

ters, where they are redistributed to areas of greatest need.

Special fasts are occasionally proclaimed by the FIRST PRESIDENCY when urgent needs arise. Such was the case on May 15, 1845, when “enough was contributed to supply the wants of the poor until harvest” (HC 7:411). In 1985, Church members observed two special fast days and donated \$10,465,000 to hunger relief and community development projects in Africa, South America, and elsewhere (see HUMANITARIAN SERVICES).

Historically, fast offerings have seldom been sufficient to provide for all the welfare needs of the Church, and shortages have been met from general Church funds. The counsel of Church President Spencer W. KIMBALL remains in effect: “I think that when we are affluent, as many of us are, that we ought to be very, very generous. . . . I think we should . . . give, instead of the amount we saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it” (CR [Apr. 1974], p. 184).

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## FAST AND TESTIMONY MEETING

An LDS fast and testimony meeting is normally held on the first Sunday of each month, where faithful members of the Church are invited to bear a verbal witness of their feelings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The meeting usually follows a fast by the members, usually from at least two consecutive meals and from liquids also. The fast is officially broken by partaking of the SACRAMENT of the Lord’s Supper. In modern scripture, fasting is described as “rejoicing and prayer” (D&C 59:14), which implies that it is more than just abstaining from food. That tone of devotion is also the feeling associated with contributing fast offerings, giving the equivalent cost of the meals, or more, to be used for the poor. The fast and testimony meeting becomes the locus of spiritual sensitivity and contrition, of concentration on the things of God.

A member of the BISHOPRIC or branch presidency conducts the fast and testimony meeting. Usually it begins with an opening hymn and an invocation or prayer, which may be followed by the naming and blessing of newborn children and the confirming of recently baptized members of the Church.

After the sacrament has been administered, the person conducting the meeting expresses his testimony, then invites the members of the congregation of all ages to do likewise. Sometimes they stand in place to speak; at other times they come forward to the pulpit. Each one arises, as prompted by the Spirit, and addresses the congregation extemporaneously. In this setting feelings of profoundest concern are often expressed: appreciation of good family relationships, thanksgiving for the blessings of the gospel, recognition of significant changes in lives, and the fruits of obedience. A faith-promoting experience may be shared or a witness given regarding a point of doctrine or attesting divine inspiration. Such expressions are usually concluded by a prayer or petition in the name of the Lord. The experience is at once enlightening, sobering, and moving. Tears are not uncommon amid acknowledgment of weaknesses and efforts to improve, along with gratitude for divine goodness.

Rarely are such individual expressions longer than five or six minutes. Thus a number of children and adults generally participate in a meeting, which usually lasts a little more than an hour, but may be extended or shortened at the discretion of the presiding officer. In any given year a majority of the membership of the Church, young and old, will have participated in this earnest form of witness on fast Sunday.

One precedent for formal testimony bearing was set at the dedication of the KIRTLAND TEMPLE. On that occasion several stood and, under the outpouring of the Spirit, spoke of things they had seen and felt. In Kirtland it was customary to hold fast meetings on Thursday afternoons. Since 1896 these meetings have usually been held on Sunday.

MARY JOLLEY

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## FATE

Fate, as usually interpreted, is the antithesis of self-determination and responsibility. Latter-day Saints reject on scriptural grounds all appeals to