

The disparaging view of litigation begins with the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught his followers to settle disputes quickly and avoid court proceedings, to “turn the other cheek,” and, if an adversary should obtain judgment against them in court to “let him have thy cloak also” (Matt. 5:25–26, 39–40). The apostle Paul condemned the practice that “brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers” (1 Cor. 6:6). He counseled the Corinthian Saints to find a wise person from among them to judge the matter and, failing that, to suffer the wrong rather than to take it to legal authorities for a decision (verses 5–7).

More detailed instructions for dealing with offenses are contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, which counsels members to resolve their differences. But it also recognizes that some offenses are violations of criminal law that should be reported to civil authorities, while other categories of offenders should be dealt with by the Church (D&C 42:79–92). Instructions for Church DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES are detailed (D&C 102:13–23).

When the main body of the Church was established in Utah in the mid-1800s, there was no civil authority, so Church courts exercised jurisdiction over secular as well as religious matters for the next several decades (*see* COURTS, ECCLESIASTICAL, NINETEENTH CENTURY). However, following the establishment of civil courts, the need for Church courts diminished. They were formally discontinued in 1989 in favor of disciplinary councils.

Church courts never were intended to absolve members from the duty of resolving their disputes by reconciliation and mutual understanding whenever possible. Even when Church courts were available, members were regularly admonished to settle their conflicts by informal means and to avoid litigation. A typical example: “Be reconciled to each other. Do not go to the courts of the Church nor to the courts of the land for litigation. Settle your own troubles and difficulties” (J. F. Smith, *GD*, p. 257).

The preference for forbearance, forgiveness, and informal means of resolution of disputes, both among Church members and with people outside the Church, continues today, as shown by counsel given in a 1988 general conference of the Church: “We live in an environment . . . of litigation and conflict, of suing and countersuing. Even here the powers of healing may be invoked” (G. B. Hinckley, *Ensign* 18 [Nov. 1988]:54).

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## LAYING ON OF HANDS

The laying on of hands on the head of an individual as a religious ceremony has served many purposes historically and continues to do so for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The most common are the following:

**THE SACRIFICIAL CEREMONIES OF ANCIENT ISRAEL.** Anciently, in burnt and sin offerings, the offerer laid his hands on the sacrifice prior to its being slain (e.g., Ex. 29:10; Lev. 1:4; 4:4; 2 Chron. 29:23). In the case of the scapegoat, hands were laid on the head, symbolizing transference of the sins of the people to the animal (Lev. 16:21). The hands of the people were laid upon the Levites, and they in turn laid their hands upon the offerings (Num. 8:10–12).

**BESTOWAL OF THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST.** CONFIRMATION and bestowing of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands follows BAPTISM. The Doctrine and Covenants explains that the one performing the ORDINANCE is acting as proxy for the Lord himself: “I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney RIGDON, and you shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom” (D&C 36:2; cf. Moro. 2:2). This ordinance may be performed only by MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD holders, not by those of the lesser or AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (D&C 20:58). This explains why JOHN THE BAPTIST, though he performed water baptism, did not bestow the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands (Matt. 3:11), and it may explain why Philip did not do so for his Samaritan converts (Acts 8:5–17), or Apollos for the Ephesians (Acts 19:6; see also Acts 8:12–20). In Philip’s case, he baptized the Samaritans, but PETER and JOHN, who held the higher priesthood, were sent to confer the Holy Ghost, and they laid “their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:17).

Paul may have referred to this gift when he counseled his companion Timothy to “neglect not

the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (1 Tim. 4:14). On another occasion Paul admonished him to “stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6).

**BESTOWAL OF THE GIFTS AND RIGHTS OF AN OFFICE.** Moses ordained Joshua as his successor by the laying on of hands (Num. 27:18, 23; Deut. 34:9). Jesus’ apostles used this procedure in authorizing seven men to manage practical economic matters in the early church (Acts 6:1–6). Paul and Barnabas were ordained to a missionary journey by the laying on of hands of the “prophets and teachers at Antioch” (Acts 13:3).

The **BOOK OF MORMON** reports that Jesus conferred upon his disciples the power to give the Holy Ghost by laying his hands upon them (3 Ne. 18:37; Moro. 2:3). The Aaronic Priesthood was conferred on the Prophet Joseph SMITH and Oliver COWDERY by the hands of the resurrected John the Baptist (JS—H 1:68–69). All subsequent transmission of AUTHORITY comes from the **PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH** by the laying on of hands. A **REVELATION** on priesthood states: “Wherefore, it must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High priesthood of the Church . . . From the same comes the administering of ordinances and blessings upon the church, by the laying on of the hands” (D&C 107:65–67). Accordingly, all men and women are installed in any Church office or **CALLING** by a **SETTING APART** by the laying on of hands of those in authority.

**HEALING THE SICK.** The laying on of hands to heal the sick was a common practice of Jesus (Mark 5:23; 6:5; 16:18; Luke 13:12–13). Luke records that “all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them” (Luke 4:40). Jesus did not use this method exclusively. Sometimes a touch was sufficient, or his word only. In the case of a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, Jesus touched his tongue and his ears (Mark 7:33).

Jesus conferred the power of healing on his followers: “And these signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:18). Ananias laid hands on Paul that he might regain his sight (Acts

9:17–18). Paul thus healed the father of Publius in Malta (Acts 28:8). The Lord commanded that this practice should be continued in the Latter-day Church (D&C 42:43–44).

**IMPARTING A BLESSING.** Blessings in addition to those for health are given by the laying on of hands. Among these are **PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS** (as when Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh [Gen. 48:14]), blessings for the Lord’s protecting care, blessings for success in the Lord’s work, blessings of counsel, and the blessing of children. (Matt. 19:15; Mark 10:13, 16; cf. Acts 8:12–20; Moro. 2:2).

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## LAY PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

One of the important defining characteristics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is lay participation and leadership. The scope of volunteer service in the Church is extensive, both in the number of people involved and in the amount of their service.

In practice, the building up of the kingdom of God on earth is accomplished by individuals serving in numerous lay assignments, or **CALLINGS**. They speak in Church meetings and serve as athletic directors, teachers, family history specialists, financial secretaries, children’s music directors, and women’s and men’s organization presidents. The goal of many leaders is to make sure that each member has a calling, reflecting the belief that personal growth comes through service. Millions of people serve in the Church, and that service represents a significant time commitment. In one study, researchers found that on average a **BISHOP**, the leader of a local **WARD** (congregation), spends approximately twenty-seven hours weekly in his duties; the president of the **RELIEF SOCIETY**, or women’s organization, thirteen hours; the ward **CLERK**, eight hours; and so on. As of 1990, there were nearly 50,000 full-time **MISSIONARIES** contributing one and a half to two years of service. Lay members and leaders are organized and assisted through an extensive Church organization, including a substantial staff of employees located primarily at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah.