I often am asked, “What’s an evangelist?” I prefer to answer by saying, “Let me tell you who is an evangelist. That may lead to a better understanding of the what.”

An evangelist is Cecil. Amid personal struggles with a changing church and difficulty with releasing former roles as a pastor and district president, Cecil laid his hands on my head to pronounce an evangelist blessing in my 19th year. He provided sacred space for me to hear spoken aloud that I was known and loved deeply by God. In the sound of his voice, I knew there was more to me, more to living, more about my purpose and possibility than I had known before. The blessing, which I still read from time to time, continues to shape me.

An evangelist is Virgilio. He joined the church in Peru in the 1960s. In his youth, he was eager to belong, to learn English, to gain knowledge of scripture, to serve in priesthood. He did all those things. But disappointments came. There were losses. He was marginally active for a few years. In his senior years, however, he is faithful and supportive, providing consistent pastoral presence for individuals, leaders, and the congregation. Virgilio is hospitable and encouraging, a voice of prayerful petition and praise in Community of Christ.

An evangelist is Clarissa. Though small in stature, she towers in empathy. She is an energetic grandmother in western Canada, willing to stand quietly alongside a sister or brother to bear the pain of loss with an embrace and shared tears. She is a spiritual companion who knows the long pilgrimage into the heart of God and is willing to accompany others on faith journeys that take a lifetime—sometimes gently leading, sometimes silently following, sometimes walking hand in hand. She knows when to speak. She knows when to hold the silence essential to encounter with the Spirit and self. She knows how to be patient, expectant. She is a midwife or birth partner of the Spirit in the lives of others.

An evangelist is Helen. She is so refreshing that her presence bathes others in the Spirit of hope and healing. Her faith is that of the child who trusts God implicitly. Her relationship is one of intimacy, akin to Jesus, who spoke to God as “Abba.” Through seasons of loss and pain she knows the meaning of revival and redemption. She draws out the sacredness of each person, even when the sacred is disguised by fear, anger, or ignorance. She affirms people with ease and grace.

What, then, is an evangelist in Community of Christ, and what is she or he called to do and be?

Called by God through the Council of Twelve Apostles, evangelists preach, teach, and embody the good news in congregational and community life. The name given to

Evangelists—Ministers of Blessing

By David R. Brock, presiding evangelist
this priesthood office is a good one. Evangel means "good news." Evangelists are messengers of the good news of God’s nature most fully revealed in Jesus Christ. Evangelists immerse themselves in the teachings of Jesus and the story of his life. Evangelists understand there is no greater joy than revealing the love of God in the lives of people who do not yet see their own sacred, unique, and special place in God’s world.

In 1901, President Joseph Smith III defined patriarch evangelists as evangelical ministers and revivalists; as ministers of blessing (see Doctrine and Covenants 125:3b).

Evangelists are ministers of blessing: “blessed to be a blessing.” Those who are blessed become a blessing to others. Henri Nouwen, in *Life of the Beloved*, expresses it this way:

Claiming your own blessedness always leads to a deep desire to bless others. The characteristic of the blessed ones is that, wherever they go, they always speak words of blessing. It is remarkable how easy it is to bless others, to speak good things to and about them, to call to be blessed. …The voice that calls us the Beloved will give us words to bless others.

The ministry of the evangelist, though expressed in multiple ways, is holistic, enriching the lives of individuals and communities. Five expressions define evangelists as ministers of blessing:

**Apostolic Witness**—One who, by God’s grace, generously shares the freeing and renewing good news of the gospel as a revivalist, value-bearer, and hope-giver to make manifest the Evangel in the life of the church.

...Evangelists preach, teach, and embody the good news in congregational and community life.

ministers who visit congregations as the Spirit requires, comfort the Saints, give counsel and advice to those who seek it, and lay on hands for the con-

forth their beauty and truth, when you yourself are in touch with your own blessedness. The blessed one always blesses. And people want

When an evangelist offers apostolic witness, people experience anew Christ’s claim on their lives. They are disrupted on their journeys, chal-
Evangelists understand there is no greater joy than revealing the love of God in the lives of people who do not yet see their own sacred, unique, and special place in God’s world.

Lenged to reflect, and empowered to see with new eyes. The impact of such witness changes the world in visible ways and promotes the Mission Initiatives of Community of Christ.

**Spiritual Companion**—One who shares the personal practice of spiritual disciplines and invites others into a deep and enriching relationship of spiritual growth in times of need and times of plenty.

A spiritual companion provides and embodies a climate where connection with God and others is as natural as breathing. When our relationship with God continually grows, deepens, and opens us to new understandings, our friendships with others expand, and we prepare ourselves for the role of spiritual companionship.

One evangelical remembers:

As a teenager growing up, [I shared things with] an evangelist. I always felt so comfortable in his presence, as if I could share anything with him, and it would fall on very accepting ears. He never judged me or tried to tell me what to do. I always came away feeling like he saw in me more than I had seen in myself. I felt encouraged and uplifted and somehow pulled higher in his presence.

**Pastoral Presence**—One who is a loving presence among people, especially the congregation; gently leading, praising, encouraging, mentoring, and shepherding on the path of discipleship.

The evangelist as pastoral presence is accessible and ready to help the congregation and its leaders share their lives openly, reflect realistically on circumstances, celebrate joyfully, and choose their own directions. Being a pastoral presence always includes encouraging, challenging, and caring for congregation members and leaders.

Evangelists are key advocates of recent divine counsel:

...Look to the needs of your own congregations, but look also beyond your walls to the far-flung places where the church must go. Each disciple needs a spiritual home. You are called to build that home and care for it, but also to share equally in the outreaching ministries of the
church. In that way the gospel may be sent to other souls also yearning for a spiritual resting place.

—Doctrine and Covenants 162:7d

Teaching Learner—One who through a lifetime of experience and reflection pursues learning and teaching as a spiritual journey, sharing knowledge, discernment, wisdom, and experience with others.

Evangelists help shape church culture through wisdom, love, humor, and a certain way of being still. They can help others release the lesser things of life and consider what is true and lasting. Their work, as Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald S. Miller wrote in From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older, “is to synthesize wisdom from long-life experience and formulate this into a legacy for future generations.”

Living Sanctuary—One who is safety and sanctuary with others and stands with them as they face the injustices of systems and structures that diminish human worth and crush dreams of God’s shalom.

Evangelists are Living Sanctuary in whom people can unreservedly place their trust. Evangelists are a safe harbor from life’s stormy seas. Many wounded souls and suffering people are searching for hope, solace, and sanctuary. Suffering people yearn for someone who will not judge them but will befriend, defend, and understand them.

The Sacrament of Evangelist Blessing

An evangelist blessing is a sacred time and space for persons to come closer to God. It offers guidance, hope, assurance, and insight through conversation and a prayer of blessing by an evangelist. One minister described it as “a prayer for the soul, unique in quality—an organic, living document that grows as one responds to its teachings.”

The evangelist blessing is not a once-in-a-lifetime experience. People can receive a blessing at times of transition and need, such as graduation, marriage, job transfer, serious illness, career change, divorce, or retirement. It also is appropriate when one wants to understand God’s will for new pathways or to meet new challenges. The sacrament is available to members and friends of Community of Christ.

Who, then, is an evangelist? An evangelist is...

• A child, ever conscious of being blessed beyond measure by a God of grace and enduring kindness.
• Flawed, wounded, and unfinished, yet trusting that God can use her or him, even in weakness, to become strength for another.
• Seasoned by years of service in family, church, and community, who knows that despite acquired knowledge and experience, listen-
ing deeply is the most difficult and most effective ministry.
• Sage enough to know that ministry is mostly about learning; that wisdom belongs to the lifelong student—a humble learner who knows there is so much more to know about oneself, creation, another human being, and God.
• So shaped by a vision of the Sacredness of Creation that he or she invites all to experience the Eternal in the present moment, the ineffable and ungraspable in the tangibility of human hands, baked bread, flowing water, or a clay cup filled with grape juice.
• Convicted by the mission of Christ, who knows spiritual formation is essential to proclaiming “release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind... the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18–19).

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. What qualities do you find in common among evangelists you have known?
2. How have they embodied “good news”?
3. Evangelists often feel blessed. Discuss their yearning to bless others.
4. Which Enduring Principles do you see most reflected in evangelists?
5. How does an evangelist, being a World Church minister, relate to “apostolic witness”?
6. How does “blessing” show up in the teacher-learner aspect of evangelists?
7. How do you feel about evangelist blessings being opened to multiple expressions in a person’s life?
8. Explore how evangelists relate to each of the five Mission Initiatives.
9. How do you see evangelists interacting with other priesthood members?
10. If you’ve had an evangelist blessing, review it. What insights does it hold for you?

—Greg Clark
Integrated Communications

David R. Brock, presiding evangelist, was ordained as president of seventy in 1988 and as an apostle in 1992. Previous assignments include the Pacific Mission Field, Southwest USA Mission Field, North Central USA Mission Field, administrator and stewardship commissioner of the Africa Region, assistant to the Council of Twelve, and Southwest Region staff member.
The Temple School course, *Ministry of the Evangelist*, introduces five essential ways of being an evangelist. The course also has, as President Stephen M. Veazey wrote in a letter of counsel in 2007, methods for ordinands to “understand more precisely the spiritual language, attitudes, and behaviors that engender abundant life in the peaceable kingdom of God as revealed by Jesus Christ.”

Although designed to help prepare evangelist ordinands for ordination, it also is useful for seasoned evangelists. All who want to learn about the ministries of an evangelist can take the course.

What is my hope for those who take it? I have specific hopes for ordinands, experienced evangelists, and disciples and seekers.

- I hope *every ordinand* will reflect and see with clarity opportunities for ministry. I hope every ordinand will emerge with conviction and skill to do the ministry of an evangelist. This means leaving former roles and responsibilities to embrace new roles fully. I hope the weight of providing spiritual formation will be balanced by the joy of discovery and growth.

- I hope *experienced evangelists* find refreshment and renewal. I hope they will value the spiritual practices and disciplines in their own lives. I hope they will become spiritual companions who serve members, seekers, and congregations in participating in Christ’s mission. I hope every evangelist, as a lifelong learner, forms deep, rich, and collegial relationships in the Order of Evangelists.

- I hope *every person, whether a disciple, seeker, or minister*, will gain deeper understanding of the role of the evangelist. I hope the course will stimulate conversations among evangelists, leaders, members, and friends of the church so those searching for or wanting to serve God more deeply will experience that creative ministry of spiritual formation.

Finally, I hope this course will fulfill the dream expressed in President Veazey’s letter that *every member, seeker, and friend* “experience the unifying, reviving, and sending breath of God’s Spirit.”
EVANGELISTS: SHEEP OR SHEPHERDS?

By Jim Slauter, Oviedo, Florida, USA

So he told them this parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’”

—Luke 15:3–6 NRSV

My early retirement from 24 years of church employment in August 2011 to help support our family in caring for our grandson was accompanied by a call to evangelist. Accepting and embracing a new ministry focus challenged me to rethink my role as a member of the congregational sheepfold.

It caused me to rethink how always to be ready and willing to assume the role of the good shepherd present with the flock while constantly seeking and discerning ways to share ministries of blessing. Admittedly, at times I have struggled to better understand what it means to be a minister of presence, sanctuary, spiritual companionship, apostolic witness, teaching learner, and blessing.

God, as always, continues to bless me with new and deeper relationships. They’re filled with life stories and lessons that inspire, teach, and guide me on a never-ending journey. It ebbs and flows with the roles of being a sheep that follows and a shepherd that leads.

One such lesson came on a beautiful Sunday morning as I stood in front of the New Port Richey Congregation in Florida and watched members and friends arrive on foot or by bicycle for physical and spiritual food. They were coming from campsites, tents, cardboard boxes, and shelters where the homeless find refuge.

Some carried their life possessions as they gathered like a faithful flock, anticipating a hot breakfast to fill empty stomachs and a Spirit-filled worship to feed parched souls. They greeted me with hugs, handshakes, smiles, and familiar gestures of welcome and acceptance. Over several visits, they had become family. It was good to be in the presence of this flock of God’s faithful disciples.

As usual, they were spread around the parking lot in groups, sharing warm greetings, laughter, and stories of events in their lives. I quietly moved from group to group, greeting and listening with interest and compassion as they talked honestly and openly about the struggles of living on the street.
It reminded me of the quality of relationships in this congregation. Daily life is difficult for these believers, yet their expressions of concern and caring visibly show their interdependence and love for one another.

As I visited with Ted, Darlene approached. With tears in her eyes she voiced deep concern for Jim, a new member. She had seen him suffer a seizure a day earlier. Assured he was OK by friends who came to help, Darlene heard Jim promise he would see her at church the next day. Now, not seeing Jim anywhere, she was in a panic.

Ted immediately assumed the role of shepherd, putting his arms around Darlene and insisting she eat breakfast while he recruited helpers (shepherds from among the sheep) to search for Jim. With awe, I watched Ted quickly go to each group and lovingly enlist a cadre of shepherds from the flock. I sensed their deep concern as they quickly circled in front of the church to receive directions on where to look for Jim.

Darlene hurriedly ate. Just as she came to join the search group, Jim appeared on the sidewalk! There were shouts of praise and tears of joy as Darlene embraced Jim. He was found! The whole flock rejoiced gathering around him and sharing deep concern.

I experienced in real life the scripture lesson I had prepared to speak about that morning. The Holy Spirit bore witness that this is what sacred community is about. It is about “sheep being sheep” as faithful disciples following the voice of the Master whose unconditional love for his flock knows no equal.

It is also about sheep assuming the role of the good shepherd when becoming aware of the needs of others. Jean Vanier in his book, Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John, talks about what it means to assume the role of shepherd:

To become a good shepherd is to come out of the shell of selfishness in order to be attentive to those for whom we are responsible so as to reveal to them their fundamental beauty and value and help them to grow and become fully alive.

These powerful words speak clearly to me about the roles of the evangelist and our calling and vocation of blessing ministries.

Evangelists, like the people in this story, are ministers of presence who “come out of their shells of selfishness to be attentive to those for whom we are responsible” by being good shepherds within the sheepfold. Here, like the rest of the sheepfold, we bring our real-life stories of brokenness, pain, transformation, joys, and hopes to share openly and freely in intimate, caring relationships.

Vulnerable to God’s grace and open to new expanding understandings of God’s all-inclusive kingdom, we find opportunities for being spiritual companions and ministers of sanctuary. Here, among the sheep, we are taught by living examples of unconditional love and caring that true apostolic witness happens when we boldly proclaim the good news and model it with ministries of justice and peace.

We, too, like Darlene, need to be reminded of the importance of taking care of self—physically and spiritually—so we have the physical, spiritual, and emotional strength to listen attentively and respond to those for whom we are responsible. As both sheep and shepherds, we claim our calling as evangelists, ministers of blessing.
What comes to your mind when a bishop enters your congregation or sanctuary, or walks onto the rostrum during a worship service? Usually, we smile and lovingly say to ourselves or the person next to us, “Hold on tight to your purse, pocketbook, or billfold. The bishop’s here today.”

In 1831, Joseph Smith Jr. called Edward Partridge, a 37-year-old, very successful hat shop owner to serve as the first bishop, overseeing the financial concerns of the church. Since that time we’ve had a good understanding that the bishop is to engage in financial matters. Scripture tells us:

…let my servant Edward Partridge… appoint unto this people their portion, every man equal according to their families, according to their circumstances, and their wants and needs.

—Doctrine and Covenants 51:1b

However, in 1831, the functions of the bishop largely were undefined, a kind of “learn-as-we-go” for a new church struggling to find its financial foundation to have the resources to share Christ’s mission, as then understood.

In 2002, as a church we changed our understanding of tithing from a formula-based response to one based on God’s grace and generosity. The role of bishop needed to be reshaped as a priesthood office to respond to this call by God to the church. We can best understand this call as we read Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a, which says: “...The hope of Zion is realized when the vision of Christ is embodied in communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness.”

The bishops’ call to be ministers of generosity does not just have to do with tithing. It is a call to be involved in something much larger—Christ’s vision for creating communities of generosity.

We see the evolution of the bishops’ role to become ministers of generosity formed by our continuing understanding of our roles as high priests, the Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity, and the six principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response. We can better understand the reshaping and growth of the bishops’ ministry as we read these words from Sharing in Community of Christ, 3rd Edition, pages 32–33:

God gives and loves graciously and generously. We receive. God provides “enough and to spare” (Doctrine and Covenants 101:2f). God shares in abundance “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” (Luke 6:38 NRSV). Disciples love God. We share with others in gratitude. We strive to be generous. We acknowledge that all we are and have is a gift from God.

Discipleship is a whole life commitment we willingly make in response to God’s wonderful generosity. Disciples place importance on good management of
financial resources and find great joy through living generously.

...Being generous disciples is about aligning our priorities with God’s priorities; aligning our hearts with God’s heart.

Bishops must engage with a person’s discipleship journey as he or she strives to understand and live the principles of becoming a generous disciple. The following questions and answers about the role of bishop help frame the ministry offered by this priesthood office.

First Things First

The ministry of the bishop continues to be an important expression of high priest ministry. As you read about each priesthood office in “Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission” in the Ministry and Priesthood flyer, notice the integration of the bishop’s ministry with each expression of high priest ministry.

**Question:** How is the role of bishop an expression of high priest ministry?

**Answer:** Bishops are ministers of vision as it relates to our understanding of the Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity. The bishop helps disciples with living this Enduring Principle through the six principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response.

Bishops as high priests also serve key roles in developing with the congregation leadership team a clear and compelling vision for Aaronic ministry.

**Question:** How is the Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity important in a bishop’s ministry?

**Answer:** Doctrine and Covenants 147:5a states: “Stewardship is the response of my people to the ministry of my Son...” Bishops must have an awareness of God’s Grace and Generosity expressed in the gift and ministry of Jesus Christ. This awareness shapes a bishop’s understanding and ministry of what it means to receive and share generously and how this shapes a steward’s whole-life response as a generous disciple.

**Question:** How do the six principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response shape the bishop’s ministry?

**Answer:** The six principles of a Disciple’s Generous Response:
1. A disciple practices generosity as a spiritual discipline in response to God’s grace and love.
2. A disciple is faithful in response to Christ’s ministry.
3. A disciple’s financial response, while unique to individual circumstances, expresses love of God, neighbor, creation, and oneself.
4. A disciple shares generously through tithing so that others may experience God’s generosity.
5. A disciple saves wisely to create a better tomorrow for self, family, the church’s mission, and the world.
6. A disciple spends responsibly as a commitment to live in health and harmony with God and the world.

These principles are the practical daily tools a bishop uses to minister to individuals, families, congregations, and the church. When lived, these six principles transform us into stewards with a clear knowledge of our own true capacity to be generous disciples. Bishops guide disciples through the transformation.

**Being a Minister of Generosity—the Receiving Side**

**Question:** What preparation and ongoing formation is required of bishops for their ministry to be effective and received by members?

**Answer:** Bishops are encouraged to deepen and strengthen their relationship and understanding of God’s Grace and Generosity through regular spiritual practices. By engaging in these practices, bishops become aware of what it means to receive and share God’s Grace and Generosity in their own lives and ministries. With this new understanding comes awareness of their true capacity.

Each Tuesday for more than six years, the Presiding Bishopric Team has asked all bishops and mission center financial officers around the world to share in the spiritual practice, “dwelling in the word,” holding up in prayer two bishops and two mission center financial officers each week. This spiritual practice and prayer experience strengthen our worldwide witness to the church of God’s Grace and Generosity.

**Question:** What does it mean for bishops to be models of God’s Grace and Generosity?

**Answer:** The words of counsel presented at the 2013 World Conference call us to:

Free the full capacity of Christ’s mission through generosity that imitates God’s generosity. …

Tithing is a spiritual practice that demonstrates willingness to regularly offer every dimension of one’s life to God.

Bishops and other priesthood members need to model “tithing as a spiritual practice” so the church can experience the full capacity of God’s generosity. When we do this as bishops, the church sees and feels God’s Grace and Generosity, and the church will respond in similar fashion.

Tithing as a spiritual practice is

**“Stewardship is the response of my people to the ministry of my Son...”**
a direct response to Doctrine and Covenants 147:5a: “Stewardship is the response of my people to the ministry of my Son...” When bishops and the church engage in tithing as a spiritual practice, we will begin to understand and imitate the generosity of God.

**Being a Minister of Generosity—the Sharing Side**

**Question:** How and what must bishops share in their ministry to the church?

**Answer:** Bishops must be living expressions in message and actions of God’s Grace and Generosity. Then they can share the message of God’s Grace and Generosity consistently from the pulpit through preaching and A Disciple’s Generous Response in worship. We too often are silent in our sharing, believing somehow we will offend.

We also must share the message with individuals and families as we mentor them in living the six principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response. The teaching of these principles is foundational if we expect individuals and families to respond as stewards of their financial resources. Again, the words of counsel tell us that in living these principles, issues such as indebtedness can be resolved, and our capacity to respond becomes much greater.

Bishops need to create ministry partnerships in the congregation, mission center, and wider church so the message and practices of God’s Grace and Generosity can be lived more fully.

**Question:** Is there more to the role of bishop than guiding Aaronic ministry?

**Answer:** Bishops can serve in many capacities related to Aaronic ministry. They can be mentors to individual ministers. They can serve as coordinators by working with mission center and congregational leaders to organize Aaronic ministry. And they can help in development of annual Aaronic ministry plans.

Finally, the bishop can serve as one who teaches by working with local leadership to instruct Aaronic ministers on the skills to serve fully and effectively.

**Giving and Receiving**

Doctrine and Covenants 85:7 (adapted) says:

> For what does it profit people if a gift is bestowed upon them, and they receive not the gift? Behold, they rejoice not in that which is given to them, neither do they rejoice in the person who is the giver of the gift.

The next time a bishop enters your congregation, or sanctuary, or appears on the rostrum for worship, because of his or her willingness to receive and share God’s Grace and Generosity, I hope that you, too, will receive from them the same gifts. If we do this, the church’s understanding in sharing to its true capacity can be fulfilled and will be a true blessing as we seek to live Christ’s mission as our mission.

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**Steve Jones** is the presiding bishop, leader of the highest financial council of the church. His past assignments include serving as a counselor to the presiding bishop and as director of Human Resource Ministries at International Headquarters. Steve’s community involvement includes serving on the boards of directors for Kansas City Hospice and the Healthcare Foundation of Greater Kansas City.
JOURNEYING AS A BISHOP

By Jim Poirier, Presiding Bishopric
As Joseph Smith Jr. began to form his community, *Bishops: Ministers of Generosity* tells us he sought to build it based on “the early Christian lifestyle suggested in Acts 4:35, which portrays the basis for a plan of distribution according to wants and needs…”

Within this new Christian group would be an economic order where surplus was consecrated and shared with the community. The office of bishop was created to manage the orderly distribution and collection of resources for the Christian community. This is referred to as the law of *temporalities*. The bishops were charged with interpreting this law as the church matured and grew. At its core, the law was all about generosity and caring for the community’s temporal needs.

The course, *Bishops: Ministers of Generosity*, will take you on this journey from the early days of the church to the present day. You will discover how the church has interpreted the financial law from taking care of the poor to an understanding of true capacity. You will discover your own theology of stewardship so you can interpret these concepts and themes for members from the pulpit, in the classroom, or as you meet with individuals and families.

There is also a spiritual nature to generosity. This course will guide you through a spiritual journey of discovery where you will experience generosity as a spiritual practice (Doctrine and Covenants 163:6c). This will lead you to understand what it means to give to your true capacity. In that way, you will lead others to similar understandings, which will “stir the hearts of the people as never before” (Doctrine and Covenants 154:5). In addition, you will discover ways to practice self-care so you will continue to be an example to others, especially priests, deacons, and teachers.

Because much of the work of the Aaronic priesthood involved stewardship over the blessings of the people, the bishops also were charged with overseeing deacons, teachers, and priests. You will discover ways to provide orientation, mentoring, and training for Aaronic ministers.

As you develop skills in effective family ministries, you will share them with the Aaronic priesthood. As we move into a new era, you will learn ways to direct Aaronic ministers as they live the mission of Christ through the Mission Initiatives.

An effective way of ministering to members is through oblation. You will learn to provide guidance for administering these funds and will call on members to continue to support the Mission Initiative of Abolish Poverty, End Suffering.

Because many mission center financial officers are not ordained bishops, you will learn ways to support these positions, sharing your discoveries of true capacity and generosity as a spiritual practice. On their behalf you will learn to minister to congregations and cluster gatherings. You will discover ways to give one-on-one support to families and young adults. As a World Church minister, you will call on the people to share equally between local and worldwide mission tithes so ministry can go to far-flung places that call the church.

You will gain an understanding of those principles and practices that make us who we are. Among them are the Enduring Principles, including Grace and Generosity. You will study in-depth the six principles of A Disciple’s Generous Response and learn to be the church’s advocate for these life-changing principles. You will help people understand how to “break free from the shackles of conventional culture” (Doctrine and Covenants 163:9), which create needs out of wants.

And you will learn by interacting with other bishops and would-be bishops. You will have opportunity to share in informal settings with mentors and colleagues.

But as much as you serve in the office of bishop, you are serving as a high priest—a minister of vision. This course will place your role as a bishop within the context of that of a high priest.

The church needs your visionary leadership. You have been called because you are a leader in the eyes of God and the eyes of those to whom you minister. This course will give you the tools—practical and spiritual—to guide you in your calling. You will leave the course with a detailed plan for your ministry. It will start and guide your path.

Welcome to the high priest office of bishop. Thank you for your generous response to give to your true capacity as the church moves forward in mission.
Advocates for God’s Generosity

By David Nii, apostolic assistant

Throughout more than 18 years in the office of bishop, I have heard many comments made in jest. A frequent one was, “Watch your wallets; the bishop is coming!” Many people expressing such sentiments had the primary image of bishops as ministers who coerced people to pay their “tithing owed.”

In my younger days as a bishop, some people exclaimed, “But you are not stodgy and conservative enough to be a real bishop.” I suspect they mistakenly interchanged bishop with banker. Recently, I was speaking with a young adult who viewed bishops as “the accounting people” of the church. As you can guess, none of these images captures the sense of ministry I am called to share.

Ministry in the 21st century, in whatever capacity or office, means being a servant to God’s creation. Community of Christ continues to uphold bishops as ministers of generosity. People who serve in these ministries must foremost be advocates for God’s generous, grace-filled presence in the world.

Bishops best minister when they express God’s blessing of abundant living through the examples of their lives. I understand my basic call to ministry as serving the needs of the world through trusting in God’s abundant grace, inviting people to encounter the Living Christ, and partnering with others toward responsible decision-making.

God generously shares blessing and invites us to likewise share generously with others. I am greatly blessed by ministers who mentored me in understanding life from this perspective of abundance. These ministers lived faithful lives of connection with—and concern for—a wide spectrum of people. They witnessed the power of being Christ’s advocates who see the invisible as well as the prominent people of society.

Their personal stewardship generated time and resources shared generously for others. They led by example. They found joy in helping others bloom. With humility and humor, they acknowledged their shortcomings and need for repentance and forgiveness. With assurance, they witnessed to God’s steadfast presence.

These mentors shaped my understanding and experience of the heart and soul of Christ’s mission—investing our entire lives in journeying toward the reign of God. These are the footsteps I try to follow as I serve in this calling.

Ministries associated with the office of bishop are critical for shaping communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. With this understanding of ministry, I have no qualms about people saying, “Watch your commitments in life; the bishop is coming!”
Maverick, visionary, lone wolf, long-winded, passionate, outward looking, pushing the envelope, especial witness, forerunner of Christ’s peace, loud, great sense of humor. These words and phrases (and others) all have described seventies through the years.

But perhaps the best way to describe seventies today is to say their primary role is to use various opportunities and methods to invite people to Christ and welcome them into the life of discipleship.

Seventies get a twinkle in their eyes when they talk about people choosing to commit their lives to Jesus Christ in the waters of baptism. They are the kind of people who intentionally reach out to the “bruised and brokenhearted as well as those who are enmeshed in sin” (Doctrine and Covenants 153:9a), acknowledging that they are persons of worth. They are people who dream up new kinds of ministry to better reach into neighborhoods and communities. They ask, “Why not?” when others ask, “Why?”

This priesthood role and responsibility trace roots back as far as Moses.

### Historic Background of the Seventy

The number 70 long has been an important part of the Judeo-Christian experience. Among other things, it has identified a priesthood office in the Melchisedec Order in Community of Christ. The origins go back to Moses in experiences in the books of Exodus and Numbers.

Then he said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance.”

—Exodus 24:1 NRSV

So the Lord said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their place there with you. I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.”

—Numbers 11:16–17 NRSV

We again find a reference to 70 individuals being chosen from among the elders of the people in the 10th chapter of Luke.

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.

—Luke 10:1 NRSV

Biblical scholars debate whether there actually were 70 individuals chosen in these instances. Some translations use the number 72 in the Luke passage. While uncertainty exists, it seems undeniable that groups of individuals were chosen for specific tasks at specific times.

So, too, in Community of Christ we find in Doctrine and Covenants 104 (which outlined the priesthood structure for the newly formed church) references to seventy as a priesthood office. This section and
elsewhere in Doctrine and Covenants enumerate specific responsibilities of the office of seventy. Among these are preaching the gospel, being witnesses throughout the world, and being fore-runners of Christ’s peace.

One aspect addressed multiple times in Doctrine and Covenants is that seventies should be free to travel, rather than limiting their ministry to a particular congregation.

And these Seventy are to be traveling ministers unto the Gentiles, first, and also unto the Jews, whereas other officers of the church, who belong not unto the Twelve neither to the Seventy, are not under the responsibility to travel among all nations, but are to travel as their circumstances shall allow, notwithstanding they may hold as high and responsible offices in the church.

—Doctrine and Covenants 104:43c

The Twelve and Seventy are traveling ministers and preachers of the gospel...

—Doctrine and Covenants 120:3b

Hence, the general philosophy is that seventies are free to travel to new places even if relatively close to where they live.

The Ministry of the Seventy Today

The Ministry and Priesthood flyer describes the ministry of the seventy today in seven broad categories (in bold below). Within each are ways ministry is lived out. Some specific ways have yet to be determined, reflecting that seventies often are called to be creative in finding ways to reach new people.

As the Apostle Paul wrote:

…I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

—1 Corinthians 9:22 NRSV

Seventies represent Christ primarily as ministers of evangelism through witnessing, inviting, and church planting. Seventies practice witness and invitation, developing relationships with others who need to experience the Blessings of Community. Their gifts are needed in the pursuit of the mission of Jesus Christ.

Additionally, seventies sometimes are called to “plant” the church. Church planting involves establishing the church in places where it does not have a presence. This can mean taking the mission of Jesus Christ to new countries. In other situations, it could involve starting a ministry within a cultural or subcultural population. In still others, it might involve experimenting with new forms of ministry.

Seventies especially proclaim and promote Jesus Christ’s invitation to faithful discipleship through vibrant witness. Doctrine and Covenants 104:11e says:

The seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world...

Such proclamation is a primary role of the seventies. However, these ministers are called to train individuals and congregations in witness...
Seventies are part of a team that works to Invite People to Christ and pursue Christ’s mission.

Seventies particularly minister with seekers, individually and in groups, to share the gospel in relevant ways and to invite response. The focus of the seventy is on people who have not yet heard the good news of Jesus Christ. This often takes them into new cultural or subcultural opportunities for sharing the joy, hope, love, and peace of Jesus Christ. In this type of ministry seventies frequently are referred to as missionary specialists.

Seventies promote community by inviting individuals, households, and families to respond to Christ’s call to discipleship. Seventies take seriously the admonition in Doctrine and Covenants 162:7d: “…look also beyond your walls to the far-flung places where the church must go.” They model intentionally reaching into the community to develop relationships.

In addition, they are ready to train and support individuals and congregations to help build relationships “beyond your walls.” These relationships often provide opportunities to convey the Enduring Principle of Worth of All Persons and intentionally invite people to respond to Christ’s call to discipleship and participation in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Seventies promote justice and peacemaking by inviting people to experience all aspects of Christ’s peace through active discipleship. The concept of seventies promoting justice and peace connects directly with the experience referenced above from Luke 10. When Jesus sent the seventy out, he was quoted as telling them, “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’” Luke 10:5 (NRSV).

In Doctrine and Covenants 163:5b, seventies are admonished “to be the forerunners of Christ’s peace, preparing the way for apostolic witness to be more readily received.” Can there be a more joyous experience than seeing a person encounter and be embraced by the peace of Jesus Christ while becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Another aspect of the peacemaking seventies are called to provide...
is “setting in order” ministry. In the church’s early days, seventies sometimes were called to provide direct leadership in congregations or districts not functioning in harmony with church policy. Improved communication and means of travel have resulted in this specific ministry becoming more akin to church planting, in which seventies “set in order” by planting or replanting the church.

However, sometimes seventies still are called to help with situations involving disorder.

Seventies create ministry partnerships with mission center officers, apostles, elders, and evangelists. The day of the “lone wolf” seventy is long gone. Seventies are part of a team that works to Invite People to Christ and pursue Christ’s mission. The practice of going out in pairs mentioned in Luke 10 often is followed as seventies look for ways to partner with others and experience the multiplying effect of uniting giftedness for the cause of the peaceable kingdom.

Organized for Ministry

For most of the church’s history, there were seven quorums of seventy, each with a president. In 2010, in response to provisions in Doctrine and Covenants 164, the number of quorums expanded to 10. Each has a president. Together these 10 presidents form the Council of Presidents of Seventy.

There are now 334 seventies who live and minister in 28 countries. Ninety-two percent are self-sustaining. Ninety-nine are female, and 235 are male.

To help seventies in their ministerial responsibilities, the Council of Presidents of Seventy launched an aggressive educational program in 1981. This involved preordination studies in the office of seventy and a Seventy Certificate Program. It provided an outline for continuing education, ultimately resulting in seventies receiving a Seventy Certificate on completion of prescribed courses.

As part of this emphasis, each quorum has a quorum education officer (QEO) who consults and supports individual seventies. The QEOs also monitor the progress of seventies toward completing the certificate program and verify when they should receive their certificates.

Looking Forward

The ministry of the seventy continues to focus primarily on missionary outreach (or witness and invitation) as noted in the Ministry and Priesthood flyer (2013). This ministry is perhaps best summed up in a paper on the role of the seventy presented by Prophet-President Stephen M. Veazey at the request of the Council of Presidents of Seventy in May 2014.

In part it says seventies constantly should be engaged in witnessing and
inviting people to become disciples, and they should know how to increase the capacity of other disciples, priesthood members, and congregations to witness to and invite people to be involved in the whole mission of Christ through baptism, confirmation, and active discipleship.

When Jesus selected the seventy, in Luke 10:3 (NRSV) he said, “... See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves.” Indeed, because it often involves new ventures and experimentation with new forms of ministry, the work of seventies can be challenging. But they, like every disciple, have the promise that God’s Spirit “will go before you into whatsoever place you are sent and I will continue to bless you as you need” (Doctrine and Covenants 155:8).

Consequently, it likely could be written of the seventies of today and tomorrow as it was in Luke 10:17 (NRSV): “The seventy returned with joy...” because of the ways they witness the marvelous transformation of the lives of people as they invite them to encounter the Living Christ.

For Further Reflection and Discussion
1. Senior President of Seventy John Wight opens his article with a litany of descriptions about the priesthood office. Why have so many terms applied to seventies over the years? Which do you think best apply?
2. Do the seventies you know fit the description for today?
3. What is the benefit of the seventies’ freedom to travel, rather than being linked to one congregation?
4. What differences do you see between seventies and evangelists?
5. What roles do seventies play as “missionary consultants”?
6. How do you see seventies functioning as “the forerunners of peace”?
7. How do they relate to the Mission Initiative of Invite People to Christ?
8. How do you understand the role of the seventies as reflected in Luke 10:3?
9. Discuss the seventies’ relationship with the Enduring Principles of All Are Called, Pursuit of Peace (Shalom), and Blessings of Community.

—Greg Clark
Integrated Communications

John Wight is field missionary coordinator for the North Central USA/Canada Mission Field. He has served as a president of seventy since 1998 and was set apart as senior president of seventy in 2010. He is a professional registered parliamentarian. John received the World Church International Youth Service Award in 1981 for his volunteer service and ministry to youth.
It was 4:00 a.m. when I backed the car from the driveway. We headed across the eastern plains of Colorado, bound for Denver and then Colorado Springs. That day marked the midpoint of our ministry trip, sharing the good news of how Christ’s peace was changing lives in our world.

I was a new seventy, assigned with Apostle Dale Luffman, serving the West Central USA Mission Field. It was the first of many ministry ventures we would take together. These experiences changed the way I understood ministry and what it means to be a forerunner of Christ’s peace.

I watched Dale make himself fully present to every person he met. He listened intently to their stories and patiently answered countless questions. He sat with them, ate with them, laughed with them, and helped with any chores that needed doing. He prayed for the sick and offered gentle words of comfort in the face of life’s many challenges. Dale became one with the people, and he passionately shared his testimony whenever the door opened.

He was equally at ease on the farm, the sprawling suburbs, or metropolitan centers. He could talk about scripture, crops, sports, and pie with folks young or old. Dale put 21st-century flesh and blood on Apostle Paul’s first-century witness.

Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn’t take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I’ve become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn’t just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!

—1 Corinthians 9:19–23 The Message

The ministry of seventy and becoming a forerunner of Christ’s peace center on relationship; relationship with God, others, and self. Firmly planted and grounded in Christ we walk in the everyday lives of people wherever we are called to be. We live among the people, break bread together, listen, and learn. Their cares become our cares. We pray for the concerns of their hearts and share the good news of God’s coming reign. In the process we become one with them, authentically present, and the Spirit binds us together.

Never has that lesson been more real for me than where I currently serve in Salt Lake City, Utah. I live among the people, learn, and listen. I spend time with people who need to share what’s on their hearts and feel heard in the safety of a loving, accepting, relationship offered without agenda.

That is how I met Jordan, a man near 20, with fair skin and bright-red hair. He came with a friend to one of our seeker gatherings. Diagnosed with cancer at age 6, greatly complicated by type I diabetes, Jordan had been in and out of hospitals a significant part of his life. Not long before we met, his mother had died. After a series of complex events, Jordan, a brilliant college student, found himself falling out of cancer remission for the third time. He basically was homeless.

The day we met he was living with friends while deeply hurting from the recent fracture of family relationships. He was frantic to get his cancer into remission, and he was clinging at a last-chance effort to find his place at God’s table—because he was pretty sure the broken pieces of his life were too far gone to make things right.

Jordan found a warm embrace in the fellowship of our fledgling seeker group. The open invitation to eat and drink at the sacrament table was his first step toward understanding the extravagant grace of God’s love.

We welcomed him every time he came to church on Sunday. We got to know each other in the everyday
The Council of Presidents of Seventy is excited about the introduction of its new orientation course, Forerunners of Christ’s Peace. This course, in the development and pilot stages for several years, is for use primarily by those preparing for ordination to the office of seventy. However, the council is asking every seventy to take the course so each can be conversant with the most current moments of life during other days. Safe in a circle of ordinary people who cared, this beautiful, fragile child of God blossomed and grew. Several months later, Jordan shared his decision to be baptized and confirmed.

With tears of joy he said, “I didn’t understand anything about God’s grace until I met Community of Christ.” On the day of his baptism, Jordan shared his testimony of finding Jesus again. He began by talking about butterflies.

“The second that butterfly appears out of the chrysalis it is a new start—this is my Butterfly Weekend—I am becoming a butterfly.” He shared about his struggles and how he’d come to know God’s grace the past few months.

“Three things helped me,” he said. “First, for the third time I made it back into remission of my cancer. Second, my friends, Robb and Dex, took me into their home when I had no place to go. They supported me, believed in me, showed me I am amazing, and helped me find myself.

“Third, I found you,” he said, pointing at the people in the congregation. “I love you with all my heart. You made me a better person just being in my life. I know that I have a long road ahead of me with life’s trials, and things will not be easy. But I now know with the love of God, my baptism and confirmation, and each and every one of you, I can do anything.”

We watched as this young man was lowered into the grave with Jesus, symbolized by the waters of baptism, then raised up to begin a new life, shedding the dry chrysalis, and unfurling his wings as he lived his butterfly moment of transformation.

And in the sacred space of that holy moment we saw the face of the Living Christ.

The mission of Jesus Christ draws us in and calls us to see ourselves in Christ, to look and see Christ in others, and then to live as Jesus lived in deep, abiding, authentic, accepting relationship with one another.

...I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

—1 Corinthians 9:22–23 NRSV

Lesson 1—Characteristics of Our Calling

- Explore ways people connect in a relationship with God.
- Identify ways congregations can offer hospitality to visitors and new members.
- Understand how being a forerunner of Christ’s peace connects people to God, congregations, and communities.

Lesson 4—Living Holistic Evangelism: The Church Is Mission

- Understand that missionary ministry is a unique expression of mission.
- Explore holistic evangelistic ministries.
- Identify ways to live holistic evangelism.

Lesson 7—Ministerial Ethics

- Become knowledgeable about Community of Christ expectations for ethical living.
- Be prepared to clearly express Community of Christ expectations for ethical behavior.
- Cultivate ethical practices in life and ministry.

Forerunners of Christ’s Peace

By John S. Wight, senior president of seventy

Lesson 1—Characteristics of Our Calling

Lesson 4—Living Holistic Evangelism: The Church Is Mission

Lesson 7—Ministerial Ethics
material. Anyone interested in learning more about the ministry of the seventy is welcome to study the course. Contact your mission center president for more information.

*Forerunners of Christ’s Peace*, begins with a study of covenant principles common to all priesthood offices. The course then explores nine specific facets of ministry that leads participants through what seventies should know, be, and do (see chart below).

