**

Living children who are born in the covenant or have been sealed to parents cannot be sealed to any other parents unless the First Presidency gives approval.

Living children who are legally adopted and were neither born in the covenant nor sealed to former parents may be sealed to their adoptive parents after the adoption is final. A copy of the final adoption decree should be presented at the temple; a court decree granting legal custody is not sufficient clearance for a sealing. There is no obligation to identify the natural parents of these children.

First Presidency approval is necessary for a living member to be sealed to foster parents. This requirement applies even if the natural parents of the foster child are unknown and cannot be identified by reasonable effort. Such requests are made by the stake president.

**38.5.2.5****Adopted or Foster Children Who Are Deceased**

A deceased adopted person is usually sealed to his or her adoptive parents.

A deceased foster child is usually sealed to his or her natural parents.



**38.5.2.6****Sealing of Living Children to One Natural Parent and a Stepparent**

A living unmarried child under 21 who was not born in the covenant or sealed previously and who has not been adopted may be sealed to one natural parent and a stepparent if both of the following conditions exist:

1. The natural parent to whom the child is being sealed has legal custody of the child and physical custody of the child the majority of the time.
2. The other natural parent has given a signed letter of consent. A court decree granting legal custody is not sufficient clearance for a sealing. The letter of consent should use wording similar to the following: “I, [name of natural parent], give permission for [name of child or children] to be sealed in the temple to [name of parents]. I understand that the sealing is a religious ceremony and does not have legal implications.” The letter should be presented at the temple before the sealing.

If the other natural parent is deceased or if his or her parental rights have been fully terminated by legal process, no consent is required.

If the other natural parent cannot be located and thorough efforts to find him or her have failed, no consent is required. In this case, the bishop or stake president writes a letter indicating that thorough efforts to locate the missing parent have failed. This letter should be given to the temple before the sealing.

A living endowed member who is married or who is 21 or older and was not born in the covenant and has not been sealed to parents may be sealed to one natural parent and a stepparent.

**38.5.2.7****Children Conceived by Artificial Insemination or In Vitro Fertilization**

Children conceived by artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization are born in the covenant if their parents are already sealed. If the children are born before their parents are sealed, they may be sealed to their parents after their parents are sealed to each other.

If a child was born to a surrogate mother, the stake president refers the matter to the Office of the First Presidency.

**38.5.2.8****Status of Children When a Sealing Is Canceled or Revoked**

Children who are born in the covenant or sealed to parents remain so even if the sealing of the parents is later (1) canceled or (2) revoked by the withdrawal or resignation of Church membership of either parent. Children who are born after their parents’ sealing is canceled or revoked are not born in the covenant. These children need to be sealed to their parents after their parents’ blessings are restored (if applicable) and any other obstacles are removed.

**38.6****Policies on Moral Issues**

A few policies in this section are about matters that the Church “discourages.” Church members usually do not experience membership restrictions because of their decisions about these matters. However, all people are ultimately accountable to God for their decisions.

**38.6.1****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:

- Pregnancy resulted from forcible rape or incest.
- A competent physician determines that the life or health of the mother is in serious jeopardy.
- 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 automatically justify abortion. 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.

Presiding officers carefully review the circumstances if a Church member has been involved in an abortion. A membership council may be necessary if a member submits to, performs, arranges for, pays for, consents to, or encourages an abortion (see 32.6.2.5). However, a membership council should not be considered if a member was involved in an abortion before baptism. Nor should membership councils or restrictions be considered for members who were involved in an abortion for any of the three reasons outlined earlier in this section.

Bishops refer questions on specific cases to the stake president. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency if necessary.

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

**38.6.2****Abuse**

Abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of others in a way that causes physical, sexual, emotional, or financial 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.

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 they become aware of instances of abuse, they should counsel with the bishop. Church leaders should take reports of abuse seriously and never disregard them.

All adults who work with children or youth are to complete children and youth protection training within one month of being sustained (see [ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)). They are to repeat the training every three years.

When abuse occurs, the first and immediate responsibility of Church leaders is to help those who have been abused and to protect vulnerable persons from future abuse. Leaders should not encourage a person to remain in a home or situation that is abusive or unsafe.

**38.6.2.1****Abuse Help Line**

In some countries, the Church has established a confidential abuse help line to assist stake presidents and bishops. These leaders should promptly call the help line about every situation in which a person may have been abused—or is at risk of being abused. They should also call it if they become aware of a member viewing, purchasing, or distributing child pornography.

The help line is available for bishops and stake presidents to call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Phone numbers are shown below.

- United States and Canada: 1-801-240-1911 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-1911
- United Kingdom: 0800 970 6757
- Ireland: 1800 937 546
- France: 0805 710 531
- Australia: 02 9841 5454 (from within the country)
- New Zealand: 09 488 5592 (from within the country)

Bishops and stake presidents should call the help line when addressing situations involving any type of abuse. Legal and clinical professionals will answer their questions. These professionals will also give instructions about how to:

- Assist victims and help protect them from further abuse.
- Help protect potential victims.
- Comply with legal requirements for reporting abuse.

The Church is committed to complying with the law in reporting abuse (see 38.6.2.7). Laws differ by location, and most Church leaders are not legal experts. Calling the help line is essential for bishops and stake presidents to fulfill their responsibilities to report abuse.

A bishop should also notify his stake president of instances of abuse.

In countries that do not have a help line, a bishop who learns of abuse should contact his stake president. He will seek guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office.

### 38.6.2.2

#### Counseling in Cases of Abuse

Stake presidents and bishops make every effort to counsel those who have been involved in abuse.

Victims of abuse often suffer serious trauma and feelings of guilt. These victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders should be sensitive to them and give caring counsel and support to help them overcome the destructive effects of abuse. Leaders also give assurances of God's love.

Stake presidents and bishops should help those who have committed abuse to repent and to cease their abusive behavior. If an adult has committed a sexual sin against a child, the behavior may be very difficult to change. The process of repentance may be very prolonged. See 38.6.2.3.

Stake presidents and bishops should also be caring and sensitive when working with the families of victims and perpetrators of abuse.

Guidance for counseling victims and offenders is provided at *Abuse: How to Help*.

In addition to the inspired help of Church leaders, professional counseling may be needed for victims, offenders, and their families. Leaders may contact a Family Services office or another trusted resource in the community for assistance.

Leaders in the United States and Canada can find information about the nearest Family Services office in the Church Directory of Organizations and Leaders (CDOL). Leaders can also obtain this information by calling:

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-1711

1-801-240-1711

In other areas, leaders can contact the Family Services specialist or the welfare and self-reliance manager through the area office.

For information about what bishops and stake presidents should do when they learn of any type of abuse, see 38.6.2.1.

See also [FamilyServices.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://FamilyServices.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

**38.6.2.3****Child or Youth Abuse**

Abuse of a child or youth is an especially serious sin (see Luke 17:2). As used here, *child or youth abuse* includes the following:

- *Physical abuse*: Inflicting serious bodily harm by physical violence. Some harm may not be visible.
- *Sexual abuse or exploitation*: Having any sexual activity with a child or youth or intentionally allowing or helping others to have such activity. As used here, sexual abuse does not include consensual sexual activity between two minors who are close in age.
- *Emotional abuse*: Using actions and words to seriously damage a child or youth's sense of self-respect or self-worth. This usually involves repeated and continuing insults, manipulations, and criticisms that humiliate and belittle. It may also include gross neglect.
- *Child pornography*: See 38.6.6.

