

GENERAL HANDBOOK

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

DECEMBER 2025



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

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Summary of Recent Updates

November 2025

Chapter 5: General and Area Leadership

- 5.1.1.1. First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (clarified succession in the Presidency of the Church)

Chapter 6: Stake Leadership

- 6.5. High Council (clarified that elders may serve on a district council)
- 6.6. Stake Patriarch (updated the term “nonfunctioning” status to “not actively serving”)
 - 6.6.1. Calling, Sustaining, and Ordaining a Stake Patriarch (added information about ordaining a stake patriarch before he can be sustained in a stake conference)
 - 6.6.3. Instructing a Newly Called Stake Patriarch (updated resources)
 - 6.6.6. Patriarchs Who Are Called to Another Church Position (updated the term “nonfunctioning” status to “not actively serving”)
- 6.7.1.1. Additional Stake Relief Society Presidency Responsibilities (emphasized ward Relief Society presidencies’ role in helping lead missionary and temple and family history work)

Chapter 7: The Bishopric

- 7.2. Differences between Branch Presidencies and Bishoprics (added reference to 23.6.1)

Chapter 9: Relief Society

- 9.5. Stake Relief Society Leaders (emphasized ward Relief Society presidencies’ role in helping lead missionary and temple and family history work)

Chapter 10: Aaronic Priesthood Quorums

- 10.2.1.3. Service and Activities (clarified that 18-year-olds may attend Aaronic Priesthood activities, such as camps and conferences)

- 10.2.4. Uniting Families for Eternity (updated “indexing” to “family history volunteer activities”)

Chapter 11: Young Women

- 11.2.1.3. Service and Activities (clarified that 18-year-olds may attend Young Women activities, such as camps and conferences)

- 11.2.4. Uniting Families for Eternity (updated “indexing” to “family history volunteer activities”)

Chapter 12: Primary

- 12.1.8. Baptism and Confirmation Preparation Meeting (new section)
- 12.2.4. Uniting Families for Eternity (updated “indexing” to “family history volunteer activities”)
- 12.3.2. Primary Presidency (a member of the Primary presidency now attends weekly missionary coordination meetings and ward temple and family history coordination meetings)

Chapter 14: Single Members

- 14.2.4. Uniting Families for Eternity (updated “indexing” to “family history volunteer activities”)

Chapter 18: Performing Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings

- 18.7.1.1. Children Who Are Members of Record (added reference to new section 12.1.8, “Baptism and Confirmation Preparation Meeting”)
- 18.17. Patriarchal Blessings (added explanation of the purpose of patriarchal blessings)

18.17.1. Receiving a Patriarchal Blessing
(added language allowing a member to invite a close friend)

Chapter 19: Music

Throughout chapter 19, language has been revised to allow worshipful children’s songs to be used for congregational singing.

Chapter 20: Activities

20.4. Youth Conference (clarified that 18-year-olds may attend youth conference)

20.7.2. Age Requirements for Participation in Youth Activities (clarified that 18-year-olds may attend youth activities)

20.7.3.4. Church Activity Medical Assistance Program (CAMA program no longer applies to members in Canada)

20.7.6.3. Accident Reporting (members in Canada now report accidents to the area office instead of Church headquarters)

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

22.3.2. Help Members Assess and Address Short-Term Needs (clarified that bishops may provide assistance with urgent needs before a Self-Reliance Plan has been completed)

22.3.3. Help Members Build Self-Reliance (emphasized that a Self-Reliance Plan is used with all members receiving assistance)

22.5.1.1. Assistance to Ward Members (added language that members receiving assistance should be making efforts to progress temporally and spiritually)

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

23.1. Share the Gospel (added introduction; moved video to 23.1.3)

23.1.1. Love (revised section)

23.1.2. Share (added paragraphs moved from 23.1.3)

23.1.3. Invite (revised section; moved paragraphs to 23.1.2; added video from 23.1)

23.2. Strengthen New Members (added link to *My Covenant Path* resource)

23.4. Hold Weekly Missionary Coordination Meetings (revised title; revised section to clarify purpose, emphasize the Covenant Path Progress report, and align with *Preach My Gospel*; a member of the Primary presidency now attends these meetings)

23.4.1. *My Covenant Path* and Covenant Path Progress report (new section; paragraphs moved here from 23.6.5)

23.6.1. Bishopric (added language to allow bishops and branch presidents to assign counselors to interview new members; added reference to Family Name Assist tool)

23.6.5. Ward Council and Ward Youth Council (moved paragraphs about *My Covenant Path* and Covenant Path Progress report to 23.4.1)

Chapter 24: Missionary Recommendations and Service

Throughout chapter 24, the terms “service mission” and “service mission leaders” have been replaced with “service missionary assignment” and “service missionary advisers,” respectively.

24.2.3. Senior Missionaries (updated to reflect a policy change allowing single men ages 40 and older to serve as senior missionaries)

24.3.4.1. Financing Young Missionaries Serving Away from Home (clarified instruction about financing missionaries)

24.4.2. Interviews and Recommendation Forms (clarified the missionary recommendation process)

24.4.4. Those Unable to Serve as Full-Time Missionaries (updated contact information for the Missionary Department)

24.5.3. Setting Apart Missionaries (added instruction for when circumstances do not permit setting apart a missionary before he or she begins service)

24.7. Service Missionaries (revised title)

24.7.1. Identifying Opportunities for Service Missionaries (updated list of examples of service missionary opportunities)

24.7.3. Training and Supervision (clarified that young service missionaries participate in a virtual MTC experience)

24.7.5. Concluding a Service Missionary Assignment (title revised; deleted second paragraph; added contact information for the in-field representative)

Chapter 25: “Temple and Family History Work in the Ward and Stake”

Throughout chapter 25, the term “uniting families for eternity” has been emphasized.

25. Uniting Families for Eternity through Temple and Family History Work (revised title)

25.0. Introduction (added paragraph describing the blessings of temple and family history work)

25.1. Member and Leader Participation in Uniting Families for Eternity (revised title and section)

25.2. Ward Leaders (revised title; moved content to 25.2.5)

25.2.1. Bishopric (revised section)

25.2.2. Elders Quorum and Relief Society Presidencies (added focus on members who have recently received mission calls and unendowed members; moved last bullet here from 25.2.3)

25.2.3. Ward Temple and Family History Leader (moved last bullet to 25.2.2)

25.2.4. Ward Temple and Family History Consultants (moved language from second bullet up to emphasize the focus of consultants’ work)

25.2.5. Ward Council (revised bulleted list)

25.2.6. Ward Temple and Family History Plan (revised list of examples)

25.2.7. Ward Temple and Family History Coordination Meetings (revised section; a member of the Primary presidency now attends these meetings)

25.3. Stake Leaders (revised title; deleted content)

25.3.1. Stake Presidency (revised bulleted list)

25.3.3. High Councilors (clarified that high councilors may help elders quorum presidencies instruct ward temple and family history consultants)

25.3.8. Area Temple and Family History Advisers (clarified the work of these advisers; added reference to Temple and Family History Leadership Instruction)

25.4.1. Online Resources (revised title and section)

25.4.3. Family History Volunteer Activities (added references to the Get Involved app)

25.5.2. Requirements for Temple Workers (clarified tasks temple workers may perform)

Chapter 26: Temple Recommends

Chapter 26 has been reorganized and revised to reflect procedural changes for issuing recommends for living ordinances through Ordinance

Preparation in LCR, to prepare for the release of mobile temple recommends, and to consolidate information.

26.0. Introduction (revised section; clarified that members must be baptized and confirmed to receive a temple recommend)

26.1. Types of Temple Recommends (revised section; clarified three types of recommends; added option to receive a mobile recommend)

26.3. General Guidelines for Issuing Temple Recommends (moved some content to 26.3.1 and 26.3.2)

26.3.1. Issuing Temple Recommends for Proxy Baptisms and Confirmations (new section; content moved here from 26.3, 26.3.3, 26.4.1, and 26.4.3)

26.3.2. Issuing Temple Recommends for Endowed Members (revised title; new section number shown; content moved here from 26.1, 26.3, 26.3.3, and 26.4.1)

26.3.3. Issuing Temple Recommends for Living Ordinances (new section; content moved here from 26.3.1, 26.3.3, 26.4.1, 26.4.4, 26.5.1; added language that members who will be age 12 or older by the end of the year must have either a recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations or a recommend for endowed members in addition to a recommend for living ordinances)

26.3.4. Issuing Temple Recommends to Members in Isolated Areas (revised title; new section number shown)

26.4. Conducting a Temple Recommend Interview (new section number shown)

26.4.1. Temple Recommend Interview Questions (new section number shown)

26.4.2. Wearing the Temple Garment (new section number shown)

26.4.3. Additional Direction (new section number shown)

26.4. Issuing Temple Recommends to Unendowed Members (section deleted)

26.4.1. General Guidelines (deleted section; content moved to 26.3.1)

26.4.2. Temple Recommends for Newly Baptized Members (deleted section; content moved to 26.5.1)

26.4.3. Temple Recommends for Proxy Baptisms and Confirmations Only (deleted section; some content moved to 26.3.1)

26.4.4. Temple Recommends for Sealing Living Children to Parents (deleted section; some content moved to 27.4.1 and 27.4.5)

26.5.1. Members Receiving Their Own Endowment (section deleted; some content moved to 27.2.2; subsequent sections have been renumbered)

26.5.1. Newly Baptized Members (new section number shown; content moved here from 26.4.2; added language that bishops may offer to use the Family Name Assist tool to help new members print names of deceased family members)

Chapter 27: Temple Ordinances for the Living

Chapter 27 has been reorganized and revised to reflect procedural changes for issuing recommends for living ordinances.

27.1.1. Preparing to Receive Temple Ordinances (some content moved to 27.1.2)

27.1.2. Scheduling Temple Ordinances (section deleted)

27.1.2. Verifying Records and Receiving a Temple Recommend for Living Ordinances (new section; content moved here from 27.1.1)

27.2. The Endowment (clarified descriptions of initiatory ordinances and law of chastity)

27.2.2. Deciding When to Receive the Endowment (added language from 26.5.1 that a man must hold the Melchizedek Priesthood before receiving the endowment)

27.2.3.1. Receiving a Recommend for Living Ordinances (updated to specify that to receive the endowment, a member must have both a recommend for living ordinances and a recommend for endowed members)

27.2.3.2. Contacting the Temple (clarified that members planning to receive the endowment should meet with their bishop before contacting the temple)

27.3. Sealing of Husband and Wife (added explanation of the covenant members make when they are sealed)

27.3.2.1. Receiving a Recommend for Living Ordinances for Sealing a Husband and Wife (revised title; updated to specify that to be sealed to a spouse, members must have both a recommend for living ordinance and a recommend for endowed members)

27.3.2.3. Obtaining a Marriage License (updated with information about Ordinance Preparation)

27.3.2.4. Escorts for the Couple Being Sealed (revised title; updated to reflect that a couple may have already been married prior to being sealed)

27.3.2.6. Appropriate Clothing for a Temple Sealing (updated to reflect that a couple may have already been married prior to being sealed)

27.3.4. Who May Attend a Temple Sealing (added language that a stake president may authorize a member with an intellectual disability to observe the sealing of their parents)

27.4.1. Receiving a Recommend for Living Ordinances (revised title; added table describing the recommends members need when they are sealed to their parents)

27.4.2. Contacting the Temple (clarified that members planning to be sealed to children or deceased parents should meet with their bishop before contacting the temple)

27.4.5. Who May Attend a Sealing of Children to Parents (added table describing the recommends members need when they observe the sealing of their siblings to their parents)

Chapter 28: Temple Ordinances for the Deceased

28.1.1.1. Submitting the Names of Family Members (removed “generally” to align with policy)

28.1.1.2. Submitting the Names of Celebrities and Unauthorized Groups (removed “generally” to align with policy)

28.2.1. Baptisms and Confirmations for the Dead (clarified that those baptizing, confirming, or recording must be able to do so without assistance)

28.3.5.2. Deceased Persons Who Were Endowed (clarified policies)

Chapter 29: Meetings in the Church

29.3.1. Stake Conference (added instruction that when a General Authority or Area Seventy presides, the stake leadership meeting includes all members of the stake council and ward councils)

29.3.3. Stake Priesthood Leadership Meeting (updated guidelines so that only one stake conference per year includes a stake priesthood leadership meeting)

Chapter 30: Callings in the Church

30.7. Calling Bishops (divided section into two subsections)

30.7.1. Recommending (new section created from 30.7; added guidelines about recommending candidates for bishop)

30.7.2. Calling, Ordaining, and Setting Apart (new section created from 30.7)

Chapter 32: Repentance and Church Membership Councils

32.6.2.5. Some Other Acts (updated table to be consistent with the section’s text)

Chapter 38: Church Policies and Guidelines

Section 38.2: Policies for Ordinances and Blessings

38.2.9.1. New Members (clarified that a bishop can interview newly baptized brothers for Aaronic Priesthood ordination and also for a temple recommend in the same meeting; updated guidelines to allow the bishop to assign his counselor to conduct this interview)

38.2.10. Patriarchal Blessings (updated list of resources)

38.2.10.4. Members Who Live outside the Patriarch’s Stake (replaced the term “functioning patriarch” with “actively serving patriarch”)

38.2.10.7. Replacement Patriarchal Blessings (revised title; clarified that in rare circumstances, members may receive a “replacement” blessing, not a “second” blessing)

Section 38.4: Sealing Policies

38.4.1.8. Sealing of Deceased Persons (made policy for sealing deceased couple who were divorced consistent with other sections; added policy for sealing deceased couples who cohabited but were not married)

38.4.2.3. Adopted or Foster Children Who Are Living (updated policies regarding when a formal adoption decree is required)

38.4.2.5. Sealing of Living Children to One Natural Parent and a Stepparent (updated section to address sealing adult children who are not accountable)

Section 38.5: Temple Clothing and Garments

38.5.1. Temple Clothing (removed “socks or hosiery” from the description of temple clothing for women)

38.5.2. Obtaining Temple Clothing and Garments (added the language from 38.5.4 that members may not make ceremonial temple clothing or temple garments)

38.5.3. Garments and Temple Clothing for Members Who Have Disabilities or Allergies (added information for members with physical needs to request modifications)

38.5.4. Making Temple Clothing (section deleted; content moved to 38.5.2)

38.5.4. Modifying Ceremonial Temple Clothing (new section)

Section 38.6: Policies on Moral Issues

38.6.1. Abortion (clarified language)

Section 38.8: Administrative Policies

38.8.40.1. Editions and Translations of the Holy Bible (revised title; updated guidelines to state that some members may benefit from doctrinally clear Bible translations that are easier to understand than Church-published editions; added reference to a list of such translations)

38.8.40.2. Scripture Translation (addressed unauthorized translations, including those done through AI)

38.8.40.3. Simplified or Modernized Scriptures (revised title; addressed unauthorized efforts, including those done through AI)

38.8.47. Appropriate Use of Artificial Intelligence (new section)

38.8.47.1. Learning and Teaching (new section)

38.8.47.2. Relationships with God and Others (new section)

38.8.47.3. Callings and Assignments (new section)

0.

Introductory Overview

0.0

Introduction

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

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

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

0.1

This Handbook

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

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

- Priesthood principles.

- Principles for leading in the Savior’s Church.

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

The headings and subheadings in this handbook are numbered to make topics easy to find and reference. For example, instruction about who may be sealed in a temple is provided in 27.3.1. The number 27 refers to the chapter, the number 3 refers to a section in that chapter, and the number 1 refers to a subsection.

0.2

Adaptation and Optional Resources

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

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

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

0.3

Updates

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

0.4

Questions about Instructions

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

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

0.5

Terminology

Except where indicated otherwise:

- The terms *bishop* and *bishopric* in this handbook refer also to branch presidents and branch presidencies. The terms *stake president* and *stake presidency* refer also to district presidents and district presidencies. For a summary of how the authority of district presidents differs from that of stake presidents, see 6.3.

- References to wards and stakes generally also apply to branches, districts, and missions.
- References to Sunday apply to whichever day the Sabbath is observed locally.
- The term *unit* refers to wards and branches.
- References to parents generally also apply to legal guardians.

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

0.6

Contacting Church Headquarters or the Area Office

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



1.

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

1.0

Introduction

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

This handbook will help you learn principles of Christlike service and understand your responsibilities. You will be most effective when you align your service in the Church with the work of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This chapter will help you gain a vision of:

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

1.1

God's Plan of Happiness

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

God's Work and Glory

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

Jesus Christ is central to God's plan. Because of Heavenly Father's infinite love for us, He sent His Son to redeem us from sin and death through His atoning sacrifice (see John 3:16). Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ ensures that each

of us born on earth will be resurrected and gain immortality.

To receive eternal life, we must “come unto Christ” (Moroni 10:32). The Savior’s Atonement makes it possible for us to be cleansed from sin and have our hearts changed so we can receive eternal life and a fulness of joy. Heavenly Father wants all of His children to choose to return to Him.

1.2

God’s Work of Salvation and Exaltation

As we come unto Christ and help others do the same, we participate in God’s work of salvation and exaltation. This work is guided by the two great commandments to love God and to love our neighbors (see Matthew 22:37–39).

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

God’s Work of Salvation and Exaltation

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

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

This handbook will help you understand these four aspects of God’s work.

1.2.1

Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Living the gospel of Jesus Christ includes:

- Exercising faith in Christ, repenting daily, making covenants with God as we receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation, and enduring to the end by keeping those covenants (see 3.5.1).
- Learning and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ at home and at church.
- Becoming self-reliant in providing for ourselves and our families, both spiritually and temporally.



1.2.2

Caring for Those in Need

Caring for those in need includes:

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

1.2.3

Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

Inviting all to receive the gospel includes:

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

1.2.4**Uniting Families for Eternity**

Uniting families for eternity includes:

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

1.3**The Purpose of the Church**

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

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

1.3.1**Priesthood Authority and Keys**

Through the priesthood, God accomplishes His work of salvation and exaltation. The priesthood authority and keys needed to direct God's work on earth were restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith

(see Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16; 112:30; see also 3.1 in this handbook). These keys are held by Church leaders today. These leaders call and authorize others to assist in God's work (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:8, 65–67).

1.3.2**Covenants and Ordinances**

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

1.3.3**Prophetic Direction**

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

1.3.4**Scriptures**

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

1.3.5**Gospel Learning and Teaching Support**

The Church supports individuals and families in their responsibility to learn the truths of the gospel and teach these truths to family members and others

(see Doctrine and Covenants 88:77–78, 118; see also 2.2.3 in this handbook).

1.3.6

Service and Leadership Opportunities

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

1.3.7

A Community of Saints

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



1.4

Your Role in God's Work

As a leader in the Church, you are called to teach and support those you serve as they assist God in His work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2). Having a clear understanding of God's work, of what He invites you to do, and of the purpose of His Church will help you focus your efforts in bringing souls to Christ.

Prayerfully seek to know how you can help bring about God's purposes in the lives of those you serve. God will direct you through the promptings of the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 32:5). Laboring with the Lord in His vineyard will bring you great joy (see Jacob 5:70–72).



2.

Supporting Individuals and Families in God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation

2.0

Introduction

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

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

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

2.1

The Role of the Family in God's Plan

The family is ordained of God and is central to His plan. Each of us "is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents [with] a divine nature and destiny" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," ChurchofJesusChrist.org). We are part of their family. We lived with them before we were born on earth.

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

In this life, many people have limited opportunities for loving family relationships. No family is free from challenges, pain, and sorrow. Individuals and families exercise faith in the Lord and strive to live according to the truths He has revealed concerning

the family. The Savior has promised that He will help bear the burdens of all who come unto Him (see Matthew 11:28–30).

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

God’s promise of eternal life includes eternal marriage, children, and all other blessings of an eternal family. This promise applies to those who are not currently married or are without family in the Church (see 38.1.4). These blessings are assured to all who strive to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

2.1.1 Eternal Families

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

Each person may fulfill a number of roles in an eternal family. All family roles are sacred and important. These roles may include mother and father, daughter and son, sister and brother, aunt and uncle, and grandmother and grandfather. Fulfilling these roles in love helps God’s children progress toward eternal life.

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

With an understanding of God’s plan, members seek the blessings of an eternal family.

2.1.2 Husband and Wife

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

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

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

Cleaving also includes total fidelity between husband and wife. Physical intimacy between husband and wife is intended to be beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife. Tenderness and respect—not selfishness—should guide their intimate relationship.

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

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

should be made in unity and love, with full participation of both.

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

2.1.3

Parents and Children

God's first commandment to Adam and Eve as husband and wife was to have children (see Genesis 1:28). Latter-day prophets have taught that "God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"; see also Doctrine and Covenants 49:16–17).

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

A loving husband and wife together provide the best setting for rearing and nurturing children. Individual circumstances may prevent parents from rearing their children together. However, the Lord will bless them as they seek His help and strive to keep their covenants with Him.

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

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

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

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

"In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"). They prayerfully counsel together and with the Lord.



2.2

God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation in the Home

The First Presidency said, "The home is the basis of a righteous life" (First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999). In their homes, individuals and families engage in helping God accomplish His work of salvation and exaltation.

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

2.2.1

A Home Where the Spirit Is Present

Church members are encouraged to make their homes a place of spiritual strength and joy. They can invite the Spirit of the Lord into their homes through simple efforts.

2.2.2

Sabbath Observance

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

- Personal worship through prayer and fasting.
- Gospel study and learning.
- Ministering and service to others.

- Family history.
- Joyful family time.
- Other appropriate gatherings.

2.2.3

Gospel Study and Learning at Home

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

A study of the scriptures as outlined in *Come, Follow Me* is the suggested course of gospel study at home.

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

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

2.2.4

Home Evening and Other Activities

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

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

- Gospel study and instruction (the *Come, Follow Me* materials may be used as desired).

- Serving others.
- Singing or playing hymns and Primary songs (see chapter 19).
- Supporting family members in Children and Youth development.
- A family council to set goals, resolve problems, and coordinate schedules.
- Recreational activities.

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

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

Leaders encourage members to be consistent in holding home evening and spending time together as families (see Doctrine and Covenants 64:33). This could include sharing meals, working and serving together, and recreational activities.

2.2.5

Supporting Individuals

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



2.3

The Relationship between the Home and the Church

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

- Leaders and teachers honor the role of parents and assist them. Leaders and teachers establish and maintain effective communication with parents.
- Some Church meetings are essential in each ward or branch. These include sacrament meeting and the classes and quorum meetings held on the Sabbath. Many other meetings, activities, and programs are not essential. Leaders organize them as needed to help meet the needs of individuals and families. Leaders take into account local circumstances and resources.
- Individuals and families consider their circumstances when making decisions about participating in Church programs that are not essential.
- The Lord will bless members as they serve and sacrifice in His Church. However, the amount of time given to Church service should not detract

from members' ability to fulfill their responsibilities at home, at work, and elsewhere. Leaders and members should not be overwhelmed with too many Church responsibilities. Nor should they be asked to make excessive sacrifices to support Church programs or activities.

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



3.

Priesthood Principles

3.0

Introduction

The priesthood is the authority and power of God. Through the priesthood, Heavenly Father accomplishes His work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). God grants authority and power to His sons and daughters on earth to help carry out this work (see chapter 1).

3.1

Restoration of the Priesthood

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

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

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

Each member of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles holds all these priesthood keys today. These leaders call and authorize other Church members to use God’s priesthood authority and power to assist in His work of salvation and exaltation.

3.2

Blessings of the Priesthood

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

- Baptism and membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- The gift of the Holy Ghost.
- Partaking of the sacrament.
- Authority and power to serve in Church callings and assignments.

- Receiving patriarchal blessings and other priesthood blessings of healing, comfort, and guidance.
- Being endowed with God's power in the temple.
- Being sealed to one's family members for eternity.
- The promise of eternal life.

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

3.3

Melchizedek Priesthood and Aaronic Priesthood

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

3.3.1

Melchizedek Priesthood

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

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

The President of the Church is the presiding high priest over the Melchizedek Priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:65–67). The stake president is the presiding high priest in the stake (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:8, 10; see also chapter 6

in this handbook). The bishop is the presiding high priest in the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:17; see also chapter 7 in this handbook).

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

3.3.2

Aaronic Priesthood

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

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

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

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

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

3.4

Priesthood Authority

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

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

3.4.1**Priesthood Keys**

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

3.4.1.1**Those Who Hold Priesthood Keys**

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

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

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

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

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

Priesthood keys are not given to others, including counselors to local priesthood leaders or presidents of Church organizations. These leaders are given

delegated authority when they are set apart and when they receive assignments under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys. Presidents of Church organizations preside under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys (see 4.2.4).

**3.4.1.2****Order to God's Work**

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

All who serve in the Church are set apart or assigned under the direction of one who holds priesthood keys.

3.4.2**Priesthood Conferral and Ordination**

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

holder exercises the priesthood according to the rights and duties of that office (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:99).

Each man in the Church of Jesus Christ should strive to be worthy to receive and use the Melchizedek Priesthood to serve others. When a man receives this priesthood, he makes a covenant to faithfully fulfill his priesthood responsibilities. He also receives from God an oath, or promise, of eternal blessings (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44; see also Guide to the Scriptures, “Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood”).

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

3.4.3

Delegation of Priesthood Authority to Serve in the Church

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

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

3.4.3.1

Setting Apart

When Church members are set apart under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys, they are given authority from God to act in that calling. For example:

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

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

When Church members are released from a calling, they no longer have the authority associated with it.

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

3.4.3.2

Assignment

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

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

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

For more information about assignment through delegation, see 4.2.5.

3.4.4

Exercising Priesthood Authority Righteously

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

This authority can be used only in righteousness (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:36). It is exercised by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love, and kindness (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42). Leaders counsel with others in a spirit of unity and seek the Lord’s will through revelation (see Doctrine and Covenants 41:2). For information about counseling with others, see 4.4.3.

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

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



3.5

Priesthood Power

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

The blessings of priesthood power that members can receive include:

- Guidance for their lives.

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

3.5.1

Covenants

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

Members make covenants with God as they receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation (see 18.1). All who endure to the end in keeping their covenants will receive eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:17–20; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7).

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

3.5.2

Ordinances

An ordinance is a sacred act performed by the authority of the priesthood. Ordinances have always been part of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Genesis 1:28; Moses 6:64–65).

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

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

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

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



3.6

The Priesthood and the Home

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

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



4.

Leadership and Councils in the Church of Jesus Christ

4.0

Introduction

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

Following Jesus Christ’s example, you will often serve others one by one. You will also have opportunities to provide leadership in Church meetings and activities. In addition, you may give important service through councils. These can include presidency meetings, ward council meetings, and others.

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

4.1

The Purpose of Leadership in the Church

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

4.2

Principles of Leadership in the Church

During His earthly ministry, the Savior set the example of leadership for His Church. His central purpose was doing the will of His Heavenly Father and helping others understand and live His gospel (see John 5:30; Mosiah 15:7). He loved those He led and showed that love by serving them (see John 13:3–5).

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

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

Applying the principles in this chapter will help you lead more effectively in the Savior’s Church.

4.2.1

Prepare Spiritually

Jesus prepared Himself spiritually for His earthly mission (see Luke 4:1–2). You likewise prepare spiritually by drawing close to Heavenly Father through prayer, scripture study, and obedience to His commandments. Following His prophets also helps you prepare spiritually (see Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–6).

Seek revelation to understand the needs of those you lead and how to fulfill the work God has called you to do.

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

4.2.2

Minister to All of God’s Children

Jesus ministered personally to people, reaching out to lift and teach those who felt alone, hopeless, or lost. He recognized the divine nature and eternal worth of each person.

Love the people you serve as Jesus did. Pray “with all the energy of heart” to be filled with His love (Moroni 7:48). Establish sincere friendships. Reach out to those who may be lonely, need comfort, or

have other needs. Your love will bless their lives and help people desire to come unto Christ.

Help individuals deepen their conversion and strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Help them prepare to make covenants as they receive their next ordinance. Encourage them to keep the covenants they have made and partake of the blessings of repentance. Help them know they can progress toward fulfilling their divine potential regardless of the challenges they face.

4.2.3

Teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ

All leaders are teachers. Strive to follow the Savior’s example as a teacher (see chapter 17; *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*). Through your words and actions, teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the principles of His gospel (see 3 Nephi 11:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 42:12–14). Effective teaching inspires people to strengthen their relationship with God and live the gospel, progressing toward eternal life.

Teaching in the Savior’s way is more than talking; it includes listening and asking questions the way He did (see Matthew 16:13–17).

Effective teachers are also diligent learners. Make the study of God’s word a high priority in your life. Gospel learning is a lifelong process.

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

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

If you are called or assigned to preside in a Church meeting or activity, ensure that the teaching is edifying and doctrinally correct (see Doctrine and Covenants 50:21–23).

4.2.4

Preside in Righteousness

The Lord revealed that “of necessity there are presidents, or presiding officers” in His Church (Doctrine and Covenants 107:21). Those who hold priesthood keys preside in their areas of responsibility, such as a quorum or ward.

Other organizations in the Church, including the Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School, are also led by a presiding officer. These leaders are called, set apart, and given delegated authority by one who holds priesthood keys or someone he has authorized (see 3.4.3).

Each presiding officer serves under the direction of a person who holds priesthood keys (see 3.4.1). This structure provides order and clear lines of responsibility and accountability in doing the Lord’s work.

A presiding officer may delegate to another person a temporary assignment to preside. For example, if a Relief Society president will be absent from a Relief Society Sunday meeting, she would assign her first counselor to preside in the meeting.

A leader who presides in a Church organization, meeting, or activity ensures that the Lord’s purposes are accomplished. In doing this, the leader follows gospel principles, Church policies, and the direction of the Holy Ghost.

Those who preside follow the example of Jesus Christ in serving with gentleness, meekness, and pure love (see John 13:13–15). A calling or assignment to preside does not make the person who receives it more important or valued than others (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:109–10).

If you have been called or assigned to preside, follow the Savior’s teaching that “whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:27; see verses 26–28). Counsel with others and seek unity in understanding the Lord’s will and doing His work (see Doctrine and Covenants 41:2; see also 4.4 in this handbook).

It is not appropriate to aspire to preside in any organization in the Lord’s Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–37). Rather, humbly and faithfully serve in the position to which you are called. Strive to do the Lord’s work with an eye single to His glory (see Doctrine and Covenants 4:5).



4.2.5

Delegate Responsibility and Ensure Accountability

The Savior gave His disciples meaningful assignments and responsibilities (see Luke 10:1). He also gave them an opportunity to account for the work they were given to do (see Luke 9:10).

As a leader, you can help others grow by delegating assignments to them. In this way you will also help them receive the blessings that come from serving. Strive to engage all members in doing God’s work.

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

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

- Meet with the person to invite him or her to serve the Lord in an assignment. Help the person understand the assignment and its purposes.

- Counsel together about the assignment, who else could be involved, and when it should be finished. Ensure that the person understands and willingly accepts the assignment. Express confidence in his or her abilities.
- Encourage the person to seek inspiration about how to fulfill the assignment. Show your trust and help the person succeed. Provide direction and support as needed.
- Periodically ask the person to report on the assignment. Accept the person's best efforts, and express appreciation for what he or she has done.

The guidelines for extending a calling in 30.1.1 should also be followed when delegating, as applicable.

4.2.6

Prepare Others to Be Leaders and Teachers

The Savior prepared His Apostles to become leaders in His Church. You likewise help others prepare to be leaders and teachers. The Lord's work focuses on helping people, not just administering Church programs. These programs are not ends in themselves. They exist to help people grow.

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

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

For more information about Church callings, see chapter 30.

4.2.7

Plan Meetings, Lessons, and Activities with Clear Purposes

Seek inspiration from the Lord in planning meetings, lessons, and activities that have clear purposes. These purposes should strengthen individuals and families, bring them closer to Christ, and help accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation (see chapters 1 and 2). When planning, follow the principles in 4.4.2 and in chapters 20 and 29.

4.2.8

Evaluating Your Efforts

Regularly review your responsibilities and spiritual growth as a leader. Consider also the growth of those you lead.

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

4.3

Councils in the Church

Heavenly Father has established councils as an important part of receiving inspiration, making decisions, and accomplishing His work. Councils existed before the world was created. Each of us participated in these councils before coming to earth. (See Doctrine and Covenants 121:32; Abraham 3:22–28.)

Following this pattern, the Church of Jesus Christ is governed by councils at every level. For example,

the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see 5.1.1.1), Area Presidencies (see 5.2.1), stake presidencies, and bishoprics are all councils. In addition to stake and ward councils, each presidency of a Church organization, quorum, or class is also a council.

The Lord has instructed the leaders of His Church to counsel together in doing His work (see Doctrine and Covenants 41:2–3). Councils provide opportunities for council members to receive revelation as they seek to understand the needs of God’s children and plan how to help meet them.



4.4

Principles of Effective Councils

Some principles of effective councils are outlined in this section.

4.4.1

Purposes of Councils

The primary purpose of councils is to help members work together in seeking divine guidance about matters that will bless individuals and families (see Doctrine and Covenants 43:8–9). Councils give special emphasis to helping members receive ordinances and keep the associated covenants. Council members also seek inspiration about planning and coordinating the Lord’s work in their area of responsibility.

Some administrative business, such as calendar planning, may not require discussion in a council setting. Much of this can be handled through communication before and after meetings.

Council members give particular care to individuals and families with pressing needs. Councils help coordinate assistance. For information about some of these needs, along with resources for understanding and assisting, see Life Help in the Gospel Library.

4.4.2

Preparation for Council Meetings

Presidencies and councils are expected to meet regularly. Leaders seek the Lord’s guidance in planning council meetings. They also seek input from council members in deciding what to discuss.

Leaders let council members know of the matters for discussion in advance. Council members prepare to share insights about these matters. For ward and stake councils, much of this preparation occurs in presidency meetings.

Council members prepare themselves spiritually to participate in council meetings.

4.4.3

Discussion and Decisions

The Lord said, “Let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:122). This principle applies to Church councils.

During a council meeting, the leader (or someone the leader assigns) explains the matter being considered. The leader then encourages discussion among all council members, asking questions and seeking ideas.

The leader encourages members to speak openly and honestly. The diverse backgrounds, ages, experiences, and viewpoints of council members enrich the council. Members share suggestions and listen to each other respectfully. As they seek to know the Lord's will, a spirit of inspiration and unity can prevail.

In a council that includes women and men, the leader seeks insights and ideas from both. Women and men often have different perspectives that provide needed balance. Men and women reach better decisions and have greater success in the Lord's service as they value each other's contributions and work together.

A leader guides the council's discussions. However, he or she should listen more than talk. When a council leader shares his or her perspective too early, it can inhibit the contributions of others. When necessary, the council leader gently redirects or refocuses the discussion.

After the discussion, the leader may either decide on a course of action or postpone a decision while seeking additional information and guidance. The decision should be informed by the discussion and confirmed by the Spirit. The council process helps bring about inspired decisions that go beyond a leader's own best judgment. The leader may also refer the matter to a different council.

Sometimes council members may have unsettled feelings about an important decision. When this happens, the leader may wait for another meeting to consider the matter further and seek spiritual confirmation and unity. In some cases, a council member may want to meet with the leader individually to discuss his or her concerns.

4.4.4

Unity

The Lord instructed His disciples to "be one" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27). Council members

seek to become one in desire and purpose with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. They strive for unity in their discussions and decisions.

Council members should avoid contention, unrighteous judgment, and gossip (see 3 Nephi 11:28–30). As they act in unity, Heavenly Father will bless their efforts.

4.4.5

Action and Accountability

Council members do most of their work before and after council meetings. During meetings, they seek inspiration in developing plans to implement decisions. The council leader invites members to fulfill assignments relating to these plans. Council members usually invite others in their organization to help. Individuals should not be overburdened with assignments.

Council members report on their assignments. Progress usually requires sustained attention and follow-up assignments.

4.4.6

Confidentiality

Leaders use discretion when sharing personal information with a council. They generally seek a member's permission to share this information.

The council respects the desires of any who request confidentiality. Council members should not share personal information outside the council unless required to fulfill an assignment from the council leader.

Some matters are too sensitive to bring before an entire council. As appropriate, leaders review these matters with individual members of the council. Or they may refer some matters to a different council.



5.

General and Area Leadership

5.0

Introduction

Jesus Christ is the “chief corner stone” of His Church (Ephesians 2:20). He holds all priesthood keys. He calls apostles and prophets to assist in God’s work of salvation and exaltation. He confers upon these chosen servants all the keys that presently pertain to the kingdom of God on the earth. (See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13; see also 3.4.1 in this handbook.)

Through prophets and apostles, the Lord calls men to the office of Seventy to assist in His work in all the world (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:38). In addition, the Presiding Bishopric, General Officers, and other men and women leaders are given important responsibilities to assist in the work.

This chapter describes the roles of general and area leaders in the Church.

5.1

General Church Leadership

The Church’s general leadership includes all General Authorities and General Officers. The word *general* indicates that the authority and responsibilities associated with the callings are not limited by geographic boundaries. Those who hold these callings lead, teach, and minister to Church members throughout the world.

This section summarizes the roles of General Authorities, General Officers, and the councils and committees in which they serve.

5.1.1

General Authorities

5.1.1.1

First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

President of the Church. Since ancient days, the Lord has directed His people through prophets

(see Amos 3:7; Ephesians 4:11–13). The President of the Church is a prophet, seer, and revelator. He is also the senior Apostle. Under the Lord’s direction, he presides over the Church and is the only person on earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys (see Matthew 16:16–19; see also 3.4.1.1 in this handbook). He has authority to receive revelation and declare the will of God for the whole Church. (See Doctrine and Covenants 43:2–3; 107:91–92; 128:11.)

First Presidency. Through the President of the Church, the Lord calls counselors to assist in the work. The President and his counselors are “three Presiding High Priests . . . [who] form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:22). This quorum is called the First Presidency. Members of the First Presidency are Apostles and as such are “special witnesses” of the name of Jesus Christ (Doctrine and Covenants 107:23). The First Presidency presides over and directs all the affairs of the Church.

Peter, James, and John fulfilled this role in the ancient Church. They were with the Savior on several sacred occasions and received the keys of the kingdom. (See Matthew 16:18–19; 17:1–5; Mark 14:32–42; Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13; 81:1–2.)

When the President of the Church dies, the First Presidency is dissolved. The counselors return to their positions of seniority within the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Under the direction of the senior Apostle, the Quorum of the Twelve leads the Church. As a quorum, they consider when the First Presidency should be reorganized. When it is reorganized, the senior Apostle becomes the new President of the Church and calls his counselors.

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Anciently, Jesus Christ called twelve Apostles to help lead His Church (see Luke 6:12–13; Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Nephi 13:40). In our day, the Lord calls men through the President of the Church to be ordained as Apostles and to serve

in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see Doctrine and Covenants 18:26–28). This quorum acts under the direction of the First Presidency to build up and regulate the Church in all nations (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:33). Members of the Twelve proclaim the gospel in all the world (see Matthew 28:19–20; Doctrine and Covenants 107:35).

Each Apostle holds all the keys of the kingdom and exercises those keys under the direction of the President of the Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 112:30–32). The Twelve Apostles are “special witnesses” of the name of Jesus Christ (Doctrine and Covenants 107:23; see also 27:12). They witness to all the world of His divinity and the reality of His Resurrection (see Acts 1:8, 22; 4:33; Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–24).

Apostles serve full-time in the Church for the remainder of their lives (see Matthew 4:18–22).

The Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. All members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators. Together they form the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Under the direction of the Lord and by unanimous voice, this council has authority to declare and interpret doctrine and establish policy for the Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 107:27–31).

5.1.1.2

The Seventy

The office of Seventy in the Melchizedek Priesthood is referenced in both the Old and New Testaments (see Exodus 24:1, 9–10; Numbers 11:16–17, 24–25; Luke 10:1, 17). Today, there are General Authority Seventies and Area Seventies (see 5.2.2). They act under the keys and direction of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They assist the Twelve in building

up and regulating the Church in all nations (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:34–35, 38).

Presidency of the Seventy. Seven members of the Seventy are called as presidents to preside over all members of the Seventy. One of the seven presidents is chosen to preside over the other six. They comprise the Presidency of the Seventy. (See Acts 6:2–6; Doctrine and Covenants 107:93–94; 124:138.)

General Authority Seventies. General Authority Seventies are called by the First Presidency to be special witnesses who bear record of the name of Jesus Christ and teach the gospel in all the world (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:25; 124:139).

General Authority Seventies serve full-time in the Church. They are generally released in the year they turn 70 years old and are granted emeritus status. Although they retain the office of Seventy, they no longer preside in meetings.

Quorums of the Seventy. Members of the Seventy, including Area Seventies, are organized into quorums. The Presidency of the Seventy presides over these quorums. The number of members of the Seventy and quorums of Seventy may increase with the growth of the Church. (See Doctrine and Covenants 107:95–96; 124:138–39).

5.1.1.3

Presiding Bishopric

The Presiding Bishopric consists of the Presiding Bishop and his two counselors. Each member of the Presiding Bishopric is a General Authority and holds the office of bishop. They are called by the First Presidency and work under their direction.

The Presiding Bishopric administers temporal matters, such as welfare, finances, physical facilities, and humanitarian efforts, for the entire Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:68). They also teach the gospel and build up the kingdom of God throughout the world.

5.1.2

General Officers

The First Presidency calls women and men to form the General Presidencies of the following Church organizations:

- Relief Society
- Young Men
- Young Women
- Primary
- Sunday School

These General Officers serve under the direction of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and assigned General Authority Seventies. They typically serve for five years.

General Officers may have the following responsibilities:

- Teach and testify of Jesus Christ and His gospel.
- Serve as members of general Church councils and committees as assigned.
- Fulfill assignments throughout the world to minister to members.
- Provide guidance for curriculum, programs, and resources for their organizations.
- Provide guidance to their general organization councils (see the next paragraph).
- Instruct and support area organization advisers, who serve under the direction of the Area Presidencies (see 5.2.5.1).

Each general Church organization may have a council to assist the Presidency.

5.2**Area Leadership**

The Church is organized into geographic areas covering the entire world. This section summarizes the leadership of the Church in these areas.

5.2.1**Area Presidency**

In each area, a General Authority Seventy is assigned by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to serve as the Area President. Two counselors, who are General Authority Seventies or Area Seventies, are assigned to assist the president.

The Area Presidency presides over and counsels with stake and mission presidents in the area. They also support temple presidents and matrons. In counsel with members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Presidency of the Seventy to whom they report, they determine how to apply general Church policy and direction to meet the needs in their area.

Members of the Area Presidency travel within the assigned area to minister to, teach, and encourage local leaders, missionaries, and Church members. They are assigned by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to preside at stake conferences and other meetings.

5.2.2**Area Seventies**

Area Seventies are called by the First Presidency to be special witnesses who bear record of the name of Jesus Christ and teach the gospel in their assigned areas (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:25; 124:139). Working under the direction of the Area Presidency, they assist the Twelve in building up and regulating the Church in their area.

Area Seventies are not called to full-time service. They typically serve for five years. They are usually

assigned to serve in the geographical area where they live (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:38, 98). Area Seventies are sustained in general conference.

Each Area Seventy belongs to a quorum of the Seventy. These quorums are organized by geography. As members of these quorums, Area Seventies are presided over by the Presidency of the Seventy.

Area Seventies work and counsel together with local Church leaders to help them fulfill their responsibilities. Area Seventies may be assigned to:

- Serve on the area council (see 5.2.3).
- Preside at coordinating council meetings (see 5.2.4).
- Preside at stake conferences and instruct stake leaders.
- Create or reorganize stakes, set apart new stake presidencies, and confer keys on the stake president.
- Coordinate area-wide responsibilities, including activities (see 20.3.3), JustServe.org (where it is available), disaster recovery, or other assignments.
- Tour missions and instruct mission leaders and missionaries.
- Serve as a counselor in the Area Presidency.

Area Seventies preside at all Church meetings they attend within their area unless a General Authority is present. However, they do not preside over the day-to-day work of temple, mission, or stake presidents. These presidents serve under the direction of the Area Presidency.

5.2.3**Area Council**

In each area, an area council meets as needed (usually quarterly) to coordinate God's work of salvation and exaltation in their area. The Area Presidency

presides over the area council. This council consists of the Area Presidency and Area Seventies serving in the area. Others may attend part or all of the council's meetings when needed and when invited by the Area Presidency.

5.2.4 Coordinating Council

The Area Presidency establishes coordinating councils. Each council includes specified stakes and missions in an area. The Area Presidency assigns an Area Seventy to lead each council.

Stake and mission presidents attend coordinating council meetings. Temple presidents whose temple districts are within the boundaries of the coordinating council are invited to attend when practical.

Others may attend part or all of the meetings when needed and when invited by the Area Seventy. Area Seventies consider distance, family circumstances, and travel when making these invitations.

The purpose of coordinating council meetings is to help stake, mission, and temple presidents exercise priesthood keys in unity. Together they counsel about and coordinate efforts to help members in their responsibilities to participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation.

The Area Seventy convenes a coordinating council meeting soon after each quarterly area council meeting (see 29.4). Additional meetings may be held when needed.

5.2.5 Area Callings

The Area Presidency may call members to serve in area callings to assist the Area Presidency in their responsibilities. Those serving in these positions are called and set apart by a member of the Area Presidency or an assigned Area Seventy. They are not sustained.

Examples of area callings may include area executive secretary, area auditor, area communications director, area temple and family history adviser, and area organization adviser.

5.2.5.1 Area Organization Advisers

Outside of the United States and Canada, Area Presidencies may call women to serve as area organization advisers. These advisers may help orient and instruct new stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies, under the direction of these leaders' stake presidencies (see 6.2.1.6). A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor participates in this orientation.

Area advisers serve under the direction of their Area Presidency. They also receive regular instruction from general organization presidencies. They typically serve for three years.



6.

Stake Leadership

6.1

Purposes of a Stake

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

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

6.2

Stake Presidency

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

The stake president has four principal responsibilities:

- He is the presiding high priest in the stake.
- He leads God’s work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.
- He is a common judge.
- He oversees records, finances, and properties.

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

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

6.2.1**Presiding High Priest**

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

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

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

6.2.1.1**Melchizedek Priesthood**

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

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

- Bishops and their counselors
- High councilors
- Functioning patriarchs

Members of the high priests quorum attend elders quorum meetings in their ward if they are not assigned elsewhere.

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

Melchizedek Priesthood Ordinations. The stake president oversees the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood. He also oversees ordinations to the offices of elder and high priest (see 18.10.4).

6.2.1.2**Bishoprics**

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

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

6.2.1.3**Stake Patriarch**

The stake president supervises the work of the stake patriarch. He develops a close relationship with him. For information about calling and supervising the stake patriarch, see 6.6.

6.2.1.4**Councils, Committees, and Meetings**

The stake president leads the high council and the stake council. He also leads the stake adult leadership committee (see 29.3.8). He assigns his counselors to oversee the following:

- Stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.9)
- Stake young single adult committee
- Stake single adult committee (where organized)

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

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

6.2.1.5

Callings and Releases

The stake president's responsibilities for callings and releases are outlined in chapter 30. He may assign his counselors and high councilors to extend callings and releases as outlined in 30.8. The stake president personally extends the following callings. For some, he must first receive approval as noted.

- *Counselors in the Stake Presidency.* When a new stake president is called, the presiding General Authority or Area Seventy calls and sets apart his counselors, who are recommended by the new stake president. When a counselor needs to be released or called in an existing stake presidency, the stake president submits a recommendation through Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR). He may interview, call, and set apart a counselor—or release a counselor—after receiving approval from the First Presidency.
- *Stake Patriarch.* The stake president may interview, call, and ordain a patriarch after receiving approval from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. See 6.6.1.
- *Bishops.* The stake president recommends brethren to be called as bishops. He also recommends their release. He submits recommendations through LCR. He may call, ordain, and set apart a bishop—or release a bishop—after receiving approval from the First Presidency. He also bestows the priesthood keys associated with this calling. See 30.7.
- *Elders Quorum Presidents.* The stake president calls and sets apart elders quorum presidents. He first consults with bishops. He also bestows the priesthood keys associated with this calling. See 8.3.3.1.
- *Stake Relief Society President.* The stake president calls and sets apart the stake Relief Society president.

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

6.2.1.6

Stake Organizations and Programs

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

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

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

When a new stake organization presidency is called, the stake presidency shares counsel and vision to orient them in their service.

In the United States and Canada, the new organization presidency may also receive orientation from the general organization council (see 5.1.2). In other areas, the new presidency may also receive orientation from an area organization adviser (see 5.2.5.1). This orientation is under the direction of the stake presidency. A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor participates.

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

- Seminary and institute (see chapter 15).
- Programs for young single adults and single adults (see 14.1.1).
- Stake activities (see 20.3.2).
- Music (see 19.5).
- Meetinghouse facilities (see 35.2.4).

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



6.2.1.7

Communication (Public Affairs)

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

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

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

The stake president or an assigned counselor oversees this council as its priesthood adviser. Information about this role is provided in *Communication Councils: A Guide for Priesthood Leaders*.

⬆️ The communication council may include a stake communication director, assistant directors, and specialists as needed. They are called and set apart by the stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor.

There is also a communication council at the coordinating council level (see 29.4). It operates under the direction of an Area Seventy and is led by a

communication director. This communication council helps coordinate relationships, events, and issues that cross stake boundaries. The director of this council offers support and training to stake communication councils.

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

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

6.2.2

Leading God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation in the Stake

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

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

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

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

- Helps brethren prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood (see 18.10.1).

- Leads efforts to care for those in need in the stake (see 22.9.1).
- Oversees missionary work in the stake and encourages members to share the gospel (see 23.5).
- Oversees efforts to strengthen new members in the stake (see 23.5).
- Interviews candidates for missionary service (see 24.4.2).
- Oversees temple and family history work in the stake (see 25.3.1).
- Helps members prepare to receive temple ordinances (see 27.1).
- With the stake Relief Society presidency, instructs and supports elders quorum and ward Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities for missionary work (see 23.6.2) and temple and family history work (see 25.2.2).

6.2.3

Common Judge

The stake president is the common judge in the stake (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:71–74). He holds priesthood keys to receive inspiration and make decisions regarding the spiritual and temporal welfare of members of the stake. In this role, he has the following responsibilities:

- Conduct interviews as outlined in 31.2. He may also authorize his counselors to conduct certain interviews (see 31.2.2).
- Meet with stake members who seek spiritual guidance, who have weighty personal problems, or who have committed serious sins. For guidelines, see 31.1.
- Hold membership councils when members have committed serious sins (see chapter 32).

In matters that require the approval of the First Presidency, the stake president carefully considers

the request. He interviews the person to determine his or her worthiness.

After the interview, the stake president submits an application to the First Presidency only if he can recommend it for approval. He describes the reasons for his support.

The stake president submits the application through Leader and Clerk Resources.

6.2.4

Records, Finances, and Properties

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

See the following chapters for more information:

- Chapter 33 (records)
- Chapter 34 (finances)
- Chapter 35 (meetinghouses)

6.3

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

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

- He is called and set apart by the mission president, after approval by the Area Presidency (see 30.8.4). A stake president is called and set apart by an assigned General Authority or Area Seventy (see 30.8.3).

- He may be an elder or a high priest. A stake president must be a high priest.
- He is not the president of a high priests quorum. Such quorums are organized only in stakes.
- A district president presides over all priesthood holders in the district. However, the mission president is the presiding high priest.
- With the mission president's approval, a district president may interview a brother to be ordained an elder. This approval must be given for each situation. A district president or someone under his direction may also (1) present a brother for sustaining and (2) perform the ordination (see 18.10.1.3, 18.10.3, and 18.10.4). However, a district president cannot ordain patriarchs, high priests, or bishops.
- With the mission president's approval, a district president may set apart branch presidents (see 18.11). This approval must be given for each situation.
- He does not release full-time missionaries. However, he may participate with a member of the mission presidency in the release interview. If travel or time constraints make it very difficult for a member of the mission presidency to release a specific missionary, the mission president may authorize the district president to do so (see 24.8.2).
- He does not conduct temple recommend interviews or sign temple recommends (see 26.3.2 and 26.3.3).
- He does not convene a membership council unless authorized by the mission president (see 32.9.5).
- He does not usually deal directly with the Area Presidency. Instead, he works through the mission presidency.

In special circumstances, a district president can be authorized to recommend, set apart, and release

missionaries. He can also be authorized to conduct temple recommend interviews and sign the recommends. He can also be authorized to set apart his counselors.

If the Area Presidency feels that a district president should have this expanded authority, they recommend him to the First Presidency. If approval is given, it is for that person, not the position. When a new district president is called, this expanded authority does not transfer to him.

6.4

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

6.4.1

Stake Executive Secretary and Assistant Stake Executive Secretaries

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

The executive secretary has the following responsibilities:

- Meet with the stake presidency and prepare agendas as assigned.
- Serve as a member of the stake council and attend high council meetings. As directed by the stake presidency, follow up on assignments made in these meetings.
- Coordinate stake business between the stake presidency, high council, and other stake leaders.
- Schedule appointments for the stake presidency.
- Advise the stake presidency of members who are entering the military or are already in military

service. Under the direction of the stake presidency, help coordinate Church orientation for stake members who are entering the military (see 38.9.3).

- Orient new ward executive secretaries soon after they are called. Provide ongoing instruction as needed.
- Forward messages received from Church employees and volunteers to the appropriate stake and ward leaders, as instructed by the stake president (see 38.8.9).

One or two assistant stake executive secretaries may be called as needed. They are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency. These brethren should have a current temple recommend.

6.4.2

Stake Clerk and Assistant Stake Clerks

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

6.5

High Council

The stake presidency calls 12 high priests to form the stake high council (see Doctrine and Covenants 102:1; 124:131). If an elder is called to serve on the high council, he is ordained a high priest before he is set apart. (In a district, elders or high priests may serve on the district council; see 30.8.4.)

Under the direction of the stake presidency, high councilors help with God's work of salvation and exaltation in the stake. Their responsibilities are described in the following sections.

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

6.5.1

Represent the Stake Presidency

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

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

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

- Learn of their needs.
- Offer support.
- Teach them their responsibilities, including those for missionary work (see 23.6.2) and temple and family history work (see 25.2.2).
- Communicate information from the stake presidency.
- Discuss how to help members of the quorum who need their next ordinance. This information is available to elders quorum leaders in LCR.

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

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

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

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

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

High councilors counsel with the stake presidency and sustain their decisions to ordain brethren to the offices of elder and high priest. The stake president may authorize high councilors to represent him when men are ordained to these offices. These high councilors ensure that the ordinance is performed properly.

High councilors also counsel with the stake presidency and sustain their decisions to issue callings to members. The stake presidency may authorize high councilors to issue some callings, present some members to be sustained, and set some members apart. (See 30.8.)

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

 The stake presidency may assign high councilors to assist with the programs listed in 6.2.1.6. They may also assign a high councilor to assist with needs for members with disabilities (see 38.8.27).

 The stake presidency may assign high councilors to represent them by speaking in sacrament meetings and other settings. The stake presidency determines the frequency of these speaking assignments. It is not necessary for high councilors to speak in sacrament meeting every month. The stake presidency may also assign stake organization presidency members to speak in these settings (see 6.7.1 and 6.7.2).



6.5.2

Serve on Stake Councils and Committees

All high councilors serve on the stake council.

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

The stake presidency assigns high councilors to serve on other committees. For example, high councilors who are assigned to work with elders quorums serve on the stake adult leadership committee (see 29.3.8).

6.5.3

Serve as Stake Organization Leaders

The stake presidency calls and sets apart a high councilor to be the stake Young Men president (see 6.7.2). They call and set apart another high councilor to be the stake Sunday School president (see 6.7.1).

6.6

Stake Patriarch

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

- Sections 18.17 and 38.2.10 in this handbook
- *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs* (a resource for stake presidents and patriarchs)

See *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs* for information about:

- Patriarchs who are given “not actively serving” status.
- Patriarchs who move to another stake.

6.6.1

Calling, Sustaining, and Ordaining a Stake Patriarch

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

The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles directs the calling of stake patriarchs (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:39). The stake president may recommend whom to call. He submits recommendations through LCR. When making a recommendation, the stake president should fast and pray for the Spirit to direct him. His counselors should agree with the recommendation.

If the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approves the recommendation, the stake president may be authorized to interview and call the patriarch. He then presents the patriarch’s name for sustaining in the general session of the next stake conference.

In some cases, a man may need to be ordained a patriarch before he can be presented for sustaining in stake conference. When this happens, he is presented for sustaining in a sacrament meeting in each ward in the stake. He may then be ordained. He is then presented in the next stake conference to ratify the ordination. This includes giving stake members an opportunity to sustain or oppose the action.

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

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

An actively serving patriarch is a member of the stake high priests quorum.

6.6.2

Calling a Second Stake Patriarch

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

- Is geographically large.
- Includes a small number of members who do not speak the majority language.

If a stake includes members who speak different languages, bishops and stake presidencies may authorize them to go to a patriarch in a nearby stake who can give the blessing in the member’s own language.



6.6.3**Instructing a Newly Called Stake Patriarch**

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

- Sections 18.17 and 38.2.10 in this handbook
- *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs* (a resource for stake presidents and patriarchs)

6.6.4**Supervising the Work of the Stake Patriarch**

The stake president supervises the patriarch's work as outlined in *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs*. He does not delegate this responsibility to one of his counselors. A patriarch benefits from a close relationship with his stake president.

The stake president meets with the patriarch at least twice a year. They discuss the patriarch's feelings about the work, the health and welfare of his family, and any other matters on which he needs counsel.

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

The stake president ensures that copies of transcribed blessings are given promptly to recipients. He also ensures that all blessings are submitted to Church headquarters. Blessings are submitted through the Patriarchal Blessing System on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Where this system is not accessible, blessings should be mailed to the following address at least once every six months:

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

6.6.5**Confidentiality of Patriarchal Blessings**

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

6.6.6**Patriarchs Who Are Called to Another Church Position**

A patriarch may not be called to a position of Church administration unless the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approves the call in advance. Such positions include a member of a bishopric; high council; or stake, mission, or temple presidency. If approval is given, the patriarch is given "not actively serving" status.

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

6.6.7**Scribes for Patriarchal Blessings**

The stake president or one of his counselors may call and set apart a worthy, skilled member of the stake to transcribe the patriarchal blessings, unless the patriarch can transcribe them himself and prefers to do so. More than one scribe may be called if needed.

The scribe should be cautioned that every blessing is sacred and confidential. No copy of any blessing may be retained by the scribe or patriarch. (See 6.6.5.)

6.7

Stake Organizations

The stake Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, Sunday School, and Young Men organizations are each led by a president. These presidents serve under the direction of the stake presidency.

 In large stakes, an organization president may recommend one or two counselors and a secretary to serve with him or her. The stake presidency considers these recommendations.

The main responsibilities of these leaders are to assist the stake presidency and to instruct and support ward organization presidencies. They do not fulfill assignments that should be fulfilled at the ward or family level. They also do not create additional responsibilities for ward organization presidencies.

6.7.1

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

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

The stake presidency calls and sets apart a high councilor to be the stake Sunday School president.

Members of these presidencies have the following responsibilities:

- Serve on the stake council (presidents only). Participate in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families in the stake.
- Orient newly called ward organization presidencies. This includes providing instruction from

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

- Offer ongoing support and instruction. Communicate with ward organization presidencies regularly to learn of their needs, discuss the needs of the members they serve, and communicate information from the stake presidency. Arrange with ward leaders to visit their meetings and classes periodically.
 - Instruct ward organization presidencies during stake leadership meetings (see 29.3.4). These are generally held once a year. The stake presidency may authorize a second meeting if it would not create a burden for participants. Bishops may request additional instruction for ward organization presidencies.
 - Counsel together regularly in their own presidency meetings (if counselors are called). Communicate regularly with the member of the stake presidency responsible for their service.
 - Attend coordinating council meetings when invited by the Area Seventy (see 29.4).
 - Speak in sacrament meetings and other settings when invited by the stake presidency.
 -  In large stakes, submit recommendations to the stake presidency for counselors and others to be called to serve in their organizations as needed. For guidelines, see 30.1.1 and 30.1.5.
-  The stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies may occasionally plan combined activities for their organizations. These activities could include all women, young women, and girls 8 and older in the stake. Such activities could also be held in multiple stakes. The presidencies counsel together to recommend combined activities to the stake presidency (see 20.3.1). Such activities would be in place of one of the stake Relief Society activities (see 6.7.1.1).

6.7.1.1**Additional Stake Relief Society Presidency Responsibilities**

The stake Relief Society presidency has the following additional responsibilities:

- Serve on the stake adult leadership committee (see 29.3.8). If a secretary is called, she is also invited.
- Teach ward Relief Society presidents the principles of ministering and caring for those in need. Help them understand their role in helping bishops with temporal and self-reliance matters.
- Teach ward Relief Society presidencies about their responsibility to help lead the ward's efforts to share the gospel (see 23.6.2) and participate in temple and family history work (see 25.2.2).
- Strengthen single adult sisters in the stake. If the stake has a young single adult committee, a member of the presidency serves on it. The same is true if the stake has a single adult committee. (See 14.1.1.2.)
- Coordinate stake Relief Society efforts during emergencies.

📌 The stake Relief Society presidency may plan and carry out one or two meetings each year for all Relief Society sisters in the stake. These meetings are held under the direction of the stake presidency. They may include service, classes, projects, conferences, or workshops. The stake Relief Society presidency may form committees to help as needed.

6.7.1.2**Additional Stake Young Women Presidency Responsibilities**

The stake Young Women presidency has the following additional responsibilities:

- Serve on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.9). If a secretary is called, she is also invited.
- Under the direction of the stake presidency, plan and coordinate stake Young Women activities and camps.

6.7.1.3**Additional Stake Primary Presidency Responsibilities**

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

**6.7.1.4****Additional Stake Sunday School Presidency Responsibilities**

The stake Sunday School presidency has the following additional responsibilities:

- Serve as specialists in the stake's efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching.
- Coordinate resource centers in the stake where applicable (see 13.7.2).

6.7.2

Stake Young Men Presidency

The stake presidency calls and sets apart a high councilor to be the stake Young Men president. The high council members assigned to the Young Women and Primary may be called and set apart to serve as his counselors.

 In a large stake, one or two other Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the stake may be called as counselors. A priesthood holder may also be called as a secretary (see 6.7.3). The stake Young Men president recommends whom to call. For guidelines, see 30.1.1 and 30.1.5. The counselors and secretary are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor.

The stake Young Men presidency has the following responsibilities:

- Serve on the stake council (president only, unless his counselors are high councilors). Participate in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families in the stake.
- Serve as a resource to bishoprics in their responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood brethren. This could include helping them understand their duties for Aaronic Priesthood quorums, as directed by the stake president.
- Counsel together regularly in their own presidency meetings. Communicate regularly with the member of the stake presidency who has responsibility for their service.
- Serve on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.9). If a secretary is called, he is also invited.
- Under the direction of the stake presidency, plan and coordinate stake Aaronic Priesthood activities and camps.
- Speak in sacrament meetings and other settings when invited by the stake presidency.

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

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

6.7.3

 Stake Organization Secretaries

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

- Prepare agendas for presidency meetings.
- Take notes in presidency meetings and keep track of assignments.
- Keep other records and prepare reports as the presidency requests.
- Help the presidency prepare the annual budget for their organization. Account for expenses.
- Provide training for ward organization secretaries as assigned. This may include instruction on recording and reporting attendance.

6.8

 Stake Specialists

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

- Music (see 19.5.3)
- Welfare and self-reliance (see 22.9.4)
- Interpretation coordinator (see 29.9)



7.

The Bishopric

7.1

The Bishop and His Counselors

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

The bishop and his counselors are high priests. If they are not high priests when they are called, they should be ordained high priests before they are set apart to serve.

The bishop has five principal responsibilities:

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

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

The bishop's foremost responsibility is to the rising generation in the ward (the children, youth, and young single adults). To enable him to concentrate on this responsibility, he delegates many assignments (see 4.2.5). He may delegate to his counselors, the clerk and assistant clerks, the executive secretary, quorum and organization leaders, and others.

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

7.1.1

Presiding High Priest

The bishop is the ward's primary spiritual leader. He sets an example by serving "with holiness of heart" (Mosiah 18:12). He teaches, uplifts, and

inspires

(see Matthew 20:28). He follows the principles of leadership in Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–46.

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

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

7.1.1.1

Ward Organizations and Priesthood Quorums

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

The bishop's responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood quorums are outlined in 7.1.2. His responsibilities for elders quorums are outlined in 8.3.1.

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

7.1.1.2

Ordinances and Blessings

The bishop directs the administration of the following ordinances and blessings in the ward:

- The sacrament
- Naming and blessing of children

- Baptism and confirmation of 8-year-old children of record (for those with intellectual disabilities, see 38.2.8.1; for converts, see 31.2.3.2)
- Conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordination to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest

For information about ordinances and blessings, see chapter 18.

7.1.1.3

Councils and Meetings

The bishop leads the ward council and the ward youth council (see 29.2.5 and 29.2.6). He uses these councils to help coordinate God's work of salvation and exaltation in the ward. He delegates much of this work and follows up on assignments (see 4.2.5).

The bishop invites leaders to counsel together about how to build spiritual strength and unity in the ward. He encourages all council members to seek inspiration and participate in discussions. (See Doctrine and Covenants 88:122; see also 4.4 in this handbook.)

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

7.1.1.4

Callings and Releases

The bishop's responsibilities for callings and releases are outlined in chapter 30. He may assign his counselors to extend callings and releases as outlined in 30.8.



7.1.2

President of the Aaronic Priesthood

“The bishopric is the presidency of [the Aaronic] priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:15; see also verse 20). The bishop has the following responsibilities as the president of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward. His counselors assist him.

- Support parents in teaching youth. Help youth serve faithfully, make and keep sacred covenants, and prepare to receive the ordinances of the temple. Help young men prepare to be ordained to priesthood offices and to serve full-time missions. If young women desire to serve full-time missions, help them prepare. The Children and Youth program can help in these efforts (see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- Oversee Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women classes. The bishop is president of the priests quorum (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:87–88). His first counselor has responsibility for the teachers quorum. His second counselor has responsibility for the deacons quorum. For more information about Aaronic Priesthood quorum leadership, see 10.3, 10.4, and 10.5.
- Counsel with the ward Young Women president. The bishop does not delegate this assignment to

a counselor. He and his counselors also regularly participate in Young Women meetings, service, and activities. (See 11.3.1.)

- Meet regularly with each youth. For guidelines about these meetings, see 31.3.1.
- Support families and Primary leaders and teachers in their efforts to help children make and keep covenants (see chapter 12).

7.1.3

Common Judge

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

- Help youth and adults qualify for and be worthy of a temple recommend.
- Conduct interviews as outlined in 31.2. He may authorize his counselors to conduct certain interviews (see 31.2.2). For guidelines, see 31.1.
- Meet with ward members who seek spiritual guidance, who have weighty personal problems, or who have committed serious sins, helping them draw on the healing power of Jesus Christ. The bishop may ask his counselors, elders quorum and Relief Society presidents, and others to meet with ward members about some matters. However, only the bishop meets with ward members about matters of worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds. For guidelines, see 31.1.
- Under the direction of the stake president, hold membership councils as needed. For guidelines, see chapter 32.

7.1.4**Coordinating God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation in the Ward**

The bishop coordinates God's work of salvation and exaltation in the ward (see chapter 1). His counselors and other ward leaders assist him.

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

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

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

- Helps men prepare to be ordained to priesthood offices.
- Leads efforts to care for those in need in the ward (see 7.1.4.1 and 22.2.1).
- Guides the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead ministering efforts in the ward (see 21.2.1).
- Coordinates the work of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead the ward's efforts to share the gospel and strengthen new and returning members (see 23.1).
- Coordinates the efforts of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead the ward's efforts in temple and family history work (see 25.2.2).
- Helps members prepare to receive a temple recommend and temple ordinances (see 27.1).

7.1.4.1**Leading Efforts to Care for Those with Temporal Needs**

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

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

Members of the bishopric teach the principles of caring for those in need and building self-reliance (see 22.1). They also teach the law of the fast (see 22.2.2). They oversee the gathering of fast offerings (see 34.3.2).

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

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

7.1.5**Records, Finances, and the Meetinghouse**

The bishop oversees ward records, ward finances, and the meetinghouse. This includes his responsibility to teach tithing and the law of the fast and to

conduct tithing declaration (see 34.3.1.2; see also Doctrine and Covenants 107:68).

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

For information about records, see chapter 33. For information about finances, including tithing, see chapter 34. For information about meetinghouses, see chapter 35.

7.2

Differences between Branch Presidencies and Bishoprics

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

- A branch president may be either an elder or a high priest. A bishop must be a high priest.
- A branch president is not set apart as a presiding high priest. However, he presides over the branch and has all of the responsibilities described in 7.1.1.
- A branch president does not need to be married.
- Counselors in a branch presidency may not issue temple recommends (see 26.3.1; for an exception, see 23.6.1).



7.3

Ward Executive Secretary and Assistant Ward Executive Secretaries

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

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

- Meet with the bishopric and prepare agendas as assigned.
- Serve as a member of the ward council and attend ward council meetings. As directed by the bishopric, follow up on assignments made in these meetings.
- Schedule appointments for the bishopric.
- Schedule interviews for youth and adults who need to renew their temple recommends.
- If assigned by the bishopric, coordinate the ward's efforts to help members access Church magazines (see 38.8.7).
- Help the bishopric with seminary and institute matters, such as helping ward members register for classes (see chapter 15).
- Keep a current list of names and addresses of ward members who are in the military. Ensure that ward leaders are aware of these members (see 38.9.2). Inform the stake executive secretary when members plan to enter the military.
- Forward messages received from Church employees and volunteers to the appropriate ward leaders, as instructed by the bishop (see 38.8.9).

One or two assistant ward executive secretaries may be called as needed. They are recommended by the bishopric and called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. These brethren should have a current temple recommend.

7.4

Ward Clerk and Assistant Ward Clerks

The bishop recommends a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to serve as ward clerk. He makes this recommendation to the stake presidency. The clerk should have a current temple recommend. He is called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. He is a member of the ward council.

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

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



8.

Elders Quorum

8.1

Purpose and Organization

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

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

8.1.1

Purpose

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

Each elder is part of an organized group of priesthood holders called an elders quorum. Members of the elders quorum work together to help accomplish God’s work of salvation and exaltation. They serve

others, fulfill priesthood duties, build unity, and learn and live doctrine.

8.1.2

Membership in the Elders Quorum

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

- All elders in the ward.
- All prospective elders in the ward (see 8.4).
- All high priests in the ward, except those who are currently serving in a stake presidency, in a bishopric, on a high council, or as a patriarch. These leaders are members of the stake high priests quorum. For information about the stake high priests quorum, see 6.2.1.1.

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

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

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

8.1.3

Adapting to Local Needs

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

8.2

Participating in God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation

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

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

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

For more information about God's work of salvation and exaltation, study chapter 1.

8.2.1

Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Elders quorum leaders support members in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. They emphasize

exercising faith, repenting, increasing in self-reliance, and making covenants with God by receiving ordinances. Such ordinances include the temple endowment. See 1.2.1.

8.2.1.1

Gospel Learning at Home

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

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



8.2.1.2

Gospel Learning in Quorum Meetings

Elders quorums meet on Sundays for the following purposes:

- Strengthen faith.
- Build unity.
- Strengthen families and homes.
- Coordinate efforts to assist God in His work of salvation and exaltation in the ward.

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

The meeting begins with prayer. Then a member of the presidency leads the quorum members in counseling together for five to ten minutes about relevant challenges, needs, and opportunities. Focusing on the Savior in this counseling will help quorum members build testimonies, receive temple ordinances, keep covenants, and increase discipleship. The elders quorum presidency selects topics to counsel about based on the needs of the quorum members.

Sufficient time should then be given to meaningful gospel instruction and discussion. The focus should be on topics in one or more talks from the most recent general conference. The elders quorum presidency prayerfully selects conference messages for quorum members to discuss. They make these selections based on members' needs.

Hymns may be sung to enhance a lesson.

Meetings should end with a prayer.

The elders quorum and Relief Society may occasionally combine for a Sunday lesson. These meetings are coordinated by the bishopric and the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies.

For more information, see “To Sit in Council.”

8.2.1.3

Activities

Elders quorum presidencies may plan activities. The president oversees activities. He may ask a counselor or another quorum member to take the lead in planning and carrying them out (see 8.3.5). Presidencies discuss activities with the bishop as part of their planning.

Activities should strengthen quorum members' desires to make and keep covenants and give them opportunities to gather and serve together. Activities should help accomplish the purposes of elders quorums (see 8.1 and 8.1.1).

8.2.2

Caring for Those in Need

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

For more information about how members of the elders quorum and Relief Society care for those in need, see 22.6.2.

8.2.2.1

Ministering

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

8.2.2.2

Short-Term Needs

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

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

The elders quorum and Relief Society coordinate efforts to address short-term needs (see 22.3.2). The bishop may provide fast-offering assistance if needed.

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

may be assigned if the president is unavailable. The assigned leader submits the completed form to the bishop for his approval.

For more information, see 22.6.2 and “Welfare Resources” in Leader and Clerk Resources.

8.2.2.3

Long-Term Needs and Self-Reliance

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

If a person or family needs assistance, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents counsel together, as coordinated by the bishop, about how to help (see 22.4).

The elders quorum president, Relief Society president, or another leader helps the person or family develop a Self-Reliance Plan. Ministering brothers or sisters can also help with the plan. Often, other members of the elders quorum or Relief Society have skills or experience that can help. All who assist treat information with confidentiality. For more information, see 22.3.3 and 22.8.

8.2.2.4

When a Ward Member Dies

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

If possible, deceased members who were endowed are buried or cremated in temple clothing. The body of a man may be dressed by his wife or by an endowed male family member. If a family member is not available or would prefer not to do the dressing,

the bishop may ask the elders quorum president to invite an endowed man to dress the body or oversee the dressing. For more information, see 38.5.10.

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

8.2.3

Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

Melchizedek Priesthood holders have a duty to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Doctrine and Covenants 53:3). They do this by sharing the gospel, strengthening new members, and reaching out to those who are less active. See 23.2 and 23.3.

In presidency and quorum meetings, the elders quorum presidency discusses ways the brethren can invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel. See 23.1.1, 23.1.2, and 23.1.3.

The elders quorum president assigns a member of the presidency to help lead efforts to share the gospel in the ward. He works with the assigned member of the Relief Society presidency to coordinate these efforts (see 23.6.2).

This member of the elders quorum presidency may fulfill the role of the ward mission leader. If the bishopric has called a ward mission leader, this presidency member oversees his work. See 23.6.1 and 23.6.3.

The ward mission leader, who may be a member of the elders quorum presidency, leads weekly coordination meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to coordinate inviting all to receive the blessings of the gospel. These meetings include assigned members of the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies, ward missionaries, an assistant in the priests quorum, a presidency member of the oldest Young Women class, and full-time missionaries. See 23.4.

8.2.4**Uniting Families for Eternity**

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

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

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

Presidency members also plan ways to help members increase their understanding of and desire to receive sacred ordinances and make covenants with God in the temple. They encourage brethren to worship in the temple regularly where possible.

The presidency encourages quorum members to learn about their family history. They help new and returning members, recently ordained elders, and newly called missionaries find and prepare ancestors' names for temple ordinances.

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

This member of the elders quorum presidency may fulfill the role of the ward temple and family history leader. If the bishopric has called a temple and family history leader, this presidency member oversees his efforts. See 25.2.2.

The ward temple and family history leader, who may be a member of the elders quorum presidency, leads temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7). These meetings are held regularly. They also include the assigned member of the Relief Society presidency, an assistant in the

priests quorum, a presidency member of the oldest Young Women class, and temple and family history consultants.

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

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

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

8.3.2**High Councilor**

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to represent them in each elders quorum. His responsibilities are outlined in 6.5.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8.3.3.2**Responsibilities**

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

- Serve on the ward council. He serves as (1) a member of the council who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the elders quorum (see 29.2.5).
- Lead the quorum's efforts to participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation (see chapter 1).
- Organize and oversee the service of ministering brothers. Coordinate ministering assignments with the Relief Society presidency, meeting at least quarterly. Seek the bishop's approval for ministering assignments. Hold ministering interviews at least quarterly. See chapter 21.
- Under the bishop's guidance, counsel with adult members of the ward (see 31.1 and 31.3). Only the bishop counsels ward members about matters of worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds. See Counseling Resources. For information about abuse, see 38.6.2.
- With the Relief Society presidency, help lead efforts in the ward to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel (see 8.2.3 and 9.2.3). Oversee the ward mission leader if one is called.
- With the Relief Society presidency, help lead the ward's efforts in temple and family history work (see 8.2.4 and 9.2.4). Oversee the ward temple and family history leader if one is called.
- Coordinate the elders quorum's efforts to strengthen young adult brethren, both single and married. One counselor may be assigned to serve with young single adults (see 14.1.2.2).
- Meet with each quorum member individually at least once a year. Discuss priesthood duties and the well-being of the member and his family.
- Teach quorum members their priesthood duties (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:89). This includes teaching them how to exercise the priesthood in performing ordinances and blessings.
- Help quorum members understand the power, protection, direction, joy, and peace that come from developing a covenant relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
- Oversee and help improve teaching in the quorum (see chapter 17).

- Plan and conduct quorum meetings.
- Oversee elders quorum activities (see 8.2.1.3).
- Help young men and prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood (see 8.4).
- Oversee quorum records, reports, and finances (see LCR.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). A secretary may help (see 8.3.4).

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

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

8.3.3.3

Presidency Meeting

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

The agenda could include the following items:

- Plan how to strengthen quorum members (including prospective elders) and their families.
- Plan how to help accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation.
- Coordinate missionary work and temple and family history work.
- Respond to counsel and assignments from the bishop and stake leaders.
- Respond to assignments from ward council meetings.
- Prayerfully consider ministering assignments.

- Review information from ministering interviews. Plan ways to identify strengths and help meet needs. (See chapter 21.)
- Consider brethren to serve in callings and assignments.
- Plan quorum meetings and activities.

8.3.4

Secretary

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

The secretary's responsibilities could include the following:

- Prepare agendas for presidency meetings and quorum meetings.
- Take notes in meetings and keep track of assignments.
- Schedule ministering interviews (see 21.3).
- Prepare and submit quarterly reports of attendance and the number of ministering interviews held. Attendance reports should include brethren serving in Primary and Young Men.
- Help prepare an annual budget and keep track of expenses.

8.3.5

Additional Callings and Assignments

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

- Elders quorum teachers to teach in Sunday quorum meetings
- A service coordinator to help plan and carry out service to people in need (see 8.2.2.2). Assistants and committee members may also be called.

- An activity coordinator to help plan and carry out elders quorum activities (see 8.2.1.3). Assistants and committee members may also be called.
- Assistant secretaries to help the elders quorum secretary
- Ministering secretaries to organize ministering interviews and help prepare quarterly reports

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

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



8.4

Helping Prospective Elders Prepare to Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood

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

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

The quorum presidency and ministering brothers teach prospective elders about:

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

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

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

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

8.5

Members with Disabilities

The elders quorum presidency gives particular care to members with disabilities. For information about helping these members, see disability [.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ChurchofJesusChrist.org); see also 38.8.27 in this handbook.



9.

Relief Society

9.1

Purpose and Organization

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

9.1.1

Purpose

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

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

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



9.1.2

Membership in Relief Society

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

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

Married women under 18 are also members of Relief Society.

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

9.1.3

Adapting to Local Needs

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

9.2

Participating in God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation

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

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

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

For more information about God's work of salvation and exaltation, study chapter 1.

9.2.1

Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

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

9.2.1.1

Gospel Learning at Home

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

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

9.2.1.2

Gospel Learning in Relief Society Meetings

Relief Societies meet on Sundays for the following purposes:

- Strengthen faith.
- Build unity.
- Strengthen families and homes.
- Coordinate efforts to assist God in His work of salvation and exaltation in the ward.

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

The meeting begins with prayer. Then a member of the presidency leads the sisters in counseling together for five to ten minutes about relevant challenges, needs, and opportunities. Focusing on the Savior in this counseling will help sisters build testimonies, receive temple ordinances, keep covenants, and increase their discipleship. The Relief Society presidency selects topics to counsel about based on the needs of the sisters.

Sufficient time should then be given to meaningful gospel instruction and discussion. The focus should be on topics in one or more talks from the most recent general conference. The Relief Society presidency prayerfully selects conference messages for the sisters to discuss. They make these selections based on sisters' needs.

Hymns may be sung to enhance a lesson.

Meetings should end with a prayer.

The Relief Society and elders quorum may occasionally combine for a Sunday lesson. These meetings are coordinated by the bishopric and the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies.

For more information, see “To Sit in Council.”

9.2.1.3 Activities

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

Activities should strengthen sisters' desires to make and keep covenants and give them opportunities to gather and serve together. Activities should help accomplish the purposes of the Relief Society (see 9.1 and 9.1.1). For information about stake Relief Society activities, see 6.7.1.

9.2.2 Caring for Those in Need

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

For more information about how members of the Relief Society and elders quorum care for those in need, see 22.6.2.



9.2.2.1 Ministering

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

9.2.2.2 Short-Term Needs

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

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

The Relief Society and elders quorum coordinate efforts to address short-term needs (see 22.3.2). The bishop may provide fast-offering assistance if needed.

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

For more information, see 22.6.2 and “Welfare Resources” in Leader and Clerk Resources.

9.2.2.3

Long-Term Needs and Self-Reliance

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

If a person or family needs assistance, the Relief Society and elders quorum presidents counsel together, as coordinated by the bishop, about how to help (see 22.4).

The Relief Society president, elders quorum president, or another leader helps the person or family develop a Self-Reliance Plan. Ministering sisters or brothers can also help with the plan. Often, other members of the Relief Society or elders quorum have skills or experience that can help. All who assist treat information with confidentiality. For more information, see 22.3.3 and 22.8.

9.2.2.4

When a Ward Member Dies

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

If possible, deceased members who were endowed are buried or cremated in temple clothing. The body of a woman may be dressed by her husband or by an endowed female family member. If a family member is not available or would prefer not to do the dressing, the bishop may ask the Relief Society president to invite an endowed sister to dress the body or oversee the dressing. For more information, see 38.5.10.

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

9.2.3

Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

Members of Relief Society have a responsibility to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 18:9). They do this by sharing the gospel, strengthening new members, and reaching out to those who are less active. See 23.2 and 23.3.

In presidency and Relief Society meetings, the Relief Society presidency discusses ways the sisters can invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel. See 23.1.1, 23.1.2, and 23.1.3.

The Relief Society president assigns a member of the presidency to help lead efforts to share the gospel in the ward. She works with the assigned member of the elders quorum presidency to coordinate these efforts (see 23.6.2).

The assigned member of the Relief Society presidency participates in weekly coordination meetings to coordinate inviting all to receive the blessings of the gospel. The ward mission leader, who may be

a member of the elders quorum presidency, leads these meetings. Ward missionaries, an assistant in the priests quorum, a presidency member of the oldest Young Women class, and full-time missionaries attend. See 23.4.

9.2.4

Uniting Families for Eternity

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

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

In presidency and Relief Society meetings, the Relief Society presidency discusses ways the sisters can participate in these efforts. Presidency members also plan ways to help members increase their understanding of and desire to receive sacred ordinances and make covenants with God in the temple. They encourage sisters to worship in the temple regularly where possible.

The presidency encourages sisters to learn about their family history. They help new and returning members, new members of Relief Society, and newly called missionaries find and prepare ancestors' names for temple ordinances.

The Relief Society president assigns a member of the presidency to help lead temple and family history efforts in the ward. She works with the assigned member of the elders quorum presidency to coordinate these efforts (see 25.2.2).

The assigned member of the Relief Society presidency participates in coordination meetings to coordinate temple and family history efforts. These meetings are held regularly. The ward temple and family history leader, who may be a member of the elders quorum presidency, leads temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7). Meetings also include an assistant in the priests quorum, a

presidency member of the oldest Young Women class, and temple and family history consultants.

9.3

Relief Society Leaders

9.3.1

Bishop

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

9.3.2

Relief Society Presidency

9.3.2.1

Calling a Relief Society Presidency

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

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

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

9.3.2.2

Responsibilities

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

- Serve on the ward council. She serves as (1) a member of the council who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Relief Society (see 29.2.5).
- Lead the Relief Society's efforts to participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation (see chapter 1).
- Organize and oversee the service of ministering sisters. Coordinate ministering assignments with the elders quorum presidency, meeting at least quarterly. Seek the bishop's approval for ministering assignments. Hold ministering interviews at least quarterly. See chapter 21.
- Under the bishop's guidance, counsel with adult members of the ward (see 31.1 and 31.3). Only the bishop counsels ward members about matters of worthiness, abuse, and approval to use fast-offering funds. See Counseling Resources. For information about abuse, see 38.6.2.
- With the elders quorum presidency, help lead efforts in the ward to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel (see 8.2.3 and 9.2.3).
- With the elders quorum presidency, help lead the ward's efforts in temple and family history work (see 8.2.4 and 9.2.4).
- Coordinate the Relief Society's efforts to strengthen young adult sisters in the ward, both single and married. One counselor may be assigned to serve with young single adults (see 14.1.2.2).
- Meet with each member of Relief Society individually at least once a year. Discuss the well-being of the sister and her family.
- Teach sisters their covenant responsibilities and blessings, including the blessings that come from God's priesthood power (see 3.5 and 3.6). Help them understand the power, protection, direction, joy, and peace that come from developing a covenant relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

- Oversee and help improve teaching in the Relief Society (see chapter 17).
- Plan and conduct Relief Society meetings.
- Oversee Relief Society activities (see 9.2.1.3).
- Help young women prepare to participate in Relief Society (see 9.4).
- Oversee Relief Society records, reports, and finances (see LCR.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). A secretary may help (see 9.3.3).

The stake Relief Society presidency teaches the ward Relief Society presidency about these responsibilities. They may do this during stake leadership meetings, ward Relief Society presidency meetings, and personal visits with Relief Society presidents (see 29.3.4).

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



9.3.2.3

Presidency Meeting

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

- Plan how to strengthen sisters and their families.
- Plan how to help accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation.

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

9.3.3

Secretary

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

The secretary's responsibilities could include the following:

- Prepare agendas for presidency meetings and Relief Society meetings.
- Take notes in meetings and keep track of assignments.
- Schedule ministering interviews (see 21.3).
- Prepare and submit quarterly reports of attendance and the number of ministering interviews held. Attendance reports should include sisters serving in Primary and Young Women.
- Help prepare an annual budget and keep track of expenses.

9.3.4

Additional Callings and Assignments

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

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

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

As needed, the Relief Society presidency may assign sisters to help with Relief Society efforts in other ways. These assignments could include the following:

- Helping young women progress into Relief Society
- Serving as a specialist for sisters with specific circumstances, such as widows, young adults, or mothers with young children

Sisters with short-term assignments do not need to be called and set apart.



9.4

Helping Young Women Prepare to Participate in Relief Society

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

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

Leaders help young women understand their covenant responsibilities. When it would be helpful to have a young woman minister to a particular sister, she may be assigned as a ministering sister when she is willing, able, and mature. She may be assigned beginning in the year she turns 14. Young women serve as companions to Relief Society sisters (see 21.2.2).

When young adults join Relief Society, the Relief Society presidency gives them opportunities to serve and share their strengths. The presidency also helps them prepare to make and keep sacred temple covenants (see 27.1.1).

9.5

Stake Relief Society Leaders

The stake president calls and sets apart a woman to serve as the stake Relief Society president. If a stake is large enough, she recommends one or two women to serve as counselors and another to serve as secretary. These women are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. For information about the responsibilities of the stake Relief Society presidency and secretary, see 6.7.1 and 6.7.3.

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

The stake Relief Society presidency instructs ward Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities to help lead the ward's efforts for ministering, sharing the gospel, and uniting families for eternity through temple and family history work (see 1.2.4). They do this under the direction of the stake presidency. High councilors are assigned to assist. See 23.1 and 25.2.2.

If the stake has a young single adult committee, a member of the stake Relief Society presidency serves on it. The same is true if the stake has a single adult committee. (See 14.1.1.2.)



9.6**Additional Guidelines and Policies****9.6.1****Members with Disabilities**

The Relief Society presidency gives particular care to members with disabilities. For information about helping these members, see disability. ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also 38.8.27 in this handbook.

9.6.2**Literacy**

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



10.

Aaronic Priesthood Quorums

10.1

Purpose and Organization

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

10.1.1

Purpose

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

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

10.1.2

Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Theme

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

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

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

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

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

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

10.1.3**Quorums**

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

10.1.3.1**Deacons Quorum**

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

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

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

10.1.3.2**Teachers Quorum**

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

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

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

10.1.3.3**Priests Quorum**

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

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

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

10.1.4**Priesthood Keys**

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

10.1.5** Adapting Quorums to Local Needs**

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

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

10.2**Participating in God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10.2.1.2**Gospel Learning**

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

Aaronic Priesthood quorums meet on Sundays to strengthen faith, build unity, strengthen families and homes, and make plans to participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation. The bishopric and youth quorum leaders, supported by advisers, plan Sunday meetings.



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

A quorum member or adult leader then leads gospel instruction. Quorum leaders counsel with advisers about who should teach. Meeting outlines are found in *Come, Follow Me*. Meetings should end with a prayer.

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

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

10.2.1.3

Service and Activities

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

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

 Activities can be planned on the Sample Service and Activity Planner, available on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

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

Youth can benefit from socializing in larger groups. The youth in two or more wards may occasionally meet together for service and activities. Stakes or districts may occasionally plan service and activities for youth (see 20.3.2).

Adult leaders help ensure that activities are safe (see [safety.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org); see also 20.7 in this handbook). At least two responsible adult leaders should be present at all activities (see 10.8.1).

For more information, see

[AaronicPriesthoodQuorums.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.AaronicPriesthoodQuorums.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). See also [JustServe.org](https://www.JustServe.org) where it is available. These resources provide service and activity ideas.

