

❖ **Procedures in a Disciplinary Council** (from Book 1)

- Purpose of Church Discipline
  - Save their souls
  - protect the innocent
  - protect the good name of the Church
- Results
  - disfellowshipment, excommunication, etc.
- Responsibility
  - Bishop can handle most Councils except where a ruling will result in a MP member being disfellowshipped or excommunicated.
  - Bishop should confer with the Stake President before convening
- Invitation
  - person is formally invited to attend
  - delivered by 2 MP holders
  - documented
- Confession
  - speaks, can ask for witnesses to be brought forward
- Accusation
  - 2 or more witnesses are required
  - individual then has chance to speak – can bring in witnesses
- Ecclesiastical Council
  - obligated to confidentiality – have to report rapes, child abuse, murder
  - in Saskatchewan there is no confidentiality (Norm Bergen reported)
    - ◆ Part of the Council process is to report the crime
  - It is best to give them the opportunity to voluntarily confess to the Bishop and the authorities. Help to put them in charge of their repentance.
- Stake Disciplinary Council
  - High Council attends - they are not a jury
  - draw lots – half speak for the accused, half speak for the Church
  - Stake President explains the events involved
    - The person is let into the room and witnesses are brought forward also
    - As the council proceeds any HC can ask questions
  - if straightforward case
    - have 1 HC speak for each side
    - if it is harder there could be 2 or 3 HC's speaking for each side
  - Then the Stake Presidency will leave and deliberate
    - they will pray and come back with a decision
    - get approval of the HC (will they sustain the decision?)
    - once the Stake President makes the decision it stands
  - The decision can be appealed to the First Presidency.

## **Melchizedek Priesthood Ordinations**

This document is to help stake high councilors fulfil two purposes:

1. Assist the stake president in overseeing Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations.
2. Ensure that ordinations are well planned, performed with dignity and correctly recorded.

Concerning the first purpose (to assist the stake president), the Church Handbook of Instructions states that, “The stake president oversees the conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood and ordination to the offices of elder and high priest” (p. 31). “The stake president (or someone under his direction) may ordain or authorize a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder to ordain the person...” (p. 171). As such, members of the high council are authorized and requested to assist and follow-up on the ordinations and record keeping.

Concerning the second purpose (to plan, perform with dignity and record the ordination), we need only to realize that Melchizedek Priesthood ordination is a saving ordinance for men. As such, we should ensure that ordinations are sacred and edifying events. They deserve the same preparation and dignity that we would give a baptismal service or temple sealing. This sheet<sup>1</sup> outlines a process to plan for an ordination, complete it with dignity, and properly record it.

### **Preparation and Sustaining**

Home teachers and priesthood leaders can invite prospective elders to prepare for ordination. We can invite them to study *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: A Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders* (Parts A & B), attend priesthood meetings, and prepare for an interview with the bishop. When a bishop feels the member is prepared, he asks the stake presidency for permission to interview the member with a view to recommending him for ordination.

“With the approval of the stake presidency, the bishop interviews the member as instructed on the Melchizedek Priesthood Record and Certificate form” (Church Handbook of Instructions, p. 31). A member of the stake presidency then interviews the brother, and “...asks the high council to sustain the decision to ordain the person. The stake presidency then presents the person for a sustaining vote in a general session of stake conference or in a stake general priesthood meeting” (p. 31). It is from this point on that the high councilor oversees the ordination.

### **The Ordination and Follow-up**

The high councilor sees that the ordination is done correctly and reverently. He should:

- ❑ Get to know the recommended brother and build that relationship at monthly visits.
- ❑ Ask the sustained member whom he wants to participate in the ordination, whom he wants to attend, and where and when he would like to be ordained.
- ❑ Ask the person performing the ordination to bring his priesthood line of authority.
- ❑ Ensure that participants are worthy and hold the appropriate priesthood office. Participants unknown to the high councilor or bishop should show a current temple recommend or a Recommend to Perform an Ordinance (see Church Handbook of Instructions, p. 171).
- ❑ After the ordination, ensure that the unit clerk enters the data into the computer. At that point, a certificate will be printed (or the stake clerk can print one).
- ❑ Have the stake president sign the certificate, and present it to the ordained brother. This completes the process.

