

Handbook 2

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**Administering the Church**

2010

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Handbook 2

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**Administering the Church**

2010

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# Introduction

The Lord admonished, “Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (D&C 107:99).

Church leaders seek personal revelation to help them learn and fulfill the duties of their callings.

Studying the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets will help leaders understand and fulfill their duties. The Lord has admonished leaders to treasure up in their minds continually the words of God so they will be receptive to the influence of the Spirit (see D&C 84:85).

Leaders also learn their duties by studying the instructions in Church handbooks. These instructions can facilitate revelation if they are used to provide an understanding of principles, policies, and procedures to apply while seeking the guidance of the Spirit.

## Handbooks for Church Leaders

The Church provides two handbooks for leaders:

*Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops.* This handbook outlines the general responsibilities of stake presidents and bishops and provides detailed information about policies and procedures.

*Handbook 2: Administering the Church.* This handbook is a guide for members of ward and stake councils. The first two chapters present the doctrinal foundation of the work of the Church: the salvation of individuals and the sealing and exaltation of families through the power of the priesthood. The other chapters provide instructions for administering priesthood quorums and auxiliaries. They also present principles and guidelines that apply to multiple organizations in the ward.

The headings and subheadings in these handbooks are numbered to make topics easy to locate or reference. Rather than refer to a page or group of pages, leaders may refer to a topic by its number. For example, in a discussion about member missionary work, a bishop might ask ward council members to turn to 5.1.2 in *Handbook 2*. The number 5 refers to the chapter, the

number 1 refers to a section of the chapter, and the number 2 refers to a subsection.

### Chapter Section Subsection

Chapter	Section	Subsection
5	1	2
The bishop and his counselors receive full-time missionaries, including couples, prepare to serve missions.		
<b>Ward Council</b>		
Member missionary work is more effective when ward council members are engaged in the missionary effort. In quorums...		

## Updates and Supplements to Instructions

Occasionally the information in these handbooks will be updated or supplemented through letters, notices, and other communication from the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric. When this occurs, leaders should note the changes in their copies of the handbooks. Leaders should keep handbooks and these supplementary materials together.

## Questions about Instructions

Leaders who have questions about information in the handbooks or about issues that are not addressed should direct the questions to their immediate presiding authority.

## Application in Branches, Districts, and Missions

For administrative purposes, the terms *bishop* and *bishopric* in the handbooks refer also to branch presidents and branch presidencies. The terms *stake president* and *stake presidency* refer also to district presidents and district presidencies. However, the offices of bishop and branch president are not equivalent in authority and responsibility. Nor are the offices 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.

References to wards and stakes usually apply also to branches, districts, and missions.

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## Contacting Church Headquarters or the Assigned Administrative Office

Some chapters in this handbook include instructions to contact Church headquarters or the assigned administrative office. The instruction to contact Church headquarters applies to priesthood leaders and clerks in the United States and Canada. The instruction to contact the assigned administrative office applies to priesthood leaders and clerks outside the United States and Canada.

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## Distribution

*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* should be distributed as follows:

- Stake Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies (3 copies each)
  - Bishopric or branch presidency (3 copies)
  - Ward or branch clerk (1 file copy)
  - Ward or branch executive secretary (1 copy)
  - High priests group leadership (3 copies)
  - Elders quorum presidency (3 copies)
  - Ward Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies (3 copies each)
  - Ward mission leader (1 copy)
- This handbook has been prepared solely for use by general and local Church officers to administer the affairs of the Church. It should not be duplicated or given to any other persons. The distribution list includes a file copy to be kept in a secure place by each stake and ward clerk. He may refer to it for information on finances and records and for information on supporting the stake president or bishop.
- When Church officers who have a copy of this handbook are released, they give the copy promptly to their successors or to their presiding authority.

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# 1. Families and the Church in God's Plan

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# 1. Families and the Church in God's Plan

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## 1.1 God the Father's Plan for His Eternal Family

### 1.1.1 The Premortal Family of God

The family is ordained of God. It is the most important unit in time and in eternity. Even before we were born on the earth, we were part of a family. 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," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). God is our Heavenly Father, and we lived in His presence as part of His family in the premortal life. There we learned our first lessons and were prepared for mortality (see D&C 138:56).

### 1.1.2 The Purpose of Mortality

Because of God's love for us, He prepared a plan that included our coming to the earth, where we would receive bodies and be tested so that we could progress and become more like Him. This plan is called "the plan of salvation" (Alma 24:14), "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8), and "the plan of redemption" (Alma 12:25; see also verses 26–33).

The purpose of God's plan is to lead us to eternal life. God declared, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). Eternal life is God's greatest gift to His children (see D&C 14:7). It is exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. Through the plan of salvation, we can receive this blessing of returning to God's presence and receiving a fulness of joy.

### 1.1.3 The Atonement of Jesus Christ

In order to gain exaltation in the kingdom of God, we must overcome two obstacles of mortality: death and sin. Because we cannot overcome either obstacle by ourselves, Heavenly Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior and Redeemer. The Savior's atoning sacrifice made it possible for all of God's children to overcome physical death, be resurrected, and gain immortality. The Atonement also made it possible for those who repent and follow Him to overcome spiritual death, return to God's presence to dwell with Him, and obtain eternal life (see D&C 45:3–5).

## 1.1.4 The Role of Families in God's Plan

As part of our Heavenly Father's plan, we were born into families. He established families to bring us happiness, to help us learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare us for eternal life.

Parents have the vital responsibility to help their children prepare to return to Heavenly Father. Parents fulfill this responsibility by teaching their children to follow Jesus Christ and live His gospel.

## 1.1.5 The Role of the Church

The Church provides the organization and means for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to all of God's children. It provides the priesthood authority to administer the ordinances of salvation and exaltation to all who are worthy and willing to accept them.

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## 1.2 Returning to the Father

### 1.2.1 The Gospel of Jesus Christ

The plan of salvation is the fulness of the gospel. It includes the Creation, the Fall, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and all the laws, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel. It provides the way for us to experience joy in mortality (see 2 Nephi 2:25) as well as the blessing of eternal life.

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can be cleansed and sanctified from sin and prepare to enter again into the presence of our Eternal Father. To receive this blessing, we must follow the principles and ordinances of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:3). We must:

1. Exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God.
2. Turn to God through sincere repentance, having a change of heart and confessing and forsaking sins.
3. Receive the saving ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins.
4. Be confirmed a member of the Church and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.
5. Endure to the end by keeping sacred covenants.

These principles have been taught since the days of Adam. As we come to understand and believe these truths and gain a firm testimony of Jesus Christ, we strive to obey His commandments and want to share our blessings with our family and others (see 1 Nephi 8:9–37). With this secure foundation of testimony, other elements of Church activity follow naturally.

Personal spiritual growth takes place as we draw close to God through prayer, scripture study, pondering, and obedience. Nephi taught:

“After ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

“Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

Each of us is accountable before God to learn and keep His commandments and to live the gospel. We will be judged according to our actions, the desires of our hearts, and the kind of people we have become. As we become true followers of Jesus Christ, we experience a mighty change of heart and “have no more disposition to do evil” (Mosiah 5:2; see also Alma 5:12–15; Moroni 10:32–33). As we live the gospel of Jesus Christ, we grow line upon line, becoming more like the Savior in loving and serving others.

### 1.2.2 The Role of Church Leaders and Teachers

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders and teachers strive to help others become true followers of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 18:18–30). To assist individuals and families in this effort, they:

1. Teach and testify of the pure doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Strengthen individuals and families in their efforts to keep their sacred covenants.
3. Provide counsel, support, and opportunities for service.

In addition, certain priesthood leaders have the authority to oversee the performance of the saving priesthood ordinances.

## 1.3 Establishing Eternal Families

Families are central to God's plan, which provides a way for family relationships to extend beyond the grave. Sacred temple ordinances and covenants, faithfully kept, help us return to the presence of God, united eternally with our families.

### 1.3.1 Husband and Wife

Exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom can be attained only by those who have faithfully lived the gospel of Jesus Christ and are sealed as eternal companions.

The sealing of husband and wife for time and eternity by the authority of the priesthood—also known as temple marriage—is a sacred privilege and obligation that all should strive to receive. It is the foundation of an eternal family.

The nature of male and female spirits is such that they complete each other. Men and women are intended to progress together toward exaltation.

The Lord has commanded husbands and wives to cleave to each other (see Genesis 2:24; D&C 42:22). In this commandment, the word *cleave* means to be completely devoted and faithful to someone. Married couples cleave to God and one another by serving and loving each other and by keeping covenants in complete fidelity to one another and to God (see D&C 25:13).

A couple is to become one in establishing their family as the basis of a righteous life. Latter-day Saint husbands and wives leave behind their single life and establish their marriage as the first priority in their lives. They allow no other person or interest to have greater priority in their lives than keeping the covenants they have made with God and each other. Nonetheless, married couples continue to love and support their parents and siblings while focusing on their own families. Similarly, wise parents realize that their family responsibilities continue throughout life in a spirit of love and encouragement.

Being one in marriage requires a full partnership. For example, Adam and Eve worked together, prayed and worshipped together, sacrificed together, taught their children the gospel together, and mourned over wayward children together (see Moses 5:1, 4, 12, 27). They were united with each other and with God.

### 1.3.2 Parents and Children

"The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. . . . God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"). By divine design, both a man and a woman are essential for bringing children into mortality and providing the best setting for the rearing and nurturing of children.

Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred responsibility. Parents and priesthood and auxiliary leaders should do all they can to reinforce this teaching.

Concerning the roles of fathers and mothers, Church leaders have taught: "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. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"). When there is no father in the home, the mother presides over the family.

Parents have a divinely appointed responsibility "to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"; see also Mosiah 4:14–15).

Wise parents teach their children to apply the healing, reconciling, and strengthening power of the Atonement within their family. Just as sin, mortal weaknesses, emotional hurt, and anger are conditions that separate God's children from Him, these same conditions can separate family members from each other. Each family member has a responsibility to strive for family unity. Children who learn to strive for unity at home will find it easier to do so outside the home.

### 1.3.3 Unmarried Members of the Church

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 become worthy spouses and loving fathers or mothers. In some cases

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.

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## 1.4 The Home and the Church

In the teachings and practices of the restored gospel, the family and the Church help and strengthen each other. To qualify for the blessings of eternal life, families need to learn the doctrines and receive the priesthood ordinances that are available only through the Church. To be a strong and vital organization, the Church needs righteous families.

God has revealed a pattern of spiritual progress for individuals and families through ordinances, teaching, programs, and activities that are home centered and Church supported. Church organizations and programs exist to bless individuals and families and are not ends in themselves. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders and teachers seek to assist parents, not to supersede or replace them.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders must endeavor to strengthen the sacredness of the home by ensuring that all Church activities support the lives of individuals and families. Church leaders need to be careful not to overwhelm families with too many Church responsibilities. Parents and Church leaders work together to help individuals and families return to our Father in Heaven by following Jesus Christ.

### 1.4.1 Strengthening the Home

Followers of Christ are invited to "gather," "stand in holy places," and "be not moved" (D&C 45:32; 87:8; 101:22; see also 2 Chronicles 35:5; Matthew 24:15). These holy places include temples, homes, and chapels. The presence of the Spirit and the behavior of those within these physical structures are what make them "holy places."

Wherever Church members live, they should establish a home where the Spirit is present. All members of the Church can make efforts to ensure that their place of residence provides a place of sanctuary from the world. Every home in the Church, large or small, 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" (D&C 88:119). Church members can invite the Spirit into their homes through simple means such as wholesome entertainment, good music, and inspiring artwork (for example, a painting of the Savior or a temple).

A home with loving and loyal parents is the setting in which the spiritual and physical needs of children are most effectively met. A Christ-centered home offers adults and children a place of defense against sin, refuge from the world, healing from emotional and other pain, and committed, genuine love.

Parents have always been commanded to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4; Enos 1:1) and "in light and truth" (D&C 93:40). The First Presidency proclaimed:

"We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility.

"We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform" (First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999).

Parents have the primary responsibility for helping their children know Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (see John 17:3). Latter-day Saint fathers and mothers have been commanded to teach gospel doctrines, ordinances, covenants, and ways of righteous living to their children (see D&C 68:25–28). Children who are so reared and taught are more likely to be prepared at the appropriate age to receive priesthood ordinances and to make and keep covenants with God.

Strengthening families is the focus of inspired Church programs such as home teaching

(see D&C 20:47, 51), visiting teaching, and family home evening. As in all things, Jesus set the example of entering homes to minister, teach, and bless (see Matthew 8:14–15; 9:10–13; 26:6; Mark 5:35–43; Luke 10:38–42; 19:1–9).

#### 1.4.2 Family Home Evening

Latter-day prophets have counseled parents to hold a weekly family home evening to teach their children the gospel, bear testimony of its truthfulness, and strengthen family unity. Stake and ward leaders are to keep Monday evenings free from all Church meetings and activities so family home evenings may be held.

Family home evening may include family prayer, gospel instruction, testimony sharing, hymns and Primary songs, and wholesome recreational activities. (For information on using music in the home, see 14.8.) As part of family home evening, or separately, parents may also call a periodic family council to set goals, resolve problems, coordinate schedules, and give support and strength to family members.

Family home evening is sacred, private family time under the direction of the parents. Priesthood leaders should not give directions as to what families should do during this time.

#### 1.4.3 Strengthening Individuals

Church leaders should give special attention to individuals who do not presently enjoy the support of a family of strong Church members. These members may include children and youth whose parents are not members of the Church, other individuals in part-member families, and single adults of all ages. They are covenant members of God's eternal family, deeply loved by Him. These individuals should be given opportunities for service in the Church. The Church can provide wholesome sociality and fellowship that these members can find nowhere else.

Every member of the Church is as precious as every other. God's eternal plan provides for all of His faithful children to receive every blessing of eternal life, exalted in families forever.



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## 2. Priesthood Principles

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## 2. Priesthood Principles

The priesthood is the power and authority of God. It has always existed and will continue to exist without end (see Alma 13:7–8; D&C 84:17–18). Through the priesthood, God created and governs the heavens and the earth. Through this power, He exalts His obedient children, bringing to pass “the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39; see also D&C 84:35–38).

In mortality, the priesthood is the power and authority that God gives to man to act in all things necessary for the salvation of God’s children. The blessings of the priesthood are available to all who receive the gospel.

Important scripture passages on the priesthood for leaders to study include Alma 13 and Doctrine and Covenants 13, 20, 84, 107, 121, and 124.

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### 2.1 Priesthood Authority

The priesthood is divided into two parts: the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The Aaronic Priesthood is the lesser priesthood and is “an appendage to . . . the Melchizedek Priesthood” (see D&C 107:13–14). It is called the Aaronic Priesthood because it was conferred upon Moses’s brother Aaron and Aaron’s sons.

The Aaronic Priesthood includes the keys of the ministering of angels, the gospel of repentance, and baptism by immersion for the remission of sins (see D&C 13:1; 84:26–27; 107:20). Those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood may be authorized to administer the “outward ordinances” of baptism and the sacrament (see D&C 107:14). The bishop is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward. As part of this responsibility, he administers temporal matters such as welfare and finances in the ward (see D&C 107:68).

The Melchizedek Priesthood is the higher or greater priesthood. It is present and functional whenever the Church of Jesus Christ is upon the earth in its fulness. It was first called “*the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*.” But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood” (D&C 107:3–4).

Melchizedek was “a great high priest” (D&C 107:2) who lived during the time of Abraham.

Through the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Church leaders guide the Church, direct the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, and administer all the spiritual work of the Church (see D&C 84:19–22; 107:18). The President of the Church is the presiding high priest over the Melchizedek Priesthood.

When a man receives the Melchizedek Priesthood, he covenants to be faithful, to magnify his callings, and to live by every word of God and His servants (see D&C 84:33–44).

#### 2.1.1 Priesthood Keys

Priesthood keys are the authority God has given to priesthood leaders to direct, control, and govern the use of His priesthood on earth. The exercise of priesthood authority is governed by those who hold its keys (see D&C 65:2; 81:2; 124:123). Those who hold priesthood keys have the right to preside over and direct the Church within a jurisdiction.

Jesus Christ holds all the keys of the priesthood pertaining to His Church. He has conferred upon 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 priesthood keys (see D&C 43:1–4; 81:2; 107:64–67, 91–92; 132:7).

Seventies act by assignment and by the delegation of authority from the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Area Presidents are assigned to administer areas under the authorization of the First Presidency and the Twelve. The Presidency of the Seventy are set apart and are given the keys to preside over the Quorums of Seventy.

The President of the Church delegates priesthood keys to other priesthood leaders so they can preside in their areas of responsibility. Priesthood keys are bestowed on presidents of temples, missions, stakes, and districts; bishops; branch presidents; and quorum presidents. This presiding authority is valid only for the designated responsibilities and within the geographic jurisdiction of each leader’s calling. When priesthood leaders are released from their callings, they no longer hold the associated keys.

Counselors to priesthood leaders do not receive keys. They are set apart and function in their callings by assignment and delegated authority.

All ward and stake auxiliary organizations operate under the direction of the bishop or stake president, who holds the keys to preside. Auxiliary presidents and their counselors do not receive keys. They receive delegated authority to function in their callings.

### 2.1.2 Ordinances

Priesthood authority is required to perform the ordinances of the gospel. An ordinance is a sacred physical act with symbolic meaning, such as baptism, confirmation, or the sacrament. Each ordinance opens the door to rich spiritual blessings. The symbolism helps the participants remember the Father's love, the Son's Atonement, and the Holy Ghost's influence.

Ordinances have always been part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Baptism, for example, was established in the days of Adam and Eve and is practiced in the Lord's Church today. Church members are commanded to gather together often to partake of the sacrament to remember the Savior always and to renew the covenants and blessings of baptism (see Moroni 6:6; D&C 59:8–9).

Some ordinances are required for exaltation in the celestial kingdom for all accountable persons. These ordinances include baptism, confirmation, Melchizedek Priesthood ordination (for men), the temple endowment, and temple sealing. Living members of the Church receive these saving and exalting ordinances themselves. Deceased persons may receive them vicariously. Vicarious ordinances become effective only when the deceased persons for whom the ordinances were performed accept them in the spirit world and honor the related covenants.

For specific information on performing ordinances and on obtaining necessary authorizations, see chapter 20.

### 2.1.3 Covenants

All the ordinances necessary for salvation and exaltation are accompanied by covenants with God. A covenant is a sacred and enduring promise between God and His children. God gives the conditions for the covenant, and His children agree to comply with those conditions. God promises blessings that are conditional on the person faithfully fulfilling the covenant.

As Church members honor and keep their covenants, they are greatly blessed in mortality and become eligible for exaltation (see Exodus 19:3–5; Judges 2:1; 3 Nephi 20:25–27; Moroni 10:33; D&C 42:78; 97:8).

To prepare an individual for participation in an ordinance, parents, other family members, priesthood and auxiliary leaders, and teachers ensure that the person understands the covenants he or she will make (see Mosiah 18:8–11). After the ordinance, they help him or her keep those covenants (see Mosiah 18:23–26).

## 2.2 The Purpose of the Church

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized by God to assist in His work to bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of His children. The Church invites all to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32; see also D&C 20:59). The invitation to come unto Christ pertains to all who have lived, or will ever live, on the earth.

When individuals receive the ordinances of baptism and confirmation, they become members of the Church. The Church supports them and their families by serving as “a refuge from the storm” of worldly influences and wickedness (D&C 115:6). The Church provides opportunities for service, blessing, and personal growth. The programs and activities of the Church support and strengthen individuals and families.

In fulfilling its purpose to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation, the Church focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities. These include helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ, gathering Israel through missionary work, caring for the poor and needy, and enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances.

## 2.3 The Priesthood and the Family

Each husband and father in the Church should strive to be worthy to hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. With his wife as an equal partner, he presides in righteousness and love, serving as the family's spiritual leader. He leads the family in regular prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. He works with his wife to teach their children and help them prepare to receive the ordinances of salvation (see D&C 68:25–28). He gives priesthood blessings for direction, healing, and comfort.



Many members do not have faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holders in their homes. Church leaders should give special attention to loving and supporting these members through inspired, watchful care, including home teaching and visiting teaching.

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## 2.4 Use of Priesthood Authority

### 2.4.1 Receiving Authority

For information about ordaining brethren to priesthood offices, see 20.7. For information about the process of calling, sustaining, and setting apart members to serve in Church callings, see chapter 19.

### 2.4.2 Delegating Authority

Priesthood leaders can delegate authority by assigning others to assist them in fulfilling a calling. For information on delegating, see 3.3.4.

### 2.4.3 Exercising Priesthood Authority Righteously

The priesthood should be used to bless the lives of others. Effective priesthood leaders preside in love and kindness. They do not try to force their will upon others. Rather, they counsel with others and try to come to a consensus through revelation. The Lord has said that the power of the priesthood cannot be used except in righteousness (see D&C 121:36). The proper

use of the priesthood is by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, sincere love, and kindness (see D&C 121:36, 41–42). If a man tries to abuse priesthood power, “the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:37).

### 2.4.4 Presiding Councils

Councils provide a means for leaders to come together in unity and faith to collectively seek the Lord’s will. Councils also provide an opportunity to coordinate the work of quorums and auxiliaries. Examples of presiding councils at the local level are stake presidencies, bishoprics, and priesthood executive committees. For information on how councils function, see 4.1.

### 2.4.5 Magnifying Priesthood Callings

Priesthood holders magnify their callings as they minister in their own homes and to other Saints and as they conscientiously fulfill assigned responsibilities. The Lord counseled, “Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence” (D&C 107:99). Priesthood holders magnify their callings as they serve with diligence, teach with faith and testimony, and lift, strengthen, and nurture convictions of righteousness in the lives of those for whom they have responsibility.

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## 3. Leadership in the Church of Jesus Christ

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## 3. Leadership in the Church of Jesus Christ

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### 3.1 The Savior's Way of Leading

All Church leaders are called to help other people become “true followers of . . . Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48). To do this, leaders first strive to be the Savior’s faithful disciples, living each day so that they can return to live in God’s presence. Then they can help others develop strong testimonies and draw nearer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Church programs and activities help achieve these purposes.

Leaders can best teach others how to be “true followers” by their personal example. This pattern—being a faithful disciple in order to help others become faithful disciples—is the purpose behind every calling in the Church.

When leaders serve according to this pattern, they help Church members desire to be worthy of temple marriage and the blessing of an eternal family.

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### 3.2 Principles of Gospel Leadership

#### 3.2.1 Prepare Spiritually

The Savior commanded Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). When leaders are converted and are growing spiritually, they can help others become converted and grow spiritually.

Leaders prepare themselves spiritually as they keep the commandments, study the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets, pray, fast, and humble themselves before the Lord. With this preparation, they are able to receive inspiration to guide them in their personal lives, their family responsibilities, and their callings.

#### 3.2.2 Participate in Councils

In councils, leaders meet under the direction of presiding officers to discuss ways to help individuals and families. Guided by the Holy Ghost, they work together to determine effective ways to serve members of their organizations. Some examples of councils in the Church are the ward council, the stake council, bishoprics, and quorum and auxiliary presidencies. For guidance on participating in councils, see chapter 4.

#### 3.2.3 Minister to Others

Like the Savior, leaders seek to minister to individuals and families, both spiritually and temporally. They care about each person, not just about managing an organization. They reach out to new members, less-active members, and those who may be lonely or in need of comfort.

The purpose of ministering is to help others become true followers of Jesus Christ. Ministering to others includes:

- Remembering their names and becoming acquainted with them (see Moroni 6:4).
- Loving them without judging them (see John 13:34–35).
- Watching over them and strengthening their faith “one by one,” as the Savior did (3 Nephi 11:15; 17:21).
- Establishing sincere friendship with them and visiting them in their homes and elsewhere (see D&C 20:47).

#### 3.2.4 Teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ

All leaders are teachers. Effective teaching inspires people to strengthen their relationship with God and live according to gospel principles.

Leaders’ most powerful teaching comes from their personal example. Leaders also teach by sharing their testimonies and conducting doctrinally based discussions in leadership meetings, classes, and activities. They teach from the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets. They know that “the preaching of the word . . . [has] more powerful effect . . . than the sword, or anything else” (Alma 31:5).

In addition to teaching the gospel themselves, priesthood and auxiliary leaders are responsible for the quality of learning and teaching in their organizations. They ensure that teaching in their classes is meaningful, edifying, and doctrinally sound.

For additional guidance on teaching the gospel and overseeing efforts to improve learning and teaching, see 5.5.

#### 3.2.5 Administer the Priesthood or Auxiliary Organization

Leaders are most effective in their efforts to strengthen others when they follow the Church’s

established guidelines. Guidelines for administering priesthood and auxiliary organizations are found in chapters 7–12.

### 3.3 Additional Instructions for Leaders

#### 3.3.1 Represent the Lord and His Church

Because Church leaders have been called by the Lord through His appointed servants, they represent Him and His Church. As representatives of the Savior, leaders look to Him as their example. He said: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).

#### 3.3.2 Build Unity and Harmony

The Lord has said, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). Presiding officers encourage unity by seeking counsel from the men and women who serve with them. Members of presidencies and councils help establish unity by sharing their honest feelings and ideas, communicating clearly, and listening to one another.

When leaders of Church organizations follow their priesthood leaders and when members of presidencies and councils are unified, they can receive guidance from the Holy Ghost and lead according to the Lord’s will.

#### 3.3.3 Prepare Others to Be Leaders and Teachers

In some wards, leaders rely repeatedly on a small group of people to give service in priesthood and auxiliary organizations. This can overburden the faithful few, and it can also deprive others of experiences that could help them learn and grow. Effective leaders give all members opportunities to serve.

As presiding officers prayerfully consider members to fill leadership and teaching positions, they should remember that the Lord will qualify those He calls. Members do not need to be highly experienced before serving as teachers and leaders. They can learn from experience, by exercising faith and working diligently, and by receiving instruction and support from leaders.

Presiding officers look for ways to give service opportunities to new members, members who are returning to Church activity, and young single adults. New and returning members are excited about the restored gospel, and they are often ready for opportunities to serve others and learn about the Church. Young single adults need opportunities to contribute to the Lord’s work and grow spiritually.

For information about recommending members to serve in Church callings, see 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

#### 3.3.4 Delegate Responsibility and Ensure Accountability

Individual leaders cannot and should not do everything themselves. Leaders who try to do too much will “surely wear away” (Exodus 18:18), and so will the people they serve. Leaders should delegate service opportunities to others, such as counselors, clerks, and members of councils or committees.

Delegation includes more than giving someone an assignment. It includes the following elements:

- Explaining the purposes of the assignment, suggesting ways it could be done, and explaining when it should be completed. The assigned person should understand and accept accountability to perform the assignment and report on it.
- Keeping a written record of the assignment and checking progress from time to time.
- Respecting the assigned person’s efforts to develop plans and fulfill the assignment. Leaders provide encouragement and assistance as needed.
- Asking the person to report back about the assignment. After receiving the report, the leader accepts the person’s best efforts and expresses appreciation for the good things the person has done.

#### 3.3.5 Warn against Sin but Love the Sinner

Leaders need to be firm and unyielding in their warnings against sinful behavior but merciful and kind to those who sin. They treat others as the Savior would treat them. Doing so helps members feel the Lord’s love for them as they apply the Atonement in their lives.

#### 3.3.6 Encourage Reverence

Reverence is a calm and peaceful attitude of worship and respect toward God. It leads to gospel learning and personal revelation. True reverence comes from within each individual.

Leaders can help cultivate a reverent atmosphere at Church gatherings. In sacrament meetings, stake conferences, and similar meetings, leaders set an example of reverence as they sit on the stand. Leaders also encourage reverence by arranging for worshipful music and inspiring talks. Teachers can encourage reverence in

classrooms by preparing inspiring lessons, arranging the rooms in advance, using appropriate pictures and music, and greeting class members in a peaceful, loving way. Worship services and Church classes are enhanced when the entire ward makes an effort to be reverent.

### 3.3.7 Prepare Written Agendas for Meetings

Written agendas can serve as guides for leaders as they discuss ways to serve others. If agendas are distributed before council or planning meetings, leaders will be more prepared for the discussions. Guidelines for preparing agendas for different meetings are found in chapter 4 and chapters 7–12.

### 3.3.8 Plan with Purpose

Leaders plan activities, lessons, and other efforts to bless the lives of ward members. They always plan with a purpose in mind so their efforts will benefit those they serve. In planning activities, leaders follow the principles in 13.1 and 13.2. In planning training and gospel teaching, they follow the principles in 5.5.

Leaders also make long-term plans for their organizations. This includes keeping an annual calendar, setting goals, and periodically evaluating progress in reaching those goals.

With help from secretaries, leaders maintain a written record of their plans and keep track of progress in completing assignments. After carrying out their plans, they evaluate how well the plans accomplished their purposes. This evaluation helps in future planning.

### 3.3.9 Use Church Resources to Learn Duties

Leaders use the following resources to help them learn and fulfill their duties:

- This handbook. Stake presidencies and bishops should become familiar with this entire handbook. Other leaders should become familiar with chapters 1–6, the chapters about their organizations, and any other information that relates to their responsibilities. The handbook teaches principles and practices that can help them serve effectively.
- Reports. Clerks and secretaries provide leaders with reports that show the progress of individuals and groups. This information helps leaders understand which people and organizations need their special attention.
- Instruction from local leaders. Soon after being sustained, every new leader should receive

an orientation about the calling. The leaders who give the orientation continue to provide instruction and support through leadership meetings and personal communication.

- Church training materials. These materials are available in the Serving in the Church section of LDS.org or from Church headquarters or the assigned administrative office.
- Church magazines and other Church publications.

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## 3.4 Leadership Purposes

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have established the following purposes for leaders to keep in mind as they magnify their callings.

Leaders encourage every member to receive all essential priesthood ordinances, keep the associated covenants, and qualify for exaltation and eternal life. Church leaders guide the efforts of priesthood quorums, auxiliaries, and stake and ward councils to help produce the following results:

**Families:** Teach the preeminence of the home and family as the basic organizational unit of the Church. Emphasize the place of the higher priesthood in helping individuals and families qualify for exaltation (see D&C 84:19–22). Encourage each family member—parents and children—to study the scriptures, pray regularly, and live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Adults:** Encourage each adult to be worthy to receive the ordinances of the temple. Teach all adults to identify their ancestors and perform vicarious temple ordinances for them.

**Youth:** Help prepare each young man to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to receive the ordinances of the temple, and to be worthy to serve a full-time mission. Help prepare each young woman to be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple. Strengthen youth through participation in meaningful activities.

**All Members:** Help priesthood and auxiliary leaders, ward councils, ward and full-time missionaries, and members work cooperatively in a balanced effort to rescue individuals, strengthen families and Church units, increase priesthood activity, and gather Israel through conversion, retention, and activation. Teach members to provide for themselves and their families and to assist the poor and needy in the Lord's way.

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## 4. The Ward Council

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## 4. The Ward Council

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### 4.1 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.

As the presiding high priest of the ward, the bishop presides over three related councils: the bishopric, the priesthood executive committee, and the ward council. This chapter provides an explanation of each of these.

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### 4.2 Bishopric

The bishopric has responsibility for all ward members, organizations, and activities. The bishopric usually meets at least weekly. The ward clerk and ward executive secretary attend. For suggested agenda items, see 18.2.6.

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

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### 4.3 Priesthood Executive Committee

The ward priesthood executive committee (PEC) includes the bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, high priests group leader, elders quorum president, ward mission leader, and Young Men president.

The PEC meets regularly to consider priesthood matters. Generally, the PEC need not consider matters that will be discussed by the ward council. However, it may be beneficial for the PEC to preview some matters that will be on the ward council's agenda. For convenience, the PEC could meet just before the ward council meeting.

As needed, the bishop may invite the Relief Society president to attend some ward PEC meetings to discuss confidential welfare matters and to coordinate home teaching and visiting teaching assignments.

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### 4.4 Ward Council

The ward council includes the bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, high priests group leader, elders quorum president, ward mission leader, and presidents of the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School.

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. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders 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 or auxiliary organization should be addressed by leaders in that organization, not by the entire ward council. Additionally, individual ward council members may raise sensitive or confidential matters privately with the bishop.

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### 4.5 The Work of the Ward Council

#### 4.5.1 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 home teachers, visiting teachers, and others in reaching out and ministering to 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:

1. 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.
2. Reports from home teachers and visiting teachers.
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.
4. Progress Record. Full-time missionaries use this form to record each investigator's progress. Missionaries share this information with the ward mission leader, who shares it with the ward council.

#### 4.5.2 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 13.

### 4.6 Ward Council Meetings

The ward council meets regularly (at least monthly). The meeting usually lasts 60 to 90 minutes.

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.

As recommended by the ward mission leader, the bishop may occasionally invite full-time missionaries to meet with the ward council.

#### 4.6.1 Guiding Principles

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders 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.

#### 4.6.2 Sample Agenda

Under the bishop's direction, the executive secretary prepares an agenda for ward council meeting. The bishop invites council members to contact the executive secretary to place items on the agenda. The executive secretary may also suggest agenda items, including those from previous meetings that may need additional discussion or follow-up. The executive secretary may also prepare a calendar of upcoming ward events for council members to review.

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

1. 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. Make plans to help them meet their needs, including long-term needs. Discuss how to strengthen families. For more information, see 6.2.2.
3. Missionary. Develop and review the ward mission plan (see 5.1.8). Using the Progress Record, review baptismal candidates and currently progressing investigators. The bishop may ask the ward mission leader to lead this review. For more information, see 5.1.2.
4. Convert retention. Review the progress of each new member listed on the New and Returning Member Progress form; plan ways to help them continue progressing (see 5.2.3).
5. Activation. Review the progress and fellowship of less-active members listed on the New and Returning Member Progress form; plan ways to help them continue progressing (see 5.3.2).
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. For more information, see 5.4.2.

7. Gospel learning and teaching. Discuss how to improve gospel learning and teaching in Church settings and in the home (see 5.5.2).
8. Reports on the work of the elders quorum, high priests group, and auxiliary organizations. This part of the meeting should be brief so it does not distract from the council's main focus on individuals.
9. Calendar and activity planning to help meet the spiritual, temporal, and social needs of ward members (see chapter 13).
10. Perpetual Education Fund (where the program is approved). Review the progress of participants in the program.
11. Concluding instruction from the bishopric.

#### 4.6.3 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.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders use their own leadership meetings to review ward council decisions and enlist the help of other leaders and teachers in their organization to fulfill council assignments. Similarly, the ward mission leader holds a missionary coordination meeting with the full-time missionaries and ward missionaries to carry out the decisions of the ward council. This work in the organizations is an extension of the spirit and purpose of the ward council.

When undertaking a course of action, council members should be careful to avoid overburdening individuals and families (see Mosiah 4:27; D&C 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.

#### 4.6.4 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 *Handbook 1*, 13.4.2.

#### 4.6.5 Responsibilities of the Executive Secretary

The executive secretary prepares agendas for ward council meetings as outlined in 4.6.2. 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.

The executive secretary can provide continuity between the ward council and the priesthood executive committee.

Other responsibilities of the ward executive secretary are outlined in *Handbook 1*, 13.4.4.



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## 5. The Work of Salvation in the Ward and Stake

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ are sent forth “to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men” (D&C 138:56). This work of salvation includes member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel. The bishopric directs this work in the ward, assisted by other members of the ward council.

Although the bishop retains ultimate responsibility in these areas, the ward mission leader coordinates member missionary work, the high priests group leader coordinates temple and family history work, and the Sunday School president assists other ward leaders in improving gospel learning and teaching. The bishop may assign one of his counselors to coordinate convert retention and the other to coordinate activation. Each priesthood or auxiliary leader assists in furthering the work of salvation in his or her organization.

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### 5.1 Member Missionary Work

#### 5.1.1 Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop directs the ward council in preparing and following a ward mission plan, as described in 5.1.8.

The bishop calls and sets apart a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to serve as the ward mission leader. The bishop and his counselors may call and set apart other members to serve as ward missionaries.

The bishop and his counselors give priority to member missionary work. They teach the doctrines of missionary work regularly. They encourage ward members to work with full-time missionaries to find, teach, and baptize investigators. They set an example by finding and preparing individuals and families for the missionaries to teach.

The bishop and his counselors help prospective full-time missionaries, including sisters and couples, prepare to serve missions.

#### 5.1.2 Ward Council

Member missionary work is most effective when ward council members are fully engaged in the missionary effort. In quorums and auxiliaries,

they encourage members to participate in missionary work in the following ways:

1. Find and prepare people to be taught.
2. Assist the missionaries when they teach (in members’ homes, if possible).
3. Fellowship investigators.
4. Prepare themselves and their children to serve as full-time missionaries.

In ward council meetings, members of the council develop and review the ward mission plan (see 5.1.8). They review baptismal candidates, other investigators, and other matters from the Progress Record prepared by the full-time missionaries. They make plans to help each investigator progress. They offer counsel about possible home teachers and visiting teachers for investigators who are preparing to be baptized and confirmed.

As recommended by the ward mission leader, the bishop may occasionally invite full-time missionaries to meet with the ward council.

#### 5.1.3 Ward Mission Leader

Under the bishop’s direction, the ward mission leader has the following responsibilities:

He coordinates the ward’s efforts to find, teach, and baptize investigators. He coordinates this work with the work of the full-time missionaries and ward missionaries. In ward council meetings, the bishop may ask him to lead discussions on missionary work.

He conducts missionary coordination meetings and directs the work of ward missionaries.

He arranges as many teaching opportunities for the full-time missionaries as possible each week.

He organizes convert baptismal services, assisted by the full-time missionaries (see 20.3.4).

He helps coordinate the confirmations of new members in sacrament meetings.

He participates with full-time missionaries in teaching and fellowshipping investigators.

He attends the Gospel Principles class, and he may teach the class when assigned by the bishopric.

A Melchizedek Priesthood holder may be called as an assistant ward mission leader.

#### 5.1.4 Ward Missionaries

The bishopric and the ward mission leader determine how many ward missionaries are needed in the ward. Ward missionaries serve under their direction. Priesthood holders, sisters, and married couples may serve as ward missionaries. They need not have assigned companions, but they should not go alone when visiting in homes. A man and a woman do not make visits together as ward missionaries unless they are husband and wife.

Ward missionaries are called to a specified term of service, such as two years. They normally do not have other Church responsibilities, except for assignments as home teachers or visiting teachers, preferably to part-member or less-active families. They do not wear name tags.

Ward missionaries find and prepare people for the full-time missionaries to teach. They also assist in fellowshipping and teaching investigators.

Ward missionaries visit members' homes to encourage members to seek missionary experiences, identify people the missionaries could teach, and prepare people to be taught.

#### 5.1.5 Missionary Coordination Meeting

The ward mission leader conducts a missionary coordination meeting with the ward missionaries and the full-time missionaries. The meeting is held regularly. If full-time missionaries serve in several wards, they attend as often as circumstances allow.

In this meeting, the ward mission leader coordinates the work of the full-time missionaries and the ward members. The ward mission leader may also lead discussions on implementing the ward mission plan, scheduling as many teaching appointments for the missionaries as possible, and arranging to have members present as often as possible when investigators are taught.

#### 5.1.6 Members and Full-Time Missionaries Working Together

The mission president holds the keys for baptizing and confirming converts. Under his direction, full-time missionaries have the primary responsibility for teaching investigators. Full-time missionaries also conduct baptism and confirmation interviews for each candidate and authorize the ordinances to take place.

The bishop becomes acquainted with all investigators and follows their progress. Although

he does not interview baptismal candidates, he meets with them personally before they are baptized. He also oversees ward members' efforts to fellowship them. Investigators are more likely to be baptized and confirmed and remain active when they have close friendships with Church members.

Normally, full-time missionary companions are not separated to work with ward members. However, they may be separated to work with members when necessary to fill a large number of teaching appointments. In such cases, the ward mission leader ensures that those who work as companions to full-time missionaries understand and accept mission rules. He instructs them that they must never leave a full-time missionary without an authorized companion.

#### 5.1.7 Baptismal Services and Confirmations

Baptismal services should be scheduled as soon as an investigator has committed to be baptized. The services should not normally be delayed past this date unless a person is not prepared. Baptisms of family members should not be delayed so the father can receive the priesthood and perform the baptisms himself.

A baptismal service offers the opportunity to find and encourage other investigators. Converts should be encouraged to invite their family members, other relatives, and friends. Church leaders and missionaries may also invite other investigators who are being taught, potential investigators, and leaders and members who will be working with the new members. Other ward members may also attend.

Converts are confirmed in a sacrament meeting in the ward where they live, preferably on the Sunday following their baptism.

Guidelines for baptismal services and confirmations, including guidelines for baptisms and confirmations of 8-year-olds, are found in 20.3.

#### 5.1.8 Ward Mission Plan

Under the direction of the bishop, the ward council develops a ward mission plan. The plan should be brief and simple. It should include specific goals and activities to help members of ward priesthood and auxiliary organizations participate in member missionary work, retention, and activation. The ward council coordinates the ward mission plan with the plans of the full-time missionaries assigned to the ward. The following steps may be helpful in this planning process:



1. Consider the needs and resources of the ward in member missionary work, retention, and activation, including the availability of full-time missionaries.
2. Set specific goals for member missionary work, retention, and activation to be accomplished within the next year.
3. Determine how to accomplish the goals. Leaders could plan ways to lift the ward's overall vision and attitude about missionary work. They could develop ideas for activities to help the full-time missionaries find, teach, and baptize more investigators. They could also plan ways to befriend and strengthen new members and improve the activation of less-active members.

The ward council reviews the ward mission plan regularly and revises it as needed.

### 5.1.9 Stake Leaders

#### Stake President and His Counselors

The stake president and his counselors give priority to missionary work. They teach the doctrines of missionary work regularly and encourage stake members to work with full-time missionaries to find, teach, and baptize investigators. They set an example by finding and preparing individuals and families for the missionaries to teach.

In his regular interview with each bishop, the stake president asks for a report on the progress of investigators in the bishop's ward.

The stake president meets regularly with the mission president to coordinate the work of full-time missionaries in the stake. Matters to discuss include the number and location of missionaries, the role of members in missionary work, the assistance of missionaries in retention and activation efforts, the assistance of missionaries in training local members, and meals, housing, and transportation for missionaries.

#### High Councilor Assigned to Missionary Work

The stake presidency assigns a missionary-oriented high councilor to assist them in overseeing the stake's efforts to find, teach, baptize, and confirm investigators. This high councilor may lead discussions on these topics in stake priesthood executive committee meetings, stake council meetings, stake priesthood leadership meetings, and other stake meetings.

The high councilor assigned to missionary work orients newly called ward mission leaders.

He also provides ongoing instruction and encouragement to all ward mission leaders, both individually and as a group. With the stake president's approval, he may train ward leaders and ward missionaries.

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## 5.2 Convert Retention

New Church members need the support and friendship of Church leaders, home teachers, visiting teachers, and other members. This support helps new members become firmly "converted unto the Lord" (Alma 23:6).

### 5.2.1 Needs of New Members

The transition to Church membership is challenging for most people. It often involves embracing new religious teachings and a new way of life. All members of the Church, particularly new members, need three things to help them stay active in the Church: friendship, opportunities to mature and serve in the Church, and nourishing by the word of God (see Moroni 6:4). Under the bishopric's direction, priesthood and auxiliary leaders help new members in these areas.

### 5.2.2 Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop has overall responsibility for convert retention. To help new members remain active in the Church, the bishop and his counselors have the following responsibilities. The bishop may assign one of his counselors to coordinate these efforts.

