

tions that place themselves or others at risk. Members are also encouraged to become informed about AIDS-related laws and policies in the country where they live and to join in wise and constructive efforts to stem the spread of AIDS.

The statement calls for Church members to extend Christlike sympathy and compassion to all who are infected or ill with AIDS. Particular concern and sympathy are expressed for those having received the virus through blood transfusions, babies infected by their mothers, and marriage partners infected by a spouse. Leaders and members are encouraged to reach out with kindness and comfort to the afflicted, ministering to their needs and assisting them with their problems.

While hope is expressed that medical discoveries will make it possible both to prevent and cure AIDS, the observance of clearly understandable and divinely given guidance regardless of such potential discoveries will do more than all else to check a potential AIDS epidemic: "That guidance is chastity before marriage, total fidelity in marriage, abstinence from all homosexual relations, avoidance of illegal drugs, and reverence and care for the body, which is the temple of God."

The First Presidency statement includes remarks given about AIDS by Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, in the April 1987 general priesthood meeting: "Prophets of God have repeatedly taught through the ages that practices of homosexual relations, fornication, and adultery are grievous sins. Sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage are forbidden by the Lord. We reaffirm those teachings. . . . Each of us has a choice between right and wrong. But with that choice there inevitably will follow consequences. Those who choose to violate the commandments of God put themselves at great spiritual and physical jeopardy."

In January 1989 a special bulletin on AIDS was sent to Church leaders throughout the world to provide (1) scientific and medical information about AIDS; (2) counsel reaffirming the blessings and protection that come from living God's commandments; and (3) guidelines and policies dealing with interviewing and assisting those infected with the AIDS virus. Some items treated in the four-page special bulletin are:

- Church teachers and activity leaders who on occasion may be involved in cleaning up blood or rendering first aid should become aware of,

and follow, local health department recommendations regarding the prevention of AIDS infection.

- AIDS-infected individuals who may be contemplating marriage are to be encouraged by local Church leaders to be honest with potential marriage partners and to disclose their AIDS infection. For a person to do less would be deceitful, and in violation of one's covenants with God.
- Where transgression of God's laws has resulted in infection, the Church advocates the example of Jesus Christ, who condemned the sin but loved the sinner.
- AIDS victims who seek membership in the Church, temple recommends, or other blessings are treated as all others who express faith in God, repent, request baptism, and are living the teachings of Jesus Christ.

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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND ALCOHOLISM

Active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages. This practice of abstinence derives from an 1833 revelation known as the WORD OF WISDOM, which states "that inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father" (D&C 89:5). The harmful effects of ethyl alcohol (the active ingredient in all alcoholic beverages) on human health are also noted in the Bible (Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11). Although the Word of Wisdom was given originally to show the will of God and not as a commandment, abstinence from alcohol was expected of fully participating Church members by the early twentieth century and faithful observance is virtually prerequisite to temple work and leadership callings in the Church (*see* DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS: SECTION 89).

Ethyl alcohol is produced by yeast fermentation in grains and fibers containing sugar. The

amount of alcohol in wine and beer is normally less than 10 percent because fermentation stops when the ethyl alcohol concentration reaches this level. In modern times, however, the amount in alcoholic beverages has been increased by distillation.

The availability of beverages with higher concentrations of alcohol has increased the number of social and medical problems associated with ingesting it. Some conditions that are increased among those who use alcohol include cancers of the oral cavity, larynx, and esophagus; cirrhosis of the liver; degenerative diseases of the central nervous system; and higher accidental death rates (both automobile and pedestrian accidents).

The proscription on alcohol ingestion has reduced the incidence of all of these conditions among Latter-day Saints. The number of alcoholics in any population is usually estimated from the number of deaths caused by cirrhosis of the liver. An unpublished study conducted at the University of Utah in 1978 found that the number of deaths from alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver among LDS people was about half that of the non-LDS in Utah and other areas of the United States. This suggests that while the Word of Wisdom does not prevent alcoholism entirely, it has been effective in reducing its incidence.

[See also Social Services.]

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ALLEGORY OF ZENOS

The Allegory of Zenos (Jacob 5) is a lengthy, prophetic declaration made by ZENOS, a Hebrew prophet, about the destiny of the house of ISRAEL. Evidently copied directly from the plates of brass into the Book of Mormon record by JACOB, it was intended (1) to reinforce Jacob's own teachings both about Jesus Christ ("We knew of Christ, and

we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming"—Jacob 4:4) and about the house of Israel's anticipated unresponsiveness toward the coming Redeemer ("I perceive . . . they will reject the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation"—Jacob 4:15), and (2) to instruct his people about the promised future re-gathering of Israel, to which Jacob's people belonged.

Framed in the tradition of parables, the allegory "likens" the house of Israel to an olive tree whose owner struggles to keep it from dying. The comparison figuratively illustrates God's bond with his chosen people and with the Gentiles, and underscores the lesson that through patience and compassion God will save and preserve the compliant and obedient.

The narrative contains seventy-six verses, divisible into five parts, all tied together by an overarching theme of good winning over bad, of life triumphing over death. In the first part, an alarmed owner, recognizing threatening signs of death (age and decay) in a beloved tree of superior quality, immediately tries to nurse it back to health (verses 4–5). Even though new growth appears, his ministering does not fully heal the tree; and so, with a servant's help, he removes and destroys waning parts and in their place grafts limbs from a "wild" tree. At the same time, he detaches the old tree's "young and tender" new growth for planting in secluded areas of his property. Though disappointed, he resolves to save his beloved tree (verses 6–14).

Second, following a lengthy interval of conscientious care, the owner's labor is rewarded with a generous harvest of choice fruit, not only from the newly grafted limbs on his old tree but also from the new growth that he planted around the property. These latter trees, however, have produced unequally: the two trees with least natural advantages have the highest, positive yield; while the most advantaged tree's production is only half good, compelling removal of its unprofitable parts. Even so, the owner continues an all-out effort on every tree, even this last one (verses 15–28).

In the third part, a long time passes. The owner and the servant return again to measure and evaluate the fruit, only to learn the worst: the old tree, though healthy, has produced a completely worthless crop; and it is the same for the other trees. Distressed, the owner orders all the trees destroyed. His assistant pleads for him to forbear a