

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints





The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, informally known as the LDS Church or Mormon Church, is a restorationist, nontrinitarian Christian denomination that is the largest denomination in the Latter Day Saint movement. The church is headquartered in the United States in Salt Lake City, Utah and has established congregations and built temples worldwide. According to the church, it has over 17 million members and over 72,000 full-time volunteer missionaries. [3][4] The church was the fourth-largest Christian denomination in the United States as of 2012, [11] and reported over 6.8 million US members as of 2022.

The church was founded as the Church of Christ in western New York, in 1830 by Joseph Smith during the Second Great Awakening. Under Smith's leadership, the church's headquarters moved successively to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. After Smith's 1844 death and a resultant succession crisis, the majority of his followers sided with Brigham Young, who led the church to its current headquarters in Salt Lake City. Young and his successors continued the church's growth, first throughout the Intermountain West, and more recently as a national and international organization.

Church theology includes the Christian doctrine of <u>salvation</u> through Jesus Christ, and his <u>substitutionary</u> atonement on behalf of mankind. The church has an <u>open canon</u> of four <u>scriptural texts</u>: the <u>Bible</u>, the <u>Book of Mormon</u>, the <u>Doctrine and Covenants</u> (D&C), and the <u>Pearl of Great Price</u>. Other than the Bible, the majority of the church canon consists of material the church's members believe to have been revealed by God to Joseph Smith, including commentary and <u>exegesis</u> about the Bible, texts described as <u>lost parts of the Bible</u>, and other works believed to be written by

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Official logo since 2020 featuring the Christus statue

Classification	Restorationist	
Orientation	Latter Day Saint movement	
Scripture	Bible Book of Mormon Doctrine and Covenants Pearl of Great Price	
Theology	Nontrinitarian • Mormonism	
Polity	Hierarchical	
<u>President^[a]</u>	Russell M. Nelson	
Headquarters	Salt Lake City, Utah, United States	
Founder	Joseph Smith ^[1]	
Origin	April 6, 1830 ^[2] as <u>Church of</u> <u>Christ</u> <u>Fayette, New York</u> , United States	
Separations	LDS denominations	
Congregations	31,330 (2022) ^[3]	
Members	17,002,461 (2022) ^[3]	
<u>Missionaries</u>	72,000 (2023) ^[4]	

ancient prophets, including the Book of Mormon. Because of doctrinal differences, many Christian groups consider the church to be distinct and separate from mainstream Christianity. [14]

Members of the church, known as Latter-day Saints or <u>Mormons</u>, believe that the church <u>president</u> is a modern-day "prophet, seer, and <u>revelator</u>" and that Jesus Christ, under the direction of <u>God the Father</u>, leads the church by revealing his will and delegating his priesthood keys to its president. The president

Aid organization Tertiary institutions	Philanthropies 4[5]:154[6]:206
Other name(s)	LDS Church, ^[7] Mormon Church, ^{[8][9]} Church of Jesus Christ, Restored Church of Jesus Christ ^[10]
Official website	churchofjesuschrist.org (http://C hurchofJesusChrist.org)

heads a hierarchical structure descending from <u>areas</u> to <u>stakes</u> and <u>wards</u>. The church has a volunteer clergy at the local and regional levels; wards are led by <u>bishops</u>, who are drawn from the membership of the wards themselves. Male members may be ordained to the <u>priesthood</u>, provided they are living the standards of the church. Women are not ordained to the priesthood, but occupy leadership roles in some church organizations. [2]

Both men and women may serve as <u>missionaries</u>. The church maintains a large <u>missionary program</u> that proselytizes and conducts <u>humanitarian services</u> worldwide. The church also funds and participates in humanitarian projects independent of its missionary efforts. [15] Members adhere to church laws of <u>sexual purity</u>, <u>health</u>, <u>fasting</u>, and <u>Sabbath observance</u>, and contribute ten percent of their income to the church in <u>tithing</u>. The church teaches <u>ordinances</u> through which adherents make <u>covenants</u> with God, including baptism, confirmation, the sacrament, priesthood ordination, <u>endowment</u> and <u>celestial marriage</u>. [16]

The church has <u>been criticized</u> throughout its history. Modern criticisms include disputes over the church's historical claims, treatment of minorities, and <u>finances</u>. <u>The church's practice of polygamy</u> (plural marriage) was controversial until it was curtailed in 1890 and officially rescinded in 1904.