They oversee efforts to ensure that each new member receives fellowship.

They ensure that each new adult member receives a calling or other opportunities to serve.

They ensure that brethren ages 12 and older are ordained to the appropriate Aaronic Priesthood office soon after their confirmation, normally within a week. They also see that these brethren receive opportunities to exercise the priesthood. Brethren who are worthy to be baptized and confirmed are also worthy to receive the Aaronic Priesthood.

The bishop and his counselors oversee the work of the high priests group leader and the elders quorum president in helping brethren ages 18 and older prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Recently baptized brethren ages 18 and older are ordained elders after they have served as priests, developed sufficient understanding of the gospel, and demonstrated

their worthiness. No specific time as a member is required.

### 5.2.3 Ward Council

In ward council meetings, members of the council review their goals for convert retention as outlined in the ward mission plan (see 5.1.8). They discuss the progress of each new member and identify areas where he or she may need more support. They may use the New and Returning Member Progress form as a guide for this discussion. They counsel about ways to help new members feel the love of other members, the joy of serving in the Lord's kingdom, and the peace that comes through living gospel principles.

The ward council may discuss ways the ward mission leader can work with other priesthood and auxiliary leaders to strengthen new converts. Ward council members may also suggest possible opportunities for service that could be extended to new members, such as temple and family history work.

### 5.2.4 Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders

As directed by the bishopric, priesthood and auxiliary leaders provide opportunities that help new members mature spiritually and remain active in the Church. For example, the Relief Society president is responsible to assist adult female converts. Because an adult male convert is a prospective elder, either the elders quorum president or the high priests group leader is responsible to assist in his progress, as determined by the bishopric. When more than one family member joins the Church, priesthood and auxiliary leaders coordinate their efforts in ward council meetings.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders may help new members in the following ways:

They help new members understand and apply the doctrines and principles in the missionary lessons.

They ensure that new members learn basic Church practices, such as how to bear testimony, pay tithing and other offerings, live the law of the fast, give a talk, perform priesthood ordinances, participate in family history work, perform baptisms and confirmations for the dead (where possible), and serve as a home teacher or visiting teacher.

They ensure that new members have access to the scriptures, the Church magazines, and any

manuals they may need for the Church classes they attend.

If new members are eligible for seminary or institute, priesthood and auxiliary leaders help them enroll.

When new members become eligible to receive temple ordinances, priesthood and auxiliary leaders help them prepare, either in a temple preparation seminar or in some other way.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders may assign experienced members to help fellowship new members. Leaders might consider assigning members who relate well with the new members because of similar interests or because they have faced similar challenges.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders (or members they assign) note each week whether recently baptized members who belong to their quorum or auxiliary are present in sacrament meeting. They make assignments to visit those who are not attending and invite them to attend the following week.

### 5.2.5 Home Teachers and Visiting Teachers

Home teachers and visiting teachers have important responsibilities to establish friendships with new members. In consultation with the bishop, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders give high priority to assigning dedicated home teachers and visiting teachers to new members.

When authorized by the mission president, full-time missionaries may assist in home teaching or visiting teaching new members.

### 5.2.6 Ward Missionaries and Full-Time Missionaries

While retention is primarily the responsibility of ward priesthood and auxiliary leaders, ward missionaries and full-time missionaries assist in this work. Ward missionaries teach the first four missionary lessons again to all new members (see *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 3). They also teach lesson 5. Ward missionaries may be assisted by the full-time missionaries as needed.

### 5.2.7 Influence of Other Ward Members

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders encourage ward members to strengthen new members by showing love and establishing friendships. Leaders may encourage ward members to invite recent converts to attend family home evenings, Church meetings, classes, and activities with them, providing transportation if needed.



### 5.2.8 Gospel Principles Class

New members ages 18 and older attend the Gospel Principles class during Sunday School, along with investigators. New members usually attend the Gospel Principles class for a few months. When they are ready, they attend the Gospel Doctrine class.

The ward mission leader attends the Gospel Principles class. He coordinates the class with other retention efforts in the ward. A member of the bishopric may assign him to teach it. Other ward missionaries may also attend.

Home teachers, visiting teachers, and other members may attend the class to provide fellowship. Occasionally the teacher may invite other ward members to attend and share experiences and testimony. For example, the teacher may invite ward members to share their testimonies of the blessings of tithing, their experiences in overcoming challenges, or the blessings they have received as they have served in Church callings.

The teachers of this course have the following responsibilities:

They select and teach lessons from *Gospel Principles*. As they teach, they use the scriptures often, especially the Book of Mormon. They adapt lessons to class members' needs and invite class members to share their thoughts and experiences.

They create an atmosphere that invites the Spirit, frequently bearing testimony.

They encourage class members to read the Book of Mormon regularly and to share impressions from their reading.

### 5.2.9 Stake Leaders

#### Stake President and His Counselors

Members of the stake presidency oversee efforts to strengthen new members in the stake. They instruct and encourage other leaders in these efforts. They meet new members when they visit wards. They may occasionally hold a meeting for new members in connection with a stake conference.

In his regular interview with each bishop, the stake president asks for a report on the progress of new members in the bishop's ward.

In his regular meeting with the mission president, the stake president may give a report on the progress of new members in the stake.

#### High Councilors

High councilors who work with ward Melchizedek Priesthood leaders and high councilors who work with ward mission leaders may help teach and fellowship new members. They may also participate in efforts to help prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.

#### Stake Auxiliary Presidencies

Stake auxiliary presidencies may occasionally work with ward auxiliary leaders in teaching and fellowshiping new members.

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## 5.3 Activation

Ward priesthood and auxiliary leaders strive continually to help less-active members return to Church activity. The Savior said, "Unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them" (3 Nephi 18:32).

Less-active members usually still believe in the gospel, but they may be experiencing difficult trials that make them feel uncomfortable attending church. They also tend to have fewer friendships in the Church, so they are less likely to feel they are among friends when they go to ward meetings. Those who return to activity often do so when they see that something is missing from their lives. As a result, they realize that they need to make changes in the way they live. At such times, they need the love and friendship of caring, active Church members who accept them as they are and show genuine personal interest in them.

### 5.3.1 Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop and his counselors have the overall responsibility for activation. They direct the efforts of priesthood quorums and auxiliaries to help less-active members rekindle faith and to ensure that returning members receive fellowship and support. They help returning brethren advance in the priesthood, and they help brethren and sisters receive temple ordinances or become worthy to enter the temple again.

The bishop may assign one of his counselors to coordinate activation.

**5.3.2 Ward Council**

Under the bishopric's direction, members of the ward council review their goals for activation as outlined in the ward mission plan (see 5.1.8). They share recommendations for ministering to less-active members in their organizations. By being continually aware of the needs and circumstances of less-active members, ward council members can discern when families and individuals might be ready to respond to an invitation to receive Church visitors, attend a Church activity, or participate in a temple preparation seminar.

The ward council prayerfully identifies the less-active members who are the most likely to return to activity. They also decide which leaders and members could best strengthen less-active members and build personal relationships with them. When more than one family member is less active, leaders coordinate their efforts in ward council meetings.

Ward council meetings regularly include reports on the progress of these members. As some members return to activity or decline invitations to return, the ward council identifies others who may be receptive. Leaders may use the New and Returning Member Progress form to keep track of these efforts.

**5.3.3 Home Teachers and Visiting Teachers**

In consultation with the bishop, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders assign dedicated home teachers and visiting teachers to less-active members. These leaders focus their efforts on the less-active members who are most likely to respond to invitations to return to activity.

**5.3.4 Full-Time Missionaries and Ward Missionaries**

The ward mission leader, full-time missionaries, and ward missionaries may assist with activation efforts when appropriate, especially when their teaching of less-active members will create opportunities for the missionaries to teach these members' nonmember friends or relatives.

**5.3.5 Gospel Principles Class**

Less-active members ages 18 and older may attend the Gospel Principles class during Sunday School (see 5.2.8).

**5.3.6 Stake Leaders****Stake President and His Counselors**

In his regular interview with each bishop, the stake president asks for a report on the progress of less-active members in the bishop's ward. The stake president and the bishop discuss the plans and goals prepared by the ward council for these members.

When the stake president and mission president meet to discuss missionary work, they may also discuss the assistance full-time missionaries can give in working with less-active members.

**High Councilors**

High councilors who work with ward Melchizedek Priesthood leaders may help teach and fellowship less-active members. They may also participate in efforts to help prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.

**Stake Auxiliary Presidencies**

Stake auxiliary presidencies may occasionally work with ward auxiliary leaders in teaching and fellowshiping less-active members.

**5.4 Temple and Family History Work**

In temples, Church members receive ordinances and make sacred covenants that are essential for exaltation. Church members also go to temples to perform ordinances in behalf of deceased persons who have not received the ordinances.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders teach ward members about basic responsibilities in temple and family history work, as outlined in the following paragraphs:

They encourage members to receive their own temple ordinances and help immediate family members receive theirs. Leaders teach members that the purpose of the endowment is to prepare for exaltation, not merely to prepare for marriage or a mission.

Leaders encourage each endowed member to hold a current temple recommend and go to the temple as often as circumstances and family needs allow. Leaders also encourage unendowed adults and youth ages 12 and older, including new members, to have limited-use temple recommends and go to the temple often to be baptized and confirmed for the dead. Leaders do not establish quotas or reporting systems for temple

attendance. Each member determines his or her own level of participation in temple work.

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders teach members to participate in family history work by identifying their ancestral family members, requesting temple ordinances for them if needed, and providing these ordinances in the temple themselves if possible.

Leaders help members understand that they should not request that temple ordinances be performed for any unrelated person without the approval of the person's closest living relative. Leaders also help members understand that they should not make such requests for famous people who are not related to them or for people whose information has been gathered from unapproved indexing projects.

#### 5.4.1 **Bishop and His Counselors**

The bishop and his counselors oversee temple and family history work in the ward. They ensure that the doctrines and blessings of temple and family history work are taught regularly in ward meetings.

As the bishop meets with members, he helps them prepare to receive the ordinances of the temple and qualify to continue going to the temple as often as circumstances allow.

The bishop and his counselors encourage members to identify their ancestral family members and provide temple ordinances for them.

Other responsibilities of the bishopric related to temple work are outlined in *Handbook 1*, chapter 3.

#### 5.4.2 **Ward Council**

At least quarterly in a ward council meeting, leaders consider matters relating to temple and family history work, as follows:

They discuss ways to help individuals and families receive the ordinances of the temple and go to the temple as often as circumstances allow.

They prayerfully consider ward members who may be invited to participate in temple preparation seminars or work with family history consultants.

They discuss ways to help members participate in family history work.

They may discuss ways to use family history work to find people for the full-time missionaries to teach and to reach out to new members and less-active members.

#### 5.4.3 **High Priests Group Leader**

The high priests group leader coordinates the ward council's efforts to encourage temple and family history work in the ward.

The high priests group leader also coordinates the work of family history consultants. If the stake has a family history center, he assigns consultants to serve as staff members there as requested by the family history center director. If the stake participates in FamilySearch indexing, he recommends individuals to serve as FamilySearch indexing workers.

If a ward does not have a high priests group leader, the elders quorum president or another assigned Melchizedek Priesthood holder fills this role.

#### 5.4.4 **Family History Consultants**

Under the direction of the high priests group leader, family history consultants have the following responsibilities. They use the *Member's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* as a resource.

They help members identify ancestral family members. They help members prepare information so that temple ordinances may be performed for their ancestral family members. They help members who do not have access to computers or who are uncomfortable using computers. Where possible, they provide this assistance in members' homes.

They serve regularly as staff members in a local family history center, as assigned. They may also be assigned to teach family history classes in the ward.

For additional information on the responsibilities of family history consultants, see the *Family History Consultant's Guide to Temple and Family History Work*, which is available on LDS.org.

#### 5.4.5 **Temple and Family History Classes and Resources**

##### **Temple Preparation Seminars**

Temple preparation seminars help members prepare to receive the ordinances and blessings of the temple. These seminars are planned under the bishop's direction. They are taught at the meetinghouse or in a home as often as needed.

Temple preparation seminars are especially helpful for new members, less-active members returning to Church activity, and endowed members who have not renewed their recommends for an extended time. The seminars may also be

helpful for active members who are preparing to receive the endowment.

Under the bishop's direction, ward council members prayerfully select members to invite to each seminar.

The bishopric calls one or more teachers, who may be a husband and wife. Lessons and instructions for organizing the course are in *Endowed from on High: Temple Preparation Seminar Teacher's Manual*. Participants in the seminar should receive their own copies of the booklet *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*.

### Family History Course

A family history course may be taught during Sunday School or at another time that is more convenient for members. This course is organized under the direction of the bishopric rather than the Sunday School president. The teacher uses the *Instructor's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* to teach the lessons. The teacher is usually a family history consultant assigned by the bishopric. Lessons are generally conducted as workshops in which members actually complete family history work.

### Access to Online Family History Resources

The Church's online family history resources help members identify their ancestral family members, organize ancestral information, and submit requests for temple ordinances to be performed for these family members. The majority of these resources are available through the Church's family history Internet site, FamilySearch.org.

Where a stake or ward meetinghouse has computers with Internet access, or where family history programs are installed on stake or ward computers, the stake presidency and bishopric ensure that these computers are available for members to use at reasonable times. Family history consultants can help schedule the computers and teach members how to use them.

Members who use Church administrative computers for family history work should not have access to membership or financial information.

## 5.4.6 Stake Leaders

### Stake President and His Counselors

The stake president and his counselors oversee temple and family history work in the stake.

They ensure that the doctrines and blessings of this work are taught regularly in stake meetings.

As the stake president meets with members, he helps them prepare to receive the ordinances of the temple and qualify to continue going to the temple as often as circumstances allow.

The stake president and his counselors encourage members to identify their ancestral family members and provide temple ordinances for them.

Other responsibilities of the stake presidency related to temple work are outlined in *Handbook 1*, chapter 3.

### High Councilor(s) Assigned to Temple and Family History Work

The stake presidency may assign one or more high councilors to instruct high priests group and elders quorum leaders in their temple and family history responsibilities. As needed, these high councilors also coordinate the stake's efforts in FamilySearch indexing and at family history centers.

## 5.4.7 Temple and Family History Resources in the Stake

### FamilySearch Indexing Program in the Stake

In FamilySearch indexing, participants use their computers to access images of documents such as census records, church registers, and vital records. From these images, they create automated indexes that are then made accessible through FamilySearch.org.

Individuals, including those who are not members of the Church, can do FamilySearch indexing on their own. However, the stake presidency may determine that it would be beneficial for stake members to work together in an indexing program. Such an effort can provide service opportunities for members who are less active or homebound. Youth may also participate.

For information on establishing a FamilySearch indexing program, see the *Administrative Guide for Family History*, which is available on LDS.org.

### Family History Centers

Some stakes have family history centers, which exist primarily to help Church members identify their ancestral family members and provide temple ordinances for them. Community patrons are also welcome to use the resources at family history centers.



These centers provide access to the Church's microfilmed family history records, to family history computer and Internet resources such as FamilySearch, and to training on how to do family history work.

For more information about family history centers, see the *Administrative Guide for Family History*, which is available on LDS.org.

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## 5.5 Teaching the Gospel

Effective gospel teaching helps people grow in their testimonies and their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It strengthens members in their efforts to live according to gospel principles. When God's word is taught with spiritual power, it has a "more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than . . . anything else" (Alma 31:5). Priesthood and auxiliary leaders encourage effective teaching in their organizations. They remember that Church members attend meetings seeking the power, peace, and inspiration provided by the word of God.

### 5.5.1 Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop and his counselors teach the gospel by the power of the Spirit and by personal example. They direct the ward council's efforts to ensure that teaching in the ward is edifying and doctrinally correct.

### 5.5.2 Ward Council

Under the direction of the bishopric, members of the ward council regularly counsel together about how to improve gospel learning and teaching in the ward. The bishop may invite the Sunday School president to lead these discussions and provide instruction.

### 5.5.3 Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders strive to teach the gospel effectively. They are also responsible for efforts to improve learning and teaching in their organizations. In these efforts, they may counsel with the ward Sunday School presidency.

#### Recommending Members to Serve as Teachers

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders submit recommendations to the bishopric for ward members to be called to serve as teachers in their organizations. Leaders should recommend teachers who will strive to prepare lessons that will inspire class members to live according to gospel

principles. In doing so, they follow the principles in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

#### Orienting Newly Called Teachers

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders meet individually with newly called teachers in their organizations, preferably before each teacher's first lesson. In these meetings, leaders orient teachers as follows:

They help teachers begin to become acquainted with class members, if needed. They give teachers a list of the class members and encourage teachers to learn class members' names. They also encourage teachers to build caring relationships with class members.

They help teachers understand how to use *Teaching, No Greater Call*. They give each teacher a copy of the book and share a brief overview of its contents.

As needed, they help teachers understand how to prepare a lesson. They give teachers the approved curriculum materials for their classes and explain how to use them. They also review the article titled "Preparing Lessons" on pages 98–99 in *Teaching, No Greater Call*. (For a list of approved curriculum materials and instructions on how to order them, see the current *Instructions for Curriculum*.)

#### Providing Ongoing Support for Teachers

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders develop a supportive and caring relationship with teachers. After their initial orientation meeting, leaders regularly meet with individual teachers to learn of the teachers' needs, discuss the needs of those they teach, and review the principles outlined in this section. They encourage teachers to set goals according to the article titled "Making a Plan to Improve Your Teaching" on pages 24–27 in *Teaching, No Greater Call*.

#### Ensuring That Teaching Is Edifying and Doctrinally Correct

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders carefully observe the learning and teaching during Sunday classes and other lessons. Leaders who do not regularly attend each class, such as members of the Sunday School and Primary presidencies, arrange with teachers to attend the classes occasionally. Based on their observations, leaders counsel with teachers on how to improve the learning in the classes.

Leaders ensure that teachers use the scriptures, the teachings of latter-day prophets, and

the approved curriculum materials as outlined in the current *Instructions for Curriculum*. They help teachers understand how to supplement the curriculum with Church magazines, particularly the general conference issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona*.

#### 5.5.4 Teachers and Leaders

As teachers and leaders teach the gospel, they are guided by the following principles.

##### Love Those You Teach

Teachers and leaders show love and sincere concern for those they teach. They learn class members' names. They review attendance information so they can be aware of class members who are not attending regularly. They may contact these members outside of class to encourage them in their participation.

##### Teach by the Spirit

Teachers and leaders seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost in preparing and teaching lessons. They seek this guidance by praying and humbly recognizing their dependence on the Lord. During lessons, they invite the Spirit by bearing testimony of the doctrines they teach.

##### Teach the Doctrine

Teachers and leaders use the scriptures, the teachings of latter-day prophets, and approved curriculum materials to teach and testify of the doctrines of the gospel. Approved curriculum materials for each class or quorum are listed in the current *Instructions for Curriculum*. As needed, teachers and leaders supplement curriculum materials with Church magazines, particularly the general conference issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona*.

##### Invite Diligent Learning

Teachers and leaders encourage class members to be responsible for their own gospel learning as individuals, in their families, and during

class instruction. They encourage class members to bring their own copies of the scriptures to class where possible. Teachers and leaders provide opportunities for class members to actively participate in discussions, and they invite class members to live the gospel and receive the promised blessings.

#### 5.5.5 Ward Sunday School President and His Counselors

Members of the ward Sunday School presidency serve as resources to help other leaders with efforts to strengthen gospel learning and teaching. They may be invited to assist leaders in orienting, instructing, and providing ongoing support for teachers.

#### 5.5.6 Printed and Online Resources for Learning and Teaching

To help members improve in learning and teaching the gospel, the Church provides two publications: *Teaching, No Greater Call* and the *Teaching Guidebook*. These resources are available in print and on LDS.org. Other resources are also available on LDS.org.

#### 5.5.7 Course on Teaching the Gospel

The bishopric and the ward council may periodically decide to hold the Teaching the Gospel course in the ward. This course can benefit current teachers and help prepare future teachers. The course is usually held during Sunday School. The lessons for the course are found on pages 186–239 of *Teaching, No Greater Call*. The bishopric assigns the Sunday School presidency to teach the course or calls another member to do so.

#### 5.5.8 Stake President and His Counselors

The stake president and his counselors teach the gospel by the power of the Spirit and by personal example. They direct efforts to ensure that teaching in the stake is edifying and doctrinally correct.



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## 6. Welfare Principles and Leadership

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## 6. Welfare Principles and Leadership

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### 6.1 Purposes of Church Welfare

The purposes of Church welfare are to help members become self-reliant, to care for the poor and needy, and to give service.

In 1936 the First Presidency outlined a welfare plan for the Church. They said: "Our primary purpose was to set up . . . a system under which the curse of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3).

#### 6.1.1 Self-Reliance

Self-reliance is the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family. As members become self-reliant, they are also better able to serve and care for others.

Church members are responsible for their own spiritual and temporal well-being. Blessed with the gift of agency, they have the privilege and duty to set their own course, solve their own problems, and strive to become self-reliant. Members do this under the inspiration of the Lord and with the labor of their own hands.

When Church members are doing all they can to provide for themselves but cannot meet their basic needs, generally they should first turn to their families for help. When this is not sufficient or feasible, the Church stands ready to help.

Some of the areas in which members should become self-reliant are outlined in the following paragraphs.

#### Health

The Lord has commanded members to take care of their minds and bodies. They should obey the Word of Wisdom, eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, control their weight, and get adequate sleep. They should shun substances or practices that abuse their bodies or minds and that could lead to addiction. They should practice good sanitation and hygiene and obtain adequate medical and dental care. They should also

strive to cultivate good relationships with family members and others.

#### Education

Education provides understanding and skills that can help people develop self-reliance. Church members should study the scriptures and other good books. They should improve in their ability to read, write, and do basic mathematics. They should obtain as much education as they can, including formal or technical schooling where possible. This will help them develop their talents, find suitable employment, and make a valuable contribution to their families, the Church, and the community.

#### Employment

Work is the foundation upon which self-reliance and temporal well-being rest. Members should prepare for and carefully select a suitable occupation or self-employment that will provide for their own and their families' needs. They should become skilled at their work, be diligent and trustworthy, and give honest work for the pay and benefits they receive.

#### Home Storage

To help care for themselves and their families, members should build a three-month supply of food that is part of their normal diet. Where local laws and circumstances permit, they should gradually build a longer-term supply of basic foods that will sustain life. They should also store drinking water in case the water supply becomes polluted or disrupted. (See *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage*, 3.)

#### Finances

To become financially self-reliant, members should pay tithes and offerings, avoid unnecessary debt, use a budget, and live within a plan. They should gradually build a financial reserve by regularly saving a portion of their income. (See *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances*, 3.)

#### Spiritual Strength

Spiritual strength is essential to a person's temporal and eternal well-being. Church members grow in spiritual strength as they develop their testimonies, exercise faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, obey God's commandments,

pray daily, study the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets, attend Church meetings, and serve in Church callings and assignments.

### 6.1.2 Members' Efforts to Care for the Poor and Needy and Give Service

Through His Church, the Lord has provided a way to care for the poor and needy. He has asked Church members to give generously according to what they have received from Him. He has also asked His people to "visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief" (D&C 44:6). Church members are encouraged to give personal compassionate service to those in need. They should be "anxiously engaged in a good cause," serving without being asked or assigned (see D&C 58:26–27).

The Lord has established the law of the fast and fast offerings to bless His people and to provide a way for them to serve those in need (see Isaiah 58:6–12; Malachi 3:8–12). When members fast, they are asked to give to the Church a fast offering at least equal to the value of the food they would have eaten. If possible, they should be generous and give more. Blessings associated with the law of the fast include closeness to the Lord, increased spiritual strength, temporal well-being, greater compassion, and a stronger desire to serve.

Some opportunities to care for those in need come through Church callings. Other opportunities are present in members' homes, neighborhoods, and communities. Members can also help the poor and needy of all faiths throughout the world by contributing to the Church's humanitarian efforts.

Providing in the Lord's way humbles the rich, exalts the poor, and sanctifies both (see D&C 104:15–18). President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught:

"The real long term objective of the Welfare Plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers, rescuing all that is finest down deep inside of them, and bringing to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit, which after all is the mission and purpose and reason for being of this Church" (in special meeting of stake presidents, Oct. 2, 1936).

### 6.1.3 The Lord's Storehouse

In some locations the Church has established buildings called bishops' storehouses. When members receive permission from their bishop,

they may go to the bishops' storehouse to obtain food and clothing. But the Lord's storehouse is not limited to a building used to distribute food and clothing to the poor. It also includes Church members' offerings of time, talents, compassion, materials, and financial means that are made available to the bishop to help care for the poor and needy. The Lord's storehouse, then, exists in each ward. These offerings are "to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, . . . every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God" (D&C 82:18–19). The bishop is the agent of the Lord's storehouse.

## 6.2 Welfare Leadership in the Ward

### 6.2.1 Bishop

The bishop directs welfare work in the ward. He has a divine mandate to seek out and care for the poor (see D&C 84:112). His goal is to help members help themselves and become self-reliant.

The bishop's counselors, the Relief Society president, the high priests group leader, the elders quorum president, and other members of the ward council assist the bishop in fulfilling these responsibilities.

The bishop maintains confidentiality about the welfare assistance that members receive. He carefully safeguards the privacy and dignity of members who receive assistance. When he feels that other ward leaders can help members in need, he may share information according to the guidelines in 6.4.

More information about the bishop's welfare responsibilities, including guidelines for administering assistance from fast-offering funds, is provided in *Handbook 1*, 5.2.

### 6.2.2 Ward Council

In ward council meetings, the bishop teaches welfare principles and instructs council members in their welfare responsibilities. Council members consider spiritual and temporal welfare matters as follows:

They counsel together about ways to help ward members understand and follow principles of welfare.

They report on spiritual and temporal welfare needs in the ward, drawing information from personal visits and from home teaching and visiting teaching reports. When information may

be too confidential to share with the entire ward council, leaders speak privately with the bishop or in priesthood executive committee meeting (see 6.2.3).

They plan ways to help specific ward members meet their spiritual and temporal needs, including long-term needs. They determine how to assist members who have disabilities or other special needs. They keep these discussions confidential (see 6.4).

They coordinate efforts to ensure that members who receive Church assistance have opportunities to work or give service. They compile and maintain a list of meaningful work opportunities. If Church welfare operations exist in the area, these operations may provide work opportunities and training for people who need Church assistance.

They compile and maintain a list of ward members whose skills might be useful in responding to short-term, long-term, or disaster-caused needs.

They develop and maintain a simple written plan for the ward to respond to emergencies (see *Handbook 1*, 5.2.11). They coordinate this plan with similar plans in the stake and community.

#### 6.2.3 **Ward Priesthood Executive Committee**

As needed, the ward priesthood executive committee discusses confidential welfare matters. The bishop may invite the Relief Society president to attend for these discussions.

#### 6.2.4 **High Priests Group, Elders Quorum, and Relief Society**

Welfare is central to the work of the high priests group, the elders quorum, and the Relief Society. In meetings of the high priests group leadership, the elders quorum presidency, and the Relief Society presidency, leaders plan ways to teach principles of self-reliance and service and to address welfare needs. Under the direction of the bishop, these leaders help members become self-reliant and find solutions to short-term and long-term welfare concerns.

##### **Short-Term Welfare Needs**

As the bishop provides short-term assistance, he may give assignments to Melchizedek Priesthood or Relief Society leaders.

The bishop normally assigns the Relief Society president to visit members who need short-term assistance. She helps assess their needs

and suggests to the bishop what assistance to provide. The bishop may ask her to prepare a Bishop's Order for Commodities form for him to approve and sign.

The Relief Society president's role in making these family-needs visits is explained more fully in 9.6.1. For information on other short-term welfare responsibilities that apply specifically to the Relief Society president and her counselors, see 9.6.2 and 9.6.3.

##### **Long-Term Welfare Needs**

Many short-term problems are caused by long-term difficulties such as poor health, lack of skills, inadequate education or employment, lifestyle habits, and emotional challenges. Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders have a special responsibility to help members address these concerns. Their goal is to address long-term concerns in ways that lead to lasting change.

As Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders become aware of long-term needs, they respond compassionately to help individuals and families. They use resources available in their organizations and in the ward. They pray for guidance to know how to provide assistance.

To gain a better understanding of how to help, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders normally visit members who have welfare needs. They may use the Needs and Resources Analysis form or otherwise follow its principles to help members plan ways to respond to welfare needs.

As leaders help members respond to long-term needs, they counsel with the bishop. In some cases, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders work together.

##### **Reporting to the Bishop and Seeking His Continued Direction**

The high priests group leader, the elders quorum president, and the Relief Society president regularly report to the bishop on actions they and their organizations are taking to address short-term and long-term welfare needs in the ward. They seek the bishop's continued direction on their welfare efforts.

If individuals and families have short-term problems that they cannot resolve themselves and that Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders cannot resolve, leaders inform the bishop immediately.

If Melchizedek Priesthood leaders and Relief Society leaders learn of possible concerns with worthiness or sensitive family matters, they refer the members to the bishop.

#### Home Teachers and Visiting Teachers

Assistance with spiritual and temporal welfare often begins with home teachers and visiting teachers. In a spirit of kindness and friendship that goes beyond monthly visits, home teachers and visiting teachers help individuals and families in need. They report the needs of those they serve to their priesthood leaders or Relief Society leaders.

#### Seeking Service from Quorum and Relief Society Members and Others

Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders may seek the service of members whose skills or experience could help those in need. Members may provide short-term service such as providing meals or child care or sharing information about available employment. Members may also provide guidance to help with long-term welfare needs, such as health, sanitation, nutrition, preparing for a career, finding opportunities for education, starting a small business, or managing family finances.

After leaders ask others to provide assistance, they remain in contact with the needy individual or family to provide encouragement and to help in other ways as necessary.

Leaders may assist the bishop when he refers members to Church welfare operations such as bishops' storehouses, Church employment resource centers, Deseret Industries, and LDS Family Services. Leaders may also help members receive assistance through community and government agencies.

#### 6.2.5 Ward Welfare Specialists

Welfare specialists serve as resources to help the bishopric and to help Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society leaders perform their welfare duties.

The bishopric may call an employment specialist to help members prepare for and find suitable employment. The bishopric may also call other welfare specialists to help members with needs such as education, training, nutrition, sanitation, home storage, health care, family finances, and the Perpetual Education Fund.

### 6.3 Welfare Leadership in the Stake

#### 6.3.1 Stake President

The stake president oversees welfare work in the stake. More information on his welfare responsibilities is provided in *Handbook 1*, 5.1.

#### 6.3.2 Stake Council

In stake council meetings, leaders consider spiritual and temporal welfare matters as follows:

They identify welfare concerns in the stake and seek ways to address those concerns. However, they do not assume responsibility to resolve ward welfare matters.

They plan ways to teach welfare principles to stake and ward leaders.

They discuss ways to make ward leaders aware of people in the stake who can serve as resources to help with welfare needs.

They develop and maintain a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies (see *Handbook 1*, 5.1.3). This plan should be coordinated with similar plans of other stakes in the coordinating council and with plans in the community.

They plan welfare activities, taking care not to place undue burdens on ward leaders.

They plan ways to respond to stake welfare assignments.

When assigned by a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or the Area Presidency, they provide leadership and support for a welfare operation.

If a bishop has been assigned to handle requests for assistance to people who are transient or homeless, members of the stake council determine how to make stake resources available to that bishop.

#### 6.3.3 Stake Welfare Specialists

A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor may call a stake employment specialist and other welfare specialists. These stake specialists serve as resources for bishops and other ward leaders. The specialists may help with welfare needs such as those listed in 6.2.5.

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## 6.4 Confidentiality

As the bishop and other ward leaders learn of members' welfare needs and assistance that has been provided, they maintain the confidentiality of that information. They carefully safeguard the privacy and dignity of members who receive assistance. They are careful not to embarrass members who need assistance.

There may be times when it would be helpful for the entire ward council, and perhaps other ward members, to know about the welfare needs

of an individual or family. For example, when a member is unemployed or looking for a better job, others may be able to help the member find a job more quickly. In such cases, the bishop and other leaders generally seek the needy members' permission to share information about their situations.

When leaders ask others to help, they share only the information needed to fulfill the assignment. Leaders also instruct them to maintain confidentiality.



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# 7. Melchizedek Priesthood

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## 7. Melchizedek Priesthood

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### 7.1 Definition and Purposes of the Melchizedek Priesthood

The priesthood is the power and authority of God. It is conferred upon worthy male members of the Church. Those who hold priesthood keys direct the administration of the ordinances of the gospel, the preaching of the gospel, and the government of the kingdom of God on the earth.

The Melchizedek Priesthood holds “the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church” (D&C 107:18).

For more information about the purposes of the priesthood and priesthood keys, see chapter 2.

#### 7.1.1 Melchizedek Priesthood Offices and Duties

The offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood are elder, high priest, patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle. Each priesthood office has rights and responsibilities of service, including authority to administer priesthood ordinances. This chapter contains information for leaders of elders and high priests. For information about ordination to the offices of elder and high priest, see 20.7.

##### Elder

Worthy brethren may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained elders when they are at least 18 years old. The rights and responsibilities of elders are revealed in Doctrine and Covenants 20:38–45; 42:44; 46:2; and 107:11–12. Elders also hold the authority of deacons, teachers, and priests.

##### High Priest

Brethren are ordained high priests when they are called to a stake presidency, high council, or bishopric or when otherwise determined by the stake president. The rights and responsibilities of high priests are to preside and to hold all the authority of elders (see D&C 107:10).

Brethren in districts are not ordained to the office of high priest.

#### 7.1.2 Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums

A priesthood quorum is an organized group of brethren who hold the same priesthood office. The primary purposes of quorums are to serve

others, build unity and brotherhood, and instruct members in doctrines, principles, and duties.

Each ward has one or more elders quorums. Each quorum has up to 96 elders (see D&C 107:89).

Each stake has one high priests quorum. The stake presidency is the presidency of that quorum. In each ward, high priests are organized in a high priests group.

Patriarchs are not organized into quorums. Apostles and Seventies are organized into quorums at the general Church level.

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### 7.2 Stake Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership

#### 7.2.1 Stake Presidency

The stake president is the presiding high priest in the stake. He and his counselors comprise the stake high priests quorum presidency. They give instruction at high priests quorum meetings. They may occasionally visit high priests group meetings and elders quorum meetings to give instruction and counsel.

The stake president oversees the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordinations to the offices of elder and high priest (see *Handbook 1*, 16.7.1).

The stake president calls an elder in each ward to be the elders quorum president. In each ward that has a high priests group, the stake president or an assigned counselor in the stake presidency calls a high priest to be the high priests group leader. Before calling a new elders quorum president or high priests group leader, the stake president consults with the bishop of the ward. The bishop may recommend whom to call.

The stake president, an assigned counselor, or an assigned high councilor calls counselors in the elders quorum presidency and assistants in the high priests group leadership. The elders quorum president and high priests group leader, in consultation with the bishop, may recommend counselors and assistants.

All recommendations for calling members of elders quorum presidencies and high priests group leaderships are subject to the approval of the stake presidency and high council.

When new quorum or group leaders are called, a member of the stake presidency or high council presents them to quorum or group members for a sustaining vote.

If an elder is called to serve in a high priests group leadership, he must be ordained a high priest before he is set apart.

The stake president sets apart a new elders quorum president and confers the keys of his calling. A member of the stake presidency sets apart a new high priests group leader, who does not receive keys. A member of the stake presidency or high council sets apart counselors to the elders quorum president and assistants to the high priests group leader.

After new quorum or group leaders are sustained, a member of the stake presidency or bishopric announces these callings in sacrament meeting. He does not ask for a sustaining vote in sacrament meeting.

For information about elders quorum callings in branches in missions, see the Chart of Callings in chapter 19.

### 7.2.2 High Councilors

Under the direction of the stake presidency, high councilors help oversee the work of the Church in the stake. Their responsibilities relating to elders quorums and high priests groups are described in 15.3.1.

## 7.3 Ward Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering the elders quorum and high priests group in a way that strengthens individuals and families. Melchizedek Priesthood leaders should frequently review chapter 3, which outlines general principles of leadership. These principles include preparing spiritually, participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 7.3.1 Bishopric

The bishop is the presiding high priest in the ward. He and his counselors work closely with the elders quorum president and the high priests group leader in watching over quorum and group members and their families, building strength in the quorum and group, and ensuring that the work of the priesthood is accomplished.

Although the elders quorum president and high priests group leader are directly responsible to the stake presidency, the bishop meets regularly with each of them. He asks them to report on their responsibilities, including home teaching in the quorum or group. He also counsels them and encourages them to magnify their callings.

### 7.3.2 Elders Quorum Presidency and High Priests Group Leadership

The elders quorum presidency and high priests group leadership preside over, sit in council with, and teach quorum and group members (see D&C 107:89). They direct the efforts of quorum and group members to advance the work of salvation in the ward (see chapter 5). They receive instruction from the stake presidency, assigned members of the high council, and the bishop.

#### Elders Quorum President and High Priests Group Leader

The elders quorum president and high priests group leader have the following responsibilities:

They serve as members of the ward priesthood executive committee and ward council. As members of this committee and council, they participate in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families (see chapter 4). The high priests group leader coordinates the ward council's efforts to encourage temple and family history work in the ward (see 5.4.3). Where there is no high priests group leader, the elders quorum president or another assigned Melchizedek Priesthood holder fills this role.

They teach other leaders and teachers in the quorum and group their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

In consultation with the bishop, they submit recommendations for brethren to be called to serve as counselors in the elders quorum presidency or assistants in the high priests group leadership. They also submit recommendations to the bishop for brethren to be called to serve as secretaries and instructors. In making these recommendations, they follow the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

They oversee the records, reports, budget, and finances of the quorum or group. The quorum or group secretary helps with this responsibility.

### Elders Quorum President and Counselors and High Priests Group Leader and Assistants

The elders quorum presidency and high priests group leadership have the following responsibilities. The elders quorum president and high priests group leader assign counselors and assistants to oversee some of these responsibilities.

They encourage quorum and group members to fulfill their priesthood duties, especially their duties as husbands and fathers. Quorum and group leaders fulfill this responsibility during quorum and group meetings and during interviews and visits with quorum and group members.

They organize and oversee home teaching.

They oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in the elders quorum and high priests group. In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4.

They hold elders quorum presidency meetings or high priests group leadership meetings.

Under the direction of the bishop, they plan ways to address welfare needs in the quorum or group (see 7.5 and chapter 6).

Where possible, they visit or interview quorum or group members at least once a year.

They may organize committees among quorum or group members to carry out the work of the quorum or group and to fulfill assignments given in ward council meeting.

They help prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood (see 7.6).

With approval from the bishop, they may occasionally plan activities for the members of the quorum or group. These activities may include the families of quorum or group members and the single sisters whom quorum or group members visit as home teachers. Activities should comply with the guidelines in chapter 13 and should be coordinated with the ward council.

As assigned by the bishop, they work with parents and Young Men leaders to help 18-year-old young men prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and make a successful transition from the priests quorum to the elders quorum.

The elders quorum president assigns one of his counselors to coordinate the quorum's efforts with the young single adult men in the ward. If the ward has a young single adult committee, this counselor serves on the committee. (See 16.3.3 and 16.3.4.)

### 7.3.3 Elders Quorum and High Priests Group Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries

With the bishop's approval, the elders quorum president or one of his counselors calls and sets apart an elder to serve as elders quorum secretary. Likewise, the high priests group leader or one of his assistants calls and sets apart a high priest to serve as high priests group secretary.

Quorum and group secretaries have the following responsibilities:

They consult with quorum or group leaders to prepare agendas for presidency meetings or group leadership meetings. They attend these meetings, take notes, and keep track of assignments.

Each month, they compile home teaching reports for the elders quorum president and high priests group leader to give to the bishop. At least quarterly, they compile attendance information, review it with the elders quorum president or high priests group leader, and submit it to the ward clerk.

If the quorum or group plans activities that will involve expenses, secretaries help leaders prepare an annual budget and account for expenses.

With the bishop's approval, leaders in the elders quorum and high priests group may call and set apart assistant secretaries to help with these responsibilities. Prospective elders may be called to serve as assistant secretaries.

### 7.3.4 Elders Quorum and High Priests Group Instructors

With the bishop's approval, the elders quorum president or one of his counselors calls and sets apart one or more elders to serve as elders quorum instructors. Likewise, the high priests group leader or one of his assistants calls and sets apart one or more high priests to serve as high priests group instructors.

Quorum and group leaders assign instructors to teach lessons during priesthood meeting. Instructors follow the principles outlined in 5.5.4.

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## 7.4 Home Teaching

Under the bishop's direction, quorum and group leaders oversee home teaching. They instruct home teachers in their duties and inspire them to perform these duties well.

Home teaching is a priesthood responsibility of teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders. Accordingly, home teachers are assigned by priesthood leaders. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.

#### 7.4.1 Responsibilities of Home Teachers

Home teaching is one way Heavenly Father blesses His children. Home teachers “visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties” (D&C 20:51). They are assigned to families and individuals to “watch over . . . and be with and strengthen them” (D&C 20:53). They “warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59).

Where possible, home teachers visit members in their homes at least monthly. Home teachers may also find other meaningful ways to watch over and strengthen the families they are assigned. For example, they may render service to the families or contact family members by mail or telephone.

Home teachers represent the Lord, the bishop, and quorum or group leaders. They can be an important source of help to members. They consult with the head of the household about the family’s needs and about ways to be most helpful.

Home teachers become acquainted with family members’ interests and needs and recognize special events in their lives.

As needed, home teachers help parents ensure that their children are blessed, baptized, and confirmed. They may also help parents ensure that their sons have the Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon them and are ordained to priesthood offices at the appropriate ages.

Home teachers offer help when members are unemployed, ill, lonely, moving, or have other needs.

Home teachers help members strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and encourage them to make and keep sacred covenants. This service is especially important to new members and less-active members.

Home teachers make appointments for their visits at times that are convenient for the individuals or families. They remember that they are guests of the members they visit.

Each visit should focus on a planned purpose. Before visiting a home, companions pray together. They discuss ways they can strengthen

those they will visit. Based on this discussion and the guidance of the Holy Ghost, they share a message, usually taken from the scriptures and the First Presidency’s message in the *Ensign* or *Liahona* magazine. Other messages may come from the bishop or other leaders. The head of the household may also request a special message. Home teaching visits typically include a prayer.

Each month, home teachers report to quorum or group leaders on the spiritual and temporal welfare of the members they visit. If a member’s needs are urgent, home teachers report them immediately.

#### 7.4.2 Organizing Home Teaching

A household that is headed by an elder usually has home teachers from the elders quorum. A household that is headed by a high priest usually has home teachers from the high priests group. When a household is not headed by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, the bishopric determines whether that household should have home teachers from the elders quorum or the high priests group. In making this decision, the bishopric may consult with the priesthood executive committee and ward council.

In organizing home teaching, quorum and group leaders prayerfully discuss the needs of individuals and families. Leaders discuss ways home teachers can watch over and strengthen these members, consulting with the priesthood executive committee and ward council as needed. Leaders also consider factors such as distance, travel, and safety.

Based on these discussions, leaders assign a companionship of two home teachers to each household where possible. They obtain the bishop’s approval for each companionship and each home teaching assignment.

