

Introduction

In early 2017, the salary/stipend amount of LDS General Authorities (GAs) [was leaked](#). The Church owned [Deseret News](#) stated:

The church long has been transparent about providing living allowances to General Authorities

While technically accurate (the practice of compensating GAs *was* disclosed in 1985 in the male-only Priesthood session of General Conference), the question remains as to how broadly transparent the LDS Church has been with leadership compensation. How often are members or journalists led to believe that the Church pays no one, and how often is GA compensation explicitly mentioned?

This document seeks to establish the extent to which the LDS Church has been transparent in providing living allowances to General Authorities. First, I present every statement made by the Church or leaders that seems relevant to perceptions about General Authority living allowances. Second, I conduct several searches on lds.org using relevant phrases to determine the extent to which the search results provide transparency. Next, I examine a series of linked LDS Newsroom articles discussing the LDS Church's unpaid clergy to show the extent to which, in practice, the LDS Church is transparent with GA compensation. Finally, I reference anecdotes demonstrating that members themselves frequently taught that no one (including the General Authorities) were paid.

Statements by LDS leaders and official sources

Explanation *after* the salary/stipend leak

After the salary/stipend leak occurred

General authorities leave their careers when they are called into full-time church service. When they do so, they focus all of their time on serving the church and are given a living allowance. The living allowance is uniform for all general authorities [including First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, First and Second Quorums of the Seventy and Presiding Bishopric].

—Eric Hawkins, Senior Manager, Media Relations, LDS Church Public Affairs Department, [January 9, 2017 PR Statement](#)

Clearly explain living allowance for all General Authorities (pre-leak)

These clearly explain that all General Authorities are given a living allowance.

Note that the following statement was given in the Priesthood Session of General Conference which is not attended by women.

I should like to add, parenthetically for your information that the living allowances given the General Authorities, which are very modest in comparison with executive compensation in industry and the professions, come from this business income and not from the tithing of the people.

—Gordon B. Hinckley, October 1985 General Conference. [“Questions and Answers”](#)

Unlike local leaders, who maintain their normal vocations while serving in Church assignments, General Authorities set aside their careers to devote their full time to the ministry of their office. The living allowance given General Authorities rarely if ever equals the earnings they sacrifice to serve full-time in the Church.

—Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 1992, pg 539. [“General Authorities”](#) (also explained in [“Financial Contributions, pg 510”](#))

The following three statements are from the seminary manual copyrighted in 2013 and published in 2014. One is directly accessible to home study seminary students while the other two statements are from the teacher’s manual.

In these verses, reference is made to the bishop and his counselors receiving “a just remuneration for” their services. In our day, this refers specifically to General Authorities, mission presidents, and temple presidents who are required to give up their livelihoods to serve full time in the Church. These individuals receive a modest living allowance sufficient to support them and their immediate families during their time of service.

—Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Seminary Teacher Manual. [Lesson 49: Doctrine and Covenants 42:43–93](#)

After they report, explain that General Authorities give up their livelihoods to serve full-time, so they receive a modest living allowance—enough for them to support themselves and their families. This allowance comes from the Church’s corporate funds, not from tithing funds.

—Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Seminary Teacher Manual. [Lesson 75: Doctrine and Covenants 69–71. Supplemental Teaching Idea](#)

Doctrine and Covenants 70:5–18 teaches that the men entrusted to be stewards over the revelations and commandments were to make the printing and distribution of Church publications their employment. In our day, General Authorities of the Church give up their livelihoods to serve full-time, so they receive a modest living allowance—enough for them to support themselves and their families. Why is it appropriate for Church leaders who are called to full-time service to receive compensation for their needs?

—Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Study Guide for Home-Study Seminary Students. [Unit 15: Day 4, Doctrine and Covenants 69–71](#)

Give impression *all* are unpaid

As noted by reddit user curious_mormon, many of these statements are particularly problematic since the person making them was receiving a stipend at the time they made the statement.

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there is no paid ministry, no professional clergy, as is common in other churches.

—Boyd K. Packer, March 23, 1965, BYU Speeches of the Year, reprinted in September 1979 Ensign. “[Follow the Brethren](#)”

And the fact that faithful members of the Church do all these things is one of the great evidences of the divinity of the work. . . . Where [else] is there so much unpaid teaching and church administration? In the true church we neither preach for hire nor divine for money. We follow the pattern of Paul and make the gospel of Christ without charge, lest we abuse or misuse the power the Lord has given us. Freely we have received and freely we give, for salvation is free.

—Elder Bruce R. McConkie, General Conference, April 1975. “[Obedience, Consecration, and Sacrifice](#)”

But another reason for this change [lifestyle change experienced by new converts] is their involvement in Church activities. Inasmuch as there is no paid ministry in the Church, service opportunities are available to men, women, and children of all ages.

—New Era March, 1977. [Q&A: Questions and Answers](#)

Well, you see, we’re Mormons, and we don’t have paid clergy; so each Sunday a family from the congregation is asked to put on a part of the program. That’s why we’re in such a hurry!

—Ensign, 1977. [Mirthright](#) (fictional, unsigned story)

Some of these things will have an all-too-familiar ring to many Latter-day Saints. And perhaps this is inevitable in a church where we all teach each other instead of relying on a paid clergy of professional elocutionists.

—Thomas W. Ladanye, Ensign, January 1978. “[The Six Best Talks I Ever Heard](#)”

They [Joseph’s early church] had no paid ministry, believed that every believer received divine help in understanding the word of God, . . .

—De Lamar Jensen, Ensign, September 1978. “[Seventeen Centuries of Christianity](#)”

I am persuaded that one of the reasons our Church is designed differently from others, without a paid clergy, is that the Lord knows that only through service can we learn the most important virtues.

—Carlfred B. Broderick, Ensign, July 1979. “[Midlife Report](#)”

It is apparent from these titles that Elder Hyde focuses his attention on the ordinances of the priesthood. Furthermore, where he is not discussing these ordinances themselves, Elder Hyde considers items closely related to them, such as the absence of paid ministry in the Church, the proper age at which to baptize children, prayer, and the Sabbath day.

—Welch and Whittaker, Ensign, September 1979. “[‘We Believe. . .’: Development of the Articles of Faith](#)”

Note, this manual is in current use as of 2017.

Even Paul and his ministerial associates, who were in fact entitled to temporal help from the saints, chose to set an example of self-support. There are perils in a paid ministry. (McConkie, DNTC, 3:67)

—The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles, 1979. [Chapter 33: The Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ](#)

Consider these additional aspects of the restored Church: a great women’s program. . . ; an unpaid clergy (‘freely ye have received, freely give’ [Matt. 10:8]) ; teachings that stress the redeeming and positive in life; and an extensive welfare program to assist the poor and needy in dignity and love. The list goes on and on.

—Elder Hugh W. Pinnock, General Conference, April 1980. “[The Gospel Restored](#)”

No one—husband, wife, children, or church—has claim on the full time of someone else. Children, given their parents’ full-time attention, would be overshadowed and become dependent. The Church, with full-time bishops, would have a paid ministry and become an end in itself rather than a divine organization designed to help perfect the individual children of God.

—Ensign, September 1983. “[The Gift of Knowing](#)” (republished in 1989)

Over the years of my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have greatly appreciated the opportunities for service, for there is no paid ministry.

—Elder Derek A. Cuthbert, General Conference, October 1985. “[What’s the Difference?](#)”

During his remarks at the [June 15, 1996 Berlin] regional conference, President Hinckley mentioned this interview. He noted that he explained to the reporters that among the Church’s distinguishing characteristics are the unpaid lay ministry and the belief in modern revelation.

—Ensign, September 1996. “[News of the Church](#)”

On 6 March [1997], he addressed the largest gathering ever of the Los Angeles World Affairs Council. He discussed the Church’s growth, humanitarian efforts, missionary force, unpaid ministry , and Relief Society and spoke of the benefits of obeying the Word of Wisdom. . . . Later, on

19 March [1997], President Hinckley gave a similar address at the World Forum of Silicon Valley, held in Santa Clara, California.

—Ensign, May 1997. [“News of the Church”](#)

The concept of lay leadership, which involves all of us as active members, provides us with many opportunities to serve and develop.

—Joe J. Christensen, Ensign, March 2001. [The Principle of Presidency](#)

I need not tell you that we have become a very large and complex Church. Our program is so vast and our reach is so extensive that it is difficult to comprehend. We are a Church of lay leadership. What a remarkable and wonderful thing that is. It must ever remain so. It must never move in the direction of an extensive paid ministry.

—President Gordon B. Hinckley, General Conference, October 2002. [“To Men of the Priesthood”](#)

Serve in the Church whenever you are called. This Church has the pattern of lay leadership, where every person has a calling in the kingdom.

