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REGION, REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Regions are intermediate geographic units positioned between the STAKE and the general AREA levels of administration in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1990, 447 regions around the world consisted of two to six stakes per region in close geographical proximity, each stake being comprised of between four and ten local WARDS of 200 to 700 members each. Groups of ten to forty regions are organized into areas determined by geographic and administrative convenience. Each area is presided over by three seventies who constitute the area presidency.

Regional Representatives are part-time lay officers of the Church that are called by the First Presidency, receive general instructions from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and serve under the direction of the area presidency. Because Regional Representatives do not preside as line officers, they serve without counselors, and stake presidencies report directly to area presidencies. A Regional Representative may preside at a stake conference when assigned.

The principal responsibility of a Regional Representative is to train stake leaders. This training may take place through personal visits, regional council meetings consisting of the stake presidencies in the region, stake CONFERENCES, or other leadership meetings. A Regional Representative has no authority to call local leaders or to counsel individual members in connection with personal matters, but serves as an organizational link providing information and feedback between local Church officers and the General Authorities at area or Church headquarters.

A Regional Representative serves for a period determined by the First Presidency, typically five years. The first Regional Representatives were called in October 1967, and with the growth of the Church, the number has increased steadily.

With the approval of the area presidency, the regional council may organize occasional conferences, special training, athletic competitions, or other events. For members who might otherwise be somewhat isolated or limited by circumstance, such occasions provide perspective, motivation, and exposure to other members and to Church leaders.

[See also Organization: Contemporary.]

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REINCARNATION

Reincarnation refers to a theory that one SPIRIT (life or soul) passes from one material body to another through repeated births and deaths, usually of the same species, often with ethical implications; thus the present life is viewed as only one of many. This theory is rejected by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The idea of repeated return or of a continuing, exacting wheel of rebirth is based on the Eastern doctrine of karma. Karma literally means "deeds" or "actions" and, in a limited sense, may refer to a system of cause and effect. According to this belief, all inequalities of birth, society, race, and economic being are products of one's individual karma created by an accumulation of previous behavior. Karma is also seen as a cosmic law of justice. It is an eternally moving wheel of rebirth. Experience is repeatable. An individual spirit can live again and again in a wide variety of guises and forms in the mortal estate.

In Latter-day Saint doctrine, mankind is on the road to IMMORTALITY and ETERNAL LIFE. One moves from one type of existence to another along the way. But this teaching is distinguishable from reincarnation on several counts:

1. In Latter-day Saint belief, there is only one physical death for any one person (Heb. 9:27). Amulek, in the Book of Mormon, taught that man can die only once (Alma 11:45). Reincarnation posits many deaths, but in Latter-day Saint thought, the RESURRECTION (incarnation) follows death (cf. D&C 29:24–25).
2. In LDS theology, the PHYSICAL BODY is sacred, and its elements are imperishable. The body is prerequisite to becoming like God. In reincarna-