In 1851, under the direction of Charles C. Rich, an apostle, 437 colonists from Utah were sent to found a settlement near the Cajon Pass. The result was San Bernardino, the principal LDS settlement in California along the “Mormon Corridor” connecting Utah settlements and the West Coast. It was intended to be a gathering place for immigrants from the Pacific as well as a way station to assist LDS immigration via the Pacific. Latter-day Saints from the gold fields also gathered there. By 1856 about 3,000 settlers lived in San Bernardino, but the colony was plagued by dissension. In 1857, as the U.S. Army approached Utah (see Utah Expedition), Brigham Young instructed the San Bernardino Saints, along with other outlying settlers, to return to Utah. Only a little more than half complied, and many of those who remained drifted from the Church. After the 1857 evacuation, as before, California attracted some Latter-day Saints who were dissatisfied with Brigham Young’s relatively authoritarian style of leadership, or with the practice of polygamy, or with the Great Basin itself.

After its official withdrawal from California in 1857–1858, the Church sponsored no further colonization in the state. Latter-day Saints subsequently moved to California as individuals rather than at the request of the Church. Many migrated there in the 1920s during the southern California land promotion boom. Thousands moved there during World War II for employment opportunities in war industries such as shipping and aircraft. Today California has perhaps the greatest density of Latter-day Saints outside the states of Utah and Idaho. Two LDS temples are located there, in Los Angeles and Oakland, with another under construction in San Diego in 1990.

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CALLING AND ELECTION

An exhortation to make one’s “calling and election sure” is found in Peter’s writings (2 Pet. 1:3–10), and is associated with the “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:16–19). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that “the more sure word of prophecy means a man’s knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood” (D&C 131:5).

Peter said that the acquisition and exercise of faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are necessary to make one’s “calling and election sure” and to obtain a fullness of the blessings of God (2 Pet. 1:5–7; cf. TPJS, p. 305).

In addition to acquiring these qualities of character, those who would have their calling and election made sure must receive the ordinances of the gospel, including the temple ordinances (D&C 131:2–3; 132:19–20).

Having one’s calling and election made sure is not attained easily. Speaking of this, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “When the Lord has thoroughly proved [a person], and finds that the [person] is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the [person] will find his[her] calling and election made sure” (TPJS, p. 150). The Prophet indicates that this was the case with ancient prophets such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, John, Paul and others (TPJS, p. 151).

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CALLINGS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is organized to benefit all who participate, and all are expected to assist in its labors (see ACTIVITY IN THE
CHURCH; LAY PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP; WARD ORGANIZATION). The Church is administered according to the principles of individual involvement, service, and self-government. There is no paid ministry in local WARDS or STAKES, and the work of the Church is carried out through volunteer service by the members, who are called by priesthood leaders to contribute in various capacities. Callings may be general requests or assignments to follow some particular instruction for the benefit of the Church, assignments to serve in the PRIESTHOOD, or requests to fill specific administrative, teaching, or service-oriented positions. They are usually for indefinite periods of time. Committed Latter-day Saints accept and fulfill one or more callings at any given time. Called by Church leaders whom Latter-day Saints support as inspired representatives of the Lord, members serve until they are released, often because they are called to other positions that need their talents, and as the inspiration of the Holy Ghost indicates.

The most frequent callings are charges to Church members to take certain actions or to perform specific functions. Early examples of this are seen in the revelations from God—recorded from 1830 on in the Doctrine and Covenants—that call for the gathering of his people (D&C 29:7–8; 57:1–2). These calls initiated the dynamic missionary effort of the Church, the migration and gathering of Saints to form a new society of those striving to be pure in heart (D&C 97:21), and the development of support organizations to encourage and finance these activities.

Calls to action can be issued by leaders to the members overall, to a congregation, or to an individual. These calls may be permanent or temporary, depending upon the needs of the Church and the members. Another type of calling is the selection of a member to receive the priesthood. Every worthy male member of the Church age twelve or older may be called to receive the Aaronic, and later the Melchizedek Priesthood and is sequentially ordained to an office in each priesthood (D&C 20:90; see also PRIESTHOOD OFFICES). One who holds the priesthood has a permanent calling and obligation to remain worthy to help build the KINGDOM OF GOD on earth, with family responsibilities being central to that call. In a message “To the Home Teachers of the Church” in the May 1989 Ensign, President Ezra Taft BENSON wrote that an essential priesthood calling, equal in importance to any other in the church, is to assist Church families through a HOME TEACHING assign-

ment. All offices and callings in the church derive their “rights, powers, and prerogatives” from the priesthood (McConkie, p. 353).

A third type of calling, and the most typical, involves positions in local congregations in either the priesthood or auxiliary programs of the Church. Latter-day Saints believe that a calling as an officer or teacher is a stewardship, where they are to bless those they have been called to serve (Matt. 20:26–28).