Individuals preparing for ordination to the office of seventy also are expected to study (with the help of an assigned mentor):


*Exploring the Ministry of the Seventy* by the Council of Presidents of Seventy

These booklets respectively explore Community Christ identity, theological questions, and specific ministries undertaken by seventies.

In harmony with the introduction of the new orientation course, the Council of Presidents also has revised the Seventy Education and Certificate Program. The council has stressed the importance of lifelong learning and continuing education since 1981, when it launched its first comprehensive certificate and education program.

The council continues to advocate for and facilitate such ongoing learning so seventies might “…seek learning even by study, and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 85:36a).

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### Lesson 2—Community of Christ Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs

- Have working knowledge of current Community of Christ identity.
- Identify ways to engage in mission.
- Be prepared to clearly articulate Community of Christ’s message.
- Be fully equipped to respond to the seeker’s question, “What does your church believe?”

### Lesson 3—Living Our Theology

- Develop a deeper understanding of Community of Christ theology.
- Explore the official church statements about Jesus Christ and scripture.
- Develop a personal understanding of what it means to be a non-creedal church.

### Lesson 5—Sharing Our Witness, Story by Story, Life by Life

- Reflect on personal testimony.
- Develop critical skills for sharing a vibrant witness of Jesus Christ.
- Identify persons with whom to share their witness.

### Lesson 6—Accountability, Quorum Support, Guidance

- Explore accountability to God, self, and family.
- Understand a seventy’s accountability to the World Church and local jurisdiction.
- Identify people to help serve as resources for their development and accountability.

### Lesson 8—Generosity and Mission

- Increase awareness of how grace and generosity directly affect all expressions of mission.
- Be more sensitive to the connection of generosity and mission in a global context.
- Respond with increasing witness and practice of generosity by equally sharing local and world mission tithes.
Elders: Leaders of Congregational Ministry

By David Lloyd, Integrated Formation Ministries

Many of us can name someone who personifies an elder’s ministry. Elders are present at most life events in congregations. They stand beside us at the blessing of our children, they enter with us into the waters of baptism, they lightly anoint our heads with oil when we are in need, and they speak with passion from the pulpit. Elders are the “all-purpose” ministers in congregational life.

Though we usually recognize elders in these traditional roles, those who most affect us minister in less-public ways. These are the ministers of Christ’s mission who employ their unique gifts and talents to create paths leading to God. For a moment, think of elders who lovingly have guided you. Chances are you don’t identify them as “elder,” but as “Bob,” “Helen,” or another first name.

For me, the model example in my boyhood congregation was a modest man named Hans. He was not famous or well known, but he was a remarkable presence in my life. Hans was not a great preacher—English was his second language. As far as I knew, he never was the pastor of my congregation.

Hans was a small-framed, German immigrant. He was always with Betty, his energetic, sweet wife. Betty did most of the talking after church, as Hans stood silently beside her. Together, they were a force of love and acceptance. Both sat in the pew directly behind me each Sunday. Growing up, I felt Hans behind me—quietly watching. It prompted me to behave.

I’m sure he noticed when my father no longer joined our family in church or in our home. I was a quirky preadolescent, more trouble than someone his age might have bothered with. Hans might have felt sorry for me—but his commitment to Christ’s mission prompted him beyond feeling and into action.

When the annual Father and Son Banquet came around, I unexpectedly received a phone call from Hans. He knew my father would not be present. Rather than framing his request in a way that might embarrass me, he turned the focus on himself. “David,” he said, “you know I do not have my son to go with. I saw the notice in the bulletin for the Father and Son Banquet at the church. Would you mind attending with me?”

Hans showed how elders not only should see the needs in the congregation, but how they should skillfully respond in loving and caring ways.

I do not remember what they served at that banquet, and I don’t remember the program. But I remember the man who took me there. I remember how he turned an embarrassing meal into a creative way...
for me to seemingly provide ministry to him. I felt I was doing him a favor, but in reality, he was teaching me how to care for others. I didn’t know it then, but he was mentoring me.

Later, I would notice Hans’ quiet leadership in the congregation. As a teenager, when overwhelmed with life decisions and a busy schedule, I was reminded by Hans that God cared about my spiritual and physical well-being, we shared in the ministry of healing and wholeness.

His hospitality in his home let me know he really cared about me. When Hans served the Lord’s Supper, even as his aging hands became less steady, I wanted to be served by my friend. When I received my first priesthood call, Hans’ hands were on my head.

Hans epitomized congregational ministry. He was an elder. He opened his life to me and invited me to join him on the journey of a disciple. That decision was easy, because he loved me. This is what effective elders do—they love people. This love radiates through their public and private ministry, transforming lives.

Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission

When considering the elders’ ministry at the 2014 Ministry and Priesthood Writers Summit, I asked the people on our writing team to remember an elder who had affected their lives. In most cases, these ministers were humble, hard-working.

They stand beside us at the blessing of our children, they enter with us into the waters of baptism, they lightly anoint our heads with oil when we are in need, and they speak with passion from the pulpit. Elders are the “all-purpose” ministers in congregational life.
folks who encouraged, mentored, and were present during important life stages. As we wrote the chapters for the new elders course, these elders frequently were in our thoughts.

We drew the topics from the Ministry and Priesthood flyer (September 2013). In it, a chart outlining the priesthood members’ responsibilities included the following statements about elders:

- Elders represent Christ primarily as ministers of congregational community-building, leading others in the congregation in pursuing the Mission Initiatives.
- Elders especially proclaim and promote Christ-centered congregational community by modeling intentional witness and invitation and mentoring others in Christ’s mission.
- Elders particularly minister with congregations to build sacred community and engage in Christ’s mission.
- Elders support sacramental ministries by preparing congregations for sacramental in mission. Doctrine and Covenants 164:9f says, “The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.” Effective elders know the Mission Initiatives and study methods to help their congregations pursue them. When elders live this mission in all facets of their lives (personal, church, home, business, neighborhood), they extend the blessing of God’s peaceable kingdom.

Congregations are blessed when elders proclaim and promote Christ-centered congregational community by modeling intentional witness and invitation and mentoring others in Christ’s mission. From the church’s earliest days, elders were critical in sharing the good news with others. Elders should continue to help congregations create ministries of witness and hospitality. They best carry out this task as they continue to develop relevant testimonies of how

If elders do not purposely set aside time to connect with God, how can they expect those they lead to do the same on Sunday morning?
Christ’s mission matters most. Elders need to be examples of practicing congregational hospitality. Not only do they welcome people into their congregations, they welcome people into their homes and lives. Effective elders mentor best through relationships.

Congregations are blessed when elders build sacred community and engage in Christ’s mission. Elders should build sacred community from their own spiritual journeys. If elders do not purposely set aside time to connect with God, how can they expect those they lead to do the same on Sunday morning? Elders should discover, experience, and teach spiritual practices. Through these practices, elders help build sacred community, which is central to the life of the church.

Many first experience church community through a worship service. Elders need careful and intentional planning to develop engaging, vibrant, and theologically sound experiences. Working with ministry teams can help meet more people’s needs through more creative and innovative worship services.

One of the elder’s most significant roles is preparing the congregation for and performing in sacramental encounters with God. Each sacrament happens at an important life stage. An elder’s preparation, discernment, and creativity can bring blessing to those longing to connect to the Divine. The spiritual and physical actions of the sacraments help participants recognize these worship experiences are not an ending, arrival, or beginning—they connect to all parts of a disciple’s journey. Elders can help people most through preparing them to receive the sacraments through education and worship planning.

Congregations are blessed when elders promote community by serving as ministers of mission both inside and outside the church walls. They serve as ministers of mission by promoting Christ’s vision of the peaceable kingdom of God on Earth. By displaying healthy, culturally enriched relationships with members and the community, they witness of God’s love for all creation.

Each person has different life experiences, interests, and gifts that can bring blessing. Elders who encourage diverse thoughts and viewpoints help strengthen the congregation and community. Honoring each person as having inherent worth does not mean we always agree, but it holds promise that we can remain companions on the journey.

Congregations are blessed when elders reflect the ministry of
Jesus Christ by leading justice and peacemaking. When elders live Christ’s peace and generously share his peace with others, they help the church restore Christ’s covenant of peace.

The Mission Initiative of Pursue Peace on Earth encourages elders to live as examples of Christ’s peace by generously sharing that peace with others. When elders recognize God’s blessings and generous grace, they find motivation to explore ways to respond generously through their witness, service, finances, leadership, and the sacraments.

Congregations are blessed when elders create ministry partnerships with pastors, mission center officers, priests, seventies, high priests, and evangelists. Because God’s nature is to be in relationship, elders must recognize ministry partnerships are vital to congregational ministry. Ministers are always stronger and wiser when working together. Each priesthood office has different and unique purposes—and that diversity strengthens the whole community.

Elders are often the leaders charged with bringing together the right minister for the right occasion. This means working with specialized congregational ministers (deacons, teachers, priests, and other elders), and at times consulting with or asking for ministry from seventies, high priests, and evangelists.

As elders continue to recognize and develop their callings as leaders of congregational ministry, people will be blessed. As a new elder, I served as a pallbearer at the funeral of my friend, Hans. I felt a mantle, so to speak, fall on me. Whether he knew it or not, my understanding of the ministry of the elder took shape through this humble servant, who took time to be present with me.

Throughout the church, there are elders like Hans—tirelessly performing the sacraments, presiding, and quietly shaping lives. Congregations are where the church lives and breathes—where lifetime relationships find root and branch. Elders, as servant-leaders, express their callings and ministries in all facets of life, bringing blessing to people in communities, congregations, and the world.

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. Author David Lloyd calls elders “all-purpose” ministers and gives some examples. How many more can you cite?
2. How has an elder served you as a mentor or model of ministry?
3. Discuss the role of leadership in priesthood and specifically the office of elder.
4. How do you see elders in your congregation building community?
5. What opportunities reside outside the church walls for elders to offer ministry?
6. Why is it important for elders to know—and practice—the Mission Initiatives?
7. Discuss the importance of elders in the sacramental life of your congregation.
8. How does your congregation uphold the different gifts of different elders?
9. What role does humility play in the ministry of the elder?
10. How do elders exemplify the term servant-minister?

—Greg Clark
Integrated Communications

David Lloyd serves as a leadership and priesthood formation specialist, focused on online learning and priesthood ministries. He has served as a mission center president, regional specialist, full-time pastor, and stake youth minister.
In the years my husband, Jeff, and I lived and worked in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, we were fortunate to live across the street from the Beechview Congregation. We were far from our hometown, and members of this congregation became family to us—welcoming us to their gatherings, holidays, kids hockey games, and school musicals. We felt comfortable. In fact, at times I think I became too comfortable, and perhaps I lost focus on the importance of seeking opportunities to connect with neighbors. In her book, *Bread of Angels*, Barbara Brown Taylor reminds us we are not “consumers” but “providers of God’s love.” Taylor adds:

In a world that can be hard and scary sometimes it is tempting to think of the church as a hideout, the place where those of us who know the secret password can gather to celebrate our good fortune. As we repeat our favorite stories and eat the food that has been prepared for us, it is tempting to think of ourselves as consumers of God’s love, chosen people who have been given more good gifts than we can open at one sitting: healing, forgiveness, restoration, resurrection. Then one day the Holy Spirit comes knocking at the door, disturbing our members-only meeting and reminding us that it is time to share.

The Beechview Congregation actually is fortunate to have many knocks at the door (literally) from neighborhood children. The congregation sits in the center of a working-class neighborhood, surrounded by compact homes on small plots.

The congregation has one of the neighborhood’s larger plots of open grass, and children often play in the yard. Finding ways to connect with them and serve working parents has been—and continues to be—the congregation’s primary calling. Years ago, the congregation housed a nursery school run by church volunteers. More recently, the congregation began a monthly Children’s Activity Program (CAP). Over the years positive relationships have developed from this ministry. One was with a girl named Michelle and her parents.

Michelle started attending CAP at age 7. She and her mom usually arrived first, sometimes early, for the meal at the program’s beginning. While Michelle was in classes, her mom would chat with volunteers. We started to learn more about their lives, and we enjoyed our developing connection. But the relationship didn’t go beyond CAP...until they stopped coming.

We weren’t sure why they stopped, but we had a feeling older kids might have picked on Michelle because she stutters. All we knew was that we missed them.

A few elders reached out to Michelle’s parents, leaving messages at their home to say we were thinking about them and asking how we could encourage Michelle to return. One elder eventually was able to talk with Michelle’s parents. They confirmed an older child, who previously had attended CAP, had made fun of Michelle for her stutter. This made Michelle feel insecure. Her parents weren’t sure we could ensure a safe environment.

Acknowledging Michelle’s fears, we invited her back to CAP, assuring her parents we’d watch more closely so Michelle and other youth would not experience this type of injustice again. Following this conversation, elders led a meeting with our volunteers to discuss how we more effectively would handle bullying. We then felt more prepared.
In February 2014, writers gathered at the Temple in Independence, Missouri, to create lesson plans for a ministry and priesthood course for elders. The team began by looking at what elders should know, be, and do. Beyond the classic exploration of the elders’ ministry, the team followed the outline in the recent Ministry and Priesthood flyer.

The class includes eight sessions. Also, a supplemental module, or training unit, explores how to provide sacramental ministry. After field-testing, we will introduce the course at the 2016 World Conference. (For access to the pilot course that is currently being field tested, contact your mission center president.) The course first will be available in the traditional field-class experience. In time, we will include an online option through the new Community of Christ e-Learning platform. Here is a quick preview:

**CONGREGATIONAL MISSION AND COMMUNITY-BUILDERS**

This session will consider the meaning of “Christ’s mission is our mission” and how elders can best live that mission in their ministry. Elders are the local ambassadors of Community of Christ’s Mission Initiatives. This class invites consideration of these initiatives and how they become part of an elder’s ministry. The class addresses how to engage and empower disciples in Christ’s mission, found in Luke 4:16–19. They will explore what it means to lead the congregation in Christ’s mission as they learn the basic responsibilities of the office.

**MODEL INTENTIONAL WITNESS AND INVITATION**

Explore ways to proclaim and promote Christ-centered congregational community through hospitality and invitation in this session. Learn how to develop the cour-
BE, AND DO

MINISTERS PROMOTING COMMUNITY

This session will explore the theological principles of Christ’s ministry and Community of Christ scriptures that embrace the worth and inclusion of all people. Participants will learn about Unity in Diversity through internal and external dimensions. Participants will discover ways to challenge unjust systems that lessen human worth. They will study Community of Christ’s “Affirmation of Human Diversity” statement and consider its use in the church, congregations, and neighborhoods.

BUILD SACRED COMMUNITY

This session will highlight the importance of elders building sacred community. Because one of the elder’s roles is leading worship, class participants will explore the responsibility of conducting quality services. The class teaches familiarity with the order of worship, worship direction (such as serving Communion), and communication with participants.

This includes preparation, using the scriptural text, understanding the congregation’s needs, faithful presentation of Community of Christ theology, and a deliberate focus on God through Jesus Christ. In addition, participants will develop a working knowledge of spiritual practices and how to lead them.

PREPARE CONGREGATIONS FOR SACRAMENTAL ENCOUNTERS

Explore the meaning and message of Community of Christ’s sacraments in this session. Study each sacrament’s purpose, and learn to perform it effectively. Elders help lead the spiritual and physical actions of the sacraments, underlining each as not an ending, arrival, or beginning, but a connection to all parts of a disciple’s journey.

A module, or training session, on providing sacramental ministry will walk new priesthood members through the physical practices of each sacrament. Participants will view video demonstrations and practice facets of the sacrament.

MINISTERS OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

Here, elders will learn to experience and teach building a world of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit—an active, redemptive peace for all. Participants will explore God’s longing for peace throughout creation. They will learn skills that promote local and global promotion of justice and peace. The class also will explore practical ways to lead efforts in congregations and neighborhoods.

PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

This will review all Community of Christ priesthood offices and their roles in the congregation and the worldwide church. Participants will learn to create ministry partnerships with pastors, mission center officers, priests, seventies, high priests, and evangelists. The class also will explore responsible mentoring—through receiving and providing ministry. Finally, this class will review the elder’s ministry plan, and students will consider who might serve as their mentors.
Priesthood ministry is as varied as each person who responds to the call to be a minister of Jesus Christ. In this beautiful diversity, we find common ground through our relationships with God and in the unconditional love God shares with all creation.

The priest’s specific calling is to enter into relationship with families, being the tangible expression of God’s love in their lives. The mission of Jesus Christ is lived through these relationships. When priests are authentic and humble ministers who live relationally, they are living the Christ-like life they are called to live.

All ministers, according to their gifts, are called into servant ministry. Ministers who serve Community of Christ as priests are called to unique and specific ministry that brings families hope and support. Just as various ministers serve as priests, various families need ministry and the touch of Christ.

Some priests find themselves working with families within a congregation. Matthew was called to be a priest a little over two years ago. He took his call seriously and spent much time in study and prayer, preparing for his role as a minister of presence. Matthew has a gift with people his age, people in their 70s and 80s. These families consist of grandparents, people whose loved ones have died, people who are sick, and people who are tired.

These families face difficulties, just like any other. Some are homeless. Some are caregivers. Many are lonely. Matthew responds to each person with compassion. He believes in God’s grace in his own life and shares that belief with others.

When family members have questions, Matthew helps them find answers. When they ask for spiritual guidance, Matthew prays with them. His ministry is his presence and his love. He shares these freely. Matthew serves as a priest.

Sometimes, priests are called to visit faraway places and serve in new situations. Lia is a young adult who recently was called to the office of priest. She visited Africa, and found families that needed support and a minister of presence who loved them. These were not long-term relationships. Lia was not in Africa long. However, the time she spent with families, listening to concerns and praying for healing, brought great comfort to those needing a sense of God’s love. Lia serves as a priest.

Ministers of Presence Know Christ

Matthew and Lia knew, through experience and the study of scripture, the amazing presence of Christ in their lives. The life and ministry of Christ called them to be Christ’s presence in the lives of others.

Each of us learns Christ’s mission through a relationship with the God of love. God invites us into relationship, and we experience transformation. God fills our hearts and draws our lives to Christ’s mission. The Holy Spirit abides in our daily lives, and we know God’s love.

The relational nature of God-Christ-Holy Spirit shows us how to live in community. Priests are not alone in life or ministry. The community is where ministry takes place. It is to community that priests are called.

Matthew found his community right in front of him, the congregation he had attended for years. Lia found her community halfway around the world. Community can occur wherever you find yourself. People everywhere need the transforming love of God and the presence of Christ.

Knowing Christ also comes from a deepening spiritual encounter with the One who calls us into prayer and spiritual practice. When priests take time to encounter the Divine through spiritual practices, a developing relationship occurs. The priest grows in understanding and compassion.

Many spiritual practices can be included in the priest’s daily journey with Christ. Centering prayer helps
the minister focus and become quiet amid everyday life. Dwelling in the word brings new insight and a deepening awareness of the meaning of scripture. As ministers practice spiritual disciplines, they can incorporate them into congregational and family life, leading members into expanding spiritual awakenings.

Ministers of Presence Are Christ’s Hands and Feet

To be Christ’s presence in the lives of individuals and families, the priest’s call is to strengthen and build specific giftedness and skills. Listening and referring are two such skills.

Listening skills are key when working with families. Good listening comes when listeners are interested in what the speaker has to say, and when they create room for the speaker to share honestly and fully.

Good listening does not come naturally to everyone, but it is critical. When a person is heard, he or she feels valued and able to share. It is important when listening to another’s story to keep the conversation confidential, unless someone’s well-being is threatened.

Priests (and any minister) must understand confidentiality and the importance it plays in building relationships. In many communities resources can help the priest increase skills and understanding.

At times, the priest may work with a family and find it needs resources beyond what the minister can offer. Referral then becomes important.

For example, Matthew learned when working with a homeless family that it needed resources for food and lodging he could not offer. He turned to community-outreach partners and referred the family to a shelter, helping it become whole.

Priests are called to be authentic in their relationships with others. They share appropriately from their experiences when families need support. They listen carefully, seeking knowledge and understanding. They refer to other resources, working with their communities as they seek to provide holistic support.

Priests commit their time and ministry to long-term connections with families. They know building relationship occurs over time and requires dedication. Helping a family find a resource for support outside the church does not indicate the end of the priest-family relationship. Priests follow through and pay attention to the needs of those with whom they work and minister.

Priestly ministry is a long-term commitment. Priests know families are vulnerable to outside and inside forces that can be destructive and divisive. They know God is in all things. This means everyone, no matter the experiences or current struggles, receives God’s transforming, unconditional love. Priests serve others as the hands and feet of the Living Christ.

Ministers of Presence Live Christ’s Call

Priests work intimately with members of all other priesthood offices. All priesthood offices are complementary. Priests work specifically with elders, bishops, pastors, and congregational financial officers as they seek to bring wholeness to individuals and families.

All priesthood members are called to share the peace of Jesus Christ with others. Priests should rely on others to help them grow in ministry while serving the congregation and families.

Church members hold various gifts. Some people are called to specific priesthood offices to honor and utilize their gifts in specific ways. When members of different offices work together, they magnify their gifts by supporting one another in ministry.

