### **GENERAL HANDBOOK**

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

**MARCH 2021** 



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

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### **Summary of Recent Updates**

#### March 2021

Chapter 5: Stake Leadership

5.3. Differences between the Authority of District Presidents and That of Stake Presidents

5.6.1. Calling, Sustaining, and Ordaining a Stake Patriarch

Chapter 6: The Bishopric

Chapter 6 has been revised. The content has also been simplified and oriented around the needs of smaller units. The chapter also now features a section that explains differences between bishops and branch presidents.

Chapter 14: Single Members

14.0. Introduction

14.3.3.1. Bishopric

14.3.3.4. Young Single Adult Advisers

14.3.4. Ward Young Single Adult Committee

Chapter 22: Providing for Temporal Needs and Building Self-Reliance

22.4. Principles for Providing Church Assistance

Chapter 23: Sharing the Gospel and Strengthening New and Returning Members

Chapter 23 has been revised. It is now organized around the work of salvation and exaltation. The content has also been simplified and reduced. The chapter emphasizes the responsibilities of elders quorum presidencies, Relief Society presidencies, and others for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members. It also includes updated information about the callings of ward mission leader and ward missionaries. Chapter 24: Missionary Recommendations and Service

Chapter 24 has been revised. It presents updated guidelines on preparing and qualifying for missionary service. It also clarifies the different types of missionary service, updates policies on maximum age limits for young sister missionaries, and updates policies on setting apart senior service missionaries.

Chapter 27: Temple Ordinances for the Living

27.3.2.5. Who Performs a Temple Marriage or Sealing

Chapter 28: Temple Ordinances for Ancestors

28.3.5. Deceased Persons Who Had Intellectual Disabilities

Chapter 29: Meetings in the Church

Chapter 29 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 33: Records and Reports

33.6.2. Members of Record

33.6.10. Records of Members Who Have Intellectual Disabilities

33.6.11. Records of Members Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

33.6.25. Out-of-Unit Member Records

33.10. Stake and Ward Technology Specialists

Chapter 37: Specialized Stakes, Wards, and Branches

37.2.2. Leadership in a Young Single Adult Ward or Branch in a Conventional Stake

37.3.2. Leadership in a Young Single Adult Stake and Its Wards or Branches

37.5.2. Leadership in a Single Adult Ward

Chapter 38: Church Policies and Guidelines

38.7.13. Vaccinations

38.8.1. Adoption and Foster Care

38.8.2. Affinity Fraud

38.8.4. Autographs and Photographs of General Authorities, General Officers, and Area Seventies

38.8.9. Church Name, Wordmark, and Symbol

38.8.11. Copyrighted Materials

38.8.14. Directories

38.8.16. Extreme Preparation or Survivalism

38.8.20. Guest Speakers or Instructors

38.8.22. Internet

38.8.28.2. Giving Assistance

38.8.28.4. Providing Opportunities to Serve and Participate

38.8.28.5. Organizing Special Classes, Programs, or Units

38.8.28.6. Interpreters for Members Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

38.8.28.7. Privacy

38.8.28.9. Disability Specialist

38.8.33. Privately Published Writings

38.8.35. Referring to the Church and Its Members

38.8.36. Research in the Church

38.8.37. Respecting Local Restrictions for Sharing the Gospel

38.8.41. Seminars and Similar Gatherings

## Introductory Overview

#### o.o 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 latterday 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 bishoprics, 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.

#### o.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:

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- Guidelines for adaptation ((1)) 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.

#### о.з 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. For a summary of how the authority of district presidents differs from that of stake presidents, see 5.3.

- 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.



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

#### 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 2.2 in this handbook). 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.

#### <sup>1.3.1</sup> 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 in this handbook). 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 in this handbook). 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 in this handbook).

#### 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.

#### <sup>2.1.3</sup> 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, meckness, 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 in this handbook). The bishop is the presiding high priest in the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:17; see also chapter 6 in this handbook).

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).

#### <sup>3.4.1</sup> 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.

#### <sup>4.2.3</sup> 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 latterday 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).



#### <sup>4.2.5</sup> 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 in this handbook).

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

### 5.1

Purposes of a Stake

Isaiah described latter-day Zion as a tent or a tabernacle secured by stakes (see Isaiah 33:20; 54:2). Today the Church is organized into stakes. Each stake is composed of multiple wards and is led by a stake president.

The Lord establishes stakes for "the gathering together" of His people and "for a defense, and . . . a refuge" from the world (Doctrine and Covenants 115:6). Members and leaders in a stake work together to accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2).

### 5.2 Stake Presidency

The stake president holds the priesthood keys to lead the work of the Church in the stake (see 3.4.1). He and his counselors form a stake presidency. They care for stake members with love, helping them become true followers of Jesus Christ.

The stake president has four principal responsibilities:

- 1. He is the presiding high priest in the stake.
- 2. He leads the work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.
- 3. He is a common judge.
- 4. He oversees records, finances, and properties.

Because the stake president holds priesthood keys, some responsibilities are his alone. If he is unable to perform them, a counselor may act in his place except as noted in this handbook. The stake president or his counselor consults with the Area Presidency if he has questions about the counselor acting for the stake president.

The stake president delegates many assignments to others. These include his counselors, high councilors, stake organization leaders, the stake executive secretary, and the stake clerk and assistant stake clerks.

### 5.2.1 Presiding High Priest

The stake president is the stake's primary spiritual leader. He sets an example for the stake by doing the Lord's work "with holiness of heart" (Mosiah 18:12). He teaches and uplifts.

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

The stake president provides guidance to bishops and other leaders in the stake.

#### 5.2.1.1

#### **Melchizedek Priesthood**

The stake presidency presides over all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood in the stake.

*Stake High Priests Quorum.* The stake president is the president of the stake high priests quorum. He and his counselors are the presidency of that quorum. The stake high priests quorum consists of the following additional high priests:

- Bishops and their counselors
- High councilors

• Functioning patriarchs

Members of the high priests quorum attend elders quorum meetings in their ward if they are not assigned elsewhere. See 29.3.5 for information about the stake high priests quorum meeting.

*Elders Quorums*. The stake presidency has responsibility for elders quorums (see 8.3.3.1).

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

### 5.2.1.2 Bishoprics

The stake president meets with new bishoprics to instruct them soon after they are called. He continues to instruct and encourage bishops in regular interviews, meetings, and other settings.

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

### 5.2.1.3 Stake Patriarch

The stake president supervises the work of the stake patriarch. He develops a close relationship with him. For information about calling and supervising the stake patriarch, see 5.6.

#### 5.2.1.4

#### Councils, Committees, and Meetings

The stake president leads the high council and the stake council. He also leads the stake adult leadership committee (see 29.3.9). He assigns his counselors to oversee the following:

- Stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.10)
- Stake young single adult committee

• Stake single adult committee (where organized)

Each stake president is a member of a coordinating council (see 29.4).

The stake presidency plans the stake meetings listed in 29.3. The stake president presides at stake meetings unless a General Authority or Area Seventy attends. His counselors may conduct these meetings. They may also preside if the stake president is absent.

#### 5.2.1.5 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 personally extends the following callings. For some, he must first receive approval as noted.

- *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). He may interview, call, and set apart a counselor—or release a counselor—after receiving approval from the First Presidency.
- *Stake Patriarch.* The stake president may interview, call, and ordain a patriarch after receiving approval from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. See 5.6.1.
- *Bishops*. The stake president recommends brethren to be called as bishops. He also recommends their release. He submits recommendations through LCR. He may call, ordain, and set apart a bishop—or release a bishop—after receiving approval from the First Presidency. He also bestows the priesthood keys associated with this calling. See 30.6.

- *Elders Quorum Presidents.* The stake president calls and sets apart elders quorum presidents. He first consults with bishops. He also bestows the priesthood keys associated with this calling. See 8.3.3.1.
- *Stake Relief Society President*. The stake president calls and sets apart the stake Relief Society president.
- *Stake Clerk*. The stake president calls and sets apart the stake clerk.

Stake presidents who are not able to use LCR should contact the area office to make recommendations when needed.

### 5.2.1.6 Stake Organizations and Programs

The stake president has responsibility for the stake Relief Society. He assigns his counselors responsibility for the stake Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School organizations.

Members of the stake presidency meet regularly with the presidencies of the organizations to which they are assigned. In these meetings, they:

- Ensure that presidencies understand their responsibilities.
- Counsel together about the needs of leaders in the organizations.

The stake president also assigns his counselors to oversee stake programs as needed. These may include:

- Seminary and institute.
- Programs for young single adults and single adults.
- Stake activities.
- Music.
- Physical facilities.

Members of the stake presidency meet regularly with committees, high councilors, and specialists in the programs to which they are assigned.



### 5.2.1.7 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 seek to build good relationships with civic and community leaders.

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

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

The communication council may include a stake communication director, assistant directors, and specialists as needed. They are called and set apart by the stake presidency.

There is also a communication council at the coordinating council level (see 29.4). It operates under the direction of an Area Seventy and is led by a communication director. This communication council helps coordinate relationships, events, and issues that cross stake boundaries. The director of this council offers support and training to stake communication councils.

The communication council structure differs in the Utah Area. Area Seventies in the Utah Area can provide stake presidents with details about this structure.

For information about communication callings, see GCN.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

### 5.2.2 Leading the Work of Salvation and Exaltation

The stake president presides over the work of salvation and exaltation in the stake (see chapter 1). He instructs and encourages stake and ward leaders and members in this work. His counselors and other leaders assist him.

He helps members live the gospel and increase their spiritual strength. He teaches them to pray and study the scriptures. He also teaches them about the covenants they will make as they receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. He encourages them to honor their covenants.

The stake president strengthens families. He encourages them to pray and learn the gospel together, including in home evening. He teaches by word and example that Church callings can be fulfilled without detracting from family responsibilities. He also ensures that Church activities support parents' efforts to raise their children in righteousness.

In addition to helping members live the gospel, the stake president oversees other aspects of the work of salvation and exaltation. For example, he:

- Helps brethren prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood (see 38.2.5.1).
- Leads efforts to care for those in need in the stake (see 22.9.1).

- Oversees missionary work in the stake and encourages members to share the gospel (see 23.4).
- Oversees efforts to strengthen new members in the stake (see 23.4).
- Interviews candidates for missionary service (see 24.4.2).
- Oversees temple and family history work in the stake (see 25.3.1).
- Helps members prepare to receive temple ordinances (see 27.1).
- With the stake Relief Society presidency, instructs and supports elders quorum and ward Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities for missionary work (see 23.5.1) and temple and family history work (see 25.3.1).

### 5.2.3 Common Judge

The stake president is the common judge in the stake (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:71–74). In this role, he has the following responsibilities:

- Conduct worthiness interviews as outlined in 31.1. He may also authorize his counselors to conduct certain interviews (see 31.1.4).
- 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.
- Hold membership councils when members have committed serious sins (see chapter 32).

### 5.2.4 Records, Finances, and Properties

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

See the following chapters for more information:

- Chapter 33 (records)
- Chapter 34 (finances)
- Chapter 35 (physical facilities)

### 5.3

### Differences between the Authority of District Presidents and That of Stake Presidents

In each member district, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder is called as the district president. He holds the priesthood keys needed to preside (see 3.4.1.1). He serves much like a stake president but with the following differences:

- He is called and set apart by the mission president, after approval by the Area Presidency (see 30.7.8). A stake president is called and set apart by an assigned General Authority or Area Seventy (see 30.7.1).
- He may be an elder or a high priest. A stake president must be a high priest.
- He is not the president of a high priests quorum. Such quorums are organized only in stakes.
- The district president presides over all priesthood holders in the district. However, the mission president is the presiding high priest.
- With the mission president's approval, he can ordain elders and set apart branch presidents (see 18.10 and 18.11). However, he cannot ordain patriarchs, high priests, or bishops.
- He does not recommend or set apart missionaries.

- He does not release full-time missionaries. However, he may participate with a member of the mission presidency in the release interview. If travel or time constraints make it very difficult for a member of the mission presidency to release a specific missionary, the mission president may authorize the district president to do so (see 24.8.2).
- He does not conduct temple recommend interviews or sign temple recommends (see 26.3.1).
- He does not convene a membership council unless authorized by the mission president (see 32.9.5).
- He does not usually deal directly with the Area Presidency. Instead, he works through the mission presidency.

In special circumstances, a district president can be authorized to recommend, set apart, and release missionaries. He can also be authorized to conduct temple recommend interviews and sign the recommends. If the Area Presidency feels that a district president should have this expanded authority, they recommend him to the First Presidency. If approval is given, it is for that person, not the position. When a new district president is called, this expanded authority does not transfer to him.

### 5.4

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

### 5.4.1 Stake Executive Secretary

The stake president or an assigned counselor calls and sets apart a stake executive secretary. He should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and be worthy to have a temple recommend.

The executive secretary has the following responsibilities:

- Meet with the stake presidency and prepare agendas as assigned.
- Serve as a member of the stake council and attend high council meetings. As directed by the stake presidency, follow up on assignments made in these meetings.
- Coordinate stake business between the stake presidency, high council, and other stake leaders.
- Schedule appointments for the stake presidency.
- Advise the stake presidency of members who are entering the military or are already in military service. Under the direction of the stake presidency, help coordinate Church orientation for stake members who are entering the military (see 38.9.1 and 38.9.3).
- Orient new ward executive secretaries soon after they are called. Provide ongoing instruction as needed.

#### 5.4.2

### Stake Clerk and Assistant Stake Clerks

The stake clerk is called and set apart by the stake president. Assistant stake clerks may also be called. The stake president or an assigned counselor calls and sets them apart. The responsibilities of the stake clerk and assistant stake clerks are described in 33.3.2 and 33.3.3.

### 5.5 High Council

The stake presidency calls 12 high priests to form the stake high council (see Doctrine and Covenants 102:1; 124:131). If an elder is called to serve on the high council, he is ordained a high priest before he is set apart.

Under the direction of the stake presidency, high councilors help with the work of salvation and

exaltation in the stake. Their responsibilities are described in the following sections.

The high council does not meet as a group unless a member of the stake presidency is there to preside.

### 5.5.1 Represent the Stake Presidency

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to each ward in the stake.

The stake presidency also assigns a high councilor to each elders quorum in the stake. In this role, high councilors instruct newly called elders quorum presidencies. This includes providing instruction from chapters 1–4 and 7–8 of this handbook.

High councilors who are assigned to elders quorums meet regularly with quorum leaders to do the following:

- Learn of their needs.
- Offer support.
- Teach them their responsibilities, including those for missionary work (see 23.5.2) and temple and family history work (see 25.3.3).
- Communicate information from the stake presidency.
- Discuss how to help members of the quorum who need their next ordinance. This information is available to elders quorum leaders on LCR.

As needed or invited, they attend elders quorum meetings and quorum presidency meetings. On occasion, the quorum presidency may invite the high councilor to accompany them as they minister to ward members.

When invited or assigned, high councilors attend bishopric and ward council meetings.

The stake presidency may assign high councilors to instruct the following people in their responsibilities for temple and family history work and missionary work:

- Elders quorum presidencies
- Ward mission leaders
- Ward temple and family history leaders

One or more high councilors may be assigned to lead these efforts in the stake. However, all high councilors have these responsibilities for the wards and elders quorums to which they are assigned.

High councilors counsel with the stake presidency and sustain their 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 these offices. These high councilors ensure that the ordinance is performed properly.

High councilors also counsel with the stake presidency and sustain their decisions to issue callings to members. The stake presidency may authorize high councilors to issue some callings, present some members to be sustained, and set some members apart. (See the Chart of Callings in chapter 30.)

The stake presidency assigns high councilors to work with the stake Young Women and Primary organizations. When a member of the stake presidency meets with one of these presidencies, the high councilor also attends. Assigned high councilors also attend stake leadership meetings for these organizations.

The stake presidency may assign high councilors to assist with the programs listed in 5.2.1.6.

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. The stake presidency may also assign stake organization presidency members to speak in these settings (see 5.7.1 and 5.7.2).



### 5.5.2 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 assigns high councilors to serve on other committees. For example, high councilors who are assigned to work with elders quorums serve on the stake adult leadership committee (see 29.3.9).

High councilors with assignments relating to Aaronic Priesthood quorums, the Young Women, and the Primary serve on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.10). The high councilor who serves as the stake Sunday School president may also serve on this committee.

### 5.5.3 Serve as Stake Organization Leaders

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to be the stake Young Men president (see 5.7.2). They assign another high councilor to be the stake Sunday School president (see 5.7.1).

### 5.6 Stake Patriarch

A patriarch is an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood. Patriarchs are called and ordained to give patriarchal blessings to worthy members of the Church. This section outlines the stake president's responsibilities for 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

See Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs for information about:

- Patriarchs who are given nonfunctioning status.
- Patriarchs who move to another stake.

### 5.6.1 Calling, Sustaining, and Ordaining a Stake Patriarch

A patriarch must be a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He should be mature in his understanding of the gospel and sensitive to the Spirit. He should have received his own patriarchal blessing. Normally he should be age 55 or older. He must be married when he is called.

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. He submits recommendations through LCR. When making a recommendation, the stake president should fast and pray for the Spirit to direct him. His counselors should agree with the recommendation. If the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approves the recommendation, the stake president may be authorized to interview and call the patriarch. He then presents the patriarch's name for a sustaining vote in the general session of the next stake conference.

The stake president ordains the patriarch. He does not delegate this responsibility to a counselor. No others should stand with him during the ordination. A new patriarch is first ordained to that office and then set apart to serve in a specific stake. A previously ordained patriarch who is being returned to functioning status is not ordained again. However, he is set apart.

The ordination must be recorded in LCR before the patriarch can access the online tools for patriarchs.

A functioning patriarch is a member of the high priests quorum and participates in quorum meetings (see 29.3.5).



### 5.6.2 Calling a Second Stake Patriarch

The Quorum of the Twelve normally does not approve calling a second patriarch for a stake unless one patriarch is unable to give the number of blessings requested. Nor does the Quorum of the Twelve normally approve an additional patriarch because a stake:

- Is geographically large.
- 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.

### 5.6.3 Instructing a Newly Called Stake Patriarch

The stake president instructs a newly called patriarch before he begins giving blessings. He teaches the patriarch about the sacred, revelatory nature of his office. He carefully reviews with the patriarch the instructions in:

- Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs
- Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Patriarch

#### 5.6.4

### Supervising the Work of the Stake Patriarch

The stake president supervises the patriarch's work as outlined in *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*. He does 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. They discuss the patriarch's feelings about the work, the health and welfare of his family, and any other matters on which he needs counsel.

At least twice a year, the stake president reviews the blessings the patriarch has given. As needed, he may make general suggestions about the content of the patriarch's blessings.

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 are submitted through the Patriarchal Blessing System on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Where this system is not accessible, blessings should be mailed to the following address at least once every six months:

Church History Library Attn: Patriarchal Blessings 15 East North Temple Street Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600

### 5.6.5 Confidentiality of Patriarchal Blessings

The stake president ensures that after the patriarch has given the recipient a copy of the patriarchal blessing and submitted it to Church headquarters, all other paper and electronic copies are destroyed or deleted. The patriarch ensures that blessings deleted from his computer cannot be recovered.

#### 5.6.6

### Patriarchs Who Are Called to Another Church Position

A patriarch may not be called to a position of Church administration (such as a bishop, high councilor, or stake president) unless the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approves the call in advance. If approval is given, the patriarch is given nonfunctioning status.

A patriarch may be called to serve in other callings without approval from the Quorum of the Twelve. He may also serve as a sealer or temple ordinance worker.

### 5.6.7 Scribes for Patriarchal Blessings

The stake president or one of his counselors may call and set apart a worthy, skilled member of the stake to transcribe the patriarchal blessings, unless the patriarch can transcribe them himself and prefers to do so. More than one scribe may be called if needed. The scribe should be cautioned that every blessing is sacred and confidential. No copy of any blessing may be retained by the scribe or patriarch. (See 5.6.5.)

### 5.7 Stake Organizations

The stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, Sunday School, and Young Men organizations are each led by a president. These presidents serve under the direction of the stake presidency. OIn large stakes, an organization president may recommend one or two counselors and a secretary to serve with him or her. The stake presidency considers these recommendations.

The main 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 at the ward or family level. They also do not create additional responsibilities for ward organization presidencies.

#### 5.7.1

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

The stake president calls and sets apart a sister to be the stake Relief Society president. He or an assigned counselor calls and sets apart sisters to be the stake Young Women and Primary presidents. If counselors and secretaries are called, a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor calls and sets them apart.

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to be the stake Sunday School president.

Members of these presidencies have the following responsibilities:

• Serve on the stake council (presidents only). Participate in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families in the stake.

- Orient newly called ward organization presidencies. This includes providing instruction from chapters 1–4 and 7 in this handbook and the chapter for their organization.
- Offer ongoing support and instruction. Communicate 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. Arrange with ward leaders to visit their meetings and classes periodically.
- Instruct ward organization presidencies during stake leadership meetings (see 29.3.4). These are generally held once a year. The stake presidency may authorize a second meeting if it would not create a burden for participants. Bishops may request additional instruction for ward organization presidencies.
- Counsel together regularly in their own presidency meetings (if counselors are called). Communicate regularly with the member of the stake presidency responsible for their service.
- Attend coordinating council meetings when invited by the Area Seventy (see 29.4).
- Speak in sacrament meetings and other settings when invited by the stake presidency.
- **(1)** In large stakes, submit recommendations to the stake presidency for counselors and others to be called to serve in their organizations as needed. For guidelines, see 30.1.1 and 30.1.2.

The stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies may occasionally plan combined activities for their organizations. These activities could include all women, young women, and girls 8 and older in the stake. Such activities could also be held in multiple stakes. The presidencies counsel together to recommend combined activities to the stake presidency (see 20.3.1). Such activities would be in place of one of the stake Relief Society activities (see 5.7.1.1).



### 5.7.1.1 Additional Stake Relief Society Presidency Responsibilities

The stake Relief Society presidency has the following additional responsibilities:

- Serve on the stake adult leadership committee (see 29.3.9). If a secretary is called, she is also invited.
- Teach ward Relief Society presidents the principles of ministering and caring for those in need. Help them understand their role in helping bishops with temporal and self-reliance matters.
- Teach ward Relief Society presidencies about their responsibilities for missionary work (see 23.5.2) and temple and family history work (see 25.3.4).
- Strengthen young single adult sisters in the stake. If the stake has a young single adult committee, a member of the presidency serves on it (see 14.3.2).
- Coordinate stake Relief Society efforts during emergencies.

The stake Relief Society presidency may plan and carry out one or two meetings each year for all Relief Society sisters in the stake. These meetings are held under the direction of the stake presidency. They may include service, classes, projects, conferences, or workshops. They are not held in conjunction with the women's session of general conference. The stake Relief Society presidency may form committees to help as needed.

#### 5.7.1.2

#### Additional Stake Young Women Presidency Responsibilities

The stake Young Women presidency has the following additional responsibilities:

- Serve on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.10). If a secretary is called, she is also invited.
- Under the direction of the stake presidency, plan and coordinate stake Young Women activities and camps.

### 5.7.1.3 Additional Stake Primary Presidency Responsibilities

The stake Primary presidency may occasionally plan stake activities for children ages 8 to 11. These activities could be for girls, boys, or both. They follow the guidelines in 12.2.1.3.

#### 5.7.1.4

### Additional Stake Sunday School Presidency Responsibilities

The stake Sunday School presidency has the following additional responsibilities:

- Serve as specialists in the stake's efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching.
- Coordinate resource centers in the stake where applicable (see 13.7.2).
- Serve on the stake youth leadership committee if invited (see 29.3.10).

### 5.7.2 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.

● In a large stake, one or two other Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the stake may be called as counselors. A priesthood holder may also be called as a secretary (see 5.7.3). The stake Young Men president recommends whom to call. For guidelines, see 30.1.1 and 30.1.2. The counselors and secretary are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor.

The stake Young Men presidency has the following responsibilities:

- Serve on the stake council (president only, unless his counselors are high councilors). Participate in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families in the stake.
- Serve as a resource to bishoprics in their responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood brethren. This could include helping them understand their duties for Aaronic Priesthood quorums, as directed by the stake president.
- Counsel together regularly in their own presidency meetings. Communicate regularly with the member of the stake presidency who has responsibility for their service.
- Serve on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.10). If a secretary is called, he is also invited.
- Under the direction of the stake presidency, plan and coordinate stake Aaronic Priesthood activities and camps.
- Speak in sacrament meetings and other settings when invited by the stake presidency.

• Attend coordinating council meetings when invited by the Area Seventy (see 29.4).

The stake Young Men presidency does not hold a stake leadership meeting. Instruction for those who have responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood quorums is given in stake priesthood leadership meetings (see 29.3.3).

### 5.7.3 Stake Organization Secretaries

Stake organization secretaries are usually called only in large stakes. A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor calls and sets them apart. Under the direction of stake organization presidents, they may have the following responsibilities:

- Prepare agendas for presidency meetings.
- Take notes in presidency meetings and keep track of assignments.

- Keep other records and prepare reports as the presidency requests.
- Help the presidency prepare the annual budget for their organization. Account for expenses.
- Provide training for ward organization secretaries as assigned. This may include instruction on recording and reporting attendance.

### 5.8

### Stake Specialists

The stake presidency may call and set apart specialists as needed for purposes such as:

- Activities (see 20.3.2)
- Music (see 19.5.4)
- Welfare and self-reliance (see 22.9.4)

### ۰ The Bishopric

### 6.1

## The Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop holds the priesthood keys to lead the work of the Church in the ward (see 3.4.1). He and his counselors form a bishopric. They receive guidance from the stake presidency. They care for ward members with love, helping them become true followers of Jesus Christ (see Moroni 7:48).

The bishop has five principal responsibilities:

- He is the presiding high priest in the ward.
- He is president of the Aaronic Priesthood.
- He is a common judge.
- He coordinates the work of salvation and exaltation, including caring for those in need.
- He oversees records, finances, and the use of the meetinghouse.

Because the bishop holds priesthood keys, he has the right to receive revelation for the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:11). Therefore, some responsibilities are his alone. These are described in this chapter.

The bishop's foremost responsibility is to the rising generation in the ward, including young single adults. To enable him to concentrate on this responsibility, he delegates many assignments (see 4.2.6). He may delegate to his counselors, the clerk and assistant clerks, the executive secretary, quorum and organization leaders, and others.

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

### 6.1.1 Presiding High Priest

The bishop is the ward's primary spiritual leader. He sets an example by serving "with holiness of heart" (Mosiah 18:12). He teaches, uplifts, and inspires (see Matthew 20:28). He follows the principles of leader-ship in Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–46.

A bishop is a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. He is true to his covenants. He is loyal to his wife and family. He sets an example of righteousness for his family, the ward, and the community. (See 1 Timothy 3:2–7.) His counselors are men of similar character.

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

#### 6.1.1.1

#### Ward Organizations and Priesthood Quorums

The bishop has responsibility for the ward Relief Society and Young Women organizations. He assigns his counselors responsibility for the Sunday School and Primary organizations and other ward programs. (See 9.3.1, 11.3.1, 12.3.1, and 13.2.1.)

The bishop's responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood quorums are outlined in 6.1.2. His responsibilities for elders quorums are outlined in 8.3.1.

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

### 6.1.1.2 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 (for those with intellectual disabilities, see 18.3; for converts, see 18.7.1.2)
- Conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordination to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest

For information about ordinances and blessings, see chapter 18.

### 6.1.1.3 Councils and Meetings

The bishop leads the ward council and the ward youth council (see 29.2.5 and 29.2.6). He uses these councils to help coordinate the work of salvation and exaltation in the ward. He delegates much of this work and follows up on assignments (see 4.2.6).

The bishop invites leaders to counsel together about how to build spiritual strength and unity in the ward. He encourages all council members to seek inspiration and participate in discussions. (See Doctrine and Covenants 88:122; see also 7.6 in this handbook.)

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 in his area, or a General Authority attends. The bishop's counselors may conduct these meetings. They also preside if the bishop is absent.

### 6.1.1.4 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).

### 6.1.2

### 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; see also verse 20). The bishop has the following responsibilities as the president of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward. His counselors assist him.

- Support parents in teaching youth. Help youth serve faithfully, make and keep sacred covenants, and prepare to receive the ordinances of the temple. Help young men prepare to be ordained to priesthood offices and to serve full-time missions. If young women desire to serve full-time missions, help them prepare. The Children and Youth program can help in these efforts (see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- Oversee 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. For more information about Aaronic Priesthood quorum leadership, see 10.3, 10.4, and 10.5.
- Counsel with the ward Young Women president. The bishop does not delegate this assignment to a counselor. He and his counselors also regularly participate in Young Women meetings, service, and activities (see 11.3.1).
- Hold regular interviews with youth. For guidelines about these interviews, see 31.1.7.

• Support families and Primary leaders and teachers in their efforts to help children make and keep covenants (see chapter 12).

### 6.1.3 Common Judge

The bishop is the common judge in the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:71–74). He strives to follow the example of the Savior as a righteous judge (see 3 Nephi 27:27). He has the following responsibilities:

- Help youth and adults qualify for and be worthy of a temple recommend.
- Conduct worthiness interviews as outlined in 31.1.5. He may authorize his counselors to conduct certain interviews (see 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 sins, helping them draw on the healing power of Jesus Christ. The bishop may ask his counselors, elders quorum and Relief Society presidents, and others to counsel ward members about some matters. However, only the bishop counsels ward members about matters of worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds. For guidelines on counseling, see 31.2.
- Under the direction of the stake president, hold membership councils as needed according to the guidelines in chapter 32.

### 6.1.4 Coordinating the Work of Salvation and Exaltation

The bishop coordinates the work of salvation and exaltation in the ward (see chapter 1). His counselors and other ward leaders assist him. The bishop helps members live the gospel. He helps them strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and in Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:29). He teaches them to pray and study the scriptures. He invites them to make covenants by receiving the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. He encourages them to keep their covenants.

The bishop strengthens Church members. He encourages families to participate in regular family prayer and learn the gospel together, including in home evening. He teaches them to love and serve one another. He teaches by word and example that Church callings can be fulfilled without detracting from family responsibilities. He ensures that Church activities support parents' efforts to raise their children in righteousness.

In addition to helping members live the gospel, the bishop has other responsibilities in the work of salvation and exaltation. For example, he:

- Helps men prepare to be ordained to priesthood offices.
- Leads efforts to care for those in need in the ward (see 6.1.4.1 and 22.2.1).
- Guides the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead ministering efforts in the ward (see 21.2.1).
- Coordinates the work of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead the ward's efforts to share the gospel and strengthen new and returning members (see 23.1).
- Coordinates the efforts of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead temple and family history work in the ward (see 25.2).
- Helps members prepare to receive a temple recommend and temple ordinances (see 27.1).

### 6.1.4.1 Leading Efforts to Care for Those with Temporal Needs

The bishop has a divine mandate to seek out and care for those with temporal needs (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:112). He delegates much of this work to the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies.

Some duties are performed only by the bishop. For example, he determines the type, amount, and duration of any temporal assistance provided by the Church. In doing so, he often consults with the Relief Society and elders quorum presidents. For more information, see 22.4 and 22.5.

Members of the bishopric teach the principles of caring for those in need and building self-reliance (see 22.1). They also teach the law of the fast (see 22.2.2). They oversee the gathering of fast offerings (see 34.4.2).

The bishop instructs other ward leaders in their responsibilities to care for those in need. He also leads the ward council in these efforts.

For more information about how the bishop cares for those in need, see 22.6.1.

#### 6.1.5

#### Records, Finances, and the Meetinghouse

The bishop oversees ward records, ward finances, and the meetinghouse. He may assign much of the work with records and finances to his counselors and clerks. We 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, see chapter 33. For information about finances, see chapter 34. For information about meetinghouses, see chapter 35.

### 6.2

### Differences between Branch Presidencies and Bishoprics

In a branch, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder is called as the branch president. He holds the priesthood keys needed to preside (see 3.4.1.1). He and his counselors serve much like a bishopric but with the following differences:

- A branch president may be either an elder or a high priest. A bishop must be a high priest.
- A branch president is not set apart as a presiding high priest. However, he presides over the branch and has all of the responsibilities described in 6.1.1.
- Counselors in a branch presidency may not issue temple recommends (see 26.3.1).

### 6.3 Ward Executive Secretary

The bishopric recommends a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to serve as ward executive secretary. They make this recommendation to the stake presidency. The executive secretary should be worthy of a temple recommend. He is called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor.

The executive secretary works closely with the bishop and his counselors, but he is not a member of the bishopric. He has the following responsibilities:

- Meet with the bishopric and prepare agendas as assigned.
- Serve as a member of the ward council and attend ward council meetings. As directed by the bishopric, follow up on assignments made in these meetings.

- Schedule appointments for the bishopric.
- Schedule interviews for youth and adults who need to renew their temple recommends.
- If assigned by the bishopric, coordinate the ward's efforts to help members access Church magazines (see 38.8.8).
- Help the bishopric with seminary and institute matters, such as helping ward members register for classes (see chapter 15).
- Keep a current list of names and addresses of ward members who are in the military. Ensure that ward leaders are aware of these members (see 38.9.2). Inform the stake executive secretary when members plan to enter the military.

### 6.4 Ward Clerk and Assistant Ward Clerks

The bishop recommends a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to serve as ward clerk. He makes this recommendation to the stake presidency. The clerk should be worthy of a temple recommend. He is called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency.

Assistant ward clerks may also be called (see 33.4.3). They are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor.

Clerks work closely with the bishop and his counselors, but they are not members of the bishopric. The responsibilities of the ward clerk and assistant ward clerks are outlined in 33.4.2 and 33.4.3.

### <sup>7</sup> 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.

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 21.3).
- *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.

### <sup>7.6.2</sup> 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 22.7.
- 3. *Missionary*. Develop and review the ward mission plan (see 23.5.6). 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 23.5.5.
- 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). For

information on limited-use temple recommends and priesthood ordination for new converts, see 23.5.1.

- 5. *Activation*. Review the progress and fellowshipping 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 25.2.5.
- 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 6.3.

# **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.

### <sup>8.1.1</sup> 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 5.2.1.1 and 29.3.5.

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.

# 8.1.3Adapting 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.

### 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 22.6.2.

### 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 22.3.2). 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 22.6.2 and "Welfare Resources" in Leader and Clerk Resources.

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

As coordinated by the bishop, 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, as coordinated by the bishop, about how to help (see 22.4). 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 22.3.3 and 22.8.

### 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 bishop's guidance, they can help with the funeral.

If possible, deceased members who were endowed are buried or cremated in temple clothing. The body of a man may be dressed by his wife or by an endowed male family member. If a family member is not available or would prefer not to do the dressing, the bishop may ask the elders quorum president to invite an endowed man to dress the body or oversee the dressing. For more information, see 38.5.8.

