helped open the Boy Scouts program to women leaders nationwide. They served not only in local troops but eventually on local and national boards. In 1967 Parmley became the first woman member of a national scouting committee and later served on several scouting boards. She received the highest honors awarded by the Boy Scouts of America, including the Silver Buffalo award.

President Parmley also supervised the adaptation of the Primary organization to serve the needs of a growing, widely distributed world membership. When Primary membership doubled during her first decade as president, she doubled the members on the Primary General Board. She set up committees to establish new activities, including an annual sacrament meeting presentation by the children, special Primaries for handicapped children, and a reverence program. As editor of the CHILDREN’S FRIEND, she restructured its format to make it a magazine for children (see FRIEND). Under her direction, teacher training, which began with Primary, developed into a well-ordered general Church program.

As the Church grew, stake Primary conventions and general Primary conferences were discontinued. The Church began to centralize the publication of educational materials, and Primary publications were reduced. President Parmley responded to these challenges by standardizing lesson materials and by preparing audiovisual and printed materials for presentation to Primary leaders in regional meetings.

A major challenge during her administration was the need to accommodate the Primary program to the CORRELATION process implemented in 1961 to place all Church programs under the authority and direction of the priesthood. As part of the process, responsibility for Primary lessons was transferred to the Church Correlation Committee. In a spirit of cooperation, President Parmley helped merge the goals and programs of the Primary into a larger Church-sponsored program for children.

President Parmley helped promote the construction of a new Primary Children’s Hospital (later Primary Children’s Medical Center), completed in 1952, and encouraged donations from Primary children. As Primary president, she served as chairman of the board for the hospital until 1970. When the Health Service Corporation was organized later that year to oversee all LDS hospitals, she was appointed a board member. In 1975, after she was released as Primary president, the Primary Children’s Hospital was transferred to Intermountain Health Care, a private nonprofit corporation (see HOSPITALS).

LaVern Parmley presided over the Primary Association at a time when its programs became more complex and wide-ranging than at any earlier time in its history. As its president during a period of rapid Church growth and expansion, she traveled more than any Primary president before her, providing firsthand supervision and unity in an organization otherwise subject to much local variation. Her contributions are reflected in the organization and direction of Primary today.

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JESSIE L. EMBRY

PASSOVER
See: Law of Moses

PATRIARCH

[This entry consists of two articles: Stake Patriarch and Patriarch to the Church. A patriarch is a Church priesthood calling. Each stake has one or more patriarchs and their duties are given in the first article. The second article gives the history of the Church office Patriarch to the Church.]

STAKE PATRIARCH

Each stake in the Church has at least one patriarch ordained, as the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, “for the benefit of the posterity of the Saints as it was with Jacob in giving his patriarchal blessing unto his sons” (WJS, p. 6). Age is not a factor, and the call, which is for voluntary service in giving patriarchal blessings to stake members, may come to any worthy, spiritually mature high priest.

The fathers from Adam to Jacob are seen as patriarchs of this order. The word “patriarch” is often used in the Bible as a title of honor for the early leaders of the Israelites. It is perhaps in this sense that Peter spoke of “the patriarch David”
(Acts 2:29). Stephen spoke of the sons of Jacob as “the twelve patriarchs” (Acts 7:8–9). These men may have been natural patriarchs, being fathers, and some of them may also have been ordained to the patriarchal priesthood. By right of this priesthood and under inspiration, they could confer upon their sons and daughters promises, privileges, and duties like unto those of the family of Abraham.

The Doctrine and Covenants speaks of “evangelical ministers,” which is understood to refer to patriarchs. The Council of the Twelve Apostles has the responsibility of calling and ordaining stake patriarchs “as they shall be designated unto them by revelation” (D&C 107:39). This responsibility is now generally delegated to stake presidents. A stake patriarch may also give patriarchal blessings outside his stake to members of his own family. If he moves to another stake, his jurisdiction there requires approval through the Council of the Twelve.

The training and preparation of patriarchs includes spiritual enhancement through prayer and righteous living, constant study of the scriptural and historical heritage of the calling, and occasional meetings where they are instructed by their leaders.

Members of the Church receive a blessing from a stake patriarch only on a bishop’s recommendation following an interview. Approval is based on a desire and readiness to receive the blessing, and on personal worthiness as shown by faithfulness in the gospel and Church service. The blessing is given in a quiet setting, usually a room in the stake center or the home of the patriarch. Parents, a spouse, or other immediate family members may be invited to witness the blessing. The recipient is seated. The patriarch lays his hands on the head of the person and invokes the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In the spirit of fasting and prayer all present are united in faith to seek inspired insight into the birthright blessings and destinies of the recipient. The patriarch also seeks inspiration to specify the dominant family line that leads back to Abraham. Then, as manifested by the Spirit, the patriarch gives admonitions, promises, and assurances.

The stake patriarch always records and transcribes the blessings he gives. The original copy is sent to the patriarchal division of the Church Historical Department. A copy given to the individual becomes a permanent record that is held sacred. It is usually available only to the recipient, or later to his family and descendants.