Priests are called to sacramental living. When ordained, they take the responsibility to live sacramentally, reflecting God’s vision of wholeness for creation. They commit to living as followers of Christ—seeking justice, loving peace, and living compassion.

They dedicate themselves to sharing God’s love with a broken and...
hurting world. They share in the sacraments, leading members into deeper relationships with the Divine. They become people of the Way, following Christ down the path of the disciple.

Priests are integral to the broader ministry found in the church—All Are Called. Priests represent a specific call. Each priest is different and brings various gifts to his or her call.

Matthew found his ministry does not include preaching, but it does include serving Communion, particularly to the homebound. When he takes Communion to their homes, he takes time to listen to their stories and create connections. Folks look forward to seeing Matthew. They know he cares for them, has prayed for them, will advocate for them, and will help them find what they need to be whole in Christ.

Lia is known as the singing minister. In Africa, she touched the lives of those she visited by singing for and with them. The words were different, the tunes unfamiliar, but the heart and meaning of her music was the same.

Her ministry of song and presence brought hope and healing to families in deep despair. She listened to stories, brought compassion into homes, and served with others to bring holistic ministry.

Priests reflect the life of Christ in how they humbly serve others. They are called to work with other ministers to bring the love of God to people they serve. Filled with the Spirit, they bring hope and compassion to their communities through relationship building and inviting others into lives filled with hope. Priests are important in the life of Community of Christ. They bring special gifts that make a difference.

As a church, we are gifted with individuals who respond to a call to priest. They are servant ministers. They are dedicated to families and communities throughout the world. Priests are called to live the mission of Jesus Christ wherever they are as humble and loving ministers of wholeness and peace. Matthew and Lia are two examples of priests who said yes to the call, and who live their ministries.

As priests respond to the call of Christ in their lives, the church will receive the gift of presence and ministry from their efforts. As the church experiences ministry, members will be invited into relationships, which form the foundation of a peaceful world.

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. Discuss how the various types of priesthood ministry relate to the Enduring Principle of Unity in Diversity.
2. What role does humility play in a priest’s ministry to individuals and families?
3. The author gives examples of two priests providing ministry, one in a home congregation and one in another land. What does this say about opportunities for ministry?
4. The author dwells on giftedness and its need in ministry. Do priests in your congregation focus on their gifts, or do they try to “do it all”?
5. What happens when a priest is pushed outside her or his area of giftedness?
6. How have priests you have known gone about establishing relationship?
7. What blessings have you encountered through relationships with various priests?
8. What does a priest do if she or he tries to establish a relationship, and the other person resists?
9. The author says priests are called to sacramental living. Yet, as humans, priests from time to time fall short in their callings. What should they do when this happens?
10. How do priests in your congregation interact with members of other offices?

—Greg Clark, Integrated Communications

Shandra Newcomb works for the Rocky Mountain USA Mission Center and directs the Seminars in Theological Education program. She has a passion for mission development.
I was asked to consider a call to priest while serving as a youth and young-adult minister in Australia. It was an odd experience for me. I felt called to priesthood. I knew it was coming. I didn't think it would be to the office of priest.

Everything I had read about priests (outside the responsibilities of Communion, baptism, etc.) involved working with families. I lived on the opposite side of the world from everyone in my family. I wasn't married and didn't have a family of my own. I didn't even work with families. I worked with high school and university students. What did I have to offer families?

I didn't feel so great about some parts of my job then. I didn't know everything about scriptures. I was getting more preaching experience, but I was not entirely comfortable with it. I didn't have answers to all the theological questions. While I felt passionate and called to work in the church, I was unsure whether I was a good minister.

On the other hand, I loved the parts of my work focused on youth and young adults. I got to spend time hanging out with fun people.

We would meet regularly for coffee or souvlaki dates. We'd talk about high school drama, work, university stresses, travel plans, and anything happening in our lives. We'd go fishing, sit on the dock, and chat. I loved asking about their goals and dreams, and I would try to offer any help I could for issues they faced.

I would spend numerous weeks a year at camp, going on trips, and experiencing “God moments” with them in various forms of community. I would organize dinners, study groups, beach days, and game nights for people to connect. I really couldn't think of a job more fun!

I found my role with youth and young adults wasn't so much focused on scripture and traditional congregational responsibilities. It intensely involved building relationships outside Sunday-morning congregations, making memories at camp together, spending quality time, and dealing with life together. It involved investing in their lives, being present.

But I didn't feel I knew how to work with families. So I was a bit nervous about my ability to live up to the expectations of a priest.

At the meeting to approve my priesthood call, one of my closest friends in Australia, spoke in support. She described her vision of the priest's role as “Jesus as Friend” and spoke about how she saw me that way.

I had heard people before describe me as being a loyal friend, offering helpful advice, and being a good listener. I often found people would come to me and share deep thoughts, secrets, and concerns. They trusted me. But I had never heard the role of priest described like that.

Immediately, it resonated with me. I can do that! It was a way of serving as a priest that I could connect with, and it has stuck with me.

After three years in that role in Australia, I decided to move back to Canada. I had built many deep friendships in Australia and had been with many youth and young adults as they journeyed through high school, university, and transitions.

I was asked to baptize a youth to whom I had grown close. Parents thanked me for spending time with their kids, driving them to youth activities, helping them with job applications, and taking them fishing and out for coffee.

It wasn't until I was leaving Australia that I realized what my ministry had been there. Nobody thanked me for my knowledge of scriptures, my ability to preach, or how nicely I carried the bread and the wine during Communion. They thanked me for my ministry to their families.

For me, the role of priest may involve working with families, but I think it is more a call to serve as a Christ-like friend. It is expressing God’s love in relationships. It is companionship, modeled by Jesus, walking with people on their paths, offering support. It is making people feel loved and cared for—like family—so they know they are not alone. It is listening and helping. It is just being there.

I realized that by being Jesus as Friend, being myself, and sharing my gifts that I might have made a difference.
A new Temple School course will support persons interested in learning about the ministry of priests in Community of Christ. Priests serve as ministers of presence who model Jesus as Friend in households, families, congregations, and communities.

The course will highlight specific parts of the priest’s ministry, guiding people through various topics related to the office. The focus is to empower learners to become Christ’s presence in the world.

Topics will include: What it means to be a minister of presence, how to develop listening skills, exploring giftedness, community advocacy for families in need, how to minister in homes with families, the interrelatedness of priesthood offices, Grace and Generosity, sacramental living, and how to serve as a priest in a world longing for wholeness and healing.

The course will include information for reading, topics for discussion, experiences for groups or classes, and spiritual practices for personal and group encounters. All of these ways of learning work together to create the whole experience. Learners will explore meaningful lessons, which will explore the ministry of the priest in new and exciting ways.

It is important to note that spiritual practices are primary in the new course. Spiritual practices connect us to God in meaningful ways. They can become part of our daily walk with the Divine, inviting us into deeper relationship with ourselves and God, who loves us and wants the best for us.

When we engage in spiritual practices, we open ourselves to the movement and mission of Christ. When learners engage in spiritual practices together, they deepen their relationships and encounter one another and the Spirit in profound ways.

Another key idea that threads through the new course is the understanding of the importance of priests as Christ’s presence with individuals, households, and families that need support. The course supports ministers who seek to be present with families by teaching listening skills, giftedness identification, and the understanding that sometimes a minister simply needs to “be” with a family—offering support through presence and prayer.

The priest course is open to anyone who wants a deeper understanding of the ministry of the priest. The pilot version of this course is available now through your mission center president.
Ministry of the Teacher

By Erica Blevins Nye, Troy, Michigan, USA

The priesthood ministry of teachers is vital. Teachers act as a congregation’s spiritual circulatory system, carrying nourishment to all parts of the body. Healing energy flows through them to wounded areas. This ministry often goes unseen, just below the surface, but our spiritual vitality depends on its unfailing pulse.

Teachers represent Christ primarily as ministers of presence who model Jesus as Peacemaker through interpersonal (one-to-one) reconciliation and peacemaking.

—“Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission” Ministry and Priesthood flyer

The teacher’s duty is to watch over the church always, and be with, and strengthen them...

—Doctrine and Covenants 17:11a

The teachers’ ministry of presence is built on a foundation of their own presence with God. “Ministry and Priesthood in Community of Christ, Part I: Theological Foundations” reminds us that “consistently living or dwelling in God’s holy and just love, which is much more than any human love, frees disciples to share divine love in the world more faithfully and fully.” Teachers draw on their growing relationship with Christ to help reveal Christ’s presence in the congregation and community.

Just as Christ welcomed all into his company, teachers make themselves open and available to all. Ministers of presence offer companionship during the ups and downs of life. When you need spiritual support, you can trust teachers to listen with love to your concerns and hopes. Call on them when you need someone to stand beside you.

Teachers especially proclaim and promote the Worth of All Persons and create an environment that is ready to listen and slow to criticize with individuals and in congregations.

—“Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission”

The teachers’ ministry of presence goes hand-in-hand with intercessory prayer. They intentionally spend time being with others and listening compassionately. Individuals and the congregational body can count on teachers to hear their concerns and interests without judgment. Christ recognized the value in each life he encountered. In the same way, teachers seek the goodness and giftedness in others. Then teachers lift individuals to God, upholding hopes and hurts in prayer. Never hesitate to call a teacher when you are in need of faithful prayer.

When teachers come to know individuals closely and then seek God’s blessing for them in prayer, they cultivate a deep appreciation for the Worth of All Persons. This Christ-like perspective on the value of all life experiences makes teachers ideal ministers to extend unbiased reconciliation when conflict arises in the congregation.

Teachers particularly minister with individuals to encourage peace, and healing of interpersonal conflicts, and where needed, reconciliation through trained facilitators.

—“Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission”

The teacher’s duty is to...see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other...

—Doctrine and Covenants 17:11a
We often prefer to ignore conflict in the faith community for fear of worsening the situation or causing offense. Teachers act as courageous, yet sensitive, ministers of reconciliation who recognize wounded relationships and offer healing. Teachers are particularly tuned in to personal brokenness and interpersonal conflict in the congregation. Often these concerns smolder just below the surface. Teachers are well-positioned to extend help because through their ministry of presence with the congregation they already have established trust and set aside judgment. This service is key to Christian community.

Mission and ministry focus on reconciling people to God and one another through loving, just, and peaceable relationships. Reconciling and redeeming people, relationships, social systems, cultures, and the whole creation is Jesus Christ’s mission.

—“Ministry and Priesthood in Community of Christ Part 1, Theological Foundations,” September 2013 draft

At times teachers act as gentle mediators in mending relationships. In other situations, teachers help the whole congregation approach a sensitive issue by naming the concern, offering prayer on the congregation’s behalf, and teaming with other leaders to work through it. Teachers are familiar with professional services to which they can refer people for personal healing or interpersonal conflict resolution.

When you encounter strained relationships in your congregation, consider discussing your concern with teachers. God has specially called and equipped them for this ministry.

Teachers support sacramental ministries by extending the hand of reconciliation to those with broken spirits and encouraging participation in the blessings of the sacraments.

—“Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission”

Teachers extend their ministry of reconciliation through the sacraments, especially Communion. Reconciliation between God and creation is key to the sacraments. As ministers with particular awareness of individuals’ spiritual and practical circumstances, teachers are poised to invite people to participate in the sacraments. Teachers may be sensitive to the Spirit’s movement to invite persons to baptism and confirmation. Perhaps a teacher in your congregation is just the minister to introduce a quietly suffering person to elders for the sacrament of Laying on of Hands for the Sick.

Some congregations invite a teacher to sit on the rostrum during Communion services. From that vantage point the minister of presence and reconciliation can view the faces in the congregation. Throughout the worship, the teacher offers ongoing, silent prayer for reconciliation between God, individuals, and in the faith community. What a blessing to approach the Lord’s Supper in the spirit of compassionate healing prayer!

Teachers promote community by encouraging development and nurturing of a healing, redeeming, and prayerful environment.

—“Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission”

The teacher’s duty is to...see that all the members do their duty...and invite all to come unto Christ.

—Doctrine and Covenants 17:11a, b, f
Ministry of presence with people and families builds the teachers’ sensitivity to the spiritual gifts in the membership. They may be attuned to unfolding priesthood calls. Teachers are encouragers who recognize potential skills each person can bring to congregational mission that others may overlook. Teachers can help people discover their own gifts, connect them to support, and find avenues for expressing those gifts in the congregation. God blesses each congregation with the gifts necessary to engage in Christ’s mission. It takes all disciples and priesthood members to begin to represent Jesus Christ in the world.

—“Ministry and Priesthood in Community of Christ Part 1, Theological Foundations,” September 2013 draft

The teachers’ ministry of encouragement helps the congregation to recognize Christ’s ministry in each person and harmonize those gifts to serve together in mission. Teachers create ministry partnerships with bishops, pastors, and evangelists.

—“Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission”

As teachers encourage people and Develop Disciples to Serve, they share their insights with pastors and other leaders. Pastors can connect individuals with mentors and ministry opportunities according to their gifts. Teachers also inform pastors of any needs for special ministry or sacraments the congregation could extend.

The teacher’s goal is reconciliation and peacemaking, and information shared always is intended for that end. Sensitivity to confidentiality is a primary value for teachers. The priesthood office does not carry administrative responsibilities that may disrupt their ability to offer pastoral care. This is a blessing of ministry that congregational leaders should honor and maximize.

Teachers also work as partners with bishops and evangelists. They are spiritual disciplines developed over time with the support of other ministers. Evangelists bring teachers experienced guidance for spiritual formation. Teachers can help encourage individuals to participate in the sacrament of evangelist blessing.

Teachers promote justice and peacemaking by personally living out and encouraging others to build relationships based on love and acceptance and referring individuals for reconciliation to appropriate professional services.

—“Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission”

The teacher’s duty is to watch over the church always, and be with, and strengthen them...
Teachers connect spiritual healing to practical concerns. Conflict is inevitable in congregational life. Broken relationships occur in all of our lives. Teachers help begin reconciliation in these situations by inviting the Holy Spirit to intercede. They find inroads for healing by establishing unbiased relationships where there is conflict and encouraging all parties to listen and understand one another. Addressing wounds and conflict may not be comfortable for these ministers, but they draw on their spiritual foundation to remember God’s love for all involved and God’s promise of peace in community.

Teachers are familiar with referral resources in the community for conflict resolution and personal healing. When appropriate, they connect individuals to these professional services in addition to congregational ministries. The teachers’ ongoing ministry of presence blooms into life-changing justice and peacemaking as they seek wholeness for those in the faith community.

In a word, teachers are nurturers. As our spiritual circulatory system, they assure that each area of the congregational body is connected to the Source of blessing. This priesthood office brings spiritual nourishment and gentle healing for the congregation and community.

Teachers offer compassion and companionship. Their devotion to prayer and openness help other disciples recognize their own places in the community. The ministry of teachers is indispensable. Teachers strengthen individuals and congregations to be healthy and whole as we serve Christ’s mission together.

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. Why is it so important to congregations to have the “healing energy” shown in the ministry of teachers?
2. Why is “presence” essential to the ministry of teachers?
3. People often think of the ministry of presence in terms of problems, hurt, or difficult times. Give examples of its relationship to joy and celebration.
4. In intercessory prayer, teachers uphold the Enduring Principle of Worth of All Persons. How does this benefit the congregational body?
5. Because reconciliation is a key part of teachers’ ministry, they often are attuned to conflict. How can they offer ministry without violating confidentiality?
6. Does your congregation provide teachers and other priesthood members a list of professional services available in the community?
7. What types of services should your congregation include on such a list?
8. What makes teachers valuable in connecting people with the sacraments?
9. How do you see teachers partnering with members of other offices?
10. Discuss the role of teachers as nurturers in relation to each of the five Mission Initiatives.

—Greg Clark
Integrated Communications

Erica Blevins Nye, a former Young Adult Ministries specialist for the worldwide church, lives in Troy, Michigan, with her family.
Peace, Encouragement, Love
By Kay Sheridan, Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

After reading the Priesthood Manual and preordination material for the teacher, including the Ministry and Priesthood flyer, I have a strong appreciation for the important ministry of teachers.

Teachers are congregation-focused ministers called to model Jesus as peacemaker. They watch over the church, focusing primarily on individuals. They have a strong interpersonal (one-on-one) shepherding function and need to closely associate with congregational members and build strong, trusting relationships. Their call is to encourage peace and healing of relationships. It is a very relationship-focused calling.

Teachers are to be peacemakers, bringers of wisdom, and sharers of genuine love—quite a depth of ministry. Their call is to proclaim and promote the Worth of All Persons and create an environment that promotes being ready to listen and slow to criticize. They extend the hand of reconciliation to those with broken spirits. They encourage participation in the blessings received through the sacraments.

A friend shared with me a memory of his parents, who were teachers. He recalled that while growing up he always saw his parents sitting on the back row in church. He finally asked why they sat there.

Their response, to me, seemed to display the true attitude of teachers. They said they sat on the back row so they could pray for each person as he or she came in. What a gentle, caring, relationship-building ministry. What a blessing the ministry of the teacher is to us all!
Low-profile Ministry

By Erica Blevins Nye, Troy, Michigan, USA

The ministry of teachers brings vitality and healing to whole congregations, but it often happens when no one is looking! The new training course for teachers helps you see the important charge this office has and the special ways teachers make Christ present in congregational life.

The priesthood-training course for teachers offers nine lessons for study, spiritual exploration, and ministerial planning. Lessons invite learners to reflect on how Jesus’ ministry of presence and peacemaking shape the office of teacher. The course highlights the teachers’ call to engage in individuals’ lives and draw them into congregational community, mission, and the sacraments. The course explores ministry of reconciliation and peacemaking in depth.

Learners find practical suggestions for embedding the ministry of teachers into congregational life and exercises to help develop ministries tailored to their own community context. Practical ideas and foundational information are paired with spiritual formation to help ordinands develop a personal ministry plan.

Prayer journaling is woven throughout the learning experience, serving as a foundation for ongoing spiritual formation after ordination. The course emphasizes collaboration with pastors and other leaders to bring intentional ministry of presence, encouragement, and reconciliation where needed most.

All teacher ordinands and ordained teachers are encouraged to explore this course in a class setting.
The powerful potential for transformation in the priesthood office of teacher “screamed” at our team during the Ministry and Priesthood Writers Summit in February 2014 at the Temple in Independence, Missouri.

Teacher is one of the least populated and perhaps least understood priesthood offices. We discovered the tremendous impact teachers could have in congregations as they are embraced and empowered to engage in ministry resident in their calling.

Teachers bless congregations with the ministry of presence. As humble servant-ministers, they often are unaware they model Jesus as Peace-maker when entering into people’s lives through listening, encouraging, or extending the invitation of reconciliation to those with broken minds, bodies, or spirits.

Cora Hill was 78 when called to the office of teacher. Nine years later, she continues serving, “doing whatever is necessary—preaching, teaching, praying.”

She told of a member living in a dysfunctional situation. The member falls between the cracks of receiving mental-health treatment. Cora spends much time on the phone just listening as the woman tells her latest stories. Cora can’t heal the dysfunction, but she serves as a minister of presence by upholding the worth of a broken soul ignored by society.

It often is said teachers do not perform the sacraments. While they do not pour the oil, serve the bread, or baptize, they do play a significant role in sacramental ministry! The sacraments symbolize the touch of the sacred and the ordinary. The teacher sits on the side of the ordinary without any specific task other than to encourage participation in the sacraments and be fully present, prayerful, and attentive to the Spirit.

A few years ago, a team of evangelists from the Michigan USA/Canada Mission Center planned a Friday-evening Communion service for the annual priesthood convocation. It was at Cora’s congregation in Kalamazoo, Michigan. As a teacher, Cora was asked to be “shepherd” during the service. She sat in a visible place on the rostrum and prayed as the service progressed.

This challenge deeply affected Cora. “First, I had to be quiet—that was hard to do!” she said. “But as I looked out over the priesthood gathered together, I could see everything—the expressions and emotions that were going on. It is something I will never forget.”

Indeed, it was a powerful service where evangelists and teacher teamed up to be ministers of presence in a way that allowed the Holy Spirit to breathe new life into those present.

Tammy Lindle of Priesthood and Missionary Formation Ministries attended that convocation as a guest minister.

“I imagined myself in Cora’s place, and thought, ‘Whoa, what a conspicuous place to sit! I’ll bet that feels uncomfortable sitting alone—front and center—with everyone watching. If that were me, I’m sure I would become a distraction because of my fidgeting.’”

But Lindle said the teacher’s presence was a powerful blessing, setting the tone for the entire weekend.

“It brought great blessing to the congregation gathered for worship. It was humbling for me watching Cora watch the congregation—knowing she saw us, that she was praying about and for us. She saw me. I know she included me in her prayerful, humble gaze as she scanned the congregation. It affected me in profound ways. I began to relax, and the stress lifted from me. As I knelt and then stood to help serve the Communion, I was humbled in the ministry that I was receiving and offering. It was a visible blessing of Cora’s ministry settling over us.”

Teachers, moving quietly and intentionally among the congregation, provide powerful support for pastors and other priesthood members. Because they are in tune with the Spirit, they become aware of those who are broken, hurting, need encouragement, or need prayer.

