SETTING APART

“Setting apart” is a priesthood ordinance that is performed by the LAYING ON OF HANDS, authorizing a man or woman to serve in a Church CALLING. It occurs after one has been sustained by COMMON CONSENT to perform certain duties and responsibilities in a specific calling in a geographical or organizational part of the Church. It is performed by, or under the direction of, the one in AUTHORITY over that unit. One is “ordained” to priesthood offices, but is “set apart” to preside or serve. In the setting apart, one is given the authority and charged to act; he or she is also counseled, instructed, and blessed. The blessings are conditional upon faithful performance.

The meaning of being set apart to service in the Church is symbolically a setting apart (a separation) from the world to act on a higher plane (Lev. 20:26; Num. 8:14; Ezra 8:24; Rom. 1:1). The act of setting apart is referred to in the Bible in a number of places, though not always using the same terminology. Moses was told “put some of thine honour” upon Joshua that the Israelites might be obedient to him (Num. 27:20). Seven men of honest report were “set before the apostles,” who laid their hands on them to take charge of temporal matters in the early church (Acts 6:6). The early Twelve were told to “separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2). The Book of Mormon writers appear to use the terms “consecrate” and “appoint” to describe a setting apart (Mosiah 6:3).

Settings apart concern both the Church unit and the person. When men and women are set apart as presidents of Church organizations, they are given the authority as well as the obligations and responsibilities to act in their offices. The president is always set apart before the counselors, since counselors are set apart as counselors to the specific person serving as president.

In the early days of the Church, the words “ordain” and “set apart” were often used interchangeably for both ordination and setting apart. Therefore, the Doctrine and Covenants speaks of men being ordained high counselors and women being ordained to preside over auxiliaries (D&C 20:67; 25:7). In modern usage, both these would be instances of being set apart.

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DENNIS L. THOMPSON

SEVENTY

[This entry contains three articles:

  Overview
  First Council of the Seventy
  Quorums of Seventy

The first article identifies the office of Seventy in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Then it discusses the biblical precedents in Old and New Testament times. It then describes the establishment of the priesthood office of seventy by Joseph Smith in the 1830s and the subsequent development of that office at greater length. The second article discusses the organization of General Authority seventies before the reorganization of 1875, when its functions and officers were incorporated into the current quorums of the Seventy. The third article describes the contemporary constitution and function of seventies in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The bibliography for all the articles follows the first entry. See also General Authorities; Melchizedek Priesthood; Organization: Contemporary; Priesthood Quorums.]

OVERVIEW

Seventy is a PRIESTHOOD OFFICE in the Melchizedek Priesthood reserved since 1836 for General Authorities called to assist the FIRST PRESIDENCY and QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOTLES in the administration of the Church worldwide. The organization and assignments of seventies have undergone numerous changes as the Church organization has developed.

On February 28, 1835, at Kirtland, Ohio, the organization of the Seventy commenced with individuals selected from among the participants in ZION’S CAMP. The Prophet Joseph Smith recorded
that they were “ordained and blessed at that time, to begin the organization of the first quorum of Seventies, according to the visions and revelations which I have received. The Seventies are to constitute traveling quorums, to go into all the earth, whithersoever the Twelve Apostles shall call them” (HC 2:201–202). In a March 1835 revelation the role of the Seventy was further clarified: “The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling” (D&C 107:25). Further, they are to act in the name of the Lord and under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles “in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews” (verse 34). Finally, the Seventy are to be “traveling ministers” to Gentiles and Jews (verse 97).

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND. God instructed Moses to take seventy of the elders of Israel up onto the holy mount, where “they saw God, and did eat and drink” (Ex. 24:1, 9–11). On another occasion, Moses was told to gather seventy men of the elders of Israel to the tabernacle of the congregation. There the Lord put his spirit upon them, empowering them to assist Moses in bearing the burdens of the people (Num. 11:16–17, 24–25). Many Jewish writers have read this as an account of the divine origin of their Sanhedrin, a body of seventy-one or seventy-two elders that regulated many of their affairs, particularly at the time of Jesus Christ.

Luke recorded the Lord’s appointment of the seventy whom he sent “two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come” (Luke 10:1). Of their return he wrote, “And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name” (Luke 10:17). Some regard Luke’s statement that “the Lord appointed other seventy also” to be an indication that more than one group of seventies served the Lord during his ministry (Luke 10:1). Latter-day Saints see these seventy as an important part of the ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES.

IN THE MODERN CHURCH. The first quorums of the Seventy in the RESTORATION were organized in 1835–1836 in Kirtland, Ohio. Their members participated in the momentous events surrounding the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836. On occasions, most notably in the temple dedicatory services, the Prophet referred to members of the Seventy broadly as APOSTLES and special witnesses to the nations in assisting the Twelve (HC 2:418). In 1838 the First Quorum of the Seventy organized and led the Kirtland Camp, consisting of 529 people, in their march from Kirtland to Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman in Missouri.

