

disrupt the organization's work flow and impinge on the privacy of individual Church members. The current membership records of the Church maintained by the Finance and Records Department are kept confidential, as are records of voluntary FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS. The Missionary Department keeps the applications it receives from prospective missionaries confidential because they contain private information about the applicants' health and personal life. Similarly, the Personnel Department does not make employee files available.

Despite the general restriction of access to these current records, the Church allows exceptions in extraordinary cases that promise substantial benefits to mankind. For instance, Church officials have provided extensive membership data to cancer researchers and others who have established a legitimate need for such information (Lyon, pp. 129–33).

Most of the noncurrent records of the Church are stored in the Historical Department, one of the world's largest religious archival institutions. Besides housing institutional records, the department also accepts donations of personal historical materials, such as the diaries and papers of individual Church members.

The majority of the thousands of collections in the Historical Department are open and available to most members of the public. Like other major archival institutions, however, the Historical Department restricts access to some of its collections for several legal and ethical reasons. Some other materials are restricted by the terms of their donation. Some of these donor-imposed restrictions eventually expire, making the donated materials more accessible to the public.

The Historical Department restricts some materials to protect the privacy of persons mentioned in them. Experts on archival law have written that "privacy is by far the most pervasive consideration in restricting materials in archives" (Peterson and Peterson, p. 39). The Church's view of privacy embraces more than the legal principle that recognizes persons' privacy until death. "In addition," Dallin H. Oaks explained, "our belief in life after death causes us to extend this principle to respect the privacy of persons who have left mortality but live beyond the veil" (p. 65). Examples of materials restricted for privacy reasons include the records of Church disciplinary proceedings, confidential minutes of Church councils, and journals of

Church officials who record confidential information disclosed to them by Church members.

The Historical Department restricts other records because they are sacred. Examples of such records include transcripts of PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS. Generally, researchers are given access only to their own blessing transcripts, those of their spouses, and their direct-line descendants and deceased ancestors.

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## CONFIRMATION

Confirmation in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a sacred ORDINANCE essential for salvation. This ordinance follows baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and is efficacious only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance. It is administered by the laying on of hands by men having AUTHORITY, one of whom performs the ordinance and blesses the candidate. By this process one becomes a member of the Church and is given the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:37–38; 19:1–7). Baptism and confirmation are administered to persons at least eight years of age, the age of ACCOUNTABILITY (D&C 68:25–27).

The scriptures attest to the administering of the ordinance of confirmation in New Testament times. When Peter and John went to Samaria and found certain disciples who had received John's baptism in water, they "laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:17; see also verses 14–22).

Confirmation may be performed only by those holding the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD. The Book of Mormon records that Jesus "touched with his hand the disciples whom he had chosen, one by one, even until he had touched them all, and spake

unto them as he touched them. [Thereby] he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost" (3 Ne. 18:36–37; Moro. 2:1–3). The Doctrine and Covenants specifies: "And whoso having faith you shall confirm in my church, by the laying on of the hands, and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them" (D&C 33:15).

The ordinance of confirmation is usually performed at a baptismal service or fast and testimony meeting. One or more bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood lay their hands upon the head of the newly baptized person, and the one who is "voice," calling the person by name, says words to this effect: "In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority of the holy Melchizedek Priesthood, I confirm you a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and say unto you, 'receive the Holy Ghost.'" Words of blessing follow as the Spirit of the Lord may dictate, invoking divine guidance, comfort, admonition, instruction, or promise. The initiates are often reminded that through this gift they will discern right from wrong and that the Spirit will be, as it were, a lamp to their feet.

The receiving of the gift of the Holy Ghost may or may not be apparent immediately, although the *right* to receive this gift is conferred at confirmation. The admonition to receive the Holy Ghost is interpreted to include living in a receptive way for the enlightenment of the Spirit. Joseph Smith taught, "No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations. The Holy Ghost is a revelator" (*TPJS*, p. 328). One is admonished likewise to seek earnestly for spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1–11, 31; D&C 46:9–26) and the "fruits of the Spirit," including love, joy, peace, and longsuffering (Gal. 5; Moro. 7:45–48).

The scriptures sometimes refer to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost as the "baptism of fire" (Matt. 3:11; 3 Ne. 19:13; Morm. 7:10). Confirmation begins that process. It is seen as a lifetime quest formally renewed each Sabbath in the partaking of the SACRAMENT, whose prayers end with the plea that those who have taken upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ "may always have his Spirit to be with them" (Moro. 4:3).

Once individuals have been confirmed as members of the Church and have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, they may retain this gift by maintaining a state of worthiness with corrections as needed, through an ongoing process of repentance and discipleship.



A girl is confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Philippines, 1986). Confirmation is a priesthood ordinance performed after baptism, inviting the person to receive the Holy Ghost. Courtesy Floyd Holdman.

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## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

While any member of the Church is free to object to military combat service because of conscience, simply holding membership in the Church in and of itself is not a justification. Church leaders have discouraged conscientious objection in every conflict of the twentieth century. Although it is opposed to war and recognizes that going to war is a very poor alternative means of resolving conflicts, the Church considers it the loyal duty of citizenship for members to answer the call of their various countries for military service.

At the same time, it recognizes the right of individual members to determine for themselves whether their deep, spiritual consciences will allow them to serve in combat or require them to request assignment to alternate service. The