They remind the congregation that caring for the “least” extends beyond the pews of the church. They invite the congregation to go where God already is at work in the lives of people in their neighborhoods.
In my role as a full-time minister, I visit many congregations and groups in a variety of settings and for various reasons. As I enter into fellowship with these groups, I try to envision what a first-time visitor would experience without an official title, interconnected history, families, or common acquaintances.

I mentally note how my initial impressions connect with my understanding of the character and values of the people. How do they welcome newcomers? What is important to them? What motivates them to come together? Why do they do what they do?

Although these questions and concerns can be complex and multi-layered, my enthusiasm for growing in relationship usually is fueled in direct proportion to the ministry of hospitality I experience. Acts of hospitality, compassion, and kindness are what I understand to be the essence of the deacon’s ministry.

The ministries associated with the priesthood office of deacon focus on modeling Jesus as comforter. Through the ministries of hospitality and welcome, we invite people to participate in the journey toward a peaceable and compassionate way of living. These ministries prepare people to awaken to the sacredness of their lives and experience the joy and value of gathering in community.

There is great power in genuinely being invited to be part of something grander than our individual selves. The deacon’s ministry upholds the Worth of All Persons and helps us see the connectedness of our existence, despite what an individualistic and fiercely competitive society promotes.

The deacon’s ministry extends comfort to those who are uncertain, fearful, alienated, or simply searching for healthy relationships.

Although we often define ministry in terms of specific people and their roles, creating rigid boundaries of different roles is unhealthy. Limiting a priesthood office’s scope to specific acts, duties, and stereotypes diminishes the broader possibilities of God’s ever-present invitation to servanthood.

Although we often define ministry in terms of specific people and their roles, creating rigid boundaries of different roles is unhealthy. Limiting a priesthood office’s scope to specific acts, duties, and stereotypes diminishes the broader possibilities of God’s ever-present invitation to servanthood.

It is not simply the roles of the deacon that are important to clarify. Of more importance is focusing on how we shape the whole lives of persons participating in ministry to become the living expression of Jesus, who comforts, sustains, and walks with people. For me, the term deacon ministry better describes the holistic focus of this priesthood office instead of terms such as “roles and duties of the deacon.”

Our emphasis should be on Christ-like ministry and not the job description of the person who keeps the keys to the facility. When I receive healthy “deacon ministry,” I have an invaluable sense of acceptance, belonging, and connectedness with others. This type of ministry is what we hope to enliven when we call people to serve in this office.

Knowing God’s Generosity Is the Foundation of Deacon Ministry

At the foundation of the deacon’s ministry is the awareness of God’s presence and generosity. People responding to this call also are present in the lives of people and are generous in sharing time, talents, and treasures.
Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint. Break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts.

She took housecleaning jobs to help pay her bills. Not owning a car, she used a bus and walked throughout the metropolitan area without complaint and with a smile and pleasant greeting to all. She also participated steadfastly in her congregation. People could depend on her being available to serve in various ways.

Although she had limited financial means, she was exemplary in sharing without thought of return. Could it be otherwise in the domain of God, who eternally gives all for the sake of creation?

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

For many years, I worked from the church office connected to the North Valley Congregation in Colorado. During that time, I became acquainted with Ellen, a congregation member and a sharer of the deacon’s ministry. Although being socially reserved, Ellen was a visible presence in her community.

There is great power in genuinely being invited to be part of something grander than our individual selves.

It is imperative to understand that when you are truly baptized into Christ you become part of a new creation. By taking on the life and mind of Christ, you increasingly view yourselves and others from a changed perspective. Former ways of defining people by economic status, social class, sex, gender, or ethnicity no longer are primary. Through the gospel of Christ a new community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love is being born as a visible sign of the coming reign of God.

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:5

After graduating from college, I moved to Bakersfield, California, to start my first career job. When I walked into the local, then-RLDS congregation, the first person I met was Bill. We appeared to have little in common. Bill was a war veteran, 40 years older,
somewhat gruff and unsophisticated, not particularly sociable, not someone I’d necessarily choose as a friend.

Bill, however, chose me.

As was common in the mindset of those years, the older generation believed the way to keep younger people engaged in the congregation was to give them jobs. So I soon found myself making home visits with Bill. Once a month we visited two or three families.

Some people were shut-ins, and some were twice-a-year attendees. Although Bill was not a “people-person,” he knew their needs and understood the importance of being in relationship and connected with them.

Bill and I formed an unlikely team, yet we continued our visiting schedule for a couple of years and had many interesting conversations—interesting because we had several contrasting opinions and views.

My experiences with Bill taught me that despite our differences we all are on a journey of searching and discovery. Hospitality and welcome can blossom while wrestling with prejudices, injury, and self-doubt. The key is to commit to being present with one another.

Compassion grows and matures when people risk entering into relationship with others, even those who look, sound, and think differently.

Although Bill never accepted a priesthood call, he was a dedicated disciple, providing deacon ministry of comfort and compassion by being a faithful presence in the lives of people. Being a faithful presence is critical for extending welcome and hospitality.

The Deacon’s Ministry Prepares and Nurtures the Community

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

—Acts 2:42–47 NRSV

My home congregation has many people who share wonderful deacon ministry. Although we are far from being the type of idyllic community described in Acts 2, we, nevertheless strive to be a welcoming and hospitable presence in our community.

Some people are adamant advocates for keeping the facility well-groomed and inviting. Some people faithfully attend to the needs of worship services and other congregational activities. Some people constantly remind us about the needs and appropriate responses to social-justice issues. Some people continue to promote deeper connections with neighbors. Some people faithfully keep in contact with a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. Some people provide ongoing pastoral support to congregants in times of need.

Not surprisingly, different people have various emphases of ministerial focus, but collectively, we share in deacon ministry. In our piecemeal fashion, ministers serve to prepare sacred space where hospitality and welcome are extended, needs of people are addressed, relational connections are strengthened, and the Holy Spirit is encountered.

My congregation’s invitation and challenge, however, is to grow our individual and collective capacity to learn, become, and carry out the deacon’s ministry that brings comfort and nurturing to our community.

The Quiet Comforter

I often am hard-pressed to identify clearly what needs to happen and
who needs to respond to the needs of enhancing the deacon's ministry. The context differs from one congregation to the next.

People, circumstances, resources, skills, and immediate needs often differ. A network of partnering with many people, including pastors, financial officers, bishops, and jurisdictional leaders, is important in addressing what steps need to happen to enhance the ministry of deacons.

It's easier to identify a severe lack of healthy deacon ministry. Where this deficiency exists, I do not feel welcomed or invited to become part of the group. I sense an atmosphere of drudgery and inward-looking despair. I wonder about the group's earnest desire for a healthy future. If this unease is not shifted, it usually evolves into congregational dis-ease.

The blessing and beauty of the deacon's ministry is that it serves as a quiet comforter. We best know what this ministry of presence is about when we experience it. Ministers who share genuine hospitality and welcome respond not from duty, but from joy in following the example of Christ.

The ministry of deacons and all who seek to serve in these ministries is magnified by acceptance and compassion, steadfast companionship, and knowing God as the generous source of life.

Deacons represent Christ primarily as ministers of presence who model Jesus as Comforter through ministries of hospitality, preparation, and addressing the physical needs of people, especially the poor. Deacons especially proclaim and promote the cause of the Peaceable Kingdom by nurturing individuals, households, and families in the congregation and community.

— Ministry and Priesthood flyer
"Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission"

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. How do deacons in your congregation bring a ministry of hospitality?
2. Does your congregation take the ministry of deacons for granted?
3. How do deacons bring comfort to your guests? To your congregational members?
4. Discuss the relationship of generosity with the ministry of deacons.
5. Discuss the importance of relationships to the ministry of deacons.
6. How do you see the ministry of deacons relating to each Mission Initiative?
7. How do you see the ministry of deacons complementing the ministry of other priesthood members or disciples?
8. How does the ministry of deacons extend beyond the church walls?

— Greg Clark, Integrated Communications

David M. Nii is assigned to the Asia USA Mission Field. He holds the priesthood office of bishop. He also has served as apostolic assistant for the West Central USA Mission Field, president and financial officer for the Rocky Mountain USA Mission Center, bishop of the Denver Stake, and stewardship minister for the West Central States Region. Born in Hilo, Hawaii, he earlier worked as a petroleum-production engineer and engineering consultant.
New Course: 
Ministry of Deacons

By David Nii, Asia Field

The new course on Ministry of the Deacon will help prepare people to be ministers of welcome and hospitality who model Jesus as Comforter. The course also will be a good refresher for people already engaged in these ministries. Participants will be encouraged to go deeper into their lives of discipleship and reflect on how Community of Christ’s Enduring Principles inform our ministry and service.

The eight lessons comprising the course:

1. Principles of Faithful Priesthood Ministry
   This reflects on the “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry” that explore nine expectations, which all priesthood members and ordinands are asked to review and incorporate in their ministry.

2. Deacon as Minister of Welcome
   This explores the meaning of being a minister of presence and the scope of creating sacred space for people to encounter Christ.

3. It’s All about Understanding the Other
   This upholds the ongoing initiative of pursuing peace through creating healthy, compassionate relationships.

4. Generosity Flows from Compassionate Hearts
   This raises appreciation for God’s generous nature and our faithful response as life stewards of grace.

5. Let the Spirit Breathe
   This expands understanding of the sacraments and how God’s revelation is experienced through them.

6. Creating Sacred Community
   This advocates for healthy community-building through the Enduring Principles of Blessings of Community and Unity in Diversity.

7. When Did We See You Hungry?
   This promotes the ongoing response to confront the issues of poverty, oppression, and marginalization.

8. Let Us Work with Each Other,
   Let Us Work Side by Side
   This reminds ministers about their need for collaboration, partnership, and giftedness of others as they respond to their call.

The course format includes readings and discussion points, interactive exercises, video, reference resources, spiritual-formation practices, and moments of blessing. All of these are included to help participants best grow in response to their calls to ministry and to model Jesus as Comforter.
Many people think that the deacon’s job is just taking care of the facilities. However, the deacon is not only a building manager, the deacon is a minister of Jesus Christ. The deacon creates a worship environment that allows space for the Spirit to move freely among the people. Part of the deacon’s role is to remove barriers to vibrant worship.

—excerpt from Ministry of the Deacon course pilot

When you walk into the Dundalk Congregation in Baltimore, Maryland, prepare for a warm welcome by Paul Wolfe! Paul serves the congregation in all kinds of ways. You usually can find him in the audiovisual enclave at the back of the church, conveniently located next to the door. From there, under the guise of audiovisual tech, he plies his ministry of hospitality. No one gets by him without a greeting, and everyone gets the help needed to get comfortable and prepare to worship.

Paul is who I think of when I hear the deacon is the “minister of first impressions.” Paul is a minister of Jesus Christ. Paul is a deacon in Community of Christ, and he has ministered to me.

If you get the opportunity to worship with the Power House Congregation in Baltimore, you’ll notice what a great job it does with projection. The entire worship service, from opening praise song to closing announcement, is projected. This encourages everyone’s joyful participation.

What I didn’t notice until I preached there and was invited to bring PowerPoint slides to accompany my sermon was how Robert Smead quietly and competently runs the projection and sound systems. He seems to know intuitively what to do. He is always thinking about what is needed to allow the Holy Spirit to dance among the people!

Robert is a minister of Jesus Christ. Robert was a deacon (recently ordained to priest), and he has ministered to me.

Deacons like Paul, Robert, and so many others welcome us to worship, offer gifts of hospitality and preparation, attend to the needs of the people, and make space for the Spirit to move among the congregation. I am so grateful for their powerful ministry!
Priesthood is a sacred covenant involving the highest form of stewardship of body, mind, spirit, and relationships. The priesthood shall be composed of people of humility and integrity who are willing to extend themselves in service for others and for the well-being of the faith community.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:6a

As a member of Community of Christ, I know the ministry of numerous priesthood members has enriched my life. Some have been ministers with years of experience; others have been newly ordained. Despite their diversity of age, experience, education, and background, those who have made the most significant impact shared notable characteristics.

They were active in the church’s life, but their ministerial involvement with people reached beyond the walls of the church. Their ministry was motivated by a simple, genuine love for people and was centered in their personal relationship with Christ—a covenant that drew them into service and caused them to care deeply for their world. As they reached out to me and others, the potency of that covenant was felt.

A new Temple School ordination-preparation course, *Introduction to Priesthood Ministry*, centers on this principle of covenant. It recognizes that other courses will examine the specific responsibilities of each priesthood office. *Introduction to Priesthood Ministry*, however, will explore the covenant principles at the heart of faithful priesthood ministry. These covenant principles form the foundation on which responsibilities of specific priesthood offices are built.

### Covenant: A Familiar and Important Theme

The idea of covenant is a familiar theme in scripture and the church’s heritage. Sometimes we understand covenant as an agreement, but this does not adequately convey what scriptural authors meant when using the term. The scriptural idea of covenant means much more. It is an agreement characterized by faith, marked by God’s promise, and grounded in the hope of God’s vision for the future.

For instance, in ancient times God made a covenant with Abraham. It involved a wonderful promise, but it also asked Abraham to catch a vision of the future and to walk faithfully toward it. That covenant became foundational for generations of people who would learn about living together under God’s care.

Prophets held up God’s covenant like a compass when calling people to faithful living. It was a call that asked for more than intellectual belief. It asked people to realign their lives with God’s purposes. It is no surprise the psalmist would sing of the covenant’s importance.

In scriptures, when people entered into covenant with God, they did not do so as spectators. Rather, they entered as participants in God’s unfolding intentions for people and the planet. It is the same for us today.

As Jesus drew his disciples together for one last evening, he could have done any number of things with them. What he chose, however, was...
to invite them into a new covenant revealed in his body and blood—a covenant we remember each time we join in the Lord’s Supper.

In Community of Christ, we affirm that God also calls us into covenant. We don’t just “join the church” when we are baptized and or confirmed; we enter a covenant with God and the church that shapes us all the days of our lives.

Covenant as Central to Effective Ministry

Introduction to Priesthood Ministry affirms that effective priesthood ministry also is centered on a covenant. Priesthood duties and responsibilities are essential. However, if priesthood members center their ministry only on duties, it is possible for their service to become more mechanical than life-giving. When priesthood members are centered on a covenant with Christ, their duties resonate with the vibrancy of that relationship.

Likewise, we understand that priesthood members receive certain authority when ordained. If one centers ministry on the idea of authority, then it’s easy to become focused on something other than humble service. When ministers center on a covenant with Christ, humility and love swallow and amplify any authority they have.

The priesthood covenant, however, is not just between the priesthood member and God. Introduction to Priesthood Ministry affirms, “Ordination to priesthood involves a covenant relationship with God and the church community” (Ministry and Priesthood in Community of Christ).

The course is built on the idea that the priesthood covenant may be personal, but it certainly is not private. “Priesthood calling is misunderstood if it is seen as a private matter or a personal right apart from the church’s life in Jesus Christ” (Ministry and Priesthood in Community of Christ).

Given the centrality of “covenant,” Introduction to Priesthood Ministry is organized around nine “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry.” Those principles:

1. Engage in ongoing faith and spiritual practices to deepen my relationship with God and others through study and spiritual formation.

2. Affirm and promote Christ’s mission of invitation, compassionate ministries, and justice and peacemaking; helping prepare others for Christ’s mission; and partnering with other priesthood in leading congregations in Christ’s mission.

“...we enter a covenant with God and the church that shapes us all the days of our lives.”
3. Provide ministry consistent with the church’s identity, mission, message, and beliefs as expressed in *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs* (current edition) and other current official documents.

4. Model an ethical, moral, and holistic lifestyle.

5. Model generosity as a regular contributor to mission tithes (local, mission center, and worldwide ministries), according to my true capacity.

6. Protect the safety and well-being of children and youth, including, where applicable, being a Registered Children and Youth Worker.

7. Actively participate in congregational life or similar church expressions when congregational life is not available.

8. Participate annually in educational or spiritual-formation experiences offered by my congregation, mission center, apostolic mission field, or World Church.

9. Develop and implement a plan for ministry that uses my gifts to advance Christ’s mission.

*Introduction to Priesthood Ministry* explores each of these Covenant Principles in various ways. While the course contains material for learners to read or hear, much of the course helps the learner internalize these principles through participation in exercises and reflections.

**Knowing, Being, Doing**

Effective ministry is not just a set of ideas. It is lived. It is integrated into one’s heart, mind, and practice. Consequently, *Introduction to Priesthood Ministry* does more than simply present the learner with ideas to consider.

Each section of the course contains material for *knowing*. In other words, it contains concepts, information, and material for the learner to grasp intellectually. These concepts frame important aspects of priesthood ministry and are presented through readings, videos, and various exercises.

In addition, each section is concerned with *being*, which involves how people internalize and integrate principles and practices into their inner lives and character. *Being* is at the core of who we are. Consequently, each section of the course includes exercises designed to help principles and practices sink deeper into one’s life and awareness.

Finally, we understand ministry ultimately is to be lived with skill and compassion. Therefore, each section of the course includes opportunities to help the learner put principles into practice through live application or *doing*.

This trifold emphasis on *knowing, being, and doing* is consistent with the life and ministry of Jesus, who acquired ministerial knowledge through study, observation, and relationships. His life of spiritual practice, ethical living, and deep love for people cultivated a rich sense of his own being. Ultimately, his love of God and people motivated him consistently to live his faith through acts of courageous service.

As already stated, priesthood ministry grows from one’s covenant with Christ and the church. Therefore, knowing, being, and doing are woven together in people as they grow in covenant relationship with the One who modeled this integration for all of us.

**Church Members and Priesthood Members**

Another important point must be made if we are to understand *Introduction to Priesthood Ministry* in its proper context. It is not the primary role of church members—as participants in divine covenant—only to receive ministry. It is the primary role of church members to give ministry to people in their communities, as well as people in the congregation. This ministry is to be given “according to their gifts” and takes countless forms.

Church members have entered a
For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. Author David Schaal talks about priesthood members who have impacted his life. Think of your own experiences. How have various priesthood members mentored, guided, taught, and loved you?

2. How did you respond when a priesthood member disappointed you? What does this say about your covenant with Christ?

3. Schaal says prophets “held up God’s covenant like a compass.” How have the covenants you celebrate through the sacraments given you direction?

4. Discuss what it means to be a participant, rather than a spectator, in a covenant with God.

5. How do you see the concept of covenant relating to priesthood ministries? To the ministry of a disciple?

6. Review the nine “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry.” All are important and necessary, but which speak to you most compellingly?

7. How do priesthood members reflect the concept of covenant in knowing, being, and doing?

8. How does your congregation reflect its covenant with Christ in terms of servanthood?

9. Discuss the relationship of covenant with the Enduring Principle of Responsible Choices.

—Greg Clark, Integrated Communications

David Schaal served as a member of the church’s First Presidency from 2005–2012. Previously, he was a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. He now serves as vice president for student life at Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa.
Have you heard scripture used in church or public discourse and wondered, “Is that what it really means?” Have you wondered what your church believes about scripture, or how to make sense of a passage or story that seems contradictory to the values Jesus taught? Have you looked at the assigned lectionary text for an upcoming Sunday ministry assignment and thought, “What am I supposed to do with that?” Or, have you feared being assigned to preach on a passage with which you have no relationship yet, convinced there is nothing it can say to you, or you can say with it to your congregation? Or, do you just want some tools to help you explore a book of the Bible that intrigues you?

These questions and many others guided our creation of the new Temple School course, “Introduction to Scripture.” It soon will be available in video form with accompanying print materials for easy use by facilitators and students. The videos are an intrinsic part of the course, which we hope will make the basic information accessible to a wide audience. The course book contains much of the text of the presentations, plus additional readings, resources, and worksheets.

Nearly three decades ago Temple School’s “Introduction to Scripture” became a required course for all ordinands. The course went through subsequent modifications, the most recent edition appearing in 2001. We have long thought it was time not simply to modify the course, but to completely recreate it. Factors pointing to this need include new knowledge and experience in the life of the church; new clarity about Community of Christ’s identity, message, and mission; the ever-growing need for responsible use of scripture in public ministries; and the growing demand for serious study of scripture.

Some four years ago, we began this project. We are so pleased to see it nearing completion and are hopeful it will be useful—maybe even transformative—in developing disciples and priesthood members to serve Christ’s mission.

What should participants expect? “Introduction to Scripture” consists of eight sessions of about 1½ hours each that combine worship, instruction, discussion, personal reflection, and practice exercises. The aim is to help students understand what scripture is and isn’t, to provide tools to explore scripture better, and to enhance communion with God through it.

Important Elements for Each Session

1. **Lectio Divina.** Each session begins with an encounter with scripture in a video segment or a suggested passage. In this
way, we are not just talking about scripture, but letting scripture open our hearts and minds toward God every time we come together for class. After all, the purpose of knowing more about scripture is so it can more effectively connect us to the real and living God to which it points. Sometimes this will be a simple meditation on a single verse; sometimes you’ll be invited into a story in Jesus’ life. But always the purpose will be to allow scripture to bring us into sincere engagement with the Holy.