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 23.5.1 and 23.5.3.

The ward mission leader, who may be a member of the elders quorum presidency, leads weekly coordination meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to coordinate inviting all to receive the blessings of the gospel. These meetings include assigned members of the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies, 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 25.2.2.

The ward temple and family history leader, who may be a member of the elders quorum presidency, leads temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7). These meetings 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 guidance 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 5.5.

### 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 bishop's guidance, counsel with adult members of the ward. Only the bishop counsels ward members about matters of worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds. See Counseling Resources.
- With the Relief Society presidency, help lead efforts in the ward to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel (see 8.2.3 and 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 8.2.4 and 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 21.3).
- 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 38.8.28.



### 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.

### 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 22.6.2.



### 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 22.3.2). 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 22.6.2 and "Welfare Resources" in Leader and Clerk Resources.

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

As coordinated by the bishop, 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, as coordinated by the bishop, about how to help (see 22.4). 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 22.3.3 and 22.8.

### 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 bishop's guidance, they can help with the funeral.

If possible, deceased members who were endowed are buried or cremated in temple clothing. The body of a woman may be dressed by her husband or by an endowed female family member. If a family member is not available or would prefer not to do the dressing, the bishop may ask the Relief Society president to invite an endowed sister to dress the body or oversee the dressing. For more information, see 38.5.8.

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 23.5.1).

The assigned member of the Relief Society presidency participates in coordination meetings to coordinate inviting all to receive the blessings of the gospel. The ward mission leader, who may be a member of the elders quorum presidency, leads weekly coordination meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to coordinate inviting all to receive the blessings of the gospel. 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 25.2.2).

The assigned member of the Relief Society presidency participates in coordination meetings to coordinate temple and family history work. These meetings are held regularly. The ward temple and family history leader, who may be a member of the elders quorum presidency, leads temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7). 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 bishop's guidance, counsel with adult members of the ward. Only the bishop counsels ward members about matters of worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds. See Counseling Resources.
- With the elders quorum presidency, help lead efforts in the ward to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel (see 8.2.3 and 9.2.3).

- With the elders quorum presidency, help lead temple and family history work in the ward (see 8.2.4 and 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). 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 29.3.4).

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 21.3).
- 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 21.2.2).

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 27.1.1).

## 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 5.7.1 and 5.7.3.

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 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 25.2.

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 38.8.28.

### 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 in this handbook).

### 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.

### <sup>10.1.4</sup> 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.

# 10.1.5Adapting 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).

### 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).

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

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.

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; see also 20.6.20 in this handbook). At least two responsible adult leaders should be present at all activities (see 10.8.1).

### For more information, see

AaronicPriesthoodQuorums.ChurchofJesusChrist .org. See also 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.

- 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.
- PA ward or stake youth conference or a For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conference (see 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 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.

### 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. Where available, 论 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 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 PamilySearch.org).
- Participate in baptisms and confirmations for the dead as often as circumstances allow.
- Participate in indexing (see PamilySearch.org/ indexing).
- Serve as temple and family history consultants, as called by the bishopric (see 25.2.4).

## 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

(1) 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.

### <sup>10.4.4</sup> 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 29.2.6 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 (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.

# 10.7Stake 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 5.5).

The stake Young Men president serves under the direction of the stake presidency. He and his counselors and secretary serve on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.10). 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 5.7.2 and 5.7.3.



## 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 21.2.2.

### 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.

### 10.8.4 Gathering Fast Offerings

(1) 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, regardless of size, should have a president and, where possible, one or two counselors and a secretary. In units with sufficient young women, 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.

# **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).

### 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).

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 coordinated by the bishopric and the Young Women presidency.

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.

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; see also 20.6.20 in this handbook). At least two responsible adult leaders should be present at all activities (see 11.6.1).

For more information, see YoungWomen .ChurchofJesusChrist.org. See also 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.
- 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.
- PA ward or stake youth conference or a For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conference (see 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 for information about funding for FSY 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.

### 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. Where available, 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 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 PamilySearch.org).
- Participate in baptisms and confirmations for the dead as often as circumstances allow.
- Participate in indexing (see FamilySearch.org/ indexing).
- Serve as temple and family history consultants, as called by the bishopric (see 25.2.4).

## 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 29.2.6).
- 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 and 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 21.2.2).
- 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; 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 Sunday class meetings (see 11.2.1.2).
- Plan and carry out class service and activities (see 11.2.1.3).
- Regularly hold class presidency meetings (see 11.3.4.3).

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 and 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.

### 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 29.2.6 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 when 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 (see 11.6.1).



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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 (see 11.6.1).

### 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 5.7.1 and 5.7.3.

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 5.5). This high councilor and the Young Women presidency and secretary serve on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.10).

### 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 21.2.2.

### 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.





# 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 ① 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:

Age on December 31 of the Previous Year	Class on January 1
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.

### <sup>12.2.1</sup> 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).



### 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:

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.

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 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; see also 20.6.20 in this handbook). 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 agegroups. 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. See also 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.

### 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. (\*) Where available, 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 PamilySearch.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:
  - $\circ~$  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.

### <sup>12.3.4</sup> 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
- "Primary Singing Time—Music Can Teach Doctrine" (MediaLibrary. 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. Or 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 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. (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. (See 12.5.1.)

# 12.4① 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 5.7.1 and 5.7.3.

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 5.5). He serves on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.10).

## 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). 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 **O**disability .ChurchofJesusChrist.org and 38.8.28.

### 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.

### <sup>12.5.7</sup> 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





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 13.2.2.2.

### 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.

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 guided 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 noted 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.

# 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 5.7.1 and 5.7.3. 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.

### 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.

# <sup>14.</sup> 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 as directed by the Spirit. The leadership positions include ward and stake organization presidencies, elders quorum presidencies, bishopric counselors, high councilors, and stake presidency counselors.

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.

### <sup>14.1.3</sup> 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

### <sup>14.3.1</sup> 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 councilor 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 councilor 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.

### <sup>14.3.3</sup> Ward Leadership

### 14.3.3.1 Bishopric

The bishop's foremost responsibility is to the rising generation in the ward, including young single adults. A strong relationship with the bishop and his counselors can help young single adults build greater faith in Jesus Christ and deeper connection to His gospel.

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 married couple or single adults as ward young single adult advisers. These

advisers are usually age 30 or older. They 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. Committee members include the elders quorum and Relief Society counselors assigned to young single adults, the young single adult leaders, and the 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.

### <sup>14.3.6</sup> 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.

# 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.

### <sup>14.6.3</sup> 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 Churchservice 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. 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.

### 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 ① 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 Les- sons	Number of Weekly Home Study or Online Lessons
A	5 (50 minutes)	None
В	4 (60 minutes)	None
С	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.

A local board of education may be established where several stakes with seminary classes, homestudy classes, or both are in close proximity and have common concerns and challenges (see seminary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

### <sup>15.1.3</sup> 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 releasedtime seminary, see Released-Time Seminary on 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.

### 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.

# 15.3Church Schools

For information on Church primary and secondary schools, BYU–Pathway Worldwide, and institutions of higher education, see 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*.

### <sup>17.1.1</sup> 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.

### <sup>17.1.2</sup> 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.

### <sup>17.1.3</sup> 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.

### 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.



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

For information about performing these ordinances for those with intellectual disabilities, see the following:

- For baptism and confirmation (38.2.1.8 and 38.2.3.5)
- For ordination to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood (38.2.5.4)
- For the temple endowment and sealing (27.2.1.3 and 27.3.1.2)

If a child who was born in the covenant dies before age 8, no ordinances are needed or performed. If the child was not born in the covenant, the only ordinance he or she needs is to be sealed to parents. Because of the Savior's Atonement, all children who die before age 8 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



# <sup>18.3</sup> 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 and for members of record ages 9 and older whose baptism was delayed due to intellectual disabilities)
	Mission president (for converts)
Confirmation and gift of the Holy Ghost	<ul><li>Bishop (for 8-year-old children and for members of record ages 9 and older whose baptism was delayed due to intellectual disabilities)</li><li>Mission president (for converts)</li></ul>
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

Ordinance or Blessing	Who Holds Keys
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 38.8.24).

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.)

### <sup>18.7.1</sup> 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 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.

For information about baptizing and confirming a person who has an intellectual disability, see 38.2.1.8 and 38.2.3.5.

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.
- Members of record ages 9 and older whose baptism was delayed due to intellectual disabilities.

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. See 18.7.1.1 for an exception for those with intellectual disabilities.
- 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 bishopric's guidance, 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.

### <sup>18.7.3</sup> 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.

### <sup>18.7.4</sup> 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.

### <sup>18.7.8</sup> 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 29.2.1.1 when introducing new members.



### <sup>18.8.1</sup> 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 food allergies or gluten intolerance, they discuss with a member of the bishopric what adaptations to make for the sacrament. As needed, the bishopric may modify the procedure for administering the sacrament to them.

Generally, bread must be broken as part of the sacrament ordinance. However, to ensure the health and safety of a particular member, that member 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.

See disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for guidelines about food allergies. 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.



### <sup>18.10.1</sup> 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 John 15:16; Doctrine and Covenants 42:11; see also 3.4.3.1 in this handbook). 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.

### <sup>18.11.1</sup> 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.

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

### <sup>18.12.1</sup> 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.

#### <sup>18.15.1</sup> 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

#### <sup>18.16.1</sup> 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.

#### 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. 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.

## <sup>19.</sup> 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).

#### <sup>19.2.2</sup> 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.

#### <sup>19.2.3</sup> 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.

#### <sup>19.2.6</sup> 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.

#### <sup>19.2.7</sup> 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.
- 2. Hymns and children's songs can be downloaded in MP3 format at 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.

#### <sup>19.4.1</sup> 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.

#### <sup>19.4.3</sup> 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).

#### <sup>19.4.4</sup> 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.

#### <sup>19.4.6</sup> 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

#### <sup>19.5.1</sup> 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.

#### <sup>19.5.2</sup> 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

#### <sup>19.6.1</sup> 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.

#### <sup>19.6.2</sup> 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 38.8.35). 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.

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. Members may also visit 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.

## <sup>19.9</sup> Additional Music Policies and Guidelines

#### <sup>19.9.1</sup> 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.

## <sup>19.9.4</sup> Copyright Guidelines

See 38.8.11.

#### 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 29.5.4.

#### <sup>19.9.7</sup> Music for Baptismal Services

See 18.7.2.

## 19.10 Online Music Resources

For additional resources, visit music .ChurchofJesusChrist.org and "Music Callings" on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

# 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 bishopric's guidance, 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.

#### <sup>20.2.6</sup> 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 29.4).

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 and 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 bishopric's guidance. 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 youth leadership 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 38.8.20 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) 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 38.8.11.

#### 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.

#### <sup>20.6.10</sup> 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 Churchsponsored 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 Misconduct

If a leader becomes aware of physical, sexual, or emotional misconduct 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, geographic 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 29.4).

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.



## <sup>21.</sup> Ministering

#### 21.0

## Introduction

Ministering means serving others as the Savior did (see Matthew 20:26–28). He loved, taught, prayed for, comforted, and blessed those around Him (see Acts 10:38). As disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek to minister to God's children.

The Lord wants all members of His Church to receive such care. For this reason, priesthood holders are assigned as ministering brothers to each member household. Ministering sisters are assigned to each adult sister. These assignments help ensure that Church members are remembered and cared for (see Moroni 6:4). Ministering is an important way we keep the commandments to love God and to love our neighbors (see Matthew 22:36–40). It is also a vital way to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation.

Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies help ministering brothers and sisters learn how to minister to others. They also give inspiration, guidance, and support. They can do this in ministering interviews (see 21.3), in Sunday meetings, and in personal conversations. They seek inspiration from the scriptures, this chapter, and ministering. ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

## 21.1 Responsibilities of Ministering Sisters and Brothers

Ministering sisters and brothers represent the Lord. They also help members feel the love and support of the bishop and Relief Society or quorum leaders. They are to "watch over" Church members and "be with and strengthen them" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:53).

Ministering sisters and brothers have the following responsibilities for the individuals and families assigned to them:

- Help them strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
- Help them prepare to make and keep sacred covenants with God as they receive ordinances. As needed, help parents prepare their children to receive ordinances and keep covenants.
- Discern needs and provide Christlike love, caring, and service. Offer help and comfort in times of spiritual or temporal need. Discuss needs during ministering interviews and at other times.
- Help them become spiritually and temporally self-reliant.

For more about the responsibilities of ministering sisters and brothers, see James 1:27, Mosiah 23:18, and Doctrine and Covenants 20:47, 59.

Ministering sisters and brothers prayerfully seek the guidance of the Spirit. They also counsel with those they serve to understand how best to help them meet their needs.

Ministering sisters and brothers adapt their efforts to the needs and circumstances of those they serve. Personal visits are encouraged, considering factors such as safety, distance, and cultural appropriateness. Ministering sisters and brothers can also reach out in other ways. These include phone calls, video calls, texts, emails, letters, social media, contact at church, and acts of service.

There may be needs that ministering brothers or sisters cannot meet alone. In such cases, they counsel with a member of the Relief Society or elders quorum presidency.

## 21.2 Organizing Ministering

The Savior gave His disciples meaningful assignments (see Luke 10:1–17; see also 4.2.6 in this handbook). Following this pattern, we receive assignments to minister to specific individuals and families. An organized approach to ministering helps give each person opportunities to feel the Savior's love.

#### 21.2.1 Making Assignments

Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies prayerfully consider assignments for ministering brothers and sisters. They take into account the strengths and needs of the members. They also consider the needs of children in the family. They normally assign two brothers or two sisters as companionships. They seek the bishop's approval for ministering companionships and assignments.

When making these decisions, leaders consider the following:

- Dedicated ministering brothers and sisters should be assigned to members who have the greatest need. These may include new members, single parents, widows, widowers, and less-active members.
- Youth may serve as companions to adults according to the guidelines in 21.2.2.
- A married couple may be assigned to minister together to a person or family.

• Stake presidencies and bishoprics care for all members of the stake or ward. Because of this, they are generally not assigned as ministering brothers. The stake president determines whether high councilors and functioning patriarchs are assigned.

After the bishop has given approval, a member of the elders quorum presidency extends assignments to ministering brothers, including young men. A member of the Relief Society presidency extends assignments to ministering sisters, including young women.

These leaders counsel with the ministering brothers or sisters about the strengths, needs, and challenges of those to whom they will minister. Leaders encourage ministering brothers or sisters to understand the needs of those to whom they are assigned, then seek inspiration about how best to serve.

Ministering brothers and sisters are not called, sustained, or set apart. Their service is part of the covenant they made at baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–11).

#### 21.2.2 Ministering Assignments for Youth

Even before they receive ministering assignments, youth minister to others by serving them in Christlike ways. A youth's service as a ministering sister or brother can be a significant part of accomplishing the work of salvation and exaltation.

A young woman may serve as a ministering companion to a Relief Society sister when the young woman is willing and able. She may begin serving in the year she turns 14. The Relief Society presidency counsels with the young woman, her parents, and the Young Women presidency as they consider ministering assignments.

It is often a blessing to a sister to have a young woman minister to her. It can also be a blessing to the young woman. A young man serves as a ministering companion to a Melchizedek Priesthood holder when he is ordained to the office of teacher or priest. The bishop determines whether the young man is worthy and prepared to be ordained. (See 10.1.3.2.) The elders quorum presidency counsels with the young man, his parents, and the bishopric as they consider ministering assignments.

In some cases, youth may be assigned as a third member of a ministering companionship. Leaders may assign the youth to help minister to some or all of the individuals and families assigned to the companionship.

Youth do not have ministering brothers or sisters assigned to them. They receive ministering care from their family's ministering brothers. Their class or quorum presidency and adult leaders also minister to them. If their parents are not members of the Church but are open to receiving ministering, the elders quorum presidency may assign ministering brothers to the family. Similarly, the Relief Society presidency may assign ministering sisters to the mother.

The Church's guideline that two responsible adults be present with youth does not apply to ministering companions. However, leaders use wisdom and seek inspiration when assigning youth as companions to adults. They also seek guidance from the bishop. When a youth is assigned to a companion who is not his or her parent, leaders confirm that the parents do not object to the assignment.

Adult companions should avoid situations that might be misunderstood. They use care in one-onone situations. They help youth have a safe and rewarding experience with ministering.



#### 21.2.3 Full-Time Missionaries

If the mission president approves, full-time missionaries can help with ministering. Ward leaders can seek his approval through the stake president. Fulltime missionaries are usually assigned to minister to new members, part-member families, and less-active members.

## 21.3 Ministering Interviews

The Savior had a simple yet profound interview with Peter about feeding His sheep (see John 21:15–17). Ministering interviews can be a similar opportunity. They also allow leaders to set an example of ministering.

The elders quorum president and his counselors interview ministering brothers. The Relief Society president and her counselors interview ministering sisters. A married couple assigned to minister together can meet with elders quorum or Relief Society leaders or both.

These interviews are held at least once each quarter. They may be held at any time during the quarter. Preferably, interviews are held in person and with both members of the companionship. Youth with ministering assignments should be included if possible. Ministering interviews do not need to be long to be effective. Their purposes are to:

- Counsel about the strengths, needs, and challenges of assigned individuals and families.
- Discuss ways to help persons prepare to receive ordinances if needed.
- Consider how the elders quorum, Relief Society, ward council, and others might help.
- Teach and encourage ministering brothers and sisters.

Between interviews, ministering brothers and sisters communicate with leaders as needed. They may share confidential information directly with the bishop.

Leaders use Leader and Clerk Resources to report ministering interviews.

#### 21.4 Coordinating Ministering Efforts

The Relief Society and the elders quorum share the work of ministering. They do this work in unity.

Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies meet together at least quarterly. They review what they have learned in ministering interviews (see 21.3). They also coordinate ministering assignments. The two presidents share the responsibility of organizing and conducting the meeting.

In units with few active members, the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies may decide not to assign both ministering sisters and ministering brothers to some members. Leaders make this decision together and seek the bishop's approval. If a sister is assigned ministering sisters but not ministering brothers, leaders ensure that she has someone she can ask for a priesthood blessing.

The Relief Society and elders quorum presidents meet together at least quarterly with the bishop.

They discuss the needs of ward members. They also talk about possible changes in ministering assignments.

When needed, Relief Society and elders quorum presidents discuss with the ward council information shared by ministering sisters and brothers. As they do, they respect members' requests for confidentiality. As coordinated by the bishop, the ward council makes plans to serve and bless ward members. The ward youth council also discusses ministering (see 29.2.6).



22.

# Providing for Temporal Needs and Building Self-Reliance

#### 22.0

## Introduction

Members of the Church covenant to "bear one another's burdens, . . . mourn with those that mourn . . . , and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:8–9). Caring for those who have temporal needs is part of the work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2). This responsibility applies to all members of the Church as they minister to one another.

Church members are also counseled to strengthen their own self-reliance through diligent work and with the help of the Lord. Self-reliance is the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family. As members become more self-reliant, they are also better able to serve others.

#### INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY EFFORTS

## 22.1 Build Self-Reliance

With help from the Lord, members build self-reliance in the following ways:

- Develop spiritual, physical, and emotional strength.
- Gain education and employment.
- Improve temporal preparedness.

#### 22.1.1 Spiritual Strength

The Savior taught that "all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:34). Members develop spiritual strength as they do the following:

- Exercise faith in Christ.
- Pray.
- Fast.
- Study the scriptures and the words of the living prophets.
- Obey the commandments.
- Attend sacrament meeting and other Church meetings.
- Provide service to others.
- Participate in sacred ordinances and strive to keep the associated covenants.

As members do these things, they receive guidance from the Holy Spirit on how to solve their problems and minister effectively to others.

#### 22.1.2 Physical and Emotional Health

Heavenly Father wants His children to develop physical and emotional strength. This includes doing the following:

• Obey the Word of Wisdom (see Doctrine and Covenants 89; see also 38.7.14 in this handbook).

- Strive to eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, get enough sleep, and maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid substances and behaviors that are harmful or addictive.
- Practice good hygiene and receive proper medical care.
- Develop and strengthen healthy relationships with family and others.
- Learn to manage stress.
- Seek help for mental or emotional challenges as needed.



#### 22.1.3 Education and Employment

The Savior taught that "the glory of God is intelligence" (Doctrine and Covenants 93:36). He also taught, "Seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118; see also 130:18). Education or vocational training can lead to better employment so members can provide for personal and family needs.

Developing the capacity to work will help members contribute to their families, the Church, and the world. Members are counseled to work hard and be honest in all they do.

#### 22.1.4 Temporal Preparedness

The scriptures teach the importance of being prepared (see Ezekiel 38:7; Doctrine and Covenants 38:30). Members are counseled to become prepared so they can care for themselves, their families, and others in times of need.

## Key Elements of Temporal Preparedness

#### Finances

- Pay tithes and offerings
- Avoid debt
- Live within a budget
- Save for the future
- Obtain an appropriate education

#### **Home Storage**

- Food
- Water
- Other necessities

Members increase their financial preparedness by:

- Paying tithes and offerings (see Malachi 3:8-12).
- Eliminating and avoiding debt to the extent possible.
- Preparing and living within a budget.
- Saving for the future.
- Obtaining an appropriate education to help them provide for themselves and their families (see 22.3.3).

Preparedness also includes developing a plan for how to take care of basic needs during an emergency. Members are encouraged to build both a short-term and longer-term supply of food, water, and other necessities.

For more information, see Personal Finances for Self-Reliance and "Temporal Preparedness Resources."

#### 22.2

# Minister to Those with Temporal and Emotional Needs

The Lord's disciples are taught to "love . . . and to serve one another" and to "succor those that stand in need of . . . succor" (Mosiah 4:15–16). Members strive to see others as the Savior sees them, understanding their unique strengths and needs. By doing this, members will be inspired to know how to minister to those who have temporal and emotional needs. These needs may include food, clothing, housing, education, employment, physical health, and emotional well-being.

#### 22.2.1 The Lord's Storehouse

The Savior taught, "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). All the resources available to the Church to help those with temporal needs are called the Lord's storehouse (see Doctrine and Covenants 82:18–19). These include members' offerings of time, talents, compassion, materials, and financial resources to help those in need.

The Lord's storehouse exists in each ward and stake. Leaders can often help individuals and families find solutions to their needs by drawing on the knowledge, skills, and service offered by ward and stake members. Besides the resources of the Lord's storehouse, members can often receive needed help through government and community resources (see 22.12).



#### <sup>22.2.2</sup> The Law of the Fast and Fast Offerings

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. The law of the fast blesses both givers and receivers. Members grow closer to the Lord and increase in spiritual strength as they live the law of the fast. They also strengthen their own self-reliance and develop greater compassion. (See Isaiah 58:6–12; Malachi 3:8–12.)

Fasting may be done at any time. However, members usually observe the first Sabbath of the month as a fast day. A fast day typically includes the following:

- Praying
- Going without food and drink for a 24-hour period (if physically able)
- Giving a generous fast offering

A fast offering is a donation to help those in need. When members fast, they are invited to give an offering that is at least equal to the value of the meals not eaten. Members are encouraged to be generous and give more than the value of these meals if they can.

Members may give their fast offering and a completed Tithing and Other Offerings form to the bishop or one of his counselors. In some areas, they can also make their donation online. (1) In some wards, the bishop may authorize Aaronic Priesthood holders to collect fast offerings (see 34.4.2).

#### 22.2.3 Service

Members seek to serve others as the Savior did (see John 13:35). They strive to become aware of each other's strengths and needs. They minister to one another with love and understanding.

Service can be coordinated in the ward, stake, or community. Where JustServe is available, members and others can use it to identify service opportunities in the community. Members and others can also provide disaster relief or community service through Church-sponsored projects such as Helping Hands.

#### 22.2.4 Humanitarian Aid

The Church provides humanitarian aid throughout the world. It does this both directly and through partnerships with other relief organizations. This aid is typically delivered through the Church organization called Latter-day Saint Charities. It is given without regard to race, religion, or nationality.

Members and others who wish to support these efforts may donate to the Church Humanitarian Aid Fund. Members may give their donation and a completed Tithing and Other Offerings form to the bishop or one of his counselors. In some areas, they can also make their donation online.

#### LEADER EFFORTS

## 22.3 Pattern for Building Self-Reliance and Ministering to Those in Need

Church leaders represent the Savior as they care for those with temporal and emotional needs (see 22.3.4). In doing so, they strive to help members strengthen their self-reliance.

Leaders seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost so they can assist with sensitivity and compassion. The following pattern will help leaders address members' needs in a way that builds self-reliance:

- Seek out those in need.
- Help them assess and address short-term needs.
- Help them build long-term self-reliance.
- Minister to those with emotional needs.

#### 22.3.1 Seek Out Those in Need

The bishop has a sacred responsibility to seek out and care for those in need (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:112). Others who have an important role in helping the bishop with this responsibility include:

- Ministering brothers and sisters.
- Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies.
- The bishop's counselors.
- Other members of the ward council.

As needed, the bishopric may call ward welfare and self-reliance specialists to support these efforts (see 22.6.4).

In a spirit of love and concern, ward leaders and those who serve with them help identify members who may need assistance. It is not enough to assist only when asked. Leaders should counsel with ministering brothers and sisters to ensure that members in need receive proper care.

#### 22.3.2

## Help Members Assess and Address Short-Term Needs

Members strive to meet their basic needs through their own efforts, help from extended family, and help from government and community resources (see 22.12). If these sources are insufficient, members may need Church assistance.

Church assistance might include help with shortterm needs such as food, hygiene items, clothing, housing, or other basics. Bishops may use fast offerings to respond to these needs. In some locations, bishops may also use bishops' orders for food and other basic goods (see "Bishops' Orders and Referrals" in Leader and Clerk Resources [LCR]).

When providing Church assistance, leaders follow the principles and policies outlined in sections 22.4 and 22.5.

#### 22.3.3 Help Members Build Long-Term Self-Reliance

Members may need ongoing support to address longer-term challenges. Education, vocational training, or other resources can help them build self-reliance and provide for their longer-term needs. Relief Society and elders quorum leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, and others can help members gain access to these resources.

The Self-Reliance Plan helps members identify their strengths and needs. It also helps them identify useful resources. This plan should be used each time Church assistance is considered. The bishop may assign Relief Society leaders, elders quorum leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, or others to help members fill out the plan. As part of a self-reliance plan, leaders may recommend that members participate in a self-reliance group. These groups help them develop skills and resources for better education, employment, or financial management (see 22.13). The groups are generally organized by stake or ward councils (see 22.10.2, 22.7).

The bishop, or another leader he assigns, uses the Bishop's Guide to the Self-Reliance Plan when providing assistance. This form helps leaders follow up on members' progress toward self-reliance.

#### 22.3.4 Minister to Those with Emotional Needs

Many members experience emotional challenges. Ministering brothers and sisters and ward leaders can be instrumental in helping members with these challenges.

A person's struggle with emotional challenges can also affect his or her family members. Ward leaders should be attentive to the needs of family members, especially spouses. Leaders extend support and understanding to them.

The Church provides "Counseling Resources" to help leaders support members on a wide range of emotional and social issues. Additional resources for members include the following:

- Emotional Resilience for Self-Reliance
- Addiction recovery groups
- Spouse and family support groups
- Courses for strengthening marriages and families

See also "Emotional Health" in 22.13.

Bishops may consult with Family Services staff to better understand a member's emotional challenges and to identify available resources and services. Stake and mission presidents may also consult with Family Services. As part of this consultation, Family Services staff may help these leaders evaluate if a member with serious emotional or social challenges may need professional counseling. These leaders can request a consultation by contacting their Family Services office or their welfare and self-reliance manager. See 31.2.6 for contact information.

Bishops can refer members who need counseling to a Family Services professional, where available. They do this by using a bishop's order for services (see "Bishops' Orders and Referrals" in LCR). Alternatively, members may seek help from reputable professional counselors in the community.

Sometimes bishops counsel members who need help to repent of sinful behavior. This behavior may include sins related to or caused by addictions. In these situations, bishops should refer to the guidelines in 32.8.1 and 32.8.2.



## 22.4 Principles for Providing Church Assistance

With the help of the Lord, members seek to provide for themselves and their families. When members need financial assistance, they should turn to the following sources in this order:

- 1. Their extended family
- 2. Government and community financial resources
- 3. Church assistance through fast offerings

When members need short-term help with food or other basic goods, bishops may use fast offerings to provide assistance (see 22.3.2). Where bishops' orders are available, bishops generally use those to provide food and other basic goods.

Church assistance is intended to help members develop independence, not dependence. Any assistance given should strengthen members in their efforts to become self-reliant.

When providing Church assistance, leaders follow the principles in sections 22.4.1 through 22.4.5. Bishoprics and clerks are encouraged to review the video "Sacred Funds, Sacred Responsibilities."

## Principles for Providing Church Assistance

- · Encourage personal and family responsibility.
- · Provide temporary assistance for essential needs.
- Provide resources or services rather than cash.
- Offer work or service opportunities.
- Keep information about Church assistance confidential.

#### 22.4.1 Encourage Personal and Family Responsibility

Leaders teach that individuals and families have the primary responsibility for their own temporal, emotional, and spiritual well-being. By living principles of self-reliance, members will be better able to solve future needs on their own (see 22.1).

Before providing Church assistance, the bishop (or another leader or member he assigns) reviews with members what resources they are using to meet their own needs. This person may suggest other resources for the members to consider, including resources in the government or community (see 22.12).

#### 22.4.2 Provide Temporary Assistance for Essential Needs

The goal of Church assistance is to temporarily meet basic needs while members strive to become selfreliant. Fast-offering assistance is generally used to pay for essential items, such as food and clothing. However, it may also be used to pay for housing or utilities. It may also be used to pay for personal services such as counseling, medical care, or vocational training.

Church assistance is meant to sustain life—not to maintain lifestyle. Members may need support and empathy as they work to reduce or eliminate expenses to better provide for their own needs.

Bishops should exercise good judgment and seek spiritual direction when considering the amount and duration of the assistance given. They should be compassionate and generous while not creating dependence.

#### <sup>22.4.3</sup> Provide Resources or Services Rather Than Cash

If possible, the bishop should avoid giving cash. Instead, he should use fast offerings or bishops' orders to provide members with groceries or services. Members can then use their own money to pay for other needs.

When this is not sufficient, the bishop may assist by using fast offerings to temporarily pay essential bills (see 22.5.2). If possible, these payments should be sent directly to the service provider (see 22.5.3).

#### 22.4.4 Offer Work or Service Opportunities

Bishops invite those who receive assistance to work or provide service to the extent of their ability. This helps members maintain a sense of dignity. It also increases their ability to be self-reliant. Where JustServe is available, it may be used to identify service opportunities in the community.

Some members who are elderly or disabled may be limited in the work or service they can provide. Leaders should understand their situations and offer options that allow them to do what they can within their circumstances.

#### 22.4.5

#### Keep Information about Church Assistance Confidential

The bishop and other ward leaders keep confidential any information about members who may need Church assistance. This protects members' privacy and dignity. (See 31.3.)

Members who receive assistance should recognize the sacred nature of fast offerings and bishops' orders. They should treat any assistance they receive with confidentiality and respect.

Sometimes it may be helpful for the ward council or others to know about the needs of an individual or family. An example is when a member is looking for a job. In these cases, the bishop and other leaders generally seek the member's permission to share such information.

## 22.5 Policies for Providing Church Assistance

Church leaders should follow the policies outlined in this section when providing assistance through fast offerings or bishops' orders for food and other basic goods.

#### 22.5.1 Policies Regarding Recipients of Church Assistance

## 22.5.1.1

#### Assistance to Ward Members

Generally, members who receive Church assistance should live in the ward boundaries and have their membership record in the ward. Assistance can be given regardless of whether the member regularly attends Church meetings or follows Church standards.

If a member recently moved into the ward, the bishop contacts the previous bishop to discuss the person's situation before providing assistance. Bishops can also review any assistance given during the previous three years in the "Finance" section of LCR.

#### 22.5.1.2

#### Assistance to Bishops and Stake Presidents

At times a bishop or members of his immediate or extended family who live in the ward may need Church assistance. When this occurs, the bishop reviews the needs and the proposed assistance with the stake president. The stake president's written approval is required before a bishop may use fast offerings or approve a bishop's order for himself or his family.

If fast-offering funds are used, the stake president reviews the bills and other expenses before authorizing payment. The bishop may not approve a payment for himself or his family.

When a stake president or members of his immediate or extended family who live in his ward need assistance, he contacts the bishop. The bishop follows the same principles and guidelines of Church assistance that he would for any other member. However, once the bishop has approved the request, the stake president must submit it to the Area Presidency. The stake president and bishop await written approval from a member of the Area Presidency before proceeding with the payment or order.

#### 22.5.1.3

#### Assistance to Persons Who Are Transient or Homeless

Bishops may assist members and others who are transient or homeless. However, they carefully consider the type and amount of assistance given. They are encouraged to counsel with the bishop of the person's previous ward before giving assistance.

Bishops generally invite transient or homeless members who receive assistance to accept work or service opportunities. Bishops may also refer these members to community resources that are equipped to address their needs.

Based on need, a stake president may appoint one bishop to handle all requests arising in the stake from people who are transient or homeless. In some areas there is a concentration of stakes with large numbers of people who are transient or homeless. In those situations, the Area Presidency may call a service missionary to handle their requests for assistance. This person should have served as a bishop.

#### 22.5.1.4

## Assistance to Persons Who Are Not Members of the Church

Persons who are not members of the Church are usually referred to local community resources for assistance. On rare occasions, as guided by the Spirit, the bishop may assist them with fast offerings or bishops' orders. For instance, the bishop may consider assistance for parents or caretakers who are not Church members but have one or more children who are members.

#### 22.5.2 Policies on Using Fast Offerings

#### 22.5.2.1 Medical or Other Health Care

Each Church area has established approval limits for using fast offerings to pay medical, dental, or mental health expenses. These limits are recommended by the Area Presidency. They are approved by the Church Welfare and Self-Reliance Executive Committee. Limits may vary by region or country in an area.

When bishops use fast offerings to help pay for medical, dental, or mental health care, they should not exceed these limits without appropriate approval. For approval amounts and guidelines, see "Use of Fast Offerings for Medical Expenses."

#### 22.5.2.2

## Consumer Debt and Failed Businesses or Investments

Fast offerings may not be used to pay consumer debt, such as credit cards or personal loans. Nor may fast offerings be used to pay money owed as a result of a failed business or investment.

#### 22.5.2.3 Repayment of Fast Offerings

Members do not repay fast-offering assistance they receive from the Church.

