bishopric will consult with the ward council and work for consensus in that group before taking action. Following the same pattern, the stake president consults with his counselors in the stake presidency and then with the high council. The First Presidency consults in this same way on matters of general Church policy and action in regular meetings with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Unanimity is the ideal for all these decision processes because of the importance of unity in the Church: “If ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). The three presiding quorums over the whole Church are of equal authority within their own spheres (D&C 107:22–26), but their decisions are of “the same power or validity” only when made “by the unanimous voice” of the quorum (D&C 107:27). Many important decisions take shape over what seem like long periods because achieving unanimity is highly valued by the quorums.

Because of the emphasis on divine and prophetic leadership and because of well-established norms and values in decision-making procedures, public dissent on a proposed calling or policy is unusual. There are, however, mechanisms for accommodating dissent. Normally, if one or more members find the proposed action objectionable, the dissenting member or members are asked to meet with the presiding officer privately to make known the reason for the question or objection. After considering the objections, presiding officers are free to pursue whatever decision they believe to be right.

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COMMUNION
Communion refers to partaking of the Lord’s Supper. The more common term among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is SACRAMENT (D&C 59:9). Eucharistia is the Greek term that meant “thanksgiving” among early Christians.

Partaking of the sacrament is the central act of worship and COVENANT renewal and resembles the simple commemorative meal described in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; Acts 2:42, 46). Postbiblical doctrines of transubstantiation (real presence) and of a “mere sign” are absent from the LDS teachings. All members of the Church, including unbaptized children, are encouraged to partake of the bread and water as emblems in remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ (see D&C 27). The communion sought is a communion of spirit as envisioned in the SACRAMENT PRAYERS (Moro. 4:3; 3 Ne. 18; D&C 20:77, 79).

[See also Sacraments.]

PAUL B. PIXTON

COMMUNITY
For Latter-day Saints, community is an essential and eternal part of life in this world and in the world to come. From the time the Church was established (1830), its teachings have placed emphasis on principles of unity, cooperation, mutual assistance, and beautification of one’s surroundings. The community of believers envisioned by the Prophet Joseph SMITH continues today, based essentially on the principles he established. Changes, however, occurred as the Church moved to the Intermountain West, where Mormon towns and cities rose, and later as the Church spread to many parts of the world. As the Church has grown, the community embodied in the ward has become a special focus of spiritual and social life among Church members, however small or isolated the congregation. Wherever Latter-day Saints find themselves, they form a community of believers based on human relationships that are expected to endure forever.

TEACHINGS OF JOSEPH SMITH AND BRIGHAM YOUNG. The advantages of village life described by Joseph Smith are an extension of life in a New England town. The Smiths brought to the frontier their New England background, emphasizing the importance of the community in providing education, mutual assistance, and political and economic organization. Joseph Smith’s ideas about the in-
portance of community life were an application of a revelation received in February 1831 on the law of consecration and stewardship (D&C 42). This revelation encouraged the members of the Church to band together and live a communitarian life in which the wealthy would voluntarily share their surplus with the poor. These ideas about community were partially implemented in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831. Participants soon moved to Jackson County, Missouri, to be involved with Joseph Smith’s City of Zion plan, through which he envisioned many social, educational, intellectual, economic, and professional advantages to the Saints from living together in communities, each containing 15,000 to 20,000 people, rather than being scattered on farms, as was the custom on the frontier at that time (CHC 1:311–12; see also City Planning).

However, persecution drove the Saints from Missouri in 1838–1839, and some 12,000 of them fled to the Nauvoo area in Illinois. Based on a modified plan of the City of Zion, Nauvoo became a general model for community development later used by the Latter-day Saints in settling the Intermountain West.

An essential element of the organization of the communities established by the Latter-day Saints between 1830 and 1846 was the division of the larger communities into wards and stakes, each with its own leaders. The bishop of each ward was a major figure in this organization. Nauvoo was eventually divided into a number of wards, each representing a geographic area of the city and the countryside beyond it. The bishop, with his counselors, was involved in supervising both the temporal and the spiritual affairs of the families within his ward’s boundaries.

The guidelines set by Joseph Smith and fifteen years of experience in community building in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois provided the basis for the principles that President Brigham Young followed during the migration to Utah and the establishment and development of the LDS settlements of the Intermountain West.

The first principle was based on Joseph Smith’s belief that the Latter-day Saints should live in a village and commute to rural farming areas around the community.

Second, property rights of residents of LDS communities were to be held under the principle of stewardship, which suggested that the interest of the group was more important than that of the individual. This principle was later implemented by Brigham Young, who tried for thirty years to incorporate these communitarian teachings into the settlement of the Intermountain West.

Third, the duty of the Saints was to care for, and beautify, the earth (Nibley, pp. 3–29). The belief that the earth could be improved through the efforts of an industrious and dedicated community of Saints was of particular importance as the Church migrated to the arid Great Basin.

The fourth principle advocated frugality and the economic independence of the Saints.

The fifth principle emphasized the importance of unity and cooperation among Church members. Community cooperation allowed them to establish hundreds of settlements in the arid West, based on principles of faith, love, charity, kindness, service, and sharing one another’s burdens.

**Settlement of the Intermountain West.**

The communitarian principles established and developed during the formative years of the Church were institutionalized in the settlement of the Great Basin. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Intermountain West is the presence of LDS communities based on these principles. Historically, these settlements ranged through southern Idaho, southwestern Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, California, Arizona, northwestern New Mexico, and southern Colorado. The role of religion was unique in their establishment.