Quorum and group leaders assign the most effective home teachers to members who need them most. When assigning home teachers, leaders give highest priority to new members, less-active members who may be the most receptive, and others who have the greatest need for home teachers, such as single parents, widows, and widowers. It is often helpful to assign a youth leader to a family where a young man or young woman is experiencing special challenges. Home teachers should be assigned to converts before the converts are baptized.

After consultation with the elders quorum president, high priests group leader, and Young Men president, a member of the bishopric



extends home teaching assignments to teachers and priests. They are assigned as companions to Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

Aaronic Priesthood holders participate with their companions in watching over and caring for the members they visit. This may include making appointments, sharing messages, and giving service. This experience helps them with their priesthood training, including mission preparation (see D&C 84:106–7).

Elders quorum leaders in young single adult wards assign home teachers to each member in the ward. Single members who live together as roommates may be visited at the same time. However, home teachers should focus on serving the individuals and should report on each person separately.

With approval from the bishop in exceptional cases, Melchizedek Priesthood leaders and Relief Society leaders may assign a husband and wife as a companionship where visits by a couple are needed. Couples report these visits as home teaching and visiting teaching. Normally, young parents are not given such an assignment because it takes them away from their children.

#### 7.4.3 Adapting Home Teaching to Local Needs

In some locations, visiting every home each month may not be possible for a time because of insufficient numbers of active priesthood holders or other challenges. In these circumstances, leaders give priority to visiting new members, less-active members who are most likely to respond to invitations to return to Church activity, and members with serious needs.

Leaders do their best in using available resources to watch over and strengthen each member. Any adaptations they make to home teaching should be considered temporary.

Some suggestions for adapting home teaching are outlined in the following paragraphs.

With approval from the bishop, Melchizedek Priesthood leaders and Relief Society leaders may temporarily assign only home teachers or only visiting teachers to certain families. In some cases, leaders may assign home teachers to visit a family one month and assign visiting teachers to visit Relief Society members in that family the next month.

With approval from the mission president, leaders may consider asking full-time missionaries to go home teaching with Melchizedek Priesthood holders on a limited basis. The mission president communicates this approval to

the stake president, who informs bishops. When such approval is given, full-time missionaries are assigned primarily to visit new members, part-member families, and less-active members.

Based on needs and priorities, quorum and group leaders may make some visits to help fulfill the quorum and group's home teaching responsibilities.

#### 7.4.4 Reporting Home Teaching

Quorum and group leaders receive monthly home teaching reports from each companionship. In addition, they meet with home teachers regularly to discuss the spiritual and temporal welfare of the members they are assigned and to make plans to help members in need. Confidential information should be reported only to the elders quorum president or high priests group leader, who reports it to the bishop.

The elders quorum president and high priests group leader give the bishop monthly home teaching reports. Each report includes a list of those who were not contacted. Reports give special attention to new members, less-active members, and others who have serious needs. If a family or individual has urgent needs, the elders quorum president or high priests group leader reports this information to the bishop immediately.

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#### 7.5 Welfare

Welfare is central to the work of the elders quorum and high priests group.

Under the bishop's direction, the elders quorum presidency, the high priests group leadership, and the ward Relief Society presidency share the following welfare responsibilities:

- They teach principles of temporal and spiritual self-reliance.

- They care for the poor and needy and encourage members to give service.

- They help individuals and families become self-reliant and find solutions to short-term and long-term welfare concerns.

For more information on these welfare responsibilities, see chapter 6.

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#### 7.6 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.

#### 7.6.1 Responsibility for Prospective Elders

Quorum and group leaders have the responsibility to help prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. The bishop counsels with quorum and group leaders and each prospective elder to determine whether the prospective elder should meet with the elders quorum or the high priests group for instruction and activities. The bishop considers the relationships the prospective elder may have with the elders or high priests in the ward and the age and needs of the prospective elder.

Quorum and group leaders assign effective home teachers to prospective elders. If prospective elders have been ordained to the office of teacher or priest, leaders may give them assignments to serve as home teachers.

Quorum and group leaders invite prospective elders to attend quorum or group meetings and activities.

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

Helping prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood should be among leaders' highest priorities because it strengthens families and prepares couples for temple marriage. Prospective elders should be ordained as soon as they are reasonably prepared, without unnecessary waiting periods.

The elders quorum president or high priests group leader ensures that prospective elders are taught the following principles in preparation to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood:

1. The restoration of the priesthood and priesthood keys through the Prophet Joseph Smith
2. The oath and covenant of the priesthood (see D&C 84:33–44)
3. The responsibilities of husbands and fathers
4. The duties of an elder and the purposes of priesthood quorums
5. The purposes of priesthood ordinances and blessings and how to perform those ordinances and blessings (see chapter 20 and the *Family Guidebook*)

Leaders may teach these principles one-on-one, or they may organize a class for prospective elders in the ward, in multiple wards, or in the stake. They may assign capable home teachers

to provide this instruction. They may also offer the instruction as part of a temple preparation seminar (see 5.4.5). As needed, the stake president may assign a member of the high council to help quorum and group leaders with this responsibility.

Possible resources for helping prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood include Doctrine and Covenants sections 20, 84, 107, and 121; the *Family Guidebook*; *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part A*, lessons 1–4 and 9; and *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part B*, lessons 1–6.

The bishop counsels with quorum and group leaders and with the ward council to identify prospective elders who should have the highest priority for receiving this preparation. Eighteen-year-old Aaronic Priesthood holders who have not otherwise been prepared may be included.

In helping a prospective elder prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, the bishop follows the instructions in *Handbook 1*, 16.7.1.

### 7.7 Leadership Meetings

#### 7.7.1 Ward Priesthood Executive Committee Meeting and Ward Council Meeting

The elders quorum president and high priests group leader serve as members of the ward priesthood executive committee and the ward council (see chapter 4).

#### 7.7.2 Elders Quorum Presidency Meeting and High Priests Group Leadership Meeting

The elders quorum presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The high priests group leadership holds a leadership meeting regularly. The quorum president or group leader presides at the meeting and conducts it. The quorum or group secretary attends, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments. A high councilor assigned to the ward may attend periodically.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Plan ways to strengthen quorum or group members and their families, including prospective elders.
2. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to the responsibilities of priesthood leaders.
3. Discuss home teaching assignments and performance and plan ways to improve.
4. Discuss gospel instruction in quorum or group meetings and plan ways to improve.



5. Report on assignments given in ward council meeting.
6. Plan ways to build quorum or group unity, including service and other quorum or group activities.

### 7.7.3 Stake Priesthood Leadership Meeting

The stake presidency convenes a stake priesthood leadership meeting in connection with each stake conference (see 18.3.1, item 2). The presidency also convenes one other stake priesthood leadership meeting during the year, for a total of three such meetings annually. Quorum and group leaders and secretaries attend.

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## 7.8 Quorum and Group Meetings

### 7.8.1 Sunday Priesthood Meetings

Sunday priesthood meetings begin with opening exercises for Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood holders, conducted by a member of the bishopric (see 18.2.4).

After opening exercises, brethren attend their quorum or group meeting. The purposes of quorum and group meetings are to conduct quorum business, learn priesthood duties, strengthen families, and study the gospel of Jesus Christ. Leaders prayerfully plan the meetings to accomplish these purposes.

Unless a member of the stake presidency or bishopric (or another presiding authority) is present, the elders quorum president presides over the elders quorum meeting and the high priests group leader presides over the high priests group meeting. A member of the quorum presidency or group leadership conducts.

Elders and high priests normally meet separately. However, if very few elders or high priests in a ward are able to attend priesthood meeting, they may meet together. If they meet together, in no case should a single Melchizedek Priesthood quorum be established. As long as there are ordained elders and high priests in a ward, both an elders quorum and a high priests group should be organized.

Because districts do not have high priests quorums, branches in districts do not have high priests groups. High priests who attend these branches meet with the elders quorum.

The bishop may authorize an elder to meet with the high priests group if such an arrangement will be beneficial for the elder. The bishop

may also invite an 18-year-old Aaronic Priesthood holder to meet with the elders quorum.

Each month, quorum and group leaders plan Sunday instruction according to the following pattern.

#### First Sunday

A member of the elders quorum presidency or high priests group leadership teaches on the first Sunday. He uses the scriptures, the teachings of latter-day prophets, and approved Church materials. Melchizedek Priesthood leaders use this meeting to teach the doctrines of the gospel and help brethren become actively engaged in their priesthood duties.

Quorum and group leaders seek the guidance of the Spirit as they determine subjects to teach. Subjects may include home teaching, performing priesthood ordinances and blessings, strengthening marriages and families, service, missionary work, convert retention, activation, spiritual and temporal welfare, and temple and family history work. Quorum and group leaders may also use this time to plan ways to help others, give assignments, and ask for reports on past assignments.

#### Second and Third Sundays

On the second and third Sundays, the lesson is taught by a quorum or group leader or instructor. He uses the current Melchizedek Priesthood manual. Lessons are generally taught in the order they are presented in the manual and on the same Sunday they are taught in Relief Society meeting.

Quorum and group leaders see that all men in the ward ages 18 and older receive a copy of the Melchizedek Priesthood manual for their personal study, regardless of whether these brethren are able to attend quorum or group meetings. Leaders encourage those who attend to bring their copies of the manual and, where possible, their personal copies of the scriptures.

#### Fourth Sunday

On the fourth Sunday, the lesson is taught by a quorum or group leader or instructor. He uses messages from the most recent general conference. The stake president or bishop selects the messages.

#### Fifth Sunday

On a fifth Sunday, the bishop determines the subject to be taught, the instructor (usually a member of the ward or stake), and whether

Melchizedek Priesthood holders and the Relief Society meet separately or combined.

### 7.8.2 Stake High Priests Quorum Meeting

The stake presidency convenes a high priests quorum meeting for all high priests in the stake at least once a year. During this meeting the stake presidency conducts quorum business and instructs quorum members in their duties.

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## 7.9 Teaching How to Perform Ordinances and Blessings

The following publications provide instructions on performing ordinances and blessings:

1. Chapter 20 in this handbook
2. *Family Guidebook*, pages 18–25
3. *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part B*, pages 42–47

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

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

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## 7.10 Additional Guidelines and Policies

### 7.10.1 Brethren Who Have Special Needs

Brethren who may have special needs include those who are ill, elderly, widowed, divorced, homebound, or bereaved and those who care for chronically ill family members. Members of their quorum or group should offer help.

Brethren who have these and other special challenges may come to their elders quorum president or high priests group leader with their concerns. These leaders should listen, offer love and encouragement, and maintain appropriate confidentiality. If they learn of possible concerns with worthiness or sensitive family matters, they refer the brethren to the bishop.

For information about helping brethren with disabilities, see 21.1.26 and [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org).

### 7.10.2 Offering Support at Times of Death

When a death occurs in the ward, the bishop may ask the high priests group leader or elders quorum president to contact the family to give comfort, assess needs, and offer assistance. He may request similar assistance from the Relief Society president. Melchizedek Priesthood leaders and Relief Society leaders coordinate these efforts.

The bishop may also ask Melchizedek Priesthood leaders to help make preparations for the funeral service. For additional information about funerals, see 18.6.

If possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried in temple clothing. In some circumstances, the bishop may ask the high priests group leader or elders quorum president to assign an endowed man to dress or oversee the proper dressing of a deceased endowed man. These leaders ensure that the assignment is given to a person who will not find it objectionable. Guidelines for dressing deceased members are provided in *Instructions for Clothing the Dead Who Have Received Their Endowments*. Leaders may obtain these instructions from Church Distribution Services.

For additional instructions on dressing deceased members in temple clothing, the bishop may refer to *Handbook 1*, 3.4.9.

The elders quorum president, high priests group leader, home teachers, and other brethren continue to offer support, comfort, and assistance to the bereaved during the period of adjustment following the death.

### 7.10.3 Instructions about Temple Clothing and Garments

See 21.1.42.

### 7.10.4 Funding for Activities

See 13.2.8.



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## 8. Aaronic Priesthood

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### 8.1 Definition and Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood

The priesthood is the power and authority of God. It is conferred upon worthy male members of the Church. Those who hold priesthood keys direct the administration of the ordinances of the gospel, the preaching of the gospel, and the government of the kingdom of God on the earth.

The Aaronic Priesthood holds “the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel; which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins” (D&C 84:26–27; see also D&C 13:1; 107:20). The Aaronic Priesthood also “has power in administering outward ordinances” (D&C 107:14).

For more information about the purposes of the priesthood and priesthood keys, see chapter 2.

#### 8.1.1 Aaronic Priesthood Offices and Duties

The offices in the Aaronic Priesthood are deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop. Each priesthood office has rights and responsibilities of service, including authority to administer priesthood ordinances. For information about ordination to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest, see 20.7.

##### Deacon

Worthy brethren may receive the Aaronic Priesthood and be ordained deacons when they are at least 12 years old. A deacon has the following responsibilities:

He lives a righteous life and remains worthy to exercise the priesthood. He sets a good example for fellow quorum members and other Church members.

He passes the sacrament (see 20.4.3).

He serves as a standing minister, “appointed to watch over the church” (D&C 84:111). He is also to “warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59). This responsibility includes fellowshipping quorum members and other young men, notifying members of Church meetings, speaking in meetings, sharing the gospel, and bearing testimony.

He assists the bishop in “administering . . . temporal things” (D&C 107:68). This responsibility may include gathering fast offerings, caring

for the poor and needy, caring for the meeting-house and grounds, and serving as a messenger for the bishop in Church meetings.

He participates in quorum instruction by being an active student of the gospel.

He assists the bishopric in other ways consistent with the office of a deacon. He also assists teachers “in all [their] duties in the church . . . if occasion requires” (D&C 20:57).

##### Teacher

Worthy brethren may be ordained teachers when they are at least 14 years old. A teacher has all the responsibilities of a deacon. He also has the following responsibilities:

He prepares the sacrament (see 20.4.2).

He is to “watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them” (D&C 20:53). One way he does this is by serving as a home teacher.

He is to “see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking” (D&C 20:54). This responsibility includes being a peacemaker and being an example of moral integrity and uprightness.

He is to “see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty” (D&C 20:55).

He assists the bishopric in other ways consistent with the office of a teacher.

##### Priest

Worthy brethren may be ordained priests when they are at least 16 years old. A priest has all the responsibilities of a deacon and teacher. He also has the following responsibilities:

He is to “preach, teach, expound, exhort, . . . and visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties” (D&C 20:46–47).

When authorized by the bishop, he performs baptisms, confers the Aaronic Priesthood, and ordains deacons, teachers, and priests (see D&C 20:46, 48).

He may administer the sacrament by officiating at the sacrament table and offering the sacrament prayers when authorized (see D&C 20:46, 77, 79; see also 20.4.3 in this handbook).



He assists the bishopric in other ways consistent with the office of a priest.

### Bishop

The bishop's responsibilities regarding the Aaronic Priesthood are outlined in 8.3.1.

### 8.1.2 Aaronic Priesthood Quorums

A priesthood quorum is an organized group of brethren who hold the same priesthood office. The primary purposes of quorums are to serve others, build unity and brotherhood, and instruct members in doctrines, principles, and duties.

The bishop organizes the deacons into a quorum of up to 12 members, the teachers into a quorum of up to 24 members, and the priests into a quorum of up to 48 members (see D&C 107:85–87). If quorum membership increases beyond these numbers, the bishop may divide the quorum. Before doing so, he considers the eventual size of the quorum, available leadership, and the effect on quorum members.

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

### 8.1.3 Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood

Young men are in a time of preparation and personal spiritual growth. Accordingly, parents and the bishopric and other Aaronic Priesthood leaders help each young man to:

1. Become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live by its teachings.
2. Serve faithfully in priesthood callings and fulfill the responsibilities of priesthood offices.
3. Give meaningful service.
4. Prepare and live worthily to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances.
5. Prepare to serve an honorable full-time mission.
6. Obtain as much education as possible.
7. Prepare to become a worthy husband and father.
8. Give proper respect to women, girls, and children.

Parents and leaders help young men accomplish these objectives in family home evenings, family scripture study, meetings, activities, and interviews and by encouraging them to participate in the Duty to God program (see 8.12).

Young men should not recite these objectives in their meetings or activities.

## 8.2 Roles of Parents and Church Leaders

Parents have the first responsibility for the spiritual and physical welfare of their children (see D&C 68:25–28). The bishopric and other Aaronic Priesthood leaders support but do not replace parents in this responsibility. They offer support in the following ways:

They assist parents in helping their sons prepare for priesthood ordinations, the temple endowment, full-time missionary service, temple marriage, and fatherhood.

They encourage communication between young men and their parents.

They ensure that quorum activities and other youth events do not put undue burdens on families or compete with family activities.

Leaders should be especially sensitive to young men who come from homes that lack strong support for gospel living.

## 8.3 Ward Aaronic Priesthood Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering Aaronic Priesthood quorums in a way that will strengthen individual young men and their families. Aaronic Priesthood leaders frequently review chapter 3, which outlines general principles of leadership. These principles include preparing spiritually, participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In this chapter, the term *quorum leaders* refers to the deacons quorum presidency, the teachers quorum presidency, and the bishop and his assistants in the priests quorum. The members of the Young Men presidency are quorum advisers, not quorum leaders.

### 8.3.1 Bishopric

The bishop oversees the Aaronic Priesthood quorums in the ward. He and his counselors comprise the bishopric and the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward (see D&C 107:13–15). They watch over and strengthen individual young men, working closely with parents and with other leaders.

### Bishop

The bishop is the presiding high priest in the ward. He is also the president of the priests quorum (see D&C 107:87–88). In a branch, the branch president acts as the president of the priests quorum.



In the leadership of the priests quorum, the bishop serves with two assistants, both of whom are priests. Although the bishop delegates many responsibilities to his assistants, he serves personally and actively as quorum president. He promotes a spirit of love and unity in the quorum. He regularly attends and presides over quorum presidency meetings and Sunday quorum meetings. He participates in quorum service and activities. In his absence, he designates one of his assistants to assume quorum leadership responsibilities. When a bishop is released, his assistants are also released.

The bishop interviews young men who are preparing to be ordained to the office of priest.

#### **Bishop and His Counselors**

The bishop assigns one of his counselors to oversee the deacons quorum and the other counselor to oversee the teachers quorum. These counselors promote a spirit of love and unity in the quorums. They attend quorum presidency meetings and Sunday quorum meetings as often as possible. They also participate in quorum service and activities.

With assistance from quorum advisers, the bishop and his counselors teach leadership skills to quorum leaders and help them fulfill their responsibilities.

The bishop assigns one of his counselors to oversee the ward Young Men organization under his direction. This counselor discusses Young Men matters regularly with the ward Young Men presidency. He reports on these discussions in bishopric meetings.

The bishop interviews each young man at least annually. If possible, he interviews each 16- and 17-year-old twice annually. If this is not possible, he assigns a counselor to conduct some of these interviews. Six months after each young man between the ages of 12 and 15 has his annual interview with the bishop, he has an interview with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees his quorum. For guidelines on youth interviews, bishops and their counselors may refer to *Handbook 1*, 7.1.7.

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews young men who are preparing to be ordained to the offices of deacon and teacher.

The bishop and his counselors assign teachers and priests to serve as home teachers.

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews the deacons quorum president, the teachers

quorum president, and the priests quorum assistants regularly. In these interviews, the bishopric member and the quorum leader discuss the progress of individual quorum members and the progress of the quorum as a whole.

The bishop and his counselors recognize each young man in sacrament meeting when he advances from Primary to the Aaronic Priesthood, when he is to be ordained to an office in the priesthood, and when he has completed the Duty to God program.

The bishop and his counselors oversee Scouting where it is authorized by the Church (see 8.13.4).

The bishop calls and sets apart the Young Men president. He may assign his counselors to call and set apart counselors in the Young Men presidency, the Young Men secretary, assistant quorum advisers, and others who serve with the young men.

The bishop calls his assistants in the priests quorum. He or an assigned counselor calls deacons and teachers quorum presidencies and quorum secretaries. Members of the bishopric counsel together prayerfully to determine whom to call to these positions. They do not select leaders merely because of age or seniority in the quorum. The bishop and his counselors may consult with members of the ward Young Men presidency as they seek inspiration about whom to call.

When a member of the bishopric calls a young man to serve as a deacons or teachers quorum president, he asks that young man to recommend whom to call as counselors and a secretary. The bishopric member counsels the quorum president to approach this responsibility prayerfully, seeking guidance from the Lord about whom to recommend. However, the bishopric member also helps the quorum president understand that final responsibility to receive inspiration on whom to call rests with the bishopric.

A member of the bishopric seeks permission from a young man's parents before asking him to serve in any of these callings.

After extending these callings, a member of the bishopric presents the quorum leaders for a sustaining vote in their quorum meeting. Then the bishop or an assigned counselor sets the young men apart. The bishop sets apart his assistants in the priests quorum. He also sets apart the deacons quorum president and the teachers quorum president because only he can give them the priesthood keys of their callings. He may

assign his counselors to set apart counselors in deacons and teachers quorum presidencies and quorum secretaries.

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

### 8.3.2 Quorum Presidencies and Assistants to the Bishop in the Priests Quorum

Aaronic Priesthood quorum leaders “sit in council” with quorum members, “teaching them the duties of their office” (see D&C 107:85–86). They seek inspiration in fulfilling their responsibilities. They also receive instruction and guidance from the bishopric and quorum advisers. Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents hold the priesthood keys to direct the work of the quorums over which they preside. Counselors in the deacons and teachers quorum presidencies and assistants to the bishop in the priests quorum do not hold priesthood keys.

Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and assistants to the bishop in the priests quorum watch over and fellowship quorum members and other young men of quorum age. They give special attention to those who are new members or less active and those who have disabilities or other special needs. Quorum leaders strive to develop love and brotherhood among quorum members.

Aaronic Priesthood quorum leaders provide quorum members with opportunities for priesthood assignments, leadership experiences, and spiritual growth.

They hold regular quorum presidency meetings.

They conduct Sunday quorum meetings.

They help plan quorum activities, including Mutual.

They help quorum members set and accomplish goals in the Duty to God program.

On occasion, they may give gospel instruction in Sunday quorum meetings, with help from quorum advisers.

The deacons quorum president, the teachers quorum president, and one of the priests quorum assistants serve on the bishopric youth committee (see 18.2.9).

### 8.3.3 Quorum Secretaries

Quorum secretaries have the following responsibilities:

They compile and review attendance information and submit it to the Young Men secretary.

They consult with quorum leaders to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. They attend these meetings, take notes, and keep track of assignments.

They may help quorum leaders and advisers plan activities.

### 8.3.4 Ward Young Men Presidency (Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Advisers)

The ward Young Men presidency consists of a president and two counselors. They serve as advisers to the Aaronic Priesthood quorums. They work under the direction of the bishopric. They also receive orientation and ongoing support from the stake Young Men presidency.

#### Ward Young Men President

The Young Men president has the following responsibilities:

He serves as a member of the ward priesthood executive committee and the ward council. As a member of this committee and council, he participates in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families (see chapter 4). He is also a member of the bishopric youth committee (see 18.2.9).

He teaches other Young Men leaders their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

He oversees the records, reports, budget, and finances of the ward Young Men organization. The Young Men secretary helps with this responsibility.

#### Ward Young Men President and His Counselors

The Young Men president and his counselors serve as Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers. The president is the adviser to the priests quorum, the first counselor is the adviser to the teachers quorum, and the second counselor is the adviser to the deacons quorum. They have the following responsibilities:

They guide Aaronic Priesthood quorums in fulfilling their priesthood duties.

They get to know each young man and become familiar with his talents, interests, and challenges. They look for ways to strengthen young men individually, help them grow in their testimonies, and encourage them to participate in their quorums. They give special attention to young men who are new members and young men who are less active.

They support each young man in his family.

They help young men work toward the objectives listed in 8.1.3. This includes helping them set and accomplish goals in the Duty to God program.

In response to some assignments given in priesthood executive committee and ward council meetings, they may work with quorum presidencies to organize service committees.

They may counsel with parents and priesthood leaders about the needs of young men.

They regularly teach lessons in Sunday quorum meetings, though they may share this responsibility with assistant advisers. They oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in the quorums. In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4.

They attend Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidency meetings and provide guidance as needed. They help the bishopric teach leadership skills and qualities to quorum presidencies and priests quorum assistants (see 8.14).

They work with quorum leaders to plan and carry out quorum activities, including Mutual activities.

They help the bishopric and quorum leaders build quorum unity.

They hold Young Men presidency meetings. They also meet regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Young Men organization.

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, members of the Young Men presidency are generally called to serve as Scout leaders, but they may be called to serve as assistant Scout leaders (see 8.13.4).

### 8.3.5 Ward Young Men Secretary

The Young Men secretary has the following responsibilities:

He consults with the Young Men presidency to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. He attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

He instructs quorum secretaries and oversees their work in keeping quorum attendance records. At least quarterly, he compiles attendance information, reviews it with the Young Men president, and submits it to the ward clerk.

He ensures that the bishopric and the Young Men presidency are aware of young men who are not attending meetings regularly and young

men who will soon be eligible to be ordained to another office in the priesthood.

He may be assigned to record the progress of individual young men as they participate in the Duty to God program.

He helps the Young Men presidency prepare an annual budget and account for expenses.

### 8.3.6 Assistant Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Advisers

The bishopric may call assistant quorum advisers to help the Young Men presidency with their responsibilities. Assistant quorum advisers may teach some of the lessons in Sunday quorum meetings. They may also assist with activities, including Mutual.

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, assistant quorum advisers are generally called to serve as assistant Scout leaders, but they may be called to serve as Scout leaders (see 8.13.4).

### 8.3.7 Sports Coaches

The bishopric may call men as coaches for Young Men sports teams. The coaches serve under the direction of the Young Men presidency. For information about sports programs, see 13.6.21.

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## 8.4 Home Teaching

Home teaching is a priesthood responsibility of teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders. For detailed information about home teaching, including instructions about giving home teaching assignments to Aaronic Priesthood holders, see 7.4.

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## 8.5 Gathering Fast Offerings

Where a ward is geographically concentrated and where safety conditions permit, the bishop may direct Aaronic Priesthood holders, especially deacons, to contact member households each month to give members the opportunity to contribute fast offerings.

Priesthood holders should go in pairs when gathering fast offerings. Melchizedek Priesthood holders may accompany Aaronic Priesthood holders if necessary.

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

Those who gather fast offerings deliver them promptly to a member of the bishopric.

## 8.6 Helping 10- and 11-Year-Old Boys Prepare to Receive the Priesthood

### 8.6.1 Parents and Home Teachers

The parents of a 10- or 11-year-old boy have the primary responsibility for helping him prepare to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. Other family members and home teachers assist. The support of home teachers may be especially important in homes where the father is absent or is not an active member of the Church.

### 8.6.2 Primary Leaders and Teachers

Primary leaders and teachers support families in helping 10- and 11-year-old boys prepare to receive the Aaronic Priesthood.

Each year, Primary leaders prepare a Priesthood Preview under the direction of the bishopric (see 11.5.5). The deacons quorum presidency and Young Men presidency may be invited to participate.

## 8.7 Helping Quorum Members Prepare for Full-Time Missions

The Lord expects each able young man to prepare spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially for full-time missionary service. The earlier a young man decides to serve a mission, the more likely it is that he will serve.

Each young man should prepare by developing his own testimony and his own relationship with the Lord. He should also prepare by studying the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Many of the goals and activities suggested in the Duty to God program can help a young man prepare for missionary service.

Parents have the primary responsibility for helping their sons prepare to serve full-time missions. Other family members, bishopric members, Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and advisers, home teachers, and others support parents in this effort.

Helping quorum members prepare for missionary service is a high priority for bishopric members and quorum advisers. This preparation begins in the deacons quorum and continues throughout each young man's years in the Aaronic Priesthood. Leaders look for ways to include missionary preparation in quorum meetings, presidency meetings, quorum activities, and other settings.

Bishopric members and quorum advisers help young men prepare for full-time missions in the following ways:

They provide opportunities in quorum meetings and activities for quorum members to feel and recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost.

They teach young men the basic doctrines that missionaries teach, such as the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the plan of salvation, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. They may use *Preach My Gospel* as a resource for teaching these doctrines.

They encourage young men to study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, on their own every day. They also encourage young men to study *Preach My Gospel*.

They teach young men and their parents about the expectations for full-time missionaries. These expectations include gospel knowledge and testimony, personal worthiness, physical fitness, social and emotional maturity, and financial preparation. Adult leaders guide young men in setting goals to reach these expectations.

They encourage young men to attend seminary.

They provide opportunities for service, including home teaching assignments for teachers and priests.

They give young men opportunities to teach the gospel in quorum meetings and other settings.

They encourage young men to share the gospel with friends and family members.

They provide opportunities for young men to learn from and interact with exemplary returned missionaries, in both formal and informal settings.

As part of this preparation, the bishopric and quorum advisers encourage priest-age young men to attend a missionary preparation class. Depending on the number of these young men, this class may be organized by the bishopric at the ward level or by the stake presidency at the stake level. The main resources for this class are the scriptures, the *Missionary Handbook*, and *Preach My Gospel*.

Additional instructions for bishops are provided in *Handbook 1*, 4.2.



## 8.8 **Conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood on 18-Year-Old Young Men**

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 brethren should be ordained elders.

Young Men leaders and elders quorum leaders work together to make the transition into the elders quorum successful for each young man.

## 8.9 **Leadership Meetings**

### 8.9.1 **Ward Priesthood Executive Committee Meeting and Ward Council Meeting**

The Young Men president serves as a member of the ward priesthood executive committee and the ward council (see chapter 4).

### 8.9.2 **Bishopric Youth Committee Meeting**

The bishop presides over the bishopric youth committee. This committee is composed of the bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants, the deacons and teachers quorum presidents, the Young Women class presidents, and the Young Men and Young Women presidents. For more information, see 18.2.9.

### 8.9.3 **Quorum Presidency Meeting**

Each quorum presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The bishop regularly attends and presides over the priests quorum presidency meeting, and one of his assistants conducts it. The deacons quorum president and teachers quorum president conduct their presidency meetings, and they preside unless a member of the bishopric attends. Quorum advisers and secretaries also attend these meetings. Secretaries take notes and keep track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Plan ways to strengthen quorum members, including new members and less-active members. Also plan ways to fellowship young men of other faiths.

2. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to the responsibilities of priesthood leaders.
3. Plan to visit quorum members as needed.
4. Discuss ways to help each young man have success in the Duty to God program.
5. Plan quorum meetings and activities.
6. Consider items to discuss in bishopric youth committee meeting (see 18.2.9).
7. Receive leadership training from bishopric members or quorum advisers.

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, quorum presidency meeting may be used to make plans for the quorum's Scouting unit after the items above have been discussed. If youth and adult Scouting leaders are not already present, they may be invited into the meeting for this discussion. Young men of other faiths who hold leadership positions in the Scouting unit may be included. The quorum president continues to preside over this part of the meeting. He may invite a youth Scouting leader to conduct it. Quorum advisers ensure that each Scouting activity is consistent with the objectives listed in 8.1.3.

### 8.9.4 **Ward Young Men Presidency Meeting**

The Young Men presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The president presides at the meeting and conducts it. The secretary attends, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Evaluate how the young men in each quorum are accomplishing the objectives listed in 8.1.3. Plan ways to help individual young men accomplish those objectives more completely.
2. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to the responsibilities of priesthood leaders.
3. Make plans to instruct quorum leaders in their duties.
4. Discuss the effectiveness of quorum activities. Discuss ways to include young men in planning meaningful activities.
5. Discuss gospel instruction in Sunday quorum meetings and plan ways to improve.
6. Review attendance records. Plan ways to help new members and less-active young men participate.
7. Review the Young Men budget and expenditures.

The counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Young Men organization may occasionally attend the Young Men presidency meeting to receive reports and give counsel. The Young Men presidency may also invite quorum leaders and assistant advisers to attend as needed.

#### 8.9.5 Stake Priesthood Leadership Meeting

The stake presidency convenes a stake priesthood leadership meeting in connection with each stake conference (see 18.3.1, item 2). The presidency also convenes one other stake priesthood leadership meeting during the year, for a total of three such meetings annually.

Ward Young Men presidencies and secretaries attend these meetings. Deacons and teachers quorum presidencies and priests quorum assistants may be invited occasionally, such as when the meeting includes subjects that will be especially helpful for them in their callings.

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#### 8.10 Standards

Standards provide sure direction to strengthen and guide members of the Church. As young men keep gospel standards, they will be of great service in the Church and the world. They will also be worthy to receive the ordinances of the temple.

In the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*, the First Presidency outlines gospel standards and teaches youth how to apply them. Every young man should have a copy of *For the Strength of Youth*. He should review the standards often and consider how well he is living them.

Quorum advisers and assistant advisers should study the standards in the booklet and exemplify them. They should find ways to teach and reinforce these standards often in lessons and at Mutual activities, camps, youth conference, and other activities.

Bishopric members and quorum advisers can encourage parents to study gospel standards, exemplify them, and discuss them with their sons. They can also encourage young men to use *For the Strength of Youth* as a resource for family home evening lessons and talks.

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#### 8.11 Sunday Quorum Meetings

Sunday priesthood meetings begin with opening exercises for Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood holders, conducted by a member of the bishopric (see 18.2.4).

After opening exercises, priesthood holders attend their quorum meetings. Aaronic Priesthood quorums normally meet separately. However, in a ward or branch with few young men, quorums may meet together for instruction. Even when quorums meet together, separate quorums should be organized, with leaders called and sustained for each quorum. When possible, each quorum should begin to meet separately and should have a full presidency and a secretary.

The purposes of quorum meetings are to conduct quorum business, learn priesthood duties, and study the gospel of Jesus Christ. Quorum leaders and advisers prayerfully plan the meetings to accomplish these purposes. They encourage quorum members to bring their personal copies of the scriptures where possible. As needed for individual lessons, leaders may also ask young men to bring other Church-approved resources.

Quorum presidents preside at quorum meetings unless a higher presiding authority is present. A member of the quorum presidency or a priests quorum assistant conducts. If quorums meet together, the priests quorum assistants, teachers quorum president, and deacons quorum president take turns conducting.

Lessons in quorum meetings are usually taught by quorum advisers or assistant advisers. These brethren may divide this responsibility as needed. Bishopric members, quorum leaders, and other quorum members may assist in teaching from time to time. When quorum leaders or members give instruction, the adviser helps them prepare. Those who teach should follow the principles in 5.5.4.

Adults who hold an Aaronic Priesthood office are members of that quorum. However, they meet with the elders or high priests for Sunday instruction. The bishop may also invite 18-year-old Aaronic Priesthood holders to meet with the elders quorum.

During the time for quorum meetings, young women and young men may occasionally meet together, as directed by the bishopric.

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#### 8.12 Duty to God Program

All Aaronic Priesthood holders are encouraged to participate in the Duty to God program. This program gives Aaronic Priesthood holders opportunities to develop spiritual strength, learn and fulfill their priesthood duties, prepare



to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and serve full-time missions, maintain physical health, and improve their relationships with others.

Parents and leaders encourage young men to participate in the program soon after they are ordained to their first priesthood office. Young men continue to set goals throughout their years in the Aaronic Priesthood.

## 8.13 Activities

Quorum leaders and quorum advisers plan activities based on the needs and interests of quorum members. They make a special effort to reach out to all young men, including those who have recently joined the Church and those who are less active. Activities may help young men accomplish their goals in the Duty to God program. Quorum leaders should participate as much as possible in planning and carrying out activities.

Plans for quorum activities should be approved by a member of the bishopric and should follow the guidelines in chapter 13.

### 8.13.1 Mutual

Most quorum activities occur during a time called Mutual. The term *Mutual* suggests shared experiences in which there is mutual respect and support for one another and opportunities to learn together. Mutual activities should provide youth with a variety of opportunities to serve others and to develop spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually.

Mutual is generally held weekly. If travel or other restrictions make this impractical, Mutual may be held less frequently, but it should be held at least monthly. Mutual should be 1 to 1½ hours long and should take place on a day or evening other than Sunday or Monday.

The Young Men presidency, under the direction of the bishopric, oversees Mutual for young men.

Young Men and Young Women presidencies may use Mutual activities to prepare for stake or multistake activities (see 13.3).

#### Annual Theme for Mutual

Each year, the First Presidency announces a theme for Mutual. Leaders emphasize this theme in Mutual opening exercises and in other youth activities.

## Opening Exercises

Mutual usually begins with brief opening exercises presided over by a member of the bishopric. The bishop's priests quorum assistants and members of the Laurel class presidency take turns conducting. Adult leaders prepare youth leaders for this responsibility.

Opening exercises include a hymn and prayer and may also include musical selections and opportunities for the youth to share their talents and testimonies.

## Quorum and Class Activities or Combined Activities

Following opening exercises, Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women classes generally hold separate activities. In a ward or branch with few young men, all the young men may meet together for activities. Activities may also be planned for any combination of quorums and classes.

Combined activities for all young men and young women are normally held once a month. Members of the bishopric youth committee schedule, plan, and review these activities in their meetings. The activities are carried out under the direction of the bishopric.

Some examples of appropriate activities are service projects, music, dance, drama, cultural events, sports or athletic events, career exploration, and outdoor activities.

### 8.13.2 Bishopric Youth Discussions

Bishopric youth discussions are planned and carried out by the bishopric. These discussions, which are held occasionally, give the bishopric opportunities to address subjects that are interesting to the youth and that strengthen the youth spiritually. Topics in *For the Strength of Youth* and *True to the Faith* are especially appropriate. Occasionally the bishopric may invite guests to participate. Guests are usually members of the ward or stake.

Bishopric youth discussions may be held with all of the youth together or with the youth of a certain age-group. They may be held during Mutual, on Sunday during the time for quorum meetings and Young Women classes, or at another time that does not put undue burden on families. The bishopric determines their frequency. They are scheduled in bishopric youth committee meetings.

### 8.13.3 Standards Events

Standards events are special programs that emphasize moral values and eternal goals. They encourage young men to live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, which will bring them closer to the Savior.

These events are held annually, or more often as needed, usually during Mutual. They may be held on a quorum, ward, multiward, or stake level. Depending on how a subject is presented, these events may include any combination of Aaronic Priesthood quorums. They may also include mothers, fathers, mothers and fathers together, and young women.

### 8.13.4 Scouting

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, quorums may participate in Scouting activities during Mutual. Scouting should help young men put into practice the gospel principles they learn on Sunday.

Each member of the bishopric oversees the Scouting program for the Aaronic Priesthood quorum he oversees. Members of the ward Young Men presidency generally serve as Scout leaders. Or the bishopric may call assistant quorum advisers as Scout leaders, with members of the Young Men presidency called to serve as assistant Scout leaders.

In each quorum, the bishop usually appoints the quorum president or one of his assistants in the priests quorum to serve as the youth leader of the Scouting program. However, he may appoint other young men as youth Scout leaders.

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, young men ages 12 to 15 should be registered. Young men ages 16 and 17 should be registered if they are pursuing rank advancements or if the stake president or bishop chooses to sponsor Scouting programs for young men of this age.

All adult Scout leaders should register before they begin their service and should receive proper training in their responsibilities. In the United States, registered adult leaders receive liability protection from the Boy Scouts of America.

The Church pays all or part of the fees for registering young men and adult leaders in Scouting. The Church also pays for unit chartering. Registration and chartering expenses are paid from the stake general checking account. The Church provides these funds in addition to the budget allowance.

The bishopric organizes a ward Scout committee to ensure that Scouting functions properly as a supporting activity for Aaronic Priesthood quorums.

Where there are few young men, a Scout troop may be organized to serve multiple wards and branches or, in some instances, an entire stake or district.

For information about financing Scouting, see 8.13.7. For additional information about Scouting, see the Church's *Scouting Handbook*.

### 8.13.5 Stake and Multistake Activities

See 13.3.

### 8.13.6 Youth Conference

See 13.4.

### 8.13.7 Funding for Activities

Funding for Aaronic Priesthood activities, including Scouting activities where they are authorized by the Church, should come from the ward budget (see 13.2.8).

#### Funding for an Annual Camp or Similar Activity

If the ward budget does not have sufficient funds to pay for an annual extended Scout camp or similar activity for young men, leaders may ask participants to pay for part or all of it. If funds from participants are not sufficient, the bishop may authorize one group fund-raising activity annually that complies with the guidelines in 13.6.8.

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.

#### 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 fund-raising activity annually that complies with the guidelines in 13.6.8.

Equipment and supplies purchased with Church funds, whether from the ward budget or a fund-raising activity, are for Church use only. They are not for the personal use of individuals or families.

Church funds may not be used to purchase uniforms for individuals.

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## 8.14 Teaching Leadership Skills and Qualities

Quorum advisers and assistant advisers teach leadership skills and qualities as they work with quorum presidencies and the bishopric youth committee, as they help young men plan and carry out activities, and as they help young men give service together. In this effort, advisers and assistant advisers may refer to chapter 3 in this handbook.

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## 8.15 Stake Aaronic Priesthood Leadership

### 8.15.1 Stake Presidency

Members of the stake presidency oversee the Aaronic Priesthood in the stake. As part of this responsibility, they instruct bishops in their duty to preside over the Aaronic Priesthood in their wards.

The stake president assigns one of his counselors to oversee the stake Young Men organization and Scouting in the stake (or other stake activities for young men in areas where Scouting is not authorized by the Church). Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, this counselor should receive proper training in his Scouting responsibilities.

For more information about the responsibilities of the stake presidency, see 15.1. For more information about Scouting, see the Church's *Scouting Handbook*.

### 8.15.2 High Councilor Assigned to the Stake Young Men

The stake president assigns a member of the high council to work with the stake Young Men presidency. This high councilor's responsibilities are outlined in 15.3.

### 8.15.3 Stake Young Men Presidency

The responsibilities of the stake Young Men presidency are outlined in 15.4.1.

### 8.15.4 Stake Young Men Secretary

The responsibilities of the stake Young Men secretary are outlined in 15.4.2.

### 8.15.5 Stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women Committee

The stake president assigns a counselor to preside over the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee. Other committee members are the high councilors assigned to the stake

Young Men and Young Women organizations, the stake Young Men presidency and secretary, and the stake Young Women presidency and secretary.

The stake presidency may invite youth to attend the committee's meetings as needed. Youth should be included as much as possible in planning and carrying out activities such as youth conferences, dances, devotionals, and multistake events. Youth may also participate in discussions about challenges that the youth in the stake are facing.

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## 8.16 Adapting the Young Men Organization to Local Needs

In a ward or branch with few young men, Aaronic Priesthood quorums may meet together for instruction (see 8.11). They also may meet together for activities.

If adult leadership is limited in a ward or branch, the Young Men presidency may teach the Sunday lessons and administer the activity program without assistant advisers. In a very small unit, the Young Men president may be the only adult leader in the Young Men organization. In this case, he teaches the Sunday lessons and oversees activities for all young men. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called.

Because youth often benefit from socializing in larger groups, the young men and young women in two or more small wards or branches may meet occasionally for combined activities. If neighboring wards and branches have few young men, the bishops and branch presidents may authorize the young men to meet together for weekly activities. When considering these options, bishops and branch presidents take into account factors such as distance and travel cost.

In a small stake or a district, the Young Men president may be the only stake or district Young Men leader. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called.

For general information about adapting to local needs, see chapter 17.

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## 8.17 Additional Guidelines and Policies

### 8.17.1 Youth under Age 14 in Youth Conferences and Dances

Youth under age 14 do not usually participate in youth conferences or in dances that are held at times other than the regularly scheduled

Mutual night (see 13.6.14). Overnight camps and extended Scout camps are exceptions to this guideline.