History

The history of the church can be divided into three broad time periods: (1) the early history during the lifetime of <u>Joseph Smith</u>, which is in common with all churches associated with the Latter Day Saint movement, (2) a pioneer era under the leadership of <u>Brigham Young</u> and his 19th-century successors, and (3) a modern era beginning around the turn of the 20th century as Utah achieved statehood. [2]

Beginnings

Joseph Smith formally organized the church as the <u>Church of Christ</u>, on April 6, 1830, in <u>western New York; [b]</u> the church's name was later changed to the <u>Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. [17]: 627 n. 73 Initial converts were drawn to the church in part because of the newly published <u>Book of Mormon</u>, a self-described chronicle of <u>indigenous American prophets that Smith said he had translated from golden plates. [21][22][23]: 57,72,90</u></u>



<u>Joseph Smith</u>, first <u>president</u> of the Church of Christ

Smith intended to establish the New Jerusalem in North America, called Zion. [17]:122 [24][25] In 1831, the church moved to Kirtland, Ohio, [c][27]:97 and began establishing an outpost in Jackson County, Missouri, [17]:162 [27]:109 where Smith planned to eventually move the church headquarters. [d] However, in 1833, Missouri settlers violently expelled the Latter Day Saints from Jackson County. [17]:222-227 [e] The church attempted to recover the land through a paramilitary expedition, but did not succeed. [27]:141,146-159 [17]:322 Nevertheless, the church flourished in Kirtland as Smith published new revelations and the church built the Kirtland Temple, [f][29][30][27]:101 [31] culminating in a dedication of the building similar to the day of Pentecost. [17]:310-319 [27]:178 The Kirtland era ended in 1838, after a financial scandal rocked the church and caused widespread defections. [17]:328-338 [32] Smith regrouped with the remaining church in Far West, Missouri, [g] but tensions soon escalated into violent conflicts with the old Missouri settlers. [17]:357-364 [27]:227-230 [34][35]:97-98 Believing the Latter Day Saints to be in insurrection, the Missouri governor ordered that they be "exterminated or driven from the State". [h] In 1839, the Latter Day Saints converted a swampland on the banks of the Mississippi River into Nauvoo, Illinois, which became the church's new headquarters. [17]:383-384



<u>Carthage Jail</u>, where <u>Joseph Smith</u> was killed in 1844

Nauvoo grew rapidly as missionaries sent to Europe and elsewhere new converts who then Nauvoo. [17]: 409 [27]: 258, 264-65 Meanwhile, Smith introduced polygamy to his closest associates. [27]: 334–336 [17]: 437 established ceremonies, which he stated the Lord had revealed to him, to allow righteous people to become gods in the afterlife, [i] and secular institution to govern the Millennial kingdom.[35]:120-122[j] He also introduced the church to a full accounting of his First Vision, in which he claimed that two heavenly "personages" appeared to him at age $14.\frac{[k]}{}$ This vision would come to be regarded by the LDS Church as the most important event in human history since the resurrection of Jesus. [42]

On June 27, 1844, Smith and his brother, <u>Hyrum</u>, were <u>killed by a mob</u> in <u>Carthage</u>, <u>Illinois</u>, [27]: 393–394 [17] while being held on charges of treason. [43] Because Hyrum was Joseph's designated successor, their deaths caused a <u>succession crisis</u>, [35]: 143 [27]: 398 and Brigham Young assumed leadership over a majority of the church's membership. [17]: 556–557 Young had been a close associate of Smith's and was the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in Smith's church.

Other splinter groups followed other leaders around this time. These groups have no affiliation with the LDS Church, [35]:198–211 however they share a common heritage in their early church history. Collectively, they are called the Latter Day Saint movement. The largest of these smaller groups is the Community of Christ, based in Independence, Missouri, followed by the Church of Jesus Christ, based in Monongahela, Pennsylvania. Like the LDS Church, these faiths believe in Joseph Smith as a prophet and founder of their religion. They also accept the Book of Mormon, and most accept at least some version of the Doctrine and Covenants. However, they tend to disagree to varying degrees with the LDS Church concerning doctrine and church leadership. [44][45]