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<sup>1</sup> The Handbook states that, “Priesthood leaders should not produce or use publications that give instructions for ordinances, blessings, or prayers unless the First Presidency has authorized such publications” (p. 171). Therefore, for those instructions, refer to the authorized publications.

# THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Council of the Twelve  
47 East South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

8 April 1994

To: General Authorities; Regional Representatives; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops and Branch Presidents

Dear Brethren:

## Stake and Ward Councils

Stake and ward councils are the ideal place for priesthood and auxiliary leaders to communicate and cooperate in their efforts to accomplish the mission of the Church. It has been our experience that when these councils are used properly, the work of the Lord is blessed in significant ways.

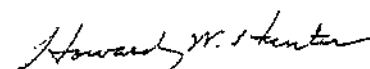
The effective use of councils was emphasized in area training meetings held last fall; however, there is still some concern that stake and ward councils are not functioning as well as they might. We encourage you to consider this matter carefully and to increase the effectiveness of the councils according to existing policies and guidelines as outlined in the official handbooks of the Church.

We suggest that a meaningful time for consideration of this subject would be in stake conferences held during the second half of this year. Stake presidents are encouraged to work closely with the presiding authority at the conference to determine the most effective way to approach this subject in their individual stakes. We can see the benefit of open discussion and training sometime during the conference weekend with all members of stake and ward councils, and perhaps their counselors, as participants. The training should not replace or be held as a part of already existing stake conference sessions, such as the priesthood leader session or the Saturday evening session. The training could be held Sunday morning or at another convenient time during the conference period. To enhance the training, you may want to emphasize issues that are of particular concern to the stake.

Attached is a list of resources you may find helpful in your preparations.

We are confident that your efforts will result in more effective stake and ward councils.

Sincerely,



Howard W. Hunter  
President  
Council of the Twelve

## PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE CHURCH COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS

The following principles apply specifically to the stake and ward priesthood executive committee, stake and ward council meeting, and stake and ward welfare meeting, but have general application to all committee and council meetings held in the Church:

- Council meetings should focus on accomplishing the mission of the Church and helping members to live the gospel.
- Council meetings should ensure that no parent or Church leader is left to perform his or her labors without help from others.
- Presiding leaders should plan and make adequate time available for effective council meetings.
- Time spent on calendaring and programs should be minimal. The major emphasis should be on assisting the Lord in His work and in meeting the needs of people.
- While respecting confidentiality, presiding officers should encourage free and open discussion.
- All council members should be made to feel their input is valued and that they are full partners in the council and full participants in discussions and decisions.
- Participation in councils is both a privilege and a responsibility. Each council member should feel the personal accountability to prepare for and participate in council meetings. By so doing, council members help lift the load from the shoulders of the bishop and other presiding leaders.
- Each council member should prayerfully seek solutions to all problems and matters brought before the council.
- Council members should support one another, respect the role of the presiding officer, and be unified in decisions reached.
- Councils should be conducted in the spirit of love and follow the example of the Lord who "counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy" (Jacob 4:10).
- Councils can consider matters beyond their specific unit, such as community matters and general Christian service.
- All Church councils should assist and strengthen the family.

(over)

5 April 1994

## SELECTED RESOURCE MATERIALS ON CHURCH COUNCILS

### Handbooks

- *General Handbook of Instructions*, pp. 2-2 to 2-4; 2-8 to 2-9).
- *Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership Handbook*, pp. 3, 4-7, 21-22, 33.

### Video

- *Putting the Melchizedek Priesthood to Work* (31184).  
Segment 2, part 2: Shows how the ward priesthood executive committee and ward council should function in helping to accomplish the mission of the Church.

### Conference Addresses

- Ballard, M. Russell. "Strength in Counsel," *Ensign*, November 1993, pp. 76-78.
- Ballard, M. Russell. "Counseling with Our Councils," General Conference Address, April 1994.

ELDER RUSSELL M. NELSON

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# How to Plan and Conduct Sacrament Meetings



## Doctrinal Foundation

Thank you, brethren, for your devotion to the Lord and to His sacred work. I am humbly grateful to be with you. My teaching on sacrament meetings will be addressed particularly to you bishops and branch presidents and your counselors.

Many of you may be new in your assignment and somewhat apprehensive. Please do not be concerned. Not only will the people be served, but your families will be blessed because of your commitment to the Lord and to His Church.