#### 8.17.2 ***True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference***

The Church has published *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* as a companion to the study of the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets. Members of the bishopric or quorum advisers ensure that each young man has a copy of the book. Young men can use the book as a resource as they study and apply gospel principles, prepare talks, teach classes, and answer questions about the Church.

#### 8.17.3 **Young Men of Other Faiths**

Young men of other faiths who agree to abide by Church standards should be welcomed

warmly and encouraged to participate in youth activities. Expenses for their participation should be handled the same as for young men who are members of the Church. When these young men participate in Scouting, their parents may give donations to help fund activities.

#### 8.17.4 **Young Men Who Have Disabilities**

Young men who have disabilities are normally included in their regular quorums. Exceptions may be made with the approval of the parents and the bishopric.

For information about understanding, including, and teaching young men who have disabilities, see 21.1.26 and [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org).



# 9. Relief Society

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## 9. Relief Society

The Relief Society is an auxiliary to the priesthood. All auxiliary organizations exist to help Church members grow in their testimonies of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel. Through the work of the auxiliaries, members receive instruction, encouragement, and support as they strive to live according to gospel principles.

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### 9.1 Overview of Relief Society

#### 9.1.1 Purposes

Relief Society prepares women for the blessings of eternal life by helping them increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need. Relief Society accomplishes these purposes through Sunday gospel instruction, other Relief Society meetings, visiting teaching, and welfare and compassionate service.

#### 9.1.2 History

The Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society on March 17, 1842. He taught that the Relief Society was organized for “the relief of the poor, the destitute, the widow and the orphan, and for the exercise of all benevolent purposes” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 452). In addition, he taught that the Relief Society was “not only to relieve the poor, but to save souls” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 453). The larger part of the work of Relief Society today is “to look after the spiritual welfare and salvation . . . of all the female members of the Church” (Joseph F. Smith, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 185).

The Relief Society was “divinely made, divinely authorized, divinely instituted, divinely ordained of God” (Joseph F. Smith, in *Teachings: Joseph F. Smith*, 184). It operates under the direction of priesthood leaders.

#### 9.1.3 Motto and Seal

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



#### 9.1.4 Membership

All adult women in the Church are members of Relief Society.

A young woman normally advances into Relief Society on her 18th birthday or in the coming year. By age 19, each young woman should be fully participating in Relief Society. Because of individual circumstances, such as personal testimony and maturity, school graduation, desire to continue with peers, and college attendance, a young woman may advance into Relief Society earlier than her 18th birthday or remain in Young Women longer. Each young woman counsels with her parents and the bishop to decide what will best help her remain an active participant in the Church.

Young Women and Relief Society leaders work together to make the transition into Relief Society successful for each young woman.

Adult sisters who serve in Primary, Young Women, or other callings that prevent them from attending Sunday Relief Society meetings continue to participate in Relief Society. Visiting teachers are assigned to them, and they are assigned to serve as visiting teachers. They may also be given assignments to provide compassionate service and to teach classes at other Relief Society meetings when such assignments do not impose an undue burden on them.

Women under 18 who are married are also members of Relief Society. For other exceptions, see 10.12.4.

Women of other faiths who attend Relief Society are warmly welcomed and encouraged to participate.

## 9.2 Ward Relief Society Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering the Relief Society in a way that will strengthen individuals, families, and homes. Relief Society leaders frequently review chapter 3, which outlines general principles of leadership. These principles include preparing spiritually, participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 9.2.1 Bishopric

The bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Relief Society.

The bishop calls and sets apart a sister to serve as Relief Society president. He oversees the calling and setting apart of counselors in the ward Relief Society presidency, the ward Relief Society secretary, and other sisters who serve in Relief Society callings. He may assign his counselors to call and set apart these sisters.

The bishop meets with the Relief Society president regularly to discuss Relief Society and welfare matters.

### 9.2.2 Ward Relief Society Presidency

The Relief Society presidency consists of a president and two counselors. They are spiritual leaders in the effort to strengthen sisters and their families. They work under the direction of the bishopric. They also receive orientation and ongoing support from the stake Relief Society presidency.

#### Ward Relief Society President

The Relief Society president has the following responsibilities:

She serves as a member of the ward council. As a member of this council, she participates in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families (see chapter 4).

She meets regularly with the bishop to report on and discuss Relief Society and welfare matters.

At the bishop's request, she visits homes of members to evaluate welfare needs and suggest ways to respond to them (see 9.6.1). In the absence of the Relief Society president, the bishop

may assign a counselor in the Relief Society presidency to respond to an urgent need.

She submits recommendations to the bishopric for sisters to be called to serve as leaders and teachers and to fulfill other callings in the Relief Society. In making these recommendations, she follows the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

She coordinates ward Relief Society welfare efforts during emergencies.

She teaches other Relief Society leaders and teachers their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

She oversees the records, reports, budget, and finances of the ward Relief Society. The Relief Society secretary helps with this responsibility.

#### Ward Relief Society President and Counselors

The Relief Society president and her counselors work together to fulfill the following responsibilities. The Relief Society president assigns her counselors to oversee some of these responsibilities.

They organize and oversee visiting teaching.

They oversee compassionate service in the ward.

They oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in the Relief Society. In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4.

Under the direction of the bishop, they plan ways to address welfare needs (see 9.6 and chapter 6).

They plan and conduct Relief Society meetings.

They hold Relief Society presidency meetings.

As needed, they visit Relief Society sisters.

The Relief Society president assigns one of her counselors to coordinate the Relief Society's efforts to help the young single adult sisters in the ward. If the ward has a young single adult committee, this counselor serves on the committee. (See 16.3.3 and 16.3.4.)

### 9.2.3 Ward Relief Society Secretary

The Relief Society secretary has the following responsibilities:

She consults with the Relief Society president to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She

attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

Each month, she compiles a visiting teaching report for the Relief Society president to give to the bishop unless a visiting teaching coordinator has been assigned to do so (see 9.5.4). At least quarterly, she compiles attendance information, reviews it with the Relief Society president, and submits it to the ward clerk.

She ensures that the Relief Society presidency is aware of young women who will be entering Relief Society.

She assists the Relief Society presidency in preparing an annual budget and accounting for expenses.

#### 9.2.4 Relief Society Teachers

Relief Society teachers teach lessons as assigned by the Relief Society presidency. They follow the principles outlined in 5.5.4.

#### 9.2.5 Other Ward Relief Society Callings

The callings listed in this section are suggestions. The bishop and Relief Society president may decide not to fill every position, or they may determine that additional callings are needed.

##### Visiting Teaching Coordinator and Supervisors

In a ward with a large number of women, a sister may be called to help the Relief Society president coordinate visiting teaching and make sure it is done effectively. Additionally, visiting teaching supervisors may help the visiting teaching coordinator gather information and coordinate the work.

The visiting teaching coordinator receives monthly reports of visits and other contacts that visiting teachers have made. She may be assigned to help prepare a monthly visiting teaching report (see 9.5.4).

##### Compassionate Service Coordinator and Assistants

A sister may be called to help the Relief Society presidency identify needs and coordinate compassionate service. Assistants may also be called.

##### Relief Society Meeting Coordinator and Committee

A sister may be called to help the Relief Society presidency coordinate the planning of Relief Society meetings that are not held on Sunday. These meetings may include service, classes, projects, conferences, and workshops. The Relief

Society presidency may request that committee members be called to assist the coordinator. Committee members may be given specific areas of responsibility.

##### Assistant Relief Society Secretary

An assistant secretary may be called to help the secretary with her responsibilities.

##### Advisers to Young Single Adult Sisters

Advisers to young single adult sisters work under the direction of the Relief Society counselor assigned to young single adults. They watch over and strengthen young single adult sisters.

An adviser may be given any of the following responsibilities:

She may serve as a visiting teaching companion to a young single adult sister.

She may help with young single adult activities.

She may encourage young single adult sisters to participate in institute classes or other religious instruction.

If the ward has a young single adult committee, she serves on the committee (see 16.3.4).

If the ward has a Relief Society class for young single adult sisters, she may attend the class.

##### Committees

The Relief Society presidency may form committees to accomplish ongoing work such as strengthening individuals, families, and homes; watching over young single adult sisters; welfare; emergency preparedness; temple and family history work; missionary work; convert retention; and activation. Leaders of the committees report to the Relief Society president or an assigned counselor. Committee members may be given specific areas of responsibility.

While not required, committees may be formed if they will help accomplish the work of Relief Society and give more sisters opportunities to serve.

Some committees may be temporary to fill a short-term need. Sisters on such committees do not need to be called and set apart. Sisters who lead or serve on long-term committees are called and set apart by a member of the bishopric.

##### Music Leaders and Pianists

Appropriate music helps invite the Spirit in Relief Society meetings. The Relief Society

presidency may recommend sisters to serve as music leaders and pianists for Relief Society meetings.

### 9.3 Leadership Meetings

#### 9.3.1 Ward Council Meeting

The Relief Society president serves as a member of the ward council (see chapter 4).

As needed, the bishop may invite the Relief Society president to attend some ward priesthood executive committee meetings to discuss confidential welfare matters and to coordinate home teaching and visiting teaching assignments.

#### 9.3.2 Ward Relief Society Presidency Meeting

The Relief Society presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The president presides at the meeting and conducts it. The secretary attends, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Discuss ways to organize, teach, and inspire sisters in the work of Relief Society.
2. Review counsel and assignments from the bishop, including assignments from ward council meetings, and plan ways to fulfill them.
3. Discuss ways to help Relief Society sisters and their families meet welfare needs. This may include discussions about compassionate service.
4. Review visiting teachers' efforts to watch over and strengthen Relief Society sisters and their families. Give special attention to the needs of new members in Relief Society and young single adult sisters.
5. Discuss the effectiveness of teaching in Sunday Relief Society meetings and other Relief Society meetings and make plans to improve.
6. Plan Relief Society meetings.
7. Consider sisters to be called to serve in Relief Society, and prepare recommendations for the Relief Society president to share with the bishopric. Also consider sisters to ask to help with short-term assignments.

#### 9.3.3 Stake Relief Society Leadership Meeting

Stake Relief Society leadership meeting is generally held once a year, as explained in 18.3.11. Ward Relief Society presidencies and secretaries

attend. Others with Relief Society callings may be invited to attend as needed.

### 9.4 Ward Relief Society Meetings

#### 9.4.1 Sunday Relief Society Meetings

In Sunday Relief Society meetings, Latter-day Saint women learn doctrines and principles of the gospel that will help them increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need.

A member of the Relief Society presidency conducts Sunday meetings. Each meeting begins with a welcome by a member of the presidency, a hymn, a prayer, and brief announcements about opportunities to serve, upcoming events, illnesses, and other appropriate information. Maximum time is reserved for a gospel lesson. The meeting closes with a hymn and a prayer.

Each month, the Relief Society presidency plans Sunday meetings according to the following pattern.

##### First Sunday

A member of the ward Relief Society presidency teaches on the first Sunday. She uses the scriptures, the teachings of latter-day prophets, and approved Church materials. Relief Society leaders use this meeting to teach the doctrines of the gospel and help sisters become actively engaged in the work of Relief Society.

Members of the Relief Society presidency seek the guidance of the Spirit as they determine subjects to teach. The Relief Society president may also counsel with the bishop about subjects he would like the sisters to discuss. Subjects may include women's roles and responsibilities in the gospel, strengthening marriages and families, visiting teaching, service, missionary work, convert retention, activation, spiritual and temporal welfare, temple and family history work, and the history and purposes of Relief Society. Time may be given for sisters to share their testimonies.

##### Second and Third Sundays

On the second and third Sundays, the lesson is taught by a member of the Relief Society presidency or a Relief Society teacher. She uses the current Relief Society manual. Lessons are generally taught in the order they are presented in the manual and on the same Sunday they are taught in elders quorum and high priests group meetings.



The Relief Society presidency sees that all women in the ward ages 18 and older receive a copy of the Relief Society manual for their personal study, regardless of whether these members are able to attend Sunday Relief Society meetings. Leaders encourage those who attend to bring their copies of the manual and, where possible, their personal copies of the scriptures.

#### Fourth Sunday

On the fourth Sunday, the lesson is taught by a member of the Relief Society presidency or a Relief Society teacher. The teacher uses messages from the most recent general conference. The stake president or bishop selects the messages.

#### Fifth Sunday

On a fifth Sunday, the bishop determines the subject to be taught, the instructor (usually a member of the ward or stake), and whether Relief Society sisters and Melchizedek Priesthood holders meet separately or combined.

### 9.4.2 Additional Relief Society Meetings

To supplement the instruction in Sunday meetings, Relief Society sisters may participate in additional meetings. These may include service, classes, projects, conferences, and workshops. In these meetings, sisters learn and accomplish the charitable and practical responsibilities of the Relief Society. They learn and practice skills that will help them increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen their families and make their homes centers of spiritual strength, and help those in need. They learn and apply principles of provident living and spiritual and temporal self-reliance. They also increase in sisterhood and unity as they teach one another and serve together.

All Relief Society sisters, including those who serve in Young Women and Primary and those who do not actively participate in the Church, are invited to attend. Sisters may also invite their friends of other faiths.

Sisters should not be made to feel that attendance at these meetings is mandatory.

The Relief Society president oversees all Relief Society meetings. As part of this responsibility, she counsels regularly with the bishop about how the meetings can help meet the needs of individuals and families in the ward.

Although the Relief Society president oversees the meetings, she does not need to attend all of them. However, at least one member of the

Relief Society presidency should be in attendance at every meeting.

#### Frequency and Location of the Meetings

The Relief Society presidency prayerfully considers how often they should hold additional Relief Society meetings and where they should hold them. When they have made a decision, the Relief Society president seeks approval from the bishop.

These meetings are usually held at a time other than on Sunday or on Monday evening. They are generally held monthly, but the Relief Society presidency may recommend that they be held more often or less often. Efforts should be made to meet at least quarterly.

In determining the frequency, location, and length of additional meetings, the bishop and Relief Society presidency consider time commitments of sisters, family circumstances, travel distance and cost, financial cost to the ward, safety, and other local circumstances.

#### Planning the Meetings

Relief Society leaders prayerfully counsel together about the topics that will strengthen sisters and their families and about the best ways to teach those topics.

The Relief Society president ensures that plans for all Relief Society meetings are approved by the bishop. She also ensures that all plans are in accordance with the guidelines in chapter 13.

Although the Relief Society president oversees these meetings, she may ask her first or second counselor to assume the responsibility for planning them and carrying them out. She may also recommend another sister to be called as Relief Society meeting coordinator to fulfill this responsibility (see 9.2.5).

Meetings may focus on one topic or be divided into more than one class or activity. Generally, teachers should be members of the ward or stake. Each year, one meeting may commemorate the founding of the Relief Society and focus on its history and purposes.

In planning these meetings, Relief Society leaders give special attention to topics that the bishop has asked them to address to help meet local needs. Leaders also give priority to the following topics:

*Marriage and family:* preparing for marriage and family, strengthening marriages, motherhood, early childhood education, preparing

youth for future responsibilities, encouraging and preparing for family home evening, and strengthening extended family relationships.

*Homemaking:* learning and improving skills for the care of the home and family, such as cleaning and organizing, home beautification, cooking, and sewing.

*Self-reliance and provident living:* finances (budgeting, debt relief, and employment qualifications); education and literacy (studying the scriptures and learning the gospel, teaching others to read, tutoring children and youth, choosing children's literature, using computers and other technology, and developing cultural awareness); health (physical health, fitness, addiction prevention and recovery, social and emotional health, and preventing illness); gardening; food production and storage; and emergency preparedness.

*Compassionate service:* care of the sick, elderly, homebound, disabled, and poor and needy; support for new mothers and babies; and humanitarian and community aid.

*Temple and family history:* collecting and preserving family history information, writing family histories, preparing for the temple, and doing temple work.

*Sharing the gospel:* member missionary efforts, fellowshiping new and less-active members, neighborhood outreach, activation and retention, welcoming new sisters into Relief Society, and preparing for full-time missions.

### Children's Class

A children's class may be held to allow mothers of young children to attend meetings held on days other than Sunday. With the approval of the bishopric, the Relief Society presidency asks Relief Society sisters or other ward members to supervise and teach this class. If Relief Society sisters teach the class, the Relief Society presidency rotates this responsibility so all the sisters can have the opportunity to attend the meetings. If men teach the class, the Relief Society presidency follows the guidelines in 11.8.1.

Teachers for the children's class plan age-appropriate activities that teach children about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. They may use Primary manuals and other Primary materials to teach the children.

If food is provided in the children's class, leaders first consult with the parents of each child about any dietary restrictions due to conditions such as diabetes or allergies.

## 9.5 Visiting Teaching

Visiting teaching gives women the opportunity to watch over, strengthen, and teach one another. Through visiting teaching, the Relief Society president helps the bishop identify and resolve short-term and long-term needs of sisters and their families.

Members of the Relief Society presidency instruct visiting teachers on ways to care for, watch over, remember, and strengthen one another. Presidency members can give this instruction in a lesson on the first Sunday of the month or in another Relief Society meeting.

Visiting teachers are not sustained or set apart.

### 9.5.1 Responsibilities of Visiting Teachers

Visiting teachers sincerely come to know and love each sister, help her strengthen her faith, and give service. They seek personal inspiration to know how to respond to the spiritual and temporal needs of each sister they are assigned to visit.

Taking into account each sister's individual needs and circumstances, visiting teachers have regular contact (monthly if possible) with those they are assigned. When a personal visit is not possible, visiting teachers may use phone calls, letters, e-mail, or other means to watch over and strengthen sisters.

When appropriate, visiting teachers share a gospel message. These messages may be from the monthly visiting teaching message printed in the *Ensign* or *Liahona* magazine and the scriptures.

Visiting teachers give compassionate service during times of illness, death, and other special circumstances. They assist the Relief Society president in coordinating short-term and long-term assistance when invited.

### 9.5.2 Organizing Visiting Teaching

The structure of visiting teaching in the ward is determined by the bishop and Relief Society presidency after prayerful consideration of local needs and circumstances. Where possible, the presidency assigns sisters into companionships of two. Because visiting teaching focuses on individual sisters, Relief Society leaders do not organize women in groups for the purpose of visiting teaching.

In organizing visiting teaching, members of the Relief Society presidency prayerfully discuss the needs of individuals and families. They



give special priority to ensuring that the following sisters are cared for: sisters coming into Relief Society from Young Women, single sisters, new ward members, recent converts, newly married sisters, less-active members, and others with special needs. They also consider factors such as distance, travel, and safety.

Based on these discussions, they assign visiting teachers to each sister in the ward. They obtain the bishop's approval for each assignment.

With approval from the bishop in exceptional cases, Melchizedek Priesthood leaders and Relief Society leaders may assign a husband and wife as a companionship where visits by a couple are needed. Couples report these visits as home teaching and visiting teaching. Normally, young parents are not given such an assignment because it takes them away from their children.

### 9.5.3 Adapting Visiting Teaching to Local Needs

In a ward with limited resources, leaders may adapt visiting teaching to ensure that sisters with the greatest needs always receive a monthly visit.

With approval from the bishop, Melchizedek Priesthood leaders and Relief Society leaders may temporarily assign only home teachers or only visiting teachers to certain families. In some cases, leaders may assign home teachers to visit a family one month and assign visiting teachers to visit Relief Society members in that family the next month.

With approval from the mission president, leaders may consider asking full-time sister missionaries to help with visiting teaching on a limited basis. The mission president communicates this approval to the stake president, who informs bishops. When such approval is given, full-time missionaries are assigned primarily to visit new members, part-member families, and less-active members.

### 9.5.4 Reporting Visiting Teaching

The Relief Society presidency or those who are called to assist them receive monthly reports from visiting teachers. The visiting teachers report any special needs of the sisters they visit and any service rendered. In addition, presidency members meet with visiting teachers regularly to discuss sisters' spiritual and temporal welfare and to make plans to help those in need. Confidential information should be reported only to the Relief Society president, who reports it to the bishop.

The Relief Society president gives the bishop a monthly visiting teaching report. Each report includes a list of those who were not contacted. If a sister and her family have urgent needs, the Relief Society president reports this information to the bishop immediately.

## 9.6 Welfare and Compassionate Service

Welfare and compassionate service are central to the work of Relief Society.

Under the bishop's direction, the ward Relief Society presidency, the elders quorum presidency, and the high priests group leadership share the following welfare responsibilities:

They teach principles of temporal and spiritual self-reliance.

They care for the poor and needy and encourage members to give service.

They help individuals and families become self-reliant and find solutions to short-term and long-term welfare concerns.

For more information on these welfare responsibilities, see chapter 6.

The following sections outline responsibilities that apply specifically to the Relief Society president and her counselors.

### 9.6.1 Family-Needs Visits

The bishop normally assigns the Relief Society president to visit members who need welfare assistance so she can evaluate their needs and suggest ways to respond to them. If there is not a woman in a home she visits, she takes one of her counselors, the Relief Society secretary, or the compassionate service coordinator with her.

To prepare for a family-needs visit, the Relief Society president considers information the bishop provides about the family and seeks guidance from the Lord.

The Relief Society president evaluates the family's resources and prepares an itemized list of the family's basic food and clothing needs. She gives this list to the bishop. She also may prepare a Bishop's Order for Commodities form for the bishop to review and approve. She provides this service with sensitivity and understanding, helping those who receive assistance to maintain their self-respect and dignity.

The Relief Society president reports to the bishop on the general condition of the family. She reports any needs in the areas of food (for normal needs but not for food storage), clothing, home

management, health, and social and emotional well-being. She also may share her assessment of family members' work capabilities and the opportunities family members have for work.

The bishop helps the family develop a self-reliance plan. He also counsels with the Relief Society president regarding additional opportunities to help the family. In some cases, the most valuable assistance may include (1) helping a sister manage income and resources and (2) teaching homemaking skills such as cleaning, sewing, organizing, planning menus, preserving food, and promoting good health.

The Relief Society president and anyone who assists her keep strictly confidential any information they obtain during the visit or from the bishop.

### 9.6.2 **Compassionate Service**

All Relief Society sisters have a responsibility to be conscious of the needs of others. They use their time, skills, talents, spiritual and emotional support, and prayers of faith to help others.

Through the help of visiting teachers and others in the ward, the Relief Society presidency identifies those who have special needs because of old age, physical or emotional illness, emergencies, births, deaths, disability, loneliness, and other challenges. The Relief Society president reports her findings to the bishop. Under his direction, she coordinates assistance. She assesses the skills and circumstances of all sisters as she determines who may be able to help.

She may ask a counselor, a compassionate service coordinator, or a visiting teacher to help coordinate these service efforts. She may also form a committee to help. Sisters can assist by providing meals, providing child care or home care, helping individual sisters improve literacy skills, providing transportation for needed medical assistance, and responding to other needs.

### 9.6.3 **Literacy**

The ability to read and write helps members find employment and develop temporal self-reliance. It also helps them increase in their gospel knowledge and spiritual self-reliance. Each ward implements literacy efforts according to its needs and resources. When basic literacy skills are lacking among members, the Relief Society presidency works with the bishop and ward council to identify practical ways to help members improve these skills. Assigned leaders and teachers may use the Church's literacy course, which includes

the *Ye Shall Have My Words* student manual and teacher's manual and a DVD for training teachers. In addition, Relief Society leaders may devote some meetings to literacy skills.

## 9.7 **Strengthening Young Relief Society Sisters**

### 9.7.1 **Working with the Young Women Presidency**

The transition from youth to womanhood is a defining time in the life of a young woman. The Relief Society presidency works with the Young Women presidency to determine ways to support parents in their efforts to help young women successfully make the transition to Relief Society.

The following suggestions may help in this effort:

The Relief Society president may visit Young Women classes and present a preview of Relief Society.

Young women and Relief Society sisters may occasionally plan a Relief Society meeting or activity together.

When authorized by the stake president and when space permits, Young Women and Relief Society opening exercises may be combined one Sunday each month. To ensure that the young women and Relief Society sisters have enough time for gospel learning and teaching, the Relief Society presidency and Young Women presidency plan opening exercises that are well organized and brief. Responsibility for conducting is shared between the Relief Society presidency and the Laurel class presidency.

Young Relief Society sisters may be asked to assist individual young women who need support in completing Personal Progress and remaining active in the Church.

### 9.7.2 **Responsibility for Young Single Adult Sisters**

The Relief Society presidency has a responsibility to look after young single adult sisters. Relief Society leaders teach young single adult sisters the purposes of Relief Society and give them opportunities to participate in the work of Relief Society. They assign young single adult sisters to serve as visiting teachers. Relief Society leaders may also give young single adult sisters other meaningful opportunities to serve and may recommend them to receive callings to serve in the Relief Society.

The Relief Society presidency assigns visiting teachers to each young single adult sister. If

a young single adult sister lives with her parents, the Relief Society presidency determines whether she should have her own visiting teachers or if her mother's visiting teachers should visit her as well.

### 9.7.3 **Separate Relief Society Class for Young Single Adult Sisters**

If sufficient numbers of young single adult sisters reside in a ward, the bishop may authorize the organization of a separate Relief Society class for Sunday lessons and occasional activities. If a sister in the ward is serving as a young single adult leader (see 16.3.3), she may serve as the class leader. Lessons are taught by members of the class, who focus their teaching on the needs of young sisters. They use the scriptures, the teachings of latter-day prophets, and the approved Relief Society manual.

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## 9.8 **Stake Relief Society Leadership**

### 9.8.1 **Stake Presidency**

The stake president oversees the Relief Society in the stake. He meets regularly (usually monthly) with the stake Relief Society president or presidency. He provides priesthood direction as they counsel together about matters that pertain to Relief Society sisters and their families. These matters may include welfare needs, the progress and needs of sisters in the stake, and Relief Society meetings, instruction, and activities.

For more information about the stake presidency's responsibilities relating to auxiliary organizations, see 15.1.

### 9.8.2 **Stake Relief Society Presidency**

The responsibilities of stake auxiliary presidencies are outlined in 15.4.1. The stake Relief Society presidency also has the following responsibilities:

Under the direction of the stake presidency, they may plan and carry out one or two stake Relief Society meetings each year for all Relief Society sisters in the stake. These meetings may include service, classes, projects, conferences, and workshops. One of them may be held in conjunction with the general Relief Society meeting. The stake Relief Society presidency may form committees to help as needed.

Members of the stake Relief Society presidency ensure that ward Relief Society presidents

understand welfare principles and that they understand their role to help bishops in welfare matters.

Members of the stake Relief Society presidency assist young single adult sisters in the stake. If the stake has a young single adult committee, a member of the presidency serves on the committee (see 16.3.2).

The stake Relief Society president supervises stake Relief Society welfare efforts. She also coordinates stake Relief Society efforts during emergencies.

### 9.8.3 **Stake Relief Society Secretary**

The responsibilities of the stake Relief Society secretary are outlined in 15.4.2.

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## 9.9 **Adapting the Relief Society Organization to Local Needs**

The following guidelines are provided to help wards and stakes adapt the Relief Society organization to local needs. For general information about adapting to local needs, see chapter 17.

### 9.9.1 **More Than One Relief Society in a Ward**

Under special circumstances, the bishop and stake president may authorize that more than one Relief Society be created in a ward. Special circumstances might include wards with nursing homes, young single adult wards, wards with a large number of single mothers and widows, and wards that encompass large geographic areas. The intent of creating more than one Relief Society is to facilitate watching over and strengthening the sisters and their families.

In a ward with more than one Relief Society, the leaders in each Relief Society presidency administer the full Relief Society program for their membership, including visiting teaching and welfare. Each Relief Society president has an equal voice in ward council meetings and works individually with the bishop concerning welfare matters and efforts to strengthen the sisters and their families.

### 9.9.2 **Relief Society in Small Units**

In a small ward or branch, the Relief Society presidency may be the only Relief Society leaders and teachers. In a very small unit, the Relief Society president may be the only Relief Society leader. Counselors, a secretary, teachers, and others listed in this chapter should be called when possible.

In a very small branch that does not have a Young Women president or Primary president, the Relief Society president may help parents organize instruction for the young women and children until Young Women and Primary presidents are called.

In a small stake or a district, the Relief Society president may be the only stake or district Relief Society leader. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called.

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## 9.10 Additional Guidelines and Policies

### 9.10.1 Sisters Who Have Special Needs

Sisters who may have special needs include those who are ill, elderly, widowed, divorced, homebound, or bereaved and those who care for chronically ill family members. Other Relief Society members should offer help.

Sisters who have these and other special challenges may come to the Relief Society president with their concerns. She should listen, offer love and encouragement, and maintain appropriate confidentiality. If she learns of possible concerns with worthiness or sensitive family matters, she refers the sisters to the bishop.

For information about helping sisters with disabilities, see 21.1.26 and [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org).

### 9.10.2 Dress Standards

The Relief Society presidency teaches sisters to be well groomed and modest in their attire. Presidency members help sisters understand that at Church meetings, their appearance and clothing should show reverence and respect for the Lord. Relief Society leaders also help sisters understand that when they go to the temple, they should wear clothing that is suitable for entering the house of the Lord. On these occasions they should avoid wearing casual clothes, sports attire, and ostentatious jewelry.

### 9.10.3 Offering Support at Times of Death

When a death occurs in the ward, the bishop may ask the Relief Society president to contact

the family to give comfort, assess needs, and offer assistance. He may request similar assistance from the elders quorum president and the high priests group leader. Melchizedek Priesthood leaders and Relief Society leaders coordinate these efforts.

In preparing for a funeral, the bishop may also ask Relief Society leaders to give service such as helping with flowers, meals, or care of children and providing a simple meal for family members after the funeral service. For additional information about funerals, see 18.6.

If possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried in temple clothing. In some circumstances, the bishop may ask the Relief Society president to assign an endowed woman to dress or oversee the proper dressing of a deceased endowed woman. The bishop and Relief Society president ensure that this assignment is given to a person who will not find it objectionable. Guidelines for dressing deceased members are provided in *Instructions for Clothing the Dead Who Have Received Their Endowments*. Leaders may obtain these instructions from Church Distribution Services.

For additional instructions on dressing the deceased in temple clothing, the bishop may refer to *Handbook 1*, 3.4.9.

The Relief Society president, visiting teachers, and other sisters continue to offer support, comfort, and assistance to the bereaved during the period of adjustment following the death.

### 9.10.4 Young Women Who Are Pregnant out of Wedlock or Who Are Unwed Mothers

See 10.12.4.

### 9.10.5 Instructions about Temple Clothing and Garments

See 21.1.42.

### 9.10.6 Finances

See 13.2.8.





# 10. Young Women

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## 10. Young Women

The Young Women organization is an auxiliary to the priesthood. All auxiliaries exist to help Church members grow in their testimonies of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel. Through the work of the auxiliaries, members receive instruction, encouragement, and support as they strive to live according to gospel principles.

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### 10.1 Overview of the Young Women Organization

#### 10.1.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Young Women Organization

The purpose of the Young Women organization is to help each young woman be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple. To accomplish this purpose, Young Women leaders guide each young woman in accomplishing the following objectives:

1. Strengthen her faith in and testimony of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
2. Understand her identity as a daughter of God.
3. Be worthy by obeying the commandments and living gospel standards.
4. Receive, recognize, and rely on the promptings of the Holy Ghost.
5. Prepare for her divine roles as a daughter, wife, mother, and leader.
6. Understand and keep her baptismal covenants.

#### 10.1.2 Young Women Theme

The Young Women theme provides a foundation for helping each young woman accomplish the objectives listed above.

Young women and their adult leaders repeat the theme at the beginning of Sunday meetings and at other Young Women gatherings. The theme reads as follows:

“We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love Him. We will ‘stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places’ (Mosiah 18:9) as we strive to live the Young Women values, which are:

Faith  
Divine Nature  
Individual Worth  
Knowledge  
Choice and Accountability  
Good Works  
Integrity and  
Virtue.

“We believe as we come to accept and act upon these values, we will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation.”

#### 10.1.3 Young Women Motto and Logo

The Young Women motto is “Stand for Truth and Righteousness.”

The Young Women logo is a torch surrounded by the Young Women motto. The torch represents the light of Christ that can shine through each young woman. Young women are invited to “arise and shine forth, that [their] light may be a standard for the nations” (D&C 115:5).



#### 10.1.4 Young Women Values

The Young Women values are Christlike attributes. Sunday gospel instruction, Mutual, and other activities help each young woman apply these values in her life.

The following statements and scripture references give insight into the meaning of each value. Leaders should use these statements in lessons. Leaders encourage young women to apply these truths in their lives and use them as resources for talks and presentations.

The colors associated with the values are to help young women remember the values.

*Faith (white)*: I am a daughter of Heavenly Father, who loves me. I have faith in His eternal plan, which centers in Jesus Christ, my Savior (see Alma 32:21).

*Divine Nature (blue)*: I have inherited divine qualities, which I will strive to develop (see 2 Peter 1:4–7).

*Individual Worth (red)*: I am of infinite worth with my own divine mission, which I will strive to fulfill (see D&C 18:10).

*Knowledge (green)*: I will continually seek opportunities for learning and growth (see D&C 88:118).

*Choice and Accountability (orange)*: I will choose good over evil and will accept responsibility for my decisions (see Joshua 24:15).

*Good Works (yellow)*: I will help others and build the kingdom through righteous service (see 3 Nephi 12:16).

*Integrity (purple)*: I will have the moral courage to make my actions consistent with my knowledge of right and wrong (see Job 27:5).

*Virtue (gold)*: I will prepare to enter the temple and remain pure and worthy. My thoughts and actions will be based on high moral standards (see Proverbs 31:10).

### 10.1.5 Young Women Classes

The young women in a ward are divided into three classes according to their ages: Beehives (ages 12–13), Mia Maids (ages 14–15), and Laurels (ages 16–17).

As a young woman advances to a new age-group, her new Young Women leaders and class presidency welcome her.

#### Beehives, Ages 12–13



When a young woman reaches age 12, the bishop interviews her. She advances from Primary to Young Women and begins attending Young Women meetings during Primary sharing time (see 11.4.3). She is a member of the Beehive class.

For the early pioneers of the Church, the beehive was a symbol of harmony, cooperation, and work. When the young women of the Church were first organized as a group, they were known as Beehives.

As a member of a Beehive class today, a young woman strengthens her faith in Heavenly

Father and Jesus Christ and learns to work with others in harmony and cooperation. This is a time for her to stand for truth and righteousness and “arise and shine forth” (D&C 115:5).

#### Mia Maids, Ages 14–15



A young woman becomes a member of the Mia Maid class when she reaches age 14.

The term *Mia* refers to the Mutual Improvement Association (MIA), which was once the name of the youth program in the Church. The word *Maid* means young woman. The Mutual Improvement Association adopted the rose as an emblem of their organization, and that emblem continues with Mia Maids today as a symbol of love, faith, and purity.

As a member of a Mia Maid class today, a young woman strengthens her testimony of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, accepts and acts upon the Young Women values, and learns about love, faith, and purity.

#### Laurels, Ages 16–17



A young woman becomes a member of the Laurel class when she reaches age 16.

For centuries, the leaves of the laurel tree have symbolized honor and accomplishment, especially when woven into a crown.

As a member of a Laurel class today, a young woman prepares to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple.

#### Eighteen-Year-Old Young Women

A young woman normally advances into Relief Society on her 18th birthday or in the coming year. By age 19, each young woman should be fully participating in Relief Society. Because of individual circumstances, such as personal testimony and maturity, school graduation, desire to continue with peers, and college attendance, a young woman may advance into Relief Society earlier than her 18th birthday or remain in Young Women longer. Each young woman counsels with her parents and the bishop to decide what will best help her remain an active participant in the Church.

Young Women and Relief Society leaders work together to make the transition into Relief Society successful for each young woman.

## 10.2 Roles of Parents and Church Leaders

Parents have the first responsibility for the spiritual and physical welfare of their children (see D&C 68:25–28). The bishopric and Young Women leaders support but do not replace parents in this responsibility. They offer support in the following ways:

They assist parents in helping their daughters prepare to receive the blessings of the temple by following the guidelines listed in 10.1.1.

They encourage communication between young women and parents.

They ensure that Young Women activities and other youth events do not put undue burdens on families or compete with family activities.

Leaders should be especially sensitive to young women who come from homes that lack strong support for gospel living.

## 10.3 Ward Young Women Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering the Young Women organization in a way that will strengthen individual young women and their families. Young Women leaders frequently review chapter 3, which outlines general principles of leadership. These principles include preparing spiritually, participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 10.3.1 Bishopric

The bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Young Women organization. They watch over and strengthen individual young women, working closely with parents and Young Women leaders in this effort.

#### Bishop

The bishop calls and sets apart a sister to serve as Young Women president. He also oversees the calling and setting apart of other Young Women leaders. He may assign his counselors to call and set apart these leaders.

The bishop interviews each young woman who completes the Personal Progress program (see 10.7.3).

#### Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop and his counselors regularly participate in Young Women meetings, service, and activities. The bishop works with the Laurels. He assigns his counselor who works with deacons to

work with the Beehives and his counselor who works with the teachers to work with the Mia Maids.

The bishop assigns one of his counselors to oversee the ward Young Women organization. This counselor meets regularly with the Young Women presidency. He reports on Young Women matters in bishopric meetings.

The bishop interviews each young woman at least annually. If possible, he interviews each 16- and 17-year-old twice annually. If this is not possible, he assigns a counselor to conduct some of these interviews. Six months after each young woman between the ages of 12 and 15 has her annual interview with the bishop, she has an interview with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees her class.

In these interviews, the bishop and his counselors follow the guidelines in *Handbook 1*, 7.1.7. They may also refer to the Young Women Personal Progress Tracking Sheet for Leaders, which they receive from the ward Young Women secretary.

The bishop and his counselors recognize each young woman in sacrament meeting when she advances from Primary to Young Women, when she advances to a new age-group, and when she receives the Young Womanhood Recognition. When a young woman advances to a new age-group, a member of the bishopric gives her a certificate.

Members of the bishopric counsel together prayerfully to determine whom to call as class presidents. They do not select leaders merely because of age or seniority in the class. The Young Women presidency may recommend young women to serve as class presidents (see 19.1.1 and 19.1.2).

When a member of the bishopric calls a young woman to serve as a class president, he asks her to recommend whom to call as counselors and a secretary. He counsels her to approach this responsibility prayerfully, seeking guidance from the Lord about whom to recommend. However, the bishopric member also helps the class president understand that final responsibility to receive inspiration on whom to call rests with the bishopric.

A member of the bishopric seeks permission from a young woman's parents before asking her to serve in any of these callings.

After extending these callings, a member of the bishopric presents the young women to their class for a sustaining vote. Then the bishop or an assigned counselor sets the young women

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

A Young Women leader may communicate with the bishopric regarding any changes that may be needed in class presidencies.

### 10.3.2 Ward Young Women Presidency

The ward Young Women presidency consists of a president and two counselors. They work under the direction of the bishopric. They also receive orientation and ongoing support from the stake Young Women presidency.

Each member of the ward Young Women presidency is responsible for one of the Young Women classes, as follows:

President: Laurels

First counselor: Mia Maids

Second counselor: Beehives

#### Ward Young Women President

The Young Women president has the following responsibilities:

She serves as a member of the ward council. As a member of this council, she participates in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families (see chapter 4). She is also a member of the bishopric youth committee (see 18.2.9).

She submits recommendations to the bishopric for sisters to be called to serve in the Young Women organization. In making these recommendations, she follows the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

She teaches other Young Women leaders their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

She oversees the records, reports, budget, and finances of the ward Young Women organization. The Young Women secretary helps with this responsibility.

#### Ward Young Women President and Her Counselors

The Young Women president and her counselors have the following responsibilities:

They get to know each young woman and become familiar with her talents, interests, and challenges. They look for ways to strengthen young women individually, help them grow in their testimonies, and encourage them to participate in the Young Women organization. They give special attention to young women who are new members and young women who are less active.

They support each young woman in her family.

They help young women work on Personal Progress. They are also encouraged to work on Personal Progress themselves.

They may counsel with parents and priesthood leaders about the needs of young women.

They ensure that the ward Young Women program is organized and functioning properly. As part of this effort, they oversee and instruct ward Young Women advisers and specialists.

They often teach lessons in Sunday classes, though they may share this responsibility with Young Women advisers. They oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in the Young Women organization. In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4.

They attend class presidency meetings and provide guidance as needed.

They work with class presidencies to plan and carry out activities, including Mutual activities. They help class presidencies build unity among the young women.

They teach leadership skills and qualities to class presidencies and other leaders in the Young Women organization (see 10.9).

They hold Young Women presidency meetings. They also meet regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Young Women organization.

### 10.3.3 Ward Young Women Secretary

The Young Women secretary has the following responsibilities:

She consults with the Young Women presidency to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

She instructs class secretaries and oversees their work in keeping attendance records. At least quarterly, she compiles attendance information, reviews it with the Young Women president, and submits it to the ward clerk.

She ensures that the bishopric and the Young Women presidency are aware of young women who are not attending meetings regularly and young women who will soon advance to another Young Women class.

She uses the Young Women Personal Progress Tracking Sheet for Leaders to record the progress of individual young women as they participate in Personal Progress and other activities and as



they fulfill leadership callings. When a young woman is scheduled to have an interview with a member of the bishopric, the secretary may give him a copy of the young woman's tracking sheet.

She helps the Young Women presidency prepare an annual budget and account for expenses.

#### 10.3.4 Ward Young Women Advisers

The bishopric may call Young Women advisers to help the Young Women presidency with their responsibilities. Each adviser works with a specific age-group of young women and works under the direction of the presidency member who is assigned to that age-group. Advisers have the following responsibilities:

They help the Young Women presidency and class presidencies plan and carry out activities, including Mutual.

They may teach Sunday lessons. They also may help teach leadership skills to class presidencies.

They may help record the progress of individual young women in the Personal Progress program.

They attend ward Young Women presidency meetings as invited.

#### 10.3.5 Young Women Class Presidencies

A class presidency is normally called for each Young Women class. In a ward or branch with few young women, one presidency may be called for the combined age-groups until the young women are able to be organized into their respective classes.

Class presidencies have the following responsibilities:

They watch over and fellowship class members, especially those who are new members or less active and those who have disabilities or other special needs. They pray for them, spend time with them, and become genuine friends.

They help class members establish close friendships, learn leadership skills, and live the gospel.

They help each young woman know that she is welcome when she becomes a member of their class.

They support class members' efforts in the Personal Progress program.

They hold regular class presidency meetings.

They conduct the Sunday meetings for their classes.

They help plan activities, including Mutual.

The class presidents serve on the bishopric youth committee (see 18.2.9).

#### 10.3.6 Young Women Class Secretaries

Class secretaries have the following responsibilities:

They compile and review attendance information and submit it to the Young Women secretary.

They consult with the class presidency to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. They attend these meetings, take notes, and keep track of assignments.

They may help class presidencies and Young Women leaders plan activities.

#### 10.3.7 Ward Young Women Activity Specialists

The bishopric may call specialists to serve temporarily in planning and carrying out specific activities. For example, specialists may be called to help with activities such as Young Women camp, youth conference, and sports. These specialists serve under the direction of the ward Young Women presidency.

#### 10.3.8 Young Women Music Director and Pianist

The bishopric may call a Young Women music director and pianist. They may extend these callings to adult women or to young women.

The music director selects and conducts hymns for Sunday opening exercises. She may also help young women learn special musical selections and develop their musical abilities.

The pianist plays prelude and postlude music and hymn accompaniment in Young Women meetings.

