

Glossary of Latter-day Saint Terms



Cross-references are indicated with italics.

A

Anointing: Act of placing a drop of pure olive oil on the head of a person as a means of giving a blessing or consecrating the person to sacred service (see Exodus 40:12).

Apostle: A “special witness of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23); specifically a member of the *Quorum* of the Twelve Apostles, the presiding body second in authority only to the *First Presidency*.

B

Baptism: Ceremony by which a person becomes an official member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and has his or her sins forgiven; this rite is performed vicariously in *temples* for those who have died without the *gospel*.

Bishop: Local lay leader who presides over and acts as pastor of a *ward*; typically he is called to fill this calling for a period of several years, on a part-time basis with no financial remuneration.

Bishopric: Group of local leaders comprising a bishop and his two *counselors*.

Book of Mormon: Volume accepted as scripture by Latter-day Saints, taken from records of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and compiled by a prophet/historian named Mormon; translated by Joseph Smith through “the gift and power of God” (D&C 135:3). It contains “the fulness of the gospel” (D&C 20:9), has the purpose of testifying “that Jesus is the Christ,” and is known as “Another testament of Jesus Christ.”

Branch: Local congregation, smaller and less completely organized than a *ward*.

Celestial room: The most beautiful room in the *temple*; intended to be a representation of heaven.



Chapel: 1. Meetinghouse; 2. Room in the meetinghouse where larger meetings, usually for worship, are held.

Confirmation: Sacred ceremony following *baptism*, completing the process of a person's becoming a member of the Church and allowing the individual to receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Counselor: One of two individuals appointed to assist and give advice to a presiding officer.

Covenant: A solemn agreement, such as with God, in which He promises blessings conditioned on our worthy conduct.

Dedication: Ceremony consecrating a building for sacred purposes.



District: Geographical grouping of smaller local congregations; subdivision of a *mission*; when stronger and more completely organized, it may become a *stake*.

Doctrine and Covenants (D&C): Volume containing revelations through Joseph Smith and his successors as heads of the Church, accepted as scripture by Latter-day Saints.

Elder: 1. Any man holding the Melchizedek *Priesthood*; 2. Specifically, title of a General Authority or of a male full-time missionary.



Endowment: *Ordinance* performed in *temples*, described as a course of instructions showing the path back into the presence of God; it communicates spiritual insights and power, and includes making specific *covenants* with God to live according to high ideals.



Family history: Identifying and compiling experiences of one's ancestors so that *baptism* and other sacred *ordinances* might be performed vicariously for them in the *temple* in order to perpetuate family relationships eternally.

Fasting: Refraining from food and drink, generally for a period of twenty-four hours, as a means to demonstrate the subjection of physical appetites to a person's spirit in preparation for obtaining increased spiritual power or blessings.

First Presidency: Highest presiding council having worldwide jurisdiction, composed of the President of the Church and his first and second *counselors*.



Genealogy: See *Family History*.

General Authorities: Presiding officers of the Church worldwide; they include the *First Presidency*, *Quorum* of the Twelve *Apostles*, *Quorums* of the *Seventy*, and *Presiding Bishopric*.

General conference: Worldwide gathering at Church headquarters covering two days each April and October at which Church business is conducted and the *General Authorities* and others speak. It is carried to Church members worldwide by means of satellites and other media; it is a time of expounding gospel principles, exhortation, and spiritual renewal.

Gospel: Way of life set forth in the teachings of Jesus Christ, specifically embodying the power to overcome sins and become whole because of the Savior's atoning sacrifice in Gethsemane and on the cross.

Keys: Presiding authority held by certain Church leaders; it embodies the right to receive revelation from God, give direction, and to pass *priesthood* authority on to others.



Last or latter days: The concluding era of the earth, culminating with the triumphal return of Jesus Christ.



Latter-day Saint: A person baptized and confirmed into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members of the Church are often referred to as Latter-day Saints. As an adjective (often LDS), something pertaining to the Church or its members.

