Revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith supplement those of the New Testament to indicate that the church of the Firstborn consists of those who have the inheritance of the Firstborn and become joint-heirs with Christ in receiving all that the Father has (Rom. 8:14–17; D&C 84:33–38; see HEIRS OF GOD). The Lord said, "If you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; . . . I . . . am the Firstborn; . . . And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn" (D&C 93:20–22). The church of the Firstborn is the divine patriarchal order in its eternal form. Building the priesthood family order on this earth by receiving sealings in the temple is a preparation and foundation for this blessing in eternity (see GOSPEL OF ABRAHAM).

When persons have proved themselves faithful in all things required by the Lord, it is their privilege to receive covenants and obligations that will enable them to be heirs of God as members of the church of the Firstborn. They are "sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise" and are those "into whose hands the Father has given all things" (D&C 76:51–55). They will be priests and priestesses, kings and queens, receiving the Father's glory, having the fulness of knowledge, wisdom, power, and dominion (D&C 76:56–62, cf. 107:19). At the second coming of Jesus Christ, the "general assembly of the church of the firstborn" will descend with him (Heb. 12:22–23; JST Gen. 9:23; D&C 76:54, 63).

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IVAN J. BARRETT

CHURCH GROWTH
See: Vital Statistics

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, THE
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the official name of the Church established on April 6, 1830, at Fayette, New York, under the
direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is commonly referred to as the Mormon Church because of its belief in the Book of Mormon, and members are often called Mormons or Latter-day Saints. Originally chartered with six members, the Church has grown into an international organization encompassing millions of members in many countries in the world.

From 1830 until 1838, members of the Church referred to it as “The Church of the Latter-day Saints” or “The Church of Christ.” On April 26, 1838, the official title of the Church was given by revelation: “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (D&C 115:4).

Each phrase in this name is significant. “The Church of Jesus Christ” indicates that Jesus Christ stands at the head of the Church, and that his gospel, teachings, and divine authority constitute the fundamental basis of the Church. The term “Saints” is in accord with New Testament usage connoting a member of the covenant group (Acts 9:13, 32, 41; Rom. 1:7; Phil. 1:1; see LATTER-DAY SAINTS.) It has no direct relationship to the connotation of “Saints” as used in Roman Catholic or Orthodox traditions. The term “Latter-day” indicates that the Church was restored in the last era of human history prior to the second coming of Christ and also distinguishes today’s Church from the “Former-day” organization established by Christ during his mortal ministry in Palestine. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a divinely restored embodiment of the original Church of Jesus Christ, and the appointed guardian of its doctrine, authority, and divine mission (see ORGANIZATION: CONTEMPORARY).

The Church is the kingdom of God on the earth, a divinely established institution through which God accomplishes his purposes pertaining to the salvation of his children. President Spencer W. Kimball suggested that the Church has three primary objectives to help people come unto Christ, sometimes identified as its three principal missions. The first is to proclaim the gospel to all mankind. The Church does this through a large missionary force, as well as through the efforts of individual Church members. The second mission is to perfect the Saints, which includes teaching them the gospel of Christ, administering the essential ordinances of salvation, and assisting them in a lifelong process of repentance, discipleship, and preparation for eternal life. The third mission of the Church is redeeming the dead, making it possible for generations of the deceased, who had no opportunity to accept the gospel in mortality, to receive the truths and ordinances of salvation. This work is accomplished by proxy ordinances performed in the temples of the Church. It leads to Church encouragement of family history research. Later, Church Presidents may alter or add to these missions as directed or inspired by the Lord.

