

SACRAMENT MEETING

Church Handbook:

Purpose of Sacrament Meeting

Each sacrament meeting should be a spiritual experience in which members of the Church renew their baptismal covenants by partaking of the sacrament. Other purposes of sacrament meeting are to:

- Worship
- Receive gospel instruction
- Perform ordinances
- Conduct ward business
- Strengthen members spiritually

Planning and Conducting Sacrament Meeting

Members of the bishopric plan sacrament meetings and conduct them in a reverent and dignified manner. They oversee the administration of the sacrament, select topics for talks and music, select and orient participants, and invite members to give opening and closing prayers.

A sample sacrament meeting agenda follows:

- Prelude music
- Greeting and welcome
- Acknowledgment of presiding authorities or visiting high councilors who are attending
- Announcements (if possible, most announcements should be printed so they do not take time in sacrament meeting; the bishopric may give essential announcement briefly before the opening hymn)
- Opening hymn and prayer
- Ward business, such as:
 - sustaining and releasing ward officers and teachers (see pages 38-39)
 - Recognizing children who advance from Primary (see page 231 in Book 2)
 - Presenting names of brethren to receive or advance in the Aaronic Priesthood (see page 32)
 - Presenting the Duty to God Recognition and Young Womenhood Recognition (see pages 190 and 227 in book 2)
 - Presenting names of new ward members (see page 127)
 - Naming and blessing children (fast and testimony meeting) and performing confirmations
- Sacrament hymn and administration of the sacrament
- Gospel messages, congregational singing, and special musical selections
- Closing hymn and prayer
- Postlude music

The bishopric ensures that sacrament meetings *begin and end on time* and are not over programmed. The bishopric and the speakers should be in their seat *at least five minutes before* the meeting begins.

The bishopric *encourages families to arrive on time and sit together*. Members should be reverent before and during sacrament meeting.

Blessing and Passing the Sacrament

The bishopric ensures that the sacrament is blessed and passed in a reverent and orderly manner. The sacrament table should be prepared before the meeting begins. Instructions for preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament are on pages 29-30.

Selecting Topics for talks and Music

The bishopric selects topics for talks and music in sacrament meetings. Talks and music should focus on gospel subjects that ward members most need to build faith and testimony.

Selecting and Orienting Participants

Selecting Participants

- The **bishopric selects members to participate** in sacrament meetings.
 - most opportunities to participate should be given to ward members
 - If the bishopric invites members from outside the ward to speak, the guidelines on page 151 should be followed.
- Members of the bishopric **regularly invite youth ages 12-17 to speak** in sacrament meeting.
 - Youth should speak briefly (five minutes each) on assigned gospel subjects.
 - They should prepare their own talks, though the bishopric may encourage parents to help
 - In addition, the bishopric may call a speech specialist to help youth learn to prepare talks and speak in public. The speech specialist is a member of the activities committee.
- Missionaries are normally invited to speak in a sacrament meeting just before they depart and when they return (see pages 84 and 87-88). *The bishopric plans these meetings.*
- The bishopric schedules high councilors to speak as assigned by the stake president (usually once each month, though the stake president may adjust the frequency of such assignments according to the needs of the ward).
- The bishopric schedules one sacrament meeting each year for the Primary children to take part in a Primary program (see page 237 in Book 2)
- Occasionally the bishopric may invite full-time missionaries who are serving in the area to speak.
- Bishoprics may not turn sacrament meetings over to auxiliaries or outside musical groups. However, auxiliaries may be invited to participate in the meeting under the bishopric's direction.

Orienting participants

- Members of the bishopric orient sacrament meeting participants
- They review the purposes of sacrament meeting and explain that all talks and music should be in harmony with the sacred nature of the sacrament.
- When inviting members to speak, a member of the bishopric explains clearly the topic and the length of time the person should speak.
- He counsels speakers to:
 - teach the doctrines of the gospel
 - relate faith-promoting experiences
 - bear witness of divinely revealed truths
 - use the scriptures (see D&C 42:12; 52:9)
- Speakers should teach in a spirit of love after prayerful preparation.
- *Members should not speak on subjects that are speculative, controversial, or out of harmony with Church doctrine.*
- Members who participate in sacrament meeting should stay until the meeting ends.

Music

The bishopric *selects or approves music for sacrament meetings*. Music and musical texts are to be sacred, dignified, and otherwise suitable for sacrament meeting. Guidelines for determining whether music is appropriate are provided on pages 289-90 in Book 2:

- Hymns are the basic music for Latter-day Saint meetings and are the standard for all congregational singing.
- Hymns are encouraged for prelude and postlude music, choir music, and special selections. If others are used, they should be in keeping with the spirit of the hymns of the Church. Texts should be doctrinally correct. (See above . . . bishopric approves)
- Music should help members feel the spirit of the Sabbath and of revelation.
- Music should not draw attention to itself and is not for demonstration.
- Popular styles may not be appropriate.
- Much sacred music suitable for concerts or recitals is not appropriate for a Latter-day Saint worship service.
- Organs and pianos are the standard instruments. Others used should be in keeping with the spirit of the meeting.
- Instruments with a prominent sound are not appropriate for sacrament meeting.
- Live accompaniment is normally used; if piano, organist, or accompanist is not available, appropriate recordings may be used.
- Opening and closing hymns are normally sung by the congregation; sacrament hymns are always sung by the congregation.
- If a musical program is presented, it should be simple, reverent, and short enough to allow a spoken message.
- Recitals, concerts, and pageantry are not appropriate in sacrament meeting.
- The ward choir should sing once or twice per month.

Audiovisual Materials

Audiovisual materials such as prerecorded music, videocassettes, filmstrips, and slide should not be used in sacrament meeting. An exception may be made to use appropriate recorded accompaniment if a piano, organ, or accompanist is not available.

Sacrament Service in Unusual Situations

Every member needs the spiritual blessings that come from partaking of the sacrament. Occasionally members may be unable to attend sacrament meeting because they are confined to a home, nursing home or hospital. The bishop may assign priesthood holders to prepare, bless and pass the sacrament to these members.

Occasionally members may be unable to attend sacrament meeting because of distance to the meetinghouse. Under unusual circumstances, the bishop may give authorization for a sacrament service to be held away from the meetinghouse. The priesthood holder whom the bishop authorizes to conduct the service must be a priest in the Aaronic priesthood or hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. He also must be worthy to bless and pass the sacrament. The bishop's authorization is also required if the service will be attended by members of more than one family. The priesthood holder who directs the service reports to the bishop when the service has been held.

When members are traveling or temporarily residing away from their home wards, they should make sincere effort to attend sacrament meetings and the Sunday meetings in a ward or branch of the Church.

Sacrament services should *not be held in conjunction with family reunions or other outings.*

Fast and Testimony Meeting

One Sunday a month, usually the first Sunday, sacrament meeting is a fast and testimony meeting. Under the bishop's direction, children may be named and blessed and confirmations may be performed before the sacrament is blessed and passed.

After the sacrament, the bishopric member who is conducting bears a *brief* testimony. He then invites members to bear *brief, heartfelt testimonies and to relate faith-promoting experiences.*