

### 3.

## Priesthood Principles

### 3.0

### Introduction

The priesthood is the authority and power of God. It has always existed and will continue to exist without end (see Alma 13:7–8; Doctrine and Covenants 84:17–18). Through the priesthood, Heavenly Father accomplishes His work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). God grants authority and power to His sons and daughters on earth to help carry out this work (see chapter 1).

### 3.1

### Restoration of the Priesthood

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only organization on earth with priesthood authority. The Prophet Joseph Smith received the Aaronic Priesthood and its keys from John the Baptist (see Doctrine and Covenants 13:1). He received the Melchizedek Priesthood and its keys from the Apostles Peter, James, and John (see Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13).

In the Kirtland Temple, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and committed to him the further authority necessary to accomplish God’s work in the latter days (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:11–16).

- Moses committed the keys of the gathering of Israel (see Guide to the Scriptures, “Israel”).
- Elias committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham. This includes the restoration of the Abrahamic covenant (see Abraham 2:9–11; Guide to the Scriptures, “Abrahamic Covenant”).
- Elijah committed the keys of the sealing power (see Guide to the Scriptures, “Seal, Sealing”). These keys provide the authority that allows ordinances performed on earth to be binding in the next life (see Doctrine and Covenants 128:9–10).

Each member of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles holds all these priesthood keys today. Only the President of the Church, who is the senior Apostle, is authorized to exercise all these keys. These leaders call and authorize other Church members to use God’s priesthood authority and power to assist in the work of salvation and exaltation.

For information about priesthood keys, see 3.4.1.

### 3.2

## Blessings of the Priesthood

Through covenants and priesthood ordinances, God makes great blessings available to all His children. These blessings include:

- Baptism and membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- The gift of the Holy Ghost.
- Partaking of the sacrament.
- Authority and power to serve in Church callings and assignments.
- Receiving patriarchal blessings and other priesthood blessings of healing, comfort, and guidance.
- Being endowed with God's power in the temple.
- Being sealed to one's family members for eternity.
- The promise of eternal life.

God's children can receive these blessings of the priesthood and experience great joy as they live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 3.3

## Melchizedek Priesthood and Aaronic Priesthood

In the Church, the priesthood has two parts: the Melchizedek Priesthood and the Aaronic Priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:1).

#### 3.3.1

### **Melchizedek Priesthood**

The Melchizedek Priesthood is “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:3). It is the power by which the sons and daughters of God can become like Him (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21; 132:19–20).

“The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency.” It has “power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:8). Through this authority, Church leaders direct and administer all the spiritual work of the Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:18). “All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:5).

The President of the Church is the presiding high priest over the Melchizedek Priesthood (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:65–67). The stake president is the presiding high priest in the stake (see Doctrine

and Covenants 107:8, 10; see also chapter 6 in this handbook). The bishop is the presiding high priest in the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:17; see also chapter 7 in this handbook).

For information about the offices and responsibilities of the Melchizedek Priesthood, see 8.1.

### 3.3.2

#### **Aaronic Priesthood**

The Aaronic Priesthood is “an appendage to ... the Melchizedek Priesthood” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:14). It includes the keys of:

- The ministering of angels.
- The gospel of repentance.
- Administering in outward ordinances, including baptism for the remission of sins.

(See Doctrine and Covenants 13:1; 84:26–27; 107:20.)

The bishop is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:15).

For information about the offices and responsibilities of the Aaronic Priesthood, see 10.1.3.

### 3.4

## Priesthood Authority

Priesthood authority is the authorization to represent God and act in His name. In the Church, all priesthood authority is exercised under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys.

Worthy male Church members receive priesthood authority through priesthood conferral and ordination to priesthood offices. All Church members can exercise delegated authority as they are set apart or assigned to assist in accomplishing God’s work. Members are accountable to God and to those He has appointed to preside for how they exercise His authority (see 3.4.4).