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### 10.4 Leadership Meetings

#### 10.4.1 Ward Council Meeting

The Young Women president serves as a member of the ward council (see chapter 4).

#### 10.4.2 Bishopric Youth Committee Meeting

The bishop presides over the bishopric youth committee. This committee is composed of the bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants, the teachers and deacons quorum presidents, the Young Women class presidents, and



the Young Men and Young Women presidents. For more information, see 18.2.9.

#### 10.4.3 Ward Young Women Presidency Meeting

The Young Women presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The president presides at the meeting and conducts it. The secretary attends, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Evaluate how the young women in each class are accomplishing the objectives listed in 10.1.1. Plan ways to help individual young women accomplish those objectives more completely.
2. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to their callings.
3. Make plans to instruct class presidencies in their duties.
4. Discuss the effectiveness of Young Women activities. Discuss ways to include young women in planning activities that help them incorporate the Young Women values in their lives.
5. Discuss gospel instruction in Sunday classes and plan ways to improve.
6. Review attendance records. Plan ways to help new members and less-active young women participate.
7. Review the Young Women budget and expenditures.

The Young Women presidency may invite advisers and specialists to attend these meetings as needed.

#### 10.4.4 Meeting with a Counselor in the Bishopric

The Young Women presidency meets regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Young Women organization. In these meetings they counsel together about the progress and needs of individual young women. Members of the Young Women presidency give reports, make recommendations, and review plans for meetings and activities. When appropriate, Young Women advisers and class presidencies may be invited to attend this meeting to give reports and receive instruction.

#### 10.4.5 Class Presidency Meeting

Each class presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The class president conducts

the meeting. The secretary attends, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments. The Young Women presidency member and class adviser who are responsible for the class also attend.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Plan ways to strengthen class members, including new members and less-active members. Also plan ways to fellowship young women of other faiths.
2. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to their responsibilities.
3. Plan to visit class members as needed.
4. Discuss ways to help each young woman succeed in Personal Progress.
5. Plan class meetings and activities.
6. Consider items to discuss in bishopric youth committee meeting (see 18.2.9).
7. Receive leadership training from ward Young Women leaders.

#### 10.4.6 Stake Young Women Leadership Meeting

Stake Young Women leadership meeting is generally held once a year, as explained in 18.3.11. Ward Young Women presidencies and secretaries attend. Advisers, specialists, and the bishopric member assigned to the Young Women may be invited to attend as needed.

### 10.5 Standards

Standards provide sure direction to strengthen and guide members of the Church. As young women keep gospel standards, they will be of great service in the Church and the world. They will also be worthy to receive the ordinances of the temple.

In the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*, the First Presidency outlines gospel standards and teaches youth how to apply them. Every young woman should have a copy of *For the Strength of Youth*. She should review the standards often and consider how well she is living them.

Young Women leaders should study the standards in the booklet and exemplify them. They should find ways to teach and reinforce these standards often in lessons and at Mutual activities, camp, youth conference, and other activities.

Members of the bishopric and Young Women leaders can encourage parents to study gospel standards, exemplify them, and discuss them with

their daughters. They can also encourage young women to use *For the Strength of Youth* as a resource for family home evening lessons and talks.

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## 10.6 Sunday Gospel Instruction

Young women gather each Sunday to increase their gospel understanding, to recognize how the gospel answers their daily questions, to have opportunities to feel the Spirit, and to strengthen and share their testimonies.

### 10.6.1 Opening Exercises

Where possible, all young women meet together for brief opening exercises before Sunday classes. The ward Young Women presidency oversees this portion of the meeting, and a member of a class presidency conducts.

In opening exercises, leaders establish an atmosphere that invites the Spirit for the lessons that follow. Opening exercises include a welcome, a hymn, a prayer, recitation of the Young Women theme, and announcements.

When authorized by the stake president, Young Women and Relief Society opening exercises may be combined one Sunday a month (see 9.7.1).

### 10.6.2 Classes

After opening exercises, young women meet for gospel instruction. Young Women classes usually meet separately by age-group. However, leaders may consider the following alternatives as needed:

1. In a ward with a large number of young women, more than one class may be organized in an age-group, with an adviser and class presidency called for each class.
2. In a ward or branch with few young women, age-groups may be combined for Sunday gospel instruction, and advisers may not be needed.
3. In any ward, all the young women may meet together once a month for a combined lesson.

Lessons are usually taught by members of the Young Women presidency or by Young Women advisers. Presidency members and advisers may divide this responsibility as needed. Young women may assist in teaching from time to time. When young women give instruction, a member of the Young Women presidency or an adviser helps them prepare. Priesthood leaders and other faithful ward members may also be invited to

teach on occasion. Those who teach should follow the principles in 5.5.4.

Leaders encourage each young woman to bring her personal copy of the scriptures where possible. As needed for individual lessons, leaders may also ask young women to bring other Church-approved resources.

Young women and young men may occasionally meet together, as directed by the bishopric.

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## 10.7 Personal Progress

Personal Progress is an achievement program designed to help young women strengthen their testimonies of Jesus Christ, prepare for their future roles, and prepare to be worthy to make and keep sacred temple covenants.

The goals of the program are outlined in the *Young Women Personal Progress* book. Young women work with their parents and Young Women leaders to set and accomplish goals that are based on the Young Women values.

After careful consideration, parents and leaders may modify the program to help young women with special needs. For example, they may consider the needs of young women with disabilities or educational limitations, young women who join the Church or become active in Young Women after age 16, and young women who are not Church members. When making any changes or exceptions for one person, leaders should consider the effect those changes may have on others.

### 10.7.1 Personal Progress Activities at Mutual

Young Women leaders and class presidencies may plan some Personal Progress activities for Mutual (see 10.8.1). For example, all young women could assist with another young woman's value project. Such group activities should be planned prayerfully and selectively to ensure that the Personal Progress program remains personal for each young woman.

### 10.7.2 Emblems, Certificates, and Recognition

Ward leaders may obtain Personal Progress certificates and awards through Church Distribution Services. They use ward budget funds to purchase these items.

### 10.7.3 Personal Progress Responsibilities of Leaders

#### Young Women Leaders

When a young woman reaches age 12, the second counselor in the Young Women presidency

and the class adviser for the Beehives arrange to meet with her and her parents. A member of the Beehive class presidency may also attend.

The leaders give the young woman a *Young Women Personal Progress* book and explain the program to her and her parents. They encourage her parents to work with her in selecting and completing Personal Progress experiences and projects. They explain that her mother may also work on Personal Progress and earn an award. Other women may also help and participate in the program themselves.

Young Women leaders give the young woman copies of *For the Strength of Youth* and *True to the Faith* (if the bishop has not already given them to her). They also give her a pendant with the Young Women logo on it, which can be ordered through Church Distribution Services.

Young Women leaders also give this orientation to young women who enter the organization later than age 12.

Additional instructions for parents and leaders are included in the *Young Women Personal Progress* book.

### Bishop

When a young woman completes the entire Personal Progress program, the bishop interviews her. This can be part of his annual or six-month interview with her. He may use the standards in *For the Strength of Youth* as a guide. He may also verify her attendance at sacrament meeting and in seminary (where available) and her reading of the Book of Mormon. When he determines that she is ready to receive the Young Womanhood Recognition, he signs her Personal Progress book. He may present the award to her in a sacrament meeting.

## 10.8 Activities and Events

Young Women leaders, including class presidencies, plan activities based on the needs and interests of the young women. They make a special effort to reach out to all the young women, including those who have recently joined the Church and those who are less active. Activities may help young women accomplish their goals in the Personal Progress program. Class presidencies should participate as much as possible in planning and carrying out activities.

Plans for Young Women activities should be approved by a member of the bishopric and should follow the guidelines in chapter 13.

### 10.8.1 Mutual

Most Young Women activities occur during a time called Mutual. The term *Mutual* suggests shared experiences in which there is mutual respect and support for one another and opportunities to learn together. Mutual activities should provide youth with a variety of opportunities to serve others and to develop spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually.

Mutual is generally held weekly. If travel or other restrictions make this impractical, Mutual may be held less frequently, but it should be held at least monthly. Mutual should be 1 to 1½ hours long and should take place on a day or evening other than Sunday or Monday.

The Young Women presidency, under the direction of the bishopric, oversees Mutual for young women.

Young Men and Young Women presidencies may occasionally use Mutual activities to prepare for stake or multistake activities (see 13.3).

#### Annual Theme for Mutual

Each year, the First Presidency announces a theme for Mutual. Leaders emphasize this theme in Mutual opening exercises and in other youth activities.

#### Opening Exercises

Mutual usually begins with brief opening exercises presided over by a member of the bishopric. The bishop's priests quorum assistants and members of the Laurel class presidency take turns conducting. Adult leaders prepare youth leaders for this responsibility.

Opening exercises include a hymn and prayer and may also include musical selections and opportunities for the youth to share their talents and testimonies.

#### Quorum and Class Activities or Combined Activities

Following opening exercises, Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women classes generally hold separate activities. In a ward or branch with few young women, all the young women may meet together for activities. Activities may also be planned for any combination of quorums and classes.

Combined activities for all young men and young women are normally held once a month. Members of the bishopric youth committee schedule, plan, and review these activities in their

meetings. The activities are carried out under the direction of the bishopric.

Some examples of appropriate activities are service projects, music, dance, drama, cultural events, sports or athletic events, career exploration, and outdoor activities.

### 10.8.2 Bishopric Youth Discussions

Bishopric youth discussions are planned and carried out by the bishopric. These discussions, which are held occasionally, give the bishopric opportunities to address subjects that are interesting to the youth and that strengthen the youth spiritually. Topics in *For the Strength of Youth* and *True to the Faith* are especially appropriate. Occasionally the bishopric may invite guests to participate. Guests are usually members of the ward or stake.

Bishopric youth discussions may be held with all of the youth together or with the youth of a certain age-group. They may be held during Mutual, on Sunday during the time for quorum meetings and Young Women classes, or at another time that does not put undue burden on families. The bishopric determines their frequency. They are scheduled in bishopric youth committee meetings.

### 10.8.3 New Beginnings

New Beginnings is an annual event for young women and their parents, priesthood leaders, and Young Women leaders. Young women who will reach age 12 in the coming year are also invited to attend with their parents. It may be held at the beginning of the school year or the calendar year. It may be held during Mutual.

This event helps young women and their parents learn about the Young Women program. It includes an explanation of Personal Progress and a presentation of the Young Women theme, logo, motto, and age-group purpose statements and symbols (see 10.1). It should help young women and their parents plan for events in the coming year.

New Beginnings provides opportunities for leaders to express love for the young women, encourage parents to help their daughters in Personal Progress experiences, introduce young women who will reach age 12 in the coming year, and welcome young women who have joined the Church or moved into the ward. It is a time to recognize young women and their accomplishments in Personal Progress. The Young Women

presidency invites a member of the bishopric to give concluding remarks.

Class presidencies plan the program under the direction of the Young Women presidency. The Young Women presidency may ask specialists to help (for example, to direct a choir or instrumental group, rehearse speakers, or direct a skit). A member of the Laurel class presidency may conduct.

### 10.8.4 Young Women in Excellence

Young Women in Excellence is an event in which young women are recognized for the good things they are doing. It is a celebration of Personal Progress. Each young woman shares a value experience or value project she has completed during the year that exhibits excellence. Her presentation may include talents and skills she has developed through her Personal Progress goals. Young Women leaders invite parents to attend.

At the beginning of the year, leaders encourage each young woman to give serious thought to the values she might focus on for this event. She may work with a family member, another young woman, or others on the projects, which may take several months to complete.

This event is usually held during Mutual at the ward level, but it may be held at the stake level. Adult leaders include the young women in planning it. The date and plans for the event should be announced early in the year.

### 10.8.5 Standards Events

Standards events are special programs that emphasize moral values and eternal goals. They encourage young women to live the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, which will bring them closer to the Savior.

These events are held annually, or more often as needed, usually during Mutual. They may be held on a class, ward, multiward, or stake level. Depending on how a subject is presented, these events may include any combination of Young Women age-groups. They may also include mothers, fathers, mothers and fathers together, and young men.

### 10.8.6 Young Women Camp

The Church encourages one annual camp or similar activity for young women. In planning this activity, Young Women leaders use the *Young Women Camp Manual* and *Young Women Camp: A Guide for Priesthood and Young Women Leaders*.



Camp may be held on a ward or stake level. Under the direction of priesthood leaders, stake and ward Young Women presidencies determine the extent of the camp program for young women.

Priesthood leaders may call stake and ward Young Women specialists to be camp leaders. Camp leaders organize and conduct the camp program under the direction of the Young Women presidency. They may work with ward leaders and the stake activities committee to arrange for equipment, transportation, and other assistance.

For information about financing camp, see 10.8.9. For information about safety at camp, see 13.6.20 and the *Young Women Camp Manual*.

### 10.8.7 Stake and Multistake Activities

See 13.3.

### 10.8.8 Youth Conference

See 13.4.

### 10.8.9 Funding for Activities and Events

Funding for Young Women activities and events should come from the ward budget (see 13.2.8).

#### Funding for an Annual Camp or Similar Activity

If the ward budget does not have sufficient funds to pay for an annual Young Women camp or similar activity, leaders may ask participants to pay for part or all of it. If funds from participants are not sufficient, the bishop may authorize one group fund-raising activity each year that complies with the guidelines in 13.6.8.

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.

#### 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 fund-raising activity annually that complies with the guidelines in 13.6.8.

Equipment and supplies purchased with Church funds, whether from the ward budget or a fund-raising activity, are for Church use only. They are not for the personal use of individuals or families.

## 10.9 Teaching Leadership Skills and Qualities

Young Women leaders teach leadership skills and qualities as they work with class presidencies, camp leaders, and other young women in leadership positions. This teaching occurs as leaders help young women plan and carry out activities and participate together in service projects for Personal Progress. In this effort, leaders may refer to chapter 3 in this handbook.

## 10.10 Stake Young Women Leadership

### 10.10.1 Stake Presidency

Members of the stake presidency oversee the Young Women organization in the stake. As part of this responsibility, they instruct bishops in their responsibilities for young women.

The stake president assigns one of his counselors to oversee the stake Young Women organization.

For more information about the stake presidency's responsibilities relating to auxiliary organizations, see 15.1.

### 10.10.2 High Councilor Assigned to the Stake Young Women

The stake president assigns a member of the high council to work with the stake Young Women presidency. This high councilor's responsibilities are outlined in 15.3.

### 10.10.3 Stake Young Women Presidency

The responsibilities of the stake Young Women presidency are outlined in 15.4.1.

### 10.10.4 Stake Young Women Secretary

The responsibilities of the stake Young Women secretary are outlined in 15.4.2.

### 10.10.5 Stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women Committee

The stake president assigns a counselor to preside over the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee. Other committee members are the high councilors assigned to the stake Young Men and Young Women organizations, the stake Young Men presidency and secretary, and the stake Young Women presidency and secretary.

The stake presidency may invite youth to attend the committee's meetings as needed.



Youth should be included as much as possible in planning and carrying out activities such as youth conferences, dances, devotionals, and multistake events. Youth may also participate in discussions about challenges that the youth in the stake are facing.

#### 10.10.6 Stake Young Women Activity Specialists

The stake presidency may assign stake members to serve temporarily as Young Women specialists, helping plan and carry out stake activities or programs. Specialists may be assigned for such activities as Young Women camp, stake and multistake events, and sports. They serve under the direction of the stake Young Women presidency.

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#### 10.11 Adapting the Young Women Organization to Local Needs

In a ward or branch with few young women, all the young women may meet together for instruction (see 10.3.5 and 10.6.2). They also may meet together for activities.

If adult leadership is limited in a ward or branch, the Young Women presidency may teach the Sunday lessons and administer the activity program without advisers. In a very small unit, the Young Women president may be the only adult leader in the Young Women organization. In this case, she teaches the Sunday lessons and oversees activities for all young women. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called.

In a very small branch that does not have a Young Women president, the Relief Society president may help parents organize instruction for the young women until a Young Women president is called.

Because youth often benefit from socializing in larger groups, the young men and young women in two or more small wards or branches may meet occasionally for combined activities. If neighboring wards and branches have few young women, the bishops and branch presidents may authorize the young women to meet together for weekly activities. When considering these options, bishops and branch presidents take into account factors such as distance and travel cost.

In a small stake or a district, the Young Women president may be the only stake or district Young Women leader. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called.

For general information about adapting to local needs, see chapter 17.

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#### 10.12 Additional Guidelines and Policies

##### 10.12.1 Youth under Age 14 in Youth Conferences and Dances

Youth under age 14 do not usually participate in youth conferences or in dances that are held at times other than the regularly scheduled Mutual night (see 13.6.14). An annual Young Women camp is an exception to this guideline.

##### 10.12.2 Young Women of Other Faiths

Young women of other faiths who agree to abide by Church standards should be welcomed warmly and encouraged to participate in youth activities. They may also participate in the Personal Progress program and earn the recognition. Expenses for their participation should be handled the same as for young women who are members of the Church.

##### 10.12.3 Young Women Who Have Disabilities

Young women who have disabilities are normally included in their regular classes. Exceptions may be made with the approval of the parents and the bishopric.

For information about understanding, including, and teaching young women who have disabilities, see 21.1.26 and [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org).

##### 10.12.4 Young Women Who Are Pregnant out of Wedlock or Who Are Unwed Mothers

If a young woman is pregnant out of wedlock, the decision to participate in Young Women classes and activities is left to the prayerful discretion of the young woman, her parents, and the bishop.

If a young woman age 17 or older has a baby out of wedlock and chooses to keep the child, she is welcomed into Relief Society, where she can be taught and helped in her new responsibilities. She no longer participates in Young Women.

If a young woman under 17 has a baby out of wedlock and chooses to keep the child, the decision to participate in Young Women is left to the prayerful discretion of the young woman, her parents, and the bishop. If the young woman participates in these classes and activities, the child should not accompany her.

For information on the Church policy discouraging single young women from keeping a child born out of wedlock, see 21.4.12.

# 11. Primary

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# 11. Primary

The Primary is an auxiliary to the priesthood. All auxiliaries exist to help Church members grow in their testimonies of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel. Through the work of the auxiliaries, members receive instruction, encouragement, and support as they strive to live according to gospel principles.

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## 11.1 Theme and Purposes of Primary

Primary is for children ages 18 months through 11 years. The Primary theme is “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (3 Nephi 22:13). The purposes of Primary are to help children:

1. Feel Heavenly Father’s love for them.
2. Learn and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Feel and recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost.
4. Prepare to make and keep sacred covenants.

Parents have the first responsibility for the spiritual and physical welfare of their children (see D&C 68:25–28). The bishopric, Primary leaders, and Primary teachers support but do not replace parents in this responsibility.

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## 11.2 Ward Primary Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering the Primary in a way that will strengthen individuals and families. Primary leaders frequently review chapter 3, which outlines general principles of leadership. These principles include preparing spiritually, participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 11.2.1 Bishopric

#### Bishop and His Counselors

The bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Primary.

The bishop calls and sets apart a sister to serve as Primary president. He oversees the calling and setting apart of all other Primary workers. He may assign his counselors to call and set them apart.

The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts interviews for the baptism and confirmation of

8-year-old children who are members of record and 8-year-old children who are not members of record but have at least one parent or guardian who is a member. 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.

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews children before they reach age 12 and advance from Primary.

#### Counselor Assigned to Oversee the Ward Primary

The bishop assigns one of his counselors to oversee the ward Primary. This counselor has the following responsibilities:

He meets regularly with the ward Primary presidency. He reports on Primary matters in bishopric meetings.

He guides efforts to prepare the annual children’s sacrament meeting presentation.

He directs the planning of the Priesthood Preview.

He coordinates efforts to have members of the bishopric give short messages to the children in sharing time.

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, he oversees Scouting for boys ages 8 through 11.

### 11.2.2 Ward Primary Presidency

The ward Primary presidency consists of a president and two counselors. They work under the direction of the bishopric. They receive orientation and ongoing support from the stake Primary presidency.

#### Ward Primary President

The Primary president has the following responsibilities:

She serves as a member of the ward council. As a member of this council, she participates in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families (see chapter 4).

She submits recommendations to the bishopric for ward members to be called to serve as leaders and teachers in the Primary. In making these recommendations, she follows the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

She teaches other Primary leaders and teachers their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

She oversees the use of the *Faith in God* guidebooks as described in 11.5.1.

She oversees the records, reports, budget, and finances of the ward Primary. The Primary secretary helps with this responsibility.

#### Ward Primary President and Her Counselors

Members of the ward Primary presidency work together to fulfill the following responsibilities. The Primary president may assign her counselors to oversee some of these responsibilities.

They learn the children's names and become familiar with their talents, interests, and challenges. They look for ways to strengthen children individually and help them participate in Primary.

They orient newly called teachers and oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in Primary. In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4. They also support Primary teachers and nursery leaders by (1) visiting with them occasionally to address their questions and concerns and to discuss ways to serve the children; (2) helping them maintain reverence during sharing time, class time, and breaks; and (3) arranging to visit their classes.

They plan sharing time and oversee the programs, activities, and events listed in 11.5.

They hold Primary presidency meetings. They also meet regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees Primary.

#### 11.2.3 Ward Primary Secretary

The ward Primary secretary has the following responsibilities:

She consults with the presidency to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

At least quarterly, she compiles attendance information, reviews it with the Primary president, and submits it to the ward clerk.

She ensures that the Primary president and ward executive secretary are aware of children who will soon be eligible for baptism and who will soon advance from Primary to the Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women.

She helps the Primary presidency prepare an annual budget and account for expenses.

She assists children, teachers, and parents as requested by the Primary presidency. For example, she may help monitor classes and maintain reverence during sharing time. She may also assign children to give talks in upcoming sharing times and inform the children's parents of the assignments.

#### 11.2.4 Ward Primary Music Leader(s) and Pianist(s)

Under the direction of the Primary presidency, Primary music leaders and pianists have the following responsibilities:

They plan, teach, and direct the music for sharing time, including songs that will be part of the children's sacrament meeting presentation.

They help with music for the nursery class and other Primary classes as requested.

They may organize and direct a children's choir as requested.

Members of the Primary presidency help the ward Primary music leaders and pianists understand how music contributes to Primary. The melodies, words, and messages of Primary songs can teach children the doctrines of the gospel and stay in their hearts throughout their lives.

Music in Primary should invite reverence, teach the gospel, and help children feel the influence of the Holy Ghost and the joy that comes through singing. While the children sing some songs, music leaders give them opportunities to move physically and stretch appropriately.

The *Children's Songbook* and the current sharing time outline are the basic resources for music in Primary. Hymns from the hymnbook and songs from the *Friend* and *Liahona* are also appropriate. Occasionally children may sing patriotic or holiday songs that are suitable for Sunday and for the children's ages. The use of any other music in Primary must be approved by the bishopric.

For information about teaching music to children, see the *Children's Songbook*, pages 300–304. See also chapter 14 in this handbook, the current outline for sharing time, and "Music Callings and Resources" in the Serving in the Church section of LDS.org.

#### 11.2.5 Primary Teachers and Nursery Leaders

Primary teachers and nursery leaders work with specific age-groups of children. These teachers and leaders follow the principles outlined in 5.5.4.

Primary teachers and nursery leaders remain with the children during the entire Primary time on Sunday, including sharing time and breaks. During sharing time, they sit with their assigned classes, sing the songs with the children, and help the children participate reverently.

### 11.2.6 Activity Days Leaders and Scout Leaders

If a ward Primary holds activity days and Scouting activities for children ages 8 through 11, the activities may be planned and conducted by the teachers of these children or by other leaders the bishopric calls to fulfill these responsibilities (see 11.5.2 and 11.5.3).

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## 11.3 Leadership Meetings

### 11.3.1 Ward Council Meeting

The Primary president serves as a member of the ward council (see chapter 4).

### 11.3.2 Ward Primary Presidency Meeting

The Primary presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The president presides at the meeting and conducts it. The secretary attends, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Plan ways to strengthen individual children and teachers in the Primary.
2. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to their callings.
3. Discuss the effectiveness of Sunday Primary, including music. Also discuss the effectiveness of weekday activities. Plan ways to improve.
4. Make plans to instruct other Primary workers in their responsibilities.
5. Review attendance records. Make plans to help children who have recently entered Primary and children whose families are less active.
6. Review the Primary budget and expenditures.

The Primary presidency may invite other Primary workers to attend these meetings as needed.

### 11.3.3 Meeting with a Counselor in the Bishopric

The Primary presidency meets regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the

Primary organization. In these meetings they counsel together about the progress and needs of individual children. Members of the Primary presidency give reports, make recommendations, and review plans for meetings and activities. When appropriate, other Primary workers may be invited to attend this meeting to give reports and receive instruction.

### 11.3.4 Stake Primary Leadership Meeting

Stake Primary leadership meeting is generally held once a year, as explained in 18.3.11. Ward Primary presidencies and secretaries attend. Other Primary leaders and teachers, as well as the bishopric member assigned to the Primary, may be invited to attend as needed.

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## 11.4 Sunday Primary

### 11.4.1 Schedule

Sunday Primary is normally held for 1 hour and 40 minutes while adults and youth attend priesthood meetings, Relief Society meeting, Young Women classes, and Sunday School.

Children in the nursery stay in their nursery class for the entire time, as outlined in the nursery manual, *Behold Your Little Ones*. The other children attend two sessions. In one session, children meet together for 50 minutes for sharing time. In the other session, they divide into smaller classes for 40-minute lessons taught by their Primary teachers.

The children and teachers who attend sharing time and classes have a 10-minute break between the two sessions. During this break, they prepare for the next session. Children may use the restroom or get a drink of water. Teachers supervise the children throughout the break.

The following charts show three options for scheduling Sunday Primary. When considering which option to follow, Primary leaders ensure that the older children attend sharing time at the same time as Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings and Young Women classes. This will allow for a smooth transition for children when they reach age 12.

*Option 1:* The younger children and older children meet for sharing time in two different groups. During the first 50 minutes, one group meets for sharing time while the other group divides into classes for 40 minutes and has a 10-minute break. Then the two groups switch



places, with the first group taking a 10-minute break before their classes begin.

<b>Sharing Time</b> 50 minutes	<b>Break</b> 10 minutes	<b>Classes</b> 40 minutes
<b>Classes</b> 40 minutes	<b>Break</b> 10 minutes	<b>Sharing Time</b> 50 minutes

*Option 2:* All the children meet together for sharing time first. Then they have a break and go to their classes.

<b>Sharing Time</b> 50 minutes	<b>Break</b> 10 minutes	<b>Classes</b> 40 minutes
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*Option 3:* All the children go to their classes first. Then they have a break and meet together for sharing time.

<b>Classes</b> 40 minutes	<b>Break</b> 10 minutes	<b>Sharing Time</b> 50 minutes
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#### 11.4.2 Sharing Time

Sharing time provides opportunities for children to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ and feel the influence of the Holy Ghost. The Primary presidency follows the outline for sharing time, which is sent to the ward each year. Additional copies are available from Church Distribution Services and under “Primary” in the Serving in the Church section of LDS.org.

Members of the presidency take turns conducting sharing time. This time normally includes the following elements:

1. Prelude music, a reverent song or hymn that the children know, and an opening prayer by one of the children.
2. One or more of the following: a scripture passage chosen and read by one of the children, memorization of an article of faith, a brief message by a member of the bishopric, one or two activity songs, and children’s talks that are related to the month’s theme.
3. Gospel instruction by the Primary presidency. This portion lasts about 15 minutes. Members of the presidency use the scriptures and

follow the current outline for sharing time as they prepare and teach.

4. Singing time conducted by a music leader. This portion lasts about 20 minutes (see the current outline for sharing time).
5. A closing prayer by one of the children, followed by postlude music.

#### 11.4.3 Classes

As shown in the following guidelines, children are normally grouped in Primary classes according to their ages.

Parents, leaders, and teachers encourage older children to bring their personal copies of the scriptures to church where possible.

For information about adapting classes to local needs, see 11.7.

##### Nursery Class

Children may begin attending the nursery class as soon as they reach the age of 18 months. They continue attending nursery until they are eligible to attend the Sunbeam class, as shown in the chart under the next heading.

##### Primary Classes

Children begin attending a new Primary class on the first Sunday of each calendar year. They are normally divided into classes based on their age on January 1, as shown in the following chart.

Age on January 1	Class
3	Sunbeam
4	CTR 4
5	CTR 5
6	CTR 6
7	CTR 7
8	Valiant 8
9	Valiant 9
10	Valiant 10
11	Valiant 11

##### Children Age 12

Children advance from Primary when they reach age 12. Leaders may give them a certificate of advancement.

During sharing time, new 12-year-olds attend their Aaronic Priesthood quorum meeting or Young Women class.

During Primary class time, new 12-year-olds normally attend their Valiant 11 Primary class until the end of the year. However, the bishop and the presidents of the Primary, Young Men, Young Women, and Sunday School may counsel together to determine if these 12-year-olds would benefit more from attending the Sunday School class for 12- and 13-year-olds. As these leaders counsel together, they consider the needs of the children and the times of the year when individual children will reach age 12. Their decision applies to all young men and women who reach age 12 that year.

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## 11.5 Primary Programs, Activities, and Events

### 11.5.1 Faith in God Program

The Faith in God program helps boys and girls ages 8 through 11 live gospel principles, develop testimonies, and prepare to be righteous Aaronic Priesthood holders and righteous young women. This program also encourages children to memorize the Articles of Faith.

The ward Primary president ensures that each child who reaches age 8 receives a copy of *Faith in God for Girls* or *Faith in God for Boys*. She helps parents understand that they can use these guidebooks as resources for activities with individual children and with the entire family.

### 11.5.2 Activity Days

Where practical, the Primary may hold activity days for boys and girls ages 8 through 11. Leaders and teachers use the *Faith in God* guidebooks as resources for activity days, supporting the work children and parents do at home to fulfill Faith in God requirements.

Activity days are held no more than twice each month. They may be held at the meetinghouse or in a home. As leaders determine the frequency and location of activity days, they consider the time constraints of the children's families, travel distance and costs, children's safety, and other local circumstances. Leaders ensure that activity days follow the guidelines in 11.8.1 and in chapter 13.

The children's Primary teachers conduct activity days unless the bishopric calls separate activity days leaders.

### 11.5.3 Scouting Activities

Where Scouting is authorized by the Church, Scout activities take the place of activity days for boys ages 8 through 11. To maintain a gospel focus in Scout activities, leaders use the *Faith in God for Boys* guidebook as one of their resources. As boys fulfill requirements in the guidebook, they also qualify for religious awards in Scouting.

The children's Primary teachers may serve as Scout leaders, or the bishopric may call others to serve as Scout leaders. Leaders ensure that Scouting activities follow the guidelines in 11.8.1 and in chapter 13.

The Primary presidency ensures that all boys ages 8 through 11 are registered in the Scout program and that all Scout leaders are registered and receive proper training. For more information about Scouting, including guidelines for planning annual day camps, see the Church's *Scouting Handbook* and the *Day Camp Guide for Eleven-Year-Old Scouts*.

The Church has not adopted the Tiger Cub program (in the United States) or the Beaver program (in Canada) for Primary-age boys.

### 11.5.4 Children's Sacrament Meeting Presentation

The annual children's sacrament meeting presentation gives children an opportunity to share what they have learned in Primary. It is normally presented during the fourth quarter of the year.

The Primary presidency and music leader(s) prepare the presentation under the direction of the bishopric. They follow the guidelines in the current outline for sharing time, adapting it as needed to fit the circumstances of the children.

In the sacrament meeting, the presentation comes after the administration of the sacrament and may take all or part of the remaining time. All Primary children ages 3 through 11 sing songs they have learned in sharing time. Children may also participate by reading or reciting scripture passages, giving talks, singing in small groups, and sharing their testimonies. An adult leader in Primary may also share a brief message.

In keeping with the sacredness of sacrament meeting, the presentation should not include visuals, costumes, or media presentations.

### 11.5.5 Priesthood Preview

A meeting called Priesthood Preview is held each year for 11-year-old boys and their parents. The purpose of this meeting is to help boys understand the priesthood and strengthen their

commitment to prepare to receive it. Possible topics for the meeting include priesthood purposes, responsibilities, and blessings (for some ideas, see *Faith in God for Boys*, pages 12–13).

A member of the bishopric conducts the Priesthood Preview, and at least one member of the Primary presidency attends. Other leaders, including members of the deacons quorum presidency and Young Men presidency, may also attend.

If a ward has very few 11-year-old boys, the meeting may be held, under the direction of the stake presidency, with other wards or with the entire stake. According to local needs, it may be held on a Sunday evening, as part of a deacons quorum meeting on Sunday, or at another time.

## 11.6 Stake Primary Leadership

### 11.6.1 Stake Presidency

The stake presidency’s responsibilities relating to auxiliary organizations in the stake are outlined in 15.1.

### 11.6.2 High Councilor Assigned to the Stake Primary

The stake president assigns a member of the high council to work with the stake Primary presidency. This high councilor’s responsibilities are outlined in 15.3. In addition to those responsibilities, he helps implement the Scouting program for boys ages 8 through 11 where it is authorized by the Church (see the Church’s *Scouting Handbook*).

### 11.6.3 Stake Primary Presidency

The responsibilities of the stake Primary presidency are outlined in 15.4.1.

### 11.6.4 Stake Primary Secretary

The responsibilities of the stake Primary secretary are outlined in 15.4.2.

### 11.6.5 Stake Primary Music Leader

Under the direction of the stake Primary presidency, a stake Primary music leader may help give instruction in stake Primary leadership meetings. He or she may also give individual instruction to Primary presidencies, music leaders, and pianists. When requested, the stake Primary music leader organizes and directs a stake children’s choir.

Instruction should include demonstrating effective ways to teach the gospel to children through music. Resources include the *Children’s Songbook*, pages 300–304. See also chapter 14 in this handbook, the current outline for sharing time, and “Music Callings and Resources” in the Serving in the Church section of LDS.org.

## 11.7 Adapting the Primary Organization to Local Needs

In a ward with many children in an age-group, Primary leaders may organize multiple classes for those children. This adaptation may be especially helpful in wards that have many nursery-age children.

In a ward with few children, Primary leaders may combine two or more age-groups into one class.

In a small ward or branch, the members of the Primary presidency may be the only Primary leaders and teachers. In a very small unit, the Primary president may be the only Primary leader and teacher. In this case, she conducts sharing time and teaches a class for all the children. When possible, more leaders and teachers should be called in the following order:

1. Counselors in the Primary presidency
2. Music leaders
3. Primary teachers and nursery leaders
4. Secretary
5. Activity days leaders and Scout leaders (where applicable)

In a very small branch that does not have a Primary president, the Relief Society president can help parents organize instruction for their children until a Primary president is called.

In a small stake or district, the Primary president may be the only stake or district Primary leader. When possible, other leaders should be called in the following order:

1. Counselors in the stake or district Primary presidency
2. Music leader
3. Secretary

For general information about adapting to local needs, see chapter 17.

## 11.8 Additional Guidelines and Policies

### 11.8.1 Men Serving in Primary

When considering members who might serve in the Primary, the bishopric and the Primary presidency should remember the positive influence of worthy men in the ward. Children, especially those who do not have worthy priesthood holders in their homes, need to see examples of righteous, caring priesthood holders. Men may serve as teachers, music leaders, pianists, activity days leaders, and Scout leaders. They may also assist in the nursery.

When men are assigned to teach children, at least two responsible adults should be present at all times. The two adults could be two men, a husband and wife, or two members of the same family. In small branches, if it is not practical to have two teachers in a classroom, a member of the Primary presidency frequently visits and monitors each class that a man teaches alone.

### 11.8.2 Baptismal Services for Eight-Year-Old Children of Record

See 20.3.4.

### 11.8.3 Testimony Bearing in Primary

Parents, Primary leaders, and teachers bear simple and direct testimony when they teach, helping children learn what a testimony is and how to express a testimony.

Testimony meetings are discouraged in Primary. However, parents, Primary leaders, and teachers may provide other opportunities for testimony bearing. For example, children may share their testimonies when they give lessons in family home evening and when they give talks in sharing time. Such opportunities help children prepare to share their testimonies in fast and testimony meeting when they are old enough to do so without assistance from a parent, sibling, or other person.

### 11.8.4 Encouraging Reverence

Reverence is an expression of love and respect for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Primary leaders and teachers help children understand what reverence is and how to act reverently. They encourage reverence by personal example. They also encourage reverence by coming to church prepared to teach from the scriptures and to use visuals and learning activities that invite the influence of the Holy Ghost.

### 11.8.5 Portrayals of Deity in Role-Playing Activities

Leaders and teachers carefully maintain reverence when they choose to conduct role-playing activities, especially when people dramatize sacred events. God the Father and the Holy Ghost are not to be portrayed in any way. The Savior should not be portrayed by children except in a nativity scene. For additional guidelines, see 13.6.15.

### 11.8.6 Children Who Have Special Needs

When a child has a prolonged illness, a disability, or other special needs, Primary leaders consult with priesthood leaders and the child's parents to determine ways to help.

Children who have disabilities are normally included in their regular Primary classes. As needed, and where possible, a special teacher may be called to attend class with them or to teach them separately. If an illness or disability requires that a child stay at home, Primary teachers may help members of the child's family teach Primary lessons to him or her. The child is enrolled in Primary with his or her age-group, and the teacher marks the child present when a lesson is given.

Children with disabilities or other special needs normally advance from Primary when they reach age 12.

For information about understanding, including, and teaching children who have disabilities, see 21.1.26 and [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org).

### 11.8.7 Finances

Activities for all aspects of Primary—including nursery, activity days, and Scouting—are funded from the ward budget. Supplies that are purchased for Primary activities, classes, or meetings belong to the ward. They are not for the personal use of Primary workers or their family members.

If the ward budget does not have sufficient funds to pay for an annual day camp or similar activity for children ages 8 through 11, leaders may ask participants to pay for part or all of it. In no case should the expenses or travel for an annual day camp or similar activity be excessive. Nor should the lack of personal funds prohibit a member from participating.

Church funds may not be used to purchase uniforms for individuals.

For more information about funding for activities, see 13.2.8.

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# 12. Sunday School

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## 12. Sunday School

The Sunday School is an auxiliary to the priesthood. All auxiliaries exist to help Church members grow in their testimonies of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel. Through the work of the auxiliaries, members receive instruction, encouragement, and support as they strive to live according to gospel principles.

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### 12.1 Purposes of Sunday School

All Church members ages 12 and older are members of Sunday School. Those of other faiths are also welcome to attend and participate in Sunday School classes. The purposes of the Sunday School organization are to:

1. Strengthen individuals' and families' faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ through teaching, learning, and fellowshiping.
2. Help Church members "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom" (D&C 88:77) at church and at home.

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### 12.2 Ward Sunday School Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering the Sunday School in a way that will strengthen individuals and families. Sunday School leaders frequently review chapter 3, which outlines general principles of leadership. These principles include preparing spiritually, participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### 12.2.1 Bishopric

The bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Sunday School.

The bishop calls and sets apart the Sunday School president. He also oversees the calling and setting apart of other Sunday School workers. He may assign his counselors to call and set them apart.

The bishop assigns one of his counselors to oversee the ward Sunday School, including the meetinghouse library. This counselor meets regularly with the ward Sunday School presidency. He reports on Sunday School and meetinghouse library matters in bishopric meetings.

#### 12.2.2 Ward Sunday School Presidency

Members of the ward Sunday School presidency are priesthood holders. Where possible, the president holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. They work under the direction of the bishopric. They receive orientation and ongoing support from the stake Sunday School presidency.

##### Ward Sunday School President

The Sunday School president has the following responsibilities:

He serves as a member of the ward council. As a member of this council, he participates in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families (see chapter 4). He comes to ward council meeting prepared to suggest ways members can improve learning and teaching at church and in their homes. As invited by the bishop, he conducts training in ward council meeting to help improve gospel learning and teaching in the ward.

He submits recommendations to the bishopric for ward members to be called to serve as counselors in the Sunday School presidency, as Sunday School teachers, and as ward librarian and assistant librarians. If needed, he also recommends a ward member to serve as Sunday School secretary. In making these recommendations, he follows the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

He teaches other Sunday School leaders their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

##### Ward Sunday School President and His Counselors

Members of the ward Sunday School presidency work together to fulfill the following responsibilities:

They oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in Sunday School. In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4. They also support Sunday School teachers by (1) visiting with them occasionally to address their questions and concerns and to discuss ways to serve class members and (2) arranging to visit their classes.

They serve as specialists in the ward's efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching (see 12.5).

They oversee the meetinghouse library. This includes (1) orienting newly called librarians, (2) providing ongoing support and training, and (3) recommending an annual budget for the library after consulting with the ward librarian.

They hold Sunday School presidency meetings. They also participate in meetings with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Sunday School.

The Sunday School president assigns his counselors to oversee some areas of responsibility. For example, he may delegate the responsibilities for organizing Sunday School classes for different age-groups, orienting teachers, supervising the meetinghouse library, and helping Sunday School teachers arrange for substitute teachers as needed. The counselors frequently report to him on their efforts.

### 12.2.3 Sunday School Teachers

Sunday School teachers teach classes as assigned by the bishopric and the Sunday School presidency. They follow the principles outlined in 5.5.4.

### 12.2.4 Ward Sunday School Secretary

If needed, the bishopric may call a brother to serve as ward Sunday School secretary. The secretary may be given the following responsibilities:

He consults with the presidency to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. He attends presidency meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

He compiles attendance information and reviews it with the Sunday School president to help determine ways to encourage members to participate in Sunday School. Teachers should receive copies of this information.

### 12.2.5 Sunday School Class Presidents

With the approval of the bishopric, the Sunday School presidency may invite members to serve as Sunday School class presidents. Class presidents may be male or female. They may be asked to extend a brief welcome at the beginning of class, introduce new class members and visitors, and invite class members to offer the opening and closing prayers. They may also be asked to help with efforts to keep track of attendance and fellowship class members who do not attend regularly.

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## 12.3 Leadership Meetings

### 12.3.1 Ward Council Meeting

The Sunday School president serves as a member of the ward council (see chapter 4).

### 12.3.2 Ward Sunday School Presidency Meeting

The Sunday School presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The president presides at the meeting and conducts it. The secretary may attend, take notes, and keep track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Read and discuss scripture passages and instructions from Church leaders that relate to their callings.
2. Discuss the effectiveness of Sunday School classes and plan ways to help teachers and class members improve.
3. Plan ways to respond to requests to help improve learning and teaching in other priesthood or auxiliary organizations.
4. Review attendance records. Plan ways to encourage increased participation in Sunday School.

### 12.3.3 Meeting with a Counselor in the Bishopric

The Sunday School presidency meets regularly with the counselor in the bishopric who oversees the Sunday School. In these meetings they counsel together about learning and teaching in Sunday School and the ward. Members of the Sunday School presidency give reports, make recommendations, and review plans for meetings.

### 12.3.4 Stake Sunday School Leadership Meeting

Stake Sunday School leadership meeting is generally held once a year, as explained in 18.3.11. Ward Sunday School presidencies and secretaries attend. Sunday School teachers and the bishopric member assigned to the Sunday School may be invited to attend as needed.

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## 12.4 Sunday School Classes

Sunday School classes are held between sacrament meeting and the time set aside for priesthood, Relief Society, and Young Women meetings. Classes last 40 minutes. Opening and closing prayers are offered in each class. It is not necessary to have an opening or closing hymn.