In Nauvoo the number of seventies rapidly expanded, in part because of a decision that all elders under the age of thirty-five become seventies. To provide leadership for the newly established quorums, the sixty-three members of the First Quorum who were not in its presidency were divided into nine presidencies of seven and assigned to preside over the next nine quorums. The seven presidents who remained in the First Quorum presided over all seventies. These men were designated the First Council of the Seventy and were sustained as General Authorities of the Church. In December 1844 the Seventies’ Hall was dedicated in Nauvoo in imposing ceremonies that continued for a week. A famous LDS hymn, “The Seer,” written in honor of the recently martyred Prophet, was prepared for these services. The quorums of the Seventy then numbered fifteen. By the time of the exodus from Nauvoo, the number of seventies quorums had increased to thirty-five. These quorums were independent of geographical wards. When one was made a member of a quorum, it was presumed to be for life.

When the Saints arrived in Utah and began to spread throughout the territory, members of a quorum were dispersed geographically, making it impossible for them to meet together as a quorum. Disarray and confusion persisted into the 1880s. Efforts were made to identify and motivate seventies throughout the Church. In 1882 a revelation came to President John Taylor calling on the Twelve to assist the seventies and increase service among the Lamanites (American Indians). This revelation appeared to be a response to the organizational woes of the seventies quorums, but little success resulted from the change. In 1883 the First Presidency prepared instructions on the organization of the Seventy, and President Taylor received a revelation affirming that what they had written “is [God’s] will, and is acceptable unto [him]” (Hartley, p. 70). The instructions established the First Quorum of the Seventy, consisting of its seven presidents (the First Council of Seventy) and the senior presidents of the sixty-four oldest
quorums. While this action answered the appeal of many to reorganize the First Quorum, this new quorum never met or functioned as a body—perhaps because of the increasing pressures from federal antipolygamy legislation.

The headquarters and records of the numbered quorums were then redistributed throughout the wards and stakes of the Church, under the direction of the First Council of Seventy, as the numbers residing in each locality justified. Counsel was given for all seventies in good standing to join the quorum located in their district. Quorum presidents were released if they did not live in the boundary of their quorum and, where possible, were sustained in new quorums where they were residing. Some found it difficult to give up the membership and seniority they enjoyed in their original quorums. Nevertheless, by April 1884 there were 76 quorums; by 1888 there were 101.

By October 1904, the number of quorums had reached 146 with some 10,000 members. President Joseph F. Smith said that their special duty was "to respond to the call of the Apostles to preach the Gospel, without purse or scrip, to all the nations of the earth. They are minute men" (CR, Oct. 6, 1904, p. 3). Their chief function was to serve as missionaries for the Church. But, since the quorums were now geographical, stake and ward officers gradually utilized seventies in the common duties of the Church. For several years the Seventy had their own course of study, but in 1909 they began to use the study manuals followed by other Melchizedek Priesthood quorums. In 1912, in Salt Lake City's Granite Stake, the program of stake missions was initiated with the seventies as the major participants. This program expanded with occasional adjustments into the 1980s. Every stake had its “stake mission,” largely under supervision of the seventies.

As the Church expanded, the demands upon its General Authorities determined much of the future role the seventies would be given. The presiding offices of the Church established by the revelations consisted only of the quorums of the First Presidency, the Twelve, and the Seventy. In every revelation, the Seventy are subordinate to, and under the direction of, the other two. Over time, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have introduced many changes affecting the seventies that have proven to be appropriate responses to expanding needs of the Church. Decisions affecting the Seventy in the last three decades have been especially substantial and rapid.

In 1961 the members of the First Council of the Seventy were ordained high priests by the First Presidency. President David O. McKay stated, “The members of the First Council of the Seventy are now given the authority of high priests to set in order all things pertaining to the stake and the wards, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles” (IE 65 [Jan. 1962]:42). On January 12, 1964, the seven members of the First Council of Seventy were given the sealing authority. On March 29, 1974, the First Presidency authorized stake presidents to ordain seventies approved by the First Council. On October 3, 1974, all previous seventies units were replaced by quorums in each stake and were designated with the name of the stake, rather than a number.

President Spencer W. Kimball organized the First Quorum of the Seventy on October 3, 1975, and called three new General Authorities as members of that quorum, in addition to the seven presidents. Unlike the stake quorums, members of this quorum would be General Authorities. On January 1, 1976, twenty men previously sustained as assistants to the Twelve were added to the First Quorum of the Seventy and the titles First Council of the Seventy and Assistant to the Twelve were dropped. The First Presidency also announced that the seven presidents would not be determined by tenure of service and would be rotated periodically. In the October 1978 general conference, emeritus status was announced for several designated members of the First Quorum of the Seventy whose age and health prevented their full participation. In the April 1984 general conference, six new members of the Seventy were sustained for a period of three to five years—rather than for life, as before. In the general conference held on October 4, 1986, all stake quorums of seventy were discontinued, and all seventies in those quorums were directed to affiliate with the elders quorums in their wards.