If a bishop or stake president learns of or suspects child or youth abuse, he promptly follows the instructions in 38.6.2.1. He also takes action to help protect against further abuse.

A Church membership council and record annotation are required if an adult member abuses a child or youth as described in this section. See also 32.6.1.1 and 38.6.2.5.

If a minor abuses a child, the stake president contacts the Office of the First Presidency for direction.

Physical or emotional bullying between children or youth of a similar age should be addressed by ward leaders. A membership council is not held.

**38.6.2.4****Abuse of a Spouse or Another Adult**

Abuse of a spouse or another adult can occur in many ways. These include physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse. Adults who are elderly, vulnerable, or disabled are sometimes at high risk for abuse.

Often there is not a single definition of abuse that can be applied in all situations. Instead, there is a spectrum of severity in abusive behavior. This spectrum ranges from occasionally using sharp words to inflicting serious harm.

If a bishop or stake president learns of abuse of a spouse or another adult, he promptly follows the instructions in 38.6.2.1. He also takes action to help protect against further abuse.

Leaders seek the direction of the Spirit to determine whether personal counseling or a membership council is the most appropriate setting to address abuse. They may also counsel with their direct priesthood leader about the setting. However, any abuse of a spouse or another adult that rises to the levels described below requires holding a membership council.

- *Physical abuse*: Inflicting serious bodily harm by physical violence. Some harm may not be visible.
- *Sexual abuse*: See the situations specified in 38.6.17.
- *Emotional abuse*: Using actions and words to seriously damage a person's sense of self-respect or self-worth. This usually involves repeated and continuing insults, manipulations, and criticisms that humiliate and belittle.
- *Financial abuse*: Taking advantage of someone financially. This may include the illegal or unauthorized use of a person's property, money, or other valuables. It may also include fraudulently obtaining financial power over someone. It could

include using financial power to coerce behavior.  
See also 32.6.1.3.

#### **38.6.2.5**

#### **Church Callings, Temple Recommends, and Membership Record Annotations**

Members who have abused others should not be given Church callings and may not have a temple recommend until they have repented and Church membership restrictions have been removed.

If a person abused a child or youth sexually or seriously abused a child or youth emotionally or physically, his or her membership record will be annotated. He or she must not be given any calling or assignment involving children or youth. This includes not being given a ministering assignment to a family with youth or children in the home. It also includes not having a youth as a ministering companion. These restrictions should remain in place unless the First Presidency authorizes removal of the annotation. See 32.14.5 for information about annotations.

#### **38.6.2.6**

#### **Stake and Ward Councils**

In stake and ward council meetings, stake presidencies and bishoprics regularly review Church policies and guidelines on preventing and responding to abuse. They teach the key messages in “Preventing and Responding to Abuse,” an enclosure to the First Presidency letter dated March 26, 2018. They invite discussion from council members. Leaders and council members seek the guidance of the Spirit as they teach and discuss this sensitive subject.

Council members should take and discuss the course “Protecting Children and Youth.” Council members are also to complete children and youth protection training (see 38.6.2).

#### **38.6.2.7**

#### **Legal Issues Relating to Abuse**

If a member’s abusive activities have violated applicable law, the bishop or stake president should urge the member to report these activities to law enforcement personnel or other appropriate government authorities. The bishop or stake president can obtain information about local reporting requirements through the Church’s help line (see 38.6.2.1). If members have questions about reporting requirements, he encourages them to secure qualified legal advice.

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. Bishops and stake presidents should call the help line for details about mandated reporters and other legal requirements for reporting abuse. The Church’s policy is to obey the law.

#### **38.6.3**

#### **Artificial Insemination**

See 38.6.9.

#### **38.6.4**

#### **Birth Control**

Physical intimacy between husband and wife is intended to be beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife (see 2.1.2).

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 (see 2.1.3). The decision about how many children to have and when to have them is extremely personal and private. It should be left

between the couple and the Lord. Church members should not judge one another in this matter.

The Church discourages surgical sterilization as an elective form of birth control. Surgical sterilization includes procedures such as vasectomies and tubal ligations. However, this decision is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the judgment and prayerful consideration of the husband and wife. Couples should counsel together in unity and seek the confirmation of the Spirit in making this decision.

Surgical sterilization is sometimes needed for medical reasons. Members may benefit from counseling with medical professionals.

#### 38.6.5

### Chastity and Fidelity

The Lord's law of chastity is:

- Abstinence from sexual relations outside of a marriage between a man and a woman according to God's law.
- Fidelity within marriage.

Physical intimacy between husband and wife is intended to be beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife.

Only a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife should have sexual relations. In God's sight, moral cleanliness is very important. Violations of the law of chastity are very serious (see Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:28; Alma 39:5). Those involved misuse the sacred power God has given to create life.

A Church membership council may be necessary if a member:

- Has sexual relations outside of a marital relationship authorized by God's law, such as adultery, fornication, and same-sex relations (see 32.6.2).

- Is in a form of marriage or partnership that is not authorized by God's law, such as cohabitation, civil unions and partnerships, and same-sex marriage.
- Uses pornography intensively or compulsively, causing significant harm to a member's marriage or family (see 38.6.13).

The decision about whether to hold a membership council in these situations depends on many circumstances. These are outlined in 32.7. For example, violating temple covenants increases the likelihood of a council being necessary to help a person repent. In some cases, personal counseling and informal membership restrictions may be sufficient (see 32.8).

See 32.6.1.2 for when a council is *required* for sexual sins.

#### 38.6.6

### Child Pornography

The Church condemns child pornography in any form. If a bishop or stake president learns that a member is involved with child pornography, he promptly follows the instructions in 38.6.2.1.

A Church membership council and record annotation are required if a member makes, shares, possesses, or repeatedly views pornographic images of children (see 32.6.1.2 and 32.14.5). This guideline generally does not apply to children or youth of approximately the same age who share sexual pictures of themselves or others. Personal counseling and informal membership restrictions may be appropriate in those situations.

For more guidance, see 38.6.13.

#### 38.6.7

### Donating or Selling Sperm or Eggs

The pattern of a husband and wife providing bodies for God's spirit children is divinely appointed (see

2.1.3). For this reason, the Church discourages donating sperm or eggs. However, this is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the judgment and prayerful consideration of the potential donor. See 38.6.9. The Church also discourages selling sperm or eggs.

### 38.6.8 Female Genital Mutilation

The Church condemns female genital mutilation.

### 38.6.9 Fertility Treatments

The pattern of a husband and wife providing bodies for God’s spirit children is divinely appointed (see 2.1.3). When needed, reproductive technology can assist a married woman and man in their righteous desire to have children. This technology includes artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization.

The Church discourages artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization using sperm from anyone but the husband or an egg from anyone but the wife. However, this is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the judgment and prayerful consideration of a lawfully married man and woman.

See also “Adoption” (Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

### 38.6.10 Incest

The Church condemns any form of incest. As used here, *incest* is sexual relations between:

- A parent and a child.
- A grandparent and a grandchild.
- Siblings.
- An uncle or aunt and a niece or nephew.