Pioneer era

For two years after Smith's death, conflicts escalated between Mormons and other Illinois residents. Brigham Young led his followers, later called the <u>Mormon pioneers</u>, westward to <u>Nebraska</u> and then in 1847 on to what later became the <u>Utah Territory</u>, [46] which at the time had been part of the indigenous lands of the Ute, Goshute, and Shoshone nations, and claimed by <u>Mexico until 1848</u>. [47]: 28,249–250,365 [48] Around 80,000 settlers arrived between 1847 and 1869. [49] who then branched out and colonized a large

region now known as the <u>Mormon Corridor</u>. Meanwhile, efforts to globalize the church began in earnest around this time, with missionaries being sent off to the Sandwich Islands (present-day <u>Hawaii</u>), <u>India</u>, <u>Chile</u>, Australia, China, South Africa, and all over Europe. [50]

Young incorporated the LDS Church as a legal entity, and initially governed both the church and the state as a <u>theocratic</u> leader. He also publicized the practice of <u>plural marriage</u> in 1852. Modern research suggests that around 20 percent of Mormon families may have participated in the practice. [2]



19th century painting of Mormon pioneers crossing the plains of Nebraska

By 1857, tensions had again escalated between Mormons and other Americans, largely as a result of accusations involving polygamy and the theocratic rule of the Utah Territory by Young. [51] The Utah



Brigham Young led the LDS Church from 1844 until his death in 1877.

Mormon War ensued from 1857 to 1858, which resulted in the relatively peaceful invasion of Utah by the <u>United States Army</u>. The most notable instance of violence during this conflict was the Mountain Meadows massacre, in which leaders of a local Mormon militia ordered the massacre of a civilian emigrant party who was traveling through Utah during the escalating military tensions. [6]: 120–123 After the massacre was discovered, the church

became the target of significant media criticism for it. [52]

After the Army withdrew, Young agreed to step down from power and be replaced by a non-Mormon territorial governor, Alfred Cumming. Nevertheless, the LDS Church still wielded significant political power in the Utah Territory. Coterminously, tensions between Mormon settlers and indigenous tribes continued to escalate as settlers began colonizing a growing area of tribal lands. While Mormons and indigenous peoples made attempts at peaceful coexistence, skirmishes ensued from about 1849 to 1873 culminating in the armed conflicts of Walkara's War, the Bear River Massacre, and the Black Hawk War.

After Young's death in 1877, he was followed in the church presidency by John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff successively, who resisted efforts by the United States Congress to outlaw Mormon polygamous marriages. In 1878, the United States Supreme Court, in *Reynolds v. United States*, decreed that "religious duty" to engage in plural marriage was not a valid defense to prosecutions for violating state laws against polygamy. Conflict between Mormons and the U.S. government escalated to the point that, in 1890, Congress disincorporated the LDS Church and seized most of its assets. Soon thereafter, Woodruff issued a manifesto that officially suspended the performance of new polygamous marriages in the United States. Relations with the United States markedly improved after 1890, such that Utah was admitted as a U.S. state in 1896. Relations further improved after 1904, when church president Joseph F. Smith again disavowed polygamy before the United States Congress and issued a "Second Manifesto", calling for all plural marriages in the church to cease. Eventually, the church adopted a policy of excommunicating its members found practicing polygamy. Some fundamentalist groups with relatively small memberships have broken off and continue to practice polygamy, but the Church distances itself from them. [56][57]

Modern times



The Washington D.C. Temple, completed in 1974, was the first built in the eastern half of the United States since 1846.

During the 20th century, the church grew substantially and became an international organization. In 2000, the church reported over 60,000 missionaries and global church membership stood at just over 11 million. Nominal worldwide membership surpassed 16 million in 2018. Slightly under half of church membership lives within the United States. [59]

The church has become a strong proponent of the <u>nuclear family</u> and at times played a prominent role in political matters, including opposition to <u>MX Peacekeeper missile</u> bases in Utah and <u>Nevada, [60]</u> the <u>Equal Rights Amendment, [60]</u> legalized gambling, [61] same-sex marriage, [62]:2 and physician-assisted death.

A number of official changes have taken place to the organization during the modern era. In 1978, the church reversed its previous policy of excluding black men of African descent from the priesthood, which had been in place since 1852; [64]:70 members of all races can now be ordained to the priesthood. Also, since the early 1900s, the church has instituted a Priesthood Correlation Program to centralize church operations and bring them under a hierarchy of priesthood leaders. During the Great Depression, the church also began operating a church welfare system, and it has conducted humanitarian efforts in cooperation with other religious organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, as well as secular organizations like Care International. [65][66]

During the second half of the 20th century and beginnings of the 21st, the church has responded to various challenges to its doctrine and authority. Challenges have included rising secularization, [67][68] challenges to the correctness of the translation of the Book of Abraham, [69][70] and primary documents forged by Mark Hofmann purporting to contradict important aspects of official early church history. [71] The church's positions regarding homosexuality, women, and black people have all been publicly criticized during this timeframe.