—Earl C. Tingey, Ensign, October 2004. [Establishing Eternal Patterns](#)

Soon after baptism new members receive from priesthood leaders the blessing of a responsibility to help in the Church. This is referred to as a calling. All of the work in the Church is voluntary. No one is paid for such service.

—Preach My Gospel, 2005. [Lesson 5: Laws and Ordinances](#)

The Lord in His infinite wisdom has designed His Church to operate with a lay ministry.

—M. Russell Ballard, General Conference, October 2006. [O Be Wise](#)

I answered that the Church is not wealthy but that we follow the ancient biblical principle of tithing, which principle is reemphasized in our modern scripture. I explained also that our Church has no paid ministry and indicated that these were two reasons why we were able to build the buildings then under way, including the beautiful temple at Freiberg. Minister Gysi was most impressed with the information I presented. . . The opportunity to declare a truth may come when we least expect it. Let us be prepared.

—President Thomas S. Monson, General Conference April 2006. [“Our Sacred Priesthood Trust”](#)

Share unique truths. When investigators come to church for the first time, they are excited to learn about the Church. Learning that the Church has an unpaid ministry or that living oracles guide the members is often surprising to investigators. ‘But keep the information simple’ the

lawyer observed. ‘Intricate explanations and deep doctrine only confuse investigators.’

—Dale M. Valentine, Ensign, September 2008. [“Coming to Church, Becoming Converted”](#)

Personal sacrifice is vital to the religious faith of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members volunteer their time to serve in various positions in tens of thousands of congregations throughout the world. Their service is critical at the local level because the Church has no full-time paid clergy .

—Mormon Newsroom September 3, 2009. [“The Church’s Unpaid Clergy”](#)

We have no professionally trained and salaried clergy in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

—Dallin H. Oaks, General Conference, April 2012. [Sacrifice](#)

Because there is no paid ministry, almost every churchgoer has a responsibility.

—Mormon Newsroom 2012. [Why Mormons Make Good Neighbors](#)

Why does the Church have unpaid clergy? From the beginning, the Lord has called His disciples from among ordinary people with diverse backgrounds. They served out of love for the Lord and for others. In the Book of Mormon, for instance, the prophet Alma chose priesthood leaders and “commanded them . . . [to] labor with their own hands for their support. “And the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support; but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God” (Mosiah 18:24, 26; see also 2 Nephi 26:29–31; Articles of Faith 1:5). Likewise in our day, a call to serve gives us the opportunity to help others and to develop and share our talents and spiritual gifts. We are amply repaid for our service by blessings from the Lord.

—Ensign July, 2013. [Whom the Lord Calls He Qualifies](#)

This mutual commitment to Church service was tested again and again as President Monson was called to numerous lay leadership positions and asked to take a leave of absence from his executive position at the Deseret News to move his family to Toronto, Canada, where he served as the president of the Canadian Mission for three years.

—Mormon Newsroom (undated). [President Thomas S. Monson: On the Lord’s Errand](#)

Since we do not have a paid clergy, most of our applicants will meet this requirement by having sufficient practical Church leadership experience, especially if they have served a mission.

—Military Relations and Chaplain Services (undated). [Military Chaplains](#)

Modest allowance for Mission Presidents

These quotes indicate that a Mission President receives a modest living allowance.

The interruption to professional employment can in some cases mean financial loss. While the Church provides mission presidents with a minimal living allowance, the couples usually have the financial means to supplement that allowance with their own funds.

—Liahona December, 2011. [New Mission Presidents Blessed for Exercise of Faith](#)

“Then you must be acquainted with Martin Zachreson, who is mission president in Southern California for the Mormon Church.” “Yes,” he said. “I wondered why he would leave the position of chairman of the board of a successful bank to serve as a mission president for a mere living allowance.”

—Royden G. Derrick BYU Speeches May 15, 1979. [The True Value System](#)

The calling is not a regular remunerative position,. . . The family involved gives of its time and energies without salary, though there is a modest allowance for living expenses.

—Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 1992, pg 914. [“Mission President”](#)

No local paid clergy

These statements clearly indicate local clergy are unpaid.

Because we have no paid local clergy in our worldwide congregations, our members perform the work of ministry themselves.

—President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, General Conference October 2013. [“Come, Join with Us”](#)

Technically correct but might be construed as *all* leaders unpaid

These make the appropriate technical distinction, but they might be taken to mean that all clergy are unpaid.