Sunday School includes adult classes and youth classes. Approved courses, including some optional courses, are identified in the current *Instructions for Curriculum*.

#### 12.4.1 **Classes for Youth**

The Sunday School presidency generally organizes youth ages 12 to 18 into classes according to their age on January 1. For example, the presidency may organize a class for all young men and women who are 14 or 15 years old on January 1. The youth stay in that same class until the next year.

For information on Sunday School for young men and young women when they reach age 12, see 11.4.3.

#### 12.4.2 **Class for Young Single Adults**

Each ward that has enough young single adults may have a separate class for them during Sunday School. Teachers use the scriptures and approved Sunday School manuals, giving special emphasis to the needs of young single adults.

#### 12.4.3 **Helping Class Members with Disabilities**

For information about understanding, including, and teaching members who have disabilities, see 21.1.26 and [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org).

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### 12.5 **Improving Learning and Teaching in the Ward**

Members of the ward Sunday School presidency serve as specialists in the ward's efforts to improve learning and teaching. As invited by the bishopric or by leaders of priesthood and auxiliary organizations, they provide counsel, training, and support. They help leaders orient newly called teachers and improve gospel learning and teaching in their organizations.

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### 12.6 **Meetinghouse Library**

Each meetinghouse should have a library with resources to help members learn and teach the gospel. The ward Sunday School presidency oversees the meetinghouse library.

Meetinghouse libraries vary according to available space. They may provide some or all of the following items: scriptures, Church magazines, Church-produced pictures and audiovisual materials, chalk, erasers, pencils, paper, television sets, DVD players, and a photocopier.

The stake presidency may authorize wards, institute classes, and family history centers to share the resources in meetinghouse libraries.

#### 12.6.1 **Ward Librarian and Assistant Librarians**

The ward librarian helps leaders, teachers, and other members learn how to access and use the materials, supplies, and equipment that are available. He or she prepares a schedule for staffing the library. This schedule should ensure that all librarians can attend sacrament meeting each Sunday and that each librarian can attend either a Sunday School class or a Melchizedek Priesthood or Relief Society meeting each Sunday.

As needed, the ward librarian works with other wards and organizations to coordinate the use of the library. He or she organizes and cares for the materials and equipment in the library and uses a simple system to allow members to borrow materials.

Assistant librarians work under the direction of the ward librarian and share many of his or her responsibilities.

#### 12.6.2 **Leadership for a Meetinghouse Library in a Multiward Building**

In a multiward building, the wards usually share the same library. If this is the case, the agent bishop is responsible for the coordination of the library. He may appoint a committee to coordinate the use of the library and manage the budget funds allocated to it. The committee should include a member of the Sunday School presidency from each ward and the librarian from each ward.

#### 12.6.3 **Meetinghouse Library Policies**

Policies related to the meetinghouse library are found under "Sunday School" in the Serving in the Church section of [LDS.org](http://LDS.org).

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### 12.7 **Stake Sunday School Leadership**

#### 12.7.1 **Stake Presidency**

The stake presidency's responsibilities relating to auxiliary organizations in the stake are outlined in 15.1.

The counselor in the stake presidency who oversees the Sunday School also oversees meetinghouse libraries in the stake.

### 12.7.2 High Councilor Assigned to the Stake Sunday School

The stake president assigns a member of the high council to work with the stake Sunday School presidency. This high councilor's responsibilities are outlined in 15.3.

### 12.7.3 Stake Sunday School Presidency

Members of the stake Sunday School presidency are priesthood holders. Where possible, the president holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. Their responsibilities as stake auxiliary leaders are outlined in 15.4.1. In addition, they have the following responsibilities:

They serve as specialists in the stake's efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching.

They coordinate the use of meetinghouse libraries in the stake. This includes:

1. Helping orient newly called ward librarians, as invited by ward Sunday School presidencies.
2. Conducting other training meetings for ward librarians and assistant librarians in the stake.
3. Ensuring that meetinghouse libraries have the materials and equipment they need.
4. Ensuring that stake leaders have the meetinghouse library materials and equipment they need.

### 12.7.4 Stake Sunday School Secretary

If needed, the stake presidency may call a brother to serve as stake Sunday School secretary. The responsibilities of the stake Sunday School secretary are outlined in 15.4.2.

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### 12.8 Adapting the Sunday School Organization to Local Needs

In a small ward or branch, members of the Sunday School presidency may also serve as teachers. Youth classes may be combined as needed. In a very small unit, the Sunday School president may be the only Sunday School leader and teacher. In this case, he teaches a Sunday School class for all members ages 12 and older. When possible, more leaders and teachers should be called.

In a small stake or a district, the Sunday School president may be the only stake or district Sunday School leader. When possible, counselors should be called. A stake Sunday School secretary may also be called.

For general information about adapting to local needs, see chapter 17.





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# 13. Activities

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## 13. Activities

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### 13.1 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:

1. Participating in service projects that bless others and build community relationships.
2. Developing talents and appreciation for cultural arts.
3. Improving fitness and learning sportsmanship.
4. Gaining education and vocational training.
5. Celebrating special occasions and commemorating Church or local historical events.
6. Developing leadership skills.
7. Developing self-reliance.
8. Participating in missionary work, retention, activation, temple work, and family history work.

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### 13.2 Planning Activities

#### 13.2.1 Responsibility for Planning Activities

Before planning an activity, leaders consider the spiritual and temporal needs of members. Leaders seek the guidance of the Spirit to determine what kind of activity would help meet those needs. Careful planning is necessary to ensure that activities accomplish gospel-centered purposes and meet the needs of those who participate.

Under the direction of the bishopric, the ward council oversees the planning of ward activities. When an activity is for a specific organization or

group in the ward, it is planned under the direction of the priesthood or auxiliary 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 13.3.

#### 13.2.2 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.

#### 13.2.3 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.

#### 13.2.4 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*.

### 13.2.5 Safety

See 13.6.20.

### 13.2.6 Balance and Variety

Leaders should plan a balanced activities program that includes a variety of activities. Members should have opportunities to participate in activities that appeal to their interests. Members should also have opportunities to support others in their interests. Planning a yearly calendar helps leaders achieve a balance of service, cultural arts, and physical activities without creating excessive demands on members’ time.

The following paragraphs provide some examples of worthwhile activities.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### Sports, Recreation, Health, and Fitness

For information about Church sports activities, see 13.6.21.

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 13.6.25, item 2).

### 13.2.7 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 family home evening (see 13.6.10).

### 13.2.8 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:

1. One annual extended Scout camp or similar activity for young men.
2. One annual young women camp or similar activity.
3. One annual day camp or similar activity for Primary children ages 8 through 11.
4. Optional activities as outlined in 13.5.

If funds from participants are not sufficient, the bishop may authorize one group fund-raising activity annually that complies with the guidelines in 13.6.8.

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 16.3.7.

For guidelines about funding travel that is associated with activities, see 13.6.24.

### 13.2.9 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 fund-raising activity annually that complies with the guidelines in 13.6.8.

Equipment and supplies purchased with Church funds, whether from the ward budget or a fund-raising activity, are for Church use only. They are not for the personal use of individuals or families.

Church funds may not be used to purchase uniforms for individuals.

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## 13.3 Stake, Multistake, and Area Activities

### 13.3.1 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 13.1.

Stake and multistake activities are particularly beneficial for youth and young single adults. These activities are especially important in areas where there are few young members or where they seldom associate with large groups of members. Well-planned stake and multistake activities can give young members confidence in their Church membership, a wider circle of friendships, and opportunities to meet future temple marriage companions.

Where young single adults are able to gather at reasonable time and expense, they should have varied, simple multistake activities 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 a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or 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 13.4), 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.

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.

A member of the Presidency of the Seventy or 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 13.2.4 and 13.6.24). These activities require effective leadership, careful planning, and adequate resources.

### 13.3.2 Stake Activities Committee

Stake activities are planned according to the guidelines in 13.2. The stake presidency may organize a stake activities committee to help the stake council and stake auxiliary 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.

#### 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 auxiliaries.

He serves as a resource to stake auxiliary 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.

#### 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.

## 13.4 Youth Conference

Young men and young women ages 14 to 18 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.

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 bishopric youth committee, under the direction of the bishopric. The bishopric obtains the stake presidency's approval of plans for a ward youth conference.

Stake youth conferences are planned and carried out by the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee, under the direction of the stake presidency. Youth should be invited to assist the committee as much as possible in planning stake youth conferences. 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:

1. Select a gospel theme, such as a scripture, that will inspire the youth and help them understand the expectations of the conference. The annual Mutual theme could be used as the youth conference theme. The bishopric or stake presidency should approve the theme.



2. Plan activities such as devotionals, group meetings, learning experiences, and service projects that are consistent with the theme.
3. 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 21.1.20 for other guidelines concerning speakers.
4. 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 a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or the Area Presidency. Groups should not travel to or from youth conference on a Sunday.
5. Ensure that adequate adult supervision is present at all times (see 13.6.2).

Members of the bishopric or stake presidency are invited to attend as much of the conference as possible. Young Men and Young Women presidencies are encouraged to attend the entire conference.

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### 13.5 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 a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or 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.

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### 13.6 Policies and Guidelines

Leaders ensure that the following policies and guidelines are observed in all Church activities.

#### 13.6.1 Accident Prevention and Response

See 13.6.20.

#### 13.6.2 Adult Supervision

Supervision by an adequate number of responsible adults should be provided for activities for children, youth, and young single adults. The number of adults needed is determined by 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.

#### 13.6.3 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 21.2.

#### 13.6.4 Copyrighted Materials

See 21.1.12.

#### 13.6.5 Curfew Laws

Activities should comply with community curfew laws.

#### 13.6.6 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.

**13.6.7 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.

**13.6.8 Fund-Raising Activities**

Fund-raising 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 fund-raising activity each year. Such an activity may be held to raise funds for the following purposes only:

1. To help pay the cost of one annual camp or similar activity as outlined in 13.2.8.
2. To help purchase equipment that the unit needs for annual camps as outlined in 13.2.9.

If a fund-raising activity is held, it should provide a meaningful value or service. It should be a positive experience that builds unity.

Contributions to fund-raising activities are voluntary. Priesthood leaders should take special care to ensure that members do not feel obligated to contribute.

Stakes and wards that sponsor fund-raising activities should not advertise or solicit beyond their boundaries. Nor should they sell products or services door to door.

Examples of fund-raising activities that are not approved include:

1. Activities that would be taxable.
2. Activities completed with paid labor, either by employees or by contract.
3. 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.
4. The sale of commercial goods or services, including food storage items.
5. Games of chance, such as raffles, lotteries, and bingo.

Any exceptions to these instructions must be approved by a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or the Area Presidency.

The Friends of Scouting fund drive in the United States will continue as a separate, voluntary solicitation.

**13.6.9 Insurance****Automobile Insurance**

See 13.6.24.

**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.

**Church Activity Insurance Program**

In the United States and Canada, the Church Activity Insurance 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 Insurance Program, including its restrictions and limitations. The program is outlined in the *Church Activity Insurance 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  
E-mail: churchactivity@dmba.com  
Web site: www.dmba.com/churchactivity

**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.

**13.6.10 Monday Nights**

Monday nights are reserved for family home evening throughout the Church. No Church activities, meetings, baptismal services, games, or practices should be held after 6:00 p.m. on Mondays. Other interruptions to family home evening should be avoided. An exception may be made when New Year's Eve is on a Monday (see 13.6.11).

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.

#### 13.6.11 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.* All families are encouraged to have their family home evenings before participating in public gatherings. No 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.

#### 13.6.12 Overnight Activities

Parental permission is required for all overnight activities involving youth (see 13.6.13).

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 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.

When staying in tents, youth may not stay in the same tent 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 who are the same gender as the youth.

If adult leaders and 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 youth.

All 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 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.

#### 13.6.13 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 Parental or Guardian 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.

#### 13.6.14 Participation of Youth under 14 Years of Age

Youth under age 14 do not usually participate in youth conferences or in dances that are held at times other than the regularly scheduled Mutual night.

Members of the bishopric or stake presidency determine to what extent youth under age 14 may participate in other activities. Leaders consider such factors as late hours, the subject of the discussion, the nature of the activity, and the maturity of the participants.

#### 13.6.15 **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.

#### 13.6.16 **Prayers at Activities**

All activities should be opened and, when appropriate, closed with prayer.

#### 13.6.17 **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 assigned administrative 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.

#### 13.6.18 **Reports of Abuse**

If a leader becomes aware of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of someone during a Church activity, he or she should contact the bishop immediately. Instructions for bishops are provided in *Handbook 1*, 17.3.2.

#### 13.6.19 **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.

#### 13.6.20 **Safety Precautions and Accident Response and Reporting**

##### **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.

##### **Accident Response**

If an accident or injury occurs on Church property or during a Church-sponsored activity, leaders observe the following guidelines, as applicable:

1. 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.
2. In case of a missing person or fatality, immediately notify local law enforcement authorities and cooperate fully with them.
3. Provide emotional support.
4. Do not encourage or discourage legal action against the Church, and do not make commitments on behalf of the Church.
5. Gather and preserve witness names and information, accounts of what happened, and photographs.



### Accident Reporting

The bishop or stake president should be notified promptly if:

1. An accident, injury, or illness occurs on Church property or during a Church-sponsored activity.
2. A person who was participating in a Church-sponsored activity is missing.
3. 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:

1. 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).
2. 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.

### Insurance and Questions

Leaders should review the applicability of the Church Activity Insurance Program if an injury occurred during a Church-sponsored activity, event, or assignment. For information about insurance, see 13.6.9.

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.

### 13.6.21 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, a

member of the Presidency of the Seventy or 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 a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or the Area Presidency. Area sports tournaments are not approved.

Participants in Church-sponsored sports activities do not need to be Church members. However, they should live in the stake's boundaries and agree to follow Church standards and policies.

The stake presidency establishes guidelines that specify the ages at which players may participate in Church sports. These guidelines should take into account the local culture, geographical setting, school system, and rules of governing sports organizations. Such decisions should be made before the start of a season so everyone who is involved understands the age and eligibility rules.

Schools, states, provinces, and national sports organizations often establish rules about playing on school teams and Church teams in the same sport season. Church leaders and participants in Church sports ensure that they follow these rules. Violating them can result in the loss of eligibility for school teams and individuals.

In the United States and Canada, a person who is a member of a school sports team generally is not eligible to participate in the same sport in the same season in the Church sports program. School teams include those associated with junior high or middle schools, high schools, and colleges and universities, including junior colleges. This guideline does not apply to those who participate in intramural sports. If two schedules of play are either concurrent or overlapping, they are considered to be in the same season. Leaders encourage youth who play on school teams to assist with Church sports programs in ways other than as players.

Team uniforms should be simple, inexpensive, modest, and appropriate for the activity. Colored T-shirts or pullover reversible shirts are usually sufficient. Uniforms should be paid for from the stake or ward budget.

The presentation of team or individual awards or trophies is discouraged.



**13.6.22 Taxable Activities**

Leaders ensure that activities do not jeopardize the Church's tax-exempt status. For guidelines, see 21.2.

**13.6.23 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 13.6.24. Overnight temple visits must also comply with the policies in 13.6.12.

**13.6.24 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.

Leaders fill out an 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 13.6.13). Responsible adult supervision must be provided (see 13.6.2).

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.

**13.6.25 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.

1. Activities that have a high risk of injury or illness or that require unusual expense or travel (see 13.6.20 and 13.6.24).
2. Exercise programs that have music, lyrics, dress, or other elements that are not in harmony with Church standards.
3. Activities that involve wearing masks, except in dramatic productions.
4. Debutante balls, coming-out parties, or activities that include selecting kings and queens.
5. 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 a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or the Area Presidency.



# 14. Music

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## 14. Music

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### 14.1 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” (D&C 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).

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### 14.2 Ward Music Leadership

#### 14.2.1 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 14.4.2).

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 14.8).

#### 14.2.2 Ward Music Adviser

A member of the bishopric serves as the ward music adviser. He supervises the music program in the ward, advises the ward music chairman, and represents the music program in leadership meetings.

#### 14.2.3 Ward Music Chairman

A man or woman may serve as the ward music chairman. Under the direction of the ward

music adviser, the ward music chairman has the following responsibilities:

Serve as a resource to the bishopric on music matters.

Arrange for effective, appropriate music in sacrament meetings and other ward meetings.

Serve as a resource to ward auxiliary leaders in providing music training and in meeting other music needs as requested.

Recommend and supervise music training programs in the ward (see 14.7).

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.

#### 14.2.4 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.

#### 14.2.5 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.

#### 14.2.6 Ward Choir Director and Choir Accompanist

The ward choir director recommends music to be sung by the choir, directs choir rehearsals, and conducts choir performances (see 14.4.5).

The ward choir accompanist plays for choir rehearsals and performances.

#### 14.2.7 Priesthood Music Director and Pianist or Organist

The priesthood music director recommends and conducts the hymns for the opening exercises of priesthood meetings.

The pianist or organist provides prelude and postlude music and accompaniment for hymns.

### 14.3 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 in priesthood or auxiliary meetings. A pianist could play for sacrament meetings, choir, and priesthood or auxiliary meetings.

When no one can play the piano, the following resources may be useful:

1. CDs of hymns and children's songs are listed in the *Church Materials Catalog* and are available from Church Distribution Services.
2. Hymns and children's songs can be downloaded in MP3 format from the Church music Web site ([music.lds.org](http://music.lds.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 14.7).

### 14.4 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.

#### 14.4.1 Planning Music for Church Worship Services

Members who serve in ward music callings work together to select appropriate music for worship services. When feasible, the bishop and his counselors choose meeting topics well in advance. This allows the music chairman, music director, and choir director to plan hymns, special selections, and choir performances that complement and reinforce the meeting topics. This also allows time for the bishopric to approve the musical selections in advance.

#### 14.4.2 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 14.3).

Music in Church meetings should usually be sung in the language of the congregation.

#### 14.4.3 Standard Musical Elements in Church Worship Services

##### 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 five to ten minutes before and after a meeting. Playing hymns can help members review gospel teachings in their minds.

##### 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).



### 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 14.4.2).

#### 14.4.4 Sacrament Meetings

The bishopric approves music for sacrament meetings. Music and musical texts are to be sacred, dignified, and otherwise suitable for sacrament meeting. Music in sacrament meeting is for worship, not for a performance that draws attention to itself.

Opening and closing hymns are usually sung by the congregation (see “Selecting the Right Hymn,” *Hymns*, 380). In addition to using hymns that are already known and loved, members are encouraged to become acquainted with new or less familiar hymns. Music leaders should try to achieve a good balance between familiar favorites and hymns that are not as well known (see “Hymns for Congregations,” *Hymns*, 380–81).

The sacrament hymn is always sung by the congregation. It should refer to the sacrament itself or to the sacrifice of the Savior. Vocal solos or instrumental music may not replace this hymn. No music should be played during the sacrament prayer, while the sacrament is being passed, or as a postlude after the sacrament is passed.

Special musical selections or a congregational hymn may be scheduled after the sacrament or between speakers (see “Special Musical Selections” in 14.4.3).

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.

#### 14.4.5 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 14.4.2).

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.

#### 14.4.6 Using Music in the Classroom

Hymn singing can be an effective way to introduce or reinforce gospel principles taught in the classroom. Leaders should encourage teachers to use the hymns to enhance classroom instruction.

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### 14.5 Stake Music Leadership

#### 14.5.1 Stake Presidency

The stake president and his counselors oversee stake music. They call and set apart stake members to serve in stake music callings as outlined in this section.

#### 14.5.2 Stake Music Adviser

The stake presidency assigns a high counselor 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.

#### 14.5.3 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 auxiliary leaders.

Recommend and supervise music training programs in the stake (see 14.7).

Recommend and implement stake music activities as requested.

#### 14.5.4 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 14.7) or to assist with music in stake activities.

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### 14.6 Music in the Stake

#### 14.6.1 Stake Conferences

Music for stake conference should be planned with the purpose of strengthening faith and testimony. The presiding authority at a stake conference reviews all proposed musical selections for the conference early in the planning stage.

Music for the general session of stake conference normally includes four selections. The congregation sings the opening and intermediate hymns. A choir may sing the other two selections, perhaps immediately before the first speaker and at the close of the meeting. At least one of the choir's selections should be a Latter-day Saint hymn or hymn arrangement. Choirs may be composed of ward choirs, or they may be special choirs of children, youth, priesthood holders, Relief Society sisters, or families.

For guidelines on choosing appropriate music, see 14.4.2.

#### 14.6.2 Stake and Multistake Choirs

With priesthood leaders' approval, stake and multistake choirs may be organized for stake conferences, regional conferences, and other occasions, such as community events. After the performance, the choir is disbanded until other occasions arise. These choirs should not interfere with members' participation in ward choirs.

Standing community choirs directed by and consisting primarily of Church members are not sponsored by the Church. These choirs should not use references to the Church such as "LDS," "Latter-day Saint," or "Mormon" in their names. 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.

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### 14.7 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 listed in the *Church Materials Catalog* and are available from Church Distribution Services.

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.

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### 14.8 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 listed in the *Church Materials Catalog*. Members may also access the Church music Web site ([music.lds.org](http://music.lds.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.

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## 14.9 Additional Music Policies and Guidelines

### 14.9.1 Other Music in the Chapel

Some cultural and recreational music may be presented in the chapel on weekdays. However, the cultural hall is usually a more appropriate setting for such music. Local priesthood leaders resolve questions about what music is appropriate in the chapel. Applause is not usually appropriate in the chapel.

### 14.9.2 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 meetinghouse library and belongs to all units that share the library. The stake or ward music chairman may help librarians create an index of this music.

### 14.9.3 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.

#### 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 assigned administrative office for information about acquiring new or replacement instruments.

#### 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.

### 14.9.4 Copyright Guidelines

See 21.1.12.

### 14.9.5 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.

### 14.9.6 Music for Funerals

See 18.6.5.

### 14.9.7 Music for Baptismal Services

See “Elements of a Baptismal Service” in 20.3.4.

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## 14.10 Online Music Resources

For additional resources, see the Church music Web site ([music.lds.org](http://music.lds.org)) and “Music Callings and Resources” in the Serving in the Church section of [LDS.org](http://LDS.org).

# 15. Stake Organization

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## 15. Stake Organization

The stake presidency and other stake leaders work together to teach and support ward leaders. This chapter outlines the general organization of the stake and explains the relationship between stake auxiliaries and ward auxiliaries. Detailed instructions for the stake president are found in *Handbook 1*.

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### 15.1 Stake Presidency

#### 15.1.1 Call and Set Apart Stake Leaders

The stake president and his counselors call and set apart stake leaders as outlined in the Chart of Callings in chapter 19.

#### 15.1.2 Oversee the Work of Stake Auxiliaries and Programs

The stake president personally oversees the stake Relief Society. He assigns his counselors to oversee the other stake auxiliary organizations: Young Men (including Scouting where authorized), Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School. These counselors ensure that members of stake auxiliary presidencies are instructed in their duties.

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

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

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

#### 15.1.3 Preside over Stake Councils and Committees

The stake president presides over the stake priesthood executive committee and the stake council. He also presides over stake disciplinary councils. He assigns his counselors to preside over the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee, the stake young single adult committee, and the stake single adult committee (where organized).

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

The responsibilities of the stake clerk, assistant stake clerks, and stake executive secretary are outlined in *Handbook 1*, 13.3.2 through 13.3.4.

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### 15.3 High Council

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

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

#### 15.3.1 Represent the Stake Presidency

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

High councilors also counsel about and sustain the stake presidency's decisions to issue callings to members. For some callings, the stake presidency may authorize high councilors to represent them in issuing the callings, presenting members to be sustained, and setting members apart as indicated in chapter 19.

To assist them in overseeing the Melchizedek Priesthood, the stake presidency assigns a high councilor to represent them in each elders quorum, high priests group, ward, and branch in the stake. In this role, high councilors orient newly called high priests group leaderships and elders quorum presidencies. They also provide ongoing encouragement, support, and instruction for these leaders, including instruction based on chapters 1–7 of this handbook. They meet with these leaders regularly to learn of their needs, teach them their duties, and communicate information from the stake presidency. They periodically attend meetings of the elders quorum and high priests group, including elders quorum presidency meetings and high priests group



leadership meetings. They also attend bishopric, priesthood executive committee, and ward council meetings if invited or assigned.

The stake presidency assigns high councilors to work with the stake auxiliaries and programs listed in 15.1.2 (except for Church magazines if the stake executive secretary or someone else is assigned this responsibility). When a member of the stake presidency meets with a stake auxiliary presidency, the assigned high councilor attends this meeting. High councilors also attend the stake auxiliary leadership meetings for the auxiliaries to which they are assigned.

The stake presidency assigns high councilors to help oversee missionary work and temple and family history work in the stake (see 5.1.9 and 5.4.6).

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.

### 15.3.2 Serve on Stake Councils and Committees

All high councilors serve on the stake priesthood executive committee and the stake council.

As directed by the stake presidency, high councilors participate in stake disciplinary councils (see *Handbook 1*, chapter 6).

The stake presidency may assign high councilors to serve on other committees as needed. For example, high councilors who are assigned to work with elders quorums and high priests groups may meet as a Melchizedek Priesthood committee. High councilors with assignments relating to the Aaronic Priesthood may meet as an Aaronic Priesthood committee.

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

## 15.4 Stake Auxiliaries

The Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School organizations are auxiliaries to the priesthood. Each auxiliary has a presidency that serves under the direction of the stake presidency. The members of the stake Young Men presidency are Melchizedek Priesthood holders. The members of the stake Sunday School presidency are also priesthood holders; where possible, they should hold

the Melchizedek Priesthood. The members of the presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary are women.

This chapter outlines the responsibilities that stake auxiliary leaders have in common. In addition, the stake Relief Society and Sunday School presidencies have some responsibilities that are unique to their organizations. Those responsibilities are outlined in 9.8.2 and 12.7.3, respectively.

### 15.4.1 Stake Auxiliary Presidencies

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

Stake auxiliary presidencies have the following responsibilities:

They orient newly called ward auxiliary presidencies. They also provide ongoing encouragement, support, and instruction for ward auxiliary presidencies and teachers. They should base some of their instruction on chapters 1–6 in this handbook and the chapter for their auxiliary organization. They meet with these leaders regularly to learn of their needs, discuss the needs of the members they serve, and communicate information from the stake presidency. Periodically they visit ward meetings and classes as arranged with ward leaders.

They instruct ward auxiliary leaders in stake auxiliary leadership meetings, which are generally held once a year. If local circumstances and travel time do not put undue burdens on leaders, the stake presidency may authorize a second leadership meeting each year. (See 18.3.11.) Bishops may request additional instruction for ward auxiliary presidencies.

Members of auxiliary presidencies counsel together regularly in their own presidency meetings. They also meet regularly with the member of the stake presidency who oversees their work and the high councilor assigned to their organization.

Auxiliary presidents serve on the stake council. As members of this council, they participate in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families in the stake.

Auxiliary presidents submit recommendations to the stake presidency about members who may be called to serve in their organizations. In making these recommendations, they follow the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

#### 15.4.2 Stake Auxiliary Secretaries

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

They prepare agendas for presidency meetings.

They attend presidency meetings, take notes, and keep track of assignments.

They keep other records and prepare reports as the presidency requests.

They help prepare the annual budget for their auxiliary and account for expenses.

They provide training for ward auxiliary secretaries as assigned. This training may include instruction on recording and reporting attendance.

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#### 15.5 Stake Specialists

The stake presidency may call and set apart specialists to help with activities (see 13.3.2), music (see 14.5.4), welfare (see 6.3.3), and other initiatives to help stake members.

The stake presidency may also call and set apart public affairs specialists to help increase positive awareness of the Church and to build bridges of friendship and understanding in the community. Information for public affairs specialists is available in the Serving in the Church section of LDS.org. These specialists serve under the direction of the stake public affairs director.

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#### 15.6 Adapting to Local Needs

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

General information about adapting Church callings and organizations is provided in chapter 17. Instructions that are specific to priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations are provided in 8.16, 9.9, 10.11, 11.7, and 12.8.

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# 16. Single Members

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## 16. Single Members

Men and women who have not married or who are divorced or widowed make up a significant portion of Church membership. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders reach out to these members and include them in the work of the Church. Worthy single members should be given opportunities to hold leadership and teaching positions, including positions in elders quorum presidencies, high priests group leaderships, and auxiliary presidencies.

Leaders support single members by helping them draw near to the Lord, strengthen their testimonies, and take responsibility for their own spiritual, social, and temporal well-being.

In ministering to 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).

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### 16.1 Ministering to 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.

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.

#### 16.1.1 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.

#### 16.1.2 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.

#### 16.1.3 Multistake Activities

When multistake activities can provide single adults with needed opportunities for service, leadership, and social interaction, Area Seventies work with stake presidents to establish committees to plan and organize such activities.

#### 16.1.4 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.

#### 16.1.5 Home Evening Groups

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.

## 16.2 Ministering to Young Single Adult Members (Ages 18 to 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.

## 16.3 Young Single Adults in Conventional Stakes and Wards

### 16.3.1 Stake Leadership

The leadership of the stake presidency is particularly important in the effort to minister to 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 16.3.5.

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 16.4).

### 16.3.2 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, and sociality beyond their wards (see 16.3.5). As they plan young single adult activities, they maintain a focus on spiritual growth and service, not just social experiences.

The committee helps ensure that ward young single adult committees are functioning well in the wards where they are established.

### 16.3.3 Ward Leadership

#### Bishopric

To understand and address the needs of young single adults in the ward, a bishopric member interviews each young single adult at least annually. The bishopric works with the ward council to find meaningful callings for all young single adults. The bishopric may also organize a ward young single adult committee.

A counselor in the bishopric oversees the young single adults in the ward. He receives regular reports from the counselors in the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies who are assigned to work with young single adults in the ward. He may report on specific young single adults in ward council meeting.

#### 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 watch over 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 home teaching and visiting teaching contacts 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.

#### **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 home teaching and visiting teaching assignments help address the needs of young single adults. They may be assigned to serve on the stake young single adult committee.

#### **Young Single Adult Advisers**

The bishopric may call a worthy married couple as ward young single adult advisers. These advisers report to a counselor in the bishopric. They serve on the ward young single adult committee if one is formed. They may also be assigned to serve on the stake young single adult committee. They help young single adults have opportunities to gather for friendship, service, and gospel learning.

### **16.3.4 Ward Young Single Adult Committee**

In a ward with a significant number of young single adults, the stake president and bishop may feel that a ward young single adult committee is needed. A counselor in the bishopric presides over the committee. Other committee members include the elders quorum and Relief Society counselors assigned to young single adults, the young single adult leaders, and the couple called to serve as young single adult advisers.

This committee meets as needed. Committee members discuss ways to help young single adults participate in service, leadership, gospel learning, and social activities. They also find and fellowship less-active young single adults.

### **16.3.5 Meetings, Classes, and Activities (Stake and Ward)**

Young single adults should be offered a variety of gospel learning, service, cultural, and social

activities that can take place at the ward, stake, or multistake level. These activities may include temple visits, priesthood or temple preparation seminars, missionary work, community service, choirs, cultural events, dances, and sports.

Supported by the stake young single adult committee and by ward leaders, the stake presidency establishes meetings, classes, and activities that will best meet the needs of young single adult members. They also determine 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 13. 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.

#### **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.

#### **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 affairs, 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.

### Home Evening Groups

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.

### Sunday School Classes

Wards with enough young single adults may have a separate Sunday School class for young single adults (see 12.4.2).

### Weekday Gospel Study Classes

Young single adults are encouraged to enroll in institute classes. Priesthood leaders work with local institute personnel to establish classes that meet institute standards and meet the needs of young single adults. Young single adults who are not attending school may enroll in institute classes, either in institutes or in classes taught in local meetinghouses by teachers who are called by priesthood leaders. Arrangements for such classes are coordinated between priesthood leaders and institute personnel.

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.

### 16.3.6 Multistake and Area Activities

Multistake and area activities can give young single adults opportunities for social interaction, leadership, and service without leaving the ecclesiastical care of their bishops.

Area Seventies work with stake presidents to establish multistake committees to organize such activities. These Area Seventies work under the direction of a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or 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 13.3.1.

### 16.3.7 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 13.2.8. 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.

### 16.3.8 Centers for Young Adults

Centers for young adults are authorized in some locations to bring together opportunities for gospel learning, social activities, missionary work, and activation efforts. A center for young adults requires cooperative efforts among stake presidencies, institute personnel, and the mission president, with an agent stake presidency providing overall direction. These leaders may be assisted by an institute of religion student council and stake young single adult committees. Full-time missionaries may participate in missionary work at these centers, often assisted by a married couple who may or may not be missionaries.

Organizations for young single adults, such as an institute of religion advisory council (see *Handbook 1*, 11.1.3), an institute of religion student council (see *Handbook 1*, 11.2.2), ward and stake young single adult committees, and young single adult wards and stakes, should avoid duplication and scheduling conflicts when they make plans to use the center. In consultation with institute personnel and other leaders, stake presidents may wish to have these organizations combine for some functions.

A center for young adults may be housed in a meetinghouse, with the agent stake president overseeing the use and scheduling of the building.

Where there is an institute building, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or the Area

Presidency may request that it be used as a center for young adults. In this case, the institute director continues to serve as the building agent. In counsel with the stake president, the institute director is responsible for institute classes and other uses of the building. Other activities should not disrupt institute classes.

To request authorization to establish a center for young adults, priesthood leaders contact a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or the Area Presidency. For more information about centers for young adults, leaders should contact the office of the administrator for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion.

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## 16.4 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 *Handbook 1*, 9.1.6.

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.

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## 16.5 Young Single Adult Stakes

Priesthood leaders may recommend the creation of a young single adult stake according to the guidelines in *Handbook 1*, 9.1.7. That section also provides guidelines for membership and leadership in these stakes.

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## 16.6 Guidelines and Policies for Young Single Adult Wards and Stakes

### 16.6.1 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 and in *Handbook 1*. This includes instructions for welfare assistance, finances, and budget.

### 16.6.2 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.

### 16.6.3 Home Evening Groups

The bishopric of a young single adult ward may organize home evening groups as outlined in 16.3.5.

### 16.6.4 Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching

Each member of a young single adult ward or stake is considered a family for the purposes of home teaching and visiting teaching.

### 16.6.5 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.

### 16.6.6 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.

#### 16.6.7 **Missionary Recommendations**

For information about missionary recommendations, stake presidents and bishops may refer to *Handbook 1*, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.7.

#### 16.6.8 **Priesthood Ordinations**

See 20.7.

#### 16.6.9 **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.

#### 16.6.10 **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.

#### 16.6.11 **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.

#### 16.6.12 **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.





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# 17. Uniformity and Adaptation

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## 17. Uniformity and Adaptation

Members of the Church live in a wide variety of political, social, and economic conditions. Wards and branches also vary in size and leadership resources. These conditions may require local leaders to adapt some Church programs. Such adaptations typically affect the auxiliaries, leadership meetings, and activity programs. The guidelines in this chapter are intended to help priesthood leaders determine which adaptations may be appropriate and which are not.

All wards and branches, regardless of their size or circumstances, can experience the same abundance of the Spirit of the Lord. The Savior taught, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

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### 17.1 Where Uniformity Is Required

To know which adaptations might be appropriate, leaders must first understand the doctrines, ordinances, and practices that are established by the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets and apostles. These are to be uniform throughout the Church.

Stake presidents, bishops, and other local leaders have a sacred obligation to maintain the uniformity and purity of the Church in all of the categories outlined below. This need for uniformity is based on the scriptural principle of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5; see also Mosiah 18:21).

#### 17.1.1 Scriptures

The standard works of the Church are the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. In many languages, the Church has approved one edition of the Bible to be used in Church meetings and classes. Likewise, the latest authorized edition of the other three books of Latter-day Saint scriptures should be used. No other works are to be promoted or used in the Church as scripture.

#### 17.1.2 Commandments and Standards

The commandments of the Lord and the worthiness standards of the Church are given in the scriptures and in official communications from

the First Presidency. Local leaders should not alter these commandments and standards. Nor should local leaders teach their own rules or interpretations regarding the commandments.

The worthiness standards for temple attendance are detailed in the interview questions found in the temple recommend book. Local leaders should not alter these.

#### 17.1.3 Purity of Doctrine

The doctrines of the Church are found in the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets and apostles. The Lord instructed, “The elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel” (D&C 42:12; see also D&C 52:9, 36).

All leaders should ensure that true doctrine is taught in the Church. If a person teaches false or speculative doctrine, leaders should correct it promptly and sensitively. Errors can usually be corrected in private, but major or repeated errors may require public correction.

If local leaders are unsure what doctrines or teachings are correct on a given subject, they may seek guidance from their immediate presiding authority.

#### 17.1.4 Sacrament Meetings and the Sunday Meeting Schedule

Holding sacrament meetings is a scriptural mandate (see D&C 59:9). Instructions for sacrament meetings are provided in 18.2.2. The Sunday meeting schedule is set forth on page 153. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have established this schedule. Local leaders should not alter it.

In extreme situations, local leaders may cancel Sunday meetings. However, doing so should be a rare occurrence. Examples of situations that may justify canceling meetings include emergency security concerns and severe weather. If possible, a bishop should confer with the stake president before canceling meetings.

Sometimes an unusual local situation may make it necessary to alter the Sunday schedule for a longer period. For example, a change may

be necessary if a meetinghouse has been damaged by fire, flooding, or storm. In such a circumstance, the stake president seeks guidance from the Area Presidency or the Area Seventy who presides in his coordinating council.

Leaders of very small branches may adapt the Sunday schedule as directed by their leaders, using the *Basic Unit Program Guidebook*.

#### 17.1.5 Conferences

Each stake holds two stake conferences during the year as scheduled by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve (see 18.3.1).

The stake presidency schedules, organizes, and presides at one ward or branch conference annually for each ward or branch in the stake (see 18.2.5). The district president does the same for each branch in a district.

#### 17.1.6 Temple Work

The sacred work of temples is under the direct authority of the President of the Church. All matters pertaining to temple work should be handled according to the instructions in *Handbook 1*, chapter 3. Examples of such matters include temple recommends, sealings, sealing clearances, and cancellations of sealing. If a stake president encounters a question he cannot resolve, he directs it to the Office of the First Presidency.

Local leaders make sure that temple phraseology and the sacred ordinances and covenants of the temple are not discussed in specific terms in Church meetings.

#### 17.1.7 Disciplinary Councils

Instructions for disciplinary councils are provided in *Handbook 1*, chapter 6. Leaders should not deviate from these instructions, including the requirements for submitting reports. If a stake president encounters a question he cannot resolve, he directs it to the Office of the First Presidency.

#### 17.1.8 Records and Reports

Keeping Church records is a scriptural mandate (see D&C 20:81–83). The required records and reports are outlined in *Handbook 1*, chapter 13. The First Presidency may amend these from time to time.

Church records and reports are prepared using Church computer systems or in written form, depending on the area. Leaders ensure that

records and reports are accurate and submitted on time.

#### 17.1.9 Ordinances

Instructions for performing priesthood ordinances are outlined in chapter 20. These instructions should not be altered. The minimum ages for receiving ordinances such as baptism and ordination to Aaronic Priesthood offices may not be altered for any reason.

#### 17.1.10 Curriculum

Church-approved curriculum materials are to be used in classes that are held during the Sunday meeting schedule. These materials include Church-produced manuals, magazines, and supplementary teaching resources. New manuals and courses should not be developed at the local level.

Bishops and branch presidents may occasionally teach or authorize a special priesthood or auxiliary lesson when they feel there is a need.

### 17.2 Circumstances That May Permit Local Adaptation

Stake presidents, bishops, and branch presidents have discretion to make simple adaptations to certain Church programs. Where needed, such adaptations may be made as follows:

1. In the staffing and programs of the auxiliaries
2. In the format and frequency of leadership meetings
3. In the format and frequency of activities

When considering what adaptations may be appropriate, the stake presidency, bishopric, or branch presidency counsel among themselves and also with the stake, ward, or branch council. They also counsel with their immediate presiding authority if circumstances may justify a major or unusual adaptation. Leaders should always seek the guidance of the Spirit in making adaptations.

Leaders may consider the following factors when determining what adaptations may be appropriate.

#### 17.2.1 Family Circumstances

When extending callings, scheduling leadership meetings, and planning activities, leaders

consider the family circumstances of members. Church service and participation always entail a measure of sacrifice. However, strong families are vital to the Church, and members should not be asked to make excessive family sacrifices to serve or to support programs or activities.

One family circumstance to consider is the Church calling(s) held by a member's husband or wife. Individual families should not be overburdened with Church responsibilities. Another circumstance to consider is the overall time demands that members face in supporting their families and taking care of other personal matters. In some areas of the world, members of necessity work two or three jobs. These are legitimate considerations for leaders to weigh in extending callings, scheduling leadership meetings, and planning activities.

### 17.2.2 Transportation and Communication

Some stakes or wards encompass large geographical areas, requiring members to travel long distances to meetings and activities. When evaluating the need for meetings and activities, leaders take into account the time and expense required for members to travel.

In many areas of the world, automobiles are not common, and transportation takes place by foot, bicycle, bus, and streetcar. When distances are great, these conditions may mean that leaders should adjust Church programs and leadership meetings to make it easier for members to participate.

Even where automobiles are widely available, leaders should be sensitive to the cost of driving long distances. In some instances, such as conducting high council business, leaders may use conference calls, e-mail, and the Internet to reduce costly transportation. When using these resources, leaders should take special care to ensure confidentiality.

Members in different stages of life often vary widely in their access to transportation. For example, young single adults are often more mobile than families with children, and sometimes they have the resources to travel greater distances. Where young single adults are able to gather at reasonable time and expense, they should have multistake activities of moderate frequency (see 13.3.1).

In some parts of the world, telephones are expensive, and many members do not own one. Likewise, e-mail and Internet access are rare in some areas. If these resources are expensive or

not generally available, leaders should make necessary adaptations.

Where travel is difficult or costly and communication resources are inadequate, home teaching and visiting teaching are more challenging. In such cases, leaders may make adjustments as outlined in 7.4.3 and 9.5.3.

### 17.2.3 Small Quorum or Class Size

#### Elders and High Priests

If very few elders or high priests in a ward are able to attend priesthood meeting on Sunday, they may meet together. However, in no case should a single Melchizedek Priesthood quorum be established. As long as there are ordained elders and high priests in a ward, both an elders quorum and a high priests group should be organized.

Because districts do not have high priests quorums, branches in districts do not have high priests groups. High priests who attend these branches meet with the elders quorum.

#### Young Men and Young Women

In a ward or branch with few young men, Aaronic Priesthood quorums may meet together for instruction and activities (see 8.11 and 8.13.1). However, individual quorums should still be organized, with leaders called and sustained for each quorum.

In a ward or branch with few young women, they may meet together for instruction and activities (see 10.6.2 and 10.8.1). A class presidency may be called for each age-group, or one presidency may be called for the combined age-groups until they are able to be organized into their respective classes.

If adult leadership is limited, the Young Men presidency may teach the Sunday lessons and administer the activity program without assistant advisers. The Young Women presidency may do the same for young women. In a very small unit, the Young Men and Young Women presidents may be the only adult leaders in their organizations. If this is the case, they teach the Sunday lessons and oversee activities for all young men or young women. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called for each organization.

Because youth often benefit from socializing in larger groups, the young men and young women in two or more small wards or branches may meet occasionally for combined activities.

If neighboring wards and branches have few young men or young women, the bishops and branch presidents may authorize the youth to meet together for weekly activities. When considering these options, leaders take into account factors such as distance and travel cost.