In the April 1989 general conference, the Second Quorum of the Seventy was organized, with General Authorities called to temporary service. As additional General Authorities are required to administer the growing worldwide organization, it is assumed that additional quorums of seventy will be formed “until seven times seventy, if the labor in the vineyard of necessity requires it” (D&C 107:95–96). The First Quorum of Seventy consists
of members called for lifetime service or until granted emeritus status. The Presidency of the First Quorum of Seventy presides over both quorums of seventies, as their assignments are not distinguished by quorum.

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ALAN K. PARRISH

FIRST COUNCIL OF THE SEVENTY

The First Council of the Seventy, comprised of the first seven presidents of the First Quorum of Seventy, was organized on February 28, 1835, at Kirtland, Ohio, by Joseph Smith in response to revelation regarding the organization of priesthood offices. Later, when it was determined that five high priests had been ordained seventies, the First Council was reorganized in April 1837, using only priesthood members who were seventies (HC 2:476).

As outlined in Doctrine and Covenants 107:93–98, the Seventy “should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy.” Other seventies could be called as needed, but the first seven presidents (First Council of the Seventy) were to preside over all the additional seventies as well as the First Quorum.

Through the years the role of the First Council of the Seventy and their specific function as General Authorities have been modified in such areas as the seventy’s missionary role, their ability to preside and ordain, and their position as “especial witnesses” (Madsen, pp. 299–300).

By 1936 the various seventies quorums scattered throughout the Church were placed under stake supervision. In 1961 members of the First Council of Seventy were ordained high priests with their primary calling being missionaries, but they also had the authority to act as administrators and direct the affairs of the Church in various parts of the world, under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. On October 3, 1975, the First Quorum of the Seventy was reconstituted as an entity, and on October 1, 1976, the members of the First Council of the Seventy and the Assistants to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were released and added to the First Quorum of the Seventy. A new presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy was sustained. Additional men were selected to be members of the First Quorum and to act as General Authorities to assist in the expanded functions of Church leadership (Ensign 6 [Nov. 1976]:9–10). In 1984 Gordon B. Hinckley, counselor in the First Presidency, announced that in order to infuse “new talent and a much widened opportunity for men of ability and faith to serve” as General Authorities, new members of the First Quorum were to be called to act for a period of three to five years (CR, Apr. 1984, p. 4). This policy was redefined on April 1, 1989, when the Second Quorum of Seventy was organized, comprised of men who would be called to serve for a period of five years (CR, Apr. 1989, p. 22). President Hinckley later indicated that members of the First Quorum would serve until “factors of age and health” made them candidates for emeritus status (Ensign 20 [Jan. 1990]:10). The leaders of the Seventy were identified as the “Presidency of the Seventy.”

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RICHARD C. ROBERTS

QUORUMS OF SEVENTY

The quorums of Seventy consist of general Church officers, ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood office of seventy, who, under the direction of the FIRST PRESIDENCY and the QUORUM OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES, carry major responsibility for administering the affairs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. The First Quorum of Seventy constitutes a third presiding quorum over the Church after the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (D&C 107:24; see also ORGANIZATION: CONTEMPORARY). A presidency of seven, all seventies and members of the First Quorum, presides over the quorums of Seventy, conducts quorum meetings, and instructs the members in their specific duties.

Members of the Seventy are called from the membership of the Church by the First Presidency. Generally they are HIGH PRIESTS of considerable experience in Church leadership within their own wards and STAKES who have distinguished themselves in their service. Like all LDS leaders, they are not professional clergy but come from many vocations and professions (see LAY PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP). Each one is presented to the general membership of the Church for a sustaining vote at a general conference. Then he is ordained a seventy and set apart by the First Presidency of the Church, receiving the authority and powers that pertain to his calling as a GENERAL AUTHORITY. The Seventy have all of the authority necessary to officiate in any capacity assigned to them by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve . . . in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations" (D&C 107:34).

Some members of the quorums of Seventy are assigned to serve in groups of three as AREA PRESIDENCIES and preside over large geographical subdivisions of the Church. In this capacity, they supervise MISSIONS, stakes, districts, wards, and branches and are responsible for the effective implementation of Church policies and programs in their areas.

