

Fifth Annual Brigham Young University Church History Symposium
The Religious Studies Center

Mormon Administrative/Organizational History

Friday, February 26, 2010

Conference Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah

Co-chairs: David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr

One of the great strengths of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been its institutional viability. Joseph Smith, more than most have realized, thought institutionally, and almost of all of his major theological innovations involved the creation of organizations. From quorums and councils to conferences, Joseph Smith established the administrative principles and organizational foundations for the growth and development of the Church.

The Brigham Young University Church History Symposium for 2010 has chosen this aspect of Latter-day Saint history as its focus. The topics are endless, but the symposium organizers anticipate a two-part program: (1) the origins under the direction of Joseph Smith and (2) developments since 1844. There are many topics that could be considered, including the origins and development of the presiding quorums and councils (First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Seventy). But the symposium would also like to consider lesser-known aspects of Church organization: for example, papers are invited on such topics as the Book of Mormon and its key role in the organization of the Church; the offices of local, general, and presiding bishops; Relief Society leadership; the Primary organization; youth organizations; stake presidents; worship patterns (for this symposium, we are excluding the important topic of temple worship); in addition to the scriptures, the emergence of handbooks and manuals for Church administration (Benjamin Winchester to Harold Glenn Clark); the gradual movement of Mormon congregations from villages to wards; local meetinghouse architecture for housing the worshipping community; the office of trustee-in-trust; Corporation of the President; Zion's Securities Corporation and Deseret Trust (the separation of taxable from non-taxable properties); Intellectual Reserve (issues of copyright); and the growing importance of media studies and public relations. Mormon mission history remains a central topic. Key individuals like Joseph B. Keeler, George F. Richards, N. Eldon Tanner, A. Theodore Tuttle, and Spencer W. Kimball, among many others, merit closer study.

Please submit a one-page proposal and curriculum vitae by October 15, 2009, to Arnold K. Garr, 275C Joseph Smith Building, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, or David J. Whittaker, 1102 Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602. Or send them electronically to david_whittaker@byu.edu, or arnold_garr@byu.edu.