As used here, *child*, *grandchild*, *siblings*, *niece*, and *nephew* include biological, adopted, step, or foster relationships. Incest can occur between two minors, an adult and a minor, or two adults.

When a minor is a victim of incest, the bishop or stake president calls the Church’s abuse help line in countries where it is available (see 38.6.2.1). In other countries, the stake president seeks guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office.

A Church membership council and record annotation are required if a member commits incest (see 32.6.1.2 and 32.14.5). Incest almost always requires the Church to withdraw a person’s membership.

If a minor commits incest, the stake president contacts the Office of the First Presidency for direction.

Victims of incest often suffer serious trauma and feelings of guilt. These victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders should be sensitive to them and give caring counsel and support to help them overcome the destructive effects of incest. Leaders also give assurances of God’s love.

### 38.6.11 In Vitro Fertilization

See 38.6.9.

### 38.6.12 The Occult


“That which is of God is light” (Doctrine and Covenants 50:24). The occult focuses on darkness and leads to deception. It destroys faith in Christ.

The occult includes Satan worship. It also includes mystical activities that are not in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such activities include (but are not limited to) fortune-telling, curses, and healing practices that are imitations of the priesthood power of God (see Moroni 7:11–17).

Church members should not engage in any form of Satan worship or participate in any way with the occult. They should not focus on such darkness in conversations or in Church meetings.

### 38.6.13 Pornography

The Church condemns pornography in any form. Pornography use of any kind damages individual lives, families, and society. It also drives away the Spirit of the Lord. Church members should avoid all forms of pornographic material and oppose its production, dissemination, and use.

 The Church provides the following resources to help people whose lives are affected by pornography:

- [AddressingPornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://AddressingPornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- [AddictionRecovery.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://AddictionRecovery.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- *Helping Those Who Struggle with Pornography* (booklet)
- *Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts* (booklet)

Stake presidents and bishops also provide support to family members as needed.

Church leaders should realize that use of pornography can be a compulsion or an addiction. In addition to the inspired help of these leaders, some members may need professional counseling. Leaders may contact Family Services for assistance. See 38.6.2.2 for contact information for Family Services.

Personal counseling and informal membership restrictions are usually sufficient when helping a person repent of using pornography (see 32.8). Membership councils are not usually held. However, a council may be necessary for intensive and compulsive use of pornography that has caused significant harm to a member's marriage or family (see 38.6.5). A council is required if a member makes,

shares, possesses, or repeatedly views pornographic images of children (see 38.6.6).


### 38.6.14 Same-Sex Attraction and Same-Sex Behavior

The Church encourages families and members to reach out with sensitivity, love, and respect to persons who are attracted to others of the same sex. The Church also promotes understanding in society at large that reflects its teachings about kindness, inclusiveness, love for others, and respect for all human beings. The Church does not take a position on the causes of same-sex attraction.

God's commandments forbid all unchaste behavior, either same-sex or heterosexual. Church leaders counsel members who have violated the law of chastity. Leaders help them have a clear understanding of faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, the process of repentance, and the purpose of life on earth. Behavior that is inconsistent with the law of chastity may be cause for holding a Church membership council (see 38.6.5). It can be forgiven through sincere repentance.

If members feel same-sex attraction and are striving to live the law of chastity, leaders support and encourage them in their resolve. These members may receive Church callings, hold temple recommends, and receive temple ordinances if they are worthy. Male Church members may receive and exercise the priesthood.

The circumstances of some faithful members do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life. They will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, provided they keep the covenants they have made with God (see Mosiah 2:41).

 The Church provides the following resources to better understand and support people whose lives are affected by same-sex attraction:



- “Same-Sex Attraction,” Gospel Topics, topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- “Same-Sex Attraction,” Life Help, ChurchofJesusChrist.org

In addition to the inspired help of Church leaders, members may benefit from professional counseling. Leaders may contact Family Services for assistance. See 38.6.2.2 for contact information.

### 38.6.15

#### Same-Sex Marriage

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. The Church also affirms that God’s law defines marriage as the legal and lawful union between a man and a woman.

Only a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife should have sexual relations. Any other sexual relations, including those between persons of the same sex, are sinful and undermine the divinely created institution of the family.

### 38.6.16

#### Sex Education

Parents have primary responsibility for the sex education of their children. Parents should have honest, clear, and ongoing conversations with their children about healthy, righteous sexuality. These conversations should:

- Be appropriate to the age and maturity of the child.
- Help children prepare for happiness in marriage and follow the law of chastity (see 2.1.2).
- Address the dangers of pornography, the need to avoid it, and how to respond when they encounter it.

For more information, see “Sex Education and Behavior” (Gospel Topics, topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

As part of their responsibility to teach their children, parents should be aware of and appropriately seek to influence the sex education taught at school. Parents teach correct principles and support school instruction that is consistent with the gospel.

### 38.6.17

#### Sexual Abuse

The Church condemns sexual abuse. As used here, *sexual abuse* is defined as imposing any unwanted sexual activity on another person. Sexual activity with a person who cannot give legal consent is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also occur with a spouse. For information about sexual abuse of a child or youth, see 38.6.2.3.

Sexual abuse covers a broad range of actions, from harassment to assault. It can occur physically, verbally, and in other ways.

If leaders and members become aware of sexual abuse, they take action to protect victims and others as soon as possible. This includes alerting the bishop or stake president.

If a bishop or stake president learns of sexual abuse, he calls the Church’s abuse help line in countries where it is available (see 38.6.2.1). In other countries, the stake president seeks guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office.

A membership council is required if a member committed a rape or is convicted of sexual assault (see 32.6.1.1). A council must also be held for sexual activity with a vulnerable adult. As used here, a *vulnerable adult* is a person who, because of physical or mental limitations, either cannot consent to the activity or cannot understand the nature of it.

To address other forms of sexual abuse, leaders seek the Spirit’s guidance about whether personal

counseling or a membership council is the most appropriate setting (see 32.6.2.2 and 32.8). In severe cases a council is required. Leaders may counsel with their direct priesthood leader about the setting.

If membership restrictions result from a membership council that is held for sexual abuse, a person's records are annotated.

Victims of sexual abuse often suffer serious trauma and feelings of guilt. These victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders should be sensitive to them and give caring counsel and support to help them overcome the destructive effects of abuse. Leaders also give assurances of God's love.

For information about counseling in cases of abuse, see 38.6.2.2.

### 38.6.18


#### Single Expectant Parents

Church members who are single and pregnant are encouraged to meet with their bishop. Family Services is available for:

- Consultation with Church leaders.
- Counseling with single expectant parents and their families.

No bishop's referral is needed for this service. There is no charge.

Leaders may contact Family Services for assistance. See 38.6.2.2 for contact information.

 Guidance for counseling single expectant parents is also provided at "Unwed Pregnancy" (Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

### 38.6.19

#### Suicide

Mortal life is a precious gift from God—a gift that should be valued and protected. The Church strongly supports the prevention of suicide. For

information about how to help someone who is suicidal or someone who has been affected by suicide, see [suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Most people who have thought about suicide want to find relief from physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual pain. Such individuals need love, help, and support from family, Church leaders, and qualified professionals.


The bishop provides ecclesiastical support if a member is considering suicide or has attempted it. He also immediately helps the member obtain professional help. He encourages those close to the person to seek professional help as needed.