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

- A meeting for youth and their parents near the beginning of the year. It can be held for young men and young women separately or together. It can also be held at the ward or stake level. It is planned and led by the assistants to the bishop in the priests quorum and the presidency of the oldest Young Women class. Young men turning 12 during the year may receive their emblems of belonging during this meeting (see 10.8.3). For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- An Aaronic Priesthood quorum camp (see *Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Camp Guide*). Young men may participate in additional overnight camps, events, and activities throughout the year, where feasible.
-  A ward or stake youth conference or a For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conference. For information about FSY conferences, see [FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). For information about ward and stake FSY callings and responsibilities, see [FSYLeader.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.FSYLeader.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) (for the U.S. and Canada) or the FSY Planning Guide (for all other areas).
- At least one activity emphasizing the principles in *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices*. This event could include both young men and young women. Parents may also be invited.

Age Requirements. With their parents' approval, young men may attend Aaronic Priesthood quorum

activities, including overnight camps, beginning in January of the year they turn 12. They may attend dances, youth conferences, and FSY conferences beginning in January of the year they turn 14. Eighteen-year-olds, including those who have been ordained elders and those who have been endowed, may attend Aaronic Priesthood activities (see 8.1.2 and 10.6).

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

As an exception, if the ward budget does not have enough money to pay for multiday activities, such as camps, leaders may ask participants to help pay for them. However, a young man should not be prevented from participating if he cannot help pay. If more money is still needed, the bishop may authorize one fundraising activity each year (see 20.6.5).

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

See FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for information about funding for FSY conferences.



10.2.1.4

Personal Development

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

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

For more information, see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

10.2.2

Caring for Those in Need

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

10.2.2.1

Ministering

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

10.2.3**Inviting All to Receive the Gospel**

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

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

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

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

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



Missionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org provides additional resources that can help young men as they prepare to serve as missionaries. See chapters 23 and 24 for more information.

10.2.4**Uniting Families for Eternity**

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

- Honor their parents and set an example of Christlike living in their home.
- Prepare to have their own eternal family.
- Have a current temple recommend.
- Prepare to make and keep covenants and receive temple ordinances, including eternal marriage.
- Learn about their extended families and ancestors.
- Identify ancestors who need temple ordinances (see FamilySearch.org).
- Participate in proxy baptisms and confirmations in the temple as often as circumstances allow.
- Participate in family history volunteer activities (see 25.4.3).
- Serve as temple and family history consultants, as called by the bishopric (see 25.2.4).

10.3**Bishopric**

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Mentor quorum presidencies and the bishop’s assistants in the priests quorum. Help them understand and fulfill their duties as leaders. To do this, the bishopric uses the scriptures and “Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women Class Presidency Orientation” (see [AaronicPriesthoodQuorums.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#)). They may also use chapter 4 of this handbook.
- Meet with each young man at least twice a year (see 31.3.1).
- Oversee teaching in the Aaronic Priesthood quorums.
- Help young men prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood (see 10.6).
- Oversee the records, reports, and finances of Aaronic Priesthood quorums.

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

10.4

Youth Quorum Leaders

10.4.1

Calling, Sustaining, and Setting Apart

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

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

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

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

A member of the bishopric announces these callings in sacrament meeting. He does not present them to be sustained.

10.4.2

Responsibilities

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

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

- Get to know and serve each quorum member, including those who do not attend quorum meetings. Be aware of their needs and circumstances.
- Serve on the ward youth council (see 10.4.4).
- Participate in ward efforts to share the gospel and strengthen new and returning members. An assistant in the priests quorum attends coordination meetings (see 23.4).
- Participate in ward temple and family history efforts. An assistant in the priests quorum attends coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).
- Teach quorum members their priesthood duties (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:85–88). Support them in fulfilling those duties.
- Plan and conduct quorum meetings (see 10.2.1.2).
- Plan and carry out quorum service and activities (see 10.2.1.3).

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

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

10.4.3

Quorum Presidency Meeting

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

- Helping accomplish God’s work of salvation and exaltation

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

A Sample Presidency Meeting Agenda is available on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

10.4.4

Ward Youth Council

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

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

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



The ward youth council discusses ways to help others build testimonies, receive saving ordinances,

make and keep covenants, and become followers of Jesus Christ (see Moroni 6:4–5). They counsel together about the needs of the young men and young women in the ward. They may discuss activities to meet these needs. However, detailed planning of activities should happen in quorum or class presidency meetings.

See 29.2.6 for more information about the ward youth council.

10.5

Advisers and Specialists

A member of the bishopric calls and sets apart men to be Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers. These advisers support the bishopric in their responsibilities for Aaronic Priesthood quorums. They give special emphasis to mentoring the young men, teaching them how to lead by inspiration, and helping them become more like Jesus Christ. As needed and practical, more than one adviser may be called for each quorum.

 The bishopric may also call quorum specialists to assist with a particular event, such as a camp, a youth conference, or sports.

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

10.6

Helping Young Men Prepare to Receive the Melchizedek Priesthood

When a young man is 18 or older, he is eligible to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained

an elder if he is prepared and worthy. He counsels with his parents and the bishop to make this decision.

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

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

Those who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood should strive to understand:

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

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

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

10.7

Stake Young Men Leaders

The stake presidency calls and sets apart a high councilor to be the stake Young Men president. The high council members assigned to the Young Women and Primary may be called and set apart to serve as his counselors. Or, if a stake is large enough, other Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the stake may be called as counselors. (See 6.5.)

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

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

For more information about the responsibilities of the stake Young Men presidency and secretary, see 6.7.2 and 6.7.3.

10.8

Additional Guidelines and Policies

10.8.1

Safeguarding Youth

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

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

For information about how these guidelines apply to ministering companions, see 21.2.2.



10.8.2

Young Men with Disabilities

Quorum leaders give special care to young men with disabilities.  For information about helping these young men, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also 38.8.27 in this handbook.

10.8.3

Children and Youth Emblems

Young men receive emblems as part of the Children and Youth program. When a young man becomes a member of his first Aaronic Priesthood quorum, he receives an emblem of belonging from his quorum leaders. He also receives a copy of *Personal Development: Youth Guidebook*. This could be done when quorum leaders meet with him to welcome him to the quorum. It could also be done at an annual meeting for youth and their parents (see 10.2.1.3).

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

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

For more information about emblems, see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

10.8.4

Gathering Fast Offerings

In wards that are geographically concentrated, the bishop may direct Aaronic Priesthood holders to visit members each month and invite them to contribute fast offerings. In making this decision, the bishop considers the number of Aaronic Priesthood holders available, their safety, and the blessing to members who might not otherwise contribute (see 34.3.2).

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

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



11.

Young Women

11.1

Purpose and Organization

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

11.1.1

Purpose

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

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

11.1.2

Young Women Theme

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

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

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

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

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

11.1.3**Classes**

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

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

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



Classes are referred to by the unifying title of “Young Women.” If a ward has more than one class, age-groups are used to distinguish classes.

11.2**Participating in God’s Work of Salvation and Exaltation**

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

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

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

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

11.2.1**Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ****11.2.1.1****Roles of Parents and Leaders**

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

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

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

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

11.2.1.2**Gospel Learning**

Young Women leaders and class presidencies encourage young women and their families to learn the gospel at home. Leaders study the gospel and

share with the young women what they learn. They invite class members to share at church what they are learning at home.

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

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

A class member or adult leader then leads gospel instruction. Class presidencies counsel with adult leaders about who should teach. Meeting outlines are found in *Come, Follow Me*. Meetings should end with a prayer.

If a ward has more than one Young Women class, they meet separately. However, they may meet together when there is a special need. Young women and young men may occasionally combine for a Sunday lesson, as coordinated by the bishopric and the Young Women presidency.

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

11.2.1.3

Service and Activities

Class presidencies, supported by adult leaders, plan service and activities. These should help accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation. Service and activities should build testimonies, strengthen families, foster class unity, and provide opportunities to bless others. They should be balanced among four areas of personal growth: spiritual, social, physical, and intellectual.

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

📅 Activities can be planned on the Sample Service and Activity Planner, available on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

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

Youth can benefit from socializing in larger groups. The youth in two or more wards may occasionally meet together for service and activities. Stakes or districts may occasionally plan service and activities for youth (see 20.3.2).

Adult leaders help ensure that activities are safe (see safety.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also 20.7 in this handbook). At least two responsible adult leaders should be present at all activities (see 11.6.1).

For more information, see YoungWomen.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. See also JustServe.org where it is available. These resources provide service and activity ideas.

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

- A meeting for youth and their parents near the beginning of the year. It can be held for young men and young women separately or together. It can also be held at the ward or stake level. It is planned and led by the assistants to the bishop in the priests quorum and the presidency of the oldest Young Women class. Young women turning 12 during the year may receive their emblems of belonging during this meeting (see 11.6.3). For more information, see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

- A Young Women camp (see *Young Women Camp Guide*). Young women may participate in additional overnight camps, events, and activities throughout the year, where feasible.
- 📌 A ward or stake youth conference or a For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conference. For information about FSY conferences, see FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. For information about ward and stake FSY callings and responsibilities, see FSYLeader.ChurchofJesusChrist.org (for the U.S. and Canada) or the FSY Planning Guide (for all other areas).
- At least one activity emphasizing the principles in *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices*. This event could include both young men and young women. Parents may also be invited.

Age Requirements. With their parents' approval, young women may attend Young Women activities, including overnight camps, beginning in January of the year they turn 12. They may attend dances, youth conferences, and FSY conferences beginning in January of the year they turn 14. Eighteen-year-olds, including those who have been endowed, may attend Young Women activities (see 9.1.2 and 11.4).

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

As an exception, if the ward budget does not have enough money to pay for multiday activities, such as camps, leaders may ask participants to help pay for them. However, a young woman should not be prevented from participating if she cannot help pay. If more money is still needed, the bishop may authorize one fundraising activity each year (see 20.6.5).

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



📌 See FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for information about funding for FSY conferences.

11.2.1.4

Personal Development

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

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

For more information, see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

11.2.2

Caring for Those in Need

Young women should have regular opportunities to serve others in and with their families, during youth activities, and on their own. Ideas for service are available at ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Where it is available, JustServe.org suggests opportunities for service in the community.

11.2.2.1**Ministering**

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

11.2.3**Inviting All to Receive the Gospel**

Young women invite all to receive the gospel as they “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9). Some ways they can do this are listed below:

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

Parents and leaders can help young women prepare to share the gospel throughout their lives. Some ways they can do this are listed below:

- Encourage young women to gain a personal testimony of Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the restoration of His gospel.
- Provide opportunities to serve in the Church.
- Provide opportunities to teach the gospel in class meetings and other settings.

If young women desire to serve full-time missions, parents and leaders help them prepare. This includes

teaching them about the blessings and expectations of full-time missionary work.

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

 [Missionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.Missionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) provides additional resources that can help young women who desire to prepare to serve a mission. See chapters 23 and 24 for more information.

11.2.4**Uniting Families for Eternity**

Young women can help unite families for eternity in many ways. Some of these ways are listed below:

- Honor their parents and set an example of Christlike living in their home.
- Prepare to have their own eternal family.
- Have a current temple recommend.
- Prepare to make and keep covenants and receive temple ordinances, including eternal marriage.
- Learn about their extended families and ancestors.
- Identify ancestors who need temple ordinances (see [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org)).
- Participate in proxy baptisms and confirmations in the temple as often as circumstances allow.
- Participate in family history volunteer activities (see 25.4.3).
- Serve as temple and family history consultants, as called by the bishopric (see 25.2.4).

11.3**Ward Young Women Leadership****11.3.1****Bishopric**

The bishop's foremost responsibility is to care for the rising generation in his ward. He and his counselors learn their names and understand their home circumstances. They meet with each young woman at least twice a year (see 31.3.1).

The bishop has responsibility for the ward Young Women organization. He meets regularly with the Young Women president. He reports on Young Women matters in bishopric meetings.

The bishop and his counselors regularly participate in Young Women meetings, service, and activities. If there are multiple Young Women classes, the bishop may assign himself and his counselors to work with specific classes.

11.3.2**Adult Young Women Presidency**

The bishop calls and sets apart an adult woman to serve as the ward Young Women president. If the unit is large enough, she recommends one or two adult women to be called as her counselors (see chapter 30). The bishopric considers her recommendations and extends the callings.

⬆️ In a small unit, the Young Women president may be the only called adult leader in the Young Women organization. In this case, she works with parents to organize instruction and activities for the young women. She also ensures that at least two responsible adults are present at all meetings and activities. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called.

If a branch does not have a Young Women president, the Relief Society president may organize instruction for the young women until a Young Women president is called.



The Young Women president has the following responsibilities. Her counselors assist her.

- Serve on the ward council. She serves as (1) a ward council member who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Young Women (see 29.2.5).
- Serve as a member of the ward youth council (see 29.2.6).
- Minister to individual young women.
- Submit recommendations to the bishopric for sisters to serve in Young Women.
- Teach other Young Women leaders and class presidencies their responsibilities.
- Counsel with young women about challenges that do not require the bishop or involve abuse (see 32.3, 31.1, 31.3.1, and 38.6.2).
- Mentor class presidencies in their leadership responsibilities. Each class is assisted and overseen by a specific member of the Young Women presidency.
- Support young women who serve as companions to adult sisters in ministering (see 21.2.2).
- Regularly hold Young Women presidency meetings and meet with the bishop.
- Oversee the records, reports, budget, and finances of the Young Women organization.

11.3.3**Secretary**

If the unit is large enough, the Young Women president recommends to the bishop an adult sister to serve as Young Women secretary. She may have the following responsibilities:

- Help the Young Women presidency prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.
- Instruct class secretaries and help them keep attendance records.
- Using LCR, work with the Relief Society secretary to keep attendance records for adult sisters serving in Young Women.
- Help the Young Women presidency prepare a budget and account for expenses.

11.3.4**Class Presidency and Secretary****11.3.4.1****Calling, Sustaining, and Setting Apart**

Each Young Women class should have a class presidency. The Young Women presidency may recommend young women to serve as class presidents. Members of the bishopric prayerfully counsel together to determine whom to call.

A member of the bishopric calls a young woman to serve as a class president. 🕒 When there are enough young women to serve, she prayerfully considers class members to recommend as counselors and a secretary. The bishopric considers her recommendations and extends the callings.

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

After extending these callings, a member of the bishopric presents the young women to their class

for sustaining. The bishop or an assigned counselor sets the young women apart.

A member of the bishopric announces these callings in sacrament meeting. He does not present them to be sustained.

Shortly after class presidencies are set apart, a member of the bishopric should orient them to their responsibilities. See "Aaronic Priesthood Quorum and Young Women Class Presidency Orientation" at YoungWomen.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also chapter 4 of this handbook.

11.3.4.2**Responsibilities**

Class presidents serve on the ward youth council (see 11.3.4.4). Class presidencies also have the following responsibilities:

- Lead the class's efforts to participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation (see chapter 1).
- Get to know and serve each young woman, including those who do not attend class meetings. Be aware of their needs and circumstances.
- Participate in ward efforts to share the gospel and strengthen new and returning members. A presidency member of the oldest Young Women class attends coordination meetings (see 23.4).
- Participate in ward temple and family history efforts. A presidency member of the oldest Young Women class attends coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).
- Organize the youth to minister by welcoming visitors and members as they enter the chapel (see 29.2.1.3).
- Plan and conduct Sunday class meetings (see 11.2.1.2).
- Plan and carry out class service and activities (see 11.2.1.3).
- Regularly hold class presidency meetings (see 11.3.4.3).

 When class secretaries are called, they prepare agendas for meetings, take notes, and keep track of attendance.

Members of the Young Women presidency regularly teach class presidencies about their responsibilities (see 11.3.2). Class advisers and specialists should actively help (see 11.3.5 and 11.3.6).

11.3.4.3

Class Presidency Meeting

Young Women class presidencies meet regularly. The class president conducts these meetings. The adult Young Women leaders assigned to support the class presidency also attend. During these meetings, leaders counsel together and seek revelation about the Lord's will for their class. The agenda could include discussion of the following items:

- Helping accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation
- Serving class members, with special attention to supporting new members and reaching out to less-active members
- Reaching out to those of other faiths and beliefs
- Planning class meetings, service, and activities
- Leadership instruction from adult Young Women leaders or a member of the class presidency

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

11.3.4.4

Ward Youth Council

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

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

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

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

See 29.2.6 for more information about the ward youth council.

11.3.5

Advisers

The Young Women presidency may recommend that the bishopric call Young Women advisers. Each adviser works with a specific age-group of young women.

Advisers have the following responsibilities:

- Help the Young Women presidency with their responsibilities.
- Support and guide class presidencies as they learn and carry out their responsibilities.
- Teach Sunday lessons as needed. Help young women who have been invited to teach a lesson to effectively prepare and teach.
- Attend class activities.
- Attend ward Young Women presidency meetings when invited.

At least two responsible adult women should be present at each class meeting and activity. Advisers must complete the training at ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org (see 11.6.1).



11.3.6

Specialists

Where needed, the Young Women presidency may recommend that the bishopric call specialists to assist with a particular event, such as a camp, a youth conference, or sports.

All specialists serve under the direction of the ward Young Women presidency.

Specialists must complete the training at ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org (see 11.6.1).

11.4

Helping Young Women Prepare to Join Relief Society

A young woman may join the Relief Society when she is 18. By age 19, each young woman should be fully participating in Relief Society. In some cases, a young woman may come into Relief Society earlier than her 18th birthday. Each young woman counsels with her parents and the bishop to decide what will best help her continue to strengthen her faith in Jesus Christ.

Parents and Young Women and Relief Society leaders work together to help each young woman successfully progress into Relief Society. These leaders provide ongoing opportunities for young women and Relief Society sisters to make connections and develop relationships.

11.5

Stake Young Women Leaders

A member of the stake presidency calls an adult woman to serve as the stake Young Women president. If a stake is large enough, she recommends one or two adult women to serve as counselors and another to serve as secretary. These women are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. For information about the responsibilities of the stake Young Women presidency and secretary, see 6.7.1, 6.7.1.2, and 6.7.3.

A counselor in the stake presidency has responsibility for the Young Women organization in the stake. He also has responsibility for the work of the stake Young Women presidency. He also instructs bishops in their responsibilities for young women.

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to work with the stake Young Women presidency (see 6.5).

The stake Young Women presidency and secretary serve on the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.9).



11.6**Additional Guidelines and Policies****11.6.1****Safeguarding Youth**

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

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

For information about how these guidelines apply to ministering companions, see 21.2.2.

11.6.2**Young Women with Disabilities**

Class presidencies give special care to young women who have disabilities.  For information about helping these young women, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also 38.8.27 in this handbook.

11.6.3**Children and Youth Emblems**

Young women receive emblems as part of the Children and Youth program. Every young woman should receive an emblem of belonging from her class presidency when she becomes a member of Young Women. She also receives a copy of *Personal Development: Youth Guidebook*. This could be done when the class presidency and adult Young Women leaders meet with her to welcome her to Young Women. It could also be done at an annual meeting for youth and their parents (see 11.2.1.3).

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

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

For more information about emblems, see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



12.

Primary

12.1

Purpose and Organization

The Primary organization helps God’s children prepare to return to His presence. As they embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, they will “be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works” (Mosiah 5:15).

12.1.1

Purposes

Primary helps children:

- Feel their Heavenly Father’s love and learn about His plan of happiness.
- Learn about Jesus Christ and His role in Heavenly Father’s plan.
- Learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Feel, recognize, and act on the influence of the Holy Ghost.
- Prepare for, make, and keep sacred covenants.
- Participate in God’s work of salvation and exaltation.

12.1.2

Primary Theme

The Primary theme is a reminder of the blessings of serving in Primary:

“All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isaiah 54:13; 3 Nephi 22:13).

12.1.3

Nursery

Nursery helps children 18 months to 3 years feel Heavenly Father’s love and learn about His plan of happiness.

Nursery leaders love, teach, and minister to the children. They also ensure their safety and well-being.

At least two people should be called for each nursery class. If the nursery leaders are not husband and wife, they should be the same gender.

Nursery lasts the entire time scheduled for Primary. For more information, see 12.1.4 and 12.3.5.

12.1.4

Classes

Primary classes help children feel Heavenly Father’s love and learn about His plan of happiness. Lessons follow the *Come, Follow Me* curriculum. On fifth Sundays, teachers are encouraged to use “Appendix B: For Primary—Preparing Children for a Lifetime on God’s Covenant Path.”

Primary classes are organized by age and the number of teachers available. Units with fewer children or teachers may combine two or more age-groups into one class. In larger units, Primary leaders may form more than one class for an age-group and more than one nursery.

When there are enough children, they are divided into classes based on their age on December 31 of the previous year, as shown on the following chart:

Age on December 31 of the Previous Year	Class on January 1
2	Nursery (children join nursery at 18 months)
3	Sunbeam
4	CTR 4
5	CTR 5
6	CTR 6
7	Valiant 7
8	Valiant 8
9	Valiant 9
10	Valiant 10

Children generally advance from Primary into Young Women or the deacons quorum in January of the year they turn 12. They may receive a certificate of advancement. These certificates may be generated in Leader and Clerk Resources.

In some circumstances, an 11-year-old may not be ready to leave Primary. The bishop, parents, and child counsel together about the timing.

Children may not complete Primary before January of the year they turn 12. Nor may young men be ordained deacons before that time.

12.1.5

Singing Time

Singing time helps children feel Heavenly Father’s love and learn about His plan of happiness. As children sing about gospel principles, the Holy Ghost testifies of their truthfulness. The words and music will stay in the children’s minds and hearts throughout their lives.

Singing time is different from class time. During singing time, children learn as they actively engage in singing. Primary music leaders teach gospel principles, but they do so primarily through music.

The Primary presidency and music leader select songs for each month to reinforce gospel principles the children are learning in their classes and at home. Songs that reinforce these principles are also suggested in *Come, Follow Me*.



For more information, see “Instructions for Singing Time and the Children’s Sacrament Meeting Presentation” in *Come, Follow Me*. See also 12.1.6 and 12.3.4 in this handbook.

12.1.6

Children’s Sacrament Meeting Presentation

The annual children’s sacrament meeting presentation is held during the last few months of the year. The children present what they have learned at home and at church during the year. They help the congregation focus on Heavenly Father, the Savior, and Their teachings.

The Primary presidency and music leader prayerfully plan the presentation. The bishopric gives direction. Children may sing, give talks, and share stories, scriptures, or testimonies.

⬆️ The presentation may take all or part of the meeting time after the sacrament. Units with few children may invite children’s family members to participate.

Because of the sacredness of sacrament meeting, the presentation should not include visuals, costumes, or media presentations.

For more information, see “Instructions for Singing Time and the Children’s Sacrament Meeting Presentation” in *Come, Follow Me*.

12.1.7

Temple and Priesthood Preparation Meeting

Parents have the primary responsibility to teach their children about the temple and the priesthood. To support them, the Primary presidency plans a Temple and Priesthood Preparation meeting each year. The bishopric gives direction. The meeting is for children in the Valiant 10 class. Parents are invited. This meeting has the following purposes:

- Help children understand priesthood purposes, responsibilities, and blessings.
- Help children prepare to make and keep sacred covenants.
- Teach children the blessings and joy of participating in uniting families for eternity through temple and family history work (see 1.2.4).
- Help boys prepare to receive the Aaronic Priesthood.
- Help children prepare to receive a temple recommend.

The meeting may be held during Primary on Sunday, at another time on Sunday, or at a different time. A member of the bishopric conducts. At least one member of the Primary presidency attends.

⬆️ If a unit has few children, the meeting may be held under the direction of the stake presidency. Some or all of the wards in the stake meet together.

For more information, see Temple and Priesthood Preparation on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

12.1.8

Baptism and Confirmation Preparation Meeting

Parents have the primary responsibility to teach their children about baptism and confirmation. To support them, the Primary presidency plans a

Baptism and Confirmation Preparation meeting near the beginning of each year. The bishopric gives direction.

This meeting is for children in the Valiant 7 class and their parents and teachers. The meeting has the following purposes:

- Help children understand the covenant they make at baptism with Heavenly Father and the blessings they receive as they live that covenant.
- Help children learn the importance of becoming a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Help children understand the gift of the Holy Ghost and how it can bless them.
- Help children understand that when they partake of the sacrament, they renew their baptismal covenant.

The meeting may be held during Primary on Sunday, at another time on Sunday, or at a different time. A member of the bishopric conducts. At least one member of the Primary presidency attends.

If a unit has few children, the meeting may be held under the direction of the stake presidency. Some or all of the wards in the stake may meet together.

12.2

Participating in God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation

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

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

Primary helps children, families, leaders, and teachers participate in this work. For more information

about God's work of salvation and exaltation, study chapter 1.

12.2.1

Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

12.2.1.1

Roles of Parents and Leaders

Parents are responsible to teach their children the gospel and help them live it (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28). Primary leaders and teachers support parents in this responsibility as follows:

- Ensure that Primary lessons, singing time, and service and activities help children follow the example of the Savior.
- Help children prepare for baptism and confirmation.
- Help boys prepare for priesthood ordination.
- Help children prepare to receive a temple recommend and temple ordinances.
- Teach children about the blessings of sharing the gospel, including full-time missionary service.

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

Parents and leaders strive to be good examples to children. They encourage children in their efforts to become more like Jesus Christ. The Children and Youth program is a resource to help children ages 8–11 (see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



12.2.1.2**Gospel Learning**

Primary leaders and teachers encourage children and their families to learn the gospel at home. These leaders and teachers study the gospel and share with the children what they learn. They invite children to share at church what they are learning at home.

Sunday Primary meetings help children fulfill the purposes of Primary (see 12.1.1). A member of the Primary presidency conducts the opening. The music leader conducts singing time. Primary teachers teach children during classes.

Primary meetings for children ages 3–11 are held every Sunday for 50 minutes while adults and youth attend their classes. The schedule is as follows:

Part of Meeting	Length
Opening (prayer, scripture or Article of Faith, and talk—all given by children)	5 minutes
Singing time	20 minutes
Transition to classes	5 minutes
Classes and closing prayer	20 minutes

 In wards with many children, Primary leaders may divide children into two groups. One group is in classes while the other group is in singing time. Then the two groups change places. Leaders adjust the time as needed.

Nursery for children ages 18 months to 3 years lasts 50 minutes. The following schedule may be used. Leaders adjust it according to the needs of the children.

Part of Meeting	Length
Welcome by nursery leader and opening prayer by nursery child, if possible	5 minutes
Activity (snack, play with simple toys and games, read, and so on)	25 minutes
Lesson from <i>Behold Your Little Ones</i> nursery manual	10 minutes
Singing time	10 minutes
Closing prayer	

12.2.1.3**Service and Activities**

Activities for All Children. Primary presidencies may occasionally hold activities for all children ages 3 to 11. These activities help children participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation. Activities should be fun and engaging. They build testimonies, strengthen families, and foster personal growth. For general activity guidelines, see chapter 20.

Primary presidencies may also organize an annual community service activity. Where possible, this

activity focuses on serving children. Valiant-age children can help plan it. The activity provides children an opportunity to invite friends and ward members to join in community service.

Valiant Activities. Beginning in January of the year they turn 8, children may begin attending Valiant activities. Most Valiant activities are held at times other than Sundays or Monday evenings. Adult leaders help ensure that activities are safe (see safety .ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also 20.7 in this handbook). At least two responsible adult leaders must be present at all activities (see 12.5.1).

📌 The following guidelines may be adapted to local circumstances:

- Valiant activities are held two times a month when possible. They can be held more or less frequently. Leaders consider family circumstances, travel distance and costs, and safety.
- Generally, children are organized by age-groups. Boys and girls normally meet separately. However, they may combine for certain activities or in locations with few children.
- Leaders may choose to plan and hold annual day camps for these children. Valiant activities, including day camps, do not include over-night stays.

All supplies and activities, including day camps, are paid for by the ward budget. Travel and expenses should not be excessive.

The bishopric ensures that the budget and activities for boys and girls in Primary are sufficient and equitable. Budget is allocated according to the number of children.

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

12.2.1.4

Personal Development

In their efforts to become more like the Savior, children—beginning in the year they turn 8—are invited to set goals to grow spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually (see Luke 2:52). With help from parents, children seek inspiration to discover what to work on. They make plans, act on their plans, and reflect on what they learn. Leaders offer support as needed. However, they should not track the children's goals or progress.

Beginning in the year they turn 8, children are encouraged to complete at least one goal in each

of the four areas each year. They can use *Personal Development: Children's Guidebook* to set and record goals.

For more information, see [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#).

12.2.2

Caring for Those in Need

Children should have regular opportunities to serve others in and with their families and during Primary activities. Ideas for service can be found at [ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#). Where it is available, [JustServe.org](#) suggests opportunities for service in the community.

12.2.3

Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

Children can invite all to receive the gospel in many ways. Some of these ways are listed below:

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

12.2.4**Uniting Families for Eternity**

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

- Honor their parents and set an example of Christlike living in their home.
- Prepare to have their own eternal family.
- Strive to be worthy to receive a temple recommend at the appropriate age.
- Prepare to make and keep covenants and receive temple ordinances, including eternal marriage.
- Learn about their extended families and ancestors.
- Identify ancestors who need temple ordinances (see FamilySearch.org).
- Prepare to participate in proxy baptisms and confirmations in the temple.
- Participate in family history volunteer activities with a family member (see 25.4.3).

**12.3****Ward Primary Leadership****12.3.1****Bishopric**

The bishop's foremost responsibility is for the rising generation in his ward. The bishop or an

assigned counselor meets regularly with the Primary president.

The bishop and his counselors respond promptly to recommendations from the Primary presidency for those to be called to serve in Primary. The bishopric works with the presidency to maintain continuity in teachers and music leaders. When possible, members in these callings should serve long enough to establish loving, trusted relationships with the children. Such relationships help nourish testimonies in the hearts of children.

The bishop and his counselors regularly attend Primary. They also learn the names and understand the home circumstances of each child in the ward.

12.3.2**Primary Presidency**

The bishop calls and sets apart an adult woman to serve as the ward Primary president. If the unit is large enough, she recommends one or two adult women to be called as her counselors (see chapter 30). The bishopric considers her recommendations and extends the callings.

The Primary presidency receives orientation and ongoing support from the stake Primary presidency.

In a small unit, the Primary president may be the only called leader in Primary. In this case, she works with parents to organize lessons, singing time, and activities. She also ensures that at least two responsible adults are present at all meetings and activities. If the unit is large enough, additional callings might be filled in this order: counselors, music leader, teachers and nursery leaders, secretary, and activity leaders.

If a branch does not have a Primary president, the Relief Society president may help parents organize instruction for children until a Primary president is called.

The Primary presidency helps parents prepare children to enter and progress along the covenant path. This is one of their most important responsibilities.

To accomplish this, the Primary president may assign a member of the presidency to help parents prepare their children to be baptized and confirmed. The Primary president may assign another presidency member to help parents with temple and priesthood preparation for their children.

These presidency members make parents aware of resources in the Gospel Library that can help. See, for example, “Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God’s Covenant Path” in *Come, Follow Me*. Presidency members may work with ministering brothers and sisters, teachers, and others to support parents.

The Primary president has the following additional responsibilities. Her counselors assist her.

- Serve on the ward council. She serves as (1) a ward council member who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Primary. She helps the ward council know the name and home circumstances of each child in order to enhance ministering to children and families. See 29.2.5.
- Regularly hold Primary presidency meetings and meet with the bishop or his assigned counselor.
- Attend weekly missionary coordination meetings (see 23.4) and ward temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).
- Submit recommendations to the bishopric for adult men and women to serve in Primary.
- Help the ward council know of children who will be eligible to be baptized in the next year (see 18.7.1.1).
- Help plan baptismal services for children of record when asked (see 18.7.2).
- Plan and conduct the opening of Sunday Primary meetings.
- Minister to individual children, teachers, and leaders in Primary.
- Teach Primary leaders and teachers their responsibilities and support them in those responsibilities by orienting them to their callings (see *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* [2016], 38).
- Help Primary leaders and teachers during class time, singing time, and transitions.
- Visit Primary classes and arrange for teachers to attend teacher council meetings.
- Help introduce the Children and Youth program to children turning 8 and to their parents. This could occur in their homes or their Primary class (see 12.5.7).
- Oversee the records, reports, budget, and finances of Primary.

12.3.3

Secretary

If the unit is large enough, the Primary president recommends to the bishopric an adult woman to serve as the secretary. She has the following responsibilities:

- Help the Primary presidency prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.
- Work closely with teachers and leaders to keep accurate attendance records.
- Using LCR, work with elders quorum and Relief Society secretaries to keep attendance records for adults serving in Primary.
- Make sure the Primary presidency is aware of:
 - New children and visitors.

- Children coming into nursery and children moving from nursery to the Sunbeam class.
- Children who are eligible for baptism.
- Children who will advance from Primary.
- Assign children to give prayers, scriptures, and talks during the opening of Sunday Primary meetings (under the presidency's direction). She also notifies parents.
- Help the Primary presidency prepare a budget, account for expenses, and track Children and Youth materials.

12.3.4

Music Leader and Pianist

The music leader and pianist teach children the gospel of Jesus Christ through music during singing time. Music reinforces weekly study of the scriptures as outlined in *Come, Follow Me*. 📖 The following resources may be used:

- *Come, Follow Me*
- *Instructions for Singing Time and the Children's Sacrament Meeting Program*
- *Children's Songbook*
- *Hymns*
- Primary Music Collections on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- "Primary Singing Time—Music Can Teach Doctrine" (MediaLibrary. [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org))

The bishopric must approve the use of any other music in Primary.



📶 If a pianist or piano is not available, leaders may use recordings from the following sources:

- Sacred Music app
- Gospel Library app
- [Music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.Music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- CDs at [store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

Children can also sing without accompaniment.

The music leader can help with music for nursery when invited. An additional music leader may be called if needed.

The music leader works with the Primary presidency to help the children prepare for the annual children's sacrament meeting presentation (see 12.1.6).

See Singing Time on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) for more ideas and resources.

12.3.5

Teachers and Nursery Leaders

It is a sacred privilege to teach children. Jesus Christ taught, "Behold your little ones" and "feed my lambs" (3 Nephi 17:23; John 21:15). By following these invitations, Primary leaders love and teach children in the Savior's way.

The Primary presidency recommends to the bishopric men and women to serve as Primary teachers and nursery leaders. The bishopric considers these recommendations and extends the callings. These

members are called to teach and minister to specific age-groups of children.

Primary teachers teach from *Come, Follow Me* (ages 3–11). On fifth Sundays, they are encouraged to teach lessons from “Appendix B: For Primary—Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God’s Covenant Path.”

Nursery leaders teach from *Behold Your Little Ones*.

Teachers and nursery leaders follow the principles in *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* and chapter 17 of this handbook.

When adults teach children in Church settings, at least two responsible adults should be present. The two adults could be two women, two men, or a married couple. If this is not possible, leaders should combine classes. Leaders and teachers must complete the training at ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. (See 12.5.1.)

Youth should not teach in Primary, including as substitutes.

Primary teachers and nursery leaders stay with the children throughout Primary, including singing time and transitions. During singing time, teachers participate with their classes. Teachers should remain with young children after Primary until a family member comes for them.

Teachers and nursery leaders attend quarterly teacher council meetings (see 13.4).

12.3.6

Valiant Activity Leaders

Valiant activity leaders minister to children as they plan service and activities beginning in January of the year children turn 8 (see 12.2.1.3). Service and activities focus on God’s work of salvation and exaltation. They are fun and engaging. They build testimonies, strengthen families, and foster personal growth.

Valiant activity leaders can be the children’s Primary teachers. They can also be other members the Primary presidency recommends and the bishopric calls. At least two leaders attend each activity. Leaders can be two women, two men, or a married couple. Leaders must complete the training at ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. (See 12.5.1.)

12.4

Stake Primary Leaders

The stake presidency calls an adult woman to serve as stake Primary president. If a stake is large enough, she recommends one or two adult women to serve as counselors and another to serve as secretary. These women are called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. For information about the responsibilities of the stake Primary presidency and secretary, see 6.7.1, 6.7.1.3, and 6.7.3.

A counselor in the stake presidency has responsibility for Primary in the stake. He also has responsibility for the work of the stake Primary presidency. He also instructs bishops in their responsibilities for Primary.

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to work with the stake Primary presidency (see 6.5).



12.5**Additional Guidelines and Policies****12.5.1****Safeguarding Children**

When adults are interacting with children in Church settings, at least two responsible adults should be present. It may be necessary to combine classes to make this possible.

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

12.5.2**Children Who Have Special Needs**

When a child has a long illness, disability, or special need, Primary leaders talk with parents and the bishopric. Together they make a plan to support the family and help the child participate in Primary.

Children with disabilities typically attend their regular Primary class. As necessary, additional teachers may be called to assist.

Children with disabilities or other special needs typically complete Primary at the beginning of January in the year they turn 12. Some children may not complete Primary on this schedule. The bishop and parents work together to decide what is best for each child.



For more information, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also 38.8.27 in this handbook.

12.5.3**Men Serving in Primary**

The bishopric and Primary presidency should remember the positive influence of worthy men serving in Primary. Men may serve as teachers, nursery

leaders, music leaders and pianists, and Valiant activity leaders.

12.5.4**Restroom Safety**

Leaders and teachers should encourage parents to take their children to the restroom before Primary. During Primary, a young child must be taken to the restroom by a parent or legal guardian. Leaders and teachers should not take children into the restroom.

12.5.5**Role-Playing Activities**

Leaders and teachers should be careful when acting out sacred events in Primary. Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost are not portrayed. Children may portray the Savior only in a Nativity scene. For additional guidelines, see 20.5.6.

12.5.6** CTR Rings**

When children begin the CTR 4 class, the Primary presidency and their Primary teacher remind them to “choose the right.” These leaders also give each child a green CTR ring.

12.5.7**Introducing the Children and Youth Program**

At the beginning of each year, the bishop, one of his counselors, or members of the Primary presidency may visit the home or Primary class of each child who will turn 8 during the year. They introduce children and their parents to the Children and Youth program. Each child receives the emblems of belonging and a copy of *Personal Development: Children's Guidebook*. These resources are available at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

For more information, see ChildrenandYouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



13.

Sunday School

13.1

Purpose

The Sunday School helps accomplish God’s work of salvation and exaltation. It does this by helping God’s children learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sunday School leaders, teachers, and classes:

- Strengthen faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ by teaching “the doctrine of the kingdom” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:77).
- Support home-centered and Church-supported gospel learning and teaching.
- Help members teach in the Savior’s way.

13.2

Ward Sunday School Leadership

13.2.1

Bishopric

The bishopric oversees the Sunday School. Usually the bishop assigns one of his counselors to fulfill this responsibility under his direction.

This assigned counselor meets with the Sunday School president regularly. They counsel about the needs of the Sunday School, how it is accomplishing its purpose, and the responsibilities outlined in 13.2.2.2.

13.2.2

Sunday School President

13.2.2.1

Calling a Sunday School President

The bishop calls and sets apart a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to be the ward Sunday School president. They discuss whether counselors should be called. If counselors are needed, and if there are enough men to serve in these positions, the Sunday School president may recommend one or two counselors. If the bishopric approves, a member of the bishopric calls them.

A member of the bishopric presents Sunday School presidency members in sacrament meeting for sustaining by ward members. A member of the bishopric also sets them apart.

⬆️ In a large ward, the bishopric may call and set apart a man to be the Sunday School secretary. The Sunday School president may recommend whom to call. The secretary can help the presidency keep track of assignments or attendance if desired.

13.2.2.2

Responsibilities

The Sunday School president has the following responsibilities. If he has counselors, they assist him.

- Serve on the ward council. He serves as (1) a member of the council who helps address needs in the ward and find solutions and (2) a representative of the Sunday School (see 29.2.5).
- Oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching at home and at church.
- Organize Sunday School classes, with the bishopric's approval (see 13.3). Recommend to the bishopric adult members to serve as Sunday School teachers.
- Support, encourage, and instruct Sunday School teachers. Help them become more effective gospel teachers by following the principles in the scriptures and *Teaching in the Savior's Way*. Encourage them to study *Teaching in the Savior's Way*.
- Lead teacher council meetings as guided by the bishop (see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 38–39).
- Encourage teachers to reach out to members who do not attend classes.
- Work with teachers to keep attendance records. Report attendance quarterly to the ward clerk or in LCR or Member Tools. A secretary, if called, can help with this responsibility.

13.2.3

Sunday School Teachers

The Sunday School president may recommend members to serve as Sunday School teachers. If the

bishopric approves, a member of the bishopric calls them, presents them in sacrament meeting for sustaining by ward members, and sets them apart.

Sunday School teachers get to know class members, including those who do not attend classes. Teachers support members in their efforts to learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To prepare to teach, Sunday School teachers use the scriptures and *Come, Follow Me*. They follow the principles in *Teaching in the Savior's Way* and chapter 17 of this handbook.

Sunday School teachers attend quarterly teacher council meetings (see 17.4).

13.3

Sunday School Classes

Sunday School classes are held on the first and third Sundays of the month. They last 50 minutes. Classes begin and end with a prayer.

With the bishopric's approval, the Sunday School president organizes classes for adults and youth. If he has counselors, they assist him.

The number of classes depends on (1) how many members are in the ward and (2) the number and size of rooms that are available. Usually, smaller classes make it easier for more people to participate actively and learn. The ward council can help the Sunday School president decide how many Sunday School classes to organize.

Young men and young women typically start attending a youth Sunday School class at the beginning of the year they turn 12. They may start attending an adult class when they turn 18.

The Sunday School president organizes as many youth classes as are needed. Youth should be assigned to classes according to their age. If there are few youth in an age-group, they may be combined in a class with a similar age-group. They stay in that same class until January of the next year.

At least two responsible adults should be present in each youth class. The adults could be two men, two women, or a married couple. To meet this requirement, classes may need to be combined.

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



13.3.1 Small Branches

In a small branch, the Sunday School president may be the only Sunday School leader and teacher. He teaches a Sunday School class for all youth and adults in the branch.

13.3.2 Sunday School Classes for Specific Groups

As needed, the Sunday School president may organize Sunday School classes for specific groups. The curriculum for these classes is *Come, Follow Me*.

Groups that could benefit from their own Sunday School class include:

- Young single adults.
- Members who do not speak the ward's primary language.
- New members, returning members, and those who are learning about the Church.
- Other groups as noted by the bishop.

13.4

Improving Learning and Teaching in the Ward

Ward leaders are responsible for improving learning and teaching in their organizations. This includes orienting newly called teachers (see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 40). They can ask the ward Sunday School president for help if needed.

Teacher council meetings are held quarterly during the 50-minute class time on Sunday (see 17.4). Their purpose is to help improve learning and teaching. *Teaching in the Savior's Way* is the main resource for these meetings.

The ward council oversees and schedules teacher council meetings. A member of the Sunday School presidency usually leads the meetings. However, the bishopric may ask another member to lead them.

For more information, see “For Leaders—Helping Teachers Succeed” in *Teaching in the Savior's Way* (pages 38–40).

13.5

Improving Learning and Teaching in the Home

Parents are responsible for teaching the gospel to their children.

The ward council may organize teacher council meetings for parents during the 50-minute class time on Sunday. These meetings are led by a member of the Sunday School presidency or someone else the bishopric assigns. *Teaching in the Savior's Way* is the main resource for these meetings.

For more information about teacher council meetings for parents, see 17.5.



13.6

Stake Sunday School Leaders

The stake president assigns one of his counselors to oversee the Sunday School in the stake. He also calls and sets apart a high councilor to be the stake Sunday School president.

The responsibilities of the stake Sunday School president are outlined in 6.7.1 and 6.7.3. If counselors are called, they assist him.

13.7

Additional Guidelines

13.7.1

Members with Disabilities

Sunday School teachers give special care to class members who have disabilities. For information about teaching members who have disabilities, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; see also 38.8.27 in this handbook.

13.7.2

Resource Center

Some meetinghouses have a resource center (library) to help members learn and teach the gospel. The ward Sunday School president oversees the resource center. Wards that share a meetinghouse also share the resource center. Seminary and institute classes and FamilySearch centers share the resource center with the wards.

In meetinghouses that have a resource center, the bishopric calls a resource center specialist. The Sunday School president may recommend someone to call. Or the bishopric could ask a member of the Sunday School presidency to be the specialist. This person:

- Organizes and cares for the resources.
- Helps leaders, teachers, and other members obtain and use these resources.

The Sunday School president consults with the resource center specialist to determine if an annual budget is needed for the resource center. He then makes a recommendation to the bishopric.

The resource center specialist should attend sacrament meeting each week and other Sunday meetings regularly. If necessary, the bishopric may call an assistant to the specialist.

For more information, see “Resource Centers” at ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



14.

Single Members

14.0

Introduction

The Savior invites all to come unto Him and belong to His Church (see 2 Nephi 26:24). Men and women who have not yet married or who are divorced or widowed make up a significant portion of Church membership. It is important for all to find hope through the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Ether 12:4). The following eternal truths can help develop such hope:

- Scriptures and latter-day prophets confirm that everyone who is faithful in keeping gospel covenants will have the opportunity for exaltation.
- The precise time and manner in which the blessings of exaltation are bestowed have not all been revealed. But they are nonetheless assured (see Mosiah 2:41).
- Waiting upon the Lord implies continued obedience and spiritual progress toward Him (see Isaiah 64:4).
- God offers eternal life to all of His children. All who qualify for the Savior’s gracious gift of

forgiveness and live His commandments will receive eternal life. (See Mosiah 26:30; Moroni 6:8.)

- Confidence in these assurances is rooted in faith in Jesus Christ. By His grace, all things pertaining to mortality are set right (see Alma 7:11–13).

God needs all members to help in His work of salvation in their wards and stakes (see 1 Corinthians 12:12–27). As directed by the Spirit, single members are called to leadership and teaching positions. Leadership callings may include serving in the following positions:

- Ward and stake organization presidencies
- Elders quorum presidencies
- Bishopric counselors
- High councilors
- Stake presidency counselors

In this chapter:

- “Single members” refers to all adult members of the Church who are not currently married.

- “Young single adults” refers to those ages 18–35.
- “Single adults” refers to those ages 36 and older.

14.1

Single Members in Geographic Units

Most single members attend a geographic unit with members of all ages. They have opportunities to serve, teach, lead, and associate with people in many circumstances.

14.1.1

Stake Leadership

14.1.1.1

Stake Presidency

The involvement of the stake presidency is particularly important in engaging single members in God’s work of salvation and exaltation.

The stake president may assign one of his counselors and a high councilor to support single adults. He may also assign a counselor and a high councilor to support young single adults. He may also ask the stake Relief Society president to assign a presidency member to support single adults and young single adults. The same leaders could be assigned to both groups.

The stake presidency pays particular attention to young single adults—as they do all members of the rising generation.

The stake presidency determines whether activities for young single adults should take place at the ward level, the stake level, or some combination of both. Activities for single adults take place at the stake and multistake level. (See chapter 20.)

When the number of single members in a location is sufficient, stake presidents may recommend

organizing a young single adult ward or a single adult ward (see 14.3).

A stake (or a group of adjacent stakes) may not have enough single members to create a young single adult or single adult ward. In this situation, the Area Presidency may authorize a stake president to invite all of these members to be members of a designated geographic ward. This allows single adults or young single adults to serve and worship together. The Area Presidency counsels with their assigned member of the Presidency of the Seventy and the Quorum of the Twelve.

14.1.1.2

Stake Young Single Adult and Single Adult Committees

Single members serve God’s children by participating in His work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2 and 14.2). To help them do so, the stake presidency creates a young single adult committee. This committee is made up of the young single adult leaders from each ward.

A young single adult man and young single adult woman are called to lead the committee. They serve on the stake council.

If there are not enough young single adults to form a committee in a stake, a group of neighboring stakes may create a committee with the approval of the Area Presidency.

The stake presidency may also create a single adult committee. It is made up of a few single adults from each ward. A single adult man and single adult woman are called to lead the committee. They serve on the stake council.

If there are not enough single adults to form a committee in a stake, a group of neighboring stakes may create a committee with the approval of the Area Presidency.

Committees seek to support members through friendship and opportunities to participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation (see 14.2). They plan opportunities for gospel learning and for service and activities.

The committees meet as needed. The assigned member of the stake presidency and stake Relief Society presidency and the assigned high councilor may attend these meetings to provide support.

Young single adult committees coordinate with campus institute programs, where available.

Normally the single adult and young single adult committees function separately from one another.

14.1.2

Ward Leadership

14.1.2.1

Bishopric

The bishopric is key to engaging single members in God's work of salvation and exaltation. They work with the ward council to identify meaningful callings and assignments for single members. They recognize and strive to help meet the needs of single parents.

Generally, the bishopric supports single members as they support all members of the elders quorum and Relief Society. However, because of their foremost responsibility to the rising generation, the bishopric also does the following:

- A member of the bishopric meets with each young single adult at least once a year.
- The bishopric receives regular updates on the well-being of young single adults. The elders quorum president and Relief Society president discuss the needs of young single adults in ward council meeting. The leaders of the young single adult committee may be invited to attend.

- The bishopric may organize a ward young single adult committee (see 14.1.2.4). (Single adult committees for those ages 36 and older are organized at the stake level.)

14.1.2.2

Elders Quorum and Relief Society Presidency Members Assigned to Young Single Adults

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidents may each assign a member of their presidencies to support young single adults. These presidency members learn of the strengths of young single adults and help meet their needs.

The elders quorum president and Relief Society president may report on these efforts in ward council meeting. If there is a ward young single adult committee, the leaders of this committee are invited to attend and report on their efforts.

These presidency members support the ward young single adult committee if one is organized (see 14.1.2.4).

14.1.2.3

Young Single Adult Leaders

In a ward with many young single adults, the bishopric may call a young single adult man and woman as young single adult leaders. Their responsibilities include:

- Helping young single adults participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation (see 14.2).
- Serving on the stake young single adult committee.
- Leading the ward young single adult committee if one is formed.
- Meeting regularly with the elders quorum presidency and Relief Society presidency. In these meetings, they discuss the strengths of young

single adults and how to help meet their needs. They also focus on ministering to young single adults.

- Attending ward council meetings when invited.

14.1.2.4

Ward Young Single Adult Committee

Some wards have many young single adults. In these wards, the bishop may feel that the young single adult leaders could be assisted by a ward young single adult committee. (Single adult committees are organized at the stake level. See 14.1.1.2.)

Committee members include:

- Ward young single adult leaders.
- Additional young single adults invited by the bishopric.
- The members of the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies assigned to support young single adults.

14.2

Participating in God's Work of Salvation and Exaltation

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

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

Single members engage in this work at home and at church. They participate in elders quorums and Relief Societies. They serve in callings and assignments, including ministering. Wards and stakes may

plan optional activities that are specifically for single members who choose to participate (see 14.2.1.3).

14.2.1

Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

14.2.1.1

Home Evening and Gospel Study

Leaders or members who desire to participate may organize one or more home evening groups for single adults and other groups for young single adults. Generally, those who participate do not have children at home. In stakes with few single members, home evening groups may cross ward boundaries.

In addition, single members may choose to gather virtually or in person for home gospel study. *Come, Follow Me* may be a resource.

All young single adults are encouraged to enroll in institute (see 15.2).

14.2.1.2

Sunday School Classes

Under the direction of the bishop, the ward Sunday School president may organize a Sunday School class for young single adults (see 13.3.2).

14.2.1.3

Activities

Under the direction of ward or stake leaders, young single adults may plan and participate in activities specifically for them. These activities can take place at the ward or stake level. Examples could include:

- Temple visits.
- Family history work.
- Sharing the gospel.

- Community service.
- Music and cultural events.
- Sports.

Under the direction of stake leaders, single adults may plan similar activities at the stake level.

Area Seventies may work with stake presidents to create committees to plan multistake activities for single members.

Funding for activities comes from stake or ward budgets. When multistake or area activities are held, leaders ensure a fair allocation of funding among stakes.

Funding for activities should be consistent with the policies in 20.2.6. As an exception, members may pay some costs when multistake or area events are held. Leaders ensure that all can participate.

For additional activity guidelines, see 20.2 and 20.3.



14.2.2

Caring for Those in Need

14.2.2.1

Service

Like all disciples of Jesus Christ, single members have regular opportunities to serve others individually and as groups. Community service is among the

foremost ways that young single adults are spiritually strengthened.

Service activities can focus on:

- Welfare and self-reliance.
- Family history.
- Community outreach.
- Sharing the gospel.
- Strengthening new and returning members.
- Humanitarian needs locally or elsewhere.

Where it is available, JustServe.org suggests service opportunities for both individuals and groups.

14.2.2.2

Ministering

Each single brother is assigned ministering brothers. Each single sister is assigned ministering sisters and ministering brothers. Assignments are made to individuals, not to groups or apartments. (See chapter 21.)

14.2.3

Inviting All to Receive the Gospel

Single members have an opportunity to invite all to receive the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They do this by sharing the gospel, strengthening new and returning members, and reaching out to those who are not participating. (See chapter 23.)

Some young single adults move frequently. Young single adults may periodically organize activities to find and welcome other young single adults in the stake. These activities may also be done with neighboring stakes.

Young single adults may be particularly helpful in teaching with and supporting full-time missionaries.

14.2.4**Uniting Families for Eternity**

As individuals and as groups, single members can help unite families for eternity. For example, they might:

- Prepare to make covenants with God by receiving ordinances, including the temple endowment (see 27.2.2).
- Serve as temple workers (see 25.5).
- Participate in ordinances for the deceased.
- Learn about their extended families and ancestors.
- Identify ancestors who need temple ordinances (see FamilySearch.org).
- Serve as temple and family history consultants (see 25.2.4).
- Participate in family history volunteer activities (see 25.4.3).

14.3** Young Single Adult Wards and Stakes and Single Adult Wards**

Most single members attend geographic wards. As an exception, where many single members live in close proximity, priesthood leaders may recommend creating the following units. These units must meet the criteria in chapter 37.

- A young single adult ward for those ages 18–35 (see 37.2)
- A young single adult stake for those ages 18–35 (see 37.3)
- A single adult ward for those ages 36–45 (see 37.5)

In areas with large numbers of young single adults, priesthood leaders may recommend creating:

- A young single adult ward for those ages 18–25.
- A young single adult ward for those ages 26–35.

These units use the regular program of the Church as much as possible. They follow the instructions in this handbook.

Eligible members may choose to be members of the young single adult ward or the single adult ward, where available. Or they can choose to be members of their geographic ward.

Membership in a young single adult ward or a single adult ward is temporary:

- When a single member marries, he or she becomes a member of a geographic ward.
- When a member of a young single adult ward reaches age 36, he or she becomes a member of a single adult ward (if one exists where he or she lives) or a geographic ward.
- When a member of a single adult ward reaches age 46, he or she becomes a member of a geographic ward.

When transitioning between wards, the member and his or her leaders communicate with the leaders of the geographic ward. Leaders of the new ward assign ministering brothers and sisters. They plan for a calling or assignment that helps the member feel welcome and engaged in the work of the ward.

14.4**Additional Guidelines and Policies****14.4.1****Gathering Places**

A gathering place is a designated location where young single adults and their friends can gather for fellowship and to participate in any of the following:

- Gospel learning, including institute

- Self-reliance courses, educational opportunities, and support groups
- Service and activities
- Sharing the gospel and community outreach
- Temple and family history efforts
- Other Church programs

All designated gathering places must be approved by the Area Presidency. Gathering places are overseen by stake presidents and bishops. They are established in existing Church facilities, such as a meetinghouse or institute building. Stake presidents who desire to establish a gathering place for young single adults should contact the Area Presidency.

14.4.2

Monday Nights

As an exception, young single adult wards and single adult wards may hold activities on Monday nights, including in Church buildings (see 20.5.3).

14.4.3

Additional Elders Quorums and Relief Societies

With approval from the stake president, the bishop of a ward for single members may organize more than one Relief Society and elders quorum. (See 8.1.3 and 9.1.3.)

14.4.4

Members Called to Serve in Units for Single Members

Only the bishop and the stake president in units for single members need to be called from a geographic ward. As directed by the Spirit, many other callings can be filled by those in the unit for single members.

Those called away from their geographic ward to serve in a unit for single members usually serve no

more than three to five years in these units. This time period includes cumulative service in different callings.

Leaders of geographic stakes should be supportive when members are considered to serve in units for single members. However, leaders counsel together to understand members' circumstances.

Callings may be extended to individuals or to couples. In some cases, one spouse may need to remain in a geographic ward while the other serves in a ward for single members.

The membership records of bishops and their families normally remain in their geographic ward while they serve in wards for single members. The same is true for those who serve in the stake presidency or bishopric, on the high council, or in the stake Relief Society presidency if these members are called to serve outside of their geographic ward. These members and their families pay tithing and offerings in their geographic ward. They also go to their geographic ward and stake leaders for temple recommend interviews.

14.4.5

School Breaks

If possible, young single adult wards function during school breaks. Multiple young single adult wards may meet together if needed. In such cases, wards keep separate records, reports of attendance, and finances.

14.4.6

Interviews in Young Single Adult Wards and Stakes

In most cases, the stake president interviews members who are:

- Receiving their own endowment.
- Being sealed to a spouse.

- Being recommended to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.
- Being recommended to serve missions.

As an exception, the stake president of a young single adult stake may authorize his counselors to conduct some of these interviews.

In large young single adult wards, bishops may authorize counselors to conduct interviews for members who are:

- Receiving their own endowment.
- Being sealed to a spouse. (See 26.3.3.)

14.4.7

Participation in Activities for Single Members

A person who is separated from his or her spouse or is seeking a divorce participates in a geographic ward. He or she may attend a ward or activities for single members when his or her divorce decree is final.



14.4.8

Single Parents

Members and leaders recognize and strive to help meet the specific needs of single parents. Single parents with children at home normally attend their geographic ward. Doing so allows the children to be active in Primary and youth organizations. Single parents may attend the activities of a young single adult or single adult ward.



15.

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

15.0

Introduction

Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) assists parents and Church leaders in helping youth and young adults deepen their conversion to Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. This is done by supporting a home-centered study of the scriptures and the words of living prophets and other Church leaders.

Seminary and institute programs are governed by policies established by the Church Board of Education. This board is directed by the President of the Church. The stake presidency carries out these programs in the stake and wards. Stake and ward leaders regularly review the participation of their youth in seminary and institute programs.

An S&I representative is assigned to each stake to help leaders administer S&I programs.

15.1

Seminary

Seminary is a four-year program in which youth study the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the

scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets. Seminary students are generally 14–18 years old.

Classes are held on weekdays when school is in session. The number of days the seminary class meets each week may be adapted to local conditions. (See Seminary Class Options for more information.) Classes or online assignments should take approximately four hours per week to complete.

The bishopric, youth leaders, and quorum and class presidencies encourage every youth to participate fully in seminary. The bishopric encourages parents to register their children each year before seminary classes start. For more information, see Seminary Registration on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

A local board of education may be established where several stakes with seminary classes (including home-study classes) are in close proximity and have common concerns and challenges. See [seminary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

15.1.1**Teachers**

Seminary teachers should be Church members who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a testimony of His restored gospel. They should live the principles they teach and work well with youth. When possible, teachers should have a current temple recommend.

A member of the stake presidency counsels with the bishop, stake supervisor, and S&I representative about potential seminary teachers. A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor calls, sets apart, and releases stake seminary teachers and stake supervisors. After the person has been called and set apart, the S&I representative trains and supports him or her.

To protect teachers and students, two adults should be present in the building or home where a seminary class is being taught. An additional teacher may be called, or another responsible adult may be assigned to be present. The second adult could be the teacher's spouse or the parent of a class member. He or she should be the same gender as the teacher, unless that person is an adult member of the teacher's family. A teacher should never be alone with a student unless the student is the teacher's child. This applies in any setting, such as a classroom, building, virtual gathering, or vehicle.

15.1.2**Buildings, Equipment, and Materials**

Stake and ward leaders ensure that locations such as meetinghouses or members' homes are available for seminary classes. Buildings or rooms should not be rented for seminary classes. If classes meet in a meetinghouse, teachers should have access to the equipment in the resource center.

The S&I representative provides materials for teachers and students for each class. Students should bring their own scriptures, printed or digital.

15.1.3**Class Officers and Activities**

A seminary teacher may choose class officers, such as a president, vice presidents, and a secretary. The teacher first contacts each student's parents and bishop for approval. Class officers are not sustained or set apart. They can help the teacher with routine classroom duties and encourage other students to attend and participate.

Seminary teachers should not provide activities outside of normal class time or away from the classroom. Exceptions require approval from local priesthood leaders.

15.1.4**Credit and Graduation**

Seminary students can learn more effectively and deepen their conversion if they regularly attend class, participate, and study the scriptures outside of class. As they do these things, they also earn seminary credit each year and can graduate from seminary.

 Some students may have difficulty earning seminary credit due to reading challenges or other reasons. The teacher may adapt the requirements to the needs of these students. The S&I representative can request adaptations for an entire program. These adaptations require approval from S&I administration.

To graduate from seminary, a student must earn four years of credit and receive an ecclesiastical endorsement from a bishopric member. This endorsement verifies that a student is worthy and committed to living the standards of the gospel.

Each year the stake holds a seminary graduation. This event is planned by a stake presidency member or a high councilor. The S&I representative may help. For more information, see *A Guide to Seminary and Institute Graduation Exercises*.

15.1.5

Released-Time Seminary

In some areas of the United States and Canada, local laws allow students to leave school and attend seminary during school hours. The Church Board of Education approves where this type of seminary is used. For more information, see Released-Time Seminary on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

15.2

Institute

Institute provides weekday gospel study classes that strengthen faith and testimony in Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. Stake leaders ensure that institute is available for all young adults ages 18–35.

All young single adults ages 18–35 should be encouraged to attend institute classes, whether they are attending school or not. Married young adults are also welcome to attend.

Classes are divided by ages 18–25 and 26–35 unless the number of participants is insufficient.

BYU Pathway students, including those over 35, are required to attend institute. Pathway students ages 18–35 may choose to attend online or in-person classes. Students over 35 should attend online classes.

See Stake Institute for guidelines on the following:

- Establishing and operating stake-based institute classes
- Planning for facilities
- Calling teachers
- Recognizing student achievement

15.2.1

Other Religion Classes

Stake presidencies may desire to provide religion classes for adults ages 36 years and older. These classes are not a function of S&I and are not called institute classes. However, institute curriculum materials may be used for them.



15.3

Church Schools and Church Educational System

For information on Church primary and secondary schools, BYU–Pathway Worldwide, and institutions of higher education, see CES.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Information about completing ecclesiastical endorsements for students to attend these schools is also provided there.

Additionally, information about employment ecclesiastical clearances through the CES Ecclesiastical Clearance Office can be found at help.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



16.

Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ

God's work of salvation and exaltation focuses on four divinely appointed responsibilities (see 1.2). The first of these is living the gospel of Jesus Christ. We live the gospel as we:

- Exercise faith in Jesus Christ.
- Repent daily.
- Make covenants with God as we receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.
- Endure to the end by keeping those covenants.

Living the gospel encompasses the other aspects of God's work of salvation and exaltation. These include caring for those in need, inviting all to receive the gospel, and uniting families for eternity.



17.

Teaching the Gospel

We teach the gospel to help people strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. We seek to help people become more like the Savior, receive His power in their lives, and ultimately obtain eternal life. When the word of God is taught and received by the Spirit, it has the power to change hearts and inspire conversion. It has a “more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than . . . anything else” (Alma 31:5).

17.1

Principles of Christlike Teaching

When teaching the gospel, parents, teachers, and leaders follow the example of Jesus Christ, who is the Master Teacher. Teaching in the Savior’s way is a sacred trust and responsibility.

Leaders share the following principles of Christlike teaching with teachers in their organizations. These principles are explained in more detail in *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*.

17.1.1

Love Those You Teach

Everything the Savior does is an expression of His love (see 2 Nephi 26:24). Leaders and teachers follow His example by showing love for those they teach. They pray for those they teach by name, seek to connect with and understand them, and focus on individual needs. They reach out to members of their class or quorum who do not attend.

17.1.2

Teach by the Spirit

To inspire people to have faith in Jesus Christ, teachers must teach by the Spirit. Teachers seek the Spirit’s guidance as they prepare and teach, and they strive to live worthy of His influence each day.

17.1.3

Teach the Doctrine

The Savior taught His Father’s doctrine. Following the Savior’s example, teachers focus on the essential,

saving truths of the gospel. They teach using the scriptures, the teachings of latter-day prophets, and approved curriculum materials. Teachers lead inspired discussions and ensure that their teaching is edifying and doctrinally sound. Approved materials are listed in the current Instructions for Curriculum on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

17.1.4

Invite Diligent Learning

Teachers encourage members to be responsible for their own learning. They support members in their efforts to learn the gospel individually and with their families. They invite members to share what they are learning and to act on it. A person's faith grows when he or she actively participates in learning the gospel and applies its principles in daily life.

17.2

Home-Centered Gospel Learning and Teaching

To become converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, each member of the Church is responsible to learn the gospel for himself or herself. In addition, parents are responsible to teach the gospel to their children. Gospel learning and teaching should be centered in the home. Church leaders and teachers encourage and support home-centered gospel learning and teaching.

Leaders and teachers encourage members to seek their own inspiration about how to study and teach the gospel. Their main resources should be the scriptures and general conference messages. Supporting resources can include *Come, Follow Me* and Church magazines.

17.3

Leaders' Responsibilities

Leaders are responsible for teaching and learning in their organizations. Some of the ways they fulfill this responsibility are outlined below.

- Set an example by learning the gospel and teaching it in the Savior's way.
- Ensure that the teaching in their organizations builds faith and is doctrinally correct.
- If leaders are members of the ward council, discuss with other council members how to improve gospel learning and teaching in the ward. The bishop may invite the Sunday School president to lead these discussions.
- As needed, recommend names to the bishopric of ward members to call as teachers in their organizations, following the guidelines in 30.1.
- Meet with newly called teachers and help them prepare for their callings (see *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 40).
- Give ongoing support to the teachers in their organizations. Talk to the teachers regularly about their efforts to build faith in the people they teach. If needed, ask the Sunday School president for help.

17.4

Teacher Council Meetings

In teacher council meetings, teachers counsel together about principles of Christlike teaching. They also counsel about how to improve gospel learning and teaching. They use *Teaching in the Savior's Way* as a resource.

Teacher council meetings are held quarterly during the 50-minute class time on Sunday.

- Meetings for priesthood, Relief Society, and Young Women teachers can be held on a first or third Sunday.
- Meetings for Sunday School teachers can be held on a second or fourth Sunday.

The Primary presidency counsels with a member of the bishopric to determine how to strengthen teaching in the Primary. The Sunday School president can help as needed. Some options are listed below:

- Primary teachers could attend teacher council meetings with teachers from other organizations.
- Separate teacher council meetings could be held for Primary teachers. These meetings could be held during the 20-minute Primary singing time. As an alternative, they could be held before or after regular Sunday meetings or on another day during the week.
- Members of the Primary presidency could visit Primary classes and counsel with teachers afterward about teaching in the Savior's way.

The ward council oversees and schedules teacher council meetings. A member of the Sunday School presidency usually leads the meetings. However, the bishopric may ask another member to lead them.

For more information, see “Teacher Council Meetings” in *Teaching in the Savior's Way* (pages 38–39).

17.5

Teacher Council Meetings for Parents

The ward council may organize teacher council meetings for parents to help them improve gospel teaching in the home. Like other teacher council meetings, these are held during the 50-minute class time on Sunday.

In these meetings, parents counsel together about how to apply principles of Christlike teaching as they teach their children. They use *Teaching in the Savior's Way* as a resource, including the section titled “Home and Family” (pages 30–31). They can also discuss the teaching and scripture study suggestions in *Come, Follow Me*, such as the section titled “Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime on God's Covenant Path.”

The ward council oversees and schedules teacher council meetings for parents. They determine whether to invite specific parents to attend or to extend an invitation to all parents in the ward.

A member of the Sunday School presidency usually leads the meetings. However, the bishopric may ask another member to lead them.

For more information, see “Teacher Council Meetings” in *Teaching in the Savior's Way* (pages 38–39).



18.

Performing Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings

18.0

Introduction

Ordinances and blessings are sacred acts performed by the authority of the priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ. As priesthood holders perform ordinances and blessings, they follow the Savior's example of blessing others. Priesthood ordinances and blessings provide access to God's power (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:20).

Ordinances and blessings are to be performed with faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and according to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Leaders ensure that they are performed with proper approval (where necessary), with the required priesthood authority, in the proper way, and by worthy participants (see 18.3).

For policies on priesthood ordinances and blessings, see 38.2.

18.1

Ordinances of Salvation and Exaltation

The priesthood includes the authority to administer gospel ordinances that are necessary for salvation and exaltation. People make sacred covenants with God as they receive these ordinances. The ordinances of salvation and exaltation are listed below:

- Baptism
- Confirmation and gift of the Holy Ghost
- Conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordination to an office (for men)
- Temple endowment
- Temple sealing

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

- For baptism and confirmation (38.2.8.1)

- For ordination to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood (38.2.9.7)
- For the temple endowment and sealing (27.2.1.3 and 27.3.1.2)

If a child who was born in the covenant dies before age 8, no ordinances are needed or performed. If the child was not born in the covenant, the only ordinance he or she needs is to be sealed to parents. Because of the Savior's Atonement, all children who die before age 8 are "saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven" (Doctrine and Covenants 137:10; see also Moroni 8:8–12).

18.2

Other Ordinances and Blessings

Other ordinances and blessings make it possible for God's children to receive His power, healing, comfort, and guidance. These ordinances and blessings are listed below:

- Naming and blessing children
- The sacrament
- Conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordination to an office (for young men and men)
- Setting apart members to serve in callings
- Consecrating oil
- Administering to the sick
- Blessings of comfort and counsel, including father's blessings
- Dedicating homes
- Dedicating graves
- Patriarchal blessings by ordained patriarchs



18.3

Participation in an Ordinance or Blessing

Those who perform or participate in an ordinance or blessing must have the necessary priesthood authority and be worthy. Generally, the standard of worthiness is that associated with holding a temple recommend. However, as guided by the Spirit and the instructions in this chapter, bishops and stake presidents may allow fathers and husbands who hold the necessary priesthood office to perform or participate in some ordinances and blessings even if they are not fully temple worthy. A priesthood holder who has unresolved serious sins should not participate.

Generally, only priesthood leaders and other priesthood holders who are close family members and friends participate in an ordinance or blessing.

The person receiving the ordinance, family members, and priesthood leaders counsel together to determine who and how many will participate. This decision should be made well before the ordinance is performed.

When only one or two priesthood holders participate, each of them places both hands lightly on the person's head. When several participate, they stand in a circle around the person receiving the ordinance or blessing. Each one places his right hand lightly on the person's head (or under the baby) and

his left hand on the shoulder of the brother to his left. One acts as voice to perform the ordinance or give the blessing.

Performing or receiving some ordinances and blessings requires approval from a presiding leader who holds the necessary priesthood keys (see 3.4.1).

As needed, approval may be given by a counselor he authorizes. See the following charts. References to stake presidents apply also to mission presidents. References to bishops apply also to branch presidents.

Which Leaders Hold Keys to Give Approval to Perform or Receive the Ordinances of Salvation and Exaltation?

Ordinance	Who Holds Keys
Baptism	Bishop (for 8-year-old children and for members of record ages 9 and older whose baptism was delayed due to intellectual disabilities) Mission president (for converts)
Confirmation and gift of the Holy Ghost	Bishop (for 8-year-old children and for members of record ages 9 and older whose baptism was delayed due to intellectual disabilities) Mission president (for converts)
Conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordination to an office (for men)	Stake president
Temple endowment	Bishop and stake president
Temple sealing	Bishop and stake president

Which Leaders Hold Keys to Give Approval to Perform or Receive Other Ordinances and Blessings?

Ordinance or Blessing	Who Holds Keys
Naming and blessing children	Bishop
The sacrament	Bishop
Conferral of the Aaronic Priesthood and ordination to an office (for young men and men)	Bishop
Setting apart members to serve in callings	See 30.8
Consecrating oil	Approval not needed
Administering to the sick	Approval not needed
Blessings of comfort and counsel, including father's blessings	Approval not needed

Ordinance or Blessing	Who Holds Keys
Dedicating homes	Approval not needed
Dedicating graves	The priesthood leader who presides over the service
Patriarchal blessings	Bishop

18.4

Ordinances for Minor Children

Guidelines for obtaining approval from parents or guardians for a minor child to receive the following ordinances and blessings are provided in the sections listed below:

- For naming and blessing: 38.2.7.2 and 38.2.7.3
- For baptism and confirmation: 38.2.8.2
- For ordination to a priesthood office: 38.2.9.2

For questions about the legal rights of parents or guardians, the bishop or stake president seeks legal advice from the Church's Office of General Counsel or from the area office (see 38.8.23).

18.5

Ordinances Performed for and by Persons Who Have Disabilities

See 38.2.4 and 38.2.5.

18.6

Naming and Blessing Children

“Every member of the church of Christ having children is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:70).

Children are typically named and blessed during fast and testimony meeting in the ward where their parents reside. This is true regardless of whether the

child's parents are married. If the parents do not reside together, the ordinance is usually performed in the ward where the child will primarily live.

Exceptions to the typical time and place of a child's blessing must be approved by the bishop. Possible exceptions include blessings not on fast Sunday, especially in wards with many new babies, and blessings in another ward where the child's grandparents or many family members live. The bishop may also authorize Melchizedek Priesthood holders to bless the child in the home. A member of the bishopric presides.

For information about naming and blessing children in special circumstances, see 38.2.7.

18.6.1

Who Gives the Blessing

The ordinance of naming and blessing a child is performed by Melchizedek Priesthood holders, in conformity with Doctrine and Covenants 20:70. Priesthood leaders inform members of this before their children are named and blessed. Leaders should make every effort to avoid embarrassment or offense to individuals or families.

A person or family who desires that a child receive a name and a blessing coordinates the ordinance with the bishop. He holds the priesthood keys for naming and blessing children in the ward.

A bishop may allow a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to name and bless his child even if the father is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3). Bishops encourage fathers to prepare themselves to bless their own children.

To act as voice in blessing a child, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the presiding leader. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

18.6.2 Instructions

Under the direction of the bishopric, Melchizedek Priesthood holders gather in a circle to name and bless a child. They place their hands under a baby, or they place their hands lightly on an older child's head. Then the one acting as voice:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father as in prayer.
2. States that the blessing is being performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives the child a name.
4. Addresses the child.
5. Gives a blessing to the child as guided by the Spirit.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

18.6.3 Child Record Form and Blessing Certificate

Before a child is blessed, a clerk uses Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR) to prepare a Child Record Form. After the blessing, he creates the membership record in that system and prepares a Blessing Certificate. This certificate is signed by the bishop and given to the child's parents or guardians.

The name on the membership record and certificate should match the birth certificate, civil birth registry, or current legal name.

18.7

Baptism

Baptism by immersion in water by one having authority is necessary for a person to become a member of the Church and receive the Holy Ghost. All who seek exaltation must follow the example of the Savior by receiving these ordinances. (See Matthew 3:13–17; John 3:3–7; Acts 2:37–38; 2 Nephi 31:5–21.)

For information about baptism in special circumstances, see 38.2.8.



18.7.1

Approval for a Person to Be Baptized and Confirmed

18.7.1.1

Children Who Are Members of Record

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for baptizing 8-year-old members of record in a ward. These children should be baptized and confirmed on or as soon after their 8th birthday as is reasonable (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:27). These are children for whom Church membership records already exist (see 33.6.2). When they reach age 8, the bishop makes sure they have every opportunity to accept the gospel and be baptized and confirmed.

For information about baptizing and confirming a person who has an intellectual disability, see 38.2.4 and 38.2.8.1.

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews children of record for baptism and confirmation. Instructions are in 31.2.3.1.

For information about filling out the Baptism and Confirmation Record, see 18.8.3.

Bishops give special attention to 7-year-old children in the ward, ensuring that their parents, their Primary leaders and teachers, and those who minister to their families help them prepare for baptism and confirmation. Elders quorum and Relief Society leaders also encourage parents to prepare their children for these ordinances.

For information about Baptism and Confirmation Preparation meetings planned by the Primary presidency, see 12.1.8.

18.7.1.2

Converts

The mission president holds the priesthood keys for baptizing converts in a mission. For this reason, full-time missionaries interview converts for baptism and confirmation. Instructions are in 31.2.3.2.

For information about filling out the Baptism and Confirmation Record, see 18.8.3.

18.7.1.3

Children Whose Parents Are Not Married (Including Divorced)

For guidelines about baptizing and confirming minor children, see 38.2.8.2.

18.7.2

Baptismal Services

A baptismal service should be simple, brief, and spiritually uplifting. It may include the following:

1. Prelude music
2. A brief welcome from the brother who is conducting the service
3. An opening hymn and prayer

4. One or two short messages on gospel subjects, such as baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost

5. A musical selection

6. The baptism

7. A time of reverence while those who participated in the baptism change into dry clothes (hymns or Primary songs may be played or sung during this time)

8. The confirmation of 8-year-old members of record; the confirmation of converts (see 18.8)

9. Bearing of testimonies by new converts, if desired

10. A closing hymn and prayer

11. Postlude music

When a child of record is preparing to be baptized, a member of the bishopric and Primary presidency counsel with the family to plan and schedule a baptismal service. A member of the bishopric conducts the service. If more than one child will be baptized in the same month, they could share a baptismal service.

In stakes with many children of record, children from multiple wards may share the same baptismal service. In such cases, a member of the stake presidency or stake Primary presidency or a high councilor counsels with families of children being baptized to plan and schedule baptismal services. A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor conducts the service. Wards or families may meet separately for a portion of the service so that each child is recognized individually. This could be, for example, for the baptismal ordinance, the confirmation, or a talk by a ward or family member. A member of the bishopric conducts that part of the service.

Baptismal services for converts should be scheduled as soon as they have met the qualifications in 31.2.3.2. Baptism of a family member should not be delayed until a father can receive the priesthood and perform the baptism himself.

Under the bishopric's guidance, the ward mission leader (if one is called) or the member of the elders quorum presidency who leads missionary work in the ward plans and conducts baptismal services for converts. He also plans the confirmation of converts unless they will be confirmed in sacrament meeting. He coordinates with the full-time missionaries.

18.7.3

Who Performs the Ordinance

The ordinance of baptism is performed by a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder. The person who performs a baptism must be approved by the bishop (or by the mission president if a full-time missionary is performing the baptism).

A bishop may allow a father who is a priest or a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to baptize his child even if the father is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3). Bishops encourage fathers to prepare themselves to baptize their own children.

To perform a baptism, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the presiding leader. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

18.7.4

Where to Perform the Ordinance

Baptisms should be performed in a baptismal font if one is available. If there is not a font, a safe body of water may be used. It should be large enough for both the person performing the ordinance and the person being baptized to stand in. Water is not dedicated for baptisms.

If a font is used, it is scheduled through an assigned member in the agent bishop's ward.

For safety, a responsible adult must be present while a font is being filled and remain until it is drained, cleaned, and secured. The font should be drained immediately after each baptismal service. The doors to the font should be locked when it is not in use.

18.7.5

Clothing

A person who performs a baptism and a person who is being baptized wear white clothing that is not transparent when wet. An endowed person wears the temple garment under this clothing while performing a baptism. Local units purchase baptismal clothing with budget funds and do not charge for its use.

Baptismal clothing may be ordered at store
[.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

18.7.6

Witnesses

Two witnesses, approved by the presiding leader, observe each baptism to make sure it is performed properly. Baptized members of the Church, including children and youth, may serve as witnesses.

A baptism must be repeated if the words are not spoken exactly as given in Doctrine and Covenants 20:73. It must also be repeated if part of the person's body, hair, or clothing is not completely immersed.

18.7.7

Instructions

To perform the ordinance of baptism, a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder:

1. Stands in the water with the person being baptized.
2. Holds the person's right wrist with his left hand (for convenience and safety). The person being baptized holds the priesthood holder's left wrist with his or her left hand.
3. Raises his right arm to the square.
4. States the person's full name and says, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:73).

5. Has the person hold his or her nose with the right hand (for convenience); then places his right hand high on the person's back and immerses the person completely, including clothing. Immersion is easier if the person bends his or her knees.
6. Helps the person to come up out of the water.

18.7.8

Baptism Record

For information about making a record of a baptism, see 18.8.3.

18.8

Confirmation and Gift of the Holy Ghost

After a person is baptized, he or she is confirmed a member of the Church and receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:41; Acts 19:1–6). The person becomes a member of the Church after both of these ordinances are completed and properly recorded (see John 3:5; Doctrine and Covenants 33:11; 3 Nephi 27:20).

For information about confirmation in special circumstances, see 38.2.8.

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for confirming 8-year-old members of record in his ward. The mission president holds the keys for confirming converts (for a definition of a convert baptism, see 31.2.3.2).

The bishop oversees the confirmations of 8-year-old children of record. These children are typically confirmed on the day they are baptized.

The full-time missionaries coordinate with ward leaders to plan the confirmation of converts as noted in 18.7.2. Converts may be confirmed at the baptismal service or in sacrament meeting in

the ward where they live as soon as possible after their baptism.

New members are recognized and welcomed as a new member of the ward in the sacrament meeting after their confirmation (see 29.2.1.1).



18.8.1

Who Performs the Ordinance

The ordinance of confirmation is performed by Melchizedek Priesthood holders. The one who acts as voice must be approved by the bishop (or by the mission president if a full-time missionary is performing the confirmation).

Only a Melchizedek Priesthood holder who is temple worthy may act as voice for a confirmation. However, a bishop may allow a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to stand in the circle for the confirmation of his child even if the father is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3).

At least one member of the bishopric participates in this ordinance. When missionary elders have taught a convert, the bishop invites them to participate.

To act as voice in this ordinance, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the presiding leader. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

18.8.2**Instructions**

Under the direction of the bishopric, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders may participate in a confirmation. They place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one acting as voice:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that the ordinance is being performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Confirms the person a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4. States "receive the Holy Ghost" (not "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost").
5. Gives words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

18.8.3**Baptism and Confirmation Record and Certificate**

Before a child who is a member of record is interviewed for baptism, a clerk uses LCR to prepare a Baptism and Confirmation Form. The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts the interview and signs the form. After the baptism and confirmation, a clerk uses this form to update the child's membership record in LCR.

When a full-time missionary interviews a convert for baptism, he fills out the Baptism and Confirmation Record using the Preach My Gospel app. After the baptism and confirmation, the missionaries record the information in the app and submit it to the ward clerk electronically. The ward clerk reviews the information in LCR and creates the membership record.

After the membership record is created, a clerk prepares a Baptism and Confirmation Certificate. This certificate is signed by the bishop and given to the person.

The name on the membership record and certificate should match the birth certificate, civil birth registry, or current legal name.

18.9**The Sacrament**

Church members meet on the Sabbath day to worship God and partake of the sacrament (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:75; 59:9; Moroni 6:5–6). During this ordinance, they partake of the bread and water to remember the Savior's sacrifice of His flesh and blood and to renew their sacred covenants (see Matthew 26:26–28; Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:20–25; Luke 22:15–20; 3 Nephi 18; Moroni 6:6). Everyone should be reverent during the blessing and passing of the sacrament.

18.9.1**Approval to Administer the Sacrament**

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for administering the sacrament in the ward. All who participate in preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament must receive approval from him or someone under his direction.

If members of his ward are unable to partake of the sacrament because they are confined to a home, care center, or hospital, the bishop may authorize priesthood holders to administer the sacrament to them. He may authorize this even if they are temporarily outside his ward boundaries. However, he may not authorize the sacrament to be given to members outside his ward boundaries in other circumstances.

In rare circumstances, sacrament meeting might not be held for an extended time. In these situations, a bishop may authorize worthy priesthood holders in his ward to prepare and administer the sacrament in their homes each Sabbath. Bishops may also authorize them to prepare and administer the sacrament to ward members who do not have priesthood holders in their homes.

When the bishop authorizes the sacrament to be prepared and administered outside of standard Church services, the instructions in 18.9.2 about who performs the ordinance still apply.

18.9.2

Who Performs the Ordinance

- Teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may prepare the sacrament.
- Priests and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may bless the sacrament.
- Deacons, teachers, priests, and Melchizedek Priesthood holders may pass the sacrament.

When there are enough Aaronic Priesthood holders, they usually perform these duties. When there are not enough deacons to pass the sacrament, the deacons quorum president counsels with the bishop about whom to invite to assist. Generally, he asks teachers and priests to help before asking elders and high priests.

18.9.3

Guidelines for the Sacrament

Because of the sacred nature of the sacrament, priesthood leaders should prepare carefully so it is orderly and reverent. Sacrament tablecloths should be white, clean, and pressed. Sacrament trays should be clean. Sacrament trays and cups should be ordered well in advance.

| Sacrament supplies may be ordered at store
| [.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Those who administer the sacrament should do so in a dignified manner, realizing that they are representing the Lord. The bishopric encourages them to ponder the Savior's Atonement as they prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament.

Those who administer the sacrament should be well groomed and clean. They should not wear clothing or jewelry that might detract from the worship and covenant making that are the purpose of the sacrament. If the bishop needs to counsel a priesthood holder about such matters, he does so with love. He also takes into account the person's maturity in the Church.

The passing of the sacrament should be natural and not overly formal. For example, certain actions (such as holding the left hand behind the back) or appearances (such as dressing alike) should not be required.

The congregation sings a sacrament hymn while the bread is being broken. Vocal solos or instrumental music should not replace this hymn. No music should be played during the passing of the sacrament or immediately after.

If members have food allergies or gluten intolerance, they discuss with a member of the bishopric what adaptations to make for the sacrament. As needed, the bishopric may modify the procedure for administering the sacrament to them.

Generally, bread must be broken as part of the sacrament ordinance. However, to ensure the health and safety of a particular member, that member may provide allergen-free bread or another broken bread-like substitute in a sealed plastic bag or cup. They give this to a priesthood holder to place on a separate tray. The bishopric helps those who pass the sacrament know which members to whom the allergen-free item should be passed.

See [disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) for guidelines about food allergies.

Although the sacrament is for members of the Church, nothing should be done to prevent others from partaking of it.



18.9.4

Instructions

1. Those who prepare, bless, or pass the sacrament first wash their hands with soap or other cleanser.
2. Teachers, priests, or Melchizedek Priesthood holders make sure that bread trays with unbroken bread, water trays with cups of clean water, and clean tablecloths are in place before the meeting.
3. As ward members sing a sacrament hymn, those who will bless the sacrament reverently stand, remove the cloth that covers the bread trays, and break the bread into bite-sized pieces.
4. After the hymn, the person blessing the bread kneels and says the sacrament prayer for the bread (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77).
5. The bishop makes sure the sacrament prayers are spoken clearly, accurately, and with dignity. If someone makes an error in the wording and corrects himself, no further correction is needed. If the person does not correct his error, the bishop kindly asks him to repeat the prayer. The bishop uses discretion when asking for the prayer to be repeated. He ensures that doing so does not cause undue embarrassment or detract from the ordinance. Another person at the sacrament table can help as needed.
6. After the prayer, priesthood holders reverently pass the bread to the members. The presiding

leader receives it first, after which there is no set order. Once a tray is handed to members, they may pass it to one another.

7. Members partake with their right hand when possible.
8. When the bread has been passed to all members, those passing the sacrament return the trays to the sacrament table. Those blessing the sacrament place a cloth over the bread trays and uncover the water trays.
9. The person blessing the water kneels and says the sacrament prayer for the water (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:79). He uses the word *water* instead of *wine*.
10. After the prayer, priesthood holders reverently pass the water to the members. The presiding leader receives it first, after which there is no set order.
11. When the water has been passed to all members, those passing the sacrament return the trays to the sacrament table. Those who blessed the sacrament place a cloth over the trays, and those who blessed and passed the sacrament reverently take their seats.
12. After the meeting, those who prepared the sacrament clean up, fold the tablecloths, and remove any unused bread.

18.10

Conferring the Priesthood and Ordaining to an Office

There are two divisions of the priesthood: the Aaronic and Melchizedek (see 3.3; Doctrine and Covenants 107:1, 6). When the priesthood is conferred on a person, he is also ordained to an office in that priesthood. After either of these priesthoods has been conferred, a man needs only to be ordained to other offices in that priesthood.

For information about priesthood ordinations in special circumstances, see 38.2.9.

18.10.1

Melchizedek Priesthood

The stake president holds the priesthood keys for conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordaining to the offices of elder and high priest. However, the bishop usually provides recommendations for these ordinations.

18.10.1.1

Elders

Worthy brethren may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained elders when they are 18 years old or older. Based on individual circumstances, the bishop determines whether a young man should be recommended to be ordained an elder soon after his 18th birthday or remain with the priests quorum longer. These circumstances include a young man's:

- Testimony and maturity.
- School graduation.
- Desire to continue with peers.
- College attendance.

In making this decision, the bishop consults first with the young man and his parents or guardians. Worthy men should be ordained elders by age 19 or before they leave home to attend college, serve a full-time mission, serve in the military, or accept full-time employment.

Recently baptized men ages 18 and older are ordained elders after they have:

- Received the Aaronic Priesthood and served as priests.
- Developed sufficient understanding of the gospel.
- Demonstrated their worthiness.

No specific time as a Church member is required.

18.10.1.2

High Priests

Men are ordained high priests when they are called to a stake presidency, high council, or bishopric. They may also be ordained at other times as determined by the stake president through prayerful consideration and inspiration.

18.10.1.3

Interviewing and Sustaining

With the approval of the stake presidency, the bishop interviews the brother as instructed on the Melchizedek Priesthood Ordination Record. Then a member of the stake presidency also interviews him. With approval from the mission president, the district president may interview a brother to be ordained an elder (see 6.3). For instructions about these interviews, see 31.2.6.

After the interview, the stake presidency asks the high council to sustain the decision to ordain the brother. A member of the stake presidency presents him for sustaining in the general session of stake conference (see 18.10.3). With approval from the mission president, a district president may present a brother for sustaining to be ordained an elder (see 6.3).

18.10.2

Aaronic Priesthood

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for conferring the Aaronic Priesthood and ordaining to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. Worthy brethren are typically ordained to these offices at the following ages, but not earlier:

- Deacon at the beginning of the year they turn 12
- Teacher at the beginning of the year they turn 14
- Priest at the beginning of the year they turn 16

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews those who are to be ordained deacons or teachers to determine if they are spiritually prepared.

The bishop interviews brethren who are to be ordained priests.

Before interviewing a young man for priesthood ordination, the bishop obtains verbal permission from the parents or guardians. Permission is not required from a parent or guardian who has no legal basis for opposing the action.