#### 22.5.2.4

#### Ward Fast-Offering Expenditure Amounts

Bishops are not required to limit fast-offering assistance for ward members to the amount of donations collected within the ward.

#### 22.5.3 Policies on Making Payments

If possible, payments should be made directly to the businesses that provide goods and services. Payments are not typically made to the person being assisted.

Bishopric members and clerks follow the financial procedures outlined in 34.6.7 when:

- Preparing a check.
- Preparing an electronic disbursement.
- Withdrawing cash for a fast-offering payment.

#### 22.5.4 Policies on Payments That Would Benefit a Bishop or Stake President

When providing members with fast-offering assistance, a bishop may not use the funds to pay for goods or services in a way that would benefit him personally. Any exception would require approval from the stake president. For example, if the bishop owns the rental property where a member lives, he may not use fast offerings to pay that member's rent unless the stake president first gives approval. The same policy would apply if fast offerings are used to buy food for the member from a grocery store the bishop owns.

If a fast-offering payment for a member would benefit the stake president or a business he owns, Area Presidency approval is required. Once the bishop approves the proposed payment, the stake president submits the request to the Area Presidency. The stake president and bishop await written approval from a member of the Area Presidency before proceeding with the payment.

#### 22.5.5 Protecting against Improper Use of Funds

Bishoprics and clerks should protect fast-offering funds from improper use. For questions or to report abuse of Church assistance or fraud, members of bishoprics or clerks in the United States and Canada can call the help line at 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-7887. Members of bishoprics or clerks outside the United States and Canada should call their area office.

### 22.6 Roles of Ward Leaders

#### 22.6.1 Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop has a divine mandate to seek out and care for those with temporal needs (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:112). He delegates much of this work to the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies. However, certain duties are performed only by the bishop. For example, the bishop:

- Determines the type, amount, and duration of any temporal assistance provided.
- Approves fast-offering assistance (see 22.4 and 22.5) and bishops' orders for food and other basic goods (see 22.13).
- Ensures that the principles and policies for providing temporal assistance are followed. (See 22.4, 22.5, and the video "Sacred Funds, Sacred Responsibilities.")
- Personally reviews members' self-reliance plans. He assigns other ward leaders to follow up on those plans as needed. (See the Self-Reliance Plan and Bishop's Guide to the Self-Reliance Plan.)

The bishop and his counselors have the following responsibilities:

- Teach the principles and blessings related to (1) caring for those who have temporal and emotional needs and (2) building self-reliance (see 22.1). This includes personal and family preparedness.
- Teach the law of the fast and encourage members to give a generous fast offering (see 22.2.2).
- Oversee the gathering and accounting of fast offerings (see 34.4.2).

As the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, the bishopric also oversees the efforts of Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women classes to serve those with temporal needs in the ward and community (see 10.2.2 and 11.2.2). These efforts are coordinated in ward youth council meetings (see 22.8) and in quorum and class presidency meetings (see 10.4.3 and 11.3.4.2).

#### 22.6.2 Relief Society and Elders Quorum Presidencies

Under the direction of the bishop, the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies have a key role in caring for those in need in the ward (see 8.2.2, 9.2.2). These leaders teach ward members to:

- Minister to those in need.
- Live the law of the fast.
- Build self-reliance.
- Increase personal and family preparedness.

Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies apply the pattern described in 22.3 as they help care for those in need.

(1) In some locations, bishops have the option to provide members in need with a bishop's order for food and other basic goods (see 22.13). The bishop generally assigns the Relief Society president to meet with the members and fill out the order form (see 9.2.2.2). However, he may also assign the elders quorum president (see 8.2.2.2). 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.

#### 22.6.3 Ministering Brothers or Sisters

Assistance with spiritual and temporal needs often begins with ministering brothers and sisters (see 21.1). They report the needs of those whom they serve to their elders quorum or Relief Society presidencies in ministering interviews and at other times. They may share needs that are confidential directly with the bishop.

# 22.6.4Ward Welfare and Self-RelianceSpecialists

Bishoprics may call individuals or couples as ward welfare and self-reliance specialists. These specialists support ward leaders in their efforts to care for others and help them become more self-reliant.

Specialists may be assigned to specific areas of focus. These could include the following:

- Employment
- Education
- Preparedness
- Emotional health
- Personal finances
- Local government and community resources that serve those in need (see 22.12)

Bishoprics may also ask specialists to help coordinate or facilitate self-reliance groups. These groups are generally organized by stake or ward councils.

#### 22.6.5 Summary of Callings and Roles

The following table summarizes the callings and roles discussed in 22.6.

Calling	Visit and Assess Needs	Teach Principles of Self-Reliance	Assist Members with the Self-Reli- ance Plan	Approve Fast-Offer- ing Assistance or Bishops' Orders
Bishop	May, but often dele- gates	Yes	May, but often dele- gates	Yes
Relief Society and elders quorum presi- dencies	Yes	Yes	As assigned	No
Ministering brothers and sisters	Yes	Yes	As assigned	No
Ward welfare and self-reliance special- ists (if called)	As assigned	As assigned	As assigned	No

## **22.7** Role of the Ward Council

An important role of the ward council is to plan how to care for those in need and to help them become self-reliant (see 7.5.1 and 7.6.2). Council members base these plans on information from ministering interviews and from their own personal contacts with those in need. In discussing the needs of members, the council respects the desires of any who request confidentiality.

As ward councils consider how to care for those with temporal and emotional needs, they do the following:

- Plan ways to teach ward members how to apply principles of self-reliance (see 22.1). These principles include personal and family preparedness.
- Plan ways to help those who have immediate needs, such as unemployment, and those who have longer-term care needs, such as health problems or disabilities.

- Identify ward members whose skills might be helpful in responding to immediate and long-term needs.
- Identify possible work or service assignments for those who receive Church assistance.
- Identify members who could benefit from participating in a self-reliance group. These groups are generally organized by stake or ward councils.
- Identify other government, community, or Church resources that can benefit members (see 22.12 and 22.13).
- Plan ways to give service in the community. Where JustServe is available, it may be used to identify such service opportunities.

Ward councils also prepare a simple written plan for the ward to respond to emergencies. This plan should be coordinated with the stake's emergency plan (see "Stake and Ward Preparedness"; see also 22.9.1.3 in this handbook). Ward welfare and self-reliance specialists may be invited to ward council meetings as needed.

### 22.8 Role of the Ward Youth Council

One purpose of the ward youth council is to help youth become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ (see 29.2.6). Serving those who have temporal needs is important to achieving this purpose. Among others, persons who may have temporal needs could include those who are elderly, ill, or disabled.

Under the bishopric's guidance, the ward youth council plans ways to serve those in need in their ward and community. Specific service activities can be planned during quorum and class presidency meetings. Where JustServe is available, it may be used to identify service opportunities in the community.

## 22.9 Roles of Stake Leaders

#### 22.9.1

#### Stake President and His Counselors

The stake president and his counselors lead the efforts of ministering to those with temporal and emotional needs and building self-reliance. The stake Relief Society presidency, high councilors, and other members of the stake council assist them.

The stake president and his counselors have the following responsibilities:

- Teach the principles and blessings related to (1) caring for those who have temporal and emotional needs and (2) building self-reliance (see 22.1). This includes personal and family preparedness.
- Teach the law of the fast and encourage members to give a generous fast offering (see 22.2.2).

- Teach bishops how to properly provide Church assistance to those who have temporal needs (see 22.9.1.1).
- Ensure that elders quorum presidents and ward Relief Society presidents are taught about their roles in caring for those in need. High councilors and stake Relief Society presidencies help instruct these ward leaders in their responsibilities (see 22.9.2 and 22.9.3).
- Direct the stake's efforts to prepare for and respond to emergencies (see 22.9.1.3).

The stake president also has the following responsibilities:

- Review fast-offering requests for medical expenses that exceed a bishop's approval limit. The stake president may approve requests up to his approval limit. He submits requests that exceed his approval limit to the Area Presidency for consideration (see 22.5.2.1).
- Review any requests for Church assistance for bishops (see 22.5.1.2).
- Serve as the agent stake president for welfare and self-reliance operations if assigned (see 22.9.1.2).

The stake presidency may assign one or more high councilors to help oversee the efforts of caring for those with temporal needs in the stake (see 22.9.2). The stake presidency may also call stake welfare and self-reliance specialists to support these efforts (see 22.9.4).

#### 22.9.1.1

#### Teach Bishops the Principles of Providing Church Assistance

The stake president ensures that bishops are caring for those with temporal needs in their wards. He teaches bishops the principles and policies for providing Church assistance (see 22.4 and 22.5). In teaching, he uses real and practical examples. In his interviews with bishops, the stake president reviews fast-offering payments from the ward's monthly financial statement. He also discusses with each bishop the principles he is using to help members. He counsels with the bishop about any payments or patterns in the statement that may show a misunderstanding of correct principles.

Principles and practices for providing Church assistance are also discussed in the stake bishops' council (see 22.11).

The stake president ensures that each bishop reviews the training in the video "Sacred Funds, Sacred Responsibilities" at least once a year.

#### 22.9.1.2

#### Serve as the Agent Stake President for Church Welfare and Self-Reliance Operations

Where applicable, the Area Presidency assigns an agent stake president to each welfare and self-reliance operation in their area. Examples of these operations include the following:

- · Bishops' storehouses
- Family Services offices
- BYU-Pathway Worldwide
- Deseret Industries stores

The assigned stake president helps find volunteers to support the needs of the operation. The volunteers may come from the agent stake and from other stakes served by the operation.

The agent stake president may organize an agent stake operating committee to oversee the operation. Committee members include the following:

- The stake president or an assigned counselor
- A high councilor
- A member of the stake Relief Society presidency
- The manager of the operation
- Welfare and self-reliance specialists as needed

#### 22.9.1.3 Respond to Emergencies

The stake president oversees Church emergency response and communications within his stake. In disasters that cover more than one stake, the Area Presidency or an assigned Area Seventy may direct the response. Welfare and self-reliance managers support area and stake leaders in these efforts.

Stake presidents may call welfare and self-reliance specialists to oversee an emergency operations center, manage communications, or handle safety concerns. If needed, the Area Presidency or an Area Seventy may also appoint such specialists at the area level or coordinating council level.

Ministering brothers and sisters report the conditions and needs of members to quorum and Relief Society leaders. These leaders report to the bishop, who reports to the stake presidency.

The stake presidency reports information to (1) the Area Presidency or an assigned Area Seventy and (2) the welfare and self-reliance manager. This report includes the status of members, missionaries, Church facilities, and the community. If Church members have been affected by a disaster, bishops may use fast offerings to help meet basic needs. Bishops follow the principles in 22.4.

The stake president approves public information that is released locally by the Church. He coordinates this with the stake communication director if one is called (see 5.2.1.7). He ensures that information is accurate and timely. He may serve as the Church spokesman to respond to questions from the media. He may also assign the stake communication director or another spokesperson to do this. In disasters that cover more than one stake, the Area Presidency or an assigned Area Seventy may manage public communications.

Church leaders may make the resources of the Church available to civil authorities during an emergency. With approval from the Area Presidency, Church buildings (except temples) may be used as shelters, first-aid stations, or feeding locations. Such use of a Church building should be coordinated with the assigned facilities manager. If another charitable or community organization is permitted to use the building, a usage agreement should be signed. See "Use of Church Buildings in a Disaster" for more information.

More information is available at "Emergency Response Procedures."

#### 22.9.2 High Councilors

The high councilor assigned to each elders quorum supports the quorum presidency in their responsibility to care for those in need and help them build self-reliance (see 22.6.2).

The stake presidency may also assign one or more high councilors to do the following:

- Help teach stake and ward welfare and self-reliance specialists their roles, if specialists have been called (see 22.9.4 and 22.6.4).
- Coordinate volunteer efforts for welfare and selfreliance operations.
- Serve on specialized working groups that coordinate resources related to self-reliance or community service (see 22.10.2).

In stakes that support a welfare and self-reliance operation, a high councilor may be asked to serve on the agent stake operating committee (see 22.9.1.2).

#### 22.9.3 Stake Relief Society Presidency

The stake Relief Society presidency supports ward Relief Society presidencies in their responsibility to care for those in need and help them build self-reliance (see 22.6.2).

Members of the stake Relief Society presidency may be asked to serve on specialized working groups that coordinate resources related to self-reliance or community service (see 22.10.2). ① In stakes that support a welfare and self-reliance operation, a presidency member may also be asked to serve on the agent stake operating committee (see 22.9.1.2).

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As needed, the stake presidency may call individuals or couples as stake welfare and self-reliance specialists. They support stake leaders in their efforts to care for others and help them become more self-reliant.

Specialists may be assigned to a specific area of focus. For instance, they may be asked to:

- Help coordinate or facilitate self-reliance groups or addiction recovery groups. These groups are generally organized by stake or ward councils.
- Help members find employment or educational opportunities.
- Serve as BYU–Pathway Worldwide service missionaries or volunteers.
- Provide ideas and resources to help stake members increase their temporal preparedness (see 22.1.4).
- Help prepare for or respond to emergencies (see 22.9.1.3).
- Share information about available government, community, and Church resources with members (see 22.12 and 22.13).

Stake specialists coordinate efforts with welfare and self-reliance specialists who may have been called in the wards.

## 22.10 Role of the Stake Council

Members of the stake council discuss the needs of stake members and plan how to help members become self-reliant (see 29.3.8). They identify resources in the community and stake that can help ward leaders care for the temporal and emotional needs of their members (see 22.12 and 22.13). They develop and maintain a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies (see "Stake and Ward Preparedness"). Stake councils may also plan ways of providing service in the community.

#### 22.10.1

#### Resources Coordinated by the Stake

Based on local availability, the stake council may access or implement any of the following optional resources. These resources can help stake members build self-reliance or participate in community service:

- Self-reliance groups on employment, self-employment, education, personal finances, or emotional resilience
- Addiction recovery groups
- BYU-Pathway Worldwide
- JustServe (see the JustServe Community Service Guidebook)
- Temporal preparedness resources
- Stake welfare and self-reliance resource centers
- A directory of local government and community resources that serve those in need (see 22.12 for examples)

#### 22.10.2 P Specialized Working Groups

To help organize and manage the optional resources outlined in 22.10.1, the stake presidency may appoint specialized working groups, such as JustServe working groups. These groups could consist of selected members of the stake council or the stake adult leadership committee (see 29.3.9). They could also include specialists such as the following:

- Welfare and self-reliance specialists (see 22.9.4)
- Stake communication directors or JustServe specialists (see the JustServe *Community Service Guidebook*)
- Others as needed

### 22.11 Role of the Stake Bishops' Council

The stake bishops' council is held to counsel about responsibilities pertaining to bishops. It includes regular discussion of the principles of (1) caring for those who have temporal and emotional needs and (2) building self-reliance (see 29.3.11).

Council members are encouraged to:

- Exchange ideas, experiences, and resources for addressing members' temporal and emotional needs. This includes resources in the community. It also includes ideas for work or service opportunities for members who receive Church assistance.
- Discuss ways to encourage members to receive the blessings of living the law of the fast and donating fast offerings.

#### GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY, AND CHURCH RESOURCES

## 22.12 Government and Community Resources

In many areas, members have access to government or community resources that help with basic needs. Such resources may include:

- Health care assistance.
- Food assistance.
- Job training and placement services.
- Mental health services.
- Education programs.
- Senior assistance programs.
- Housing assistance.

Members are encouraged to explore these resources, in addition to resources provided by the Church (see 22.13).



## 22.13 Church Resources

The following table lists Church resources that can support members' efforts to provide for their temporal and emotional needs and build self-reliance. The Lord's storehouse (see 22.2.1) and fast offerings (see 22.2.2) are available to bishops in every ward. **()** The other resources listed are optional and vary by location.

Category	Resources	
Immediate needs	The Lord's storehouse (members' offerings of time, tal- ents, compassion, materials, and financial resources)	
	Fast offerings	
	<ul> <li>Bishops' orders for food and other basic goods through a bishops' storehouse or grocery store.*</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>Bishops' orders for clothing or household items through a Deseret Industries store.*</li> </ul>	
	* Bishops' orders are placed through "Bishops' Orders and Referrals" in LCR.	

Category	Resources
Education and employment	Self-reliance groups (Find a Better Job, Starting and Growing My Business, Education for Better Work)
	Welfare and self-reliance resource centers
	Employment centers
	BYU–Pathway Worldwide
	• EnglishConnect
	Perpetual Education Fund loans
	Training programs through Deseret Industries or Development Counseling Services
Emotional health	Self-reliance group (Emotional Resilience)
	Counseling Resources
	<ul> <li>Family Services counseling. In some locations, bish- ops can refer members to Family Services through "Bishops' Orders and Referrals" in LCR.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Addiction recovery groups and spouse and family support groups</li> </ul>
	Strengthening Marriages and Families courses
	Family Services consultations for leaders
	Life Help resources
Temporal preparedness	Self-reliance group (Personal Finances)
	Home storage products
	Temporal Preparedness Resources
	Stake and Ward Preparedness
Community service	• JustServe
	Helping Hands projects

23.

# Sharing the Gospel and Strengthening New and Returning Members

#### 23.0

#### Introduction

Inviting all to receive the gospel is part of the work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2 in this handbook; Matthew 28:19–20). It includes:

- Participating in missionary work and serving as missionaries.
- Helping new and returning Church members progress along the covenant path.

## 23.1 Share the Gospel

#### 23.1.1 Love

We are all children of a Heavenly Father who loves His children perfectly. He offers everyone the opportunity to be filled with His love through Jesus Christ and His gospel (see John 3:16; 2 Nephi 26:24–28; Alma 26:37; Articles of Faith 1:3).

One way we show our love for God is by loving and serving His children (see Matthew 22:36–39; 25:40). We strive to love and serve as Jesus Christ did. This love inspires us to reach out to people of all religions, races, and cultures (see Acts 10:34; 2 Nephi 26:33).

#### <sup>23.1.2</sup> Share

Because we love God and His children, we naturally want to share the blessings He has given us (see John 13:34–35) and help gather Israel. We seek to help people feel the joy that we feel (see Alma 36:24). As disciples of Jesus Christ, we hold up His light (see 3 Nephi 18:24–25). We speak openly of the Savior and His influence in our lives (see Doctrine and Covenants 60:2). We share love, time, experiences, and Church programs to bless God's children and help them draw closer to the Savior. We share these things in normal and natural ways as part of personal, online, and other interactions.

#### 23.1.3 Invite

The Savior invites all to receive His gospel and prepare for eternal life (see Alma 5:33–34). As His disciples, we follow His example, inviting all to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32).

We pray for inspiration and guidance on how to invite others to:

- Come and see the blessings available through Jesus Christ, His gospel, and His Church (see John 1:37–39, 45–46).
- Come and help us serve people in need.
- Come and belong to the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

When our invitations are based on a person's needs and interests, he or she is more likely to accept those invitations. Often, inviting simply means including our family, friends, and neighbors in what we are already doing. For example, we can invite them to:

- Join us in our homes for activities.
- Join us for worship and gospel learning.

- Attend special events, such as a baby blessing or baptism.
- Participate in ward and community activities or service, including projects organized through JustServe (where available).
- Participate in Church programs and activities. These could include Primary activities, youth activities, family history, self-reliance courses, BYU–Pathway Worldwide, and literacy and English courses.
- Meet the full-time missionaries and hear their message.

For more ideas and resources, see share .ChurchofJesusChrist.org and "Sharing the Gospel" in the Gospel Library.

The principles of loving, sharing, and inviting apply also to strengthening new and returning members.

## 23.2 Strengthen New Members

Joining the Church is both wonderful and challenging for many. It brings great blessings, but it also requires adjusting to new beliefs, new habits, and new relationships (see 1 Thessalonians 1:6).

Each new member needs friendship, opportunities to serve, and spiritual nourishment. As members of the Church, we give new members our love and support (see Mosiah 18:8–10). We help them feel a sense of belonging in the Church. We help them progress along the covenant path and become more deeply "converted unto the Lord" (Alma 23:6). We help them be "nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, . . . relying alone upon the merits of Christ" (Moroni 6:4).

We can also help new members:

• Learn and experience the joy of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

- Learn how to recognize promptings from the Spirit.
- Develop a habit of personal and family prayer and scripture study.
- Share the gospel with their family and friends.
- Find names of ancestors and prepare to receive temple ordinances for them.
- Grow through fulfilling Church assignments and participating in the many other opportunities the Church offers.

#### 23.3

## Strengthen Returning Members

Some members choose to stop participating in the Church. "Unto such," said the Savior, "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). These words apply to all who, for any reason, need continued ministering.

Members who are not fully participating are more likely to return if they have strong relationships with Church members. Our love and support can help them overcome challenges. Like new members, they need friendship, opportunities to serve, and spiritual nourishment. Understanding their circumstances and challenges can help us minister to them with sensitivity and love.

## 23.4 Stake Leaders

#### <sup>23.4.1</sup> Stake Presidency

The stake president holds the keys in the stake for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members. He and his counselors give overall direction for these efforts. He ensures that this work is discussed regularly in stake meetings.

Usually monthly, the stake president meets with the mission president to coordinate efforts between the stake and ward leaders and the full-time missionaries. Others who may attend include:

- Counselors in the stake and mission presidencies.
- Assigned high councilors.
- The stake Relief Society president.
- Missionaries assigned by the mission president.

#### 23.4.2 Stake Adult Leadership Committee

The stake adult leadership committee includes:

- The stake presidency.
- The stake Relief Society presidency.
- High councilors assigned to work with elders quorums.

These leaders instruct and support elders quorum and ward Relief Society presidencies in the work of sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members (see 23.5.2). Instruction could take place in a group setting or individually. Ward mission leaders may be invited to receive this instruction.

For more about this committee's meetings, see 29.3.9.

#### 23.4.3 High Councilors

The stake presidency may assign high councilors to instruct and support elders quorum presidencies and ward mission leaders. One or more high councilors may be assigned to lead these efforts. However, all high councilors have these responsibilities for the wards and quorums to which they are assigned.

#### 23.4.4 Stake Relief Society Presidency

Under the direction of the stake president, the stake Relief Society presidency instructs and supports ward Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members.

### 23.5 Ward Leaders

#### 23.5.1 Bishopric

The bishopric coordinates with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead the ward's efforts in sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members. These leaders counsel together regularly.

The bishopric ensures that these efforts are discussed and coordinated in ward council and ward youth council meetings. The bishopric also reviews and approves the ward plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members (see 23.5.6).

The bishopric consults with the stake president to determine whether to call a ward mission leader (see 23.5.3 for more information).

The bishop interviews new members of the appropriate age for a limited-use temple recommend (see 26.3.1 and 26.4.2). He also interviews brethren of the appropriate age to receive the Aaronic Priesthood (see 38.2.5.2). He normally conducts these interviews within a week of the member's confirmation.

The bishopric coordinates with other leaders to ensure that new and returning members have opportunities to serve. Such opportunities can help these members grow spiritually and feel the Lord's power in their lives. Service can also help members feel joy and build close relationships with others in the ward. These opportunities should be based on the member's needs and abilities. In some cases, a calling is appropriate. In others, a less formal assignment is best.

#### 23.5.2 Elders Quorum and Relief Society Presidencies

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies lead the ward's day-to-day efforts to share the gospel and strengthen new and returning members (see 8.2.3 and 9.2.3). The elders quorum presidency leads these efforts for members of the elders quorum. The Relief Society presidency leads the efforts for members of the Relief Society. They work together to lead these efforts with the ward council, under the coordination of the bishop.

These leaders have the following responsibilities:

- Help inspire members to love God's children, to share the gospel, and to invite others to receive the Savior's blessings (see 23.1).
- Counsel with quorum or Relief Society members about how to share the gospel. Discuss how to find people for the missionaries to teach and how to support people who are being taught. Counsel together about the needs of new and returning members and how to provide support.
- Assign ministering brothers and sisters to new and returning members (see 21.2.1). Ministering brothers and sisters may also be assigned to people the missionaries are teaching (this is done in coordination with the missionaries). If possible, leaders assign members who have or can develop close friendships with these individuals. Leaders

encourage ministering brothers and sisters to give Christlike love and support.

- Give new and returning members opportunities to serve as ministering sisters or brothers. For more about ministering, see chapter 21.
- Help the ward council develop a plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members (see 23.5.6).
- Lead the work of the ward mission leader. If this leader is not called, a member of the elders quorum presidency fills this role (see 23.5.3).

The elders quorum president and Relief Society president each assign a presidency member to help lead these efforts. These two presidency members work together. They attend weekly coordination meetings (see 23.5.7).

#### 23.5.3 Ward Mission Leader

The bishopric consults with the stake president to determine whether to call a ward mission leader. If they decide to extend this calling, the bishopric counsels with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents in determining whom to call. This person should be a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. If this leader is not called, a member of the elders quorum presidency fills this role.

The ward mission leader supports the elders quorum presidency and Relief Society presidency in their missionary responsibilities. He also has the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate the work of ward members and leaders, ward missionaries, and full-time missionaries. This may include coordinating teaching efforts, baptismal services, and efforts to strengthen new members. It can also include planning ways to help ward members share the gospel.
- Lead weekly coordination meetings (see 23.5.7).

- Attend ward council meetings when invited.
- Help the ward council develop and implement the ward plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members (see 23.5.6).
- Where it is allowed, arrange for full-time missionaries to eat meals with members. Seek opportunities for the missionaries to eat with part-member and less-active families if possible. Encourage them to share a gospel message with these families.
- Work with the ward temple and family history leader and consultants to help those who are learning the gospel, new members, and returning members engage in temple and family history work.

#### 23.5.4 Ward Missionaries

Ward missionaries help ward members experience the joy of sharing the gospel as described in 23.1. They serve under the direction of the ward mission leader or the member of the elders quorum presidency who fills this role. The elders quorum and Relief Society presidents may suggest members who could serve.

Ward missionaries teach by word and example how to love others, share their faith, and invite others to receive the blessings of the gospel. They also help ward members minister to new and returning members.

Ward missionaries participate in weekly coordination meetings (see 23.5.7).

#### 23.5.5 Ward Council and Ward Youth Council

Sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members should be discussed regularly in ward council meetings. The bishop may ask the elders quorum or Relief Society president to lead these discussions, which should focus on individuals. The bishop may invite the ward mission leader to attend ward council meetings.

The council may discuss the ward's plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members. They also discuss assignments that need to be coordinated across organizations. Forms like the following can help in these discussions:

- Missionary Progress Record. Full-time missionaries use this form to report on the progress of people they are teaching. This form helps missionaries and members coordinate their work. In areas where missionaries use the Area Book Planner app, this form is available to ward leaders in Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR) and the Member Tools app. In other areas, full-time missionaries use a paper copy.
- New and Returning Member Progress. Ward leaders use this form to plan ways to help members progress spiritually. It is available in LCR.

For more about the ward council, see 29.2.5.

In discussing the needs of youth in the ward, the ward youth council gives special attention to new and returning members and to youth being taught by the missionaries. The council also discusses ways the youth can participate in the ward's plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members. For more about the ward youth council, see 29.2.6.

#### 23.5.6 Ward Plan for Sharing the Gospel and Strengthening New and Returning Members

Each ward should have a simple plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning

members. It can help guide meetings, service, and activities. It can include plans and ideas for:

- Helping everyone feel welcome in ward meetings and activities.
- Helping members experience the joy of sharing the gospel.
- Supporting people being taught by the missionaries.
- Helping new and returning members progress spiritually.

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidents help the ward council create the plan. The ward mission leader also helps. The bishop reviews and approves it.

Members of the ward council take the lead in implementing the plan. They report on progress in ward council meetings. They also update the plan as needed.

#### 23.5.7 Coordination Meetings

Every week, brief informal meetings are held to coordinate efforts to share the gospel and strengthen new and returning members. If a ward mission leader is called, he conducts these meetings. Otherwise, the member of the elders quorum presidency who fills this role conducts. Others who are invited include:

- Assigned members of the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies.
- Ward missionaries.
- An assistant in the priests quorum (or the teachers or deacons quorum president if there are no priests in the ward).
- A presidency member of the oldest Young Women class.
- Full-time missionaries.

#### They may discuss:

- Implementing the ward's plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members. They coordinate this plan with the full-time missionaries' plans and goals.
- Assignments given in previous meetings.
- How to support those being taught by the missionaries.
- Plans for upcoming baptismal services and inviting members to attend.

These meetings may be held in person or remotely. Coordination can also happen in other ways, including phone calls, texts, and emails.

## <sup>24.</sup> Missionary Recommendations and Service

#### 24.0 Introduction

In ancient times, the Lord gave the commission to gather Israel among "all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19; see also verse 20). The Lord has renewed that commission in these latter days (see Doctrine and Covenants 39:11; 68:6–8; 112:28–30). All members of the Church covenant at the time of baptism to be witnesses of God and to minister to others (see Mosiah 18:8–10).

To serve the Lord as a missionary is a sacred privilege. It brings eternal blessings to the person and those he or she serves (see Doctrine and Covenants 18:14–16).

Mission calls include an assignment to teach the gospel, support the work of Church departments or units, or serve in the local community. The Lord expects each able young man to prepare to serve (see Doctrine and Covenants 36:1, 4–7). Young women and senior members who desire to serve should also prepare. An essential part of preparation is striving to become converted to Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. Those who desire to serve also prepare physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially.

#### 24.1

### The Call to Serve

Each missionary is called to assist Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in Their work. Missionaries represent Jesus Christ and His restored Church. They selflessly serve the Lord in a labor of love among His children. (See Matthew 16:25; 22:36–40.) Mission calls are given to members who desire to serve, are worthy, and are able. These members strive to serve the Lord with all their "heart, might, mind and strength." They develop "faith, hope, charity and love." They keep their "eye single to the glory of God." As they do these things, the Lord will qualify them for the work. (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2, 5; see verses 1–7.)

Missionaries represent the Lord and must be called by proper authority (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:11; Articles of Faith 1:5). The call to serve a mission is generally extended by the President of the Church. For senior service missionaries, the call is extended by the stake president.

## **24.2** Missionary Assignments

The call to serve as a missionary includes a specific assignment. These assignments vary widely. They usually include:

- A form of service.
- A location.
- A length of service.

Each assignment is guided by revelation so it is suited to the missionary and the needs of God's children.

An assignment may change by continuing revelation as circumstances change. A specific assignment is important. However, it is secondary to the call to serve as a missionary. (See Doctrine and Covenants 80:3.)

#### 24.2.1 Young Teaching Missionaries

Most young missionaries are assigned to teach the gospel away from home. These assignments are given by revelation to Apostles. These missionaries serve under the direction of a mission president.

Single men ages 18–25 may serve as teaching missionaries. They usually serve for 24 months.

Single women ages 19–29 may serve as teaching missionaries. They usually serve for 18 months.

#### 24.2.2 Young Service Missionaries

Some young missionaries are assigned to serve in the Church and the community while living at home. These assignments are given by revelation to Apostles and are given to candidates whose circumstances are best suited for a service mission (see 24.3.3).

These individuals have the same standards for preparation and worthiness as those who are assigned to a teaching mission. All young missionary candidates are recommended through the same process.

Service missionaries serve locally under the direction of the stake president. Each of them receives assignments that are tailored to their circumstances and based on service opportunities (see 24.7.1). They serve to the full extent of their capacity.

Single men ages 18–25 may serve as service missionaries. They usually serve for 6–24 months.

Single women ages 19–29 may serve as service missionaries. They usually serve for 6–18 months.

Service missions for young missionaries are not yet available in all areas of the world. For a list of areas where service missions are available, see ChurchofJesusChrist.org/service-missionary. That website also provides more information on service missions. Where service missions are not available, young members may serve in the senior service missionary program (see 24.2.4).

#### 24.2.3 Senior Missionaries

Married members ages 40 and older may be called as senior missionaries as a couple if they do not have dependent children.

Single women ages 40 and older may also be called as senior missionaries if they do not have children living at home.

Single men ages 40 and older may not serve as senior missionaries. However, they may serve as senior service missionaries. (See 24.2.4.)

All senior missionaries are encouraged to find people to teach and help them prepare for baptism. Senior missionaries may also be assigned to support:

- Members and area and local leaders.
- Church departments and facilities.
- Charitable organizations.

Senior missionaries usually serve away from home for 6–23 months. Those who serve outside their resident country usually serve for at least 18 months.

Senior missionaries are not asked to work the same hours, perform all the same activities, or meet the same expectations as young missionaries. Still, their service is demanding. For this reason, they should be healthy enough to serve. They should also meet financial qualifications (see 24.3.4.2).

Bishops, stake presidents, and other leaders prayerfully consider who could serve. Bishops or stake presidents may interview these members to determine their availability and invite them to prepare to serve.

Assignments for senior missionaries are given by revelation to Apostles. Leaders may recommend

specific types of assignments for senior missionaries. However, leaders should not make commitments about the assignment they will receive. Candidates may express a preference for an assignment but should be willing to accept any assignment.

For more information, see SeniorMissionary .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

#### 24.2.4 Senior Service Missionaries

In addition to callings in their home ward or stake, members may serve the Lord as senior service missionaries. These missionaries give valuable service in Church departments, facilities, and missions (see 24.7.1). They live at home.

Men and women ages 26 and older may be called as senior service missionaries.

In addition, young men ages 18–25 and young women ages 19–25 may serve in the senior service missionary program if they live where service missions for young missionaries are not available. They may also serve if they are married or have already served as a young teaching or service missionary.

Senior service missionaries are called by the stake president. They serve under his direction. The amount of time they serve each week depends on their capacity, service opportunities in their area, and direction from the Area Presidency.

Senior service missionaries are given assignments by their stake president. He counsels with the missionary and others and prayerfully seeks revelation about each assignment. He may review SeniorMissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org when determining assignments.

For more information about senior service missionaries, see 24.7.

#### 24.2.5 Summary of Missionary Assignments

The following table summarizes the types of missionary assignments.

	Young Teaching Missionary (see 24.2.1)	Young Service Missionary (see 24.2.2)	Senior Missionary (see 24.2.3)	Senior Service Missionary (see 24.2.4)
Is called by	President of the Church	President of the Church	President of the Church	Stake president
Is assigned by	An Apostle	An Apostle	An Apostle	Stake president
ls set apart by	Stake president	Stake president	Stake president	Stake president or counselor
Lives	Away from home	At home	Away from home or at home	At home
Ecclesiastical leader	Mission president or historic site presi- dent	Stake president	Mission, temple, or historic site president; or Area President	Stake president

	Young Teaching Missionary (see 24.2.1)	Young Service Missionary (see 24.2.2)	Senior Missionary (see 24.2.3)	Senior Service Missionary (see 24.2.4)
Reports to	Mission president or historic site president	Service mission leader	Mission, temple, or historic site pres- ident; Area Presi- dent; visitors' center director; or a Church department or facili- ties manager	Manager of the service assignment
Age requirements	18–25 (men) 19–29 (women)	18–25 (men) 19–29 (women)	40 or older if married or if a single sister	26 or older

## 24.3 Preparing and Qualifying to Serve a Mission

Prospective missionaries are encouraged to serve a mission because of their love for the Lord and His children. They should be familiar with the missionary recommendation interview questions.