Despite the best efforts of loved ones, leaders, and professionals, suicide is not always preventable. It leaves behind deep heartbreak, emotional upheaval, and unanswered questions for loved ones and others. Leaders should counsel and console the family. They provide nurturing and support. The family may also need professional support and counseling.

It is not right for a person to take his or her own life. However, only God is able to judge the person's thoughts, actions, and level of accountability (see 1 Samuel 16:7; Doctrine and Covenants 137:9).

The family, in consultation with the bishop, determines the place and nature of a funeral service for the person. The family may choose to use Church facilities. If the person had received the temple endowment, he or she may be buried in temple clothing.

Those who have lost a loved one to suicide can find hope and healing in Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

 For information about suicide prevention and ministering, see [suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

### 38.6.20

#### Surgical Sterilization (Including Vasectomy)

See 38.6.4.

**38.6.21****Surrogate Motherhood**

The pattern of a husband and wife providing bodies for God’s spirit children is divinely appointed (see 2.1.3). For this reason, the Church discourages surrogate motherhood. However, this is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the judgment and prayerful consideration of the husband and wife.

Children who are born to a surrogate mother are not born in the covenant. Following their birth, they may be sealed to parents only with the approval of the First Presidency (see 38.5.2.7).

**38.6.22****Transgender Individuals**

Transgender individuals face complex challenges. Members and nonmembers who identify as transgender—and their family and friends—should be treated with sensitivity, kindness, compassion, and an abundance of Christlike love. All are welcome to attend sacrament meeting, other Sunday meetings, and social events of the Church (see 38.1.1).

Gender is an essential characteristic of Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness. The intended meaning of *gender* in the family proclamation is *biological sex at birth*. Some people experience feelings of incongruence between their biological sex and their gender identity. As a result, they may identify as transgender. The Church does not take a position on the causes of people identifying themselves as transgender.

Most Church participation and some priesthood ordinances are gender neutral. Transgender persons may be baptized and confirmed as outlined in 38.2.3.14. They may also partake of the sacrament and receive priesthood blessings. However, priesthood ordination and temple ordinances are received according to birth sex.

Church leaders counsel against elective medical or surgical intervention for the purpose of attempting

to transition to the opposite gender of a person’s birth sex (“sex reassignment”). Leaders advise that taking these actions will be cause for Church membership restrictions.

Leaders also counsel against social transitioning. A social transition includes changing dress or grooming, or changing a name or pronouns, to present oneself as other than his or her birth sex. Leaders advise that those who socially transition will experience some Church membership restrictions for the duration of this transition.

Restrictions include receiving or exercising the priesthood, receiving or using a temple recommend, and receiving some Church callings. Although some privileges of Church membership are restricted, other Church participation is welcomed.

Transgender individuals who do not pursue medical, surgical, or social transition to the opposite gender and are worthy may receive Church callings, temple recommends, and temple ordinances.

Some children, youth, and adults are prescribed hormone therapy by a licensed medical professional to ease gender dysphoria or reduce suicidal thoughts. Before a person begins such therapy, it is important that he or she (and the parents of a minor) understands the potential risks and benefits. If these members are not attempting to transition to the opposite gender and are worthy, they may receive Church callings, temple recommends, and temple ordinances.

If a member decides to change his or her preferred name or pronouns of address, the name preference may be noted in the preferred name field on the membership record. The person may be addressed by the preferred name in the ward.

Circumstances vary greatly from unit to unit and person to person. Members and leaders counsel together and with the Lord. Area Presidencies will help local leaders sensitively address individual situations. Bishops counsel with the stake president.

Stake presidents and mission presidents must seek counsel from the Area Presidency (see 32.6.3 and 32.6.3.1).

For further information on understanding and supporting transgender individuals, see “Transgender” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

### 38.7

## Medical and Health Policies

*Note:* Some content in this section may undergo future revision.

### 38.7.1

#### Autopsies

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

### 38.7.2

#### 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 29.6).

### 38.7.3

#### 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 helping someone die by

suicide, violates the commandments of God. (See also 38.7.10.)

### 38.7.4

#### HIV Infection and AIDS

Members who are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or who have acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) 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 same-sex 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.

### 38.7.5

#### 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.

### 38.7.6

#### Individuals Whose Sex at Birth Is Not Clear

In extremely rare circumstances, a baby is born with genitals that are not clearly male or female (ambiguous genitalia, sexual ambiguity, or intersex). Parents or others may have to make decisions to determine their child's sex with the guidance of competent medical professionals. Decisions about proceeding with medical or surgical intervention are often made in the newborn period. However, they can be delayed unless they are medically necessary.

Special compassion and wisdom are required when youth or adults who were born with sexual ambiguity experience emotional conflict regarding the gender decisions made in infancy or childhood and the gender with which they identify.

Questions about membership records, priesthood ordination, and temple ordinances for youth or adults who were born with sexual ambiguity should be directed to the Office of the First Presidency.

### 38.7.7

#### 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.

### 38.7.8

#### Medical Marijuana

The Church opposes the use of marijuana for non-medical purposes. See “Word of Wisdom” (38.7.13).

However, marijuana may be used for medicinal purposes when the following conditions are met:

- The use is determined to be medically necessary by a licensed physician or another legally approved medical provider.
- The person follows the dosage and other directions for use from the physician or other authorized medical provider.

The Church does not approve of the use of marijuana in smoking or vaping forms.

### 38.7.9

#### 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.

### 38.7.10

#### 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.

**38.7.11****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.

**38.7.12****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.

**38.7.13****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.

**38.8****Administrative Policies****38.8.1****Accident Prevention and Response**

See 20.6.20.

**38.8.2****Activities Policies**

See 20.6.

**38.8.3****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.

In the United States and Canada, stake presidents and bishops may contact Family Services for guidance:

1-801-240-1711

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-1711

FamilyServices.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

Outside the United States and Canada, leaders may contact Family Services or the Family Services person in the area office.

**38.8.4****Adoption and Foster Care**

Members who wish to adopt children or provide foster care should be certain to obey all applicable laws of the countries and governments involved.

For information about placing children for adoption, see 38.6.18.

**38.8.5****Audiovisual Materials**

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

- 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).

- They may not be used if such use is restricted by copyright (see 38.8.13).
- 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.

**38.8.6****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.

**38.8.7****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.

### 38.8.8

#### 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.)” (“Modern-Language Editions of the Book of Mormon Discouraged,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1993, 74).

### 38.8.9

#### Church Employees

Church employees are to uphold Church standards at all times. To begin or continue employment, they must be worthy to have a temple recommend. This includes employees of the Church Educational System and Church universities and colleges.

Periodically, representatives of the Church Human Resource Department will contact stake presidents or bishops to verify the temple worthiness of current or potential Church employees. These requests may be written or made by telephone. Leaders should respond promptly.

Church employees must comply with employment laws. Church headquarters or the area office can provide information about applicable laws.

### 38.8.10

#### 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 33.3.4 and 33.4.4). Bishopricks 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' webpages.

### 38.8.11

#### 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:

- The activity or function with which the name is associated is officially sponsored by the unit (for example, a sacrament meeting program).
- 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).
- 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:

- Official Church publications and stationery.
- Missionary name tags.
- Meetinghouse exterior signs.