If the brother is found worthy in an interview, a member of the bishopric presents him for sustaining in sacrament meeting (see 18.10.3).

For information about ordaining recently baptized brethren, see 38.2.9.1.

18.10.3

Presenting a Member to Be Sustained before He Is Ordained

After a brother has been interviewed and found worthy to be ordained to a priesthood office, he is presented for sustaining (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:65, 67). Brethren to be ordained elders or high priests are presented by a stake presidency member in the general session of stake conference (see 6.3 for instructions for district presidents). Brethren to be ordained deacons, teachers, or priests are presented by a bishopric member in sacrament meeting.

The person who conducts the sustaining asks the brother to stand. He announces the proposal to confer the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood (if needed) and to ordain the brother to the priesthood office. He then invites the members to sustain the proposal. For example, to present a brother to be ordained an elder, he could use words like these:

“We propose that [name] receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained an elder. Those in favor may show it by the uplifted hand. [Pause briefly.] Those opposed, if any, may also show it. [Pause briefly.]”

The person who is being presented should participate in the sustaining. If more than one person is being presented, they may be sustained as a group.

If a member in good standing opposes the ordination, the presiding leader or another assigned priesthood leader meets with him or her in private after the meeting. The leader seeks to understand why the member is opposed. He learns if the member knows of conduct that could disqualify the person from being ordained to the priesthood office.

Only members in good standing may participate in the sustaining. However, if a member not in good standing or a person who is not a member opposes the action, the bishop or stake president may hear his or her concern in private outside of the meeting.

In some cases, a brother may need to be ordained an elder or high priest before he can be presented in stake conference. When this happens, a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor presents him in his ward sacrament meeting for sustaining. He is then presented in the next stake conference to ratify the ordination (adapting the process for sustaining, described above). This includes giving stake members an opportunity to sustain or oppose the action.



18.10.4**Who Performs the Ordinance**

The stake president or a Melchizedek Priesthood holder under his direction may ordain a man to the office of elder. With approval from the mission president, the district president or someone under his direction may perform the ordination (see 6.3). Only Melchizedek Priesthood holders may stand in the circle.

The stake president or a high priest under his direction may ordain a man to the office of high priest. Only high priests may stand in the circle.

A person who ordains a man to a Melchizedek Priesthood office should be temple worthy. The stake president or someone he designates must be present.

A priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder may ordain a brother to the office of deacon, teacher, or priest. He must be authorized by the bishop. The bishop or someone he designates must be present.

To participate in an Aaronic Priesthood ordination, a person must be a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

A bishop may allow a father who is a priest or a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to ordain his son to the office of deacon, teacher, or priest even if the father is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3). Bishops encourage fathers to prepare themselves to ordain their own sons.

To act as voice in this ordinance, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the presiding leader. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

18.10.5**Instructions**

To confer the priesthood and ordain a person to a priesthood office, one or more authorized

priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one acting as voice:

1. Calls the person by his full name.
2. States the authority he personally holds to perform the ordinance (either the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood).
3. Confers the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood, unless it has already been conferred.
4. Ordains the person to an office in the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood and bestows the rights, powers, and authority of that office. (Priesthood keys are not bestowed when conferring the priesthood or ordaining to an office, except when ordaining a bishop.)
5. Gives words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

To ordain a person to a priesthood office after he has already had the appropriate priesthood conferred upon him, the person who performs the ordination omits step 3.

An ordination is an opportunity to give a blessing. Detailed counsel and instruction about a person's duties are given before and after the ordination. They should not be the focus of the blessing. It is not necessary to have prayers, testimonies, or instruction when someone is ordained.

18.10.6**Ordination Record and Certificate**

Before a man is interviewed to be ordained to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood, a clerk uses LCR to prepare a Melchizedek Priesthood Ordination Record. The stake president or an assigned counselor conducts the interview and signs the form if all worthiness conditions are met.

After the ordination, the stake president or his assigned representative completes the form and

gives it to a clerk. He records the ordination in LCR and prepares an ordination certificate. This certificate is signed by the stake president and given to the person.

Before a brother is interviewed to be ordained to an office in the Aaronic Priesthood, a clerk uses LCR to prepare an Aaronic Priesthood Ordination Record. The bishop or an assigned counselor conducts the interview and signs the form if all worthiness conditions are met.

After the ordination, the bishop or an assigned counselor completes the form and gives it to a clerk. He records the ordination in LCR and prepares an ordination certificate.

A person's current legal name should be used on the ordination record and certificate.

18.11

Setting Apart Members to Serve in Callings

Members who are called and sustained to most Church positions should be set apart to serve in that position (see John 15:16; Doctrine and Covenants 42:11; see also 3.4.3.1 in this handbook). During the setting apart, the person is given (1) authority to act in the calling and (2) words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.

Stake presidents, bishops, and quorum presidents receive keys of presidency when they are set apart (see 3.4.1.1). However, the word *keys* should not be used when setting apart members to serve in other callings, including counselors in presidencies.

For information about calling, ordaining, and setting apart bishops, see 30.7.2.

18.11.1

Who Performs the Setting Apart

A setting apart is performed by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He must receive approval from the leader who holds the appropriate priesthood

keys. Those who are authorized to perform a setting apart are indicated in 30.8. An elder should not act as voice or stand in the circle when a man is set apart to a calling that requires the man to be a high priest.

Under the direction of the presiding leader, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders may participate in a setting apart. Presidents are set apart before their counselors.

A presiding leader may allow a husband or father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to stand in the circle for the setting apart of his wife or children even if he is not fully temple worthy (see 18.3).

18.11.2

Instructions

One or more authorized Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one acting as voice:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Sets the person apart to the calling in the stake, ward, quorum, or class.
4. Confers keys if the person should receive them.
5. Gives words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

A setting apart is not a formal meeting with prayers or testimonies. Nor is it a time for giving detailed instructions. Those are given during training, not as part of the blessing.

18.12

Consecrating Oil

Melchizedek Priesthood holders must consecrate olive oil before it is used to anoint the sick or afflicted (see James 5:14). No other oil may be used.

 Oil vials are available at store
[.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

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

18.12.1

Who Performs the Ordinance

One or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders may consecrate oil. They do not need to seek approval from a priesthood leader.

18.12.2

Instructions

To consecrate the oil, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder:

1. Holds an open container of olive oil.
2. Addresses Heavenly Father as in prayer.
3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. Consecrates the oil (not the container) and sets it apart for anointing and blessing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

18.13

Administering to the Sick

Usually, administering to the sick should be done at the request of the person receiving the blessing or at the request of others who are concerned so the blessing will be according to their faith (see James 5:14; Doctrine and Covenants 24:13–14; 42:43–44, 48–52).

Administering to the sick “by the laying on of hands” has two parts: anointing with oil and sealing the anointing with a blessing. If consecrated oil is not available, a blessing may be given by the

authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood without an anointing.

If a person requests more than one blessing for the same illness, another anointing is not necessary. A priesthood holder can give another blessing by the laying on of hands and the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. However, another anointing may also be done.

Priesthood holders who visit hospitals should not solicit opportunities to administer to the sick.



18.13.1

Who Gives the Blessing

Only worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders may administer to the sick or afflicted. They do not need to seek approval from a priesthood leader. If possible, a father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood administers to sick members of his family.

Normally, two or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders administer to the sick. However, one may perform both the anointing and sealing.

18.13.2

Instructions

Administering to the sick has two parts: anointing with oil and sealing the anointing.

Anointing with oil is done by one Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He:

1. Puts a drop of consecrated oil on the person's head.
2. Places his hands lightly on the person's head and calls the person by his or her full name.
3. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
4. States that he is anointing with oil that has been consecrated for anointing and blessing the sick and afflicted.
5. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

To seal the anointing, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one who seals the anointing:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that he is sealing the anointing by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives words of blessing as guided by the Spirit.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

18.14

Blessings of Comfort and Counsel, Including Father's Blessings

18.14.1

Who Gives the Blessing

Melchizedek Priesthood holders may give blessings of comfort and counsel to family members and to others who request them. These blessings are typically given by family members, ministering brothers, or priesthood leaders.

A father who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may give father's blessings to his children. These may be especially helpful when children go to school, go on missions, get married, enter military service, or face special challenges. Parents encourage their children

to seek father's blessings in times of need. Father's blessings may be recorded for personal use.

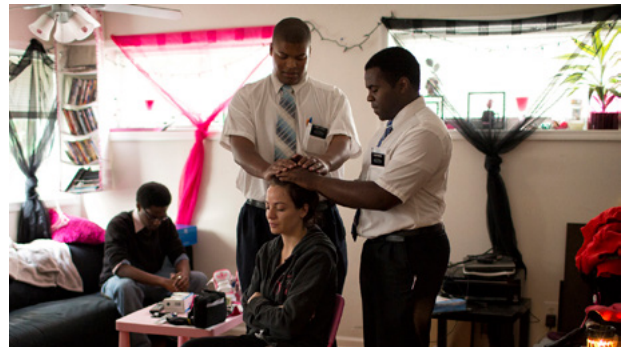
A Melchizedek Priesthood holder does not need to seek approval from a priesthood leader to give a blessing of comfort and counsel or a father's blessing.

18.14.2

Instructions

To give a blessing of comfort and counsel or a father's blessing, one or more Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands lightly on the person's head. Then the one acting as voice:

1. Calls the person by his or her full name.
2. States that the blessing is being performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Gives words of blessing, comfort, and counsel as guided by the Spirit.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.



18.15

Dedicating Homes

Church members may have their homes dedicated by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Homes do not need to be owned or free of debt to be dedicated. Unlike Church buildings, homes are not consecrated to the Lord.

18.15.1**Who Performs the Dedication**

A home is dedicated by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. If there is not a Melchizedek Priesthood holder in the home:

- A family may invite a close friend, relative, or ministering brother who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood to dedicate the home. The person does not need to seek approval from a priesthood leader.
- A family might gather and offer a prayer as guided by the Spirit. The prayer could include the elements mentioned in 18.15.2, number 3.

18.15.2**Instructions**

To dedicate a home, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father as in prayer.
2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Dedicates the home as a sacred place where the Holy Spirit can reside and gives other words as guided by the Spirit. For example, he might bless the home to be a place where family members can worship, find safety from the world, grow spiritually, and prepare for eternal family relationships.
4. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

18.16**Dedicating Graves****18.16.1****Who Dedicates the Grave**

A person who dedicates a grave should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and be authorized by the priesthood leader who presides at the service.

If the family prefers, a graveside prayer may be offered instead of a dedicatory prayer. It may be offered by anyone the family chooses.

To act as voice in dedicating a grave, a person who is outside his own ward must show a current temple recommend to the priesthood leader who presides at the service. Or he may show a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance signed by a member of his bishopric.

18.16.2**Instructions**

To dedicate a grave, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder:

1. Addresses Heavenly Father as in prayer.
2. States that he is acting by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.
3. Dedicates and consecrates the burial plot as the resting place for the body of the deceased.
4. Prays that the place will be hallowed and protected until the Resurrection (where appropriate).
5. Asks Heavenly Father to comfort the family and expresses thoughts as guided by the Spirit.
6. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

If a Church member's body is cremated, the presiding leader uses his judgment to decide whether to dedicate the place where the ashes are kept. He takes into account the family's wishes and local customs and laws. The brother who acts as voice adapts the instructions for dedicating a grave.

18.17**Patriarchal Blessings**

A patriarchal blessing is a priesthood blessing received from an ordained patriarch by the laying on of hands. Every worthy, baptized member is invited to receive a patriarchal blessing, which provides

personal, inspired direction from Heavenly Father (see Genesis 48:14–16; 49; 2 Nephi 4:3–11).

The main purpose of a patriarchal blessing is to declare a person's lineage within the house of Israel. It may also offer spiritual guidance, reassurance, and comfort throughout life, especially as the individual follows the counsel it provides.

Parents and Church leaders encourage members to prepare spiritually to obtain their patriarchal blessings.

The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews members who desire to receive a patriarchal blessing. If the member is worthy, the interviewer prepares a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend. He submits it through the Patriarchal Blessing System on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

The person who issues a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend ensures that the member understands the significance and sacred nature of patriarchal blessings. Ideally the member should be young enough that many important decisions in life are still ahead. However, older adults are also encouraged to receive their patriarchal blessings. Priesthood leaders should not establish a minimum age for a member to receive a patriarchal blessing.

A new convert should understand the basic doctrine of the gospel before receiving a patriarchal blessing.

For information about patriarchal blessings in special circumstances, see 38.2.10.

18.17.1

Receiving a Patriarchal Blessing

After receiving a recommend, the member contacts the patriarch to set up an appointment to receive a patriarchal blessing. On the day of the appointment, the member should go to the patriarch with a prayerful attitude and in Sunday attire. Members may fast, but fasting is not required.

Each patriarchal blessing is sacred, confidential, and personal. Therefore, it is given in private. If

the member desires, he or she may invite a limited number of family members or a close friend to be present.

A person who receives a patriarchal blessing should treasure its words, ponder them, and live to be worthy to receive the promised blessings in this life and in eternity.

Church members should not compare blessings with others and should not share them except with close family members. Patriarchal blessings should not be read in Church meetings or other public gatherings.

If a patriarchal blessing does not include a declaration of lineage, the patriarch may later give an addendum to declare lineage.



18.17.2

Obtaining Copies of Patriarchal Blessings

A person who has received a patriarchal blessing should carefully safeguard the printed copy. However, if this copy is lost or destroyed, the person may request a new one. He or she can make this request at Patriarchal Blessings on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. If this is not possible, the person contacts his or her bishop for assistance.

18.17.3

More Information

For more information about patriarchal blessings, see 38.2.10 and “Patriarchal Blessings.”

18.18

Temple Endowment and Sealing

For information on the temple endowment and sealing ordinances, see chapter 27.

18.19

Chart of Ordinations

Office	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by	Interviewed and ordained by
Patriarch	Stake presidency	Quorum of the Twelve Apostles	Members in stake conference	Stake president after receiving approval from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; or a member of the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
High priest	Bishop and stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Interviewed by the bishop and by the stake president or an assigned counselor; ordained under the direction of the stake president
Elder	Bishop	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference or district conference	Interviewed by the bishop and by the stake president or an assigned counselor (in a district, interviewed by a member of the mission presidency or by the district president if assigned; see 6.3) Ordained under the direction of the stake president (in a district, ordained under the direction of the mission president or the district president if assigned)
Bishop	Stake presidency, using LCR	First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles	Members in sacrament meeting	The stake president after receiving approval from the First Presidency (see 30.7.2)
Priest	Bishop	Bishopric	Members in sacrament meeting	Interviewed by the bishop; ordained under the direction of the bishop
Teacher or deacon	Bishop	Bishopric	Members in sacrament meeting	Interviewed by the bishop or an assigned counselor; ordained under the direction of the bishop



19.

Music

19.1

Purpose of Music in the Church

In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said, “My soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (Doctrine and Covenants 25:12). He also said, “The righteous . . . shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:71).

Sacred music increases faith in Jesus Christ. It invites the Spirit and teaches doctrine. It also creates a feeling of reverence, unifies members, and provides a way to worship Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

19.2

Music in the Home

Through His prophets, the Lord has encouraged individuals and families to use uplifting music in their daily lives. Singing and listening to sacred music can invite a spirit of beauty and peace. It can also increase love and unity among family members.

The hymns can help individuals gain courage and withstand temptation.

Recordings of Church music are available from the following sources:

- Sacred Music app
- Gospel Library app
- [Music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- CDs at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

The Church provides resources to help individuals and families learn basic music skills. They can be found at music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org (see also 19.6). Developing music skills expands opportunities for members to serve at home and in the Church.

19.3

Music in Church Meetings

Sacred music is a vital part of sacrament meeting and other Church meetings. It has power to invite the Spirit, bringing individuals closer to God.

“Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns.” (See *Hymns*, ix.)

19.3.1

Planning Music for Church Meetings

Ward and stake music coordinators work with priesthood leaders to plan music for worship services. They select music that enhances the spirit of worship in the meetings.

Hymns and worshipful children’s songs are used for all congregational singing in worship services. Hymns, children’s songs, or other sacred musical selections may be used for prelude and postlude music, choir music, and solo or small group presentations. All music in Church meetings should be presented in the spirit of worship of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, not as a performance to showcase musical talent.

Musical selections should be consistent with the worshipful spirit of the hymns. They should teach the gospel with power and clarity.

Sacred music that is written or sung in culturally diverse musical styles may help unify congregations. Music coordinators and priesthood leaders may include a variety of appropriate musical styles that appeal to members of various backgrounds.

For information about music for baptismal services, see 18.7.2. For information about music for weddings held in Church buildings, see 38.3.4. For information about music for funerals, see 29.5.4.

19.3.2

Music in Sacrament Meeting

Members gather in sacrament meeting to remember Jesus Christ by partaking of the sacrament. They gather to build faith and testimony and to worship Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Music should be selected to help achieve these purposes.

Music in sacrament meeting includes congregational singing of hymns or worshipful children’s songs to open and close the meeting. It also includes singing a hymn before the administration of the sacrament. Congregational singing provides an opportunity for members to unite as they actively participate in worshipping together. The sacrament hymn should refer to the sacrament itself or to the sacrifice of the Savior. For more information, see “Hymns for Congregations,” *Hymns*, 380–81.

Prelude music is played as members gather before the meeting. Its purpose is to create an atmosphere of worship that invites the Spirit. After the closing prayer, an instrumental postlude is played as members leave the meeting. Hymns, worshipful children’s songs, and other sacred music can be selected for prelude and postlude music.

A sacrament meeting could also include additional congregational singing in the middle of the meeting—for example, between spoken messages. Or it may include one or more other musical selections. These could be presented by choirs (see 19.3.7), vocal or instrumental soloists, or small groups. Sacrament meetings should not be turned over to outside musical groups.

The piano, organ, or another instrument approved by the bishopric may be used to accompany congregational singing in sacrament meeting (see 19.3.6).

Music coordinators and bishoprics try to find a balance between familiar and less-familiar hymns. Musical selections presented by the ward choir or others can help members become more familiar with hymns that are not as well known.

19.3.3

Music in Classes and Other Ward Meetings

Singing hymns can be an effective way to introduce or reinforce gospel principles. Leaders encourage teachers to use the hymns and other sacred music to enhance their teaching.

Sunday quorum meetings and classes do not routinely begin with an opening hymn.

19.3.4

Music in Stake Conference

Music for stake conference should be planned to strengthen faith and testimony. It should follow the principles in 19.3.1. The presiding authority reviews all proposed musical selections early in the planning.

Music for stake conference usually includes congregational singing and other musical selections from a choir, soloists, or small groups. The congregation normally sings hymns or worshipful children's songs in the middle of the meeting. Stake presidencies may approve solo and accompanying instruments other than the piano or organ (see 19.3.6).

19.3.5

Other Music in the Chapel

The chapel may occasionally be used for cultural arts events that include secular music, such as concerts, recitals, and other presentations. While applause is discouraged in worship services, it may be appropriate for these events.

Local priesthood leaders answer questions about cultural activities held in the chapel. See 35.5 for information about the appropriate use of meetinghouses.

19.3.6

Musical Instruments

Live instruments are normally used for prelude and postlude music and for hymn accompaniment in Church meetings. Where they are available and where members can play them, organs and pianos are the standard instruments. Bishopricks may approve the use of other instruments to accompany

congregational singing, for prelude and postlude music, and in other musical selections.

Musical instruments should convey a feeling of worship and be played in keeping with the spirit of the meeting.

⬆️ If a piano, organ, or accompanist is not available, recordings may be used (see 19.2).

19.3.6.1

Obtaining Musical Instruments

Church buildings are usually supplied with an organ, pianos, or electronic keyboards. Leaders may contact the local facilities manager for information about acquiring new or replacement instruments.

19.3.6.2

Maintaining Musical Instruments

Pianos are tuned and organs are maintained regularly. The bishop or the stake building representative can contact the facilities manager with questions. As needed, he can also submit a request in Facility Issue Reporting (FIR) to maintain and repair pianos and organs (see 35.4.2).

19.3.7

Choirs

Since Old Testament times, God's children have sung in choirs to offer praise to Him. Church choirs bring glory to God, unify and edify Church members, and bring joy to participants and congregations.

19.3.7.1

Ward Choirs

Where there are enough members, wards may organize choirs that sing in sacrament meeting regularly. The bishopricks may call a choir director and choir accompanist (see 19.4.3.3).

Ward members may volunteer to sing in the choir. Members and others may also be invited to participate. Auditions are not held.

Choirs are encouraged to use the hymns and worshipful children's songs of the Church. The singing of hymns invites the Spirit and helps choir participants and congregations learn the gospel (see *Hymns*, 381–83). If other sacred musical selections are used, the guidelines in 19.3.1 should be followed.

Choir rehearsals do not usually exceed one hour.

If the ward choir needs sheet music, it may be purchased with ward budget funds (see 19.7.1). Ward choirs are encouraged to share purchased music with other choirs in the stake. Duplicating sheet music without permission from the copyright owner is contrary to Church policy (see 38.8.11).

In addition to the ward choir, families and groups of women, men, youth, or children may be invited to sing in Church meetings.



19.3.7.2

Stake and Multistake Choirs

With the approval of stake or area leaders, stake and multistake choirs may be organized for stake conferences and other occasions, such as community events. After the meeting or event, the choir is disbanded until other occasions arise.

19.4

Music Leadership in the Ward

19.4.1

Bishopric

The bishop is responsible for ward music. He may assign this responsibility to one of his counselors. Bishoprics have the following responsibilities:

- Call and set apart members to serve in the music callings described in 19.4.2 and 19.4.3 as needed.
- Work with the ward music coordinator to plan music for sacrament meetings (see 19.3.1).
- Teach about the importance of worshipping through music in meetings. Encourage members to participate in congregational singing. Encourage members, especially youth, to use uplifting music daily in their personal lives (see 19.2).
- Decide when instruments other than pianos or organs may be used in Church meetings (see 19.3.6).
- Support the ward choir by encouraging members to participate.

19.4.2

Ward Music Coordinator

The ward music coordinator serves under the direction of the bishopric. He or she has the following responsibilities:

- Be a resource to the bishopric and other ward leaders on music matters. Attend ward council meeting as invited by the bishop to help coordinate music in the ward.
- Work with the bishopric to plan music for sacrament meetings (see 19.3.1 and 19.3.2).
- Recommend and supervise music training in the ward, if needed (see 19.6). Help members find

opportunities to develop and use their musical talents in the ward.

- As requested by the bishopric, recommend members to serve in ward music callings. Orient those who serve in these callings, offering support, instruction, and training as needed.
- Serve in other ward music callings if others have not been called.
- Consult with the stake music coordinator for training and support as needed.

19.4.3

Additional Callings

In wards that are large enough, the bishopric may call members to serve in the following callings. Youth and those of other faiths may be called to serve. Bishoprics may adapt these callings as necessary to meet the needs of their ward.

19.4.3.1

Ward Music Leader

The music leader conducts the congregational hymns for sacrament meeting and for other ward meetings as requested.

19.4.3.2

Ward Accompanist

The ward accompanist provides prelude and postlude music and accompaniment for hymns during sacrament meeting and other ward meetings as requested. When needed, the accompanist could also accompany the choir or serve as the Primary pianist.

 When no one in the ward can play the piano or organ, the following options are available:

- A member may play an alternate instrument approved by the bishop (see 19.3.6).

- Digital pianos and organs that play preprogrammed hymn accompaniments are available in some meetinghouses (see 19.3.6.1).
- Members may use recordings from the following sources:
 - Sacred Music app
 - Gospel Library app
 - Music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
 - CDs at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

19.4.3.3

Choir Director and Choir Accompanist

The ward choir director recommends music to be sung by the choir, directs choir rehearsals, and conducts the choir in sacrament meetings (see 19.3.7).

The ward choir accompanist plays for choir rehearsals and for when the choir sings in sacrament meetings.

For more information about conducting choirs, see the *Conducting Course* manual, pages 73–83.

19.4.3.4

Primary Music Leader and Primary Pianist

See 12.3.4.

19.4.3.5

Music Specialists

The bishopric may call specialists to help with music training in the ward (see 19.6).

19.5**Music Leadership in the Stake****19.5.1****Stake Presidency**

The stake president oversees stake music. He may assign the following responsibilities to one of his counselors or a member of the high council:

- Call and set apart members to serve in the music callings described in 19.5.2 and 19.5.3 as needed.
- Consult with the stake music coordinator to plan music for stake conference and other stake events (see 19.3.1, 19.3.4, and 19.3.7.2).
- Teach about the importance of worshipping through music in meetings. Encourage members to participate in congregational singing. Encourage members to use uplifting music daily in their personal lives (see 19.2).
- Decide when instruments other than pianos or organs may be used in stake meetings (see 19.3.6).

19.5.2**Stake Music Coordinator**

Under the direction of the stake presidency, the stake music coordinator has the following responsibilities:

- Serve as a resource to the stake presidency and other stake leaders on music matters.
- Consult with the stake presidency to plan music for stake conference and other stake events (see 19.3.1, 19.3.4, and 19.3.7.2).
- Recommend and supervise music training in the stake (see 19.6).

- As requested by the stake presidency, recommend members to fill stake music callings. Orient those who serve in these callings. Offer support, instruction, and training as needed.
- Provide training and support for ward music coordinators as needed.
- Serve as the music leader and choir director in stake meetings if others have not been called.

19.5.3** Stake Music Specialists**

Stake music specialists may be called as needed. They may include a stake choir director, stake music leader, and stake accompanist. Stake music specialists may also be assigned to provide music training (see 19.6).

19.6**Music Training and Resources**

Learning basic music skills prepares members to use their talents to serve in the Church. The following resources can help those with music callings. They can also help all members who are interested in developing musical abilities.

Basic music training materials are in the “Using the Hymnbook” section in *Hymns* and the “Using the Songbook” section in the *Children’s Songbook*.

The following resources may also be helpful:

- A library of sheet music and music recordings for use at home and at church is available on the Sacred Music app and online at [music.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Listening to recordings can help members become more familiar with the hymns.

- The interactive music player on ChurchofJesusChrist.org can help those seeking to learn new music or develop music skills.
- The Basic Music Course can help members learn how to read and play music. It includes the Conducting Course Kit and Keyboard Course Kit. These resources can be purchased at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
- A Music Education Fund has been established at Church headquarters to provide keyboards, training materials, and instruction for members seeking to develop music skills. For information about this fund, see musicfund.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Stake and ward music coordinators may organize basic music training courses for music leaders, choir directors, or accompanists. Participants could include those who currently serve in music callings and other interested adults, youth, and children. Music coordinators or specialists may teach the courses. Music coordinators may also recommend qualified instructors to provide training.

 Where there are enough members, music coordinators may consult with priesthood leaders and recommend organizing stake or multistake training workshops. No fee is charged for Church-sponsored training.

19.7

Additional Policies and Guidelines

19.7.1

Obtaining and Using Music

A supply of hymnbooks is provided to new meetinghouses. Additional hymnbooks, choir music, and other music may be purchased with stake or ward budget funds.

19.7.2

Use of Meetinghouse Instruments for Practice, Private Instruction, and Recitals

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. This authorization is an exception as described in 35.5.6.1. No admittance fee should be charged for recitals.

19.7.3

Community Choirs

Long-term 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 in their names.

If the stake presidency approves, community choirs may use Church buildings for rehearsals and performances. They should follow Church standards and policies related to meetinghouses (see 35.5).



20.

Activities

20.1

Purposes

Church activities bring Church members and others together as “fellowcitizens with the saints” (Ephesians 2:19). Purposes for activities may include the following:

- Build faith in Jesus Christ.
- Provide fun and foster unity.
- Provide opportunities for personal growth.
- Strengthen individuals and families.
- Help members participate in God’s work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2).

Some examples of Church activities include:

- Service that blesses others and builds community relationships.
- Missionary work, temple work, and family history work.
- Opportunities to develop self-reliance and leadership skills.

- Education and vocational training.
- Outdoor activities.
- Opportunities to develop talents and appreciation for cultural arts.
- Sports and fitness.
- Celebrations of special occasions, such as holidays or Church or local historical events.

As used in this handbook, the term *Church activity* refers to an activity sponsored by a Church unit, quorum, or organization.

20.2

Planning Activities

Before planning an activity, leaders consider the spiritual and temporal needs of members. Leaders seek the guidance of the Spirit when deciding what kind of activity would help meet those needs.

20.2.1**Responsibility for Planning Activities**

For information about planning stake and multisite activities, see 20.3.

Ward activities can be planned in any of the following ways, based on local needs:

- The ward council could oversee the planning.
- The ward council could assign specific organizations to help plan one or more activities.
- When needed and where there are enough members, the bishopric may organize a ward activities committee. Youth may be called as committee members. This committee works under the direction of the ward council. The ward council assigns one of its members to be in regular contact with the activities committee.

For information about planning ward youth activities, see 10.2.1.3 and 11.2.1.3.

20.2.2**Inviting All to Participate**

Those who plan activities should reach out to all, especially new members, less-active members, youth, single adults, those with disabilities, and people of other faiths. Those who plan should be sensitive to participants' physical limitations. They should also be sensitive to cultural and language differences.

Those who plan activities look for ways for participants to be involved. For example, they could invite members and others to use their skills and talents in the activity.

While gathering in activities can be a blessing, members should not be made to feel obligated to attend every activity. Activities should not put undue burdens on leaders and members.

20.2.3**Standards**

Church activities should be uplifting and emphasize what is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13). Activities may not include anything that is contrary to Church teachings. Activities may not include media or other entertainment that makes anything inappropriate seem acceptable.

Substances that are contrary to the Word of Wisdom are not permitted at Church activities or on Church premises. Persons who are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs may not participate in Church activities. If such a situation occurs, leaders respond compassionately.

20.2.4**Balance and Variety**

Leaders plan a balance of activities, including service, cultural arts, and physical activities (see 20.1). Members should have opportunities to participate in activities that appeal to their interests. They should also support others in their interests.

The following sections provide examples of good activities.

20.2.4.1**Service**

Service activities provide opportunities to show love for others, to feel the joy of helping them, and to improve communities.

These activities can include visiting people who are sick or lonely, beautifying Church buildings and grounds, and participating in community projects. Where it is available, JustServe.org suggests community service opportunities.

Service activities should follow safety guidelines (see 20.7.6.1).

20.2.4.2**Cultural Arts**

Cultural arts activities provide opportunities for members to develop and share their talents. These activities also nurture creativity, confidence, and cooperation. They could include arts and crafts displays, talent shows, or dance, music, and drama. They could also include celebrations of culture, holidays, or local or general Church history.

**20.2.4.3****Recreation, Health, Fitness, and Sports**

As individuals, families, and Church groups, members are encouraged to participate in activities that contribute to their health and fitness. Some Church recreational activities can be planned so family members can participate together.

For information about sports activities, see 20.5.9.

20.2.5**Scheduling Activities**

Church activities should be planned as far in advance as feasible. Leaders keep parents informed of activities for children and youth.

Activities should be held at a reasonable hour. They should end early enough that participants can travel home safely.

If an activity will be held at a meetinghouse or another Church facility, the facility should be reserved in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Monday nights are reserved for family activities (see 20.5.3).

20.2.6**Funding for Activities**

Most activities should be simple and have little or no cost. Any expenses must be approved in advance by the bishopric or stake presidency.

Members should not usually pay to participate in activities. For policies and guidelines on funding activities, see 20.6.

20.3**Stake, Multistake, and Area Activities****20.3.1****General Guidelines**

Most Church activities are held at the ward level. Leaders are also encouraged to hold periodic stake and multistake activities when such activities will help accomplish the purposes in 20.1.

Stake and multistake activities are particularly beneficial for youth, single members, and women, especially in areas with few members. Well-planned stake and multistake activities can give members a wider circle of friendships. Leaders identify the needs of those they serve and consider whether such activities would help meet those needs. These leaders then recommend activities to the stake presidency.

20.3.2**Stake Activities**

Stake Young Men, Young Women, Relief Society, and Primary presidencies begin the process of planning stake activities for their organizations.

The stake young single adult committee begins the process of planning stake activities for young single adults.

If a stake single adult committee is organized, committee members begin the process of planning activities for single adults.

If a stake activities committee is organized, they can plan stake activities and serve as a resource to stake organizations in planning their activities as outlined in 20.3.2.1.

All stake activities require the approval of the stake presidency. They 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.

20.3.2.1**Stake Activities Committee**

The stake presidency may organize a stake activities committee to help the stake council plan stake activities. The stake activities committee consists of a chair (a high councilor) and committee members (see 20.3.2.2 and 20.3.2.3). The stake presidency could also invite other members to help plan one or more activities.

20.3.2.2**Stake Activities Committee Chair**

If the stake presidency organizes a stake activities committee, they assign a high councilor to be the committee chair. His responsibilities can include:

- Maintaining a calendar of stake activities.
- Supervising committee members in planning stake activities.
- Recommending a detailed stake activities budget to the stake presidency before the beginning of each year. This budget does not include activities that are for individual stake organizations.
- Serving as a resource to stake organization leaders when they plan activities.

20.3.2.3**Stake Activities Committee Members**

A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor may call members to serve on the stake activities committee. They serve under the direction of the committee chair. Committee members help plan and organize activities in the stake.

20.3.3**Multistake and Area Activities**

In areas with few youth, leaders should hold multistake youth activities periodically so youth can benefit from socializing in larger groups. Area activities for youth may also be held occasionally.

Frequent multistake activities should be held for young single adults where gathering does not require too much time or expense. Area activities for young single adults may also be held occasionally.

For information about multistake activities for single members, see 14.2.1.3.

Multistake activities should be simple and varied.

If stake presidents feel that a multistake activity would benefit the members of their stakes, they may request permission from the Area Presidency. Before proposing a multistake activity, stake presidents determine whether it is the best way to meet the needs they have identified. The stake presidents consider

the cost, time, and travel the activity would require. They also consider safety (see 20.7.6).

Meetings to coordinate the planning of multistake activities may be held before or after area council and coordinating council meetings (see 5.2.3 and 5.2.4). As needed, additional leaders—including stake Relief Society, Young Men, and Young Women presidents—could be invited to attend.

The Area Presidency may assign stake presidents or Area Seventies to lead committees that plan and carry out multistake or area activities. Stake presidencies may call members of their stakes to serve on these committees.

Funding for most multistake activities comes from the budget funds of the participating stakes. Funding for area activities may come from area or Church headquarters budgets when approved.

20.3.4

Complying with Church Travel Policies

Stake, multistake, and area activities should comply with Church travel policies (see 20.7.7). Travel for FSY conferences should comply with Church travel policies unless an FSY administrator gives local leaders other instructions.



20.4

Youth Conference

Beginning in January of the year they turn 14, young men and young women are invited to participate together in a youth conference. Eighteen-year-olds may also attend, including those who have been ordained elders and those who have been endowed. 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. In a year that youth are assigned to attend an FSY conference, stakes and wards should not hold youth conferences.

The purposes of youth conferences are to help youth:

- Build faith in Jesus Christ.
- Strengthen testimonies.
- Develop talents.
- Make new friends.
- Have fun with youth who share similar beliefs and standards.

Youth can also learn leadership skills as they help plan youth conferences.

Ward youth conferences are planned and carried out by the ward youth council, under the direction of the bishopric (see 29.2.6). The bishopric obtains the stake presidency's approval of plans for a ward youth conference.

Stake youth conferences are planned and carried out by the stake youth leadership committee (see 29.3.9). Youth should be invited to assist the committee as much as possible.

Youth conferences are funded from the stake or ward budget. Members should not be asked to pay for youth conferences (see 20.6).

As leaders and youth plan a youth conference, they should observe the policies in this chapter and the following guidelines:

- Select a gospel theme, such as a scripture, that will inspire the youth and help them understand the expectations of the conference. The Church's annual youth theme could be used as the conference theme. The bishopric or stake presidency should approve the theme.
- Plan activities that are consistent with the theme.
- Obtain the approval of the bishopric or stake presidency for all speakers and activities. Speakers should be Church members who teach by the Spirit. See 38.8.18 for other guidelines concerning speakers.
- If an event is planned for Sunday, it should be appropriate for the Sabbath day. Testimony meetings, discussions with the bishopric, or similar meetings are permitted. However, sacrament meetings are not to be held—and the sacrament is not to be administered—outside of meeting-houses in the ward or stake. Any exceptions must be for a Church-sponsored activity and must be approved by the Area Presidency. Groups should not travel to or from youth conference on a Sunday.
- Ensure adequate adult supervision at all times (see 20.7.1).
- Follow all safety guidelines in 20.7.6.

Adult leaders are invited to attend as much of the conference as possible. These include members of the bishopric or stake presidency, ward or stake Young Women presidency, and stake Young Men presidency. Ward Young Women and Young Men advisers may also be invited to attend.

20.5

Policies and Guidelines for Selecting and Planning Activities

Leaders ensure that the following policies and guidelines are observed in selecting and planning Church activities.

20.5.1

Commercial or Political Activities

Activities held for any commercial or political purpose are not permitted (see 35.5.6.1 and 35.5.6.3).

20.5.2

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: A Guide for Making Choices*).

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. Leaders make clear agreements in writing that commit those who provide music to follow Church standards at Church activities.

20.5.3

Monday Nights

Members are encouraged to hold family activities on Monday or at other times. No Church activities, meetings, or baptismal services should be held after 6:00 p.m. on Mondays.

Leaders ensure that Church buildings and other facilities are closed on Monday nights. Receptions and similar activities may not be held in Church facilities on Monday nights.

As an exception, young single adult wards and single adult wards may hold activities on Monday nights, including in Church buildings. An exception may also be made when New Year's Eve is on a Monday (see 20.5.4).

20.5.4

New Year's Eve Activities

If a ward or stake plans a New Year's Eve activity, and if New Year's Eve falls on Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, leaders should observe the following guidelines.

Saturday. The stake president may schedule an alternate Sunday for observing fast day. The activity may extend past midnight. However, it should end soon afterward so participants can attend Sunday meetings.

Sunday. Church activities may be planned for Saturday, December 30. The guidelines in the previous paragraph apply. Families may be encouraged to celebrate New Year's Eve in their homes. Activities should be appropriate for the Sabbath day.

Monday. The stake president or bishop may authorize the use of Church buildings on Monday evening.

20.5.5

Overnight Activities

Permission from parents or guardians is required for all Church overnight activities involving youth (see 20.7.4).

Church overnight activities for combined groups of young men and young women must be approved by the bishop and stake president. The same is true for activities for male and female single members. Such activities should be rare. Examples include youth conferences, FSY conferences, or temple visits that require traveling long distances.

Male and female participants and leaders should have separate sleeping accommodations. However, a married couple may share the same room or tent. Each youth should have his or her own bed or sleeping bag.

If adult leaders and youth share overnight facilities, such as a cabin or tent, there must be at least two adults in each facility, and they must be the same sex as the youth.

Youth may not stay in the same tent or room as an adult if there is only one adult present. However, a youth may stay alone in a tent or room with his or her parent or guardian.

All Church overnight activities must include at least two adult leaders.

When adult priesthood holders attend Young Women activities, they must stay in facilities separate from the young women.

Leaders fill out an Event and Activity Plan form for all overnight activities.

Overnight activities at Church meetinghouses or meetinghouse grounds are not approved.

For more information, see "FAQs—What Should I Do?" on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

20.5.6

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 with reverence and dignity. Only men 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, he should change immediately into regular clothes.

The Savior should not be portrayed by children in dramatization except in a Nativity scene.

20.5.7

Prayers and Devotionals at Activities

All activities should be opened and, when appropriate, closed with prayer. A hymn, a spiritual thought, or remarks by a leader or participant may be included.

20.5.8

Sabbath-Day Observance

No Church camps, sports events, or recreational events are to be scheduled on Sunday. Nor should youth groups and others travel to or from camps or youth conferences on Sunday.

As an exception, when safety or travel costs are serious concerns, some youth activities may be scheduled immediately after Sunday worship meetings. These activities should be separate from the Sunday meeting schedule. They should be in keeping with the spirit of the Sabbath. Approval from the bishop and stake president is required.

20.5.9

Sports

Church sports activities provide opportunities for physical activity and fellowship. They emphasize participation, sportsmanship, and skill development. When the activity involves competition, every effort should be made to avoid contention. All team members should have regular opportunities to play, regardless of skill level.

The stake presidency oversees sports activities sponsored within their stake. They also establish guidelines that (1) specify the ages at which players may participate in Church sports and (2) determine player eligibility. Such decisions should be made before the start of a season.

If multistake sports activities are held, the Area Presidency or assigned Area Seventies oversee them. These activities are administered by sports specialists who are called by agent stake presidents designated by the Area Presidency. Area sports tournaments are not approved.

Participants in Church sports activities do not need to be Church members. However, they should live in the unit's boundaries and agree to follow Church standards and policies during activities.

If team uniforms are used, they should be simple, inexpensive, and appropriate for the activity. Colored T-shirts or pullover shirts are usually sufficient. Uniforms should be paid for from the stake or ward budget.

The presentation of team or individual awards or trophies is discouraged.



20.5.10

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 require the approval of the stake presidency. Overnight temple visits also require the approval of the stake presidency.

Temple visits must comply with the travel policies in 20.7.7. Overnight temple visits must also comply with the policies in 20.5.5.

20.5.11**Unapproved Activities**

Church units may not sponsor activities that are not in harmony with the guidelines in this chapter. These include:

- Activities that have a high risk of injury or illness (see 20.7.6).
- Activities that require unusual expense or travel (see 20.7.7).
- Exercise programs that have music, lyrics, dress, or other elements that are not in harmony with Church standards.

If a bishop has a question about whether an activity is appropriate, he asks the stake president. Stake presidents may address questions to the Area Presidency.

20.6**Policies and Guidelines for Funding Activities**

Leaders ensure that the following policies and guidelines are observed in funding all Church activities.

20.6.1**Activities Paid for with Ward or Stake Budget Funds**

Ward or stake budget funds should be used to pay for all activities—with the possible exceptions listed in 20.6.2.

Members should not provide materials, supplies, rental or admission fees, or long-distance transportation at their own expense. Members may provide food if doing so is not a burden.

20.6.2**Funding for Youth Camps**

If the ward or stake budget does not have enough funds for the activities listed below, leaders may ask participants to pay for part or all of them:

- One annual extended Aaronic Priesthood camp or similar activity
- One annual extended Young Women camp or similar activity

The expenses or travel for an annual camp should not be excessive. Lack of personal funds should not keep a member from participating.

If funds from ward and stake budgets and from participants are not sufficient for camps, the bishop may authorize one ward fundraising event annually. This event must comply with the guidelines in 20.6.5.

For information about funding large multistake or area events for young single adults, see 14.2.1.3.

20.6.3**Funding for FSY Conferences**

Youth may be asked to contribute a fee to attend For the Strength of Youth (FSY) conferences. If the cost would keep a youth from participating, the bishop may use ward budget funds to pay all or part of this fee. See FSY.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

20.6.4**Funding for Equipment and Supplies**

If possible, equipment and supplies the ward needs for annual youth camps are purchased with ward budget funds. If these funds are not sufficient, the bishop may authorize one ward fundraising event annually. This activity must comply with the guidelines in 20.6.5.

Equipment and supplies that are purchased with ward budget funds or money raised through a fundraising event are for Church use only. They are not for personal use.

20.6.5

Fundraising Events

Expenses for stake and ward activities are usually paid with budget funds. However, a stake president or bishop may authorize one fundraising event each year for the following purposes only:

- To help pay for the activities listed in 20.6.2 and 20.6.3.
- To help buy equipment that the unit needs for annual camps as outlined in 20.6.4.

If a fundraiser is held, it should provide a meaningful value or service.

Leaders ensure that the funds raised are distributed equitably. Budget for Aaronic Priesthood quorums is based on the number of young men in the ward. Budget for the young women is based on the number of young women in the ward.

Contributions to fundraising events are voluntary. Leaders ensure that members do not feel obligated to contribute.

Units that sponsor fundraisers should not advertise or solicit beyond their boundaries. Nor should they sell products or services door to door.

Examples of fundraising activities that are not approved include:

- Activities that would be taxable.
- Activities completed with paid labor, either by employees or by contract.
- Entertainment for which the stake or ward pays performers for their services.

- The sale of goods or services from a commercial business.
- Games of chance, such as raffles, lotteries, and bingo.
- Activities that are unsafe.

Any exceptions to these instructions must be approved by the Area Presidency.

20.7

Safety Policies and Guidelines for Activities

Leaders ensure that the following safety policies and guidelines are observed in all Church activities.

20.7.1

Adult Supervision

At least two adults must be present at all Church activities attended by children and youth. Additional adults may be needed depending on the size of the group, the skills required for the activity, or other factors. Parents are encouraged to help.

All who work with children and youth must complete the children and youth protection training. See ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

20.7.2

Age Requirements for Participation in Youth Activities

With their parents' approval, youth may attend overnight camps beginning in January of the year they turn 12. They may attend dances, youth conferences, and FSY conferences beginning in January of the year they turn 14. Eighteen-year-olds may also attend, including those who have been ordained elders and those who have been endowed.

20.7.3**Insurance****20.7.3.1****Personal Automobile Insurance**

See 20.7.7.

20.7.3.2**Personal Health and Accident Insurance**

In many parts of the world, health and accident insurance coverage is available through employers or government programs. Members who have this coverage should access all available benefits if they incur an injury during a Church activity before seeking help through Church Activity Medical Assistance (CAMA) (see 20.7.3.4).

20.7.3.3**Personal Liability Insurance**

The Church counsels members and leaders who oversee Church activities to protect themselves, where possible, by carrying reasonable amounts of liability insurance. Such insurance may be available through homeowners insurance or other policies. For more information, see “FAQs—What Should I Do?” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

20.7.3.4**Church Activity Medical Assistance Program**

In the United States, the Church Activity Medical Assistance (CAMA) program provides secondary medical and dental assistance for injuries sustained while participating in a Church activity. It also provides funeral assistance if necessary. This program is designed to supplement, not replace, a person’s own health and accident insurance. For more information, see “FAQs—What Should I Do?” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

If an incident occurs during a Church-sponsored event, leaders determine if CAMA might be needed. Any leader may report an incident in the Global Incident Reporting system at incidents.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. If the leader indicates that treatment beyond first aid is expected, the bishop will be notified and will receive enrollment information. The bishop considers a person’s ability to pay medical expenses by other means, such as personal insurance coverage or other resources. He may authorize the use of CAMA funds if he feels it is appropriate.

For more information, see the *Church Activity Medical Assistance Handbook*. To obtain this handbook, contact:

Deseret Mutual Benefit Administrators
P.O. Box 45530
Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0530
Telephone: 1-801-578-5650 or 1-800-777-1647
Email: churchactivity@dmdba.com
Website: dmdba.com/churchactivity

20.7.3.5**Certificates of Insurance**

The Church is often asked to provide evidence of insurance for activities. These requests come because of rental agreements, contracts, or permits associated with activities.

In the United States and Canada, leaders may obtain a certificate showing evidence of insurance at InsuranceCertificates.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Outside the United States and Canada leaders should contact the area office. Requests should include:

- The name and address of the organization requiring evidence of insurance.
- A description and location of the facility, if renting a facility.
- The liability limits required.

- Other relevant information about the activity.

Leaders should plan well in advance to allow time to prepare the certificates.

20.7.4

Parental Permission

Children and youth may not participate in a Church activity without the permission of their parents or guardians. For Church activities that include an overnight stay, lengthy travel, or higher than ordinary risks, written consent is necessary. Some activities may require additional planning to reduce risks. Safety should always be an important consideration. See 20.7.6.1.

Parents and guardians give this consent by signing the Permission and Medical Release form. The person who leads the activity should have a signed form for each participant.

20.7.5

Reports of Abuse

Any abuse that occurs during a Church activity should be reported to civil authorities. The bishop should be contacted immediately. Instructions for members are in 38.6.2.7. Instructions for bishops are in 38.6.2.1.

For definitions of abuse, see 38.6.2.3 and 38.6.2.4.

20.7.6

Safety Precautions, Accident Response, and Accident Reporting

20.7.6.1

Safety Precautions

Leaders and participants carefully assess activities to ensure minimal risk of injury or illness. 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 supervision. They should also be appropriate for the participants' age, abilities, and maturity.

Leaders instruct all participants in safety practices for the activity. When activities require specific physical skills or experience, it may be necessary to obtain specialized training or to use professional guides.

Leaders should be prepared for emergencies. They should also know in advance how to contact local law enforcement and emergency services. For more information, see “FAQs—What Should I Do?” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



20.7.6.2

Accident Response

If an accident or injury occurs on Church property or during a Church activity, leaders observe the following guidelines, as applicable:

- Render first aid. If a person needs additional medical care, contact emergency medical services. Also contact the parent, guardian, or other next of kin and the bishop or stake president.
- If someone goes missing or dies, immediately notify local law enforcement. Cooperate fully with them.

- Provide emotional support.
- Do not encourage or discourage legal action. Do not make commitments on behalf of the Church.
- Gather and keep names of witnesses, their contact information, accounts of what happened, and photographs.
- Report the accident (see 20.7.6.3).

20.7.6.3

Accident Reporting

The following situations should be reported online at incidents.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. The bishop, stake president, or member he designates who knows about the incident makes the report promptly.

- An accident or injury occurs on Church property or during a Church activity.
- A person who was participating in a Church activity is missing.
- Private, public, or Church property is damaged during a Church activity.
- Legal action is threatened or anticipated.

If an event results in a serious injury, fatality, or missing person, the stake president, bishop, or member he designates immediately takes one of the following actions:

- In the United States, first call 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). Then contact the Area Presidency.
- Outside the United States, notify the area office.

The stake president or bishop also reports injuries and damage involving Church facilities or property to the Church facilities manager.

For more information, see “FAQs—What Should I Do?” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

20.7.6.4

Insurance and Questions

If an injury occurs during a Church event, leaders determine if the Church Activity Medical Assistance program applies (see 20.7.3.4).

In some cases, the stake president or bishop may have questions about safety issues or claims against the Church. The stake president (or a bishop under his direction) refers such questions to the Risk Management Division or to the area office.

20.7.7

Travel

Travel for Church activities should be approved by the bishop or stake president. This travel should not place undue burdens on members.

Participants should not travel long distances (more than a few hours) for activities. Any exceptions require approval from the Area Presidency. If the Area Presidency approves such travel, members should not provide it at their own expense (see 20.6).

Travel practices and the application of guidelines in this section should be consistent among units in the same area or coordinating council. Stake presidents may discuss and agree on travel practices during coordinating council meetings.

Leaders fill out an Event and Activity Plan form for activities that involve long-distance travel.

When a Church activity for youth involves long-distance travel or staying overnight, parents or guardians must give written permission for their children to participate (see 20.7.4).

Responsible adult supervision must be provided (see 20.7.1).

When feasible, Church groups should use commercial transportation for long-distance travel. It should be licensed and protected by liability insurance.

When Church groups travel in private passenger vehicles, each vehicle must be in safe operating condition. 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. Plans should be made to ensure that drivers remain aware and alert. Whenever possible, an adult should not be alone with a youth in a vehicle unless the youth is his or her child.

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.

For more information, see “FAQs—What Should I Do?” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

20.8

Activity Administration Policies

Leaders ensure that the following policies and guidelines are observed when administering all Church activities.

20.8.1

Copyrighted Materials

See 38.8.11.

20.8.2

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 stake president. Such requests are handled by the Church facilities manager.

Local units may be asked to show evidence of liability insurance when renting or using facilities that are not owned by the Church. For information about how to obtain a certificate of insurance, see 20.7.3.5.

20.8.3

Taxable Activities

Leaders ensure that activities do not jeopardize the Church’s tax-exempt status. For guidelines, see 34.8.1.



21.

Ministering

21.0

Introduction

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

The Lord wants all members of His Church to receive such care. For this reason, priesthood holders are assigned as ministering brothers to each member household. Ministering sisters are assigned to each adult sister. These assignments help ensure that Church members are remembered and cared for (see Moroni 6:4).

Ministering is an important way we keep the commandments to love God and to love our neighbors (see Matthew 22:36–40). It is also a vital way to help accomplish God’s work of salvation and exaltation.

Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies help ministering brothers and sisters learn how to minister to others. They also give inspiration, guidance, and support. They can do this in ministering interviews (see 21.3), in Sunday meetings,

and in personal conversations. They seek inspiration from the scriptures, this chapter, and ministering [.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

21.1

Responsibilities of Ministering Sisters and Brothers

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

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

- Help them strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
- Help them prepare to make and keep sacred covenants with God as they receive ordinances. As needed, help parents prepare their children to receive ordinances and keep covenants.

- Discern needs and provide Christlike love, caring, and service. Offer help and comfort in times of spiritual or temporal need. Discuss needs during ministering interviews and at other times.
- Help them become spiritually and temporally self-reliant.

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

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

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

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

21.2

Organizing Ministering

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

21.2.1

Making Assignments

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

When making these decisions, leaders consider the following:

- Dedicated ministering brothers and sisters should be assigned to members who have the greatest need. These may include new members, single parents, widows, widowers, and less-active members.
- Youth may serve as companions to adults according to the guidelines in 21.2.2.
- A married couple may be assigned to minister together to a person or family.
- Stake presidencies and bishoprics care for all members of the stake or ward. Because of this, they are generally not assigned as ministering brothers. The stake president determines whether high councilors and functioning patriarchs are assigned.

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

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

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

21.2.2

Ministering Assignments for Youth

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

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

It is often a blessing to a sister to have a young woman minister to her. It can also be a blessing to the young woman.

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

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

Youth do not have ministering brothers or sisters assigned to them. They receive ministering care from their family's ministering brothers. Their class or

quorum presidency and adult leaders also minister to them. If their parents are not members of the Church but are open to receiving ministering, the elders quorum presidency may assign ministering brothers to the family. Similarly, the Relief Society presidency may assign ministering sisters to the mother.

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

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



21.2.3

Full-Time Missionaries

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

21.3**Ministering Interviews**

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

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

These interviews are held at least once each quarter. They may be held at any time during the quarter. Preferably, interviews are held in person and with both members of the companionship. Youth with ministering assignments should be included if possible.

Ministering interviews do not need to be long to be effective. Their purposes are to:

- Counsel about the strengths, needs, and challenges of assigned individuals and families.
- Discuss ways to help persons prepare to receive ordinances if needed.
- Consider how the elders quorum, Relief Society, ward council, and others might help.
- Minister to ministering brothers and sisters. Show love and appreciation. Teach and encourage them. Help them grow in their capacity to receive and act upon revelation in their service.

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

Leaders use Leader and Clerk Resources to report ministering interviews.

21.4**Coordinating Ministering Efforts**

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

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

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

The Relief Society and elders quorum presidents meet together at least quarterly with the bishop. They discuss the needs of ward members. They also talk about possible changes in ministering assignments.

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



22.

Providing for Temporal Needs and Building Self-Reliance

22.0

Introduction

Members of the Church strive to “bear one another’s burdens . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9). Caring for those who have temporal needs is part of God’s work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2).

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

See *In the Lord’s Way: Caring for Members Who Have Temporal or Emotional Needs* for examples of how to apply the principles in this chapter.

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY EFFORTS

22.1

Build Self-Reliance

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

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

22.1.1

Spiritual Strength

The Savior taught that “all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:34). Members develop spiritual strength as they exercise faith in Christ and obey God’s commandments.

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

22.1.2

Physical and Emotional Health

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

- Obey the Word of Wisdom (see Doctrine and Covenants 89).
- Strive to eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep.
- Avoid substances and behaviors that are harmful or addictive.
- Practice good hygiene and receive proper medical care.
- Develop healthy relationships.
- Seek professional help for mental or emotional health challenges as needed.



22.1.3

Education and Employment

The Savior taught, “Seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118). Education or vocational training can lead to better employment so members can provide for personal and family needs.

22.1.4

Temporal Preparedness

Members are counseled to become prepared so they can care for themselves, their families, and others in times of need.

Key Elements of Temporal Preparedness

Finances

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

Home Storage

- Food
- Water
- Other necessities

Members increase their financial preparedness by:

- Paying tithes and offerings (see Malachi 3:8–12).
- Minimizing debt.
- Living within a budget.
- Saving for the future.
- Obtaining an appropriate education (see 22.3.3).

Preparedness also includes planning for emergencies. Members are encouraged to build both a short-term and longer-term supply of food, water, and other necessities.

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

22.2**Minister to Those with Temporal and Emotional Needs**

The Lord's disciples are taught to "love . . . and to serve one another" and to "succor those that stand in need of . . . succor" (Mosiah 4:15–16). Members strive to minister to those who have temporal and emotional needs. These needs may include food, clothing, housing, education, employment, physical health, and emotional well-being.

22.2.1**The Lord's Storehouse**

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

The Lord's storehouse exists in each ward and stake. Leaders can often help individuals and families find solutions to their needs by drawing on the knowledge, skills, and service offered by ward and stake members.

**22.2.2****The Law of the Fast and Fast Offerings**

The Lord has established the law of the fast to bless His people and to provide a way for them to serve

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

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

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

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

Members may give their fast offering and a completed Tithing and Other Offerings form to the bishop or one of his counselors. In some areas, they can also make their donation online. 📱 In some wards, the bishop may authorize Aaronic Priesthood holders to collect fast offerings (see 34.3.2).

22.2.3**Service**

Members seek to serve others as the Savior did (see John 13:35).

Service can be coordinated in the ward, stake, or community. Where JustServe.org is available, members and others can use it to identify service opportunities in the community.

22.2.4**Humanitarian Aid**

The Church provides humanitarian aid throughout the world. It does this both directly and through

collaboration with other relief organizations.

 Members and others who wish to support these efforts may donate to Church humanitarian aid.

LEADER EFFORTS

22.3

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

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

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

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

See *In the Lord's Way: Caring for Members Who Have Temporal or Emotional Needs* for examples of how to apply this pattern.

22.3.1

Seek Out Those in Need

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

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

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

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

22.3.2

Help Members Assess and Address Short-Term Needs

Members strive to meet their basic needs through their own efforts and help from extended family. When this is insufficient, members may need help from other sources such as:

- Government and community resources (see 22.12).
- Church assistance.

Church assistance might include help with short-term needs such as food, clothing, housing, or other basics. Bishops may use fast offerings to respond to these needs.  Where bishops' orders are available, bishops generally use those to provide food and other basic goods (see "Bishops' Orders and Referrals" in *Leader and Clerk Resources [LCR]*).

Members who receive assistance work with leaders to develop a Self-Reliance Plan. When meeting with members, bishops should be attentive to any urgent needs.

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

22.3.3**Help Members Build Self-Reliance**

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

The Self-Reliance Plan helps members identify their strengths, needs, and resources. This plan is used with all members who receive Church assistance. The bishop may assign Relief Society leaders, elders quorum leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, or others to help members fill out the plan.

As part of a self-reliance plan, leaders may recommend that members participate in a self-reliance group. These groups help them develop skills and resources for better education, employment, or financial management (see 22.13). The groups are generally organized by stake or ward councils (see 22.10.2, 22.7).

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

22.3.4**Minister to Those with Emotional Needs**

Ministering brothers and sisters and ward leaders can be instrumental in helping members who experience emotional challenges. A person's struggle with emotional challenges can also affect family members, especially his or her spouse. Ward leaders should extend support and understanding to them.

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

- *Finding Strength in the Lord: Emotional Resilience*
- *Healing through the Savior: The Addiction Recovery Program*
- Spouse and family support groups
- Courses for strengthening marriages and families

Bishops may consult with Family Services staff to better understand a member's emotional challenges and to identify available resources. Stake and mission presidents may also consult with Family Services. Family Services staff can help these leaders evaluate if a member with serious emotional or social challenges may need professional counseling. Leaders can request a consultation by contacting their Family Services office or their welfare and self-reliance manager. (See 31.3.6 for contact information.)

📌 Bishops can refer members who need counseling to a Family Services professional, where available. They do this by using a bishop's order for services (see "Bishops' Orders and Referrals" in LCR). Relief Society and elders quorum presidents can also initiate these referrals. These referrals require approval by the bishop.

Alternatively, members may seek help from reputable professional counselors in the community.

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



22.4

Principles for Providing Church Assistance

With the help of the Lord, members seek to provide for themselves and their families. Extended families are encouraged to help as needed. When members need additional assistance, they may turn to other sources. These may include:

- Government and community resources (see 22.12).
- Church assistance through fast offerings or bishops' orders for food and other basic goods (see 22.3.2).

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

When providing Church assistance, leaders follow the principles in sections 22.4.1 through 22.4.5. See *In the Lord's Way: Caring for Members Who Have Temporal or Emotional Needs* for examples of how to apply these principles.

Bishops and clerks review the video "Sacred Funds, Sacred Responsibilities" at least once a year.

Principles for Providing Church Assistance

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

22.4.1

Encourage Personal and Family Responsibility

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

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

22.4.2

Provide Temporary Assistance for Essential Needs

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

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

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

22.4.3

Provide Resources or Services Rather Than Cash

If possible, the bishop should avoid giving cash. Instead, he should use fast offerings or bishops'

orders to provide members with groceries or services. Members can then use their own money to pay for other needs.

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

22.4.4 Offer Work or Service Opportunities

Bishops invite those who receive assistance to work or provide service to the extent of their ability. This helps members maintain a sense of dignity. It also increases their ability to be self-reliant.

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

22.4.5 Keep Information about Church Assistance Confidential

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

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

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

22.5

Policies for Providing Church Assistance

Church leaders should follow the policies outlined in this section when providing assistance.

22.5.1 Policies Regarding Recipients of Church Assistance

22.5.1.1 Assistance to Ward Members

Generally, members who receive Church assistance should live in the ward boundaries and have their membership record in the ward.

Members receiving Church assistance should be making efforts to progress both temporally and spiritually. However, temporary assistance can be provided even if members do not yet attend Church meetings or follow Church standards.

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

22.5.1.2 Assistance to Bishops and Stake Presidents

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

If fast-offering funds are used, the stake president reviews the bills and other expenses before

authorizing payment. The bishop may not approve a payment for himself or his family.

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

22.5.1.3

Assistance to Persons Who Are Transient or Homeless

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

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

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

22.5.1.4

Assistance to Persons Who Are Not Members of the Church

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

22.5.2

Policies on Using Fast Offerings

22.5.2.1

Medical or Other Health Care

Each Church area has established approval limits for using fast offerings to pay medical, dental, or mental health expenses. Limits may vary by region or country in an area.

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

22.5.2.2

Consumer Debt and Failed Businesses or Investments

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

22.5.2.3

Repayment of Fast Offerings

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

22.5.2.4**Ward Fast-Offering Expenditure Amounts**

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

22.5.3**Policies on Making Payments**

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

Bishopric members and clerks follow the financial procedures outlined in 34.5.7 when:

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

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

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

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

22.5.5**Protecting against Improper Use of Funds**

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

22.6**Roles of Ward Leaders****22.6.1****Bishop and His Counselors**

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

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

The bishop and his counselors have the following responsibilities:

- Teach the principles and blessings related to (1) caring for those who have temporal and emotional needs and (2) building self-reliance

(see 22.1). This includes personal and family preparedness.

- Teach the law of the fast and encourage members to give a generous fast offering (see 22.2.2).
- Oversee the gathering and accounting of fast offerings (see 34.3.2).

As the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, the bishopric also oversees the efforts of Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women classes to serve those with temporal needs in the ward and community (see 10.2.2 and 11.2.2). These efforts are coordinated in ward youth council meetings (see 22.8) and in quorum and class presidency meetings (see 10.4.3 and 11.3.4.3).

22.6.2

Relief Society and Elders Quorum Presidencies

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

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

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

assigned if the president is unavailable. The assigned leader submits the completed form to the bishop for his approval.

22.6.3

Ministering Brothers or Sisters

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

22.6.4

Ward Welfare and Self-Reliance Specialists

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

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

- Employment.
- Education.
- Preparedness.
- Emotional health.
- Nutrition.
- Personal finances.

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

22.6.5**Summary of Callings and Roles**

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

Calling	Visit and Assess Needs	Teach Principles of Self-Reliance	Assist Members with the Self-Reliance Plan	Approve Fast-Offering Assistance or Bishops' Orders
Bishop	May, but often delegates	Yes	May, but often delegates	Yes
Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies	Yes	Yes	As assigned	No
Ministering brothers and sisters	Yes	Yes	As assigned	No
Ward welfare and self-reliance specialists (if called)	As assigned	As assigned	As assigned	No

22.7**Role of the Ward Council**

An important role of the ward council is to plan how to care for those in need and to help them become self-reliant (see 4.4). In discussing the needs of members, the council respects the desires of any who request confidentiality.

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

- Plan ways to teach ward members how to apply principles of self-reliance (see 22.1).
- Plan ways to help those who have immediate needs, such as unemployment, and those who have longer-term needs, such as health problems or disabilities.
- Identify ward members whose skills might be helpful in responding to needs.

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

Ward councils also prepare a simple written plan for the ward to respond to emergencies. This plan should be coordinated with the stake's emergency plan (see "Stake and Ward Preparedness"; see also 22.9.1.3 in this handbook).

Ward welfare and self-reliance specialists may be invited to ward council meetings as needed.

22.8**Role of the Ward Youth Council**

One purpose of the ward youth council is to help youth become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ (see 29.2.6). Under the bishopric's guidance, the ward youth council plans ways to serve those in need in their ward and community.

Specific service activities can be planned during quorum and class presidency meetings. Where JustServe.org is available, it may be used to identify service opportunities in the community.

22.9**Roles of Stake Leaders****22.9.1****Stake President and His Counselors**

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

The stake president and his counselors have the following responsibilities:

- Direct the stake's efforts to prepare for and respond to emergencies (see 22.9.1.3).

The stake president also has the following responsibilities:

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

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

22.9.1.1**Teach Bishops the Principles of Providing Church Assistance**

The stake president ensures that bishops are caring for those with temporal needs in their wards. He teaches bishops the principles and policies for providing Church assistance (see 22.4 and 22.5).

In his interviews with bishops, the stake president reviews fast-offering payments from the ward's monthly financial statement. He also discusses with each bishop the principles he is using to help members. He counsels with the bishop about any payments or patterns in the statement that may show a misunderstanding of correct principles.

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

- Teach the principles and blessings related to (1) caring for those who have temporal and emotional needs and (2) building self-reliance (see 22.1).
- Teach the law of the fast and encourage members to give a generous fast offering (see 22.2.2).
- Teach bishops how to properly provide Church assistance to those who have temporal needs (see 22.9.1.1).
- Ensure that elders quorum presidents and ward Relief Society presidents are taught about their roles in caring for those in need. High councilors and stake Relief Society presidencies help instruct these leaders (see 22.9.2 and 22.9.3).

The stake president ensures that bishops and clerks review the training in the video “Sacred Funds, Sacred Responsibilities” at least once a year.

22.9.1.2

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

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

- Bishops’ storehouses.
- Family Services offices.
- BYU–Pathway Worldwide.
- Deseret Industries stores.

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

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

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

22.9.1.3

Respond to Emergencies

The stake president oversees Church emergency response and communications within his stake. In disasters that cover more than one stake, the Area Presidency or an assigned Area Seventy may direct

the response. Welfare and self-reliance managers support area and stake leaders in these efforts.

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

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

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

The stake president approves public information that is released locally by the Church. He coordinates this with the stake communication director if one is called (see 6.2.1.7). He may serve as the Church spokesman to respond to questions from the media. He may also assign the stake communication director or another spokesperson to do this. In disasters that cover more than one stake, the Area Presidency or an assigned Area Seventy may manage public communications.

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

More information is available at “Emergency Response Procedures.”

22.9.2

High Councilors

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

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

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

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

22.9.3

Stake Relief Society Presidency

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

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

22.9.4

Stake Welfare and Self-Reliance Specialists

As needed, the stake presidency may call individuals or couples as stake welfare and self-reliance specialists.

Specialists may be assigned to a specific area of focus. They may be asked to:

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

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

22.10

Role of the Stake Council

Members of the stake council discuss the needs of stake members and plan how to help members become self-reliant (see 29.3.7). They identify resources in the community and stake that can help ward leaders care for the temporal and emotional needs of their members (see 22.12 and 22.13). They develop

and maintain a simple written plan for the stake to respond to emergencies (see “Stake and Ward Preparedness”). Stake councils may also plan ways of providing service in the community.

22.10.1

Resources Coordinated by the Stake

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

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

22.10.2

Specialized Working Groups

To help organize and manage the optional resources outlined in 22.10.1, the stake presidency may appoint specialized working groups, such as JustServe working groups. These groups could consist of selected members of the stake council or the stake adult leadership committee (see 29.3.8). They could also include specialists such as:

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

22.11

Role of the Stake Bishops' Council

The stake bishops' council is held to counsel about responsibilities pertaining to bishops. It includes regular discussion of the principles of (1) caring for those who have temporal and emotional needs and (2) building self-reliance. (See 29.3.10.)

Council members are encouraged to:

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

GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY, AND CHURCH RESOURCES

22.12

Government and Community Resources

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

- Health care assistance.
- Food assistance.

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



22.13

Church Resources

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

Category	Resources
Immediate needs	• The Lord’s storehouse (members’ offerings of time, talents, compassion, materials, and financial resources) • Fast offerings • Bishops’ orders for food and other basic goods through a bishops’ storehouse or grocery store.* • Bishops’ orders for clothing or household items through a Deseret Industries store.* * Bishops’ orders are placed through “Bishops’ Orders and Referrals” in LCR.
Education and employment	• Self-reliance groups (Find a Better Job, Starting and Growing My Business, Education for Better Work) • Stake Welfare and Self-Reliance Resource Centers • Employment Services • BYU–Pathway Worldwide • EnglishConnect • Perpetual Education Fund loans • Training programs through Deseret Industries or Development Counseling Services
Emotional health	• Self-reliance group (Emotional Resilience) • Counseling Resources • Family Services counseling. In some locations, bishops can refer members to Family Services through “Bishops’ Orders and Referrals” in LCR. Relief Society and elders quorum presidents can also initiate these referrals. These referrals require approval by the bishop. • Addiction recovery groups and spouse and family support groups • Strengthening Marriages and Families courses • Family Services consultations for leaders • Life Help resources
Temporal preparedness	• Self-reliance group (Personal Finances) • Home storage products • Temporal Preparedness Resources • Stake and Ward Preparedness
Community service	• JustServe.org • Other Church-supported projects



23.

Sharing the Gospel and Strengthening New and Returning Members

23.0

Introduction

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

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

opportunity to be filled with His love through Jesus Christ and His gospel (see John 3:16; 2 Nephi 26:24–28; Alma 26:37; Articles of Faith 1:3).

One way we show our love for God is by loving and serving His children as Jesus Christ did (see Matthew 22:36–39; 25:40). This love inspires us to meet those around us and reach out to people of all backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs (see Acts 10:34; 2 Nephi 26:33; Jacob 2:17). We pray for and seek opportunities to share the gospel with others (see Alma 6:6; 8:10).

23.1

Share the Gospel

Jesus Christ loves us. He shares His gospel with us and invites all to come unto Him. We can do the same.

23.1.1

Love

We are all children of Heavenly Father, who loves His children perfectly. He offers everyone the

23.1.2

Share

Because we love God and His children, we naturally want to share the blessings He has given us (see John 13:34–35) and help gather Israel. We seek to help people feel the joy that we feel (see Alma 36:24). As disciples of Jesus Christ, we hold up His light (see 3 Nephi 18:24–25). We speak openly of the Savior and His influence in our lives (see Doctrine and Covenants 60:2).

We share love, gospel truths, time, experiences, and Church programs to bless God’s children and help them draw closer to the Savior. We share these things in normal and natural ways as part of personal, online, and other interactions.

Wards and stakes can create natural opportunities for members to share with others. One way to do this is to host events and activities. For more information, see “Share Ward Activities” in Gospel Library.

Ward and stake leaders also counsel together to identify (1) needs in the local community and (2) Church resources to share to help meet those needs. For more information, see “Share Church Resources” in the Gospel Library.

23.1.3

Invite

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

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

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

Often, inviting simply means including our family, friends, and neighbors in what we are already doing. For example, consider inviting people based on their needs and interests to:

- Sacrament meetings and other Sunday meetings. One of the most valuable experiences we can offer others is attending sacrament meeting

together and helping them have a welcoming, spiritual experience (see 3 Nephi 18:22–23).

- Special Church events, such as baby blessings or baptisms.
- Ward and stake activities, including Primary and youth activities (see “Share Ward Activities” in Gospel Library).
- Activities in our homes.
- Church programs, such as seminary, institute, family history, self-reliance classes, and JustServe.org projects (where available).
- Lessons with the missionaries.

For more ideas and resources, see:

- [Share.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
- “Sharing the Gospel” in the Gospel Library.
- The “Unite with Members” section in chapter 9 of *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ*.

As we love, share, and invite as Christ did, God will place opportunities in our path (see Doctrine and Covenants 11:3–5, 8). Any effort to live the principles of love, share, and invite is positive, whether or not a person meets with the missionaries or joins the Church.

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

23.2

Strengthen New Members

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

Each new member needs friendship, opportunities to serve, and spiritual nourishment. As members of

the Church, we give new members our love and support (see Mosiah 18:8–10). We help them feel a sense of belonging in the Church. We help them progress along the covenant path (see 23.4.1) and become more deeply “converted unto the Lord” (Alma 23:6). We help them be “nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, . . . relying alone upon the merits of Christ” (Moroni 6:4).

We can also help new members:

- Learn and experience the joy of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- Learn how to recognize promptings from the Spirit.
- Develop a habit of personal and family prayer and scripture study.
- Share the gospel with their family and friends.
- Find names of ancestors and prepare to receive temple ordinances for them (see 25.4).
- Grow through fulfilling Church assignments and participating in the many other opportunities the Church offers.

23.3

Strengthen Returning Members

Some members choose to stop participating in the Church. “Unto such,” said the Savior, “shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them” (3 Nephi 18:32). These words apply to all who, for any reason, need continued ministering.

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

spiritual nourishment. Understanding their circumstances and challenges can help us minister to them with sensitivity and love.

23.4

Hold Weekly Missionary Coordination Meetings

Every week, brief informal meetings are held to coordinate efforts to share the gospel. The purpose of these meetings is to help those being taught, new members, and returning members to make and keep covenants. If a ward mission leader is called, he conducts these meetings. Otherwise, the member of the elders quorum presidency who fills the role of ward mission leader conducts.

Others who are invited include:

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

Weekly missionary coordination meetings focus on the needs of individuals. The agenda usually includes the following items:

- How to help those being taught by the missionaries
- How to help those who were recently baptized
- How to help part-member families and returning members
- How to find more people to teach

The Covenant Path Progress report, suggestions in the “Weekly Coordination Meetings” section in chapter 13 of *Preach My Gospel*, and the questions below can help guide weekly plans.

- How can we help individuals attend church, have an uplifting experience, and build friendships?
- How can we support the ward plan for sharing the gospel?
- How can the ward council help, and who will coordinate with them?

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

 Strive to follow the principles of action and accountability in 4.4.5. A person in the meeting may be assigned to record and remind the group of planned actions.

Small branches may choose to do their weekly coordination in the branch council.

See a sample meeting agenda and other coordination examples in “Ideas for Weekly Missionary Coordination” in Gospel Library.

23.4.1

***My Covenant Path* and Covenant Path Progress Report**

The following resources can help guide discussions during weekly missionary coordination meetings:

- *My Covenant Path*. This resource helps new and returning members progress along the covenant path during the first 12 to 24 months after baptism or after returning to gospel participation. *My Covenant Path* is available in Gospel Library.
- Covenant Path Progress report. Ward leaders use this resource to record and view the progress of new and returning members and of people being taught by the missionaries. Covenant Path

Progress can be seen and updated by ward leaders through the Member Tools app and Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR). Full-time missionaries access and update Covenant Path Progress through the Preach My Gospel app.

23.5

Stake Leaders

23.5.1

Stake Presidency

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

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

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

23.5.2

Stake Adult Leadership Committee

The stake adult leadership committee includes:

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

These leaders instruct and support elders quorum and ward Relief Society presidencies in their efforts to share the gospel and strengthen new

and returning members (see 23.6.2). Instruction could take place in a group setting or individually. Ward mission leaders may be invited to receive this instruction.

For more about this committee's meetings, see 29.3.8.

23.5.3 High Councilors

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

23.5.4 Stake Relief Society Presidency

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



23.6 Ward Leaders

23.6.1 Bishopric

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

The bishopric ensures that these efforts are discussed and coordinated in ward council and ward youth council meetings. The bishopric also reviews and approves the ward plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members (see 23.6.6).

⬆️⬆️ The bishopric consults with the stake president to determine whether to call a ward mission leader (see 23.6.3 for more information).

The bishop interviews new members who are old enough to receive a temple recommend to perform proxy baptisms and confirmations (see 26.5.1). He also interviews brethren of the appropriate age to receive the Aaronic Priesthood (see 38.2.9.1). He can accomplish both purposes in the same interview. He normally conducts this interview within a week of the member's confirmation. A bishop or branch president may assign one of his counselors to conduct this interview. Afterward, the bishop may offer to use Family Name Assist to help the new member print the name of a deceased family member for whom the new member can perform temple ordinances (see "Family Name Assist" in 25.4.1).

The bishopric coordinates with other leaders to ensure that new and returning members have opportunities to serve. Such opportunities can help these members grow spiritually and feel the Lord's power in their lives. Service can also help members feel joy and build close relationships with others in the ward.

Service opportunities should be based on the member's needs and abilities. In some cases, a calling is appropriate. In others, a less formal assignment is best.

23.6.2

Elders Quorum and Relief Society Presidencies

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

These leaders have the following responsibilities:

- Help inspire members to love God's children, to share the gospel, and to invite others to receive the Savior's blessings (see 23.1).
- Counsel with quorum or Relief Society members about how to share the gospel. Discuss how to find people for the missionaries to teach and how to support people who are being taught. Counsel together about the needs of new and returning members and how to provide support.
- Assign ministering brothers and sisters to new and returning members (see 21.2.1). Ministering brothers and sisters may also be assigned to people the missionaries are teaching (this is done in coordination with the missionaries). If possible, leaders assign members who have or can develop close friendships with these individuals. Leaders encourage ministering brothers and sisters to give Christlike love and support.
- Give new and returning members opportunities to serve as ministering sisters or brothers. For more about ministering, see chapter 21.
- Help the ward council develop a plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members (see 23.6.6).
- Lead the work of the ward mission leader. If this leader is not called, a member of the elders quorum presidency fills this role (see 23.6.3).

The elders quorum president and Relief Society president each assign a presidency member to help lead these efforts. These two presidency members work together. They attend weekly coordination meetings (see 23.4).

23.6.3

Ward Mission Leader

The bishopric consults with the stake president to determine whether to call a ward mission leader. If they decide to extend this calling, the bishopric counsels with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents in determining whom to call.

The ward mission leader should be a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. If a ward mission leader is not called, a member of the elders quorum presidency fills this role.

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

- Coordinate the work of ward members and leaders, ward missionaries, and full-time missionaries. This may include coordinating teaching efforts, baptismal services, and efforts to strengthen new members. It can also include planning ways to help ward members share the gospel.
- Lead weekly coordination meetings (see 23.4).
- Attend ward council meetings when invited.
- Help the ward council develop and implement the ward plan for sharing the gospel and

strengthening new and returning members (see 23.6.6).

- Seek opportunities to help full-time missionaries fulfill their purpose by sharing the gospel and building relationships with members. Where approved, this may include eating meals with members (preferably with part-member families and new and returning members when possible; see 24.6.2.3).
- Work with the ward temple and family history leader and consultants to help those who are learning the gospel, new members, and returning members engage in temple and family history efforts.

23.6.4

Ward Missionaries

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

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

Ward missionaries participate in weekly coordination meetings (see 23.4).

23.6.5

Ward Council and Ward Youth Council

Sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members should be discussed regularly in ward council meetings. The bishop may ask the ward mission leader (or the member of the elders

quorum presidency who fills this role), elders quorum president, or Relief Society president to lead these discussions. (See 23.4.)

The council may discuss the ward's plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members. They coordinate assignments across organizations.

Resources like *My Covenant Path* and the Covenant Path Progress report can help in these discussions (see 23.4.1).

For more about the ward council, see 29.2.5.

The ward youth council gives special attention to youth who are:

- New and returning members.
- In part-member families.
- Being taught by the missionaries.
- Friends of other faiths or beliefs.

23.6.6

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

Each ward should have a simple plan for sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members. This plan can help guide meetings, service, and activities. It can include plans and ideas for:

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

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

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



24.

Missionary Recommendations and Service

24.0

Introduction

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

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

Mission calls include an assignment to teach the gospel, support the work of Church departments or units, or serve in the local community.

The Lord asks every worthy, able young man to prepare for and serve a mission. For Latter-day Saint young men, missionary service is a priesthood responsibility (see Doctrine and Covenants 36:1, 4–7).

The Lord also welcomes worthy, able young women to serve missions if they desire. For young women,

a mission is a powerful, but optional, opportunity. Preparing for a mission will bless a young woman whether she decides to serve as a missionary or not.

Senior missionaries are also needed and are encouraged to prepare to serve.

24.1

The Call to Serve

Each missionary is called to assist Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in Their work. Missionaries represent Jesus Christ and His restored Church. They selflessly serve the Lord in a labor of love among His children. Teaching and service missions bless both the missionary and others. (See Matthew 16:25; 22:36–40.)

Mission calls are extended to members who desire to serve, are worthy, and are able. These members strive to serve the Lord with all their “heart, might, mind and strength.” They develop “faith, hope, charity and love.” They keep their “eye single to the glory of God.” As they do these things, the Lord will qualify them for the work. (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2, 5; see verses 1–7.)

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

24.2

Missionary Assignments

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

- An assignment as either a teaching missionary or a service missionary.
- A location.
- A length of service.

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

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

24.2.1

Young Teaching Missionaries

Young teaching missionaries are assigned to teach the gospel away from home. These assignments are made by Apostles through revelation. These missionaries serve under the direction of a mission president.

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

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

24.2.2

Young Service Missionaries

Young service missionaries are assigned to serve in the Church and the community while living at home. These assignments are made by Apostles through revelation. They are extended to candidates whose circumstances are best suited for a service missionary assignment (see 24.3.3).

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

Service missionaries serve locally under the direction of a mission president, with the close support of service missionary advisers. The stake president provides support in ecclesiastical matters (see 24.7.3).

With the help of their service missionary advisers, each service missionary receives assignments that are tailored to his or her circumstances. Assignments are also based on service opportunities (see 24.7.1). These missionaries serve to the full extent of their capacity.

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

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

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

24.2.3

Senior Missionaries

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For more information, see SeniorMissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



24.2.4

Senior Service Missionaries

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

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

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

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

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

For more information about senior service missionaries, see 24.7.

24.2.5**Summary of Missionary Assignments**

The following table summarizes the types of missionary assignments.

	Young Teaching Missionary (see 24.2.1)	Young Service Missionary (see 24.2.2)	Senior Missionary (see 24.2.3)	Senior Service Missionary (see 24.2.4)
Is called by	President of the Church	President of the Church	President of the Church	Stake president
Is assigned by	An Apostle	An Apostle	An Apostle	Stake president
Is set apart by	Stake president	Stake president	Stake president	Stake president or counselor
Lives	Away from home	At home	Away from home or at home	At home
Ecclesiastical leader	Mission president or historic site president	Stake president	Mission, temple, or historic site president; or Area President	Stake president
Reports to	Mission president or historic site president	Mission president, through the service missionary advisers	Mission, temple, or historic site president; Area President; visitors' center director; or a Church department or facilities manager	Operation manager of the service assignment
Age requirements	18–25 (men) 19–29 (women)	18–25 (men) 19–29 (women)	40 or older if married or if a single sister	26 or older

24.3**Preparing and Qualifying to Serve a Mission**

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

24.3.1**Conversion to Jesus Christ**

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

- Work to strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
- Strengthen their testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ (see Alma 5:45–47).

- Live the doctrine of Christ by “choosing to repent and work righteousness” (Alma 13:10; see also 2 Nephi 31:9–21).
- Pray, study the scriptures (especially the Book of Mormon) and teachings of the living prophets, and keep the commandments (see Alma 17:2–3).
- Participate in uniting families for eternity through temple and family history work (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:22).
- Participate in seminary or institute (for youth and young adults).

24.3.2

Meeting the Standards of Worthiness

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

24.3.2.1

Repentance

Repentance and forgiveness of sin are gifts available to all of God’s children. These gifts are made possible through the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. Repentance requires exercising faith in Christ, having real intent, and keeping the commandments. It includes confessing and forsaking sin. For serious sins, repentance requires confession to the bishop or stake president (see 32.3 and 32.4 in this handbook).

A person who repents is forgiven and made clean through the Atonement and grace of Jesus Christ. The Lord remembers the sin no more. “How great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:13; see also Isaiah 43:25; Jacob 6:5; Alma 34:15–17; Helaman 5:10–11; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43; and 32.1 in this handbook.)

Members who desire to serve a mission should turn to the Savior as they repent and prepare to serve.

They may also seek the loving help of family members and local Church leaders.

A missionary candidate must have repented of serious sin before the stake president may submit his or her recommendation (see 32.6–32.8; see also 24.4.4). The repentance process includes enough time for the person to show through righteous living that he or she has received the spirit of Christ unto the remission of sins. (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:37). The stake president counsels with the Area Presidency (or the Area Seventy they designate) if he has questions about the length of time needed for repentance.

24.3.2.2

Belated Confessions

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

24.3.3

Physical, Mental, and Emotional Health

Missionary work is challenging. Physical, mental, and emotional demands can be stressful. Missionaries often work in unfamiliar conditions. Health may be affected by a change in diet, climate, or living conditions. The missionary schedule is also demanding. (See Alma 17:5; 26:27–28, 30.)

Young teaching missionaries must be committed and physically, mentally, and emotionally able to work the full missionary schedule. (See *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ* [2019], 2.4.)

Young service missionaries work a schedule customized to the full extent of their talents, skills, and capacities.

Prospective missionaries prepare to serve by strengthening their physical, mental, and emotional health. They also work to develop resiliency and self-reliance.

Leaders may need to counsel sensitively with a candidate about his or her health challenges before submitting a recommendation. Some candidates may need to receive professional care for their health challenges (see 31.3.6). A candidate who has been prescribed medication must commit to take it throughout his or her service as directed by a health care professional.



24.3.4

Finances

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

24.3.4.1

Financing Young Missionaries Serving Away from Home

Any young man or young woman who has a desire to serve God and has prepared according to his or her ability should not be delayed from serving for financial reasons.

The bishop counsels with the missionary and his or her family to determine the financial contribution they can make. If need remains, the bishop or stake

president may ask members in the ward or stake to contribute to the ward missionary fund.

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

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

- Missionaries from some countries participate in the equalized contribution program. This means the same amount is contributed for each missionary regardless of where he or she serves. The amount is identified at Church headquarters. Leaders may contact the Missionary Department (see 24.9.3) or the area office for a list of countries in this program and the equalized amount.
- In other countries, the bishop, stake president, missionary, and family counsel together about the monthly contribution amount. The bishop and stake president consider guidance from the Area Presidency. They encourage appropriate financial sacrifice and self-reliance based on the circumstances of the missionary and his or her family. They agree on a contribution amount and record it in the missionary recommendation. The missionary and his or her family commit to follow through. Others may also contribute to this amount only if they live in the missionary's home country (see "Ward Missionary Fund" later in this section).

Contributions are made to the ward missionary fund. The bishop may adjust the committed contribution based on family circumstances.

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

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

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

Ward Missionary Fund

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

Funds are not sent directly to missionaries. Each month, the bishop sees that the committed funds are available in the ward missionary fund. The Church withdraws the contribution amount each month and uses it for missionary efforts worldwide. See 34.3.3.

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

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

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

General Missionary Fund

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

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

24.3.4.2

Financing Senior Missionaries Serving Away from Home

Monthly contribution commitment. Senior missionaries serving away from home contribute to their home ward missionary fund each month. These contributions help cover housing and vehicle costs (see also "Additional expenses" later in this section). Housing contribution amounts are based on average costs in each mission. These amounts may be more or less than the value of Church-provided housing.

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

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

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

24.3.4.3

Financing Missionaries Serving at Home

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

24.3.4.4

Medical Insurance and Expenses

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

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

24.3.5

Role of Family Members and Leaders in Preparing Missionaries

Family members, bishops, and other leaders help youth prepare to serve a mission. Bishops invite each young man to become a missionary, as well as each young woman who desires to serve. The following suggestions can help youth prepare:

- Help them become effective member missionaries in sharing the gospel before they receive a call to serve.
- Provide opportunities for them to serve and teach.
- Arrange opportunities for them to accompany full-time missionaries.
- Invite currently serving missionaries or others who have served missions to share their experiences teaching and serving.
- Love and inspire each person to be prepared to serve a mission.
- Encourage them to devote additional time to prayer and study of the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon.
- Organize a missionary preparation course. This can be done at the ward or stake level. Helpful resources can be found in the *Missionary Preparation* teacher manual.

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

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

Family members and leaders encourage all missionary candidates to study:

- The Book of Mormon and other scriptures.

- *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*
- *Adjusting to Missionary Life.*

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

- For young teaching missionaries: *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ*
- For young service missionaries: *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ—Service Missions*
- For all missionaries: the sections “Use Technology Righteously” and “Follow the Safeguards for Using Technology” in chapter 2 of *Preach My Gospel*.

24.4

Recommending Missionaries

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

24.4.1

Health Assessments

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

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

24.4.2

Interviews and Recommendation Forms

The bishop and stake president review the readiness guidelines and standards of worthiness in the Missionary Recommendation System. They then conduct thorough, spiritually searching, and uplifting interviews with each candidate.

They first discuss the candidate’s:

- Physical, mental, and emotional health readiness (see 24.3.3).
- Financial situation (see 24.3.4).

If these matters are in order, the bishop and stake president then use the missionary recommendation interview questions to discuss the candidate’s:

- Testimony of Jesus Christ and His restored gospel (see 24.3.1).
- Meeting the standards of worthiness (see 24.3.2).

The bishop and stake president do not add any eligibility standards. Nor do they change the interview questions.

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

The information in the recommendation form contributes to the revelatory process of mission calls. Leaders ensure that all information requested is fully disclosed.

If a stake president in the United States or Canada has questions, he contacts the Missionary Department (see 24.9.3). Elsewhere, he contacts the area office.