2. “Scripture in Community of Christ.” This statement publicly expresses Community of Christ’s theology of scripture in nine affirmations. First issued in 2003 and subsequently published in Sharing in Community of Christ, the statement is worthy of ongoing exploration. Each session includes thoughtful consideration and discussion of one or two affirmations. Deeper familiarity with “Scripture in Community of Christ,” will nurture responsible scripture use in the church today.

3. Instructional Topics. The videos and course book explore instructional topics we consider vital to an introductory understanding of scripture. Here’s a glimpse at the eight sessions:
   - **Session 1:** This session asks, “What Is Scripture?” How did certain writings become scripture? We look at the complex and sometimes centuries-long process of canonization for all of our books of scripture.
   - **Session 2:** “Scripture in the Life of the Church” considers why ongoing interpretation is necessary and what role scripture plays in discerning God’s will for the church today. We also explore the nature of translation and how using varied translations of the Bible can enhance our understanding of a passage.
   - **Session 3:** In “Understanding Genre and Literary Context” we examine why it is important for interpreters to understand the type of literature particular books or passages are written in. Identifying genre is especially helpful when encountering types of literature foreign to us. For instance, people often mistake the genre of “apocalypse” with predictions for our own time. This yields tragic ethical results while blinding the reader to the original intent of the author.
   - **Session 4:** “Understanding the Importance of Historical, Cultural Context” looks at why it is crucial to know as much as possible about the circumstances of the author and audience of a passage. Learning the back-
ground of a text—the situation, cultural assumptions, and the concepts used—gives invaluable insights into a passage’s meaning and how or if it is relevant today.

**Session 5:** “Using the Old Testament Responsibly.” The Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) was the Bible of Jesus and early Christianity. It remains a significant part of our Christian canon, but how can we best read it with respect and understanding? How do we avoid using the Old Testament in ways that misrepresent it and Judaism? Also, how do we acknowledge that our Christian reading of it is through unapologetically Christ-tinted lenses?

**Session 6:** In “Dealing with Difficult Texts” we share suggestions for how to read and use scripture texts that strike one as ethically or textually problematic. What, for example, should you do when the lectionary throws you a curve, and the main passage for a Sunday raises tough questions for you? (The answer is not to pick another passage in hope that it will be easier!)

**Session 7:** “Scripture in Congregational Life.” The weekly life of the congregation is where we reconnect with the sacred story of scripture. This session explores the function of the lectionary, the place of scripture in the celebration of the sacraments and preaching, and how to create and conduct a small-group Bible study oriented toward disciple formation. An important feature of session 7 is a video of a small-group study on a text from 1 Corinthians.

**Session 8:** “Scripture Study and the Holy Spirit’s Call” connects the study of scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. We also offer suggestions about how to select reliable resources for scripture study.

4. **An Introduction to Basic Exegesis.** *Exegesis* is a word becoming familiar in Community of Christ vocabulary. Of Greek origin, it literally means “leading out.” When applied to scripture, exegesis refers to the practices and methods by which one “leads out” the meaning of a text. Exegesis is about responsible interpretation.

We have taught exegetical method in many settings—congregation, mission center, university, and seminary. Over many years, we’ve noted how learning a systematic approach to a scripture text consistently delights and frees participants to go deeper. A common student response to learning these methods is, “Now when I look at a scripture passage, I don’t feel like I’m in the dark. Knowing where to begin and how to gain more understanding helps me get more out of scripture and will help me share it more clearly with my congregation.” We have created this course so each of the eight sessions introduces a new step of interpretation and affords participants a chance to practice each step as they work through the class.

**Scheduling this Course**

While “Introduction to Scripture” is designed to be used in eight 90-minute sessions, it also can be offered in four meetings, each comprising two sessions, lasting at least three hours. Because there are required reading and or listening assignments before each session, as well as exegeti-
cal skills to practice at the end of each session, we are convinced that squeezing the whole course into a single day or weekend will be counterproductive. Likewise, Sunday school classes, which typically last an hour or less, are not compatible with the goals of this course.

In creating this course, we conducted a content pilot, trying out the content and initial written materials with a small class, and a presentation pilot, videotaping a live class. This helped us develop a good sense for the time needed to do justice to the course material and the exegetical steps.

We conducted the videoed class over two weeks, meeting three hours two Sunday afternoons and two Wednesday evenings. This seemed to provide sufficient time to do readings before class and momentum enough to stay focused on the exegetical practices. Giving participants adequate time to learn and absorb new concepts and practices is crucial so they can give scripture the serious attention it deserves.

Why a Course on Scripture?

Sometimes we begin a class on scripture with a quote from the early medieval Christian author, Gregory the Great (540–604 CE). He remarks in his book, *Morals in the Book of Job*, “Scripture is like a river, broad and deep: shallow enough here for lambs to go wading, but deep enough there for the elephant to swim.” Long experience has borne out the truth of Gregory’s adage. Without deciding whom among us counts as “lambs” or “elephant” (since both are in all of us), we likely can agree that our sacred texts are every bit as spacious as Gregory observed. For the church’s ongoing journey, we need reminding that “Scripture is an indispensable witness to the Eternal Source of light and truth…” (Doctrine and Covenants 163:7a).

All of us are likely familiar with the many ways scripture can be used to marginalize or wound people. If someone’s quoting of scripture makes you queasy, maybe it’s not scripture that’s making you ill, but how it’s being used. When we see scripture used recklessly, we may want to abandon it altogether or downplay its importance in the life of the church. The best antidote to irresponsible use of scripture is not to jettison the sacred story, but to go deeper into it, learning to take it more seriously, which often requires us to take it less literally. How we use scripture says loads about how deeply we’ve grasped the way of Jesus Christ.

Thank You

A special thank you goes to the two groups of students that gave us the opportunity to experiment with the content and delivery of this class, providing us with valuable feedback. Your presence, questions, and insights have been invaluable! Also, a word of thanks to our colleagues behind the cameras and around the table who helped make this a reality.

We pray this resource can be used by the Spirit to help people interact with scripture in new and exciting ways!
On behalf of the Ministry and Priesthood Team, I had the privilege of “hosting” about 40 ministers from the USA and Canada. They gathered February 15–21 at the Temple in Independence, Missouri, for the Ministry and Priesthood Writers Summit.

My role was to arrange housing, transportation, food, and other help. It was a busy week as we stretched our capacity to serve. It also was a week full of blessings.

The writers gathered at the invitation of the First Presidency. Our task was to design and write courses for disciples and people preparing for ordination to priesthood offices.

Participants primarily were field ministers who understand and represent the needs of learners in congregations. We are grateful for the time given by mission center presidents and financial officers, ministry specialists, apostolic assistants, apostles, bishops, presidents of seventy, and quorum leaders. Time spent writing, meant time away from family and other leadership duties. We also are extremely grateful for the writers who are not employed by the church. They shared their passion to create learning opportunities for priesthood members and disciples.

We learned to use a new lesson plan template, create active-learning lesson plans, and write in international English (for ease in language translation). We explored issues of diversity and inclusion. We asked the writers to consider what priesthood members should know, be, and do to minister successfully. Each lesson was to address “know, be, and do” in holistic ways.

The writing teams accepted the challenge to complete the lesson plans by the end of the week. I was skeptical we could do it. I anticipated we would get “pretty good” course outlines that would need lots of reworking. I am learning that sometimes my expectations are too small. That was true in this case.

We asked for the lessons to provide a balance of learning. We needed content to help with the knowing. We also wanted to help shape or form priesthood members by engaging them in spiritual practices with chances to connect their callings and passions for ministry with the important task of resting in God’s presence. We wanted to balance the doing of ministry with the being of ministry. This is a rather new approach for learning.

We felt it was important to model what we wanted the writers to accomplish. We began our time together in worship. We shared in Communion and received a prayer of blessing by David Brock. We planned worship moments and periods of spiritual formation and blessing to weave throughout our time together. Not wanting to drain every bit of creativity from the writers, we avoided over-scheduling. Once the basics were in place, we set the writing teams free to create.
Once I tried to go it alone in priesthood ministry. I thought the Holy Spirit and I could provide all of the ministry needed.

I was a young elder. A middle-aged married couple was having serious marital problems. They asked me to visit and counsel with them over a series of several months. Did I mention that I was not yet married?

My well-intentioned listening and suggestions may have provided some temporary help. However, I shudder even now as I consider the quality of ministry that could have been offered.

What if I had teamed with a priesthood member who had the skills to really help or the experience to know when and how to refer the couple to a professional counselor? Perhaps the marriage could have been saved. I’ll never know.

I also recall times when I shared in ministry with other priesthood members. My most meaningful and effective experiences in ministry—home visits, cottage (evangelism) meetings, hospital ministry, and retreat and camp ministry—occurred with other priesthood members.

A seventy and I once visited a woman who was severely depressed. Her husband had left her that day, and she was contemplating suicide. She felt her life had no intrinsic value. She had lost all hope.

My ministry companion that day had much more background than I in such situations. His ability to understand and relationally connect made a huge difference in a positive outcome.

As stated in our Basic Beliefs, God’s nature is primarily relational, or communal. This truth is affirmed in the concept of the Trinity as a way of understanding and relating to God.

If God’s nature is primarily relational and communal, then it naturally follows that priesthood ministry meant to draw people closer to God and each other is fundamentally relational and communal.

I believe a spiritual principle is at work in God’s universe of reconciling, redemptive ministry that amplifies the positive impact of priesthood ministry when it is offered with other priesthood members. Recently, I was reading the book, Images of Christian Ministry, by Donald E. Messer. Because I was working on this article, the following quote caught my attention:

…ministry is often viewed as individualistic acts of service rather than as the expression of God’s gift of grace to the community of faith. We imagine ourselves to be religious entrepreneurs, self-sufficient in our sawdust evangelism or prophetic thundering or pastoral counseling or whatever. Instead of acknowledging our common status as sinners, we are sometimes unwilling to admit our own vulnerability and need for others. We are not private practitioners, but representatives called by God, confirmed by the church, and in covenant with colleagues.

While the book is focused on full-time ministers, the principle undergirding this passage is equally applicable to all ordained priesthood. In “Ministry and Priesthood in Community of Christ, Part 1: Theological Foundations,” we find a similar statement: “We do not engage in mission [priesthood ministry] alone, but in community with others.”

Why is this principle so important? Effective ministry in today’s world,
fraught with so many complexities and problems, is not easy. On a given day a priesthood member may be faced with personal, family, or congregational issues that defy simple or scripted answers. No priesthood member has all of the gifts, insights, education, and experience necessary to adequately relate the gospel in all the types of situations that confront ordained ministers. However, the priesthood as a community of diverse servant ministers has a vast reservoir of personal, intellectual, professional, and spiritual gifts from which to respond.

Serving together also provides regular opportunities for ministerial enrichment through mentoring relationships. Mentoring is how the ministerial effectiveness of the church is increased. Looking back, my best ministerial development came through relationships with priesthood members who actively mentored me by regularly offering opportunities to team with them in ministry. I suspect the same could be said of many other priesthood members in the church.

Additionally, ministry in teams is important because there is inherent risk in ministry. Understanding the movements of the Holy Spirit requires joint—as well as individual—discernment. Increased emotional vulnerability and spiritual intimacy with others can lead to unhealthy behaviors and crossing of relational boundaries. Ministry in teams provides greater accountability for priesthood members. It also protects against priesthood members being falsely accused of unethical actions by unstable or vindictive people.

Individualism in priesthood ministry is unwise, even vain. We are informed in the ancient wisdom literature of Hebrew scripture that:

> Again, I saw vanity under the sun: the case of solitary individuals...Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. —Ecclesiastes 4:7–10 NRSV

Jesus certainly didn’t try to accomplish his mission all by himself! One of his first steps following proclamation of his mission (Luke 4:18–19) was to begin to form a multigifted team of disciples from various backgrounds to share ministry responsibility.

> Then he went out among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two... —Mark 6:6–7 NRSV

Jesus not only formed a community of diverse disciple-ministers, he intentionally sent them in teams of two to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel. Their ministerial effectiveness increased exponentially as a result.

The apostle Paul was a pivotal leader and shaper of early Christianity. His writings continue to have a significant impact on the faith we practice today. Like Jesus, he did not minister alone.

Recently I tried to identify all of the disciples Paul considered his “teammates” in ministry. While my list may not be complete, the sheer number of names makes the point.

The following people are named in the New Testament as missionary companions or co-workers with Paul in ministry: Andronicus, Apphia, Aquila, Archippus, Aristarchus,

This list includes women and men, successful business people and slaves, and people of different ethnicities and ages. Evidently, Paul saw being closely yoked with others in ministry as the ideal way ministry should happen in the Christian community.

His view of shared ministry probably came from his understanding of the church as a “body” with many parts or members that have different functions of equal value. This analogy pertains not only to the members, but to the ordained ministry.

One priesthood member or office cannot say to another, “I have no need of you.” All of the members and offices are needed for the edification and sanctification of the body of members—the body of Christ. In fact, the effective functioning of some priesthood offices is dependent on the effective functioning of others.

I recently was involved in a baptismal service during which I was to baptize three adults and preach in the worship service to follow. I had a lot of thoughts and concerns on my mind. I was blessed by an astute deacon who anticipated all the physical needs of the candidates and me without being specifically asked to do so. Consequently, I was freed to help the candidates experience the full meaning of their baptisms. All of the ministry offered—from physical preparations to conducting the sacrament—was vital to the overall experience.

Restoration history includes many instances of team ministry. The varied, yet complementary, gifts and backgrounds of Joseph Smith Jr. and Sidney Rigdon blessed the church at a pivotal time in its history. This is just one example among many.

The inspired genius of the Community of Christ priesthood structure is that it not only assumes, but promotes, partnerships in ministry. This is seen in the array of priesthood offices, the diverse giftedness and backgrounds of those called, and the overlap of some types of responsibilities.

When the Presidency was clarifying foundational concepts for ministry and priesthood emphasis, the Spirit guided us to reaffirm the inherent relationships between various priesthood offices. The “Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission” chart in the Ministry and Priesthood flyer is a result of our work together.

Besides summarizing the foci of particular priesthood offices, the chart presents insights into recommended ministry partnerships. For example, in the area of “working for economic justice,” which is how poverty is abolished, there are clear opportunities for deacons and bishops to minister together with individuals and families.

Historically, and in current practice, priests and elders with evangelism giftedness team with seventies to introduce seekers to the gospel and the church community. Because the call of the seventy is beyond a single congregation, this arrangement ensures local priesthood members are

“We do not engage in mission [priesthood ministry] alone, but in community with others.”

President F.M. Smith prophetically counseled the church in 1925 that:

The authorities of the church whose duty it is to appoint men to missionary tasks should remember the previously given instructions to send out by twos; and so far as practicable let the missionaries be so sent. There is wisdom and safety in this.

—Doctrine and Covenants 135:4

While this counsel specifically refers to missionaries, the principle of working cooperatively in ministry applies across all ministerial offices and functions.
involved with new members when the seventies are traveling elsewhere. When we review the ministerial responsibilities of teachers and evangelists, additional possibilities for team ministry emerge. A family with unresolved conflict may find blessings of forgiveness through the teacher’s encouragement of peace and healing in relationships and the spiritual nature of an evangelist.

In some areas, high priests mentor elders who are congregational pastors. The vision, wisdom, and leadership skills of high priests provide steady support to pastors as they shape congregations that express the mission of Jesus Christ. Also, high priests, through relationships with pastors, link congregations to the vision and mission of the worldwide church. This relationship blesses the congregation through broader understanding of the gospel.

Space does not allow a comprehensive treatment of all the possible combinations for priesthood team ministry, but these examples illustrate various possibilities. The overarching message is this: The priesthood structure of the church functions most effectively when it reflects God’s will that ministry be shared with others. There is great wisdom, safety, and power in this principle!

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**For Further Reflection and Discussion**

1. President Stephen M. Veazey starts by recounting an experience from early in his ministry. Think over your time as a disciple, and priesthood member, if applicable. Compare times of ministry alone and ministry offered with others.

2. Read Doctrine and Covenants 163:1. Discuss how the meaning of this scripture relates to the focus of President Veazey’s article.

3. What does it mean for ministers to know that God’s nature is primarily relational or communal?

4. How does the framework of engaging in ministry reflect the Enduring Principle of Blessings in Community?

5. In your ministry as a priesthood member and/or disciple, what blessings have you found through mentoring relationships?

6. Some people view priesthood responsibilities primarily from the pulpit. How do scripture verses such as Ecclesiastes 4:7–10 and Mark 6:6–7 urge us to grow far beyond this notion?

7. President Veazey provides a lengthy list of people connected in ministry with Paul. Draw up a list of those you’ve joined in ministry. What do you learn from the list?

8. Review the Ministry and Priesthood flyer. What opportunities do you see in your congregation or community life for ministering with others?

—Greg Clark, Integrated Communications

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Stephen M. Veazey is president of Community of Christ. Before his ordination June 3, 2005, he served as a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. He was ordained as president of seventy at the 1988 World Conference and as an apostle at the 1992 World Conference. In April 2002, he was set apart as president of the Council of Twelve and became director of Field Ministries. Born in Tennessee, he has a bachelor’s degree in biology from the University of Tennessee, and a master’s in religion from Park College.
When my twin sister and I walked into the waters of baptism together, we promised to follow Jesus and to serve God. We joined disciples in a sacred community that also promised to invite people to Christ; abolish poverty, end suffering; and pursue peace on Earth. At age 8, we understood our promise as a vow, or pledge, to follow faithfully in Jesus’ footsteps.

The day of our confirmation, we were reminded of the continuing presence and blessing of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As twins we were assured that each of us was gifted in unique and special ways. Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b continues to assure all of us of our distinct giftedness by affirming, “All are called according to the gifts of God unto them…”

We joyfully joined a community of people that offers unconditional love and support. We agreed to join in relationship with these faithful disciples, knowing we did not walk alone. Our promise to faithfully follow Jesus—while simplistic in its depth of understanding—was genuine. Through confirmation into Community of Christ, our promise expanded to include other faithful followers. We also experienced an expanded blessing of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

When we became adults, the simple promise to follow Jesus with other disciples expanded into a commitment and servant ministry. The two elements—commitment and servant ministry—continue to form us into holistic disciples.

Commitment involves engaging in several aspects of congregational life. Examples include regularly attending church, participating in Sunday school classes and worship, and scheduling personal times for doing spiritual practices, studying scripture, and reading church publications like the Herald. Additional examples include sharing in outreach and invitation ministries of the congregation and in church camping programs.

Committing to serve is only the beginning. The intentional fulfillment of that commitment involves servant ministry. The richest forms of servant ministry occur in relationship with others, where servant disciples and priesthood members covenant together to serve in response to God’s abundant grace and generosity.

I learned to appreciate covenant relationships during nursing school. The day before we cared for patients, each student nurse received a clinical assignment. To prepare, we read the patient’s record, reviewed the patient’s history, medications, plan of care, and anticipated what we would do to meet the patient and family needs. All this preparation involved thinking and planning.

Nurses use specific steps and tools to gather data. However, the most
important aspects of care involved being in relationship with the patient and family. Care also involved working with other health-care staff members who served as mentors. We often had to ask for help or guidance. What the textbooks said and what the patient needed frequently were not the same. Quality care involved many disciplines, each contributing expertise to benefit the patient and family.

As students, we committed to provide safe, competent, and—to the best of our abilities—professional care. The patient and family agreed to have a student nurse involved. Thankfully, a novice nurse receives a lot of grace when the patient and family members feel they are part of the care plan, have a voice in the planning, and are kept informed throughout care.

The patient, family, and student join in covenant relationship, agreeing to serve together to benefit the patient.

I believe God’s Holy Spirit is essential to all covenant relationships. What I call “God gift messages” or “promptings,” started for me in nursing school, occurred throughout my nursing career, and continue now in priesthood ministry. “God gift messages” are the “still small voice,” “disruptions in thought,” or “uneasy feelings.”

These promptings lead one to seek more information, check a patient’s condition, and call someone whose name comes to mind. They disrupt one’s thinking enough to stop and pray for whomever or whatever is foremost in your mind. The challenge is being sensitive to the promptings, stopping amid the busyness of life or the hectic work schedule, and responding to the messages.

God, through the Holy Spirit’s presence, covenants with us and freely gives messages and insights. When followed or answered, they open us to servant-ministry opportunities. If we attune, or keep our senses open, to receive God’s “gift messages,” we become faithful vessels for servant ministries. Will we faithfully attune to receive these “gift messages”? Will God’s Holy Spirit be part of our covenant relationships with other servant ministers? Are we willing vessels for God’s blessing ministries?

Student nurses learn through clinical experiences that most effective care occurs in relationship with the patient and family. It is especially

“All are called according to the gifts of God unto them...”
important to listen to the person’s needs and stories. A listening ear, gentle touch, genuine acceptance, kind presence, and openness to the Holy Spirit’s promptings all contribute to effective, compassionate care.

Patients share more openly their concerns and physical changes when we engage them as part of the care team. These same covenant-commitment and relationship principles apply to priesthood ministry. A commitment to serve as a priesthood member involves being in covenant relationship with God, oneself, other priesthood members, and those we serve. Each priesthood member has unique gifts to share with the servant-ministry team.