The logotype may not be used as a decorative element, a computer screen saver, or a desktop background. 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

Email: cor-intellectualproperty@  
ChurchofJesusChrist.org

### 38.8.12

#### 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 area 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.
- 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. Personal passwords to access Church financial systems are never to be shared. Additional instructions about protecting confidential information are provided in 33.8 and 33.9.

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 38.8.13.

The stake presidency may assign an assistant stake clerk to be the stake technology specialist. The stake clerk could be given this assignment if necessary. The stake technology specialist manages Church computers in the stake, including those in family history centers. These responsibilities are outlined in 33.3.3.2.

### 38.8.13

#### 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:

- Literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works.
- Works of art, photography, and sculpture.
- Audio and audiovisual works (such as movies and videos, CDs, and DVDs).
- Computer programs or games.
- 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](http://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  
 Email: [cor-intellectualproperty@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto: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, including [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org), [ComeUntoChrist.org](http://ComeUntoChrist.org), and [FamilySearch.org](http://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.

**38.8.14****Curriculum Materials**

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

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.

**38.8.15****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.

**38.8.16****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. Email 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.

**38.8.17****Email for Priesthood Leaders**

The Church has established an email system for communicating with priesthood leaders and for them to communicate with each other. Priesthood leaders will be notified when this system is available to them.

**38.8.18****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 traveling 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.

### **38.8.19** **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.

### **38.8.20** **Fundraising**

See 20.6.8.

### **38.8.21** **Gambling and Lotteries**

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

### **38.8.22** **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 quorum, Relief Society, Sunday School, Young Women, and Primary 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 35.4).

### **38.8.23** **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. A Church membership council is required if a member is convicted of a felony for willfully violating tax laws (see 32.6.1.5).

**38.8.24****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.

**38.8.24.1****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.

**38.8.24.2****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](http://internet.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) for additional examples and clarification.

For help with the calendar, directory, and other tools on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org), please visit [tools.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://tools.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

**38.8.24.3****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 for “Internet Usage Helps for Members” on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org) to find additional guidelines.

### **38.8.25**

#### **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.

### **38.8.26**

#### **Legal Counsel for Church Matters**

When legal help is needed for Church matters, Church leaders should contact Church legal counsel. In the United States and Canada, stake presidents should contact the Office of General Counsel at Church headquarters (1-801-240-6301 or 1-800-453-3860). Outside the United States and Canada, stake presidents should contact the area office to obtain local legal counsel.

#### **38.8.26.1**

##### **Testimony or Documents in Legal Proceedings**

Church leaders should not involve themselves in civil or criminal cases for members in their units, quorums, or organizations without first consulting

with Church legal counsel. This same policy applies to corresponding with lawyers or court personnel, including through email.

Leaders should confer with Church legal counsel if, in their Church capacities, they:

- Believe they should testify or communicate in a legal matter.
- Are being required by legal process to testify or communicate in a legal matter.
- Are ordered to provide evidence.
- Are asked to provide documents or information voluntarily.
- Are asked to communicate with lawyers or civil authorities about legal proceedings, including sentencing or parole hearings.

However well intentioned, Church leaders sharing information in legal proceedings can be misinterpreted and damaging. Such sharing can be especially harmful to victims and their families. Following the Church’s policy also helps keep the Church from being wrongly implicated in legal matters.

Church leaders may not testify on behalf of the Church in any legal proceeding without prior approval from the Office of General Counsel. This policy also applies to sentencing and parole hearings. Church leaders may not provide written evidence in their leadership capacity without this approval.

Leaders should not suggest or imply that their testimony in a legal proceeding represents the position of the Church.

Leaders should not influence the testimony of a witness in any legal proceeding.

Contact information for Church legal counsel is provided in 38.8.26. Outside of the United States and Canada, leaders should contact their area legal counsel.

**38.8.27****Mail from Church Headquarters**

Some businesses and individuals send local leaders promotional items that might appear to be official Church correspondence. Official correspondence can be distinguished from other correspondence as follows: it is always conveyed (1) personally by Church leaders, (2) in a letter from Church leaders on Church letterhead stationery, or (3) by announcement in a Church publication. Only these items require Church leaders' attention and action.

**38.8.28****Mail Sent to Church Headquarters**

Local leaders should place a return address on all letters and other items of correspondence sent to Church headquarters, in addition to the return address on the envelope in which the item is sent.

**38.8.29****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.

**38.8.30****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.

**38.8.31****Members with Disabilities**

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



Leaders also identify members who may need additional care because a parent, spouse, 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.

Leaders also seek out members with disabilities who are living in group homes or other facilities away from family members.

#### **38.8.31.1**

##### **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 [disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### **38.8.31.2**

##### **Giving Assistance**

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 [disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Leaders may also contact 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.

#### **38.8.31.3**

##### **Providing Ordinances**

When considering whether to perform ordinances for a person who has an intellectual disability, priesthood leaders follow the guidelines in 18.1.

#### **38.8.31.4**

##### **Providing Opportunities to Serve and Participate**

Many members with disabilities can serve in nearly any Church assignment. 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 [disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://disability.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 38.8.31.5). 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 38.2.1.8 and 38.2.1.9.

#### **38.8.31.5**

#### **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 activity programs or Primary classes 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 37.7.

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.

### **38.8.31.6**

#### **Interpreters for Deaf or Hearing-Impaired Members**

Members who are deaf or hearing impaired face communication obstacles in learning gospel doctrine and principles. 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 membership 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.

### **38.8.31.7**

#### **Privacy**

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

### **38.8.31.8**

#### **Resources**

Resources for members with disabilities, for their families and caregivers, and for leaders and teachers are available at [disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). This website provides:

- Information to help increase understanding of the challenges faced by those who have disabilities.
- Sections on specific disabilities and answers to frequently asked questions.
- Comfort for members who have disabilities and for their families through scriptures, quotations, and links to helpful information.
- 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 at [disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and [store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://store.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

Email: [specialcurriculum@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:specialcurriculum@ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

### **38.8.32**

#### **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 other faiths should contact the Area Presidency. Other local leaders who have such questions should contact the stake or mission president.

### **38.8.33**

#### **Overnight Activities**

See 20.6.12 and 35.4.13.

### **38.8.34**

#### **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 35.4).

#### **38.8.35**

### **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.

#### **38.8.36**

### **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 38.8.16).

#### **38.8.37**

### **Privately Published Writings**

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

#### **38.8.38**

### **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.

#### **38.8.39**

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

The name of the Church was given by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1838: “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Doctrine and Covenants 115:4).

Accordingly, references to the Church should include its full name whenever possible. Following an initial reference to the full name, if a shortened reference is needed, the terms “the Church” or the “Church of Jesus Christ” are encouraged. The “restored Church of Jesus Christ” is also accurate and encouraged.

When referring to Church members, the terms “members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” “Latter-day Saints,” and “members of the Church of Jesus Christ” are accurate and preferred. The title “Latter-day Saint” is a name given by the Lord to His covenant people in the latter days. Referring to members of the Church in these ways identifies a connection between Jesus Christ and members of His Church. Referring to Church members by other titles, such as “Mormons” or “LDS,” is discouraged.

*Mormon* is correctly used in proper names such as the Book of Mormon or when used as an adjective in such historical expressions as “Mormon Trail.”

