

who do these things are promised that “love at home and obedience to parents will increase, and faith will develop in the hearts of the youth of Israel, and they will gain power to combat [the] evil influences and temptations” that beset them (*Family Home Evening Manual*, 1965, p. v).

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FAMILY ORGANIZATIONS

Latter-day Saints think of families with respect to both this life and the next. They strive to organize family groups at the individual family level and in extended family relationships and organizations.

Family organizations provide social and familial support, historical awareness, instruction, and genealogical information necessary to bind generations together by temple ordinances (*see* FAMILY HISTORY; TEMPLE ORDINANCES).

From the early days of the Church, LDS families have regularly established family organizations, held reunions, and worked to make strong family identity. In 1978 the Church asked all families to organize themselves at three levels: immediate families, grandparent families, and ancestral families.

The immediate family consists of husband and wife, and begins when they are married. Later, if a couple is blessed with children, the size and concerns of this unit grow. When the children marry and have children of their own, the grandparent organization is initiated. Beyond that, each family is ideally involved in an ancestral organization, which consists of all the descendants of an earlier common progenitors couple.

The immediate family holds FAMILY HOME EVENINGS and family councils, encourages and assists in missionary work, family preparedness, family history, temple work, and teaching the gospel, and provides cultural and social activities for its members. The grandparent organization is involved in similar activities, but is also concerned



Platt and Wilma Ward (front row), with their children (second row), their children’s spouses (third row), grandchildren and great-grandchildren (1988). Family reunions draw the extended family together to support and sustain family traditions and values. Courtesy Craig Law.

with family reunions, which include the grandparents' children and grandchildren. The purpose of the ancestral organization is to coordinate genealogical activity on common lines. Such organizations frequently raise money for family history research, publish family histories, and generally direct the activities of the larger family.

Many families use the ancestral organization as a repository of photographs, journals, family histories, and other materials that might be used by family members or general researchers as they prepare their own histories. Some families occasionally have an ancestral family reunion, but more usually they have representatives who meet to coordinate family history and genealogical activities. Some may be organized as nonprofit corporations or trusts that may be recognized as charitable organizations if their purposes are limited to religious activities.

The benefits of a family organization can be significant. One benefit is that involvement with family organizations increases one's sense of identity and heritage. For example, in a recent survey of university students who were LDS, Catholic, Protestant, or of no particular religion, the number of ancestors' names and origins known by the LDS students was significantly higher than for the other groups.

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FAMILY PRAYER

It is considered a duty and privilege by Latter-day Saint parents to lead their children in regular family prayer. The scriptural basis for this practice is seen in the Book of Mormon. As the Savior was teaching the Nephites, he said, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Ne. 18:21). President Ezra Taft BENSON has said, "Family prayer is . . . the means to acknowledge appreciation for blessings and to humbly recognize



A Guatemalan family kneels in their home for family prayer (1989). Latter-day prophets encourage families to draw closer to God and to each other through daily family prayer (see 3 Ne. 18:21). Courtesy Craig Dimond.

dependence on Almighty God for strength, sustenance, and support" (*CR* [April 1984] p. 7).

Ideal circumstances find the LDS family kneeling in prayer twice daily, morning and evening. As family members grow older and engage in an increasing variety of activities, finding a convenient time for all members to be present for group prayer is often difficult. Some never meet the challenge, whereas others hold prayer and SCRIPTURE STUDY early in the morning when they are less likely to be interrupted. Another common time for group prayer is just before breakfast and dinner.

Family prayer affords the opportunity for both children and parents to lead in prayer, one at one family prayer and another at the next. Most prayers thank the Lord for blessings received (see THANKSGIVING) and on behalf of the family petition for desired blessings. Challenges facing family members and friends are often placed before Father in Heaven in united supplication. Specific concerns for the well-being of each family member can be enumerated. Sometimes the family fasts