For over 100 years, the church was a major sponsor of <u>Scouting</u> programs for boys, particularly in the United States. The LDS Church was the largest <u>chartered organization</u> in the <u>Boy Scouts of America</u>, having joined the Boy Scouts of America as its first charter organization in 1913. In 2020, the church ended its relationship with the BSA and began an alternate, religion-centered youth program, which replaced all other youth programs. Prior to leaving the Scouting program, LDS Scouts made up nearly 20 percent of all enrolled Boy Scouts, or an any other church.

Beliefs

Nature of God

LDS Church theology includes the belief in a <u>Godhead</u> composed of <u>God</u> the <u>Father</u>, his son, Jesus Christ, and the <u>Holy Ghost</u> as three separate persons who share a unity of purpose or will; however, they are viewed as three distinct beings. This is in contrast with the predominant Christian view, which holds that God is a <u>Trinity</u> of three distinct persons in <u>one essence</u>. The Latter-day Saint conception of the Godhead is similar to what contemporary Christian theologians call <u>social trinitarianism</u>. The church also believes that God the Father and his son, Jesus Christ, are separate beings with bodies of flesh and bone, while the Holy Ghost lacks such a physical body.

According to statements by church leaders, God sits at the head of the human family and is married to a <u>Heavenly Mother</u>, who is the mother of human spirits. [78] However, church leaders have also categorically discouraged prayers to her and counseled against speculation regarding her. [79]

Jesus Christ

Church members believe in Jesus Christ as the literal <u>Son of God</u> and <u>Messiah</u>, <u>his crucifixion</u> as a conclusion of a <u>sin offering</u>, and his subsequent <u>resurrection</u>. [80][81]:171–172 However, Latter-day Saints reject the <u>ecumenical creeds</u> and the definition of the <u>Trinity</u>. [82] Jesus is also seen as the elder brother of all who live in this world. [81]:155 The church teaches that Jesus performed a <u>substitutionary atonement</u>; in contrast with other Christian denominations, the church teaches this atonement began in the



Latter-day Saints believe in the resurrection of Jesus, as depicted in this replica of Bertel Thorvaldsen's Christus statue located in the North Visitors' Center on Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

garden of <u>Gethsemane</u> and continued to his crucifixion (rather than the orthodox belief that the crucifixion alone was the physical atonement). The church also teaches that Christ appeared to other peoples after his death, including spirits of the dead in the spirit world, [80][81]:211 and indigenous Americans. [82][80][83]

The church also teaches that Jesus is the true founder and leader of the church itself. The physical establishment of the church by Smith in 1830 is seen as simply the reestablishment of the same <u>primitive church</u> that existed under Jesus and his Apostles. Similarly, the church teaches that Jesus leads the church presently through its apostles and prophets, especially its current president. See Sec. 185]: 38

Comparison with Nicene Christianity

The LDS Church shares various teachings with other branches of Christianity. These include a belief in the Bible, [87] the divinity of Jesus, and his atonement and resurrection. LDS theology also includes belief in the doctrine of salvation through Jesus alone, restorationism, millennialism, continuationism, conditional substitutionary atonement [13] or penal substitution, [88] and a form of apostolic succession. [1]

Nevertheless, the LDS Church differs from other churches within contemporary Christianity in other ways. Differences between the LDS Church and most of traditional Christianity include disagreement about the nature of God, belief in a theory of <u>human salvation</u> that includes three <u>heavens</u>, a doctrine of <u>exaltation</u> which includes the ability of humans to become gods and goddesses in the <u>afterlife</u>, $\frac{[92][93]}{[93]}$ a belief in <u>continuing revelation</u> and an open scriptural canon, and unique ceremonies performed privately in temples, such as the endowment and sealing ceremonies. A number of major Christian denominations view the LDS Church as standing apart from <u>creedal</u> Christianity. $\frac{[m][14]}{[99]}$ However, church members self-identify as Christians.