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

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



24.4.3

Submitting Recommendations

The stake president may submit a recommendation for a young missionary candidate up to 150 days before his or her availability date. The stake president may submit a recommendation for a senior missionary candidate up to nine months before his or her availability date. The availability date must be when all of the following conditions are met:

- The person has reached the qualifying age for service.
- The person has been a confirmed Church member for at least one year.
- The person has completed or is no longer attending high school, secondary school, or the equivalent. (This applies only to young missionary candidates who will not be 19 years old by their availability date.)

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

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

24.4.4

Those Unable to Serve as Full-Time Missionaries

Sometimes a member who desires to serve and is recommended for missionary service may not be called as a teaching or service missionary. This may be due to health challenges, not meeting the standards of worthiness, legal issues, or other circumstances. The bishop and stake president express love and gratitude for the member's willingness to serve.

Leaders may address questions to the Missionary Department at 801-240-2222 or Missionary.Prefield@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

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

24.5

After Receiving a Mission Call

Newly called missionaries are encouraged to read or reread the Book of Mormon before beginning their mission. They follow King Benjamin's counsel to "watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds" (Mosiah 4:30).

They respond promptly to instructions given with the call. They study doctrine and principles in the scriptures and in *Preach My Gospel*, giving emphasis to chapter 3. They also review the booklet *Adjusting to Missionary Life* or *Adjusting to Service Missionary*.

Life: Resource Booklet. They and their family members also study the conditions they will serve in.

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

24.5.1

Temple Endowment and Temple Service

Newly called missionaries are encouraged to receive the temple endowment as soon as possible and to attend the temple as often as circumstances allow (see Doctrine and Covenants 43:15–16; 105:33). This applies to teaching missionaries and to service missionaries if appropriate for their circumstances. For information on receiving the endowment, see 27.2.

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

24.5.2

Sacrament Meetings

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

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

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

- Print special sacrament meeting programs.
- Form reception lines after sacrament meeting.

- Hold open houses, except for family gatherings. If a family gathering is held, it is recommended that it not conflict with Sunday meetings.

24.5.3

Setting Apart Missionaries

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

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

A brother who will serve away from home must have received the Melchizedek Priesthood before being set apart as a missionary. A brother who will serve as a service missionary should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood if appropriate for his circumstances. For instructions on ordination to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood, see 18.10.

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

The setting apart should be a special experience. Family members and close friends may attend. The stake president helps them understand and feel the sacredness and importance of the call to serve as a representative of Jesus Christ and His restored Church.

The setting apart and accompanying blessing should not be recorded. However, the missionary is encouraged to write in his or her journal about the experience and to note parts of the blessing that were especially meaningful.

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

A missionary's setting apart is for the call to serve, not for a specific missionary assignment. If a missionary's assignment is changed, he or she is not set apart again.

If a missionary is released and is later approved to return to service (see 24.6.3.2), he or she is set apart again as a missionary.

If circumstances do not permit setting apart a missionary before he or she begins service, the stake president should contact the Missionary Department for direction at 801-240-2222 or Missionary.Prefield@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Setting Apart a Missionary

To set apart a missionary, the stake president:

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

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

24.6

Service Away from Home

24.6.1

Leaving to the Mission Field

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

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

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



24.6.2

In the Field

24.6.2.1

Placement of Missionaries

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

24.6.2.2**Member and Community Service**

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

24.6.2.3**Housing, Meals, and Transportation**

Stake and mission presidents determine if or to what extent local members provide housing and meals for missionaries. Providing housing or meals should not burden local members.

Members are not expected to regularly provide transportation for missionaries, those they are teaching, or those who have recently been baptized.

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

24.6.2.4**⬆️ Missionaries in Branch Positions**

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

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

24.6.2.5**Requests to Support Others Financially or with Schooling or Emigration**

Missionaries and their families should not provide financial support for those who live where the missionaries are serving, including financial support for schooling. Nor should missionaries and their families sponsor persons who want to emigrate to other countries (see 38.8.19).

24.6.2.6**Medication**

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

24.6.2.7**Death of an Immediate Family Member**

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

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

24.6.2.8**Membership Records and Tithing**

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

24.6.3**Returning Home from a Mission****24.6.3.1****Returning Home as Originally Scheduled**

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

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

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

Picking Up Young Missionaries in the Field

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

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

24.6.3.2**Returning Home Early**

Some teaching and service missionaries are released early for health, worthiness, or other reasons. Bishops and stake presidents give special support

to these returned missionaries. Leaders help them work to regain health or return to service if possible.

For more information about ending a service mission early, see 24.7.5.

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

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

**24.7****Service Missionaries****24.7.1****Identifying Opportunities for Service Missionaries**

For senior service missionaries, the bishop, stake president, and missionaries counsel together to identify local opportunities to serve.

For young service missionaries, the service missionary advisers identify appropriate service

opportunities. The missionary's parents or guardians may participate in the discussion.

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

- **Internet:** [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/service-missionary](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/service-missionary) or [SeniorMissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.SeniorMissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)
- **Phone:** 1-801-240-4914
- **Email:** support-servicemission@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

Examples of Service Missionary Opportunities

- *Community Service (for young service missionaries):* JustServe.org (where it is available) and approved community charitable organizations, such as food banks, shelters, and community centers
- *Family History:* FamilySearch community support; FamilySearch records preservation (such as indexing, reviewing, and imaging); FamilySearch center support (young service missionaries only at stake-level centers)
- *Member and Leader Support:* Supporting wards and stakes in helping accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation, as directed by Area Presidencies
- *Seminaries and Institutes:* Office work, recruiting and enrollment, social media, and events support
- *Temples:* Temple workers (whose responsibilities may include performing ordinances or helping with laundry, housekeeping, office, interior maintenance, or groundskeeping tasks) and temple patrons
- *Teach Missionary Lessons (for young service missionaries):* As approved by the mission president, participate in teaching lessons

- *Welfare:* Bishops' storehouses, production facilities, farms, Deseret Industries, and employment centers
- *BYU-Pathway Worldwide:* Facilitate student gatherings, increase local awareness about BYU-Pathway, and minister to students.
- *Church Departments* (in-person or virtual, depending on the operation and the missionary's location): Welfare and Self-Reliance Services, Church History, and Family History

24.7.2

Housing and Transportation

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

Young service missionaries should not spend the night or live in teaching missionaries' housing.

24.7.3

Training and Supervision

Service missionaries are trained and supervised at the place where they serve. They also receive day-to-day supervision, help, and training about their duties from the service missionary advisers (for young service missionaries) or the manager of their service assignment (for senior service missionaries).

The stake president is the ecclesiastical leader for senior and young service missionaries. He and the bishop conduct regular worthiness interviews with young service missionaries. They also conduct interviews for temple recommends, ordination to priesthood offices, and patriarchal blessings when applicable.

The mission president and his wife set the spiritual and behavioral expectations of the mission. They counsel regularly with the service missionary advisers who oversee the missionary's schedule,

assignments, and overall health. Together they help the missionary understand and follow service missionary standards.

The mission president refers matters of personal worthiness to the missionary's stake president.

Young service missionaries participate in a virtual MTC experience.

For more about training and supervision, see *Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ—Service Missions*.

24.7.4

Service Missionaries in Ward or Stake Callings

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

24.7.5

Concluding a Service Missionary Assignment

Young service missionaries are typically called to serve for 18 or 24 months. It is anticipated that each missionary will complete the time of service indicated in his or her assignment.

Sometimes a service missionary needs to end his or her mission early for health, worthiness, or other reasons. In these situations, the stake president notifies the mission president, the service missionary advisers, and the area service missionary coordinator. The stake president then contacts the assigned in-field representative in the Missionary Department to have each early release reviewed and approved by an assigned General Authority. The in-field representative can be reached at ServiceMissionaryIFR@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

For information about a service missionary potentially returning to service, see 24.6.3.2.

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

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



24.8

After Missionary Service

24.8.1

Temple Recommends

24.8.1.1

Young Missionaries Serving Away from Home

For instructions on temple recommends for young missionaries returning home, see 26.5.2.

24.8.1.2

Senior Missionaries Serving Away from Home

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

24.8.1.3

Service Missionaries

Young and senior service missionaries arrange through local leaders for interviews to renew temple recommends (see 26.3.2).

24.8.2**Missionary Release Interview**

The stake president releases teaching and service missionaries and conducts a release interview. One of his counselors may release senior service missionaries. In districts, generally the mission president or an assigned counselor releases missionaries. For exceptions, see 6.3.

The following guidelines for this interview may be helpful.

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

BYU–Pathway Worldwide and EnglishConnect

Recently released young missionaries who do not have other educational plans should be encouraged to consider enrolling in BYU–Pathway Worldwide for professional certificates and university education.

Enrolled students must have at least an intermediate-level proficiency in English. For more information, see byupathway.org/returnedmissionary.

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

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

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

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

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

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

24.8.4**Callings**

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

24.9

Resources for Missionary Recommendations and Service

24.9.1

Manuals and Forms

Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ

Missionary Standards for Disciples of Jesus Christ—Service Missions

Adjusting to Missionary Life

Adjusting to Service Missionary Life: Resource Booklet

Missionary recommendation interview questions

My Plan: A Guide for the Returned Missionary and Mentor

24.9.2

Websites

[ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/missionary](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/missionary)

[ChurchofJesusChrist.org/service-missionary](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/service-missionary)

[SeniorMissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.SeniorMissionary.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

[MissionaryRecommendations](https://www.MissionaryRecommendations.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)

[.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) (available to local leaders and missionary candidates only)

24.9.3

Contact Information

Missionary Department:

Phone: 1-801-240-2222 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2222

Service Mission Office:

Phone: 1-801-240-4914 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-4914



25.

Uniting Families for Eternity through Temple and Family History Work

25.0

Introduction

The temple is the house of the Lord. Temple ordinances and covenants bless Heavenly Father’s children. Heavenly Father invites all His children to qualify for and receive temple ordinances.

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

- Making covenants as we receive our own temple ordinances (see Isaiah 55:3; Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–23).
- Discovering our deceased ancestors and performing ordinances for them in the temple so they can make covenants with God (see Malachi 4:5–6; 1 Corinthians 15:29; Doctrine and Covenants 128:15–18).
- Going to the house of the Lord regularly, where possible, to worship God and perform ordinances

for our ancestors (see Luke 24:52–53; Doctrine and Covenants 109:13–14).

Participating in this work brings great blessings. As members make and keep sacred covenants, they access the power of God. They find joy in serving in the house of the Lord on behalf of their ancestors.

This chapter guides Church leaders and members on how to participate in uniting families for eternity through temple and family history work. More information is available at “Temples,” “Proxy Baptism,” and “Family History” (Topics and Questions, Gospel Library).

25.1

Member and Leader Participation in Uniting Families for Eternity

Church members have the joyful privilege and responsibility to help unite their families for eternity. They prepare themselves to make covenants as they receive temple ordinances. They strive to keep those covenants.

They also help family members understand, receive, and strive to keep temple covenants. Parents have the primary responsibility to help their children experience the joy and blessings of making covenants for themselves and of performing ordinances on behalf of deceased relatives (see 2.1.3).

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

Members are also encouraged to discover their ancestors' stories, which can enrich their experience performing ordinances on behalf of their ancestors. Members invite others to do the same.

Many tools are available to help members in their temple and family history work. Some of these are described in 25.4.1 and 25.4.2.

25.1.1

Individual Responsibility for Temple Worship

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

Individual members and families who have current temple recommends may attend any temple they desire. They may schedule an appointment with the temple. See temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for each temple's contact information.

25.1.2

Ward and Stake Temple Trips

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

All ward and stake temple trips should be scheduled with the temple. See temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for each temple's contact information.

25.2

Ward Leaders

25.2.1

Bishopric

The bishopric coordinates with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies as they lead the ward's temple and family history efforts, which help unite families for eternity. These leaders counsel together regularly.

The bishopric also has the following additional responsibilities:

- Review and approve the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6).
- Ensure that the ward's temple and family history efforts are coordinated in ward council and ward youth council meetings.
- Oversee the organization of temple preparation courses (see 25.2.8).
- Issue temple recommends (see chapter 26).

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

25.2.2

Elders Quorum and Relief Society Presidencies

The elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies lead the ward's day-to-day temple and family history efforts, which help unite families for eternity (see 8.2.4 and 9.2.4). The elders quorum presidency leads these efforts for members of the elders quorum. The Relief Society presidency leads the efforts for

members of the Relief Society. They work together to lead these efforts with the ward council, under the coordination of the bishop.

These leaders have the following responsibilities:

- Help the ward council develop and implement the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6).
- Ask a ward temple and family history consultant to help specific ward members find and prepare deceased ancestors' names for temple ordinances (see 25.4.1). These efforts focus especially on those who have recently received mission calls and those who have not been endowed.
- Ensure that temple and family history efforts are planned and reported in ward council meetings and in ward temple and family history coordination meetings.
- Lead the work of the ward temple and family history leader. If this leader is not called, a member of the elders quorum presidency fills this role (see 25.2.3).
- Where applicable, assign ward temple and family history consultants to serve in the FamilySearch center (see 25.3.6).

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



25.2.3

📌 Ward Temple and Family History Leader

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

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

- Coordinate temple and family history efforts with ward organization leaders, including youth quorum and class presidencies.
- Conduct ward temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).
- Attend ward council meetings when invited.
- Help the ward council develop and implement the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6).
- Instruct ward temple and family history consultants. Coordinate their efforts to help members find names of ancestors and perform temple ordinances on their behalf.
- Work with the ward mission leader and the missionaries to help those learning the gospel, new members, and returning members engage in temple and family history work (see 23.2 and 23.3).

25.2.4

Ward Temple and Family History Consultants

Ward temple and family history consultants serve under the direction of the ward temple and family

history leader. The bishopric calls these members to serve. Adults and youth may be called. The elders quorum, Relief Society, and Young Women presidents may suggest who could serve.

Consultants teach others in simple ways how to participate in temple and family history work, which unites families for eternity. They focus especially on youth, new and returning members, and sisters and brothers who have not been endowed. Consultants have the following responsibilities:

- Help members prepare to receive temple ordinances and make temple covenants.
- Help members experience the blessings of discovering their ancestors and performing temple ordinances on their behalf.
- Participate in temple and family history coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).
- Serve in a local FamilySearch center when assigned (see 25.3.6).

Resources to help temple and family history consultants are listed in 25.4.1 and 25.4.2.

25.2.5

Ward Council

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

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

Members of the ward council have the following responsibilities:

- Help individual members prepare to make covenants with God by receiving temple ordinances (see 27.1).
- Encourage all youth and adult members, including new members, to have a current temple recommend (see 26.0).

- Encourage members to worship in the house of the Lord as often as their circumstances allow.
- Invite individuals and families to learn the doctrine and blessings of participating in the work of uniting families for eternity. This work includes learning about ancestors and performing temple ordinances on their behalf.
- Support parents in teaching their children the doctrine of the work of uniting families for eternity. This includes the blessings of temple covenants and ordinances and of performing temple ordinances for their deceased ancestors.
- Teach the principles of this work regularly during Church meetings.

See chapter 26 for information about temple recommends.

25.2.6

Ward Temple and Family History Plan

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

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

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

Examples of what the plan might include are listed below:

- Help specific members understand the blessings of worshipping in the house of the Lord.

- Help members prepare to receive the blessings of temple ordinances.
- Help members use Ordinances Ready to take the name of an ancestor to the temple (see 25.4.1).
- Help members use the FamilySearch website or app to add what they know about deceased relatives who need ordinances (see 25.4.1).
- Involve new and returning members, youth, and children in temple and family history work. Family Name Assist is a simple way for leaders to help these members prepare family names to receive ordinances (see 25.4.1).
- Help Primary children prepare to receive a temple recommend and to worship in the house of the Lord regularly where possible. The Primary presidency should hold a Temple and Priesthood Preparation Meeting each year (see 12.1.7 and 12.2.4).

The ward temple and family history plan should not establish quotas or reporting systems for temple worship (see 25.1.1).

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

25.2.7

Ward Temple and Family History Coordination Meetings

Brief informal ward temple and family history coordination meetings are held regularly. The ward temple and family history leader conducts these meetings.

Others who are invited include:

- Assigned members of the Relief Society, elders quorum, and Primary presidencies.
- An assistant in the priests quorum (or the teachers or deacons quorum president if there are no priests in the ward).

- A presidency member of the oldest Young Women class.
- Temple and family history consultants.

All who attend, including the youth, counsel together as equal participants. These meetings focus on the needs of individuals and how they can be blessed as they participate in temple and family history work. They focus especially on youth, new and returning members, and sisters and brothers who have not been endowed. The meetings usually cover the following topics:

- How to implement the ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6)
- How to help specific ward members prepare to receive their temple ordinances
- How to help specific ward members with their temple and family history efforts

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

Strive to follow the principles of action and accountability in 4.4.5. A person in the meeting may be assigned to record and remind the group of planned actions.

 Small branches may choose to do their temple and family history coordination in the branch council.

25.2.8

Temple Preparation Course

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

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

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

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

25.3

Stake Leaders

25.3.1

Stake Presidency

The stake president holds the keys for God's work of salvation and exaltation in the stake. He and his counselors have the following responsibilities to help unite families for eternity:

- Help members prepare to make sacred covenants as they receive temple ordinances (see 27.1).
- Encourage all members, especially single sisters and brothers and those who are not endowed, to have a current recommend and worship in the house of the Lord as often as their circumstances allow.
- Ensure that the doctrine and blessings of uniting families for eternity (as described in 1.2.4) are taught regularly in stake meetings.
- Encourage members to learn about their ancestors and perform temple ordinances on their behalf.
- Conduct temple recommend interviews (see chapter 26).

In his regular meeting with each elders quorum president, a member of the stake presidency discusses the ward's efforts to unite families for eternity through temple and family history work (see 8.3.1).

 The counselors in the elders quorum presidency and the high councilor assigned to the quorum may attend.

25.3.2

Stake Adult Leadership Committee

The stake adult leadership committee includes:

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

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

For more about this committee's meetings, see 29.3.8.

25.3.3

High Councilors

The stake presidency may assign high councilors to instruct and support the following people in their efforts to unite families for eternity through temple and family history work:

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

One or more high councilors may be assigned to lead these efforts. However, all high councilors have

these responsibilities for the wards and quorums to which they are assigned.

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

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

25.3.4

Stake Relief Society Presidency

Under the direction of the stake president, the stake Relief Society presidency instructs and supports ward Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities for temple and family history efforts (see 9.2.4).

25.3.5

Stake Temple and Family History Consultants

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

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

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

25.3.6

FamilySearch Centers

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

The stake president calls a FamilySearch center coordinator to oversee efforts in each FamilySearch center. Each center is generally staffed by assigned stake and ward temple and family history consultants. FamilySearch centers should be open at convenient times. FamilySearch centers near temples may adjust their schedules to align with the local temple's schedule.

As an exception, some large FamilySearch centers are overseen by Area Presidencies.

25.3.7

FamilySearch Center Coordinator

The FamilySearch center coordinator organizes the daily operations of the FamilySearch center. He or she serves under the direction of the stake president or an assigned high councilor. Responsibilities may include those listed below:

- Help members prepare family names so they can perform ordinances in the house of the Lord.
- Coordinate the center's activities to help Church members and community visitors discover their ancestors.
- Work with (1) the high councilor who is assigned to support temple and family history work and (2) the stake technology specialist to meet the center's operational needs and maintain its resources.

The *FamilySearch Center Operations Guide* provides guidance on how to operate a FamilySearch center.

25.3.8**Area Temple and Family History Advisers**

Area Presidencies may call area temple and family history advisers. If circumstances allow, one individual or one couple can be called for each coordinating council. Advisers typically serve for three to five years.

An area adviser individual or couple may be designated to support the efforts of other area advisers assigned to coordinating councils in the area.

The Area Presidency may assign Area Seventies to coordinate the work of these advisers in coordinating councils. Advisers' work should align with the area's focus.

As directed by the Area Presidency or an assigned Area Seventy, advisers assist stake presidents to fulfill their responsibilities to help unite families for eternity through temple and family history work (see 25.3.1). Advisers assist stake presidents in teaching people who serve in the following callings about their responsibilities:

- High councilors
- Stake Relief Society presidencies
- Stake adult leadership committees
- Stake temple and family history consultants
- FamilySearch center coordinators

Advisers may be assigned to help stake presidencies prepare members for worship in newly announced temples within the area. Other responsibilities might include instructing stake leaders on the principles and practices of temple and family history work. These include:

- How to help members with their first experience with proxy baptisms and confirmations (see 23.2).
- How to help members who are preparing to receive their own endowment or be sealed (see 25.2.8, 27.2, 27.3, and 27.4).

- How to organize temple and family history work in the stake and wards (see 25.2).
- How to support elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies in their responsibilities (see 25.2.2).
- How participating in this work can bless children and youth (see 10.2.4, 11.2.4, and 12.2.4).
- How to hold effective coordination meetings (see 25.2.7).
- How to help ward leaders establish an effective ward temple and family history plan (see 25.2.6).

For instruction relating to this work, see Temple and Family History Leadership Instruction.

25.4**Family History Resources****25.4.1****Online Resources**

FamilySearch provides resources to help members identify and prepare family names so that they can participate in ordinances for their deceased ancestors. These ordinances unite families for eternity. FamilySearch resources include the following:

- FamilySearch.org. This is the Church's website to help members find and prepare their ancestors' names for temple ordinances.
- Family Tree app. Many functions of the FamilySearch website are also available in this mobile app.
- Ordinances Ready. This tool provides a simple way to receive family or other names to take to the temple. It is available both on FamilySearch.org and in the Family Tree app.
- Family Name Assist. Leaders use this online tool to help new and returning members, as well as youth, easily prepare and print family name cards for proxy baptisms and confirmations.

- **Memories app.** This mobile app helps individuals and families discover, share, and preserve ancestors' stories and photographs.

See FamilySearch apps for all available apps.



25.4.2

My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together

The booklet *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together* helps people gather and preserve family names and stories. It can also help members begin to prepare family names for temple ordinances.

Physical copies of the booklet can be ordered at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

25.4.3

Family History Volunteer Activities

The Get Involved app or the Get Involved menu on FamilySearch.org allows volunteers to participate in the following activities:

- Indexing, which is a process of entering information from a written historical record into a searchable database on FamilySearch.org.
- Reviewing records for accuracy.
- Improving the accuracy of Family Tree.

Those who participate in these activities make it possible for themselves and others to discover their ancestors and perform temple ordinances on their behalf.

Anyone can participate in volunteer activities by using the Get Involved app or the Get Involved menu on FamilySearch.org. This can be a particularly fulfilling experience for the following:

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

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

25.5

Recommending and Calling Temple Workers

25.5.1

Recommending Temple Workers

Potential temple workers are identified in the following ways:

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

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

When members of a temple presidency identify a potential temple worker, they submit the person's

name to the bishop using the Recommend Temple Worker tool.

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

The recommendation is next reviewed by the stake president. If the stake president approves the recommendation, he submits it to the temple president for review using the Recommend Temple Worker tool.

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

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

25.5.2

Requirements for Temple Workers

Temple workers help perform ordinances or assist with temple operations, such as office, laundry, or groundskeeping tasks. To be recommended as a temple worker, a member must meet the following qualifications:

- Reside in the temple district of the temple where he or she will serve.
- Be endowed, honor temple covenants, and have a current temple recommend.
- Have a strong testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Be physically able to perform his or her assigned work in the temple. A worker who serves patrons or administers ordinances must be physically able to do so without assistance.
- Be worthy of respect in the Church and in the community.
- Work well with other people.
- Be dependable and in good health.
- Not currently have an annotation on his or her membership record.

In addition, the bishop ensures the following:

- If a person's membership was formally restricted, he or she may be recommended as a temple worker no sooner than five years after the restrictions were removed. (See 32.11.3 and 32.16.1.)
- If an unendowed person's membership was withdrawn, or if the person resigned membership, he or she may be recommended as a temple worker no sooner than five years after being readmitted to the Church. (See 32.11.4, 32.14.9, 32.16.1, and 32.16.2.)
- If an endowed person's membership was withdrawn, or if the person resigned membership, he or she may be recommended as a temple worker no sooner than five years after receiving a restoration of blessings. (See 32.11.4, 32.14.9, and 32.17.2.)

25.5.3

Calling and Setting Apart Temple Workers

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



26.

Temple Recommends

26.0

Introduction

Entering the house of the Lord is a sacred privilege. Ward and stake leaders encourage all members to be worthy of and have a current temple recommend even if they do not live near a temple.

Church leaders make every effort to see that all who enter the house of the Lord are worthy to do so (see Psalm 24:3–5). Authorized priesthood leaders conduct temple recommend interviews and issue temple recommends to members who answer the interview questions appropriately and sincerely (see 26.3). The Lord promises that if those who enter His house are clean, His presence will be there (see Doctrine and Covenants 97:15–16).

Members ages 8 and older must have a current temple recommend to enter a temple. They must be baptized and confirmed to be eligible to receive a recommend.

Children younger than age 8 who are being sealed to their parents or observing the sealing of their siblings to their parents do not need a recommend (see 27.4.1 and 27.4.5). However, their parents verify

their information through Ordinance Preparation in LCR (see 27.1.2).

This chapter provides instructions for leaders who issue temple recommends. A bishop counsels with his stake president if he has questions about temple recommends that are not answered in this chapter. The stake president may contact the Office of the First Presidency with questions.

26.1

Types of Temple Recommends

A current temple recommend allows a member to enter all temples. Priesthood leaders ensure that members receive the correct recommend for their circumstances. There are three types of recommends:

1. *Temple recommends for proxy baptisms and confirmations.* These recommends are for unendowed members who are performing proxy baptisms and confirmations. They are issued to the member through Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR). The member may choose to

receive either a printed or a mobile recommend. For more information, see 26.3.1.

2. *Temple recommends for endowed members.* These recommends are for members who have previously been endowed. They authorize endowed members to participate in all temple ordinances for the deceased. They are issued to a member through LCR. The member may choose to receive either a printed or a mobile recommend. For more information, see 26.3.2.
3. *Temple recommends for living ordinances.* These recommends are for members receiving their own endowment or being sealed to a spouse, parents, or children. They are issued digitally through Ordinance Preparation in LCR. Priesthood leaders use Ordinance Preparation to submit the completed recommend to the temple where the ordinance will take place.

To enter the temple, members who will be age 12 or older by the end of the year in which the ordinance occurs must also have one of the other two types of recommends in addition to a recommend for living ordinances. If needed, priesthood leaders may issue one of those recommends and the recommend for living ordinances during the same interview. For more information, see 26.3.3.

For information about temple ordinances for the living, see chapter 27.

26.2

Safeguarding Temple Recommends

26.2.1

Priesthood Leaders Safeguarding Temple Recommends

Priesthood leaders who are authorized to have temple recommend books should carefully safeguard them. No other person should have access to

them. When the Church updates temple recommend books, leaders destroy the outdated books.

Priesthood leaders also ensure that unauthorized individuals do not have access to temple recommend information in LCR.

26.2.2

Lost or Stolen Recommends

The bishop asks members to notify him as soon as possible if their recommend is lost or stolen. If the member is still worthy, the bishop or an assigned counselor or clerk logs in to LCR to reprint the recommend. The new recommend will expire on the same date as the original.

Sometimes a member whose recommend is lost or stolen is no longer living the standards of worthiness. In these cases, the bishop cancels the recommend immediately (see 26.2.3).

26.2.3

Recommend Holders Who Are Not Living the Standards of Worthiness

If the bishop determines that a member who has a current recommend is not living the standards of worthiness (see 26.3), he uses LCR to cancel the recommend. If this system is not available, the bishop contacts the temple office to have the recommend canceled. If the member has a printed recommend, the bishop requests it from the member.

26.3

General Guidelines for Issuing Temple Recommends

Authorized priesthood leaders conduct interviews before a member can receive a temple recommend. Instructions are in LCR. Priesthood leaders should issue a recommend only if the member answers the temple recommend questions appropriately.

Temple recommend interviews allow members to demonstrate that they have a testimony and are striving to obey God's commandments and follow His prophets. Priesthood leaders also affirm, through the interview, that the member is worthy.

See 26.4 for information about conducting temple recommend interviews.

26.3.1

Issuing Temple Recommends for Proxy Baptisms and Confirmations

Temple recommends for proxy baptisms and confirmations authorize members to participate in baptisms and confirmations for the dead. They are issued to unendowed members who have been baptized and confirmed.

Members who have been previously endowed are not issued a recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations.

Members are eligible for these recommends beginning in January of the year they turn 12. A male Church member must be ordained to a priesthood office before he may receive a temple recommend.

In a ward, the bishop or an assigned counselor interviews unendowed members for temple recommends for proxy baptisms and confirmations. In a branch, only the branch president conducts temple recommend interviews. (For an exception, see 23.6.1.)

The leader conducting the interview follows the guidelines in 26.4. Temple recommend interviews should not be rushed. They should be private. However, the person being interviewed may invite a parent or another adult to be present.

The leader issues a recommend through LCR if the member is worthy. These recommends require only the signatures of the member and a member of the bishopric or the branch president.

Recommends for proxy baptisms and confirmations are activated in LCR by a member of the bishopric or by the branch president.

For information about issuing recommends to members who are preparing to receive their endowment or be sealed to a spouse, parents, or children, see 26.3.3.

26.3.2

Issuing Temple Recommends for Endowed Members

Temple recommends for endowed members authorize members to participate in all temple ordinances for the deceased. They are issued to members who have previously been endowed. (For members receiving their own endowment, see 26.3.3.)

In a ward, the bishop or an assigned counselor conducts temple recommend interviews and issues recommends. In a branch, only the branch president conducts temple recommend interviews and issues recommends.

The leader conducting the interview follows the guidelines in 26.4. Temple recommend interviews should not be rushed. They should be private. However, the person being interviewed may invite a spouse, parent, or another adult to be present.

The leader issues a recommend through LCR if the member is worthy.

After the interview by a member of the bishopric or the branch president, a member of the stake presidency interviews members who live in a stake. He signs the recommends of those who are worthy. A member of the mission presidency conducts the second interview for members who live in a district. He also signs the recommends of those who are worthy. A district president does not conduct temple recommend interviews unless authorized by the First Presidency.

In stakes, a member of the stake presidency or a stake clerk activates the temple recommend in LCR. In districts, a member of the mission presidency or a mission clerk activates the recommend.

For information about issuing temple recommends to members who are preparing to receive the endowment or be sealed to a spouse, parents, or children, see 26.3.3.

26.3.3

Issuing Temple Recommends for Living Ordinances

Temple recommends for living ordinances are issued when members are preparing to:

- Receive their own endowment (see 27.2).
- Be sealed to a spouse (see 27.3).
- Be sealed to their parents (see 27.4).
- Have their children sealed to them (see 27.4).

To enter the temple, members who will be age 12 or older by the end of the year in which the ordinance occurs must also have either a recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations or a recommend for endowed members. If needed, priesthood leaders may issue one of those recommends and the recommend for living ordinances during the same interview.

The bishop or branch president and the stake president personally interview members preparing to receive temple ordinances.

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

In large young single adult wards and stakes, bishops and stake presidents may authorize experienced counselors to conduct these interviews.

In a district, the mission president or an assigned counselor conducts these interviews. District presidents do not conduct these interviews unless the First Presidency has authorized them to issue temple recommends.

The leader conducting the interview follows the guidelines in 26.4. Temple recommend interviews should not be rushed. They should be private. However, the person being interviewed may invite a spouse, parent, or another adult to be present.

Before issuing a recommend for living ordinances, the bishop or branch president reviews the member's record to verify that it does not include a notation about Church membership restrictions. He also reviews the member's information using Ordinance Preparation in LCR. He digitally signs the recommend for living ordinances if the member is worthy and prepared to receive temple ordinances. He then submits it to the stake or mission president using Ordinance Preparation in LCR.

The stake president or a member of the mission presidency then interviews the member. He digitally signs the recommend if the member is worthy and prepared to receive temple ordinances. He then submits it to the temple using Ordinance Preparation in LCR. If needed, he also signs the member's recommend for endowed members (see 26.3.2).

For information about members preparing to receive temple ordinances, see 27.1.1 and 27.1.2.

For information about members preparing to receive the endowment, see 27.2.

For information about members preparing to be sealed to a spouse, see 27.3.

For information about members preparing to be sealed to parents, see 27.4.

See 27.4.5 and 38.4.2 for additional policies on observing sealings and being sealed to parents.

26.3.4

Issuing Temple Recommends to Members in Isolated Areas

Some members live in areas that would require expensive travel or great difficulty to meet with a member of the stake or mission presidency. In these situations, a member of the stake or mission presidency may meet virtually with the member to conduct a temple recommend interview (see 31.4).

The leader issues the recommend if the member is worthy. If the member requests a printed recommend, a member of the bishopric or the branch president prints the recommend for the member.

This policy also applies to members in the military who are in isolated areas.



26.4

Conducting a Temple Recommend Interview

The temple is the house of the Lord. Entering the temple and participating in ordinances there is a sacred privilege. This privilege is reserved for those who are spiritually prepared and striving to live the Lord's standards, as determined by authorized priesthood leaders.

To make this determination, priesthood leaders interview the member using the questions below. Leaders should not add or remove any requirements. However, they may adapt the questions to the age and circumstances of the member.

Sometimes members have questions during a temple recommend interview. The priesthood leader may explain basic gospel principles. He may also help members understand the temple recommend questions if needed. However, he should not present his personal beliefs, preferences, or interpretations as Church doctrine or policy.

Temple recommend interviews should not be rushed. They should be private. However, the person being interviewed may invite a spouse, parent, or another adult to be present.

26.4.1

Temple Recommend Interview Questions

1. Do you have faith in and a testimony of God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost?
2. Do you have a testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and of His role as your Savior and Redeemer?
3. Do you have a testimony of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
4. Do you sustain the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the prophet, seer, and revelator and as the only person on the earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys?

Do you sustain the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators?

Do you sustain the other General Authorities and local leaders of the Church?

5. The Lord has said that all things are to be "done in cleanliness" before Him (Doctrine and Covenants 42:41).

Do you strive for moral cleanliness in your thoughts and behavior?

Do you obey the law of chastity?

6. Do you follow the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ in your private and public behavior with members of your family and others?
7. Do you support or promote any teachings, practices, or doctrine contrary to those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?
8. Do you strive to keep the Sabbath day holy, both at home and at church; attend your meetings; prepare for and worthily partake of the sacrament; and live your life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel?
9. Do you strive to be honest in all that you do?
10. Are you a full-tithe payer?

For new members seeking a recommend to perform proxy baptisms and confirmations: Are you willing to obey the commandment to pay tithing?
11. Do you understand and obey the Word of Wisdom?
12. *(This question is omitted when interviewing a child or youth.)* Do you have any financial or other obligations to a former spouse or to children?

If yes, are you current in meeting those obligations?
13. *(This question is omitted when interviewing a member who is not endowed.)* Do you keep the covenants that you made in the temple?
14. *(This question is omitted when interviewing a member who is not endowed.)* Do you honor your sacred privilege to wear the garment as instructed in the initiatory ordinances? (Read the “Wearing the Temple Garment” statement, included below, to each member.)
15. Are there serious sins in your life that need to be resolved with priesthood authorities as part of your repentance?
16. Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord’s house and participate in temple ordinances?

26.4.2

Wearing the Temple Garment

The First Presidency has provided the following guidance on wearing the garment:

“The garment of the holy priesthood reminds us of the veil in the temple, and that veil is symbolic of Jesus Christ. When you put on your garment, you put on a sacred symbol of Jesus Christ. Wearing it is an outward expression of your inner commitment to follow Him. The garment is also a reminder of your temple covenants. You should wear the garment day and night throughout your life. When it must be removed for activities that cannot reasonably be done while wearing the garment, seek to restore it as soon as possible. As you keep your covenants, including the sacred privilege to wear the garment as instructed in the initiatory ordinances, you will have greater access to the Savior’s mercy, protection, strength, and power.”

If members have questions about wearing the garment, refer them to 38.5.

26.4.3

Additional Direction

The priesthood leader emphasizes to the member the need to safeguard his or her recommend. It must never be loaned and should be reported immediately to the issuer if lost or stolen.



26.5**Issuing Temple Recommends in Special Circumstances****26.5.1****Newly Baptized Members**

The bishop interviews new members who are old enough to receive a temple recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations (see 26.3.1). He conducts this interview soon after the member's confirmation, normally within a week. For brethren, this interview may be held as part of the interview to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. A bishop or branch president may assign one of his counselors to conduct this interview. Male Church members must be ordained to a priesthood office before receiving a temple recommend.

During the interview, the bishop may offer to use Family Name Assist to help the new member print the name of a deceased family member for whom the new member can perform temple ordinances (see "Family Name Assist" in 25.4.1).

Worthy adult members may receive their own endowment one full year after being confirmed a member of the Church (see 27.2.1.1). Priesthood leaders ensure that the date the member will receive the endowment will be at least one full year after his or her confirmation date, not the baptismal date. Only the First Presidency may authorize exceptions.

26.5.2**Young Missionaries Returning from Service Away from Home**

Before a young missionary serving away from home completes his or her service, the mission president conducts a temple recommend interview. If the missionary is worthy, he issues a recommend. The

mission president dates and activates the recommend so it expires three months from the date the missionary returns home.

The bishop interviews returned missionaries to issue a new temple recommend near the end of the three-month expiration period. In urgent cases when the bishop is unavailable, he may authorize one of his counselors to conduct these interviews.

In large young single adult wards, bishops may authorize experienced counselors to conduct these interviews.

Returned missionaries then meet with a member of their stake presidency for a temple recommend interview.

In these temple recommend interviews, the bishop and member of the stake presidency also review counsel given in the missionary's release interview (see 24.8.2). They discuss the returned missionary's progress, well-being, and current Church calling. They also encourage him or her to continue on a lifelong path of spiritual growth and service.

If the returned missionary does not have a Church calling, the bishop and stake president make certain that one is extended. Returned missionaries may be recommended to serve as temple workers if a temple is nearby (see 25.5).

26.5.3**Members Who Have Not Lived in the Same Ward for at Least One Year**

If a member has not lived in the same ward continuously for at least one year, the bishop reviews the member's record to verify that it does not include a notation about Church membership restrictions.

The bishop or an assigned counselor contacts the prior bishop before conducting a temple recommend interview. If a counselor learns that there is

confidential information, he ends the conversation. He informs his bishop to contact the prior bishop before an interview.

26.5.4

After Divorce, Separation, or Annulment

The bishop and stake president may feel impressed to interview a member who has been divorced or legally separated or had a marriage annulled since last receiving a temple recommend. During this interview, they help strengthen the member spiritually. They also verify the member's continued temple worthiness.

26.5.5

Members Whose Close Relatives Publicly Oppose the Church or Belong to Apostate Groups

Bishops and their counselors should be sensitive when issuing recommends to members whose close relatives publicly oppose the Church or belong to apostate groups. Members in these circumstances should not be made to feel that they cannot have a temple recommend because of their family associations. They should be encouraged to maintain a loving relationship with close relatives. They may be issued a temple recommend if they answer all temple recommend questions appropriately and sincerely.

26.5.6

Individuals Who Identify as Transgender

Temple ordinances are received according to a person's biological sex at birth. Worthy members who do not pursue surgical, medical, or social transition away from their biological sex at birth may receive a temple recommend and temple ordinances. (For a definition of social transition, see 38.6.23.)

Members who have taken steps to transition and then transition back to their biological sex at birth and are worthy and committed to keeping God's

commandments may receive a temple recommend and temple ordinances.

Bishops counsel with the stake president to address individual circumstances with sensitivity and Christlike love. Stake and mission presidents seek counsel from the Area Presidency.

For more information, see 38.6.23.

26.5.7

Members Who Have Committed a Serious Sin

A member who has committed a serious sin may not receive a temple recommend until he or she has repented (see 32.6). The period between the sin and the issuing of a recommend is left to the discretion of the bishop and stake president. It should be sufficient to determine that the person has genuinely repented.

26.5.8

Members Who Have Been Readmitted after Church Membership Withdrawal or Resignation

26.5.8.1

Members Who Were Not Previously Endowed

After a member who was not previously endowed has been readmitted by baptism and confirmation, the bishop may interview him or her to receive a temple recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations (see 26.4.2). This interview normally takes place within one week of the member's confirmation. Male Church members must be ordained to an office in the priesthood before receiving a temple recommend.

These members may not be issued recommends to receive their own endowment until one full year after the date of their readmission to the Church by baptism and confirmation.

26.5.8.2**Members Who Were Previously Endowed**

Members who were previously endowed may not receive any kind of temple recommend until their temple blessings are restored through the ordinance of restoration of blessings (see 32.17.2). When their blessings are restored, they may be issued a temple recommend for endowed members.



27.

Temple Ordinances for the Living

27.0

Introduction

Since ancient times, whenever a faithful people has been on the earth, God has blessed them with temple covenants and ordinances. He has sometimes allowed His holy ordinances to be administered outside of temples when there was no dedicated temple (see Genesis 28:12–22; Exodus 24; Exodus 25:8–9; Ether 3). But whenever the Lord has established His Church, He has commanded His people to build a house “unto [His] name.” There He reveals His ordinances and the glories of His kingdom and teaches the way of salvation. (See 2 Chronicles 3–5; 2 Nephi 5:16; Doctrine and Covenants 97:10–16; 124:29–39.)

The temple is the house of the Lord. It points us to our Savior, Jesus Christ. In temples, we participate in sacred ordinances and make covenants with Heavenly Father that bind us to Him and to our Savior. These covenants and ordinances prepare us to return to Heavenly Father’s presence and to be sealed together as families for eternity.

In the temple, great blessings are also made available to God’s faithful children in this life. In temple covenants and ordinances, “the power of godliness is manifest” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:20). The temple is a holy place where members can worship, learn, and receive guidance and comfort (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:13–16). Those who attend the temple can have access to God’s power to help accomplish His work (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:22–23; see also 3.5 in this handbook).

Temple covenants and ordinances are sacred. The symbols associated with temple covenants should not be discussed outside the temple. Nor should we discuss the holy information we covenant in the temple not to reveal. However, we may discuss the basic purposes and doctrine of temple covenants and ordinances and the spiritual feelings we have in the temple.

Ward and stake leaders discuss the information in this chapter with members who are preparing to receive the endowment or sealing ordinances.

27.1**Receiving Temple Ordinances****27.1.1****Preparing to Receive Temple Ordinances**

Members should prepare themselves spiritually to receive temple ordinances and to make and honor temple covenants.

Parents have the primary responsibility to help their children prepare to receive temple ordinances. Stake and ward leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, and extended family members support parents in this role.

Stake and ward leaders regularly encourage members to prepare to receive their own temple ordinances. Leaders also emphasize the importance of honoring temple covenants and remaining worthy of and having a temple recommend.

Resources to help members prepare to receive temple ordinances are available at temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

For information about issuing temple recommends in these circumstances, see 26.1 and 26.3.3.

**27.1.2****Verifying Records and Receiving a Temple Recommend for Living Ordinances**

Members meet with their bishop when they are preparing to:

- Receive their own endowment (see 27.2).
- Be sealed to a spouse (see 27.3).
- Be sealed to their parents (see 27.4).
- Have their children sealed to them (see 27.4).

The bishop helps the member verify important information like names, birth dates, the dates of previous ordinances, and marriage dates. This is done using Ordinance Preparation in LCR.

The bishop and stake president interview the member to issue a temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3).

27.1.3**Members Who Have Physical Disabilities**

Worthy members who have physical disabilities may receive all temple ordinances (see 38.2.5). These members are encouraged to attend the temple with endowed relatives or friends of the same gender who can assist them. Those who assist must have a current temple recommend. If members cannot attend with a family member or friend, they may call the temple in advance to see what arrangements can be made. See temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for each temple's contact information.

Service animals and emotional support animals are not allowed in temples. Stake presidents may contact the Temple Department at TempleDepartment@ChurchofJesusChrist.org if they have questions.

27.1.4**Translation or Interpretation Assistance**

If members need translation or interpretation assistance, they should contact the temple in advance to see if it is available. See temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for each temple's contact information.

27.1.5**Clothing to Wear to a Temple**

When going to a temple, members should wear the type of clothing they typically wear to sacrament meeting. They should avoid wearing clothing that is casual or that does not cover the temple garment. They should also avoid wearing clothing that is overly formal, like tuxedos. This instruction is best taught by parents, ministering brothers and sisters, and ward and stake leaders as members prepare to worship in the temple.

See 27.3.2.6 for information about clothing to wear to a temple sealing.

See 38.5 for information about:

- Clothing to wear during the endowment and sealing ordinances.
- Obtaining, wearing, and caring for ceremonial temple clothing and garments.

27.1.6**Child Care**

Children must have adult supervision if they are on temple grounds. Temple workers are available to supervise children only in the following circumstances:

- If they are being sealed to parents
- If they are observing the sealing of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents

27.1.7**Meeting with Members after They Receive Temple Ordinances**

Members often have questions after receiving temple ordinances. Endowed family members, the bishop, other ward leaders, and ministering brothers and sisters may meet with members to discuss their temple experience.

Leaders also encourage members to seek answers to their questions through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In the temple, the Spirit can provide answers to many of the questions that members may have about their temple experience.

Resources to help answer questions are available at temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

27.2**The Endowment**

The word *endowment* means “a gift.” The temple endowment is literally a gift from God through which He blesses His children. The endowment can be received only in holy temples. Some of the gifts that members receive through the temple endowment include:

- Greater knowledge of the Lord’s purposes and teachings.
- Power to do all that Heavenly Father wants His children to do.
- Divine direction when serving the Lord, their families, and others.
- Increased hope, comfort, and peace.

All the promised blessings of the endowment are in force both in this life and for eternity. The fulfillment of these blessings depends on faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The endowment is received in two parts. In the first part, a person receives preliminary ordinances called the initiatory. The initiatory ordinances include being symbolically washed and anointed, as well as instruction on wearing the temple garment (see Exodus 29:4–9). It also includes special blessings related to the person’s divine potential.

During the initiatory, the member is instructed to wear the temple garment. The garment is a sacred symbol of Jesus Christ. It is also a reminder of

temple covenants. When members keep their covenants, including the sacred privilege to wear the garment as instructed, they will have greater access to the Savior’s mercy, protection, strength, and power. For more information about the garment, see 38.5.

In the second part of the endowment, the plan of salvation is taught, including the Creation, the Fall of Adam and Eve, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Members also receive instruction on how to return to the Lord’s presence.

In the endowment, members are invited to make sacred covenants as follows:

1. Live the law of obedience and strive to keep Heavenly Father’s commandments.
2. Obey the law of sacrifice, which means sacrificing to support the Lord’s work and repenting with a broken heart and contrite spirit.
3. Obey the law of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which means:
 - Exercising faith in Jesus Christ.
 - Repenting daily.
 - Making covenants with God by receiving the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.
 - Enduring to the end by keeping covenants.
 - Striving to live the two great commandments. These are to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” and to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37, 39).
4. Keep the law of chastity, which means having sexual relations only within a legal marriage between a man and a woman, which is according to God’s law.
5. Keep the law of consecration, which means that members dedicate their time, talents, and everything with which the Lord has blessed

them to building up Jesus Christ’s Church on the earth.

In return, Heavenly Father promises that those who remain faithful to their temple covenants will be endowed “with power from on high” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32, 38; see also Luke 24:49; Doctrine and Covenants 43:16).

27.2.1

Who May Receive the Endowment

All accountable adult members of the Church are invited to prepare for and receive their own endowment. All prerequisite ordinances must be performed and recorded before members can receive the endowment (see 26.3.3). See 27.2.2 for information about deciding when to receive the endowment.

27.2.1.1

Newly Baptized Members

Worthy adult new members may receive their endowment at least one full year from the date of their confirmation (see 26.5.1).

27.2.1.2

Members Who Have an Unendowed Spouse

A worthy member whose spouse is unendowed may receive his or her own endowment when the following conditions are met:

- The unendowed spouse gives his or her consent.
- The member, bishop, and stake president are confident that the responsibility assumed with temple covenants will not be a disruption to the marriage.

These conditions apply whether the spouse is a member of the Church or is not.

27.2.1.3**Members Who Have Intellectual Disabilities**

Members who have intellectual disabilities may receive their own endowment if:

- They have received all prerequisite ordinances (see 18.1).
- They have the intellectual capacity to understand, make, and keep the associated covenants.

The bishop counsels with the member and, where applicable, his or her parents. He also seeks the direction of the Spirit. He may counsel with the stake president. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency if necessary. See 38.2.4.

27.2.2**Deciding When to Receive the Endowment**

The decision to receive the endowment is personal and should be made prayerfully. The endowment is a blessing of power and revelation to all who prepare to receive it. Members may choose to receive their own endowment when they meet all of the following conditions:

- They are at least 18 years old.
- They have completed or are no longer attending high school, secondary school, or the equivalent.
- One full year has passed since their confirmation.
- They feel a desire to receive and honor sacred temple covenants throughout their lives.

In addition, a man must hold the Melchizedek Priesthood before receiving the endowment.

Members who have received a mission call or are preparing to be sealed in the temple should receive the endowment. The bishop also counsels with other adult members who desire to receive the endowment.

Before issuing a temple recommend for a member to receive the endowment, the bishop and stake president should feel that the person is prepared to understand and keep sacred temple covenants. This eligibility is determined individually for each person. Leaders do not use generalized criteria, such as those listed below, when determining whether a person is prepared to receive the endowment:

- Reaching a certain age
- Leaving home for college, employment, or military service
- Desiring to observe the temple sealing of a family member or friend

27.2.3**Planning and Scheduling the Endowment****27.2.3.1****Receiving a Recommend for Living Ordinances**

To enter the temple and receive the endowment, a member must have the following:

- A temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3)
- A current temple recommend for endowed members (see 26.3.2)

27.2.3.2**Contacting the Temple**

Members who are planning to receive the endowment should contact the temple in advance to schedule the ordinance. They may do so after they have met with their bishop (see 27.1.2). The temple will provide instructions, including information about temple clothing, when the appointment is scheduled.

27.2.3.3**Escorts for Members Receiving the Endowment**

Members receiving their own endowment may invite an endowed member of the same gender to act as an escort and assist them during the endowment session. An escort must have a current temple recommendation. The temple can provide an escort if needed.

27.3**Sealing of Husband and Wife**

“The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). A temple sealing joins a husband and wife together for time and all eternity. The couple has sealed upon them “exaltation and glory in all things” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20; see also 1.1 in this handbook). Heavenly Father promises these and other blessings to couples who remain faithful to temple covenants.

In the sealing ordinance, a man and a woman receive each other for time and all eternity. They make a covenant with God and with each other that they will:

- Cleave to each other (see Mark 10:7–9).
- Counsel and work together in love and righteousness (see Moses 5:1, 12).
- Fulfill their divinely appointed roles as husband and wife, father and mother. Husbands promise they will preside with “gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:41).
- Keep all the laws of the new and everlasting covenant (see Doctrine and Covenants 66:2; 132:6–7, 21).

Church leaders encourage members to prepare to be married and sealed in a temple. Where temple marriages are not legally recognized, authorized Church

leaders or others can perform civil marriages that are followed by a temple sealing (see 38.3). This pattern may also be followed when a temple marriage could cause parents or immediate family members to feel excluded because they cannot attend the temple ceremony.

For information about sealing living children to parents, see 27.4.

**27.3.1****Who May Be Sealed in a Temple**

All accountable unmarried members of the Church are invited to prepare for a temple sealing. Those who are civilly married are encouraged to be sealed for time and eternity in the temple as soon as they are prepared. Members must be endowed before they can be sealed (see 27.2).

Couples being sealed in the temple must be either (1) married civilly before being sealed or (2) married and sealed in the same temple ceremony. See 27.3.2.

27.3.1.1**Members Who Were Sealed to a Previous Spouse**

See 38.4.1.

27.3.1.2**Members Who Have Intellectual Disabilities**

Members who have intellectual disabilities may be sealed to their spouse, fiancé, or fiancée if:

- They have received all prerequisite ordinances, including the endowment (see 27.2.1.3).
- They have the intellectual capacity to understand, make, and keep the associated covenants.

The bishop counsels with the member and his or her spouse, fiancé, or fiancée. He also seeks the direction of the Spirit. He may counsel with the stake president. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency if necessary. See 38.2.4.

27.3.2**Planning and Scheduling a Temple Sealing****27.3.2.1****Receiving a Recommend for Living Ordinances for Sealing a Husband and Wife**

To be sealed to a spouse, members must be endowed. They must also have the following:

- A temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3).
- A current temple recommend for endowed members (see 26.3.2).

27.3.2.2**Contacting the Temple**

Members who are planning to be sealed to a spouse should contact the temple in advance to schedule the ordinance. They may do so after they have met with their bishop (see 27.1.2). The temple will provide instructions when the appointment is scheduled.

27.3.2.3**Obtaining a Marriage License**

Where local laws permit, members can be married and sealed in the same temple ceremony. Before being married in the temple, a couple must obtain a legal marriage license that is valid where the marriage will be performed. The license is reviewed when verifying information through Ordinance Preparation (see 27.1.2). The couple must also bring the marriage license to the temple.

Couples being sealed after a civil marriage do not need to bring a marriage license to the temple. Instead, they provide the date and location of their civil marriage through Ordinance Preparation in LCR (see 27.1.2).

27.3.2.4**Escorts for the Couple Being Sealed**

An endowed sister may accompany the sister who is being sealed to assist her in the dressing room. An endowed brother may do the same for the brother who is being sealed. An escort must have a current temple recommend. The temple can provide an escort if needed.

27.3.2.5**Who Performs a Temple Sealing**

A temple sealing is usually performed by a sealer who is assigned to the temple where the couple will be sealed. If a family member or acquaintance holds the sealing authority and is assigned to the temple where the couple will be sealed, they may invite him to perform the sealing.

A sealer may also seek First Presidency approval to perform a sealing for his lineal descendants (children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren) in a temple other than the one to which he is assigned. He must receive a letter of authorization from the First Presidency for each such sealing. He presents the letter at the temple.

Members are discouraged from asking General Authorities to perform their temple sealing.

27.3.2.6

Appropriate Clothing for a Temple Sealing

Sister's Dress. A sister being sealed may wear normal temple clothing (see 38.5.1 and 38.5.2) or a bridal dress during the sealing ceremony. A bride's dress worn in the temple should be white, modest in design and fabric, and free of elaborate ornamentation. It also should cover the temple garment. Sheer fabric should be lined.

To be consistent with other dresses worn in the temple, a bride's dress should have long sleeves or three-quarter sleeves. Dresses should not have a train unless it can be pinned up or removed for the sealing ceremony.

The temple can provide a dress if needed or desired.

Brother's Clothing. A brother being sealed wears normal temple clothing during the sealing ceremony (see 38.5.1 and 38.5.2). He may wear formal clothing outside the temple.

Guests' Clothing. Those who attend a sealing ceremony should wear clothing similar to what they would wear to a sacrament meeting. They should avoid wearing clothing that is casual or that does not cover the temple garment. They should also avoid wearing clothing that is overly formal, like tuxedos.

Members who come to a sealing directly from an endowment session may wear ceremonial temple clothing.

The couple should share this information with guests well before the sealing.

Flowers. The couple and their guests should not wear flowers during the sealing ceremony. Flowers may be worn outside the temple. The couple should share this information with guests well before the sealing.

27.3.2.7

Exchanging Rings after a Temple Sealing

Exchanging rings is not part of the temple sealing ceremony. However, couples may exchange rings after the ceremony in the sealing room. Couples should not exchange rings at any other time or place in a temple or on temple grounds. Doing so can detract from the ceremony.

Couples who are married and sealed in the same ceremony may exchange rings at a later time to accommodate family members who are unable to attend a temple sealing. The ring exchange should be consistent with the dignity of a temple sealing. The exchange should not replicate any part of the sealing ceremony. The couple should not exchange vows after being sealed in the temple.

Couples who are married civilly before their temple sealing may exchange rings at their civil ceremony, at their temple sealing, or at both ceremonies.

27.3.3

Marriage in a Temple for Time Only

The purpose of the temple is to administer ordinances for eternity. For this reason, marriages for time only are no longer performed in temples.

For the policy on sealing a couple who were married in the temple for time only, see 38.4.1.7.

27.3.4

Who May Attend a Temple Sealing

Couples should invite only close family members and friends to a temple sealing. Accountable members must be endowed and have a current temple recommend to attend.

Some members of record are not baptized due to an intellectual disability, and some are baptized but not endowed for the same reason. The stake president may authorize them to observe the temple sealing of their living siblings or parents if they:

- Are at least 18 years old.
- Are able to remain reverent during the ceremony.

The stake president writes a letter stating that the person is authorized to observe the sealing. This letter is presented at the temple.

Members must be endowed and have a current temple recommend to observe the sealing of their parents.

For information about who may attend a sealing of living children to parents, see 27.4.5.

27.3.5

Wedding Receptions

See 38.3.4 for information about holding wedding receptions in Church buildings.

27.4

Sealing Living Children to Parents

Children who are born after their mother has been sealed to a husband in a temple are born in the

covenant of that sealing. They do not need to receive the ordinance of sealing to parents.

Children who are not born in the covenant can become part of an eternal family by being sealed to their birth or adoptive parents. These children are entitled to the same blessings as those who were born in the covenant.

See 38.4.2 for policies about sealing children to parents.

27.4.1

Receiving a Recommend for Living Ordinances

A couple who desires to have their children sealed to them must first be sealed to each other. They must also have the following:

- A temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3).
- A current temple recommend for endowed members (see 26.3.2).

The following table describes the recommends that members need when they are sealed to their parents. For information about these recommends, see 26.1.

Person Being Sealed to Parents	Required Recommend(s)
Child younger than age 8	• No recommend is needed; however, the child's information is verified through Ordinance Preparation in LCR (see 27.1.2)
Member between ages 8 and 11 who has been baptized and confirmed	• Temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3)
Unendowed member younger than age 21 and at least 11 and turning 12 the year of the ordinance	• Temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3) • Temple recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations (see 26.3.1)
Endowed member (members who are 21 or older must be endowed to be sealed to their parents)	• Temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3) • Temple recommend for endowed members (see 26.3.2)

Some members of record are not baptized due to an intellectual disability, and some are baptized but not endowed for the same reason. The stake president may authorize them to be sealed to their parents. The stake president writes a letter stating that the person is authorized to be sealed. This letter is presented at the temple.

For information about who can observe the sealing of living children to parents, see 27.4.5.

27.4.2

Contacting the Temple

A couple who wants to have their children sealed to them, or children who desire to be sealed to their deceased parents, should contact the temple in advance to schedule the ordinance. Members may do so after they have met with their bishop (see 27.1.2). In some cases, other temple ordinances may need to be performed before the sealing can occur.



27.4.3

Child Care

See 27.1.6.

27.4.4

Who Performs a Sealing of Living Children to Parents

A sealing of living children to parents is usually performed by a sealer who is assigned to the temple where the sealing will occur. If a family member or acquaintance holds the sealing authority and is assigned to the temple where the sealing will occur, the family may invite him to perform the sealing.

A sealer may also seek First Presidency approval to perform a sealing of living children to parents for his lineal descendants (children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren) in a temple other than the one to which he is assigned. He must receive a letter of authorization from the First Presidency for each such sealing. He presents the letter at the temple.

Members are discouraged from asking General Authorities to perform their sealing of living children to parents.

27.4.5

Who May Attend a Sealing of Children to Parents

To observe the sealing of siblings, stepsiblings, or half siblings to their parents, unendowed members under the age of 21 must be born in the covenant or sealed to their parents. In addition, children ages 8 and older must be baptized and confirmed and must have a current temple recommend.

The following table describes the recommends that members need when they observe the sealing of their siblings, stepsiblings, and half siblings to their parents. For information about these recommends, see 26.1.

Person Observing the Sealing	Required Recommend(s)
Child younger than age 8	• No recommend is needed; however, the child's information is verified through Ordinance Preparation in LCR
Member between ages 8 and 11 who has been baptized and confirmed	• Temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3)
Unendowed member younger than age 21 and at least 11 and turning 12 the year of the ordinance	• Temple recommend for living ordinances (see 26.3.3) • Temple recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations (see 26.3.1)
Endowed member (members who are 21 or older must be endowed to observe such sealings)	• Temple recommend for endowed members (see 26.3.2)

Some members of record are not baptized due to an intellectual disability, and some are baptized but not endowed for the same reason. The stake president may authorize them to observe the sealing of their living siblings, stepsiblings, or half-siblings to their parents. The stake president writes a letter stating that the person is authorized to be observe the sealing. This letter is presented at the temple.



28.

Temple Ordinances for the Deceased

28.0

Introduction

Uniting families for eternity is part of God’s work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2). Ordinances performed in temples make it possible for families to be together for eternity and experience a fulness of joy in God’s presence.

For Heavenly Father’s children to return to Him, each of them must repent, become worthy to receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation, and honor the covenants associated with each ordinance. The ordinances of salvation and exaltation are:

- Baptism.
- Confirmation and the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- Conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordination to an office (for men).
- The temple endowment (including the initiatory).
- Temple sealing.

Heavenly Father knew that many of His children would not receive these ordinances during their

mortal lives. He provided another way for them to receive ordinances and make covenants with Him. In temples, ordinances can be performed by proxy. This means that a living person receives ordinances on behalf of someone who is deceased. In the spirit world, deceased persons can choose to accept or reject ordinances that have been performed for them (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:19, 32–34, 58–59).

The ordinances of salvation and exaltation are not needed or performed for those who were not accountable in this life (see 18.1, 28.3.2, and 28.3.3).

Church members are encouraged to identify deceased relatives who have not received the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. Members then perform the ordinances on behalf of those relatives. (See Malachi 4:5–6; 1 Corinthians 15:29; Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3; 128:15–18; see also 25.1 in this handbook.)

If members have not prepared family names for temple work (see 28.1.1), the names of deceased persons who need ordinances will be provided at the temple.

Members are encouraged to attend the temple as often as their circumstances allow, whether they are

performing proxy ordinances for their own relatives or for persons whose names are provided at the temple.

Church members are blessed when they perform temple ordinances for the deceased. While performing proxy ordinances, they are able to reflect on their own temple covenants and their commitment to keep those covenants.

Stake presidents and bishops help members prepare to have positive experiences performing temple ordinances. They do this by teaching the doctrinal basis of temple work and ensuring that members understand the guidelines for this work. See chapter 25 for more information.

28.1

General Guidelines for Performing Proxy Ordinances

Deceased persons who were age 8 or older at the time of their death may have proxy ordinances performed on their behalf. Except as noted in 28.3, proxy ordinances may be performed for all deceased persons as soon as 30 days have passed from their date of death if either of the following applies:

- A close relative of the deceased (undivorced spouse, adult child, parent, or sibling) submits the name for temple ordinances.
- Permission to perform the ordinances is received from a close relative of the deceased (undivorced spouse, adult child, parent, or sibling).

If neither of the above conditions applies, proxy temple ordinances may be performed 110 years after the deceased person was born.

For more information, see the following articles on FamilySearch.org (accessing the articles requires being logged in to FamilySearch.org):

- “Individuals for whom I can request temple ordinances”
- “What is the 110-year policy, and why was it initiated?”

28.1.1

Preparing the Names of Deceased Persons for Temple Ordinances

Many resources are available to help members identify deceased relatives who need ordinances performed on their behalf (see 25.4 and 28.3). The following leaders help members learn how to prepare the names of deceased family members for temple ordinances:

- Elders quorum and ward Relief Society presidencies (see 25.2.2)
- The ward temple and family history leader (see 25.2.3)
- Ward temple and family history consultants (see 25.2.4)

Where possible, information identifying deceased family members should be entered into FamilySearch.org before temple ordinances are performed (see 25.4.1).

28.1.1.1

Submitting the Names of Family Members

When submitting names for proxy temple ordinances, members should submit only the names of persons to whom they are related.

28.1.1.2

Submitting the Names of Celebrities and Unauthorized Groups

Church members should not submit names to FamilySearch.org from the following groups:

- Famous people
- Names gathered from unapproved extraction projects
- Jewish Holocaust victims

For more information, see the following article on FamilySearch: “Can I do temple work for victims of the Jewish Holocaust?”

28.1.2

Who May Participate in Ordinances for the Deceased

All members who have a current temple recommend may participate in baptisms and confirmations for the dead. Endowed members with a current temple recommend may participate in all ordinances for the deceased. See 26.3.

28.1.3

Participation by Members Who Have Physical or Intellectual Disabilities

Members who have disabilities may do temple work for the deceased if they:

- Have a current temple recommend (see 28.1.2).
- Have the intellectual capacity to understand the ordinance.
- Can care for themselves or are accompanied by a relative or friend of the same gender who has a temple recommend and can provide help if needed.

See 27.1.3 and 27.2.1.3.

28.1.4

Scheduling

Members may need to make an appointment before performing ordinances for the deceased. See

temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for each temple’s contact information and scheduling requirements.

28.1.5

Translation or Interpretation Assistance

See 27.1.4.

28.1.6

Clothing to Wear to a Temple

See 27.1.5.

28.1.7

Child Care

See 27.1.6.

28.2

Performing Temple Ordinances for Deceased Persons

The following sections explain the ordinances that are performed by proxy for deceased persons in temples. When performing proxy ordinances, a member may act as proxy only for a deceased person who is the same birth sex as the member.

Temple ordinances for the deceased are generally performed in the following order:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Melchizedek Priesthood ordination (for men)
- Initiatory
- Endowment
- Sealings

If ordinances for the deceased are completed out of sequence, they do not need to be performed again.

They become effective when the prerequisite ordinances are completed.

28.2.1

Baptisms and Confirmations for the Dead

Any member who has a current temple recommend may be invited to serve in one or more baptistry assignments. Some of the assignments might include:

- Acting as proxy for baptisms.
- Acting as a witness for proxy baptisms.
- Acting as proxy for confirmations.
- Assisting patrons.
- Distributing clothing and towels.
- Helping record baptism and confirmation ordinances in the computer system.

If they wish, members who act as proxies may choose to do only baptisms or only confirmations.

Melchizedek Priesthood holders and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood may be invited to perform baptisms for the dead. Melchizedek Priesthood holders may also be invited to officiate in confirmations for the dead. Those who baptize or confirm must be able to physically perform the ordinance without assistance.

Only endowed men may be invited to:

- Serve as the font recorder.
- Serve as the confirmation recorder.

Those who serve as font or confirmation recorders verify that the ordinance is performed correctly and recorded properly (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:4, 9). Font and confirmation recorders must be able to verify and record the ordinance without assistance.

Organized groups such as families, wards, and stakes that desire to participate in ordinances in

the baptistry normally schedule with the temple in advance (see 28.1.4). One or more adults with current temple recommends should accompany these groups.

28.2.2

Endowment (Including Initiatory)

When performing proxy endowments for the deceased, the initiatory portion of the endowment is performed and recorded separately (see 27.2). Any endowed member with a current temple recommend may act as a proxy to receive these ordinances.

28.2.3

Sealing to Spouse and Sealing Children to Parents

In the temple, deceased persons may be sealed to spouses to whom they were married in life (see 38.4.1.3 if either spouse is still living and 38.4.1.8 if both spouses are deceased). Deceased persons may also have their living or deceased children sealed to them (see 38.4.2.2). An endowed member with a current temple recommend may act as a proxy for sealing ordinances.

The ordinances of baptism, confirmation, initiatory, and endowment are generally performed, either in life or by proxy, before a deceased person is sealed to a spouse or to his or her parents (see 28.2).

However, a deceased person who died before age 8 or who was not accountable in life does not need to receive any other ordinance before being sealed to his or her parents (see 18.1, 28.3.2, and 28.3.3).



28.3

Special Circumstances

This section explains circumstances in which some of the guidelines in 28.1 may not apply.

28.3.1

Children Who Died before Birth (Stillborn and Miscarried Children)

Temple ordinances are not needed or performed for children who die before birth. For more information, see 38.7.3.

28.3.2

Children Who Died before Age Eight

Little children are redeemed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and “saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven” (Doctrine and Covenants 137:10). For this reason, no baptism or endowment is performed for a child who died before age 8. However, sealings to parents may be performed for children who were not born in the covenant or did not receive that ordinance in life (see 18.1).

28.3.3

Deceased Persons Who Had Intellectual Disabilities

Temple ordinances may be performed for deceased persons who are known to have been accountable

(see Doctrine and Covenants 20:71). Temple ordinances may also be performed for persons whose accountability is unknown.

If it is clearly known that a deceased person had intellectual disabilities and was not accountable, the only ordinance performed is that of sealing to parents (see 38.2.4). This is done only if the person was not born in the covenant or was not sealed to his or her parents while living. Other temple ordinances are not needed or performed even if the person lived to be age 8 or older.

28.3.4

Persons Who Are Presumed Dead

Temple ordinances may be performed for a person who is presumed dead. The ordinances cannot be performed until 10 years have passed since the time the person is presumed dead or legally declared dead. This policy applies to persons who either:

- Are missing in action or are lost at sea.
- Disappeared under circumstances where death is apparent but no body has been recovered.

In all other cases of missing persons, temple ordinances may be performed 110 years after the person’s birth.

The stake president may contact the Temple Department if he has questions about this policy:

Email: TempleDepartment@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

28.3.5

Persons Whose Church Membership Was Withdrawn or Who Resigned Membership

If persons either had their Church membership withdrawn or had resigned membership before they died, First Presidency approval is required before temple ordinances, including restoration of

blessings when applicable, can be performed for them (except as noted in 28.3.5.1).

A family member may seek this approval in a letter to the Office of the First Presidency after one year has passed since the person's death. The letter should explain the circumstances. No form is required. The bishop or stake president may assist with this request as needed.

28.3.5.1

Deceased Persons Who Were Not Endowed

Deceased persons who were not endowed and whose Church membership was withdrawn or who resigned membership may be readmitted by proxy baptism and confirmation. These deceased persons do not need to be sealed to their parents again if they were born in the covenant or sealed to their parents in life.

First Presidency approval is required, as noted in 28.3.5.

If such persons were readmitted by baptism and confirmation during their life, no approval is needed to perform temple ordinances on their behalf.

28.3.5.2

Deceased Persons Who Were Endowed

Deceased persons who were endowed and whose Church membership was withdrawn or who resigned membership and were later readmitted by baptism and confirmation can receive their priesthood and temple blessings only through the ordinance of restoration of blessings. Such persons are not ordained to any priesthood office or endowed again, since these blessings are restored through this ordinance.

First Presidency approval is required, as noted in 28.3.5. The one-year waiting period before a family member may request approval applies even if the deceased person had been readmitted by baptism and confirmation in life.

Restoration of blessings takes place under the direction of the First Presidency. The family is notified when it has been completed. The person's readmission by baptism and confirmation, if needed, is completed at the same time.

See 32.17.2 for information about performing this ordinance for the living.



29.

Meetings in the Church

29.0

Introduction

Latter-day Saints meet together to worship, edify each other, and teach and learn the gospel (see Alma 6:6; Moroni 6:5–6). The Savior promised, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Meeting together is one way our hearts can be “knit together in unity and in love” (Mosiah 18:21).

Leadership meetings help leaders counsel together and coordinate efforts to serve others. However, holding a meeting should never replace serving and ministering as Jesus Christ did. Ways to assist God in His work of salvation and exaltation can be planned in a meeting, but these are most often accomplished outside of the meeting.

29.1

Planning and Conducting Meetings

Leaders plan and conduct meetings “as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments

and revelations of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:45; see also Moroni 6:9; Doctrine and Covenants 46:2). They seek ways to invite the influence of the Spirit in their meetings.

Leaders ensure that the number and length of meetings do not create burdens for members or their families. For example, meetings should not make it difficult for families to have time together on the Sabbath day.

Leaders also ensure that meetings focus on what is most important. For example, sacrament meetings should focus on the sacrament and building faith in Jesus Christ. Presidency meetings and council meetings focus on strengthening individuals and families.

The presiding officer may conduct the meeting. Or he or she may ask someone else, such as a counselor, to conduct under his or her direction.

Occasionally something happens during a meeting that the presiding officer feels a need to clarify. For example, someone might teach incorrect doctrine. If that happens, the presiding officer should make a clarification without embarrassing anyone.

29.2**Ward Meetings****29.2.1****Sacrament Meeting****Purposes**

Remember Jesus Christ by partaking of the sacrament. In this ordinance, Church members renew their covenant to take upon themselves the Savior's name, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments. Other purposes include worshiping, building faith and testimony, and conducting ward business.

Participants

All are invited to attend (see 3 Nephi 18:30–32; see also 38.1.1 in this handbook).

Frequency

Each Sunday.

29.2.1.1**Planning Sacrament Meeting**

The bishopric plans and conducts sacrament meeting. They ensure that the focus of the meeting is on the sacrament and building faith in Jesus Christ.

Sacrament meeting lasts one hour. It can include the following:

1. *Prelude music* (see 19.3.2 for guidelines). Reverent music before the meeting starts can invite a spirit of worship.
2. *Greeting and welcome*.
3. *Acknowledgment of the presiding authority and other leaders who may be visiting*. Presiding authorities and visiting high councilors should be invited to sit on the stand. General Officers are also invited to sit on the stand unless they are attending their home ward.

4. *Announcements*. These should be kept to a minimum. Most can be printed, shared electronically, or shared in other meetings.

5. *Opening hymn and prayer*. See 19.3.2 and 29.6.

6. *Ward and stake business*, such as the following:

- Sustaining and releasing officers and teachers (see 30.3 and 30.6).
- Presenting names of brethren to be ordained to an office in the Aaronic Priesthood (see 18.10.3).
- Recognizing new ward members, including recent converts. After a few words of introduction, the person conducting asks the congregation to show by an uplifted hand that they welcome the member into the ward.

When children who are members of record are baptized and confirmed, they are recognized in sacrament meeting. However, they do not need to be presented for welcome into the ward.

7. *Naming and blessing children* (see 18.6). This is usually done in fast and testimony meeting (see 29.2.2).

8. *Confirming new converts* (see 18.8).

9. *Sacrament hymn and administration of the sacrament*. The sacrament is the main focus of the meeting. Other parts of the meeting should not detract from it. This ordinance is an opportunity for members to direct their thoughts toward the Savior and His sacrifice for them. It should be a sacred time of spiritual renewal.

The sacrament table should be prepared before the meeting begins. The bishop ensures that the sacrament is blessed and passed in a reverent and orderly way. Those who administer the sacrament represent Jesus Christ.

For more about preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament, see 18.9.

For information about administering the sacrament in unusual situations, see 29.2.1.5 and 18.9.1.

10. *Gospel messages and congregational singing or other music.* Messages and music should be consistent with the sacred nature of the sacrament.

For information about selecting speakers, see 29.2.1.4. For information about musical selections in sacrament meeting, see 19.3.2.

11. *Closing hymn and prayer.*

12. *Postlude music.*

Visual aids and audiovisual materials should not be used in sacrament meetings (see 38.8.3).

29.2.1.2

Presiding at Sacrament Meeting

The bishop presides at sacrament meeting unless a member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy in his area, or a General Authority attends. If the bishop and his counselors are not able to attend sacrament meeting, the stake president designates who presides. Normally he designates the elders quorum president. However, he could invite another Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

29.2.1.3

Time before the Meeting

Before the meeting starts, members of the congregation prepare spiritually for the sacrament. They can do this through quiet prayer and pondering. Leaders set an example of reverence.

A member of the bishopric invites Young Women class presidencies to organize youth to minister by welcoming visitors and members as they enter the chapel. Youth make an effort to greet members by name. They also promote reverence by answering questions and helping people find seats as needed.

29.2.1.4

Selecting Speakers

The bishopric selects speakers for sacrament meeting. Most often they invite ward members, including youth and children (see 38.8.18). The stake president may assign high councilors or members of stake organization presidencies to speak. The stake president determines the frequency of such assignments.

The bishopric extends invitations to speak well in advance of the meeting. Speakers bear testimony of Jesus Christ and teach His gospel using the scriptures (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:12; 52:9). Messages should build faith and be consistent with the sacred nature of the sacrament.

For information about newly called or recently returned missionaries speaking in sacrament meeting, see 24.5.2 and 24.8.3.

The bishopric schedules one sacrament meeting each year for a presentation by the Primary children. For information about this presentation, see 12.1.6.



29.2.1.5

⬆️ Sacrament Services in Unusual Situations

Every member needs the spiritual blessings that come from partaking of the sacrament. However, some members are unable to attend sacrament meeting because they are confined to their home, a hospital, or a care facility. The bishop may assign priesthood holders to administer the sacrament to these members (see 18.9.1).

In some cases, the bishop may authorize streaming sacrament meeting for those who cannot attend. For information, see 29.7.

When members are traveling or temporarily living away from home, they should attend sacrament meeting in a nearby ward if possible. Sacrament services should not be held in conjunction with family reunions, vacations, or other activities that are not sponsored by the Church.

29.2.2

Fast and Testimony Meeting

Purpose

Partake of the sacrament and strengthen one another by bearing testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel. Members are encouraged to come to the meeting fasting if they are able to fast.

Participants

All are invited to attend.

Frequency

Once a month, sacrament meeting is a fast and testimony meeting. Usually this is on the first Sunday of the month. It may be on a different Sunday to accommodate general conference or stake conference. (See also 20.5.4.)

In a fast and testimony meeting, there are no assigned speakers or special musical selections. Instead, the person conducting bears a brief testimony. He then invites members of the congregation to bear their testimonies. To bear testimony means to declare gospel truths as inspired by the Holy Ghost. Testimonies should be brief so that many people can participate.

Young children are welcome to bear testimony in fast and testimony meeting. It may be best for them to learn to do so at home until they can bear testimony without help from others.

Under the bishop's direction, children are usually named and blessed during fast and testimony meeting (see 29.2.1.1).

29.2.3

Ward Conference

Purpose

At ward conference, stake leaders instruct, support, and minister to ward leaders and members. Ward members sustain general and local leaders.

Participants

All are invited to attend. Participants from the stake are determined by the stake presidency.

Frequency

Once a year on a Sunday other than fast Sunday.

Ward conference is planned to meet local needs. It includes a sacrament meeting planned by the stake president. The stake president usually presides at the meeting, and a member of the bishopric usually conducts.

During this meeting, a member of the stake presidency or high council presents the names of general, stake, and ward leaders for sustaining. He uses the Officers Sustained form, prepared by the ward clerk. The bishop and stake president usually speak in the meeting.

The ward holds regular priesthood and organization meetings as part of ward conference. Stake leaders may give instruction and assistance. They minister to ward leaders and members.

In connection with ward conference, the stake presidency meets with the bishopric. Together they review the progress of God's work of salvation and exaltation in the ward. This meeting may be held on ward conference Sunday or at another time.

29.2.4**Bishopric Meeting****Purpose**

Counsel together and make decisions about matters concerning the ward. Give special attention to the bishopric's responsibility for Aaronic Priesthood holders and young women.

Participants

The bishopric, ward clerk, and executive secretary. The bishop may invite others to attend as needed, such as the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents.

Frequency

Usually weekly.

The bishop plans and conducts bishopric meetings. Matters for consideration could include:

- Coordinating God's work of salvation and exaltation in the ward.
- Strengthening individuals and families in the ward—especially youth and children.
- Identifying members who could prepare to receive ordinances, including priesthood ordinations.
- Identifying members to call to ward positions.
- Identifying members who could be recommended to the stake president to serve as missionaries.
- Reviewing instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and this handbook.

Other items may include ward organizations and programs, the ward budget, reports on assignments, and plans for upcoming meetings and activities.

**29.2.5****Ward Council Meeting****Purpose**

Help accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation in the ward (see 1.2).

Participants

- The bishopric, ward clerk, and ward executive secretary.
- Presidents of the elders quorum, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School.

The bishop may invite others to attend, such as the ward mission leader, the ward temple and family history leader, the leaders of the ward young single adult committee, the ward music coordinator, and the full-time missionaries.

Frequency

Usually weekly (but may meet less often).

The bishop plans, presides over, and conducts ward council meetings. If he is absent, he may assign a counselor to preside and conduct. However, the council does not make major decisions without the bishop.

The ward council seeks to help all ward members build spiritual strength, receive saving ordinances,

keep covenants, and become consecrated followers of Jesus Christ (see Moroni 6:4–5). During ward council meetings, council members plan and coordinate this work. They determine together how the strengths and abilities of ward members can bless those in need. They seek the guidance of the Spirit as they unite in love and concern for members of the ward.

Ward organization leaders attend ward council meetings in two capacities:

1. As members of the ward council who help bless all ward members.
2. As representatives of their organizations.

When they meet together, ward council members discuss matters that would benefit from unified efforts of the entire council. Each council member is encouraged to share his or her thoughts and inspiration on these matters.

Ward council meetings usually do not last longer than one hour. They begin with a prayer and brief reports on assignments from previous meetings. Listed below are items that could be discussed. There is not enough time to discuss all of them in every meeting. The bishop gives priority to matters that are most needed to bless individuals and families.

- *Living the gospel of Jesus Christ.* Helping all members build faith, receive saving ordinances, and keep their covenants.
- *Caring for those in need.* Sharing resources and skills to bless individuals, families, and the community. Helping ward members become self-reliant. (See chapter 22.)
- *Inviting all to receive the gospel.* Reviewing the progress of those who are learning about the gospel, as well as new and returning members. Discussing ways members can share the gospel with others. (See chapter 23.)

- *Uniting families for eternity.* Reviewing the progress of members who are preparing to receive temple ordinances. Planning ways to help more members qualify for a temple recommend. Discussing ways members can participate in temple and family history work. (See chapter 25.)

As ward council members discuss these matters, they consider the needs and strengths of the members they serve. They can learn about these needs and strengths in presidency meetings, in discussions with members of their organization (including ministering interviews), and through their own ministering efforts. In addition, Leader and Clerk Resources has tools and reports that can help leaders be aware of the progress of members. Council members must keep confidential any private or sensitive information (see 4.4.6).

The ward council should know the children and youth in the ward and their home circumstances. They pay particular attention to those who do not have gospel support at home.

After a discussion, the bishop may either decide on a course of action or postpone a decision while seeking additional information and guidance. Or he could refer the matter to a different council, such as the bishopric. See 4.4.3.

Sometimes the ward council may determine that a ward activity could help meet the needs of members. The ward council may oversee the planning of ward activities. However, most of the planning is done before and after council meetings. For more information about activities, see chapter 20.

After full-time missionaries return home, they may be invited to report on their missions to the ward council (see 24.8.3).

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study 4.3 and 4.4.

29.2.6**Ward Youth Council Meeting****Purpose**

Strengthen the youth in the ward. Help them participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2).

Participants

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

The bishop may invite other youth leaders or advisers to attend as needed.

Frequency

Usually monthly.

The bishop may conduct ward youth council meetings. Or he may assign someone else to do so, such as one of his priests quorum assistants or the president of the oldest Young Women class. Ward youth council meetings provide opportunities for youth to lead. The bishopric or other leaders can help them prepare for these meetings during quorum or class presidency meetings.

Before each meeting, the bishop and the person conducting review the items to be discussed. These items could include the following:

- God's work of salvation and exaltation.
- Needs of youth in the ward and ways to address them.
- Efforts to reach out to youth who are less active or new members.
- Activities, including opportunities to serve those in need. Most of the planning is done in quorum or class presidency meetings (see chapter 20).
- Ministering (see chapter 21).
- Orienting newly called quorum and class presidencies.

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study 4.3 and 4.4.

29.2.7**Other Ward Meetings and Classes**

Meetings for priesthood quorums and their presidencies are described in chapters 8 and 10.

Meetings for Relief Society sisters and their leaders are described in chapter 9.

Meetings for young women and their leaders are described in chapter 11.

Meetings for Primary children and their leaders are described in chapter 12.

Sunday School classes are described in 13.3.

Teacher council meetings are described in 17.4.

Coordination meetings for the work of sharing the gospel and strengthening new and returning members are described in 23.4.

Coordination meetings for temple and family history efforts are described in 25.2.7.



29.2.8**↑↓ Schedules for Sunday Meetings**

Wards use one of the following two-hour schedules for Sunday meetings.

Plan 1

60 minutes	Sacrament meeting
10 minutes	Transition to classes and meetings
50 minutes	All Sundays: Primary, including nursery (see 12.2.1.2) First and third Sundays of the month: Sunday School (see 13.3) Second and fourth Sundays: priesthood quorum meetings (see 8.2.1.2 and 10.2.1.2), Relief Society meetings (see 9.2.1.2), and Young Women meetings (see 11.2.1.2) Fifth Sundays: meetings for youth and adults. The bishopric determines the topic and assigns teachers (usually members of the ward or stake). They also determine whether youth and adults, male and female, meet separately or together.

Plan 2

50 minutes	All Sundays: Primary, including nursery (see 12.2.1.2) First and third Sundays of the month: Sunday School (see 13.3) Second and fourth Sundays: priesthood quorum meetings (see 8.2.1.2 and 10.2.1.2), Relief Society meetings (see 9.2.1.2), and Young Women meetings (see 11.2.1.2) Fifth Sundays: meetings for youth and adults. The bishopric determines the topic and assigns teachers (usually members of the ward or stake). They also determine whether youth and adults, male and female, meet separately or together.
10 minutes	Transition to sacrament meeting
60 minutes	Sacrament meeting

When two wards meet in the same building and one or both have very few children or youth, it may be desirable for the children or youth to attend Sunday classes together. The wards' Sunday meeting schedules could overlap as shown below.

Ward A	
Sacrament meeting	
Transition	
Ward B	
Primary, youth Sunday School, Aaronic Priesthood quorum meetings, and Young Women meetings (combined)	
Adult Sunday School, elders quorum meetings, and Relief Society meetings (separate)	
	Transition
	Sacrament meeting

This plan may also be considered if the two wards use different languages but the children and youth speak the same language.

Using this plan requires the stake president's approval. If he approves, the bishop of each ward meets with organization leaders to seek their counsel about implementing it.

The two bishoprics meet together to determine which members from each ward should be called to serve in quorums and organizations. Each bishop remains the president of his priests quorum, but the two bishops may take turns presiding in Sunday quorum meetings. The bishops from both wards attend combined ward youth council meetings. After implementing the plan, leaders continue to meet regularly to coordinate their efforts.

29.2.9

Easter and Christmas

On Easter Sunday, sacrament meeting is the only meeting held. The same is true when Christmas Day falls on a Sunday. When Christmas falls on another day of the week, sacrament meeting is the only meeting held on a Sunday near Christmas—usually the Sunday before—as determined by the stake presidency.

In some areas, a major non-Christian holiday is culturally significant. When such a holiday falls on a Sunday, the Area Presidency may authorize bishops to hold sacrament meeting only on that day.

Stake presidencies may consult with bishops to determine whether to adjust start times for sacrament meetings on these Sundays.

29.3

Stake Meetings

29.3.1

Stake Conference

Purpose

The primary purpose of stake conference is to strengthen members' faith in Jesus Christ.

Participants

All are invited to attend the general session. Other sessions are for specific participants, as described below.

Frequency

Twice each year.

Stake conferences are scheduled by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Usually the stake president presides at one conference each year and an assigned Area Seventy or General Authority presides at the other.

The presiding officer directs all planning for the conference. He approves participants and musical selections in advance. For information about music in stake conference, see 19.3.4.

When an Area Seventy or General Authority presides, he may invite the stake president to suggest

topics for instruction at the conference. When the stake president presides, he and his counselors select topics. The stake presidency may discuss possible topics with the stake council. In making these selections, the stake presidency considers topics that the First Presidency has emphasized recently.

As the stake president makes arrangements for stake conference, he may ask priesthood quorums and other organizations, individuals, and families to help. For example, they could be assigned to set up chairs, provide ushers, and clean the building.

Each stake conference normally includes the following meetings:

- A meeting of the Area Seventy or General Authority (if assigned) and the stake presidency. The stake clerk and executive secretary also attend.
- A stake leadership meeting. When a General Authority or Area Seventy presides, this meeting includes all members of the stake council and ward councils. When the stake president presides, it includes priesthood leaders only (see 29.3.3). The presiding authority determines whether this meeting is held on Saturday or Sunday. A member of the stake presidency conducts.
- A Saturday evening session for all stake members 18 and older. Depending on local circumstances, this meeting may be held on Sunday if approved by the presiding authority. A member of the stake presidency conducts.
- A general session, held on Sunday, for all members and others who would like to attend. The stake president conducts and speaks in this meeting. More than one Sunday general session may be held if there is not room for everyone in one session. Children attend with their families, not in a separate meeting.

If necessary, conference sessions may be streamed to meetinghouses or other locations in the stake. Some members may need the conference to be streamed

to their homes. For more about streaming meetings, see 29.7.

Speakers in the general session should not use visual aids or audiovisual materials (see 38.8.3).

If General Officers, the temple president and matron, the mission president and companion, or the stake patriarch attend, they should sit on the stand. The same is true for counselors in temple and mission presidencies (and their spouses) if they attend in the place of the temple or mission president.

In one stake conference each year, a member of the stake presidency presents general, area, and stake officers for sustaining. He uses the Officers Sustained form, prepared by the stake clerk. This is usually done in the first stake conference of the year.

If stake officers are called or released between stake conferences, they are presented for sustaining or an expression of thanks in the next stake conference. Or this can be done in each ward's sacrament meeting. See 30.3 and 30.6.

Brethren who have been recommended to be ordained elders or high priests are presented for sustaining in a stake conference. If a brother needs to be ordained before the next stake conference, he may be sustained in his ward's sacrament meeting. His name would then be presented for ratifying in a stake conference (see 18.10.3).

29.3.2

Stake General Priesthood Meeting

Purpose

Instruct and inspire priesthood holders in their duties.

Participants

All priesthood holders in the stake.

Frequency

Once each year.

The stake presidency plans and conducts stake general priesthood meetings. They prayerfully select subjects and speakers.

29.3.3

Stake Priesthood Leadership Meeting

Purpose

Teach priesthood leaders their duties, increase their abilities, and strengthen their faith.

Participants

- Stake presidency.
- High council.
- Stake and ward clerks (and assistant clerks as needed).
- Stake and ward executive secretaries.
- Stake Young Men presidency (and secretary if called).
- Bishopricks.
- Elders quorum presidencies and secretaries.
- Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers.

The stake presidency may invite others to attend, such as ward mission leaders and ward temple and family history leaders.