The appointment of stake patriarchs does not preempt the calling and right of every father in the Church who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood also to give each of his children father’s blessings. Both ordained patriarchs and priesthood-bearing fathers have the power, through spiritual inspiration, to give a priesthood blessing that will look down the corridor of time and expand the vision, strengthen the faith, and clarify the life mission of the one receiving the blessing.

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**ARIEL S. BALLIF**

**Patriarch to the Church**

Before 1979, Patriarch to the Church was a Church officer whose chief duty was to confer patriarchal blessings on Church members who generally did not have the service of stake patriarchs readily available to them. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that an “evangelist” (as in Ephesians 4:11) is a “patriarch” (*TPJS*, p. 151); that is, he confers the blessings of a patriarch upon members of the Church. Patriarchs are currently ordained in individual stakes of the Church, but for many years there was a patriarch to the entire Church. He was considered one of the General Authorities.

On December 18, 1833, in Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith, Sr., was ordained the first Patriarch to the Church (D&C 107:39–56), with jurisdiction throughout the Church. Upon his death, he was succeeded by his oldest living son, Hyrum Smith, who served until he was martyred on June 27, 1844. William Smith, a younger brother, was ordained Patriarch to the Church on May 24, 1845, by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, but William was rejected by the Church on October 6, 1845, for misconduct. The office was vacant until January 1, 1849, when John Smith, brother of Joseph Smith, Sr., was called. He served until his death on May 23, 1854.

A second John Smith, son of Hyrum Smith, was Patriarch to the Church from February 18, 1855, until November 6, 1911. Hyrum Gibbs Smith, grandson of the second John Smith, then served from May 9, 1912, until February 4, 1932.
For ten years Acting Patriarchs were called who were not in the direct hereditary line. They included Nicholas G. Smith (October 1932 to October 1934), Frank B. Woodbury (June 1935 to October 1937), and George F. Richards (October 1937 to October 1942).

The call returned to the hereditary line on October 3, 1942, with the call of Elder Joseph Fielding Smith (1899–1964), a great-grandson of Hyrum Smith. He was released at his own request on October 7, 1946, because of poor health. Eldred G. Smith, eldest son of Hyrum Gibbs Smith, was called in April 1947.

In 1979 the office of Patriarch to the Church was retired “because of the large increase in the number of stake patriarchs and the availability of patriarchal service throughout the world.” Eldred G. Smith was designated “a Patriarch Emeritus, which means that he is honorably relieved of all duties and responsibilities pertaining to the office of Patriarch to the Church” (CR [Oct. 1979]:25).

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CALVIN R. STEPHENS

PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS

The practice of a father blessing his sons and daughters can be traced from earliest times. Adam, as the first patriarch and father of the human race, blessed his son Seth, promising that “his posterity should be the chosen of the Lord, and that they should be preserved unto the end of the earth” (D&C 107:42). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob blessed their children, opening up a vision of their inheritance and their destinies (e.g., Gen. 28:4; 49:3–27).

Each family in the Church, and the larger family that is the Church, perpetuates this heritage. Members have the right to go to the stake patriarch for a Church blessing. Stake patriarchs are ordained wherever the Church is organized that all may have this privilege.

Patriarchal blessings are given by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood which “is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the Church” (D&C 107:18).

When God covenanted with Abraham that through his posterity all the families of the earth would be blessed, he promised “the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abr. 2:11). The scope of these promises, both here and hereafter, is outlined in modern day scripture:

Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins . . . which were to continue so long as they were in the world; and as touching Abraham and his seed, out of the world they should continue. . . . This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham [D&C 132:30–31].

An essential part of a patriarchal blessing is a declaration of lineage. The patriarch seeks inspiration to specify the dominant family line that leads back to Abraham. The majority of modern blessings have designated Ephraim or Manasseh as the main link in this tracing, but others of every tribe of Israel have also been named. Whether this is a pronouncement of blood inheritance or of adoption does not matter (see Abr. 2:10). It is seen as the line and legacy through which one’s blessings are transmitted. Thus the blessings “of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” are conferred.

In addition, as the patriarch seeks the spirit he may be moved to give admonitions, promises, and assurances. Individual traits of personality and strengths and weaknesses may be mentioned. Against the backdrop of the prophetic anticipation of world events, individual roles and callings may be named. One’s spiritual gifts, talents, skills, and potentials may be specified with their associated obligations of gratitude and dedication. Karl G. Maeser described these blessings as “paragraphs from the book of one’s possibilities” (Alma P. Burton, Karl G. Maeser: Mormon Educator, p. 82 [Salt Lake City, 1953]).

It is continually taught in the Church that the fulfillment of patriarchal blessings, as of all divine promises, is conditioned on the faith and works of the individual. Typically, blessings close with such a statement as, “I pronounce these blessings upon your head according to your faith and your diligence in keeping the commandments of the Lord.”

The practice of giving patriarchal blessings is a constant reminder of the honor and glory of family; that one is not alone and that every person stands on the shoulders of those who have gone before. They prompt those who receive blessings to “look unto Abraham, your father,” (2 Ne. 8:2) to “do the