

ing sacred COVENANTS, and receiving PRIESTHOOD BLESSINGS, and inspired counsel that provide guidance through mortality and prepare the recipient for eternity. These ordinances are often marked by informal celebrations with family and friends.

The family as a unit of both religious worship and eternal association is celebrated by many Latter-day Saints in daily activities and weekly FAMILY HOME EVENINGS. The daily activities may consist of scripture study, gospel discussion, prayers, or singing activities held usually at the beginning or ending of the day. Family home evening generally occupies one night a week. It is designed to strengthen the bonds of family members through a wide variety of spiritual, social, educational, and recreational activities, and thus it augments involvement in traditional holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Mother's Day. Extended LDS families often participate on a larger scale with periodic family reunions.

The identity of Latter-day Saints as "modern Israel" finds its most exuberant expression in PIONEER DAY. This annual celebration commemorates the entrance of the first LDS PIONEERS into the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. For Latter-day Saints, this commemoration has come to symbolize the establishment of a divinely ordained "promised land" in the American West.

Since 1849, Pioneer Day has given Latter-day Saints an excellent opportunity to express their identity as a covenant people. In the context of devotionals, parades, dances, sporting events, banquets, and a host of other activities, Mormons review the manifestation of God's hand in the course of their history, the creation and sustaining of their mode of life, and the religious dimension of their continuing associations. Although the focus of Pioneer Day is Salt Lake City and the Mormon West, Latter-day Saints throughout the Church memorialize their religious heritage on July 24 with celebrations appropriate to their particular settings and circumstances.

The LDS identification of the Church as the living KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH finds its greatest cultural and religious expression at general conferences. These semiannual gatherings in April and October have been observed by Church leaders and members alike almost since the ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH ON APRIL 6, 1830. The conferences are currently held on the first Sunday of April and October, plus the preceding

Saturday. The months symbolically mark the changing of the seasons between winter and summer, and April is also usually the month when Easter comes, commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

General conference unites the divine authority, organization, doctrine, and spiritual resources of the Church. The salient symbols include the architecture of TEMPLE SQUARE; the hierarchical seating of Church leadership from the FIRST PRESIDENCY through the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, the quorums of the SEVENTY, and the leading men and women of the AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS; the use of the scriptures and revelation in the addresses given; the expression of both diversity and solidarity by the gathered Church membership representing many nations in their sustaining the leadership; and reports heralding significant growth in the rapidly expanding Church membership.

The general conferences also serve as major occasions of personal pilgrimages for thousands of Latter-day Saints to travel to Salt Lake City in April or October. It is likewise an occasion of vicarious involvement for millions of others who follow the conference sessions through various telecommunications media. In addition, the conference proceedings are later printed and distributed. As a result, the general conferences have become an extremely important collective spiritual experience for Latter-day Saints throughout the world.

Through general conferences, and on a smaller scale through the weekly congregational worship services of individual WARDS and STAKES, Latter-day Saints renew and celebrate their membership in the organization that they recognize as the kingdom of God on earth.

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## CELESTIAL KINGDOM

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches of three degrees of glory in the AFTERLIFE—the celestial, terrestrial, and teles-

tial. Jesus alluded to these when he said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). Paul likened them to the sun, moon, and stars, with the highest or celestial being typical of the sun (1 Cor. 15:40–41; cf. D&C 76:50–98). The celestial kingdom was seen in vision by JOHN the Revelator, PAUL, and the Prophet Joseph SMITH (Rev. 4:6; 2 Cor. 12:2; *TPJS*, pp. 106–107). This earth in its “sanctified, immortal, and eternal state” will become a celestial sphere (D&C 88:19–20; 130:9).

Celestial glory comes to those “who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, . . . and who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true” (D&C 76:51–53). Within the celestial glory are three levels, and to obtain the highest requires a temple marriage or SEALING.

Inhabitants of the highest celestial degree inherit “thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers,” and dwell with God and Jesus Christ forever (D&C 76:54–70; 132:19–20).

[See also Degrees of Glory; Telestial Kingdom; Terrestrial Kingdom.]

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## CELIBACY

Celibacy, the deliberate renunciation of marriage, is foreign to LDS life. Like other forms of ascetic withdrawal, it may deprive the participant of crucial life experiences. Spiritual maturity and exaltation in the highest degree of the CELESTIAL KINGDOM require marriage (D&C 131:2–3).

The norm of Latter-day Saint teaching and practice is for individuals to marry, procreate, and foster righteous living in their families as indicated in the scriptures: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28). “Marriage is honourable in all” (Heb. 13:4). “Whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man” (D&C 49:15). Those who are unable to marry in a temple in mortality through no fault of their own will receive compensatory blessings later (D&C 137:5–8).

The practice of celibacy was not widespread among the Christian clergy until centuries after the death of the apostles. “Forbidding to marry”

was, for Paul, a sign of apostasy (1 Tim. 4:3). Because ancient and modern revelation endorses marriage and because most religious leaders in the Old and New Testaments were married, Latter-day Saints reject attempts to interpret the Bible as advocating celibacy.

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## CENSORSHIP

See: Confidential Records

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## CENTENNIAL OBSERVANCES

The historical consciousness of Latter-day Saints in the twentieth century has been richly expressed in the celebration of centennial anniversaries of important foundational events. Building on the elaborate jubilee (fifty-year) celebrations in 1880 of the ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH and in 1897 of the beginnings of the LDS COLONIZATION in the American West, the Church ushered in the twentieth century in 1905 with the centenary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph SMITH. For this occasion, President Joseph F. SMITH led a group of Church leaders and Smith family members to Sharon, Vermont, Joseph Smith’s birthplace, and dedicated a memorial cottage and large granite obelisk to his memory. Many LDS congregations held local observances.

The Joseph Smith Memorial became one of the first HISTORICAL SITES of the Church. Following its dedication, the Smith company visited a number of other Mormon historic sites. This tour confirmed a growing interest by Latter-day Saints in preserving their past through the restoration of such historical sites in later commemorations.

Another major centenary was celebrated on September 22, 1927, when President Heber J. GRANT conducted a devotional on the hill CUMORAH at the approximate location where Joseph Smith received the GOLD PLATES of the Book of Mormon from the angel Moroni one hundred years earlier (*see* MORONI, VISITATIONS OF). On