#### 24.3.1 Conversion to Jesus Christ

Prospective missionaries strive to strengthen their conversion to Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. They:

- Work to strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
- Strengthen their testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ (see Alma 5:45–47).
- Live the doctrine of Christ by "choosing to repent and work righteousness" (Alma 13:10; see also 2 Nephi 31:9–21).
- Pray, study the scriptures (especially the Book of Mormon) and teachings of the living prophets, and keep the commandments (see Alma 17:2–3).

- Participate in temple and family history work (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:22).
- Participate in seminary or institute (for youth and young adults).

### 24.3.2 Meeting the Standards of Worthiness

Prospective missionaries strive to be worthy of the companionship of the Spirit. This is needed for effective missionary service (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:13–14). Qualifying for the companionship of the Spirit includes being clean from sin (see Helaman 4:24; Doctrine and Covenants 38:42).

## 24.3.2.1

#### Repentance

Repentance and forgiveness of sin are gifts available to all of God's children. These gifts are made possible through the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. Repentance requires exercising faith in Christ, having real intent, and keeping the commandments. It includes confessing and forsaking sin. For serious sins, repentance requires confession to the bishop or stake president.

A person who repents is forgiven and made clean through the Atonement and grace of Jesus Christ.

The Lord remembers the sin no more. (See Isaiah 43:25; Jacob 6:5; Alma 34:15–17; Helaman 5:10–11; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43. See also 32.1 in this handbook.)

Members who desire to serve a mission should turn to the Savior as they repent and prepare to serve. They may also seek the loving help of family members and local Church leaders.

A missionary candidate must have repented of serious sin before the stake president may submit his or her recommendation (see 32.6–32.8; see also 24.4.4). The repentance process includes enough time for the person to show through righteous living that he or she has received the spirit of Christ unto the remission of sins.

#### 24.3.2.2 Belated Confessions

A person who receives a mission call or begins missionary service without repenting of serious sin may need to remain home or return home. Depending on the circumstances, he or she may serve after repenting (see 24.6.3.2).

#### 24.3.3 Physical, Mental, and Emotional Health

Missionary work is challenging. Physical, mental, and emotional demands can be stressful. Missionaries often work in unfamiliar conditions. Health may be affected by a change in diet, climate, or living conditions. The missionary schedule is also demanding. (See Alma 17:5; 26:27–28, 30.) Young teaching missionaries must be committed and physically, mentally, and emotionally able to work the full missionary schedule. (See *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ* [2019], 2.4.)

Prospective missionaries prepare to serve by strengthening their physical, mental, and emotional health. They also work to develop resiliency and self-reliance. Leaders may need to counsel sensitively with a candidate about his or her health challenges before submitting a recommendation. Some candidates may need to receive professional care for their health challenges (see 31.2.6). A candidate who has been prescribed medication must commit to take it throughout his or her service as directed by a health care professional.

#### 24.3.4 Finances

Financial sacrifice is part of missionary service (see Mark 1:17–18; Alma 15:16). Missionaries and their families have primary responsibility for contributing financially to missionary service. They should make appropriate preparation and sacrifice. They should be financially self-reliant to the extent possible in meeting contribution commitments.

#### 24.3.4.1

## Financing Young Missionaries Serving Away from Home

Young candidates who have prepared according to their ability should not be delayed from serving for financial reasons. Those who need financial help to meet expected contribution commitments can receive it from extended family and friends.

If need remains, the bishop or stake president may ask members in the ward or stake to contribute to the ward missionary fund.

Local unit budgets and fast-offering funds may not be used.

*Monthly contribution commitment.* Young teaching missionaries and their families contribute a specific amount each month to help cover missionary program costs. The amount is set in one of two ways:

• Missionaries from some countries participate in the equalized contribution program. This means the same amount is contributed for each missionary regardless of where he or she serves. The amount is identified at Church headquarters. Leaders may contact the Missionary Department (see 24.9.3) or the area office for a list of countries in this program and the equalized amount.

• In other countries, the bishop, stake president, missionary, and family counsel together about the monthly contribution amount. The bishop and stake president consider guidance from the Area Presidency. They encourage financial sacrifice and self-reliance based on the circumstances of the missionary and his or her family. They agree on a contribution amount and record it in the missionary recommendation. The missionary and his or her family commit to follow through. Others may also contribute to this amount only if they live in the missionary's home country (see "Ward Missionary Fund" later in this section).

Contributions are made to the ward missionary fund. Bishops verify that the funds are contributed each month. Funds beyond the monthly amount should not be contributed in advance. Funds contributed in advance cannot be refunded if a missionary returns home early.

*Expenses in the field.* Each month, young missionaries receive funds from the mission to provide for food, transportation, and other living expenses. These funds are sacred. Missionaries use them only for mission-related purposes. They should not be used for personal expenses, saved, or sent to family members or others. Missionaries return to the mission any funds they do not need.

Missionaries use personal funds to cover other expenses. These personal expenses should be minimal. (See *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ*, 4.8.)

## Ward Missionary Fund

The ward missionary fund is used only for donations relating to ward members who are serving missions away from home. These funds are not used for service missionaries or for missionary activities in the ward or stake.

Funds are not sent directly to missionaries. Each month, the bishop sees that the committed funds are available in the ward missionary fund. The Church withdraws the contribution amount each month and uses it for missionary efforts worldwide.

Contributions are consecrated to the Lord to accomplish His work. They cannot be refunded.

Members who desire to help meet the monthly commitment of missionaries who are not in their home ward may do so. If the missionary's ward is in the member's country of residence, the member may donate to the missionary fund of the missionary's home ward.

If the missionary's ward is not in the member's country of residence, the member should donate to the General Missionary Fund. However, these donations cannot be designated to cover the contribution commitments of specific missionaries.

## General Missionary Fund

The Church uses contributions to the General Missionary Fund for missionary efforts worldwide. These contributions may be used to support missionaries. They may also be used to finance other aspects of missionary work.

Contributions to the General Missionary Fund are consecrated to the Lord to accomplish His work. They cannot be refunded. Nor can they be designated to cover the contribution commitments of specific missionaries.

#### 24.3.4.2 Financing Senior Missionaries Serving Away from Home

*Monthly contribution commitment.* Senior missionaries serving away from home contribute to their home ward missionary fund each month. These contributions help cover housing and vehicle costs (see also "Additional expenses" later in this section). The contributions may be more than the value of Churchprovided housing or vehicles.

- Senior missionaries from countries that participate in the equalized contribution program contribute an assigned amount listed in the call packet.
- In other countries, the bishop, stake president, and missionary counsel together about the monthly contribution amount. Leaders encourage financial sacrifice based on the missionary's circumstances. They agree on an amount and record it in the missionary recommendation. This amount must be at least the amount established for senior missionaries by the Area Presidency (in consultation with the Missionary Department). Others who live in the missionary's home country may also contribute to this amount.

Bishops verify that the funds are contributed each month. Funds beyond the monthly amount should not be contributed in advance.

*Additional expenses.* In addition to the monthly contribution commitment, which helps cover housing and vehicle costs, senior missionaries must fully cover all other expenses, including food.

#### 24.3.4.3 Financing Missionaries Serving at Home

Missionaries serving at home are responsible for all their financial needs. Those who need financial help can receive it from family members and friends. Ward or stake funds may not be used for missionrelated needs.

#### 24.3.4.4 Medical Insurance and Expenses

All missionaries are strongly encouraged to keep their existing medical insurance if possible, including young teaching missionaries.

Missionaries serving at home must provide their own medical and other insurance coverage. Senior missionaries serving away from home must also provide this coverage. Senior missionaries who will serve outside their home country may be able to obtain insurance through the Senior Service Medical Plan.

#### 24.3.5

## Role of Family Members and Leaders in Preparing Missionaries

Family members and leaders help young men prepare to serve a mission. They also help young women who desire to serve to prepare. This may include the following:

- Help them become effective member missionaries in sharing the gospel before they receive a call to serve.
- Provide opportunities for them to serve and teach.
- Arrange opportunities for them to accompany full-time missionaries.
- Invite currently serving missionaries or others who have served missions to share their experiences teaching and serving.
- Love and inspire each person to be prepared to serve a mission.
- Encourage them to devote additional time to prayer and study of the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon.

• Organize a missionary preparation course.

Family members and leaders encourage senior members to consider senior missionary service. This may include helping them:

- Review their physical and financial ability to serve a mission, either away from home or while living at home.
- Identify missionary opportunities they could fulfill.
- Become effective member missionaries in sharing the gospel before they receive a call to serve.
- Understand the blessing that missionary service will be to their family (see Doctrine and Covenants 31:5–6).

Family members and leaders encourage all missionary candidates to study:

- The Book of Mormon and other scriptures.
- Preach My Gospel.
- Safeguards for Using Technology.

Family members and leaders help all candidates commit to follow missionary standards. They encourage candidates to study the missionary standards handbook that pertains to their probable assignment:

- For young teaching missionaries: Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ
- For young service missionaries: Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ—Service Missions

#### 24.4 Recommending Missionaries

Some candidates have not lived in the ward continuously for at least one year. In these situations, the bishop confers early in the recommendation process with the bishop of the person's previous ward.

#### 24.4.1 Health Assessments

Missionary work is physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. All candidates are required to have medical professionals assess their health readiness.

Health assessments are reviewed by the area office and the Missionary Department. Sometimes, health concerns could affect a person's ability to serve away from home. In some situations, the recommendation may be returned with instructions on how the person can improve his or her health readiness.

#### 24.4.2

#### Interviews and Recommendation Forms

The bishop and stake president conduct thorough, spiritually searching, and uplifting interviews with each candidate. They use the missionary recommendation interview questions. They discuss the candidate's:

- Testimony of Jesus Christ and His restored gospel (see 24.3.1).
- Meeting the standards of worthiness (see 24.3.2).
- Physical, mental, and emotional health readiness (see 24.3.3).
- Financial readiness (see 24.3.4).

The bishop and stake president also review information about standards of worthiness and health readiness in the Missionary Online Recommendation System. If a stake president in the United States or Canada has questions, he contacts the Missionary Department (see 24.9.3). Elsewhere, he contacts the area office. The bishop and stake president do not add any eligibility standards. Nor do they change the interview questions. The information in the recommendation form contributes to the revelatory process of mission calls. Leaders ensure that all information requested is fully disclosed.

If the bishop and stake president have concerns about a candidate meeting the standards of worthiness or about his or her health readiness, they counsel together and with the person. With a young candidate's permission, they may also counsel with his or her parents. The bishop and stake president do not submit a recommendation until the person has repented of serious sin (see 24.3.2.1). Depending on the person's physical, mental, or emotional health, they may discuss the possibility of being assigned as a service missionary.

In urgent cases when the bishop or stake president is unavailable, he may authorize one of his counselors to conduct these interviews.

In districts, the mission president or an assigned counselor interviews and recommends missionary candidates. District presidents do not conduct these interviews.

#### 24.4.3 Submitting Recommendations

The stake president may submit a recommendation for a young missionary candidate up to 120 days before his or her availability date. The stake president may submit a recommendation for a senior missionary candidate up to nine months before his or her availability date. The availability date must be when all of the following conditions are met:

- The person has reached the qualifying age for service.
- The person has been a confirmed Church member for at least one year.
- The person has completed or is no longer attending high school, secondary school, or the

equivalent. (This applies to young missionary candidates who are 18 years old.)

Young missionary candidates and their stake president plan for when the stake president should submit the recommendation. They may use the Submission Planning Tool and the Mission Release Date Planning Tool for help.

Missionary recommendations are usually submitted through the home ward and stake. Bishops of away-from-home wards, such as a young single adult ward, may process a missionary recommendation. They must first confer with the bishop from the home ward. The home ward should be listed as the funding ward.

#### 24.4.4 Being Excused from Full-Time Missionary Service

Sometimes a member who desires to serve may not be called as a full-time missionary. This may be due to health challenges, not meeting the standards of worthiness, legal issues, or other circumstances. The bishop and stake president express love and gratitude for the member's willingness to serve. The stake president may excuse him or her from fulltime missionary service.

The stake president and bishop encourage the member to press forward on the covenant path as a lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ. They also encourage pursuing other important endeavors, such as education or employment for young members.

#### 24.5

## After Receiving a Mission Call

Newly called missionaries are encouraged to read or reread the Book of Mormon before beginning their mission. They follow King Benjamin's counsel to "watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds" (Mosiah 4:30). They respond promptly to instructions given with the call. They should also review the booklet *Adjusting to Missionary Life* or *Adjusting to Service Missionary Life: Resource Booklet*. They and their family members should also study the conditions they will serve in.

Family members and leaders support missionaries in these efforts. They also emphasize the importance of doing good and remaining worthy of the Spirit.

#### 24.5.1

#### Temple Endowment and Temple Service

If newly called missionaries have not received the temple endowment ordinance, they should do so before beginning missionary service where possible (see Doctrine and Covenants 43:15–16; 105:33). This includes service missionaries if appropriate for their circumstances. For information on receiving the endowment, see 27.2.

Newly called missionaries who are endowed may serve as temple ordinance workers before they begin missionary service as appropriate (see 25.5).

#### 24.5.2 Sacrament Meetings

The bishopric invites newly called missionaries to speak in sacrament meeting before beginning their mission. This is a regular sacrament meeting. The focus should be on the sacrament and the Savior. The missionary should be invited to speak about Jesus Christ, His restored gospel, and the joy of sharing the gospel and serving others.

The missionary's family members and friends are not normally invited to speak. The regular time of the meeting is not extended.

Members and leaders should avoid anything that may distract from the sacred nature of a mission call or create unnecessary expense. For example, they should not:

- Print special sacrament meeting programs.
- Form reception lines after sacrament meeting.
- Hold open houses, except for family gatherings. If a family gathering is held, it is recommended that it not conflict with Sunday meetings.

#### 24.5.3 Setting Apart Missionaries

The home stake president sets apart each missionary as close as possible to his or her mission start date. In urgent cases when the stake president is unavailable, he may authorize one of his counselors to set apart missionaries. He may also delegate responsibility for setting apart senior service missionaries to a counselor.

The mission president or one of his counselors sets apart missionaries who are called from districts in his mission. The district president does not set apart missionaries.

A brother who will serve away from home must have received the Melchizedek Priesthood before being set apart as a missionary. A brother who will serve as a service missionary should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood if appropriate for his circumstances. For instructions on ordination to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood, see 38.2.5.1.

Shortly before a missionary is set apart, the stake president or an assigned counselor interviews him or her. If the missionary no longer meets the standards of worthiness or if there are questions about health, he or she is not set apart. The stake president contacts the Missionary Department (see 24.9.3) or the area office for guidance.

The setting apart should be a special experience. Family members and close friends may attend. The stake president helps them understand and feel the sacredness and importance of the call to serve as a representative of Jesus Christ and His restored Church. The setting apart and accompanying blessing should not be recorded. However, the missionary is encouraged to write in his or her journal about the experience and to note parts of the blessing that were especially meaningful.

The stake president explains that the person should follow missionary standards after being set apart.

A missionary's setting apart is for the call to serve, not for a specific missionary assignment. If a missionary's assignment is changed, he or she is not set apart again. If a missionary is released and is later approved to return to service (see 24.6.3.2), he or she is set apart again as a missionary.

## Setting Apart a Missionary

To set apart a missionary, the stake president:

- Calls the person by name and states that the setting apart is done by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
- Sets the person apart as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (The stake president may reference the specific assignment.)
- 3. Blesses the person as the Spirit directs.
- 4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

The stake president may invite worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders, such as the missionary's father, to stand with him during the setting apart.

## 24.6 Service Away from Home

#### 24.6.1 Leaving to the Mission Field

The Church pays for young teaching missionaries to travel to and from the missionary training center (MTC) and the mission assignment. The Church also pays these costs for senior missionaries who serve away from home for more than one year.

Immediate family members may bring a missionary to an MTC. However, they are not expected to do so. The MTC does not have a meeting for families to say farewell to their missionaries.

For airport security and other reasons, families and others are discouraged from meeting missionaries at airports when missionaries leave the MTC to their mission assignment.

24.6.2 In the Field

#### 24.6.2.1 Placement of Missionaries

Stake and mission presidents counsel about the need for missionaries in specific wards and branches. It is not required that missionaries be assigned to every unit. Some units may have more than one companionship. The mission president determines the placement of missionaries.

#### 24.6.2.2

#### Member and Community Service

Stake and mission presidents counsel about how missionaries may provide service to members and the community. They may use JustServe where it is available.

#### 24.6.2.3

#### Housing, Meals, and Transportation

Stake and mission presidents determine if or to what extent local members provide housing and meals for missionaries. Providing housing or meals should not burden local members. Members are not expected to regularly provide transportation for missionaries, those they are teaching, or those who have recently been baptized.

The Area Presidency may offer guidance for providing housing, meals, and transportation for missionaries in the area.

#### 24.6.2.4 Missionaries in Branch Positions

In rare situations, missionaries serving away from home may be assigned to serve in branch positions. If a branch is in a stake, the missionary is set apart under the direction of the stake presidency, with the approval of the mission president.

If a branch is in a district, the missionary is not set apart. The authority to serve in a unit assigned to the mission is included in the setting apart as a missionary. If elders perform a function that requires priesthood keys, they do so with delegated authority from the mission president.

#### 24.6.2.5

## Requests to Support Others Financially or with Schooling or Emigration

Missionaries and their families should not provide financial support for those who live where the missionaries are serving, including financial support for schooling. Nor should missionaries and their families sponsor persons who want to emigrate to other countries (see 38.8.17).

#### 24.6.2.6 Medication

Missionaries are responsible for any medication they may need. Family members or others must not send or deliver medication to missionaries. If medication is unavailable in the mission, the missionary counsels with the mission president.

#### 24.6.2.7 Death of an Immediate Family Member

If a member of a missionary's immediate family dies, the missionary may choose to return home temporarily for the funeral. However, the missionary is generally counseled to remain in the field. When possible, he or she may view the funeral services via internet streaming.

If a missionary chooses to return home for the funeral, the mission president contacts the Missionary Department.

#### 24.6.2.8 Membership Records and Tithing

A missionary's home ward retains the membership record. The home ward also records his or her tithing status. Missionaries do not pay tithing on support funds they receive from the mission. However, they do pay tithing if they have any personal income.

#### 24.6.3 Returning Home from a Mission

#### 24.6.3.1

#### **Returning Home as Originally Scheduled**

Missionaries and their family members should not request early releases or extensions of service for personal convenience.

Young missionaries should travel directly home from their missions. Any other travel may be approved only if the missionary is accompanied by at least one parent or guardian.

Missionaries are not released until they report to their stake president. They follow missionary standards until that time.

# Picking Up Young Missionaries in the Field

Parents are not expected to pick up young missionaries from the mission. If parents request this privilege, they should understand the following:

- 1. They cannot request a change in the release date for travel purposes.
- 2. They should inform the mission office and Church Travel at least three months before the release date.
- They must make their own travel arrangements, including lodging and meals. They should not impose on the time or resources of members or mission leaders.
- 4. They should follow any guidelines given by the mission president.

#### 24.6.3.2 Returning Home Early

Some missionaries are released early for health, worthiness, or other reasons. Bishops and stake presidents give special support to these returned missionaries. Leaders help them work to regain health or return to service if possible.

For missionaries who are ready to return to service, the stake president contacts the Missionary Department to recommend this (see 24.9.3). Some missionaries who return to service may be reassigned to a different teaching mission or to a service mission.

When returning to service is not possible, leaders encourage the member to press forward on the covenant path as a lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ. Leaders also encourage pursuing other important endeavors, such as education or employment for young missionaries.

## 24.7 Service Missions

#### 24.7.1 Identifying Opportunities for Service Missionaries

The bishop, stake president, and service missionary counsel together to identify local opportunities to serve. For young service missionaries, a service mission leader and the missionary's parents or guardians participate in the discussion.

Opportunities for young service missionaries are identified after they are called to serve. Opportunities for senior service missionaries may be identified before or after they are called.

Service may be provided in person or remotely using technology. Leaders may use the following resources to find information about service opportunities:

- Internet: ChurchofJesusChrist.org/service-missionary or SeniorMissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist .org
- Phone: 1-801-240-4914
- Email: support-servicemission@ ChurchofJesusChrist.org

## Examples of Service Missionary Opportunities

- Community Service (for young service missionaries): JustServe (where available) and approved community charitable organizations, such as food banks, shelters, and community centers
- *Family History:* FamilySearch indexing, worldwide FamilySearch support, family history center assistance, and family history image processing

- *Member and Leader Support:* Supporting wards and stakes in accomplishing the work of salvation and exaltation, as directed by Area Presidencies
- Seminaries and Institutes: Office work, recruiting and enrollment, social media, and events support
- *Temples:* Ordinance workers (*for young service missionaries*), laundry, housekeeping, office, cafeteria, interior maintenance, and grounds
- *Welfare:* Bishops' storehouses, production facilities, farms, Deseret Industries, and employment centers
- *Church Headquarters (for those living in the Salt Lake City area):* Welfare Square, Church History Museum, and the Family History Library

#### 24.7.2 Housing and Transportation

Service missionaries live in their own home or with another family member approved by the Service Mission Office. They provide or arrange for their own transportation to their place of service if needed.

#### 24.7.3 Training and Supervision

Service missionaries are trained and supervised at the place where they serve. They may also be trained and supervised by the service mission leader. They receive day-to-day direction about their duties from the service mission leader (for young service missionaries) or the manager of their service assignment (for senior service missionaries).

The stake president is the missionary's ecclesiastical leader. He also helps the missionary understand and follow service missionary standards (see *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ—Service Missions*).

#### 24.7.4 Service Missionaries in Ward or Stake Callings

The bishop or stake president may give ward or stake callings to service missionaries if the callings do not interfere with the mission assignments or schedule. For young service missionaries, these leaders coordinate with the service mission leader.

#### 24.7.5 Concluding a Service Mission

The stake president, service mission leader (for young missionaries), and service missionary counsel together to determine when the missionary will complete his or her service.

Service missions for young missionaries do not exceed 24 months for men. These missions do not exceed 18 months for women.

Senior service missionaries may extend their service to a date agreed on by the stake president and missionary.

## 24.8 After Missionary Service

#### 24.8.1 Temple Recommends

#### 24.8.1.1

#### Young Missionaries Serving Away from Home

For instructions on temple recommends for young missionaries returning home, see 26.5.3.

#### 24.8.1.2

#### Senior Missionaries Serving Away from Home

The mission president may conduct a temple recommend interview when needed. If the missionary is worthy, the mission president issues a new recommend that expires in two years.

#### 24.8.1.3 Service Missionaries

Service missionaries should arrange through local leaders for interviews to renew temple recommends (see 26.3).

#### 24.8.2 Missionary Release Interview

The stake president releases missionaries and conducts a release interview. One of his counselors may release senior service missionaries. In districts, generally the mission president or an assigned counselor releases missionaries. For exceptions, see 5.3.

The following guidelines for this interview may be helpful.

- Commend them for serving a mission.
- Invite them to share mission experiences.
- Encourage them to continue as a lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ.
- Counsel them to build on good habits they developed as a missionary.
- Encourage them to follow the Spirit daily and live honorably.
- Encourage them to consider and prepare for the future, including education and employment for young missionaries. Help them set goals and make plans as needed. Review progress on My Plan with young missionaries.
- Avoid promising specific blessings as a reward for missionary service.
- Encourage them to always live worthy of a temple recommend.

## BYU–Pathway Worldwide and EnglishConnect

Recently released young missionaries who do not have other educational plans should be encouraged to consider enrolling in BYU–Pathway Worldwide for professional certificates and university education. Enrolled students must have at least an intermediate-level proficiency in English. For more information, see byupathway.org/returnedmissionary.

Recently released young missionaries who do not speak English may consider enrolling in EnglishConnect. For information, see EnglishConnect .org.

#### 24.8.3 Missionary Reports and Speaking in Sacrament Meeting

Stake and district presidents invite recently released missionaries to report on their service in a high council or district council meeting. This includes service missionaries. Bishops may also invite recently released missionaries to report in a ward council meeting.

Where appropriate for distance or other circumstances, recently released missionaries may provide their reports using technology or only in a ward council meeting.

The bishopric schedules time for recently released missionaries to speak in a sacrament meeting. This includes service missionaries. The meeting is a normal sacrament meeting. The bishopric ensures that the principles outlined in 24.5.2 are followed.

Recently released missionaries may speak in sacrament meetings in other wards as invited by a member of the stake or district presidency. They may also be invited by a member of the high council or district council.

#### 24.8.4 Callings

Leaders promptly give ministering assignments and callings to recently released missionaries. This includes being considered as temple ordinance workers as appropriate (see 25.5).

#### 24.9

## Resources for Missionary Recommendations and Service

#### 24.9.1 Manuals and Forms

Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ

Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ— Service Missions

#### Adjusting to Missionary Life

PHONE: 1-801-240-2222 OR 1-800-453-3860, EXTENSION 2-2222

Adjusting to Service Missionary Life: Resource Booklet

Missionary recommendation interview questions

*My Plan: A Guide for the Returned Missionary and Mentor* 

#### 24.9.2 Websites

ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/missionary

ChurchofJesusChrist.org/service-missionary

SeniorMissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

MissionaryRecommendations .ChurchofJesusChrist.org (available to local leaders and missionary candidates only)

#### 24.9.3 Contact Information for the Missionary Department



25.

## Temple and Family History Work in the Ward and Stake

#### 25.0

### Introduction

Uniting families for eternity is part of the work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2). Temple and family history work is the means for uniting and sealing families for eternity (see Matthew 16:19). This work includes:

- Making covenants as we receive our own temple ordinances (see Isaiah 55:3; Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–23).
- Discovering our deceased ancestors and performing ordinances for them in the temple so they can

make covenants with God (see Malachi 4:5–6; 1 Corinthians 15:29; Doctrine and Covenants 128:15–18).

• Going to the temple regularly, where possible, to worship God and perform ordinances for His children (see Luke 24:52–53; Doctrine and Covenants 109:13–14).

The temple is the house of the Lord. Temple ordinances and covenants bless Heavenly Father's children. Heavenly Father invites all of His children to qualify for and receive temple ordinances. This chapter guides Church leaders and members in temple and family history work. More information is available at "Temples" and "Family History" (Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 25.1

## Member and Leader Participation in Temple and Family History Work

Church members have the privilege and responsibility to help unite their families for eternity. They prepare themselves to make covenants as they receive temple ordinances, and they strive to keep those covenants. They also help family members understand, receive, and strive to keep temple covenants. Parents have the primary responsibility to help their children experience the blessings of temple and family history service for deceased family members.

Church members are encouraged to identify their deceased relatives who have not received temple ordinances. Members then perform the ordinances on behalf of those relatives (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:18). In the spirit world, deceased individuals can choose to accept or reject the ordinances that have been performed for them.

Members also invite family and friends to learn about their ancestors and discover their stories.

Church leaders support members in the following ways:

- Teach the importance of making and striving to keep temple covenants.
- Encourage members to learn about their ancestors, discover their stories, and perform temple ordinances on their behalf.
- Support parents in helping their children participate in temple and family history work.

- Encourage endowed members to have a current temple recommend and worship in the temple as often as their circumstances allow.
- Encourage youth, new members, and other unendowed adults to have a current limited-use temple recommend and go to the temple to be baptized and confirmed for the dead.

See chapter 26 for information about temple recommends.

#### 25.1.1 Individual Responsibility for Temple Attendance

Members determine for themselves when and how often to worship in the temple. Leaders do not establish quotas or reporting systems for temple attendance.

#### 25.1.2 Ward and Stake Temple Trips

Each Church unit is assigned to a temple district. Organized ward or stake visits to temples outside the assigned temple district are not encouraged.

Individual members and families may attend any temple they desire.

#### 25.2

## Organizing Temple and Family History Work in the Ward

#### 25.2.1 Bishopric

The bishopric coordinates with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead the ward's temple and family history efforts. These leaders counsel together regularly. The bishopric also has the following responsibilities for temple and family history work in the ward:

- Encourage individuals and families to learn the doctrine and blessings of temple and family history work.
- Ensure that the doctrine and blessings of temple and family history work are taught at church.
- Ensure that temple and family history work is coordinated in ward council and ward youth council meetings.
- Review and approve the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6).
- Oversee the organization of temple preparation courses (see 25.2.8).
- Issue temple recommends (see chapter 26).

**W**The bishopric consults with the stake president to determine whether to call a ward temple and family history leader (see 25.2.3 for more information).

#### 25.2.2 Elders Quorum and Relief Society Presidencies

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies lead the day-to-day temple and family history efforts in the ward (see 8.2.4 and 9.2.4). The elders quorum presidency leads these efforts for members of the elders quorum. The Relief Society presidency leads the efforts for members of the Relief Society. They work together to lead these efforts with the ward council, under the coordination of the bishop.

These leaders have the following responsibilities:

- Encourage individuals and families to learn the doctrine and blessings of temple and family history work.
- Ensure that the doctrine and blessings of temple and family history work are taught at church.

- Help members prepare to receive temple ordinances and make temple covenants.
- Encourage members to worship in the temple as often as their circumstances allow.
- Encourage members to learn about their ancestors and perform temple ordinances on their behalf.
- Help the ward council develop and implement the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6).
- Ensure that temple and family history work is planned and reported in ward council meetings and in ward temple and family history coordination meetings.
- Lead the work of the ward temple and family history leader. If this leader is not called, a member of the elders quorum presidency fills this role (see 25.2.3).

The elders quorum president and Relief Society president each assign a presidency member to help lead temple and family history work in the ward. These two presidency members work together. They attend ward temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).



## 25.2.3Ward Temple and Family History Leader

The bishopric consults with the stake president to determine whether to call a ward temple and family

history leader. If they decide to extend this calling, the bishopric counsels with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents in determining whom to call. This person should be a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. If this leader is not called, a member of the elders quorum presidency fills this role.

The ward temple and family history leader supports the elders quorum presidency and Relief Society presidency in their temple and family history responsibilities. He also has the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate temple and family history efforts with ward organization leaders, including youth quorum and class presidencies.
- Lead ward temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).
- Attend ward council meetings when invited.
- Help the ward council develop and implement the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6).
- Instruct ward temple and family history consultants. Coordinate their efforts to help members with temple and family history work.
- Work with the ward mission leader and the missionaries to help those learning the gospel, new members, and returning members engage in temple and family history work.
- Where applicable, assign ward temple and family history consultants to serve in the family history center (see 23.5.6).

#### <sup>25.2.4</sup> Ward Temple and Family History Consultants

Ward temple and family history consultants serve under the direction of the ward temple and family history leader or the member of the elders quorum presidency who fills this role. The elders quorum and Relief Society presidents may suggest members who could serve.

Consultants have the following responsibilities:

- Help members experience the blessings of discovering their ancestors and performing temple ordinances on their behalf. These experiences are especially important for those learning the gospel, new and returning members, and those preparing to receive a limited-use temple recommend.
- Help members prepare to receive temple ordinances and make temple covenants.
- Participate in temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).
- Serve in a local family history center when assigned (see 25.3.6).

#### 25.2.5 Ward Council

Members of the ward council prayerfully develop and implement a ward temple and family history plan. For information about the plan, see 25.2.6.

The bishop may invite the ward temple and family history leader to attend ward council meetings.

#### 25.2.6

#### Ward Temple and Family History Plan

Each ward should have a simple temple and family history plan. This plan helps ward members, including children and youth, participate in family history work and prepare to worship in the temple as often as their circumstances allow.

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidents help the ward council develop the plan. The ward temple and family history leader also helps. In developing the plan, they:

- Consider available needs and resources.
- Identify actions to take during the year.
- Determine how to implement the plan and make assignments accordingly.

Examples of what the plan might include are listed below:

- Help members build their family trees on FamilySearch.org or with the FamilySearch Tree app (see 25.4.2).
- Involve new and returning members, youth, and children in family history work.
- Help specific members prepare to receive temple ordinances.

The bishop reviews and approves the plan. Members of the ward council take the lead in implementing it. They report on progress in ward council meetings. They also update the plan as needed.

#### 25.2.7 Ward Temple and Family History Coordination Meetings

Brief informal ward temple and family history coordination meetings are held regularly. If a ward temple and family history leader is called, he conducts these meetings. Otherwise, the member of the elders quorum presidency who fills this role conducts.

Others who are invited include:

- Assigned members of the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies.
- An assistant in the priests quorum.
- A presidency member of the oldest Young Women class.
- Temple and family history consultants.

The purpose of these meetings is to:

- Coordinate efforts to implement the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6).
- Plan how to help specific ward members with their temple and family history work as requested.

These meetings may be held in person or remotely. Coordination can also happen in other ways, including phone calls, texts, and emails.

#### <sup>25.2.8</sup> Temple Preparation Course

Under the bishop's direction, a temple preparation course may be organized to help members prepare to make covenants as they receive temple ordinances. These courses are held outside of regular Sunday meetings at a time convenient for members. They may be held at a meetinghouse or in a home.

Ward council members prayerfully select members to invite to participate in each course. These courses may be especially helpful for the following people:

- New members
- Members preparing to receive their own endowment or to be sealed
- Members returning to Church activity
- Endowed members who have not renewed their temple recommends for an extended time

The bishopric calls one or more temple preparation instructors. A husband and wife may be called. Lessons and instructions for organizing the course are in the *Endowed from on High: Temple Preparation Seminar Teacher's Manual*. Participants are given copies of *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*. For personal study and lesson resources, see temples .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

## 25.3 Organizing Temple and Family History Work in the Stake

Stake leaders support ward leaders and members in their temple and family history efforts.

#### 25.3.1 Stake Presidency

The stake president holds the keys for the work of salvation and exaltation in the stake. He and his counselors have the following responsibilities for the temple and family history aspect of that work:

- Ensure that the doctrine and blessings of temple and family history work are taught regularly in stake meetings.
- Help members prepare to make sacred covenants as they receive temple ordinances.
- Encourage members to learn about their ancestors and perform temple ordinances on their behalf.
- Encourage members to worship in the temple as often as their circumstances allow.
- Conduct temple recommend interviews (see chapter 26).

In his regular meeting with each elders quorum president, a member of the stake presidency discusses temple and family history work in the ward (see 8.3.1). The counselors in the elders quorum presidency and the high councilor assigned to the quorum may attend.

