

and in heaven” and, unless the COVENANTS are violated, they cannot be annulled, “according to the decrees of the great Jehovah” (D&C 128:6–10).

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Ordination to the priesthood is required in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of all who administer the ORDINANCES of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The pattern of ordaining men to PRIESTHOOD OFFICES and CALLINGS is found in the Bible as well as in sacred history. Joshua was ordained by MOSES (Num. 27:18–23), and Christ chose and ordained his APOSTLES (John 15:16). Latter-day Saints believe these ordinations involved the LAYING ON OF HANDS. The sequence of ordaining ancient prophets and thereby transmitting author-



*Christ Ordains the Apostles* (detail), by Harry Anderson (1964, oil on canvas, 5' × 12'). Christ called and ordained twelve apostles early in his Galilean ministry (Matt. 10:1–4). “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16). Church Museum of History and Art.



Worthy male members of the Church are given priesthood authority and ordained to offices within the priesthood by the laying on of hands by those in authority (A of F 5). Photograph, 1982; courtesy Floyd Holdman.

ity from Adam to Noah is outlined in modern REVELATION (D&C 84:6–16; 107:40–52).

LDS officers trace their “line of authority” in steps back to the Lord Jesus Christ. Modern conferrals of priesthood authority are based on the specific historical claim of ordinations under the hands of ancient worthies (see AARONIC PRIESTHOOD: RESTORATION OF; MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD: RESTORATION OF). Priesthood authority and power from on high can be transmitted by the laying on of hands to all men who qualify for it in a spirit of humility. They who are ordained by an authorized agent of God look upon their ordinations as coming from the Lord himself (cf. Alma 13:1). An 1830 revelation declared in the voice of the Lord, “I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant” (D&C 36:2).

Efficacy of ordination depends not simply upon the formula or words, but upon worthiness and the sanction of the Spirit. One may forfeit his priesthood authority by abusing it. The priesthood is not a domineering power. “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41).

In LDS understanding, those who are ordained to the priesthood are not an elite or professional priestly class distinct from laymen. They are all laymen. It is taught that “a man must be called of God by prophecy and the laying on of hands” by those who are in authority (A of F 5; cf. 1 Tim. 4:14). “By prophecy” means the right to receive and the power to interpret manifestations of the divine will.

At the age of twelve, all worthy LDS men may receive the Aaronic Priesthood and be ordained to the office of DEACON. At later ages they may be ordained TEACHERS and PRIESTS. Adult male converts are generally ordained priests shortly after BAPTISM. An ordained BISHOP is SET APART to preside over the Aaronic Priesthood and to serve as the PRESIDING HIGH PRIEST of his WARD. He authorizes all ordinations in the Aaronic Priesthood in his ward, which are performed either by a priest or a member of the Melchizedek Priesthood, often the father. Other priesthood holders usually join in the ordination standing in a circle around the seated person and laying their hands on his head. The one serving as voice invokes the authority of the priesthood and the name of Jesus Christ and pronounces the specific ordination, with accompanying words of counsel and promise.

Worthy men eighteen years of age and older may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained ELDERS. Men called to presiding positions in the Church such as BISHOPRICS, HIGH COUNCILS, and STAKE PRESIDENCIES, as well as PATRIARCHS and APOSTLES, are ordained high priests.

At the present time only those called to serve as GENERAL AUTHORITIES in a quorum of SEVENTY are ordained to the office of seventy. Members of the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES are ordained apostles. Counselors in the First Presidency generally, but not always, also hold the office of apostle. The PROPHET of the Church is the Senior Apostle. When he becomes the presiding officer, he is ordained and set apart as the PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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## ORGANIC EVOLUTION

See: Creation; Creation Accounts; Evolution

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## ORGANIZATION

[This entry is divided into two parts:

Organizational and Administrative History  
Contemporary Organization

*The first article summarizes 160 years of Church organization and programs, and Contemporary Organization examines the organization of the Church in 1990. There are separate entries for most major officers and units. See Auxiliary Organizations for an overview of subsidiary units that support the work of Priesthood. For details of local organization, consult District, Ward, and Stake entries; see also those associated with Mission. Correlation of the Church, Administration reviews more recent efforts to streamline and coordinate all Church curricula and administration.]*

## ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

Church organization and administration since 1830 have been the result of the restoration of ancient PRIESTHOOD authority and offices, of decisions made by living PROPHETS receptive to divine revelation, and of practical responses to changing world and Church circumstances. From its inception the Church has been hierarchical, with authority flowing from the PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH. Most positions are filled by lay members called to serve without remuneration, and members are entitled to sustain or not sustain decisions and officers proposed by their leaders (*see* COMMON CONSENT; LAY PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP).

**THE FOUNDATION.** Joseph SMITH and Oliver COWDERY received priesthood ordination and baptism under the direction of heavenly messengers in 1829. They then baptized others. This cluster of believers gathered on April 6, 1830, for the formal ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH, with Joseph Smith as First Elder and Oliver as Second Elder. Two months later the Church held its first conference and soon established a tradition of semiannual general conferences. From the beginning, Church officers were sustained by conference vote, and members and officials received certificates of membership or ordination from conferences.

During the first two years of the Church, DEACONS, TEACHERS, PRIESTS, and ELDERS constituted the local ministry. “The Articles and Covenants” served as a handbook explaining the duties of these officers (*see* DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS: SECTION 20).