Priesthood offices and callings are gifts...given to provide for consistent and effective proclamation of the gospel and for equipping the whole community of disciples (church) for ministries that support Christ’s mission. ...Priesthood members covenant to provide specific forms of ministry and servant leadership necessary to sustain and lead the community as an expression of God’s [vision] expressed through the mission of Jesus Christ in the world.

—“Ministry and Priesthood in Community of Christ, Part I: Theological Foundations,” September 2013, draft, p. 11, adapted

Competent priesthood ministry emerges from disciples who learn first to receive God’s abundant grace and generosity. In response, disciples develop and strengthen their giftedness so they can share (give) more effectively in ministry to their true capacity. Then as priesthood members, the more we learn about, and offer ministry, the more knowledgeable and skillful we become. Growing allows us to minister more effectively with other disciples in sacred community.

Serving with other faithful disciples allows each of us to develop our giftedness...

Priesthood members serve most effectively in community. Doctrine and Covenants 164:2e reaffirms and reminds us “the Holy Spirit...weaves people’s giftedness into beautiful patterns of community to enrich their discipleship and to strengthen the fabric of the church.”

Priesthood members’ most effective ministry and care occur when we listen and learn the desires, needs, personal circumstances, and stories of those we serve. Yes, I mean “care” because ministry involves a listening ear, gentle touch, genuine acceptance,
kind presence, and openness to the Holy Spirit’s promptings—“God’s gift messages.”

All these aspects of care contribute to effective, compassionate, covenant priesthood ministry. After all, priesthood ministry involves being in personal relationship with others. Doctrine and Covenants 163:6a offers this helpful guidance:

Priesthood is a sacred covenant involving the highest form of stewardship of body, mind, spirit, and relationships. The priesthood shall be composed of people of humility and integrity who are willing to extend themselves in service for others and for the well-being of the faith community.

Learning to provide effective servant priesthood ministry and learning competent nursing care have similarities. Both involve study, preparation, and practice. To be most effective, both engage others in covenant relationships. New priesthood members (mentees), become effective sooner by working with experienced priesthood members who provide guidance and mentoring. The new minister and experienced minister covenant to journey together, each learning from the other. Two-by-two ministry benefits both the developing and experienced priesthood member.

The mentee may need to work with experienced priesthood mentors to learn and practice aspects of knowledge and skill for each new priesthood office. Role-playing and discussing ministry scenarios help ministers anticipate various aspects of caring ministry. These approaches help the mentee build confidence for actual ministry situations.

Mentors benefit by reviewing their initial covenant commitment to priesthood ministry and participating in another person’s learning. After all, the teacher always learns more than the student. Each priesthood member’s ministry is enhanced by joining with other priesthood members who covenant together to offer servant ministry.

Early in the work of the Priesthood Faithfulness Team, we recognized that our church writings lacked a good definition of a faithful priesthood member. An official category is called “Active Status,” but it lacked a description. The “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry” describe basic expectations for faithful ministry (see Ministry and Priesthood flyer). These principles offer specific areas of focus for priesthood members and are so essential that a new priesthood preparation course has been written. We encourage all current priesthood members and ordinands to take the course. Learning together will help all of us focus on areas for enhancing our servant priesthood ministries.

Learning about the principles of covenant begins when we prepare to enter the waters of baptism. Individually we promise to follow Jesus. We commit to follow Jesus and join others when we are confirmed as members of Community of Christ. We serve together best when we are in genuine relationship with one another.

Serving with other faithful disciples allows each of us to develop our giftedness as we recognize the unique giftedness of each person and honor our Unity in Diversity. This mutual
sharing in relationships helps us magnify our callings. Together we covenant to provide servant ministries.

Priesthood members have particular responsibilities and callings that require additional learning and development. “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry” define focus areas. The covenant principles, however, are foundational. Priesthood effectiveness requires ongoing passionate attention to God’s vision. The mission of Jesus Christ guides our ministries.

Will we join in covenant ministry with other faithful priesthood? Are we willing to learn from each other? Will we open ourselves to new understandings of faithful covenant priesthood ministry? Is Jesus’ mission guiding our ministries?

We urge each of you to remember your personal covenant journey. Recall the promise you made in the waters of baptism to follow Jesus. Remember the commitment you made to join other faithful disciples when you were confirmed a member of Community of Christ. And consider the covenant you make when serving as priesthood in servant ministry with other faithful priesthood ministers.

Covenant ministry requires faithful commitment to specific principles. “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry” offers foundational covenant principles to guide our ongoing ministry. Let’s join in covenant relationship to bring Christ-centered servant ministry.

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. Author Becky Savage of the First Presidency writes, among other things, about giftedness. Do a self-inventory. What are your gifts?
2. Are gifts intrinsic and forever, or can they change over time?
3. Explain what “relationship” means to covenant commitments.
4. Why is the development of relationships so important in bringing servant ministry?
5. Have you ever received “God gift messages”?
6. Are you always attuned to such messages, or do you sometimes discount or ignore them? What are the outcomes?
7. What is the relationship between community, giftedness, and covenant commitment?
8. Is it important for experienced priesthood members to review their covenant commitments? Explain.
9. What sort of covenant commitments have you made on your faith journey?
10. Review the “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry.” Which do you find most challenging?

—Greg Clark, Integrated Communications

Becky L. Savage was ordained a member of the Quorum of the First Presidency in March 2007. Previous assignments included serving as director of Leadership Development at Community of Christ International Headquarters and missionary coordinator and congregational consultant to the Florida USA Mission Center. She has bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing and a master’s in religion.
Priesthood faithfulness begins with faithful discipleship. Faithful discipleship emerges from ongoing faith and spiritual formation. The constant call is to follow the Living Christ and to abide in increasing measure in God’s love and vision for creation. Being comes before doing.

The following expectations will help me serve as a faithful priesthood member. In response to God’s sacred call and priesthood authority granted by Community of Christ, I covenant to:

- Engage in ongoing faith and spiritual practices to deepen my relationship with God and others through study and spiritual formation.
- Affirm and promote Christ’s mission of invitation, compassionate ministries, and justice and peacemaking; help prepare others for Christ’s mission; and partner with other priesthood in leading congregations in Christ’s mission.
- Provide ministry consistent with the church’s identity, mission, message, and beliefs as expressed in *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs, 3rd ed.* (www.CofChrist.org/resources) and other current official documents.
- Model an ethical, moral, and holistic lifestyle.
- Model generosity as a regular contributor to local and world mission tithes according to my true capacity.
- Protect the safety and well-being of children and youth, including, where applicable, being a Registered Children and Youth Worker.
- Participate in congregational life or similar church expressions when congregational life is not available.
- Participate annually in educational or spiritual-formation experiences offered by my congregation, mission center, apostolic mission field, or World Church.
- Develop and implement a plan for ministry that uses my gifts to advance Christ’s mission.
esus began his ministry by calling individuals to come and serve with him. Jesus and the disciples invited others to hear the message of God’s abundant love for all.

Jesus offered servant ministry when he recognized that those who followed him and listened to his teachings were hungry. He prayed, and meager amounts of food became an ample meal. Jesus also modeled humble servant ministry by washing his disciples’ feet.

For Community of Christ, ministry is humble service offered to communities, congregations, and the world by disciples who follow Jesus Christ. Ministry grows as we understand how God’s nature is revealed in Jesus Christ and confirmed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ’s mission is proclaimed in Luke 4:18–19 NRSV.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

When we are baptized and confirmed, we commit our lives as living expressions of Christ’s life, ministry, mission, and continuing presence in the world. Each day disciples choose to bring humble ministry. This ministry is magnified through daily spiritual practices that help draw us closer to God. In these times of spiritual connection, we sense God’s abundant grace and love for us and all creation. This loving assurance sustains us as we invite and welcome others into relationships of inclusiveness, unconditional love, justice and reconciliation, and Unity in Diversity.

By Becky Savage, 
First Presidency
From these faithful communities, some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.

When a person is presented with a call to priesthood responsibilities, the first questions are often: “What is expected of me?” and “What am I supposed to do?” The initial questions may be about the person. As one grows in understanding, the need for relationships with other priesthood members becomes evident. The most effective ministry occurs when serving with others. It also is essential to remember that disciples and priesthood members serve best as a united community focused on the mission of Jesus Christ.

Saying yes means you are making a commitment, a covenant to humble, faithful servant ministry. It is important to know what that commitment involves. “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry” were created to define specific expectations for priesthood faithfulness. The covenant principles build on the commitment to follow the Living Christ. Following Christ includes spending regular time abiding in God’s love and vision for creation. It is essential to remember and practice “being comes before doing.”

Faithful priesthood members covenant to:

• Engage in ongoing faith and spiritual practices...
• Affirm and promote Christ’s mission...
• Provide ministry consistent with the church’s identity, mission, message, and beliefs...
• Model an ethical, moral, and holistic lifestyle.
• Model generosity as a regular contributor to mission tithes (local, mission center, and worldwide ministries), according to true capacity.
• Protect the safety and well-being of children and youth...
• Actively participate in congregational life...
• Participate annually in educational or spiritual-formation experiences...
• Develop and implement a plan for ministry that uses gifts to advance Christ’s mission.

The Ministry and Priesthood flyer shows how disciples and priesthood in each office serve together to fulfill Christ’s mission. The flyer opens to reveal a chart listing columns for Disciples, Deacons, Teachers, Priests, Elders, Seventies, High Priests, Bishops, Evangelists, Apostles, and Presidency. New Temple School courses are being written or are already in pilot phases for most offices. This includes a first-time course for disciples. The Ministry of the Disciple course is foundational for all ministries, including priesthood. Thus, we recommend everyone take the new disciple course when it is available.

“Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission” involves seven areas of ministry. The descriptions for each office—disciples and priesthood members—begin with a sentence. Then a description for each office completes the sentence. The structure of the chart allows the reader to scan the continuum of responsibilities for each office and for each of the seven areas of ministry.

For example, members serving faithfully as disciples...

Represent Christ primarily as ministers...who express the nature of love of God by growing in Christ-like character, love, concern, generosity, and mission.

Disciples serving in the priesthood as teachers...

Represent Christ primarily as ministers...of presence who model Jesus as Peacemaker through interpersonal (one-to-one) reconciliation and peacemaking.

The Ministry and Priesthood flyer provides another tool for teaching us how to serve together to fulfill Christ’s mission. While tools are helpful, people bring servant ministry to life. That means each of us has some decisions to make. Will you—will we—live into the commitment we made at our baptism and confirmation? Will we follow the Living Christ’s example of humble, servant ministry?

When we serve together to fulfill Christ’s mission, we live Christ’s mission through the five Mission Initiatives: Invite People to Christ; Abolish Poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on Earth; Develop Disciples to Serve; and Experience Congregations in Mission.
A few years ago, I attended a reunion where I met a homeless woman. She had been invited to share a week with a community of strangers. This was unique, so I took time to listen to the story of another woman who had met this homeless person on multiple occasions and felt called to extend the invitation. As I listened, I realized I was encountering the ministry of one called to serve in the priesthood office of seventy.

While sharing in ministry with a congregation one weekend, I began to develop a cough that would not stop. Without any request, a woman from the congregation brought me a bottle of water. Later that day, I noticed her assisting other members who needed help. When it was time to leave, this same woman patiently waited until all the congregation had departed so she could turn out the lights, turn down the heat, and secure the church.

As I watched her offer her ministry and service, she became a blessing to my life. Through her ministry of presence, I knew I was experiencing the important priesthood ministry of a deacon.

During a closing worship, the gathered community formed a circle and embraced hands. While holding the hand of the man who began to pray, I felt this overwhelming presence of a spiritual companion who was providing a blessing to those gathered. In that moment of sacredness, I knew I was encountering one called to be a minister of blessing in the priesthood office of evangelist.

In these encounters—where priesthood ministry and service were offered—I recognized the rich tapestry of giftedness that exists among those called to serve for the benefit of the church community.

Priesthood is a gift from God that helps form disciples to live Christ’s mission.

Priesthood is a gift that helps shape congregational communities to be living expressions of God’s abundant generosity.

Priesthood is a gift that can help us learn to be living expressions of the church’s Enduring Principles in our congregations, communities, workplaces, and schools.

Ultimately, priesthood is a gift because God seeks to be present with us and calls people from the body to serve as the incarnation of Christ in our midst.

In 1887, Joseph Smith III brought words to the church that broadened our understanding that “All are called according to the gifts of God unto them...” (Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b).

In these words, we recognize everyone has a role and place to join with God to accomplish the mission of Christ. We also know the Holy Spirit calls some from the body to specific roles of ministry for sustaining and leading the faith community.

In the first-century church, there was a need to call some from the body to provide the variety of ministries that cared for the expanding community.

The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians (4:11–13 NRSV) holds a message about the gifts provided to build the ministry and mission of the church:

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.
Some roles in this scripture fit priesthood offices in the church today. But the message in Ephesians is not trying to emphasize specific “offices.” Rather, it uplifts the variety of gifts to the church that when working together build the body of Christ. These gifts allow the body—the faith community—to grow to its fullest potential in Christ.

The vastness of God’s creative nature finds expression in the variety of gifts and skills in human life. Gifts that God offers us for the community’s benefit allow the church to be served and nurtured so it can serve and nurture others.

The call to priesthood is not more important than the call to discipleship. The call to priesthood is first a call to servant-leadership ministry. The church community needs this kind of ministry to nurture, empower, and send disciples as the incarnation of Christ’s mission.

When the presence and attitude of servant ministry is lacking, the spiritual empowerment through the full spectrum of priesthood ministry is diminished. This was a clear message in Doctrine and Covenants 156:7:

Hear, O my people, regarding my holy priesthood. The power of this priesthood was placed in your midst from the earliest days of the rise of this work for the blessing and salvation of humanity. There have been priesthood members over the years, however, who have misunderstood the purpose of their calling. Succumbing to pride, some have used it for personal aggrandizement. Others, through disinterest or lack of diligence, have failed to magnify their calling or have become inactive. When this has happened, the church has experienced a loss of spiritual power, and the entire priesthood structure has been diminished.

All priesthood members hold mutual responsibility for helping to encourage and develop members in their discipleship. But priesthood members also must give attention to their responsibility to nurture and develop their spiritual lives and ministerial skills so they can offer the depth of pastoral, spiritual, and ministerial leadership needed.

New priesthood resources intentionally help priesthood members understand what they need to “know” about serving in their priesthood office. Even more, priesthood members need to consider what it means to “be” priesthood members and what each priesthood office is to “do” to live fully into the call of ministry and mission.

The formation of one’s acceptance to serve in the priesthood is a lifelong journey of intentional development. Thoughtful consideration for how to express giftedness through the priesthood office is the task of those who accept their calling and enter a covenant relationship with God, the congregation, and the worldwide church.

It is important to understand a priesthood call is not a calling to a...
generic office. God does not call someone to be a generic priest or elder.

Each priesthood office has a special ministry focus. Within that specific ministry focus, each deacon, teacher, priest, elder, seventy, high priest, bishop, evangelist, apostle, and the Presidency must spend intentional time discovering how best his or her giftedness is lived out within the office and aligned with our Mission Initiatives. This takes time to discern through study, prayer, and conversation with the congregational pastor or mission center president.

When priesthood members give intentional time to seek guidance through prayer and from those instrumental in the calling process, the church, congregation, and community experience blessings as recipients of their ministry and service.

Over the past few years, leaders have been working to understand more clearly the variety of specific priesthood ministries in the church. From this study, reflection, and discussion have come enhanced descriptions of the ministry and role each office contributes to the whole ministry and mission of the church.

The following briefly describes how the ministry of disciples and each priesthood office represents Christ. They represent Christ primarily as ministers...

- **Disciple**—who express the nature and love of God by growing in Christ-like character, love, concern, generosity, and mission.
- **Deacon**—of presence who model Jesus as Comforter through ministries of hospitality, preparation, and addressing the physical needs of people, especially the poor.
- **Teacher**—of presence who model Jesus as Peacemaker through interpersonal (one-to-one) reconciliation and peacemaking.
- **Priest**—of presence who model Jesus as Friend in households, families, congregations, and community.
- **Elder**—of congregational community-building, leading others in the congregation in pursuing the Mission Initiatives.
- **Seventy**—of evangelism through witnessing, inviting, and church planting.
- **High Priest**—of vision who model servant leadership and mentor and develop leaders in congregations, mission centers, and communities.
- **Bishop**—of generosity who express God’s grace and mentor Aaronic priesthood.
- **Evangelist**—of blessing through spiritual companionship, sanctuary, and revival.
- **Apostles**—of leading global mission by inviting others to Christ’s Peace as apostolic witnesses.
- **Presidency**—of prophetic visioning and worldwide church leadership.

These descriptions are just one part of the full expression of ministry and priesthood. The chart, “Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission,” in the Ministry and Priesthood flyer (September 2013) provides more detail for disciples and each priesthood office.

Future articles in this Ministry and Priesthood series will provide more information on how each priesthood office contributes to the full ministry of the church.

The range of ministry provided through the priesthood offices seeks to respond to the whole of human life and the needs of the church community.

When we expand our understanding of the ministries offered through the spectrum of priesthood offices, we discover in this full team of ministers the complete expression of the Mission Initiatives.

This is not to imply priesthood members are solely responsible for doing the work of the church’s Mission Initiatives. Priesthood members, as servant leaders, have an important place in developing and leading disciples to faithfully discern, discover, and live the mission of Christ that aligns with each disciple’s giftedness.

When priesthood members function from an increased focus of ministry that aligns with their calling and skills, the church community receives the increased spiritual power to truly make a difference.

A need exists today for priesthood members, in partnership with all
disciples, to give attention to how giftedness and calling can be expressed more fully for the church to respond to the changing dynamics in our communities.

As a prophetic people you are called, under the direction of the spiritual authorities and with the common consent of the people, to discern the divine will for your own time and in the places where you serve. You live in a world with new challenges, and that world will require new forms of ministry. The priesthood must especially respond to that challenge, and the church is admonished to prayerfully consider how calling and giftedness in the Community of Christ can best be expressed in a new time.

—Doctrine and Covenants 162:2c

These words stress the importance of priesthood members responding to the needs of a changing world. If the church community is to be the incarnation of Christ and his mission in the world, the priesthood, with all the forms of ministry that represent and reflect Christ, must be experienced for the body to grow to its fullest potential.

Each Community of Christ member must take time to understand how the different priesthood offices contribute to the whole of the congregation and church community.

Disciples must take the responsibility to help priesthood members develop their callings by asking them to offer their unique ministry and service that aligns with the office they hold.

When disciples help priesthood members develop their call to ministry, and when priesthood members respond by sharing ministry and leadership arising from their office and giftedness, the whole church receives the power of priesthood given for the blessing and salvation of humanity.

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. Read the 12th chapter in 1 Corinthians. What parallels do you see with the expressions in President Scott Murphy’s article?
2. Think of your own congregation or mission center. What examples come to mind of the way various priesthood offices function?
3. What does it mean to see priesthood as a “gift”?
4. Discuss the relationship between a calling to priesthood and a calling to discipleship.
5. How does a person who has accepted a priesthood call take on the commitment for a “lifelong journey of intentional development”?
6. Explore the church’s website at www.CofChrist.org. Find at least three resources that help in the understanding and development of priesthood offices.
7. Discuss how the Enduring Principle of Unity in Diversity relates to the church’s priesthood structure.
8. Priesthood members often are viewed as leaders, yet President Murphy says disciples must “help priesthood members develop their call to ministry.” Why is this important, and how does it take place?

—Greg Clark
Integrated Communications

Scott Murphy was ordained a member of the Quorum of the First Presidency in April 2013. He continues to serve as director of Field Ministries, a responsibility he held during his previous role as president of the Council of Twelve Apostles. Other assignments have included director of Human Resource Ministries, president of Lamoni-Heartland USA Mission Center, Des Moines Stake president, and Lamoni Stake acting president. Scott served 19 years as a school principal, counselor, and music educator.
When I was a kid, I knew I wanted to be a minister and a leader in the church. I thought I knew what that looked like: I would preach, share the sacraments, and occasionally visit members.

I still had this concept when I was ordained to the office of priest at 19. I didn't realize I had a pretty myopic view of priesthood and leadership, and I really had no idea what God had in mind for me.

I'm not sure when I realized my calling was to something different, to someone different, but I remember specific situations and people. They hold special places in my heart. They probably ministered to me more than I did to them as I attempted to be God’s servant.

One of my ministry passions is youth and young adults. Before becoming mission center president, I spent much of my time on young-adult ministry. I even shared my new ministry calling as mission center president with the young adults before anyone else. They asked if that meant I was important now. I told them it just meant I had the opportunity to serve more people, and I still would consider them a priority.

Providing meaningful, vibrant worship services for younger people has always been critical to me. While preparing for a service our young adults would give to a congregation, we discussed the things that separated us from the Holy Spirit, things that distracted us from the peace and love the Holy Spirit could provide. We planned to place those things on the altar in the church.