#### <sup>25.3.2</sup> Stake Adult Leadership Committee

The stake adult leadership committee includes:

• The stake presidency.

- The stake Relief Society presidency.
- High councilors assigned to work with elders quorums.

These leaders instruct and support elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities for temple and family history work (see 25.2.2). Instruction could take place in a group setting or individually. Ward temple and family history leaders may be invited to receive this instruction.

For more about this committee's meetings, see 29.3.9.

#### 25.3.3 High Councilors

The stake presidency may assign high councilors to instruct and support the following people in their responsibilities for temple and family history work:

- Elders quorum presidencies
- Ward temple and family history leaders
- Stake temple and family history consultants

One or more high councilors may be assigned to lead these efforts. However, all high councilors have these responsibilities for the wards and quorums to which they are assigned.

High councilors may help ward temple and family history leaders instruct ward temple and family history consultants. High councilors may be assisted by stake temple and family history consultants.

The stake presidency may assign a high councilor to coordinate the stake's efforts in indexing (see 25.4.3). He or another high councilor may be assigned to oversee the work in family history centers (see 25.3.6).

#### 25.3.4 Stake Relief Society Presidency

Under the direction of the stake president, the stake Relief Society presidency instructs and supports ward Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities for temple and family history work.

# 25.3.5Stake Temple and Family History Consultants

Stake temple and family history consultants support temple and family history work throughout the stake. They serve under the direction of the stake presidency and one or more high councilors assigned to temple and family history work.

These consultants support high councilors and the stake Relief Society presidency in their efforts to instruct others in temple and family history work (see 25.3.3 and 25.3.4). They may also be given the following assignments:

- Help teach and support members in ward temple and family history callings.
- Help coordinate stake indexing efforts (25.4.3).
- Serve in family history centers (see 25.3.6).

#### 25.3.6 Tamily History Centers

If resources are available, the stake may organize one or more family history centers. These centers are to help visitors discover, gather information about, and unite both living and deceased family members. Anyone is welcome to use them.

The stake president assigns one stake temple and family history consultant to oversee efforts in each family history center. Each center is generally staffed by ward temple and family history consultants. Family history centers should be open at convenient times. As an exception, large regional family history libraries are overseen by the Area Presidency.

### 25.4 Family History Resources

#### 25.4.1 My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together

*My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together* helps people discover relatives and ancestors and gather their stories. This booklet can also help members begin to prepare family names for temple ordinances.

The booklet can be downloaded at ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Physical copies can be ordered at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

#### 25.4.2

#### FamilySearch.org and FamilySearch Apps

FamilySearch.org is the Church's website for temple and family history work. It can help users:

- Build family tree connections and relationships.
- Discover ancestors and their stories.
- Share and preserve family stories, photographs, and histories.
- Prepare family names for temple ordinances.

The FamilySearch Tree app and FamilySearch Memories app enable people to participate in temple and family history work from mobile devices.



#### 25.4.3 Indexing

Indexing is the process of entering information from a written historical record into a searchable database on FamilySearch.org. Those who index make it possible for others to discover their ancestors more easily and perform temple ordinances on their behalf.

Anyone can participate in indexing. This can be a particularly fulfilling experience for the following:

- Youth
- Young adults
- Members who are unable to regularly attend Church meetings
- New members
- General public

The stake presidency may assign a stake temple and family history consultant or a high councilor to coordinate this work.

For more information, see "Indexing Overview" on FamilySearch.org.

## **25.5** Recommending and Calling Temple Workers

#### 25.5.1 Recommending Temple Workers

## Potential temple workers are identified in the fol-

- lowing ways:
- Members identified by the bishop or another ward leader
- Members who approach the bishop about serving
- Members recommended by the temple president, the matron, or another temple leader
- Members who are preparing for or have recently returned from missionary service (see chapter 24)

The names of potential temple workers are submitted using the Recommend Temple Worker tool. This tool is available to bishops, stake presidents, and temple presidencies. The process for submitting names is outlined below.

When a temple presidency identifies a potential temple worker, they submit the person's name to the bishop using the Recommend Temple Worker tool.

When a bishop identifies a potential temple worker or receives a recommendation from a temple president, he counsels with the member about the opportunity to serve. He reviews the requirements for temple ordinance workers (see 25.5.2) or temple volunteers (see 25.5.3). If both the bishop and the member feel the opportunity would be appropriate, the bishop completes and submits the recommendation using the Recommend Temple Worker tool. The member should understand that a submitted recommendation does not ensure that he or she will be called or assigned as a temple worker.

The recommendation is next reviewed by the stake president. If he approves it, he submits it to the

temple president for review using the Recommend Temple Worker tool (see 25.5.4 and 25.5.5).

Members who are called or assigned as temple workers normally commit to a regular time to serve in the temple each week. Leaders should avoid issuing additional callings that would interfere with their ability to serve in the temple.

The Recommend Temple Worker tool also shows bishops and stake presidents a list of all members from their wards or stakes who currently serve in the temple.

#### 25.5.2 Requirements for Temple Ordinance Workers

Temple ordinance workers help perform ordinances in the temple. To be recommended as an ordinance worker, a member must meet the following qualifications:

- Reside in the temple district of the temple where he or she will serve.
- Be endowed, honor temple covenants, and hold a current temple recommend.
- Have a mature knowledge and testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Be worthy of respect in the Church and in the community.
- Work well with other people.
- Be dependable and in good health.
- Not currently have an annotation on his or her membership record.

If a person's Church membership was formally restricted, the restrictions must have been removed for at least five years. If the person was endowed when membership was withdrawn or resigned, his or her blessings must have been restored at least five years earlier.

#### 25.5.3 Requirements for Temple Volunteers

Temple volunteers help with administrative tasks in the temple, such as serving in the office or laundry. To be recommended as a temple volunteer, a member must meet the following qualifications:

- Reside in the temple district of the temple where he or she will serve.
- Be endowed, honor temple covenants, and hold a current temple recommend.
- Work well with other people.
- Be dependable and in good health.
- Not currently have an annotation on his or her membership record.

As an exception to these qualifications, members who volunteer to work outside the temple need not be endowed. An example is a member who works on the temple grounds.

#### 25.5.4 Calling and Setting Apart Ordinance Workers

After the temple president receives the recommendation for someone to serve as an ordinance worker, a member of the temple presidency or someone they designate interviews the person. As inspired, the person conducting the interview calls those who are able to serve as ordinance workers and sets them apart.

#### 25.5.5 Assigning Volunteers

Temple volunteers may be interviewed and assigned by a member of the temple presidency or someone they designate. Volunteers are assigned rather than called. They do not need to be set apart.



26.

## **Temple Recommends**

#### 26.0

## Introduction

Entering the temple is a sacred privilege. Ward and stake leaders encourage all members to be worthy of and to have a current temple recommend even if they do not live near a temple.

Church leaders make every effort to see that all who enter the temple are worthy to do so (see Psalm 24:3–5). Authorized priesthood leaders conduct temple recommend interviews and issue temple recommends to members who answer the interview questions appropriately and sincerely (see 26.3). The Lord promises that if those who enter the temple are clean, His presence will be there (see Doctrine and Covenants 97:15–16).

Members must have a valid temple recommend to enter a temple. Children younger than 8 who are being sealed to their parents or observing the sealing of their siblings to their parents do not need a recommend (see 26.4.4).

This chapter provides instructions for leaders who issue temple recommends. A bishop counsels with his stake president if he has questions about temple recommends that are not answered in this chapter. The stake president may contact the Office of the First Presidency with questions.

## **26.1** Types of Temple Recommends

A valid temple recommend allows a member to enter all temples. Priesthood leaders ensure that members receive the correct recommend for their circumstances. There are three types of recommends:

- 1. *Limited-use recommend*. These recommends are for unendowed members. They are issued through Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR). For more information, see 26.4.
- 2. *Recommend for living ordinances.* These recommends are for members receiving their own endowment, being sealed to a spouse, or being married in a temple for time only. They are issued from recommend book 2. The recommend for living ordinances is attached to a regular temple recommend (described below). The temple retains the living ordinance recommend when the ordinance is performed. The member retains the regular recommend and uses it when returning to the temple.
- 3. *Temple recommend.* These recommends are for members who have previously been endowed. They are issued from recommend book 1. They authorize a member to participate in all temple ordinances for the deceased. They are also used when an endowed member is sealed to living or deceased parents or children. For more information, see 26.5.

## 26.2 Safeguarding Temple Recommends

#### 26.2.1 Safeguarding Temple Recommend Books

Priesthood leaders who are authorized to have temple recommend books should carefully safeguard them. No other person should have access to them. When the Church updates temple recommend books, leaders destroy the outdated books.

#### 26.2.2

#### **Disposal of Expired Temple Recommends**

Stake and mission presidency members request old temple recommends when they interview members for a new recommend. They destroy the old recommends.

#### 26.2.3 Lost or Stolen Recommends

The bishop asks members to notify him as soon as possible if their recommend is lost or stolen. He or an assigned counselor or clerk uses LCR to cancel the recommend as soon as possible. If this system is not available, the bishop contacts the temple office to have the recommend canceled.

Soon after canceling the lost or stolen recommend, the bishop or an assigned counselor conducts a temple recommend interview with the member to issue a new recommend.

#### 26.2.4

## Recommend Holders Who Are Not Living the Standards of Worthiness

If the bishop determines that a member who has a current recommend is not living the standards of worthiness (see 26.3), he requests the recommend from the member. He uses LCR to cancel the recommend.

#### 26.3

## General Guidelines for Issuing Temple Recommends

Authorized priesthood leaders conduct worthiness interviews before a member can receive a temple recommend. Instructions are in the temple recommend book. Priesthood leaders should issue a recommend only if the member answers the temple recommend questions appropriately.

Temple recommend interviews allow members to demonstrate that they have a testimony and are striving to obey God's commandments and follow His prophets. Priesthood leaders also affirm, through the interview, that the member is worthy.

Temple recommend interviews should not be rushed. They should be private. However, the person being interviewed may invite another adult to be present. A youth may invite a parent or another adult to be present during an interview for a limited-use recommend.

Priesthood leaders should not add any requirements to those that are outlined in the temple recommend book. Nor should they remove any requirements. However, when issuing limited-use recommends to youth, leaders adapt the questions to the age and circumstances of the youth.

Sometimes members have questions during a temple recommend interview. The priesthood leader may explain basic gospel principles. He may also help members understand the temple recommend questions if needed. However, he should not present his personal beliefs, preferences, or interpretations as Church doctrine or policy.

In stakes, a member of the stake presidency or a stake clerk activates the temple recommend in LCR after it is issued. In districts, a member of the mission presidency or a mission clerk activates the recommend. Limited-use recommends for baptisms and confirmations for the dead are activated when they are printed by a member of the bishopric or by the branch president. He uses LCR to print the recommends.

#### <sup>26.3.1</sup> Temple Recommend Interviews for Members in Wards and Branches

In a ward, the bishop or an assigned counselor conducts temple recommend interviews and issues recommends to those who are worthy. In a branch, only the branch president conducts temple recommend interviews and issues recommends.

In a ward, the bishop personally interviews members who:

- Are receiving their own endowment (see 27.1 and 27.2).
- Are being sealed to a spouse (see 27.3).
- Are being married in a temple for time only (see 27.3.3).

In urgent cases when the bishop is unavailable, he may authorize one of his counselors to conduct these interviews.

In large young single adult wards, bishops may authorize experienced counselors to conduct these interviews.

Before issuing a recommend in any of the situations listed above, the bishop reviews the member's record to verify that it does not include a notation about Church membership restrictions. For members receiving their own endowment or being sealed to a spouse, he also ensures that:

- The person's baptism and confirmation are recorded on the membership record.
- Brethren have received the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Sometimes, dates for a member's baptism and confirmation or Melchizedek Priesthood ordination have not been recorded. In these situations, the ordinances must be verified and recorded, ratified, or performed again (see 38.2.1.10). After the interview by a member of the bishopric or the branch president, a member of the stake presidency interviews members who live in a stake. He signs the recommends of those who are worthy. A member of the mission presidency conducts the second interview for members who live in a district. He also signs the recommends of those who are worthy. A district president does not conduct temple recommend interviews unless authorized by the First Presidency.

The stake or mission president personally interviews members who:

- Are receiving their own endowment.
- Are being sealed to a spouse.
- Are being married in a temple for time only.

If the stake president is unavailable, he may authorize his counselors to conduct these interviews.

A mission president may authorize his counselors to conduct these interviews as needed.

In a young single adult stake, the stake president may authorize his counselors to conduct these interviews.

#### 26.3.2

#### Temple Recommend Interviews for Members in Isolated Areas

Some members live in areas that would require expensive travel or great difficulty to meet with a member of the stake or mission presidency. In these situations, a temple president may interview the person and sign the recommend. Before conducting the interview, he confers with the stake or mission president. 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. They should first be interviewed by the bishop of their home ward or the unit that supports their duty station.



## 26.4 Issuing Limited-Use Temple Recommends

#### <sup>26.4.1</sup> General Guidelines

In a ward, the bishop or an assigned counselor interviews members for limited-use temple recommends. In a branch, only the branch president conducts temple recommend interviews. The leader follows the guidelines in 26.3. He issues a limiteduse recommend if the person is worthy.

Limited-use recommends are issued to 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 limiteduse recommend beginning in January of the year they turn 12.)
- For single members ages 8 through 20 to be sealed to their parents.
- For single members ages 8 through 20 to observe the sealings of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents.

Members who have been previously endowed are not issued limited-use recommends.

A male Church member who is old enough to hold the priesthood must be ordained to a priesthood office before he may receive a limited-use recommend.

When issuing a limited-use recommend, a member of the bishopric or the branch president interviews the person individually. However, the person may invite a parent or another adult to be present.

#### 26.4.2 Limited-Use Recommends for Newly Baptized Members

The bishop interviews new members who are of an appropriate age to receive a limited-use recommend for baptisms and confirmations for the dead. He conducts this interview soon after the member's confirmation, normally within a week (see 26.4.1). For brethren, this interview may be held as part of the interview to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. Male Church members must be ordained to a priesthood office before receiving a limited-use recommend.

#### 26.4.3

## Limited-Use Recommends for Baptisms and Confirmations for the Dead

Limited-use recommends that are issued for baptisms and confirmations for the dead may be used only for that purpose. These recommends are printed using LCR. They require only the signature of a member of the bishopric or the branch president.

For information about scheduling baptisms and confirmations for the dead, see 28.2.

#### <sup>26.4.4</sup> Limited-Use Recommends for Sealing Living Children to Parents

Single unendowed members ages 8 through 20 are issued limited-use recommends to participate in sealings as follows:

- To be sealed to their parents
- To observe the sealing of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents

Those who are issued limited-use recommends to participate in sealings are interviewed by a member of the bishopric or the branch president. They are also interviewed by a member of the stake or mission presidency.

A member of the bishopric or the branch president prints limited-use recommends using LCR. Limiteduse recommends for sealings 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 those who are observing.

Children under age 8 do not need a recommend to be sealed to their parents. Nor do they need a recommend to observe the sealing of their siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents.

Married members and members who are 21 or older may be sealed to their parents or observe a sealing only if they are (1) endowed and (2) have a current temple recommend.

See 27.4.4 and 38.4.2 for additional policies on being sealed to parents and observing sealings.



## 26.5 Issuing Temple Recommends

#### 26.5.1 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. Members should not receive their own endowment until they meet all of the following conditions:

- They are at least 18 years old.
- They have completed or are no longer attending high school, secondary school, or the equivalent.
- One full year has passed since their confirmation.

In addition, a man must hold the Melchizedek Priesthood before receiving his endowment. For information about members preparing to receive their own endowment, see 25.2.8. For information about who may receive the endowment, see 27.2.1.

#### 26.5.2 Newly Baptized Members

Worthy adult members may receive their own endowment one full year after being confirmed a member of the Church (see 27.1). Priesthood leaders ensure that the date the member will receive the endowment will be at least one full year after his or her confirmation date, not the baptismal date. Only the First Presidency may authorize exceptions.

New members who are worthy should be issued a limited-use recommend to perform baptisms and confirmations for the dead (see 26.4.2).

#### 26.5.3

#### Young Missionaries Returning from Service Away from Home

Before a young missionary serving away from home completes his or her service, the mission president conducts a temple recommend interview. If the missionary is worthy, he issues a recommend. The mission president dates and activates the recommend so it expires three months from the date the missionary returns home.

The bishop interviews returned missionaries to issue a new temple recommend near the end of the threemonth expiration period. In urgent cases when the bishop is unavailable, he may authorize one of his counselors to conduct these interviews.

In large young single adult wards, bishops may authorize experienced counselors to conduct these interviews.

Returned missionaries then meet with a member of their stake presidency for a temple recommend interview.

In these temple recommend interviews, the bishop and member of the stake presidency also review counsel given in the missionary's release interview (see 24.8.2). They discuss the returned missionary's progress, well-being, and current Church calling. They also encourage him or her to continue on a lifelong path of spiritual growth and service.

If the returned missionary does not have a Church calling, the bishop and stake president make certain that one is extended. Returned missionaries may be recommended to serve as temple ordinance workers or volunteers if a temple is nearby (see 25.5).

#### 26.5.4 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 reviews the member's record to verify that it does not include a notation about Church membership restrictions.

The bishop or an assigned counselor contacts the prior bishop before conducting a temple recommend interview. If a counselor contacts the prior bishop and learns that there is confidential information, he ends the conversation. He informs his bishop to contact the prior bishop before an interview.

#### 26.5.5 After Divorce, Separation, or Annulment

The bishop and stake president may feel impressed to interview a member who has been divorced or legally separated or had a marriage annulled since last receiving a temple recommend. During this interview, they help strengthen the member spiritually. They also verify the member's continued temple worthiness.

#### 26.5.6

### Members Whose Close Relatives Publicly Oppose the Church or Belong to Apostate Groups

Bishops and their counselors should be sensitive when issuing recommends to members whose close relatives publicly oppose the Church or belong to apostate groups. Members in these circumstances should not be made to feel that they cannot have a temple recommend because of their family associations. They should be encouraged to maintain a loving relationship with close relatives. They may be issued a temple recommend if they answer all temple recommend questions appropriately and sincerely.

#### <sup>26.5.7</sup> Members Who Identify as Transgender

Worthy members who identify as transgender but do not pursue a medical, surgical, or social transition to the gender opposite of their biological sex at birth ("sex reassignment") may receive a temple recommend and temple ordinances.

Temple ordinances are received according to a person's biological sex at birth. For this reason, the following members may not receive a temple recommend, including a limited-use recommend:

- Members who have received elective medical or surgical intervention for the purpose of attempting to transition
- Members who have socially transitioned to the gender opposite of their biological sex at birth

The stake president may counsel with the Area Presidency to address individual situations sensitively (see 38.6.23 and 38.7.7).

#### <sup>26.5.8</sup> 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 (see 32.6). The period between the sin and the issuing of a recommend is left to the discretion of the bishop and stake president. It should be sufficient to determine that the person has genuinely repented.

#### 26.5.9

#### Members Who Have Been Readmitted after Church Membership Withdrawal or Resignation

#### 26.5.9.1

#### Members Who Were Not Previously Endowed

After a member who was not previously endowed has been readmitted by baptism and confirmation, the bishop may interview him or her to receive a limited-use recommend (see 26.4.1). This interview normally takes place within one week of the member's confirmation. Male Church members must be ordained to an office in the priesthood before receiving a limited-use recommend.

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.

#### 26.5.9.2 Members Who Were Previously Endowed

Members who were previously endowed may not receive any kind of temple recommend until their temple blessings are restored through the ordinance of restoration of blessings (see 32.17.2). When their blessings are restored, they may be issued a temple recommend.



27.

## **Temple Ordinances for the Living**

#### 27.0

### Introduction

Since ancient times, whenever a faithful people has been on the earth, God has blessed them with temple covenants and ordinances. He has sometimes allowed His holy ordinances to be administered outside of temples when there was no dedicated temple (see Genesis 28:12–22; Exodus 24; Exodus 25:8–9; Ether 3). But whenever the Lord has established His Church, He has commanded His people to build a house "unto [His] name." There He reveals His ordinances and the glories of His kingdom and teaches the way of salvation. (See 2 Chronicles 3–5; 2 Nephi 5:16; Doctrine and Covenants 97:10–16; 124:29–39.) The temple is the house of the Lord. It points us to our Savior, Jesus Christ. In temples, we participate in sacred ordinances and make covenants with Heavenly Father that bind us to Him and to our Savior. These covenants and ordinances prepare us to return to Heavenly Father's presence and to be sealed together as families for eternity.

In the temple, great blessings are also made available to God's faithful children in this life. In temple covenants and ordinances, "the power of godliness is manifest" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:20). The temple is a holy place where members can worship, learn, and receive guidance and comfort (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:13–16). Those who attend the temple can have access to God's power to help accomplish His work (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:22–23; see also 3.5 in this handbook).

Temple covenants and ordinances are sacred. The symbols associated with temple covenants should not be discussed outside the temple. Nor should we discuss the holy information we promise in the temple not to reveal. However, we may discuss the basic purposes and doctrine of temple covenants and ordinances and the spiritual feelings we have in the temple.

Ward and stake leaders discuss the information in this chapter with members who are preparing to receive the endowment or sealing ordinances.

## 27.1 Receiving Temple Ordinances

#### 27.1.1 Preparing to Receive Temple Ordinances

Members should prepare themselves spiritually to receive temple ordinances and to make and honor temple covenants.

Parents have the primary responsibility to help their children prepare to receive temple ordinances. Stake and ward leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, and extended family members support parents in this role.

Stake and ward leaders regularly encourage members to prepare to receive their own temple ordinances. Leaders also emphasize the importance of honoring temple covenants and remaining worthy of and holding a temple recommend.

Resources to help members prepare to receive temple ordinances are available at temples .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Members who are preparing to receive their own endowment or to be sealed to a spouse are encouraged to participate in a temple preparation course (see 25.2.8). Members meet with their bishop and stake president to obtain a recommend for living ordinances when they are:

- Receiving their own endowment.
- Being sealed to a spouse.
- Being married in a temple for time only.

For information about issuing temple recommends in these circumstances, see 26.1 and 26.3.1.

#### 27.1.2 Scheduling Temple Ordinances

Members who are planning to receive their own endowment or to be sealed or married should schedule the ordinance in advance with the temple they plan to attend. Normally they do this after they have received a recommend for living ordinances. See temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for each temple's contact information.

#### 27.1.3

#### Members Who Have Physical Disabilities

Worthy members who have physical disabilities may receive all temple ordinances (see 38.2.1.9). These members are encouraged to attend the temple with endowed relatives or friends who can assist them. Those who assist must have a current temple recommend. If it is not possible to attend with a family member or friend, members may call the temple in advance to see what arrangements can be made. See temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for each temple's contact information.

Service animals and emotional support animals are not allowed in temples. Stake presidents may contact the Temple Department at TempleDepartment@ChurchofJesusChrist.org if they have questions.

#### 27.1.4 Translation or Interpretation Assistance

If members need translation or interpretation assistance, they should contact the temple in advance to see if it is available. See temples .ChurchofJesusChrist.org for each temple's contact information.

#### 27.1.5 Clothing to Wear to a Temple

When going to a temple, members should wear the type of clothing they typically wear to sacrament meeting. They should avoid wearing clothing that is casual or that does not cover the temple garment. They should also avoid wearing clothing that is overly formal, like tuxedos. This instruction is best taught by parents, ministering brothers and sisters, and ward and stake leaders as members prepare to worship in the temple.

See 27.3.2.6 for information about clothing to wear to a temple marriage or sealing.

See 38.5 for information about:

- Clothing to wear during the endowment and sealing ordinances.
- Obtaining, wearing, and caring for ceremonial temple clothing and garments.

#### <sup>27.1.6</sup> Child Care

Children must have adult supervision if they are on temple grounds. Temple workers are available to supervise children only in the following circumstances:

- If they are being sealed to parents
- If they are observing the sealing of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents



#### 27.1.7 Meeting with Members After They Receive Temple Ordinances

Members often have questions after receiving temple ordinances. Endowed family members, the bishop, other ward leaders, and ministering brothers and sisters may meet with members to discuss their temple experience.

Leaders also encourage members to seek answers to their questions through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In the temple, the Spirit can provide answers to many of the questions that members may have about their temple experience.

Resources to help answer questions are available at temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

## 27.2 The Endowment

The word *endowment* means "a gift." The temple endowment is literally a gift from God through which He blesses His children. The endowment can be received only in holy temples. Some of the gifts that members receive through the temple endowment include:

- Greater knowledge of the Lord's purposes and teachings.
- Power to do all that Heavenly Father wants His children to do.

- Divine direction when serving the Lord, their families, and others.
- Increased hope, comfort, and peace.

All the promised blessings of the endowment are in force both in this life and for eternity. The fulfillment of these blessings depends on faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The endowment is received in two parts. In the first part, a person receives a preliminary ordinance called the initiatory. The initiatory is also known as the washing and anointing (see Exodus 29:4–9). It includes special blessings related to the person's divine heritage and potential.

During the initiatory, the member is authorized to wear the temple garment. The garment represents his or her personal relationship with God and the commitment to obey covenants made in the temple. When members are faithful to their covenants and wear the garment properly throughout their lives, it also serves as a protection. For information about wearing and caring for the garment, see 38.5.5.

In the second part of the endowment, the plan of salvation is taught, including the Creation, the Fall of Adam and Eve, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Apostasy, and the Restoration. Members also receive instruction on how to return to the Lord's presence.

In the endowment, members are invited to make sacred covenants to:

- Live the law of obedience and strive to keep Heavenly Father's commandments.
- Obey the law of sacrifice, which means sacrificing to support the Lord's work and repenting with a broken heart and contrite spirit.
- Obey the law of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the higher law that He taught while He was on the earth.

- Keep the law of chastity, which means having no sexual activity except with those to whom they are legally and lawfully wedded according to God's law.
- Keep the law of consecration, which means dedicating their time, talents, and everything with which the Lord has blessed them to building up Jesus Christ's Church on the earth.

In return, Heavenly Father promises that those who remain faithful to their temple covenants will be endowed "with power from on high" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32, 38; see also Luke 24:49; Doctrine and Covenants 43:16).

#### 27.2.1 Who May Receive the Endowment

All accountable adult members of the Church are invited to prepare for and receive their own endowment. All prerequisite ordinances must be performed and recorded before members may receive the endowment (see 26.3.1). See 27.2.2 for information about deciding when to receive the endowment.

## 27.2.1.1

#### Newly Baptized Members

Worthy adult new members may receive their endowment at least one full year from the date of their confirmation (see 26.5.2).

#### 27.2.1.2

#### Members Who Have an Unendowed Spouse

A worthy member whose spouse is unendowed may receive his or her own endowment when the following conditions are met:

- The unendowed spouse gives his or her consent.
- The member, bishop, and stake president are confident that the responsibility assumed with

temple covenants will not be a disruption to the marriage.

These conditions apply whether the spouse is a member of the Church or is not.

#### 27.2.1.3

#### Members Who Have Intellectual Disabilities

Members who have intellectual disabilities may receive their own endowment if:

- They have received all prerequisite ordinances (see 26.3.1).
- They have the intellectual capacity to understand, make, and keep the associated covenants.

The bishop counsels with the member and, where applicable, his or her parents. He also seeks the direction of the Spirit. He may counsel with the stake president. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency if necessary. See 38.2.1.8.

#### 27.2.2 Deciding When to Receive the Endowment

The decision to receive the endowment is personal and should be made prayerfully. The endowment is a blessing of power and revelation to all who prepare to receive it. Members may choose to receive their own endowment when they meet all of the following conditions:

- They are at least 18 years old.
- They have completed or are no longer attending high school, secondary school, or the equivalent.
- One full year has passed since their confirmation.
- They feel a desire to receive and honor sacred temple covenants throughout their lives.

Members who have received a mission call or are preparing to be sealed in the temple should receive the endowment. The bishop also counsels with other adult members who desire to receive the endowment.

Before issuing a temple recommend for a member to receive the endowment, the bishop and stake president should feel that the person is prepared to understand and keep sacred temple covenants. This eligibility is determined individually for each person. Leaders do not use generalized criteria, such as those listed below, when determining whether a person is prepared to receive the endowment:

- Reaching a certain age
- Leaving home for college, employment, or military service
- Desiring to observe the temple sealing of a family member or friend

#### 27.2.3

#### Planning and Scheduling the Endowment

#### 27.2.3.1

#### **Receiving a Recommend for Living Ordinances**

A member must receive a recommend for living ordinances to enter a temple and receive the endowment. For information about these recommends, see 26.5.1.

#### 27.2.3.2 Contacting the Temple

Members who are planning to receive the endowment should contact the temple in advance to schedule the ordinance (see 27.1.2). The temple will provide instructions, including information about temple clothing, when the appointment is scheduled.

#### 27.2.3.3 Escorts for Members Receiving the Endowment

Members receiving their own endowment may invite an endowed member of the same gender to act as an escort and assist them during the endowment session. The escort must have a current temple recommend. The temple can provide an escort if needed.

### 27.3 Sealing of Husband and Wife

"The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"). A temple sealing joins a husband and wife together for time and all eternity if they are faithful to the covenants they make in the temple. Couples who are sealed in the temple are promised glory and joy throughout eternity (see Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20). Through this ordinance, their children may also be part of their eternal family.

Church leaders encourage members to prepare to be married and sealed in a temple. Where temple marriages are not legally recognized, authorized Church leaders or others can perform civil marriages that are followed by a temple sealing (see 38.3). This pattern may also be followed when a temple marriage could cause parents or immediate family members to feel excluded because they cannot attend the temple ceremony.



#### 27.3.1 Who May Be Sealed in a Temple

All accountable unmarried members of the Church are invited to prepare for a temple sealing. Those who are civilly married are encouraged to be sealed for time and eternity in the temple as soon as they are prepared. Members must be endowed before they can be sealed (see 27.2).

Couples being sealed in the temple must be either (1) married civilly before being sealed or (2) married and sealed in the same temple ceremony. See 27.3.2.

#### 27.3.1.1

Members Who Were Sealed to a Previous Spouse

See 38.4.1.

#### 27.3.1.2

#### Members Who Have Intellectual Disabilities

Members who have intellectual disabilities may be sealed to their spouse, fiancé, or fiancée if:

- They have received all prerequisite ordinances, including the endowment (see 27.2.1.3).
- They have the intellectual capacity to understand, make, and keep the associated covenants.

The bishop counsels with the member and his or her spouse, fiancé, or fiancée. He also seeks the direction of the Spirit. He may counsel with the stake president. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency if necessary. See 38.2.1.8.

#### <sup>27.3.2</sup> Planning and Scheduling a Temple Marriage or Sealing

#### 27.3.2.1

#### **Receiving a Recommend for Living Ordinances**

A member must receive a recommend for living ordinances to be sealed to his or her spouse. For information about these recommends, see 26.3.

#### 27.3.2.2 Contacting the Temple

Members who are planning to be married or sealed to a spouse should contact the temple in advance to schedule the ordinance (see 27.1.2). The temple will provide instructions when the appointment is scheduled.

#### 27.3.2.3 Obtaining a Marriage License

Before being married, a couple must obtain a legal marriage license that is valid where the marriage will be performed. If the couple plans to be both married and sealed during the same ceremony, they must bring a valid marriage license to the temple.

Couples being sealed after a civil marriage do not need to bring a marriage license to the temple. Instead, they provide the date and location of their civil marriage as part of the record verification process.

#### 27.3.2.4 Escorts for the Bride and Groom

An endowed sister may accompany the bride to assist her in the dressing room. An endowed brother may do the same for the groom. An escort must have a valid temple recommend. The temple can provide an escort if needed.

#### 27.3.2.5

#### Who Performs a Temple Marriage or Sealing

A temple marriage or sealing is usually performed by a sealer who is assigned to the temple where the couple will be married or sealed. If a family member holds the sealing authority and is assigned to the temple where the couple will be married or sealed, they may invite him to perform the marriage or sealing. A sealer may also seek First Presidency approval to perform a sealing for his lineal descendants (children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren) in a temple other than the one to which he is assigned. He must receive a letter of authorization from the First Presidency for each such sealing. He presents the letter at the temple.

Members are discouraged from asking General Authorities to perform their temple marriage or sealing.

#### 27.3.2.6

## Appropriate Clothing for a Temple Marriage or Sealing

*Bride's Dress.* A bride's dress worn in the temple should be white, modest in design and fabric, and free of elaborate ornamentation. It also should cover the temple garment. Sheer fabric should be lined.

To be consistent with other dresses worn in the temple, a bride's dress should be long-sleeve or three-quarter-sleeve. Dresses should not have a train unless it can be pinned up or removed for the sealing ceremony. The temple can provide a dress if needed or desired.

*Groom's Clothing*. The groom wears normal temple clothing during the marriage or sealing ceremony (see 38.5.1 and 38.5.2). He may wear formal clothing outside the temple for photographs after the ceremony.

*Guests' Clothing.* Those who attend a marriage or sealing ceremony should wear clothing similar to what they would wear to a sacrament meeting. Guests should not dress in white unless the sealing room must be entered through the celestial room. Members who come to a sealing directly from an endowment session may wear ceremonial temple clothing.

The couple should share this information with guests well before the marriage or sealing.

*Flowers*. The couple and their guests should not wear flowers during the marriage or sealing ceremony. Flowers may be worn outside the temple for photographs after the ceremony. The couple should share this information with guests well before the marriage or sealing.

#### 27.3.2.7

## Exchanging Rings after a Temple Marriage or Sealing

Exchanging rings is not part of the temple sealing ceremony. However, couples may exchange rings after the ceremony in the sealing room. Couples should not exchange rings at any other time or place in a temple or on temple grounds. Doing so can detract from the ceremony.

Couples who are married and sealed in the same ceremony may exchange rings at a later time to accommodate family members who are unable to attend a temple marriage. The ring exchange should be consistent with the dignity of a temple marriage. The exchange should not replicate any part of the temple marriage or sealing ceremony. The couple should not exchange vows after being married or sealed in the temple.

Couples who are married civilly before their temple sealing may exchange rings at their civil ceremony, at their temple sealing, or at both ceremonies.

#### 27.3.3

#### Marriage in a Temple for Time Only

Marriage in a temple for time only may be performed when all of the following requirements are met:

- The man and the woman are each already sealed to a spouse who is deceased.
- The man and the woman each have a valid temple recommend and a recommend for living ordinances.
- Temple marriages are legal marriages in the country where the temple is located.
- The couple has a valid marriage license.

A marriage in the temple for time only is not authorized for members who are in the process of seeking a cancellation of sealing or a sealing clearance.

For the policy on sealing a couple who were married in the temple for time only, see 38.4.1.6.

