

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