The faith itself views other modern Christian faiths as having departed from true Christianity by way of a general apostasy and maintains that it is a restoration of 1st-century Christianity and the only true and authorized Christian church. Church leaders assert it is the only true church and that other churches do not have the authority to act in Jesus' name. [n]

Cosmology and plan of salvation



A couple after their marriage in the Manti Utah Temple. The church teaches that marriages, or sealings, performed in their temples may continue after death.

The church's cosmology and plan of salvation include the doctrines of a pre-existence, an earthly mortal existence, three degrees of heaven and exaltation.

According to these doctrines, every human spirit is a spiritual child of a Heavenly Father and each has the potential to continue to learn, grow, and progress in the eternities, eventually achieving eternal life, which is to become one with God in the same way that Jesus Christ is one with the Father, thus allowing the children of God to become divine beings—that is, gods—themselves. This view on the doctrine of theosis is also referred to as becoming a "joint-heir with Christ". The process by which this is accomplished is called exaltation, a doctrine which includes the reunification of the mortal family after the resurrection and the ability to have spirit children in the afterlife and inherit a portion of God's kingdom. To obtain this state of godhood, the church teaches that one must have faith in Jesus Christ, repent of his or her sins, strive to keep the commandments faithfully, and participate in ordinances.

According to LDS Church theology, men and women may be sealed to one another so that their marital bond continues into the eternities. Children may also be sealed to their biological or adoptive parents to form permanent familial bonds, thus allowing all immediate and extended family relations to

endure past death. [p][109][110] The most significant LDS ordinances may be performed via proxy in behalf of those who have died, such as baptism for the dead. The church teaches that all will have the opportunity to hear and accept or reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, either in this life or the next. [111][112]

Within church cosmology, the fall of <u>Adam and Eve</u> is seen positively. The church teaches that it was essential to allow humankind to experience separation from God, to exercise full <u>agency</u> in making decisions for their own happiness. [113][114][115]

Restorationism

The LDS Church teaches that, subsequent to the death of Jesus and his original apostles, his church, along with the authority to act in Jesus Christ's name and the church's attendant spiritual gifts, were <u>lost</u>, due to a combination of external persecutions and internal heresies. [85]:33 The restoration—as represented by the church began by Joseph Smith—refers to a return of the authentic priesthood power, <u>spiritual gifts</u>, ordinances, living <u>prophets</u> and revelation of the <u>primitive</u> Church of Christ. [116][117] This restoration is associated with a number of events which are understood to have been necessary to re-establish the early Christian church found in the <u>New Testament</u>, and to prepare the earth for the <u>Second Coming</u> of Jesus. [118] In particular, Latter-day Saints believe that angels appeared to Joseph Smith and a limited number of his associates, and bestowed various priesthood authorities on them.

Leadership

The church is led by a <u>president</u>, who is considered a "prophet, seer, and revelator." Within the church, he is referred to as "the Prophet" or the "President of the Church." He is considered the only person who is authorized to receive revelation from God on behalf of the whole world or entire church. As such, the church teaches that he is essentially infallible when speaking on behalf of God—although the exact circumstances when his pronouncements should be considered authoritative are debated within the

church. [119][120] In any case, modern declarations with broad doctrinal implications are often issued by joint statement of the First Presidency; they may be joined by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as well. [121][122] Church members believe Joseph Smith was the first modern-day prophet. [123]

Normally, the Prophet and two other ordained apostles he chooses as counselors form the First Presidency, the presiding body of the church; twelve other apostles form the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. [124] When a president dies, his successor is chosen from the remaining apostles, and is invariably the longest-tenured of the group. [125] Apostles are chosen by the church president after the death of an existing apostle. [126] Following the death of church president Thomas S. Monson on January 2, 2018, [127] senior apostle Russell M. Nelson was announced as president on January 16. [128]

Home and family

The church and its members consider marriage and <u>family</u> highly important, with emphasis placed on large, nuclear families. [2] In 1995, the church's

First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve issued "The Family: A Proclamation to the World", which asserts the importance of a heterosexual, nuclear family. The proclamation defined marriage as a union between one man and one woman and stated that the family unit is "central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." The document further says that "gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose," that the father and mother have differing roles as "equal partners" (with the father presiding) in raising children, and that successful marriages and families, founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ, can last eternally. [129][62]:52–54[130] The proclamation also promotes specific roles essential to maintaining the strength of the family unit—the roles of a husband and father as the family's breadwinner and spiritual leader and those of a wife and mother as a nurturing caregiver. Both parents are charged with



Adherents believe that

Joseph Smith was called to
be a modern-day prophet
through a visitation from
God the Father and Jesus
Christ.



