

physical intimacy is a strong force in expressing and strengthening the love bond in marriage, enhancing and reinforcing marital unity.

Decisions regarding the number and spacing of children are to be made by husband and wife together, in righteousness, and through empathetic communication, and with prayer for the Lord's inspiration. Latter-day Saints believe that persons are accountable not only for what they do but for why they do it. Thus, regarding family size and attendant questions, members should desire to multiply and replenish the earth as the Lord has commanded. In that process, God intends that his children use the agency that he has given them in charting a wise course for themselves and their families.

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## BIRTH RATES

See: Vital Statistics

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## BISHOP

A bishop is the ecclesiastical leader of a Latter-day Saint congregation or WARD, and has comprehensive pastoral and administrative responsibility at that level. This differs from other Christian churches in which bishops administer large geographical areas involving a number of congregations.

The word "bishop" comes from the Greek word *episkopos*, meaning "overseer." He is the pastor or shepherd, and is charged with the care of his flock. In the apostolic period, PAUL wrote to the bishops in Philippi (Phil. 1:1), and other letters speak of the bishop's duties and of his sacred role in caring for the Church of God (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9).

The bishop's office is a complex priesthood calling. The bishop is president of the ward's AARONIC PRIESTHOOD holders and is responsible for all their activities. He is also an ordained HIGH PRIEST in the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD and is the presiding high priest in the ward, responsible

for all ward activities and functions (D&C 107:15-17). As the common judge and the presiding high priest, he determines the worthiness of all members of his ward and directs the performance of sacred ordinances (D&C 107:68-76). He is assisted by two counselors, usually high priests, who with the bishop constitute the BISHOPRIC and share responsibility for all ward organizations. The bishop and his counselors extend calls to ward members as needed to fill the numerous assignments in the many programs of the ward, encompassing activities for ward members at all ages.

A bishop holds his official position for an indefinite time period. A new bishop is called when an existing bishop is replaced or when a new ward is organized. After prayerful deliberation, the STAKE PRESIDENCY proposes a new bishop to the FIRST PRESIDENCY and QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES. The individual nominated must be a member of the priesthood body of the ward. He does not seek nor apply for this position and no theological degree is necessary. A bishop is a lay minister and receives no monetary compensation for his services. Like other local Church officers, he must maintain himself and his family through normal employment. In selecting a bishop, a stake presidency ordinarily considers testimony, judgment, commitment, and charity toward ward members, as well as the virtues of sobriety and integrity and the administrative and teaching skills identified in the New Testament description of bishops:

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach. Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous. One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil [1 Tim. 3:2-6].

Receiving a call to be a bishop is often a powerfully spiritual experience for a man as he realizes the awesome responsibility and feels the spirit confirm the importance of the call.

The bishop is sustained by a vote of the congregation, after which he is ordained and set apart to this holy office by the laying-on of hands generally by the stake president under assignment from the First Presidency. After a bishop is released from active duty, he will often be called "bishop"

throughout his life because of the love and respect that ward members have for him.

The bishop has overall responsibility for all functions of the ward, which are designed to lead each individual member to Christ and eternal life. He is to “watch over the Church” (D&C 46:27). With other ward leaders, he is concerned for the daily physical needs of each ward member, especially the sick, elderly, and handicapped. He is like a father to the ward.

As the **PRESIDING HIGH PRIEST** of the ward, the bishop presides at sacrament, priesthood, and ward council meetings, and at all other ward services or activities. By these and other means he watches over both the spiritual and temporal affairs of the ward and its individual members and organizes the activities for preaching the gospel, serving in the temple, and helping ward members become more Christlike.

The bishop is the common judge of his ward. He spends much time visiting with or interviewing ward members. He determines their worthiness to participate in sacred ordinances, to receive the priesthood, to receive calls to serve in the ward and on missions, and to do temple work. He spends many hours interviewing and counseling youth as they become prospective missionaries.

Besides determining worthiness, the bishop must see that all Church ordinances are performed and recorded correctly. His direction or approval is necessary for baptism, confirmation, administration of the sacrament, blessing and naming of babies, priesthood ordinations, and all temple ordinances for members of his ward.

Where there is need, the bishop may be involved in counseling on a regular basis. He may help ward members establish goals for improvement, or he may impose appropriate discipline. In cases of serious transgression, he may initiate formal **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**, which can affect membership, and may be necessary to bring some back to full fellowship.

As the president of the Aaronic Priesthood, a bishop has a specific responsibility to the **YOUNG MEN** and **YOUNG WOMEN** of the ward, ages twelve to eighteen. He is to see that all youth are instructed not only in scriptures and doctrine but also in the principles of charity and honesty, with special training of the young men in the duties of the priesthood, including administration of the sacrament, **HOME TEACHING**, baptizing, and missionary work. The bishop is automatically president of

the quorum of priests in his ward, which generally consists of young men ages sixteen through eighteen. Bishops have similar responsibility for the young women of the ward. He meets monthly with a Bishop’s Youth Committee, composed of adult and youth leaders for the young men and women.

Other duties of the bishop include receiving and accounting for the **FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS** of ward members and caring of the needy through the **BISHOP’S STOREHOUSE** and the **FAST OFFERING** fund. He sees that all necessary supplies are at hand for ward functions. He arranges for and conducts funeral services. When it is appropriate and civil laws permit, he may perform marriages.

The bishop, as a father in his own home, as a family provider with a normal occupation, and as a member of the community in which he lives, has many time demands beyond his ecclesiastical calling. He must organize well and delegate and supervise effectively to accomplish all his duties.

The bishop’s Sunday schedule usually involves a twelve or more hour day, including attending and conducting organizational meetings, worship services, training sessions; counseling and interviewing ward members; extending invitations or calls to participate in Church service in the ward; visiting the sick in hospitals; and visiting ward members in their homes as needed. He spends many additional hours during the week in meeting ward needs. His counselors and priesthood and auxiliary leaders also spend many hours helping him with these ward responsibilities. However, the overall responsibility for ward members and certain specific duties, such as annual interviewing of individuals for temple recommends and tithing settlement, are not in ordinary circumstances delegated.

Ward members believe that a man called of God, as the bishop is, will be endowed with wisdom, understanding, and spiritual discernment (D&C 46:27). Thus they frequently seek and greatly appreciate his advice and assistance.

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