Bishoprics and branch presidencies have many responsibilities that can be

delegated. But you cannot delegate responsibility for sacrament meetings. Generally, you preside and are thus responsible for both the spirit and the content of these meetings.

This is the one ward or branch meeting that we attend as a family—the basic unit of the Church. Teach your family and members to arrive well before sacrament meeting begins. Teach them that we attend, as the Lord commanded, to receive the sacrament and renew our covenants. He instituted the sacrament to remind us of His Atonement.

As a final and specially prepared Passover supper was ending, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His Apostles, saying, “Take, eat” (Matthew 26:26). “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Then He took the cup, said a blessing of thanks, and passed it to those gathered about Him, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood” (Luke 22:20), “which is shed . . . for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). “This do . . . in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do [proclaim] the Lord’s death” (1 Corinthians 11:25–26). In this way, He linked the sacrament to His impending Crucifixion.

God had declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Then the Son of God voluntarily laid down His life to complete the will of His Father. Thus, immortality became a reality and eternal life a possibility for all who would ever live upon the earth. We commemorate His Atonement in a very personal way. We bring a broken heart and a contrite spirit to our sacrament meeting. It is the highlight of our Sabbath day observance (see D&C 59:8–13).

The sacramental prayers have been revealed by the Lord (see Moroni 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79). These prayers contain covenants *and* a promise. We covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and keep His commandments. We eat the broken bread in remembrance of His body. We drink the water in remembrance of His blood that was shed for us. And we witness that we will always remember Him. The promise: we will always have His Spirit to be with us. What a blessing!



## Planning Sacrament Meeting

With these doctrines in mind, brethren, plan your sacrament meetings thoughtfully. Keep the purpose in mind: to focus upon the Lord and teach of His Atonement, His example, and the doctrines of the gospel.

Invitations to speak should be extended well in advance and

include a clear description of the topic assigned and time allotted, along with an offer to help.

Let those who pray include members who are not often called upon. Avoid patterns of prayers given by husband and wife in the same meeting. This conveys an unintentional message of exclusion to those who are single. And you may want to caution those invited to pray *not* to give a sermon.

Departing missionaries may be given an opportunity to speak in a sacrament meeting. Their family members and friends are not invited to speak. Two or more departing missionaries may speak in the same service.

Returning missionaries who have served honorably should be invited to speak in a sacrament meeting and be given time to share spiritual experiences and bear testimony.

Sacrament meetings afford an opportunity for youth to speak briefly on assigned gospel subjects. At other times high councilors will be assigned by the stake president to speak.

Consider calling members to serve as greeters and ushers. They can welcome worshipers and seat them comfortably, while holding a few rear and aisle seats for those with special needs.

Audiovisual materials such as videocassettes and transparencies should not be used in a sacrament meeting.

Occasionally members may be unable to attend because of illness. You may assign priesthood holders to administer the sacrament to them where they are confined.

A typical sacrament meeting will include prelude music; a welcome and acknowledgment of the presiding authority and representative from the high council, if assigned; and an opening hymn and prayer.

After the prayer, ward business is conducted, such as releasing and sustaining of ward officers and teachers; recognizing children who advance from Primary, members called on missions or other assignments, and the attainments of young men and young women; and presenting the names of brethren to receive or advance in the Aaronic Priesthood and the names of new ward members.

Following the ward business, the meeting continues with the confirmation of new members, a sacrament hymn and the administration of the sacrament, gospel messages and optional additional music, a closing hymn and prayer, and postlude music.

Those to be released and sustained do not need to be presented individually. They may be proposed as groups: first those to be released; then those to be sustained in the priesthood and those to be sustained for callings in the auxiliaries.

Brethren, please ensure that these meetings begin and end on time and are not overprogrammed. You need not hold a prayer meeting before sacrament meeting. You and others invited to participate should be seated at least five minutes before the meeting begins so you can be spiritually prepared for a worshipful experience.

During that quiet interval, prelude music is subdued. This is not a time for conversation or transmission of messages. Teach your people to respect their and your own period of prayerful meditation as you prepare spiritually for the sacrament.

