

Pastor Helps for Priesthood Ministry Conversations

Dear Pastor

Like you, we are keenly aware of the continuing need to develop and support priesthood members in their servant ministry. In the many settings where sharing occurs, pastors say that developing leaders and nurturing the well-being of the faith community are among their primary concerns. Because faithful priesthood ministry is critical, the First Presidency and the Priesthood Faithfulness Team are working on updated principles and guidelines to support priesthood ministry. When completed, we will share these with the church.

Recently, President Veazey created a letter of welcome for all newly ordained priesthood. A set of reflection questions to help with understanding gifts for ministry and discovering how best to develop and share these gifts with the faith community accompanies the letter.

Also, a letter to all priesthood members serving in Australia, British Isles, Canada, and the United States announcing principles for faithful priesthood ministry has been sent. This letter also includes the set of reflections questions.

An expectation of both of these letters is for priesthood members to begin a conversation with pastors and other leaders about priesthood ministry. As a pastor, your role in this conversation is important. The following suggested ways to engage in these discussions with priesthood members in your congregation will be helpful.

A website to support the needs of priesthood is available at www.CofChrist.org/priesthood. This site will continue to grow as we add tools for ministry and other information for priesthood members.

Formats for Sharing with Priesthood

Choose one or more formats to suit your needs:

- Meet with all members of the priesthood. As a team of ministers, assess the needs of the faith community and discover how the ministry each person can offer will help address those needs.
- Divide into groups by office or order or based on gifts or interests.
- Meet one-on-one with each priesthood member.
- Gather in a series of meetings or for one extended session.
- Worship together.
- Use the Affirmations and Reflection Questions provided by President Veazey or provide a guide for individual study and reflection. See ideas below.
- Invite superannuated priesthood members and others within the congregation to support and uphold the priesthood in prayer.

The focus of this guide is to aid you in empowering those who have accepted the privilege and responsibilities of ordained ministry. We offer the suggested scriptures and readings as help in equipping priesthood members to magnify their gifts and abilities to build up God's people and strengthen the witness of the church.

Priesthood Members Are Team Members

Ministry is not about individual achievement. Minister serving in the various priesthood offices are a ministry team within the congregation. The pastor is the servant-leader or coach. Each team member (priesthood) has different interests and gifts, even those within the same office. That diversity strengthens the whole community. As we magnify our gifts and abilities, the effectiveness of working together is obvious. The best coaches work with others in sharing the leadership of the team, each one doing what they do best. Thus, you should feel free to delegate these discussions to another leader if needed.

Suggestions for Scripture Reflections:

Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b

Doctrine and Covenants 156:8

Doctrine and Covenants 163:6

Matthew 25

Luke 10:25-37

John 13

John 21

Romans 12:6-8

1 Corinthians 12:7; 8-10; 28-30

Ephesians 3:7

Ephesians 4:1-6; 11-16

1 Peter 4:10

Mosiah 1:49

Reflect Together on the Following Priesthood Scriptural Principles:

1. Priesthood is a sacred covenant one enters with God and the faith community involving the total commitment of one's life.
2. The foundation for priesthood ministry is the wholistic ministry of Jesus Christ—God's Shalom. Jesus modeled the essential balance between spiritual formation, renewal, and ministry to others.
3. God calls disciples to share the peace of Jesus Christ. God entrusts some to responsibilities of priesthood and leadership.
4. Priesthood ministry is a response to the grace and generosity of God.
5. As priesthood share ministry in their office and calling, the faith community experiences the wholistic ministry of Jesus.
6. Priesthood members prepare and extend themselves in the service of God's vision for the blessing and salvation of creation.
7. Priesthood members embody generosity, humility, and integrity.
8. Priesthood members continually seek to magnify their calling.
9. Office-specific ministry may expand as new insights emerge through our encounter with God's revelation.

10. The ultimate responsibility for priesthood faithfulness rests on the individual in response to the needs and expectations of the faith community. The church is accountable to God for supporting, equipping, and empowering priesthood to fulfill their calling for bringing blessings of community.

Reread the commentaries on Doctrine and Covenants 163:6 found on the church's web site, www.CofChrist.org/D&C163, and in the June, July, and August 2008 issues of the *Herald*.

