Appendix 8

Letters of the First Presidency

The following letters of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were selected to illustrate some of the many interests of the Presidency in the leadership of the Church. Letters included here are of a regulatory and directive nature and represent only one facet of a wide range of responsibilities and activities.

Examples of other types of documents emanating from the First Presidency are contained in additional Appendices under the titles of Doctrinal Expositions, and Temple Dedicatory Prayers. Members of the First Presidency also deliver formal messages at General Conferences and other conferences, and publish an annual Christmas Message and statements on other occasions when needed.

Letters from the First Presidency carry the official letterhead:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Office of the First Presidency
Salt Lake City, Utah

To conserve space in this Appendix the letterhead does not appear with the individual selections. A brief notation indicates the general subject matter of each letter.

Cub Scout Program Encouraged

December 19, 1960

To the Priesthood, Primary Workers, and Cub Scout Leaders

It is the desire of the First Presidency that Latter-day Saint boys have the full advantage of the Scouting program, including Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and Exploring. It is also the desire of the First Presidency that Latter-day Saint boys have this experience in units sponsored by the Church, under the direction of Church leaders, and according to Church policies and standards. When we do not accept this responsibility but leave it to the school, the community, or another church, we do two things: we place our boys in a situation where their activities may not be conducted according to Church standards; we may be sowing the seeds of Church inactivity at a most impressionable age.

The Cub Scout program was adopted by the Church in 1953. That year 114 Packs were organized. At the close of 1960 there were about 1,075 Packs and 28,000 Cub Scouts.

The Latter-day Saint belief in the eternal nature of the family places special emphasis on the value of this home-centered program.
Cub Scouting is a potent and effective part of the youth program of the Church and must have the enthusiastic support of the priesthood and Primary workers.

We extend congratulations and commendation for the outstanding success of this program to date, and pray that the blessings of the Lord will ever be with you as you continue willingly to give of yourselves for the protection and guidance of our youth.

Sincerely yours,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
David O. McKay
J. Reuben Clark, Jr.
Henry D. Moyle

For the Strength of Youth

June 2, 1965

Preface "For the Strength of Youth"

The general officers of the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Associations, together with the Brigham Young University and the Church School System and a large group of representative youth of the Church, have prepared an excellent treatise on Latter-day Saint standards and entitled it “For the Strength of Youth,” with sub-titles on Dress, Manners, Dating, Dancing, and Clean Living.

We wish to endorse what has been here written, commend all responsible for their efforts, and express the hope that all members of the Church, not only the youth, will familiarize themselves with the suggestions herein contained and conform to the regulations set forth.

All rules and regulations, in fact all laws, especially the laws of God, are made for the benefit of the people. It is, of course, of the utmost importance that we become familiar therewith and conform thereto that we may have the blessings which were intended.

Let us never lose sight of the eternal principle enunciated by the Master that while free agency will not be trammeled by our Heavenly Father, conformity to established rules of conduct is a necessary prerequisite to the blessings promised to those who obey and keep his commandments.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
David O. McKay
Hugh B. Brown
N. Eldon Tanner
National Family Week

May 3, 1967

Presidents of Stakes and Bishops of Wards in the United States

Dear Brethren:

The Family Service Association of America has recommended the observance of Family Week, May 7–14. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is pleased to join with all other religious and with civic organizations in the observance of this occasion.

We urge that the true spirit of the home be emphasized in church meetings, in bulletins, by the family home teachers as they visit the homes of the people, and by the families in their home evening gatherings. We cannot emphasize too strongly the need for a concerted effort to strengthen the relationship between husband and wife and parents and children, and the respect that should be maintained for moral, ethical and spiritual values.

Sincerely yours,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
David O. McKay
Hugh B. Brown
N. Eldon Tanner
Joseph Fielding Smith

Home Beautification Encouraged

September 20, 1974

To Stake and Mission Presidents, Bishops, Branch Presidents, and District Presidents

Dear Brethren:

Attached is a statement regarding a cleanup and beautification effort which we ask you to implement immediately.

We suggest that you organize these and other methods of implementation which you feel will be effective:

1. Ask home teachers to stress in their messages to families the need to clean up and beautify their homes and surroundings. . . .

2. Assign elders quorums . . . to clean up and beautify our meetinghouse buildings and grounds. Also, make arrangements for the upkeep of our meetinghouses and grounds so that they are always neat and attractive. Aaronic Priesthood quorum members may be asked to assist in this effort where desired.
3. Encourage Young Adult and Special Interest groups to organize themselves to assist the elderly, the fatherless, and the needy in improving the appearance of their homes and surroundings and in properly maintaining them. . . .

4. Request that Sunday School and Primary teachers, in the course of their lesson presentations, instruct class members in orderliness, in respecting buildings and property generally, in taking care of their belongings, and in keeping them in their proper places.

5. Encourage the leadership of the Relief Society to provide “how to” suggestions to women in keeping with the spirit of this effort. . . .