#### 27.3.4 Who May Attend a Temple Marriage or Sealing

Couples should invite only close family members and friends to a temple marriage or sealing. Accountable members must be endowed and have a current temple recommend to attend.

The stake president may authorize a person who was not baptized or endowed due to intellectual disabilities to observe the temple marriage or sealing of his or her living siblings. The person must:

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Be able to remain reverent during the ceremony.

The stake president writes a letter stating that the person is authorized to observe the sealing. This letter is presented at the temple.

Members must be endowed and have a current temple recommend to observe the sealing of their parents.

#### 27.3.5 Wedding Receptions

See 35.4.22 for information about holding wedding receptions in Church buildings.

## 27.4 Sealing Living Children to Parents

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.

Children who are not born in the covenant can become part of an eternal family by being sealed to their birth or adoptive parents. These children are entitled to the same blessings as those who were born in the covenant.

See 38.4.2 for policies about sealing children to parents.

#### 27.4.1

#### Issuing a Recommend for Sealing Living Children to Parents

Accountable members ages 8 and older need a recommend to be sealed to their parents. They also need a recommend to observe the sealing of living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents. Children ages 8 and older must be baptized and confirmed to receive a temple recommend.

Males who are at least 11 and turning 12 during the year of the ordinance must also hold the priesthood.

The stake president may authorize persons who were not baptized or endowed due to intellectual disabilities to be sealed to their parents. The stake president writes a letter stating that the person is authorized to be sealed. This letter is presented at the temple.

See 26.4.4 for information about issuing recommends to children.

#### 27.4.2 Contacting the Temple

A couple who wants to have their children sealed to them, or children who desire to be sealed to their deceased parents, should contact the temple in advance to schedule the ordinance (see 27.1.2). In some cases, other temple ordinances may need to be performed before the sealing can occur.



<sup>27.4.3</sup> Child Care

See 27.1.6.

#### 27.4.4

### Who May Attend a Sealing of Living Children to Parents

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 must have a temple recommend (see 26.4.4). Males who are at least 11 and turning 12 during the year of the ordinance must also hold the priesthood.

Members who are married or are 21 or older must be endowed to observe such sealings.

The stake president may authorize persons who were not baptized or endowed due to intellectual disabilities to observe the sealing of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents. Such persons must have been either (1) born in the covenant or (2) sealed to their parents. The stake president writes a letter stating that the person is authorized to observe the sealing. This letter is presented at the temple.

## <sup>28.</sup> 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 38.4. 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 38.4.

#### 28.2

Performing Ordinances for the Dead

#### <sup>28.2.1</sup> Who May Participate in Ordinances for the Dead

Members who are of an appropriate age and have a limited-use temple recommend may participate in baptisms and confirmations for the dead (see 26.4.3). Endowed members with a current temple recommend may participate in all ordinances for the deceased (see 26.5).

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 or are accompanied by relatives or friends who have a temple recommend and can provide help if needed.

#### 28.2.2

#### 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

#### <sup>28.3.1</sup> 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

## Children Who Die before Birth (Stillborn and Miscarried Children)

Temple ordinances are not necessary for children who die before birth. This does not deny the possibility that these children may be part of the family in the eternities. Parents are encouraged to trust the Lord and seek His comfort. For more information, see 38.7.3.

#### 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 are performed for the following deceased persons who had intellectual disabilities:

- Persons who are known to have been accountable (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:71)
- Persons whose accountability is unknown

If it is clearly known that a deceased person had intellectual disabilities and was not accountable, the only ordinance performed is that of sealing to parents if the person was not born in the covenant. Other temple ordinances are not needed or performed even if the person lived to be age 8 or older (see 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.

## 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. 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.

## <sup>29.</sup> Meetings in the Church

Latter-day Saints meet together to worship, edify each other, and teach and learn the gospel (see Alma 6:6; Moroni 6:5–6). The Savior promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Meeting together is one way our hearts can be "knit together in unity and in love" (Mosiah 18:21).

Leadership meetings help leaders counsel together and coordinate efforts to serve others. However, holding a meeting should never replace serving and ministering as Jesus Christ did. The work of salvation and exaltation can be planned in a meeting, but it is most often accomplished outside of the meeting.

## **29.1** 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). They seek ways to invite the influence of the Spirit in their meetings.

Leaders ensure that the number and length of meetings do not create burdens for members or their families. For example, meetings should not make it difficult for families to have time together on the Sabbath day.

Leaders also ensure that meetings focus on what is most important. For example, sacrament meetings should focus on the sacrament and building faith in Jesus Christ. Presidency meetings and council meetings focus on strengthening individuals and families. The presiding officer may conduct the meeting. Or he or she may ask someone else, such as a counselor, to conduct under his or her direction.

Occasionally something happens during a meeting that the presiding officer feels a need to clarify. For example, someone might teach incorrect doctrine. If that happens, the presiding officer should make a clarification without embarrassing anyone.

### 29.2 Ward Meetings

#### 29.2.1 Sacrament Meeting

#### Purposes

Remember Jesus Christ by partaking of the sacrament. In this ordinance, Church members renew their covenant to take upon themselves the Savior's name, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments. Other purposes include worshipping, building faith and testimony, and conducting ward business.

#### Participants

All are invited to attend (see 3 Nephi 18:30–32; see also 38.1.1 in this handbook).

## Frequency

Each Sunday.

### 29.2.1.1

#### **Planning Sacrament Meeting**

The bishopric plans and conducts sacrament meeting. They ensure that the focus of the meeting is on the sacrament and building faith in Jesus Christ. Sacrament meeting lasts one hour. It can include the following:

- 1. *Prelude music* (see 19.4.3.1 for guidelines). Reverent music before the meeting starts can invite a spirit of worship.
- 2. Greeting and welcome.
- 3. Acknowledgment of presiding authorities or other leaders who are visiting. Presiding authorities and visiting high councilors should be invited to sit on the stand. General Officers are also invited to sit on the stand unless they are attending their home ward.
- 4. *Announcements*. These should be kept to a minimum. Most can be printed, shared electronically, or shared in other meetings.
- 5. Opening hymn and prayer. See 19.4 and 29.6.
- 6. Ward and stake business, such as the following:
  - Sustaining and releasing officers and teachers (see 30.3 and 30.5).
  - Presenting names of brethren to be ordained to an office in the Aaronic Priesthood (see 38.2.5.2).
  - Recognizing new ward members, including recent converts. After a few words of introduction, the person conducting asks the congregation to show by an uplifted hand that they welcome the member into the ward.

When children who are members of record are baptized and confirmed, they are recognized in sacrament meeting. However, they do not need to be presented for welcome into the ward.

- 7. *Naming and blessing children* (see 18.6). This is usually done in fast and testimony meeting (see 29.2.2).
- 8. Confirming new converts (see 18.8 and 38.2.3.2).

9. Sacrament hymn and administration of the sacrament. The sacrament is the main focus of the meeting. Other parts of the meeting should not detract from it. This ordinance is an opportunity for members to direct their thoughts toward the Savior and His sacrifice for them. It should be a sacred time of spiritual renewal.

The sacrament table should be prepared before the meeting begins. The bishop ensures that the sacrament is blessed and passed in a reverent and orderly way. Those who administer the sacrament represent Jesus Christ.

For more about preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament, see 18.9.

For information about administering the sacrament in unusual situations, see 29.2.1.5 and 18.9.1.

- Gospel messages and congregational singing or other music. Messages and music should be consistent with the sacred nature of the sacrament. For information about selecting speakers, see 29.2.1.4. For information about musical selections in sacrament meeting, see 19.4.2 and 19.4.3.3.
- 11. Closing hymn and prayer.
- 12. Postlude music.

Visual aids and audiovisual materials should not be used in sacrament meetings (see 38.8.3).

#### 29.2.1.2

#### Presiding at Sacrament Meeting

The bishop presides at sacrament meeting unless a member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy in his area, or a General Authority attends. If the bishop and his counselors are not able to attend sacrament meeting, the stake president designates who presides. Normally he designates the elders quorum president. However, he could invite another priesthood holder, preferably a high priest or elder.

#### 29.2.1.3 Time before the Meeting

Before the meeting starts, members of the congregation prepare spiritually for the sacrament. They can do this through quiet prayer and pondering. Leaders set an example of reverence.

#### 29.2.1.4 Selecting Speakers

The bishopric selects speakers for sacrament meeting. Most often they invite ward members, including youth (see 38.8.20). The stake president may assign high councilors or members of stake organization presidencies to speak. The stake president determines the frequency of such assignments.

The bishopric extends invitations to speak well in advance of the meeting. Speakers bear testimony of Jesus Christ and teach His gospel using the scriptures (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:12; 52:9). Messages should build faith and be consistent with the sacred nature of the sacrament.

For information about newly called or recently returned missionaries speaking in sacrament meeting, see 24.5.2 and 24.8.3.

The bishopric schedules one sacrament meeting each year for a presentation by the Primary children. For information about this presentation, see 12.2.1.2.

#### 29.2.1.5

#### Sacrament Services in Unusual Situations

Every member needs the spiritual blessings that come from partaking of the sacrament. However, some members are unable to attend sacrament meeting because they are confined to their home, a hospital, or a care facility. The bishop may assign priesthood holders to administer the sacrament to these members (see 18.9.1).

In some cases, the bishop may authorize streaming sacrament meeting for those who cannot attend. For information, see 29.7.

When members are traveling or temporarily living away from home, they should attend sacrament meeting in a nearby ward if possible. Sacrament services should not be held in conjunction with family reunions or vacations.

#### 29.2.2 Fast and Testimony Meeting

#### Purpose

Partake of the sacrament and strengthen one another by bearing testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel. Members are encouraged to come to the meeting fasting if they are able to fast.

#### Participants

All are invited to attend.

#### Frequency

Once a month, sacrament meeting is a fast and testimony meeting. Usually this is on the first Sunday of the month. It may be on a different Sunday to accommodate general conference or stake conference. (See also 20.6.11.)

In a fast and testimony meeting, there are no assigned speakers or special musical selections. Instead, the person conducting bears a brief testimony. He then invites members of the congregation to bear their testimonies. To bear testimony means to declare gospel truths as inspired by the Holy Ghost. Testimonies should be brief so that many people can participate.

Young children are welcome to bear testimony in fast and testimony meeting. It may be best for them to learn to do so at home until they can bear testimony without help from others. Under the bishop's direction, children may be named and blessed during fast and testimony meeting (see 29.2.1.1).

#### <sup>29.2.3</sup> Ward Conference

#### Purpose

At ward conference, stake leaders instruct, support, and minister to ward leaders and members. Ward members sustain general and local leaders.

#### Participants

All are invited to attend. Participants from the stake are determined by the stake presidency.

#### Frequency

Once a year on a Sunday other than fast Sunday.

Ward conference is planned to meet local needs. It includes a sacrament meeting planned by the stake president. The stake president usually presides at the meeting, and a member of the bishopric usually conducts.

During this meeting, a member of the stake presidency or high council presents the names of general, stake, and ward leaders for a sustaining vote. He uses the Officers Sustained form, prepared by the ward clerk. The bishop and stake president usually speak in the meeting.

The ward holds regular priesthood and organization meetings as part of ward conference. Stake leaders may give instruction and assistance. They minister to ward leaders and members.

In connection with ward conference, the stake presidency meets with the bishopric. Together they review the progress of the work of salvation and exaltation in the ward. This meeting may be held on ward conference Sunday or at another time.

#### <sup>29.2.4</sup> Bishopric Meeting

#### Purpose

Counsel together and make decisions about matters concerning the ward. Give special attention to the bishopric's responsibility for Aaronic Priesthood holders and young women.

#### Participants

The bishopric, ward clerk, and executive secretary. The bishop may invite others to attend as needed, such as the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents.

#### Frequency

Usually weekly.

The bishop plans and conducts bishopric meetings. Matters for consideration could include:

- Coordinating the work of salvation and exaltation in the ward.
- Strengthening individuals and families in the ward—especially youth and children.
- Identifying members who could prepare to receive ordinances, including priesthood ordinations.
- Identifying members to call to ward positions.
- Identifying members who could be recommended to the stake president to serve as missionaries.
- Reviewing instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and this handbook.

Other items may include ward organizations and programs, the ward budget, reports on assignments, and plans for upcoming meetings and activities.

#### 29.2.5 Ward Council Meeting

#### Purpose

Help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation in the ward (see 1.2).

#### Participants

- The bishopric, ward clerk, and ward executive secretary.
- Presidents of the elders quorum, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School.

The bishop may invite others to attend, such as the ward mission leader, the ward temple and family history leader, and the full-time missionaries.

#### Frequency

Usually weekly (but may meet less often).

For more about the ward council and its meetings, study chapter 7.

#### 29.2.6 Ward Youth Council Meeting

#### Purpose

Strengthen the youth in the ward. Help them participate in the work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2).

#### Participants

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

The bishop may invite other youth leaders or advisers to attend as needed.

#### Frequency

Usually monthly.

The bishop may conduct ward youth council meetings. Or he may assign someone else to do so, such as one of his priests quorum assistants or the president of the oldest Young Women class. Ward youth council meetings provide opportunities for youth to lead. The bishopric or other leaders can help them prepare for these meetings during quorum or class presidency meetings.

Before each meeting, the bishop and the person conducting review the items to be discussed. These items could include the following:

- The work of salvation and exaltation.
- Needs of youth in the ward and ways to address them.
- Efforts to reach out to youth who are less active or new members.
- Activities, including opportunities to serve those in need. Most of the planning is done in quorum or class presidency meetings (see chapter 20).
- Ministering (see chapter 21).
- Orienting newly called quorum and class presidencies.

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study chapter 7.

#### 29.2.7

#### **Other Ward Meetings and Classes**

Meetings for priesthood quorums and their presidencies are described in chapters 8 and 10.

Meetings for Relief Society sisters and their leaders are described in chapter 9.

Meetings for young women and their leaders are described in chapter 11.

Meetings for Primary children and their leaders are described in chapter 12.

Sunday School classes are described in 13.3.

Teacher council meetings are described in 17.4.

Coordination meetings for the work of sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members are described in 23.5.7.

## Plan 1

Coordination meetings for temple and family history work are described in 25.2.7.

#### 29.2.8

#### Schedules for Sunday Meetings

Wards use one of the following two-hour schedules for Sunday meetings.

60 minutes	Sacrament meeting
10 minutes	Transition to classes and meetings
50 minutes	All Sundays: Primary, including nursery (see 12.2.1.2)
	First and third Sundays of the month: Sunday School (see 13.3)
	Second and fourth Sundays: priesthood quorum meet- ings (see 8.2.1.2 and 10.2.1.2), Relief Society meetings (see 9.2.1.2), and Young Women meetings (see 11.2.1.2)
	Fifth Sundays: meetings for youth and adults. The bishop- ric determines the topic and assigns teachers (usually members of the ward or stake). They also determine whether youth and adults, male and female, meet sepa- rately or together.

## Plan 2

50 minutes	All Sundays: Primary, including nursery (see 12.2.1.2)
	First and third Sundays of the month: Sunday School (see 13.3)
	Second and fourth Sundays: priesthood quorum meet- ings (see 8.2.1.2 and 10.2.1.2), Relief Society meetings (see 9.2.1.2), and Young Women meetings (see 11.2.1.2)
	Fifth Sundays: meetings for youth and adults. The bishop- ric determines the topic and assigns teachers (usually members of the ward or stake). They also determine whether youth and adults, male and female, meet sepa- rately or together.

10 minutes	Transition to sacrament meeting
60 minutes	Sacrament meeting

When two wards meet in the same building and one or both have very few children or youth, it may be desirable for the children or youth to attend Sunday classes together. The wards' Sunday meeting schedules could overlap as shown below.

#### Ward A

Transition	Ward B

Primary, youth Sunday School, Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings, and Young Women meetings (combined) Adult Sunday School, elders quorum meetings, and Relief Society meetings (separate)

Transition	
Sacrament meeting	

This plan may also be considered if the two wards use different languages but the children and youth speak the same language.

Using this plan requires the stake president's approval. If he approves, the bishop of each ward meets with organization leaders to seek their counsel about implementing it.

The two bishoprics meet together to determine which members from each ward should be called to serve in quorums and organizations. Each bishop remains the president of his priests quorum, but the two bishops may take turns presiding in Sunday quorum meetings. The bishops from both wards attend combined ward youth council meetings. After implementing the plan, leaders continue to meet regularly to coordinate their efforts.

## **29.3** Stake Meetings

#### <sup>29.3.1</sup> Stake Conference

#### Purpose

The primary purpose of stake conference is to strengthen members' faith in Jesus Christ.

#### Participants

All are invited to attend the general session. Other sessions are for specific participants, as described below.

#### Frequency

Twice each year.

Stake conferences are scheduled by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Usually the stake president presides at one conference each year and an assigned Area Seventy or General Authority presides at the other.

The presiding officer directs all planning for the conference. He approves participants and musical

selections in advance. For information about music in stake conference, see 19.6.1.

When an Area Seventy or General Authority presides, he may invite the stake president to suggest topics for instruction at the conference. When the stake president presides, he and his counselors select topics. The stake presidency may discuss possible topics with the stake council. In making these selections, the stake presidency considers topics that the First Presidency has emphasized recently.

As the stake president makes arrangements for stake conference, he may ask priesthood quorums and other organizations, individuals, and families to help. For example, they could be assigned to set up chairs, provide ushers, and clean the building.

Each stake conference normally includes the following meetings:

- A meeting of the Area Seventy or General Authority (if assigned) and the stake presidency. The stake clerk and executive secretary also attend.
- A stake priesthood leadership meeting (see 29.3.3). The presiding authority determines whether this meeting is held on Saturday or Sunday. A member of the stake presidency conducts.
- A Saturday evening session for all stake members 18 and older. Depending on local circumstances, this meeting may be held on Sunday if approved by the presiding authority. A member of the stake presidency conducts.
- A general session, held on Sunday, for all members and others who would like to attend. The stake president conducts and speaks in this meeting. More than one Sunday general session may be held if there is not room for everyone in one session. Children attend with their families, not in a separate meeting.

If necessary, conference sessions may be streamed to meetinghouses or other locations in the stake. Some members may need the conference to be streamed to their homes. For more about streaming meetings, see 29.7.

Speakers in the general session should not use visual aids or audiovisual materials (see 38.8.3).

If General Officers, the temple president and matron, the mission president and companion, or the stake patriarch attend, they should sit on the stand. The same is true for counselors in temple and mission presidencies (and their spouses) if they attend in the place of the temple or mission president.

In one stake conference each year, a member of the stake presidency presents general, area, and stake officers for a sustaining vote. He uses the Officers Sustained form, prepared by the stake clerk. This is usually done in the first stake conference of the year.

If stake officers are called or released between stake conferences, they are presented for a sustaining vote or an expression of thanks in the next stake conference. Or this can be done in each ward's sacrament meeting. See 30.3 and 30.5.

Brethren who have been recommended to be ordained elders or high priests are presented for a sustaining vote in a stake conference. If a brother needs to be ordained before the next stake conference, he may be sustained in his ward's sacrament meeting. His name would then be presented for a ratifying vote in a stake conference (see 38.2.5.1).

#### 29.3.2 Stake General Priesthood Meeting

#### Purpose

Instruct and inspire priesthood holders in their duties.

#### Participants

All priesthood holders in the stake.

#### Frequency

Once each year.

The stake presidency plans and conducts stake general priesthood meetings. They prayerfully select subjects and speakers.

#### 29.3.3 Stake Priesthood Leadership Meeting

#### Purpose

Teach priesthood leaders their duties, increase their abilities, and strengthen their faith.

#### Participants

- Stake presidency.
- High council.
- Stake and ward clerks (and assistant clerks as needed).
- · Stake and ward executive secretaries.
- Stake Young Men presidency (and secretary if called).
- Bishoprics.
- Elders quorum presidencies and secretaries.
- Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and specialists.

The stake presidency may invite others to attend, such as ward mission leaders and ward temple and family history leaders.

# Frequency

A priesthood leadership meeting is held as part of each stake conference. The stake presidency may schedule a third meeting each year.

The stake presidency plans and conducts stake priesthood leadership meetings. The structure of these meetings is flexible. All participants may meet together for the entire meeting. Or, after some general instruction, they may separate into smaller groups for specific instruction based on their callings and assignments.

The stake presidency and other stake leaders generally provide instruction. Ward leaders, including women leaders, can also be invited to give instruction on occasion.

# 29.3.4 Stake Leadership Meetings

#### Purpose

Teach ward organization leaders their duties, help them improve as leaders and teachers, and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ. In these meetings, leaders also counsel together and share ideas.

# Participants

All stake and ward Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies and secretaries. A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor attends and presides. Teachers, advisers, high councilors, and bishopric members assigned to these organizations may also be invited.

Normally, the presidency of each organization schedules its own meeting. However, the stake presidency may invite organizations to meet together.

# Frequency

Once each year. The stake presidency may authorize a second meeting if it does not create a burden for participants.

Stake organization presidencies plan and conduct stake leadership meetings. The structure of these meetings is flexible. All leaders may meet together for the entire meeting. Or, after some general instruction, they may separate into smaller groups for specific instruction based on their callings and assignments.

Organization leaders, stake presidency members, or other stake leaders generally provide instruction.

Ward organization leaders can also be invited to give instruction on occasion.

The stake Young Men presidency does not hold a stake leadership meeting. Instruction for those serving with Aaronic Priesthood quorums is given in stake priesthood leadership meetings (see 29.3.3).

# 29.3.5 Stake High Priests Quorum Meeting

# Purpose

Teach quorum members their duties and doctrine related to the priesthood.

# Participants

All members of the stake high priests quorum (see 5.2.1.1).

# Frequency

At least once each year.

The stake presidency plans and conducts stake high priests quorum meetings. Meetings for all ordained high priests in the stake are not held.

# 29.3.6 Stake Presidency Meeting

#### Purpose

Counsel together and decide about matters concerning the stake.

# Participants

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

# Frequency

Regularly (usually weekly).

The stake president plans and conducts stake presidency meetings. Matters for consideration could include:

- The work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.
- Strengthening individuals and families in the stake.
- The needs and strengths of wards, elders quorums, and other organizations in the stake.
- Bishops' recommendations of men to be ordained elders.
- Members to call to stake positions and some ward positions as outlined in the Chart of Callings (30.7).
- Bishops' recommendations of members to serve missions.
- Instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and this handbook.

Other items may include stake activities and programs, the stake budget, reports on assignments, and plans for upcoming meetings.

# <sup>29.3.7</sup> High Council Meeting

#### Purpose

Counsel together about the work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.

# Participants

- Stake presidency.
- High council.
- · Stake clerk and executive secretary.

The stake president may invite others to attend as needed.

# Frequency

Twice a month if feasible.

The stake presidency plans and conducts high council meetings. These meetings may include:

- Receiving instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and assignments.
- Counseling together about strengthening individuals and families in the stake. Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR) has tools and reports that can help leaders be aware of the progress of members.
- Discussing how to help accomplish the work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.
- Reporting on assignments.
- Counseling with the stake presidency and sustaining their decisions to ordain brethren as elders and high priests.
- Counseling with the stake presidency and sustaining their decisions to issue callings.
- Helping plan stake priesthood leadership meetings (see 29.3.3).
- Hearing reports from returning missionaries (see 24.8.3).

Sometimes a brief high council meeting could be immediately followed by a stake council meeting (see 29.3.8). This can help reduce the number of meetings for leaders to attend.

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study chapter 7.

For information about participants joining the meeting remotely, see 29.7.

# 29.3.8 Stake Council Meeting

#### Purpose

Counsel together about the work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.

#### Participants

- Stake presidency.
- High council.
- · Stake clerk and executive secretary.
- Stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidents (the stake Young Men and Sunday School presidents are present as members of the high council)

The stake president may invite others to attend as needed.

# Frequency

Monthly if feasible.

The stake president plans and conducts stake council meetings. In these meetings, council members may:

- Receive instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and on their assignments.
- Counsel together about strengthening individuals and families in the stake. LCR has tools and reports that can help leaders be aware of the progress of members.
- Discuss overall vision for the work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.
- Discuss temporal needs of stake members and how to help them be self-reliant. Identify resources available in the community and stake. Examples may include local schools and BYU– Pathway Worldwide. (See 22.12 and 22.13.)
- Develop and maintain a simple plan for the stake to respond to emergencies (see 22.9.1.3).
- Plan ways for stake members to give service in the community (see 22.9.1). Where available, JustServe suggests opportunities for community service.
- Report on stake organizations, activities, and programs.

Sometimes a stake council meeting could immediately follow a brief high council meeting (see 29.3.7). This can help reduce the number of meetings for leaders to attend.

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study chapter 7.

For information about participants joining the meeting remotely, see 29.7.

# 29.3.9 Stake Adult Leadership Committee Meeting

#### Purpose

Counsel together about how to support ward leaders in the work of salvation and exaltation. Plan ways to help implement stake leaders' vision for this work in the stake.

# Participants

- Stake presidency.
- Stake Relief Society presidency (and secretary if called).
- High councilors assigned to work with elders quorums.

The stake president may invite elders quorum presidents, ward Relief Society presidents, and others to attend the committee's meetings as needed.

# Frequency

As needed.

The stake adult leadership committee supports elders quorum and ward Relief Society presidencies in their work. Committee members give special emphasis to ward efforts to share the gospel, strengthen new and returning members, and participate in temple and family history work.

In addition, this committee coordinates stake efforts related to welfare and self-reliance, including JustServe (where available) and BYU–Pathway Worldwide (see 22.13).

The stake presidency plans and conducts meetings of the stake adult leadership committee. These meetings could be extensions of stake council meetings. For example, at the end of some stake council meetings, the adult leadership committee could meet to continue a discussion about specific matters.

#### 29.3.10 Stake Yout

# Stake Youth Leadership Committee Meeting

# Purpose

Counsel together about how to support ward leaders in involving the youth in the work of salvation and exaltation. Plan ways to help implement the stake council's vision for the youth in the stake.

# Participants

- A member of the stake presidency.
- The stake Young Men presidency (and secretary if called).
- The stake Young Women presidency (and secretary if called).
- The high councilors assigned to the Young Women and Primary organizations.

The stake presidency may invite the stake Sunday School president to serve on this committee. They also invite youth to participate on the committee as needed.

# Frequency

As needed.

The stake youth leadership committee has the following responsibilities:

• Plan service and activities for youth in the stake. These could include youth conferences, dances, devotionals, service projects, and multistake events. (For service ideas, see JustServe, where available.) Youth should lead out in planning and carrying out these activities. Stake activities should not be so frequent that they place a burden on wards. These activities should supplement ward activities, not compete with them. Ward leaders should be notified of stake activities well in advance.

- Plan ways to support For the Strength of Youth conferences.
- Coordinate stake efforts related to the Children and Youth program.

A member of the stake presidency plans and conducts meetings of the stake youth leadership committee. These meetings could be extensions of stake council meetings. For example, at the end of some stake council meetings, the youth leadership committee could meet to continue a discussion about specific matters.

# 29.3.11 Stake Bishops' Council Meeting

#### Purpose

Share experiences and address questions that pertain specifically to bishops.

#### Participants

All bishops and branch presidents in the stake are members of this council. The stake president may choose to attend some or all of the meetings. A stake clerk also attends to keep a record of assignments and decisions. When needed, the stake president may invite bishopric counselors to attend.

#### Frequency

Quarterly.

The stake president invites a bishop to lead the stake bishops' council. This bishop plans and conducts the council's meetings. Matters for discussion could include:

- Helping youth progress spiritually.
- Using fast offerings to care for those in need. Helping members build self-reliance (see chapter 22, especially 22.11). Sharing information about resources available in the community.
- Helping members repent and experience a change of heart (see chapter 32).
- Managing Church finances (see chapter 34).

On occasion, the stake president could share instruction from Church leaders, including from Area Seventies in coordinating councils (see 29.4).

This meeting does not take the place of the stake president's regular interviews with each bishop (see 5.2.1.2).

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study chapter 7.

#### 29.3.12 Other Stake Meetings

The stake single adult committee meeting is described in 14.1.2.

The stake young single adult committee meeting is described in 14.3.2.

#### 29.4

# Coordinating Council Meetings

#### Purpose

Help leaders encourage members to become true followers of Jesus Christ.

#### Participants

An Area Seventy designated by the Area Presidency chairs the coordinating council. Stake and mission presidents attend the meetings. Temple presidents

are invited and attend when practical. District presidents are not usually asked to attend.

Several stake Relief Society presidents and other stake officers may be invited to attend these meetings as necessary. Their perspective as stake officers may be needed. Their participation may also be helpful when discussions relate to their organizations. They may participate in part or all of the meeting. Area Seventies consider distance, family, and travel when making these invitations.

# Frequency

Quarterly, soon after each area council meeting. Additional meetings may be held when needed.

The Area Presidency establishes coordinating councils. A designated Area Seventy plans the meetings and facilitates 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. These matters may include activities (see 20.3.1 and 20.6.24), self-reliance and emergency response (see 22.3.2, 22.5.1, and 22.9.1.3), and finances and audits (see 34.9).

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study chapter 7.

# 29.5 Funerals and Other Services for the Deceased

When a Church member dies, the bishop may offer to hold services to help comfort the living and pay respectful tribute to the deceased. Services for people who die vary according to religion, culture, tradition, and local laws. The following instructions can help bishops plan gospel-centered services for the deceased while respecting these variations.

#### <sup>29.5.1</sup> General Principles

Death is an essential part of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation (see Alma 12:24–27). Because of Jesus Christ, all will be resurrected. An important purpose of Church services for the deceased is to testify of the plan of salvation, particularly the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection. These services should be dignified, spiritual experiences.

Church members should show respect for the practices of other religions at times of death. However, they should not join rituals or traditions that are contrary to the commandments or Church standards. Church leaders should not include rituals of other religions or groups in Church services for the deceased.

Members are counseled against practices or traditions that become a burden for the living. Such practices may include excessive travel, elaborate public announcements, payments to the family, prolonged feasts, and excessive anniversary celebrations.

Church members who take part in services for the deceased should not accept payment or contributions.

Church leaders and members obey local laws about what to do when someone dies.

# <sup>29.5.2</sup> Offering Assistance to the Family

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). When a member dies, the bishop visits the family to give comfort. He may ask his counselors to accompany him. He also notifies the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents.

The bishop offers assistance from ward members, including the elders quorum and Relief Society. For example, ward members could:

- Notify friends and relatives.
- Help prepare an obituary.
- Help plan the funeral or other service.
- Help make mortuary and cemetery arrangements, as applicable.
- Dress the body for burial (see 38.5.8).
- Prepare meals.

# 29.5.3 Viewings (Where Customary)

Sometimes a viewing of the body of the deceased is held at a Church meetinghouse before the funeral service. Leaders should open the meetinghouse for funeral directors at least one hour before the viewing is scheduled to begin.

After the viewing, a family prayer may be offered if the family desires. The casket should be closed before the funeral service.

# 29.5.4 Funeral Services (Where Customary)

If a funeral for a member is held in a Church building, the bishop conducts it. If it 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 cannot. For information about services held for nonmembers in a Church building, see 29.5.6.

A funeral conducted by the bishop, whether in a Church building or elsewhere, is a Church meeting and a religious service. It should be a spiritual occasion. The bishop urges participants to maintain a spirit of reverence and dignity.

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, ensuring that the funeral is simple and dignified, with music and brief addresses centered on the gospel. The comfort offered by Jesus Christ because of His Atonement and Resurrection should be emphasized. Family members are not required to speak or otherwise participate in the service.

Funerals are an opportunity to pay tribute to the deceased. However, such tributes should not dominate the service. A special family gathering, separate from the funeral service, is usually a better setting if the family wants more time to share tributes or memories.

Video presentations should not be part of a funeral service held in a chapel.

Funerals should start on time. Generally, they should not last more than 1.5 hours, as a courtesy to those who attend.

If a member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy in his area, or a General Authority attends the funeral, he presides. The person conducting consults him in advance and recognizes him during the service. The presiding officer should be invited to offer closing remarks if he desires.

Funeral services are not normally held on Sunday.

In some cases, the bishop can arrange with morticians to provide modest, respectable funeral and burial services at cost if expenses are paid from fast-offering funds.

For information about missionaries returning home to attend a funeral, see 24.6.2.7. For guidelines about streaming funerals, see 29.7.

# 29.5.5 Burial or Cremation

Where possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried or cremated in temple clothing. For information about temple burial clothing and dressing the dead, see 38.5.8.

If possible, a 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 perform the dedication. Instructions are provided in 18.16. If the family prefers, a graveside prayer can be offered instead.

For information about dedicating the place where a cremated member's ashes are kept, see 18.16.2. For other guidelines about cremation, see 38.7.2.

# 29.5.6 Services for Nonmembers

The bishop may offer the use of a Church meetinghouse for the funeral service of a nonmember. If the deceased person belonged to another church, the service may usually be held in the manner prescribed by that church. If the family desires, the service may be conducted by clergy from that church, provided it is dignified and appropriate. However, rituals of other churches or organizations may not be performed in a Church meetinghouse.

# 29.6 Prayers in Church Meetings

Prayers in Church meetings should be brief, simple, and directed by the Spirit. Any baptized Church member may offer an opening or closing prayer. Children who are not baptized may pray in Primary. Leaders should avoid always asking a husband and wife to pray in the same meeting.

Members should pray using words that express love and respect for Heavenly Father. In English, this includes using the pronouns *Thee, Thy, Thine,* and *Thou* when addressing Him.

# 29.7

# Streaming Meetings and Holding Virtual Meetings

When possible, Church members should strive to attend meetings in person. However, sometimes this is not possible. Streaming and holding virtual meetings make it possible to reach those who otherwise would not be able to attend. These people may include (but are not limited to) those who:

- Live in remote locations or have limited ability to travel.
- Have physical, mental, or emotional health challenges.
- Are immunocompromised or in a care facility or hospital.
- Are essential workers or otherwise are required to work on the Sabbath.
- Care for someone who is homebound and cannot be left alone.
- Need sign-language interpretation.
- Have allergies that put their health at risk in a meeting.

For the benefit of these members and others, the bishop may, as an exception, authorize a livestream of sacrament meetings and of funerals and weddings held in the meetinghouse. Streams allow others to see and hear a meeting remotely but not participate directly.

A livestream of a sacrament meeting should not include the administration of the sacrament. The stream should be paused during the sacrament and restarted afterward. Or the bishop may move the administration of the sacrament to the end of the meeting after the livestream has ended. The meeting would then close with a hymn and prayer.

The bishop may authorize a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder to administer the sacrament in person to those who cannot attend the meeting (see 18.9.1).