The Church is also a society of believers to provide a framework for cooperative effort, mutual support, and temporal assistance as needed. The bonds of love among the Saints are a vital prerequisite to the accomplishment of the Church’s purposes and are identified in the scriptures as one sign of the true church of God (John 13:35; see SIGNS OF THE TRUE CHURCH). Latter-day Saints regard themselves as the “covenant people” of the Lord, heirs to the ancient covenant between God and Abraham, and, by birth or adoption, members of the house of Israel. The Church is the instrument through which God is gathering the dispersed tribes of Israel in the latter days in accordance with his promises to Abraham and other biblical prophets.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is distinguished from other Christian

Go Ye Therefore and Teach All Nations, by Grant Romney Clawson, after a work by Harry Anderson (1973, detail from a mural in the Church Office Building, Salt Lake City, Utah). Jesus Christ is the head of the Church. Here he sends his disciples to go “and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19). Courtesy Floyd Holdman.
One of the main functions of the Church is to proclaim the gospel. As of March 1991, about 44,000 full-time missionaries were teaching the gospel in 257 missions throughout the world.

churches in several fundamental ways. Most of these differences stem from the Church’s essential belief in continuing revelation. Thus, Latter-day Saints accept the Holy Bible as the word of God, and also accept the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price as scripture and as standard works. They accept the calling of modern prophets and apostles, beginning with Joseph Smith, and continuing to the present. LDS doctrines regarding the nature of the Godhead, the plan of salvation, vitality of priesthood authority, and the interpretation of scriptural prophecies also differ in various ways from those of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant branches of Christianity. Latter-day Saints emphasize religious freedom and tolerance. The Church does not typically participate in formal ecumenical activities; however, it is committed to cooperate with other religious, civic, and educational organizations in advancing common moral and social purposes (see interfaith relations).

The Church is governed by priesthood authority. The term “priesthood” among Latter-day Saints refers not only to the body of men who hold ecclesiastical offices in the Church, but also to the actual authority or power given them by ordination to the priesthood. There are two divisions within the priesthood, a lesser or Aaronic Priesthood, and a higher priesthood or Melchizedek Priesthood. All worthy male members of the Church from age twelve onward are ordained to the priesthood, normally holding offices within the Aaronic Priesthood from ages 12 to 18, and offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood thereafter. Offices in the Aaronic Priesthood include: deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop. The Melchizedek Priesthood offices are elder, high priest, patriarch, seventy, and apostle.

The Church sees itself as organized after the basic pattern of the first century Church of Christ and in accordance with a series of revelations to Joseph Smith (D&C 20 and 107; A of F 6). Successive Presidents of the Church have refined the organization to meet changing needs and demands of an expanding international organization but have not altered the fundamental structure of the Church as it was first organized. The Church is presided over by a president, who generally has two counselors; together with him, they constitute the First Presidency of the Church.

A second governing body, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, consists of twelve men called to be “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23). The Quorum of the Twelve collectively holds in latent form the same priesthood authority as the President of the Church, and in the event of his death is the body that governs the Church and installs a new president. Members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are regarded and sustained by vote of Latter-day Saints as prophets, seers, and revelators, receiving direct revelation from Jesus Christ. These brethren are assisted by members of the quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric.

The quorums of the Seventy, each consisting of up to seventy men, have special responsibility for missionary work and also supervise Church activities in geographic areas under the direction of the Twelve. The Presiding Bishopric is responsible for the temporal affairs of the Church, including finances, records, buildings, and administration of the Church welfare services program. All these men are designated by Latter-day Saints as General Authorities because their authority extends over the entire Church. The headquarters and central administrative offices of the Church are located in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The President of the Church receives revelation from God that relates to the whole Church, but all leaders and members are entitled to divine inspiration within the scope of their responsibili-
ties and regarding their personal lives. Such revelation helps bring unity and common purpose to the Church, making it like a living organism, the “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12–28; Col. 1:15).