The term *Mormonism* is inaccurate and is discouraged. When describing the combination of doctrine,

culture, and lifestyle unique to the Church, the phrase “the restored gospel of Jesus Christ” is accurate and preferred.

#### **38.8.40**

### **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).

#### **38.8.41**

### **Safety in Church Welfare Operations**

Many Church welfare operations have equipment and machinery that can cause injury if it is not used properly. Agent stake operating committees and managers of welfare operations should ensure the safety of employees and volunteers. Workers should be instructed regularly in safety practices. The work environment should be inspected periodically, with health and safety hazards corrected. Adequate supervision should always be provided to ensure that workers follow instructions, use tools and equipment properly, and avoid hazardous behavior.

Normally those who work at welfare operations should be 16 or older. Those who operate equipment should be mature, adequately trained, and experienced in using the equipment. Only adults may operate power equipment.

The operations manager reports accidents to Welfare Services (1-801-240-3001 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-3001) and the Risk Management Division at Church headquarters (see 35.3.6 for contact information).

#### **38.8.42**

### **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.

#### **38.8.43**

### **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.

**38.8.44****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.

**38.8.45****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, email, 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.

**38.8.46****Support to Members in Prisons, Hospitals, and Other Institutions**

Stake presidents are encouraged to provide support to members in prisons, hospitals, and other institutions within their boundaries. They should

do so within priesthood channels and according to the guidelines established by the Church and the institutions.

The stake president determines the support that is to be provided at each institution. He also supervises the support, assisted by other local priesthood leaders. If the stake needs help providing service to institutions within its boundaries, the Area Presidency may assign one or more nearby stakes to assist.

The stake president or an assigned bishop may call a priesthood holder to oversee the support that is given to members at these institutions. In prisons, men should normally be called to work with male inmates. However, a husband and wife may also be called to work with male inmates. At least two men, two women, or a husband and wife should be called to work with female inmates. Men and women who work with inmates should not be alone with them.

Worship services for members in prisons, hospitals, and other institutions may be simplified as needed to meet the needs of those involved. These services usually follow the same format as sacrament meeting except that the sacrament is not administered to inmates in prisons. As an exception to Church policy, when worship services are held in prisons, inmates may participate by offering prayers or giving talks regardless of their religious affiliation or standing in the Church.

Other support that may be given to members in these institutions includes counseling; support from ministering brothers and sisters; Sunday School classes, home evening, and seminary or institute classes; and other special programs.

In collaboration with the Priesthood Department at Church headquarters, Welfare Services is responsible for materials and professional resources to assist those in correctional institutions and their families. For assistance, priesthood leaders may contact Welfare Services at 1-801-240-2644 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2644.

For assistance with welfare matters in prisons, hospitals, and other institutions, the stake president may contact the Area Presidency. The stake president may also contact Welfare Services directly at the telephone numbers in the previous paragraph.

#### 38.8.47

### 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.

#### 38.8.48

### Taxable Activities

Ward and stake leaders ensure that local Church activities do not jeopardize the Church's tax-exempt status. For guidelines, see 34.10.1.

#### 38.8.49

### 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.

It is a sacred privilege to wear the temple garment. Doing so is an outward expression of an inner commitment to follow the Savior Jesus Christ.

The garment is a reminder of covenants made in the temple. When worn properly throughout life, it will serve as a protection against temptation and evil.

The garment should be worn beneath the outer clothing. It is a matter of personal preference whether other undergarments are worn beneath the temple garment.

The garment should not be removed for activities that can reasonably be done while wearing the garment. It should not be modified to accommodate different styles of clothing.

The garment is sacred and should be treated with respect. Endowed members should seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to answer 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. Members should not donate garments or temple ceremonial clothing to the temple 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 38.10.8 and 27.3.6.

### 38.8.50

#### Travel Policies

A man and a woman should not travel alone together for Church activities, meetings, or assignments unless they are married to each other or are both single. For other travel policies, see 20.6.24.

### 38.9

## Stake Patriarch

This section outlines the stake president's responsibilities for the stake patriarch. It includes guidelines for calling, ordaining, instructing, and overseeing the stake patriarch. For information about patriarchal blessings, see the following sources:

- Sections 18.17 and 38.2.12 in this handbook
- *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*
- *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Patriarch*

### 38.9.1

#### Calling, Sustaining, and Ordaining a Stake Patriarch

The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles directs the calling of stake patriarchs (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:39). The stake president may recommend whom to call. Recommendations should be submitted online through LCR. In making this recommendation, the stake president should fast and pray for the Spirit to direct him. The recommendation should be approved by his counselors.

A man whom the stake president recommends as stake patriarch should be a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He should be mature in the

gospel and the Church, a worthy husband and patriarch in his own home, and sensitive to guidance from the Spirit. He should have received his own patriarchal blessing, and normally he should be age 55 or older. He must be married.

If the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approves the recommendation, the stake president may be authorized to interview and call the patriarch, present his name for a sustaining vote in the general session of the next stake conference or in the next stake general priesthood meeting, and ordain him. Because the calling of patriarch is an office of the Melchizedek Priesthood, a new patriarch is first ordained to that office and then set apart to serve in a specific stake.

A stake president may not assign a counselor to ordain a patriarch. Nor should he invite others to stand with him during the ordination of a patriarch.

After a patriarch has been ordained, this information must be recorded in LCR before he is given access to the online tools for patriarchs.

### 38.9.2

#### Calling a Second Stake Patriarch

The Quorum of the Twelve normally does not approve calling a second patriarch for a stake unless the present functioning patriarch is unable to give the number of blessings requested. Nor does the Quorum of the Twelve normally approve an additional patriarch simply because a stake is geographically large or includes members who do not speak the majority language. If a stake includes members who speak different languages, bishops and stake presidencies may authorize them to go to a patriarch in a nearby stake who can give the blessing in the member's own language.

**38.9.3****Instructing a Newly Called Stake Patriarch**

The stake president instructs a newly called patriarch in the sacred, revelatory nature of the office before the patriarch begins giving blessings. The stake president carefully reviews with him the instructions in *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs* and *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Patriarch*.

**38.9.4****Supervising the Work of the Stake Patriarch**

The stake president presides over the stake patriarch and supervises his work as outlined in *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*. He should not delegate this responsibility to one of his counselors. A patriarch benefits from a close relationship with his stake president.

The stake president interviews the patriarch at least twice a year. He also reviews the blessings the patriarch has given at least twice a year. As needed, the stake president may make general suggestions about the content of the patriarch's blessings. The stake president also discusses the patriarch's feelings about the work, the health and welfare of his family, and any other matters on which the patriarch seeks or needs counsel.

The stake president ensures that copies of transcribed blessings are given promptly to recipients. He also ensures that all blessings are submitted to Church headquarters. Blessings should be submitted through the Patriarchal Blessing System on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Where this system is not accessible, blessings should be mailed to headquarters at least once every six months at the following address:

Church History Library  
Attn: Patriarchal Blessings  
15 East North Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600

A functioning patriarch is a member of the high priests quorum and participates in annual quorum meetings.

**38.9.5****Nonfunctioning Status for a Stake Patriarch**

The ordination of a patriarch is for a lifetime, so he is not released. However, he may be given nonfunctioning status, excusing him from giving blessings.