### Music

Brethren, teach your music director that the hymns of the Church are the basic music for worship services and the standard for congregational singing. Other appropriate selections may be used for prelude and postlude

### A Typical Sacrament Meeting

Prelude music

Welcome and an acknowledgement of the presiding authority and representative from the high council, if assigned

Opening hymn and prayer

Ward business:

Releasing and sustaining ward officers and teachers

Recognizing

- children who advance from Primary,
- members called on missions or other assignments,
- attainments of young men and young women

Presenting

- brethren to receive or advance in the Aaronic Priesthood,
- new ward members

Confirmation of new members

Sacrament hymn and administration of the sacrament

Gospel messages and optional additional music

Closing hymn and prayer

Postlude music

music, choir music, and special musical selections. Opening and closing hymns are usually sung by the congregation. The sacrament hymn is always sung by the congregation.

Ideally, you would have a choir in your unit, with an invitation to sing periodically. A choir can bless lives. Sister Nelson and I have fond memories of our participation years ago in the choir of our small branch in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When we and the others came forward to sing, there were more of us in the choir than there were members remaining in the congregation.

Pianos, organs, or their electronic equivalents are the standard for use in Church meetings. If other instruments are used, their use should be in keeping with the spirit of the meeting. Instruments with a loud or less worshipful sound, such as most brass and percussion, are not appropriate for sacrament meeting. If a piano, organ, or accompanist is not available, appropriate recordings may be used for accompaniment.

The song of the righteous is a prayer unto the Lord (see D&C 25:12). Some members seem reluctant to sing, perhaps because of fear. Help them to forget themselves and sing as an opportunity to praise their Creator prayerfully. Music in sacrament meeting is for worship, not for performance.

Brethren, we depend upon you. Please do not let our sacred music slip away from us, nor allow secular music to replace it.

### **Conducting Sacrament Meeting**

You dear brethren have responsibility not only to plan these meetings but to conduct them as well. Some in your congregation are praying for delicate promptings and delicate communication from heaven. You can help them by establishing a spirit of reverence. Reverence invites revelation.

In conducting the meeting, extend a cordial greeting. Detailed announcements are more appropriately handled some other time.

Because we invite all to come unto Christ, friends and neighbors are always welcome, but not expected to take the sacrament. However, it is not forbidden. They choose for themselves. We hope that newcomers among us will always be made to feel wanted and comfortable. Little children, as sinless beneficiaries of the Lord's Atonement, may partake of the sacrament as they prepare for covenants that they will make later in life.

Our meetings are always to be conducted as directed by the Spirit (see D&C 46:2). Occasionally something unexpected may arise that you may wish to clarify. Please respond to such promptings and make corrections, if needed. Otherwise, no additional commentary is given after the final speaker has spoken.

### **Administration of the Sacrament**

Bishoprics and branch presidencies preside over the Aaronic Priesthood in wards and branches. You and advisers to your priesthood quorums will take every precaution to see that the sacrament is prepared in advance of the meeting and that the passing of the sacrament has been thoroughly planned.

Those who administer the sacrament are to look their best and be dressed appropriately. White shirts not only look nice, but they are a gentle reminder of other sacred rites, such as baptismal and temple ordinances, at which white clothing is also worn.

You may designate someone to help the deacons know who receives the sacrament first as the presiding authority.

Sacramental prayers are to be offered understandably because

he who prays is giving voice to covenants that others are making. Cleanliness and purity of heart are expected of those privileged to bless the sacrament.

### **Fast and Testimony Meetings**

Fast and testimony meetings are held once a month, usually the first Sunday. Generally, babies are blessed on that day. After the sacrament, the conducting brother bears a brief testimony. He then invites members to bear brief, heartfelt testimonies of the Savior, His teachings, and the Restoration.

Parents and teachers should help children learn what a testimony is and when it is appropriate for them to express it. Younger children should learn to share their testimonies at home or in Primary until they are old enough to bear an appropriate testimony unaided in fast and testimony meeting.

### **Personal Participation**

Each member of the Church bears responsibility for the spiritual enrichment that can come from a sacrament meeting. Each should sing with a grateful heart and respond with an audible "amen" at the conclusion of a prayer or a testimony.

We personally ponder the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We reflect upon the significance of His suffering at Gethsemane and His Crucifixion on Calvary. At this time each of us is to "examine himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28) and reflect upon personal covenants made with the Lord. At this time we meditate upon the sacred things of God.

Gratefully, I thank the Lord for the sacrament meeting and all that it has meant in my life. It has repeatedly rekindled my faith and allowed me to renew my covenants on a weekly basis, helping Sister Nelson and me