### 3.4.1

#### **Priesthood Keys**

Priesthood keys are the authority to direct the use of the priesthood on behalf of God’s children. The use of all priesthood authority in the Church is directed by those who hold priesthood keys (see Doctrine and Covenants 65:2).

### 3.4.1.1

#### **Those Who Hold Priesthood Keys**

Jesus Christ holds all the keys of the priesthood. Under His direction, priesthood keys are given to men to use in specific callings for

accomplishing God's work, as explained below.

The Lord has conferred on each of His Apostles all the keys that pertain to the kingdom of God on earth. The senior living Apostle, the President of the Church, is the only person on earth authorized to exercise all of those priesthood keys (see Doctrine and Covenants 81:1–2; 107:64–67, 91–92; 132:7).

Under the direction of the President of the Church, priesthood leaders are given keys so they can preside in their areas of responsibility. These leaders include:

- Stake and district presidents.
- Bishops and branch presidents.
- Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidents.
- Temple presidents.
- Mission presidents and missionary training center presidents.
- Church historic site presidents.

These leaders receive priesthood keys when they are set apart to their callings.

Priesthood keys are not given to others, including counselors to local priesthood leaders or presidents of Church organizations. Rather, these leaders are given delegated authority when they are set apart and when they receive assignments under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys. Presidents of Church organizations preside under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys (see 4.2.4).

#### **3.4.1.2**

##### **Order to the Lord's Work**

Priesthood keys ensure that the work of salvation and exaltation is accomplished in an orderly manner (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:11; 132:8). Those who hold priesthood keys direct the Lord's work within their areas of responsibility. They do so in love and righteousness. This presiding authority is valid only for the specific responsibilities of the leader's calling. When priesthood leaders are released from their callings, they no longer hold these keys.

All who serve in the Church are set apart or assigned under the direction of one who holds priesthood keys. When members are set apart or assigned, they are authorized by God to serve in His work.

#### **3.4.2**

##### **Priesthood Conferral and Ordination**

Under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys, the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood are conferred on worthy male Church members (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:14–17). After

the appropriate priesthood is conferred, the person is ordained to an office in that priesthood, such as deacon or elder. A priesthood holder exercises the priesthood according to the rights and duties of that office (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:99).

Each man in the Church of Jesus Christ should strive to be worthy to receive and use the Melchizedek Priesthood to serve others. When a man receives this priesthood, he makes a covenant to faithfully fulfill his priesthood responsibilities. He also receives from God an oath, or promise, of eternal blessings (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44; see also Guide to the Scriptures, “Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood”).

For more information about priesthood conferral and ordination, see 8.1.1, 10.6, 18.10, and 38.2.5.

### 3.4.3

#### **Delegation of Priesthood Authority to Serve in the Church**

Priesthood authority to serve in the Church is delegated to members in the following ways:

- By setting apart to a Church calling
- By assignment from presiding Church leaders

#### 3.4.3.1

##### **Setting Apart**

When men and women are set apart under the direction of those who hold priesthood keys, they are given authority from God to act in that calling. When they are released from a calling, they no longer have the authority associated with it.

Some callings are associated with offices and quorums of the priesthood. For example, a man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood may be called as an elders quorum president. When he is set apart by the stake president, he is given priesthood keys, authority, and responsibility to direct the work of the elders quorum (see 3.4.1).

Many other Church callings are not associated with priesthood offices and quorums. But all Church members who are set apart to serve are given divine authority and responsibility to act in their callings. For example:

- A woman who is called and set apart by the bishop as ward Relief Society president is given authority to direct the work of Relief Society in the ward.
- A man or woman who is called and set apart by a member of the bishopric as a Primary teacher is given authority to teach Primary children in the ward.

All who are called and set apart serve under the direction of those who preside over them (see 3.4.1.2).

For more information about setting apart members for Church callings, see 18.11.

