



## Mission and Tithing

In 1983, the movie *The Right Stuff* opened. It tells the story of the early days of flight test and the beginnings of the space journey. Shortly after its release, I began my career as a flight test engineer, working in the Mojave Desert, where all this history began. This show motivated me to do my best to continue the story of excellence in pushing the boundaries of innovation.

Similarly, as I study our scriptures and history, I am amazed by the faithful, generous disciples who kept Christ's mission alive, transforming the world. This unfolding story of God's restoring purposes motivates me in my discipleship. I want to faithfully continue the story of bringing about God's vision of shalom in the world.

Ironically, these two stories intersect in at least one place: money. A technology adage made famous by the movie is "No bucks, no Buck Rogers." Buck Rogers was a 1920s science-fiction character who traveled in space long before space travel had happened. The idea is that without funding, technological innovations won't happen.

The church's equivalent of this adage might be "No money, no mission." Neither adage is 100 percent accurate, because innovation and

Christ's mission happen through dedication and perseverance, even without significant funding. But there is no question that doing something BIG, requires everyone to work together, combining our time, talent, treasures, and testimonies.

We live in a world hungry for the restoring message of the gospel and experience with Christ's mission. This is why considering the proposal that is now World Conference Resolution 1314 was so important at the 2016 World Conference. "Tithing of time, talent, treasure, and testimony supports local and worldwide ministries in pursuit of Jesus Christ's mission."

Using several tools introduced by the Common Consent Advisory Team ([www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Common-Consent-Advisory-Team-Report.pdf](http://www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Common-Consent-Advisory-Team-Report.pdf)), the church journeyed to define tithing and how it supports Christ's mission. Delegates, members, and leaders listened to diverse perspectives and built consensus around shared values and understandings.

In the January 2016 *Herald*, President Steve Veazey introduced a proposed statement on mission and tithing for the church to consider. It built on the six principles of A Disci-

ple's Generous Response as introduced to the 2002 World Conference. The new definition did not replace these principles.

The church provided feedback about this new definition. Based on this input, the First Presidency and Presiding Bishopric refined the proposal just before World Conference. Then the World Conference selected the refined proposal to consider. The Conference experienced perspectives shared in many ways: as people spoke from the Conference floor, through electronic polling, in small groups, and in many other kinds of written and verbal feedback.

On Thursday evening during Conference, the Presiding Bishopric gathered with bishops from around the world to prayerfully review input. We gave attention to the common and recurring language, themes, and affirmations that had emerged. Based on this listening, this refinement committee presented a newly modified proposal to the Conference.

The approval of Doctrine and Covenants 165 shaped the new proposal. The committee repeatedly heard that the foundational understanding of 165:2 had to be a part of any statement on tithing.

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The committee also heard these recurring themes:

1. God's generosity cannot be separated from God's grace, so when we talk about generosity, it is incomplete without including grace.
2. The literal definition of tithing must be connected to the *spirit of tithing*, which is giving generously to one's true capacity.
3. Tithing is broader than treasure and includes time, talent, and testimony.
4. The call to faithful stewardship is for *all* disciples, not just priesthood.

The refinement committee explained why some input was not included:

1. Some preferred not using the language of stewardship. Stewardship is a word that stands the test of time. It is part of the scripture we just accepted in Section 165:2e. The language and concept of stewardship are still with us.
2. Others questioned the absence of mission centers when describing local and worldwide ministries. Future material will describe how different areas of the church fund mission centers since various methods are used around the world.

3. Many expressed the need to uphold the idea of sharing equally between Local and Worldwide Mission Tithes. Future material will explore this concept from Doctrine and Covenants 162:7d. We do not want to reduce it to a formula or calculation. It is a challenge to all of us to be aware of missional opportunities locally and globally, responding to both as we are able.

Ninety-four percent of the responding delegates accepted the newly refined proposal, and it became WCR 1314 on June 11. Now the real work begins as we live into this understanding of tithing as a spiritual practice. Our response will set the pace for living Christ's mission in the world. May God bless us as we embody the six principles of A Disciple's Generous Response and learn to share tithing as "a spiritual practice that demonstrates willingness to offer *every* dimension of one's life to God" (Doctrine and Covenants 165:2d).

Mission happens when we tithe!



—Stassi D. Cramm  
presiding bishop and First Presidency



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Graceland University is getting a new look this fall, with a visual identity that more clearly signifies the attributes of our tradition and path forward. After months of input from a committee of Gracelanders — including students, alumni, faculty and staff — the finalized new logo will keep the "G" as our visual stronghold and incorporate 1895 to commemorate our historical significance.

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TOGETHER**

emerged as our theme from the strong sense of community at Graceland.