
GENERAL HANDBOOK OF INSTRUCTIONS

The *General Handbook of Instructions* is the official book of instruction for Church leaders, mainly STAKE PRESIDENTS and BISHOPS. Church leaders who receive the handbook include GENERAL AUTHORITIES, Church department heads, general auxiliary presidencies, temple presidents, and officers in stakes, wards, missions, districts, and branches. It is a handbook of Church policy and practices, not doctrine. The FIRST PRESIDENCY and QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES prepare the handbook to provide uniform procedures and methods for local leaders as they minister to the members and direct Church affairs in their areas throughout the world. Other Church handbooks, such as those for PRIESTHOOD and AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS, are based on the *General Handbook of Instructions*.

Handbooks have included such things as instruction on (1) Church administration and meetings; (2) calling members to Church positions and releasing them from such calls; (3) ordaining members to priesthood offices; (4) performing ORDINANCES and giving BLESSINGS; (5) doing sacred temple work, and family history; (6) responding to calls for missionary service; (7) keeping records, reports, and accounting for finances; (8) applying Church discipline; and (9) implementing Church policies on such matters as buildings and property, moral issues, and medical and health issues.

The first edition of the handbook was a fourteen-page booklet of shirt-pocket size published in 1899. It instructed stake and ward leaders in how to receive, process, and account for members' tithing, most of which was farm produce and livestock rather than money. The Church revised the handbook annually until 1910 and, thereafter, about every five years. The most significant and constant change that has prompted the revisions has been the growth of the Church from 271,681 members in 1899 to more than 7 million in 1990. Other factors that have prompted revisions include the shift in North American members from an agrarian to an urban society, the immigration of converts, the Depression of the 1930s, the wars in the twentieth century, the increase of sensitive social issues, and the transitions from a membership centered in Utah to a membership in North America, and ultimately, to an international Church. Between revisions, letters from the First Presidency to local

leaders and items in the priesthood *Bulletin* update instructions in the handbook.

The handbook is written in terms of principles, as far as possible, rather than explicit directions. Local leaders apply the principles in their stakes, wards, and branches as they are directed by spiritual inspiration.

The *General Handbook of Instructions* is pre-eminent among Church publications in both its preparation and its use as an authoritative guide for local Church leaders.

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GENTILES

[In the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek words translated into English as "Gentile" signified other peoples; i.e., "not Israelite" and later "not Jewish." For Latter-day Saints, "Gentile" generally means "not Latter-day Saint," although the meaning also extends to include "not Jewish" and "not Lamanite." These latter senses are rooted partly in scripture, where the distinction between Gentiles and Israelites or Jews is firmly maintained, and partly in the language adopted by early leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the LDS scriptural view, Gentiles play an important role in the restoration of the gospel in the latter days (1 Ne. 13:38–39; 22:6–11; 3 Ne. 21:1–6) and in the latter-day work of gathering Israel (1 Ne. 22:12; 3 Ne. 21:6, 22–29). For discussions related to this topic, see Abrahamic Covenant; Gentiles, Fulness of; Israel: Gathering of Israel; and Law of Adoption.]

GENTILES, FULNESS OF

The "fulness of the Gentiles" is a term for a doctrine taught in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. It refers to a process whereby, after Jesus' ministry among his Jewish countrymen, the gospel was preached to Gentiles in the MERIDIAN OF TIME. Jesus told his Jewish listeners that the kingdom of God would be taken from them "and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). He also said that many Gentiles would sit down in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 8:5–12). Paul taught that in his day the Gentiles would be given an opportunity to receive the gospel, be adopted into the house of Israel, and receive the blessings of the covenant