For example, as of 1990, the continent of South America included three such areas, continental Europe was designated as another, and the United States and Canada were divided into nine areas. The seventies who preside over these areas administer all the affairs of the Church within their jurisdictions, including MISSIONARY work and all functions designed to enhance the spiritual and temporal welfare of Church members. These seventies make regular visits to missions and stakes within their area to train local leaders in their duties and to counsel and instruct Church members in conference meetings. They also administer the financial affairs of the Church and supervise the construction and maintenance of Church buildings. Those assigned outside North America live within their area and travel to Church headquarters for the general conferences in April and October of each year. Seventies assigned to an area within the United States and Canada generally reside in or near Salt Lake City, close to Church headquarters, and travel at regular intervals to their area. These seventies also administer headquarters departments of the Church, such as operations related to Church history, curriculum, priesthood and auxiliary organizations, temples, family history, missionary work, and correlation. These assignments, as well as those that pertain to area supervision, are made under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with recommendations from the presidency of the quorums. All these assignments of the Seventy are rotated periodically. The members of the presidency of the First Quorum of Seventy serve as executive directors of Church headquarters departments.

Members of the quorums of Seventy who are located at Church headquarters meet weekly under the direction of the presidency of the First Quorum of Seventy. These meetings provide instruction for quorum members in Church doctrine and procedure. Seventies who are assigned to international areas meet together regularly as area presidencies within their own assigned territories.

Twice a year, during the annual and semiannual general conferences, all the General Authorities meet in Salt Lake City for about two weeks for an intensive review of, and instruction in, Church policies and programs. They report on Church progress and growth in all parts of the world and assess Church programs as they apply to various nationalities and cultures. All who assemble receive spiritual instruction and are given renewed vision and direction by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

In accordance with the revelation that mandates that the Seventy are to act under the direction of the Twelve, the seven presidents of the First Quorum of Seventy meet regularly with the Twelve to receive instruction and to coordinate the
work assigned to them. Such coordination is essential to comply with one of the provisions in the revelation: "And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other" (D&C 107:27).

Because the function of the Seventy in the administrative affairs of the Church remains flexible, future adjustments to accommodate changing situations may be expected.

DEAN L. LARSEN

SEX EDUCATION

Latter-day Saints are instructed that parents have the divinely appointed responsibility and privilege of teaching their children moral and eternal values associated with human SEXUALITY and reproduction. Except in unusual cases, they cannot ignore or shift the ultimate responsibility for educating their children about sex to any other person or entity.

The scriptures define the union of the spirit and the body as the soul of man (D&C 88:15) and declare that MARRIAGE and FAMILY in the highest degree of heavenly glory are eternal (D&C 131:2; 132:19). Therefore, LDS discussion about sex respects the PHYSICAL BODY, life, marriage, family, the intentions of God the Creator, and the shared creative powers he has entrusted to a heterosexual husband and wife (see PROCREATION). The spirit of the Lord's law of love and righteousness requires one to keep sacred and appropriate all sexual desires and all related behaviors. All people are admonished to remain chaste before marriage and totally faithful in marriage (see ADULTERY; CHASTITY).

At an early age, children begin to recognize sexual differences. The Church encourages parents to establish open communication by providing their children correct information and by being aware of each individual child's readiness for specific instruction so that children will feel free to talk with their parents about sex differences and functions.

Parents are counseled to help their adolescent and older children understand the need to stay in control of their emotions and behaviors relative to physical desire and to teach them how to make personal decisions about sexual behavior based on moral awareness, with the realization that virtue and moral cleanliness lead to strength of character, peace of mind, lifelong happiness, and a fulness of love. LDS scriptures counsel, "See that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love" (Alma 38:12).

A Parent's Guide was developed by the Church to provide information and suggest teaching methods to parents. It helps parents teach children in the home about sacred and personal matters appropriate to each age through all the stages of childhood, adolescence (see DATING AND COURTSHIP), and marriage. President David O. MCKAY taught, "The home is the best place in the world to teach the child self-restraint, to give him [or her] happiness in self-control, and respect for the rights of others" (IE 62 [Aug. 1959]:553). Latter-day Saints view the home as the proper place for teaching children about care for the body, gender roles, sexuality, changing physical and emotional needs, prevention of sexual abuse, and enjoyment of proper and virtuous intimacies.

Where schools have undertaken sex education courses and programs, the Church believes the materials used should advocate abstinence from sex before marriage and should teach correct principles that will produce long-term happiness. Thus, the Church believes that public education should in no way promote or encourage sexual promiscuity, a lifestyle that is unhealthy, immoral, and fraught with potentially serious consequences. The Church takes the position that when sex education is taught in the schools, the teacher and the course materials should encourage parental involvement in sex-educational discussions to foster respect for the family, human life, and natural differences between the sexes. When educators teach about human sexuality, they should feel that they have been entrusted by the parents of their students with the privilege of discussing and teaching a subject that has eternal significance to the family and family members.

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