Explore these Passages from *The Priesthood Manual, 2004 edition*

“Ministry also has a universal dimension to it in that all of us who would be disciples of Jesus are called into service...the Christian faith as understood by the Community of Christ invites all members to be ministers. In the Doctrine and Covenants we are told, “All are called according to the gifts of God unto them” (119:8b)... Priesthood is a particular expression of that more universal ministry to which we are all called.” (p. 9)

More important than the question of what one can or can't do is the question of what one *feels called* to do and is willing to accept responsibility for in the life of the church. (p. 11)

Individual Reflection

Ministry happens in and through all dimensions of life: our vocations, community service, friendships, and the church. These added questions may be helpful for you and the priesthood members to consider:

1. How would you describe this period, time, or phase of your life?
2. What significant personal goal you are working on right now?
3. What feeds your soul? How will you integrate and celebrate that into your ministry?
4. When you consider the particular role of your priesthood office, for which types of ministry do you feel you have particular skill or aptitude?
5. What responsibilities of your priesthood office do you most enjoy?
6. In what responsibilities of your office do you feel least prepared to function, or enjoy the least? Where are you stuck, bored, or untested?
7. Describe a meaningful experience in your ministry during this past year.
8. Both “being” and “doing” are important parts of ministry. As you pray about your ministry, reflect as much on “how will I *be*” as on “what should I *do*?”

Gifts for Ministry

Ministry is humble service offered according to the model of Jesus, who calls every disciple to share in ministry for the world. Some disciples are called by God and ordained to priesthood offices to serve the mission of the church in specialized ways. The Holy Spirit gives complementary gifts and abilities to all disciples to equip the body of Christ for its witness in the world.

—We Share, Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs

www.CofChrist.org/discernment/weshare

Encourage priesthood members to complete the Discover and Share Your Gifts Questionnaire found in *Hospitality: Sharing God's Welcome* by Tammy Lindle, published by Herald House and online at www.CofChrist.org/priesthood/gifts.asp.

Hymns for inspiration, meditation, and reflection

Discuss these statements on the ordination hymns found in *Hymns of the Saints*. The statements come from Richard Clothier's book *A Heritage of Hymns* (Herald House).

In the hymn "According to the Gifts That God" (HS 363), Peter Judd wrote the following account of this hymn's creation:

Toward the end of the process of selecting hymns for *Hymns of the Saints*, it became apparent to the committee (of which I was a member) that we needed more hymns that could be used at services in which the sacraments of the church are celebrated. I started thinking of the relationship between the call to priesthood, as represented in the sacrament of ordination, and the call to ministry shared by each member.

I had long found the scripture, "All are called according to the gifts of God unto them" (DC 119:8b), to be particularly meaningful. So I tried to use the words of that scripture to create a hymn text... The last phrase of the first stanza contains some of the words I added that are not in the scripture. They contain what I believe to be the essence of the calling of all who would be disciples: to re-present the Son. The hyphen is important. We are called not just to represent Christ, but to re-present him. (pp. 135–136)

"A Diligent and Grateful Heart" (HS 362) was written during the summer of 1965 by Raymond Gunn while he was on the staff of the church youth music camp.

I became quite ill...(and) began to feel sorry for myself. Then a wonderful feeling came over me and I began to realize that instead of feeling despondent, I should be looking at all of the many blessings the Lord had given me. As I contemplated the wonderful things happening in my life I felt the urge to write my thoughts down in a poetic form. The words flowed very easily because they were an expression of my innermost feelings. It was accepted by the hymnal committee as an ordination hymn, although it was originally written as an expression of thanksgiving for the joy of service. (pp. 134–135)

In "Lord God, We Meet in Jesus' Name" (HS 365) hymn writer Ken McLaughlin says this about creating this hymn:

I have taken very seriously the premise that hymn texts are one of the most important sources of theological instruction in our faith community....this hymn speaks of the gifts given to us through the grace of God, which find their ultimate expression through servant ministry. (pp. 136–137)

Scriptural Meditation

Use the following meditation for a group setting or for personal reflection. The scripture selections are from: Psalm 100:4–5; Joshua 24:14–15; Psalm 89:1–2; 1 Corinthians 4:1–2; Hebrews 10:21–23.

- Reader 1: Give thanks to God! Bless God's name! For Our God is good; God's steadfast love endures forever, and God's faithfulness is to all generations.
- Reader 2: This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly.
- Reader 3: Forever I will sing the wonders of your love, Adonai, proclaiming your faithfulness to all generations! I'll tell them that your love stands firm forever, your fidelity is fixed in the heavens.
- Reader 4: Therefore, we should be regarded as people in service to Christ, as people entrusted with the mysteries of God. The first requirement of those who have been given a trust is faithfulness.
- Reader 5: ... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the One who made the promise is faithful. Let us consider how to spur one another to love and good deeds...encouraging one another...

Moments of Silent Meditation
Sharing by individuals