

## SEMINARIES

Seminaries are that part of the CHURCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM which provides weekday religious instruction for youth, usually from the ages of fourteen to eighteen, to balance their secular secondary education with study in the SCRIPTURES, religious teachings, and moral values of their faith. To accomplish this objective, four year-long courses are offered: OLD TESTAMENT, NEW TESTAMENT, DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS/Church HISTORY, and the BOOK OF MORMON. These courses are designed in three basic formats: released-time, early-morning, and home-study.

Released-time seminaries operate during the regular school day in Church-owned facilities near junior and senior high schools. The courses are taught by professionally trained teachers. At the request of parents, students are “released” by the school district to attend one class period a day in a seminary course. This allows the students to receive the moral, character, and scriptural educa-

tion available through Church-related instruction along with regular public school education in a nearby facility. The constitutionality of released-time religious education has been tested and upheld in the courts in cases involving Catholic and Protestant programs (with some LDS participation as *amicus curiae*). The legality of the LDS approach has also been resolved in various western U.S. states to allow released-time classes, but not to permit transfer of high school credit for those classes (*see* LEGAL AND JUDICIAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH). It is common for enrollments in released-time seminaries to exceed 80 percent of the total number of LDS youth attending the high school.

Early-morning seminaries provide weekday religious instruction in areas where local public school laws do not grant released-time or where the LDS population does not warrant the establishment of a released-time seminary program. These classes generally meet before the regular school day begins, usually in an LDS MEET-



The first graduating seminary class, Granite High School, 1927, where the first released-time classes began in 1912–1913. After the Church closed its stake academies in the 1920s, it began building a staff of centrally directed religion instructors to teach high school students during public school hours. Courtesy Department of Special Collections, University of Utah Libraries.

INGHOUSE convenient to the high school. The instructors are generally local members appointed on a part-time or volunteer basis. Typically, between 50 to 70 percent of eligible LDS youth are enrolled where early-morning seminary classes function.

Home-study seminaries are provided to meet the needs of LDS youth living where distance or other problems make participation in a daily class impossible or inadvisable. Curriculum materials based on the four regular courses have been developed for students to study daily at home. Home-study students generally meet once each week in a class taught by an appointed teacher. Average enrollment levels in home-study seminary programs are usually a lower percentage of the LDS youth of an area than that of the early-morning and released-time seminaries.

**ADMINISTRATION.** Seminaries are directly administered by the office of Religious Education and Elementary and Secondary Schools of the Church Educational System, which is governed by the Church Board of Education. The **FIRST PRESIDENCY** of the Church presides over this board, with board members appointed from among the **QUORUM OF TWELVE APOSTLES** and other general church officers, including the presidents of the women's **RELIEF SOCIETY** and the **YOUNG WOMEN** organization. Professional educational administrators responsible to the central administrator of Religious Education in the Salt Lake office are appointed to supervise the day-to-day operation of the high school seminary program throughout the world. **STAKE PRESIDENTS** also assist in local administration, especially in encouraging registration of the youth of their **STAKES**.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.** Shortly after the **LDS PIONEERS** arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, the leaders of the Church directed the establishment of **SCHOOLS** to provide education for its members. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, each **STAKE** was encouraged to establish an **ACADEMY** to offer secondary educational instruction. Classes in religion were an essential component of this Church-sponsored school system.

In the early 1900s, when Utah public high schools became more fully established, Church leaders decided to close their academies and to support the public high schools, thus eliminating

the need for Church members to fund both Church-owned and public schools.

To supplement secular public education with religious instruction, the first Latter-day Saint seminary was established in 1912 adjacent to Granite High School in Salt Lake City. When this released-time seminary program proved to be effective, it was quickly adopted in other communities with a high ratio of LDS youth. In 1990 released-time seminaries were operating in Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona, Oregon, and some parts of Colorado. From 1950 to 1970, early-morning seminaries had been established throughout California and other western states. With the home-study adaptation, the Church has essentially established seminary programs of one variety or another in all fifty states. Graduation from seminary is accomplished by students completing all four courses and living lives which reflect the moral teachings of their faith.

In the fall of 1970, when the Church Board of Education determined that the seminary program should reach the membership of the Church throughout the world, the seminary program was internationalized, with course materials translated into sixteen languages. In 1990, the seminary program was operating in more than ninety countries and territories with more than 300,000 students enrolled.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## SENIOR CITIZENS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has always had concern for the well-being of its older members. "Mormon attitudes toward old age were influenced by Joseph Smith and other Church leaders, and by scriptural injunctions to honor the elderly" (Reeves, p. 150). Latter-day Saints view aging as an important part of God's plan and believe that completing one's mortal probation and