Frequency

A stake priesthood leadership meeting is held as part of one stake conference per year. The stake presidency may schedule a second meeting sometime during the year.

The stake presidency plans and conducts stake priesthood leadership meetings. The structure of these meetings is flexible. All participants may meet together for the entire meeting. Or, after some general instruction, they may separate into smaller groups for specific instruction based on their callings and assignments.

The stake presidency and other stake leaders generally provide instruction. Ward leaders, including

women leaders, can also be invited to give instruction on occasion.

29.3.4

Stake Leadership Meetings

Purpose

Teach ward organization leaders their duties, help them improve as leaders and teachers, and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ. In these meetings, leaders also counsel together and share ideas.

Participants

All stake and ward Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies and secretaries. A member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor attends and presides. Teachers, advisers, high councilors, and bishopric members assigned to these organizations may also be invited.

Normally, the presidency of each organization schedules its own meeting. However, the stake presidency may invite organizations to meet together.

Frequency

Once each year. The stake presidency may authorize a second meeting if it does not create a burden for participants.

Stake organization presidencies plan and conduct stake leadership meetings. The structure of these meetings is flexible. All leaders may meet together for the entire meeting. Or, after some general instruction, they may separate into smaller groups for specific instruction based on their callings and assignments.

Organization leaders, stake presidency members, or other stake leaders generally provide instruction. Ward organization leaders can also be invited to give instruction on occasion.

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

29.3.5**Stake Presidency Meeting****Purpose**

Counsel together and make decisions about matters concerning the stake.

Participants

The stake presidency, stake clerk, and executive secretary. The stake president may invite others to attend as needed.

Frequency

Regularly (usually weekly).

The stake president plans and conducts stake presidency meetings. Matters for consideration could include:

- God's work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.
- Strengthening individuals and families in the stake.
- The needs and strengths of wards, elders quorums, and other organizations in the stake.
- Bishops' recommendations of men to be ordained elders.
- Members to call to stake positions and some ward positions as outlined in 30.8.
- Bishops' recommendations of members to serve missions.
- Instructions from the scriptures, Church leaders, and this handbook.

Other items may include stake activities and programs, the stake budget, reports on assignments, and plans for upcoming meetings.

29.3.6**High Council Meeting****Purpose**

Counsel together about God's work of salvation and exaltation in the stake (see 1.2).

Participants

- Stake presidency.
- High council.
- Stake clerk and executive secretary.

The stake president may invite others to attend as needed.

Frequency

Twice a month if feasible.

The stake presidency plans and conducts high council meetings. These meetings may include:

- Receiving instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and assignments.
- Counseling together about strengthening individuals and families in the stake. Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR) has tools and reports that can help leaders be aware of the progress of members.
- Discussing how to help accomplish God's work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.
- Reporting on assignments.
- Counseling with the stake presidency and sustaining their decisions to ordain brethren as elders and high priests.
- Counseling with the stake presidency and sustaining their decisions to issue callings.
- Helping plan stake priesthood leadership meetings (see 29.3.3).
- Hearing reports from returning missionaries (see 24.8.3).

Sometimes a brief high council meeting could be immediately followed by a stake council meeting (see 29.3.7). This can help reduce the number of meetings for leaders to attend.

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study 4.3 and 4.4.

For information about participants joining the meeting remotely, see 29.7.

29.3.7

Stake Council Meeting

Purpose

Counsel together about God's work of salvation and exaltation in the stake (see 1.2).

Participants

- Stake presidency.
- High council.
- Stake clerk and executive secretary.
- Stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidents (the stake Young Men and Sunday School presidents are present as members of the high council).
- Stake young single adult leaders and single adult leaders (if called).

The stake president may invite others to attend as needed.

Frequency

Monthly if feasible.

The stake president plans and conducts stake council meetings. In these meetings, council members may:

- Receive instruction from the stake presidency on doctrine and on their assignments.
- Counsel together about strengthening individuals and families in the stake. LCR has tools and

reports that can help leaders be aware of the progress of members.

- Discuss overall vision for God's work of salvation and exaltation in the stake.
- Discuss temporal needs of stake members and how to help them be self-reliant. Identify resources available in the community and stake. Examples may include local schools and BYU–Pathway Worldwide. (See 22.12 and 22.13.)
- Develop and maintain a simple plan for the stake to respond to emergencies (see 22.9.1.3).
- Plan ways for stake members to give service in the community (see 22.9.1). Where it is available, JustServe.org suggests opportunities for community service.
- Report on stake organizations, activities, and programs.

Sometimes a stake council meeting could immediately follow a brief high council meeting (see 29.3.6). This can help reduce the number of meetings for leaders to attend.

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study 4.3 and 4.4.

For information about participants joining the meeting remotely, see 29.7.

29.3.8

Stake Adult Leadership Committee Meeting

Purpose

Counsel together about how to support ward leaders as they assist in God's work of salvation and exaltation. Plan ways to help implement stake leaders' vision for this work in the stake.

Participants

- Stake presidency.
- Stake Relief Society presidency (and secretary if called).
- High councilors assigned to work with elders quorums.

The stake president may invite elders quorum presidents, ward Relief Society presidents, and others to attend the committee's meetings as needed.

Frequency

As needed.

The stake adult leadership committee supports elders quorum and ward Relief Society presidencies in their work. Committee members give special emphasis to ward efforts in ministering, sharing the gospel, strengthening new and returning members, and participating in temple and family history efforts.

In addition, this committee coordinates stake efforts related to welfare and self-reliance, including JustServe.org (where it is available) and BYU–Pathway Worldwide (see 22.13).

The stake presidency plans and conducts meetings of the stake adult leadership committee. These meetings could be extensions of stake council meetings. For example, at the end of some stake council meetings, the adult leadership committee could meet to continue a discussion about specific matters.



29.3.9

Stake Youth Leadership Committee Meeting

Purpose

Stake leaders and youth (1) counsel together about strengthening the youth of the stake and (2) plan service and activities.

In addition, stake leaders counsel together about how to instruct and support ward leaders in involving the youth in God's work of salvation and exaltation. They plan ways to help implement the stake council's vision for the youth in the stake.

Participants

- A member of the stake presidency.
- The stake Young Men presidency (and secretary if called).
- The stake Young Women presidency (and secretary if called).
- Youth from each ward in the stake when meetings or parts of meetings include matters that benefit from their involvement. Youth attend when discussions focus on strengthening youth and planning service and activities. The stake president determines the number of youth who attend. These could be youth serving in quorum and class presidencies or other youth invited by the stake presidency to be members of this committee.

Additional youth could be invited to help with specific needs or events.

The stake presidency may invite other leaders and advisers to attend as needed.

Frequency

As needed.

The stake youth leadership committee supports bishoprics, Young Women presidencies and advisers, and Atonic Priesthood quorum advisers in their work with youth. Adult leaders on the committee

give special emphasis to engaging youth in God's work of salvation and exaltation.

The stake youth leadership committee has the following additional responsibilities:

- Plan service and activities. These could include youth conferences, dances, devotionals, service projects, and multistake events. (For service ideas, see JustServe.org where it is available.) Youth should lead out in planning and carrying out these activities. Stake activities should not be so frequent that they place a burden on wards. These activities should supplement ward activities, not compete with them. Ward leaders should be notified of stake activities well in advance.
- Plan ways to support For the Strength of Youth conferences.
- Coordinate stake efforts related to the Children and Youth program.

A member of the stake presidency oversees meetings of the stake youth leadership committee. He may conduct, or he may assign someone else to do so, including youth. These meetings could be extensions of stake council meetings. For example, at the end of some stake council meetings, the youth leadership committee could meet to continue a discussion about specific matters.

29.3.10

Stake Bishops' Council Meeting

Purpose

Share experiences, address questions, and provide instruction pertaining specifically to bishops.

Participants

The stake president and all bishops and branch presidents in the stake are members of this council. A stake clerk also attends to keep a record of

assignments and decisions. When needed, the stake president may invite his counselors to attend. He may also invite bishops' counselors to attend.

Frequency

At least quarterly.

Matters for discussion could include:

- Helping youth progress spiritually.
- Using fast offerings to care for those in need. Helping members build self-reliance (see chapter 22, especially 22.11). Sharing information about resources available in the community.
- Helping members repent and experience a change of heart (see chapter 32).
- Managing Church finances (see chapter 34).

The stake president leads this meeting. He helps bishops learn and fulfill their principal responsibilities (see 7.1). He also invites bishops to counsel about instruction from Church leaders.

This meeting does not take the place of the stake president's regular interviews with each bishop (see 6.2.1.2).

To understand principles that guide council meetings in the Church, all council members should study 4.3 and 4.4.



29.3.11**Other Stake Meetings**

Meetings of the stake single adult committee and stake young single adult committee are described in 14.1.1.2.

29.4**Coordinating Council Meetings****Purpose**

Help stake, mission, and temple presidents exercise priesthood keys in unity. Counsel about and coordinate efforts to help members in their responsibilities to participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2).

Participants

The Area Presidency assigns an Area Seventy to preside at the coordinating council meeting. Stake and mission presidents attend the meetings. Temple presidents are invited and attend when practical.

Others may attend part or all of the meetings when needed and when invited by the Area Seventy. Area Seventies consider distance, family circumstances, and travel when making these invitations.

Frequency

Quarterly, soon after each area council meeting. Additional meetings may be held when needed.

The Area Seventy leads the meetings and facilitates the discussion. All who attend counsel together as equal participants (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:122).

In these meetings, participants:

- Seek revelation about how best to implement the teachings and direction of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Area Presidency.

- Coordinate God's work of salvation and exaltation within their council.
- Counsel together about the temporal and spiritual welfare of members and how to help them become true followers of Jesus Christ.
- Instruct and edify one another.
- Coordinate multistake matters.

29.5**Funerals and Other Services for the Deceased**

When a Church member dies, the bishop may offer to hold services to help comfort the living and pay respectful tribute to the deceased. Services for people who die vary according to religion, culture, tradition, and local laws. The following instructions can help bishops plan gospel-centered services for the deceased while respecting these variations.

29.5.1**General Principles**

Death is an essential part of Heavenly Father's plan of salvation (see Alma 12:24–27). Because of Jesus Christ, all will be resurrected. An important purpose of Church services for the deceased is to testify of the plan of salvation, particularly the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection. These services should be dignified, spiritual experiences.

Church members should show respect for the practices of other religions at times of death. However, they should not join rituals or traditions that are contrary to the commandments or Church standards. Church leaders should not include rituals of other religions or groups in Church services for the deceased.

Members are counseled against practices or traditions that become a burden for the living. Such

practices may include excessive travel, elaborate public announcements, payments to the family, prolonged feasts, and excessive anniversary celebrations.

Church members who take part in services for the deceased should not accept payment.

Church leaders and members obey local laws about what to do when someone dies.

29.5.2

Offering Assistance to the Family

As disciples of Jesus Christ, Church leaders and members “mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9). When a member dies, the bishop visits the family to give comfort. He may ask his counselors to accompany him. He also notifies the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents.

The bishop offers assistance from ward members, including the elders quorum and Relief Society. For example, ward members could:

- Notify friends and relatives.
- Help prepare an obituary.
- Help plan the funeral or other service.
- Help make mortuary and cemetery arrangements, as applicable.
- Dress the body for burial (see 38.5.10).
- Prepare meals.

29.5.3

Viewings (Where Customary)

Sometimes a viewing of the body of the deceased is held at a Church meetinghouse before the funeral service. Leaders should open the meetinghouse for funeral directors at least one hour before the viewing is scheduled to begin.

After the viewing, a family prayer may be offered if the family desires. The casket should be closed before the funeral service.

29.5.4

Funeral Services (Where Customary)

If a funeral for a member is held in a Church building, the bishop conducts it. If it is held in a home, at a mortuary, or at the graveside, the family may ask the bishop to conduct it. A bishop’s counselor may conduct if the bishop cannot. For information about services held in a Church building for a person who is not a member of the Church, see 29.5.6.

A funeral conducted by the bishop, whether in a Church building or elsewhere, is a Church meeting and a religious service. It should be a spiritual occasion. The bishop urges participants to maintain a spirit of reverence and dignity.

When a bishop conducts a funeral, he or one of his counselors oversees the planning of the service. He considers the wishes of the family, ensuring that the funeral is simple and dignified, with music and brief addresses centered on the gospel. The comfort offered by Jesus Christ because of His Atonement and Resurrection should be emphasized. Family members are not required to speak or otherwise participate in the service.

Funerals are an opportunity to pay tribute to the deceased. However, such tributes should not dominate the service. A special family gathering, separate from the funeral service, is usually a better setting if the family wants more time to share tributes or memories.

Video presentations should not be part of a funeral service held in a chapel.

Funerals should start on time. Generally, they should not last more than 1.5 hours, as a courtesy to those who attend.

If a member of the stake presidency, an Area Seventy in his area, or a General Authority attends the funeral, he presides. The person conducting consults him in advance and recognizes him during the service. The presiding officer should be invited to offer closing remarks if he desires.

Funeral services are not normally held on Sunday.

In some cases, the bishop can arrange with morticians to provide modest, respectable funeral and burial services at cost if expenses are paid from fast-offering funds.

For information about missionaries returning home to attend a funeral, see 24.6.2.7. For guidelines about streaming and recording funerals, see 29.7.

29.5.5

Burial or Cremation

Where possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried or cremated in temple clothing. For information about temple burial clothing and dressing the dead, see 38.5.10.

If possible, a member of the bishopric accompanies the cortege to the cemetery. If the grave will be dedicated, he consults with the family and asks a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to perform the dedication. Instructions are provided in 18.16. If the family prefers, a graveside prayer can be offered instead.

For information about dedicating the place where a cremated member's ashes are kept, see 18.16.2. For other guidelines about cremation, see 38.7.2.

29.5.6

Services for Those Who Are Not Members of the Church

The bishop may offer the use of a Church meetinghouse for the funeral service of a person who is not a member of the Church. If the deceased person belonged to another church, the service may usually

be held in the manner prescribed by that church.

If the family desires, the service may be conducted by clergy from that church, provided it is dignified and appropriate. However, rituals of other churches or organizations may not be performed in a Church meetinghouse.

29.6

Prayers in Church Meetings

Prayers in Church meetings should be brief, simple, and directed by the Spirit. Any baptized Church member may offer an opening or closing prayer. Children who are not baptized may pray in Primary. Leaders should avoid always asking a husband and wife to pray in the same meeting.

Members should pray using words that express love and respect for Heavenly Father. In English, this includes using the pronouns *Thee*, *Thy*, *Thine*, and *Thou* when addressing Him.

29.7

Streaming Meetings and Holding Virtual Meetings

Church members should strive to attend meetings in person. There is a benefit in gathering that enhances worship and helps unify members (see 29.0).

When this is not possible due to health or other reasons, streaming and holding virtual meetings make it possible to include those who are not able to attend. For the benefit of these members and others, the bishop may authorize livestreaming of sacrament meetings (see 29.2.1.5), baptismal services, funerals, and other ward meetings. The stake president may authorize livestreaming of stake conference (see 29.3.1) and other stake meetings. For guidance about streaming the sacrament and other ordinances, see 38.2.3.

Similarly, when members cannot attend Sunday classes or leadership meetings in person, the bishop or stake president may authorize these members to participate virtually.

Ward and stake technology specialists can help leaders set up streams and virtual meetings (see 33.10). These individuals can also help members access these meetings.

Stream recordings of ward and stake meetings should be deleted within one day after the meeting.

29.8

Photographs and Video Recordings of Meetings

To preserve the sacredness of Church meetings, no one should take photographs or make

video recordings of sacrament meetings or stake conferences.

For information about stream recordings of meetings, see 29.7.

29.9

Interpreting for Meetings

The Lord wants everyone to understand the gospel in his or her own language (see Doctrine and Covenants 90:11). In stakes where members speak more than one native language, a member of the stake presidency may call a stake interpretation coordinator. A bishop may call ward interpreters.

For more information, see Church Interpretation Training and Best Practices at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



30.

Callings in the Church

30.0

Introduction

Heavenly Father gave Jesus Christ a sacred mission to fulfill (see Luke 4:18–19; John 6:38; 3 Nephi 27:14–16). During His ministry, the Savior trusted His disciples with important responsibilities (see Luke 10:1–9). Likewise, the Lord calls men and women to serve in the Church today through inspired invitations from His servants. These opportunities to serve are known as callings.

Callings give members opportunities to feel the joy of serving God by serving His children (see Mosiah 2:17). Callings also help members increase their faith and draw closer to the Lord.

It is not appropriate to aspire to specific callings in the Church (see Mark 10:42–45; Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–37). Nor do Church members “advance” from one calling to another. After serving in one calling, they should not expect to receive a calling of greater responsibility or prominence. Serving faithfully in a calling is more important than what the calling is. The Lord honors the dedication of all who serve in His Church.

This chapter describes how members are called to serve in the Church and how they are released from their callings. It also includes a Chart of Callings that gives information about issuing specific callings, sustaining members in their callings, and setting them apart (see 30.8).

30.1

Determining Whom to Call

30.1.1

General Guidelines

Those who serve in the Church are called of God (see Hebrews 5:4; Articles of Faith 1:5). Leaders seek the guidance of the Spirit in determining whom to call (see also 4.2.6). They also consider:

- The member’s worthiness (as determined in an interview).
- Gifts and abilities the member has, or could develop, to bless others.
- The member’s personal circumstances, including his or her health and work.

- The impact the calling may have on the member's marriage and family.

Each calling should bless the people who are served, the member who serves, and the member's family. Callings also give members opportunities to grow.

Members are blessed for sacrifices they make to serve in the Church. However, a calling should not place undue burdens on individuals and families. Nor should callings make it difficult for members to fulfill their employment responsibilities.

Generally, each member is called to serve in only one calling at a time, in addition to being a ministering brother or sister. Exceptions should be rare and prayerfully considered. Not every potential position needs to be filled.

When extending a calling to a married member, leaders ensure that the spouse is aware and supportive of the calling.

Before extending a calling to a young man or young woman, leaders obtain approval from a parent or guardian.

Before a calling is extended, the bishop carefully reviews the person's membership record to verify that it does not include an annotation or formal membership restrictions. If the calling needs to be extended before the membership record is in the ward, the bishop contacts the member's previous bishop.

Before a stake leader extends a calling, the person's bishop is consulted to discuss the member's worthiness and other circumstances that could influence his or her service (such as those described above).

30.1.2

Callings for New Members

Opportunities to serve help members grow spiritually. Serving together can also help members build close relationships. This is especially important for new members.

Ward leaders give new members opportunities to serve soon after they are baptized and confirmed. New members have a variety of abilities. Leaders prayerfully invite them to serve in ways that will help them grow personally and bless others. Some members are ready for callings right away. Others might prefer temporary assignments that help them prepare to receive callings. See also 23.2 and 23.6.1.

30.1.3

Callings for Those Who Are Not Members

People who are not members of the Church may be called to some positions, such as organist, music director, or a calling to help plan activities. However, they should not be called as teachers, as quorum or organization presidency members, or as Primary music leaders.

A person whose membership has been formally restricted or has been withdrawn may not have a calling (see 32.11.3 and 32.11.4).

30.1.4

Confidentiality

Callings and releases are sacred. Because of this, leaders keep information about proposed callings and releases confidential. Leaders share such information at a time and in a setting that is consistent with its sacred nature.

For example, a person who is being considered for a calling is not notified until the calling is issued. This helps avoid embarrassment if the call is not extended.

Additionally, only those who need to know, such as a spouse and an organization presidency that has responsibility for the position, are informed before the person is presented for sustaining.

30.1.5**Recommendations and Approvals for Callings**

The Chart of Callings indicates who may make recommendations for each calling and who gives approval (see 30.8). In some cases, quorum and organization leaders make recommendations to the stake presidency or bishopric. They do so prayerfully, seeking inspiration about whom to recommend. They may also counsel with the bishopric or stake presidency.

Bishops and stake presidents carefully consider each recommendation, recognizing that it has been prayerfully made. The bishopric or stake presidency has final responsibility to receive inspiration about whom to call. When needed, they may request another recommendation.

If a bishop or stake president feels inspired to call someone other than the person who was recommended, that does not mean the recommendation was not inspired. It may be that the bishop or stake president had information that was not available to those who made the recommendation.

**30.2****Extending a Calling**

Receiving a call to serve should be a meaningful spiritual experience for a member. Callings to serve the Lord are sacred and joyful opportunities. Leaders communicate this by the way they extend a

calling. They should not extend callings in a casual manner.

The Chart of Callings indicates who may extend each calling (see 30.8). After receiving the necessary approvals, the authorized leader counsels with the member to understand if the member's circumstances allow him or her to serve. The leader also seeks to understand if the member is worthy and willing to serve.

When a leader extends a calling, he explains that it has come from the Lord. If needed, he may give the member time to prayerfully consider the calling, seeking his or her own spiritual confirmation.

The leader may also:

- Explain the purpose, importance, and responsibilities of the calling.
- Help the member focus primarily on the people he or she will serve. (As applicable, the leader provides a list of these people from Leader and Clerk Resources.)
- Encourage the member to seek the Spirit of the Lord in fulfilling the calling.
- Testify that the Lord will help the member and will bless him or her for serving faithfully.
- Tell the member who will provide training and support for the calling.
- Tell the member who to report to on his or her efforts.
- Inform the member of any meetings he or she should attend and any resources that are available.
- Help the member know approximately how much time commitment the calling requires.
- Discuss any special concerns or challenges of the calling.
- Answer questions the member may have.

If the member is married, the leader invites the spouse to be present when the calling is extended.

If the calling includes working with children or youth, the leader explains that the member will need to complete the children and youth protection training. This training is available at ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. The member should complete it within one month of being sustained and every three years thereafter.

30.3

Sustaining Members in Callings

Those who are called to most Church positions should be presented for sustaining before they begin serving (see Doctrine and Covenants 28:13; 42:11). By sustaining those called to serve, members pledge their support and willingness to help.

The Chart of Callings indicates whether sustaining is needed and who participates in it (see 30.8). The leader who oversaw extending the calling, or a priesthood leader he authorizes, presents the person to be sustained.

The person who conducts the sustaining first announces who was released from the position (if applicable). He invites members to give an expression of thanks for the person's service (see 30.6).

When presenting a person for sustaining, an authorized priesthood leader invites him or her to stand. The leader may use wording like the following:

“[Name] has been called as [position]. Those in favor of sustaining [him or her] may show it by the uplifted hand. [Pause briefly.] Those opposed, if any, may also show it. [Pause briefly.]”

The person who is being presented should participate in the sustaining. If more than one person is being presented, they may be sustained as a group.

If a member in good standing opposes the calling, the presiding leader or another assigned priesthood leader meets with him or her in private after the meeting. The leader seeks to understand why the member is opposed. He asks if the member knows of conduct that could disqualify the person from serving in the position. If the opposing member does not know of such conduct, he or she is encouraged to sustain and support the person in the calling.

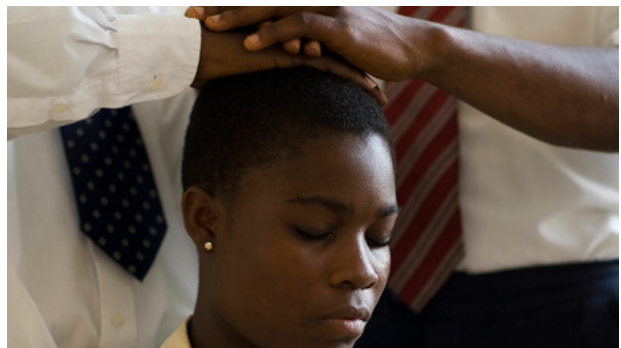
Only members in good standing may participate in the sustaining. However, if a nonmember or a member who is not in good standing has concerns about the action, he or she may share them with the bishop or stake president in private after the meeting.

30.4

Setting Apart Members to Serve in Callings

Those who are called to most Church positions should be set apart. The Chart of Callings indicates who may do the setting apart (see 30.8). This generally happens after members are sustained and before they begin serving.

To set apart a member to a calling means to give him or her the authority to act in that calling (see 3.4.3.1). A setting apart also includes a blessing and promises guided by the Spirit. For more information, see 18.11.



30.5

Length of Service

As much as possible, leaders allow members to serve in their callings long enough to establish strong relationships with those they serve. Members may also need time to learn and grow in their responsibilities. This can be especially important for leaders of youth and children as well as presidents of the Relief Society and elders quorum. The ideal length of service for leaders varies, but two to five years are often sufficient.

30.6

Releasing Members from Callings

In most cases, members are released from callings when the Lord inspires their leaders to release them. Some members, like stake and mission presidents, are usually released after an established period of time. A person could also be released for other reasons, such as personal and family circumstances.

When a president or bishop is released, his or her counselors are released automatically. Others in the organization, such as clerks, secretaries, and teachers, are not released automatically.

Releases from Church callings are made by someone with the same level of authority as the person who extended the callings. For example, if a bishopric member extended the calling, a bishopric member extends the release.

Extending a release is an important opportunity for a leader to express gratitude and to acknowledge God's hand in the member's service. The leader meets with the member personally to inform him or her of the release before it is announced publicly. He may choose to invite the member to share what he or she has learned by serving in the calling. Only those who need to know are informed of a release before it is announced.

An authorized priesthood leader announces the release in the same setting where the person was

sustained. The leader may use words like the following:

“[Name] has been released as [position]. Those who would like to express thanks for [his or her] service may show it by the uplifted hand.”

The leader does not ask if anyone opposes.

30.7

Calling Bishops

30.7.1

Recommending

The stake presidency recommends brethren to be called or released as bishops. Recommendations are submitted to the First Presidency through Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR). A member of the stake presidency, a clerk, or the executive secretary may prepare the recommendation. However, only the stake president may submit it.

A bishop's responsibilities are significant (see 7.1). Therefore, he should be a man of integrity, moral cleanliness, spiritual maturity, and faithfulness to the Savior.

A bishop should also be a married man who is faithful to his wife and family. A man who has previously been divorced can serve as a bishop, but there are considerations. The stake president should contact the Office of the First Presidency for guidance.

Generally, a candidate for bishop should be endowed and sealed to his wife in the temple. If a potential candidate for bishop has not been endowed and sealed to his wife, the stake president should contact the Office of the First Presidency for guidance.

The stake presidency seeks confirmation from the Spirit about whom to recommend. When recommending a man to serve as bishop, they carefully consider 1 Timothy 3:2–7. They do not ask for suggestions from ward members. Additional

information about the qualifications of a bishop is given in LCR.

30.7.2

Calling, Ordaining, and Setting Apart

Before the stake president can call a new bishop, he must receive written approval of his recommendation from the First Presidency. With this approval, the stake president may ordain and set apart a bishop after ward members have sustained him in a sacrament meeting. Approval of the First Presidency is also required before a stake president may release a bishop. The stake president may not delegate these responsibilities.

If a man 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. If men called as the bishop's counselors are not high priests, they are ordained high priests before being set apart.

After the First Presidency has approved the recommendation of a man to serve as bishop, they authorize the stake president to ordain him and set him apart. The stake president:

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 Aaronic Priesthood holders and young women in the ward (see 7.1.2).
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 (see 7.1.1 and 7.1.3).
6. Gives words of blessing as the Spirit directs.
7. Closes in the name of Jesus Christ.

An Area Seventy or General Authority may also call, ordain, and set apart a bishop with approval from the First Presidency.

30.8

Chart of Callings

The following chart lists selected ward and stake callings. Other callings and service opportunities are described elsewhere in this handbook.

A ward or stake does not need to fill every calling listed in this chart. Leaders determine which callings to fill based on the needs of the unit and those available to serve.

30.8.1

Ward Callings

Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by ¹	Called and set apart by
Bishop ²	Stake presidency, using LCR	First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve	Ward members	Stake president after receiving approval from the First Presidency (see 30.7.2)

Ward Callings (continued)				
Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by¹	Called and set apart by
Counselors in the bishopric ²	Bishop	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Ward clerk (and assistant ward clerks if needed)	Bishopric	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Ward executive secretary (and assistant ward executive secretaries if needed)	Bishopric	Stake presidency and high council	Ward 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	Ward members	Stake president
Counselors in the elders quorum presidency	Quorum president (in consultation with the bishop)	Stake presidency and high council	Ward members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Other elders quorum callings	Quorum presidency	Bishopric	Quorum members (presented in a quorum meeting by the quorum president or an assigned counselor)	Quorum president or an assigned counselor
Ward organization presidents (Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School)	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop
Counselors in ward organization presidencies	Organization president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Other ward Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School callings	Organization presidency	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor

Ward Callings (continued)				
Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by¹	Called and set apart by
Ward mission leader (a member of the elders quorum presidency may fill this role; if so, he does not need to be called, sustained, or set apart separately)	Bishopric (in consultation with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward missionaries	Bishopric or elders quorum and Relief Society presidents	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward temple and family history leader (a member of the elders quorum presidency may fill this role; if so, he does not need to be called, sustained, or set apart separately)	Bishopric (in consultation with the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents)	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward temple and family history consultants	Bishopric or elders quorum and Relief Society presidents	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Assistants to the priests quorum president	Bishop (as the priests quorum president)	Bishopric	Quorum members (presented in a quorum meeting by the bishop or an assigned counselor)	Bishop
Teachers and deacons quorum presidents	Bishopric	Bishopric	Quorum members (presented in a quorum meeting by the bishop or an assigned counselor)	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 president	Bishopric	Quorum members (presented in a quorum meeting by the bishop or an assigned counselor)	Bishop or an assigned counselor

Ward Callings (continued)				
Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by¹	Called and set apart by
Young Women class presidents	Bishopric (in consultation with the Young Women presidency)	Bishopric	Class members (presented in a Young Women meeting by the bishop or an assigned counselor)	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Counselors in Young Women class presidencies and class secretaries	Class president	Bishopric	Class members (presented in a Young Women meeting by the bishop or an assigned counselor)	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward welfare and self-reliance specialists if needed	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward resource center specialist if needed	Sunday School president	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Ward music coordinator	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Interpreters if needed	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor
Other ward callings	Bishopric	Bishopric	Ward members	Bishop or an assigned counselor

1. In rare circumstances, a ward member may need to begin service in a calling before he or she can be sustained. When this happens, a member of the bishopric presents the person for ratifying as soon as reasonable. He adapts the process described in 30.3. This includes providing an opportunity for ward members to oppose the action.

2. Active sealers in a temple should not be called to serve in bishoprics. Sealers are called under the direction of the President of the Church.

30.8.2

Branch Callings

Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by	Called and set apart by
Branch president ¹	Stake, mission, or district presidency	Stake presidency and high council or mission presidency	Branch members	Stake or mission president (or the district president if assigned)

Branch Callings (continued)				
Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by	Called and set apart by
Counselors in the branch presidency ¹	Branch president	Stake presidency and high council or mission presidency (or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency)	Branch members	Stake, mission, or district president or an assigned counselor
Branch clerk, assistant clerks, and executive secretary	Branch presidency	Stake presidency and high council or mission presidency (or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency)	Branch members	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor (for branches in stakes); district president or a priesthood leader he assigns (for branches in missions)
Elders quorum president	Stake, district, or mission presidency (in consultation with the branch president)	Stake presidency and high council or mission presidency (or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency)	Branch members	Stake or mission president (or the district president if assigned)
Counselors in the elders quorum presidency	Quorum president (in consultation with the branch president)	Stake presidency and high council or mission presidency (or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency)	Branch members	Stake or mission president or an assigned counselor or high councilor (or the district president or another priesthood leader if assigned)
Other branch callings	See 30.8.1, substituting <i>branch president</i> for <i>bishop</i> and <i>branch</i> for <i>ward</i> .			

¹ Active sealers in a temple should not be called to serve in branch presidencies. Sealers are called under the direction of the President of the Church.

30.8.3

Stake Callings

Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by¹	Called and set apart by
Stake president ²	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 a new stake presidency ²	Stake president	An assigned General Authority or Area Seventy	Members in stake conference	An assigned General Authority or Area Seventy
New counselor in an existing stake presidency ²	Stake president, using LCR	First Presidency	Members in stake conference	Stake president after receiving approval from the First Presidency
Stake clerk (and assistant stake clerks if needed)	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Stake executive secretary (and assistant stake executive secretaries if needed)	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor
High councilors	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Stake patriarch, including a patriarch who was already ordained in another stake	Stake presidency, using LCR	Quorum of the Twelve	Members in stake conference	Stake president after receiving approval from the Quorum of the Twelve; or a member of the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve
Stake Relief Society president	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president
Stake Young Women and Primary presidents	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor
Stake Young Men and Sunday School presidents	The stake presidency calls high councilors to fill these positions	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference (they should be sustained both as high councilors and as presidents of these organizations)	Stake president or an assigned counselor (they should be called and set apart both as high councilors and as presidents of these organizations)

Stake Callings (continued)

Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by¹	Called and set apart by
Counselors in stake organization presidencies, secretaries, and others if needed	President of the stake organization (in consultation with the stake presidency or the assigned high councilor)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake auditors	Chairman of the stake audit committee (counselor in the stake presidency)	Stake presidency and high council	Not sustained	Stake president or an assigned counselor (the stake president determines whether setting apart is needed)
Stake seminary and institute teachers and supervisors if needed	Stake presidency (after counseling with the bishop and the seminary and institute representative)	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake welfare and self-reliance specialists if needed	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake interpretation coordinator if needed	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Stake communication director, assistant directors, and specialists	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor
Other stake callings ³	Stake presidency	Stake presidency and high council	Members in stake conference	Stake president or an assigned counselor or high councilor

¹ When, as an exception, new stake officers need to begin their service before the next stake conference, they should be sustained in sacrament meetings. These sustainings should be kept to a minimum. A member of the stake presidency or high council presents the sustainings.

In rare circumstances, a stake member may need to begin service before he or she can be sustained either in a stake conference or in sacrament meetings. When this happens, the person is presented for ratifying as soon as reasonable, adapting the process described in 30.3. This includes providing an opportunity for stake members to oppose the action.

2. Active sealers in a temple should not be called to serve in stake presidencies. Sealers are called under the direction of the President of the Church.

3. The stake activities committee chair (if needed) and the stake building representative are assigned by the stake presidency from the high council. They are not called, sustained, or set apart.

30.8.4**District Callings**

Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by	Called and set apart by
District president ¹	Mission president	Area Presidency	Members in district conference	Mission president
Counselors in the district presidency ¹	District president	Mission presidency	Members in district conference	Mission president or an assigned counselor
District councilor	District president	Mission presidency (or, when authorized by the mission president, the district presidency) ²	Members in district conference	Mission president or an assigned counselor (or, when authorized by the mission president, the district president or an assigned counselor) ²
Other district callings	See 30.8.3, substituting <i>district president</i> for <i>stake president</i> and <i>district</i> for <i>stake</i> .			

1 Active sealers in a temple should not be called to serve in district presidencies. Sealers are called under the direction of the President of the Church.

2. In areas with no missions, the Area Presidency performs this function.

30.8.5**Military Service Member Group Callings**

Calling	Recommended by	Approved by	Sustained by	Called and set apart by
Service member group leader	A Latter-day Saint chaplain, the director of Military Relations, or the outgoing group leader	Bishop or branch president and the stake or mission president (in the member's home ward or branch and stake or mission)	Group members	Stake president or mission president or a designated representative (may function without being set apart if necessary)
Assistants to the service member group leader	Group leader	Bishop or branch president and the stake or mission president (in the member's home ward or branch and stake or mission)	Group members	Stake president or mission president or a designated representative (may function without being set apart if necessary)



31.

Interviews and Other Meetings with Members

31.0

Introduction

Jesus Christ often ministered to others one by one (see, for example, John 4:5–26; 3 Nephi 17:21). He loves each of God’s children. He helps them individually.

As a Church leader and servant of Jesus Christ, you also have opportunities to help God’s children, individually, in their spiritual progress. One important way you can do this is through interviews and other one-on-one meetings. Some of your most meaningful service will happen one on one. In these settings, you can give Christlike love, lifting up “the hands which hang down” and strengthening “the feeble knees” (Doctrine and Covenants 81:5).

In this chapter, the term *interview* refers to a meeting between a leader and an individual to determine whether the person should participate in an ordinance or receive a calling (see 31.2). In general,

these interviews are conducted by a member of the bishopric or stake presidency. The term *interview* also refers to ministering interviews conducted by a member of the Relief Society or elders quorum presidency (see 21.3).

In addition to these interviews, there are many other reasons a Church leader may meet with individual members (see 31.3). For example, the bishopric has regularly scheduled meetings with each youth in the ward (see 31.3.1). Even if you do not serve in a bishopric, the bishop may ask you to meet with a member who is in need to provide ongoing support and ministering. Or a member may come to you when he or she is facing a personal or family challenge.

This chapter can help all leaders who have opportunities to meet with individual members. These leaders can include Relief Society, elders quorum, and Young Women leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, or others the bishop assigns.

31.1**Guiding Principles****31.1.1****Prepare Spiritually**

If you have the responsibility to meet with a member, the Lord will bless you with the inspiration you need as you seek it. Prepare yourself spiritually through prayer, scripture study, and righteous living. Listen to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. He will guide you with impressions, thoughts, and feelings. He can help you remember teachings you have studied in the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets that can help the person you are meeting with (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:85; 100:5–8).

The Gospel Library has a collection of Counseling Resources. As you prepare to meet with a member, consider reviewing information about topics that apply to him or her.

The Holy Ghost can also guide the member with whom you are meeting. You might consider inviting him or her to prepare spiritually for your meeting as well.

Consider praying with the member as you begin the meeting. This can invite a spirit of humility and faith as you unitedly ask God for His help (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:32; 29:6).

During the interview or meeting, an issue or question may arise that you don't feel prepared to address. You might suggest that you and the member each seek the Lord's guidance—for example, through study, prayer, and fasting. You might also refer to relevant information in Counseling Resources or Life Help in the Gospel Library. Then you can meet again to discuss the matter further.

If the member has committed a serious sin, refer him or her to the bishop.

31.1.2**Help the Member Feel God's Love**

As a Church leader, you represent the Savior. An important part of His mission is to communicate God's love to His children (see John 3:16–17).

When members come to you for an interview or for help with a personal challenge, often what they need most is to know that Heavenly Father loves them. This love can strengthen them and inspire them to come unto Christ, repent of sin, and make good choices.

The scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets invite the Spirit and teach pure doctrine. Use them often, with sensitivity and love, when you meet with members. Use them to inspire and encourage, not to condemn, coerce, or cause fear (see Luke 9:56).

Schedule plenty of time for the meeting. The member should not feel that you are too busy. Give him or her your full attention.

31.1.3**Help the Member Draw upon the Savior's Power**

Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins “that he might blot out [our] transgressions according to the power of his deliverance” (Alma 7:13). He also took upon Himself our afflictions, pain, and infirmities “that he may know . . . how to succor his people” (see Alma 7:11–12).

Encourage members to turn to Him. Help them draw upon His power to strengthen, comfort, and redeem. This power comes by exercising faith in Jesus Christ, following His example, receiving priesthood ordinances, keeping covenants, and acting on promptings from the Holy Ghost.

31.1.4**Help the Member Feel Comfortable and Safe**

Some members have had experiences that make them feel anxious or overwhelmed when they meet with a Church leader. Seek ways to help them feel calm, safe, and comfortable. Find out from the member what you can do to help.

Always give the member the option of having someone else be present during an interview or meeting. When meeting with a member of the opposite sex, a child, or a youth, ensure that a parent or another adult is present. He or she may join the meeting or wait outside the room, depending on the preferences of the member with whom you are meeting.

Usually, leaders meet with members in person for interviews and to provide spiritual help and ministering. In deciding where to meet, leaders find a place where the Holy Ghost can be present and they can keep confidences. This could be a classroom or office in the meetinghouse. The leader's or member's home may also be an appropriate place to meet. In determining a location, leaders consider their own safety and the safety of the member. For information about meeting with members virtually, see 31.4.

Another important part of helping members feel safe is keeping confidences. Reassure the member that your conversation will be confidential.

Do not share confidential information with anyone—including your spouse or other Church leaders—unless the member gives permission. Continue to keep such matters confidential even after you are released. Breaking confidences can harm a member's faith, trust, and testimony. Members are more likely to seek help from Church leaders if they know that what they share will be kept confidential.

For more information about confidentiality, including legal information, see 32.4.4.

31.1.5**Ask Inspired Questions and Listen Carefully**

When meeting with a member, ask questions that help you understand his or her situation. Give the member opportunities to express his or her thoughts and feelings freely.

While the member is talking, listen carefully and attentively. Seek to understand fully before responding. If needed, ask follow-up questions to be sure you understand. But don't probe unnecessarily.

Listening helps establish trust. It helps others feel understood, valued, and loved. People often need someone they trust to listen as they work through challenges. Listening can also help you open your heart to promptings from the Holy Ghost.

31.1.6**Encourage Self-Reliance**

Because of your love for the members, you may want to immediately offer solutions to their problems. However, you will bless them more by helping them find their own solutions and make their own decisions (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:8).

Help them analyze their problems or questions within the context of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation. Teach them how to seek the Lord's guidance through the scriptures, the words of living prophets, and personal revelation. In this way, you help members prepare to face other challenges in the future. They will also be better able to help others, including their families.

31.1.7**Support Efforts to Repent**

Sometimes a member may seek help repenting of sin. There is much you can do to inspire faith in Jesus Christ and encourage the member to seek forgiveness.

Only the bishop or stake president can help a person resolve serious sins. Some of these are listed in 32.6. If the member has committed any of these sins, he or she should meet with the bishop or stake president right away.

Each bishop and stake president is “a judge in Israel” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:72). By this authority they help members repent of sin and come unto Christ, who forgives sin (see 32.1 and 32.3).

In these responsibilities, these leaders represent the Lord. They strive to use “the judgment which [He] shall give unto [them]” (3 Nephi 27:27). They teach that repentance includes exercising faith in Jesus Christ, having a contrite spirit, forsaking sin, seeking forgiveness, making restitution, and keeping the commandments with renewed commitment.

To help them fulfill their role, bishops and stake presidents are blessed with the spiritual gift of discernment. This gift helps them discern truth, understand a member’s heart, and identify his or her needs (see 1 Kings 3:6–12; Doctrine and Covenants 46:27–28).

Although confession occurs with a “judge in Israel,” with permission of the member, other leaders can give support in his or her efforts to repent. This is especially helpful when repentance will take significant time. See the last part of 32.8.1 for guidelines.

31.1.8

Respond Appropriately to Abuse

Abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Take reports of abuse seriously. If you become aware that someone has been abused, report the abuse to civil authorities and counsel with the bishop. Guidelines for reporting and responding to abuse are provided in 38.6.2.

For information about what bishops and stake presidents should do when they become aware of abuse, see 38.6.2.1.

For information about helping victims of abuse, see “Abuse (Help for the Victim)” in Counseling Resources. You can also refer members to helpful resources about abuse in Life Help.

For information about helping victims of rape or other sexual assault, see 38.6.18.2.

31.2

Interviews

31.2.1

Purposes of Interviews

In general, Church leaders interview members to determine whether they:

- Are prepared to receive or participate in an ordinance.
- Should be called to a position in the Church.

Most interviews of this kind are conducted by a member of the bishopric or stake presidency. They cannot be delegated to other ward leaders. However, a stake president may delegate some interviews to high councilors as outlined in the Chart of Callings (see 30.8).

31.2.2

Types of Interviews

The bishop is called as “a common judge” in his ward (Doctrine and Covenants 107:74; see also 7.1.3). The stake president also serves as a common judge (see 6.2.3). These leaders hold priesthood keys for authorizing ordinances. For these reasons, there are certain interviews only they can conduct. They can delegate other interviews to counselors. The following table lists who can conduct each interview.

Who can conduct the interview	Purpose of the interview
Bishop only	• Issue a temple recommend to a member who is receiving his or her own endowment or being sealed to a spouse (see 26.3.3). • Issue a temple recommend to a new convert (see 26.5.1). • Ordain a new male convert to an office in the Aaronic Priesthood (see 38.2.9.1). • Ordain a young man or a man to the office of priest (see 18.10.2). • Recommend a man to be ordained an elder or high priest (see 31.2.6). Approval from the stake presidency is required to conduct this interview. • Recommend a member to serve as a full-time missionary (see 24.4.2). • Call a member to serve as a ward organization president. • Call a priest to serve as an assistant in the priests quorum. • Help a member repent of a serious sin (see chapter 32). • Endorse a member to enroll or continue enrollment at a Church university or college. • Endorse a member to receive a Perpetual Education Fund loan, where available. • Allow a member to declare his or her status as a tithe payer (see 34.3.1.2). • Authorize the use of fast-offering funds (see 31.3.4 and 22.6.1).

Who can conduct the interview	Purpose of the interview
Bishop or a counselor he assigns	• Renew a temple recommend (see 26.3.2). • Issue a temple recommend to participate in proxy baptisms and confirmations (see 26.3.1). • Issue a temple recommend to be sealed to parents or to witness the sealing of siblings to parents (see 27.4.1 and 27.4.5). • Call a member to serve in a ward calling as indicated in 30.8. • Authorize the baptism and confirmation of an 8-year-old who is either a member of record or has a parent or guardian who is a member of the Church (see 31.2.3.1). • Authorize ordination of a young man to the office of deacon or teacher (see 18.10.2). • Issue a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend (see 18.17). • Authorize a priesthood holder to perform a priesthood ordinance in another ward, if he does not have a temple recommend. (See Recommend to Perform an Ordinance form.)
Stake president only	• Issue a temple recommend for a member who is receiving his or her own endowment or being sealed to a spouse (see 26.3.3). • Recommend a member to serve as a full-time missionary (see 24.4.2). • Release a full-time missionary who has returned home (see 24.8.2). • When authorized, call a member to serve as a counselor in the stake presidency, a patriarch, or a bishop (see 30.8.1 and 30.8.3). • Call a member to serve as an elders quorum president or stake Relief Society president. • Help a member repent of a serious sin (see chapter 32).
Stake president or a counselor he assigns	• Renew a temple recommend (see 26.3.2). • Authorize ordination of a man to the office of elder or high priest (see 18.10.1). • Call members to serve in callings as indicated in 30.8.1 and 30.8.3. • Verify a departing missionary's health and worthiness shortly before he or she is set apart (see 24.5.3). • Endorse a member to enroll at a Church university or college.

Full-time missionaries interview converts for baptism and confirmation (see 31.2.3.2).

Members of elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies conduct ministering interviews (see 21.3).

31.2.3 Baptism and Confirmation Interviews

31.2.3.1 Children Who Are Members of Record

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for baptizing 8-year-old members of record in his ward. For this reason, he or an assigned counselor interviews the following persons for baptism:

- Children age 8 who are members of record.
- Children age 8 who are not members of record but have a member parent or guardian.
- Members of record ages 9 and older whose baptism was delayed due to intellectual disabilities.

In the interview, the bishopric member ensures that the child understands the purposes of baptism (see 2 Nephi 31:5–20). He also ensures that the child understands the baptismal covenant and is committed to live by it (see Mosiah 18:8–10). He does not need to use a specified list of questions. This is not an interview to determine worthiness, since “little children need no repentance” (Moroni 8:11).

Permission of parents or guardians is required before a minor can be baptized (see 38.2.8.2).



31.2.3.2 Converts

The mission president holds the priesthood keys for baptizing converts. For this reason, a full-time missionary interviews:

- Persons ages 9 and older who have never been baptized and confirmed. See 31.2.3.1 for an exception for those with intellectual disabilities.
- Children ages 8 and older whose parents are not members of the Church.
- Children ages 8 and older who have a parent who is also being baptized and confirmed.

The missionary district leader or zone leader conducts the interview. For information about situations that require special authorization, see 38.2.8.6.

Each prospective convert should also meet with the bishop before baptism. However, the bishop does not interview him or her for baptism. Nor does he determine worthiness. The purpose of this meeting is to build a relationship with the person.

In the interview, the missionary follows the guidance of the Spirit to determine whether the person meets the qualifications described in Doctrine and Covenants 20:37 (see also Mosiah 18:8–10; Moroni 6:1–4). The missionary uses the following questions. He adapts them to the person’s age, maturity, and circumstance.

1. Do you believe that God is our Eternal Father? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior and Redeemer of the world?
2. Do you believe that the Church and gospel of Jesus Christ have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith? Do you believe that [current Church President] is a prophet of God? What does this mean to you?
3. What does it mean to you to repent? Do you feel that you have repented of your past sins?
4. You have been taught that membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

includes living gospel standards. What do you understand about the following standards? Are you willing to obey them?

- The law of chastity, which prohibits any sexual relations outside the bonds of a legal marriage between a man and a woman
 - The law of tithing
 - The Word of Wisdom
 - Keeping the Sabbath day holy, including partaking of the sacrament weekly and serving others
5. Have you ever committed a serious crime? If so, are you now on probation or parole?
 6. Have you ever participated in an abortion? (see 38.6.1).
 7. When you are baptized, you covenant with God that you are willing to take upon yourself the name of Christ, serve others, stand as a witness of God at all times, and keep His commandments throughout your life. Are you ready to make this covenant and strive to be faithful to it?

For instructions if the person answers affirmatively to question 5 or 6, see 38.2.8.6. See also 38.2.8.7.

If the person is prepared for baptism, the interviewer fills out the Baptism and Confirmation Record (see 18.8.3).

31.2.4

Interviews for Ordination to an Office in the Aaronic Priesthood

The bishop holds the priesthood keys for conferring the Aaronic Priesthood. He also holds the keys for ordaining to the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. The bishop or an assigned counselor interviews those who are to be ordained deacons or teachers to determine if they are spiritually

prepared. The bishop interviews those who are to be ordained priests.

For more information, see 18.10.2.

31.2.5

Temple Recommend Interviews

The temple is the house of the Lord. Entering the temple and participating in ordinances there is a sacred privilege. This privilege is reserved for those who are spiritually prepared and striving to live the Lord's standards, as determined by authorized priesthood leaders.

To make this determination, priesthood leaders interview the member using the questions in LCR (see also the guidelines in 26.3). Leaders should not add or remove any requirements. However, they may adapt the questions to the age and circumstances of the member.

31.2.6

Interviews for Ordination to an Office in the Melchizedek Priesthood

The stake president holds the priesthood keys for conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood. He also holds the keys for ordaining to the offices of elder and high priest.

With the approval of the stake presidency, the bishop interviews the member using the questions below. Before doing so, he verifies that the person's membership record does not include an annotation, an ordinance restriction, or a Church membership restriction.

If, after the interview, the bishop feels the member is prepared to be ordained, he completes and submits the Melchizedek Priesthood Ordination Record. Then a member of the stake presidency interviews the member, also using the questions below.

A man who receives the Melchizedek Priesthood enters into the oath and covenant of the priesthood.

This is described in Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44. During the interviews, the bishop and stake presidency member make sure the member understands this oath and covenant and agrees to live by it. The leader then asks the following questions:

1. Do you have faith in and a testimony of God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost?
2. Do you have a testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and of His role as your Savior and Redeemer?
3. Do you have a testimony of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
4. Do you sustain the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the prophet, seer, and revelator and as the only person on the earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys?

Do you sustain the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators?

Do you sustain the other General Authorities and local leaders of the Church?

5. The Lord has said that all things are to be “done in cleanliness” before Him (Doctrine and Covenants 42:41).

Do you strive for moral cleanliness in your thoughts and behavior?

Do you obey the law of chastity?

6. Do you follow the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ in your private and public behavior with members of your family and others?
7. Do you support or promote any teachings, practices, or doctrine contrary to those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?
8. Do you strive to keep the Sabbath day holy, both at home and at church; attend your meetings; prepare for and worthily partake of the

sacrament; and live your life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel?

9. Do you strive to be honest in all that you do?

10. Are you a full-tithe payer?

11. Do you understand and obey the Word of Wisdom?

12. Do you have any financial or other obligations to a former spouse or to children?

If yes, are you current in meeting those obligations?

13. Are there serious sins in your life that need to be resolved with priesthood authorities as part of your repentance?

14. Do you consider yourself worthy to be ordained to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood?

31.3

Other Opportunities for Leaders to Meet with Members

Leaders have many opportunities to meet with members individually. For example:

- Members may ask to meet with a Church leader when they need spiritual guidance or have weighty personal problems. In some cases, the leader may feel prompted to arrange a meeting with a member. Members are discouraged from contacting General Authorities about personal matters (see 38.8.25).

In order to spend more time with youth, the bishop may delegate some of these meetings to other leaders in the ward. Members of the Relief Society, elders quorum, and Young Women presidencies can be particularly helpful. However, the bishop may not delegate matters that require his role as a common judge, such as repenting of serious sin.

- The bishop or someone he assigns meets with members who have temporal needs (see 31.3.4 and 22.6).
- The elders quorum president meets with each quorum member individually once a year. They discuss the well-being of the member and his family. They also discuss his priesthood duties. (See 8.3.3.2.)
- The Relief Society president meets with each Relief Society member once a year. They discuss the well-being of the sister and her family. (See 9.3.2.2.)
- A member of the bishopric meets with each 11-year-old as he or she moves from Primary to the deacons quorum or a Young Women class. During this meeting the bishopric member also interviews young men to receive the Aaronic Priesthood (see 18.10.2).
- A member of the bishopric meets with members who are entering military service (see 38.9.2).
- A member of the bishopric meets with each youth twice a year (see 31.3.1).
- A member of the bishopric meets with each young single adult at least once a year (see 31.3.2).
- Members of the stake presidency, bishopric, and other leaders meet regularly with leaders who serve under their direction (see 31.3.3).

When leaders meet with members, they follow the principles in 31.1.

For helpful information about specific topics that may arise when meeting with members, see Counseling Resources in the Gospel Library. Leaders can also refer members to the information in Life Help.

31.3.1

Meeting with Youth

The bishop's foremost responsibility is to help the rising generation in his ward progress spiritually. One important way he does this is by meeting with the youth individually (or with another adult present; see 31.1.4). The bishop or one of his counselors meets with each youth twice a year. At least one of these meetings each year should be with the bishop. Beginning the year the youth turns 16, both meetings during the year should be with the bishop if possible.

In addition to these meetings, youth should feel free to counsel with the bishop whenever they need guidance or support. The bishop strives to build strong, trusting relationships with the youth so they feel comfortable counseling with him.

The Young Women president also has a responsibility to minister to individual young women. She can do this by meeting with young women one on one (or with another adult present; see 31.1.4).

When they meet with youth, leaders follow the principles in 31.1. Many of these principles are especially important when meeting with youth.

31.3.1.1

Communicating with Parents

In their efforts to strengthen the youth, leaders work closely with parents. They seek to support parents in their responsibility for teaching their children the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Leaders share the following information with the youth and his or her parents before their first meeting:

- Parents have the primary responsibility to teach and nurture their children.
- The bishop or one of his counselors meets with each youth at least twice a year. The Young

Women president may also meet periodically with each young woman. In these meetings, leaders may answer questions, give support, extend assignments, and discuss topics listed in 31.3.1.2.

- To help youth prepare spiritually, interviews are required for sacred matters such as temple recommends, priesthood ordinations, and mission calls. Leaders work with parents to help youth prepare for these interviews.
- Parents encourage their children to counsel with the bishop or another Church leader when they need help with spiritual guidance or with repentance.
- When a youth meets with a Church leader, a parent or another adult must be present. The youth may invite the adult to join the meeting or wait outside the room.

31.3.1.2

Topics to Discuss

The main purpose of meetings with youth is to build faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and help the youth follow Them. These meetings should be uplifting spiritual experiences. Leaders strive to help each youth feel loved, encouraged, and inspired to become more like the Savior.

The youth and the leader could discuss:

- Spiritual experiences that are building the youth's testimony of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel.
- How the youth is keeping his or her baptismal covenants.
- The youth's preparations to make and keep temple covenants.
- The youth's personal goals to become more like the Savior in all areas of life (see "Children and Youth").
- The importance of personal and family prayer and scripture study.
- How to strengthen relationships with parents and other family members.
- The principles in *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices*.
- Ways the youth can participate in God's work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2).
- With a young man, his experiences fulfilling his priesthood duties and his preparation to be ordained to the next priesthood office.
- The blessings of participating in seminary.
- Preparing to serve a full-time mission (see 24.0 and 24.3). The Lord asks every worthy, able young man to prepare for and serve a mission. For Latter-day Saint young men, missionary service is a priesthood responsibility (see Doctrine and Covenants 36:1, 4–7). The Lord also welcomes worthy, able young women to serve missions if they desire. For young women, a mission is a powerful, but optional, opportunity. Preparing for a mission will bless a young woman whether she decides to serve as a missionary or not.

Leaders should be sensitive toward those who may be unable to serve as full-time missionaries (see 24.4.4).

For information about service missions, see 24.2.2.

When discussing obedience to the commandments, leaders may refer to temple recommend interview questions and the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*. They ensure that discussions about moral cleanliness do not encourage curiosity or experimentation.

31.3.2**Meeting with Young Single Adults**

The bishop places high priority on the spiritual progress of young single adults in his ward. He or an assigned counselor meets with each young single adult at least once a year.

The bishopric member and young single adult may discuss relevant items in 31.3.1.2. They could also discuss matters of special importance to young adults, such as developing self-reliance.

31.3.3**Meeting with Members to Discuss Their Callings and Responsibilities**

Stake presidencies, bishoprics, and other leaders meet individually with members who report to them about their callings. For example:

- The stake president meets regularly with each bishop in the stake (see 6.2.1.2).
- A member of the stake presidency meets regularly with each elders quorum president in the stake (see 8.3.1).
- The bishop meets monthly with the Relief Society president (see 9.3.1). He also meets regularly with the elders quorum president and Young Women president (see 8.3.1 and 11.3.1).
- A member of the bishopric meets regularly with the Primary president and Sunday School president (see 12.3.1 and 13.2.1).
- Members of the elders quorum presidency and Relief Society presidency meet with ministering brothers and ministering sisters (see 21.3).

In these meetings, the leader inspires and instructs the member in his or her responsibilities. The leader expresses gratitude for the member's service and offers encouragement. The member reports on the progress and well-being of the people he or she

serves. Together they discuss goals, challenges, and opportunities. As applicable, they also review budgets and expenses.

**31.3.4****Meeting with Members to Discuss Temporal Needs and Self-Reliance**

Caring for those in need is part of God's work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2). As leaders meet with members who have temporal needs, they help them address short-term needs and build long-term self-reliance (see 22.3).

The bishop may assign others in the ward, such as the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies, to meet with members who have temporal needs. However, only the bishop can approve the use of fast-offering funds (see 22.6.1).

Additional principles and policies for helping those with temporal needs are described in chapter 22.

31.3.5**Meeting with Members about Marriage and Divorce**

Church leaders should not counsel a person whom to marry. Nor should they counsel a person whether or not to divorce his or her spouse. While divorce is an appropriate option in some situations, such decisions must remain with the individual.

Following the guidance of the Spirit, Church leaders often meet with couples and individuals who are separating or getting a divorce. Leaders can also seek to help a couple strengthen their marriage. They teach about the strength and healing that come from keeping covenants they have made with the Lord and living His teachings. These teachings include faith, repentance, forgiveness, love, and prayer.

A member who is separated from his or her spouse or is going through a divorce should not date until the divorce is final.

31.3.6

Professional Counseling and Therapy

Church leaders are not called to be professional counselors or to provide therapy. The assistance they give is spiritual, focusing on the strengthening, comforting, redeeming power of Jesus Christ. In addition to this important and inspired help, some members may benefit from professional counseling where it is available. Such counseling or therapy can help members understand and respond to life's challenges in healthy ways.

Meeting with a professional counselor to gain insight and skills for emotional well-being is not a sign of weakness. Rather, it can be a sign of humility and strength.

Members should carefully select reputable professional counselors who have applicable licensing. Counselors should respect the agency, values, and beliefs of those seeking help. Incorporating these values is ethically appropriate in professional counseling.

When members seek counseling about physical intimacy, bishops may refer them to professionals who specialize in such counseling and whose beliefs and practices are consistent with Church doctrine.

The Church opposes any therapy, including conversion or reparative therapy for sexual orientation or gender identity, that subjects a person to abusive practices. (See “Same-Sex Attraction” and “Transgender” in Life Help.)

In the United States and Canada, bishops and stake presidents may contact Family Services to identify resources to provide professional counseling in harmony with gospel principles. Contact information is given below:

1-801-240-1711

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-1711

FamilyServices.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

In other areas, leaders may contact Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager in the area office.

If members cannot pay for professional counseling on their own or through insurance, bishops may use fast offerings to assist (see 22.4).

31.4

Meeting with Members Virtually

Usually, leaders meet with members in person for interviews and to provide spiritual help and ministering. When meeting in person is not practical, leaders can meet with members virtually for interviews and to provide spiritual help and ministering.

Interviews and other meetings between leaders and members should not be recorded.

As with in-person interviews and meetings, the member may invite someone else to be present during a virtual interview or meeting.

When an interview for a temple recommend is held virtually, the leader digitally signs the recommend if the member is worthy. A member of the bishopric or the branch president then prints the recommend and gives it to the member.



32.

Repentance and Church Membership Councils

32.0

Introduction

Most repentance takes place between an individual, God, and those who have been affected by a person's sins. However, sometimes a bishop or stake president needs to help Church members in their efforts to repent.

When assisting members with repentance, bishops and stake presidents are loving and caring. They follow the example of the Savior, who lifted individuals and helped them turn away from sin and turn toward God (see Matthew 9:10–13; John 8:3–11).

As outlined below, this chapter is organized to guide leaders through the key decisions and actions necessary to help someone repent of a serious sin and to help protect others.

- *The Church's Role in Helping a Person Repent.* Sections 32.1–32.4 explain the Lord's doctrine of repentance and forgiveness. These sections also explain the three purposes of Church membership restrictions or withdrawal. Additionally, they explain the role of bishops and stake presidents in helping with repentance.

- *Determining the Setting for Helping a Person Repent.* Sections 32.5–32.7 provide guidelines for deciding if a membership council or personal counseling is the appropriate setting for helping someone repent.
- *Administering Personal Counseling.* Section 32.8 provides guidelines for personal counseling by the bishop or stake president. It also explains informal Church membership restrictions.
- *Administering Church Membership Councils.* Sections 32.9–32.14 explain who has responsibility for membership councils, how to conduct them, and the possible decisions. The results of those decisions are also explained.
- *Returning Church Membership Privileges.* Sections 32.15–32.17 explain how a person can have Church membership privileges restored through repentance.

Unless otherwise noted, references to stake presidents apply also to mission presidents. References to bishops apply also to branch presidents.

The First Presidency defines the policies and processes for repenting of serious sin. The First Presidency is supported by the Church's Confidential Records Office. The stake president or bishop may contact that office with administrative or policy questions. That office can also provide instructions on how to submit requests to the Office of the First Presidency. Contact information is shown below:

Telephone: 1-801-240-2053 or 1-800-453-3860,
extension 2-2053
Toll free (GSD phone): 855-537-4357
Email: ConfidentialRecords@
ChurchofJesusChrist.org

THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN HELPING A PERSON REPENT

32.1

Repentance and Forgiveness

The Lord said that “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven” (Alma 11:37; see also 3 Nephi 27:19). Our sins make us unclean—unworthy to dwell in the presence of our Heavenly Father. They also bring us anguish in this life.

God's law of justice requires a consequence when we sin (see Alma 42:14, 17–18). However, His great plan of mercy “can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles [us] in the arms of safety” (Alma 34:16; see also Mosiah 15:9).

To bring about His plan of mercy, Heavenly Father sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins (see Alma 42:15). Jesus suffered the penalty that the law of justice requires for our sins (see Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–19; see also Alma 42:24–25). Through this sacrifice, both the Father and the Son showed Their infinite love for us (see John 3:16).

When we exercise “faith unto repentance,” Heavenly Father forgives us, granting mercy through the

Atonement of Jesus Christ (Alma 34:15; see also Alma 42:13). When we are cleansed and forgiven, we can ultimately inherit the kingdom of God (see Isaiah 1:18; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42).

Repentance is more than changing behavior. It is turning away from sin and toward Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It leads to a change of heart and mind (see Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14; Helaman 15:7). Through repentance, we become new persons, reconciled to God (see 2 Corinthians 5:17–18; Mosiah 27:25–26).

The opportunity to repent is one of the greatest blessings Heavenly Father has given us through the gift of His Son.

32.2

Purposes of Church Membership Restrictions or Withdrawal

When a person is baptized, he or she becomes part of the “household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). The baptismal covenant includes a promise to strive to live according to Christ's teachings and commandments. When a person falls short, he or she exercises faith in Jesus Christ and repents, relying on His mercy to strengthen and forgive.

If a member commits a serious sin, the bishop or stake president helps him or her repent. As part of this process, he may need to restrict some Church membership privileges for a time. In some situations, he may need to withdraw a person's membership for a time.

Restricting or withdrawing a person's membership is not intended to punish. Rather, these actions are sometimes necessary to help a person repent and experience a change of heart. They also give a person time to prepare spiritually to renew and keep his or her covenants again.

The bishop or stake president oversees membership restrictions or withdrawal as outlined in 32.5–32.14.

These actions are accompanied by conditions of repentance. As a person sincerely repents, he or she may have the privileges of Church membership restored.

When membership restrictions or withdrawal is necessary, the bishop or stake president follows the guidance of the Holy Ghost and the instructions in this chapter. He acts in a spirit of love (see 32.3).

Church membership restrictions are ecclesiastical, not civil or criminal. They affect only a person's standing in the Church. (See Doctrine and Covenants 134:10.)

The three purposes of membership restrictions or withdrawal are as follows.

Three Purposes of Church Membership Restrictions or Withdrawal

1. Help protect others
2. Help a person access the redeeming power of Jesus Christ through repentance
3. Protect the integrity of the Church

32.2.1

Help Protect Others

The first purpose is to help protect others. Sometimes a person poses a physical or spiritual threat. Predatory behaviors, physical harm, sexual abuse, substance abuse, fraud, and apostasy are some of the ways this can occur. With inspiration, a bishop or stake president acts to protect others when someone poses a threat in these and other serious ways (see Alma 5:59–60).

32.2.2

Help a Person Access the Redeeming Power of Jesus Christ through Repentance

The second purpose is to help a person access the redeeming power of Jesus Christ through repentance. Through this process, he or she may again become clean and worthy to receive all of God's blessings.

The Savior taught that "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" are the sacrifice He requires for forgiveness of sin (3 Nephi 9:20). This includes sincere remorse for sins and their consequences (see 2 Corinthians 7:9–10).

When a person commits a serious sin, membership restrictions or withdrawal can help foster a broken heart and contrite spirit needed to repent, truly forsake the sin, and understand the consequences of sin. This understanding can help people value their covenants with God more deeply and desire to keep those covenants in the future.

32.2.3

Protect the Integrity of the Church

The third purpose is to protect the integrity of the Church. Restricting or withdrawing a person's Church membership may be necessary if his or her conduct significantly harms the Church (see Alma 39:11). The integrity of the Church is not protected by concealing or minimizing serious sins—but by addressing them.

32.3**The Role of Judges in Israel**

Bishops and stake presidents are called and set apart to be judges in Israel (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:72–74). They hold priesthood keys to represent the Lord in helping Church members repent (see Doctrine and Covenants 13:1; 107:16–18).

Often bishops and stake presidents assist with repentance through personal counseling. This assistance may include informally restricting some privileges of Church membership for a time. (See 32.8.)

For some serious sins, leaders assist with repentance by holding a membership council (see 32.6 and 32.9–32.14). This assistance may include formally restricting some privileges of Church membership or withdrawing a person’s membership for a time (see 32.11.3 and 32.11.4).

Bishops and stake presidents help Church members understand that God loves His children. Because He wants them to be happy and receive blessings, He also cares immensely about their obedience and repentance.

Bishops and stake presidents are loving and caring as they help members repent. The Savior’s interaction with the woman taken in adultery is a guide (see John 8:3–11). Although He did not say her sins were forgiven, He did not condemn her. Instead, He told her to “sin no more”—to repent and change her life.

These leaders teach that there is “joy . . . in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7). They are patient, supportive, and positive. They inspire hope. They teach and testify that because of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, all can repent and become clean.

Bishops and stake presidents seek guidance from the Spirit to know how to help each person repent. Only for the most serious sins does the Church have a set standard on what actions its leaders should take (see 32.6 and 32.11). No two situations are the same. The counseling that leaders give and the process of repentance they facilitate must be inspired and may be different for each person.

The Lord knows each person’s circumstances, capacity, and spiritual maturity. The Holy Ghost will help leaders discern how to help members make the necessary changes so they can heal and resist the temptation to repeat the sin.

Helping someone repent, turn back to God, and be healed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ is one of the most joyous experiences a person can have. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–13 explains:

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

“And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!”

32.4**Confession, Confidentiality,
and Reporting to Government
Authorities****32.4.1****Confession**

Repentance requires that sins be confessed to Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ said, “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:43; see also Mosiah 26:29).

When Church members commit serious sins, their repentance also includes confession to their bishop or stake president. He is then able to exercise the keys of the gospel of repentance on their behalf (see Doctrine and Covenants 13:1; 84:26–27; 107:18, 20). This helps them heal and return to the gospel path through the power of the Savior’s Atonement.

The purpose of confession is to encourage members to unburden themselves so they can fully seek the Lord’s help in changing and healing. Developing a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” is aided by confession (2 Nephi 2:7). Voluntary confession shows that a person desires to repent.

When a member confesses, the bishop or stake president follows the guidelines for counseling in 32.8. He prayerfully seeks guidance about the appropriate setting for helping the member repent (see 32.5). He considers whether a membership council would be helpful. If Church policy requires a membership council, he explains this (see 32.6 and 32.10).

Sometimes a member has wronged a spouse or another adult. As part of repentance, he or she should usually confess to that person and seek forgiveness. A youth who commits a serious sin is usually encouraged to counsel with his or her parents.

32.4.2**Serious Sins That Are Not Confessed or
Are Denied**

A bishop or stake president typically learns about a serious sin through confession or from another person. He may also receive promptings about a potential serious sin through the Holy Ghost. If he feels prompted by the Spirit that someone may be struggling with sin, he may schedule an interview. During the interview, he shares his concerns in a kind, respectful way. He avoids any tone of accusation.

If a member denies committing a serious sin that the bishop or stake president has information to support, a membership council may still be held. However, a spiritual impression alone is not sufficient to hold a council (see Doctrine and Covenants 10:37). The leader may gather additional information if needed. He follows the guidelines in 32.4.3 and 32.10.2.

32.4.3**Gathering Information**

Before holding a membership council, the bishop or stake president gathers as much information as he needs. Information from a member’s confession is often sufficient. Information may also come from a family member, another Church leader, a victim, or a participant in the sin.

When gathering information, the bishop or stake president should only use methods that are appropriate for a priesthood leader. He should not keep a watch on a person’s home or record him or her without consent. Nor should he use any practices that are against the law.

False accusations are rare but can occur. Priesthood leaders should be cautious when there is limited information besides one person’s word. For example, a member who is accused of adultery may deny the charge. The scriptures explain that “every word shall

be established against him or her by two witnesses of the church” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:80). “Two witnesses” means two separate sources of information. This could include the knowledge of a participant and some other reliable source. At times a priesthood leader may need to wait to act until more information becomes available.

When a Church leader is gathering information for a membership council, he should immediately stop if he learns that law enforcement is actively investigating the member. This is done to avoid possible claims that the leader may have obstructed justice. For legal advice about these situations in the United States and Canada, the stake president contacts the Church’s Office of General Counsel:

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-6301
1-801-240-6301

Outside the United States and Canada, the stake president contacts the area legal counsel at the area office.

Normally a membership council is not held to consider conduct being examined by a civil or criminal trial court until the court has reached a final judgment. In some cases it may also be appropriate to delay a membership council until the period of legal appeal has expired or the appeal has been rejected.

32.4.4

Confidentiality

Bishops, stake presidents, and their counselors have a sacred duty to protect all confidential information shared with them. This information may come in interviews, counseling, and confessions. The same duty of confidentiality applies to all who take part in membership councils. Confidentiality is essential because members may not confess sins or seek guidance if what they share will not be kept confidential. Breaching a confidence betrays members’ trust and causes them to lose confidence in their leaders.

Consistent with their duty of confidentiality, a bishop, stake president, or their counselors may share such information only as follows:

- They need to confer with the member’s stake president, mission president, or bishop about holding a membership council or related matters. The stake president may also confer with his assigned Area Seventy. If needed, the Area Seventy refers the stake president to the Area Presidency. Only the stake president decides if a council should be held or its outcome.
- The person moves to a new ward (or the priesthood leader is released) while membership action or other serious concerns are pending. In these cases, the leader notifies the new bishop or stake president about the concerns or pending action (see 32.14.7). He also informs the leader if the member may pose a threat to others.
- A bishop or stake president learns that a Church member who lives outside the ward or stake may have been involved in a serious sin. In that instance, he confidentially contacts that member’s bishop.
- It is necessary to disclose information during a membership council. All information gathered and shared as part of a membership council is confidential.
- A member chooses to give permission for the leader to share information with specific persons. These may include parents, Church leaders, or others who may provide support. The leader does not share information beyond the permission the member has given.
- It may be necessary to share limited information about the decision of a membership council (see 32.12.2).

In all other situations, the leader should refer to 32.4.5. These cases include when the law may require that a crime, such as child abuse, be reported to government authorities.

To assist leaders in protecting others and complying with the law, the Church provides help from trained professionals. To receive this guidance, leaders promptly call the Church's abuse help line where it is available (see 32.4.5 and 38.6.2.1). Where it is not available, the stake president contacts the area legal counsel at the area office.

In only one situation should a bishop or stake president disclose confidential information without first seeking such guidance. That is when disclosure is necessary to prevent life-threatening harm or serious injury and there is not time to seek guidance. In such cases, the duty to protect others is more important than the duty of confidentiality. Leaders should contact civil authorities immediately.

If leaders keep notes or communicate with each other electronically, they safeguard access to this information. They also delete or destroy the information when they no longer need it. They do not unnecessarily share personal information.

Civil authorities might challenge the confidentiality required of a priesthood leader. If this occurs in the United States and Canada, the stake president seeks legal advice from the Church's Office of General Counsel:

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-6301
1-801-240-6301

Outside the United States and Canada, the stake president contacts the area legal counsel at the area office.

32.4.5

Reporting to Government Authorities

Some people who are repenting have broken civil or criminal laws. In some cases, government authorities are not aware of this. Bishops and stake presidents encourage members to follow the law and report such matters when required. Leaders also counsel members to obtain competent legal advice when reporting. The Church's policy is to obey the law.

In many places, priesthood leaders are required by law to report some illegal behaviors of which they become aware. For example, some states and countries require that child abuse be reported to law enforcement authorities.

In some countries, the Church has established a confidential abuse help line to assist bishops and stake presidents. These leaders should promptly call the help line about every situation in which a person may have been abused—or is at risk of being abused (see 38.6.2.1). It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In countries that do not have a help line, a bishop who learns of abuse should contact his stake president, who should seek guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office.

For more information about reporting abuse, see 38.6.2.1 and 38.6.2.7.

DETERMINING THE SETTING FOR HELPING A PERSON REPENT

32.5

Settings for Helping a Person Repent

After becoming aware that a member has committed a serious sin, a bishop or stake president takes steps to protect others. He also seeks the guidance of the Holy Ghost in determining the setting for helping the person repent and draw closer to the Savior.

32.5.1

Overview of the Settings

The following table lists three settings for helping a person repent. It also summarizes some of the considerations for leaders when deciding which setting to use.

Settings for Helping a Person Repent

Setting	Some Considerations (see also 32.7)
Stake Membership Council	• For members who have received the temple endowment. • Is required if a man or woman who has been endowed will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn for any of the serious sins or actions addressed in 32.6.1, 32.6.2, or 32.6.3.
Ward Membership Council	• For any member. • Is required for the serious sins addressed in 32.6.1. • May be necessary for the serious sins and actions addressed in 32.6.2 and 32.6.3. • Is insufficient if a man or woman who has been endowed will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn for any of the serious sins or actions addressed in 32.6.1, 32.6.2, or 32.6.3.
Personal Counseling (see 32.8)	• For any member. • May include informal Church membership restrictions. • May be insufficient for serious sins or actions for which a membership council would be helpful in the repentance process (see 32.6.2 and 32.6.3). • Is insufficient for serious sins that require a membership council (see 32.6.1). • Is insufficient if a man or woman who has been endowed will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn for any of the serious sins or actions addressed in 32.6.1, 32.6.2, or 32.6.3.

Personal counseling and informal restrictions by the bishop or stake president are sometimes not sufficient to help a person repent of serious sins. The Lord has provided membership councils to assist a judge in Israel in these situations. (See Exodus 18:12–27; Mosiah 26:29–36; Doctrine and Covenants 42:80–83; 102.) For some serious sins, a council is required by Church policy (see 32.6.1). Violating temple covenants increases the likelihood of a membership council being necessary (see 32.7.4).

In a ward, the bishop’s counselors assist in membership councils. In a stake, the stake president’s counselors assist. In some stake membership councils, the high council also participates (see 32.9.2). In a

membership council, the bishopric or stake presidency meets with the person in a spirit of love.

32.5.2

Determining the Setting and Timing

When deciding which of these settings would best help a person repent, leaders seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. They also consider the following factors:

- The severity of the sin and Church policy about whether a council is required (see 32.6)
- The person’s circumstances (see 32.7)

A bishop counsels with the stake president about specific situations. He must receive approval from the stake president before holding a membership council.

On difficult matters, the stake president may seek counsel from his assigned Area Seventy. The stake president must counsel with the Area Presidency on the matters outlined in 32.6.3. However, only the stake president decides if a council should be held to address the conduct. If a council is held, the stake president or bishop decides the outcome.

If a bishop or stake president determines that personal counseling is sufficient, he follows the guidelines in 32.8. If he determines that a membership council is needed, or if Church policy requires a council, the one who conducts it follows the procedures in 32.9–32.14.

Before holding the council, the bishop or stake president may determine that informal membership restrictions would be best for a time. He holds the council when it would best encourage the member's sincere repentance. However, he should not delay a council if it is necessary to protect others.

32.6

Severity of the Sin and Church Policy

The severity of a sin is an important consideration in determining the setting that will (1) help protect others and (2) help a person repent. The Lord has said that He “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:31; see also Mosiah 26:29). His servants must not ignore evidence of serious sin.

Serious sins are a deliberate and major offense against the laws of God. Categories of serious sins are listed below.

- Violent acts and abuse (see 32.6.1.1 and 32.6.2.1)
- Sexual immorality (see 32.6.1.2 and 32.6.2.2)

- Fraudulent acts (see 32.6.1.3 and 32.6.2.3)
- Violations of trust (see 32.6.1.4 and 32.6.2.4)
- Some other acts (see 32.6.1.5 and 32.6.2.5)

The following sections describe when a membership council is required, when it may be necessary, and when it is not necessary.

32.6.1

When a Membership Council Is Required

The bishop or stake president must hold a membership council when information indicates that a member may have committed any of the sins described in this section. For these sins, a council is required regardless of a member's level of spiritual maturity and gospel understanding.

See 32.11 for potential outcomes of councils that are convened for the sins listed in this section. Informal membership restrictions are not an option for these councils.

Sins That Require Holding a Membership Council

- Murder
- Rape
- Sexual assault conviction
- Child or youth abuse
- Abuse of a spouse or another adult (as outlined in 38.6.2.4)
- Predatory behavior (violent, sexual, or financial)
- Incest
- Child pornography (as outlined in 38.6.6)
- Plural marriage
- Serious sin while holding a prominent Church position
- Most felony convictions

32.6.1.1**Violent Acts and Abuse**

Murder. A membership council is required if a member murders someone. As used here, *murder* is the deliberate, unjustified taking of human life. Withdrawing a person's Church membership is required.

Murder does not include police or military acts in the line of duty. Abortion is not defined as murder in this context. If death was caused by accident or by defense of self or others, the taking of a human life might not be defined as murder. This may also be true in other situations, such as when a person has limited mental capacity.

Rape. A membership council is required for rape. As used here, *rape* is forced sexual intercourse or intercourse with someone who cannot legally give consent due to diminished mental or physical capacity. As used here, *rape* does not include consensual sexual intercourse between two minors who are close in age.

Sexual Assault Conviction. A membership council is required if a member is convicted of sexual assault.

Child or Youth Abuse. A membership council is required if a person abuses a child or youth as explained in 38.6.2.3.

Abuse of a Spouse or Another Adult. There is a spectrum of severity in abusive behavior. See 38.6.2.4 for when a membership council is required for abuse of a spouse or another adult.

Violent Predatory Behavior. A membership council is required if an adult repeatedly harms people physically through violent behavior and is a threat to others.

32.6.1.2**Sexual Immorality**

Incest. A membership council is required for incest as defined in 38.6.10. Withdrawing a person's Church membership is almost always required.

Child Pornography. A membership council is required if a person is involved in child pornography as outlined in 38.6.6.

Plural Marriage. A membership council is required if a person knowingly enters into a plural marriage. Some plural marriages may occur in secret, with a spouse not knowing about one or more other spouses. Withdrawing a person's Church membership is required if a person knowingly enters into plural marriage.

Sexual Predatory Behavior. A membership council is required if an adult repeatedly harms people sexually and is a threat to others.

32.6.1.3**Fraudulent Acts**

Financial Predatory Behavior. A membership council is required if an adult has a history of deliberately and repeatedly harming people financially and is a threat to others (see 38.6.2.4). This includes investment fraud and similar activities. Unintended financial losses due to economic conditions are not considered fraudulent. If litigation is involved, priesthood leaders may decide to wait until the outcome is final. See 32.6.3.3 if a member was involved in embezzlement of Church funds or property.

32.6.1.4**Violations of Trust**

Serious Sin While Holding a Prominent Church Position. A membership council is required if a member commits a serious sin while holding a prominent position. These include a General Authority, General Church Officer, Area Seventy, temple president or

matron, mission president or his companion, stake president, patriarch, or bishop. This does not apply to branch presidents. However, a branch president's Church membership privileges can be restricted or withdrawn the same as for other members.

32.6.1.5

Some Other Acts

Felony Conviction. A membership council is required in most cases when a person is convicted of a felony.

32.6.2

When a Membership Council May Be Necessary

A membership council may be necessary in the following instances.

32.6.2.1

Violent Acts and Abuse

The Lord commanded, “Thou shalt not . . . kill, *nor do anything like unto it*” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:6; italics added). Violent acts and abuse for which a membership council may be necessary include (but are not limited to) those listed below.

Attempted Murder. Deliberately trying to kill someone.

Sexual Abuse, Including Assault and Harassment. Sexual abuse covers a broad range of actions (see 38.6.18). A membership council may be necessary for a person who has sexually assaulted or abused someone. A council is more likely to be necessary to help a member repent if he or she has violated temple covenants or if the sin was repetitive. See 38.6.18.3 for when a council is required.

Abuse of a Spouse or Another Adult. There is a spectrum of severity in abusive behavior (see 38.6.2.4). A membership council may be necessary for a person who has abused a spouse or another adult. A council is more likely to be necessary to help a member repent

if he or she has violated temple covenants or if the sin was repetitive. See 38.6.2.4 for when a council is required.

32.6.2.2

Sexual Immorality

The Lord's law of chastity is abstinence from sexual relations outside of a legal marriage between a man and a woman (see Exodus 20:14; Doctrine and Covenants 63:16). A membership council may be necessary for sexual immorality as described in 38.6.5. In these situations, a council is more likely to be necessary to help a member repent if he or she has violated temple covenants or if the sin was repetitive. See 32.6.1.2 for when a council is required.

32.6.2.3

Fraudulent Acts

The Ten Commandments teach, “Thou shalt not steal” or “bear false witness” (Exodus 20:15–16). A membership council may be necessary for acts such as robbery, burglary, theft, embezzlement, perjury, and fraud. In these situations, a council is more likely to be necessary to help a member repent if he or she has violated temple covenants or if the sin was repetitive.

See 32.6.1.3 for when a council is required for fraudulent acts. See 32.6.3.3 if a member was involved in embezzlement of Church funds or property. See 38.8.2 for affinity fraud. See 32.6.3.4 for misuse of personal data.

32.6.2.4

Violations of Trust

A membership council may be necessary if a member:

- Commits a serious sin while holding a position of authority or trust in the Church or the community.

- Commits a serious sin that is widely known.

In these situations, a council is more likely to be necessary to help a member repent if he or she has violated temple covenants or if the sin was repetitive.

See 32.6.1.4 for when a council is required. See 32.6.3.3 if a member was involved in embezzlement of Church funds or property. See 32.6.3.4 for misuse of personal data.

32.6.2.5

Some Other Acts

King Benjamin taught, “I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them” (Mosiah 4:29).

A membership council may be necessary if a person:

- Shows a pattern of committing serious sins (see Doctrine and Covenants 82:7).
- Deliberately abandons family responsibilities, including nonpayment of child support and alimony.
- Threatens physical violence, whether in person or online (see 32.2.1).
- Sells illegal drugs.
- Commits other serious criminal acts.
- Submits to, performs, arranges for, pays for, consents to, or encourages an abortion, unless an exception in 38.6.1 applies.

In these situations, a council is more likely to be necessary to help a member repent if he or she has violated temple covenants or if the sin was repetitive.

When a Membership Council Is Required or May Be Necessary

Type of Sin	Membership Council Is Required (see 32.6.1)	Membership Council May Be Necessary (see 32.6.2)
Violent Acts and Abuse	• Murder • Rape • Sexual assault conviction • Child or youth abuse • Violent predatory behavior	• Attempted murder • Sexual abuse, including assault and harassment (see 38.6.18 for when a council is required) • Abuse of a spouse or another adult (see 38.6.2.4 for when a council is required)
Sexual Immorality	• Incest • Child pornography • Plural marriage • Sexual predatory behavior	• Adultery, fornication, same-sex relations, and all other sexual relations outside of a legal marriage between a man and a woman, including sexual encounters online or over the phone • Cohabitation, civil unions and partnerships, and same-sex marriage • Intensive or compulsive use of pornography that has caused significant harm to a member's marriage or family

Type of Sin	Membership Council Is Required (see 32.6.1)	Membership Council May Be Necessary (see 32.6.2)
Fraudulent Acts	Financial predatory behavior, such as fraud and similar activities (see 32.6.3.3 if a member was involved in embezzlement of Church funds or property)	- Robbery, burglary, theft, or embezzlement (see 32.6.3.3 if a member was involved in embezzlement of Church funds or property; see 32.6.3.4 if a member was involved in the misuse of personal data) - Perjury
Violations of Trust	Serious sin while holding a prominent Church position	- Serious sin while holding a position of authority or trust in the Church or the community (see 32.6.3.3 if a member was involved in embezzlement of Church funds or property; see 32.6.3.4 if a member was involved in the misuse of personal data) - Serious sin that is widely known
Some Other Acts	Most felony convictions	- Pattern of serious sins - Deliberate abandonment of family responsibilities, including nonpayment of child support and alimony - Threat of physical violence - Sale of illegal drugs - Other serious criminal acts - Abortion (unless an exception in 38.6.1 applies)

32.6.3**When the Stake President Counsels with the Area Presidency about Whether a Membership Council or Other Action Is Necessary**

Some matters require extra sensitivity and guidance. To know how to best help, the stake president must counsel with the Area Presidency about the situations in this section. However, only the stake president decides if a council should be held to address the conduct. If a council is held, the stake president or bishop decides the outcome.

If a membership council is held for one of the matters outlined in this section, the decision of the council must be “remains in good standing,” “formal membership restrictions,” or “withdrawal of membership.” First Presidency approval is required to remove formal restrictions or readmit the person into the Church (see 32.16.1, number 9).

32.6.3.1**Other Action**

If a membership council is not held, other action could include:

- Informal membership restrictions (see 32.8.3).

- Membership record annotation (see 32.14.5).
- Ordinance restrictions, which restrict a person from receiving or exercising the priesthood or receiving or using a temple recommend.

A stake president counsels with the Area Presidency before one of these actions is taken.

32.6.3.2

Apostasy

Issues of apostasy often have an impact beyond the boundaries of a ward or stake. They need to be addressed promptly to protect others.

The bishop counsels with the stake president if he feels that a member's action may constitute apostasy. The bishop or stake president may place informal membership restrictions on the member (see 32.8.3). The stake president promptly counsels with the Area Presidency. However, only the stake president decides whether a membership council or other action is necessary.

As used here, *apostasy* refers to a member engaging in any of the following:

- Repeatedly acting in clear and deliberate public opposition to the Church, its doctrine, its policies, or its leaders
- Persisting in teaching as Church doctrine what is not Church doctrine after being corrected by the bishop or stake president
- Showing a pattern of intentionally working to weaken the faith and activity of Church members
- Continuing to follow the teachings of apostate sects after being corrected by the bishop or stake president
- Formally joining another church and promoting its teachings (Total inactivity in the Church or attending another church does not by itself constitute apostasy. However, if a member formally

joins another church and advocates its teachings, withdrawing his or her membership may be necessary.)

The Savior taught the Nephites that they should continue to minister to a person who has sinned. “But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people” (3 Nephi 18:31).

32.6.3.3

Embezzling Church Funds

If a member embezzles Church funds or steals valuable Church property, the stake president counsels with the Area Presidency about whether a membership council or other action may be necessary. Leaders consider:

- The amount embezzled or stolen.
- Whether the embezzlement was a one-time event or a repetition.
- Whether repayment has occurred.
- The person's level of remorse.
- The position held by the member (see 32.6.1.4 for members holding a prominent Church position).

The stake president reports one of the following in Leader and Clerk Resources:

- The results of a membership council
- That he counseled with the Area Presidency and determined a membership council was not necessary

If the Church Auditing Department determines that a leader or Church employee has embezzled Church funds or property, the First Presidency generally directs that his or her membership record will be annotated. “Leader” is defined as a person holding a prominent Church position, as well as counselors, clerks, and branch presidencies. When repentance is

complete, a stake president may request removal of the annotation (see 32.14.5 and 34.7.5). An annotation does not mean a membership council or other action has occurred.

32.6.3.4

Misuse of Personal Data

Misuse of personal data includes deliberately entering false information in Church records or intentionally using or sharing personal data for non-Church purposes. If a person with access to Church systems has misused personal data, promptly notify the Data Privacy Office at DataPrivacyOfficer@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

In serious cases, the stake president may counsel with the Area Presidency about whether a membership council or other action is necessary. Leaders consider:

- The action taken with the personal data.
- Whether the misuse of personal data was a one-time event or a repetition.
- Whether rectifying steps have been taken.
- The person's level of remorse.
- The position held by the member (see 32.6.1.4 for members holding a prominent Church position).

