media and effectively using modern communications technology.

The Church makes regular use of network and cable television, radio, telephones, print, and electronic exhibits for programming and public-service advertising in many countries.

Services to the media include recorded newscasts; radio, television, and print releases; features and interviews; magazine pieces; and broadcast-quality public affairs programs. Church news regarding doctrines and activities is available through official releases. Also, Church positions on public issues such as pornography, drugs, and parenting are announced.

The Public Affairs Department coordinates the volunteer service of 3,500 local public communications directors in the stakes and missions of the Church. These individuals, many of them business and professional leaders, interact with local media and arrange coverage of Church events of local interest. They report to the Church on public reactions in their local areas and, as directed, respond to commendations and criticism.

When the Church is criticized (see ANTI-MORMON LITERATURE) or involved in controversy, the Public Affairs Department may provide responses and position statements. The standard Church response to criticism is to deal respectfully but not to debate with critics. When controversy arises, the Church strives to keep its comments within the scope of its activities, so as not to interfere with the jurisdiction of other entities.

Under the direction of the Missionary Department, the Church maintains some thirty-seven volunteer-staffed VISITORS CENTERS and HISTORICAL SITES. Volunteers also conduct tours of new and remodeled TEMPLES before they are dedicated. About ten million people annually tour Church places of interest. Distinguished visitors to Church headquarters in Salt Lake City are hosted by volunteers who arrange tours, visits to members’ homes, interviews with Church leaders or directors of WELFARE SQUARE, and visits to the FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY, the Museum of Church History and Art (see MUSEUMS), and other sites.

In 1988 the Church became a charter member of the Vision Interfaith Satellite Network, a project of twenty-two faith groups. A milestone in interdenominational cooperation, VISN provides people of faith with original, value-based cable television programs. The Church’s programs appear in the schedule fourteen or more times weekly.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
For a general overview, see Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton, The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints (New York, 1970). The symposium on the Church and the public media in Dialogue 10 (Spring 1977), includes an interview with Wendell Ashton (then managing director of public communications) and articles on history, journalism, and the challenges of presenting a clear and appealing, but not misleading, image of the Church to a wide variety of public audiences.

ELIZABETH M. HAGLUND

PUBLIC SPEAKING
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints encourages its members at all ages to express publicly not only their FAITH and TESTIMONY but also their wisdom, humor, and gratitude. Anyone may be invited to speak in an LDS meeting, whether man, woman, or child. Children begin their public speaking experience by sharing two or three sentences learned at home; later, talks of original construction and longer duration are given. Subject matter may be assigned or left to the selection of the speaker. Although some Latter-day Saints write out and read their speeches aloud, that practice is less common as members mature in their gospel experience and become more confident in their speaking ability. Experienced speakers, such as Church officers, often “take no thought” beforehand (Matt. 10:19) as to precisely what they will say, but “study the word of the Lord” and then speak “as they [are] directed by the Spirit” (D&C 42:12–14). Thousands of young people who serve on MISSIONS for the Church become adept at public speaking.

Typically, an LDS speaker addresses the congregation as “brothers and sisters” and may introduce the topic by using a story, humorous event, or personal experience. The speaker then presents the substance of the speech, sometimes in traditional rhetorical form, giving general thesis statements with supporting data for each, and sometimes very informally. The information is usually based on observation, logic, authority of the SCRIPTURES, personal experience, writings of Church leaders, and sometimes comparative social or religious approaches (e.g., why Mormons may live longer than others). In summary, the speaker often declares faith in the principles discussed and testifies to their truthfulness, generally concluding
the talk invoking the name of Jesus Christ and saying "Amen." The audience affirms agreement by uttering an audible "Amen."

Latter-day Saints believe that admission to the Kingdom of Heaven is achieved through obedience to ordinances and the development of personal perfection. Such spiritual growth comes in part from individual enlightenment, which is reason to receive the spoken or written word. Inspiration often derives from hearing the oral testimony of others, for if people do not nourish the word, they "can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life" (Alma 32:40).

Thus, public speaking is a basic LDS exercise, for "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14–17). As opportunity allows, a speaker introduces the restored gospel to others and, significantly, preaches the gospel in the Church's meetings. Speaking in church carries the responsibility of teaching and inspiring others. The speaker becomes a voice for God and is expected to prepare so that the word of God can effectively be expressed. The speaker is therefore admonished to use "great plainness of speech" (2 Cor. 3:12) and to speak as "moved upon by the Holy Ghost" (D&C 68:3).

Public speaking is periodically encouraged on a local level through speech festivals and contests. These events focus on the art of speaking, involve members in refining their speaking abilities in a Church context, and provide an appropriate arena for the enjoyment and appreciation of public speaking.

LAEL J. WOODBURY

PURPOSE OF EARTH LIFE
[This entry consists of two articles: LDS Perspective discusses the Mormon understanding of life's purposes, and Comparative Perspective contrasts the LDS understanding with that of the major world religions.]

LDS PERSPECTIVE

Latter-day Saint prophets have affirmed the purpose of life within the framework of three questions: (1) Whence did we come? (2) Why are we here? (3) What awaits us hereafter? The scriptural context of these questions is assurance of the eternal character of the soul and of the creation of the earth as a place for the family of God.

All men and women have lived as spirit beings in a premortal state, and all are the spiritual offspring of God (Abr. 3:21–22). In that world all the family of God were taught his plans and purposes. "At the first organization in heaven we were all present, and saw the Savior chosen and appointed and the plan of salvation made, and we sanctioned it" (TPJS, p. 181). All the spirit children of God developed various degrees of intelligence and maturity. Those who voluntarily subscribed to the conditions of mortality were embodied and made subject to the light of Christ "that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (D&C 93:2). So that earth life may be a probation, a veil of forgetfulness has been drawn over the former life.

In mortality, at least six purposes are opened to mankind:

1. To be given a body, whose experiences and maturation, and eventual permanent resurrection, are essential to the perfecting of the soul. "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom" (TPJS, p. 181; see PHYSICAL BODY; RESURRECTION).

2. To grow in knowledge, and develop talents and gifts (see INTELLIGENCE). "If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses, for if we are not drawing towards God in principle, we are going from Him and drawing towards the devil" (TPJS, p. 216).

3. To be tried and tested. "We will prove them herewith," says the record of Abraham, "to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abr. 3:25). Through mortality one experiences contrasts and opposites—health and sickness, joy and sadness, blessings and challenges—and thus comes to know to prize the good. "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Ne. 2:23). Such joy, as Elder B. H. Roberts of the Seventy wrote, can come only from "having sounded the depths of the soul, from experiencing all emotions of which mind is susceptible, from testing all the qualities and strength of the intellect" (Roberts, p. 430; see JOY; MORTALITY; SUFFERING IN THE WORLD).

4. To fill and fulfill the missions and callings that were conferred or preordained (see FOREORDINATION; PREMORTAL LIFE). Latter-day Saints often speak of earth life as a second estate and al-