Periodic stake or multistake activities are especially important where wards or branches have small numbers of youth (see 13.3 and 13.4).

In a small stake or a district, the Young Men president may be the only stake or district Young Men leader. The same may be true for the stake or district Young Women president. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called for each organization.

### Primary

In a ward or branch with few children, the Primary presidency may want to organize fewer classes, combining age-groups.

In a small ward or branch, the Primary presidency may be the only Primary leaders and teachers. In a very small unit, the Primary president may be the only Primary leader. In this case, she conducts sharing time and teaches a class for all the children. When possible, more leaders and teachers should be called as outlined in 11.7.

In a small stake or district, the Primary president may be the only stake or district Primary leader. When possible, other leaders should be called as outlined in 11.7.

### 17.2.4 Leadership Resources

When there are not enough qualified members to fill all leadership positions, the presiding officers may fill only those that are most essential. In addition to calling active, experienced members to leadership positions, presiding officers

should seek inspiration to find other potential leaders among new members, inexperienced members, and less-active members who could return to activity. Church members do not need to be experienced or highly qualified to receive a calling. Having a calling is an important way for them to serve and to grow spiritually.

If there are not enough members to serve in leadership positions, presiding officers may organize their stake, ward, or branch on a smaller scale. Examples might include staffing some organizations with only a president and one counselor, having a counselor serve also as a secretary, and simplifying some programs.

In a very small branch that does not have a Young Women or Primary president, the Relief Society president may help parents organize instruction for the young women and children until Young Women and Primary presidents are called.

Leaders of very small branches follow the guidelines in the *Basic Unit Program Guidebook*.

### 17.2.5 Security

In some areas of the world, crime rates are very high or political unrest prevails. If leaders in these areas believe that it is unwise for members to travel at night, they may cancel evening activities. This may mean reducing the number of Church activities, as well as scheduling some activities on weekends.

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.





# 18. Meetings in the Church

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## 18. Meetings in the Church

This chapter summarizes information about Church meetings. Meetings that are specific to an organization, such as quorum, Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School meetings, are described in that organization's chapter of this handbook.

In addition to the meetings outlined in the handbooks, presiding authorities occasionally may call other meetings and define their composition and purpose.

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### 18.1 Guidelines for Planning and Conducting Meetings

Leaders plan and conduct meetings "as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God" (D&C 20:45; see also Moroni 6:9; D&C 46:2).

Leaders prepare an agenda for each meeting or assign someone else to prepare it under their direction. An agenda helps participants focus on the meeting's purposes and use time effectively. It should be prioritized to ensure that the most important matters are discussed first.

Leadership meetings should focus on strengthening individuals and families. Time spent on calendaring, program planning, and other administrative business should be minimal.

For guidelines on counseling together in meetings, see 4.6.1.

The presiding officer may conduct a meeting or ask a counselor or someone else to conduct it under his or her direction.

Meetings should not be longer than needed.

Leaders should ensure that Sunday meetings are not so numerous that there is little time for parents and children to be together on that day. Where possible, leaders should avoid scheduling Sunday meetings other than those in the standard three-hour schedule, leadership meetings in the early mornings, and occasional meetings in the evenings.

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### 18.2 Ward Meetings

The bishop oversees ward meetings. He presides at these meetings unless a member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy, or a General Authority attends. His counselors may conduct

ward meetings and may preside if he is absent. Presiding authorities and visiting high councilors should be invited to sit on the stand. High councilors do not preside when attending ward meetings.

If the bishop and his counselors are all absent, the stake president designates who presides at sacrament meeting. Normally he designates the high priests group leader, but he could authorize another priesthood holder instead.

#### 18.2.1 Schedule for Sunday Meetings

Sunday meetings provide vitally important time for members to partake of the sacrament, worship, learn the gospel, learn their duties, and give service. Interested nonmembers may attend these meetings.

Wards are to hold the following Sunday meetings in one three-hour period (for meeting schedule options, see the "Sunday Meeting Schedule" chart on page 153):

1. Sacrament meeting
2. Priesthood meeting (for all priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age; see 18.2.4)
3. Relief Society (for women ages 18 and older and for younger women who are married)
4. Young Women (for young women ages 12 to 18)
5. Primary (for children ages 3 through 11; also for children ages 18 months through 2 years if a nursery is organized and parents want their children to attend)
6. Sunday School (for those ages 12 and older; for information about 12-year-old young men and young women attending Sunday School, see 11.4.3)

#### 18.2.2 Sacrament Meeting

##### Purposes of Sacrament Meeting

Each sacrament meeting should be a spiritual experience in which members of the Church renew their covenants by partaking of the sacrament. Other purposes of sacrament meeting are to worship, provide gospel instruction, perform ordinances, conduct ward business, and strengthen faith and testimony.

### Planning and Conducting Sacrament Meeting

Members of the bishopric plan sacrament meetings and conduct them in a reverent and dignified manner. They oversee the administration of the sacrament, select subjects for talks and music, select and orient participants, and invite members to give opening and closing prayers. It is not necessary to hold a prayer meeting before sacrament meeting.

The bishopric ensures that sacrament meetings begin and end on time. Meetings should not be overprogrammed. A sample agenda follows:

1. Prelude music (see 14.4.3 for guidelines)
2. Greeting and welcome
3. Acknowledgment of presiding authorities or visiting high councilors who are attending
4. Announcements (if possible, most announcements should be printed so they do not take time in sacrament meeting; the bishopric may give essential announcements briefly before the opening hymn)
5. Opening hymn and prayer
6. Ward and stake business, such as:
  - a. Sustaining and releasing officers and teachers (see 19.3 and 19.5)
  - b. Recognizing 8-year-old children who have been baptized and confirmed (see “Introducing New Members” on page 140)
  - c. Presenting names of brethren to receive or advance in the Aaronic Priesthood (see *Handbook 1*, 16.7.2)
  - d. Recognizing young women as they advance in their classes
  - e. Presenting names of new ward members (see “Introducing New Members” on page 140)
7. Naming and blessing children (usually in fast and testimony meeting) and confirming and bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost on new members
8. Sacrament hymn and administration of the sacrament
9. Gospel messages, congregational singing, and special musical selections
10. Closing hymn and prayer
11. Postlude music

Occasionally something unexpected may occur during the meeting that the presiding officer feels a need to clarify. In this situation, he should

make any clarification that is needed, being careful not to cause embarrassment.

### Time before Sacrament Meeting

Leaders set an example of reverence during the time before sacrament meeting. The bishopric and the speakers should be in their seats at least five minutes before the meeting begins. This is not a time for conversation or transmitting messages. Setting an example of reverence encourages the congregation to be spiritually prepared for a worshipful experience.

Members should be taught to make the time before sacrament meeting a period of prayerful meditation as they prepare spiritually for the sacrament.

The bishopric encourages families to arrive on time and to sit together.

### Blessing and Passing the Sacrament

The bishopric ensures that the sacrament is blessed and passed in a reverent and orderly manner. The sacrament table should be prepared before the meeting begins. For instructions on preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament, see 20.4.

### Selecting Subjects for Talks and Music

The bishopric selects subjects for talks and music in sacrament meetings. Talks and music should focus on gospel subjects that help members build faith and testimony.

### Selecting and Orienting Participants

*Selecting Participants.* The bishopric selects members to participate in sacrament meetings. Most opportunities to participate are given to ward members. If the bishopric invites members from outside the ward to speak, the guidelines in 21.1.20 should be followed.

Members of the bishopric regularly invite youth ages 12 to 18 to speak in sacrament meeting. Youth should speak briefly (about five minutes each) on assigned gospel subjects. They should prepare their own talks, though the bishopric may encourage parents to help.

The bishopric usually invites missionaries to speak in sacrament meeting just before they depart and when they return (see *Handbook 1*, 4.8.1 and 4.10.3). The bishopric makes it clear that this is a regular sacrament meeting and is not to be a missionary farewell or homecoming. The bishopric plans and conducts these meetings. Family

members and friends of the missionary are not invited to speak. However, other departing or returning missionaries or other members may be invited to speak.

The bishopric schedules high councilors to speak as assigned by the stake president. The stake president determines the frequency of such assignments. It is not necessary for high councilors to speak in sacrament meeting every month.

The bishopric schedules one sacrament meeting each year for the Primary children to take part in a Primary program (see 11.5.4).

Occasionally the bishopric may invite the full-time missionaries who are serving in the area to speak.

The bishopric may not turn sacrament meetings over to auxiliaries or outside musical groups. However, auxiliaries may be invited to participate in the meeting under the bishopric's direction.

Members of the bishopric should extend invitations to speak in sacrament meeting well in advance of the meeting.

*Orienting Participants.* Members of the bishopric orient sacrament meeting participants. They review the purposes of sacrament meeting and explain that all talks and music should be in harmony with the sacred nature of the sacrament.

When inviting members to speak, a member of the bishopric clearly explains the subject and the length of time the person should speak. He counsels speakers to teach the doctrines of the gospel, relate faith-promoting experiences, bear witness of divinely revealed truths, and use the scriptures (see D&C 42:12; 52:9). Speakers should teach in a spirit of love after prayerful preparation. They should not speak on subjects that are speculative, controversial, or out of harmony with Church doctrine.

To maintain an atmosphere of reverent worship in sacrament meetings, when speakers use scriptures as part of their talks, they should not ask the congregation to open their own books to the scriptural references.

Members who participate in sacrament meeting should stay until the meeting ends.

#### **Music**

See 14.4.3 and 14.4.4.

#### **Introducing New Members**

When membership records are received in a ward and when converts are baptized and

confirmed, a member of the bishopric introduces and welcomes the members in the next sacrament meeting. He reads each person's name, invites the person to stand, and asks members of the congregation to show by the uplifted hand that they accept the members in full fellowship in the ward. Records of family members are read together. If a member knows any reason why a person may not be entitled to full fellowship, he or she should talk to the bishop privately.

After children who are members of record are baptized and confirmed, a member of the bishopric announces each child's baptism and confirmation in sacrament meeting. These children are not presented for acceptance into the ward because they are already members.

#### **Visual Aids and Audiovisual Materials**

See 18.4 and 21.1.5.

#### **Sacrament Services in Unusual Situations**

Every member needs the spiritual blessings that come from partaking of the sacrament. If members are unable to attend sacrament meeting because they are confined to a home, nursing home, or hospital, the bishop may assign priesthood holders to prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament to these members.

Occasionally members may be unable to attend sacrament meeting because of distance to the meetinghouse. Under unusual circumstances, the bishop may occasionally give authorization for a sacrament service to be held away from the meetinghouse. He may authorize such a service only within his ward boundaries. The person whom the bishop authorizes to conduct the service must hold the Melchizedek Priesthood or be a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. He also must be worthy to bless and pass the sacrament. The priesthood holder who directs the service reports to the bishop when the service has been held.

When members are traveling or temporarily residing away from their home wards, they should make an earnest effort to attend sacrament meeting and other Sunday meetings in a ward or branch of the Church.

Sacrament services should not be held in conjunction with family reunions or other outings.

#### **18.2.3 Fast and Testimony Meeting**

Usually on the first Sunday of each month, sacrament meeting is a fast and testimony meeting. General conference and stake conference may



necessitate holding fast and testimony meeting on a different Sunday.

Under the bishop's direction, in this meeting children may be named and blessed and confirmations may be performed before the administration of the sacrament.

After the sacrament, the bishopric member who is conducting the meeting bears a brief testimony. He then invites members to bear heartfelt testimonies and to relate faith-promoting experiences. The bishopric encourages members to keep their testimonies brief so more people may have the opportunity to participate.

It may be best to have young children learn to share their testimonies in settings such as family home evening or when giving talks in Primary until they are old enough to do so in a fast and testimony meeting without assistance from a parent, sibling, or other person.

#### 18.2.4 Priesthood Meeting

All priesthood holders meet together for brief opening exercises before separating for their quorum or group meetings. Prospective elders and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age may also attend. A member of the bishopric conducts.

Opening exercises include an opening hymn and prayer. They may also include priesthood business, instruction, brief announcements, and the introduction of new members and visitors. Opening exercises should not be used to give lengthy announcements or reports. Maximum time should be reserved for gospel lessons in quorum meetings.

The bishop may invite the high priests group leader, elders quorum president, priests quorum assistants, teachers quorum president, and deacons quorum president to sit with the bishopric during opening exercises.

After opening exercises, priesthood holders separate into quorum and group meetings to conduct business, learn priesthood duties, and study the gospel. Bishopric members normally attend Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings, though occasionally they attend Young Women classes. Sometimes the bishopric may combine the high priests group and elders quorum, Aaronic Priesthood quorums, or all priesthood holders for instruction during this time.

Other meetings should not be scheduled during priesthood meeting.

For more information about priesthood quorum and group meetings, see 7.8 and 8.11.

#### 18.2.5 Ward Conference

The stake presidency schedules and directs a ward conference once a year in each ward. Members of the stake presidency, high council, and stake auxiliaries take part in ward conference sessions as the stake president directs. The purposes of ward conference are to strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, conduct business, and evaluate activity.

The main session of ward conference is held during sacrament meeting. Normally the agenda is similar to that of other sacrament meetings. The stake president presides, and the stake presidency usually plans the meeting. A member of the bishopric usually conducts. Before the sacrament, a member of the stake presidency or a high councilor uses the Officers Sustained form (prepared by a ward clerk) to present the names of general, stake, and ward officers to ward members for their sustaining vote. After the sacrament, speakers normally include the bishop and stake president.

The ward usually holds regular priesthood and auxiliary meetings as part of ward conference. Stake leaders may give instruction and assistance during these meetings.

In connection with ward conference, the stake presidency meets with the bishopric to review the progress of individuals and organizations in the ward. This meeting may be held on ward conference Sunday or at another time.

#### 18.2.6 Bishopric Meeting

The bishopric usually meets at least weekly. The ward clerk and ward executive secretary attend; the clerk keeps a record of assignments and decisions. The bishop may invite others to attend as needed.

During this meeting, members of the bishopric counsel together about ward matters. They plan ways to strengthen individuals and families. They evaluate quorums, auxiliaries, programs, and activities. They also make plans to implement instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and handbooks.

In this meeting, members of the bishopric identify members to call to serve in the ward. They also identify which members are coming of age to be eligible for ordinances, including priesthood ordinations, and which brethren to

recommend to the stake president to be ordained elders and high priests and to serve as missionaries.

Other agenda items for this meeting may include reporting on assignments, planning meetings, reviewing the ward calendar, and reviewing the ward budget.

**18.2.7 Ward Priesthood Executive Committee Meeting**

See 4.3.

**18.2.8 Ward Council Meeting**

See 4.6.

**18.2.9 Bishopric Youth Committee Meeting**

The bishop presides over the bishopric youth committee. This committee is composed of the bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants, the teachers and deacons quorum presidents, the Young Women class presidents, and the Young Men and Young Women presidents.

The bishopric may invite others to attend the committee's meetings as needed. These may include the other priests quorum assistant, counselors in quorum and class presidencies, quorum and class secretaries, counselors in the Young Men and Young Women presidencies, and Young Men and Young Women secretaries.

The committee usually meets monthly. The bishop may conduct this meeting, or he may assign one of his counselors, one of his priests quorum assistants, or the Laurel class president to conduct it. Before each meeting, the bishop reviews and approves the agenda with the person who will be conducting. The agenda may include the following items:

1. Identify needs and interests of individual youth in the ward. Plan ways to help meet those needs. Plan ways to help youth live and promote Church standards.
2. Plan ways to encourage individual youth to participate in Church meetings and activities, including seminary. Plan and report on fellowshiping efforts for youth who are less active, youth who recently have been baptized, and youth who are investigating the Church.
3. Schedule and plan youth activities that are consistent with the needs that have been identified. These activities include combined Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women activities and ward youth conferences. Adult leaders

should include youth as much as possible in planning and carrying out these activities.

4. Evaluate past activities to see if the intended purposes were fulfilled.

These committee meetings should provide leadership opportunities and instruction for youth.

**18.2.10 Ward Young Single Adult Committee Meeting**

See 16.3.4.

**18.2.11 Missionary Coordination Meeting**

See 5.1.5.

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**18.3 Stake Meetings**

The stake president oversees stake meetings. He presides at these meetings unless an Area Seventy or General Authority attends. His counselors may conduct stake meetings and may preside if he is absent. Stake meetings should not conflict with Sunday ward meetings.

**18.3.1 Stake Conference**

Each stake holds two stake conferences during the year as scheduled by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve. In most parts of the world, the stake president presides at one stake conference and an assigned Area Seventy or General Authority presides at the other.

In some stake conferences, a satellite broadcast may be incorporated into the Sunday general session. This broadcast will include instruction by General Authorities. When a satellite broadcast is used, that conference takes the place of the stake conference at which an Area Seventy or General Authority would have presided.

When a new stake president must be called before a regularly scheduled stake conference, a special stake conference may be held.

The primary purpose of stake conference is to strengthen faith and testimony. All talks and music should be planned with this purpose in mind.

Another purpose is to conduct stake business. In one stake conference each year, a member of the stake presidency presents general, area, and stake officers to be sustained, using the Officers Sustained form. He also presents the names of stake officers who have been released so the congregation can give an expression of thanks for their service. This business is normally conducted in the first stake conference each year

unless a satellite broadcast is incorporated into that conference. In that case, the business is conducted in the second stake conference.

If stake officers are called or released between stake conferences, they should be presented for a sustaining vote or an expression of thanks in the next stake conference unless this has been done in a stake general priesthood meeting (for callings indicated in the Chart of Callings on pages 159–60) or in ward sacrament meetings (as outlined in 19.3).

Brethren who have been recommended for ordination to the offices of elder and high priest are normally presented for a sustaining vote in a stake conference or a stake general priesthood meeting. Instructions are provided in *Handbook 1*, 16.7.1.

Each stake conference normally includes the following meetings:

1. A meeting of the Area Seventy or General Authority (if assigned), stake presidency, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary.
2. A priesthood leadership meeting attended by the Area Seventy or General Authority (if assigned) and the brethren listed in 18.3.3. This meeting may be held on either Saturday or Sunday as determined by the presiding authority.
3. A Saturday evening session for all members of the stake who are 18 years of age and older. Temple presidents, stake patriarchs, and full-time mission presidents or their representatives who attend should sit on the stand. Depending on local circumstances, this session may be held on Sunday if approved by the presiding authority.
4. A general session held on Sunday for all members and interested nonmembers. Temple presidents, stake patriarchs, and full-time mission presidents or their representatives who attend should sit on the stand. More than one Sunday general session may be held if facilities are not adequate to seat everyone in the same session. Primary children attend this session with their families, not in a separate meeting.

Instruction in all stake conference sessions is under the direction of the presiding authority. When an Area Seventy or General Authority will preside, he may invite the stake president to suggest subjects. When the stake president will preside, he and his counselors select subjects for instruction.

If necessary, conference sessions may be broadcast to other locations in the stake.

#### Planning and Conducting Stake Conference

The presiding officer directs all conference planning. He approves all conference participants and all musical selections well before the conference.

The stake president conducts the Sunday general session. His counselors may conduct other conference meetings.

The stake president speaks in the Sunday general session of the conference. His counselors speak in conference sessions as determined by the presiding authority.

Planning includes making arrangements for adequate seating, ushering, and parking. Stake leaders may assign priesthood quorums and groups, including prospective elders, to provide these services.

#### Music for Stake Conference

See 14.6.1.

### 18.3.2 Stake General Priesthood Meeting

The stake presidency convenes one stake general priesthood meeting each year. All Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood holders in the stake are to attend.

The stake presidency uses these meetings to instruct and inspire priesthood holders. The presidency prayerfully selects the subjects and the speakers for these meetings.

In these meetings the stake presidency also conducts stake priesthood business, such as:

1. Presenting the names of brethren who have been recommended for ordination to the offices of elder and high priest and asking for a sustaining vote (see *Handbook 1*, 16.7.1).
2. Presenting the names of newly called stake officers and asking for a sustaining vote (see the Chart of Callings in chapter 19 for guidelines about who is to be presented for this vote).

### 18.3.3 Stake Priesthood Leadership Meeting

The stake presidency convenes a stake priesthood leadership meeting in connection with each stake conference (see 18.3.1, item 2). The presidency also convenes one other stake priesthood leadership meeting during the year, for a total of three such meetings annually. The purposes

of these meetings are to teach priesthood leaders their duties, increase their abilities, and strengthen their faith.

Brethren who attend this meeting include the stake presidency; high council; stake clerk (and assistant clerks as needed); stake executive secretary; stake Young Men presidency (and secretary as needed); bishoprics; ward clerks (and assistant clerks as needed); ward executive secretaries; high priests group leaders, assistants, and secretaries; elders quorum presidencies and secretaries; ward mission leaders; and ward Young Men presidencies (and secretaries and assistant advisers as needed). The stake presidency may invite others to attend as needed.

The structure of this meeting is flexible to provide the most effective instruction possible. All brethren may remain together for the entire meeting. Or, after they have met together for stake business and general instruction, the stake presidency may have them separate into groups to counsel together and receive specific instruction in their assignments. For example:

Bishoprics and other Aaronic Priesthood leaders could meet together.

High priests group and elders quorum leaders could meet together.

The high councilor assigned to missionary work or a member of the stake presidency could meet with ward mission leaders.

The stake executive secretary usually meets with ward executive secretaries.

The stake clerk usually meets with ward clerks.

In these groups, the stake presidency may provide instruction or invite high councilors, the stake Young Men presidency, and others to assist.

#### 18.3.4 Stake High Priests Quorum Meeting

The stake presidency convenes a high priests quorum meeting for all high priests in the stake at least once a year. During this meeting the stake presidency conducts quorum business and instructs quorum members in their duties.

#### 18.3.5 Stake Presidency Meeting

The stake presidency meets regularly. The stake clerk and stake executive secretary attend; the clerk keeps a record of assignments and decisions. The stake president may invite others to attend as needed.

During this meeting, members of the stake presidency counsel together about stake matters. They plan ways to strengthen individuals and families. They evaluate wards, high priests groups, elders quorums, auxiliaries, programs, and activities. They also make plans to implement instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and handbooks.

During this meeting, members of the stake presidency identify members to call to Church positions. They also review bishops' recommendations of members to serve missions and of brethren to be ordained elders or high priests.

Other agenda items for this meeting may include reporting on assignments, planning meetings, reviewing the stake calendar, and reviewing the stake budget.

#### 18.3.6 Stake Priesthood Executive Committee Meeting (High Council Meeting)

The stake president presides over the stake priesthood executive committee. This committee is composed of the stake presidency, high council, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary. The stake presidency may invite others to attend as needed.

This committee meets twice monthly, where feasible. The agenda may include the following items:

1. Receive instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and priesthood duties.
2. Receive instruction pertaining to assignments with the Melchizedek Priesthood, Aaronic Priesthood, and wards.
3. Report on assignments to wards, elders quorums, and high priests groups. Report on stake auxiliaries as needed.
4. Ask high councilors to sustain the stake presidency's decisions to ordain brethren to the offices of elder and high priest and to issue callings.
5. Counsel together about how to strengthen individuals and families, solve problems in the stake, and improve in areas such as leadership, home teaching, member missionary work, retention, activation, temple and family history work, welfare, and gospel instruction.
6. Report on other assignments.
7. Hear reports from returning missionaries.
8. Plan stake priesthood leadership meetings.



### 18.3.7 Stake Council Meeting

The stake president presides over the stake council. This council is composed of the stake presidency, high council, stake clerk, stake executive secretary, and stake Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidents. The stake presidency may invite others to attend as needed.

The stake council meets two to four times a year as needed. The agenda may include the following items:

1. Receive instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and duties.
2. Counsel together about how to strengthen individuals and families, solve problems in the stake, and improve in areas such as leadership, retention, activation, and gospel instruction.
3. Plan and report on the missionary efforts and temple and family history efforts in the stake.
4. Counsel together about welfare matters. Plan how to encourage members to be self-reliant. Ensure that welfare resources within the stake are made available to the wards as needed. Develop and maintain a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies. Additional information is provided in “Preside over the Welfare Work of the Stake Council” in *Handbook 1*, 5.1.1.
5. Report on stake auxiliaries and on stake activities and programs as needed.
6. Coordinate the planning of stake programs and activities.
7. Review the progress of the Perpetual Education Fund program where it is approved.

### 18.3.8 Meeting with Bishoprics

The stake presidency meets with bishoprics to instruct them in their duties, review Church policies, and counsel together. These meetings are held one to four times a year as needed.

The stake presidency, all bishoprics, the stake clerk, and the stake executive secretary attend this meeting. If desired, the stake president may limit the meeting to bishops only.

### 18.3.9 Stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women Committee Meeting

The stake president assigns a counselor to preside over the stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee. Other committee members

are the high councilors assigned to the stake Young Men and Young Women organizations, the stake Young Men presidency and secretary, and the stake Young Women presidency and secretary. The stake presidency may invite youth to attend the committee’s meetings as needed. The high councilor who serves as the stake activities committee chairman and others may also be invited to attend.

This committee meets as needed to plan stake-sponsored combined activities for young men and young women. Youth should be included as much as possible in planning and carrying out activities such as youth conferences, dances, devotionals, and multistake events. Youth may also participate in discussions about challenges that the youth in the stake are facing.

Stake activities should supplement ward activities, not compete with them. They are coordinated in stake council meetings. Ward leaders should be notified well in advance of the events.

### 18.3.10 Stake Bishops’ Welfare Council Meeting

Information on the stake bishops’ welfare council is provided in *Handbook 1*, 5.3.

### 18.3.11 Stake Auxiliary Leadership Meetings

The stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies each plan and conduct one stake auxiliary leadership meeting each year. If local circumstances and travel time do not place undue burdens on leaders, the stake presidency may authorize a second meeting each year. Each organization schedules its own meeting unless the stake presidency decides to combine all meetings into the same time and place.

The high councilor assigned to the organization presides over the meeting unless a member of the stake presidency attends. All ward auxiliary presidencies and secretaries are invited to attend. Other ward auxiliary leaders, teachers, and advisers, as well as bishopric members assigned to the auxiliary, may be invited to attend as needed.

The purposes of these meetings are to teach auxiliary leaders their duties, instruct them in teaching and leadership skills, and strengthen their faith. These meetings can also be used to correlate activities, give reports, and share ideas.

The structure of these meetings is flexible to provide the most effective instruction possible.



Leaders from an auxiliary organization may all meet together for instruction and sharing, or they may meet in smaller groups to consider specialized functions within their organization. If all auxiliary organizations meet at the same time, they may come together for general instruction and then meet in separate groups to receive instruction from their organization leaders.

The stake Young Men presidency does not hold a stake auxiliary leadership meeting. Instead, stake and ward Young Men presidencies attend stake priesthood leadership meetings (see 18.3.3).

**18.3.12 Stake Young Single Adult Committee Meeting**

See 16.3.2.

**18.3.13 Stake Single Adult Committee Meeting**

See 16.1.2.

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**18.4 Visual Aids and Audiovisual Materials in Church Meetings**

Members should not use visual aids in sacrament meeting or stake conference. Such teaching methods are more appropriate in classroom settings and leadership meetings.

For guidelines about using audiovisual materials in Church meetings, see 21.1.5.

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**18.5 Prayers in Church Meetings**

Men and women may offer both opening and closing prayers in Church meetings.

Prayers should be brief, simple, and spoken as directed by the Spirit. All members are encouraged to respond with an audible *amen* at the end of a prayer.

Members should express respect for Heavenly Father by using the special language of prayer that is appropriate for the language they are speaking. The language of prayer has different forms in different languages. In some languages, the intimate or familiar words are used only in addressing family and very close friends. Other languages have forms of address that express great respect. The principle, however, is the same: members should pray in words that speakers of the language associate with love, respect, reverence, and closeness. In English, for example, members should use the pronouns *Thee*, *Thy*, *Thine*, and *Thou* when addressing Heavenly Father.

Members of the bishopric should avoid the pattern of having a husband and wife pray in the same meeting. Such a pattern might convey an unintentional message of exclusion to those who are single. Members who are not often called upon should be included among those who are invited to pray. As needed, a member of the bishopric may caution those who pray not to sermonize or pray at great length.

The person who offers a prayer should not be asked to read a scripture aloud before the prayer.

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**18.6 Funerals and Other Services at a Time of Death**

Church leaders and members seek to make the services associated with a person's death a dignified, solemn, and spiritual experience for all who participate. These services are generally held under the direction of the bishop.

Services for people who die vary greatly around the world according to religion, culture, tradition, and legal requirements. Even services for Church members vary in different areas of the world. This section sets forth general principles that leaders should follow in funerals or other services for deceased members, regardless of tradition or culture. It also provides guidelines for determining which local traditions associated with death and mourning are appropriate to participate in and which are not.

**18.6.1 Death and Mourning**

Death is an essential part of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation (see 2 Nephi 9:6). Each person must experience death in order to receive a perfected, resurrected body. Teaching and testifying about the plan of salvation, particularly the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection, is an essential purpose of the services associated with a Church member's death.

Death brings a need to comfort the living. As disciples of Jesus Christ, Church leaders and members "mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9).

In many cultures, mortician services, viewings of the body, and funerals are customary to help comfort the living and pay respectful tribute to the deceased. Where more appropriate culturally, most of these purposes could be accomplished in a family gathering, a graveside service, or another dignified and solemn setting.

Many religions and cultures have rituals, ordinances, and customs associated with death and mourning for the dead. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ has no such rituals or ordinances. Church leaders should not incorporate rituals of other religions or groups into Church services for deceased members.

Church members should show respect for the rituals and practices of other religions. However, members are counseled not to join in rituals, practices, or traditions that compromise their ability to keep the commandments or to live the principles of the restored gospel.

In connection with mourning and services for people who die, members are counseled to avoid practices or traditions that are so expensive or prolonged that they impose a hardship on the living or impair them from proceeding with their lives. Such practices include expecting excessive travel, wearing special clothing for mourning, making elaborate public announcements, paying money to the family, holding elaborate and prolonged feasts at the funeral, and holding excessive commemorative or anniversary celebrations after the funeral.

Most governments have legal requirements that regulate what occurs when a person dies. Church leaders and members should be aware of these requirements and follow them.

### 18.6.2 Planning and Assistance

When a member dies, the bishop visits the family to comfort them and offer assistance from the ward. He may ask his counselors to accompany him. The bishop offers help in notifying relatives, friends, and associates of the death. As appropriate, he also offers help in planning the funeral service, preparing a suitable obituary, and notifying newspapers of the death. If there will be a viewing of the body before the funeral service, the obituary should include the times it will begin and end.

The bishop may offer to help make mortuary and cemetery arrangements according to local laws and customs. As needed, he may offer help from the ward in providing local transportation for the family.

The bishop notifies the Melchizedek Priesthood leader who is responsible for the family so he and other brethren, including home teachers, can assist the bereaved family. Such assistance may include dressing the body of a deceased male for burial, safeguarding the home during

the funeral, and providing other support (see 7.10.2).

The bishop also notifies the Relief Society president so she and other sisters, including visiting teachers, can assist the family. Such assistance may include dressing the body of a deceased female for burial, helping with flowers, tending small children, safeguarding the home during the funeral, and preparing meals (see 9.10.3).

### 18.6.3 Viewings (Where Customary)

If a viewing of the body of the deceased is held just prior to the funeral, the bishop should conclude it at least 20 minutes before the funeral begins. After the viewing, a family prayer may be offered if the family desires. This prayer should conclude before the funeral is scheduled to begin so it does not impose on the time of the congregation assembled in the chapel. The casket should be closed before it is moved to the chapel for the funeral service.

Leaders should open the meetinghouse for funeral directors at least one hour before the scheduled times for the viewing and funeral.

### 18.6.4 Funeral Services

If a funeral for a member is held in a Church building, the bishop conducts it. If a funeral is held in a home, at a mortuary, or at the graveside, the family may ask the bishop to conduct it. A bishop's counselor may conduct if the bishop is unable to attend.

A funeral conducted by the bishop, whether in a Church building or another location, is a Church meeting and a religious service. It should be a spiritual occasion in addition to a family gathering. The bishop urges members to maintain a spirit of reverence, dignity, and solemnity during a funeral service and at gatherings connected with the service.

When a bishop conducts a funeral, he or one of his counselors oversees the planning of the service. He considers the wishes of the family, but he ensures that the funeral is simple and dignified, with music and brief addresses and sermons centered on the gospel, including the comfort afforded by the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection. Members of the family should not feel that they are required to speak or otherwise participate in the service.

A member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy, or a General Authority presides at funeral services he attends. The person who is

conducting consults him in advance and recognizes him during the service. The presiding officer should be extended the opportunity to offer closing remarks if he desires.

Video recordings and computer or other electronic presentations should not be used as part of a funeral service. Nor should the service be broadcast on the Internet or in any other way.

Funerals should start on time. As a matter of courtesy to those who attend, services should not be too long. Funerals that last more than one and one-half hours place an undue burden on those attending and participating.

Funerals provide an important opportunity to teach the gospel and testify of the plan of salvation. They also provide an opportunity to pay tribute to the deceased. However, such tributes should not dominate a funeral service. Having large numbers of people share tributes or memories can make a funeral too long and may be inappropriate for a Church service. If family members want an extended time to share such memories, they may consider doing so in a special family gathering, separate from the funeral service.

Funeral services are not normally held on Sunday.

#### 18.6.5 Music

Music for funerals might include prelude music, an opening hymn, special musical selections, a closing hymn, and postlude music. Simple hymns and other songs with gospel messages are most appropriate for these occasions. Opening and closing hymns are usually sung by the congregation.

#### 18.6.6 Burial or Cremation

Where possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried in temple clothing. Where cultural traditions or burial practices

make this inappropriate or difficult, the clothing may be folded and placed next to the body in the casket. Additional instructions on temple burial clothing and dressing the dead are provided in 7.10.2, 9.10.3, and *Handbook 1*, 3.4.9.

If possible, at least one member of the bishopric accompanies the cortege to the cemetery. If the grave will be dedicated, he consults with the family and asks a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to do so according to the instructions in 20.9. If the family prefers, a graveside prayer rather than a dedicatory prayer may be offered.

The Church does not normally encourage cremation. However, if the body of an endowed member is being cremated, it should be dressed in temple clothing if possible. For information about dedicating the place where the ashes are kept, see 20.9.

#### 18.6.7 Financial Policies

Church members who conduct or take part in funeral services should not accept fees or contributions, whether the service is for a member or a nonmember.

In some cases, bishops can arrange with morticians to provide respectable burial services at cost when expenses are paid from fast-offering funds.

#### 18.6.8 Funeral Services for Nonmembers

Bishops may offer the use of Church meetinghouses for the funeral services of nonmembers. Such services generally may be held in the manner prescribed by the deceased person's church. However, rituals of other churches or of outside organizations may not be performed in a Church meetinghouse. If the family desires, the service may be conducted by a clergyman of the person's church, provided it is dignified and appropriate.

## Chart of Ward Meetings

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Sacrament meeting	Partake of the sacrament, worship, provide gospel instruction, perform ordinances, conduct ward business, and strengthen faith and testimony.	All ward members	Each Sunday
Fast and testimony meeting	Partake of the sacrament, worship, perform ordinances, conduct ward business, and bear testimonies.	All ward members	Usually the first Sunday of each month
Priesthood meeting	Conduct quorum business, learn priesthood duties, strengthen individuals and families, and teach the gospel.	All priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age	Each Sunday
Sunday Relief Society meeting	Teach the gospel, increase in faith and righteousness, and strengthen individuals and families.	Women in the ward ages 18 and older (and younger women who are married)	Each Sunday
Additional Relief Society meetings and activities	Learn and apply principles and skills that will help Relief Society sisters increase in faith and righteousness, strengthen individuals and families, and seek out and help those in need.	Women in the ward ages 18 and older (and younger women who are married)	Usually monthly at a time other than on Sunday or on Monday evening; can also be scheduled quarterly
Young Women	Teach the gospel with an emphasis on applying gospel principles in daily life.	Young women ages 12 to 18 and Young Women leaders	Each Sunday
Primary	Teach the gospel and help children feel Heavenly Father's love for them.	Children ages 18 months through 11 years and Primary leaders and teachers	Each Sunday
Sunday School	Strengthen faith and help Church members teach one another.	Ward members ages 12 and older and Sunday School leaders and teachers	Each Sunday
Ward conference	Strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, conduct business, and evaluate activity.	Stake presidency, stake auxiliary leaders, assigned high councilors, bishopric, and ward members	Once each year
Bishopric meeting	Plan, review, and consider matters affecting the ward.	Bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, and others as invited	Usually at least weekly

**Chart of Ward Meetings (continued)**

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Ward priesthood executive committee meeting	Consider priesthood matters. As needed, preview matters that will be on the ward council's agenda, discuss confidential welfare matters, and coordinate home teaching and visiting teaching assignments.	Bishopric, ward clerk, ward executive secretary, high priests group leader, elders quorum president, ward mission leader, and Young Men president; the Relief Society president may be invited to attend as needed to discuss confidential welfare matters and to coordinate home teaching and visiting teaching assignments	Regularly
Ward council meeting	Plan ways to strengthen individuals and families. Coordinate efforts in spiritual and temporal welfare, missionary work, retention, activation, temple and family history work, and gospel teaching and learning. Review and coordinate programs and activities.	Bishopric; ward clerk; ward executive secretary; high priests group leader; elders quorum president; ward mission leader; Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidents; and others as invited	Regularly (at least monthly)
Bishopric youth committee meeting	Identify needs of youth in the ward. Plan ways to meet needs, help youth live Church standards, and encourage participation in Church meetings and activities. Plan youth activities.	Bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants, teachers and deacons quorum presidents, Young Women class presidents, Young Men and Young Women presidents, and others (such as counselors in quorum and class presidencies) as invited	Usually monthly
Ward young single adult committee meeting	Recommend ways to help young single adults participate in service and leadership. Locate and befriend less-active young single adults.	A counselor in the bishopric, the Relief Society and elders quorum counselors assigned to young single adults, young single adult leaders, and the couple called as young single adult advisers	As needed
Missionary coordination meeting	Coordinate missionary, retention, and activation efforts of full-time missionaries and ward members.	Ward mission leader, ward missionaries, and full-time missionaries (where available)	Regularly



## Chart of Stake Meetings

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Stake conference	Strengthen faith and testimony, provide gospel instruction, and conduct stake business.	General Authority or Area Seventy (if assigned), stake presidency, and all members in the stake	Twice each year
Stake general priesthood meeting	Instruct and inspire priesthood holders and conduct stake priesthood business.	All priesthood holders, prospective elders, and unordained young men of Aaronic Priesthood age in the stake	Once each year
Stake priesthood leadership meeting	Teach priesthood leaders their duties, increase their abilities, and build their faith.	Stake presidency; high council; stake clerk (and assistant clerks as needed); stake executive secretary; stake Young Men presidency (and secretary as needed); bishoprics; ward clerks (and assistant clerks as needed); ward executive secretaries; high priests group leaders, assistants, and secretaries; elders quorum presidencies and secretaries; ward mission leaders; ward Young Men presidencies (and secretaries and assistant advisers as needed); and others as invited	Three times a year (twice in connection with stake conference)
Stake high priests quorum meeting	Conduct quorum business and instruct quorum members in their duties.	All high priests in the stake (not held in districts)	At least once each year
Stake presidency meeting	Review, plan, and consider matters affecting the stake.	Stake presidency, stake clerk, stake executive secretary, and others as invited	Regularly
Stake priesthood executive committee meeting (high council meeting)	Receive instruction, give reports, conduct business, and counsel together.	Stake presidency, high council, stake clerk, stake executive secretary, and others as invited	Twice monthly, where feasible
Stake council meeting	Receive instruction, counsel together, give reports, and coordinate planning of stake programs and activities.	Stake presidency; high council; stake clerk; stake executive secretary; stake Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidents; and others as invited	Two to four times a year as needed
Meeting with bishoprics	Instruct bishoprics, review policies, and counsel together.	Stake presidency, bishoprics, stake clerk, and stake executive secretary	One to four times a year as needed

**Chart of Stake Meetings (continued)**

Meeting	Purpose	Participants	Frequency
Stake Aaronic Priesthood–Young Women committee meeting	Plan stake-sponsored combined activities for young men and young women.	A counselor in the stake presidency, high councilors assigned to the Young Men and Young Women, stake Young Men presidency and secretary, stake Young Women presidency and secretary, and youth and others as invited	As needed
Stake bishops' welfare council meeting	Receive instruction in welfare matters. Exchange ideas and experiences. Review trends in fast-offering contributions, welfare needs, and welfare assistance. Identify work opportunities for those who receive assistance. Identify welfare resources in the community. Evaluate Church welfare operations. Coordinate welfare assignments.	All bishops and branch presidents in the stake (the stake president appoints one bishop to be chairman); stake president (occasionally); welfare specialists as needed	At least quarterly
Stake auxiliary leadership meeting (for Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School)	Teach ward auxiliary leaders their duties, instruct them in teaching and leadership skills, strengthen their faith, and share ideas.	Stake presidency member (if desired); high councilor assigned to the auxiliary organization; stake auxiliary presidency and secretary; ward auxiliary presidencies and secretaries; other ward auxiliary leaders, teachers, and advisers (as needed); bishopric members assigned to the auxiliary (as needed)	Once each year for each organization, or twice with the stake president's approval (see 18.3.11)
Stake young single adult committee meeting	Address the needs of young single adults in the stake. Provide opportunities for young single adults to come together for service, gospel learning, and sociality beyond their wards. Ensure that ward young single adult committees are functioning well in wards where they are established.	A counselor in the stake presidency, the high councilor assigned to young single adults, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, stake young single adult advisers, and ward young single adult leaders (if they are called) or other young single adults in the stake	As needed
Stake single adult committee meeting	Address the needs of single adults in the stake. As needed, provide opportunities for single adults to come together for service, gospel learning, and sociality beyond their wards.	A counselor in the stake presidency, a high councilor, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency, and several single adults	As needed

## Sunday Meeting Schedule

### Plan 1

70 min.	Sacrament meeting				Primary (including nursery) See 11.4.1 for details.
10 min.	Break				
40 min.	Sunday School				
10 min.	Break				
50 min.	General ward priesthood meeting opening exercises		Opening exercises	Opening exercises	
	Melchizedek Priesthood	Aaronic Priesthood	Relief Society	Young Women	

3 hours

The exact timing of breaks between meetings is flexible according to local needs.

### Plan 2

50 min.	General ward priesthood meeting opening exercises		Opening exercises	Opening exercises	Primary (including nursery) See 11.4.1 for details.
	Melchizedek Priesthood	Aaronic Priesthood	Relief Society	Young Women	
10 min.	Break				
40 min.	Sunday School				
10 min.	Break				
70 min.	Sacrament meeting				

3 hours

The exact timing of breaks between meetings is flexible according to local needs.

### Overlapping Meeting Schedule for Units with Different Languages

When two units whose members speak different languages meet in the same building, it may be desirable for the children and youth to attend classes together. For example, if an English-speaking ward and a Spanish-speaking branch meet in the same building, the Primary children of the Spanish branch could join with the Primary of the English ward. The youth of the Spanish branch could join with the Sunday School, Aaronic Priesthood, and Young Women classes of the English ward.

Youth from the Spanish branch could also join with the English ward for Mutual. Children could join with the English ward for Cub Scouting and activity days.

Using this plan requires the approval of the stake president. After receiving his approval, the

bishopric and the branch presidency meet with priesthood and auxiliary leaders in their own units to seek their counsel and cooperation in implementing the plan.

