

serve. They are grateful for those who “hear [the Lord’s] voice and harden not their hearts” (D&C 28:7).

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MISSIONARY TRAINING CENTERS

In 1832 a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph SMITH in KIRTLAND, OHIO, directed the elders to tarry and conduct a SOLEMN ASSEMBLY to study the “doctrines of the kingdom,” as well as a variety of secular subjects, so that they might “be prepared in all things” to go out and preach to the people (D&C 88:70–81). This initial assembly became the basis for the SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS with similar purposes, which opened on January 24, 1833. When Church schools were founded in Utah during the latter part of the nineteenth century, they created programs for MISSIONARY training. In 1883 “missionary meetings” were added to the offerings of the Theological Department at Brigham Young Academy, the predecessor to BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY in Provo, Utah. Similar programs were inaugurated at Ricks College in Idaho and at the Latter-day Saints University in Salt Lake City.

As missionary training progressed, the FIRST PRESIDENCY approved a Church Missionary Home and Preparatory Training School. A Salt Lake City home was purchased, remodeled, and furnished to accommodate up to ninety-nine missionaries. Inaugurated in 1925, the week-long program for departing missionaries emphasized gospel topics, Church procedures, personal health, and proper manners. This home accommodated the outgoing missionaries until the 1960s, but as the number of missionaries increased, other facilities were needed.

PROGRAM AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY (BYU). For several years prior to 1960, Church and BYU officials considered the advisability of offering language instruction to missionaries. The occasion to launch this program came when missionaries assigned to Mexico and Argentina experi-

enced lengthy delays in obtaining visas. On December 4, 1961, the Missionary Language Institute (MLI) opened with a class of twenty-nine elders in temporary quarters in a Provo hotel and various BYU buildings. Through classes, leadership meetings, and conferences, missionaries attending the MLI were able to develop facility in Spanish as well as in self-discipline and missionary spirit.

To enhance this program, in 1963 Church leaders gave its director the authority and stature of a MISSION PRESIDENT, and the MLI became known as the Language Training Mission (LTM). Portuguese and German were soon added to its curriculum.

In 1968 Church leaders decided to offer language instruction in all sixteen languages then being used by missionaries. To meet this major challenge, separate LTMs were established at Ricks College to teach Dutch and the Scandinavian languages and at the Church College of Hawaii to teach Polynesian and Oriental languages.

SCOPE BROADENED. The need for missionary training increased with the expansion of the Church. In 1971 over 2,500 missionaries received training at Brigham Young University in classrooms and housing that became increasingly inadequate. In 1973 the Church Missionary Committee approved plans to build a complex in Provo large enough to meet the needs of all language training for missionaries and decided to combine the three existing programs there. By 1976 the first phase was established. This multimillion-dollar complex demonstrated the Church’s resolute commitment to missionary work.

Prior to 1978, while foreign-language missionaries were trained at the LTM in Provo, the Missionary Home in Salt Lake City continued to train the English-speaking missionaries. Beginning in 1978, however, all elders, sisters, and couples called from the United States or Canada reported directly to Provo for training, and the name of the facility was changed to Missionary Training Center (MTC) to reflect its more comprehensive program.

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION. In the 1980s, the GENERAL AUTHORITIES became more involved in personal direction of missionary training. Although past MTC leaders had customarily handled policies and procedures through BYU,

from 1980 on they increasingly reported directly to the Missionary Committee in Salt Lake City.

The internal organization was also at this time restructured to separate ecclesiastical from professional responsibilities. Missionaries were organized into branches whose presidents, called as lay leaders from among Church members in the Provo area, provided needed ecclesiastical authority and service in counseling missionaries and in conducting Sunday meetings. In addition, full-time staff members supervised professional activities such as training and business affairs.

MTC REGIMEN. The MTC is regarded as a mission field. All costs are paid by the missionaries, including board and room, books, and study materials. Every missionary is assigned another new missionary as a companion, and they are together twenty-four hours a day.

The schedule is rigorous. Classes have ten to twelve students who meet in three-hour sessions, morning, afternoon, and evening. Studies include the scriptures, languages, and missionary methodology. Academic responsibilities are balanced by spiritual development and recreational opportunities. Temple attendance and weekly devotional addresses given by visiting General Authorities aid spiritual well-being. Exercise programs promote physical fitness.

The intensive methodology used in foreign-language instruction is based in part on a program developed by the U.S. Army: Trainees learn by listening and repeating. Classroom instructors are usually experienced former missionaries and foreign students from nearby campuses. Linguistic drills are related to the culture, customs, and characteristics of the assigned mission field. In one week basic grammar is learned, and after two weeks a missionary begins to converse, pray, and sing in a new language. In eight weeks, missionaries are reasonably adept in conversation and can teach gospel lessons in a foreign language.

INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION. The Church now operates Area Missionary Training Centers beyond Provo. Previously, missionaries called from outside the United States and Canada typically went directly to the mission field without orientation. Area centers have now been developed to give missionaries from other lands advantages similar to those provided in Provo. The first of these centers was established at São Paulo, Brazil, in 1977. By 1990, thirteen Area MTCs functioned in Latin

America, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific. All are adjacent to Latter-day Saint temples.

The goal of the Missionary Training Centers is to provide initial training for full-time missionaries, preparing them to teach more efficiently the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. All programs are continuously evaluated in terms of this objective.

RICHARD O. COWAN

MISSION PRESIDENT

In 1990, some 257 mission presidents, along with their wives, and sometimes families, served in geographical mission areas in more than a hundred nations. The period of service for a mission president is usually three years. In the Church being a mission president is regarded as a challenging and exhilarating spiritual assignment, a link of fellowship with the Master. Calls are issued by the **FIRST PRESIDENCY**. Both husband and wife are set apart as missionaries by the **LAYING ON OF HANDS** by an assigned General Authority, often a member of the **First Presidency** or **QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES**, and receive **BLESSINGS** and counsel appropriate to their assignment.

The calling is not a regular remunerative position, but interrupts professional employment; whatever financial losses accrue are part of the expected sacrifice. The family involved gives of its time and energies without salary, though there is a modest allowance for living expenses. Men and women from all walks of life and all nationalities and backgrounds serve, called, as it were, "from everywhere to everywhere." Typically, the president is a high priest with extensive prior service in the Church. His wife is likewise experienced in Church leadership and teaching. Their competence in the language and culture of their designated country is enhanced by mission presidents' seminars and training sessions.

A strong legacy of mission presidents permeates Church autobiography and biography, oral tradition, fiction, and folklore. Narratives range from some of flagrant and even life-threatening opposition and martyrdom to sublime accounts of conversions to Christ. It is a common feeling that the Spirit attends missionary work as it does no other.

An important concern of the mission president and his wife is naturally the continued nur-