In some cases, the First Presidency may direct that the membership record of a person who has misused personal data be annotated. This would prevent him or her from holding callings with privileged access to personal data.

32.6.3.5

Individuals Who Identify as Transgender

Bishops and stake presidents working with persons who identify as transgender should follow the guidelines in 38.6.23.

32.6.4

When a Membership Council Is Not Normally Necessary

A membership council is not normally necessary in the following instances.

32.6.4.1

Failure to Comply with Some Church Standards

A membership council is not held for the actions listed below. However, note the exception in the last item.

- Inactivity in the Church
- Not fulfilling Church duties
- Not paying tithing
- Sins of omission
- Masturbation
- Not complying with the Word of Wisdom
- Using pornography, except for child pornography (as outlined in 38.6.6) or intensive or compulsive use of pornography that has caused significant harm to a member's marriage or family (as outlined in 38.6.13).

32.6.4.2

Business Failures or Nonpayment of Debts

Leaders should not use membership councils to settle business disputes. Business failures and nonpayment of debts are not reasons to hold a membership council. However, a council must be held for serious fraudulent activities or other serious deceptive financial practices (see 32.6.1.3).

32.6.4.3**Civil Disputes**

Membership councils are not held to resolve civil disputes (see Doctrine and Covenants 134:11).

32.7**Circumstances of the Person**

The Lord said, “Mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me” (3 Nephi 9:14). A person’s circumstances are an important consideration in determining:

- The appropriate setting for helping him or her repent of serious sins (see 32.5 and 32.6).
- The decisions made in personal counseling or membership councils (see 32.8 and 32.11).

Considerations That May Influence Decisions

- Magnitude of the sin
- Interests of the victim
- Evidence of repentance
- Violation of temple covenants
- Position of trust or authority
- Repetition
- Age, maturity, and experience
- Mental capacity
- Voluntary confession
- Time between sin and confession

Bishops and stake presidents seek the mind and will of the Lord for each situation. They consider the following factors in determining which setting to use and what the outcome will be. These factors do not dictate a particular decision. Rather, they are aids to

a decision that leaders must make prayerfully and as guided by the Spirit.

32.7.1**Magnitude of the Sin**

The seriousness of a sin is measured by its magnitude. This may include the number and frequency of sins committed, the severity of the harm resulting from them, and the number of people hurt by them.

32.7.2**Interests of the Victim**

Leaders consider the interests of victims and others. These may include a person’s spouse and other family members. Leaders also consider the severity of the harm.

32.7.3**Evidence of Repentance**

Spiritual guidance is needed to discern whether a person has sincerely repented. Such repentance is shown more reliably by righteous actions over time rather than by intense sorrow during a single interview. Factors to consider include:

- Strength of faith in Jesus Christ.
- The nature of the confession.
- The depth of sorrow for the sin.
- Restitution to injured persons.
- Compliance with legal requirements.
- Success in forsaking the sin.
- Faithfulness in obeying the commandments since the sin.
- Honesty with Church leaders and others.
- Willingness to follow the counsel of Church leaders.

**32.7.4****Violation of Temple Covenants**

The Lord declared, “For of him unto whom much is given much is required” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3). A person who has received the temple endowment has made covenants to live a higher standard. Violating these covenants magnifies the seriousness of the sin. It increases the likelihood of a membership council being necessary.

32.7.5**Position of Trust or Authority**

The seriousness of a sin is magnified if a person committed it while in a position of trust or authority, such as a parent, leader, or teacher.

32.7.6**Repetition**

A pattern of repeating the same serious sin may indicate deeply rooted behavior or addiction that impedes progress toward true repentance. In addition to membership restrictions that may be necessary, addiction recovery programs and professional counseling may be helpful (see 32.8.2).

32.7.7**Age, Maturity, and Experience**

Leaders consider age, maturity, and experience when counseling a member or deciding the outcome of a membership council. Leniency is often appropriate for those who are immature in the gospel. For example, leniency may be appropriate for young members who engage in immoral conduct if they forsake the sin and show sincere repentance. However, more serious action may be needed if they persist in the conduct.

32.7.8**Mental Capacity**

Mental illness, addiction, or limited mental capacity does not excuse a person who has committed a serious sin. However, these are factors to consider. As part of helping a person repent, leaders seek the Lord’s guidance about the person’s understanding of gospel principles and level of accountability.

32.7.9**Voluntary Confession**

A voluntary confession and godly sorrow for one’s actions show a desire to repent.

32.7.10**Time between Sin and Confession**

Confession is part of repentance and should not be procrastinated. Sometimes a sin is followed by a long period of restitution and faithful living. If a member confesses a sin and has not repeated it, that can show that he or she has forsaken it. In that instance, confession may complete rather than start the process of repentance.

32.7.11**Sins Involving Members Who Live in Different Wards or Stakes**

Sometimes members who commit a serious sin together live in different wards or stakes. In this situation, the stake presidents counsel together about the need for membership restrictions or councils. They also discuss if there is merit to the restrictions or council decisions being the same or if there are other matters that might indicate a need for different outcomes.

ADMINISTERING PERSONAL COUNSELING**32.8****Personal Counseling and Informal Membership Restrictions**

Personal counseling is often sufficient to help protect others and help a person access the redeeming power of Jesus Christ's Atonement through repentance. Such counseling can also help members guard against more serious sins. In personal counseling, leaders can also give informal membership restrictions to help a member repent of some serious sins (see 32.8.3).

Serious sins should not be treated lightly (see Doctrine and Covenants 1:31). Violating temple covenants increases the likelihood of a membership council being necessary (see 32.7.4).

Guidelines to help leaders know when counseling and informal restrictions may be sufficient are listed below (see also 32.7):

- A person has not committed a sin that would require a membership council (see 32.6.1).
- A person has confessed voluntarily and is genuinely repentant.
- A person is repenting of a serious sin that he or she has not committed before.
- A person's sin has not violated temple covenants.
- A person has significant mitigating circumstances.

32.8.1**Personal Counseling**

The following guidelines apply when a bishop or stake president is counseling a member to help him or her repent.

- Ask for only enough information to determine (1) the member's attitude toward the sinful behavior and (2) the nature, frequency, and duration of the behavior. Do not ask for details beyond what is necessary to understand the situation. Do not ask questions that arise from personal curiosity.
- Ask how the conduct has affected others.
- Focus on positive conditions that deepen the member's conversion and commitment to the Lord. Encourage the member to take specific actions to bring about the change of behavior and change of heart to repent. Invite him or her to draw close to the Savior, seeking His strength and to feel of His redeeming love.
- Encourage uplifting activities such as praying, studying the scriptures, and attending Church meetings. Teach that family history and temple work can reduce the influence of the adversary. Encourage serving others and sharing the gospel.

Uplifting Activities to Help with Repenting and Building Spiritual Fortifications

- Prayer
- Scripture study
- Church attendance

- Daily family history and temple work, including name indexing
 - Serving others
 - Sharing the gospel
- Encourage making restitution to those harmed by sins and asking for forgiveness
 - Encourage turning away from bad influences. Help members take preventive action to resist specific temptations.
 - Recognize that you are an ecclesiastical leader, not a professional counselor. In addition to the counseling you provide, some members would benefit from behavioral counseling. Some suffer from mental illness. As needed, counsel members to seek help from qualified medical and mental health professionals (see 31.3.6).
 - Be prayerful and seek guidance from the Spirit before giving informal membership restrictions. Some members may benefit from exercising the privileges of Church membership more actively rather than having them restricted.
 - Follow up to give encouragement, fortify spiritual strength, and monitor progress.

After a member has confessed to a bishop or stake president, follow-up counseling may occur in several ways. The leader himself can provide it. Or, with the member's permission, he may assign one of his counselors to provide it.

With the member's consent, a bishop or stake president may assign members of the elders quorum or Relief Society to assist in specific ways. For youth, he may assign the Young Women presidency or Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers to assist. Those who are assigned to assist are entitled to inspiration to fulfill that assignment (see 4.2.6).

When assigning someone to assist with follow-up counseling, the leader gives only enough information necessary to help the member. The assigned

person must maintain confidentiality. He or she also informs the bishop of the member's progress and needs.



32.8.2

Helping People Address Addictions and Pornography Use

Personal counseling sometimes involves helping members repent of sins related to or caused by addictions. These addictions may include substances or a wide range of behaviors. Addictions harm individuals, marriages, and families.

Bishops may counsel members to seek help from the Church's *Healing through the Savior: The Addiction Recovery Program* and from qualified medical and mental health professionals. Only the Church's official program should be sponsored or hosted in Church buildings.

Pornography use is becoming increasingly common. Whether pornography use is intensive or occasional, it is harmful. It drives away the Spirit. It weakens the ability to draw on power that comes from keeping covenants. It also harms precious relationships.

Personal counseling and informal membership restrictions are usually sufficient for helping a person repent of using pornography. Membership councils are not usually held. For exceptions, see 38.6.6 and 38.6.13. Professional counseling may be helpful.

Stake presidents and bishops support family members as needed. Parents could be included when

counseling youth about pornography use. The spouse may be included when counseling a married person.

For more information about counseling members who are involved with pornography, see 38.6.13.

32.8.3
Informal Membership Restrictions

In addition to encouraging positive actions when counseling, a bishop or stake president may informally restrict some Church membership privileges for a time. Wisely administered, these restrictions can help with repentance and spiritual progress. They are considered *informal* because they are not noted on a membership record.

Informal restrictions may last a few weeks, several months, or longer if necessary for the person to repent fully. In unusual circumstances, the time could be longer than one year.

Leaders seek the guidance of the Spirit about which restrictions would best help a person repent. These could include (but are not limited to) suspending the privilege of serving in a Church calling, exercising the priesthood, or entering a temple. The leader could also restrict the person from giving a talk, lesson, or prayer in Church settings. If the leader suspends the right to enter a temple, he cancels the temple recommend in Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR).

Partaking of the sacrament is an important part of repentance. It should not be the first restriction given to a repentant person who has a broken heart and contrite spirit. However, if a person has committed serious sins, a leader may suspend this privilege for a time.

Leaders normally do not tell anyone else about informal restrictions unless there is a need to know (see 32.12.2).

The bishop or stake president may remove informal restrictions as guided by the Spirit when the person makes specified progress in genuine repentance. If the member continues in the pattern of sin, it may be helpful or necessary to hold a membership council.

ADMINISTERING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COUNCILS

Church membership councils are held when the bishop or stake president determines that they would be helpful or when they are required by Church policy (see 32.6). They are held at the ward, stake, branch, district, or mission level. This section provides information about how to administer them.

32.9
Participation and Responsibility

The following table shows who normally participates in membership councils.

	Participants in Membership Councils
Ward Membership Council	• The person for whom the council is being held • Bishop and his counselors • Ward clerk • Elders quorum or Relief Society president (optional; see 32.10.1)

	Participants in Membership Councils
Stake Membership Council	• The person for whom the council is being held • Stake president and his counselors • Stake clerk • High councilors (in limited situations as explained in 32.9.2) • Bishop of the person for whom the council is being held (optional; see 32.9.3) • Elders quorum or Relief Society president (optional; see 32.10.1)

32.9.1**Stake President**

The stake president:

- Has authority over membership councils in the stake; however, most of these councils are held by bishops.
- Must give approval before a bishop may hold a membership council.
- Holds a stake membership council if a man or woman who has received the temple endowment will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn.
- May hold a council if a member appeals the decision of a ward membership council.
- Must give approval before a ward membership council's recommendation to withdraw an unendowed person's membership is final.

32.9.2**High Council**

Members of the high council do not normally participate in stake membership councils. However, the high council may participate in difficult situations (see Doctrine and Covenants 102:2). For example,

the stake presidency may invite the high council to participate when:

- There are contested facts.
- They would add value and balance.
- The member requests their participation.
- A member of the stake presidency or his family is involved (see 32.9.7).

32.9.3**Bishop (or Branch President in a Stake)**

The bishop:

- Has authority over ward membership councils.
- Confers with the stake president and obtains his approval before holding a council.
- May not hold a council if a man or woman who has received the temple endowment will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn. A stake membership council must be held in those situations.
- May be invited to attend a stake membership council for a ward member whose membership is being reviewed. His attendance must be approved by the stake president and the person.

A ward or branch membership council may recommend withdrawing a person's Church membership if he or she has not been endowed. However, the stake president's approval is required before the decision is final.

Sometimes a ward membership council is held for an endowed member and the proceedings reveal that the member will likely have his or her membership withdrawn. In these situations, the bishop refers the matter to the stake president.

32.9.4

Mission President

The mission president:

- Has authority over membership councils in mission branches and districts.
- Must give approval before a district or branch president may hold a membership council.
- Holds a membership council if a man or woman who has received the temple endowment will likely have his or her Church membership withdrawn. If time or distance prevents this, he may assign one of his counselors to preside over the council. He appoints two other Melchizedek Priesthood holders to participate.
- Where possible, holds membership councils for those who have not been endowed. If time or distance prevents this, he may authorize three Melchizedek Priesthood holders to hold it. In this case, the member's district president or branch president normally conducts the council.
- May hold a council if a member appeals the decision of a district or branch membership council.
- With approval of a General Authority from the Missionary Department, holds a membership council if a missionary commits a serious sin in the mission field (see 32.9.8). He also reviews the matter with a member of the Area Presidency and

counsels with the stake president of the missionary's home stake.

- Must give approval before a branch or district membership council's recommendation to withdraw an unendowed person's membership is final.

If a missionary confesses a serious sin that he or she committed before serving a mission, the mission president contacts his in-field representative in the Missionary Department for direction.

When a mission president holds a membership council, he appoints two Melchizedek Priesthood holders to assist him. Only in unusual circumstances should he appoint young missionaries to assist. He follows the same procedures as in a stake membership council (see 32.10). However, a high council or district council does not participate.

32.9.5

District or Branch President in a Mission

A district or branch president in a mission may hold a membership council when authorized by the mission president. The district council does not participate.

A district or branch membership council may recommend withdrawing a person's Church membership if he or she has not received the temple endowment. However, the mission president's approval is required before the decision is final.

32.9.6

Stake or Ward Clerk

The stake or ward clerk:

- Keeps written notes of the council only for as long as is necessary to submit the Report of Church Membership Council form.
- Prepares the form if asked by the leader who conducted the council.

- Does not participate in the discussion or decision in the council.

32.9.7

Participation in Unusual Circumstances

If a counselor in the stake presidency is unable to participate in a membership council, the stake president asks a high councilor or another high priest to take his place. If the stake president is unable to participate, the First Presidency may authorize one of his counselors to preside in his place.

If a counselor in the bishopric is unable to participate in a membership council, the bishop may ask a high priest in the ward to take his place. If the bishop is unable to participate, he refers the matter to the stake president, who convenes a stake membership council. The bishop may not assign a counselor to convene a membership council.

If a membership council is being held for a family member of the bishop or one of his counselors, it is held at the stake level. If it is being held for a family member of one of the stake president's counselors, the stake president assigns another high priest to take the counselor's place. If a council is being held for a family member of the stake president, he consults with the Office of the First Presidency.

If a member objects to the participation of the bishop or his counselors, the membership council is held at the stake level. If a member objects to the participation of one of the stake president's counselors, the stake president assigns another high priest to take the counselor's place. If the member objects to the participation of the stake president, or if the stake president feels that he cannot be impartial, he consults with the Office of the First Presidency.

32.9.8

Determining Which Leader Holds a Council in Special Circumstances

Membership councils are almost always held in the geographic Church unit that has the person's membership record.

Sometimes a membership council is necessary for a person who moves. If the move is within the same stake, the stake president confers with the bishops of both wards and decides where it should take place.

If the member moves outside the stake, the stake presidents of both stakes confer and decide where the council should take place. If they decide that it should be held in the former ward or stake, the membership record is retained in that ward until the council is complete. Otherwise, the record is transferred to the new ward. The bishop or stake president confidentially informs the member's current bishop or stake president about why a council is needed.

Sometimes a membership council is necessary for a member who is living away from home temporarily. For example, a council may be needed for a student or a member in the military. The bishop where the member temporarily lives can provide counsel and support. However, he should not hold a membership council unless the membership record is in his unit and he has counseled with the bishop of the home ward.

Sometimes a missionary commits a serious sin in the mission field that is not revealed until after he or she is released. The bishop and stake president confer about which of them should hold the membership council. One of them confers with the former mission president before holding it.

32.10

Procedures for Membership Councils

32.10.1

Give Notice and Prepare for the Council

The bishop or stake president gives a member written notice of a membership council that will be held in his or her behalf. He signs the letter. It includes the following information:

“The [bishopric or stake presidency] is holding a membership council in your behalf. The council will be held on [date and time] at [place].

“This council will consider [summarize the misconduct in general terms, but do not give details or evidence].

“You are invited to attend the council to give your response. You may provide written statements from persons who could provide relevant information. You may invite such persons to speak to the council in your behalf if approved in advance by the stake president or bishop. You may also invite [the ward Relief Society president or the elders quorum president] to be present and provide support.

“Anyone who attends must be willing to comply with the respectful nature of the council, including its procedures and confidentiality. Legal counsel and supporters beyond those referred to above may not be present.”

A final paragraph could include an expression of love, hope, and concern.

Guidelines about whom the person may invite to speak to the council are provided in 32.10.3, number 4.

If the letter cannot be delivered in person, it may be sent by registered or certified mail, with a return receipt requested.

The bishop or stake president schedules a membership council at a time that is convenient for the person. He also ensures that there has been time to obtain statements from victims of the misconduct if they desire to provide them (see 32.10.2).

The bishop or stake president prepares the member for the council by explaining its purpose and procedures. He also explains the decisions the council may reach and their results. If a member has confessed, the leader explains that the confession will need to be used in the membership council.

32.10.2

Obtain Statements from Victims

When a Church member is a victim (such as for incest, child abuse, spouse abuse, or fraud), the bishop or stake president contacts that person's current bishop or stake president. These leaders determine whether it would be helpful to give the victim an opportunity to provide a written statement about the misconduct and its effects. These statements may be read in a membership council (see 32.10.3, number 3). Church leaders do not have authority to initiate contact with victims who are not members of the Church.

Any communication with a victim for this purpose is made by his or her current bishop or stake president. If a victim provides a statement, this leader gives it to the bishop or stake president who holds the membership council. Leaders must take great care to avoid causing further trauma. See 32.4.3 for other cautions.

Any inquiry about a victim who is under 18 is made through the child's parents or legal guardians, unless doing so could put the victim at risk.

For information about bishops and stake presidents receiving guidance in cases of abuse, see 32.4.5 and 38.6.2.1.

32.10.3**Conduct the Council**

Immediately before the council begins, the bishop or stake president tells the participants whom the council is for and what the reported misconduct is. If necessary, he explains the procedures of the council.

The person, if present, is then welcomed into the room. If the bishop has been invited to attend a stake membership council, he is also invited into the room at this time. If the person invited the ward Relief Society president or the elders quorum president to be present and provide support, she or he is also welcomed into the room.

The bishop or stake president conducts the council in a spirit of love, as outlined below.

1. He invites someone to offer an opening prayer.
2. He states the reported misconduct. He gives the person (if present) an opportunity to confirm, deny, or clarify this statement.
3. If the member confirms the misconduct, the bishop or stake president proceeds to number 5 below. If the member denies it, the bishop or stake president presents information about it. This may include presenting reliable documents and reading aloud any written statements from victims (see 32.10.2). If he reads such a statement, he protects the identity of the victim.
4. If the member denies the misconduct, he or she may present information to the council. This could be written. Or the member may ask persons who could provide relevant information to speak to the council, one at a time. Such persons should be Church members unless the bishop or stake president has determined in advance that a nonmember may attend. They wait in a separate room until they are asked to speak. Each person leaves the council room when he or she is finished. They must be willing to comply with the respectful nature of the council, including its procedures and confidentiality. Members may not have legal counsel present. Nor may they have supporters beyond those referred to in the second paragraph in this section.
5. The bishop or stake president may ask questions of the member in a polite and respectful way. He may also ask questions of other persons the member has asked to provide information. Counselors in the bishopric or stake presidency may also ask questions. Any questions should be brief and limited to the essential facts.
6. After all relevant information has been presented, the bishop or stake president excuses the member from the room. The clerk is also excused, unless the high council has participated in a stake membership council. If the member's bishop is present for a stake membership council, he is excused. If the Relief Society president or the elders quorum president is attending to provide support, she or he is also excused.
7. The bishop or stake president asks for comments or insights from his counselors. If the high council has participated in a stake membership council, he asks for their comments and insights.
8. With his counselors, the bishop or stake president prayerfully seeks the Lord's will about the matter. Only the stake president and his counselors or the bishop and his counselors should be in the room during this time. If a stake membership council includes the high council, the stake presidency usually goes to the stake president's office.
9. The bishop or stake president tells his counselors of his decision and asks them to sustain it. If a stake membership council includes the high council, the stake presidency returns to the room and asks the high council to sustain it. If a counselor or high councilor has a different opinion, the bishop or stake president

listens and seeks to resolve the differences. Responsibility for the decision rests with the presiding officer.

10. He invites the person back into the room. If the clerk was excused, he is also invited into the room. If the member's bishop is present for a stake membership council, he is also invited into the room. If the Relief Society president or elders quorum president is attending to provide support, she or he is also welcomed back.
11. The bishop or stake president shares the council's decision in a spirit of love. If the decision is to formally restrict the person's Church membership privileges or withdraw membership, he explains the conditions (see 32.11.3 and 32.11.4). He also explains how to overcome the restrictions and gives other instruction and counsel. A bishop or stake president may adjourn a council for a time to seek more guidance or information before making a decision. In that case, he explains this.
12. He explains the person's right to appeal (see 32.13).
13. He invites someone to offer a closing prayer.

Whether the person is present or not, the bishop or stake president notifies him or her of the decision as explained in 32.12.1.

No participant in a membership council is permitted to make an audio, video, or written recording. A clerk may take notes for the purpose of preparing the Report of Church Membership Council. However, such notes are not to be a word-for-word record or transcript. After the report is prepared, he promptly destroys any notes.

32.11

Decisions from Membership Councils

The decisions from membership councils should be directed by the Spirit. They should reflect the love and hope offered by the Savior to those who repent. Possible decisions are described below. When making these decisions, leaders consider the circumstances that are outlined in 32.7.

After any membership council, the bishop or stake president promptly submits a Report of Church Membership Council form through LCR (see 32.14.1).

Possible decisions from membership councils are outlined in the following sections.

32.11.1

Remains in Good Standing

In some instances, a person may be innocent and remains in good standing. In some instances, a person may have committed the sin, repented sincerely, and be in good standing. The bishop or stake president may give counsel and caution about future actions. After the council, he continues to give support as needed.



32.11.2**Personal Counseling with the Bishop or Stake President**

In some membership councils, leaders may determine that the member is not in good standing—but that formal membership restrictions are not warranted. In these instances, the council may decide that the person should receive personal counseling and correction from the bishop or stake president. This counseling may include informal membership restrictions as outlined in 32.8.3.

Personal counseling and informal membership restrictions are not an option when a council is held for the sins listed in 32.6.1.

32.11.3**Formal Membership Restrictions**

In some membership councils, leaders may determine that it is best to formally restrict a person's Church membership privileges for a time. Formal restrictions may be adequate for all but the most serious sins or situations, for which membership would be withdrawn (see 32.11.4).

Those who have formal membership restrictions are still members of the Church. However, their Church membership privileges are restricted as follows:

- They may not enter a temple. However, they may continue wearing the temple garment if endowed. If the member has a temple recommend, the leader cancels it in LCR.
- They may not exercise the priesthood.
- They may not partake of the sacrament or participate in the sustaining of Church officers.
- They may not give a talk, lesson, or prayer in Church settings. Nor may they serve in a Church calling.

They are encouraged to attend Church meetings and activities if their conduct is orderly. They are also encouraged to pay tithes and offerings.

The bishop or stake president may add other conditions, such as staying away from pornographic materials and other evil influences. He usually adds positive conditions. These may include regular Church attendance, regular prayer, and reading the scriptures and other Church materials.

If a person's Church membership privileges are formally restricted, that is noted on the membership record.

The time of formal restriction is usually at least one year and may be longer. When the member makes specified progress in genuine repentance, the bishop or stake president holds another council to consider removing the restrictions (see 32.16.1). If the member continues in the pattern of sin, the leader could hold another council to consider other measures.

32.11.4**Withdrawal of Membership**

In some membership councils, leaders may determine that it is best to withdraw a person's Church membership for a time (see Mosiah 26:36; Alma 6:3; Moroni 6:7; Doctrine and Covenants 20:83).

Withdrawing a person's Church membership is required for murder (as defined in 32.6.1.1) and plural marriage (as explained in 32.6.1.2). It is almost always required for incest as explained in 32.6.1.2 and 38.6.10.

As directed by the Spirit, withdrawing a person's membership may also be necessary as follows:

- For those whose conduct makes them a serious threat to others.
- For those who have committed especially severe sins.

- For those who do not demonstrate repentance of serious sins (see considerations in 32.7).
- For those who commit serious sins that harm the Church.

A ward, branch, or district membership council may recommend withdrawing Church membership from a person who has not received the temple endowment. However, the approval of the stake or mission president is necessary before the decision is final.

Those whose Church membership has been withdrawn may not enjoy any privileges of membership.

- They may not enter a temple or wear the temple garment. If the person has a temple recommend, the leader cancels it in LCR.
- They may not exercise the priesthood.

- They may not partake of the sacrament or participate in the sustaining of Church officers.
- They may not give a talk, lesson, or prayer in Church settings or lead an activity in church. Nor may they serve in a Church calling.
- They may not pay tithes and offerings.

They are encouraged to attend Church meetings and activities if their conduct is orderly.

Those whose Church membership has been withdrawn can be considered for readmission by baptism and confirmation. Usually, they first need to show genuine repentance for at least one year. The bishop or stake president holds another membership council to consider readmission (see 32.16.1).

Membership Council Decisions and Results

Decision	Results
Remains in Good Standing (see 32.11.1)	• None
Personal Counseling with the Bishop or Stake President (see 32.11.2)	• May have some membership privileges informally restricted. • Restrictions are usually less than one year; in unusual circumstances, they may be longer. • Informal restrictions are removed after genuine repentance. • Action is not recorded on the membership record.

Decision	Results
Formal Membership Restrictions (see 32.11.3)	• Membership privileges are formally restricted. • Restrictions are usually at least one year and may be longer. • Action is recorded on the membership record. • Formal restrictions are removed after genuine repentance, a membership council, and, if necessary, First Presidency approval. • The membership record indicator is removed if restrictions are removed after a membership council (except required annotations; see 32.14.5).
Withdrawal of Membership (see 32.11.4)	• All ordinances are revoked. • All membership privileges are withdrawn, usually for at least one year. • A person is eligible for readmission by baptism and confirmation only after genuine repentance, a membership council, and, if necessary, First Presidency approval (see 32.16). • A previously endowed person is eligible to receive a restoration of blessings only with First Presidency approval and after at least one full year from readmission (see 32.17.2). • For a previously endowed person, the “Restoration of Blessings Required” indicator is removed from the membership record only after the ordinance is performed (required annotations remain; see 32.14.5).

32.11.5**Questions about Deciding Difficult Matters**

Bishops direct questions about handbook guidelines for membership councils to the stake president.

On difficult matters, the stake president may seek counsel from his assigned Area Seventy. The stake president must counsel with the Area Presidency on the matters outlined in 32.6.3. However, the stake president should not ask an Area Seventy or General Authority how to decide difficult matters. The stake

president decides if a council should be held to address the conduct. If a council is held, the stake president or bishop decides the outcome.

32.11.6**First Presidency Authority**

The First Presidency has final authority over all Church membership restrictions and withdrawal.

32.12**Notifications and Announcements**

The decision of a membership council is communicated to the person—and to others as necessary—as explained below.

32.12.1**Notifying a Person of the Decision**

The bishop or stake president normally tells the person the outcome of the council when it concludes. However, he may adjourn a council for a time to seek more guidance or information before making a decision.

A ward, branch, or district membership council may recommend withdrawing Church membership from a person who has not received the temple endowment. However, the approval of the stake or mission president is necessary before the decision is final.

The bishop or stake president explains the effects of the decision as outlined in 32.11. Normally he also gives counsel on the conditions of repentance so restrictions can be removed or the person can be readmitted into the Church.

The bishop or stake president gives the person prompt written notice of the decision and its effects. This notice consists of a general statement that the action was taken in response to conduct contrary to the laws and order of the Church. It could also include counsel about having membership restrictions removed or being readmitted into the Church. It should notify the person that he or she may appeal the decision (see 32.13).

If the person does not attend the council, written notice may be sufficient to inform him or her of the decision. The bishop or stake president may also meet with the person.

The bishop or stake president does not give the person a copy of the Report of Church Membership Council form.

32.12.2**Informing Others about a Decision**

If a bishop or stake president informally restricts a person's membership privileges in personal counseling, he normally does not inform anyone else (see 32.8.3). However, these leaders communicate with each other about informal restrictions as they help members.

If a person's membership privileges are formally restricted or withdrawn in a membership council, the bishop or stake president communicates the decision only to those who need to know. The following guidelines apply.

- He considers the needs of victims and potential victims and the feelings of the person's family.
- He does not communicate the decision if the person is appealing it. However, he may communicate that it is being appealed if he feels it is necessary to protect potential victims. He may also communicate it to support the healing of victims (although he does not give victims' names) or to protect the integrity of the Church.
- As needed, the bishop communicates the decision in confidence to ward council members. This is to inform leaders who might consider the person to be available for callings, teaching lessons, or giving prayers or talks. It is also to encourage leaders to offer care and support to the member and his or her family.
- With approval from the stake president, the bishop may communicate the decision in his ward's elders quorum and Relief Society meetings if the situation involves:
 - Predatory behaviors that may threaten others.
 - Teaching false doctrine or other forms of apostasy.
 - Flagrant sins such as practicing plural marriage or using cultist teachings to attract a following.

- Publicly contradicting the actions or teachings of general or local Church leaders.
- In such cases, the stake president may also need to authorize a communication to members of other wards in the stake.
- In some cases, the bishop or stake president may feel it would be helpful to notify some or all of the victims and their families that a membership council has been held for the person. He does this through their bishop or stake president.
- If a person's predatory tendencies put others at risk, the bishop or stake president may give warnings to help protect others. He does not reveal confidential information and does not speculate.
- In all other cases, the bishop or stake president limits any communication to a general statement. He simply states that the person's Church membership privileges have been restricted or withdrawn for conduct that is contrary to the laws and order of the Church. He asks those present not to discuss it. He does not ask whether they sustain or oppose the action.
- If a member is in good standing after a membership council (see 32.11.1), the bishop or stake president may communicate that to dispel rumors.

32.12.3**Communicating Resignation of Membership**

In some cases, a bishop may need to communicate that a person has resigned his or her membership in the Church (see 32.14.9). The bishop does not provide any other detail.

32.13**Appeal of a Decision**

A member may appeal the decision of a ward membership council to the stake president within 30 days. The stake president holds a stake membership council to consider the appeal. He may also ask a bishop to reconvene a council and reconsider a decision, particularly if there is new information.

A member may appeal the decision of a stake membership council by writing a letter to the First Presidency within 30 days. The member gives the letter to the stake president to submit to the First Presidency.

In a mission, a member may appeal the decision of a branch or district membership council to the mission president within 30 days. The mission president holds a membership council to consider the appeal. If time or distance prevents him from doing this, he follows the instructions in 32.9.4.

If a mission president conducted the council, the member may appeal the decision by writing a letter to the First Presidency within 30 days. The member gives the letter to the mission president to submit to the First Presidency.

A person who appeals a decision specifies in writing the alleged errors or unfairness in the procedure or decision.

If a membership council is held to consider an appeal, one of two decisions is possible:

- Let the initial decision stand.
- Modify the initial decision.

First Presidency decisions are final and cannot be appealed again.

32.14**Reports and Membership Records****32.14.1****Report of Church Membership Council**

After any membership council, the bishop or stake president promptly submits a Report of Church Membership Council form through LCR. He may ask the clerk to prepare the report. He ensures that no hard copy or electronic copy of the form is retained locally. He also ensures that any notes used to prepare the report are promptly destroyed.

32.14.2**Formal Church Membership Restrictions**

Formal Church membership restrictions are noted on a person's membership record. Church headquarters makes this notation after receiving the Report of Church Membership Council. When a member has repented, the leader must hold another council to consider removing these restrictions (see 32.16.1).

32.14.3**Records after a Person's Church Membership Is Withdrawn**

If a person's Church membership is withdrawn, Church headquarters removes the membership record after receiving the Report of Church Membership Council. If the person desires, leaders help him or her prepare to be readmitted to the Church by baptism and confirmation (see 32.16.1).

32.14.4**Records after Readmission to the Church**

After a person is readmitted to the Church, the bishop submits a Report of Church Membership Council form. A Baptism and Confirmation Certificate is not created. Rather, the baptism and

confirmation are recorded on the Report of Church Membership Council form.

If the member was not endowed, Church headquarters assigns a membership record that shows the dates of his or her original baptism and other ordinances. The record makes no reference to the loss of Church membership.

If the member was endowed, Church headquarters updates the membership record to show the new baptism and confirmation dates. This record also includes the message "Restoration of Blessings Required." After the member's blessings are restored (see 32.17.2), the membership record is updated to show the dates of the original baptism and other ordinances. It makes no reference to the loss of Church membership.

32.14.5**Membership Records with Annotations**

As authorized by the First Presidency, Church headquarters annotates a person's membership record in any of the situations listed below.

1. The bishop or stake president submits a Report of Church Membership Council form indicating that the person's membership was formally restricted or withdrawn for any of the following conduct:
 - a. Incest
 - b. Sexual abuse of a child or youth, sexual exploitation of a child or youth, or serious physical or emotional abuse of a child or youth
 - c. Involvement with child pornography as outlined in 38.6.6
 - d. Plural marriage
 - e. Adult sexual predatory behavior
 - f. Embezzling Church funds or stealing Church property (see 32.6.3.3)

- g. Church welfare abuse
 - h. Threatening behavior (such as sexual, violent, or financial) or conduct that harms the Church
2. The bishop and stake president submit written notification that the person:
 - a. Has admitted to one of the actions listed above.
 - b. Has been convicted of a crime involving one of the actions listed above.
 - c. Has been found liable in a civil action of fraud or other illegal acts involving one of the actions listed above.
 3. Because some priesthood ordinances are based on gender, the bishop and stake president submit a request to annotate the record of someone who has intentionally transitioned away from his or her biological sex at birth (see 38.6.23).

When a bishop receives an annotated membership record, he follows the instructions in the annotation.

Only the First Presidency may authorize removing an annotation from a membership record. If the stake president recommends removing an annotation, he uses LCR (see 6.2.3). The Office of the First Presidency notifies him if the recommendation is approved or not.

32.14.6

Reporting Theft of Church Funds

If a person's membership is restricted or withdrawn for embezzling Church funds, the bishop or stake president reports it as outlined in 34.7.5.

32.14.7

Move Restrictions on Membership Records

Sometimes a Church member moves while membership action or other serious concerns are pending. Sometimes a bishop needs to share information with the new bishop before transferring the membership record to the new unit. In these cases, the bishop (or clerk if authorized) may place a move restriction on the membership record. The record remains in the unit until the bishop (or clerk if authorized) removes the restriction. This allows an opportunity for the bishop to communicate concerns and information.

32.14.8

Records of Those Who Are Incarcerated

Some members have been convicted of a crime and are incarcerated. The bishop or stake president of the unit where the person lived when the crime was committed proceeds with any necessary action for formal membership restrictions or withdrawal. If membership privileges were restricted, the leader (or clerk if authorized) forwards the membership record to the unit that is responsible for the place where the person is incarcerated. If membership was withdrawn, the bishop or stake president contacts the leader of that unit. (See 32.15.)

32.14.9

Requests to Resign Membership

If a member asks to resign his or her membership in the Church, the bishop reaches out to see if he or she is willing to discuss the concerns and try to resolve them. The bishop and member may also counsel with the stake president. The leader ensures that the member understands the following results of resigning Church membership:

- It revokes all ordinances.
- It removes all membership privileges.

- Readmission by baptism and confirmation can occur only after a thorough interview and, in many cases, a membership council (see 32.16.2).
- A previously endowed person is eligible to receive a restoration of priesthood and temple blessings only with First Presidency approval and after at least one full year from readmission (see 32.17.2).

If the member still wants to resign Church membership, he or she gives the bishop a written, signed request. The bishop submits the request to the stake president through LCR. The stake president then reviews and submits the request through that system. Leaders should act on requests promptly.

A person can also resign membership by sending a signed, notarized request to Church headquarters.

A minor who wishes to resign his or her Church membership follows the same procedure as an adult, with one exception: the request should be signed by the minor (if over the age of 8) and by the parent(s) or guardian(s) who have legal custody of the minor.

If a member resigning membership threatens legal action against the Church or its leaders, the stake president follows the instructions in 38.8.23.

A request to resign membership should be acted on even if priesthood leaders have information about a serious sin. Any information about unresolved sins is noted when the request is submitted through LCR. This allows priesthood leaders to resolve such matters in the future if the person applies for readmission into the Church (see 32.16.2).

A priesthood leader should not recommend resigning Church membership in order to avoid holding a membership council.

Leaders continue to minister to those who resign their membership unless they request no contact.

RETURNING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP PRIVILEGES

If a person's Church membership privileges have been restricted or withdrawn, leaders fellowship, counsel, and support the person as he or she allows. This section explains how those privileges can be returned.

32.15

Continue to Minister

The bishop or stake president's role as a common judge does not end when a member has received membership restrictions or had his or her Church membership withdrawn. He continues to minister, as the person allows, so he or she may again enjoy the blessings of Church membership. The bishop regularly meets with the person and, when helpful and applicable, his or her spouse. The Savior taught the Nephites:

“Ye shall not cast him out of . . . your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them” (3 Nephi 18:32).

The time just after a person's membership has been restricted or withdrawn is difficult and critical for his or her family. Leaders should be sensitive to these needs and encourage and assist family members.

The bishop ensures that caring members are assigned to minister to a person whose Church membership has been restricted or withdrawn, as the person allows. They also minister to other family members. Individuals with membership restrictions may benefit from volunteering in one of the ways shown under the “Get Involved” tab in FamilySearch.org.

If the person moves from the ward, the bishop informs the new bishop and explains what still

needs to occur before Church membership restrictions can be removed. If the person's membership was withdrawn from the Church or the person resigned membership, the bishop makes this same contact if the person has consented to be assisted by Church leaders.

32.16

Removing Formal Restrictions or Being Readmitted to the Church

32.16.1

Membership Councils to Remove Formal Restrictions or Readmit a Person

When membership privileges are restricted or withdrawn in a membership council, another council must be held to consider removing the restrictions or readmitting the person to the Church. This council should also have the same level of authority (or higher) as the initial council. For example, if a stake or mission president presided over the initial council, a stake or mission president presides over the council to consider removing the restrictions or readmitting the person.

The current bishop or stake president holds the council. He first ensures that the person has repented and is ready and worthy to enjoy the blessings of Church membership.

Those who have had their Church membership formally restricted usually need to show genuine repentance for at least one year before consideration is given to removing the restrictions. Those who have had their Church membership withdrawn almost always need to show genuine repentance for at least one year before they can be considered for readmission. For a member who held a prominent Church position at the time of the serious sin, the period is generally longer (see 32.6.1.4).

A council to consider removing restrictions or readmitting a person to the Church follows the same

guidelines as other membership councils. A bishop needs approval from the stake president to hold the council. In a mission, a branch or district president needs approval from the mission president.

The following guidelines apply when holding a membership council to consider removing Church membership restrictions or readmitting a person to the Church. Not all of these guidelines may apply in each case.

1. *Review the initial membership council.* The bishop or stake president reviews the Report of Church Membership Council form. He requests a copy through LCR. After reviewing the form, he may contact the bishop or stake president where the initial council was held to seek clarification.
2. *Interview the person.* The bishop or stake president interviews the person thoroughly to discern the strength of his or her faith in Jesus Christ and the extent of repentance. He also determines whether the person has met the conditions outlined in the initial action.
3. *Determine the status of criminal or civil court action.* Sometimes a person has admitted to or has been convicted of a crime. Sometimes a person has been found liable in a civil action of fraud or other illegal acts. In these cases, the leader generally does not hold a council until the person has fulfilled all the conditions of any sentence, order, or judgment made by legal authorities. These conditions may include imprisonment, probation, parole, and fines or restitution. Exceptions require the approval of the First Presidency before holding a membership council. These exceptions might include someone who has completed legal requirements and has shown genuine repentance but is on lifelong probation or has a substantial fine.
4. *Contact the priesthood leaders of the victims.* The bishop or stake president contacts the current

bishop or stake president of any victims (see 32.10.2).

5. *Give notice of the council.* He notifies the person of the date, time, and place of the council.
6. *Conduct the council.* He conducts the council according to the guidelines in 32.10.3. He asks the person what he or she has done to repent. He also asks about his or her commitment to Jesus Christ and the Church. When all relevant matters have been presented, he excuses the member. With his counselors, he prays to consider what action to take. The three possible decisions are:
 - a. Continue membership restrictions or withdrawal.
 - b. Remove restrictions or authorize readmission.
 - c. Recommend to the First Presidency that restrictions be removed or readmission be authorized (if necessary according to “Apply for First Presidency approval” below).
7. *Share the decision.* After the council makes a decision, the presiding officer shares it with the person. If approval from the First Presidency is necessary, he explains that the decision is a recommendation to the First Presidency.
8. *Submit a report.* The bishop or stake president submits a Report of Church Membership Council form through LCR. He may ask the clerk to prepare this report. He ensures that no hard copy or electronic copy is retained locally. He also ensures that all notes used to prepare the report are promptly destroyed.
9. *Apply for First Presidency approval (if necessary).* In the following circumstances, the approval of the First Presidency is necessary to remove formal membership restrictions or readmit the person into the Church. This approval is required even if

the conduct occurred *after* Church membership was formally restricted or withdrawn.

The stake president submits an application to the First Presidency only if he recommends approval (see 6.2.3).

- a. Murder
 - b. Incest
 - c. Sexual abuse of a child or youth, sexual exploitation of a child or youth, or serious physical or emotional abuse of a child or youth by an adult or by a youth who is several years older
 - d. Involvement with child pornography when there is a legal conviction
 - e. Apostasy (see 32.6.3.2 for what constitutes apostasy)
 - f. Plural marriage
 - g. Committing a serious sin while holding a prominent Church position
 - h. Transgender—actions to intentionally transition away from a person’s biological sex at birth (see 38.6.23)
 - i. Embezzling Church funds or property
10. *Give written notice of the decision.* The bishop or stake president ensures that the person receives prompt written notice of the decision and its effects.
 11. *Baptize and confirm.* If a person’s Church membership was withdrawn in the initial council, he or she must be baptized and confirmed again. If First Presidency approval is necessary, these ordinances may be performed only after this approval is received. A Baptism and Confirmation Certificate is not created (see 32.14.4).

32.16.2**Being Readmitted after Resigning Church Membership**

If a person formally resigns Church membership, he or she must be baptized and confirmed to be readmitted into the Church. For adults, readmission is not usually considered until at least one year after resigning membership.

When a person requests readmission, the bishop or stake president obtains a copy of the Report of Administrative Action form that accompanied the request for resignation. He can obtain this through LCR.

The bishop or stake president then interviews the person thoroughly. He asks about the reasons for the original request and the desire for readmission. In a spirit of love, he asks about serious sins the person may have committed either before or after resigning membership. The leader does not proceed with readmission until he is satisfied that the person has repented and is ready and worthy to enjoy the blessings of Church membership.

Guidelines for readmission after resignation follow:

- A membership council is held if the person's membership was formally restricted at the time of resignation.
- A membership council is held if the person committed a serious sin, including apostasy, before resigning membership.

In other circumstances, a membership council is not held unless the bishop or stake president determines that it would be needed.

When a membership council is necessary for a person who had received the temple endowment, the stake president holds it. When a council is necessary for a person who was not endowed, the bishop holds it, with approval from the stake president.

If the person engaged in any of the conduct in 32.16.1, number 9, either before or after resigning Church membership, First Presidency approval is required for readmission. If the person engaged in any of the conduct in 32.14.5, number 1, either before or after resigning membership, an annotation will be made on the membership record.

A person who requests readmission must meet the same qualifications as others who are baptized. When the bishop or stake president is satisfied that the person is worthy and sincere in wanting to be readmitted, the person may be baptized and confirmed. A Baptism and Confirmation Certificate is not created (see 32.14.4).

**32.17****Church Activity, Ordination, and Restoration of Blessings after Readmission****32.17.1****Church Activity and Ordination**

The following chart indicates the appropriate level of Church activity for a person who has been readmitted by baptism and confirmation.

	Not Previously Endowed	Previously Endowed
Previous Priesthood Holders	- Immediately after baptism and confirmation, may have the priesthood conferred on them and be ordained to the priesthood office they held when their Church membership was withdrawn or resigned. They are not presented for sustaining. - May be issued a temple recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations.	- May not be ordained to any priesthood office. When their priesthood and temple blessings are restored, their previous priesthood office will be restored as outlined in 32.17.2. They may not perform ordinances until that time. - May participate in any Church activity that is permissible for an unendowed member who does not hold the priesthood. - May not wear the temple garment or receive any kind of temple recommend until their blessings are restored.
Other Members	- May participate in Church activity as a new convert would. - May be issued a temple recommend for proxy baptisms and confirmations.	- May participate in any Church activity that is permissible for an unendowed member who does not hold the priesthood. - May not wear the temple garment or receive any kind of temple recommend until their blessings are restored (see 32.17.2).

32.17.2**Restoration of Blessings**

Persons who previously received the temple endowment and were readmitted by baptism and confirmation can receive their priesthood and temple blessings only through the ordinance of restoration of blessings (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:21). They are not ordained to priesthood offices or endowed again. These blessings are restored through the ordinance. Brethren are restored to their former priesthood office, except the office of Seventy, bishop, or patriarch.

Only the First Presidency can approve the performance of the ordinance of restoration of blessings.

They will not consider an application for this ordinance sooner than one year after the person is readmitted by baptism and confirmation.

The bishop and stake president interview the person to determine his or her worthiness and preparedness. When the stake president feels that the person is ready, he applies for a restoration of blessings using LCR. See 6.2.3 about the stake president's responsibility when submitting applications to the First Presidency.

If the First Presidency approves the restoration of blessings, they assign a General Authority or the stake president to interview the person. If the

person is worthy, this leader performs the ordinance to restore the person's blessings.

For information about membership records and the restoration of blessings, see 32.14.4.



33.

Records and Reports

33.0

Introduction

The procedures in this chapter apply generally to units that use the Church's online record-keeping tools, including Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR), Member Tools, and Ward Directory and Map. Units that do not have access to these tools should work with the Global Services Department or the area office.

Record keeping has always been important in the Lord's Church. For example:

Adam kept "a book of remembrance" (Moses 6:5).

Moroni taught that the names of those who were baptized into the Church of Christ were recorded so "they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God" (Moroni 6:4).

Joseph Smith instructed that a recorder should be called in every ward to "make a record of a truth before the Lord" (Doctrine and Covenants 128:2).

33.1

Overview of Church Records

Church records are sacred. The information in them is sensitive and should be safeguarded. Church record systems authorize access to membership information based on callings. Only those who are authorized should be given access. They should use this information only for purposes specific to their callings (see 33.8).

Records can help leaders:

- Identify who may need special care.
- Identify which ordinances a person has received or may need.
- Locate members.

The following types of records are kept in Church units:

- Member participation reports (see 33.5)
- Membership records (see 33.6)

- Historical records (see 33.7)
- Financial records (see chapter 34)

33.2

General Instructions for Clerks

All clerks should:

- Have a current temple recommend.
- Be careful record keepers.
- Be capable teachers and administrators.

Clerks carefully follow current policies to safeguard Church funds and ensure that Church records are accurate. Clerks immediately notify priesthood leaders of any improprieties. If difficulties arise in resolving improprieties, clerks should contact the Confidential Records Office at Church headquarters. Contact information is shown below:

Telephone: 1-801-240-2053 or 1-800-453-3860,
extension 2-2053

Toll free (GSD phone): 855-537-4357

Email: ConfidentialRecords@

ChurchofJesusChrist.org

The duration of clerks' service should be sufficient for them to learn their duties and preserve continuity in their work (see 30.5). Because they are not members of the stake presidency or bishopric, they do not need to be released when a stake presidency or bishopric is reorganized.

33.3

Stake Records and Reports

33.3.1

Stake Presidency

The stake president oversees stake record keeping. He may delegate much of this work to his counselors and clerks.

33.3.2

Stake Clerk

Every stake should have a qualified, functioning stake clerk. He is called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency. He should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and have a current temple recommend. He is a member of the stake council. He attends stake meetings as indicated in 29.3.

The stake clerk is instructed by the stake presidency and works under their direction. Assistant stake clerks may be called to help (see 33.3.3).

33.3.2.1

Record-Keeping Responsibilities

The stake clerk, or an assigned assistant clerk, has the following responsibilities:

- Provide administrative support to the stake presidency.
- Keep a record of assignments and decisions made in stake leadership meetings.
- Ensure that records and reports are accurate and timely.

The stake clerk should become familiar with Church record-keeping tools (see 33.0). He uses these tools to help leaders identify:

- The needs of members and organizations.
- The availability of resources, including finances.
- Stake trends, strengths, and weaknesses.

Other record-keeping duties may include:

- Ensuring that Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations are properly and promptly recorded.
- Activating temple recommends.
- Preparing the Officers Sustained form and Stake Conference Report for stake conference.

- Recording information for stake membership councils (see 32.9.6).
- Maintaining financial records (see 34.1.2).
- Organizing and coordinating the collection of stories for the unit history. A stake history specialist may be called to assist. (See 33.7.1.)

33.3.2.2

Review of Ward Records and Reports

The stake clerk meets with each new ward clerk soon after he is called. He meets with ward clerks as often as needed, but at least twice a year. These meetings are held to ensure that:

- Tithing and other financial records are properly recorded (see 34.1.2 and 34.2.2).
- Membership records are updated promptly and accurately.
- Certificates of blessing, baptism and confirmation, and priesthood ordination are given to ward members.
- The semiannual membership record audit is conducted and all audit exceptions are promptly corrected (see 33.6.19).
- Ward clerks organize and coordinate the collection of stories for the unit history. If ward history specialists are called, they assist. (See 33.7.1.)

33.3.2.3

Audits

See 33.6.19 and 34.7.

33.3.2.4

Stake Historical Records

See 33.7.

33.3.3

Assistant Stake Clerks

The stake president or an assigned counselor may call and set apart one or more assistant stake clerks as needed. These brethren should be Melchizedek Priesthood holders who have a current temple recommend. They work under the guidance of the stake presidency and the stake clerk.

If needed, one assistant clerk may be called to each of the following positions:

- Assistant stake clerk
- Assistant stake clerk—finance (see 34.1.2)
- Assistant stake clerk—membership (see 33.5 and 33.6)

33.4

Ward Records and Reports

33.4.1

Bishopric

The bishop oversees ward record keeping. He may delegate much of this work to his counselors and clerks.

33.4.2

Ward Clerk

Every ward should have a qualified, functioning ward clerk. He is recommended by the bishopric and called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. He should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and have a current temple recommend. He is a member of the ward council. He attends ward meetings as indicated in 29.2.

The ward clerk works under the direction of the bishopric. Assistant ward clerks may be called to help (see 33.4.3).

33.4.2.1**Record-Keeping Responsibilities**

The ward clerk, or an assigned assistant clerk, has the following responsibilities:

- Provide administrative support to the bishopric.
- Keep a record of assignments and decisions made in ward leadership meetings.
- Ensure that records and reports are accurate and timely.

The ward clerk should become familiar with Church record-keeping tools (see 33.0). He uses these tools to help leaders identify:

- The needs of members and organizations.
- The availability of resources, including finances.
- Ward trends, strengths, and weaknesses.

When compiling reports on member participation, the clerk works with secretaries to resolve minor problems.

Ward clerks encourage members to report any errors in their membership information.

Other record-keeping duties may include:

- Ensuring that ordinances are properly and promptly recorded.
- Preparing the Officers Sustained form for ward conference.
- Recording information for ward membership councils (see 32.9.6).
- Maintaining financial records (see 34.2.2).

**33.4.2.2****Instructing Clerks and Secretaries**

The ward clerk instructs assistant ward clerks and quorum and organization secretaries.

This instruction is especially important when:

- Assistant ward clerks and quorum and organization secretaries are newly called.
- A Church record-keeping tool is introduced or updated.
- Records are not completed properly.

33.4.2.3**Ward Historical Records**

See 33.7.

33.4.3**Assistant Ward Clerks**

Assistant ward clerks may be called as needed. They are recommended by the bishopric and called and set apart by a member of the stake presidency or an assigned high councilor. These brethren should hold the Melchizedek or Aaronic Priesthood. They should also have a current temple recommend. If an assistant ward clerk is assigned to finances, he should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. Assistant ward clerks work under the guidance of the bishopric and the ward clerk.

If needed, one assistant clerk may be called to each of the following positions:

- Assistant ward clerk
- Assistant ward clerk—finance (see 34.2.2)
- Assistant ward clerk—membership (see 33.5 and 33.6)

33.4.4

Priesthood and Organization Leaders

Quorum and organization leaders oversee record keeping in their organizations. They may assign secretaries to do much of this work. They ensure that records and reports are accurate and timely.

33.5

Reports on Member Participation

Reports on member participation help leaders focus on the progress and needs of members. When possible, these reports should be reviewed electronically rather than printed. When printed reports are necessary, they should be carefully managed to respect members' privacy and to comply with local data protection laws.

33.5.1

Types of Reports

33.5.1.1

Attendance Reports

Attendance at sacrament meetings and Sunday priesthood and organization meetings is recorded electronically using LCR or Member Tools.

Sacrament Meeting. Attendance at sacrament meeting is recorded each week by the ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk. The count is the number attending the meeting in-person or by streaming, including visitors. Ward members who are not present because

they have another assignment or are attending another ward are counted in the ward they attend.

Sunday Quorum and Organization Meetings.

Attendance is recorded each week by quorum and organization secretaries and advisers. Youth leaders may also assist in recording attendance. The count is the number attending the meeting in-person or by streaming, including visitors. Members who are serving in the Primary or as youth leaders within the ward are also included as attending. Members who are attending another ward are counted in the ward they attend.

The ward clerk can record attendance on behalf of any organization.

33.5.1.2

Ministering Interview Reports

See 21.3.

33.5.1.3

Quarterly Report

Every number in a report represents an actual person who has unique needs (see Helaman 15:13). Leaders seek direction from the Lord as they consider who may need their help.

The Quarterly Report contains useful information that can provide leaders with insights as they seek inspiration about their ministering efforts. The report is available in Member Tools or LCR.

Stake and ward leaders refer to the Quarterly Report regularly to review progress of individuals. The report includes information about:

- The temple recommend status of endowed members and of youth.
- Males ages 18–25 who are serving or have served a mission.
- The status of ministering interviews (see 21.3).

- Prospective elders who need support in preparing to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.
- Sunday meeting attendance for children, youth, young single adults, and adults (see 33.5.1.1).
- The progress of new members who were baptized and confirmed within the past 12 months.

All attendance and ministering interviews are recorded in Member Tools or LCR. This information automatically completes the corresponding portions of the Quarterly Report.

Every ward completes and submits a Quarterly Report to Church headquarters. The clerk reviews the report with the bishop and submits it before the 15th of the month following the end of each quarter.

The stake presidency may review each ward's Quarterly Report. This helps them monitor progress and know where to provide support and instruction. Stake council members may also view each Quarterly Report.

33.5.2

Membership Lists

Church record-keeping tools provide leaders with access to membership lists. These lists can help leaders identify:

- Which members have not yet received ordinances for which they are eligible.
- Which young men and young women are eligible to serve a mission.
- Which youth do not have a current temple recommend.
- Which youth need to be scheduled for meetings with a member of the bishopric.

Quorum and organization leaders should have access to lists of those who belong to their quorum or organization.

33.6

Membership Records

Membership records include members' names, contact information, ordinance details, and other vital information. The ward should have a membership record for each member living within its boundaries.

Membership records should be kept in the ward where the member lives. Exceptions, which should be rare, require the consent of the bishops and stake presidents involved. To request an exception, the stake president uses LCR to submit the request to the Office of the First Presidency.

Membership records are the only means of recording ordinances and other official actions in the permanent records of the Church. Therefore, the bishop ensures that clerks keep accurate records. He also ensures that clerks update information using LCR. It is vital to do the following promptly:

- Record ordinance information.
- Move records of members who move into or out of the ward.
- Create records for new members and new children of member parents.
- Record a member's death.
- Record marriage and household information.

The bishop or stake president ensures that a membership record is in the appropriate ward before a member is interviewed to receive:

- A Church calling.
- A temple recommend.
- The Melchizedek Priesthood or to be ordained to an office in that priesthood.

He also ensures that the record does not include any of the following:

- An annotation

- A comment about a sealing or ordinance restriction
- Formal membership restrictions

Sometimes a member has not lived in the same ward continuously for at least one year. In that case, the bishop or an assigned counselor contacts the prior bishop before conducting an interview to issue a temple recommend or to recommend ordination to a Melchizedek Priesthood office. The purpose of this contact is to ask if there are any worthiness matters to be considered. If a counselor learns that there is confidential information, he ends the conversation. He informs his bishop to contact the prior bishop before conducting the interview.

Under no circumstances may membership records be given or shown to anyone other than the bishop or a clerk.

Members may view membership information for themselves and for any dependent children living at home on the Member Tools app. They may also request printed copies of their Individual Ordinance Summaries from the clerk. If errors are found, a clerk ensures that they are corrected on the membership records.

Instructions on how to create a membership record are available in LCR.

For situations not addressed in this section, leaders should contact the Global Services Department or the area office.

33.6.1

Names Used in Church Records

A person's full legal name, as defined by local law or custom, should be used in membership records and on ordinance certificates.

33.6.2

Members of Record

The following individuals are members of record and should have a membership record:

- Those who have been baptized and confirmed
- Those under age 9 who have been blessed but not baptized
- Those who are not accountable because of intellectual disabilities, regardless of age
- Unblessed children under age 9 when both of the following apply:
 - At least one parent or one grandparent is a member of the Church.
 - Both parents give permission for a record to be created. (If only one parent has legal custody of the child, the permission of that parent is sufficient.)

A person age 9 or older who has a membership record but has not been baptized and confirmed is not a member of record. However, the ward in which the person lives retains the membership record until the person is 18. At that time, if the person chooses not to be baptized, the bishop cancels the membership record. The stake president's permission is required.

Records are not canceled for those who have not been baptized because of an intellectual disability unless requested by the person or a legal guardian, including a parent.

33.6.3

Records of New Ward Members

The ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk contacts new ward members soon after their membership records arrive to review the Individual Ordinance Summary for accuracy.

For instructions about introducing new members after their records are received or after they are baptized and confirmed, see 29.2.1.1.

33.6.4

Records of Members Who Move or Are Temporarily Away from Home

Ward leaders, ministering brothers and sisters, and clerks obtain the new addresses of members as soon as they become aware that members intend to move out of the ward. The clerk moves the records to the new ward when the members actually move. Clerks may also request the records of members moving into their ward when the records have not been sent by the previous ward.

If a clerk cannot find out where members have moved, the record is moved to the Finding Lost Members list in LCR. Elders quorum and Relief Society leaders review this report regularly and use available resources to locate these members. Other ward council members or missionaries may assist.

If the member's location is found, the clerk moves the record accordingly. If the member's location is not found after using all finding resources, the clerk receives the bishop's approval to return the record to Church headquarters.

Records in the Finding Lost Members list are still assigned to the ward, but they do not appear in member lists and reports, and they are not included in ward statistics.

When a person moves from a ward for more than three months, a clerk moves the membership record to the new ward unless the member intends to return after leaving for temporary or seasonal employment or schooling that may last longer than three months.

When a person moves from the ward for less than three months and plans to return, the membership record is kept in the ward.

When leaders are unsure how long a person will be away, they keep the record in the ward that can best meet the member's needs.

33.6.5

Out-of-Unit Member Records

A person's membership record may be kept in only one ward at a time. Only the bishop of that ward may oversee updating the membership record, performing ordinances, and conducting interviews for the member.

Some circumstances require that a member's name and contact information be recorded in a secondary ward (see 33.6.11 and 33.6.13 for examples). In these cases, the clerk of the secondary ward creates an out-of-unit member record. He uses LCR to create this record.

Members with an out-of-unit record may receive a calling in that ward. They are also included on ward directories and rolls.

33.6.6

Records of Members Serving outside Their Geographic Ward

33.6.6.1

Records of Members with Other Church Assignments

If members have Church assignments outside of their geographic ward, their membership and financial records are kept in the geographic ward. If assignments require members to move from their geographic ward for three months or more and if their children accompany them, their membership records are moved to the new ward. (See 33.6.4.)

33.6.6.2

Records of Full-Time Missionaries

See 24.6.2.8.

33.6.7**Records of Young Single Adults**

Young single adults between the ages of 18 and 35 may choose to be members of either their geographic ward or a young single adult ward if one is assigned to the boundaries where they live. The membership record is kept in the ward they attend.

These principles also apply to single adults between the ages of 36 and 45 who choose to be members of a single adult ward.

If a young single adult plans to attend a ward temporarily (for example, while attending school), the membership record is kept in the ward he or she attends. With the member's permission, the clerk of the ward where the member's family lives may create an out-of-unit record for him or her (see 33.6.5).

33.6.8**Records of Members Who Live in Hospitals or Care Facilities**

The records of members who live in hospitals or care facilities should be in the ward that can best serve them. In most cases, that is the ward where the hospital or facility is located.

33.6.9**Records of Members in Military Service**

When a member enters military service for training, the membership record is kept in the geographic ward until he or she is assigned to a more long-term duty station. At that time the member should contact the geographic ward and provide the name and address of the new ward.

33.6.10**Records of Members Who Have Intellectual Disabilities**

A person age 8 or older who has an intellectual disability, his or her parents (where applicable), and

the bishop counsel together to determine whether the person is accountable. If the person is determined not to be accountable, the bishop or a clerk indicates "Not Accountable" in the baptism section of the person's membership record in LCR. The record is not canceled. Ordinances are not necessary for a person whose record indicates that he or she is not accountable.

Sometimes an individual, his or her parents, and the bishop later counsel together and determine that a person is accountable after the record has been noted as "Not Accountable." In that case, the bishop or a clerk (with the bishop's approval) can remove the "Not Accountable" indication. For more information, see 38.2.4.

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

Members who use sign language, and their immediate family members or legal guardians, may choose to have their Church membership records in any of the following places:

- Their geographic ward
- A ward for members who are deaf or hard of hearing who live within its boundaries
- A ward that hosts a group for members who are deaf or hard of hearing who live within a geographic area specified by the stake president or Area President

In this situation, an individual or family's records may be in one unit, and they may be out-of-unit members in another. (See 33.6.5.)

Members who are deaf or hard of hearing may virtually attend wards or groups organized for those who are deaf or hard of hearing outside of the members' geographic area.

33.6.12**Records of Adopted Children**

Records of adopted children may be created or updated only after an adoption is final. The name on the record should conform to the decree of adoption. Records of adoptive parents may be updated only after an adoption is final.

33.6.13**Records of Children of Divorced Parents**

All membership records use the legal name of a person, as defined by local law or custom. This includes children of parents who are divorced. The legal name on the membership record should also be recorded on certificates of blessings and priesthood ordinances.

Children with divorced parents often attend Church meetings in both parents' wards. While only one unit may keep and update a child's official membership record, an out-of-unit member record may be created in the other ward he or she attends (see 33.6.5). This allows the child's name and contact information to be included on ward lists and class rolls.

Children with an out-of-unit member record may receive a calling in that unit.

33.6.14**Records with Annotations**

See 32.14.5.

33.6.15**Move Restrictions on Membership Records**

If a member moves while formal membership restrictions or another serious concern is pending,

the bishop or an authorized clerk may place a move restriction on the membership record. He uses LCR to do this.

A record that has a move restriction is not moved to a new unit until the priesthood leader who placed the restriction authorizes it to be removed.

33.6.16**Records from the "Address Unknown" File**

A member is sometimes located after his or her record has been in the "address unknown file" at Church headquarters. The record will include a message encouraging the bishopric, quorum, and organization leaders to visit the person as soon as possible and to provide fellowshiping.

33.6.17**Recording and Correcting Ordinance Information**

See chapter 18.

33.6.18**Recording and Correcting Civil Information**

See 33.6.

33.6.19**Audits of Membership Records**

Twice each year the stake clerk or an assistant stake clerk ensures that an audit of membership records is conducted in each ward using LCR. The stake president may call others who are experienced in membership record keeping to assist with these audits. Audits should be completed by June 15 and December 15 of each year.

33.7**Historical Records****33.7.1****Ward and Stake Histories**

The Lord has commanded that “a history of all the important” matters concerning His Church be written and kept (Doctrine and Covenants 69:3; see also verse 5; Alma 37:2).

Each unit in the Church is to document important matters concerning the unit. These matters include historical accounts from unit leaders.

Keeping a history is a spiritual work that will strengthen the faith of those who write and read it. Documenting stories throughout the year will improve the quality of the history.

Stake and ward priesthood and organization leaders contribute stories using the Unit History tool on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Stake and ward clerks have the primary responsibility to organize and coordinate this effort. The stake presidency and bishopric may call a stake or ward history specialist to help. Additional instructions are available in the tool’s Quick Start Guide.

Members may use the Unit History tool to view stories that have been published by their ward and stake leaders. Published stories are automatically preserved by the Church.

**33.7.2****Church History**

The Church History Department selectively collects historical records, including personal records, art, and artifacts “for the good of the church, and for the rising generations” (Doctrine and Covenants 69:8). Questions about the historical value of records may be addressed to:

Church History Library
15 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600
Telephone: 1-801-240-5696
Email: history@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

33.8**Confidentiality of Records**

The records of the Church are confidential, whether they exist on paper or digitally. These include:

- Membership records.
- Financial records.
- Notes from meetings.
- Official forms and documents (including records of membership councils).

Leaders and clerks are to safeguard Church records by handling, storing, and disposing of them in a way that protects the privacy of individuals. Leaders ensure that information that is gathered from members is:

- Limited to what the Church requires.
- Used only for approved Church purposes.
- Given only to those who are authorized to use it.

Information that is stored electronically must be kept secure and protected appropriately (see 33.9.1). Leaders ensure that such data is not used for personal, political, or commercial purposes.

Information from Church records, including historical information, may not be given to individuals or agencies conducting research or surveys (see 38.8.37).

Leaders and members must follow the guidelines in 38.8.13 to protect stake and ward directories.

33.9

Records Management

Stake and ward leaders should make effective records management a part of their record-keeping procedures.

33.9.1

Protection

All Church records, reports, and data should be protected against unauthorized access, change, destruction, or disclosure. This information should be kept in a safe place. Highly sensitive records, including computer printouts, should be kept in a locked drawer or cabinet in the leader's office when they are not being used.

Where possible, electronic copies of records, reports, and data should be encrypted and password protected. Lost or stolen Church-owned devices or storage media should be reported promptly at incidents.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Misuse of Church information, including personal data, should also be reported.

A membership council may be necessary in serious cases of misuse of personal data (see 32.6.3.4). Such misuse includes deliberately entering false information in Church systems or intentionally using or sharing personal data for non-Church purposes.

33.9.1.1

Username and Passwords

Stake presidents, bishops, and other leaders should never share their Church username and password

with counselors, clerks, executive secretaries, or others.

Leaders are strongly encouraged to enable two-step verification (also known as multifactor authentication) on their Church account whenever possible.

33.9.1.2

Shared Computers and Data Storage

Leaders and clerks should not store membership or financial information on shared computers that can be accessed by others who are not authorized to have this information.

33.9.1.3

Data Privacy

Many countries have enacted data protection laws that regulate the processing of personal data. This includes the information in membership records and other Church records that identify individuals. Leaders who have questions about the application of data protection laws to the local management of Church records may contact the Church data privacy office at DataPrivacyOfficer@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

33.9.2

Retention

Records should be kept only as long as they are needed for administrative, legal, and historical purposes. Financial records should be retained for at least three years plus the current year. Leaders who have questions about how long to keep records should contact the Global Services Department or the area office.

33.9.3**Disposition**

Records that are outdated or no longer needed should be destroyed in such a way that the information cannot be retrieved or reconstructed.

Records that have potential historical value should not be discarded, destroyed, or placed in the ward resource center (library). Questions about the historical value of records may be addressed to the Church History Library (see contact information in 33.7.2).

- Implement direction from the stake presidency about placing, sharing, reassigning, and scheduling all stake computers.
- Maintain a current inventory of all computer hardware in the stake, with serial numbers, models, capacities, and physical locations.
- Ensure that (1) computers, software, and confidential information are secure and (2) data files are backed up regularly.
- Be familiar with the general policies for Church computers (see 38.8.10).

33.10**Stake and Ward Technology Specialists**

The stake presidency calls one or more stake members to serve as stake technology specialists. The bishopric may call one or more ward members to serve as ward technology specialists. Men, women, and youth may fill these callings.

Stake technology specialists serve under the guidance of the stake clerk. Ward technology specialists serve under the guidance of the ward clerk or executive secretary, as determined by the bishop. Their responsibilities can include the following:

- Assist stake or ward leaders with technical needs.
- Teach members how to access and use Church media, apps, and other technology tools, including FamilySearch.org.
- Support leaders and teachers who use technology tools to fulfill their callings.
- Manage streaming of meetings and classes for those who cannot attend (see 29.7).

In addition, the stake technology specialist has the following responsibilities for managing Church computers in the stake, including those in FamilySearch centers:

As needed, stake technology specialists coordinate the work of ward technology specialists.



34.

Finances and Audits

34.0

Introduction

Tithes and offerings allow the Church to pursue God's work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2). These funds are sacred. They represent the sacrifice and faith of members of the Church (see Mark 12:41–44).

Some of the uses of tithes and offerings in supporting the Lord's work include:

- Building and maintaining temples, meeting-houses, and other Church buildings.
- Supporting the activities and operations of the Church and its local congregations.
- Sharing the gospel throughout the world.
- Supporting the programs of the Church, such as education and family history.
- Providing food, shelter, and other necessities to people in need.

Stake presidents and bishops have a sacred obligation to oversee Church funds (see Doctrine

and Covenants 72:9–10). These funds should be used only by authorized members for authorized Church purposes. They must be carefully accounted for and protected.

34.1

Stake Financial Leadership

34.1.1

Stake Presidency

The stake president has the following responsibilities for stake finances. He delegates some of this work to his counselors and clerks.

The stake president:

- Teaches and inspires members to pay a full tithe and give generous offerings (see 34.3).
- Ensures that stake funds are properly handled and accounted for (see 34.5).
- Reviews the financial statement each month and ensures that any issues are resolved promptly.

- Ensures that bishoprics, organization leaders, and clerks learn their responsibility for sacred Church funds.
- Prepares and manages the annual stake budget (see 34.6).
- Ensures that stake budget allowance guidelines are followed (see 34.6.2).
- Regularly counsels with each bishop to discuss the ward's finances.
- Verifies that each ward receives members' tithing declarations annually.
- Ensures that passwords to access Church financial systems are never shared.
- Ensures that the stake audit committee is organized and functioning properly (see 34.7.1).
- Is available to answer questions during audits of stake financial records (see 34.7).
- Reviews audits of stake and ward financial records and ensures that any issues are resolved promptly (see 34.7).
- Ensures that the stake and wards comply with all applicable tax laws (see 34.8).

34.1.2 Stake Clerks

The stake president assigns the stake clerk or an assistant stake clerk to help with stake financial record keeping. Clerks carefully follow current policies to safeguard Church funds and ensure that Church records are accurate.

The clerk has the following responsibilities:

- Record and deposit any funds received with a member of the stake presidency.
- Review the financial statement each month and ensure that any issues are resolved promptly.

- Help the stake presidency prepare the annual stake budget (see 34.6.1 and 34.6.2).
- Verify that each ward has submitted the annual tithing declaration report.
- Participate in financial audits by stake auditors and take corrective actions if needed (see 34.7).
- Assist bishoprics with training ward clerks.

Clerks should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and have a current temple recommend. For more information about calling stake clerks, see 33.3.2 and 33.3.3.

34.2

Ward Financial Leadership

34.2.1 Bishopric

The bishop has the following responsibilities for ward finances. He delegates some of this work to his counselors and clerks.

The bishop:

- Teaches and inspires members to pay a full tithe and give generous offerings (see 34.3).
- Ensures that ward funds are properly handled and accounted for (see 34.5).
- Reviews the financial statement each month and ensures that any issues are resolved promptly.
- Ensures that organization leaders and clerks learn their responsibility for sacred Church funds.
- Prepares and manages the annual ward budget (see 34.6).
- Ensures that ward budget allowance guidelines are followed (see 34.6.2).
- Meets with ward members annually to receive their tithing declaration.

- Ensures that passwords to access Church financial systems are never shared.
- Is available to answer questions during audits of ward financial records and ensures that any issues are resolved promptly (see 34.7).

34.2.2

Ward Clerks

The bishop assigns the ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk to help with ward financial record keeping. Clerks carefully follow current policies to safeguard Church funds and ensure that Church records are accurate.

The clerk has the following responsibilities:

- Record and deposit any funds received with a member of the bishopric.
- Review the financial statement each month and ensure that any issues are resolved promptly.
- Help the bishopric prepare the annual ward budget (see 34.6.1 and 34.6.2).
- Ensure that members have access to their statements of contributions and assist as needed.
- Help the bishop prepare and record tithing declarations.
- Participate in financial audits by stake auditors and take corrective actions if needed (see 34.7).

Clerks should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood and have a current temple recommend. For more information about calling ward clerks, see 33.4.2 and 33.4.3.

34.3

Contributions

Church leaders teach members the principles of tithes and other offerings and encourage members

to live these principles. People who are not members of the Church may also make contributions. However, only members of the Church may pay tithing.

Members are encouraged to make their contributions online where possible (see donations .ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Members may also give their contributions and a completed Tithing and Other Offerings form to the bishop or one of his counselors (see 34.5.2). If members use a check, it should be payable to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

34.3.1

Tithing

Tithing is the donation of one-tenth of one's income to God's Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4; *interest* is understood to mean income). All members who have income should pay tithing.

The Lord's covenant people have lived the law of tithing since ancient times (see Genesis 14:18–20; Leviticus 27:30–32). The Lord has said, "The tithing of my people . . . shall be a standing law unto them forever" (Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4).

Tithes are holy to the Lord, and members honor Him by paying tithing. This is an expression of faith in God and His promises. Those who pay tithing receive this promise from the Lord: "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

34.3.1.1

Use of Tithing Funds

Tithing donations are always used for the Lord's purposes, as directed by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes (see Doctrine and Covenants 120). Some of these purposes are outlined in 34.0.

34.3.1.2**Tithing Declaration**

The bishop meets with each member during the last few months of each year to receive his or her tithing declaration. In rare circumstances when the bishop is absent, the stake president may authorize one of the bishop's counselors to fulfill this responsibility.

All members are invited to meet with the bishop to:

- Declare to the bishop their status as tithe payers.
- Ensure their contribution records are accurate.

Whenever possible, all members of a family, including children, should attend together.

During tithing declaration, the bishop expresses appreciation to members for their faithfulness. He also teaches the principle of tithing, encourages members to give a generous fast offering, and discusses other relevant matters.

Instructions for tithing declaration are provided by Church headquarters or the assigned area office.

**34.3.2****Fast Offerings**

Church leaders encourage members to live the law of the fast. This includes giving a generous fast offering (see 22.2.2).

⬆️ In some wards, the bishop may authorize Aaronic Priesthood holders to collect fast offerings.

In deciding this, the bishop considers the number of Aaronic Priesthood holders available, their safety, and the blessing to members who might not otherwise contribute.

Priesthood holders should go in pairs when gathering fast offerings. They deliver fast offerings promptly to a member of the bishopric.

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

Guidelines for using fast-offering funds are provided in 22.5.2.

34.3.3**Missionary Funds**

Contributions to the ward missionary fund are used primarily to meet the contribution commitments of full-time missionaries from the ward. Excess funds in a ward may be used to meet the commitments of other missionaries in the stake. Excess funds in a stake may be used for other stakes in the coordinating council as directed by the Area Seventy who presides over the council.

Ward missionary funds should not be sent directly to individual missionaries. These funds should not be used for any missionary activities in the ward or stake.

Contributions to the General Missionary Fund are used by the Church in its overall missionary efforts.

Stake presidents and bishops should send missionary funds that exceed reasonable stake and ward needs to the General Missionary Fund at Church headquarters or to the area office.

For more information about missionary funds and financing missionary service, see 24.3.4.

34.3.4**Additional Contributions**

Members may contribute financially to additional approved categories. If donors are using the Tithing and Other Offerings form, they write the category name in the “Other” section of the form.

Stakes and wards should not establish categories in the “Other” section to request, collect, or spend funds for projects that are not approved by the Area Presidency. For a list of approved categories, members should contact the ward clerk.

34.3.5**Philanthropies**

Philanthropies of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a department of the Office of the Presiding Bishopric. This department coordinates and facilitates voluntary philanthropic contributions to the Church and its affiliated charities and activities, other than tithing and other offerings. Assistance in making contributions may be obtained by contacting the Philanthropies office:

Philanthropies
1450 North University Avenue
Provo, UT 84604-6080
Telephone: 1-801-356-5300 or 1-800-525-8074
Email: philanthropies@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

34.3.6** In-Kind Donations, Including Tithing**

The Church normally discourages making in-kind contributions (non-monetary) as tithing and other offerings. It is preferable for members to dispose of the property themselves and then pay tithing and other donations monetarily. However, in-kind donations may be accepted in certain cases. Such donations may be a common practice in some areas of the world.

The Church accepts (1) stocks, bonds, or other securities that are immediately marketable and (2) some marketable real estate. Members should email DonationsInKind@ChurchofJesusChrist.org for instructions on how to initiate these in-kind donations. If members want to contribute other items, the stake president contacts Church headquarters or the area office for approval before authorizing the bishop to accept them.

Receipts to members who make in-kind donations are issued only by Church headquarters or the area office.

34.3.7**Contributions Cannot Be Refunded**

When tithes and other offerings are given to the Church, they belong to the Lord. They are consecrated to Him. All such contributions are freewill offerings. They are made without reservation of purpose, retention of control, ownership in any form, or expectation of any benefit by the donor other than the Lord’s blessings.

Stake presidents and bishops inform those who contribute tithes and offerings that these contributions cannot be refunded. Nor can prepaid missionary funds be refunded.

34.4**Confidentiality of Tithing and Other Offerings**

The amount of tithing and other offerings paid by a donor is confidential. Only the bishop and those who are authorized to handle or view these contributions should have access to this information. Stake presidencies, bishoprics, and clerks should never inappropriately discuss a member’s tithing status. Nor should they discuss the total amount of tithing or other offerings received.

34.5**Handling Church Funds**

The stake president and bishop ensure that all Church funds are properly handled. This is a sacred responsibility of their callings. General principles are outlined in the following sections. Bishopricks and clerks review the video “Sacred Funds, Sacred Responsibilities” at least once a year.

34.5.1**Companionship Principle**

The companionship principle requires two persons—a member of the bishopric and a clerk, or two members of the bishopric—to be actively involved when recording and disbursing Church funds. This principle is essential to safeguarding sacred funds and protecting Church leaders.

Leaders should protect and never share their passwords (see 33.9.1.1).

34.5.2**Receiving Tithing and Other Offerings**

The Lord has given bishops the sacred trust of receiving and accounting for the tithes and other offerings of the Saints (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:30–33; 119). Only the bishop and his counselors may receive tithes and other offerings. Under no circumstances should their wives, other members of their families, clerks, or other ward members receive these contributions. The only exception is when Aaronic Priesthood holders are assigned to collect fast offerings (see 34.3.2).

Church leaders and members should not leave donations unattended.

34.5.3**Verifying and Recording Tithing and Other Offerings**

Contributions should be verified and recorded on the Sunday they are received. A member of the bishopric and a clerk, or two members of the bishopric, open each envelope together. They verify that the funds enclosed are the same as the amount written on the Tithing and Other Offerings form. They record each donation properly. If the funds and the written amount differ, they contact the donor as soon as possible to resolve the discrepancy.

34.5.4**Depositing Tithing and Other Offerings**

A deposit should be prepared after ensuring the amounts recorded match the funds received.

Where a 24-hour bank depository is available, the bishopric member and another Melchizedek Priesthood holder deposit the funds in the bank on the same day the funds are opened and verified.

Where a 24-hour bank depository is not available and the bank is closed on Sunday, the bishop designates a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to make the deposit the next business day. Normally this person should be a member of the bishopric. He is accountable for these funds. He should:

- Ensure that the funds are kept secure until they are deposited.
- Obtain a deposit receipt showing the date and the amount of the deposit.

Additionally, a bishopric member and a clerk, or two members of the bishopric, should complete the following procedure on the next Sunday before processing donations for that day:

- Compare the deposit receipt to the previous week’s deposit records to verify that the correct amount was deposited.

- Sign the deposit receipt and file it with the previous week's donation information.

34.5.5

Safeguarding Church Funds

Members who are responsible for Church funds must never leave them in the meetinghouse overnight or leave them unattended at any time, such as during meetings and activities.

34.5.6

Donation Statements

Donor Statements of Contributions are available to all members at donations.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Leaders should encourage members to regularly review their donor statements. Where applicable, official tax statements are also available at donations.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, from the local unit, or from the area office.



34.5.7

Managing Stake and Ward Payments

All stake funds are managed in Church financial systems. The stake president manages the stake finances. His counselors and clerks may assist him. The counselor who serves as chairman of the stake audit committee generally should not be involved in stake financial record keeping.

All ward funds are managed in Church financial systems. The bishop manages the ward finances. His counselors and clerks may assist him.

⬆️ Payments are generally made by electronic funds transfer or by check. In some areas, units may be approved to use bank cards.

No stake or ward expenses may be incurred or paid without the presiding officer's authorization.

Two authorized leaders must approve each payment. One of them must be a member of the stake presidency or bishopric. Although counselors may be authorized to approve payments, the stake president or bishop must review each payment. Leaders should not approve a payment to themselves.

The stake president's written approval is required before a bishop may use fast offerings or approve a bishop's order for himself or his family. Written approval from a member of the Area Presidency is required before a bishop may use fast offerings or approve a bishop's order for the stake president or his family. See 22.5.1.2 for guidelines.

A member requesting reimbursement provides a physical or electronic copy of any receipts or invoices. He or she also includes the purpose, amount, and date of the purchase.

If funds are advanced, the member submits a payment request form, noting the purpose, amount, and date. After the expense has been paid, the member then (1) provides receipts or invoices for the funds spent and (2) returns any unspent funds. Returned funds should be redeposited.

Authorized leaders and clerks should not approve payments without carefully reviewing the expense and receipts or invoices.

Stakes and wards may not open their own bank accounts or maintain a petty cash fund.

34.5.7.1** Electronic Payments**

If the stake or ward uses electronic payments, members are encouraged to enter their personal bank account details in the Expense Reimbursement Account section under Settings in Online Donations at donations.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. The ward or stake should never keep physical or electronic copies of members' bank account information details.

34.5.7.2** Checks**

If the stake or ward uses checks, a check should not be signed until it is filled out completely. Checkbooks and blank checks should be stored in a locked file or cabinet. They must not be left unattended when they are not locked securely. If any blank checks are missing, the stake president or bishop immediately reports the numbers of those checks to Church headquarters or the area office.

34.5.7.3** Payment Cards**

If the stake or ward uses payment cards for local unit expenses, they may be used for point-of-sale transactions or for withdrawing cash. The card transactions and cash withdrawals are automatically uploaded to Church financial systems. All uses of the card should be promptly recorded. If these uses are not recorded, the card may be disabled.

All payment card balances should be brought to zero at least annually.

34.5.8** Cash Boxes**

The area office provides specific guidelines for units that do not have access to a Church-provided bank account.

34.5.9**Keeping Financial Records**

Each stake and ward should keep current, accurate financial records. These records help stake presidents and bishops account for and protect sacred Church funds. Accurate records are also necessary for:

- Preparing budgets.
- Managing the budget allowance.
- Providing information to members about their financial contributions.
- Responding to audits.

For information about the use and retention of records and reports, clerks should refer to instructions from Church headquarters or the area office. Financial records should be retained for at least three years plus the current year. Local laws may require longer retention periods.

34.6**Budget and Expenditures**

The budget allowance program provides general Church funds to pay for the activities and programs of stakes and wards. This program eliminates the need to receive budget contributions from members. Faithful payment of tithes has made the budget allowance possible.

If necessary, leaders should reduce and simplify activities to stay within the allowance. Most activities should be simple and have little or no cost.

34.6.1**Stake and Ward Budgets**

Every stake and ward prepares and operates an annual budget. The stake president manages the stake budget, and the bishop manages the ward budget. They may assign a counselor to supervise

the budget under their direction. They may also assign a clerk to help prepare and monitor the budget.

Stake presidencies and bishoprics begin preparing budgets well before the beginning of each calendar year. Guidelines are listed below:

- Review the amounts spent during the previous year to make sure that recurring expenses are considered.
- Ask organizations to estimate their budget needs in detail.
- Compile the budget using approved budgeting practices. Budgets should ensure that projected expenses do not exceed anticipated budget allowance funds.

The budget tools included in Church financial systems should be used where they are available.

34.6.2 Budget Allowance

34.6.2.1 Allocation of Budget

Budget funds are allocated quarterly based on attendance in the following categories:

- Sacrament meeting
- Young men
- Young women
- Primary children ages 7–10
- Young single adults

It is important to report attendance accurately and on time (see 33.5.1.1).

Before each quarterly allocation, the stake president receives information on the amount to be distributed. He then determines how much of the funds are

allocated to the wards. He works with bishops in a unified, cooperative manner to ensure the stake and wards are funded fairly and adequately. If unforeseen changes occur that may justify altering original budget allocations, the stake president makes sure that fair adjustments are made.

The bishop oversees the allocation of budget allowance funds in the ward. He ensures that organizations in the ward are funded fairly and adequately.

Priesthood leaders ensure that the budget allocations and activities for young men and young women are equitable and that allocations for children in Primary are sufficient.

34.6.2.2 Appropriate Use of Budget

Stake presidents and bishops make sure budget allowance funds are spent wisely. Funds should be used to bless people and to further gospel purposes. Leaders also ensure that all expenditures are within the allowance.

Stake and ward budget funds should be used to pay for all activities, programs, manuals, and supplies. Members should not usually pay to participate in activities. Nor should they provide materials, supplies, rental or admission fees, or long-distance transportation at their own expense. Members may provide food if doing so is not a burden (see 20.6.1).

Members who want to contribute additional funds to the Church may not designate them for the stake or ward budget. Instead, leaders encourage them to contribute the funds to fast offerings, missionary funds, humanitarian aid, or other authorized donation categories.

Expenses for building construction, maintenance, telephones, utilities, computers, and priesthood leader travel are paid from general Church funds according to current guidelines.

34.6.2.3**Excess Budget**

Excess budget allowance funds should not be spent.
Excess ward funds should be returned to the stake.
Excess stake funds are returned to the Church.

As an exception, stakes and wards may retain some unspent funds if they are needed for specific activities that are planned for the next year, such as a youth conference. However, significant portions of the stake or ward budget allowance should not be retained from one year to the next.

34.6.3**Funding Special Activities and Equipment****34.6.3.1****Stake and Multistake Activities**

Local leaders are encouraged to hold stake and multistake activities that provide opportunities to develop unity and friendships, especially among youth and young single adults. Leaders ensure that they budget adequate funds to support an appropriate number of stake and multistake activities.

Funding for most multistake activities comes from the budget funds of the participating stakes. Funding for area activities may come from area or Church headquarters budgets when approved.

34.6.3.2**Special Activities and Equipment**

For information about special activities and equipment, see chapter 20.

34.7**Audits****34.7.1****Stake Audit Committee**

The stake president appoints a stake audit committee. This committee ensures that stake and ward finances are handled according to Church policy. It consists of one of the stake president's counselors as chairman and two other stake members who understand or can be trained in financial matters. These brothers or sisters should have current temple recommends.

The counselor who serves as chairman generally should not approve payments or be involved in stake financial record keeping.

Committee members should not be stake auditors. Nor should they do stake or ward financial record keeping.

34.7.2**Stake Auditors**

The stake president or his counselor who is chairman of the stake audit committee calls at least two stake auditors. These brothers and sisters should have current temple recommends. If possible, they should be experienced in accounting or auditing. They should be approved by the stake presidency and high council. However, they are not sustained. The stake president determines whether they are set apart.

High councilors may also serve as stake auditors. However, the stake clerk and assistant stake clerks may not be called as auditors. Those who serve as auditors may also hold other callings.

34.7.3**The Financial Audit**

Stake auditors audit financial records of the stake, wards, and FamilySearch centers twice each year. They also audit the financial records of recreational properties once each year. These are opportunities to encourage, support, and kindly train those who have been called to handle the funds of the Lord's Church.

Auditors ensure that:

- Tithing and other contributions are properly recorded.
- Church funds are properly used, accounted for, and protected.
- Financial records are complete and accurate.

The unit's presiding officer and the clerk assigned to finances should be available to answer questions during audits.

The stake president and stake audit committee review all audits. After their review, the stake audit committee chairman and stake president sign the audits. Audits may be signed and submitted before all of the exceptions are corrected. The stake president and stake audit committee ensure that any audit exceptions are promptly corrected.

34.7.4**Area Auditors and Assistant Area Auditors**

The Area Presidency follows the guidelines in the *Guide to the Area Audit Program* when calling an area auditor or assistant area auditor.

34.7.5**Loss, Theft, Embezzlement, or Misappropriation of Church Funds**

The stake president or chairman of the stake audit committee should be notified promptly if:

- Church funds have been lost or stolen.
- A leader has embezzled or misappropriated Church funds.

The stake president or the chairman of the audit committee notifies the Church Auditing Department. He notifies the area controller if the unit is outside the United States and Canada.

The Church Auditing Department (or area controller) sends a loss report form to the stake president or chairman of the audit committee. Under the direction of the Church Auditing Department (or the area controller), the stake president or chairman of the audit committee ensures that the matter is properly examined. He also ensures that the loss form is properly completed and submitted.

After the examination is complete, if the Church Auditing Department determines that a leader or Church employee has embezzled Church funds or property, membership action should be considered. Guidelines are in 32.6.3.3.

If a major misuse of funds is discovered, the stake president or chairman of the audit committee also notifies the Area Presidency.

34.7.6**Stake Clerk or Assistant Stake Clerk Assigned to Finances**

The stake audit committee may assign the stake clerk or the assistant stake clerk assigned to finances to instruct ward leaders in proper financial policy. He also instructs them in procedures related to exceptions disclosed by audits.

34.7.7**For More Information**

For more information about audit committees, auditors, and audit procedures, see the Help Center

at ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Stake audit committees may direct questions to the assistant area auditor.

34.8

Taxes

The tax information in this section applies only in the United States and Canada. If priesthood leaders in the United States and Canada need more information, they should contact the Tax Administration Division:

Tax Administration
50 East North Temple Street, Room 2276
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0022
Telephone: 1-801-240-4405 or 1-800-453-3860,
extension 2-4405

Priesthood leaders outside the United States and Canada contact the area office to resolve questions on taxes.

34.8.1

Tax-Exempt Status

The Church is normally exempt from paying sales, property, income, and other taxes because it is a religious organization. Church buildings and other properties are to be used for the purposes of

worship, religious instruction, and other Church-related activities. Stake and ward leaders ensure that Church facilities are not used for political, business, or investment purposes as outlined in the examples in 35.5.6.1 and 35.5.6.3. To do so would violate laws that permit tax exemption of Church property.

It is important that stake and ward leaders follow these guidelines to preserve the Church's tax-exempt status. If one stake or ward misuses the Church's tax-exempt status, other Church units could be affected.

34.8.2

Sales and Use Tax

Sales and use tax laws and how they apply to the Church vary by country and by state. Leaders contact the Church's Tax Administration Division or the assigned area office to see if the Church is exempt or must pay such taxes.

34.8.3

Property Tax

The Church's Tax Administration Division files all property tax exemptions and pays all required property taxes. No action is required by local leaders.



35.

Care and Use of Meetinghouses

35.1

Purpose

The Church provides meetinghouses so that all who enter can:

- Make and renew covenants through sacred ordinances (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:75; 59:9–12).
- Meet together (see 3 Nephi 18:22–23).
- Worship and pray together (see Mosiah 18:25; Moroni 6:9).
- Teach and minister to one another (see Moroni 6:4–5).
- Participate in other approved uses as described in this chapter.

A meetinghouse can take different forms depending on local circumstances and needs. It could be a Church-constructed or Church-purchased space, a member's home, a local school or community center, a leased space, or another approved option.

35.2

Roles and Responsibilities

35.2.1

Meetinghouse Facilities Department

The Meetinghouse Facilities Department at Church headquarters establishes principles and guidelines for providing and maintaining places of worship. This department operates under the direction of the Presiding Bishopric.

Meetinghouse Facilities employees are responsible for providing and maintaining meetinghouses and other Church buildings. This is done under the direction of the Area Presidency and the area director for temporal affairs.

35.2.2

Church Facilities Manager

A Church-employed facilities manager helps each stake operate meetinghouses. He or she arranges major repairs, deep cleaning, and routine building maintenance.

As needed, the facilities manager helps instruct stake and ward building representatives on how to clean the building and perform other local tasks. He or she provides instructions, materials, and equipment.

The facilities manager works with the stake building representative to manage these services and the overall care of buildings. He or she may also review building expenses with bishops.

35.2.3 Area Seventy

The assigned Area Seventy works closely with stake presidents in the master planning process (see 35.3).

35.2.4 Stake Presidency

The stake presidency guides bishops in the use, care, and security of meetinghouses. They assign a high councilor to be the stake building representative (see 35.2.5). They counsel with him to review related needs and projects.

If members need additional space for worship, the stake presidency provides information to the Area Seventy. This is done through the master planning process (see 35.3).

35.2.5 Stake Building Representative

The stake building representative assists the stake presidency in the use, care, and security of meetinghouses by:

- Instructing ward building representatives in their duties (see 35.2.9).
- Distributing keys to unit leaders.

- Communicating with the Church facilities manager about maintenance and operational needs of the buildings.

35.2.6 Stake and Ward Technology Specialists

Stake and ward technology specialists help set up and maintain technology in buildings. When new equipment needs to be installed, they coordinate with the facilities manager. For more information about these callings, see 33.10 (see also [mhtech.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

35.2.7 Bishopric

The bishopric (or the ward building representative) teaches members how to use, care for, and secure the building. The bishopric also distributes building keys to ward leaders.

They make sure that activities in the building and on the grounds are conducted safely (see 20.7).

They communicate with the Church facilities manager about maintenance and operational needs. They may also review related expenses with the facilities manager.

35.2.8 Agent Bishop

If more than one ward meets in a building, the stake presidency selects an agent bishop to coordinate assignments with the other bishops. These assignments include scheduling, cleaning, and securing the building. The stake presidency periodically rotates this responsibility among the bishops whose wards meet in the building.

35.2.9**Ward Building Representative**

The bishopric determines whether to call a ward building representative. If they decide to extend this calling, the bishopric may call an adult male or female member. 🕒 If a ward building representative is not called, the bishop may assign this responsibility to one of his counselors, the ward clerk or an assistant ward clerk, or the executive secretary.

The ward building representative organizes members and volunteers to clean and maintain the building. He or she teaches them how to do each task with the available supplies and equipment.

If needed, he or she receives instruction from the stake building representative in operating sound, heating, air conditioning, and other building systems.

35.2.10**Members**

Under the direction of the bishop, adult and youth leaders encourage members to help with building care and maintenance. The bishopric and the ward building representative adjust tasks according to the skills and abilities of those doing the work. Regular care by members helps Church resources last as long as possible.

35.3**Providing Meetinghouses**

Meetinghouses vary in size and type based on local needs and conditions. A meetinghouse may be a Church-constructed or purchased space, a member's home, a local school or community center, a leased space, or another approved option.

Area and local leaders strive to fully use existing meetinghouses and be wise in recommending

additional space. They follow the “Principles and Guidelines for Providing Meetinghouses” (*Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*).

Leaders prepare master plans annually using the *Meetinghouse Master Planning Guidelines* to ensure that meetinghouse space is adequate. Leaders also use the master plans to evaluate future needs for meeting space additions or redeployment, which is selling or allowing other uses for meetinghouses and property.

For more information, see “Providing Meetinghouses and Other Places of Worship” (*Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*).

**35.3.1****Groundbreaking Services and Dedicating Buildings**

Groundbreaking services may be held before construction. Once complete, new buildings and major additions should be dedicated as soon as possible. Leased spaces may also be dedicated.

For more information, see “Groundbreaking Services” and “Dedicating Buildings” in “Providing Meetinghouses and Other Places of Worship” (*Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*).

35.4**Maintaining Meetinghouses****35.4.1****Cleaning and Maintaining Meetinghouses**

Local leaders and members, including youth, have a responsibility to help keep each building clean and in good condition. This helps:

- Preserve the building's sacred nature as a place where the Spirit can be present.
- Encourage reverence.
- Present an image of dignity and respect.
- Extend the building's useful life.

The cleaning schedule should not be a burden on the members. For example, if travel to the building is challenging, members might clean as part of weekly events when they are already at the building.

For more information, see “Maintaining Meetinghouses” (*Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*).

35.4.2**Requesting Repairs**

Members of ward and stake councils can report needs for building repairs. This can be done by using the Facility Issue Reporting (FIR) tool. FIR enables leaders to submit, track the progress of, and give feedback on repairs and other requests. Council members can also contact the facilities manager for assistance.

FIR is also available as an app in Google Play and the Apple App Store. Instructions for using FIR are available in the Help Center on [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

35.4.3**Meetinghouse Inspection**

Every building is inspected annually by a facilities manager. The intent is to identify long-term building needs and repairs. The facilities manager then discusses inspection results and needed actions with the stake building representative or agent bishop.

35.4.4**Energy and Water Conservation**

The Church strives to conserve water, energy, and other resources. Leaders encourage members to conserve energy and water in the building. For example, when members leave a room, they should turn off lights, water faucets, and heating and cooling equipment or settings used during the meeting or activity. Members report to their leaders any conditions contributing to waste.

Members may also support community-sponsored energy and water conservation projects. These efforts can reduce utility costs.

Leaders and members may contact the facilities manager for more information about water and energy use and conservation.

35.4.5**Safety and Security**

Leaders and members should:

- Keep hallways, stairs, exits, and utility rooms clear for safe entry and exit.
- Not use or store hazardous or flammable materials in buildings.
- Establish and follow building lockup procedures.
- Secure Church-owned equipment from theft.
- Know how to shut off utilities such as water, electricity, and gas or fuel.

As needed, the facilities manager can provide a map showing fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and locations to shut off utilities. More information about safety is available in “Security and Lockup Procedures” in “Maintaining Meetinghouses” (*Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*). See also 20.7.

35.5

Policies on Using Church Meetinghouses

Church meetinghouses are sacred resources that should be used to help God’s children draw closer to Christ. Welcoming people to join us for activities at meetinghouses and using our meetinghouses to bless our communities are ways to “let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

This section contains general policies for meetinghouse use. These policies also apply to all Church-owned property and facilities surrounding the meetinghouse. More information is available in the sources listed in this section.

35.5.1

Basic Principles and Requirements for Using Church Meetinghouses

Church meetinghouses are private religious property dedicated for worship, gospel learning, fellowship, and appropriate activities that help bring people to Christ. The use of Church meetinghouses is a privilege.

All uses of Church meetinghouses must meet the following basic requirements:

- Be consistent with the doctrine, policies, and practices of the Church, including the sacred nature and purposes of Church meetinghouses.
- Be within the bounds of the law.
- Be consistent with the Church’s tax-exempt status where applicable.
- Take appropriate steps to avoid, mitigate, and manage safety risks, including Church guidelines and policies for safeguarding children and youth (see 12.5.1 and 20.7.1)
- Comply with other conditions and limitations provided by the stake president or bishop.

35.5.2

Church Use of Meetinghouses

Church meetings, programs, and activities have priority over other meetinghouse uses if there is a conflict. Church uses include:

- Worship services and other Sabbath meetings.
- Leadership meetings.
- Relief Society meetings and activities.
- Priesthood meetings and activities.
- Primary, Aaronic Priesthood, and Young Women meetings and activities.
- Seminary, institute, young single adult, and single adult meetings and activities.
- Family history work.
- Missionary meetings and events.
- Emergency preparedness activities.

Wards and stakes may also offer other Church programs that benefit members and the community. These include:

- Self-reliance courses.
- Addiction recovery courses.
- EnglishConnect.
- BYU–Pathway Worldwide.

The stake president seeks guidance from the area office to ensure compliance with local law.

For more information, see *A Leader's Guide to Sharing Church Resources*.

In some locations with a high concentration of Church members, a meetinghouse may be used by more than one stake. In such cases, the stake presidents counsel together about the use and scheduling of the building. They may contact the Area Seventy for direction as needed.

Approval from the director for temporal affairs and the Area Presidency is required before using a meetinghouse to establish a gathering place for young single adults where additional nonstandard equipment or resources are being requested. To seek approval, the stake president contacts the facilities manager.

All who use the meetinghouse should show consideration for others. Every effort should be made to accommodate others' needs. Such efforts include scheduling the use of spaces, controlling noise, and keeping use within the scheduled time.

For more information about Church activities, see chapter 20.

35.5.3

Member Use of Meetinghouses—Personal and Family

Members may request to use a meetinghouse within their stake for personal or family activities. To seek approval, they contact a member of the bishopric of a ward that meets in that meetinghouse (or someone he designates). The following conditions apply:

- The use must comply with the basic principles and requirements in 35.5.1.
- The use must be supervised in person by a responsible adult member of a ward that meets in the meetinghouse.

- The use must not interfere with scheduled Church activities.
- Users have full responsibility for any damage to the facilities or any injury or liability in connection with such use.
- Users must clean up and fully restore the facilities to pre-use condition.
- Users must comply with direction and requests from local leaders, including requests by leaders to monitor the use.
- Church leaders may ask any individual or group to stop using the property if they are not complying with guidelines.
- For approved activities, ward and stake leaders should make arrangements for meetinghouse access. Keys to the building should be given only to designated ward or stake members.

See 38.3.4 for use of meetinghouses for weddings and wedding receptions.

See 29.5 for use of meetinghouses for funerals and other services for the deceased.

35.5.4

Use of Church Meetinghouses by Nonprofit Organizations or by Other Groups or Individuals

Area leadership may permit nonprofit organizations, community and other groups (such as sports teams), or individuals not described in 35.5.3 to use Church meetinghouses for wholesome activities or service. The conditions listed in 35.5.3 apply.

To seek area leadership approvals for such use, the stake president contacts the facilities manager.

If area leadership approves a use by a nonprofit organization, a Temporary Use Agreement will be required. This agreement is available from the area office. A certificate of insurance from the nonprofit

organization is also required unless the director for temporal affairs confirms that the Church Risk Management Division has approved an exception.

Groups in the community that are not qualified nonprofits, as well as individuals not described in 35.5.3, must satisfy any requirements communicated through the facilities manager.

35.5.5 Emergencies

Church meetinghouses may be used for essential community service during an emergency. For example, a stake president may allow meetinghouses in his stake to be used by disaster-relief agencies and others in associated efforts (see 35.5.4). In these circumstances, he works with the facilities manager and the welfare and self-reliance manager, as well as with other Church representatives as needed (see 22.9.1.3).

If meetinghouses will be used for emergency purposes, stake leaders are encouraged to coordinate with community leaders.

35.5.6 Meetinghouse Uses That Are Not Allowed

35.5.6.1 Commercial Uses

Church property may not be used for commercial purposes. For example, meetinghouses may not be used to support any kind of business. Nor may resources within meetinghouses, such as bulletin boards, be used to support a business (see 38.8.5). Such use does not align with the purposes of Church properties. It could also conflict with local or national laws that may allow tax exemption of Church property (see 34.8.1).

The following are examples of commercial uses that are not approved:

- Promoting or sponsoring businesses or investments
- Buying, selling, or promoting products, services, publications, or creative works
- Holding unauthorized fundraising activities (see 20.6.5)
- Hosting or accommodating choirs, speakers, instructors, educational groups, or other service providers who receive a fee for seminars, lessons (except for private piano or organ instruction; see 19.7.2), classes, or other activities
- Renting space for weddings or wedding-related events

35.5.6.2 Homeschooling and Childcare Uses

The Church strongly supports education and families. However, meetinghouses are not used for homeschooling or as childcare facilities.

Adherence to this policy will promote safety and avoid tax liabilities for the Church.

35.5.6.3 Political Purposes

The Church is politically neutral. Church property may not be used for political or advocacy purposes. Prohibited activities include political meetings and use by political campaigns and advocacy groups. Announcements related to political purposes may not be made on Church property, such as on bulletin boards.

However, using properties for voter registration or voting may be allowed as an exception (see 38.8.30). The stake president may obtain such an exception through the facilities manager (see 35.5.4).

35.5.6.4**Other Uses**

The following uses of Church meetinghouse property are generally not approved:

- Providing overnight shelter (except in emergencies; see 35.5.5)
- Camping
- Renting or leasing Church buildings and properties

These guidelines apply to the meetinghouse itself as well as to all Church-owned property and facilities surrounding the meetinghouse. If the stake president feels an exception may be warranted, he may request it through the facilities manager. For example, an exception may be granted to use a meetinghouse to assist members traveling long distances for temple trips.

35.5.7**Other Policies and Standards That Apply to All Uses****35.5.7.1****Chapels**

Chapels are rooms where members worship and partake of the sacrament. Meetings and activities held in chapels should be in harmony with these purposes. For guidelines about holding cultural arts events, concerts, and other presentations in chapels, see 19.3.5.

35.5.7.2**Firearms and Weapons**

Firearms and other lethal weapons are not allowed on Church property. This includes concealed weapons. This does not apply to current law enforcement officers.

35.5.7.3**Kitchens and Serving Areas**

Kitchens and serving areas may be used to serve meals and refreshments and to keep food warm or cold.

In some locations, food preparation in kitchens is allowed. However, in the United States, Canada, and some other countries, food-handling regulations often require certification, commercial equipment, or government inspection. In these areas, food should be prepared elsewhere and brought to the meetinghouse. Food preparation demonstrations are an exception and are allowed even where these regulations exist. Facilities managers can provide guidance for each area.

For more information, see safety.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

**35.5.7.4****Parking Lots**

Use of Church parking lots should comply with the guidelines in this chapter. In addition, parking lots should not be used for commuter parking or other similar uses without permission from the director for temporal affairs. Leaders may contact the facilities manager with requests. Personal vehicles and other personal equipment may not be stored on Church property.

For more information about parking lots and accessible parking, see “Meetinghouse Parking Lots” (*Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*).

35.5.7.5

Storage

Only maintenance equipment and approved supplies may be stored in buildings. Welfare items may be stored in meetinghouses during emergencies (see 35.5.5). Leaders may contact the facilities manager with questions.

35.5.7.6

Additional Information

More information about using Church property is available at “Other Information Related to Meetinghouse Facilities” (*Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*). This resource includes information and instructions about artwork, decorations, equipment, flags, fees, signs, use of vacant Church property, and other topics.

For policies about recreational property use, see “Recreational Camps” (*Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*).



36.

Creating, Changing, and Naming New Units

36.0

Introduction

Church members belong to congregations based on where they live (see Mosiah 25:17–24). These congregations are necessary for organizing and doing the work of the Church under the proper priesthood authority. Leaders of congregations are given priesthood keys to authorize the performance of priesthood ordinances. Congregations also help members strengthen each other's faith as they worship God, learn the teachings of Jesus Christ, and serve.

Church congregations (also called units) include stakes, districts, wards, and branches. They are created, changed, or discontinued only as needed.

Leaders work to increase the spiritual strength of members before proposing to create a new unit

or change a unit's boundary. New units should be created only when the existing units are sufficiently strong.

For support in the United States and Canada, call 1-801-240-1007. Outside the United States and Canada, call the area office.

36.1

Creating or Changing Stakes and Districts

Stakes are created from districts or by dividing existing stakes. A stake or mission president may propose creating a new stake. He first ensures that it will meet the minimum requirements shown in the following table.

Minimum Requirements to Create a Stake

Number of members (active and less active)	2,000
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	150
Number of participating adults*	500
Number of participating youth (recommended, not required)*	100
Number of wards	5

* For more information, see “Boundary and Leadership Proposals.”

Districts are created from branches in a mission or an existing stake. There is not a minimum number of members or branches needed to create a district.

A district must have the level of strength needed for a stake for at least six months before a mission president can propose making it a stake.

Boundaries of a stake or district follow the boundaries of the units that are within it. To propose changing stake or district boundaries or transferring a unit to a neighboring stake or district, the stake or mission presidents involved plan and coordinate the recommendation.

A stake or mission president starts a new proposal at “Boundary and Leadership Proposals.” If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link.

Approval of proposed stake changes comes from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. Generally, a decision can take up to eight weeks after receiving a completed proposal.

36.2

Creating or Changing Wards and Branches in Stakes

Wards and branches in stakes are created from existing units. A stake president may propose creating a new ward or branch in the stake. He first ensures that the new unit will meet the minimum requirements shown in the following table.

Minimum Requirements to Create a Ward or Branch in a Stake

	Ward	Branch
Number of members (active and less active)	250	20
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	20	4
Number of participating adults*	100	No minimum
Number of participating youth (recommended, not required)*	20	No minimum

* For more information, see “Boundary and Leadership Proposals.”

A stake president may propose changing a branch into a ward when the unit meets the minimum requirements and he has identified a candidate who could serve as bishop.

A stake president may propose realigning or discontinuing wards and branches when there is a clear need.

A stake president starts a new proposal at “Boundary and Leadership Proposals.” If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link.

Approval of proposed ward or branch changes comes from the First Presidency. Generally, a decision can take up to six weeks after receiving a completed proposal.

36.3

Creating or Changing Branches in Missions

A mission president may propose creating new branches in a mission. There is not a minimum number of members needed to create a branch in a mission. However, new branches generally should have at least four priesthood holders. At least one should be an active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

A mission president starts a new proposal at “Boundary and Leadership Proposals.” If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link.

The Area Presidency may give final approval or denial of a mission president’s proposal to:

- Create and name a new branch in a mission.
- Discontinue a branch in a mission.
- Change branch boundaries in a mission if the change does not affect a stake, a district, or another mission.

The Area Presidency must submit the approved proposal to Church headquarters for processing before the branch can be created or changed in the Church’s systems.

The Area Presidency may endorse *but not give final approval* of a mission president’s proposal to:

- Transfer a branch to another stake, district, or mission.
- Change the name of an existing branch in a mission.
- Change branch boundaries in a mission if the change would affect a stake, a district, or another mission.
- Create or change a mission branch for young single adults or single adults; members who speak a language other than the language of their unit; members who use sign language; members who are in care centers, treatment programs, or prisons; or members in the military.

In these situations, the Area Presidency reviews the proposal, and if they endorse it, they submit it for approval. Approval of proposed branch changes comes from the First Presidency. Generally, a decision can take up to six weeks after receiving a completed proposal.



36.4**Naming Church Units**

The name of a unit should help identify it to those who live in the area. Generally, the names of existing units should not be changed.

If a unit name needs to be changed because of a boundary realignment, the stake or mission president starts a new proposal by using the online system at Boundary and Leadership Proposals. If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link.

Only the First Presidency can approve these proposals.

Area Presidencies may approve proposals to create and name new branches in missions (see 36.3).

36.4.1**Naming Stakes and Districts**

The first word in the stake or district name is one of the following:

- The city in which the stake or district headquarters is located
- Another city in the stake or district that is well known to the members
- A geographic feature within the stake or district boundaries

In the United States and Canada, the second word is the state or province in which the stake or district is located. In other countries, the second word is the name of the country.

When more than one stake or district is in the same city, the third word is an identifying characteristic within the unit boundaries. Some allowable identifying characteristics for stake and district names are shown below:

- Compass directions (north, south, east, or west)
- Community or neighborhood
- Geographic feature

Some identifying characteristics that are *not* allowed for stake and district names are shown below:

- Other directional terms (for example, southwest)
- Names of people

When the name of a city is the same as the state, province, or country, it is not repeated in the name. For example:

- Idaho Falls Taylor Mountain Stake, *not* Idaho Falls Idaho Taylor Mountain Stake
- México City Azteca Stake, *not* México City México Azteca Stake

36.4.2**Naming Wards and Branches**

A ward or branch is named after an identifying characteristic within its boundaries. Some allowable identifying characteristics for ward and branch names are shown below:

- City
- Community or neighborhood
- Street
- Park
- School
- Geographic feature

Some identifying characteristics that are *not* allowed for ward and branch names are shown below:

- Compass directions (for example, east or northwest)

- Names of people
- Names based only on a view (for example, Temple View, Mountain View, or River View)
- Combining two names to create a new name

The name of only one identifying characteristic is used in the ward or branch name. If there is more than one ward or branch with the same name, a number is added as part of the name, such as Preston 1st Ward and Preston 2nd Ward.

The name of the ward or branch should be in the language of the area. If the language does not use the Roman alphabet, a translation using Roman characters should be included in the application.

36.5

Implementing Proposed Changes

36.5.1

Stake and District Changes

The approval letter for creating or discontinuing a stake or district generally indicates the date the changes will be made. This date should not be announced until the assigned General Authority discusses the details with the stake or mission president. The actual changes are not announced until the stake or district conference.

Stake or mission presidents notify Church headquarters or their area office after the changes have been made.

36.5.2

Ward and Branch Changes

After a stake or mission president receives approval for ward or branch changes, he generally has 90 days to present the changes to be sustained by the members. If he needs to delay longer than 90 days, he requests permission from the Office of the First Presidency.

Stake or mission presidents implement the proposal in LCR once the changes have been made. For help in the United States and Canada, call 801-240-6243 or email oiservices@ChurchofJesusChrist.org. For help outside the United States and Canada, contact the area office. Maps and units are not updated until they are recorded by Church headquarters.



36.6

Basic Unit Program

The Church has developed the Basic Unit Program for use by some small branches or small authorized gatherings of members, known as groups (see 37.7 for more information on groups). An Area Presidency may authorize the use of the Basic Unit Program in groups or branches where any of the following conditions apply:

- The Church is in its beginning stages.
- Members are scattered geographically.
- The number of members is small, and leadership is just beginning to develop.
- Members have special language needs.
- Members are in the military (see 38.9.4 for reasons a service member group might be created).
- Members are in care centers, treatment programs, or prisons.

Area Presidencies and other leaders emphasize that units using the Basic Unit Program should not

expand organizations, meetings, and programs too quickly. Leadership is best cultivated when Church resources are in proper balance with members' circumstances and needs.

Leaders also share the following principles with groups and branches using the Basic Unit Program:

- Seek inspiration from the Spirit to know what to do and how to do it.
- Teach the basic doctrine and principles of the gospel.
- Help members (1) understand and receive essential priesthood ordinances and (2) make and keep the associated covenants.

These units can hold Church meetings in a home, a rented building, or a Church-owned building (see 35.3). The mission, stake, or district presidency can

provide information on obtaining and maintaining a meeting place for the group or branch.

If the group or branch has very few members, they hold only a sacrament meeting and a gospel instruction period for all members. For gospel instruction, members use the scriptures and *Come, Follow Me—For Home and Church*. If the scriptures have not yet been translated into the language the members speak, members use the *Gospel Fundamentals* manual for gospel instruction. As the Church grows, more translations of the scriptures, hymns and songs, and Church magazines will become available.

As the unit grows, Church leaders should organize an elders quorum and a Relief Society (see 8.3.3 and 9.3.2). As the number of members and potential leaders increases, the branch president may organize Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School organizations (see 10.3, 11.3.2, 12.3.2, and 13.2.2).



37.

Specialized Stakes, Wards, and Branches

37.0

Introduction

A stake president may propose creating specialized stakes, wards, and branches to serve members as outlined in this chapter. For information about creating specialized units in a mission, see 36.3.

A stake president starts a new proposal at Boundary and Leadership Proposals. If he cannot use the online system, he can download paper forms by clicking on the link. Only the First Presidency can approve the proposal.

For support in the United States and Canada, call 1-801-240-1007. Outside the United States and Canada, call the area office.

37.1

Language Wards and Branches

A stake president may propose creating a language ward or branch for stake members who:

- Speak a language other than the language of their unit.
- Use sign language.

Where there are not enough members in one of these circumstances to create a separate branch, a stake president may propose creating a group (see 37.7).

A stake president may also propose creating a language ward or branch that includes members from one or more neighboring stakes. The stake presidents involved plan and coordinate the recommendation. One of the participating stakes will be responsible for the ward or branch.

A mission president may propose creating a language branch or group to address these same circumstances (see 36.3 and 37.7).

Minimum Requirements to Create a Language Ward or Branch in a Stake

	Ward	Branch
Number of members (active and less active)	125	No minimum
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	15	4

Boundaries for language units generally follow the boundaries of geographic wards, branches, and stakes.

The children and youth of a language unit may combine classes with a geographic unit if desired (see 29.2.8).

See 36.3 for language branches in a mission. See 36.4.2 for ward and branch naming guidelines.

For support regarding the creation of a language *stake* in the United States and Canada, call 1-801-240-1007. Outside the United States and Canada, call the area office.



37.1.1

Membership in a Language Ward or Branch

- Members must live within the boundaries of the language ward or branch.
- Members may choose to be members of the language unit or their geographic unit.

- Each person's membership record should be in the unit he or she is attending.

37.1.2

Leadership in a Language Ward or Branch

- Generally, the bishop or branch president and his counselors are called from within the boundaries of the language unit. Exceptions may be made for leaders who do not live within the unit's boundaries if they live within the stake that is responsible for it.
- First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop.
- Generally, other leaders and teachers are called from among the membership of the ward or branch.

37.2

Young Single Adult Wards and Branches in a Geographic Stake

A stake president may propose creating a young single adult ward or branch (for members ages 18–35) if the stake has enough active young single adults who would like to attend. The following should be considered:

- The effect on the personal progress and spiritual development of the young single adults.

This includes their ability to participate in all aspects of God’s work of salvation and exaltation (see 1.2).

- The effect on the geographic units from which the young single adult unit will draw members.
- The travel time and expense required of young single adults and leaders.

In areas where it can be supported, stake presidents may request creating two young single adult units for members of the following ages:

- 18–25
- 26–35

Generally, the two young single adult units for members in these age ranges will serve the same geographic area. The units will overlay each other on the map.

Stake presidents may also propose creating a ward or branch that includes members from one or more neighboring stakes. Stake presidents should consider whether multistake activities would meet the needs of young single adults better than creating a ward or branch. One of the participating stakes will be responsible for the ward or branch.

A geographic stake with boundaries that overlap those of a young single adult stake should not have its own young single adult unit.

Minimum Requirements to Create a Young Single Adult Unit in a Stake

	Ward	Branch
Number of <i>active</i> members	125	50
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	15	4

A young single adult ward usually should not have more than 225 *active* members.

See 36.4.2 for ward and branch naming guidelines.

37.2.1

Membership in a Young Single Adult Ward or Branch in a Geographic Stake

- Members must be young single adults (ages 18–35) who live within the boundaries of the young single adult ward or branch.
- Young single adults may choose to be members of the young single adult unit or their geographic unit.
- Each person’s membership record should be in the unit he or she is attending.

- If the stake president feels that it would help a less-active young single adult in his stake, he may approve transferring the membership record from the geographic unit to the young single adult unit. When the less-active member becomes active, he or she may choose to attend the young single adult unit or the geographic unit.
- Young single adult parents (ages 18–35) who have children at home remain in their geographic unit. The parents may attend the activities of the young single adult unit.
- Members do not attend a young single adult unit when they marry or reach age 36. See 37.5 for single adult members ages 36–45.

- Young single adults who attend a unit for those ages 18–25 would move to a unit for those ages 26–35 when they reach age 26.

- Other leaders and teachers are called from among the young single adults who are members of the unit.

37.2.2

Leadership in a Young Single Adult Ward or Branch in a Geographic Stake

- The bishop or branch president should be a married man of mature judgment and experience. First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop. Generally, the bishop or branch president lives within the boundaries of the young single adult unit. Exceptions may be made for young single adult units that serve universities and colleges.
- The bishop’s counselors may be members of the unit. Or they may be other single or married men who live within the unit boundaries. They must be high priests. If a man called as a counselor in a bishopric is not a high priest, the stake president ensures that he is ordained a high priest before setting him apart.
- A branch president and his counselors may be high priests or elders.

37.3

Young Single Adult Stakes and Their Wards and Branches

Where large numbers of young single adults live in one area, usually near universities or colleges, one or more young single adult stakes may be organized.

In areas where it can be supported, stake presidents may request creating two young single adult units for members of the following ages:

- 18–25
- 26–35

Generally, the two young single adult units for members in these age ranges will serve the same geographic area. The units will overlay each other on the map.

Minimum Requirements to Create a Young Single Adult Stake, Ward, or Branch

Young single adult stake	• 1,500 members (active and less active) • 5 wards
Young single adult ward in a young single adult stake	• 125 members (active) • 15 active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders who are capable of serving in leadership positions
Young single adult branch in a young single adult stake	• 50 members (active) • 4 active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders who are capable of serving in leadership positions

A geographic stake with boundaries that overlap those of a young single adult stake should not have its own young single adult unit.

A young single adult unit that is in a geographic stake may be transferred to a young single adult stake only when:

- Its boundaries are adjacent to the young single adult stake.
- The presidents of both stakes recommend the transfer.

See 36.4.1 and 36.4.2 for stake and ward naming guidelines.

37.3.1

Membership in a Young Single Adult Stake and Its Wards or Branches

- Members must be young single adults (ages 18–35) who live within the boundaries of the young single adult ward or branch.
- All active and less-active young single adults within the stake boundaries who are not living at home with their parents are members of the young single adult stake unless they choose to attend their geographic unit.
- Young single adults who live at home with their parents may choose to be members of the young single adult unit or their geographic unit.
- Each person's membership record should be in the unit he or she is attending.
- Young single adult parents (ages 18–35) who have children at home remain in their geographic unit. The parents may attend the activities of the young single adult unit.
- Members do not attend a young single adult unit when they marry or reach age 36. See 37.5 for single adult members (ages 36–45).

- Young single adults who attend a unit for those ages 18–25 would move to a unit for those ages 26–35 when they reach age 26.

37.3.2

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

- The stake president, stake patriarch, bishops, and branch presidents should be married men of mature judgment and experience. First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop. They may be called from outside the boundaries of the stake as determined by the Area Presidency. Those who extend such callings first consult with the person's stake president to obtain approval. For guidelines, see chapter 30.
- The stake president's counselors, high councilors, bishopric counselors, and branch presidency counselors may be single or married men. Stake Relief Society presidents and counselors may be single or married women. Stake Sunday School presidents and counselors may be single or married men. These leaders may be members of the stake. Or they may be called from outside the boundaries of the stake as determined by the Area Presidency.
- A bishop's counselors must be high priests. If a man called as a counselor in a bishopric is not a high priest, the stake president ensures that he is ordained a high priest before setting him apart. A branch president and his counselors may be high priests or elders.
- Quorum of the Twelve approval is required before calling a patriarch.
- In wards and branches, other leaders and teachers are called from among the young single adults who are members of the unit.

37.4

Married Student Stakes and Wards

Married student stakes and wards may be created to serve the married student members who live close to a university or college.

Minimum Requirements to Create a Married Student Stake or Ward

Married student stake	• 1,500 members (active and less active) • 5 wards
Married student ward	• 125 members (active and less active) • 15 active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders who are capable of serving in leadership positions

See 36.4.1 and 36.4.2 for stake and ward naming guidelines.

37.4.1

Membership in Married Student Stakes and Wards

- Members must be married students who live within the boundaries of the married student ward.
- Married students may choose to be members of the married student ward or their geographic unit.
- Membership records should be in the unit the family is attending.

37.4.2

Leadership in Married Student Stakes and Wards

See 37.3.2 and apply the same guidelines.

37.5

Single Adult Wards

Generally, single adult members (ages 36–45) are best served in geographic units. As an exception, a stake president may suggest creating a single adult ward.

A stake president may also suggest creating a single adult ward with members from one or more neighboring stakes. The stake presidents involved plan and coordinate the recommendation. One of the participating stakes will be responsible for the ward.

Minimum Requirements to Create a Single Adult Ward in a Stake

Number of members (active and less active)	125
Number of active, full-tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders capable of serving in leadership positions	15

See 36.4.2 for ward naming guidelines.

37.5.1

Membership in a Single Adult Ward

- Members must be single adults (ages 36–45) who live within the boundaries of the single adult ward.
- Single adults may choose to be members of the single adult ward or their geographic unit.
- Each person's membership record should be in the unit he or she is attending.
- Single adult parents (ages 36–45) who have children at home remain in their geographic unit. The parents may attend the activities of the single adult ward.
- Members do not attend a single adult ward when they marry or reach age 46.

37.5.2

Leadership in a Single Adult Ward

- The bishop should be a married high priest of mature judgment and experience. First Presidency approval is required before calling a bishop.
- A bishop's counselors may be members of the unit. Or they may be other single or married men who live within the unit boundaries. They must be high priests. If a man called as a counselor in a bishopric is not a high priest, the stake president ensures that he is ordained a high priest before setting him apart.
- Other leaders and teachers are called from among the single adults who are members of the ward.

37.6

Wards and Branches for Members in Special Circumstances

A stake president may suggest creating wards or branches for members in special circumstances, such as those who are in care centers, treatment programs, or prisons.

Generally, leaders who are called to serve in these units should live within the stake that is responsible for the unit.

See 36.3 for information about branches in a mission for young single adults or single adults; members who do not speak the local native language; members who are in care centers, treatment programs, or prisons; or members in the military.

See 36.4.2 for ward and branch naming guidelines.



37.7

Groups in Stakes, Missions, and Areas

Groups are small authorized gatherings of members overseen by a bishop, branch president, or mission president. The stake or mission president

may recommend creating a group in the following circumstances:

- Travel for its potential members to meet with a ward or branch is difficult.
- A small number of members speak a language other than the language of their unit, including sign language.
- Members in the military are best served by being in a group (see 38.9.4).

To propose creating a group, the stake or mission president submits a request to the Area Presidency. Only the Area Presidency can approve the request.

A group must have at least two members. One must be a worthy priest in the Aaronic Priesthood or a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

In stakes, the stake president assigns a bishop or branch president to organize and supervise the group. In missions, the mission president assigns a branch president to organize and supervise it.

Generally, a group can be created to serve members who live in one or more units within a stake or district. Group membership is limited to those who live within the boundaries of the participating unit or units. Groups do not cross stake or district boundaries.

The stake president, mission president, bishop, or branch president calls a group leader and sets him apart. The group leader organizes and conducts

group meetings, which include the administration of the sacrament.

A group leader does not hold priesthood keys, and he is not authorized to:

- Receive tithes and offerings.
- Counsel members about serious sin.
- Give informal or formal membership restrictions.
- Perform other duties that require priesthood keys.

Typically, groups use the Basic Unit Program (see 36.6).

Membership records of group members are kept in the ward or branch that supervises the group.

Church headquarters does not assign a unit number to groups.

When a group qualifies, the stake or mission president may propose for it to become a branch.

37.8

Church Units at Military Installations

For instructions on creating wards, branches, and service member groups that meet on military installations, see 38.9.4.

38.

Church Policies and Guidelines

38.1

Church Participation

Our Father in Heaven loves His children. “All are alike unto God,” and He invites all “to come unto him and partake of his goodness” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Church leaders and members are often asked who can attend meetings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who can become Church members, and who can attend a temple.

38.1.1

Attendance at Church Meetings

The Savior taught that His disciples should love their neighbors (see Matthew 22:39). Paul invited new converts to “no more be strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints” (Ephesians 2:19). The Savior also taught that Church members are not to “cast any one out from . . . public meetings, which are held before the world” (Doctrine and Covenants 46:3).

All are welcome to attend sacrament meeting, other Sunday meetings, and social events of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The presiding officer is responsible to ensure that all who attend are respectful of the sacred setting.

Those who attend should avoid disruptions or distractions contrary to worship or other purposes of the meeting. All age and behavior requirements of different Church meetings and events should be respected. That requires refraining from overt romantic behavior and from dress or grooming that causes distraction. It also precludes making political statements or speaking of sexual orientation or other personal characteristics in a way that detracts from meetings focused on the Savior.

If there is inappropriate behavior, the bishop or stake president gives private counsel in a spirit of love. He encourages those whose behavior is improper for the occasion to focus on helping maintain a sacred space for everyone present with a special emphasis on worshipping Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Church meetinghouses remain private property subject to Church policies. Persons unwilling to follow these guidelines will be asked in a respectful way not to attend Church meetings and events.

38.1.2

Becoming a Church Member

Membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is available to people who “come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits,” “are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ,” and desire to make and keep sacred baptismal covenants (Doctrine and Covenants 20:37).

For baptism of minor children ages 8 and older, see 38.2.8.2.

38.1.3

Temple Worship

Temples are holy places of worship in which essential ordinances are received and sacred covenants are made. To members of the Church, temples are houses of God. Because of this sacredness and the covenants made, only members of the Church with a current temple recommend may worship in the temple. Members may receive a temple recommend when they faithfully keep the required commandments and live the gospel of Jesus Christ. (See chapter 26.)

38.1.4**Unmarried Member Participation and Blessings**

All members, even if they have never married or are without family in the Church, should strive for the ideal of living in an eternal family. This means preparing to be sealed as a worthy husband or wife and to become a loving father or mother. For some, these blessings will not be fulfilled until the next life, but the ultimate goal is the same for all.

Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, provided they keep the covenants they have made with God (see Mosiah 2:41).

38.1.5**Unwed Parents under Age 18**

An unwed young man under age 18 who is going to become a father may participate in his Aaronic Priesthood quorum or in the elders quorum. This decision is left to the prayerful discretion of the young man, his parents, and the bishop.

An unwed young woman under age 18 who is going to become a mother may participate in Young Women or in Relief Society. This decision is left to the prayerful discretion of the young woman, her parents, and the bishop.

In making this decision, youth, parents, and leaders consider the following:

- If the youth participates in youth classes and activities, the child should not accompany him or her.
- Older youth who choose to raise the child may benefit from being welcomed into the elders quorum as prospective elders or into Relief Society.

38.2**Policies for Ordinances and Blessings**

This section gives policies for ordinances and blessings. Some of these policies involve special circumstances. General information about ordinances and blessings is provided in chapter 18. Information about temple ordinances is provided in chapters 27 and 28.

38.2.1**Interpreting Ordinances and Blessings into Another Language**

It is important that a person who receives an ordinance or blessing understands what is said. If necessary, a presiding leader may ask someone to interpret an ordinance or blessing into a language that the recipient understands. This includes sign language interpretation.

If a person receiving an ordinance or blessing is deaf or hard of hearing, he or she may use a voice-to-text application. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may also use sign language interpretation or a voice-to-text application to understand the blessings given to their family members.

For information about written translations of patriarchal blessings, see 38.2.10.5. For information about sign language interpretation of patriarchal blessings, see 38.2.10.6.

38.2.2**Photographs, Recordings, and Transcriptions of Ordinances and Blessings**

Ordinances and blessings are sacred. For this reason, no one should take photographs or make video recordings of ordinances, blessings, or baptismal services.

A family may make an audio recording and transcription of father's blessings. These blessings are described in 18.14.1.

Patriarchal blessings are transcribed. To facilitate this, the patriarch or his scribe makes an audio recording of the blessing.

Other ordinances and blessings should not be recorded or transcribed.

For information about streaming ordinances, see 38.2.3.

38.2.3

Streaming Ordinances

When possible, those who want to view an ordinance should strive to attend in person. When members and friends gather for an ordinance, they feel the influence of the Spirit and fellowship with one another.

However, when a close family member is not able to attend in person, the bishop or stake president may authorize streaming the ordinance to him or her. Streaming is permitted, for example, when the close family member:

- Lives in a remote location or has limited ability to travel.
- Has physical, mental, or emotional health challenges.
- Is immunocompromised or in a care facility or hospital.
- Needs sign-language interpretation.
- Is serving a full-time mission. (The mission president's approval is required.)

The bishop may authorize the streaming of baby blessings, baptisms, confirmations, and Aaronic Priesthood ordinations. The stake president may authorize the streaming of Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations and the setting apart of missionaries.

The ordinance of the sacrament is not streamed. If a sacrament meeting is being livestreamed, the stream should be paused during the administration of the sacrament. The bishop may authorize a priest or Melchizedek Priesthood holder to administer the sacrament in person to those who cannot attend the meeting (see 18.9.1).

Streaming of ordinances should not distract from the Spirit. Generally, only one device should be used. It is operated by the ward or stake technology specialist. Both the device and the person using it should be inconspicuous.

Streams of ordinances should be deleted within one day after the ordinance.

38.2.4

Ordinances for Those Who Have Intellectual Disabilities

When considering whether to perform ordinances for a person who has an intellectual disability, the individual, his or her parents or guardians (where applicable), and leaders counsel together. They prayerfully consider the person's desire and degree of understanding. Ordinances should not be withheld if the person is worthy, wants to receive them, and shows sufficient responsibility and accountability.

The bishop may counsel with the stake president if he has questions about specific persons. The stake president may contact the Office of the First Presidency if necessary.

Individuals whose disabilities make them not accountable are "saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven" (Doctrine and Covenants 137:10). For this reason, ordinances are not needed or performed for them. The only exception is sealing to parents for those who were not born in the covenant.

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

- For baptism and confirmation, 38.2.8.1
- For ordination to a priesthood office, 38.2.9.7
- For a patriarchal blessing, 38.2.10.1
- For the temple endowment and sealing, 27.2.1.3 and 27.3.1.2

38.2.5

Ordinances and Blessings Performed by and for Those Who Have Physical Disabilities

Persons who have physical disabilities, such as the loss of limbs, paralysis, or deafness, may perform and receive ordinances and blessings. Leaders make arrangements so these persons can participate to the extent possible. If leaders have questions they cannot resolve, the stake president contacts the Office of the First Presidency.

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may communicate through sign language when performing or receiving an ordinance or blessing. A priesthood leader who oversees an ordinance ensures that the recipient understands it through an interpreter or by other means (see 38.2.1).

38.2.6

Validating or Ratifying Ordinances

The information below gives reasons an ordinance would not be valid. It also describes how to validate or ratify the ordinance.

In some cases, an ordinance must be performed again. When this happens with a baptism and confirmation or a priesthood ordination, a clerk records the new date on the membership record, even if it is out of sequence with the dates of other ordinances.

Members may not repeat living temple ordinances without First Presidency approval (see 38.2.6.2).

38.2.6.1

A Membership Record Was Not Created or the Year Is Missing or Incorrect

For record-keeping purposes, a baptism and confirmation or a priesthood ordination is considered not valid if the year it was performed is missing or incorrect on the membership record. In addition, a baptism is not valid if a membership record was not created. The ordinance can be validated with the original certificate that was issued when the ordinance was performed. With this certificate, the bishop can authorize a clerk to update the membership record.

If the certificate cannot be found, the baptism and confirmation or the priesthood ordination can be validated with the testimony of two people who witnessed it. The two witnesses should:

- Have been 8 years old or older when the ordinance was performed.
- Have seen or heard the ordinance.
- Be Church members of record at the time they give their testimony.
- Give their testimony in writing, stating either (1) the complete date the ordinance was performed or (2) the year it was performed and the person who performed it.
- Sign their testimony in the presence of a member of the bishopric or stake presidency.

With this testimony, the bishop can authorize a clerk to create or update the membership record. The written testimony may then be discarded.

If the certificate or witnesses cannot be found, the baptism and confirmation or the priesthood ordination must be performed again or ratified by the First Presidency.

If the member has received other ordinances after the invalid ordinance, they must be ratified by the

First Presidency. The stake president uses LCR to submit the request.

For information about validating an ordinance that a member received in the temple, see 38.2.6.2.

38.2.6.2

A Living Person's Temple Ordinance Information Is Incorrect or Missing from His or Her Membership Record

If a living person's temple ordinance information is incorrect or missing from his or her membership record, local leaders should record the date and, if available, the location of the original ordinance using LCR. The Temple Department then verifies the temple ordinance and connects it to the membership record.

If the temple ordinance cannot be verified, the Temple Department will contact the Office of the First Presidency and give instruction to the local leader.

Members may not repeat a living temple ordinance without First Presidency approval.

38.2.6.3

Ordinances Were Received out of Sequence

An ordinance is not valid if a person received it out of sequence. For example, a man's endowment is not valid if he received it before receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood. However, the First Presidency may ratify such an ordinance. The stake president uses LCR to submit the request.

38.2.6.4

The Ordinance Was Performed before the Appropriate Age

An ordinance is not valid if it was performed before the appropriate age. For example, a baptism is not

valid if it was performed before the person was 8 years old.

If no other ordinances were received after the invalid ordinance, a baptism and confirmation or a priesthood ordination should be performed again or ratified by the First Presidency. Members may not repeat a living temple ordinance without First Presidency approval (see 38.2.6.2).

If other ordinances were received, those and the invalid ordinance must be ratified by the First Presidency. The stake president uses LCR to submit the request.

38.2.6.5

The Ordinance Was Performed without the Proper Authority

An ordinance is not valid if it was performed by someone who did not have the proper priesthood authority. For example, a confirmation is not valid if it was performed by someone who did not hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. Similarly, it is not valid if the person performing it received the Melchizedek Priesthood out of sequence or without proper approval (see 38.2.6.3; see also 32.17).

If no other ordinances were received after the invalid ordinance, it should be performed again by someone with the proper authority. If other ordinances were received, those and the invalid ordinance must be ratified by the First Presidency. To request this, the stake president sends a letter to the Office of the First Presidency. In some cases, the First Presidency may instruct that ordinances be performed again.

38.2.7

Naming and Blessing Children

For general information about naming and blessing children, see 18.6.

38.2.7.1**Babies Who Are Critically Ill**

If a newborn is critically ill, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder may perform the naming and blessing in the hospital or at home. He does not need authorization from the bishop. After giving the blessing, he notifies the bishop promptly so a membership record can be created for the child.

38.2.7.2**Children Whose Parents Are Not Married (Including Divorced)**

A child may be blessed when the bishop obtains verbal permission from the parents or guardians. Permission is not required from a parent or guardian who has no legal basis for opposing the blessing.

38.2.7.3**Children Whose Parents Are Not Members of the Church**

Sometimes a child's parents or guardians request that the child be blessed even though they are not members of the Church. When this happens, the bishop obtains verbal permission from the parents or guardians. Permission is not required from a parent or guardian who has no legal basis for opposing the blessing.

The bishop explains that:

- A membership record will be created for the child.
- Ward members will contact them periodically.
- He or other ward leaders will propose that the child prepare to be baptized as he or she approaches age 8.

38.2.8**Baptism and Confirmation**

For general information about baptism and confirmation, see 18.7 and 18.8.

38.2.8.1**Persons with Intellectual Disabilities**

A person with an intellectual disability may be baptized and confirmed if he or she can reasonably be considered accountable. He or she should be able to understand and keep the covenants of baptism.

The bishop holds the keys for the person's baptism if he or she is:

- A member of record age 8 or older.
- Age 8 and has at least one member parent or guardian (see 18.7.1.1).

The person, his or her parents or guardians (where applicable), and the bishop counsel together to determine whether the person should be baptized and confirmed.

If the person is a potential convert, the mission president holds the keys for his or her baptism (see 18.7.1.2). In this case, the missionaries inform the mission president. He counsels with the person and his or her parents or guardians (where applicable) to determine whether he or she should be baptized and confirmed. If the bishop knows the person well, the mission president may also seek his input.

Those who are not accountable do not need to be baptized, regardless of age (see Doctrine and Covenants 29:46–50 and 38.2.4 in this handbook).

For information about the membership records of persons who may not be accountable, see 33.6.10.

38.2.8.2**Minors**

A minor, as defined by local laws, may be baptized when both of the following conditions are met:

1. The parents or legal guardians give permission. Permission is not required from a parent or guardian who has no legal basis for opposing the baptism. Exceptions require the approval of the First Presidency.

The person who conducts the baptism and confirmation interview asks for this permission to be in writing if he feels it will help prevent misunderstandings. In some locations, written permission is required. Mission and area leaders can provide guidance.

Parents or guardians should understand the doctrine their child will be taught. They should also be willing to support the child in making and keeping the baptismal covenant.

2. The person who conducts the interview discerns that the child understands the baptismal covenant. He should feel confident that the child will strive to keep this covenant by obeying the commandments, including attending Church meetings.

If a child goes by the surname of his or her stepfather, the child may be baptized and confirmed in that name. This is true even if he or she has not been formally adopted. However, the child's legal name, as defined by local law or custom, should be recorded on the membership record and the baptism and confirmation certificate.

38.2.8.3**Persons Who Are Married**

A married person must have the consent of his or her spouse before being baptized.

38.2.8.4**Persons Who Are Cohabiting**

A couple living together but not married must commit to living the law of chastity before either of them can be baptized. This includes exercising faith unto repentance as described in Doctrine and Covenants 20:37. It also includes no longer living together or, in the case of a man and a woman, getting married.

38.2.8.5**Persons Whose Church Membership Was Withdrawn or Who Resigned Membership**

Persons whose Church membership was withdrawn or who resigned membership may be readmitted by baptism and confirmation. They are not considered converts. Missionaries do not interview them for baptism. For instructions, see 32.16.

38.2.8.6**Situations That Require Authorization from the Mission President or First Presidency**

Authorization from the mission president is required before a person can be baptized if he or she has ever:

- Committed a serious crime (see 38.2.8.7).
- Participated in an abortion (see 38.6.1).

In these cases, the mission president interviews the person. If necessary, the mission president may authorize one of his counselors to conduct the interview. He gives this authorization separately for each interview. The counselor who conducts it reports to the mission president, who may then authorize or deny the baptism and confirmation.

Approval from the First Presidency is required before a person can be baptized and confirmed if he or she:

- Has committed murder (see 38.2.8.7).

- Has been convicted of a crime involving sexual misconduct (see 38.2.8.7).
- Is currently on legal probation or parole for any serious crime or offense (usually punishable by one year in prison or longer) or any crime that involves sexual misconduct (see 38.2.8.7).
- Has been involved in plural marriage (see 38.2.8.8).

For guidance about baptizing and confirming individuals who identify as transgender, see 38.2.8.9.

If the person is seeking baptism for the first time, the mission president interviews him or her. If he finds the person to be worthy and if he recommends baptism, he submits a request for approval to the First Presidency using LCR.

If the person is a former member seeking readmission, the bishop and stake president both interview him or her. They follow the instructions in 32.16. If they both find the person to be worthy and recommend baptism, the stake president submits a request to the First Presidency using LCR.

Any request to the First Presidency should include all pertinent details as determined in the interviews.

See 6.2.3 about the stake (or mission) president's responsibility when submitting applications to the First Presidency.

38.2.8.7

Persons Who Have Been Convicted of Crimes

Persons who have been convicted of crimes may not be baptized until they complete their terms of imprisonment. This is true for converts and for those seeking readmission.

Persons who have been convicted of felonies or any crimes involving sexual misconduct may not be baptized and confirmed until they have also completed their terms of probation or parole. Only the First Presidency may grant an exception (see 38.2.8.6). These persons are encouraged to work closely with

local priesthood leaders. They strive to do all they can to receive the Savior's help to become worthy of baptism and confirmation.

Full-time missionaries do not teach people who are in prison or jail.

A person who has been convicted of murder or a crime involving sexual misconduct may not be baptized unless the First Presidency gives approval (see 38.2.8.6). The same is true for a person who has confessed to committing murder even if the confession was in private to a priesthood leader. As used here, *murder* does not include abortion or police or military action in the line of duty.

If the person is seeking baptism for the first time, the mission president follows the instructions in 38.2.8.6. If the person is a former member seeking readmission, the bishop and stake president follow the instructions in the same section (see also 32.16).

38.2.8.8

Adults Involved in Plural Marriage

An adult who has encouraged, taught, or been involved in plural marriage must receive approval from the First Presidency before he or she may be baptized.

If the person is seeking baptism for the first time, the mission president follows the instructions in 38.2.8.6. If the person is a former member seeking readmission, the bishop and stake president follow the instructions in 38.2.8.6 (see also 32.16).

The request should describe the person's past involvement in plural marriage. It should also describe his or her repentance and current family situation.

38.2.8.9

Individuals Who Identify as Transgender

Baptism and confirmation are received according to a person's biological sex at birth. Worthy individuals who do not pursue surgical, medical, or social

transition away from their biological sex at birth may be baptized and confirmed. (For a definition of social transition, see 38.6.23.)

Any exception to this policy requires the approval of the First Presidency. To request approval, the mission president, or the stake president for an eight-year-old, interviews the person. If he finds the person to be worthy and if he recommends baptism and confirmation, he submits a request for approval to the First Presidency using LCR.

If the First Presidency approves baptism and confirmation, the person will not be able to receive the priesthood, a temple recommend, or some Church callings while transitioned. However, the individual may participate in the Church in other ways.

Individuals who have taken steps to transition and then transition back to their biological sex at birth and are worthy and committed to keeping God's commandments may be baptized and confirmed.

Mission presidents, or stake presidents for an eight-year-old, address individual circumstances with sensitivity and Christlike love. They seek counsel from the Area Presidency.

For more information, see 38.6.23.

38.2.9

Priesthood Ordination

For general information about priesthood ordinations, see 18.10.

38.2.9.1

New Members

When a brother is baptized and confirmed, he is eligible to be ordained to an office in the Aaronic Priesthood if he will be at least 12 years old by the end of the year. The bishop interviews him soon after his confirmation, normally within a week. At the same time, he can interview the new member to receive a temple recommend for proxy baptisms and

confirmations (see 26.5.1). A bishop or branch president may assign one of his counselors to conduct this interview.

A member of the bishopric presents the brother in sacrament meeting so ward members can sustain his proposed ordination (see 18.10.3). He may then be ordained to the appropriate office:

- Deacon, if he will turn 12 or 13 by the end of the year
- Teacher, if he will turn 14 or 15 by the end of the year
- Priest, if he will turn 16 or older by the end of the year; if he is 19 or older, he is also considered a prospective elder (see 38.2.9.3)

A new member is eligible to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained an elder when he:

- Is 18 or older.
- Has served as a priest (no specified time is required).
- Has sufficient understanding of the gospel.
- Has demonstrated worthiness.

Newly baptized brethren are not ordained on the day they are baptized or confirmed. They first need to be interviewed by the bishop and sustained by ward members.

Baptisms of family members should not be delayed so the father can receive the priesthood and perform the baptisms himself.

38.2.9.2

Young Men Whose Parents Are Not Married (Including Divorced)

A young man may be ordained to Aaronic Priesthood offices when the bishop obtains verbal permission from the parents or guardians. Permission is not required from a parent or

guardian who has no legal basis for opposing the ordination.

If the young man goes by the surname of his stepfather, he may be ordained in that name. This is true even if he has not been formally adopted. However, the young man's legal name, as defined by local law or custom, should be recorded on the ordination certificate.

38.2.9.3

Prospective Elders

A prospective elder is a male Church member age 19 or older who does not hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. Married brethren who are younger than 19 and do not hold the Melchizedek Priesthood are also prospective elders.

Under the direction of the bishop, the elders quorum presidency works closely with prospective elders to help them prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. If a prospective elder is not a priest, he should be ordained a priest as soon as he is worthy. He does not need to be ordained a deacon or teacher first. He may be ordained an elder when he has developed sufficient understanding of the gospel and demonstrated his worthiness. The bishop and stake president interview him to make this determination (see 31.2.6).

For more information about helping prospective elders prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, see 8.4.

38.2.9.4

Brethren Who Have Changed Wards within the Past Year

Sometimes a brother who has lived in a ward for less than one year needs or desires to be ordained to a Melchizedek Priesthood office. In that situation, the bishop or an assigned counselor contacts the prior bishop to ask if there are any worthiness matters to be considered. If a counselor learns that there is

confidential information, he ends the conversation. He informs his bishop to contact the prior bishop before conducting the interview.

38.2.9.5

Brethren in Young Single Adult and Single Adult Wards

Worthy men ages 18 and older in young single adult wards and single adult wards should be ordained elders. Those who are not ordained elders are part of the elders quorum as prospective elders.

38.2.9.6

Military Servicemen in War Zones or Isolated Areas

A military serviceman is normally interviewed and ordained in the ward that has his membership record. However, this may not be feasible if the serviceman is at sea for an extended time or is serving in a war zone or isolated area. In such cases, the serviceman meets with his service member group leader. If the group leader feels that the serviceman is ready to be ordained, he gives a written recommendation to the presiding leader of the Church unit that oversees the service member group. (If there is not such a Church unit, he gives the recommendation to the Area Presidency.) That leader contacts the bishop of the serviceman's home ward to certify the man's worthiness.

For ordination to Aaronic Priesthood offices, the presiding leader may authorize the group leader or a Latter-day Saint chaplain to interview the person and oversee the ordination. For ordination to the office of elder, the stake president, mission president, or Area Presidency may authorize a Latter-day Saint chaplain to interview the person and oversee the ordination. All ordinations should be sustained or ratified as explained in 18.10.3.

38.2.9.7**Brethren Who Have Intellectual Disabilities**

A male Church member who has an intellectual disability, his parents (where applicable), and the bishop counsel together about whether he should receive the priesthood. They counsel about his desires and whether he has a basic understanding of the priesthood and his responsibilities.

Priesthood holders who have such disabilities should be assisted so they can fulfill priesthood duties as fully as possible.

38.2.9.8**Brethren Who Have Been Readmitted by Baptism and Confirmation**

When a man who was not previously endowed is readmitted to the Church by baptism and confirmation, he may be ordained immediately afterward. He is ordained to the priesthood office he held when his membership was withdrawn or resigned.

If the man was previously endowed, he is not ordained to a priesthood office. Instead, his previous office is restored through the ordinance of restoration of blessings.

For more information and instructions, see 32.17.

38.2.9.9**Individuals Who Identify as Transgender**

Priesthood ordination is received according to a person's biological sex at birth. A worthy male Church member who does not pursue surgical, medical, or social transition away from his biological sex at birth may receive and exercise the priesthood. (For a definition of social transition, see 38.6.23.)

Male members who have taken steps to transition and then transition back to their biological sex at birth and are worthy and committed to keeping God's commandments may receive and exercise the priesthood.

Bishops counsel with the stake president to address individual circumstances with sensitivity and Christlike love. Stake and mission presidents seek counsel from the Area Presidency.

For more information, see 38.6.23.

38.2.10**Patriarchal Blessings**

For general information about patriarchal blessings, see:

- Section 18.17 of this handbook.
- *Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs* (a resource for stake presidents and patriarchs).

38.2.10.1**Members Who Have an Intellectual Disability**

A member who has an intellectual disability, his or her parents or guardians (where applicable), and the bishop counsel together about whether he or she should receive a patriarchal blessing. They consider the member's desires and whether he or she has a basic ability to understand the blessing. If so, a member of the bishopric may issue a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend. Instructions are in 18.17.

38.2.10.2**Missionaries**

A patriarchal blessing can be a source of spiritual strength for a missionary. If possible, a member should receive a patriarchal blessing before beginning missionary service. When this is not possible, he or she may receive a patriarchal blessing during his or her mission. The mission president interviews the missionary and prepares a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend. Instructions are in 18.17.

A missionary at a missionary training center (MTC) may receive a patriarchal blessing when all of the following apply:

- The missionary comes from an area where no patriarch is able to give a blessing in the missionary's native language.
- The missionary will serve in a mission where no patriarch is able to give a blessing in the missionary's native language.
- A patriarch near the MTC can provide a blessing in the missionary's native language.

38.2.10.3

Members Entering the Military

A patriarchal blessing can be a source of spiritual strength for a member serving in the military. If possible, a worthy member should receive a patriarchal blessing before reporting for active duty.

If this is not possible, the member may be able to receive a patriarchal blessing at his or her permanent duty station. A member of the bishopric there interviews the member and prepares a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend. Instructions are in 18.17.

For more information, the stake president may contact the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at Q12Patriarchs@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.2.10.4

Members Who Live outside the Patriarch's Stake

A member normally receives a patriarchal blessing from the patriarch in his or her stake. However, a member may receive a blessing from a patriarch in another stake if he or she:

- Is a direct descendant of the patriarch (child, grandchild, or great-grandchild) through birth or adoption.
- Lives in a stake that does not have an actively serving patriarch.

- Lives in a district.
- Does not speak the same language as the stake patriarch, and a patriarch in a nearby stake can provide the blessing in the member's language.

In each of these cases, a member of the bishopric or the branch president interviews the member as described in 18.17. A member of the patriarch's stake presidency and of the recipient's stake or mission presidency must approve the recommend through the Patriarchal Blessing System.

38.2.10.5

Translation of Patriarchal Blessings

The inspiration and meaning of a patriarchal blessing is difficult to convey in translation. For this reason, members should receive their blessings in the language they understand best. The Church does not provide written translations of patriarchal blessings.

Members are not encouraged to translate patriarchal blessings. However, sometimes a member needs a blessing translated into a language he or she understands. The member may find a trusted and worthy member of the Church who can provide the translation. The member should select a competent translator who understands the spiritual nature and confidentiality of the blessing. Translated copies of blessings are not filed at Church headquarters.

A stake president may request a braille transcription of a patriarchal blessing. He contacts the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at Q12Patriarchs@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.2.10.6

Sign Language Interpretation of Patriarchal Blessings

If a member is deaf or hard of hearing, his or her patriarchal blessing can be interpreted in sign language. The member identifies an interpreter. It

is best if this person is a trusted and worthy member of the Church who understands the doctrinal significance of patriarchal blessings. However, when a member of the Church cannot be found, another capable person can provide the interpretation.

38.2.10.7

Replacement Patriarchal Blessings

In very rare circumstances, a worthy member may request a replacement patriarchal blessing. However, this is not encouraged, and the request might not be approved. If the member has an important reason for such a request, he or she discusses it with the bishop. If the bishop feels that a replacement blessing is appropriate, he prepares a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend. Instructions are found in 18.17.

The stake president then interviews the member and reads the original blessing with him or her. If he feels that a replacement blessing is appropriate, he seeks approval from the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at Q12Patriarchs@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

The stake president informs the recipient and the patriarch of the decision of the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. If the request is approved, the stake president approves the recommend in the Patriarchal Blessing System. The stake president tells the recipient that the replacement blessing replaces the original blessing. The patriarch may then give a replacement patriarchal blessing.

38.3

Civil Marriage

Church leaders encourage members to qualify for temple marriage and be married and sealed in a temple. If allowed by local laws, Church leaders may perform civil marriages in circumstances such as the following:

- A couple plans to be married in a temple, but temple marriages are not legally recognized.
- A couple will be married in a temple, but a civil marriage will help parents or immediate family members feel included.
- Access to a temple is not available for an extended period of time.
- A couple is not planning to be married in a temple.

A civil marriage is valid for as long as a couple lives. It does not endure beyond mortal life.

Civil marriages should be performed in accordance with the laws of the place where the marriage is performed.

Civil marriages and related religious ceremonies should not be performed on the Sabbath. Nor should they be held at unusual hours.

The bishop consults with his stake president if he has questions about civil marriage that are not answered in this section. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency.

38.3.1

Who May Perform a Civil Marriage

When permitted by local law, the following currently serving Church officers may act in their calling to perform a civil marriage ceremony:

- Mission president
- Stake president
- District president
- Bishop
- Branch president

These officers may only perform a civil marriage between a man and a woman. All of the following conditions must also apply:

- The bride or the groom is a member of the Church or has a baptismal date.
- Either the bride's or the groom's membership record is, or will be after baptism, in the Church unit over which the officer presides.
- The Church officer is legally authorized to officiate at a civil marriage in the jurisdiction where the marriage will take place.

Latter-day Saint chaplains on active military duty may perform civil marriages without prior approval.

Chaplains who are assigned to Reserve or National Guard units must receive prior approval from the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division to perform a civil marriage. See contact information in 38.9.10.

Nonmilitary chaplains who serve in the following organizations must receive prior approval from the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division to perform a civil marriage:

- Hospitals
- Hospice organizations
- Assisted-living centers
- Prisons
- Border patrol
- Police or fire departments

Retired chaplains are not authorized to perform civil marriages in their capacity as chaplains.

Those who perform marriages acting in their callings as Church leaders or chaplains should use the guidelines in this section. They also follow all legal requirements.

Latter-day Saint chaplains are not considered presiding Church officers unless they are serving as a stake president, bishop, or branch president. When a chaplain who is not a presiding Church officer performs a civil marriage, he or she functions as an agent of the government or civilian organization he

or she serves. Thus, the wording of the civil marriage ceremony is changed slightly for these chaplains as shown in 38.3.6.

Latter-day Saint chaplains may only perform a civil marriage between a man and a woman.

Church officers and chaplains who perform civil marriages for members of the Church should provide the necessary marriage information to the ward or branch clerk. The clerk updates the membership records.

A Church officer or chaplain who performs civil marriages in a Church capacity may not accept fees.

38.3.2

Civil Marriage for Members from Other Units

A Church officer may not perform a marriage for Church members when neither the bride's nor the groom's membership record is in the Church unit over which the officer presides (see 38.3.1). An exception is made for Latter-day Saint chaplains and Church officers who are government officials.

38.3.3

Civil Marriage for Those Who Are Not Members of the Church

A Church officer may not perform a marriage when neither the bride nor the groom is a member of the Church unless one or both of them have a baptismal date. An exception is made for Latter-day Saint chaplains and Church officers who are government officials.

38.3.4

Civil Marriages Held in Church Buildings

A wedding ceremony may be held in a Church building if it does not disrupt the schedule of regular Church functions. Weddings should not be held on the Sabbath or on Monday evenings. Weddings performed in Church buildings should be simple

and dignified. Music should be sacred, reverent, and joyful.

Marriages may be performed in the chapel, the cultural hall, or another suitable room. Receptions may not be held in the chapel unless it is a multipurpose area. Marriages should follow the guidelines for proper use of the meetinghouse (see 35.5.3).

The Church does not allow its meetinghouses or properties to be used for any purpose related to same-sex, polygamous, unlawful, or other marriages not in alignment with Church doctrine or policy.

In rare circumstances, the bishop may allow the use of a Church building for marriages that are performed by someone who is not a Church officer or for those who are not Church members. He first counsels with the stake president. He counsels with the person who will be officiating to ensure that he or she understands the guidelines in this section. A member of the stake or ward council attends to ensure proper use and care of the building.

The bishop may authorize a livestream of a wedding performed in a Church building (see 29.7).

38.3.5

Civil Marriages That Must Be Performed by a Public Official or in a Public Place

In some locations, laws require that a marriage ceremony be performed by a public official. Some require that the ceremony be performed in a public building or another public place. In these cases, an authorized priesthood officer may conduct a brief religious gathering after the civil marriage. In this gathering he provides counsel to the couple.

38.3.6

Civil Marriage Ceremony

Marriage is sacred and should be honored and dignified as such. Marriages for Church members

performed outside the temple should reflect a spirit of commitment and joy.

Except where noted, information in this section applies to Latter-day Saint chaplains as well as Church officers.

Before performing a civil marriage, a Church officer may counsel the couple on the sacred nature of the marriage vows. He may add other counsel as the Spirit directs.

To perform a civil marriage, the Church officer addresses the couple and says, “Please take each other by the right hand.” He then says, “[Groom’s full name] and [bride’s full name], you have taken one another by the right hand in token of the vows you will now enter into in the presence of God and these witnesses.” (The couple may choose or nominate these witnesses ahead of time.)

The officer then addresses the groom and asks, “[Groom’s full name], do you receive [bride’s full name] as your lawfully wedded wife, and do you of your own free will and choice solemnly promise as her companion and lawfully wedded husband that you will cleave unto her and none else; that you will observe all the laws, responsibilities, and obligations pertaining to the holy state of matrimony; and that you will love, honor, and cherish her as long as you both shall live?”

The groom answers, “Yes” or “I do.”

The Church officer then addresses the bride and asks, “[Bride’s full name], do you receive [groom’s full name] as your lawfully wedded husband, and do you of your own free will and choice solemnly promise as his companion and lawfully wedded wife that you will cleave unto him and none else; that you will observe all the laws, responsibilities, and obligations pertaining to the holy state of matrimony; and that you will love, honor, and cherish him as long as you both shall live?”

The bride answers, “Yes” or “I do.”

The Church officer then addresses the couple and says, “By virtue of the legal authority vested in me as an elder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I pronounce you, [groom’s name] and [bride’s name], husband and wife, legally and lawfully wedded for the period of your mortal lives.”

(Alternate wording for a chaplain not serving as a presiding Church officer: “By virtue of the legal authority vested in me as a chaplain in the [branch of military or civilian organization], I pronounce you, [groom’s name] and [bride’s name], husband and wife, legally and lawfully wedded for the period of your mortal lives.”)

“May God bless your union with joy in your posterity and a long life of happiness together, and may He bless you to keep sacred the vows you have made. These blessings I invoke upon you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.”

The invitation to kiss each other as husband and wife is optional, based on cultural norms.

38.4

Sealing Policies

Church members make sacred covenants with God as they receive temple ordinances. The temple sealing ordinances unite families for eternity as members strive to honor the covenants they make when they receive the ordinance. Sealing ordinances include:

- Sealing of a husband and wife.
- Sealing of children to parents.

38.4.1

Sealing of a Husband and Wife

The following table explains where to find policies for sealing of a husband and wife.

Need	Section
I was married civilly and want to be sealed to my spouse.	38.4.1.1
I am divorced from a previous spouse and want to be sealed to my current spouse.	38.4.1.2
My spouse to whom I was sealed died. To whom may I now be sealed?	38.4.1.3
May I be sealed to a deceased individual with whom I cohabited without being legally married?	38.4.1.4
I need to apply for a sealing cancellation or a sealing clearance.	38.4.1.5
I need to have a restriction against temple sealing removed.	38.4.1.6
My spouse and I were married for time only in the temple. Can we be sealed to one another?	38.4.1.7
To whom may my deceased family members be sealed?	38.4.1.8
How does divorce affect my sealing?	38.4.1.9
What are the effects of canceling a sealing?	38.4.1.10
How does resignation or withdrawal of Church membership affect my sealing?	38.4.1.11

Members should counsel with their bishop if they have questions about sealing policies that are not answered in this section. The bishop contacts the stake president if he has questions. The stake president contacts the Office of the First Presidency if he has questions.

Members who have concerns about the eternal nature of the sealing ordinance and their associated family and spousal relationships are encouraged to trust in the Lord and seek His comfort. Heavenly Father will ensure that each person receives every blessing that his or her desires and choices allow.

38.4.1.1**Sealing of Living Members after Civil Marriage**

A man and woman who were married civilly may be sealed in the temple as soon as circumstances permit if the following conditions are met:

- They both have been members of the Church for at least one year (see 27.3.1 and 27.2.1).
- They are prepared and worthy.

When issuing temple recommends for a couple to be sealed, priesthood leaders make sure the civil marriage is legally valid. See 26.3 and 27.3.

38.4.1.2**Sealing of Living Members after Divorce**

Women. A living woman may be sealed to only one husband at a time. If she and a husband were sealed and later divorced, she must receive a cancellation of that sealing before being sealed to another man during her lifetime (see 38.4.1.5).

A living woman who is not currently married or sealed to another man may be sealed to a deceased husband from whom she was divorced in life. She must first receive signed consent from her former husband's widow (if there is one).

See chapter 28 for information about performing ordinances for a deceased spouse.

Men. If a man and woman were sealed and later divorced, the man must receive a sealing clearance before being sealed to another woman (see 38.4.1.5). A sealing clearance is necessary even if (1) the previous sealing has been canceled or (2) the previous wife is deceased.

A sealing clearance is needed only if a man is divorced from the woman who was most recently sealed to him. For example, if a man received a sealing clearance to be sealed to a second wife after a

divorce, and then his second wife dies, he would not need another sealing clearance to be sealed again.

A living man may be sealed to a deceased wife from whom he was divorced in life. He must first receive signed consent from his former wife's widower (if there is one). If he is married, he also must receive written consent from his current wife if she is living.

See chapter 28 for information about performing ordinances for a deceased spouse.

38.4.1.3**Sealing of Living Members after a Spouse's Death**

Women. If a husband and wife have been sealed and the husband dies, the woman may not be sealed to another man unless she receives a cancellation of the first sealing (see 38.4.1.5).

A living woman who is not currently married or sealed to another man may be sealed to a deceased husband (see 38.4.1.8). If the marriage ended in divorce, see 38.4.1.2.

A living woman who is currently married may not be sealed to a deceased husband without First Presidency approval.

See chapter 28 for information about performing ordinances for a deceased spouse.

Men. If a husband and wife have been sealed and the wife dies, the man may be sealed to another woman if she is not already sealed to another man. In this circumstance, the man does not need a sealing clearance from the First Presidency unless he was divorced from his previous wife before she died (see 38.4.1.2).

A living man may be sealed to a deceased wife if she was not sealed to another husband in life. If she was sealed to another husband while living, all men to whom she was married must be deceased before any other man may be sealed to her (see 38.4.1.8). If the marriage ended in divorce, see 38.4.1.2.

Before being sealed to a deceased wife, a married man must receive written consent from his current wife if she is living.

See chapter 28 for information about performing ordinances for a deceased spouse.

38.4.1.4

Sealing of a Living Member to a Deceased Individual with Whom He or She Cohabited

Women. As an exception, a living woman who is not currently married or sealed to another man may be sealed to a deceased man with whom she cohabited. This exception may be considered only if their relationship was of such a nature and duration to show a determination to do all of the following:

- Be faithful to one another in a permanent relationship.
- Fulfill all marital responsibilities to each other.
- Fulfill all parental responsibilities to any children they had.

If the member's stake president feels that such an exception is warranted, he submits a request to the Office of the First Presidency.

Men. As an exception, a living man may be sealed to a deceased woman with whom he cohabited if she was not sealed to another man during her life. This exception may be considered only if their relationship was of such a nature and duration to show a determination to do all of the following:

- Be faithful to one another in a permanent relationship.
- Fulfill all marital responsibilities to each other.
- Fulfill all parental responsibilities to any children they had.

Before being sealed to a deceased woman, a married man must receive written consent from his current wife if she is living.

If the member's stake president feels that such an exception is warranted, he submits a request to the Office of the First Presidency.

38.4.1.5

Applying for a Sealing Cancellation or a Sealing Clearance

See 38.4.1.2 for information about the sealing of living members after a divorce. See 38.4.1.3 for information about the sealing of living members after a spouse's death.

Members of either gender may seek a sealing cancellation even if they are not preparing to be sealed to another spouse. A male Church member must receive a sealing clearance to be sealed to another woman after a divorce.

The process for seeking a sealing cancellation or sealing clearance is outlined below.

1. The member speaks with his or her bishop about the request.
2. The bishop ensures that:
 - a. The divorce is final.
 - b. The member is current in all legal requirements for child and spousal support related to the divorce.
3. If the bishop recommends that the sealing cancellation or sealing clearance be granted, he:
 - a. Fills out an Application to the First Presidency for the member using Leader and Clerk Resources (LCR). Leaders who do not have access to LCR instead use a physical copy of the Application to the First Presidency form. This form is available from the Confidential Records Office at Church headquarters.

- b. Submits the application to the stake president.
- 4. The stake president meets with the member. The stake president verifies that:
 - a. The divorce is final.
 - b. The member is current in all legal requirements for child and spousal support related to the divorce.
- 5. If the stake president recommends that the sealing cancellation or sealing clearance be granted, he submits the application to Church headquarters using LCR. See 6.2.3 about the stake president's responsibility when submitting applications to the First Presidency.
- 6. If the request is approved, the First Presidency provides a letter stating that the sealing cancellation or sealing clearance has been granted.
- 7. After approval is granted, the member may schedule an appointment for a temple sealing.

See 38.4.1.10.

38.4.1.6

Removing a Restriction against Temple Sealing

A person who commits adultery while married to a spouse to whom he or she has been sealed may not be sealed to the partner in the adultery without approval from the First Presidency.

A couple may seek approval after they have been married for at least five years. The process for making a request to remove a restriction against temple sealing is outlined below.

- 1. The couple meets with their bishop and stake president.
- 2. If these leaders feel that the restriction should be removed, they write letters to the First Presidency with their recommendations. Their

letters should describe the applicants' temple worthiness and the stability of their marriage for at least five years. See 6.2.3 about the stake president's responsibility when submitting applications to the First Presidency.

- 3. The couple also writes a letter of request to the First Presidency.
- 4. The stake president submits all of these letters to the First Presidency. He may submit the request with an application for a sealing cancellation or sealing clearance (see 38.4.1.5).
- 5. If the request is approved, the First Presidency provides a letter stating that the restriction against temple sealing has been removed.

After approval is granted, the couple may schedule an appointment to be sealed.

38.4.1.7

Sealing after Temple Marriage for Time Only

Couples who were married in a temple for time only are not usually sealed later. For such a sealing to occur, the woman must first receive from the First Presidency a cancellation of her previous sealing. If the bishop and stake president both feel that a cancellation is justified, the stake president submits an application to the First Presidency using LCR. See 6.2.3 about the stake president's responsibility when submitting applications to the First Presidency.

Time-only marriages in the temple are no longer performed (see 27.3.3).

38.4.1.8

Sealing of Deceased Persons

Deceased Women. A deceased woman may be sealed to all men to whom she was legally married during her life. The following table shows when these sealings may take place.

She was not sealed to a husband in life	She may be sealed to all living or deceased men to whom she was married in life. If the man is living, his wife (if he is married) must give written consent (see 38.4.1.3). If the man is deceased, his widow (if any) must give written consent.
She was sealed to a husband in life	All her husbands must be deceased before she is sealed to other men to whom she was married. This includes former husbands from whom she may have been divorced. Each of the men's widows (if any) must give written consent.

Deceased Men. A deceased man may be sealed to all women to whom he was legally married during his life if (1) they are deceased or (2) they are living, are not currently married, and are not sealed to another man (see 38.4.1.3).

Before a deceased man may be sealed to a deceased woman to whom he was married in life, the woman's widower (if there is one) must give written consent.

Deceased Couples Who Were Divorced. Deceased couples who were divorced may be sealed by proxy so their children can be sealed to them. See 28.3.5 if either the husband or wife had Church membership withdrawn or had resigned membership.

If either deceased person has a surviving spouse, that spouse must give written consent.

First Presidency approval is required before sealing a deceased couple who obtained a cancellation of their sealing in life.

Deceased Couples Who Cohabited but Were Not Married to Each Other. A deceased couple may be sealed to each other if they lived together as though they were husband and wife, even if no marriage can be documented. If either deceased person has a surviving spouse, that spouse must give written consent.

These sealings are generally done so that a couple's children can receive the blessing of being sealed to them.

38.4.1.9

Effects of Divorce

If a couple was sealed and later divorced, the blessings of that sealing remain in effect for individuals who are worthy (see 38.4.1.5 and 38.4.1.10). A member who remains faithful to temple covenants will receive the personal blessings promised in the temple. This is true even if the person's spouse has broken the covenants or withdrawn from the marriage.

See 38.4.2.1 for information about children who are born after a divorce.

38.4.1.10

Effects of Sealing Cancellation

While a sealing remains in place, a member who is faithful to temple covenants will receive the personal blessings promised in the temple. This is true even if the person's spouse has broken the covenants or withdrawn from the marriage. Moreover, God will not require anyone to remain in a sealed relationship throughout eternity against his or her will. Heavenly Father will ensure that each person receives every blessing that his or her desires and choices allow.

Once a sealing cancellation has been granted by the First Presidency, the covenants and blessings related to that sealing are no longer in force. See 38.4.2.8 for information on the status of the couple's children when a sealing is canceled.

Any children born to a woman after her sealing to a former husband has been canceled are not born

in the covenant unless the mother was sealed to another man before the child's birth.

Priesthood leaders counsel with members seeking a cancellation of a sealing to help them understand these principles. Local leaders honor members' agency in these decisions.

38.4.1.11

Effects of Resignation or Withdrawal of Church Membership

After a couple has been sealed in a temple, if one of them resigns Church membership or has his or her membership withdrawn, his or her temple blessings are also withdrawn. However, the personal blessings of the sealing ordinance for the person's spouse and children remain in effect if they remain faithful.

Any children born to a couple after one or both of them have resigned their membership or had their Church membership withdrawn are not born in the covenant. See 38.4.2.8.

38.4.2

Sealing Children to Parents

Parents must be sealed to each other before children are sealed to them (see 38.4.1).

Members should counsel with their bishop if they have questions about sealing policies that are not answered in this section. The bishop contacts the stake president if he has questions. The stake president contacts the Office of the First Presidency if he has questions.

Members who have concerns about the eternal nature of the sealing ordinance and their associated family relationships are encouraged to trust in the Lord and seek His comfort. Heavenly Father will ensure that each person receives every blessing that his or her desires and choices allow.

38.4.2.1

Children Who Are Born in the Covenant

Children who are born after their mother has been sealed to a husband in a temple are born in the covenant of that sealing. They do not need to receive the ordinance of sealing to parents.

Sometimes a woman who has been sealed to a man later has children with another man. When this occurs, these children are born into the covenant of the woman's most recent sealing unless they were born (1) after the sealing was canceled or (2) after it was withdrawn due to resignation or withdrawal of Church membership.

38.4.2.2

Children Who Are Not Born in the Covenant

Children who are not born in the covenant can become part of an eternal family by being sealed to:

- Their natural parents.
- Their adoptive parents.
- A natural or adoptive parent and a stepparent (see 38.4.2.5).

These children receive the same blessings as if they had been born in the covenant.

Sealing living children to living parents. A living child is sealed to only two parents—a husband and wife. If both parents are living, they must be married and sealed to each other.

See 27.4.1 for information about issuing temple recommends for children being sealed to their parents.

Members who are 21 or older must be endowed to be sealed to their parents (see 27.4.1 and 27.4.5).

Sealing living children to deceased parents. A living child is sealed to only one set of parents. The parents must be sealed to each other before children are sealed to them.

A member who is an adult at the time his or her parents die is generally sealed to those parents. As used here, the term *parents* means natural parents, adoptive parents, or a natural parent and a stepparent.

The following table shows sealing options available to a person whose parents died when he or she was still a minor or who is not accountable due to intellectual disabilities.

Circumstance	Options
Minor child	• Be sealed to adoptive parents or legal guardians who are raising him or her • Wait until he or she is an adult and then choose to be sealed either (1) to the deceased parents or (2) to the adoptive parents or legal guardians who raised him or her
Person who is not accountable due to intellectual disabilities	• Be sealed to adoptive parents or legal guardians who are caring for him or her

See 27.4.1 for information about issuing temple recommends for children being sealed to their parents.

Members who are 21 or older must be endowed to be sealed to their parents (see 27.4.1 and 27.4.5).

Sealing deceased children to parents (living or deceased).

A deceased person is usually sealed to his or her birth or adoptive parents. However, a deceased child may also be sealed to:

- A birth mother and stepfather.
- A birth father and stepmother.
- Foster parents or grandparents who raised the child (see 38.4.2.4).
- A couple who intended to adopt the child but could not complete the adoption before the child died (see 38.4.2.4).

These sealings may be done even if a deceased child is already sealed to his or her birth or adoptive parents. Sealings to nonbiological or nonadoptive parents in circumstances other than those listed above require First Presidency approval.

38.4.2.3

Adopted or Foster Children Who Are Living

Living children who are born in the covenant or have been sealed to parents cannot be sealed to any other parents without First Presidency approval.

Living children who are legally adopted and were neither born in the covenant nor sealed to former parents may be sealed to their adoptive parents after the adoption is final.

Living minor children and adult children who are not accountable due to intellectual disabilities must have a final adoption decree to be sealed to their adoptive parents. The parents present the decree to the bishop when verifying information through Ordinance Preparation in LCR (see 27.1.2). A court decree granting legal custody is not sufficient. There is no obligation to identify the natural parents of these children.

Living adult children who are accountable do not need a formal adoption decree to be sealed to their adoptive parents. Members verify the adoption through Ordinance Preparation in LCR (see 27.1.2).

First Presidency approval is needed for a living member to be sealed to foster parents. This requirement applies even if the natural parents of the foster

child are unknown. Such requests are made by the stake president using LCR (see 6.2.3).

38.4.2.4

Adopted or Foster Children Who Are Deceased

A deceased adopted person is usually sealed to his or her adoptive parents.

A deceased foster child is usually sealed to his or her natural parents.

38.4.2.5

Sealing of Living Children to One Natural Parent and a Stepparent

Minor children and adult children who are not accountable. Living minor children and adult children who are not accountable due to intellectual disabilities may be sealed to one natural parent and a stepparent only if all the following conditions are met:

- The child was not born in the covenant or sealed previously.
- The child has not been adopted by another parent.
- The other natural parent has given a signed letter of consent for the sealing to take place. A court decree granting legal custody is not sufficient clearance for a sealing. The letter of consent should use wording similar to the following:

“I, [name of natural parent], give permission for [name of child or children] to be sealed in the temple to [name of parents]. I understand that the sealing is a religious ceremony and does not have legal implications.”

This letter is reviewed when verifying information through Ordinance Preparation in LCR before the sealing (see 27.1.2).

If the other natural parent is deceased or if his or her parental rights have been fully terminated by

legal process, no consent is required. Likewise, no consent is required if the child is considered an adult in the jurisdiction where he or she lives.

If the other natural parent cannot be located after thorough efforts to find him or her, no consent is required. In this case, the bishop and stake president certify in the verification process that thorough efforts to locate the missing parent have failed. If the other natural parent comes forward at a later date, the sealing will be subject to review.

Adult children. A living adult member may be sealed to one natural parent and a stepparent if the member was not born in the covenant or previously sealed to parents.

Members who are 21 or older must be endowed before being sealed to a natural parent and a stepparent.

Married members who are younger than 21 do not need to be endowed to be sealed to a natural parent and a stepparent. However, they must have a current temple recommend to be sealed to parents (see 27.4.1 and 27.4.5).

See 27.4.1 for information about issuing temple recommends for children being sealed to their parents.

38.4.2.6

Children Conceived by Artificial Insemination or In Vitro Fertilization

Children conceived by artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization are born in the covenant if their parents are already sealed. If the children are born before their parents are sealed, they may be sealed to their parents after their parents are sealed to each other.

38.4.2.7**Children Born to Surrogate Mothers**

If a child was born to a surrogate mother, the stake president refers the matter to the Office of the First Presidency (see 38.6.22).

38.4.2.8**Status of Children When a Sealing Is Canceled or Withdrawn**

Faithful children who are born in the covenant or sealed to parents retain the blessings of eternal parentage. This is true even if:

- The sealing of their parents is later canceled.
- The Church membership of either parent is later resigned or withdrawn.

Children who are born after their parents' sealing is canceled or withdrawn are not born in the covenant. These children may be sealed to their parents after their parents' temple blessings are restored (if applicable) and any other obstacles are removed.

38.5**Temple Clothing and Garments****38.5.1****Temple Clothing**

During the endowment and sealing ordinances in the temple, Church members wear white clothing.

Women wear the following white clothing: a long-sleeve or three-quarter-sleeve dress (or a skirt and a long-sleeve or three-quarter-sleeve blouse) and shoes or slippers.

Men wear the following white clothing: a long-sleeve shirt, necktie or bow tie, pants, socks, and shoes or slippers.

During the endowment and sealing ordinances, members put on additional ceremonial clothing over their white clothing.

38.5.2**Obtaining Temple Clothing and Garments**

Ward and stake leaders encourage endowed members to obtain their own temple clothing. Temple clothing and garments may be purchased from a Church Distribution store or at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Stake and ward clerks may help members order the clothing.

The bishop may use fast-offering funds to help members in need purchase temple clothing and garments (see chapter 22).

Some temples have clothing available for rent. If a temple does not have rental clothing, members need to bring temple clothing with them. See temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org to learn whether a particular temple has rental clothing available.

Temples maintain a limited supply of temple clothing that full-time missionaries may use. There is no rental charge while they are in missionary training centers and when they are authorized to participate in temple ordinances while serving in the mission field. If needed, this clothing may be used by missionaries receiving their own endowment.