Elder Monson’s Church callings have included stake Young Men president, bishop, high councilor, stake president, and stake mission president. “Our lay leadership is one of the great things about the Church,” he says

—Mormon Newsroom, 1998. [News of the Church](#)

An unpaid clergy leading a congregation that supported their church through the payment of tithes seemed to Teahumanu much more Christlike than what he saw in other churches. “Christ’s service was free,” he observes. “So why shouldn’t the service of His servants also be free?”

—R. Val Johnson, Ensign August 1999. [Islands of Light](#)

We are a Church of lay leadership. What a remarkable and wonderful thing that is. It must never move in the direction of an extensive paid ministry.

—President Gordon B. Hinkley, General Conference, October 2002. [To Men of the Priesthood](#)

Again, the organization is unique and different from that of traditional Christianity. It is largely operated by a lay ministry. Voluntary service is its genius. As it has grown and spread abroad, thousands upon thousands of faithful and able men have directed its efforts.

—President Gordon B. Hinckley, General Conference, October 2007. [The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain](#)

Members volunteer their time to serve in various positions in tens of thousands of congregations throughout the world. Their service is critical at the local level because the Church has no full-time paid clergy.

—Mormon Newsroom blog, September 2009. [The Church's Unpaid Clergy](#)

One of the practices that distinguishes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that of having lay shepherds. We have no paid clergy in the wards, branches, stakes, and districts of the Church; rather, the members themselves minister to each other.

—Daniel L. Johnson, General Conference, October 2009. [Me? A Shepherd in Israel?](#)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will issue a new administrative handbook to hundreds of thousands of its lay leaders in a worldwide leadership training meeting tomorrow. . . . The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints differs markedly from most other major churches in its absence of full-time paid clergy at the congregational level

—Mormon Newsroom, November 2010. [Church Leaders to Release New Administrative Handbook](#)

In a church with lay leadership, the work of the individual congregations depends wholly on the volunteer efforts of the local members

—Mormon Newsroom, August 2012. [Mormon Lay Ministry: An Opportunity to Serve](#)

He chose Peter, a fisherman, and Matthew, a tax collector, and later Paul, a tentmaker. Each was chosen from the rank and file—in essence, it was a lay ministry.

—Tad R. Callister, CES Devotional, January 2014. [What Is the Blueprint of Christ's Church?](#)

The following article, “intended to help journalists, opinion leaders and the public better understand the structure of local ministration” talks explicitly about unpaid local

clergy and directs visitors to other articles on General Authorities; however, those articles do not mention GA living allowances.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints functions in large measure because of the unpaid volunteer ministry of its members. In fact, this lay ministry is one of the Church's most defining characteristics. In thousands of local congregations...

—Mormon Newsroom (undated). [Lay Leadership: Volunteer Ministry of the Church](#)

The local congregational leader for Latter-day Saints is the bishop (or branch president, for smaller congregations). A bishop holds the priesthood and is ordained to the office of bishop by a more senior Church leader. He earns his own living and receives no pay of any kind for his service in the Church.

—Mormon Newsroom (undated). [Lay Priesthood](#)

lds.org search results

I performed searches of various terms relevant to General Authority living allowances to see how widely and in what manner the Church disburses information on GA allowances.

Searches were performed in the lds.org search bar on 2017-03-09 and 2017-03-10

- **“living allowance” or “living allowances”** — 5 distinct sources: 1) The D&C and Church History Seminary Teacher Manual [two quotes] 2) The home study lesson manual, 3) the quote about new mission presidents (mission presidents), and 4) the story in a BYU speech by Derrick (mission presidents). 5) Questions and Answers (living allowance given the GAs)
- **“living stipend”** — zero hits related to GA allowances.
- **“unpaid clergy”** — 4 distinct and relevant results: 1) “Islands of Light” (technical distinction; might be construed incorrectly), 2) “Whom the Lord Calls He Qualifies” (gives impression all are unpaid), 3) “The Gospel Restored” (gives impression all are unpaid), 4) “Bishop” Mormon Newsroom (“this position is unpaid”)
- **“no paid ministry”** — 5 distinct and relevant results: 1) 1977 New Era (gives impression all unpaid) 2) “Follow the Brethren” (gives impression all unpaid), 3) “What’s the Difference?” (gives impression all unpaid), 4) “Our Sacred Priesthood Trust” (gives impression all unpaid) 5) “Why Mormons Make Good Neighbors” (gives impression all unpaid)

Summary

From a search of the 4 phrases shown above, we can sum up the relative disbursement of these ideas.