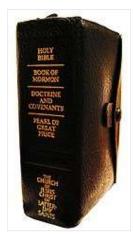
A Vietnamese family in Cambodia having a <u>Family Home Evening</u> with LDS missionaries

the duties of childrearing. Senior church leaders have continued to emphasize conservative teachings on marriage and gender to the present time. 131

LDS Church members are encouraged to set aside one evening each week, typically Monday, to spend together in "Family Home Evening" (FHE), which typically consists of gathering as a family to study the faith's gospel principles, and other family activities. Daily family prayer is also encouraged. [2]

Sources of doctrine

The theology of the LDS Church consists of a combination of biblical doctrines with modern revelations and other commentary by LDS leaders, particularly Joseph Smith. The most authoritative sources of theology are the faith's canon of four religious texts, called the "standard works". Included in the standard works are the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the D&C and the Pearl of Great Price. [132]



The written canon of the LDS Church is referred to as its standard works

The Book of Mormon is a foundational sacred book for the church; the terms "Mormon" and "Mormonism" come from the book itself. The LDS Church teaches that the <u>Angel Moroni</u> told Smith about golden plates containing the record, guided him to find them buried in the <u>Hill Cumorah</u>, and provided him the means of translating them from <u>Reformed Egyptian</u>. It claims to give a history of the inhabitants from a <u>now-extinct society</u> living on the American continent and their distinct <u>Judeo-Christian</u> teachings. The Book of Mormon is very important to modern Latter-day Saints, who consider it the world's most perfect text. [133]

The Bible, also part of the church's canon, is believed to be the word of God—subject to an acknowledgment that its translation may be incorrect, or that authoritative sections may have been lost over the centuries. Most often, the church uses the Authorized King James Version. [87] Two extended portions of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible have been canonized and are thus considered authoritative. [q] Additionally, over $600^{[134]}$ of the more doctrinally significant verses from the translation are included as excerpts in the current LDS Church edition of the Bible. [135] Other revelations from Smith are found in the D&C, and in the Pearl of Great Price. [2] Another source of authoritative doctrine is the pronouncements of the current Apostles and members of the First

Presidency. The church teaches that the First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve Apostles are prophets [136] and that they are therefore authorized teachers of God's word. [137]

In addition to doctrine given by the church as a whole, individual members of the church believe that they can also receive <u>personal revelation</u> from God in conducting their lives, [138] and in revealing truth to them, especially about spiritual matters. Generally, this is said to occur through thoughts and feelings from the <u>Holy Ghost</u>, in response to <u>prayer</u>. [139] Similarly, the church teaches its members may receive individual guidance and counsel from God through blessings from priesthood holders. In particular, <u>patriarchal blessings</u> are considered special blessings that are received only once in the recipient's life, which are recorded, transcribed, and archived. [140]: 239

Practices

Rituals

In the church, an ordinance is a sacred <u>rite</u> or <u>ceremony</u> that has spiritual and symbolic meanings, and acts as a means of conveying <u>divine grace</u>. Ordinances are physical acts which signify or symbolize an underlying spiritual act; for some ordinances, the spiritual act is the finalization of a <u>covenant</u> between the ordinance recipient and <u>God</u>. Ordinances are generally performed under <u>priesthood</u> authority.

The ordinance of baptism is believed to bind its participant to Jesus Christ, who saves them in their imperfection if they continually keep their <u>promises</u> to him. [141] Baptism is performed by immersion, and is typically administered to children starting at age eight.

Church members believe that through the ordinances of temple sealing and <u>temple endowment</u>, anyone can reach the highest level of salvation in the celestial kingdom and eternally live in God's presence, continue as families, become gods, create worlds, and make spirit children over whom they will govern. [103][92][93]



Baptism by immersion is considered highly important in the LDS Church. This depiction from circa 1850 shows the all-white clothing used in the ordinance.

Other ordinances performed in the church include <u>confirmation</u>, the <u>sacrament</u> (analogous to the <u>Eucharist</u> or holy communion), and priesthood ordination.