Mission: 1. Large geographical unit, in charge of proselytizing by full-time missionaries; it sometimes supervises *districts* and *branches*. 2. Period of full-time missionary service, often two years, by Church members. Typically young single adults or retired couples serve as missionaries.



Mormon: A popular or informal reference to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members because of their accepting the *Book of Mormon* as a volume of scripture.

Mormon Tabernacle Choir: Based in Salt Lake City, this historic choir is featured on the longest-running series of weekly broadcasts in the history of network radio and television.

Ordinance: A sacred rite or ceremony such as *baptism* or *confirmation* (normally performed outside of *temples*), as well as *endowments* and *sealings* (performed in temples).



P

Patriarchal blessing: A blessing given by *priesthood* authority typically once during a person’s lifetime. These blessings include inspired counsel, admonitions, promises, and other insights to guide the recipient’s future life.

Presiding Bishop: *General Authority* having particular responsibility for temporal (financial) affairs of the Church.

Priesthood: Formal authority to preside or officiate in the Church; it consists of two orders or divisions: the lesser (Aaronic) Priesthood, generally held by male youths, focuses on temporal affairs, or “outward *ordinances*”; the higher (Melchizedek) Priesthood, held by adult men, deals primarily with spiritual matters.

Prophet: An individual who is authorized to speak for God; the President of the Church is regarded as a prophet, and he is the only person authorized to declare new doctrines, positions, or interpretations officially for the whole Church.

Q

Quorum: Organized group of men or young men holding a specific *priesthood* office, such as Quorum of the Twelve *Apostles*, *elders* quorum, and so forth.

R

Relief Society: Latter-day Saint women’s organization, emphasizing education and compassionate service; organized in 1842, it is one of the oldest and largest women’s organizations in the world.

Resurrection: A return to life of a person’s physical body in a perfected state.

Restoration: Return of the doctrines and authority of the New Testament church to the earth by means of heavenly messengers and divine revelation.

Sacrament: Bread and water partaken of by Church members during the weekly worship service as a means to renew the *covenants* made at *baptism*: to remember the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, keep His commandments, and enjoy the companionship of His Spirit.



Spiritual gifts: Manifestations of the Holy Ghost, including teaching, prophesying, healing, speaking in tongues, and so forth (see 1 Corinthians 12–13).

Sealings: Sacred ceremonies performed in *temples* by which couples are promised great blessings and married for eternity as well as for this life; often called “celestial” or “eternal” marriages; sealings also link children to their parents for eternity.

Seventies: Group of men holding the office of seventy in the Melchizedek *Priesthood*, taken from Christ’s appointing seventy men to serve under the Twelve in spreading the *gospel* (see Luke 10:1); now held only by *General Authorities*, this calling earlier was also held by men at the local level.

Stake: Geographic group of local congregations, similar to a diocese; the term is taken from the comparison of God’s work being carried on in a large tent in which the surrounding tent posts, or stakes, are sources of stability and strength (see Isaiah 54:2).

Tabernacle: A larger building designed to accommodate combined meetings of several congregations.



Temple: Sacred building where certain *ordinances* are conducted; thought of as a place of revelation where heaven and earth meet, it can be entered only by Church members recommended by their local ecclesiastical leaders as meeting standards of worthiness.

Testimony: Conviction of the truthfulness of the *gospel*, often given as an oral statement to others, such as in the monthly *fast* and testimony meeting in each *ward*.

Tithing: Voluntary contribution of one-tenth of a person's income to support the religious functions of the Church.

Ward: Local congregation, part of a *stake*; larger and more completely organized than a *branch*.

Washing: Act of placing a drop of water on a person's head as part of the process of giving a blessing.

Young Men's and Young Women's Mutual Improvement Associations: Organizations sponsoring educational, cultural, social, and athletic programs for youth.

Zion: A society of believers preparing for the return of Jesus Christ.