Let People Know They Matter

By Heather Howard Donofrio, Alabama/Northwest Florida USA Mission Center president
One of our young adults had been imprisoned repeatedly for drug use and still was using. I casually said to him that he knew what was separating him from the Holy Spirit, and I wondered if he was willing to give up his drug habit. Little did I know what that comment would mean to him and me.

The next morning, as I arrived for the service, my friend handed me a box. Inside, I found two crack pipes. His fiancée told me the plan had been to give me one pipe and keep the other...just in case. The night before he’d decided he needed to give it all up for God.

I explained to him that once he gave the pipes to me I would not give them back. He said he understood. When he placed the box on the altar during the service, we were both emotional. I'm certain that small congregation had never had crack pipes on the altar before.

I continue to pray for my friend on his journey. As a child I never saw myself praying in a church kitchen for a man with a prominent satanic tattoo, but God’s plan can be surprising.

Then I had to figure out a way to dispose the crack pipes. As a child, I had never considered the disposal of drug paraphernalia as part of my future ministry. But God’s plan can be surprising.

Sometimes I think God has quite a sense of humor. A home-school group was meeting at a Community of Christ congregation. As a safety precaution with the kids, we always kept the church doors locked. We forgot one day.

A frightened mom called me into the kitchen that day. As I entered, I saw the source of her fear: A dirty, ragged man stood in the kitchen with her. The numbers 666 were tattooed across his forehead. I asked him how we could help him, and he told me he was hungry.

As the mother went to prepare a packaged meal, I asked what he really needed from us. He told me he had just been released from prison. Then he recounted every vile, scary thing he could about himself. As I listened, I realized he had been rejected his whole life and expected me to do the same. He finished his story by inviting me to visit a website for the Church of Satan.

As we bundled up food, drink, and silverware for him, I walked him to the door and asked if I could pray for him.

The hard, angry lines in his face softened. As he thanked me, he told me he now realized he needed to “get his life together and go back to church” (this time a Christian one).

I continue to pray for my friend on his journey. As a child I never saw myself praying in a church kitchen for a man with a prominent satanic tattoo, but God’s plan can be surprising.

I never imagined hugging teens with drug problems and telling them I loved them no matter what. I never expected to wash the feet of a convicted felon. I never imagined holding the baby of a single mother to protect her from the scorn of others. I never expected to buy clothes for the children of parents who choose addictions over the needs of their children. I never imagined providing sex education to teens who are invisible to others.

I never expected to receive such incredible blessings from a calling to be a servant to those who are invisible, downtrodden, and despised. But such ministry brings joy to my life.

Maybe my ministry hasn’t been what I expected, but it’s where God has called me to make a difference. Every day I work to make Christ’s mission mine, and having leaders willing to be servants makes a huge, incredible difference. Please don’t doubt that. In the words of one of our youth, “Miss Heather, with you we feel like we matter.”

Servant leaders let people know they matter.
Priesthood faithfulness is about trustworthy, accountable, and competent ministry. The church provides support and resources to help priesthood members find a fullness of joy, meaning, and effectiveness in their callings. Since God calls priesthood members through the church for the sake of the church’s mission, the church is called to nurture, equip, and support priesthood members for effective and faithful ministry.


Several new office-centered courses for ordinands— with support for sacraments, scripture, and “Covenant Principles of Faithful Priesthood Ministry”—will be available through Temple School by World Conference 2016. Over the next year, follow the articles in this series to learn about opportunities for education, formation, and support for priesthood members and disciples.

For current resources available to priesthood members, explore www.CofChrist.org/priesthood and visit the site often as additional resources become available.

It is vital for priesthood members to stay connected and magnify their calling. Take particular note of the ministry and development materials below:

Explore Ministry and Priesthood

- Ministry and Priesthood flyer, September 2013—(buy from Herald House). This large, foldout flyer gives a theological overview of ministry and priesthood; a
review of the nine “Covenant Principles for Faithful Priesthood Ministry;” the five Mission Initiatives; and “Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission,” an integrated chart highlighting how disciples and priesthood members serve together to provide particular ministry based on these topics:

- Represent Christ primarily as ministers...
- Especially proclaim and promote...
- Particularly minister with...
- Support sacramental ministries by...
- Promote community by...
- Promote justice and peacemaking by...
- Create ministry partnerships with...

- “Theological Foundations” (www.CofChrist.org/priesthood)
  - Draft document (September 2013)—provides the conceptual theological and organizational foundation for the support ministries, administrative processes, and educational resources to be developed related to ministry and priesthood.
  - Five video interviews with President Stephen M. Veazey (www.CofChrist.org/priesthood)

Tools for Learning and Teaching

The following resources are available from Herald House: www.heraldhouse.org:

- Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs, 3rd ed., provides a foundation for classes, sermons, ministry models, resources, small-group activities, and worships. It provides common threads to use to weave unique expressions of the vision and mission of Community of Christ throughout the world (download at www.CofChrist.org/our-faith).
- Of Water and Spirit: Preparing for Baptism and Confirmation in Community of Christ (facilitator guide) teaches what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and how discipleship is lived in Community of Christ. Priesthood members should know and use this new guide.
- Understanding the Way: Exploring Our Christian Faith, revised edition, is a 13-session guide that explores doctrinal topics to help readers gain a deeper understanding of theology and beliefs of the church.
- Walking with Jesus: Disciples in Community of Christ, rev. ed., provides guidance for new disciples and offers helpful direction for those who decided to follow Christ some time ago. In addition, use this book for devotional reflection and personal or class study.
- Community of Christ Sings. Explore and use this hymnal for worship or personal study.
- Church Administrator’s Handbook.

Stay Informed

- Read the Herald! Keep up with the latest news, official statements, and events around the church. Follow various reading series that highlight topics of interest to disciples and leaders.
- Explore www.CofChrist.org! Stay current with what’s happening around the church. The site hosts video interviews, news reports, lessons for small-group and individual study, lessons for all ages, reunion resources, worship helps, inspirational stories from around the worldwide church, official statements, events, and much more.
- Study the adult reunion texts. Each year the church creates a six-lesson book of readings and small-group activities focused on a particular theme important in the life of the church. It’s important for leaders to engage with these topics.
Ministry of the Disciple

By Janné Grover, Disciple Formation Ministries

Ministry is humble service offered to communities, congregations, and the world by disciples who follow Jesus Christ.

—Ministry and Priesthood flyer

The ministry of the disciple is where making Christ’s mission and God’s vision of shalom becomes reality. It encompasses all the many ways the gospel is lived and shared in the world. Our “Yes!” to God’s unconditional love sets us on a journey of discovering and sharing our passion and giftedness in ways that bring blessing and healing to a world in need. We do so, blessed by the community through which we are nurtured and with whom we serve.

Discipleship is an inward journey of development, formation, and becoming. It is also an outward journey where disciples are sent into the world to be Jesus’ hands, feet, and voice. True discipleship involves growing in Christ-like character, love, concern, generosity, and mission.

—Ministry and Priesthood in Community of Christ: Part 1 Theological Foundations

As a faith community, we embrace the language of discipleship as an inward and outward journey. We wrestle with the meaning beyond words, and we adopt practices that help us live into meaning. Ministry begins with encounter, and holistic discipleship must include an inward journey of discovery and an outward journey of generosity and mission. We find evidence of this inward and outward model in the examples of the early church described in Acts:

The way the early disciples lived mystified people around them...Their lives were governed by the reign of God and not by the press of politics or the call of the culture. They were different because they chose to live their lives in obedience to and in the presence of God. Their radical love for God and neighbor resulted in dramatic actions that perplexed all who observed them.

...Their actions caught the world’s attention both positively and negatively, but their actions—like ours—were not calculated to bring a response; rather, their actions and ours are a response. A response to God’s amazing grace that has apprehended us in Jesus Christ.

An amazing grace that accepts us, assures us, sustains us, and always holds us close in the embrace of divine love. Such radical grace prompts a radical response.

—Rueben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck, A Guide to Prayer for All Who Seek God

As with the early disciples, ministry is our life-response to God’s abundant grace and generosity. Claimed by God’s grace, disciples begin a journey of being formed in the likeness of Christ. This formational journey is life-changing for the individual. When ministry is shared with Christ-like concern and generosity, it becomes life-giving to the community and to the whole of creation.

As a schoolteacher, I remember driving one day and wondering what it would be like to have more time to devote to ministry. I did not mull the thought for long when the realization hit me: Everything you do, and everything about the way you live is ministry. Ministry is not just a task to do at church, and it is not something exclusive to the function of a priesthood office. Ministry is 100 percent
connected with everything we do, who we are, and every life we touch as representatives of the body of Christ.

Through this lens, the Mission Initiatives become more than a to-do list. They are formational to the choices we make and the care we give to relationships inside and outside our congregations. The Enduring Principles are more than a set of core values. They shape our understanding of God’s love and form us in the likeness of Christ.

Beyond poetic words and ideals, the Enduring Principles and Mission Initiatives form the foundation of what it means to grow in Christ-like character, love, concern, generosity, and mission. Becoming a peace church is not just a vision we profess; it shapes how we treat one another, how we reconcile all relationships, and how we act as just stewards, caring for the environment and those who have need.

What is important to know as a disciple of Jesus Christ? Who are we called to be as disciples? What does a disciple of Jesus Christ do? These were some questions addressed by a team of five writers developing a course on the ministry of the disciple. The team collaborated as part of a summit focused on creating new courses for ministry and priesthood.

What began with trepidation and a bit of uncertainty became a lively exchange of ideas and concepts, rich discussion, and tireless effort toward a finished product. Bobbie Ann Robinson, disciple-formation minister in Michigan, shared about the experience:

Worshiping and working with so many gifted ministers was awe-inspiring. The blessing given to us by Presiding Evangelist David Brock made me feel valued, like my work would be acceptable to the church. As many ideas were shared, more ideas came. The Spirit’s presence was so very evident.

As the team began to explore themes for lessons, the greatest challenge was narrowing the scope of the project. Discipleship is multidimensional, and ministry goes beyond what happens in a place of worship on Sunday morning. Grounded in scripture, and incorporating various spiritual practices and hymns, the lessons engage disciples in what it means to proclaim Jesus Christ and engage in humble service.

Apostle Barbara Carter said:

The Community of Christ Enduring Principle, All Are Called, upholds the giftedness of all persons. The focus on the ministry of the disciple recognizes that all persons can engage in ministry as they share the life and ministry of Jesus Christ with others.

The lessons for the course were developed based on the following statements of discipleship taken from the chart, “Serving Together to Fulfill Christ’s Mission,” in the Ministry and Priesthood flyer:

- Disciples represent Christ primarily as ministers who express the nature and love of God by growing
in Christ-like character, love, concern, generosity, and mission.

- Disciples especially proclaim and promote Jesus Christ through covenant relationship with God and the faith community.
- Disciples particularly minister with individuals, households, families, and communities by nurturing right relationships with God, self, others, and all creation.
- Disciples support sacramental ministries by engaging in sacramental living and preparing spiritually to participate in the sacraments.
- Disciples promote community by engaging in activities that uphold the Worth of All Persons, caring for the congregation so it is welcoming, and inviting others to join in fellowship.
- Disciples promote justice and peacemaking by participating in partnership with the poor to overcome injustice and poverty.
- Disciples create ministry partnerships with other disciples, priesthood, pastors, and mission center officers.

The seven lessons explore what is important to know, be, and do as disciples of Jesus Christ. Disciples must know what it means to promote justice, generosity, and peacemaking. Disciples are called to be models of the nature and love of God through intentional spiritual formation, sacramental living, and right relationships with God, self, others, and all creation. Disciples do ministry by inviting others to take part in sacred community, engaging in activities that uphold the Worth of All Persons, and creating welcoming congregations.

The ministry of the disciple means looking beyond self-interest and embracing the radicalism of Jesus’ life and message for the sake of the world God loves.

Serving together in holistic mission is what discipleship is all about. Proclaiming Jesus Christ, we Invite People to Christ and Develop Disciples to Serve. Promoting communities of joy, hope, love, and peace, we work to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering and pursue justice and peace. Ministry of the disciple affirms that “All are called according to the gifts of God unto them” (Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b) and invites all disciples to express giftedness in community, for the community.

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. Author Janné Grover likens discipleship to a journey. What unexpected paths have you explored on your journey?
2. Discipleship also means accepting a call to action. How do you see members of your congregation living out discipleship?
3. Discuss the connection between grace, generosity, and discipleship.
4. Grover says, “Everything you do, and everything about the way you live is ministry.” How does that outlook affect your lifestyle? Your relationships? Your ministry?
5. Leaders often emphasize that all Mission Initiatives must be practiced for holistic mission to occur. How does this relate to the role of the disciple?
6. Discuss the concepts of knowing, being, and doing as disciples. Why are all three steps important?
7. Link the Enduring Principle of All Are Called with ministry as a disciple.
8. Reflect on the inward and outward nature of discipleship. What can you do to move yourself another step along your journey?

—Greg Clark, Integrated Communications

Janné Grover serves in Disciple Formation Ministries and holds the priesthood office of high priest. She previously worked as director of orchestras for Lee’s Summit North High School and Bernard Campbell Middle School in Lee’s Summit, Missouri. She holds bachelor’s, master’s, and specialist degrees.
A few months ago, my then-6-year-old son, McLane, received an assignment during his Sunday-school class at our Good Shepherd Congregation in Kansas City, Missouri. Using the Seasons of the Spirit curriculum, his teacher shared the focus, “Respond to the invitation to follow Jesus and learn of God’s ways.”

The instructions read, “The more people responded to Jesus’ invitation, the more God’s love grew in the world.” McLane’s assignment was to fill out a little white paper to use to invite a friend to church the following Sunday. He decided to invite a buddy from school, DJ.

However, we were going to be at another congregation...
that week and at a retreat the following weekend. McLane was upset that he couldn’t follow through at that time. Finally, a few weeks later, we saw DJ’s family at a school event, and McLane asked if he could now invite DJ to church. I agreed.

He asked DJ and his parents for permission to pick up DJ for church. They said “Yes!” to the invitation, and we exchanged phone numbers and addresses. I cannot adequately describe my son’s enthusiastic anticipation as he waited for Sunday. Finally, about a month after McLane wrote the initial invitation, his friend was able to join us for Sunday-morning worship!

His first trip to church excited both boys. DJ was shocked to see a gymnasium, which also happened to be the location of the Fellowship Café. As they enjoyed a doughnut and some juice, I informed DJ it was about time for Sunday school. His response was priceless “You mean we get to come to church and have breakfast and class? It’s a lot like school! Cool!”

Off they went to music class and Sunday school. Next, it was time for the worship service in the sanctuary, where DJ was excited to see a sculpture of Jesus in the front and a wooden cross in the back. He related them to pictures he’d seen during Sunday school and on his children’s bulletin.

McLane enjoyed guiding DJ through the order of worship—particularly the songs, children’s focus moment, and A Disciple’s Generous Response. After the service they shot a few hoops and played with friends in the gym. We then enjoyed lunch together. The wonderful day exceeded McLane’s expectations.

About the same time, our We Share Kids’ Club was starting a six-week session on Wednesday evenings. The club sought to introduce Community of Christ’s Enduring Principles. This latest session focused on the Jack and Jenn video and lesson series—“Kids Can Do Mission, Too!” DJ began attending the Kids’ Club with McLane, too.

So, we began a new routine. McLane would invite DJ to church, and I would confirm with his mother that we could pick him up Sunday. McLane and DJ would zip into church, pause at the Fellowship Café to snag strawberries, doughnuts, and juice. Then they were off to music, Sunday school, extra doughnuts (if possible), worship service, play in gym, lunch, and then home, where I would confirm with DJ’s mom that we were on for We Share Kid’s Club on Wednesday.

My husband, Steve, and I have noticed that McLane always makes sure we’ve firmed up plans with DJ’s parents about the next church event.

My Interview with McLane about Inviting People to Christ

Me: What made you decide to invite DJ to church?
McLane: Pretty much that he is my friend, and I wanted to spend more time with him.

Me: What were you hoping DJ would learn at church?
McLane: Well, he said at school that he only goes to church about once a month. I wanted him to be able to go more often, so he could learn more and more about Jesus and God.

Me: What did DJ say about coming to church and to Kids’ Club?
McLane: He said he really loved coming to church on Sunday, and he wants to keep coming forever and ever.

During this time, McLane started earning an allowance and filling out tithing envelopes for A Disciple’s Generous Response. In conjunction with McLane’s allowance, he
receives $1 for tithing each week. He has to decide how to divide it up on his envelope. We are guided by our bishopric and financial officers to “share equally” between our local and worldwide ministries. However, when McLane heard “share equally,” he believed it to mean filling in every line item on his envelope. There are seven lines, and he wanted each line to receive something.

We found he was spreading his $1 across the seven lines and then choosing one or two lines for his extra money. He began filling in his extra 30 cents on the line, “Invite People to Christ.” He felt a particular call to this Mission Initiative.

He found something the church is doing worldwide that he does locally. He found something to which he could relate and could contribute financially. His experience of inviting a friend to Christ at the local level has transformed into his financial gift of inviting others to Christ at the global level.

My Interview with McLane about A Disciple’s Generous Response

Me: So you’ve been collecting money for tithing along with your money for an allowance. How did you decide to divide your $1 tithing contribution in your envelope?

McLane: Well, I first make sure each line is filled in. There were only seven lines, so I had 30 cents extra.

Me: Where did you decide to put the most money?

McLane: I always like to put the most on Invite People to Christ.

Me: Why do you like to choose that Mission Initiative?

McLane: I choose it because that is what I do the most for God...Invite People to Christ.

Me: Can you think of some other places to invite DJ so he can continue to learn about God and make friends?

McLane: You know, I was just thinking about that the other day. I think vacation Bible school and our congregational retreat would be a couple. I think he would also like to do the children’s Christmas program.

Me: Do you think you’ll invite any other friends to church?

McLane: Oh yes, I could invite Marlee and Neveah, and DJ could still come, too!

Let’s plant a seed in our children. Let’s see where their interests and gifts take them. Let’s encourage and support them to contribute their tithing enthusiastically to the cause that speaks to their heart and experience. Then they, too, can be important examples of what it is to be one of God’s generous disciples.

As I sat in the movie theater waiting for Jersey Boys to start, I leaned over and shared a bit of trivia with my husband, Doug. The movie director, Clint Eastwood, was 84 when he finished the film.

“You’ve got to be kidding!” Doug said.

As I sat in the darkness I thought, “That’s nothing. I know hundreds of 70- to 90-plus-year-olds who continue to bring leadership and ministry in and outside Community of Christ.”

In fact, the church, community, and world are greatly blessed by this remarkably gifted, dedicated, committed, and seasoned cadre of humble servants who daily model what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

Many names and faces instantly came to mind.

I thought of Fran Mazzaferro from Nashville, Tennessee, who in her 70s provided excellent ministry as the Mid-South USA Mission Center financial officer. Her gentle spirit and competence draw people to her. She can lift you up by just being present. When she “retired” from her mission center role, the social-work community again recruited her to serve others full-time. She recently was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Board of Social Workers.

My late father, Ernest Ledsworth, who in his late 80s was instrumental in helping Shirley, the woman across the hall from my parents at the Groves Retire-
ment Center, decide to be baptized. When I ate lunch with my parents in the dining hall, he frequently left the table to push "elderly" women in wheelchairs to their rooms.

Wilma Urbaniak, who in her 70s lives Christ’s mission as a mentor to children and youth who attend Peace Club at the Pensacola Congregation in Florida, freely gives her remarkable energy and many gifts in service to others. Oh, she’s also a full-time mission center financial officer!

My mother, LaDora Ledsworth, who is in her late 80s, continues to bring ministry in the 24/7 skilled-nursing facility where she lives. In her wheelchair, she stops to comfort lonely and often-confused residents. She calls staff members and residents by name. Frequently, staff members tell me how important Mom is to them and the residents.

Barbara Barlow, Pascagoula, Mississippi, in her 70s brought rich spiritual leadership to the Gulf USA Mission Center as its president. She led during a pivotal time of change, concern, and struggle. Her ability to listen, support, and encourage others blessed me and many others, as did her strong testimony of Jesus Christ.

Don Henderson, Milton, Florida, in his 70s served as the Alabama-Northwest USA Florida Mission Center financial officer. Don modeled generosity in all that he did. He inspired and empowered us to be holistic stewards. His last ministry was preaching in the Brewton Congregation. When the service was over, he was taken to a hospital, where he died a few days later from a massive stroke.

When the movie started, I was still remembering ministers who continue to bless me personally and the church: Betty and Lee Dixon, Peggy Michael (now deceased), Ward and Donnie Serig, John and Mary Lou Noble, Marcia and Gary Howard, and on and on. I also thought of all the people from these generations who generously give to the worldwide ministries of the church. Because of their sacrifice and lifetime stewardship, Christ’s mission is made real around the world.

When the movie ended and the credits began to roll, Doug said, “Good movie. Way to go, Clint—you old guy.”

And I replied, “There’s no ‘old’ when it comes to ministry. Let me tell you about some folks who are my heroes.”

LaDora Ledworth (right) finds opportunities to minister in her skilled-nursing facility.