For some meetings, the bishop or stake president may authorize members who cannot attend in person to participate virtually. These meetings may include:

- Leadership meetings, such as presidency or council meetings.
- Quorum, Relief Society, and Young Women meetings.
- Sunday School classes.
- Primary classes and singing time.

Unlike streams, virtual meetings are interactive. Those who join remotely can contribute by asking questions, making comments, and participating in other ways.

The stake president may authorize a livestream of stake conference to other locations in the stake, including to members' homes when needed. He may also authorize stake leaders to join leadership meetings virtually when they cannot attend in person (for example, for the reasons listed earlier in this section).

Streams and virtual meetings are not meant for the convenience of those who could reasonably attend in person. For example, the bishop does not authorize streaming of sacrament meeting for ward members who are traveling and could attend another ward.

Ward and stake technology specialists can help leaders set up streams and virtual meetings (see 33.10). These individuals can also help members access these meetings.

Streams and virtual meetings should not distract from the Spirit. Generally, only one device should be used to capture the meeting. Both the device and the person using it should be inconspicuous.

Stream recordings of ward and stake meetings should be deleted within one day after the meeting.

# <sup>30.</sup> 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.

# <sup>30.1.4</sup> 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.

In unusual circumstances, ward members may need to begin service in a calling before they can be presented for a sustaining vote. When this occurs, a member of the bishopric presents them for a ratifying vote as soon as reasonable. He adapts the process outlined above for presenting a person for a sustaining vote. This includes providing an opportunity for ward members to give an opposing vote.

As an exception, new stake officers may need to begin their service before the next stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting in which they would normally be sustained. When this occurs, 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.

In unusual circumstances, stake members may need to begin service in a calling before they can be presented for a sustaining vote in a general stake meeting or in sacrament meetings. When this occurs, a member of the stake presidency or high council presents them for a ratifying vote as soon as reasonable. This includes providing an opportunity for members to give an opposing vote.

# 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.

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By <sup>1</sup>	Called and Set Apart By
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 writ- ten 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

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By <sup>1</sup>	Called and Set Apart By		
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 ap- proval from the Quo- rum of the Twelve		
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 ser- vice 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 presi- dencies, secretaries, and other organiza- tion 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 facil- ities representative (high councilor)	Assigned by the stake	Assigned by the stake presidency; not called, sustained, or set apart.				
Stake activities committee chairman (high councilor)	Assigned by the stake	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 Callings (cont	inued)			
Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By <sup>1</sup>	Called and Set Apart By
Stake music chair- man	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 commit- tee (counselor in the stake presidency)	Stake presidency and high council	Not sustained	Stake president or an assigned counselor <sup>2</sup>
Stake welfare spe- cialists (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 seminary and institute teachers and supervisors	Stake presidency (after counseling with the bishop and the seminary and insti- tute representative)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake communica- tion director, assis- tant directors, and specialists	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor

1 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).

2 The stake president determines whether members who are called to serve in these positions should be set apart.

# 30.7.2 Melchizedek Priesthood Callings

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Presidency of the stake high priests quorum (stake pres- idency)	See 30.7.1.			
Elders quorum pres- ident	Stake presidency (in consultation with the bishop)	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president

Melchizedek Priesthood Callings (continued)					
Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By	
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 pres- ident)	Bishop	Quorum members	Quorum president or an assigned coun- selor	
Ministering brothers		ng brother is a priesthoo thren are <i>assigned</i> as min bishop's guidance.			

# <sup>30.7.3</sup> 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 quo- rum president)	Bishopric	Quorum members	Bishop
Teachers and deacons quorum presidents	Bishopric	Bishopric	Quorum members	Called by the bishop or an assigned coun- selor; set apart by the bishop
Counselors in the teachers and dea- cons quorum presi- dencies and quorum secretaries	Quorum presidents	Bishopric	Quorum members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor
Priests, teachers, and deacons quorum ad- visers and specialists	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor

Aaronic Priesthood Callings (continued)					
Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By	
Ministering brothers	Accordingly, these brea	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 bishop's guidance.			

# <sup>30.7.4</sup> 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 quo- rum president)	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Branch members	Stake president
Other Aaronic Priest- hood callings	See 30.7.3, substitutir	g branch president for bis	hop and branch for ward	<i>.</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.

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
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 Presi- dency
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

Ward Callings (contin	1			
Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
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 pres- idency may fill this calling)	Bishopric (in consul- tation with the elders quorum president)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor
Ward missionaries	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor
Ward temple and family history leader (a member of the elders quorum presidency may fill this role)	Bishopric (in consul- tation with the elders quorum president)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor
Ward organization presidents (Relief So- ciety, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop
Counselors in ward organizations	Organization presi- dent	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor
Secretaries in ward organizations (except Relief Society)	Organization presi- dent	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor
Advisers, teachers, specialists, music directors, and other callings in ward organizations (except Relief Society)	Organization presi- dency	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor

Ward Callings (continued)					
Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By	
Secretaries in the ward Relief Society presidency; teachers and other callings in the ward Relief Society	Relief Society presi- dency	Bishopric	Relief Society mem- bers (presented in a Relief Society meet- ing by the bishop or an assigned coun- selor)	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Ministering sisters	the bishop's guidance. may assign young won	After consulting with nen (beginning in Jar	ering sisters by the Relief So h parents and leaders, the F nuary of the year they turn 1 lled, sustained, or set apart.	Relief Society presidenc 4) as companions to	
Temple preparation course teacher(s)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Young Women class presidents	Bishopric (in consul- tation with the Young Women presidency)	Bishopric	Class members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Counselors in Young Women class pres- idencies and class secretaries	Class president	Bishopric	Class members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Ward music chair- man	Ward music adviser (member of the bishopric)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Ward music director, ward organist or pianist, ward choir director and accom- panist, and ward choir president	Ward music chair- man	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Ward resource cen- ter specialist	Sunday School pres- ident	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Assistant resource center specialists	Sunday School pres- ident	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Ward temple and family history consultant(s)	Bishopric (in consul- tation with the elders quorum president)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	
Ward young single adult leader(s)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor	

Ward Callings (continued)				
Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Ward magazine rep- resentative	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor <sup>1</sup>
Ward welfare spe- cialists (including ward employment specialist)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an as- signed counselor <sup>1</sup>

1 The bishop determines whether members who are called to serve in these positions should be set apart.

# <sup>30.7.6</sup> Branch Callings in Stakes

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Branch president	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Branch members	Stake president
Other branch callings	See 30.7.5, substituting branch president for bishop and branch for ward.			

# <sup>30.7.7</sup> Mission Callings

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Mission president	General Authority or Area Seventy	First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve	Not sustained	Member of the First Presidency or Quo- rum of the Twelve
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 presi- dencies	feels that branch orga	ncies are not recommen nization leaders need tr n individuals to provide i	aining from more-expe	l. If the mission president rienced organization

# <sup>30.7.8</sup> District Callings

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
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 coun- selor
District councilors and district clerk, assistant clerks, exec- utive secretary, and organization leaders	See 30.7.1, substitutin	g district president for sto	ake president and district fo	or stake.

# <sup>30.7.9</sup> Elders Quorum Callings in Branches in Missions

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Elders quorum pres- ident	Mission presidency or district presidency	Mission presidency or, when autho- rized by the mission president, the district presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president
Counselors in the elders quorum pres- idency	Quorum president (in consultation with the branch presi- dent)	Mission presidency or, when autho- rized 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 presi- dent)	Branch president and quorum presi- dency	Quorum members	Quorum president or an assigned coun- selor

Elders Quorum Callings in Branches in Missions (continued)						
Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By		
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

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Priests quorum president (branch president, who acts as the priests quo- rum president)	Mission presidency or district presidency	Mission presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president
Other Aaronic Priest- hood callings	See 30.7.3, substitutin	g branch president for bis	shop and branch for wa	ırd.

# 30.7.11 Branch Callings in Missions

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Branch president	Mission presidency or district presidency	Mission presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president
Counselors in the branch presidency	Branch president	Mission presidency or, when autho- rized 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 counsel- ors

Branch Callings in Missions (continued)					
Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By	
Branch clerk, assis- tant clerk, and execu- tive secretary	Branch presidency	Mission presidency or, when autho- rized 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, substitutir	g branch president for bis	hop and branch for wa	ırd.	

# <sup>30.7.12</sup> Military Service Member Group Callings

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
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 ser- vice 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>

1 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 38.9.5.

# 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.

# <sup>31.1.2</sup> 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 26.3.1).
- For recommendation of full-time missionaries (see 24.4.2).
- For release of full-time missionaries after they have returned home (see 24.8.2).
- 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, the stake Relief Society president, 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 5.6.4).

# 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 26.3.1).
- 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 22.13).

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:

- For temple recommends for those who are receiving their own endowment or are being married or sealed in a temple (see 26.3.1).
- For limited-use recommends for new converts (see 26.4.2).
- For recommendation of missionary candidates (see 24.4.2).
- 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 22.2.2).
- 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).

The bishop also meets regularly with the elders quorum president and the Relief Society president both separately and together (see 8.3.1 and 9.3.1).

#### 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 sins in these interviews. If a counselor encounters serious matters, such as sins that require confession, he refers the member to the bishop without delay.

- For renewal of temple recommends and limiteduse recommends (see 26.3, 26.4, and 26.5).
- 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 38.9.2).

• For an endorsement to participate in the Perpetual Education Fund loan program, where the program is approved (see 22.13).

#### 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 24.4.2). Young men are encouraged to serve, and young women, when they desire, may be recommended to serve (see 24.0). 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. 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 24.3.3). The bishop discusses opportunities for service missions with young men and young women, as applicable (see 24.2.2).

*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 38.8.26).

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 and Therapy

In addition to the inspired help of bishops and others to whom he delegates, members may benefit from appropriate professional counseling where it is available. This counseling or therapy can help members understand and respond to life's challenges in healthy ways.

Meeting with a professional counselor to gain insight and skills that contribute to emotional selfreliance is not a sign of weakness. Rather, it can be a sign of humility and strength.

Members should carefully select reputable professional counselors who have applicable licensing. Counselors should respect the agency, values, and beliefs of those seeking help. Incorporating these values is ethically appropriate in professional counseling.

The Church opposes any therapy, including conversion or reparative therapy for sexual orientation or gender identity, that subjects a person to abusive practices. (See "Same-Sex Attraction" and "Transgender Individuals.")

In the United States and Canada, bishops and stake presidents may contact Family Services to identify resources to provide professional counseling in harmony with gospel principles. Contact information is shown below:

1-801-240-1711 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-1711 FamilyServices.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

In other areas, leaders may contact Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager in the area office for consultation.

If members are unable to pay for professional counseling on their own or through insurance, bishops have the option of assisting with payments through fast offerings. See 22.4 for principles for providing Church assistance.

# <sup>31.2.7</sup> 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.

# 31.4Protecting againstMisunderstandings

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.

For information about counseling victims of rape or other sexual assault, see 38.6.18.2.



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

# <sup>32.2.1</sup> 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).

# <sup>32.2.2</sup> 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 His children. Because He wants them to be happy and receive blessings, He also cares immensely about their obedience and repentance.

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 and 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, who should 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.

Setting	Some Considerations (see also 32.7)	
Stake Membership Council	For members who have received the temple endowment.	
	• 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.	

# **Settings for Helping a Person Repent**

Setting	Some Considerations (see also 32.7)	
Ward Membership Council	For any member.	
	Is required for the serious sins addressed in 32.6.1.	
	• May be necessary for the serious sins and actions addressed in 32.6.2 and 32.6.3.	
	• 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.	
Personal Counseling (see 32.8)	For any member.	
	May include informal Church membership restrictions.	
	• May be insufficient for serious sins or actions for which a membership council would be helpful in the repentance process (see 32.6.2 and 32.6.3).	
	• Is insufficient for serious sins that require a membership council (see 32.6.1).	
	• 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.	

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.

## <sup>32.6.2</sup> 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 38.6.18). A membership council may be necessary for a person who has sexually assaulted or abused someone. See 38.6.18.3 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, perjury, and fraud. See 38.8.2 for affinity fraud. 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.

Type of Sin	Membership Council Is Required (see 32.6.1)	Membership Council May Be Necessary (see 32.6.2)
Violent Acts and Abuse	• Murder	Attempted murder
	<ul> <li>Rape</li> <li>Sexual assault conviction</li> <li>Child or youth abuse</li> <li>Violent predatory behavior</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Sexual abuse, including assault and harassment (see 38.6.18 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> <li>Incest</li> <li>Child pornography</li> <li>Plural marriage</li> <li>Sexual predatory behavior</li> </ul>	<ul> <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>
Fraudulent Acts	Financial predatory behavior, such as fraud and similar activities	<ul> <li>Robbery, burglary, theft, or embezzlement</li> <li>Perjury</li> </ul>
Violations of Trust	Serious sin while holding a promi- nent Church position	<ul> <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	Most felony convictions	• Abortion
		• Pattern of serious sins
		<ul> <li>Deliberate abandonment of family responsibilities, including nonpay- ment of child support and alimony</li> </ul>
		• Sale of illegal drugs
		Other serious criminal acts

#### 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 38.6.23.

#### 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.

## <sup>32.7.1</sup> 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.

# <sup>32.7.3</sup> 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.

# <sup>32.7.5</sup> 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).

# <sup>32.7.7</sup> 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.

# <sup>32.7.8</sup> 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.

## <sup>32.8.1</sup> 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.

# 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
- 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.

# 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.

	Participants in Membership Councils
Ward Membership Council	• The person for whom the council is being held
	Bishop and his counselors
	• Ward clerk
	• Elders quorum or Relief Society president (optional; see 32.10.1)
Stake Membership Council	• The person for whom the council is being held
	Stake president and his counselors
	• Stake clerk
	<ul> <li>High councilors (in limited situations as explained in 32.9.2)</li> </ul>
	Bishop of the person for whom the council is being held (optional; see 32.9.3)
	• Elders quorum or Relief Society president (optional; see 32.10.1)

#### 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.

# <sup>32.9.4</sup> 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 with-draw 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 geographic 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 second 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)	• None
Personal Counseling with the Bishop or Stake President (see 32.11.2)	May have some membership privileges informally restricted.
	Restrictions are usually less than one year; in unusual circumstances, they may be longer.
	Informal restrictions are removed after genuine repentance.
	Action is not recorded on the membership record.
Formal Membership Restrictions (see 32.11.3)	Membership privileges are formally restricted.
	<ul> <li>Restrictions are usually at least one year and may be longer.</li> </ul>
	Action is recorded on the membership record.
	Formal restrictions are removed after genuine repen- tance, a membership council, and, if necessary, First Presidency approval.
	• The membership record indicator is removed if restrictions are removed after a membership council (except required annotations; see 32.14.5).
Withdrawal of Membership (see 32.11.4)	All ordinances are revoked.
	All membership privileges are withdrawn, usually for at least one year.
	<ul> <li>A person is eligible for readmission by baptism and confirmation only after genuine repentance, a mem- bership council, and, if necessary, First Presidency approval.</li> </ul>
	• 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 readmis- sion (see 32.17.2).
	• For a previously endowed person, the "Restoration of Blessings Required" indicator is removed from the membership record only after the ordinance is per- formed (required annotations remain; see 32.14.5).

#### 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.

# <sup>32.12.1</sup> 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).

## <sup>32.14.3</sup> 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
  - 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 biological sex at birth (see 38.6.23)
  - 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 38.8.24.

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. Individuals under membership restrictions may benefit from participating in indexing (see 25.4.3).

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 might include someone who has completed legal requirements and has shown genuine repentance but is on lifelong probation or has a substantial fine.

- 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 biological sex at birth (see 38.6.23)
  - 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).

## <sup>32.16.2</sup> 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.



	Not Previously Endowed	Previously Endowed
Previous Priesthood Holders	• Immediately after baptism and confirmation, may have the priest- hood 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.	• May not be ordained to any priesthood office. When their priesthood and temple bless-ings are restored, their previous priesthood office will be restored as outlined in 32.17.2. They may not perform ordinances until that time.
	<ul> <li>May be issued a limited-use temple recommend.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>May participate in any Church activity that is permissible for an unendowed member who does not hold the priesthood.</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>May not wear the temple garment or receive any kind of temple rec- ommend until their blessings are restored.</li> </ul>
Other Members	<ul> <li>May participate in Church activity as a new convert would.</li> <li>May be issued a limited-use temple recommend.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>May participate in any Church activity that is permissible for an unendowed member who does not hold the priesthood.</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>May not wear the temple garment or receive any kind of temple rec- ommend 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.

# <sup>33.</sup> 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

# <sup>33.3.1</sup> 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 38.8.22).

# 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).

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.

# 33.4 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 38.8.22).

#### 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.

#### <sup>33.4.3</sup> 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 guidance 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

#### **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 bishop's guidance. 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 permission from the stake president, cancels the membership record.

Records are not canceled for those who have not been baptized because of an intellectual disability unless requested by the person or a legal guardian, including a parent.

#### 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 29.2.1.1.

#### 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 24.6.2.8.

#### 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 or a clerk indicates "Not Accountable" in the baptism section of the person's membership record in Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR) (see 38.2.3.5). Where LCR is not available, the clerk sends the update to Church headquarters or the area office. The membership record is not canceled.

#### 33.6.11

## Records of Members Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Members who use sign language, and their immediate family members or legal guardians, may choose to have their Church membership records in any of the following places:

- Their local ward
- A ward for the deaf and hard of hearing who live within that ward's boundaries
- A ward that hosts a group for the deaf and hard of hearing who live within a geographic area specified by the stake president or Area President

To best meet the needs of these members and their families, an individual or family's records may be in

one unit, and they may be "out-of-unit" members in another. For example, an individual, a family, or part of a family may have their records in a unit for the deaf and hard of hearing, and they may be out-of-unit members in their local unit. For more information, see 33.6.25.

Members who are deaf or hard of hearing may attend virtually a unit or group organized for those who are deaf or hard of hearing outside of the members' geographic area. They may do so even if their records are not in that unit. Before attending virtually, they should obtain permission from the bishop of the unit they desire to attend.

#### 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.

Children with divorced parents often attend Church meetings in both parents' wards. While only one unit may keep and update a child's official membership record, an out-of-unit member record may be created in the other ward he or she attends. This record is created using Leader and Clerk Resources. It allows the child's name and contact information to be included on ward lists and class rolls.

Children with an out-of-unit member record may receive a calling in that unit. This can help ensure that they are included and can fully participate wherever they attend.

#### 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 fellowshipping. Full-time missionaries may also be asked to visit and fellowship these members.

#### 33.6.20 Recording and Correcting Ordinance Information

See chapter 18.

#### <sup>33.6.21</sup> 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.

#### 33.6.25 Out-of-Unit Member Records

A member's official membership record may be kept in only one ward at a time. Only the bishop of this ward may oversee updating the membership record, performing ordinances, and conducting worthiness interviews for the member.

Some circumstances require that a member's name and contact information be recorded in a secondary ward. In these cases, the clerk of the secondary ward creates an out-of-unit member record using Leader and Clerk Resources.

Members with an out-of-unit member record may receive a calling in that ward. They are also included on ward directories and rolls. They will have access to the ward directory of members through the Member Tools app. Circumstances in which an out-of-unit member record might be used include:

- Children with divorced parents who attend Church meetings in both parents' wards.
- Members who serve in callings outside their home ward, such as mission presidents, temple presidents, bishops of young single adult wards, and senior missionaries.
- Members who attend a ward for the deaf or hard of hearing.
- Members living away from their home ward temporarily.

### **33.7** Historical Records

#### <sup>33.7.1</sup> 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. 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.

#### 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

### 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 38.8.14. 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 and other digital devices, leaders and clerks should only use their personal username and password to access Church record-keeping systems. Passwords should be changed periodically. They should never be shared with others or stored where others may see them. If members use Church 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.

#### 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).

### **33.10** Stake and Ward Technology Specialists

The stake presidency calls one or more stake members to serve as stake technology specialists. The bishopric may call one or more ward members to serve as ward technology specialists. Men, women, and youth may fill these callings.

Stake technology specialists serve under the direction of the stake clerk. Ward technology specialists serve under the direction of the ward executive secretary. Their responsibilities can include the following:

- Teach members how to access and use Church media, apps, and other technology tools, including FamilySearch.
- Support leaders and teachers who use technology tools to fulfill their callings.
- Manage streaming of meetings and classes for those who cannot attend (see 29.7).

In addition, the stake technology specialist has the following responsibilities for managing Church computers in the stake, including those in family history centers:

• Take direction from the stake presidency about placing, sharing, reassigning, and scheduling all stake computers.

- Maintain a current inventory of all computer hardware in the stake, with serial numbers, models, capacities, and physical locations.
- Ensure 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).
- Be familiar with the general policies for Church computers in 38.8.10. 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, internet connections, repairs, disposal of computers, stolen or damaged computers, security, and use by members.

As needed, stake technology specialists coordinate the work of ward technology specialists and provide training.

## 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.

### <sup>34.3</sup> 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. A fast day typically includes praying, going without food and drink for a 24-hour period (if physically able), and giving a generous fast offering.

A fast offering is a donation to help those in need. When members fast, they are invited to give an offering that is at least equal to the value of the meals not eaten. Members are encouraged to be generous and give more than the value of these meals if they can.

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.

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 22.5.2.

#### <sup>34.4.3</sup> 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 24.3.4. 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 Department (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 24.3.4.

#### <sup>34.4.4</sup> 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.

#### 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 22.13.

#### 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

Online donations may be made at 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.

#### <sup>34.6.7</sup> 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. This committee consists of one of his counselors as chairman and two other stake members who understand or can be trained in financial matters. These brothers or sisters should hold current temple recommends.

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.

A man and a woman should not be alone together while performing audits.

#### 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 brothers and sisters should 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. However, 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 and 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. 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.

#### <sup>34.10.1</sup> 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 Churchrelated 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.

#### <sup>34.10.2</sup> 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.

### <sup>35.</sup> 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 renew 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.

#### <sup>35.2.3</sup> 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 Churchsponsored 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.

# 35.4Policies on Using ChurchBuildings 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, nonprofit 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 22.9.1.3.

#### 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

Because chapels are sacred, taking photographs or making video recordings in chapels is not permitted. For information about streaming meetings and other events that are held in the chapel, see 29.7.

#### 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.

### <sup>36.1</sup> Creating or Changing Stakes and Districts

propose creating a new stake. He first ensures that it will meet the minimum requirements shown in the following table.

Stakes are created from districts or by dividing existing stakes. A stake or mission president may

### **Minimum Requirements to Create a Stake**

	U.S. and Canada	All other countries
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 mini- mum of 20.	1 for every 20 members (active and less active). There must be a mini- mum 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 Priest- hood 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).

#### <sup>36.4.1</sup> 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 mini- mum 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 29.2.8).

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 active 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 mini- mum 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. Generally, the bishop or branch president lives within the boundaries of the young single adult unit. Exceptions may be made for young single adult units that serve universities and colleges.
- The bishop's counselors may be members of the unit. Or they may be other single or married men who live within the unit boundaries. They must be high priests. If a man called as a counselor in a bishopric is not a high priest, the stake president ensures that he is ordained a high priest before setting him apart.

- A branch president and his counselors may be high priests or elders.
- 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	• 1,500 members (active and less active)	
	• 5 wards	
Young single adult ward in a young single adult stake	• 125 members (active)	
	<ul> <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	• 50 members (active)	
	4 active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood hold- ers who are capable of serving in leadership positions	
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	<ul> <li>37.3.1</li> <li>Membership in a Young Single Adult Stake and Its Wards or Branches</li> <li>Members must be young single adults (ages 18–30) who live within the boundaries of the young single adult ward or branch.</li> </ul>	
<ul><li>stake only when:</li><li>Its boundaries are adjacent to the young single adult stake.</li></ul>	• All active and less-active young single adults within the stake boundaries who are not living	
• The presidents of both stakes recommend the transfer.	at home with their parents are members of the young single adult stake unless they choose to attend their conventional unit.	
See 36.4.1 and 36.4.2 for stake and ward naming guidelines.	• 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.	

- 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 president, stake patriarch, bishops, and branch presidents should be married men of mature judgment and experience. First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop. They may be called from outside 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.
- The stake president's counselors, high councilors, bishopric counselors, and branch presidency counselors may be single or married men. Stake Relief Society presidents and counselors may be single or married women. Stake Sunday School

presidents and counselors may be single or married men. These leaders may be members of the stake. Or they may be called from outside the boundaries of the stake as determined by the Area Presidency.

- A bishop's counselors must be high priests. If a man called as a counselor in a bishopric is not a high priest, the stake president ensures that he is ordained a high priest before setting him apart. A branch president and his counselors may be high priests or elders.
- 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	• 1,500 members (active and less active)
	• 5 wards
Married student ward	• 125 members (active and less active)
	<ul> <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.

#### <sup>37.4.1</sup> 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.

#### <sup>37.4.2</sup> 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 Priest-	1 for every 20 members (active and less active). There
hood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	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.

#### 37.5.2

#### Leadership in a Single Adult Ward

they marry or reach the age of 46.

• The bishop should be a married high priest of mature judgment and experience. First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop.

• Members do not attend a single adult ward when

• A bishop's counselors may be members of the unit. Or they may be other single or married men who live within the unit boundaries. They must be high priests. If a man called as a counselor in a bishopric is not a high priest, the stake president ensures that he is ordained a high priest before setting him apart.

• 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 38.9.4).

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 38.9.4.



## <sup>38.</sup> Church Policies and Guidelines

### 38.1 Church Participation

Our Father in Heaven loves 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.

#### <sup>38.1.1</sup> 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).

#### <sup>38.1.5</sup> 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

Policies that pertain to temple ordinances are outlined in chapters 27 and 28 of this handbook.

#### <sup>38.2.1</sup> 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 or Interpreting Ordinances and Blessings

If necessary, a presiding officer may ask a priesthood holder to orally translate or interpret an ordinance or blessing into a language that the recipient understands, including sign language. If a priesthood holder is not available, a presiding officer may ask a capable man or woman to do the oral translation into a language that the recipient understands, including sign language.

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 38.4.2.4.

#### 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, the individual, his or her parents (where applicable), and leaders 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 bishop may counsel with the stake president if he has questions about specific persons. The stake president may contact the Office of the First Presidency if necessary.

Individuals whose disabilities make them not accountable are "saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven" (Doctrine and Covenants 137:10). For this reason, ordinances are not needed or performed for them. The only exception is sealing to parents for those not born in the covenant. For information about performing ordinances for those with intellectual disabilities, see the following:

- For baptism and confirmation (38.2.3.5)
- For ordination to a priesthood office (38.2.5.4)
- For a patriarchal blessing (38.2.12.1)
- For the temple endowment and sealing (27.2.1.3 and 27.3.1.2)

#### 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, or deafness or are hard of hearing, may perform and receive ordinances and blessings. Leaders arrange for these persons to participate to the extent possible. 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 hard of hearing 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.

#### <sup>38.2.2</sup> 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 convert baptism candidates in 18.7.1.2). 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 bishopric's guidance, 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 18.7.1.2). 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 biological sex at birth (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.

- 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 with Intellectual Disabilities

A person age 8 or older who has an intellectual disability, his or her parents (where applicable), and the bishop counsel together to determine whether the person should be baptized and confirmed. They counsel about:

- Whether the person can understand and keep the covenants of baptism.
- Whether the person is accountable.

If the person can reasonably be considered accountable, he or she may be baptized and confirmed. Those who are not accountable do not need to be baptized, regardless of age (see Doctrine and Covenants 29:46–50).

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:

- 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 to address individual situations sensitively (see 38.6.23).

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 biological sex at birth ("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.

#### <sup>38.2.4</sup> The Sacrament

See 18.9.

#### <sup>38.2.5</sup> 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. The process for sustaining, as outlined earlier in this section, is adapted for a ratifying vote. This includes providing an opportunity for stake members to give an opposing vote. 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 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.* A male Church member who has an intellectual disability, his parents (where applicable), and the bishop counsel together about whether he should receive the priesthood. They counsel about:

- Whether he is accountable.
- Whether he has a basic understanding of the priesthood and his responsibilities.

Priesthood holders who have such disabilities should be assisted so they can fulfill priesthood duties 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 biological sex at birth ("sex reassignment"), or who has socially transitioned to the opposite gender of his or her biological sex at birth, may not receive or exercise the priesthood. Stake presidents should counsel with the Area Presidency to address individual situations sensitively (see 38.6.23). A male Church member who experiences gender incongruence, but who does not pursue medical, surgical, or social transition to the opposite gender of his biological sex at birth 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.

#### <sup>38.2.12</sup> Patriarchal Blessings

Information about patriarchal blessings is provided in the following paragraphs and in these additional sources:

- Sections 5.6 and 18.17 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.

A member who has an intellectual disability, his or her parents (where applicable), and the bishop counsel together about whether he or she should receive a patriarchal blessing. They counsel about whether the member has a basic ability to understand the blessing.

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 mission-ary'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.

#### 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. 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.

#### <sup>38.2.13</sup> Chart of Ordinations

#### 38.2.13.1 Chart of Ordinations

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Interviewed and Ordained By
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 writ- ten 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 Presi- dency
Priest	Bishop	Bishopric	Ward members in sacrament meeting	Interviewed by the bishop; ordained under the direction of the bishop

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Interviewed and Ordained By
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. See 38.3.1 for information about which Church leaders may perform civil marriages.

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.

#### <sup>38.3.1</sup> 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.

#### <sup>38.3.2</sup> 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.

#### <sup>38.3.3</sup> 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.

#### <sup>38.3.5</sup> 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 Latterday 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 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.

#### 38.4.1 Sealing of a Man and Woman

#### 38.4.1.1 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.

#### 38.4.1.2

#### 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 38.4.1.4).

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 38.4.1.4). 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.

#### 38.4.1.3

## 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 38.4.1.2 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).

#### 38.4.1.4

#### 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 38.4.1.2).

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.

#### 38.4.1.5

#### 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.

#### 38.4.1.6 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.

#### 38.4.1.7 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.

#### 38.4.1.8 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 38.4.2.8.

#### 38.4.2 Sealing Children to Parents

#### 38.4.2.1 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.

#### 38.4.2.2 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.

#### 38.4.2.3

## **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.

#### 38.4.2.4 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.

#### 38.4.2.5

#### 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.

#### 38.4.2.6

#### 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.

#### 38.4.2.7

## 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.

#### 38.4.2.8 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.

### 38.5 Temple Clothing and Garments

#### 38.5.1 Temple Clothing

During the endowment and sealing ordinances in the temple, Church members wear white clothing. Women wear the following white clothing: a longsleeve or three-quarter-sleeve dress (or a skirt and long-sleeve or three-quarter-sleeve blouse), socks or hosiery, and shoes or slippers.

Men wear the following white clothing: a longsleeve shirt, necktie or bow tie, pants, socks, and shoes or slippers.

During the endowment and sealing ordinances, members put on additional ceremonial clothing over their white clothing.

#### <sup>38.5.2</sup> Obtaining Temple Clothing and Garments

Ward and stake leaders encourage endowed members to obtain their own temple clothing. Temple clothing and garments may be purchased from a Church Distribution store or at store .ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Stake and ward clerks may help members order the clothing.

Some temples have clothing available for rent. If a temple does not have rental clothing, members need to bring temple clothing with them. See temples .ChurchofJesusChrist.org to learn whether a particular temple has rental clothing available.

Temples maintain a limited supply of temple clothing that full-time missionaries may use. There is no rental charge while they are in missionary training centers and when they are authorized to participate in temple ordinances while serving in the mission field. If needed, this clothing may be used by missionaries receiving their own endowment.

For information about garment fabrics and styles, see store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

#### 38.5.3

#### Garments and Temple Clothing for Members Who Have Disabilities or Allergies

Special garments may be purchased for members who are bedridden, have severe physical disabilities, or have allergies to certain fabrics or garments (see "Garments and Sacred Clothing," store. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Shorter temple robes are available for members who are in wheelchairs or who have other needs (see store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### <sup>38.5.4</sup> Making Temple Aprons

Members may make their own temple aprons if they use one of the approved apron kits. These kits are available from a Church Distribution store or from store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Members should not make other ceremonial temple clothing or temple garments.

#### <sup>38.5.5</sup> Wearing and Caring for the Garment

Members who receive the endowment make a covenant to wear the temple garment throughout their lives.

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.

The garment should be worn beneath the outer clothing. It is a matter of personal preference whether other undergarments are worn over or under 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.

#### 38.5.6 Wearing the Garment in the Military

See 38.9.8.

#### 38.5.7

### Disposing of Garments and Ceremonial Temple 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. The remaining cloth can be discarded. To dispose of worn-out ceremonial temple clothing, members should cut it up so the original use cannot be recognized. The cloth should then be discarded.

Members may give garments and temple clothing that are in good condition to other endowed members. Priesthood and Relief Society leaders can identify those who might need such clothing. Members should not give garments or ceremonial temple clothing to thrift stores, bishops' storehouses, temples, or charities.

#### <sup>38.5.8</sup> Temple Burial Clothing

If possible, deceased members who are endowed should be buried or cremated 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.

Only members who were endowed in life may be buried or cremated in temple clothing. An endowed person who stopped wearing the garment before his or her death may be buried or cremated in temple clothing if the family requests.

A person whose blessings have not been restored after withdrawal or resignation of Church membership may not be buried or cremated in temple clothing.

A person who was endowed in life and who died by suicide may be buried or cremated in temple clothing.

Temple clothing that is used for burial or cremation need not be new, but it should be in good condition and clean. The member's own temple clothing may be used.

A member who is to be buried or cremated 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 may ask the elders quorum president to invite 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 may ask 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-sleeve shirt, necktie or bow tie, pants, socks, and shoes or slippers. A woman's body is dressed in temple garments and the following white clothing: a long-sleeve or threequarter-sleeve dress (or a skirt and long-sleeve or three-quarter-sleeve blouse), socks or hosiery, and shoes or slippers.

Ceremonial temple 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 or container. 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 veiling of a woman's face before burial or cremation is optional, as 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 is properly placed on the body.

Some countries require that deceased persons be dressed in biodegradable clothing when they are buried. Biodegradable temple clothing is available at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

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 mediumsized 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.

### 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 members become aware of instances of abuse, they report it to civil authorities and 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). 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. The stake president should seek guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office. He is also encouraged to counsel with the Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager at the area office.

## 38.6.2.2 Counseling in Cases of Abuse

Victims of abuse often suffer serious trauma. Stake presidents and bishops respond with heartfelt compassion and empathy. They provide spiritual counseling and support to help victims overcome the destructive effects of abuse.

Sometimes victims have feelings of shame or guilt. Victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders help them and their families understand God's love and the healing that comes through Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see Alma 15:8; 3 Nephi 17:9).

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 receiving the inspired help of Church leaders, victims, offenders, and their families may need professional counseling. For information, see 31.2.6.