- **Two** sources (if we group the related seminary manual quotes) clearly indicate that all General Authorities receive a “modest living allowance” (note that one was in 1985 in a priesthood session and the quotes in the seminary manuals are from the teacher manual or home-study manual and published in 2014).
- **Two** sources indicate that a Mission President receives a modest allowance.
- **Five** distinct sources give the impression that all leaders in the Church are unpaid.
- **One** makes the proper technical distinction about local leaders salaries but may also be mis-construed that all leaders are unpaid.
- **One** clearly indicates that a Bishop is unpaid.

LDS Newsroom obfuscation

Statements on the LDS Newsroom about the lay, unpaid ministry appear to be carefully worded so as to lead readers unfamiliar with the compensation of General Authorities to mistakenly assume that LDS General Authorities are unpaid.¹

When visiting the page [The Church’s Unpaid Clergy](#) we find this nominally accurate—but somewhat misleading—verbiage:

[members’] service is critical at the local level because the Church has no full-time paid clergy.

This phrase is interesting because it *begins* with the qualifying condition that “service is critical at the local level” but it ends with the all-inclusive and leading phrase “because the Church has no full-time paid clergy.”

Later, the article states:

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Church’s Quorum of Twelve Apostles spoke on the concept of an unpaid volunteer ministry:

“The Lord in His infinite wisdom has designed His Church to operate with a lay ministry. That means we have been charged to watch over one another and to serve one another. . . .”

If we click on the link “[no] full-time paid clergy” we find [an article on Lay Priesthood](#) where we learn the “local congregational leader. . . earns his own living and receives no pay of any kind for his service in the Church.” Below that, we find a link to the article [Lay Leadership: Volunteer Ministry of the Church](#). This article is “intended to help journalists, opinion leaders and the public better understand the structure of local ministration and leadership within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” and includes a very nice infographic entitled “Lay Leadership: Volunteer Ministry of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” summarizing duties of the Stake Presidency on down to ward auxiliaries and individuals. The article states:

¹All pages retrieved in the LDS Newsroom analysis were last retrieved September 2, 2017.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints functions in large measure because of the unpaid volunteer ministry of its members. In fact, this lay ministry is one of the Church’s most defining characteristics.

The end of the article has a link to learn more about global general authorities:

The Church also has global general authorities and general auxiliary leaders. Read more about their various offices and responsibilities.

Clicking on that link takes the reader to [a bulleted list of links to visit information pages of various General Authority and Auxiliary offices](#). Working through all 12 links provided and searching for the phrases “stipend”, “allowance”, “paid”, “compensated”, or “salary” yields no results—these pages completely avoid the topic of compensation. So, whether deliberately or through oversight, the LDS Newsroom:

- states that the LDS Church “has no full-time paid clergy”
- quotes Elder Ballard saying “The Lord . . . has designed His Church to operate with a lay ministry”
- and states that the Church “functions in large measure because of the unpaid volunteer ministry of its members”

but it never divulges that global leadership receives a significant “allowance” associated with their service. The qualifier “local” is sometimes used, but never in a manner to exclude the possibility that GAs are paid. A member or journalist who is unaware of GA allowances would not likely conclude that GAs are paid based on their traversal of these pages—many of which are dedicated exclusively to the topic of (un-)paid clergy.

Member teachings and beliefs

[Represented through ~900 mormon.org member profiles containing an answer to the question “Why don’t Mormons have paid clergy?” and a few other off-hand anecdotes, for example online chats with missionaries]

Discussion

[need to highlight quotes that are directly contradictory; need to present percentages]

[initial discussion, needs work] Given a member’s likely access to source material (i.e., most members will either not have been exposed to or will not remember an off-hand statement from their seminary teacher; only males older than 44 years old would have been present in the 1985 Priesthood Session), I conclude that in the past 30 years, a member was more likely to stumble on material suggesting all leaders are unpaid than material suggesting they all are paid. Still, once a person understands that GAs are given a living allowance then all other statements will likely be interpreted in that light, and this makes the analysis more complex and suggests that even with limited statements indicating a living allowance, many members were likely aware of

the living allowance. Still, it stands to reason that a substantial number of members were not aware that all General Authorities are given a salary/stipend.

Conclusions

Survey data of individuals in the U.S. and in other countries would be helpful to better understand the percentage of members who know that GAs receive a living allowance.

[other conclusions]

Attribution: besides searching lds.org, many quotes were compiled from [IntellectualP-reserve](#), [this post by ___Shawn](#), and especially [this post by curious_mormon](#).