May the Lord bless you in this and your other leadership responsibilities in building the kingdom of God on earth.

Sincerely yours,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney

American Woman’s Movement

October 7, 1974

To Stake Presidents, Stake Relief Society Presidents

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

We are enclosing a pamphlet containing a copy of the talk given by President Belle S. Spafford at the Lochinvar Club in New York on the subject “The American Woman’s Movement.”

This talk is an excellent presentation of the history of the women’s movement in the United States and the world. It also emphasizes the efforts of the Church to give status to women and to enhance the role of motherhood.

We hope you will take the opportunity in future talks to share with the membership in your stake the pertinent information contained in this pamphlet.

Sincerely,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney
Support for Boy Scout Programs

June 20, 1975

To all Regional Representatives, Stake and Mission Presidents, Bishops, District and Branch Presidents in the United States

Dear Brethren:

For the past 62 years the Church has enjoyed a rewarding relationship with the Boy Scouts of America. The ideals of Scouting fostering citizenship training, physical fitness, and moral integrity, based upon a firm belief in God, are in harmony with the objectives of the Church.

We are pleased to support Scouting in the Church. The attached letter from the Presiding Bishopric is included to give you information regarding a policy change concerning the Church’s relationship with the Venturing and Exploring programs. We urge the support of local priesthood leaders in the Scouting program as explained in the letter from the Presiding Bishopric.

We encourage priesthood leaders to do all possible in strengthening the young men of the Church through the Aaronic Priesthood and the use of the Scouting program.

Sincerely yours,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney

National Bible Week

November 1, 1975

To all Stake and Mission Presidents in the United States

Dear Brethren:

As we approach National Bible Week, November 23–30, we suggest that you ask all bishops and branch presidents under your leadership to read at sacrament meeting the following statement on this observance:

“America continues to be shaken by rising crime, widespread permissiveness, and the breakdown of far too many marriages and homes. “One positive way to combat these destructive forces is to lead our youth into a new appreciation of the scriptures. “In them they will find ways to build greater strengths in the home and in the individual. Also in the scriptures are time-tested keys to a personal happiness which endures."
“We therefore urge Latter-day Saints to fully support National Bible Week, November 23–30.

“Read the scriptures together as a family. Ponder them as individuals. Enjoy the scriptures at Family Home Evenings and otherwise.

“What a treasure of wisdom, inspiration, and practical suggestions for more abundant living are found in our Standard Works: the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price!

‘For my soul delighteth in the scriptures . . . ’ wrote Nephi.

(2 Nephi 4:15)

“Teach your family, beginning with yourself, to love the scriptures, to delight in them, and to realize that in them are the answers to most of the problems besetting this great nation today.”

Encourage our people to turn more to the Lord’s words. All of us so much need them to meet the daily challenges of today’s world.

Sincerely yours,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Spencer W. Kimball

N. Eldon Tanner

Marion G. Romney

Proper Conversion to the Gospel

January 3, 1977

To all Mission Presidents

Dear Brethren:

We are pleased with the great number of stable and sound converts who are coming into the Church, and we extend our highest commendation to you, your missionaries, and all who labor with you. Your devotion, sacrifice, and achievements are deeply appreciated. We hope and pray that through your continued labors, additional worthy and honest truth seekers will receive the blessings of the gospel.

As we begin this new year of missionary efforts, we might review the revealed requirements that our Heavenly Father’s children should attain to qualify for baptism:

All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the Church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into His Church. (D&C 20:37)
As part of the necessary preparation for baptism, investigators should come to a knowledge of Christ and the first principles of the gospel; they should have attended Church meetings and should feel a unity and oneness with Church members; and they should desire to love and serve God with all their hearts.

New members should be carefully fellowshipped and involved in suitable activity and service in Church programs to encourage their continued growth and understanding of the gospel.

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless and prosper you, your missionaries, and all those who labor with you, that the great harvest now underway will continue, all to the honor and glory of His name.

Sincerely,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney

Fast Day and Donation to the Needy of Africa

January 11, 1985

To General Authorities, Regional Representatives, Stake Presidents, Bishops and Branch Presidents in the United States and Canada

Dear Brethren:

People throughout the world have been touched by the portrayal in the media of the plight of many thousands of starving people in Africa. There are others in similar circumstances in other areas. We have sent funds to assist those in need. We now feel that our people would like to participate more extensively in the great humanitarian effort to assist those in Ethiopia, other areas of Africa, and perhaps in other parts of the world.

The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve have accordingly determined that Sunday, January 27, should be designated as a special fast day when our people will be invited to refrain from partaking of two meals and contribute the equivalent value, or more, to the Church to assist those in need. All fast offering funds contributed on this day will be dedicated for the use of the victims of famine and other causes resulting in hunger and privation among people of Africa, and possibly in some other areas. They will be placed through agencies of unquestioned integrity.