Diet and health

The LDS Church asks its members to adhere to a dietary code called the Word of Wisdom, in which they abstain from the consumption of alcohol, coffee, tea, tobacco, and illicit or harmful substances. [142] The Word of Wisdom also encourages the consumption of herbs and grains along with the moderate consumption of meat. [2]

When Joseph Smith published the Word of Wisdom in 1833, it was considered only advice; violation did not restrict church membership. During the 1890s, though, church leaders started emphasizing the Word of Wisdom more. In 1921, church president <u>Heber J. Grant</u> made obeying the Word of Wisdom a requirement to engage in worship inside of the faith's temples.

From that time, church leadership has emphasized the forbidding of coffee, tea, tobacco, and alcohol, but not the other guidelines concerning meat, grains, and herbs. [2] In 2019, the church further clarified through its $\underline{New\ Era}$ magazine that the $\underline{usage\ of\ marijuana}$ and opioids is prohibited except as prescribed by a competent physician for medical purposes. [143]

Sexuality

Church members are expected to follow a <u>moral code</u> called the law of chastity, which prohibits <u>adultery</u>, homosexual behavior, and sexual relations before or outside of marriage. [87]: 1. As part of the law of chastity, the church strongly opposes pornography, and considers masturbation an immoral act. [144] Law of chastity violations can be grounds for <u>church discipline</u>; resulting penalties may include having access to the <u>temple</u> and sacrament revoked. [145] Dating is forbidden until the age of 16. [146]

Tithing and other donations



Tithing forms and envelopes in an LDS church building

Church members are expected to donate one-tenth of their income to support the operations of the church (e.g. temple and meetinghouse operation and construction, etc.). After initially relying on a communal lifestyle known as the <u>law of consecration</u> throughout most of the 1830s, the church created the law of tithing in July 1838 when the membership was <u>concentrated in Missouri. [147]</u> Back in those days, members frequently tithed by giving ten percent of their livestock and produce; nowadays donations are generally done with money. [147]

Annual donations were estimated to total \$7 billion $\frac{[148][149]}{[150]}$ to \$33 billion $\frac{[150]}{[150]}$ donated in 2012 (equivalent to \$8.9 billion to \$42.1 billion in $\frac{[151]}{[151]}$). In order to qualify for participation in

temple ordinances (which Latter-day Saints believe are necessary for their salvation), paying a full tithe is a requirement, regardless of one's temporal circumstances. [152][153][154][155] Members are also encouraged to

<u>fast</u> (abstain from food and drink) on the <u>first Sunday of each month</u> for two consecutive meals. They donate at least the cost of the two skipped meals of the fast as a "fast offering", which the church uses to assist people in need and expand its humanitarian efforts. [156]

Local leadership is not paid, and is expected to tithe as well. Full-time missionaries, however, are not expected to pay tithing as they are usually paying to be a missionary. [157]

Missionary service

Starting in the late 1960s, serving a two-year, full-time proselytizing mission became expected for all able-bodied LDS young men. $\frac{[158][159][160]}{[159][160]}$ Missionaries do not choose where they serve or the language in which they will proselytize, and are expected to fund their missions themselves or with the aid of their families. $\frac{[2]}{[2]}$ Prospective male missionaries must be at least 18 years old and no older than 25, and have completed secondary school. $\frac{[161]}{[162]}$ Missionary service is not compulsory, nor is it required for young men to retain their church membership. $\frac{[162]}{[162]}$

Unmarried women 19 years and older may also serve as missionaries, [158] generally for a term of 18 months. There is no maximum age for missionary service for women. [158]



Missionaries typically commit to 18–24 months of full-time service.

Retired couples are also encouraged to serve missions, and may serve from 6–23 months terms. [163] Unlike younger missionaries, these senior missionaries may serve in non-proselytizing capacities such as <u>humanitarian</u>

<u>aid</u> workers or <u>family history</u> specialists. [163] Other men and women who desire to serve a mission, but may not be able to perform full-time service in another state or country due to health issues, may serve in a non-proselytizing mission. They might assist at <u>Temple Square</u> in Salt Lake City or aid in the <u>seminary</u> system in schools. [164]

All proselytizing missionaries are organized geographically into administrative areas called <u>missions</u>. The efforts in each mission are directed by an older adult male <u>mission president</u>. As of July 2020, there were 407 missions of the church. [165]

Sabbath day observance

Church members are expected to set aside Sundays as a day of rest and worship. Typically, weekly worship meetings occur solely on Sundays. Shopping and recreation are discouraged on Sundays as well. [5]:456

Worship and meetings

Weekly meetings

Meetings for worship and study are held at <u>meetinghouses</u>, which are typically utilitarian in character. The main focus of Sunday worship is the Sacrament meeting, where the <u>sacrament</u> is passed to church members; sacrament meetings also include prayers, the singing of hymns by the congregation or choir, and

impromptu or planned <u>sermons</u> by church members. Also included in weekly meetings are times for <u>Sunday School</u>, or separate instructional meetings based on age and gender, including the <u>Relief Society</u> for women.