If a patriarch is incapacitated by age or illness, as determined by the stake president or the patriarch, the stake president recommends to the Quorum of the Twelve that the patriarch be given nonfunctioning status. He submits this recommendation through LCR. If the recommendation for nonfunctioning status is approved, the patriarch's name is no longer presented for a sustaining vote in stake conferences when Church officers are sustained. The stake president notifies bishops not to send members to that patriarch. The stake president also ensures that all blessings the patriarch has given are sent promptly to the recipients and to Church headquarters as noted in 38.9.4.

A patriarch is also given nonfunctioning status if he leaves to serve a mission, is absent from his home for other reasons, moves to a different stake, or is approved to be called to a position of Church administration (see 38.9.7 and 38.9.8). In such circumstances, the stake president notifies the Quorum of the Twelve through LCR and follows the instructions in the previous paragraph. A patriarch is not automatically returned to functioning status when he completes his missionary service or other Church assignments (see 38.9.6).

A patriarch who is given nonfunctioning status may continue to give patriarchal blessings to his lineal descendants (children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren) if the stake president determines that he is able to do so. The stake president reviews these blessings and ensures they are submitted to Church headquarters as noted in 38.9.4.

**38.9.6****Returning a Patriarch to Functioning Status**

To return a patriarch to functioning status, the stake president interviews him carefully and submits a recommendation to the Quorum of the Twelve through LCR. If the recommendation is approved, the patriarch's name is presented for a sustaining vote in the general session of the next stake conference or in the next stake general priesthood meeting. Once sustained, he should be set apart to serve in that stake.

**38.9.7****Patriarchs Who Move to a Different Stake**

If a patriarch moves to a different stake, his status automatically becomes nonfunctioning. He contacts the president of the new stake as a courtesy to inform him of his residence there. If the stake president wants him to serve as a patriarch in the new stake, he contacts the patriarch's former stake president to confirm the patriarch's worthiness and past service. The new stake president then follows the procedure in 38.9.6.

If the stake president decides not to recommend having the patriarch serve in the new stake, the patriarch remains on nonfunctioning status as explained in 38.9.5.

**38.9.8****Patriarchs Who Are Called to Another Church Position**

A patriarch may not be called to a position of Church administration, such as bishop, high counselor, or stake president, unless the Quorum of the Twelve approves the call in advance. If it is approved, the patriarch is given nonfunctioning status as explained in 38.9.5.

**38.9.9****Confidentiality of Patriarchal Blessings**

To protect the confidentiality of patriarchal blessings, the stake president ensures that after the patriarch has given the final copy to the recipient and submitted it to Church headquarters and he has received confirmation that the submission has been received, all audio, electronic, and paper copies are deleted or destroyed. This includes copies stored on computers and portable storage devices.

If the patriarch's computer is to be turned over to anyone else, either by sale, for salvage, or for other use, the patriarch should ensure that previously deleted blessings cannot be recovered through any technical means. This should be done by either reformatting the hard drive or running a cleaning utility that will eliminate the possibility of recovering the text.

**38.10****Military Relations and Chaplain Services**

Stake presidents and bishops help make the blessings of Church participation available to members who serve in the military. As outlined in this chapter, the Church's military relations and chaplain services program consists of:

- Support from stakes and wards.
- Church orientation for members who enter military service.
- Organization of wards, branches, or Latter-day Saint service member groups.
- Endorsement of and support from Latter-day Saint chaplains.
- Wearing the garment in the military.
- Support from senior missionary couples assigned to selected military installations.

**38.10.1****Stake Military Relations Leadership**

If military installations or members who serve in the military are in a stake, the stake presidency has the responsibilities outlined in this section. If such installations are located in a mission rather than a stake, the mission president fulfills these responsibilities.

A member of the stake presidency oversees the pre-military service Church orientation in the stake. He makes sure the orientation is offered to all members entering military service. The stake executive secretary may coordinate this orientation.

If Church services are held on the military installation, the president of a stake where a military installation is located organizes a ward, branch, or service member group for military personnel and their families (see 38.10.4). For each of these units, the stake president calls, sets apart, and oversees a bishopric (when authorized by the First Presidency), branch presidency, or service member group leader and assistants. The stake president gives contact information for these leaders to the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division. He may designate a ward to support each service member group.

Where one or more Church units are established for military personnel, the stake president coordinates with the Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division to provide each bishop, branch president, or group leader a letter of appointment. This letter outlines his responsibilities and authorizes him to preside over the unit and conduct meetings. A copy of the letter should be given to the installation chaplain.

A member of the stake presidency develops a working relationship with the senior chaplain at each military installation in the stake. He ensures that bishops of wards whose boundaries encompass a military installation do the same. These leaders inform the chaplain of the ward's meeting schedule,

meeting location, and contact person so the chaplain can give this information to members at the installation.

The stake president conducts an annual interview with each Latter-day Saint chaplain who lives within his stake boundaries. The purpose of this interview is to determine the chaplain's well-being and worthiness to serve. The stake president also separately interviews the spouse of each chaplain annually.

Latter-day Saint chaplains and their spouses should have ward or stake callings. A Latter-day Saint chaplain who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may serve in leadership callings, such as on the high council or presiding over a military ward, branch, or service member group as long as this calling does not conflict with his military duties. However, chaplains should not be called to serve in positions that require proselyting.

The stake president may consider inviting a chaplain to attend stake council meetings to report on the activities of Church units and activation efforts at the installation. The chaplain may also serve as the liaison between military leaders and the stake president. Chaplains may also help the stake president identify members in the military to call as service member group leaders and may assist with activation efforts among Church members in the military.

The military requires that a chaplain provide administrative oversight to any religious service held on a military installation. If there is a Latter-day Saint chaplain on the installation, the military normally assigns the chaplain to provide such oversight to a Church unit that meets there. Unless called as bishop, branch president, or service member group leader, the chaplain does not preside at the worship services but is expected to attend and participate.

**38.10.2****Ward Military Relations Leadership**

A member of the bishopric interviews ward members before they leave for military service. He makes sure they have an opportunity to attend the pre-military service Church orientation.

When a member enters military service or is transferred to a new location, a member of the bishopric helps him or her identify the Church unit nearest the new duty station. Information on meeting times and locations for Church services on military installations is available on “Find a Meetinghouse or Ward” or from the Church’s Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division.

The membership records for a member entering the military should be retained in the home ward until the member is assigned to his or her first permanent duty station. Do not transfer their membership records to Church units at basic and advanced training bases.

Priesthood leaders in the home ward should correspond regularly with each ward member who is away in military service. They also encourage families to ensure that their family member in the military receives the *Ensign* or *Liahona*. The *Church News* is also available for those who read English.

Each bishop is responsible for Church members assigned to a military installation within his ward boundaries. He establishes a working relationship with the senior chaplain at the installation (see 38.10.1).

**38.10.3****Pre-Military Service Church Orientation**

At the pre-military service Church orientation, members entering military service learn what to expect regarding Church services and activities in the military. The orientation may be held on a stake or ward level. A member of the stake presidency or bishopric calls an instructor, preferably someone

with recent military experience, to provide the orientation.

The orientation may include watching the video recordings *Serving Your Country* and *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled*. The member should receive a military scripture set, a Latter-day Saint identification tag, and the *Serving Your Country* brochure. If a member did not receive this orientation before arriving at basic training, the bishop, branch president, or service member group leader who is responsible for those in training provides it as soon as possible after the member arrives on the base.