#### 3.4.3.2

### Assignment

Presiding Church leaders can delegate authority by assignment. When men and women receive these assignments, they are given authority from God to act. For example:

- The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles delegate authority to Seventies who are assigned to administer areas and to preside at stake conferences.
- Mission presidents delegate authority to male and female missionaries who are assigned to lead and train other missionaries.
- Authority is delegated to Church members to serve as ministering brothers and ministering sisters. This occurs when they are assigned under the bishop's direction by the elders quorum president or Relief Society president.

Authority that is delegated by assignment is limited to the specific responsibilities and duration of the assignment.

For more information about assignment through delegation, see 4.2.5.

#### 3.4.4

### Exercising Priesthood Authority Righteously

Church leaders and members use conferred or delegated priesthood authority to bless the lives of others.

This authority can be used only in righteousness (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:36). It is exercised by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love, and kindness (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42). Leaders counsel with others in a spirit of unity and seek the Lord's will through revelation (see Doctrine and Covenants 41:2). For information about counseling with others, see 4.4.3.

Those who exercise priesthood authority do not force their will on others. They do not use it for selfish purposes. If a person uses it unrighteously, “the heavens withdraw themselves [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved” (Doctrine and Covenants 121:37).

Some Church callings include a responsibility to preside. For information about presiding in the Church, see 4.2.4.

#### 3.5

### Priesthood Power

Priesthood power is the power by which God blesses His children. God's priesthood power flows to all members of the Church—female

and male—as they keep the covenants they have made with Him. Members make these covenants as they receive priesthood ordinances. (See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–20.)

The blessings of priesthood power that members can receive include:

- Guidance for their lives.
- Inspiration to know how to serve family members and others.
- Strength to endure and overcome challenges.
- Gifts of the Spirit to magnify their abilities.
- Revelation to know how to fulfill the work they are ordained, set apart, or assigned to do.
- Help and strength to become more like Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father.

### 3.5.1

#### **Covenants**

A covenant is a sacred promise between God and His children. God gives the conditions for the covenant, and His children agree to obey those conditions. God promises to bless His children as they fulfill the covenant.

Members make covenants with God as they receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation (see 18.1). All who endure to the end in keeping their covenants will receive eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:17–20; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7). Enduring to the end includes exercising faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and repenting each day.

Parents, Church leaders, and others help individuals prepare to make covenants as they receive the ordinances of the gospel. They ensure that the person understands the covenants he or she will make. After a person makes a covenant, they help him or her keep it. (See Mosiah 18:8–11, 23–26.)

### 3.5.2

#### **Ordinances**

An ordinance is a sacred act performed by the authority of the priesthood. Ordinances have always been part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The first ordinances on earth were performed in the days of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 1:28; Moses 6:64–65).

In many ordinances, individuals make covenants with God. Examples include baptism, the sacrament, the endowment, and the marriage sealing ordinance. In other ordinances such as patriarchal blessings or blessings on the sick, individuals do not make covenants, but they do receive guidance and strength to keep covenants.

Ordinances have symbolic meaning that point individuals to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. In the ordinances that include covenants, the

symbolism helps individuals understand the promises they make and the blessings they receive through their faithfulness.

Each ordinance allows individuals to receive rich spiritual blessings. The Lord revealed, “In the ordinances [of the priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:20). Ordinances of salvation and exaltation are essential for eternal life. For more information, see 18.1.

Living individuals receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation for themselves. Where possible, they then return to the temple to perform these ordinances vicariously for those who have died. For more information about performing ordinances for the deceased, see chapter 28.

### 3.6

## The Priesthood and the Home

All Church members who keep their covenants—women, men, and children—are blessed with God’s priesthood power in their homes to strengthen themselves and their families (see 3.5). This power will assist members in doing God’s work of salvation and exaltation in their personal lives and families (see 2.2).

Men who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood can give priesthood blessings to family members to provide direction, healing, and comfort. When needed, Church members can also seek these blessings from extended family members, ministering brothers, or local Church leaders. For more information about priesthood blessings, see 18.13 and 18.14.

For information about presiding in the family, see 2.1.3.