The regular February fast day will be held on the first Sunday of the month as usual and funds contributed on that day will be used in the customary way to assist those in need in the Church. We repeat, however, that all funds contributed on January 27 will be earmarked particularly to assist the hungry and needy in distressed areas regardless of Church membership.
We shall appreciate your advising the people of your wards and stakes accordingly. This letter may be read in the Sacrament meetings of all wards and branches. We are confident that there will be a great outpouring from this effort.

Sincerely, your brethren,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
Spencer W. Kimball
Marion G. Romney
Gordon B. Hinckley

National Day of Fasting To Be Observed

November 15, 1985

To Area Presidencies in the United States

Dear Brethren:

Attached is a letter to priesthood leaders outlining the First Presidency’s desire to have Church members participate in a National Day of Fasting and prayer for hunger relief on Sunday, November 24, 1985, as declared by Congress and the President of the United States. This letter will be sent from Church headquarters today.

Priesthood leaders should be advised that—

1. Sunday, November 24, has been designated as a National Day of Fasting and prayer for hunger relief.

2. The First Presidency is encouraging Church members to join in this special day by fasting two meals on November 24 and contributing the equivalent value, or more, to hunger relief. It will be administered to the needy regardless of their church membership.

3. Instructions for forwarding contributions to Church headquarters are in the mail and will be received by priesthood leaders on November 18 or 19.

Thank you for your assistance in this very special undertaking.

Sincerely your brethren,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
Ezra Taft Benson
Gordon B. Hinckley
Thomas S. Monson
An Invitation to Come Back

December 23, 1985

To: All Stake Presidents

Dear Brethren:

There are members of the Church who have become inactive, or who have been disciplined, or who otherwise have become alienated from the Church. At this time of the year it is important that we reach out to all such persons to encourage them to return to full activity and thereby to enjoy all the blessings the Church affords.

You will find the enclosed statement from the First Presidency which was published in the December 22 issue of the Church News which elaborates on this theme. We request that you make copies of this statement available to all bishops and that you ask them to read the statement at a sacrament meeting. At that time the bishops should also encourage the members of the Church in attendance to reach out and to endeavor to reactivate those who may have become alienated.

Sincerely your brethren,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
Ezra Taft Benson
Gordon B. Hinckley
Thomas S. Monson

December 25, 1985

AN INVITATION

FROM THE FIRST PRESIDENCY OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Come back, Come back and

feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again

the sweet and satisfying fruits of

fellowship with the Saints.

We rejoice in the blessings that come of membership and activity in this Church whose head is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. In deep sincerity we express our love and gratitude for our brethren and sisters everywhere.

We are aware of some who are less active, of others who have become critical and are prone to find fault, and of those who have been disfellowshipped or excommunicated because of serious transgressions.
To all such we reach out in love. The Lord said: “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.” (D&C 64:10)

We encourage members to forgive those who may have wronged them. To those who have ceased activity and to those who have become critical, we say, “Come back. Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints.”

We are confident that many have longed to return, but have felt awkward about doing so. We assure you that you will find open arms to receive you and willing hands to assist you.

We know there are many who carry heavy burdens of guilt and bitterness. To such we say, “Set them aside and give heed to the words of the Savior, who gave His life for the sins of all. ‘Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

“‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“‘For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’” (Matt. 11:28–30)

We plead with you. We pray for you. We invite and welcome you with love and appreciation.

Sincerely your brethren,

Ezra Taft Benson
Gordon B. Hinckley
Thomas S. Monson

Political Neutrality and Non-Use of Church Buildings

June 9, 1988

To General Authorities and the following priesthood leaders in the United States: Regional Representatives; Stake, Mission and District Presidents; Bishops; and Branch Presidents

Dear Brethren:

Political Neutrality (To be read in sacrament meeting.)

In this election year, we reiterate the long-standing policy of the Church of strict political neutrality, of not endorsing political candidates or parties in elections, and of not using Church facilities for political purposes, including voter registration.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not favor one political party over another. We have no candidates for political office and we do not undertake to tell people how to vote.
We do urge all voters to involve themselves in the political process and to study carefully and prayerfully candidates’ positions on issues and to vote for those who will most nearly carry out their views of government and its role.

The use of branch, ward, or stake premises, chapels or other Church facilities or equipment in any way for voter registration or political campaign purpose is contrary to our counsel and advice. This stricture applies to speech-making, class discussion, fund-raising, or preparation or distribution of campaign literature. Church directories or mailing lists should not be made available for any purpose to candidates for distribution of campaign literature or fund solicitation or to those involved in voter registration.

Those who attempt to use Church meetings or facilities or equipment to further their own or another’s political ambitions injure their own cause and do the Church a disservice. We appeal, therefore, to all candidates for public office to take notice of this instruction and to conduct their campaigns in strict compliance with this requirement pertaining to use of Church facilities, equipment, meetings and membership lists.

We also call on all political candidates who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints neither to state nor imply the endorsement of their candidacy by the Church or its leaders.

Sincerely your brethren,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
Ezra Taft Benson
Gordon B. Hinckley
Thomas S. Monson