Members may not make ceremonial temple clothing or temple garments.

The garment is available in a variety of fabrics and styles, including for women who are pregnant or nursing (store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Members who need garments in a size that is not offered may contact a clothing consultant to place a special order. Contact information is available at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/contactus.

For information about trying on garments before purchasing them, see store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.5.3**Garments and Temple Clothing for Members Who Have Disabilities or Allergies**

Special-order garments may be purchased for members who are bedridden, have severe physical disabilities, or have allergies to certain fabrics or garments (see “Obtaining Special-Order Temple Garments and Ceremonial Clothing,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org/tools/help).

Members who have physical needs or disabilities that require modification to their ceremonial clothing may make a request at [store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/contactus](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/contactus). For example, shorter temple robes are available for members who are in wheelchairs or who have other needs.

38.5.4**Modifying Ceremonial Temple Clothing**

Temple ceremonial clothing should not be altered from its authorized design. Members may repair their clothing if doing so does not alter the original design. They may also use a pin or other fastener to secure portions of the clothing as needed.

For information about ordering ceremonial clothing for members who have physical needs or disabilities, see 38.5.3.

38.5.5**Wearing the Garment**

The First Presidency has provided the following guidance on wearing the garment:

“The garment of the holy priesthood reminds us of the veil in the temple, and that veil is symbolic of Jesus Christ. When you put on your garment, you put on a sacred symbol of Jesus Christ. Wearing it is an outward expression of your inner commitment to follow Him. The garment is also a reminder of your temple covenants. You should wear the garment

day and night throughout your life. When it must be removed for activities that cannot reasonably be done while wearing the garment, seek to restore it as soon as possible. As you keep your covenants, including the sacred privilege to wear the garment as instructed in the initiatory ordinances, you will have greater access to the Savior’s mercy, protection, strength, and power.”

The garment should be worn beneath the outer clothing. It is a matter of personal preference whether other undergarments are worn over or under the temple garment.

Members should not modify or alter the garment to accommodate different styles of clothing.

Members should not inappropriately display the garment to those who do not understand its significance.

See 26.4.

38.5.6**Caring for the Garment**

The garment is a sacred symbol of Jesus Christ. The way we care for our garments should reflect that sacred symbolism.

Members may mend tears in the garment as long as the original design is not altered. However, if a mark is completely unraveled or missing, members should replace the garment.

38.5.7**Wearing the Garment in the Military, Fire Service, Law Enforcement, or a Similar Agency**

The guidelines in this section apply to endowed members who have specific uniform requirements while serving:

- In the military.
- As firefighters.

- As law enforcement officers.
- As government security agents.

When possible, these members should wear the garment the same as any other member. However, they should avoid inappropriately displaying the garment to the view of those who do not understand its significance. Members should seek the guidance of the Spirit and use tact, discretion, and wisdom. In some cases, it may be best to lay the garment aside temporarily and wear it again when conditions allow. However, mere inconvenience in wearing the garment does not justify laying it aside.

Sometimes service regulations prevent a member from wearing the garment. In these cases, the member's religious status is not affected. The Lord focuses on the heart and a willing mind (see Doctrine and Covenants 64:34). As long as the member remains worthy, he or she will still receive the blessings associated with wearing the garment. If members are unable to wear the garment, they should wear it again as soon as circumstances allow.

Members in these organizations should consult with their individual services on specific requirements that undergarments must meet, such as color or neckline style. These members may send organization-approved apparel that meets garment guidelines to Beehive Clothing to be marked as authorized garments. Guidelines and additional instructions are provided on the Garment Guidelines for Military, Law Enforcement, and Firefighters order form.

38.5.8

Medical Conditions That May Prevent Members from Wearing the Garment

When possible, members with medical conditions should wear the garment the same as any other member.

Special-order garments may be purchased for members who have medical conditions or use

medical devices. Members who need special-order garments may contact a clothing consultant to place an order. Contact information is available at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/tools/help.

Some medical conditions or medical devices may make it difficult for members to wear one or both parts of the garment. Members should seek the guidance of the Spirit in such situations. In some cases, it may be best to lay the garment aside temporarily and wear it again when conditions allow.

When a member cannot wear the garment because of a medical condition or device, his or her religious status is not affected. The Lord focuses on the heart and a willing mind (see Doctrine and Covenants 64:34). As long as the member remains worthy, he or she will receive the blessings associated with wearing the garment.

38.5.9

Disposing of Garments and Ceremonial Temple Clothing

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

To dispose of worn-out ceremonial temple clothing, members should cut it up so the original use cannot be recognized. The cloth should then be discarded.

Members may give garments and temple clothing that are in good condition to other endowed members. Members should not give garments or ceremonial temple clothing to thrift stores, bishops' storehouses, temples, or charities.

38.5.10

Temple Burial Clothing

If possible, deceased members who are endowed should be buried or cremated in temple clothing. If cultural traditions or burial practices make this

inappropriate or difficult, the clothing may be folded and placed next to the body.

Only members who were endowed in life may be buried or cremated in temple clothing. An endowed person who stopped wearing the garment before his or her death may be buried or cremated in temple clothing if the family requests.

A person whose blessings have not been restored after withdrawal or resignation of Church membership may not be buried or cremated in temple clothing.

A person who was endowed in life and who died by suicide may be buried or cremated in temple clothing.

Temple clothing that is used for burial or cremation need not be new, but it should be in good condition and clean. The member's own temple clothing may be used.

A member who is to be buried or cremated in temple clothing may be dressed by an endowed family member of the same gender or by the spouse. If a family member is not available or would prefer not to dress the body of an endowed man, the bishop may ask the elders quorum president to invite an endowed man to dress the body or to oversee the proper dressing. If a family member is not available or would prefer not to dress the body of an endowed woman, the bishop may ask the Relief Society president to invite an endowed woman to dress the body or to oversee the proper dressing. Leaders ensure that this assignment is given to a person who will not find it objectionable.

A man's body is dressed in temple garments and the following white clothing: a long-sleeve shirt, necktie or bow tie, pants, socks, and shoes or slippers. A woman's body is dressed in temple garments and the following white clothing: a long-sleeve or three-quarter-sleeve dress (or a skirt and long-sleeve or three-quarter-sleeve blouse), socks or hosiery, and shoes or slippers.

Ceremonial temple clothing is placed on the body as instructed in the endowment. The robe is placed on the right shoulder and tied with the drawstring at the left waistline. The apron is secured around the waist. The sash is placed around the waist and tied in a bow over the left hip. A man's cap is usually placed beside his body until it is time to close the casket or container. The cap is then placed with the bow over the left ear. A woman's veil may be draped on the pillow at the back of her head. The veiling of a woman's face before burial or cremation is optional, as determined by the family.

In some areas only a licensed funeral director or an employee of the director is allowed to handle a deceased body. In these cases, an endowed family member or an endowed person who is invited by the bishop or Relief Society president ensures that the clothing is properly placed on the body.

Some countries require that deceased persons be dressed in biodegradable clothing when they are buried. Biodegradable temple clothing is available at store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

In areas where temple clothing may be difficult to obtain in time for burial, stake presidents should keep on hand at least two complete sets of medium-sized clothing, one for a man and one for a woman.

If temple clothing is not available, a deceased endowed member is clothed for burial in the garment and other suitable clothing.

38.6

Policies on Moral Issues

A few policies in this section are about matters that the Church "discourages." Church members usually do not experience membership restrictions because of their decisions about these matters. However, all people are ultimately accountable to God for their decisions.

38.6.1**Abortion**

Human life is a sacred gift from God and central to His divine plan for the spiritual progression of His children (see Moses 1:39; Abraham 3:23–26). Elective abortion for personal or social convenience is contrary to God’s plan and His commandments. The Lord declared, “Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:6). Members must not submit to, perform, arrange for, pay for, consent to, or encourage an abortion. The only possible exceptions are when:

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

Abortion is a most serious matter. Even in these circumstances, members should approach a decision with prayerful deliberation. Members may counsel with their bishops as part of this process. Discussions with members on this subject should always be conducted with love and respect.

Presiding officers carefully review the circumstances if a Church member has been involved in an abortion. A membership council may be necessary if a member submits to, performs, arranges for, pays for, consents to, or encourages an abortion (see 32.6.2.5). However, a membership council should not be considered if a member was involved in an abortion before baptism. Nor should membership councils or restrictions be considered for members who were involved in an abortion for any of the three reasons outlined earlier in this section.

A person who seeks forgiveness with “godly sorrow” (2 Corinthians 7:10; see also 3 Nephi 9:20) and “full purpose of heart” (3 Nephi 18:32) may repent and be forgiven for the sin of abortion.

Bishops refer questions on specific cases to the stake president. The stake president may direct questions to the Office of the First Presidency if necessary.

38.6.2**Abuse**

Abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of others in a way that causes physical, sexual, emotional, or financial harm. The Church’s position is that abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Those who abuse their spouses, children, other family members, or anyone else violate the laws of God and man.

All members, especially parents and leaders, are encouraged to be alert and diligent and do all they can to protect children and others against abuse. If members become aware of instances of abuse, they report it to civil authorities and counsel with the bishop. Church leaders should take reports of abuse seriously and never disregard them.

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

When abuse occurs, the first and immediate responsibility of Church leaders is to help those who have been abused and to protect vulnerable persons from future abuse. Leaders should not encourage a person to remain in a home or situation that is abusive or unsafe.

38.6.2.1**Abuse Help Line**

In some countries, the Church has established a confidential abuse help line to assist stake presidents and bishops. These leaders should promptly call the help line about every situation in which a person may have been abused—or is at risk of being abused. They should also call it if they become aware of a

member viewing, purchasing, or distributing child pornography.

The help line is available for bishops and stake presidents to call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Contact information is provided below.

- United States and Canada: 1-801-240-1911 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-1911
- United Kingdom: 0800 970 6757
- Ireland: 1800 937 546
- Countries in the Europe Central Area: +49 69 54802 016 or EURC-Abuse@ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- Australia: 02 9841 5454 (from within the country)
- New Zealand: 09 488 5592 (from within the country)

Bishops and stake presidents should call the help line when addressing situations involving any type of abuse. Legal and clinical professionals will answer their questions. These professionals will also give instructions about how to:

- Assist victims and help protect them from further abuse.
- Help protect potential victims.
- Comply with legal requirements for reporting abuse.

The Church is committed to complying with the law in reporting abuse (see 38.6.2.7). Laws differ by location, and most Church leaders are not legal experts. Calling the help line is essential for bishops and stake presidents to fulfill their responsibilities to report abuse.

A bishop should also notify his stake president of instances of abuse.

In countries that do not have a help line, a bishop who learns of abuse should contact his stake president. The stake president should seek guidance

from the area legal counsel at the area office. He is also encouraged to counsel with the Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager at the area office.

38.6.2.2

Counseling in Cases of Abuse

Victims of abuse often suffer serious trauma. Stake presidents and bishops respond with heartfelt compassion and empathy. They provide spiritual counseling and support to help victims overcome the destructive effects of abuse.

Sometimes victims have feelings of shame or guilt. Victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders help them and their families understand God's love and the healing that comes through Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see Alma 15:8; 3 Nephi 17:9).

Stake presidents and bishops should help those who have committed abuse to repent and to cease their abusive behavior. If an adult has committed a sexual sin against a child, the behavior may be very difficult to change. The process of repentance may be very prolonged. See 38.6.2.3.

Stake presidents and bishops should also be caring and sensitive when working with the families of victims and perpetrators of abuse.

Guidance for counseling victims and offenders is provided at *Abuse: How to Help*.

In addition to receiving the inspired help of Church leaders, victims, offenders, and their families may need professional counseling. For information, see 31.3.6.

For information about what bishops and stake presidents should do when they learn of any type of abuse, see 38.6.2.1. For information about counseling in cases of sexual abuse, rape, or other forms of sexual assault, see 38.6.18.2.

See also FamilyServices.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.6.2.3**Child or Youth Abuse**

Abuse of a child or youth is an especially serious sin (see Luke 17:2). As used here, *child or youth abuse* includes the following:

- *Physical abuse*: Inflicting serious bodily harm by physical violence. Some harm may not be visible.
- *Sexual abuse or exploitation*: Having any sexual activity with a child or youth or intentionally allowing or helping others to have such activity. As used here, sexual abuse does not include consensual sexual activity between two minors who are close in age.
- *Emotional abuse*: Using actions and words to seriously damage a child or youth's sense of self-respect or self-worth. This usually involves repeated and continuing insults, manipulations, and criticisms that humiliate and belittle. It may also include gross neglect.
- *Child pornography*: See 38.6.6.

If a bishop or stake president learns of or suspects child or youth abuse, he promptly follows the instructions in 38.6.2.1. He also takes action to help protect against further abuse.

A Church membership council and record annotation are required if an adult member abuses a child or youth as described in this section. See also 32.6.1.1 and 38.6.2.5.

Physical or emotional bullying between children or youth of a similar age should be addressed by ward leaders. A membership council is not held.

38.6.2.4**Abuse of a Spouse or Another Adult**

Abuse of a spouse or another adult can occur in many ways. These include physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse. Adults who are elderly,

vulnerable, or disabled are sometimes at high risk for abuse.

Often there is not a single definition of abuse that can be applied in all situations. Instead, there is a spectrum of severity in abusive behavior. This spectrum ranges from occasionally using sharp words to inflicting serious harm.

If a bishop or stake president learns of abuse of a spouse or another adult, he promptly follows the instructions in 38.6.2.1. He also takes action to help protect against further abuse.

Leaders seek the direction of the Spirit to determine whether personal counseling or a membership council is the most appropriate setting to address abuse. They may also counsel with their direct priesthood leader about the setting. However, any abuse of a spouse or another adult that rises to the levels described below requires holding a membership council.

- *Physical abuse*: Inflicting serious bodily harm by physical violence. Some harm may not be visible.
- *Sexual abuse*: See the situations specified in 38.6.18.3.
- *Emotional abuse*: Using actions and words to seriously damage a person's sense of self-respect or self-worth. This usually involves repeated and continuing insults, manipulations, and criticisms that humiliate and belittle.
- *Financial abuse*: Taking advantage of someone financially. This may include the illegal or unauthorized use of a person's property, money, or other valuables. It may also include fraudulently obtaining financial power over someone. It could include using financial power to coerce behavior. See also 32.6.1.3.

38.6.2.5**Church Callings, Temple Recommends, and Membership Record Annotations**

Members who have abused others should not be given Church callings and may not have a temple recommend until they have repented and Church membership restrictions have been removed.

If a person abused a child or youth sexually or seriously abused a child or youth physically or emotionally, his or her membership record will be annotated. He or she must not be given any calling or assignment involving children or youth. This includes not being given a ministering assignment to a family with youth or children in the home. It also includes not having a youth as a ministering companion. These restrictions should remain in place unless the First Presidency authorizes removal of the annotation. See 32.14.5 for information about annotations.

38.6.2.6**Stake and Ward Councils**

In stake and ward council meetings, stake presidencies and bishoprics regularly review Church policies and guidelines on preventing and responding to abuse. They teach the key messages in the Abuse section of Life Help in the Gospel Library. They invite discussion from council members. Leaders and council members seek the guidance of the Spirit as they teach and discuss this sensitive subject.

Council members are also to complete children and youth protection training (see 38.6.2).

38.6.2.7**Legal Issues Relating to Abuse**

If a member's abusive activities have violated applicable law, the bishop or stake president should urge the member to report these activities to law enforcement personnel or other appropriate government authorities. The bishop or stake president can

obtain information about local reporting requirements through the Church's help line (see 38.6.2.1). If members have questions about reporting requirements, he encourages them to secure qualified legal advice.

Church leaders and members should fulfill all legal obligations to report abuse to civil authorities. In some locations, leaders and teachers who work with children and youth are considered "mandated reporters" and must report abuse to legal authorities. Similarly, in many locations, any person who learns of abuse is required to report it to legal authorities. Bishops and stake presidents should call the help line for details about mandated reporters and other legal requirements for reporting abuse. The Church's policy is to obey the law.

38.6.3**Artificial Insemination**

See 38.6.9.

38.6.4**Birth Control**

Physical intimacy between husband and wife is intended to be beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife (see 2.1.2).

It is the privilege of married couples who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for the spirit children of God, whom they are then responsible to nurture and rear (see 2.1.3). The decision about how many children to have and when to have them is extremely personal and private. It should be left between the couple and the Lord. Church members should not judge one another in this matter.

The Church discourages surgical sterilization as an elective form of birth control. Surgical sterilization includes procedures such as vasectomies and tubal ligations. However, this decision is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the judgment and prayerful

consideration of the husband and wife. Couples should counsel together in unity and seek the confirmation of the Spirit in making this decision.

Surgical sterilization is sometimes needed for medical reasons. Members may benefit from counseling with medical professionals.

38.6.5

Chastity and Fidelity

The Lord's law of chastity is:

- Abstinence from sexual relations outside of a legal marriage between a man and a woman.
- Fidelity within marriage.

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

Only a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife should have sexual relations. In God's sight, moral cleanliness is very important. Violations of the law of chastity are very serious (see Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:28; Alma 39:5). Those involved misuse the sacred power God has given to create life.

A Church membership council may be necessary if a member:

- Has sexual relations outside of a legal marriage between a man and a woman, such as adultery, fornication, same-sex relations, and sexual encounters online or over the phone (see 32.6.2).
- Is in a form of marriage or partnership that is outside of a legal marriage between a man and a woman, such as cohabitation, civil unions and partnerships, and same-sex marriage.
- Uses pornography intensively or compulsively, causing significant harm to a member's marriage or family (see 38.6.13).

The decision about whether to hold a membership council in these situations depends on many circumstances (see 32.7). For example, a council is more likely to be necessary to help a member repent if he or she has violated temple covenants or if the sin was repetitive.

See 32.6.1.2 for when a council is *required* for sexual sins.

In some cases, personal counseling and informal membership restrictions may be sufficient (see 32.8).

38.6.6

Child Pornography

The Church condemns child pornography in any form. If a bishop or stake president learns that a member is involved with child pornography, he promptly follows the instructions in 38.6.2.1.

A Church membership council and record annotation are required if a member makes, shares, possesses, or repeatedly views pornographic images of children (see 32.6.1.2 and 32.14.5). This guideline generally does not apply to children or youth of approximately the same age who share sexual pictures of themselves or others. Personal counseling and informal membership restrictions may be appropriate in those situations.

For more guidance, see 38.6.13.

38.6.7

Donating or Selling Sperm or Eggs

The pattern of a husband and wife providing bodies for God's spirit children is divinely appointed (see 2.1.3). For this reason, the Church discourages donating sperm or eggs. However, this is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the judgment and prayerful consideration of the potential donor. See 38.6.9. The Church also discourages selling sperm or eggs.

38.6.8**Female Genital Mutilation**

The Church condemns female genital mutilation.

38.6.9**Fertility Treatments**

The pattern of a husband and wife providing bodies for God's spirit children is divinely appointed (see 2.1.3). When needed, reproductive technology can assist a married woman and man in their righteous desire to have children. This technology includes artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization.

The Church discourages artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization using sperm from anyone but the husband or an egg from anyone but the wife. However, this is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the judgment and prayerful consideration of a lawfully married man and woman.

For information about the sealing of children who are conceived by artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization, see 38.4.2.6.

See also "Adoption" (Topics and Questions, topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

38.6.10**Incest**

The Church condemns any form of incest. As used here, *incest* is sexual relations between:

- A parent and a child.
- A grandparent and a grandchild.
- Siblings.
- An uncle or aunt and a niece or nephew.

As used here, *child*, *grandchild*, *siblings*, *niece*, and *nephew* include biological, adopted, step, or foster relationships. Incest can occur between two minors, an adult and a minor, or two adults. If a stake

president has questions about whether a relationship is incestuous under local laws, he seeks guidance from the Office of the First Presidency.

When a minor is a victim of incest, the bishop or stake president calls the Church's abuse help line in countries where it is available (see 38.6.2.1). In other countries, the stake president should seek guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office. He is also encouraged to counsel with the Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager at the area office.

A Church membership council and record annotation are required if a member commits incest (see 32.6.1.2 and 32.14.5). Incest almost always requires the Church to withdraw a person's membership.

If a minor commits incest, the stake president contacts the Office of the First Presidency for direction.

Victims of incest often suffer serious trauma.

Leaders respond with heartfelt compassion and empathy. They provide spiritual support and counseling to help them overcome the destructive effects of incest.

Sometimes victims have feelings of shame or guilt. Victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders help them and their families understand God's love and the healing that comes through Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see Alma 15:8; 3 Nephi 17:9).

In addition to receiving the inspired help of Church leaders, victims and their families may need professional counseling. For information, see 38.6.18.2.

38.6.11**In Vitro Fertilization**

See 38.6.9.

38.6.12**The Occult**

“That which is of God is light” (Doctrine and Covenants 50:24). The occult focuses on darkness and leads to deception. It destroys faith in Christ.

The occult includes Satan worship. It also includes mystical activities that are not in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such activities include (but are not limited to) fortune-telling, curses, and healing practices that are imitations of the priesthood power of God (see Moroni 7:11–17).

Church members should not engage in any form of Satan worship or participate in any way with the occult. They should not focus on such darkness in conversations or in Church meetings.

38.6.13**Pornography**

The Church condemns pornography in any form. Pornography use of any kind damages individual lives, families, and society. It also drives away the Spirit of the Lord. Church members should avoid all forms of pornographic material and oppose its production, dissemination, and use.

 The Church provides the following resources to help people whose lives are affected by pornography:

- AddressingPornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- AddictionRecovery.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- *Helping Those Who Struggle with Pornography* (booklet)
- *Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts* (booklet)

Stake presidents and bishops also provide support to family members as needed.

Some exposure to pornography may be inadvertent. Intentional use of pornography is harmful—whether occasional or intensive.

Personal counseling and informal membership restrictions are usually sufficient when helping a person repent of using pornography (see 32.8). Membership councils are not usually held. However, a council may be necessary for intensive and compulsive use of pornography that has caused significant harm to a member’s marriage or family (see 38.6.5). A council is required if a member makes, shares, possesses, or repeatedly views pornographic images of children (see 38.6.6).

In addition to the inspired help of Church leaders, some members may need professional counseling. Leaders may contact Family Services for assistance if needed. See 31.3.6 for contact information.

38.6.14**Prejudice**

All people are children of God. All are brothers and sisters who are part of His divine family (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). God “hath made of one blood all nations” (Acts 17:26). “All are alike” unto Him (2 Nephi 26:33). Each person is “as precious in his sight as the other” (Jacob 2:21).

Prejudice is not consistent with the revealed word of God. Favor or disfavor with God depends on devotion to Him and His commandments, not on the color of a person’s skin or other attributes.

The Church calls on all people to abandon attitudes and actions of prejudice toward any group or individual. Members of the Church should lead out in promoting respect for all of God’s children. Members follow the Savior’s commandment to love others (see Matthew 22:35–39). They strive to be persons of goodwill toward all, rejecting prejudice of any kind. This includes prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief or nonbelief, and sexual orientation.

38.6.15**Same-Sex Attraction and Same-Sex Behavior**

The Church encourages families and members to reach out with sensitivity, love, and respect to persons who are attracted to others of the same sex. The Church also promotes understanding in society at large that reflects its teachings about kindness, inclusiveness, love for others, and respect for all human beings. The Church does not take a position on the causes of same-sex attraction.

God's commandments forbid all unchaste behavior, either heterosexual or same-sex. Church leaders counsel members who have violated the law of chastity. Leaders help them have a clear understanding of faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, the process of repentance, and the purpose of life on earth. Behavior that is inconsistent with the law of chastity may be cause for holding a Church membership council (see 38.6.5). It can be forgiven through sincere repentance.

Feeling same-sex attraction is not a sin. Members who have these feelings and do not pursue or act on them are living in accordance with Heavenly Father's plan for His children and with Church doctrine. Leaders support and encourage them in their resolve to live according to the commandments of the Lord. Members with these feelings may receive Church callings, have temple recommends, and receive temple ordinances if they are worthy. Male Church members may receive and exercise the priesthood.

All members who keep their covenants will receive all promised blessings in the eternities whether or not their circumstances allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life (see Mosiah 2:41).

 The Church provides the following resources to better understand and support people whose lives are affected by same-sex attraction:

- “Same-Sex Attraction,” Topics and Questions, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org
- “Same-Sex Attraction,” Life Help, ChurchofJesusChrist.org

In addition to the inspired help of Church leaders, members may benefit from professional counseling. Leaders may contact Family Services for assistance. See 31.3.6 for contact information.

38.6.16**Same-Sex Marriage**

As a doctrinal principle, based on the scriptures, the Church affirms that marriage between a man and a woman is essential to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children. The Church also affirms that God's law defines marriage as the legal and lawful union between a man and a woman.

Only a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife should have sexual relations. Any other sexual relations, including those between persons of the same sex, are sinful and undermine the divinely created institution of the family.

38.6.17**Sex Education**

Parents have primary responsibility for the sex education of their children. Parents should have honest, clear, and ongoing conversations with their children about healthy, righteous sexuality. These conversations should:

- Be appropriate to the age and maturity of the child.
- Help children prepare for happiness in marriage and follow the law of chastity (see 2.1.2).
- Address the dangers of pornography, the need to avoid it, and how to respond when they encounter it.

For more information, see “Sex Education and Behavior” (Topics and Questions, topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

As part of their responsibility to teach their children, parents should be aware of and appropriately seek to influence the sex education taught at school. Parents teach correct principles and support school instruction that is consistent with the gospel.

38.6.18

Sexual Abuse, Rape, and Other Forms of Sexual Assault

The Church condemns sexual abuse. As used here, *sexual abuse* is defined as imposing any unwanted sexual activity on another person. Sexual activity with a person who does not or cannot give legal consent is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also occur with a spouse or in a dating relationship. For information about sexual abuse of a child or youth, see 38.6.2.3.

Sexual abuse covers a broad range of actions, from harassment to rape and other forms of sexual assault. It can occur physically, verbally, and in other ways. For guidance about counseling members who have experienced sexual abuse, rape, or other forms of sexual assault, see 38.6.18.2.

If members suspect or become aware of sexual abuse, they take action to protect victims and others as soon as possible. This includes reporting to civil authorities and alerting the bishop or stake president. If a child has been abused, members should follow the instructions in 38.6.2.

38.6.18.1

Abuse Help Line

If a bishop or stake president learns of sexual abuse, rape, or another form of sexual assault, he calls the Church’s abuse help line in countries where it is available (see 38.6.2.1 for contact information). Legal and clinical professionals will answer his

questions. These professionals will also give instructions about how to:

- Assist victims and help protect them from further harm.
- Help protect potential victims.
- Comply with legal requirements for reporting.

In countries that do not have a help line, a bishop who learns of these offenses should contact his stake president. The stake president should seek guidance from the area legal counsel at the area office. He is also encouraged to counsel with the Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager at the area office.

38.6.18.2

Counseling for Victims of Sexual Abuse, Rape, and Other Forms of Sexual Assault

Victims of sexual abuse, rape, or other forms of sexual assault often suffer serious trauma. When they confide in a bishop or stake president, he responds with heartfelt compassion and empathy. He provides spiritual counseling and support to help victims overcome the destructive effects of abuse. He also calls the Church’s abuse help line for guidance where it is available (see 38.6.18.1).

Sometimes victims have feelings of shame or guilt. Victims are not guilty of sin. Leaders do not blame the victim. They help victims and their families understand God’s love and the healing that comes through Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see Alma 15:8; 3 Nephi 17:9).

While members may choose to share information about the abuse or assault, leaders should not focus excessively on the details. This can be harmful to victims.

In addition to receiving the inspired help of Church leaders, victims and their families may need professional counseling. For information, see 31.3.6.

38.6.18.3**Membership Councils**

A membership council may be necessary for a person who has sexually assaulted or abused someone. A membership council is required if a member committed rape or is convicted of another form of sexual assault (see 32.6.1.1).

A council must also be held for sexual activity with a vulnerable adult. As used here, a *vulnerable adult* is a person who, because of physical or mental limitations, either cannot consent to the activity or cannot understand the nature of it.

To address other forms of sexual abuse, leaders seek the Spirit's guidance about whether personal counseling or a membership council is the most appropriate setting (see 32.6.2.2 and 32.8). In severe cases a council is required. Leaders may counsel with their direct priesthood leader about the setting.

If membership restrictions result from a membership council that is held for a perpetrator of sexual abuse, that person's membership record is annotated.

For information about counseling in cases of abuse, see 38.6.2.2. For information about counseling victims of sexual assault, see 38.6.18.2.

38.6.19**Single Expectant Parents**

Church members who are single and pregnant are encouraged to meet with their bishop. In the United States and Canada, Family Services is available for:

- Consultation with Church leaders.
- Counseling with single expectant parents and their families.

No bishop's referral is needed for this service. There is no charge. See 31.3.6 for Family Services contact information.

In other areas, leaders may contact Family Services staff or the welfare and self-reliance manager in the area office for consultation.

 Guidance for counseling single expectant parents is also provided at "Unwed Pregnancy" (Topics and Questions, topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

38.6.20**Suicide**

Mortal life is a precious gift from God—a gift that should be valued and protected. The Church strongly supports the prevention of suicide. For information about how to help someone who is suicidal or someone who has been affected by suicide, see [suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/suicide).

Most people who have thought about suicide want to find relief from physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual pain. Such individuals need love, help, and support from family, Church leaders, and qualified professionals.

The bishop provides ecclesiastical support if a member is considering suicide or has attempted it. He also immediately helps the member obtain professional help. He encourages those close to the person to seek professional help as needed.

Despite the best efforts of loved ones, leaders, and professionals, suicide is not always preventable. It leaves behind deep heartbreak, emotional upheaval, and unanswered questions for loved ones and others. Leaders should counsel and console the family. They provide nurturing and support. The family may also need professional support and counseling.

It is not right for a person to take his or her own life. However, only God is able to judge the person's thoughts, actions, and level of accountability (see 1 Samuel 16:7; Doctrine and Covenants 137:9).

The family, in consultation with the bishop, determines the place and nature of a funeral service for the person. The family may choose to use Church

facilities. If the person was endowed in life, he or she may be buried or cremated in temple clothing.

Those who have lost a loved one to suicide can find hope and healing in Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

 For information about suicide prevention and ministering, see [suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/suicide).

38.6.21

Surgical Sterilization (Including Vasectomy)

See 38.6.4.

38.6.22

Surrogate Motherhood

The pattern of a husband and wife providing bodies for God's spirit children is divinely appointed (see 2.1.3). For this reason, the Church discourages surrogate motherhood. However, this is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the judgment and prayerful consideration of the husband and wife.

Children who are born to a surrogate mother are not born in the covenant. Following their birth, they may be sealed to parents only with the approval of the First Presidency (see 38.4.2.7). The parents write a letter to the First Presidency and give it to the stake president. If he supports the request, he submits the letter along with his own letter.

38.6.23

Individuals Who Identify as Transgender

Gender is an essential characteristic in Heavenly Father's plan of happiness (see Genesis 1:27). The intended meaning of *gender* in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" is biological sex at birth. (For those whose biological sex is not clear at birth, see 38.7.7.)

Some people feel their inner sense of gender does not align with their biological sex at birth. The

Church does not take a position on the causes of these feelings. Some who experience these feelings identify as transgender.

These individuals often face complex challenges. They—and their family and friends—should be treated with sensitivity, kindness, compassion, and Christlike love. All are children of God and have divine worth.

The ordinances of salvation and exaltation are received according to a person's biological sex at birth. For guidance about administering these ordinances, refer to the following:

- Baptism and confirmation (see 38.2.8.9)
- Priesthood ordination (see 38.2.9.9)
- Temple ordinances (see 26.5.6)

Worthy individuals who do not pursue surgical, medical, or social transition away from their biological sex at birth may enjoy all the privileges of Church membership.

Church leaders counsel against pursuing surgical, medical, or social transition away from one's biological sex at birth. (Social transitioning means intentionally identifying and presenting oneself as other than one's biological sex at birth, and may include changing dress, grooming, names, or pronouns.) Leaders advise that taking these actions will result in some Church membership restrictions. These restrictions include receiving or exercising the priesthood, receiving or using a temple recommend, and serving in some Church callings.

Individuals who transition away from their biological sex at birth are welcome to attend sacrament meetings and participate in the Church in many other ways. These individuals and their families are encouraged to counsel with their local leaders regarding Church participation. Church leaders teach gospel truth and minister in a Christlike way. They consider the needs of all involved. Sections of this handbook—such as attendance at Church

meetings and activities (see 38.1.1), participation in family history work (see 25.1 and 25.4), service to others (see 22.2.3), and so on—should guide leaders as they counsel with individuals and their families. For further guidance on Church participation of individuals who identify as transgender, refer to these guiding principles.

Members who have taken steps to transition and then transition back to their biological sex at birth and are worthy and committed to keeping God’s commandments may enjoy all the privileges of Church membership.

Circumstances vary greatly from person to person and can change over time. Members who feel their inner sense of gender does not align with their biological sex at birth or who identify as transgender, as well as the parents or guardians of minors facing such circumstances, are encouraged to seek counsel from their bishop. Bishops counsel with the stake president to address individual circumstances with sensitivity and Christlike love. Stake and mission presidents seek counsel from the Area Presidency.

National and local laws vary regarding individuals who identify as transgender. In the United States and Canada, stake presidents and mission presidents who have questions about legal requirements should contact the Church’s Office of General Counsel:

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-6301
1-801-240-6301

Outside the United States and Canada, these leaders should contact the area legal counsel at the area office.

For more information about understanding and supporting individuals who feel their inner sense of gender does not align with their biological sex at birth or who identify as transgender, see “Transgender” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.7

Medical and Health Policies

38.7.1

Autopsies

An autopsy may be performed if the family of the deceased person gives consent and if the autopsy complies with the law. In some cases, an autopsy is required by law.

38.7.2

Burial and Cremation

The family of the deceased person decides whether his or her body should be buried or cremated. They respect the desires of the individual.

In some countries, the law requires cremation. In other cases, burial is not practical or affordable for the family. In all cases, the body should be treated with respect and reverence. Members should be reassured that the power of the Resurrection always applies (see Alma 11:42–45).

Where possible, the body of a deceased member who has been endowed should be dressed in ceremonial temple clothing when it is buried or cremated (see 38.5.10).

A funeral or memorial service provides an opportunity for families to gather and perpetuate family relations and values (see 29.5.4).

38.7.3

Children Who Die before Birth (Stillborn and Miscarried Children)

Parents who experience the death of an unborn child suffer grief and loss. Leaders, family members, and ministering brothers and sisters offer emotional and spiritual support.

Parents may decide whether to hold memorial or graveside services.

Parents may record information about the child in FamilySearch.org. Instructions are provided on the website.

Temple ordinances are not needed or performed for children who die before birth. This does not deny the possibility that these children may be part of the family in the eternities. Parents are encouraged to trust the Lord and seek His comfort.

38.7.4

Euthanasia

Mortal life is a precious gift from God. Euthanasia is deliberately ending the life of a person who is suffering from an incurable disease or other condition. A person who participates in euthanasia, including assisting someone to die by suicide, violates the commandments of God and may violate local laws.

Discontinuing or forgoing extreme life support measures for a person at the end of life is not considered euthanasia (see 38.7.11).

38.7.5

HIV Infection and AIDS

Members who are infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or who have AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) should be welcomed at Church meetings and activities. Their attendance is not a health risk to others.

38.7.6

Hypnosis

For some people, hypnosis can compromise agency. Members are discouraged from participating in hypnosis for purposes of demonstration or entertainment.

The use of hypnosis for treating diseases or mental disorders should be determined in consultation with competent medical professionals.

38.7.7

Individuals Whose Sex at Birth Is Not Clear

In extremely rare circumstances, a baby is born with genitals that are not clearly male or female (ambiguous genitalia, sexual ambiguity, or intersex). Parents or others may have to make decisions to determine their child's sex with the guidance of competent medical professionals. Decisions about proceeding with medical or surgical intervention are often made in the newborn period. However, they can be delayed unless they are medically necessary.

Special compassion and wisdom are required when youth or adults who were born with sexual ambiguity experience emotional conflict regarding the gender decisions made in infancy or childhood and the gender with which they identify.

Questions about membership records, priesthood ordination, and temple ordinances for youth or adults who were born with sexual ambiguity should be directed to the Office of the First Presidency.

38.7.8

Medical and Health Care

Seeking competent medical help, exercising faith, and receiving priesthood blessings work together for healing, according to the will of the Lord.

Members should not use or promote medical or health practices that are ethically, spiritually, or legally questionable. Those who have health problems should consult with competent medical professionals who are licensed in the areas where they practice.

In addition to seeking competent medical help, members of the Church are encouraged to follow the scriptural injunction in James 5:14 to “call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” Priesthood blessings of healing are given by those who hold the necessary priesthood office. They are given when requested and at no charge (see 18.13).

Church members are discouraged from seeking miraculous or supernatural healing from an individual or group that claims to have special methods for accessing healing power outside of prayer and properly performed priesthood blessings. These practices are often referred to as “energy healing.” Other names are also used. Such promises for healing are often given in exchange for money.

38.7.9

Medical Marijuana

The Church opposes the use of marijuana for non-medical purposes. See 38.7.14.

However, marijuana may be used for medicinal purposes when the following conditions are met:

- The use is determined to be medically necessary by a licensed physician or another legally approved medical provider.
- The person follows the dosage and mode of administration from the physician or other authorized medical provider. The Church does not approve of vaping marijuana unless the medical provider has authorized it based on medical necessity.

The Church does not approve of smoking marijuana, including for medical purposes.

38.7.10

Organ and Tissue Donations and Transplants

The donation of organs and tissues is a selfless act that often results in great benefit to individuals with medical conditions.

The decision of a living person to donate an organ to another or to receive a donated organ should be made with competent medical counsel and prayerful consideration.

The decision to authorize the transplant of organs or tissue from a deceased person is made by the person or by his or her family.

38.7.11

Prolonging Life (Including Life Support)

When facing severe illness, members should exercise faith in the Lord and seek competent medical assistance. However, when dying becomes inevitable, it should be seen as a blessing and a purposeful part of eternal existence (see 2 Nephi 9:6; Alma 42:8).

Members should not feel obligated to extend mortal life by extreme means. These decisions are best made by the person, if possible, or by family members. They should seek competent medical advice and divine guidance through prayer.

Leaders offer support to those who are deciding whether or not to remove life support for a family member.

38.7.12

Self-Awareness Groups

Many private groups and commercial organizations have programs that claim to improve self-awareness, self-esteem, spirituality, or family relationships. These groups tend to promise quick solutions to problems that normally require time, prayer, and personal effort to resolve. Although participants may experience temporary relief or exhilaration, previous problems often return, leading to added disappointment and despair.

Some of these groups claim or imply that the Church or individual General Authorities have endorsed them. However, these claims are not true.

Church members are warned that some of these groups advocate concepts and use methods that can be harmful. Many groups also charge exorbitant fees and encourage long-term commitments. Some

combine worldly concepts with gospel principles in ways that can undermine spirituality and faith.

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

Members who have social or emotional concerns may consult with leaders for guidance in identifying sources of help that are in harmony with gospel principles. For more information, see 22.3.4.

38.7.13

Vaccinations

Vaccinations administered by competent medical professionals protect health and preserve life. Members of the Church are encouraged to safeguard themselves, their children, and their communities through vaccination.

Ultimately, individuals are responsible to make their own decisions about vaccination. If members have concerns, they should counsel with competent medical professionals and also seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Prospective missionaries who have not been vaccinated will likely be limited to assignments in their home country.

38.7.14

Word of Wisdom and Healthy Practices

The Word of Wisdom is a commandment of God. He revealed it for the physical and spiritual benefit of His children. Prophets have clarified that the teachings in Doctrine and Covenants 89 include abstinence from tobacco, strong drinks (alcohol), and hot drinks (tea and coffee).

Prophets have also taught members to avoid substances that are harmful, illegal, or addictive or that impair judgment.

There are other harmful substances and practices that are not specified in the Word of Wisdom or by Church leaders. Members should use wisdom and prayerful judgment in making choices to promote their physical, spiritual, and emotional health.

The Apostle Paul stated: “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

The Lord promises spiritual and temporal blessings to those who obey the Word of Wisdom and the guidance of living prophets (see Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21).

38.8

Administrative Policies

38.8.1

Adoption and Foster Care

Adopting children and providing foster care can bless children and families. Loving, eternal families can be created through adoption. Whether children come to a family through adoption or birth, they are an equally precious blessing.

Members who seek to adopt or provide foster care to children should obey all applicable laws of the countries and governments involved.

The Church does not facilitate adoptions. However, in the United States and Canada, leaders can refer members to Family Services as a consultation resource. For contact information, see 31.3.6.

For information about single expectant parents, see 38.6.19.

For more information, see “Adoption” (Topics and Questions, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

38.8.2**Affinity Fraud**

Affinity fraud occurs when a person exploits another's trust or confidence to defraud him or her. This can happen when both people belong to the same group, such as the Church. It can also happen by abusing a position of friendship or trust, such as a Church calling or family relationship. Affinity fraud is usually for financial gain.

Church members should be honest in their dealings and act with integrity. Affinity fraud is a shameful betrayal of trust and confidence. Its perpetrators may be subject to criminal prosecution. Church members who commit affinity fraud may also face membership restrictions or withdrawal. See 32.6.1.3 and 32.6.2.3 for guidance about membership councils for fraudulent acts.

Members may not state or imply that their business dealings are sponsored by, endorsed by, or represent the Church or its leaders.

38.8.3**Audiovisual Materials**

Audiovisual materials can help invite the Spirit and enhance gospel teaching in Church classes and meetings. Examples of these materials include videos, pictures, and music recordings. Use of these materials should never become a distraction or the main focus of the class or meeting.

Members should not use audiovisual materials in sacrament meetings or in the general session of stake conference. However, recorded music may be used in these meetings if needed to accompany hymns.

Members should obey all copyright laws when using audiovisual materials (see 38.8.11). They should only use materials that are in harmony with the gospel and help invite the Spirit.

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

Church members should not seek the autographs of General Authorities, General Officers, or Area Seventies. Nor should members ask these leaders to sign their scriptures, hymnals, or programs. Doing so detracts from their sacred callings and the spirit of meetings. It also could prevent them from greeting other members.

Members should not take photographs of General Authorities, General Officers, or Area Seventies in chapels during meetings (see 29.8).

38.8.5**Businesses**

Church meetinghouses and other facilities, Church meetings and classes, and Church websites and social media channels may not be used to promote any business or non-Church entity.

Lists of Church groups or other information about members may not be given to any business or non-Church entity. These include (but are not limited to) those that promote dating, education, and job opportunities. See 38.8.31.

38.8.6**Church Employees**

Church employees are to live and uphold Church standards at all times. They must also comply with local employment laws.

To begin or continue Church employment, members must be worthy of a temple recommend. Periodically, representatives of the Church Human Resource Department will contact stake presidents or bishops to verify the temple worthiness of current or potential Church employees. Leaders should respond promptly.

38.8.7**Church Magazines**

The Church magazines include:

- The *Friend* for children.
- *For the Strength of Youth* for youth.
- The *Liahona* for adults.

The First Presidency encourages all members to read the Church magazines. The magazines can help members learn the gospel of Jesus Christ, study the teachings of living prophets, feel connected to the global Church family, face challenges with faith, and draw closer to God.

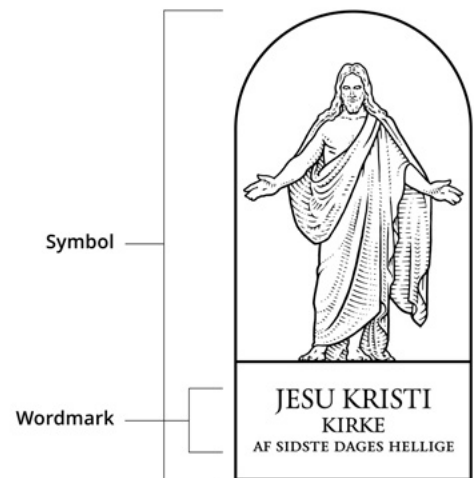
Leaders help members access the magazines at no cost as follows:

- Help members subscribe to the magazines and renew their subscriptions at MagazineSubscriptions.ChurchofJesusChrist.org or by subscribing for them using Leader and Clerk Resources.
- Show members how to access magazine content on ChurchofJesusChrist.org, the Gospel Library app, and the Gospel Living app. This digital content is free.
- Soon after new members are baptized, show them how to access Church magazines digitally or in print.
- Provide ongoing subscriptions to all children and youth who attend church without a parent or guardian, using Leader and Clerk Resources.

Bishops may call a magazine representative to help members access the magazines. Or they may assign the ward executive secretary to assist (see 7.3).

The magazine representative or executive secretary can also help gather faith-promoting experiences and testimonies from local members to share with the magazines.

Members can manage subscriptions at MagazineSubscriptions.ChurchofJesusChrist.org, using their Church account. For help, members may contact the ward clerk or magazine representative.

38.8.8**Church Name, Wordmark, and Symbol**

The Church's name, wordmark, and symbol are key Church identifiers. They are registered as trademarks or are otherwise legally protected worldwide. They are used to identify official literature, news, and events of the Church.

The Church's key identifiers are to be used only according to the guidelines provided below.

Written name of the Church. Local units may use the written name of the Church (not the wordmark or symbol) when all of the following conditions are met:

- The activity or function with which the name is associated is officially sponsored by the unit (for example, a sacrament meeting program).
- The name of the local unit is used as a prelude to the name of the Church (for example, Campo Rosa Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).

- The typeface does not imitate or resemble the official Church wordmark.

Wordmark and symbol. The Church's wordmark and symbol (see the illustration above) are to be used only as approved by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They may not be used as decorative elements. Nor may they be used in any personal, commercial, or promotional way.

Questions should be directed to:

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

38.8.9

Communications to Stake Presidents and Bishops from Church Employees and Volunteers

When Church employees and volunteers need to contact a stake president or bishop, they direct the communication to the leader's executive secretary unless the matter is very urgent or confidential. This allows stake presidents and bishops to focus on the many responsibilities that only they can fulfill.

Church employees and volunteers include representatives of all Church departments, education programs and schools, welfare and self-reliance operations, and Church-affiliated businesses.

When an executive secretary is not called or fully functioning, a leader may be contacted directly.

38.8.10

Computers

Computers and software used in Church meeting-houses are provided and managed by Church headquarters or the area office. Leaders and members use these resources to support Church purposes, including family history work.

All software on these computers must be properly licensed to the Church.

The stake president oversees the placement and use of computers in the stake, including those in FamilySearch centers. The stake technology specialist ensures that they are properly updated and maintained as outlined in 33.10.

38.8.11

Copyrighted Materials

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

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

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

Church members should strictly observe all copyright laws. Generally, only copyright owners may authorize the following uses of their work:

- Duplication (copying)
- Distribution
- Public performance
- Public display
- Creation of derivatives

Using a work in any of these ways without authorization from the copyright owner is contrary to Church policy. Such use may also subject the Church or the user to legal liability.

A user of a work should assume that it is protected by copyright. Published works usually include a copyright notice, such as “© 1959 by John Doe.” (For sound recordings, the symbol is ®.) However, a copyright notice is not required for legal protection. Similarly, the fact that a publication is out of print or posted on the internet does not mean it is not copyrighted. Nor does it justify duplicating, distributing, performing, displaying, or making derivatives of it without permission.

The Church’s Intellectual Property Office (IPO) assists in processing requests to use copyrighted Church materials or programs, including materials that are copyrighted by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. (IRI). IRI is a separate, nonprofit corporation that owns the intellectual property used by the Church. For information on requesting the use of Church-owned materials, see “Terms of Use” on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

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

Intellectual Property Office
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0005
Telephone: 1-801-240-3959 or 1-800-453-3860,
extension 2-3959

Fax: 1-801-240-1187

Email: cor-intellectualproperty@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

Can I copy published Church materials? Unless otherwise indicated, Church materials may be copied for noncommercial Church, home, and family use. Terms of use that accompany a Church website or app indicate how material on these websites and apps may be used. No commercial use may be made of Church materials without specific written permission from the IPO.

Can I copy music? Special copyright laws apply to music. A person may copy music from the following sources for noncommercial Church, home, and family use unless a restriction is noted on the hymn or song:

- Hymns
- The *Children’s Songbook*
- Church magazines

Duplicating printed or recorded music without authorization from the copyright owner is contrary to Church policy.

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

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

Can I download or duplicate computer software and other programs for Church use? Generally not. Computer programs and other software may not be duplicated or downloaded unless all licenses have been appropriately purchased.

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

38.8.12

Curriculum Materials

The Church provides materials to help members learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ. These include the scriptures, general conference messages, magazines, manuals, books, and other resources. Leaders encourage members to use the scriptures and other resources as needed to study the gospel at home.

Gospel learning and teaching should focus on the Savior and His doctrine. To help maintain this focus in Church classes, leaders ensure that teachers use approved materials. For information about approved materials, see *Instructions for Curriculum*.

38.8.13

Directories

Members and leaders are encouraged to use member directories provided by the Church. These directories are available in Ward Directory and Map on ChurchofJesusChrist.org and in the Member Tools app. They provide basic contact information for members. Stake and ward leaders are able to view

additional information helpful for their callings. Leaders can also view this information in Leader and Clerk Resources.

Members can restrict the visibility of their digital contact information. They do this by selecting privacy levels in their household profile.

Stake and ward leaders should respect the privacy settings that members select. These leaders also ensure that information is used for approved Church purposes only.

Printed stake and ward directories are generally not needed. If leaders determine that there is a genuine need, printed directories may be created only by using Ward Directory and Map on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. These directories do not include the gender, age, or birthday of members.

Membership lists should not be printed for non-Church use.

38.8.14

Dress and Appearance

Men and women are created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26–27; Abraham 4:27). Mortal bodies are a sacred gift.

Members of the Church are encouraged to show respect for the body in their choices about appropriate dress and appearance. What is appropriate varies across cultures and for different occasions. For example, for sacrament meeting, individuals wear their best available Sunday clothing to show respect for Jesus Christ and the sacrament ordinance (see 18.9.3). This same principle applies to temple attendance (see 27.1.5). Disciples of Jesus Christ will know how best to dress and groom themselves.

Members and leaders should not judge others based on dress and appearance. They should love all people, as the Savior commanded (see Matthew 22:39; John 13:34–35). All should be welcomed at Church meetings and activities (see 38.1.1).

When issuing temple recommends and ward and stake callings, leaders consider worthiness and the guidance of the Spirit (see 26.3, 30.1.1, and 31.1.1).

38.8.15

Extreme Preparation or Survivalism

The Church encourages self-reliance. Members are encouraged to be spiritually and physically prepared for life's challenges. See 22.1.

However, Church leaders have counseled against extreme or excessive preparation for possible catastrophic events. Such efforts are sometimes called survivalism. Efforts to prepare should be motivated by faith, not fear.

Church leaders have counseled members not to go into debt to establish food storage. Instead, members should establish a home storage supply and a financial reserve over time. See 22.1.4 and "Food Storage" (Topics and Questions, topics. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

38.8.16

Fast Day

Members may fast at any time. However, they usually observe the first Sabbath of the month as a fast day.

A fast day typically includes praying, going without food and drink for a 24-hour period (if physically able), and giving a generous fast offering. A fast offering is a donation to help those in need (see 22.2.2).

Sometimes Churchwide or local meetings are held on the first Sabbath of the month. When this occurs, the stake presidency determines an alternative Sabbath for fast day.

38.8.17

Gambling and Lotteries

The Church opposes and counsels against gambling in any form. This includes sports betting and government-sponsored lotteries.

38.8.18

Guest Speakers or Instructors

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

A guest speaker or instructor is someone who does not belong to the ward or stake. The bishop's approval is required before a guest speaker is invited to a ward meeting or activity. The stake president's approval is required to invite guest speakers to stake meetings or activities.

The bishop or stake president carefully screens guest speakers or instructors. This may include contacting the person's bishop.

The bishop or stake president ensures that:

- The presentation is in harmony with Church doctrine.
- The presentation does not include speculative topics (topics should be consistent with those addressed in general conference).
- Guest speakers or instructors are not paid a fee, do not recruit participants, and do not solicit customers or clients.
- The person's travel expenses are not paid either with local unit budget funds or by private contributions.
- Presentations comply with the guidelines for using Church facilities (see 35.5).

38.8.19**Immigration**

Members who remain in their native lands often have opportunities to build up and strengthen the Church there. However, immigration to another country is a personal choice.

Members who move to another country should obey all applicable laws (see Doctrine and Covenants 58:21).

Missionaries should not offer to sponsor others' immigration. Nor should they ask their parents, relatives, or others to do so.

The Church does not sponsor immigration through Church employment.

Church members offer their time, talents, and friendship to welcome immigrants and refugees as members of their communities (see Matthew 25:35; see also 38.8.35 in this handbook).

38.8.20**Internet****38.8.20.1****Official Church Internet Resources**

The Church maintains official websites, blogs, and social media accounts. These resources are clearly identified as official by the use of the Church wordmark or symbol (see 38.8.8). They also comply with legal requirements and the Church's intellectual property and privacy policies.

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

Members may not create websites, blogs, or social media accounts on behalf of the Church or to officially represent the Church and its views, doctrine, policies, and procedures. However, they may create

websites, blogs, or social media accounts to assist with their callings. When doing so, members should comply with the following guidelines:

- The creation of a website, blog, or social media account must first be approved by the stake president (for stake resources) or bishop (for ward resources).
- The Church wordmark or symbol may not be used or imitated (see 38.8.8).
- The online resource should have a purpose and goal and be named accordingly. The name may include a ward or stake name. However, it may not include the official name of the Church.
- Members may not state or imply that the online resource's content, images, or other materials are sponsored or endorsed by the Church or officially represent the Church in any way. Rather, a disclaimer should be included stating that it is not an official, Church-sponsored product.
- All content should be relevant for the intended audience and should be actively moderated.
- The online resource should include contact information.
- More than one administrator should be responsible for the online resource. This can provide continuity when a person's calling or assignment changes. It also keeps one person from being burdened with updating and monitoring the resource.
- Church-owned artwork, videos, music, or other materials may not be posted unless the use is clearly authorized by the Terms of Use of an official Church website or by the Church's Intellectual Property Office. Copyrighted content from other sources should not be used unless the content owner has first given written permission. For more information about using copyrighted material, see 38.8.11.

- When using images, videos, or personal information, consent from the content owner or the individuals involved is required. Consent may be obtained through a release form, a public announcement, a posted sign for a specific event, or written permission when needed. The country's privacy laws should be followed.
- Online resources should not duplicate tools and features that are already on ChurchofJesusChrist.org, Member Tools, or other Church resources.
- Leaders and missionaries should coordinate to prevent duplicate communication.
- Online resources should be retired when they are no longer needed. Important media (such as photos and videos) should be preserved in the ward or stake's history.

For additional guidelines, see internet .ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.8.20.3

Personal Internet and Social Media Use

The internet and social media have many positive uses. Among these are opportunities to share testimonies of the Savior and His restored gospel. Blogs, social media, and other internet technologies allow members to promote the messages of peace, hope, and joy that accompany faith in Christ.

Members are encouraged to share uplifting content. They should also exemplify civility in all online interactions, including social media. They should avoid contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29–30; Doctrine and Covenants 136:23).

Members should avoid all statements of prejudice toward others (see 38.6.14). They strive to be Christlike to others at all times, including online, and reflect a sincere respect for all of God's children.

Members should not use threatening, bullying, degrading, violent, or otherwise abusive language or

images online. If online threats of illegal acts occur, law enforcement should be contacted immediately.

Members should not imply that their messages represent or are sponsored by the Church.

38.8.21

Internet, Satellite, and Video Equipment

Church internet, satellite, and video equipment is to be used only for noncommercial Church purposes. Any use must be authorized by the stake presidency or bishopric.

This equipment may not be used to access or record programs that are not sponsored by the Church. Nor may Church resources, such as internet connections, be used to access or record such programs.

Only people who are trained to operate the equipment may do so. It should be locked securely when not in use. Equipment may not be removed from the building for personal use.

38.8.22

Laws of the Land

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

38.8.23

Legal Counsel for Church Matters

When legal help is needed for Church matters, leaders should contact Church legal counsel. In the United States and Canada, the stake president contacts the Church's Office of General Counsel:

1-800-453-3860, extension 2-6301

1-801-240-6301

Outside the United States and Canada, the stake president contacts the area legal counsel at the area office.

38.8.23.1**Involvement or Documents in Legal Proceedings**

Church leaders should not involve themselves in civil or criminal cases for members in their units without first consulting with Church legal counsel. This same policy applies to speaking with or writing to lawyers or court personnel, including through email.

Leaders should speak with Church legal counsel if, in their Church capacities, they:

- Believe they should testify or communicate in a legal matter.
- Are being required by legal process to testify or communicate in a legal matter.
- Are ordered to provide evidence.
- Are asked to provide documents or information voluntarily.
- Are asked to communicate with lawyers or civil authorities about legal proceedings, including sentencing or parole hearings.

However well intentioned, Church leaders sharing information in legal proceedings can be misinterpreted and damaging. Such sharing can be especially harmful to victims and their families. Following the Church's policy also helps keep the Church from being inappropriately implicated in legal matters.

38.8.23.2**Testimony in Legal Proceedings**

Church leaders may not testify on behalf of the Church in any legal proceeding without prior approval from the Office of General Counsel. This policy also applies to sentencing and parole hearings. Church leaders may not provide verbal or written evidence in their leadership capacity without this approval.

Leaders should not suggest or imply that their testimony in a legal proceeding represents the Church's position.

Leaders should not influence the testimony of a witness in any legal proceeding.

Contact information for Church legal counsel is provided in 38.8.23.

38.8.24**Mailbox Use**

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

38.8.25**Members' Communication with Church Headquarters**

Church members are discouraged from calling, emailing, or writing letters to General Authorities about doctrinal questions, personal challenges, or requests. Responding personally would make it difficult for General Authorities to fulfill their duties. Members are encouraged to reach out to their local leaders, including their Relief Society or elders quorum president, when seeking spiritual guidance (see 31.3).

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

38.8.26**Members' Employment**

Church members should seek employment that is consistent with gospel principles and for which they can in good conscience ask the blessings of the Lord. This is a personal matter that is ultimately left to the member's judgment and prayerful consideration.

38.8.27**Members with Disabilities**

Leaders and members are encouraged to address the needs of all who live within their unit. Members with disabilities are valued and can contribute in meaningful ways. Disabilities may be intellectual, social, emotional, or physical.

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

Leaders also identify members who may need additional care because a parent, spouse, child, or sibling has a disability. Caring for a family member who has a disability can be both rewarding and challenging.

Leaders seek out and minister to members with disabilities who are living in group homes or other facilities away from family members.

38.8.27.1**Increasing Awareness and Understanding**

Leaders, teachers, and other members seek to understand each individual who has a disability and his or her strengths and needs. They can increase their understanding by talking with the person and his or her family members. Resources are available at disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.8.27.2**Giving Assistance**

Leaders assess the needs of those who have disabilities and their caregivers. These leaders determine how ward or stake resources could be used to help meet the needs as appropriate. Leaders encourage members to help and reach out in love and friendship.

The bishopric or stake presidency may call a ward or stake disability specialist to help individuals, families, teachers, and other leaders (see 38.8.27.9).

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

For more information on assisting persons who have disabilities, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Leaders may also contact Family Services (where available; see 31.3.6 for contact information).

Leaders and members should not attempt to explain why someone has a disability or why a family has a child with a disability. They should not suggest that a disability is a punishment from God (see John 9:2–3) or a special privilege.

38.8.27.3**Providing Ordinances**

See 38.2.4.

38.8.27.4**Providing Opportunities to Serve and Participate**

Many members with disabilities can serve in nearly any Church assignment. Leaders prayerfully consider the abilities, circumstances, and desires of each person and then provide appropriate opportunities to serve. Leaders also counsel with the individual and his or her family. They consider the effects of a Church calling on the person and his or her family or caregiver. (See Doctrine and Covenants 46:15.)

When considering Church assignments or callings for caregivers of people with disabilities, leaders carefully evaluate the circumstances of the caregivers.

Leaders and teachers should include members with disabilities in meetings, classes, and activities as fully as possible. Lessons, talks, and teaching methods should be adapted to meet each person's needs. For information about adapting lessons, see disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

The bishopric may invite a ward member to help a person with a disability in a meeting or activity. For a class that includes a member with disabilities, the bishopric may call multiple teachers. The teachers work together to meet the needs of all class members.

If a person cannot participate in a meeting, class, or activity, leaders and teachers may consult with the member and his or her family about how to meet the member's needs. The stake president or bishop may approve organizing special classes or programs for members with disabilities (see 38.8.27.5). If a person is not able to attend Church meetings, leaders and teachers may provide lesson materials, recordings, or streaming.

Streaming of events, including sacrament meetings and funerals, is intended only for those who cannot attend in person (see 29.7). For more information about partaking of the sacrament, see 18.9.3.

Leaders encourage priesthood holders who have disabilities to participate in ordinances when appropriate. Beginning in January of the year they turn 12, priesthood holders and young women who have been baptized and confirmed and who are worthy may be baptized and confirmed for the dead in a temple. For guidelines about members with disabilities receiving their own temple ordinances, see 27.2.1.3 and 27.3.1.2.

38.8.27.5

Organizing Special Classes, Programs, or Units

Members who have disabilities or special needs are encouraged to attend Sunday meetings in their wards unless they live in a care facility or residential treatment program where Church programs are organized (see 37.6).

Units and groups. Wards or branches may be created for members who have unique needs, such as those who are deaf and use sign language (see 37.1). Approval is given only by the First Presidency.

A ward may be asked to host a group for those with disabilities, such as those who use sign language. For information about the membership records of those attending such units or groups, see 33.6.11.

Deaf members who do not live within a reasonable distance from a deaf unit may attend one virtually. They should obtain permission from the leaders of that unit. Local ward leaders ensure that deaf members are cared for and have the opportunity to partake of the sacrament regularly.

Classes. Members with disabilities attend Sunday classes with the members of their ward. However, when needed to meet the needs of adult or youth members with similar disabilities, a ward or stake may organize special Sunday School classes (see 13.3.2).

Disability activity programs. When needed to meet the needs of adult members with intellectual disabilities, a ward, group of wards, stake, or group of stakes may organize a disability activity program. This program supplements ministering, Sunday Church services, and activities in the local unit.

A disability activity program typically serves individuals ages 18 and older. Every effort should be made to integrate members under 18 into their wards and stakes. In unusual situations, leaders may provide supplemental activities for youth beginning in the year they turn 12.

When multiple wards participate in a disability activity program, the stake president assigns an agent bishop to oversee it. When multiple stakes participate, the Area Presidency assigns an agent stake president to oversee it.

The agent bishop or agent stake president consults with other participating bishops or stake presidents to determine how these programs will be funded.

Disability activity leaders. Adult members may be called as disability activity leaders. These leaders plan and carry out the disability activity program. They consult with ward and stake disability specialists (see 38.8.27.9) to invite members with disabilities to participate. They counsel together about how to meet those members' needs.

Disability activity leaders are called and set apart under the direction of the agent bishop or agent stake president. A stake president may also assign a high councilor to serve as a disability activity leader.

Leaders serving those of any age with disabilities complete the training at ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. For additional safety requirements for leaders, see *Activities for Members with Disabilities*.

When invited, disability activity leaders may attend stake or ward leadership meetings.

Guidelines for disability activity programs. Disability activity programs are organized to help participants develop spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually (see Luke 2:52). Leaders determine the frequency of activities. They consider the number of participants, travel distances, and other circumstances.

Some people may not be able to participate because of complex medical, physical, intellectual, or behavioral circumstances. Leaders seek other ways to minister to their needs.

Participation and safety standards. At least two responsible adults must be present at all activities. The two

adults could be two men, two women, or a married couple. Generally, more adults are needed to supervise activities for members with disabilities than are needed for other activities.

Adults who help with activities complete the training at ProtectingChildren.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. They must receive approval from their bishop before participating. For additional safety requirements, see “Activities for Members with Disabilities.”

If inappropriate behavior occurs, leaders' immediate responsibility is to protect and help the vulnerable person. For information about responding to suspected abuse, see 38.6.2.1 and [abuse.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

38.8.27.6

Interpreters for Members Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Members who are deaf or hard of hearing take initiative in working with leaders to meet communication needs. Members and leaders work together to ensure that interpreters are available.

Interpreters should be located where members can see them as well as the person speaking.

During an ordinance or interview, the interpreter sits or stands close to the person who performs the ordinance or conducts the interview. For more information on interpreting ordinances and blessings, see 38.2.1.

If enough interpreters are available, they rotate approximately every 30 minutes to avoid fatigue.

In preparation for sensitive situations such as personal interviews or Church membership councils, leaders counsel with the deaf member. When the member desires, leaders seek an interpreter who is not a family member to preserve confidentiality.

These same principles apply for members who are deaf or hard of hearing and do not use sign

language but need an oral interpreter to help them read lips.

Leaders may organize ward or stake classes to teach the sign language that is used in their area. A helpful resource is *Dictionary of Sign Language Terms for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

38.8.27.7

Privacy

Leaders should respect the privacy of members with disabilities both during and outside of leadership meetings where needs are discussed. Leaders do not share diagnoses or other personal information without permission.

38.8.27.8

Service Animals

Bishops and stake presidents may determine whether to allow persons with disabilities to use trained service dogs in meetinghouses. Other types of animals, including emotional support animals (comfort pets), are generally not permitted in meetinghouses or at Church-sponsored events, except as specifically required by law. (In general in the United States, the Church is under no legal obligation to admit service dogs or emotional support animals to houses of worship.) Bishops and stake presidents make local decisions. They take into account the needs of persons with disabilities and the needs of others in the congregation.

For additional guidelines on the use of service animals in Church facilities, see 27.1.3 and disability.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.8.27.9

Disability Specialist

The bishopric or stake presidency may call a ward or stake disability specialist. The specialist helps

members with disabilities and their caregivers participate in Church meetings and activities and feel included.

The specialist serves members and leaders in the following ways:

- Get to know individuals with disabilities and their families.
- Respond to disability-related questions and concerns from caregivers, leaders, and others.
- Help individuals access Church materials, meetings, and activities. This may occur through using technology and in other ways (see 38.8.27.10).
- Identify meaningful opportunities for members with disabilities to serve.
- Identify specific needs of families and, where appropriate, identify community, ward, and stake resources.

The specialist can help members with disabilities and their caregivers share information about the disability with others.

38.8.27.10

Resources

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

- Information to help increase understanding of the challenges faced by those who have disabilities.
- Resources to help members who have disabilities and their families find comfort in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Listings of Church materials in formats that are accessible to members with disabilities (see also store.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Questions may be addressed to:

Members with Disabilities
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024
Telephone: 1-801-240-2477 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2477
Email: disability@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

38.8.28

Ministering to Members Affected by Crime and Incarceration

Church leaders are encouraged to follow the Savior's example of offering hope, understanding, and love to those who are affected by crime and those who are incarcerated (see Matthew 25:34–36, 40).

Stake presidents direct prison ministry efforts. These efforts include supporting adults and youth who are in custody or have recently been released from prison or jail. This work also includes caring for families and children with an incarcerated parent or loved one.

Leaders who have a prison or jail within their unit boundaries should take steps to become aware of ministering opportunities and needs. For resources and guidelines, leaders may contact the Church's Prison Ministry Division:

Email: PrisonMinistry@ChurchofJesusChrist.org
Telephone: 1-801-240-2644 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2644

38.8.29

Other Faiths

Much that is inspiring, noble, and worthy of the highest respect is found in many other faiths. Missionaries and other members must be sensitive and respectful toward the beliefs and traditions of others. They must also avoid giving offense.

Stake and mission presidents who have questions about relationships with other faiths should contact the Area Presidency. Other local leaders who have such questions should contact the stake or mission president.

38.8.30

Political and Civic Activity

Church members are encouraged to participate in political and governmental affairs. In many countries, this may include:

- Voting.
- Joining or serving in political parties.
- Providing financial support.
- Communicating with party officials and candidates.
- Participating in peaceful, legal protests.
- Serving in elected or appointed offices in local and national government.

Members are also encouraged to participate in worthy causes to make their communities wholesome places to live and raise families.

In accordance with local laws, members are encouraged to register to vote and to study issues and candidates carefully. Principles compatible with the gospel may be found in various political parties. Latter-day Saints have a special obligation to seek out and uphold leaders who are honest, good, and wise (see Doctrine and Covenants 98:10).

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.

In exceptional cases, when moral issues or the Church's practices are involved, the Church may take a position on political matters. In such cases,

the Church may engage in political discourse to represent its views. Only the First Presidency can authorize:

- Expressing the Church's position on moral issues.
- Committing the Church to support or oppose specific legislation.
- Sharing the Church's perspective on judicial matters.

Local Church leaders should not organize members to participate in political matters. Nor should leaders attempt to influence how members participate.

Church members who seek elected or appointed public office should not imply that they are endorsed by the Church or its leaders. Leaders and members should also avoid statements or conduct that might be interpreted as Church endorsement of any political party, platform, policy, or candidate.

Even when taking a position on a political matter, the Church does not ask elected officials to vote a certain way or to take a certain position. Members who are elected officials make their own decisions. These officials might not agree with one another or with a publicly stated Church position. They do not speak for the Church.

Political choices and affiliations should not be the subject of any teachings or advocating in Church settings. Leaders ensure that Church meetings and activities focus on the Savior and His gospel.

Members should not judge one another in political matters. Faithful Latter-day Saints can belong to a variety of political parties and vote for a variety of candidates. All should feel welcome in Church settings.

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 voting

or voter registration where there is not a reasonable alternative (see 35.5.6.3).

38.8.31

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 38.8.13).

Ward and stake leaders should not store or share confidential Church information outside of Church-provided applications, systems, or internet services. Examples of confidential Church information include a person's:

- Membership status.
- Temporal needs.
- Other personal information that is not publicly available.

Communications from individuals or government offices that refer to data privacy laws should be promptly referred to the Church Data Privacy Office.

Email: DataPrivacyOfficer@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Ward and stake leaders should not respond to these requests.

For the Church's privacy notice, see "Privacy Notice" on ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Members may also ask stake or ward leaders to help them access the policy.

38.8.32

Privately Published Writings

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

38.8.33**Recording, Transcribing, or Streaming Messages by General Authorities, General Officers, and Area Seventies**

Members should not record, transcribe, or stream messages by General Authorities, General Officers, and Area Seventies. However, some meetings where these leaders speak can be streamed under the direction of the bishop or stake president. For information, see 29.7.

Members may record broadcasts of general conference on home equipment for personal, noncommercial use.

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

The name of the Church was given by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1838: “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Doctrine and Covenants 115:4). Referring to the Church and its members in the ways described below identifies a connection between Jesus Christ and members of His Church.

References to the Church should include its full name whenever possible. Following an initial reference to the full name, if a shortened reference is needed, the following terms are accurate and encouraged:

- The Church
- The Church of Jesus Christ
- The restored Church of Jesus Christ

When referring to Church members, the following terms are accurate and preferred:

- Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

- Latter-day Saints (this is a name given by the Lord to His covenant people in the latter days)
- Members of the Church of Jesus Christ

Referring to Church members by other titles, such as “Mormons” or “LDS,” is discouraged.

Mormon is correctly used in proper names such as the Book of Mormon. It is also correctly used as an adjective in historical expressions such as “Mormon Trail.”

The term *Mormonism* is inaccurate, and its use is discouraged. When describing the combination of doctrine, culture, and lifestyle unique to the Church, the phrase “the restored gospel of Jesus Christ” is accurate and preferred.

38.8.35**Refugees**

Many people have fled their homes seeking relief from violence, war, religious persecution, and life-threatening situations. As part of their responsibility to care for those in need (see Mosiah 4:26), Church members offer their time, talents, and friendship to welcome refugees as members of their communities. See Matthew 25:35; ChurchofJesusChrist.org/refugees.

38.8.36**Requests for Church Financial Assistance**

The established programs of the Church provide financial help for people in need and for appropriate causes.

Church assistance to members in need is administered by bishops (see 22.3.2). Bishops follow established principles and policies to help ensure that Church funds are used properly (see 22.4 and 22.5).

Members in need are encouraged to speak with their bishop instead of contacting Church headquarters or requesting money from other Church leaders or

members. The bishop will likely ask leaders from the elders quorum or Relief Society to help assess needs.

38.8.37

Research in the Church

The purpose of Church research is to gather reliable information to support the deliberations of general Church leaders. The Correlation Research Division (CRD) is the only authorized research agency of the Church. CRD may also contract with third-party agencies to conduct research.

When Church-authorized researchers contact members or leaders, they provide a CRD employee's contact information. This employee can answer questions about the research.

CRD seeks to protect the identity and responses of research participants. Persons may decline to participate at any time. They may choose not to answer any or all questions.

Parents or guardians must give consent before children under 18 are invited to participate in a study.

Local leaders should not approve any research related to the Church. This includes using members as research subjects.

CRD abides by all data privacy laws. Local leaders should also abide by these laws and should not provide members' personal information to unauthorized researchers and research agencies.

Some research requires collecting information in Church meetings. This is especially true if the meeting is the focus of the study. In such cases, CRD will work with local leaders to ensure that the presence of researchers does not detract from the meetings.

To verify any research request, contact the Correlation Research Division:

Telephone: 1-801-240-2727 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-2727

Email: research@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

38.8.38

Respecting Local Restrictions for Sharing the Gospel

The Church works to fulfill Jesus Christ's commandment to take the gospel to all the world (see Matthew 28:19). Missionaries serve only in countries where they are officially recognized and welcomed by local governments.

The Church and its members respect all laws and requirements with regard to missionary efforts. For example, in some parts of the world, missionaries are sent only to serve humanitarian or other specialized missions. Those missionaries do not proselytize. The Church does not send missionaries to some countries.

38.8.39

Safety in Church Welfare and Self-Reliance Operations

Many Church welfare and self-reliance operations have equipment and machinery that can cause injury if it is not used properly. Agent stake presidents (or those they assign) and managers of these operations should ensure the safety of employees and volunteers.

Workers should be instructed regularly in safety practices. The work environment should be inspected periodically. Health and safety hazards should be corrected. Adequate supervision should always be provided to ensure that workers follow instructions, use tools and equipment properly, and avoid hazardous behavior.

Normally those who work at these operations should be age 16 or older. Those who operate equipment should be mature, adequately trained, and experienced in using it. Only adults may operate power equipment.

If an accident occurs, the operations manager reports it to the following:

- Welfare and Self-Reliance Services: 1-801-240-3001 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-3001
- Risk Management Division at Church headquarters (see 20.7.6.3 for contact information)

38.8.40

Scriptures

38.8.40.1

Editions and translations of the Holy Bible

The Church identifies editions of the Bible that align well with the Lord's doctrine in the Book of Mormon and modern revelation (see Articles of Faith 1:8). A preferred edition of the Bible is then chosen for many languages spoken by Church members.

In some languages, the Church publishes its own edition of the Bible. Church-published editions are based on standard Bible texts. Examples include:

- The King James Version in English.
- The Reina-Valera (2009) in Spanish.
- The Almeida (2015) in Portuguese.

Church-published editions of the Bible include footnotes, subject indexes, and other study aids.

Generally, members should use a preferred or Church-published edition of the Bible in Church classes and meetings. This helps maintain clarity in discussions and consistent understanding of doctrine. Other Bible translations may also be used. Some individuals may benefit from translations that are doctrinally clear and also easier to understand. Examples of such translations can be found in the Church's Holy Bible list. When members encounter doctrinal discrepancies between Bible translations, they should refer to the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and teachings of latter-day prophets.

38.8.40.2

Scripture Translation

The Lord directed His prophets and apostles to preserve the scriptures in safety (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:56). The Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles closely supervises the translation of Church scriptures. Using approved processes helps ensure doctrinal accuracy and preserve evidence of the text's origins.

Area Presidencies submit official requests for new translations of the scriptures to the Church Correlation Department.

Any other efforts to translate scripture text are not authorized. This policy applies to translations accomplished by traditional methods, artificial intelligence, or other means.

38.8.40.3

Simplified or Modernized Scriptures

The Church publishes simplified scripture stories intended for children. The Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has not authorized any other efforts to update or rewrite scripture text into modern or informal language. This policy applies to efforts accomplished by traditional methods, artificial intelligence, or other means.

38.8.40.4

Accessing Scriptures

Printed copies of scriptures, including some preferred editions of the Bible, are available from Church Distribution Services. Preferred editions of the Bible may also be available at local booksellers, online, and in Bible mobile applications. Electronic text and audio recordings of Church-published editions and some preferred editions are available in the Gospel Library app and at scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. These resources

also provide lists of scriptures that are available by language.

38.8.41

Seeking Information from Reliable Sources

In today's world, information is easy to access and share. This can be a great blessing for those seeking to be educated and informed. However, many sources of information are unreliable and do not edify. Some sources seek to promote anger, contention, fear, or baseless conspiracy theories (see 3 Nephi 11:30; Mosiah 2:32). Therefore, it is important that Church members be wise as they seek truth.

Members of the Church should seek out and share only credible, reliable, and factual sources of information. They should avoid sources that are speculative or founded on rumor. The guidance of the Holy Ghost, along with careful study, can help members discern between truth and error (see Doctrine and Covenants 11:12; 45:57). In matters of doctrine and Church policy, the authoritative sources are the scriptures, the teachings of the living prophets, and the *General Handbook*.

38.8.42

Seminars and Similar Gatherings

The Church warns members against seminars and similar gatherings that include presentations that:

- Disparage, ridicule, or are otherwise inappropriate in their treatment of sacred matters.
- Could injure the Church, detract from its mission, or jeopardize the well-being of its members or leaders.

Members should not allow their position or standing in the Church to be used to promote or imply endorsement of such gatherings.

For more information, see 35.5, 38.6.12, and 38.7.8. See also Jacob 6:12.

38.8.43

Support to Members in Hospitals and Care Centers

Leaders provide support to members in hospitals and care centers within their units. They follow guidelines established by the facilities.

For information about administering the sacrament for members in these facilities, see 18.9.1. For information about creating a ward or branch, see 37.6.

38.8.44

Taxable Activities

Ward and stake leaders ensure that local Church activities do not jeopardize the Church's tax-exempt status. For guidelines, see 34.8.1.

38.8.45

Taxes

Church members are to obey the tax laws of the nation where they live (see Articles of Faith 1:12; Doctrine and Covenants 134:5). Members who disagree with tax laws can challenge them as the laws of their countries permit.

Church members are in conflict with the law and with Church teachings if they:

- Intentionally fail or refuse to pay required taxes.
- Make frivolous legal arguments to avoid paying taxes.
- Refuse to comply with a final judgment in a tax proceeding that requires them to pay taxes.

These members may be ineligible for a temple recommend. They should not be called to leadership positions in the Church.

A Church membership council is required if a member is convicted of a felony for violating tax laws (see 32.6.1.5).

38.8.46**Travel Policies**

A man and a woman should not travel alone together for Church activities, meetings, or assignments unless they are married to each other or are both single. For other travel policies, see 20.7.7.

38.8.47**Appropriate Use of Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial intelligence (AI) presents opportunities and risks and is continuously changing. AI can enhance learning, facilitate communication, and foster innovation. However, AI cannot substitute for the individual effort or divine inspiration required for personal spiritual growth or genuine relationships with God and others.

AI should be used responsibly. Church members should not use AI to create or disseminate anything that is false, misleading, illegal, or harmful. They should verify AI-generated output for accuracy.

38.8.47.1**Learning and Teaching**

AI cannot replace the gift of divine inspiration or the individual work required to receive it. However, AI can be a useful tool to enhance learning and teaching.

Jesus Christ taught with power and authority (see Matthew 7:28–29). He sought divine direction from His Father. He relied on the scriptures (see Matthew 4:3–10) and prayer (see Luke 6:12). He lived and taught only those things He learned from His Father (see John 8:28; 12:49–50).

Church members teach the gospel of Jesus Christ from the scriptures and the words of the living prophets as guided by the Holy Ghost (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:11–17; 52:9). As they seek learning by study, faith, and prayer (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:85; 88:118), they invite the Spirit to

inspire their minds and hearts (see Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3; 11:12–14). Through personal effort and the gift of revelation, they can teach God’s word by the power of the Spirit (see Alma 17:2–3; Doctrine and Covenants 50:17–22).

38.8.47.2**Relationships with God and Others**

Interactions with AI cannot substitute for meaningful relationships with God and others.

Jesus Christ had a personal and sacred relationship with His Father (see Matthew 3:17; John 17). He prayed to His Father (see Matthew 6:9–13), learned from Him (see John 8:28), and fulfilled His will (see 3 Nephi 27:13).

Jesus also had meaningful relationships with others (see Luke 2:52). He listened to and talked with them, understood their needs, and ministered to them (see John 4:5–30; Luke 24:13–35).

Church members are encouraged to follow the Savior’s example by developing genuine relationships with God and others. This requires humility, consistent effort, and patience.

38.8.47.3**Callings and Assignments**

Leaders and members seek divine inspiration to fulfill their callings and assignments. When used appropriately, AI can be an effective tool to assist them in their duties.

The following principles should guide leaders and members in the appropriate use of AI in their Church responsibilities:

- If members use AI, they should do so in positive, helpful, and uplifting ways that uphold the integrity, standards, and teachings of the Church.
- AI cannot replace the individual work and spiritual guidance required to prepare divinely

inspired talks, lessons, prayers, or blessings. However, AI can be helpful for research, editing, translation, and similar tasks.

- Leaders should not rely upon AI to provide advice to members on medical, financial, legal, or other sensitive matters. If members need assistance beyond the spiritual guidance provided by Church leaders, competent professionals may be helpful (see 31.3.6).
- Sensitive information, such as Church records, personal member data, or confidential communications, should not be entered into AI tools that are not provided or managed by the Church.

For more information, see [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/AI](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/AI).

38.9

Military Relations and Chaplain Services

Stake presidents and bishops help make the blessings of Church participation available to members who serve in the military. The Church's military relations and chaplain services program consists of:

- Support from stakes and wards.
- Church orientation for members who enter military service.
- Organization of wards, branches, or Latter-day Saint service member groups.
- Endorsement of and support from Latter-day Saint chaplains.
- Information on how to wear the garment in the military.
- Support from senior missionary couples assigned to selected military installations.

38.9.1

Stake Military Relations Leadership

If military installations or members who serve in the military are in a stake, the stake presidency has the responsibilities outlined in this section. If such installations are located in a mission rather than a stake, the mission president fulfills these responsibilities.

A member of the stake presidency oversees military relations in the stake. He may call a man or a woman to serve as the military relations specialist. This member does not need to have military experience. He or she ensures that resources are provided to support members of the military in the stake. This includes the military service orientation (see 38.9.3).

38.9.1.1

Church Services on Military Installations

If Church services are held on a military installation, the president of a stake where the installation is located organizes one of the following for military personnel and their families (see 38.9.4):

- A ward with a bishopric (when authorized by the First Presidency)
- A branch with a branch presidency
- A service member group with a service member group leader and assistants

The stake president calls, sets apart, and oversees the leaders of these units. He gives these leaders' contact information to the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division. He may designate a ward to support each service member group.

The stake president works with the Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division to provide a letter of appointment to each bishop, branch president, or group leader. This letter outlines his responsibilities and authorizes him to preside over

the unit and conduct meetings. A copy of the letter should be given to the installation chaplain.

The United States military requires that a chaplain provide administrative oversight to any religious service held on a military installation. If there is a Latter-day Saint chaplain on the installation, he normally provides such oversight to a Church unit that meets there. The chaplain does not preside at the worship services unless he is the bishop, branch president, or group leader. However, he is expected to attend and participate.

A member of the stake presidency coordinates with the senior chaplain at each military installation in the stake. He ensures that bishops of wards whose boundaries encompass a military installation do the same. These leaders inform the chaplain of the ward's meeting schedule, meeting location, and contact person. The chaplain can give this information to members at the installation.

38.9.1.2

Latter-day Saint Chaplains in Stakes

The stake president annually interviews each Latter-day Saint chaplain who lives in the stake. He determines the chaplain's well-being and worthiness to serve. The stake president also separately interviews each chaplain's spouse annually.

Chaplains and their spouses should have ward or stake callings. A chaplain who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may serve in leadership callings, such as on the high council or presiding over a military ward, branch, or service member group. However, this calling cannot conflict with his military duties.

Chaplains may assist the stake president in the following ways:

- Report in stake council meetings on Church units meeting on military installations. These reports should include information about new and returning members.

- Serve as the liaison between military leaders and the stake president.
- Help the stake president identify members in the military to call as service member group leaders.
- Assist with efforts to strengthen new and returning Church members in the military.
- Help prepare members in the military to receive sacred ordinances and keep their covenants.

38.9.2

Ward Military Relations Leadership

A member of the bishopric meets with ward members before they leave for military service. He ensures they have an opportunity to attend the military service orientation (see 38.9.3).

For information about the membership records for a member entering the military, see 33.6.9. Some members are assigned to a remote or isolated location or are deployed to a war zone. In these cases, the bishop contacts the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division for guidance about membership records (see 38.9.10).

Leaders in the home ward should correspond regularly with each ward member who is away in military service.

The bishop coordinates with the senior chaplain at each military installation in the ward.

38.9.3

Military Service Orientation

The military service orientation helps members entering and serving in the military know what to expect regarding Church services and activities in the military. It also teaches them how to strengthen their faith and keep their covenants during military service.

A member of the stake presidency or bishopric calls a military service instructor to provide the orientation. Preferably this instructor has had recent military experience. If a qualified instructor is not available, the stake president or bishop contacts the Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division for guidance.

For more information, see the “Military Service Orientation” section in the Church’s Military Members page.

38.9.4

Church Units for Service Members

Members in the military normally participate in wards located near their military installations. However, in the following circumstances, the stake or mission president may organize a ward, branch, or service member group for military personnel and their families at the installation:

- There is no ward within a reasonable distance of the military installation.
- Military personnel do not understand the language spoken in the local ward.
- Military personnel are unable to leave the military installation because of training requirements or other restrictions.
- The members’ military unit is or will be deployed to a location where one of the following applies:
 - The Church is not organized.
 - The local Church unit cannot accommodate the members because of a different language.
 - Attendance at local meetings is not feasible.
- Members belong to Reserve or National Guard units and participate in weekend drills or annual training exercises.

Wards and branches at military installations are created using the procedures outlined in chapter 37.

Wards and branches are usually established to support both military members and their families. A ward or branch may also be established for military members without their families. Such units may be established for members attending basic or advanced training or on a remote assignment. The military does not normally allow Church members who are not associated with the military to belong to a ward or branch that uses installation facilities.

If the number of members or if other circumstances do not justify creating a ward or branch at a military installation, the stake or mission president may establish a service member group. A service member group is a small Church unit that holds Church meetings and looks after members. The group leader does not have priesthood keys. Because of this, he is not authorized to receive tithes and offerings, counsel members about serious sins, restrict membership privileges, or perform other duties that require keys (see 37.7).

For information about service member groups, see the “Find a Church Location or Leader” and “Information for Group Leaders” sections in the Church’s Military Members page.

When a Church unit is established at a military installation, the unit leader coordinates with the senior installation chaplain to arrange for meeting times and use of base facilities. If there is not an installation chaplain assigned to the base, the stake president consults with the commanding officer.

38.9.5

Group Leaders in Remote Areas or War Zones

Stake or mission presidents normally call and set apart service member group leaders. However, this may not be possible in some remote locations or war zones. Since a group leader is not given priesthood keys with his calling, it is permissible for him to be appointed without being set apart. The priesthood leader who is responsible for the location can

appoint a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder to serve as the group leader. He first verifies the man's worthiness with his bishop and stake president. If a Latter-day Saint chaplain is in the area, the priesthood leader can authorize him to call and set apart a group leader.

Service member group leaders in isolated locations may obtain Church supplies and materials by contacting the Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division (see 38.9.10).

Sometimes a deployed service member is isolated from other Church members. If the service member holds the Melchizedek Priesthood or is a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, his bishop may authorize him to administer and partake of the sacrament. If there is more than one member at a deployed location, a group leader should be called.

The Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division should be notified when a group leader is called. A letter of appointment will be sent to him (see 38.9.1.1).

38.9.6

Missionary Service and Military Obligation

For countries with mandatory military service, Church members must generally complete their military service before they can serve a mission. Some countries may allow the mandatory military service to be deferred until after missionary service. Stake presidents and bishops should become familiar with their country's requirements so they can advise members appropriately. Members serving in the Reserves or National Guard may be able to serve missions after they complete basic and advanced training.

For more information, see the "Missionary Service and Military Obligations" section in the Church's Military Members page.

38.9.7

Latter-day Saint Chaplains

The Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division provides centralized endorsement for male and female chaplains who serve in a variety of government and nongovernment settings. These settings include:

- The military.
- Hospitals.
- Hospice organizations.
- Prisons.
- Detention centers.
- Police and fire departments.
- Border patrol.
- Civic and veteran organizations.
- Colleges and universities.

Each organization establishes its own educational and ministry requirements for chaplains. Most organizations require Church endorsement before a person may serve as a Latter-day Saint chaplain. The Church's Military Relations and Chaplain Services Division provides endorsement for all Latter-day Saint chaplains. Letters of endorsement from bishops and stake presidents are not sufficient and should not be provided.

Latter-day Saint chaplains:

- Serve people of all faiths, including Latter-day Saints.
- Ensure that individuals are afforded religious freedom.
- Help facilitate or accommodate the religious needs of those they serve.

For more information, see "Latter-day Saint Chaplains" on ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

38.9.8**Wearing the Garment in the Military**

See 38.5.7.

38.9.9**Senior Missionary Couples**

Retired military couples may be called to serve as military relations missionaries at selected military bases. They assist local priesthood leaders in strengthening new and returning members. They also provide support to families of deployed service members during periods of family separation.

38.9.10**Other Information**

For information about membership records of service members, see 33.6.9.

For information about patriarchal blessings for service members, see 38.2.10.3.

For information about ordaining service members in isolated locations, see 38.2.9.6.

For information about issuing temple recommends in isolated locations, see 26.3.4.

If Church leaders have questions about military relations, they may contact:

Military Relations and Chaplain Services
Division

50 East North Temple Street, Room 2411
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024

Telephone: 1-801-240-2286

Email: pst-military@ChurchofJesusChrist.org