General Authorities preside over the Church throughout the world, overseeing those who administer geographical units known as wards, stakes, regions, and areas. A stake is a cluster of wards, a region is a group of stakes, and an area is a group of regions. A ward is a congregation of Saints, usually numbering between 200 and 600 members. Wards are usually organized according to geographical boundaries, and all members living within those boundaries belong to the same ward. A ward is led by a bishop who serves usually about five years and is called from among the membership of the congregation; under the direction of the bishop, the ward is usually staffed entirely by its own members. Several wards together, usually no more than ten, constitute a stake, led by a stake president, also called from among the members of the stake. The term “stake” was given by revelation (D&C 101:21) and is linked to Old Testament imagery of Zion as a great tent upheld by lengthened cords and stakes (Isa. 33:20; 54:2). In areas where Church population is too small for wards and stakes to be formed, it is administered through missions, districts, and branches. While the main function of missions is to proclaim the gospel, in some areas of the world they also administer smaller units of the Church known as districts, which are made up of branches, usually consisting of fewer than 200 members. Branches can also exist under stakes if the units are too small to constitute a ward.

Within the wards and branches of the Church, there are specialized auxiliary organizations intended to meet specific needs of groups within the Church. They provide important support to the quorums of the priesthood. The largest of these is the Relief Society, the women’s organization established in 1842 under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It provides cultural, social, and spiritual enrichment to the women of the Church and also renders compassionate service to families in need, hence the name Relief Society.

Other auxiliaries of the Church are the Primary, responsible for the instruction of children under the age of twelve; the Young Men organization, for young men between the ages of twelve and eighteen; the Young Women organization, for young women of the same age group; and the Sunday School organization, which administers Sunday instruction in gospel doctrine to youth and adults.

Local officers and teachers throughout the Church receive no financial compensation. Formal training is not required for holding positions in the Church, nor is there a ministerial career track of any kind (see Lay Participation and Leadership). An individual receives a calling, like a formal invitation, to serve in a specific position by Church authorities responsible for that unit of the Church; such callings are believed to be made under divine inspiration.

Regular worship services in the Church are conducted in individual wards. Members of the ward meet together each Sunday for a general worship service known as Sacrament Meeting. The sacrament, or the Lord’s Supper, is administered, ward business is conducted, hymns are sung, and members of the congregation give inspirational talks on gospel subjects. Members also meet each Sunday in smaller priesthood or auxiliary groups. In all, formal Sunday meetings may last up to three hours. Latter-day Saint communities are involved in an entire way of life, and a typical family is likely to spend many hours each week in Church-related activities, meetings, and service (see Meetings, Major Church). Regular conferences—ward, stake, regional, area, and general—provide continuity and association with the larger community of the Church.

The twenty-eight-story Church Office Building in Salt Lake City, Utah, shown here in an aerial view from the southeast, at the time it was dedicated on July 24, 1975. The maps of the world, in relief on the building, signify this as the world headquarters of the Church.
Latter-day Saints regard the family as the basic unit of the Church, and of society, and emphasize the sanctity of marriage and the importance of family ties. Mormons believe that marriage and family relationships can continue beyond this life into the eternities, that men and women are equal in the sight of God, and that the blessings of the gospel revolve around the family.

Observers in the past may have regarded the Church as largely a western U.S. phenomenon, or at least as an American church. However, as of 1990, nearly 40 percent of the members lived outside the United States. Church growth internationally has been rapid since the end of World War II, especially in Latin America, the South Pacific, Australia, and parts of Asia and Africa. This growth has been perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Church in recent decades. By the end of 1990, nearly 50,000 members were serving as missionaries for one to three years, the majority outside the United States. This missionary corps, becoming skilled in many languages, imparts a cosmopolitan dimension to the contemporary Church.

To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord described The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased" (D&C 1:30).

BRUCE DOUGLAS PORTER

CHURCH NEWS

The *Church News* is a weekly supplement to the daily *Deseret News* of Salt Lake City, Utah. It reports the worldwide happenings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Coverage includes official Church announcements, appointments, conferences, and activities. Regular features are: Messages of Inspiration, Church News Viewpoint, LDS Calendar, current gospel study information, Mormon Forum on timely topics, and This Week in Church History. A staff of reporter-photographers travels worldwide to report on Church events and people. They are