The ward became the main base for organizing cooperation, economic development, spiritual and temporal welfare, and even the administration of justice in the new settlements. Salt Lake City, for example, was divided geographically into wards, with the bishop of each responsible for the well-being of the members within his jurisdiction. In each ward unit, believers unified their efforts in such prosaic activities as building a fence to protect the ward’s newly sown crops, digging irrigation ditches to provide water for the land within the ward’s boundary, caring for widows or the families of men who were absent on missions for the Church, assisting with births, burying the dead, and being involved in every other aspect of life within the ward. Disputes over water or land also were handled by the priesthood within the ward boundaries.

The importance of concerted efforts in LDS communities is still obvious to any observer of these small western towns. Many have only one ward. Thus, the Meadow Utah Ward is also the town of Meadow, Utah. The activities of the ward
are the focus of the social, political, and economic life of the community, involving even the few non-Mormons who reside there. In larger cities and in places where there are fewer Latter-day Saints, the ward remains the focus of activity for believers.

**The Twentieth Century.** The modern LDS community operates in basically the same manner as the earliest communities founded under the direction of Joseph Smith. The fundamental principles of cooperation, equality, beautifying the earth, frugality and independence, unity and cooperation, and stewardship of material possessions are modified only in emphasis, not in principle. The continued reliance on an unpaid leadership allows the majority of ward members to be involved in providing services for the local congregation. From the bishop to the home teachers and visiting teachers who regularly visit each LDS home, all members are invited to become actively involved with the well-being of the entire community. The ward provides not only worship services but friends, economic assistance, and a support group that can be relied upon to provide the assistance any family might need, particularly in a society in which extended family members may not be nearby to provide such assistance. In this way, for many the ward becomes a surrogate family, and the common practice of addressing fellow Saints as “Brother” and “Sister” takes on enhanced and spiritually literal meaning. One belongs in the community of Saints regardless of one’s other affiliations or lack of them; one is welcome in the ward however outcast one may feel elsewhere.

The effectiveness of the individual ward varies from place to place as a function of the ability and commitment of the leaders and members. The extent of unity among ward members and their commitment to the principles of mutual assistance and concern for one another also affect the effectiveness of the individual ward; yet, in general, the wards function as an instant community for the Latter-day Saint wherever he or she may move.

Membership in the LDS community is not restricted to those who have been longtime members of the Church. The Church is actively involved in proselytizing, with nearly 50,000 missionaries throughout the world who introduce prospective members to the ward or branch community, where they are encouraged to attend and become involved. The Church organizations are the structures used to fellowship them into the community.

The ward community strives to operate on what Joseph Smith said was the basis of governance in the Church: teach the members correct principles and let them govern themselves (*JD* 10:57–58). While the principle of equality of resources is not now practiced as it was in the 1830s or 1870s, members of the Church still dedicate their time and talents to the welfare of the community as a whole and are encouraged to tithe and to contribute to the assistance of the poor.

**Life in the Mormon Community.** The importance of the Church in the lives of its members cannot be overstated (see membership). Not only
are its principles and practices a part of everyday life in such matters as dress, food, personal habits, and financial and time management, but the involvement of the entire ward in helping one another also creates a strong bond among ward members. The Church emphasizes the integrity of the family and teaches that a fundamental purpose of the Church is to strengthen the family. In addition to formal and informal family religious observances, Church meetings consist (as of 1990) of a three-hour block of time on Sundays, the focus of which is an hour-long general meeting in which members of the congregation deliver talks on gospel principles and partake of the SACRAMENT of the Lord’s Supper; following the SACRAMENT MEETING, sessions for SUNDAY SCHOOL, PRIESTHOOD, RELIEF SOCIETY, YOUNG WOMEN, and PRIMARY are held. In earlier decades various auxiliary meetings, youth activities, and ward events were held during the week, and the meetinghouse was a bustling center of ward and stake activities and classes nearly every day.

Members also have contact with one another through the HOME TEACHING and VISITING TEACHING programs, through assisting one another as needs arise, and through the other meetings and activities associated with the various Church AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS. Members of wards and stakes may participate in sports activities. The ward sponsors periodic socials, Scouting activities, and cultural events that involve the members of the community, both LDS and others. The cooperation of members of the ward in helping widows, the poor, the ill, the aged, and others with special needs provides additional opportunities for interaction. In combination, the activities and opportunities for service among members of the ward strengthen the ties of the LDS community and enhance their commitment to “love one another,” as Christ commanded (John 13:34–35).

ETERNAL PERSPECTIVES. The attitudes of Latter-day Saints regarding community are influenced by the belief that human relationships are eternal. People are by nature social beings whose lives and feelings are eternally intertwined with those of others. In premortal life, all human beings were born as spirit children in the family of God and therefore became members of an eternal and divine society. In the present life, people can become members of the Church by entering into the new and everlasting covenant of baptism, which binds people together as members of the kingdom of God. The Latter-day Saint view of the kingdoms of glory yet to come anticipates immortal beings living together forever. In other words, heaven includes life with other people and with God. In the highest degree of the celestial glory, a fulness of joy is found in ETERNAL MARRIAGE and familial relationships. Indeed, the nature of GODHOOD itself and the composition of the GODHEAD as three personages eternally united in a common cause demonstrate the divine prototype for personal relationships.

Latter-day Saints have faith that all people will come forth at the day of judgment and continue at various levels thereafter. This expectation gives a permanent and sensitive dimension to friendships, companionships, and virtually all contacts with other people in local and worldwide communities, both religious and civic. The ideal of human existence looks toward the creation of a people of ZION modeled after the city of Enoch and the establishment of a perfected community, a NEW JERUSALEM, under the personal governance of Jesus Christ.

[See also Brotherhood; Sisterhood; Society; Unity.]

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