For information about what bishops and stake presidents should do when they learn of any type of abuse, see 38.6.2.1. For information about counseling in cases of sexual abuse, rape, or other forms of sexual assault, see 38.6.18.2.

See also 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 38.6.18.3.
- *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 physically or emotionally, 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 requirequirements, 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.

#### <sup>38.6.5</sup> 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. If a stake president has questions about whether a relationship is incestuous under local laws, he seeks guidance from the Office of the First Presidency.

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 should seek guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office. He is also encouraged to counsel with the Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager 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. Leaders respond with heartfelt compassion and empathy. They provide spiritual support and counseling to help them overcome the destructive effects of incest.

Sometimes victims have feelings of shame or guilt. Victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders help them and their families understand God's love and the healing that comes through Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see Alma 15:8; 3 Nephi 17:9).

In addition to receiving the inspired help of Church leaders, victims and their families may need professional counseling. For information, see 38.6.18.2.

#### <sup>38.6.11</sup> 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

- 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 31.2.6 for contact information.

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 Prejudice

All people are children of God. All are brothers and sisters who are part of His divine family (see "The Family: A Proclamation to the World"). God "hath made of one blood all nations" (Acts 17:26). "All are alike" unto Him (2 Nephi 26:33). Each person is "as precious in his sight as the other" (Jacob 2:21).

Prejudice is not consistent with the revealed word of God. Favor or disfavor with God depends on devotion to Him and His commandments, not on the color of a person's skin or other attributes.

The Church calls on all people to abandon attitudes and actions of prejudice toward any group or individual. Members of the Church should lead out in promoting respect for all of God's children. Members follow the Savior's commandment to love others (see Matthew 22:35–39). They strive to be persons of goodwill toward all, rejecting prejudice of any kind. This includes prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief or nonbelief, and sexual orientation.

## <sup>38.6.15</sup> 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 31.2.6 for contact information.

#### 38.6.16 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.

#### 38.6.17 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.

#### 38.6.18

# Sexual Abuse, Rape, and Other Forms of Sexual Assault

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 does not or cannot give legal consent is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also occur with a spouse or in a dating relationship. 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 rape and other forms of sexual assault. It can occur physically, verbally, and in other ways. For guidance about counseling members who have experienced sexual abuse, rape, or other forms of sexual assault, see 38.6.18.2.

If members suspect or become aware of sexual abuse, they take action to protect victims and others as soon as possible. This includes reporting to civil authorities and alerting the bishop or stake president. If a child has been abused, members should follow the instructions in 38.6.2.

#### 38.6.18.1 Abuse Help Line

If a bishop or stake president learns of sexual abuse, rape, or another form of sexual assault, he calls the Church's abuse help line in countries where it is available (see 38.6.2.1 for contact information). Legal and clinical professionals will answer his questions. These professionals will also give instructions about how to:

- Assist victims and help protect them from further harm.
- Help protect potential victims.
- Comply with legal requirements for reporting.

In countries that do not have a help line, a bishop who learns of these offenses should contact his stake president. The stake president should seek guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office. He is also encouraged to counsel with the Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager at the area office.

#### 38.6.18.2

## Counseling for Victims of Sexual Abuse, Rape, and Other Forms of Sexual Assault

Victims of sexual abuse, rape, or other forms of sexual assault often suffer serious trauma. When they confide in a bishop or stake president, he responds with heartfelt compassion and empathy. He provides spiritual counseling and support to help victims overcome the destructive effects of abuse. He also calls the Church's abuse help line for guidance where it is available (see 38.6.18.1).

Sometimes victims have feelings of shame or guilt. Victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders do not blame the victim. They help victims and their families understand God's love and the healing that comes through Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see Alma 15:8; 3 Nephi 17:9). While members may choose to share information about the abuse or assault, leaders should not focus excessively on the details. This can be harmful to victims.

In addition to receiving the inspired help of Church leaders, victims and their families may need professional counseling. For information, see 31.2.6.

## 38.6.18.3 Membership Councils

A membership council may be necessary for a person who has sexually assaulted or abused someone. A membership council is required if a member committed rape or is convicted of another form 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 a perpetrator of sexual abuse, that person's membership record is annotated.

For information about counseling in cases of abuse, see 38.6.2.2. For information about counseling victims of sexual assault, see 38.6.18.2.

# 38.6.19 Single Expectant Parents

Church members who are single and pregnant are encouraged to meet with their bishop. In the United States and Canada, 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. See 31.2.6 for Family Services contact information.

In other areas, leaders may contact Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager in the area office for consultation.

Guidance for counseling single expectant parents is also provided at "Unwed Pregnancy" (Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 38.6.20 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.

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 was endowed in life, he or she may be buried or cremated 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.

## 38.6.21 Surgical Sterilization (Including Vasectomy)

See 38.6.4.

#### 38.6.22 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 38.4.2.7).

## <sup>38.6.23</sup> 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 biological sex at birth.

Church leaders counsel against elective medical or surgical intervention for the purpose of attempting to transition to the opposite gender of a person's biological sex at birth ("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 biological sex at birth. 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

#### 38.7.1 Autopsies

An autopsy may be performed if the family of the deceased person gives consent and if the autopsy complies with the law. In some cases, an autopsy is required by law.

## <sup>38.7.2</sup> Burial and Cremation

The family of the deceased person decides whether his or her body should be buried or cremated. They respect the desires of the individual.

In some countries, the law requires cremation. In other cases, burial is not practical or affordable for the family. In all cases, the body should be treated with respect and reverence. Members should be reassured that the power of the Resurrection always applies (see Alma 11:42–45).

Where possible, the body of a deceased member who has been endowed should be dressed in ceremonial temple clothing when it is buried or cremated (see 38.5.8).

A funeral or memorial service provides an opportunity for families to gather and perpetuate family relations and values (see 29.5.4).

#### 38.7.3

# Children Who Die before Birth (Stillborn and Miscarried Children)

Parents who experience the death of an unborn child suffer grief and loss. Leaders, family members, and ministering brothers and sisters offer emotional and spiritual support.

Parents may decide whether to hold memorial or graveside services.

Parents may record information about the child in FamilySearch. Instructions are provided on the website.

Temple ordinances are not necessary for children who die before birth. This does not deny the possibility that these children may be part of the family in the eternities. Parents are encouraged to trust the Lord and seek His comfort.

#### 38.7.4 Euthanasia

Mortal life is a precious gift from God. Euthanasia is deliberately ending the life of a person who is suffering from an incurable disease or other condition. A person who participates in euthanasia, including assisting someone to die by suicide, violates the commandments of God and may violate local laws.

Discontinuing or forgoing extreme life support measures for a person at the end of life is not considered euthanasia (see 38.7.11).

#### 38.7.5 HIV Infection and AIDS

Members who are infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or who have AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) should be welcomed at Church meetings and activities. Their attendance is not a health risk to others.

## 38.7.6 Hypnosis

For some people, hypnosis can compromise agency. Members are discouraged from participating in hypnosis for purposes of demonstration or entertainment.

The use of hypnosis for treating diseases or mental disorders should be determined in consultation with competent medical professionals.

#### 38.7.7

#### 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.

#### 38.7.8 Medical and Health Care

Seeking competent medical help, exercising faith, and receiving priesthood blessings work together for healing, according to the will of the Lord.

Members should not use or promote medical or health practices that are ethically, spiritually, or legally questionable. Those who have health problems should consult with competent medical professionals who are licensed in the areas where they practice.

In addition to seeking competent medical help, members of the Church are encouraged to follow the scriptural injunction in James 5:14 to "call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Priesthood blessings of healing are given by those who hold the necessary priesthood office. They are given when requested and at no charge (see 18.13).

Church members are discouraged from seeking miraculous or supernatural healing from an individual or group that claims to have special methods for accessing healing power outside of prayer and properly performed priesthood blessings. These practices are often referred to as "energy healing." Other names are also used. Such promises for healing are often given in exchange for money.

## <sup>38.7.9</sup> Medical Marijuana

The Church opposes the use of marijuana for non-medical purposes. See "Word of Wisdom and Healthy Practices" (38.7.14).

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 mode of administration from the physician or other authorized medical provider. The Church does not approve of vaping marijuana unless the medical provider has authorized it based on medical necessity.

The Church does not approve of smoking marijuana, including for medical purposes.

## 38.7.10 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 of a living person to donate an organ to another or to receive a donated organ should be made with competent medical counsel and prayerful consideration.

The decision to authorize the transplant of organs or tissue from a deceased person is made by the person or by his or her family.

#### 38.7.11

# Prolonging Life (Including Life Support)

When facing severe illness, 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 (see 2 Nephi 9:6; Alma 42:8).

Members should not feel obligated to extend mortal life by extreme means. These decisions are best made by the person, if possible, or by family members. They should seek competent medical advice and divine guidance through prayer.

Leaders offer support to those who are deciding whether or not to remove life support for a family member.

## <sup>38.7.12</sup> Self-Awareness Groups

Many private groups and commercial organizations have programs that claim to improve self-awareness, self-esteem, spirituality, or family relationships. These groups tend to promise quick solutions to problems that normally require time, prayer, and personal effort to resolve. Although participants may experience temporary relief or exhilaration, previous problems often return, leading to added disappointment and despair.

Some of these groups claim or imply that the Church or individual General Authorities have endorsed them. However, these claims are not true.

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

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

Members who have social or emotional concerns may consult with leaders for guidance in identifying sources of help that are in harmony with gospel principles. For more information, see 22.3.4.

#### 38.7.13 Vaccinations

Vaccinations administered by competent medical professionals protect health and preserve life. Members of the Church are encouraged to safeguard themselves, their children, and their communities through vaccination.

Ultimately, individuals are responsible to make their own decisions about vaccination. If members have concerns, they should counsel with competent medical professionals and also seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Prospective missionaries who have not been vaccinated will likely be limited to assignments in their home country.

#### 38.7.14 Word of Wisdom and Healthy Practices

The Word of Wisdom is a commandment of God. He revealed it for the physical and spiritual benefit of His children. Prophets have clarified that the teachings in Doctrine and Covenants 89 include abstinence from tobacco, strong drinks (alcohol), and hot drinks (tea and coffee).

Prophets have also taught members to avoid substances that are harmful, illegal, or addictive or that impair judgment.

There are other harmful substances and practices that are not specified in the Word of Wisdom or by Church leaders. Members should use wisdom and prayerful judgment in making choices to promote their physical, spiritual, and emotional health.

The Apostle Paul stated: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

The Lord promises spiritual and temporal blessings to those who obey the Word of Wisdom and the guidance of living prophets (see Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21).

# 38.8 Administrative Policies

## <sup>38.8.1</sup> Adoption and Foster Care

Adopting children and providing foster care can bless children and families. Loving, eternal families can be created through adoption. Whether children come to a family through adoption or birth, they are an equally precious blessing.

Members who seek to adopt or provide foster care to children should obey all applicable laws of the countries and governments involved.

The Church does not facilitate adoptions. However, in the United States and Canada, leaders can refer members to Family Services as a consultation resource. For contact information, see 31.2.6.

For information about single expectant parents, see 38.6.19.

For more information, see "Adoption" (Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

#### 38.8.2 Affinity Fraud

Affinity fraud occurs when a person exploits another's trust or confidence to defraud him or her. This can happen when both people belong to the same group, such as the Church. It can also happen by abusing a position of friendship or trust, such as a Church calling or family relationship. Affinity fraud is usually for financial gain. Church members should be honest in their dealings and act with integrity. Affinity fraud is a shameful betrayal of trust and confidence. Its perpetrators may be subject to criminal prosecution. Church members who commit affinity fraud may also face membership restrictions or withdrawal. See 32.6.2.3 and 32.6.1.3 for guidance about membership councils for fraudulent acts.

Members may not state or imply that their business dealings are sponsored by, endorsed by, or represent the Church or its leaders.

#### <sup>38.8.3</sup> 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 38.8.11).
- 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.

#### 38.8.4

## Autographs and Photographs of General Authorities, General Officers, and Area Seventies

Church members should not seek the autographs of General Authorities, General Officers, or Area

Seventies. Nor should members ask these leaders to sign 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, General Officers, or Area Seventies in chapels.

#### 38.8.5 Bible

English-speaking members should use the Latterday 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 Latterday 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 Latterday Saint editions are also available at scriptures .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

## 38.8.6 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).

## <sup>38.8.7</sup> 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.

#### <sup>38.8.8</sup> Church Magazines

The Church magazines include:

- The *Friend* for children.
- For the Strength of Youth for youth.
- The Liahona for adults.

The First Presidency encourages all members to read the Church magazines. The magazines can help members learn the gospel of Jesus Christ, study the teachings of living prophets, feel connected to the global Church family, face challenges with faith, and draw closer to God.

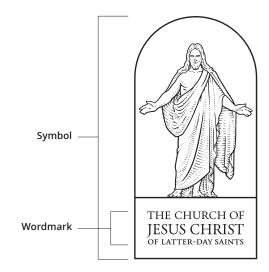
Leaders help members access the magazines as follows:

- Help members subscribe to print magazines and renew their subscriptions.
- Show members how to access magazine content on ChurchofJesusChrist.org, the Gospel Library app, and the Gospel Living app. This digital content is free.
- Soon after new members are baptized, show them how to access Church magazines digitally. If they prefer a print magazine, give them a oneyear subscription using unit budget funds.
- Provide ongoing subscriptions to all children and youth who attend church without a parent or guardian. Use unit budget funds.

Bishops may call a magazine representative to help members access the magazines. Or they may assign the clerk or ward executive secretary to assist (see 6.3 and 33.4.2).

The magazine representative, secretary, or clerk can also help gather faith-promoting experiences and testimonies from local members to share with the magazines. Subscriptions to the print magazines are available at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, the Global Services Department, and Distribution Center retail stores. In some areas, units order on behalf of their members and distribute magazines at their meetinghouses. For more information, contact the Global Services Department or a distribution center store.

## 38.8.9 Church Name, Wordmark, and Symbol



The Church's name, wordmark, and symbol are key Church identifiers. They are registered as trademarks or are otherwise legally protected worldwide. They are used to identify official literature, news, and events of the Church.

The Church's key identifiers are to be used only according to the guidelines provided below.

*Written name of the Church*. Local units may use the written name of the Church (not the wordmark or symbol) 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, Campo Rosa Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).
- The typeface does not imitate or resemble the official Church wordmark.

Wordmark and symbol. The Church's wordmark and symbol (see the illustration above) are to be used only as approved by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They may not be used as decorative elements. Nor may they be used in any personal, commercial, or promotional way.

Questions should 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

#### 38.8.10 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 38.8.11.

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 33.10.

## 38.8.11 Copyrighted Materials

Copyright is protection given by law to the creators of original works of authorship that are expressed in a tangible (including digital) 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.

The laws governing creative works and their permissible use vary by country. The Church policies outlined in this section are consistent with international treaties that apply 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.

Church members should strictly observe all copyright laws. Generally, only copyright owners may authorize the following uses of their work:

- Duplication (copying)
- Distribution
- Public performance
- Public display
- Creation of derivatives

Using a work in any of these ways without authorization from the copyright owner is contrary to Church policy. Such use 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 or posted on the internet does not mean it is not copyrighted. Nor does it 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. For information on requesting the use of Church-owned materials, see "Terms of Use" on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

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

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

*Can I copy published Church materials?* Unless otherwise indicated, Church materials may be copied for noncommercial Church, home, and family use. Terms of use that accompany a Church website or app indicate how material on these websites and apps may be used. 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 the following sources for noncommercial Church, home, and family use unless a restriction is noted on the hymn or song:

- Hymns
- The Children's Songbook
- Church magazines

Duplicating printed or recorded music without authorization from the copyright owner is contrary to Church policy.

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. This includes movies, other video, and music. 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.

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.

## 38.8.12 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.

#### 38.8.13

# 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.

## 38.8.14 Directories

Members and leaders are encouraged to use member directories provided by the Church. These directories are available in Ward Directory and Map on ChurchofJesusChrist.org and in the Member Tools app. They provide basic contact information for members. Stake and ward leaders are able to view additional information helpful for their callings. Leaders can also view this information in Leader and Clerk Resources.

Members can restrict the visibility of their digital contact information. They do this by selecting privacy levels in their household profile.

Stake and ward leaders should respect the privacy settings that members select. These leaders also ensure that information is used for approved Church purposes only.

Printed stake and ward directories are generally not needed. If leaders determine that there is a genuine need, printed directories may be created only by using Ward Directory and Map on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. These directories do not include the gender, age, or birthday of members. Membership lists should not be printed for non-Church use.

## <sup>38.8.15</sup> Dress and Appearance

Men and women are created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26–27; Abraham 4:27). Mortal bodies are a sacred gift.

Members of the Church are encouraged to show respect for the body in their choices about appropriate dress and appearance. What is appropriate varies across cultures and for different occasions. For example, for sacrament meeting, individuals wear their best available Sunday clothing to show respect for the sacrament ordinance (see 18.9.3). This same principle applies to temple attendance (see 27.1.5). Disciples of Jesus Christ will know how best to dress and groom themselves.

Members and leaders should not judge others based on dress and appearance. They should love all people, as the Savior commanded (see Matthew 22:39; John 13:34–35). All should be welcomed at Church meetings and activities (see 38.1.1).

When issuing temple recommends and ward and stake callings, leaders consider worthiness and the guidance of the Spirit (see 26.3, 30.1.1, and 31.1.1).

#### 38.8.16 Extreme Preparation or Survivalism

The Church encourages self-reliance. Members are encouraged to be spiritually and physically prepared for life's challenges. See 22.1.

However, Church leaders have counseled against extreme or excessive preparation for possible catastrophic events. Such efforts are sometimes called survivalism. Efforts to prepare should be motivated by faith, not fear.

Church leaders have counseled members not to go into debt to establish food storage. Instead,

members should establish a home storage supply and a financial reserve over time. See 22.1.4 and "Food Storage" (Gospel Topics, topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

## 38.8.17 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.

## 38.8.18 Fast Day

Members may fast at any time. However, they usually observe the first Sabbath of the month as a fast day.

A fast day typically includes praying, going without food and drink for a 24-hour period (if physically able), and giving a generous fast offering. A fast offering is a donation to help those in need (see 22.2.2).

Sometimes Churchwide or local meetings are held on the first Sabbath of the month. When this occurs, the stake presidency determines an alternative Sabbath for fast day.

## 38.8.19 Gambling and Lotteries

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

## 38.8.20 Guest Speakers or Instructors

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

A guest speaker or instructor is someone who does not belong to the ward or stake. The bishop's approval is required before a guest speaker is invited to a ward meeting or activity. The stake president's approval is required to invite guest speakers to stake meetings or activities.

The bishop or stake president carefully screens guest speakers or instructors. This may include contacting the person's bishop.

The bishop or stake president ensures that:

• The presentation is in harmony with Church doctrine.

- Guest speakers or instructors are not paid a fee, do not recruit participants, and do not solicit customers or clients.
- The person's travel expenses are not paid either with local unit budget funds or by private contributions.
- Presentations comply with the guidelines for using Church facilities (see 35.4).

#### 38.8.21 Income Taxes

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

Church members who refuse to file a tax return, pay required income taxes, or comply with a final judgment in a tax case are in direct conflict with the law and with the teachings of the Church. Such members may be ineligible for a temple recommend and should not be called to positions of principal responsibility in the Church. A Church membership council is required if a member is convicted of a felony for willfully violating tax laws (see 32.6.1.5).

#### 38.8.22 Internet

#### 38.8.22.1 Official Church Internet Resources

The Church maintains official websites, blogs, and social media accounts. These resources are clearly identified as official by the use of the Church wordmark or symbol (see 38.8.9). They also comply with legal requirements and the Church's intellectual property and privacy policies.

#### 38.8.22.2 Members' Use of the Internet in Church Callings

Members may not create websites, blogs, or social media accounts on behalf of the Church or to officially represent the Church and its views, doctrine, policies, and procedures. However, they may create websites, blogs, or social media accounts to assist with their callings. When doing so, members should comply with the following guidelines:

- The creation of a website, blog, or social media account must first be approved by the stake president (for stake resources) or bishop (for ward resources).
- The Church wordmark or symbol may not be used or imitated (see 38.8.9).
- The online resource should have a purpose and goal and be named accordingly. The name may include a ward or stake name. However, it may not include the official name of the Church.
- Members may not state or imply that the online resource's content, images, or other materials are sponsored or endorsed by the Church or officially represent the Church in any way. Rather, a disclaimer should be included stating that it is not an official, Church-sponsored product.
- All content should be relevant for the intended audience and should be actively moderated.
- The online resource should include contact information.
- More than one administrator should be responsible for the online resource. This can provide continuity when a person's calling or assignment changes. It also keeps one person from being burdened with updating and monitoring the resource.
- Church-owned artwork, videos, music, or other materials may not be posted unless the use is clearly authorized by the Terms of Use of

an official Church website or by the Church's Intellectual Property Office. Copyrighted content from other sources should not be used unless the content owner has first given written permission. For more information about using copyrighted material, see 38.8.11.

- When using images, videos, or personal information, consent from the content owner or the individuals involved is required. Consent may be obtained through a release form, a public announcement, a posted sign for a specific event, or written permission when needed. The country's privacy laws should be followed.
- Online resources should not duplicate tools and features that are already on ChurchofJesusChrist. org, Member Tools, or other Church resources.
- Leaders and missionaries should coordinate to prevent duplicate communication.
- Online resources should be retired when they are no longer needed. Important media (such as photos and videos) should be preserved in the ward or stake's history.

For additional guidelines, see internet .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

# 38.8.22.3 Personal Internet Use

Members are encouraged to use the internet to flood the earth with testimonies of the Savior and His restored gospel. Blogs, social networks, and other internet technologies allow members to promote the messages of peace, hope, and joy that accompany faith in Christ.

Members should focus on sharing uplifting messages that edify others. These messages can come from official Church resources as well as members' own words, images, and other media. Members should not imply that their messages represent or are sponsored by the Church.

Members should exemplify civility in all online interactions.

#### 38.8.23 Laws of the Land

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

#### 38.8.24 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.

#### 38.8.24.1 Involvement 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 38.8.24. Outside of the United States and Canada, leaders should contact their area legal counsel.

#### 38.8.25 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.

#### 38.8.26 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.

#### 38.8.27 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.

#### 38.8.28 Members with Disabilities

Leaders and members are encouraged to address the needs of all who live within their unit. Members with disabilities are valued and can contribute in meaningful ways. Disabilities may be intellectual, social, emotional, or physical.

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 both rewarding and challenging.

Leaders seek out and minister to members with disabilities who are living in group homes or other facilities away from family members.

#### 38.8.28.1 Increasing Awareness and Understanding

Leaders, teachers, and other members seek to understand each individual who has a disability and his or her strengths and needs. They can increase their understanding by talking with the person and his or her family members. Resources are available at disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

#### 38.8.28.2 Giving Assistance

Leaders assess the needs of those who have disabilities and their caregivers. These leaders determine how ward or stake resources could be used to help meet the needs as appropriate. Leaders encourage members to help and reach out in love and friendship.

The bishopric or stake presidency may call a ward or stake disability specialist to help individuals, families, teachers, and other leaders (see 38.8.28.9).

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

For more information on assisting persons who have disabilities, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Leaders may also contact Family Services (where available; see 31.2.6 for contact information).

Leaders and members should not attempt to explain why someone has a disability or why a family has a child with a disability. They should not suggest that a disability is a punishment from God (see John 9:2–3) or a special privilege.

## 38.8.28.3 Providing Ordinances

See 38.2.1.8.

#### 38.8.28.4 Providing Opportunities to Serve and Participate

Many members with disabilities can serve in nearly any Church assignment. Leaders prayerfully consider the abilities, circumstances, and desires of each person and then provide appropriate opportunities to serve. Leaders also counsel with the individual and his or her family. They consider the effects of a Church calling on the person and his or her family or caregiver. (See Doctrine and Covenants 46:15.)

When considering Church assignments or callings for caregivers of people with disabilities, leaders carefully evaluate the circumstances of the caregivers.

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.

The bishopric may invite a ward member to help a person with a disability in a meeting or activity. For a class that includes a member with disabilities, the bishopric may call multiple teachers. The teachers work together to meet the needs of all class members.

If a person cannot participate in a meeting, class, or activity, leaders and teachers may consult with the member and his or her family about how to meet the member's needs. The stake president or bishop may approve organizing special classes or programs for members with disabilities (see 38.8.28.5). If a person is not able to attend Church meetings, leaders and teachers may provide lesson materials, recordings, or streaming.

Streaming of events, including sacrament meetings and funerals, is intended only for those who cannot attend in person (see 29.7). For more information about partaking of the sacrament, see 18.9.3. Leaders encourage priesthood holders who have disabilities 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. For guidelines about members with disabilities receiving their own temple ordinances, see 38.2.1.8 and 38.2.1.9.

#### 38.8.28.5

# Organizing Special Classes, Programs, or Units

Members who have disabilities or special needs are encouraged to attend Sunday meetings in their wards unless they live in a care facility or residential treatment program where Church programs are organized (see 37.6).

*Units and groups.* Wards or branches may be created for members who have unique needs, such as those who are deaf and use sign language (see 37.1). Approval is given only by the First Presidency.

A ward may be asked to host a group for those with disabilities, such as those who use sign language. For information about the membership records of those attending such units or groups, see 33.6.11.

Deaf members who do not live within a reasonable distance from a deaf unit may attend one virtually. They should obtain permission from the leaders of that unit. Local ward leaders ensure that deaf members are cared for and have the opportunity to partake of the sacrament regularly.

*Classes.* Members with disabilities attend Sunday classes with the members of their ward. However, when needed to meet the needs of adult or youth members with similar disabilities, a ward or stake may organize special Sunday School classes (see 13.3.2).

Disability activity programs. When needed to meet the needs of adult members with intellectual disabilities,

a ward, group of wards, stake, or group of stakes may organize a disability activity program. This program supplements ministering, Sunday Church services, and activities in the local unit.

A disability activity program typically serves individuals ages 18 and older. Every effort should be made to integrate members under 18 into their wards and stakes. In unusual situations, leaders may provide supplemental activities for youth beginning in the year they turn 12.

When multiple wards participate in a disability activity program, the stake president assigns an agent bishop to oversee it. When multiple stakes participate, the Area Presidency assigns an agent stake president to oversee it.

The agent bishop or agent stake president consults with other participating bishops or stake presidents to determine how these programs will be funded.

*Disability activity leaders*. Adult members may be called as disability activity leaders. These leaders plan and carry out the disability activity program. They consult with ward and stake disability specialists (see 38.8.28.9) to invite members with disabilities to participate. They counsel together about how to meet those members' needs.

Disability activity leaders are called and set apart under the direction of the agent bishop or agent stake president. A stake president may also assign a high councilor to serve as a disability activity leader.

Leaders serving those of any age with disabilities complete the training at ProtectingChildren .ChurchofJesusChrist.org. For additional safety requirements for leaders, see disability .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

When invited, disability activity leaders may attend stake or ward leadership meetings.

*Guidelines for disability activity programs.* Disability activity programs are organized to help participants develop spiritually, socially, physically, and

intellectually (see Luke 2:52). Leaders determine the frequency of activities. They consider the number of participants, travel distances, and other circumstances.

Some people may not be able to participate because of complex medical, physical, intellectual, or behavioral circumstances. Leaders seek other ways to minister to their needs.

Participation and safety standards. At least two responsible adults must be present at all activities. The two adults could be two men, two women, or a married couple. Generally, more adults are needed to supervise activities for members with disabilities than are needed for other activities.

Adults who help with activities complete the training at ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. They must receive approval from their bishop before participating. For additional safety requirements, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

If inappropriate behavior occurs, leaders' immediate responsibility is to protect and help the vulnerable person. For information about responding to suspected abuse, see 38.6.2.1 and abuse .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

#### 38.8.28.6 Interpreters for Members Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Members who are deaf or hard of hearing take initiative in working with leaders to meet communication needs. Members and leaders work together to ensure that interpreters are available.

Interpreters should be located where members can see them as well as the person speaking. Interpreters do not necessarily need to be on the stand.

During an ordinance or interview, the interpreter sits or stands close to the person who performs the ordinance or conducts the interview. For more information on interpreting ordinances and blessings, see 38.2.1.2.

If enough interpreters are available, they rotate approximately every 30 minutes to avoid fatigue.

In preparation for sensitive situations such as personal interviews or Church membership councils, leaders counsel with the deaf member. When the member desires, leaders seek an interpreter who is not a family member to preserve confidentiality.

These same principles apply for members who are deaf or hard of hearing and do not use sign language but need an oral interpreter to help them read lips.

Leaders may organize ward or stake classes to teach the sign language that is used in their area. A helpful resource is *Dictionary of Sign Language Terms for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.* 

## 38.8.28.7 Privacy

Leaders should respect the privacy of members with disabilities both during and outside of leadership meetings where needs are discussed. Leaders do not share diagnoses or other personal information without permission.

#### 38.8.28.8 Service Animals

Bishops and stake presidents may determine whether to allow persons with disabilities to use trained service dogs in meetinghouses. Other types of animals, including emotional support animals (comfort pets), are generally not permitted in meetinghouses or at Church-sponsored events, except as specifically required by law. (In general in the United States, the Church is under no legal obligation to admit service dogs or emotional support animals to houses of worship.) Bishops and stake presidents make local decisions. They take into account the needs of persons with disabilities and the needs of others in the congregation.

For additional guidelines on the use of service animals in Church facilities, see 27.1.3 and disability .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

#### 38.8.28.9 Disability Specialist

The bishopric or stake presidency may call a ward or stake disability specialist. The specialist helps members with disabilities and their caregivers participate in Church meetings and activities and feel included.

The specialist serves members and leaders in the following ways:

- Get to know individuals with disabilities and their families.
- Respond to disability-related questions and concerns from caregivers, leaders, and others.
- Help individuals access Church materials, meetings, and activities. This may occur through using technology and in other ways (see 38.8.28.10).
- Identify meaningful opportunities for members with disabilities to serve.
- Identify specific needs of families and, where appropriate, identify community, ward, and stake resources.

The specialist can help members with disabilities and their caregivers share information about the disability with others.

#### 38.8.28.10 Resources

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

- Information to help increase understanding of the challenges faced by those who have disabilities.
- Resources to help members who have disabilities and their families find comfort in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Listings of Church materials in formats that are accessible to members with disabilities (see also store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Questions may be addressed to:

Members with Disabilities

50 East North Temple Street

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024

Telephone: 1-801-240-2477 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2477

Email: disability@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

## 38.8.29 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.

## 38.8.30 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).

## <sup>38.8.31</sup> 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.

## <sup>38.8.32</sup> 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 38.8.14).

#### 38.8.33 Privately Published Writings

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

#### 38.8.34

# 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.

## <sup>38.8.35</sup> 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). Referring to the Church and its members in the ways described below identifies a connection between Jesus Christ and members of His Church.

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 following terms are accurate and encouraged:

- The Church
- The Church of Jesus Christ
- The restored Church of Jesus Christ

When referring to Church members, the following terms are accurate and preferred:

- Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints
- Latter-day Saints (this is a name given by the Lord to His covenant people in the latter days)
- Members of the Church of Jesus Christ

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. It is also correctly used as an adjective in historical expressions such as "Mormon Trail."

The term *Mormonism* is inaccurate, and its use 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.

## <sup>38.8.36</sup> Research in the Church

The purpose of Church research is to gather reliable information to support the deliberations of general Church leaders. The Correlation Research Division (CRD) is the only authorized research agency of the Church. CRD may also contract with third-party agencies to conduct research.

When Church-authorized researchers contact members or leaders, they provide a CRD employee's contact information. This employee can answer questions about the research.

CRD seeks to protect the identity and responses of research participants. Persons may decline to participate at any time. They may choose not to answer any or all questions.

Parents or guardians must give consent before children under 18 are invited to participate in a study.

Local leaders should not approve any research related to the Church. This includes using members as research subjects.

CRD abides by all data privacy laws. Local leaders should also abide by these laws and should not provide members' personal information to unauthorized researchers and research agencies.

Some research requires collecting information in Church meetings. This is especially true if the meeting is the focus of the study. In such cases, CRD will work with local leaders to ensure that the presence of researchers does not detract from the meetings.

To verify any research request, contact the Correlation Research Division:

Telephone: 1-801-240-2727 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2727 Email: research@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

#### <sup>38.8.37</sup> Respecting Local Restrictions for Sharing the Gospel

The Church works to fulfill Jesus Christ's commandment to take the gospel to all the world (see Matthew 28:19). Missionaries serve only in countries where they are officially recognized and welcomed by local governments.

The Church and its members respect all laws and requirements with regard to missionary efforts. For example, in some parts of the world, missionaries are sent only to serve humanitarian or other specialized missions. Those missionaries do not proselytize. The Church does not send missionaries to some countries.

#### 38.8.38 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).

## 38.8.39 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.

#### 38.8.40 Seeking Information from Reliable Sources

In today's world, information is easy to access and share. This can be a great blessing for those seeking to be educated and informed. However, many sources of information are unreliable and do not edify. Some sources seek to promote anger, contention, fear, or baseless conspiracy theories (see 3 Nephi 11:30; Mosiah 2:32). Therefore, it is important that Church members be wise as they seek truth.

Members of the Church should seek out and share only credible, reliable, and factual sources of information. They should avoid sources that are speculative or founded on rumor. The guidance of the Holy Ghost, along with careful study, can help members discern between truth and error (see Doctrine and Covenants 11:12; 45:57). In matters of doctrine and Church policy, the authoritative sources are the scriptures, the teachings of the living prophets, and the *General Handbook*.

#### <sup>38.8.41</sup> Seminars and Similar Gatherings

The Church warns members against seminars and similar gatherings that include presentations that:

- Disparage, ridicule, or are otherwise inappropriate in their treatment of sacred matters.
- Could injure the Church, detract from its mission, or jeopardize the well-being of its members or leaders.

Members should not allow their position or standing in the Church to be used to promote or imply endorsement of such gatherings.

For more information, see 35.4, 38.6.12, and 38.7.8. See also Jacob 6:12.

## <sup>38.8.42</sup> 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.

## 38.8.43 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.

## <sup>38.8.44</sup> 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.

#### 38.8.45 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.

#### 38.8.46 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.

# <sup>38.9</sup> 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.

#### 38.9.1

## 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 premilitary 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 38.9.4). 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.

#### 38.9.2 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 38.9.1).

#### 38.9.3 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.

## <sup>38.9.4</sup> 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 longterm 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.

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.

## <sup>38.9.5</sup> 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.

#### 38.9.6

#### 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.

#### <sup>38.9.7</sup> 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.

#### 38.9.8 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.

## 38.9.9 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.

## 38.9.10 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 26.3.2.

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