

# David O. McKay: Beloved Educator

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President David O. McKay had been serving as the President of the Church for one year when I was born, and he passed away just one year before I was called as a full-time missionary for the Church. I thus have sweet and poignant memories of this wonderful servant of the Lord. Many Church members feel a special closeness to or spiritual connection with the prophet who presided over the Church during their spiritually formative years, this often being the childhood and teenage years. Such is definitely the case with me. President McKay's fervent testimony, inspiring leadership, striking physical appearance, and gentle demeanor are lasting memories. His unflinching devotion to and concern for his wife were legendary long before he passed away, and that marvelous example served as a beacon of conduct for an entire generation of Church members, married and unmarried alike. My testimony of his prophetic call at that time has only strengthened and matured as I have studied his teachings. Below are some interesting facts about his life and ministry:

1. President McKay was born September 8, 1873, in Huntsville, Utah. Brigham Young and Emma Smith were both still alive when he was born.
2. He was the third child and first son born to David McKay and Jennette Evans. There were ten children born into this family: four sons and six daughters. Two of these children died before reaching the age of twelve.
3. President McKay was baptized on September 8, 1881, in Spring



David O. McKay, speaking at Brigham Young University, early 1950s.

Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Creek near Huntsville, Utah. He was baptized by James Moyle.

4. He was ordained an Apostle on April 9, 1906, by President Joseph F. Smith. He was only 32 years 7 months old at the time of his apostolic ordination. President McKay's apostolic line of authority was as follows: David O. McKay—Joseph F. Smith—Brigham Young—The Three Witnesses—Joseph Smith—Peter, James, and John—Jesus Christ.

5. President McKay was sustained as Second Counselor to President Heber J. Grant on October 6, 1934, and was sustained as Second Counselor to President George Albert Smith on May 21, 1945. President McKay is one of only ten brethren who have served as counselor to more than one President of the Church. The other nine are George Q. Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose, J. Reuben Clark Jr., Marion G. Romney, N. Eldon Tanner, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson.

6. President McKay was sustained as the ninth President of the Church on April 9, 1951. He was 77 years 7 months of age when sustained as President. President McKay had served as an Apostle for forty-five years (1906 to 1951) before being sustained as President of the Church.

7. During his tenure as President, President McKay called four brethren to serve as additional counselors in the First Presidency. These four brethren were Hugh B. Brown, Joseph Fielding Smith, Thorpe B. Isaacson, and Alvin R. Dyer. Brigham Young and Joseph Smith were the only other Presidents to utilize additional counselors in the First Presidency prior to President McKay.

8. Eleven brethren were called as Apostles during President McKay's tenure as Church President. These Apostles were Marion G. Romney, LeGrand Richards, Adam S. Bennion, Richard L. Evans, George Q. Morris, Hugh B. Brown, Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, N. Eldon Tanner, Thomas S. Monson, and Alvin R. Dyer. Two of the eleven Apostles called by President McKay have subsequently served as President of the Church (Presidents Hunter and Hinckley).

9. President McKay passed away on January 18, 1970, having served 18 years 9 months as President of the Church. Only Brigham Young and Heber J. Grant served longer as President than President McKay.

10. President McKay served a total of 35 years 3 months in the First Presidency: 16 years 6 months as a counselor and 18 years 9 months as president. Only Joseph F. Smith served longer in the First Presidency than President McKay.

11. President McKay served longer as an Apostle than any other Apostle in this dispensation. He held his apostolic calling for 63 years 9 months (April 9, 1906, to January 18, 1970).

12. President Joseph Fielding Smith succeeded President McKay as President of the Church, and the resulting vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve was filled by Elder Boyd K. Packer.

13. No other President of the Church has lived longer than President McKay. He was 96 years 4 months of age at the time of his passing.

14. President McKay was part of a unique situation that existed early in the twentieth century. From June 23, 1910 (President Hinckley's birth), to November 19, 1918 (President Joseph F. Smith's passing), ten of the fifteen Presidents of the Church of this dispensation were living concurrently. Those ten were Joseph F. Smith, Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, and Gordon B. Hinckley. **RE**



Marian Roth and Beverly Bekker, May 10, 1952, Berchetes Garden, Germany.

Courtesy of Beverly Bekker.