**38.10.4****Church Units for Service Members**

Members in the military normally participate in wards or branches located near their military installations. However, in the following circumstances, the stake or mission president may organize a ward, branch, or service member group for military personnel and their families at the installation:

- There is not an organized Church unit within a reasonable distance of a military installation to which Church members are assigned.
- Military personnel are in a country where they do not understand the language spoken in the local ward or branch.
- Military personnel are unable to leave a military installation because of training requirements or other restrictions.
- The Church members’ military unit is deployed or will be deployed for contingency operations to a location where the Church is not organized, where the local Church unit cannot accommodate the members because of a different language, or where attendance at local meetings is not feasible.

- Members belong to Reserve or National Guard units and participate in weekend drills or annual training exercises.

Wards and branches at military installations are created using the procedures outlined in chapter 37.

Generally a ward or branch is established, rather than a service member group, if there is a need to support both military members and their families. A ward or branch may also be established for military members without their families if there is a long-term need to provide Church services and programs for members attending basic or advanced training or on a remote assignment. The military does not normally allow Church members who are not associated with the military to belong to a ward or branch that uses installation facilities.

If circumstances do not justify creating a ward or branch at a military installation, the stake or mission president may establish a service member group. A service member group is a small Church unit that holds Church meetings and looks after members. However, the group leader does not have priesthood keys, so he is not authorized to receive tithes and offerings, counsel members about serious sins, restrict membership privileges, or perform other duties that require keys. For information about service member groups, contact the Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division or visit [military.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://military.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Leaders of service member groups in isolated areas may obtain Church supplies and materials by contacting the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division.

Depending on the needs of service members, Church programs in a ward, branch, or service member group that meets on a military installation may be limited in scope and complexity.

When a Church unit is established at a military installation, coordination with the senior installation chaplain is necessary to arrange for meeting times

and use of base facilities. If there is not an installation chaplain assigned to the base, the stake president consults with the commanding officer.

#### **38.10.5**

### **Group Leaders in Remote Areas or War Zones**

While stake or mission presidents normally call and set apart service member group leaders, this may not be possible in remote areas or war zones. Since a group leader is not given priesthood keys with his calling, it is permissible for him to be appointed without being set apart. The priesthood leader who is responsible for the area can appoint a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder to serve as the group leader after verifying his worthiness with his bishop and stake president. If there is a Latter-day Saint chaplain in the area, the priesthood leader can authorize him to call and set apart a group leader.

If a deployed service member is isolated from other Church members, he may receive authorization from his bishop to administer and partake of the sacrament if he is a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood or holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. If there is more than one member at a deployed location, a group leader should be called to conduct church services and administer the sacrament.

When a group leader is called, the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division should be notified. A letter of appointment will be sent to him. This letter is required by the military before the group leader may hold Church services.

#### **38.10.6**

### **Missionary Service and Military Obligation**

In countries that have mandatory military conscription (draft), stake presidents and bishops must consider how these laws apply to individuals who desire to serve missions. In the United States military, a person who joins the active-duty military before

serving a mission must complete his enlistment obligation before serving a mission. Those in Reserve or National Guard units may be able to serve missions after they complete basic and advanced training. For more information, leaders may contact the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division.

### 38.10.7

#### Latter-day Saint Chaplains

The Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division provides centralized endorsement for male and female chaplains who serve in a variety of government and nongovernment settings. These settings include the military, hospitals, hospice organizations, prisons, detention centers, police and fire departments, border patrol, civic and veteran organizations, and colleges and universities. Each organization establishes the educational and ministry requirements for chaplains, but most institutions require Church endorsement before a person may serve as a chaplain.

Chaplains serve people of all faiths, including Latter-day Saints. They ensure that individuals are afforded religious freedom and help facilitate or accommodate the religious needs of those they serve.

The scope and type of ministry a chaplain provides varies greatly depending on the setting. For example, military chaplains are authorized to:

- Lead nondenominational Christian services.
- Perform civil marriages.
- Assist commanders with death notifications.
- Conduct funeral and memorial services.
- Provide grief and bereavement counseling.
- Conduct suicide prevention training.
- Provide spiritual care and counseling to service members and their families.

For information about Latter-day Saint chaplains performing civil marriages, see 38.3.

Chaplains may assist Church members in the repentance process under the direction of their priesthood leaders. However, members must resolve serious transgressions with their bishop or stake president.

Military chaplains in a war zone or isolated area may fulfill additional responsibilities under the direction of their Church leaders. For example, chaplains who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood may call and set apart service member group leaders. When authorized by Church leaders, they may also interview a service member for baptism, confirmation, and Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood ordination if conditions prevent access to full-time missionaries or to the service member's bishop or stake president.

If the duties of chaplains prevent them from attending their own ward meetings, they should seek approval from their stake president to attend Church services at another ward.

### 38.10.8

#### Wearing the Garment in the Military

If members who enter military service have been endowed, bishops make sure they understand the following guidelines.

When possible, endowed members who are in the military should wear the garment the same as any other member. However, members should avoid exposing the garment to the view of those who do not understand its significance. When conditions make this unavoidable, members should seek the guidance of the Spirit and use tact, discretion, and wisdom. It may be best to lay the garment aside temporarily and put it on again when conditions permit. However, mere inconvenience in wearing the garment does not justify laying it aside.

When military regulations prevent a member from wearing the garment, the member's religious status is not affected, provided he or she remains worthy. If members in military service are unable to wear the garment because of military regulations or circumstances beyond their control, it is their privilege, right, and duty to wear it again as soon as circumstances permit.

Members in the military should consult with their individual services on specific requirements that undergarments must meet, such as color or neckline style. A special military garment that meets the specifications of the Church and the United States Army and Air Force can be obtained through Church Distribution Services. This two-piece garment is coyote tan in color and has a T-shirt top with a crew neck. It should be worn with the combat camouflage uniform when required by military regulations. Since the T-shirt is considered part of the uniform, the marks are stenciled inside so they are not visible to others if the T-shirt is worn without the camouflage uniform shirt.

When military service requires a different color of T-shirt than coyote tan, approved military T-shirts may be purchased and sent to Beehive Clothing to be marked individually. White or coyote tan garment bottoms may be worn with the service-specific colored tops.

Certain synthetic fibers worn next to the skin may create serious hazards for airmen and others who may be exposed to fire. All nylon and some polyester blend materials fall into this category. Military authorities have indicated that cotton is a much safer fabric for these individuals to wear. A

100-percent cotton garment should be worn in these situations.

To place special orders for garments, members may contact Distribution Services or use the Uniform Garment Marking Order Form.

### **38.10.9 Senior Missionary Couples**

Retired military couples are called to serve as senior missionary couples at selected military bases to assist local priesthood leaders in activation and retention efforts. They also provide support to families of deployed service members during periods of family separation.

### **38.10.10 Other Information**

For information about membership records of service members, see 33.6.8.

For information about patriarchal blessings for service members, see 38.2.12.3.

For information about ordaining service members in isolated areas, see 38.2.5.4.

For information about giving temple recommends in isolated areas, see 26.2.3.

If Church leaders have questions about military relations, they may contact:

Military Relations Division  
50 East North Temple Street, Room 2048  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0020  
Telephone: 1-801-240-2286  
Email: [pst-military@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:pst-military@ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



