

They strive to find and fulfill their CALLINGS and fear to fall short of the divine purpose in their lives. They are constantly charged to magnify their callings and not to be weary in well-doing. Modern revelation promises that on condition of “persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41), “[their] confidence [shall] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). This parallels the promise of John: “Perfect love casteth out fear” (1 Jn. 4:18).

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FELLOWSHIPING MEMBERS

Latter-day Saints consider themselves brothers and sisters (see BROTHERHOOD and SISTERHOOD) responsible to help one another. Their informal



A New Zealand Church member is greeted with the traditional “hongi” by John Shaw Welch, president of the LDS Maori Agricultural College (1917). Friendship, understanding, kindness, love, and service are fostered in Latter-day Saint communities through personal fellowshiping and social activities. Courtesy Edith W. Morgan.

acts of friendship and kindness foster congeniality within the Church and assist new members as they move into its social context. In addition, the Church has developed some practices specifically intended to help integrate new members.

After baptism, the full-time and stake missionaries present to new members a series of lessons entitled *Discussions for New Members*. Home teachers also teach them and help them become part of the local Church unit. The BISHOPRIC, priesthood quorum, and auxiliary leaders also help converts feel welcome. New members are encouraged to attend Church meetings and participate in other scheduled ward activities. Converts are also invited to accept Church CALLINGS (such as teaching a class or serving in an administrative capacity). Women are welcomed into RELIEF SOCIETY activities, and girls into YOUNG WOMEN; male adults and teenagers receive the PRIESTHOOD and begin functioning in their priesthood responsibilities. Newly baptized members grow in love for the gospel as they serve others. After one year of membership, worthy adult members are encouraged to attend the TEMPLE, where they receive TEMPLE ORDINANCES that bind families together as eternal units.

[See also Conversion; Joining the Church; Membership.]

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FEMINISM

Feminism is the philosophical belief that advocates the equality of women and men and seeks to remove inequities and to redress injustices against women. Far from a monolithic ideology, feminist theory embraces a variety of views on the nature of women and argues for a pluralistic vision of the world that regards as equally important the experiences of women of all races and classes.

In the United States, “feminism” has been an umbrella term encompassing a coalition of those women and men who share a devotion to the cause of women’s rights but who often differ on specific goals and tactics. Personal, religious, and political values all influence which reforms and measures a specific feminist will support.

The doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints converges in some areas with the ideals of feminism and diverges in others. It insists on the absolute spiritual equality of women and men, proclaiming that "all are alike unto God," both "black and white, bond and free, male and female" (2 Ne. 26:33; Gal. 3:28). GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT are given equally to men and women: "And now, he imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also" (Alma 32:23). LDS principles argue unequivocally for the development of the full potential of each person, regardless of gender.

So central is the equality of all humankind to Christ's message that during his earthly ministry Christ openly rejected cultural proscriptions that relegated women to an inferior spiritual and political status. He recognized women's spirits and intellects; he taught them directly (Luke 10:38-42); he identified himself as the Messiah to a woman, the first such affirmation recorded in the New Testament (John 4:26); he healed women (Matt. 15:22-28) and raised a woman from the dead (Luke 8:49-56). After his resurrection, he appeared first to a woman, whom he asked to tell his apostles of the glorious event (John 20:11-18), although according to Jewish law women were not considered competent as legal witnesses.

Such equality of women and men is based on the celestial model of heavenly parents, both Father and Mother, who share "all power" and have "all things . . . subject unto them" (D&C 132:20) and who invite their children to emulate their example of perfect love and unity and become as they are. Mormons are taught that righteous power, held by heavenly parents and shared with their children, is never coercive but is characterized "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41). While the implications of these expansive beliefs are always subject to individual implementation, Mormon women and men have found in these doctrines sources of spiritual strength, including the desire to know more about MOTHER IN HEAVEN.

LDS doctrine is, however, at odds with several versions of feminism, including those that emphasize female sufficiency apart from men. Because Church doctrine stresses the necessity of overcoming differences and forging a celestial unity between husband and wife in order to achieve EXALTATION (cf. 1 Cor. 11:11), the radical feminist critique of the family as an institution of

repression for women and the call for its replacement find little support among Latter-day Saints. While individual families may be repressive and dysfunctional, most Latter-day Saints believe that the defect is not inherent in the structure. Indeed, the family is viewed as the source of both men's and women's greatest work and joy, not only on earth but also in eternity.

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FINANCES OF THE CHURCH

The financial strength of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints derives primarily from the commitment of its members to the scriptural principle of TITHING and other forms of voluntary contributions and service. The collection and disbursement of all funds are carefully managed according to standard procedures worldwide and under the direct supervision of the FIRST PRESIDENCY. The Church also maintains limited business investments and financial reserves as part of its larger strategy for supporting expanding ecclesiastical programs. The handling of all funds is regularly audited in accordance with sound financial practices.

Latter-day Saints take seriously the commandment to pay tithing and the Lord's promises as given in the Old Testament:

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it [Mal. 3:8-10].

This law of finance for God's Church has been reiterated in latter-day scripture. In 1838 the Lord