The bishopric and the branch presidency also meet together to determine which members from each unit should be called to serve in the organizations. Leaders also discuss the calling of Aaronic Priesthood quorum and Young Women class leaders. After the plan has been implemented, priesthood leaders continue to meet regularly to coordinate their efforts and resolve any concerns.

One representative from the bishopric and one from the branch presidency attend bishopric youth committee meetings.

To implement this plan, meeting schedules for the two units need to overlap as shown in the chart below. The chart shows the ward beginning first, but the branch could begin first instead.

Ward		Branch	
Sacrament meeting		Branch starts 80 minutes after the ward	
Sunday School	Primary	Sunday School (youth join with ward classes)	Primary (join with ward Primary)
Priesthood		Priesthood (young men join with ward quorums)	
Relief Society		Relief Society	
Young Women		Young Women (join with ward young women)	
Ward ends 80 minutes before the branch		Sacrament meeting	

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## 19. Callings in the Church

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## 19. Callings in the Church

This chapter provides information about calling and releasing members to serve in the Church. The Chart of Callings on pages 159–66 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.

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### 19.1 Determining Whom to Call

#### 19.1.1 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 (see 17.2.1). 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 assignments as a home teacher or visiting teacher.

Leaders keep information about proposed callings and releases confidential. Only those who need to know, such as an auxiliary president who oversees 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 a comment about unresolved Church discipline.

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, music director, and assistant Scout leader. 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 excommunicated members, who may not have any callings.

#### 19.1.2 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 auxiliary 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.

#### 19.1.3 Stake Callings

The stake president oversees the calling of members who serve in most stake positions, as shown in the Chart of Callings.

#### 19.1.4 Ward Callings

The stake presidency recommends brethren to be called or released as bishops (see 19.6). 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.

#### 19.1.5 Elders Quorum and High Priests Group Callings

The stake president oversees the calling of elders quorum presidents and their counselors and of high priests group leaders and their assistants, as shown in the Chart of Callings.

The elders quorum president and the high priests group leader oversee the calling of quorum or group secretaries and instructors. The bishop's approval is required before brethren may be called to these positions.

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### 19.2 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.

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.

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### 19.3 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 19.5 for suggested language).

When presenting a person for a sustaining vote, an authorized priesthood officer asks him or her to stand. The officer may say:

"[Name] has been called as [position], and we propose that he [or she] be sustained. Those in favor may manifest it by the uplifted hand. [Pause briefly for the sustaining vote.] Those opposed, if any, may manifest it. [Pause briefly to allow for a dissenting vote, if any.]"

The person who is being presented should participate in the sustaining vote. If more than one person is being presented, they may usually be sustained as a group.

If a member in good standing gives a dissenting vote when someone is presented to be sustained, the presiding officer or another assigned priesthood officer confers with the dissenting member in private after the meeting. The officer determines whether the dissenting vote was based on knowledge that the person who was presented is guilty of conduct that should disqualify him or her from serving in the position. Dissenting votes from nonmembers need not be considered.

When, as an exception, new stake officers need to begin their service before the next stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting in which they would normally be sustained, they should be sustained in the sacrament meetings of the wards and branches of the stake. These sustainings should be kept to a minimum. Members of the stake presidency or high council present the sustainings.

#### 19.4 Setting Apart Officers and Teachers

Members who are called to most Church positions should be set apart before they begin serving. The Chart of Callings indicates who is authorized to perform a setting apart. Presidents are set apart before their counselors.

Under the direction of the presiding authority, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders may participate in a setting apart, including a worthy father or husband (see 20.1.2). These brethren place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the priesthood holder who acts 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 appropriate office in the stake, ward, quorum, high priests group, or class.
4. Confers keys if the person is entitled to receive them. (In stakes and wards, only stake presidents, bishops, and quorum presidents receive keys of presidency when they are set apart. The word *keys* should not be used when setting apart counselors, high councilors, high priests group leaders, presidents of auxiliary organizations, the bishop's priests quorum assistants, or teachers in an organization.)
5. Gives words of blessing as the Spirit directs.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

A setting apart is an opportunity to give a blessing. Detailed counsel and instruction are normally provided when a person is taught his or her duties rather than during the setting apart.

A setting apart should not be expanded into a formal meeting. It is not necessary to have prayers, testimonies, or instruction when someone is set apart.

#### 19.5 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, bishop, or high priests group leader is released, the counselors or assistants are released automatically. Others who hold positions in the organization, such as clerks, secretaries, and teachers, are not released automatically.

#### 19.6 Calling, Ordaining, and Setting Apart Bishops

The stake presidency recommends brethren to be called or released as bishops. Instructions are on the Recommendation for New Bishop form. This form is available electronically in units that use Church record-keeping software. In other units it is available from the assigned administrative office.

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.

## Chart of Callings

### 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 written approval from the First Presidency
Stake clerk	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Stake president
Assistant stake clerks	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Stake executive secretary	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Stake president or an assigned counselor
High councilors	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting	Stake president or an assigned counselor

<sup>1</sup> When, as an exception, new stake officers need to begin their service before the next stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting in which they would normally be sustained, they should be sustained in the sacrament meetings of the wards and branches of the stake (see 19.3).

**Stake Callings (continued)**

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By <sup>1</sup>	Called and Set Apart By
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 written approval from the Quorum 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 or set apart to begin service in a new stake
Stake auxiliary presidents (Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School)	Stake presidency (in consultation with the assigned high counselor)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Counselors in stake auxiliary presidencies, secretaries, and other auxiliary leaders	President of the stake auxiliary (in consultation with the assigned high counselor)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high counselor
Stake physical facilities representative (high counselor)	Assigned by the stake presidency; not called, sustained, or set apart.			
Stake activities committee chairman (high counselor)	Assigned by the stake presidency; not called, sustained, or set apart.			
Family history center director and assistant director	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high counselor
Stake indexing director and assistant director	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high counselor
Stake music chairman	Stake music adviser (high counselor)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high counselor
Stake auditors	Chairman of the stake audit committee (counselor in the stake presidency)	Stake presidency and high council	Not sustained	Stake president or an assigned counselor <sup>2</sup>
Stake welfare specialists (including stake employment specialist)	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Not sustained	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high counselor <sup>2</sup>
Stake seminary and institute teachers	Bishop (may consult with seminary and institute personnel)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high counselor

<sup>1</sup> When, as an exception, new stake officers need to begin their service before the next stake conference or stake general priesthood meeting in which they would normally be sustained, they should be sustained in the sacrament meetings of the wards and branches of the stake (see 19.3).

<sup>2</sup> The stake president determines whether members who are called to serve in these positions should be set apart.



## Melchizedek Priesthood Callings

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Presidency of the stake high priests quorum (stake presidency)	See "Stake Callings," page 159.			
Ward high priests group leader	Stake presidency (in consultation with the bishop)	Stake presidency and high council	Group members	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Assistants to the ward high priests group leader	Group leader (in consultation with the bishop)	Stake presidency and high council	Group members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Elders quorum president	Stake presidency (in consultation with the bishop)	Stake presidency and high council	Quorum members	Stake president
Counselors in the elders quorum presidency	Quorum president (in consultation with the bishop)	Stake presidency and high council	Quorum members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
High priests group and elders quorum secretaries and instructors	Group leader or quorum president (in consultation with the bishop and the assistants to the high priests group leader or the counselors to the elders quorum president)	Bishop	Group or quorum members	Group leader or an assigned assistant; quorum president or an assigned counselor
Home teachers	Home teaching is a priesthood responsibility of elders and high priests. Accordingly, these brethren are <i>assigned</i> as home teachers by quorum and group leaders, under the direction of the bishop. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.			

## Aaronic Priesthood Callings in Wards

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Priests quorum president (bishop)	See "Ward Callings," page 162.			
Assistants to the priests quorum president	Bishop (priests quorum president)	Bishopric	Quorum members	Bishop
Teachers and deacons quorum presidents	Bishopric	Bishopric	Quorum members	Called by the bishop or an assigned counselor; set apart by the bishop
Counselors in the teachers and deacons quorum presidencies and quorum secretaries	Quorum presidents	Bishopric	Quorum members	Bishop or an assigned counselor

**Aaronic Priesthood Callings in Wards (continued)**

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Priests quorum adviser (ward Young Men president)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop
Teachers and deacons quorum advisers (counselors in the ward Young Men presidency), assistant advisers, and ward Young Men secretary	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Home teachers	Home teaching is a priesthood responsibility of teachers and priests. Accordingly, these brethren are <i>assigned</i> as home teachers by the bishopric. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.			

**Aaronic Priesthood Callings in Branches in Stakes**

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Priests quorum president (branch president, who acts as the priests quorum president)	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Branch members	Stake president
Other Aaronic Priesthood callings	See "Aaronic Priesthood Callings in Wards," pages 161–62, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			

**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 Presidency
Counselors in the bishopric	Bishop	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Ward clerk	Bishopric	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Assistant ward clerks	Bishopric	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Ward executive secretary	Bishopric	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor

**Ward Callings (continued)**

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Ward mission leader	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop
Ward missionaries	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward auxiliary presidents (Young Men, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop
Counselors in the ward Young Men presidency (teachers and deacons quorum advisers), assistant advisers, and ward Young Men secretary	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Counselors and secretaries in ward auxiliaries (except Young Men)	Auxiliary president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Advisers, teachers, or instructors; music directors; and other callings in ward auxiliaries (except Young Men)	Auxiliary presidency	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Relief Society visiting teachers	Relief Society sisters are <i>assigned</i> as visiting teachers by the Relief Society presidency, under the direction of the bishop. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.			
Temple preparation seminar teacher(s)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Young Women class presidents	Bishopric (in consultation with the Young Women presidency)	Bishopric	Class members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Counselors in Young Women class presidencies and class secretaries	Class president	Bishopric	Class members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward music chairman	Ward music adviser (member of the bishopric)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward music director, ward organist or pianist, ward choir director and accompanist, and ward choir president	Ward music chairman	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Priesthood music director and pianist or organist	Ward music adviser (member of the bishopric)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor

**Ward Callings (continued)**

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Ward librarian	Sunday School president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Assistant ward librarians	Sunday School president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Family history consultant	Bishopric (in consultation with the high priests group leader)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward young single adult leader(s)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward magazine representative	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor <sup>1</sup>
Ward welfare specialists (including ward employment specialist)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The bishop determines whether members who are called to serve in these positions should be set apart.

**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 "Ward Callings," pages 162–64, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			

**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 Quorum of the Twelve
Counselors in the mission presidency	Mission president	Area Presidency or a member of the Presidency of the Seventy	Ratified in district conference in all districts	Member of the Area Presidency or Presidency of the Seventy, 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
Mission auxiliary presidencies are not recommended. If the mission president feels that branch auxiliary leaders need training from more experienced auxiliary leaders, he may assign individuals to provide it.				

## District Callings

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
District president	Mission president	Area Presidency or a member of the Presidency of the Seventy	Members in district conference	Mission president
Counselors in the district presidency	District president	Mission presidency	Members in district conference or district general priesthood meeting	Mission president or an assigned counselor
District councilors and district clerk, assistant clerks, executive secretary, and auxiliary leaders	See "Stake Callings," pages 159–60, substituting <i>district president</i> for <i>stake president</i> and <i>district</i> for <i>stake</i> .			

## Elders Quorum Callings in Branches in Missions

Office	Recommended By	Approved By	Sustained By	Called and Set Apart By
Elders quorum president	Mission presidency or district presidency	Mission presidency or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency	Quorum members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president
Counselors in the elders quorum presidency	Quorum president (in consultation with the branch president)	Mission presidency or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency	Quorum members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president or another priesthood officer
Elders quorum secretary and instructor(s)	Quorum president (in consultation with the branch president and counselors to the quorum president)	Branch president	Quorum members	Quorum president or an assigned counselor
Home teachers	Home teaching is a priesthood responsibility of elders. Accordingly, these brethren are <i>assigned</i> as home teachers by the elders quorum presidency, under the direction of the branch president. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.			

## 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 quorum president)	Mission presidency or district presidency	Mission presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, the district president
Other Aaronic Priesthood callings	See "Aaronic Priesthood Callings in Wards," pages 161–62, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			



## 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 authorized by the mission president, the district presidency	Branch members	Mission president or, if assigned, one of his counselors, the district president, or one of the district president's counselors
Branch clerk, assistant clerk, and executive secretary	Branch presidency	Mission presidency or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency	Branch members	District president or a priesthood officer he assigns
Branch auxiliary leaders and other callings	See "Ward Callings," pages 162–64, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			

## 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 service member group leader	Group leader	Stake presidency and high council or mission presidency	Group members	Stake president or mission president or a priesthood leader either of them assigns <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a war zone or remotely isolated area, it may not be possible for a stake president or mission president to call and set apart service member group leaders and assistants. Instructions that apply in these circumstances are provided in *Handbook 1*, 10.5.

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## 20. Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings

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

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### 20.1 General Instructions

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

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

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

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

A priesthood leader who oversees an ordinance or blessing ensures that the person who performs it has the necessary priesthood authority, is worthy, and knows and follows the

proper procedures. Leaders also seek to make the ordinance or blessing a reverent and spiritual experience.

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

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

### 20.1.1 Participation in Ordinances and Blessings

Only brethren who hold the necessary priesthood and are worthy may perform an ordinance or blessing or stand in the circle. Those who participate are usually limited to a few, including priesthood leaders, close family members, and close associates such as home teachers. Inviting large numbers of family, friends, and leaders to assist in an ordinance or blessing is discouraged. When too many participate, it can become cumbersome and detract from the spirit of the ordinance. Those who perform an ordinance and those who preside are the only ones required. Others provide support and sustain the spokesman.

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

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

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

### 20.1.2 Worthiness to Participate in an Ordinance or Blessing

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

or setting apart a person to serve in a Church calling.

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

A bishop may allow a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to name and bless his children even if the father is not fully temple worthy. Likewise, a bishop may allow a father who is a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder to baptize his children or to ordain his sons to offices in the Aaronic Priesthood. A Melchizedek Priesthood holder in similar circumstances may be allowed to stand in the circle for the confirmation of his children, for the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood on his sons, or for the setting apart of his wife or children. However, he may not act as voice.

### 20.1.3 Performing an Ordinance or Blessing in Another Ward

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

### 20.1.4 Performing Ordinances by and for Persons Who Have Disabilities

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

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

### 20.1.5 Translating Ordinances and Blessings

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

### 20.1.6 Instructions on Performing Ordinances and Blessings

The following publications provide instructions on performing ordinances and blessings:

1. This chapter of the handbook

2. *Family Guidebook*, pages 18–25

3. *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part B*, pages 42–47

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

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

## 20.2 Naming and Blessing Children

### 20.2.1 General Guidelines

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

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

### 20.2.2 Instructions for Naming and Blessing a Child

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

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

### 20.2.3 Blessing Record and Certificate

Before a child is blessed, the ward clerk prepares a Child Blessing Record. After the blessing, the clerk ensures that this form is complete,

and he processes or distributes it according to instructions with the form. The clerk also prepares a blessing certificate. The bishop signs the certificate, and he or the clerk gives it to the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).

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

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## 20.3 Baptism and Confirmation

### 20.3.1 Children Who Are Members of Record

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

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

### 20.3.2 Converts

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

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

### 20.3.3 Baptism and Confirmation Interviews

The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts interviews for the baptism and confirmation of 8-year-old children who are members of record and 8-year-old children who are not members of record but have at least one parent or guardian who is a member.

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

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

### 20.3.4 Baptismal Services

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

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

Baptismal services should not be scheduled on Monday evenings.

#### Services That Involve Only One Ward

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

A member of the bishopric oversees the planning of these baptismal services. He may conduct the services or assign the ward mission leader to conduct. Primary leaders may help plan the services under the direction of the bishopric.

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

Under the direction of the bishopric, the ward mission leader usually works with the full-time missionaries to plan these baptismal services. A member of the bishopric or the ward mission leader usually conducts the services. If none of these ward leaders are available, full-time missionary district or zone leaders may plan and conduct the services with the approval of the mission president.

#### Services That Involve More Than One Ward

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



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

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

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

#### Scheduling Baptismal Services for Converts

Baptismal services should be scheduled as soon as an investigator has committed to be baptized. The services should not normally be delayed past this date unless a person is not prepared. Baptisms of family members should not be delayed so the father can receive the priesthood and perform the baptisms himself.

Baptismal services for converts should be scheduled through the ward mission leader. If a service is scheduled on a Sunday, it should be held at a time that minimizes interference with regular Sunday meetings.

#### Elements of a Baptismal Service

A baptismal service may include:

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

be confirmed in a fast and testimony meeting; see 20.3.9 and 20.3.10).

9. An opportunity for new converts to bear their testimonies, if desired.
10. A closing hymn and prayer.
11. Postlude music.

#### 20.3.5 Baptismal Fonts

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

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

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

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

#### 20.3.6 Clothing for Baptism

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

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

#### 20.3.7 Witnesses of a Baptism

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

### 20.3.8 Instructions for Performing a Baptism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Converts are confirmed in any sacrament meeting in the ward where they live, preferably

on the Sunday following their baptism. Converts are not confirmed at the baptismal service.

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

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

### 20.3.10 Instructions for Performing a Confirmation

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

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

### 20.3.11 Baptism and Confirmation Record and Certificate

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

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

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

After the confirmation, the ward clerk prepares a baptism and confirmation certificate. The

bishop signs the certificate, and he or the clerk gives it to the new member.

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

## 20.4 Sacrament

### 20.4.1 General Guidelines

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

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

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

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

Those who bless and pass the sacrament should dress modestly and be well groomed and clean. Clothing or jewelry should not call attention to itself or distract members during the sacrament. Ties and white shirts are recommended because they add to the dignity of the ordinance. However, they should not be required as a mandatory prerequisite for a priesthood holder to participate. Nor should it be required that all be

alike in dress and appearance. Bishops should use discretion when giving such guidance to young men, taking into account their financial circumstances and maturity in the Church.

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

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

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

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

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

### 20.4.2 Preparing the Sacrament

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

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

### 20.4.3 Blessing and Passing the Sacrament

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

As the congregation sings the sacrament hymn, the priesthood holders who will bless the

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

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

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

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

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

When brethren finish passing the bread, they return the trays to the sacrament table. Those officiating at the sacrament table place the cloth over the bread trays and uncover the water trays. The person who blesses the water then kneels and offers the sacrament prayer for the water (see D&C 20:79), substituting the word *water* for *wine*.

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

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

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

#### 20.4.4 **Sacrament for Members Who Are Unable to Attend**

See “Sacrament Services in Unusual Situations” in 18.2.2.

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#### 20.5 **Consecrating Oil**

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

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

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

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#### 20.6 **Administering to the Sick**

##### 20.6.1 **General Guidelines**

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

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

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

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



of hands and the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

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

### 20.6.2 Anointing with Oil

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

1. Puts a drop of consecrated oil on the person's head.
2. Places his hands lightly on the person's head and calls the person by his or her full name.
3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. States that he is anointing with oil that has been consecrated for anointing and blessing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

### 20.6.3 Sealing the Anointing

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

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

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## 20.7 Conferring the Priesthood and Ordaining to an Office

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

The bishop oversees the conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordinations to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. Worthy brethren should be ordained at the following minimum ages:

Deacon: age 12

Teacher: age 14

Priest: age 16

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

### 20.7.1 Instructions for Performing an Ordination

When the necessary interviews and approvals are completed:

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

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

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

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



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

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

**20.7.2 Ordination Record and Certificate**

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

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

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

**20.8 Father's Blessings and Other Blessings of Comfort and Counsel**

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

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

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

To give a father's blessing or another blessing of comfort and counsel, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands

lightly on the person's head. Then the priesthood holder who gives the blessing:

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

---

**20.9 Dedicating Graves**

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

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

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

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

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**20.10 Setting Apart Officers and Teachers**

See 19.4.

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**20.11 Dedicating Homes**

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

A Melchizedek Priesthood holder may dedicate a home by the power of the priesthood. If there is not a Melchizedek Priesthood holder in the home, a family might invite a close relative, a home teacher, or another Melchizedek Priesthood holder to dedicate the home. Or a family might gather and offer a prayer that includes the elements mentioned in the preceding paragraph and other words as the Spirit directs.

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## 20.12 Patriarchal Blessings

### 20.12.1 General Guidelines

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

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews members who want to receive patriarchal blessings. If a member is worthy, the interviewer issues and signs a Patriarchal Blessing Recommendation.

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

*Handbook 1*, 16.12

*Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*

*Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting:  
The Patriarch*

### 20.12.2 Receiving a Patriarchal Blessing

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

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

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

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

### 20.12.3 Obtaining Copies of Patriarchal Blessings

A person who has received a patriarchal blessing should carefully safeguard the copy he or she receives. However, if this copy is lost or destroyed, another one may be obtained from the patriarch if he still has the original in his binder of blessings. If the original has been sent to Church headquarters, a copy may be obtained from:

Patriarchal Blessings  
15 East North Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600  
Telephone: 1-801-240-3581

A person who requests a copy of his or her patriarchal blessing should supply his or her full name, membership record number (if available), and birth date. If possible, the person should include the name of the patriarch and the approximate date of the blessing.



# 21. Selected Church Policies and Guidelines

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## 21. Selected Church Policies and Guidelines

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

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

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

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### 21.1 Administrative Policies

#### 21.1.1 Accident Prevention and Response

See 13.6.20.

#### 21.1.2 Activities Policies

See 13.6.

#### 21.1.3 Adopted Children and Their Biological Parents

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

#### 21.1.4 Adoption and Foster Care

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

#### 21.1.5 Audiovisual Materials

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

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

3. They may not be used if they contain material that is not suitable for Church settings.

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

#### 21.1.6 Autographs and Photographs of General Authorities and Area Seventies

Church members should not seek the autographs of General Authorities or Area Seventies, including signing in their scriptures, hymnals, or programs. Doing so detracts from their sacred callings and the spirit of meetings. It also could prevent them from greeting other members.

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

#### 21.1.7 Bible

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

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

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

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

Printed copies of approved editions of the Bible are available from Church Distribution Services. Electronic text and audio recordings of Latter-day Saint editions are also available at [scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org).



### 21.1.8 Book of Mormon

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

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

### 21.1.9 Church Magazines

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

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

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

### 21.1.10 Church Name and Logotype

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

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

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

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

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

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

Intellectual Property Office  
50 East North Temple Street, Room 1888  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0018  
Telephone: 1-801-240-3959 or  
1-800-453-3860, extension 2-3959  
Fax: 1-801-240-1187  
E-mail:  
cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org

### 21.1.11 Computers

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

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

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

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

For restrictions on duplicating computer software, see 21.1.12.

#### 21.1.12 Copyrighted Materials

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

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

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

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

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

The Church's Intellectual Property Office (IPO) assists in processing requests to use copyrighted

Church materials or programs, including materials that are copyrighted by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. (IRI). IRI is a separate, nonprofit corporation that owns the intellectual property used by the Church. Additional information on requesting the use of Church-owned materials can be found by following the "Rights and Use Information" link on LDS.org.

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

Intellectual Property Office  
 50 East North Temple Street, Room 1888  
 Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0018  
 Telephone: 1-801-240-3959 or  
 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-3959  
 Fax: 1-801-240-1187  
 E-mail:  
 cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org

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

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

*Can I copy music?* Special copyright laws apply to music. A person may copy music from *Hymns*, the *Children's Songbook*, and Church magazines for noncommercial Church, home, and family use except where a restriction is expressly noted on the hymn or song. Duplicating printed or recorded music without authorization from the copyright owner is contrary to Church policy. Music that has been duplicated contrary to this policy must not be used for Church purposes.

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

*Can I copy materials that are not owned by the Church?* Generally not. Copyright laws govern

the use of privately owned materials. Usually there are restrictions that give the conditions the public must follow before copying non-Church materials. These restrictions are usually listed near the beginning of a publication. Members should strictly observe all copyright laws.

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

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

*Can I download or distribute materials that I find on Church Web sites?* The Church has created several Web sites, such as LDS.org, Mormon.org, and FamilySearch.org. Unless otherwise indicated, all material on Church-owned Web sites, including visuals, text, icons, displays, databases, and general information, may be viewed, downloaded, and printed for noncommercial Church, home, and family use only. Material from these sites may not be posted, transcribed, or distributed to other Web sites or computer networks without permission from the IPO.

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

For additional information, see the rights and use information associated with the Web sites.

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

### 21.1.13 Curriculum Materials

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

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders encourage members to obtain copies of the scriptures and other curriculum materials to use in their homes and at church.

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

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

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

### 21.1.15 Directories

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

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

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

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

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

### 21.1.16 Emigration of Members

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 21.1.17 **Fast Day**

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

#### 21.1.18 **Fund-Raising**

See 13.6.8.

#### 21.1.19 **Gambling and Lotteries**

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

#### 21.1.20 **Guest Speakers or Instructors**

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

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

The bishop or stake president carefully screens guest speakers or instructors and the subjects

of their presentations. This may include contacting the person's bishop. The bishop or stake president ensures that:

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

#### 21.1.21 **Income Taxes**

Church members are obligated by the twelfth article of faith to obey the tax laws of the nation where they reside (see also D&C 134:5). Members who disapprove of tax laws may try to have them changed by legislation or constitutional amendment. Members who have well-founded legal objections may challenge tax laws in the courts.

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

#### 21.1.22 **Internet**

When carefully used, the Internet can help coordinate the work of the Church, strengthen faith, and minister to the needs of others. However, where feasible, members should ensure that electronic communication does not replace opportunities for in-person contact.

##### **Official Church Internet Resources**

The Church provides a number of official Web sites and other Internet resources for general use. These sites and resources are clearly identified as official either by the use of the Church logo or in some other way. They also comply with legal requirements and the Church's intellectual property and privacy policies.

Stake and ward Web sites may be created only by using the official Church Internet resources. Stakes and wards are not authorized to create



other Web sites or blogs or otherwise have a Church-sponsored presence on the Internet.

Stake and ward Web sites can facilitate coordination and communication within local units. These Web sites can include news and announcements, calendars, leadership and membership directories, and facilities scheduling. If a stake or ward site is created, it should be regularly maintained to fulfill its intended purposes.

To request approval to use official Church resources to create a stake or ward Web site, the stake president contacts the following office at Church headquarters:

Member and Statistical Records Division  
Attn: Local Unit Internet Resources  
50 East North Temple Street, Room 1320  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0013  
Telephone: 1-801-240-3500 or  
1-800-453-3860, extension 2-3500  
E-mail: msrmail@ldsmail.net

Additional guidelines for stake and ward Web sites can be found by searching for “LDS Site Development Guide” on LDS.org.

On occasion, official Church Web sites may be approved for other purposes, such as multi-stake projects, special events, and young single adult activities and organization. To seek approval for such a site, the organization’s priesthood leader submits a request stating the purpose and need to a member of the Presidency of the Seventy or the Area Presidency.

Temples, missions, and visitors’ centers are not authorized to create Web sites.

#### Members’ Use of the Internet in Church Callings

Individual members may create Web sites or blogs or make use of other appropriate Internet resources in their Church callings, provided they include a disclaimer such as “This is not an official Web site of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Members should also comply with the following guidelines:

1. The Church logo may not be used or imitated.
2. The name and contact information of the member who is responsible for the Web site should be included.
3. Members should not state or imply that their Web site or activities are sponsored or endorsed by the Church.
4. Church-owned artwork, music, or other materials should not be reposted unless such

use is clearly authorized by the “Rights and Use Information” page of an official Church Web site or by the Church’s Intellectual Property Office.

5. Photographs of other individuals or personal information about them should not be displayed without their consent.

#### Personal Internet Use

Members are encouraged to be examples of their faith at all times and in all places, including on the Internet. If they use blogs, social networks, and other Internet technologies, they are encouraged to strengthen others and help them become aware of that which is useful, good, and praiseworthy. When appropriate, members are encouraged to mention the Church and to link to and share approved Church materials.

When members use the Internet for purposes other than Church callings, they should understand that the message they give is personal. They should not give the impression that they represent or are sponsored by the Church.

Additional helps and guidelines are provided by searching for “Internet Usage Helps for Members” on LDS.org.

#### 21.1.23 Laws of the Land

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

#### 21.1.24 Members’ Communication with Church Headquarters

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

The Lord has organized His Church so every member has access to a bishop or branch president and a stake, district, or mission president who serve as spiritual advisers and temporal counselors. By reason of their callings, these



local leaders are entitled to the spirit of discernment and inspiration to enable them to counsel members within their jurisdiction.

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

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

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

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

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

#### 21.1.26 **Members with Disabilities**

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

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

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

#### **Increasing Awareness and Understanding**

Leaders, teachers, and other members should seek to understand a person's disability and any needs that may be associated with it. They can increase their understanding by talking with the person and his or her family members. They can also read talks by Church leaders, articles in Church magazines, and online resources at [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org).

#### **Giving Assistance**

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

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

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

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

#### **Providing Ordinances**

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

#### **Providing Opportunities to Serve and Participate**

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

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

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

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

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

Priesthood leaders encourage males who hold the priesthood to participate in ordinances when appropriate. Priesthood holders and women ages 12 and older who have been baptized and confirmed and who are worthy may be baptized and confirmed for the dead in a temple. Guidelines about members with disabilities receiving their own temple ordinances are provided in *Handbook 1*, 3.3.3.

#### Organizing Special Classes, Programs, or Units

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

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

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

To organize a special class or program on a multiward level, the stake presidency's approval is required. The stake president assigns an agent

bishop to oversee the initial organization and the continuing operation of a class or program for a specified time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Interpreters for Deaf or Hearing-Impaired Members

Members who are deaf or hearing impaired face communication obstacles in learning gospel principles and doctrines. If they use sign language, they need interpreters to help them participate fully in Church meetings, priesthood ordinances, temple work, testimony bearing, interviews, and activities.

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

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

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

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

During a class or meeting, interpreters should be at the front of the classroom or chapel but not on the stand. They should also be to the side of the speaker so they do not create a visual distraction. Because understanding is enhanced by seeing the lips and body language of the person who is speaking, the deaf or hearing-impaired members should be able to see the interpreter and also be able to see the speaker or teacher peripherally. If enough interpreters are available, leaders ask them to rotate approximately every 30 minutes to avoid fatigue.

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

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

### Privacy

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

### Resources

Resources for members with disabilities, for their families and caregivers, and for leaders and teachers are available at [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org). This Web site provides:

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

Church materials for members with disabilities are listed in the *Church Materials Catalog* and at [disabilities.lds.org](http://disabilities.lds.org).

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

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

### 21.1.27 Other Faiths

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

such questions should contact the stake or mission president.

#### 21.1.28 **Overnight Activities**

See 13.6.12 and 21.2.8.

#### 21.1.29 **Political and Civic Activity**

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

In accordance with the laws of their respective governments, members are encouraged to register to vote, to study issues and candidates carefully, and to vote for individuals whom they believe will act with integrity and sound judgment. Latter-day Saints have a special obligation to seek out, vote for, and uphold leaders who are honest, good, and wise (see D&C 98:10).

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

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

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

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

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

#### 21.1.30 **Postal Regulations**

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

#### 21.1.31 **Privacy of Members**

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

#### 21.1.32 **Privately Published Writings**

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

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

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

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

As the Church grows across boundaries, cultures, and languages, the use of its revealed name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:4), is increasingly important in the responsibility of the Church and its members to proclaim the name of the Savior throughout all the world. Accordingly, references to the Church should include its full name whenever possible. Following an initial reference to the full name of the Church, the contractions “the Church” or “the Church of Jesus Christ” are acceptable.



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

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

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

#### 21.1.35 Research Studies in the Church

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

Church meetings may not be used for collecting information by unauthorized persons or agencies. Nor should the names of Church members be made available to such persons or agencies. If local leaders want to verify the authorization of questionnaires or interviews, they should contact the Research Information Division (1-801-240-2727 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2727).

#### 21.1.36 Sales Agents

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

#### 21.1.37 Satellite and Video Equipment

Church satellite and video equipment may be used only for noncommercial, Church-related purposes as authorized by the stake presidency or bishopric. This equipment may not be used to record television, cable, or satellite programs that are not sponsored by the Church. Nor may Church satellite equipment be used to view non-Church programs. Members may not direct the

antenna from one satellite or transponder to another without authorization from Church headquarters.

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

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

#### 21.1.38 Solicitation of Funds

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

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

#### 21.1.39 Statements Attributed to Church Leaders

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

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

#### 21.1.40 Symposia and Similar Gatherings

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



to be used to promote or imply endorsement of such gatherings.

#### 21.1.41 Taxable Activities

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

#### 21.1.42 Temple Clothing and Garments

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

Members may make their own temple aprons only if they use the approved apron embroidery and sewing kit that is available through Church Distribution Services. Other temple ceremonial clothing may not be made. Nor may temple garments be made.

Church members who have been clothed with the garment in a temple have taken upon themselves a covenant obligation to wear it according to the instructions given in the endowment. The garment provides a constant reminder of the covenants made in a temple. When properly worn, it provides protection against temptation and evil. Wearing the garment is also an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow the Savior.

Endowed members should wear the temple garment both day and night. They should not remove it, either entirely or partially, to work in the yard or for other activities that can reasonably be done with the garment worn properly beneath the clothing. Nor should they remove it to lounge around the home in swimwear or immodest clothing. When they must remove the garment, such as for swimming, they should put it back on as soon as possible.

Members should not adjust the garment or wear it contrary to instructions in order to accommodate different styles of clothing. Nor should they alter the garment from its authorized design. When two-piece garments are used, both pieces should always be worn.

The garment is sacred and should be treated with respect at all times. Garments should be kept off the floor. They should also be kept clean and mended. After garments are washed, they should not be hung in public areas to dry. Nor

should they be displayed or exposed to the view of people who do not understand their significance.

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

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

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

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

Information about ordering temple clothing or ordering garments for those in special circumstances (such as members serving in the military, members who are bedfast, or members with disabilities) is provided in *Handbook 1*, 3.4.

#### 21.1.43 Travel Policies

See 13.6.24.

## 21.2 Policies on Using Church Buildings and Other Property

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

1. Renting or leasing Church facilities for commercial purposes.
2. Promoting business ventures or investment enterprises, including posting commercial advertising or sponsoring commercial entertainment.
3. Buying, selling, or promoting products, services, publications, or creative works or demonstrating wares.

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

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

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

#### 21.2.1 Artwork

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

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

Artwork in meetinghouses should be properly framed.

#### 21.2.2 Decorations

Decorations for Christmas, other holidays, and other similar occasions may be placed temporarily in the foyer or cultural hall of a meetinghouse, as approved under the direction of the stake presidency. With the exception of flowers, decorations may not be placed in the chapel area of the meetinghouse. Nor should the exterior of the meetinghouse or the grounds be decorated.

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

#### 21.2.3 Emergencies

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

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

#### 21.2.4 Firearms

Churches are dedicated for the worship of God and as havens from the cares and concerns of the world. The carrying of lethal weapons, concealed or otherwise, within their walls is inappropriate except as required by officers of the law.

#### 21.2.5 Fires and Candles

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

#### 21.2.6 Flags

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

**21.2.7 Monday Nights**

See 13.6.10.

**21.2.8 Overnight Lodging or Camping**

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

**21.2.9 Parking Lots**

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

**21.2.10 Photographs, Video Recordings, and Broadcasts in Chapels**

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

**21.2.11 Serving Areas**

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

**21.2.12 Storage**

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

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

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

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

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

**21.3.2 Cremation**

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

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

**21.3.3 Euthanasia**

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

**21.3.4 HIV Infection and AIDS**

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

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

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

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

With regard to baptism and confirmation, persons with HIV infection or AIDS are treated

as anyone else who expresses faith in God, repents, and is living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### 21.3.5 Hypnosis

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

#### 21.3.6 Medical and Health Practices

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

#### 21.3.7 Organ and Tissue Donations and Transplants

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

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

#### 21.3.8 Prolonging Life

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

#### 21.3.9 Self-Awareness Groups

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 21.3.10 Stillborn Children (Children Who Die before Birth)

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

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

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

#### 21.3.11 Word of Wisdom

The only official interpretation of "hot drinks" (D&C 89:9) in the Word of Wisdom is the statement made by early Church leaders that the term "hot drinks" means tea and coffee.



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

## 21.4 Policies on Moral Issues

### 21.4.1 Abortion

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

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

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

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

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

### 21.4.2 Abuse and Cruelty

The Church’s position is that abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Those who abuse or are cruel to 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 and neglect. Members who have abused others are subject to Church discipline.

If leaders or teachers become aware of instances of abuse, they should counsel with the bishop. Instructions for the bishop are provided in *Handbook 1*, 17.3.2.

### 21.4.3 Artificial Insemination

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

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

### 21.4.4 Birth Control

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

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

### 21.4.5 Chastity and Fidelity

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

### 21.4.6 Homosexual Behavior and Same-Gender Attraction

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



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

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

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

#### 21.4.7 In Vitro Fertilization

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

#### 21.4.8 Occult Affiliation

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

#### 21.4.9 Pornography

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

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

#### 21.4.10 Same-Gender Marriages

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

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

#### 21.4.11 Sex Education

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

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

#### 21.4.12 Single Expectant Parents

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

When a man and woman conceive a child outside of marriage, every effort should be made to encourage them to marry. When the probability of a successful marriage is unlikely due to age or other circumstances, the unmarried parents should be counseled to work with LDS Family Services to place the child for adoption, providing an opportunity for the baby to be sealed to temple-worthy parents. Adoption is an unselfish, loving decision that blesses both the birth parents and the child in this life and in eternity.

If LDS Family Services is not available in the area, leaders should encourage the placement of the child for adoption with a temple-worthy

couple through a local licensed agency. LDS Family Services may be of assistance in identifying reputable, licensed adoption agencies. Licensed agencies are designed to protect the interest of the child, screen adoptive couples before placement, and provide needed supervision and counseling.

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

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

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

LDS Family Services has established a toll-free help line for single expectant parents and others to obtain help regarding pregnancies and related matters (1-800-537-2229). The help line is available in all areas of the United States and Canada. Members and nonmembers may call it directly or call the local LDS Family Services

office. If leaders do not know the number of the local office, they may call the help line or go to [itsaboutlove.org](http://itsaboutlove.org). That Web site provides helpful information for those who are single, pregnant, and considering their options.

#### 21.4.13 Sperm Donation

The Church strongly discourages the donation of sperm.

#### 21.4.14 Suicide

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

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

#### 21.4.15 Surgical Sterilization (Including Vasectomy)

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

#### 21.4.16 Surrogate Motherhood

The Church strongly discourages surrogate motherhood.



## Appendix: List of Items Referenced

*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* refers to many other Church-produced materials. An alphabetical list of these materials is provided below. If item numbers have been assigned, they are included in this list rather than in the text of the handbook. Most of these materials are available through Church Distribution Services. Contact information is provided below:

Distribution Services  
1999 West 1700 South  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84104-4233  
Telephone: 801-240-3800 (Salt Lake City area)  
1-800-537-5971 (U.S. and Canada)  
1-801-240-1126 (other countries)  
Internet: [www.ldscatalog.com](http://www.ldscatalog.com)

Aaronic Priesthood Ordination Record and Certificate (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, the record and certificate are printed in local units; in other areas, the item number is 35857)

Activity Plan form (available online at [ldscatalog.com](http://ldscatalog.com) and [LDS.org](http://LDS.org); or item number 33809)

*Administrative Guide for Family History* (04397)

*All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances* (04007)

*All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage* (04008)

*A Parent's Guide* (31125)

Baptism and Confirmation Certificate (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, the certificate is printed in local units; in other areas, the item number is 35920)

Baptism and Confirmation Record (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, the form is printed in local units; for full-time missionaries and areas that do not have record-keeping software, the item number is 35971)

*Basic Unit Program Guidebook* (36717)

*Behold Your Little Ones: Nursery Manual* (37108)

Bishop's Order for Commodities forms (item numbers vary by area)

*Branch Guidebook* (31179)

Certificate of Advancement (33237)

Child Blessing Record and Certificate (in areas that have Church record-keeping software,

the record and certificate are printed in local units; in other areas, the item number is 35972)

*Children's Songbook* (35395)

*Church Facilities Artwork* catalog (contact the facilities manager)

Conducting Course Kit (33619)

*Day Camp Guide for Eleven-Year-Old Scouts* (31374)

*Dictionary of Sign Language Terms for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (31121)

*Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part A* (31111)

*Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part B* (31112)

*Endowed from on High: Temple Preparation Seminar Teacher's Manual* (36854)

*Facilities Management Guidelines for Meeting-houses and Other Church Property* (United States and Canada, 35860; outside the United States and Canada, 36485)

*Faith in God for Boys* (36812)

*Faith in God for Girls* (36813)

*Family Guidebook* (31180)

*Family History Consultant's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* (36797; available on [LDS.org](http://LDS.org))

*For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 36550; card, 36551)

*Gospel Principles* (2009 printing, 06195)

*Hymns* (31243)

*Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs* (31257)

*Instructions for Clothing the Dead Who Have Received Their Endowments* (31461)

*Instructions for Curriculum* (updated annually)

*Instructor's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* (35804)

Keyboard Course Kit (33620)

*Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts* (00460)

Melchizedek Priesthood Ordination Record and Certificate (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, the record and certificate are printed in local units; in other areas, the item number is 35858)

*Member's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* (36795)

- Missionary Handbook* (35996)
- Mission President's Handbook* (36203)
- Needs and Resources Analysis form (32290)
- New and Returning Member Progress form (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, the form is printed in local units; in other areas, the item number is 08616)
- Officers Sustained forms (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, these forms are printed in local units; in other areas, the item numbers are as follows: stake, 32300; district, 32301; ward or branch in stake, 32302; branch in mission, 32303)
- Outline for sharing time (published annually)
- Parental or Guardian Permission and Medical Release form (available online at [ldscatalog.com](http://ldscatalog.com) and [LDS.org](http://LDS.org); or item number 33810)
- Patriarchal Blessing Recommend (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, the form is printed in local units; in other areas, the item number is 32017)
- Performance Contract form (available online at [ldscatalog.com](http://ldscatalog.com) and [LDS.org](http://LDS.org); or item number 33811)
- Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (36617)
- Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* (36793)
- Progress Record (36985)
- Quarterly Report (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, the form is accessed and submitted electronically; in other areas, the assigned administrative office sends the form to units)
- Recommendation for New Bishop form (in areas that have Church record-keeping software, the form is printed in local units; in other areas, the item number is 31747)
- Recommend to Perform an Ordinance form (32595)
- Scouting Handbook* (Canada, 35810; United States, 35814)
- Talent and Interest Survey form (available online at [ldscatalog.com](http://ldscatalog.com) and [LDS.org](http://LDS.org); or item number 33812)
- Teaching Guidebook* (34595)
- Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (36123)
- True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (36863; the item number for units to order this publication as a no-charge item is 37054)
- Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Patriarch* (booklet, 25240; DVD, 25241 090)
- Ye Shall Have My Words* (student manual, 34476; teacher's guide, 34477; training DVD, 00548)
- Young Womanhood Recognition medallion (gold, 08602; silver, 08603)
- Young Women age-group certificates (Beehive, 08563; Mia Maid, 08565; Laurel, 08564)
- Young Women Camp Manual* (34573)
- Young Women Camp: A Guide for Priesthood and Young Women Leaders* (04093)
- Young Women logo pendant (08601)
- Young Women Personal Progress: Standing as a Witness of God* (36035)
- Young Women Personal Progress Tracking Sheet for Leaders (36655)



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