

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

and joins in family prayer on behalf of family members, friends, neighbors, or others who are ill or in special need of the Lord's blessings.

Family prayer allows individuals and families to focus attention and affection on God. It builds faith and loyalty within the family and epitomizes Christ-centered family WORSHIP. Family prayer affords the opportunity to offer praise to God and gratitude for daily blessings as well as for the Savior's mission, example, and love. Church members believe that the benefits of daily family prayer include family UNITY, strength in the Lord, freeing the heart of evil inclinations, tender moments of divine communication, and an understanding of God's relationship to his children.

Many members who live alone participate in a family prayer experience by choosing to pray aloud for family members and others. They may also join family home evening groups or other friends and associates for regular group prayer.

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#### FAMILY REGISTRY™

Family Registry is a service provided by the Family History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to help people who are doing research on the same family lines to cooperate with one another and share results, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort and expense. This service provides a way for individuals and family organizations to ask for information about an ancestor who is currently the subject of their research or to share with others information they may have about deceased individuals.

The Family Registry has an alphabetical list of the surnames being researched, together with the names and addresses of persons who have registered. The index is updated periodically and published on microfiche. The January 1990 edition

contained 287,000 names. Those who register are expected to respond to others who wish to coordinate research efforts. The Family Registry index can be personally searched by anyone at the FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY in Salt Lake City, Utah, or at more than 1,500 FAMILY HISTORY CENTERS or other libraries that participate in offering this service. There is no charge for registration or for searching the index.

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#### FAMILYSEARCH™

FamilySearch™ is an automated computer system that simplifies the task of family history research. The FamilySearch system includes search-and-retrieval programs designed to work on personal computers and computer files of family history information. FamilySearch was developed by the Family History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The information in each file is distributed on compact discs, each capable of storing the equivalent of about 320,000 pages of text. They are read by computers equipped with a compact-disc player and with the FamilySearch software.

FamilySearch is available to the public at the FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY in Salt Lake City and over time will be distributed to FAMILY HISTORY CENTERS affiliated with the library.

FamilySearch's primary purpose is to help members of the Church identify their ancestors and complete TEMPLE ORDINANCES for them. The power of the program, together with the large files available to it, make FamilySearch a valuable research tool.

When the system was introduced in 1990, it included the following files:

1. The Family History Library Catalog, which has been available for many years in a microfiche edition in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and in family history centers, describes the collection of the library and provides help in locat-