The majority of callings are unpaid and temporary. But callings in certain governing quorums of the Church require full-time service and in some cases are permanent, with financial support if needed (see GENERAL AUTHORITIES). Any worthy member can receive a full-time unpaid call to serve as a missionary, MISSION PRESIDENT, or as a TEMPLE PRESIDENT and MATRON, but these callings are for a limited number of months or years. As of 1990, for example, every worthy unmarried young man (eligible at age nineteen) is expected to serve a period as a full-time missionary, without reimbursement from the Church. Worthy young women who so choose may receive mission calls at age twenty-one.

One purpose of Church callings is to benefit individual members by letting them do the work of the Church. Responsibility and authority are distributed locally. Leaders delegate to officers and teachers the responsibility of conceiving, planning, preparing, and executing the activities pertinent to their callings (D&C 107:99). This decentralized organization encourages initiative and personal growth among members of local wards and stakes. Through service, members learn their responsibilities and their capacity, enlarge their understanding, and increase their commitment to the gospel (D&C 58:26–28; Matt. 10:39).

Calls are issued through an orderly process. The first step involves the selection of those to be called. For example, the presiding authority (the STAKE PRESIDENT or BISHOP) is to thoughtfully and prayerfully evaluate possible candidates for each office or teaching responsibility. Other leaders who eventually will be working closely with the person may be asked to suggest the names of a few candidates they think could serve ably. Newly called presidents of quorums or auxiliaries are given the right and responsibility of submitting the names of those they wish to be their counselors, and unless there are problems of availability or worthiness, such candidates are given priority. Personal worthiness, ability, willingness to serve,
individual and family circumstances, whether the calling would benefit those being served, and the possible impact on the lives of the member and the member’s family are to be considered carefully. The prime consideration for a leader in selecting a person for a calling is confirmation by the Holy Ghost of the correctness of the final selection. When leaders select members to fulfill callings in this manner, members understand that callings have divine approval.

The second step involved in extending a call requires the authorized leader to hold a private interview with the member to issue and explain the calling. When a wife, husband, or child is to receive a call, it is recommended that the husband, wife, or parents of the candidate be consulted regarding the calling. Support by family members of the one who is receiving a call is an important consideration.

All calls respect individual agency with the decision to accept or decline resting with the member being called. It is considered an opportunity and honor to be asked to serve; however, calls require sacrifice, and they may come at inconvenient times. Therefore, the persons called are counseled to make the decision by examining their circumstances and taking the matter to the Lord in prayer. To accept a calling requires humility, invites personal prayer, and inspires increased commitment. Many of the blessings associated with callings result from the voluntary nature of the service. When the calling is viewed as a sacred stewardship, the dedication to the calling is of high quality. If a member decides, because of an unwillingness to serve, not to accept a call from God, the decision is viewed with regret by those issuing the call (Widtsoe, p. 190).

The third step in the process is the presentation of the name of the person called to a constituent body of members for a sustaining vote. According to the principle of common consent in the Church, no person is to serve in an official calling without the consent of the membership (D&C 20:65). The sustaining vote is not an election, but signifies that members know of no reason why the individual should be disqualified from service and that they are willing to offer cooperation and support (Arrington and Bitton, p. 208). Members are instructed to have faith and be supportive of those called to serve. At least once a year, members have the opportunity in a ward or branch conference to formally sustain their entire general and local Church leadership.

After receiving the consent of the Church, the call is completed by the laying on of hands by authorized priesthood holders. This act of ordination, or setting apart, confers the authority of the office or position and testifies “visibly and without question, that the powers or keys or prerogatives are vested in the recipient” (McConkie, p. 326). A priesthood blessing is given to the one called, the fulfillment of which is conditional upon faithful service. Generally, members anticipate receiving the ordinance of being set apart and are spiritually uplifted.

Once sustained and set apart in a calling, members receive training in their new responsibilities through their leaders and Church-produced manuals, as well as during in-service meetings and special conferences (see Leadership Training). It is understood that individuals will serve in particular callings for a time then be released, giving them the opportunity to support others in the position who once supported them. Ordinarily, members do not resign from their callings; they are released by the presiding authority. However, a member may go to the presiding authority to ask that new circumstances be considered and a release extended, if necessary. Releases are announced to the congregation and a vote of appreciation is offered to recognize the member’s service.

Duration of service in a calling depends on the member’s circumstances, the needs and resources of the Church, and the whisperings of the Spirit to the presiding authority. It is not the practice of the Church to “promote” persons from one position to another. All positions are considered equally necessary (1 Cor. 12:12–31), and positions of high visibility often involve increased responsibility and commitment of time. Similarly, members do not volunteer, campaign, or call themselves to positions. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., explained that “in the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how” (IE 54 [June 1951]:412). The collective strength of the Church is enhanced through every member receiving broad experience in a variety of callings.

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