Church congregations are organized geographically. [5]:150 Members are generally expected to attend the congregation with their assigned geographical area; however, some geographical areas also provide separate congregations for young single adults, older single adults, or for speakers of alternate languages. [5]:151 For Sunday services, the church is grouped into either larger



Interior view of a typical weekly Sunday sacrament meeting in <u>Provo</u>, Utah

congregations known as <u>wards</u>, or smaller congregations known as branches. Regional church organizations, encompassing multiple congregations, include <u>stakes</u>, missions, <u>districts</u> and areas. 166

The church's <u>Young Men</u> and <u>Young Women</u> organizations meet at the meetinghouse once a week, on a day other than Sunday, where the youth participate in activities.

Temple worship

In LDS theology, a temple is considered to be a holy building, dedicated as a "House of the Lord" and held as more sacred than a typical meetinghouse or chapel. In temples, church members participate in ceremonies that are considered the most sacred in the church, including marriage, and an endowment ceremony that includes a washing and anointing, receiving a temple garment, and making covenants with God. Baptisms for the dead—as well as other temple ordinances on behalf of the dead [2]—are performed in the temples as well.

Temples are considered by church members to be the most sacred structures on earth, and as such, operating temples are not open to the public. Upon being built, temples typically have an "open house" period, whereby interior tours are available to the public. [167] Then after the temple is [1



The Salt Lake Temple

with ecclesiastical leaders and receive a special recommendation card, called a temple recommend, that they present upon entry. Church members are instructed not to share details about temple ordinances with non-members or even converse about them outside the temple itself. As of May 2023, there are $\underline{177}$ operating temples worldwide.

In order to perform ordinances in temples on behalf of deceased family members, the church emphasizes genealogical research, and encourages its lay members to participate in genealogy. It operates FamilySearch, the largest genealogical organization in the world. [170]

Conferences

Twice each year (the first weekend of April and October), general authorities address the worldwide church through general conference. General conference sessions are translated into as many as 80 languages and are broadcast from the 21,000-seat^[171] Conference Center in Salt Lake City. During this conference,

church members <u>formally acknowledge</u>, or "sustain", the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. [172]



Interior of the Conference Center where the church holds its General Conferences twice a year.

Individual stakes also hold formal conferences within their own boundaries biannually; wards hold conferences annually. [173]

Organization and structure

Name and legal entities

The church teaches that it is a continuation of the Church of Christ established in 1830 by Joseph Smith. This original church underwent several name changes during the 1830s, being called the Church of Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ; $\frac{[10]}{[10]}$ in 1834, the name was officially changed to the Church of the Latter Day Saints. $\frac{[174]}{[18]}$: In April 1838, the name was officially changed to "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints". $\frac{[174][18]}{[18]}$: After Smith died, Brigham Young and the largest body of Smith's followers incorporated the LDS Church in 1851 by legislation of the State of Deseret under the name "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints", which included a hyphenated "Latter-day" and a British-style lower-case d. $\frac{[175]}{[18]}$

Common informal names for the church include the LDS Church, the Latter-day Saints, and the Mormons. The term $Mormon\ Church$ is in common use. The church requests that the official name be used when possible or, if necessary, shortened to "the Church", "the Church of Jesus Christ", 10 or "Latter-day Saints". In August 2018, church president Russell M. Nelson asked members of the church and others to cease using the terms "LDS", "Mormon" and "Mormonism" to refer to the church, its membership, or its belief system and instead to call the church by its full and official name. Subsequent to this announcement, the church's premier vocal ensemble, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, was officially renamed and became the "Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square". Reaction to the name change policy has been mixed.

Legally, the church currently functions as a <u>corporation sole</u>, incorporated in Utah. [184]

Intellectual Reserve is a nonprofit corporation wholly owned by the church, which holds the church's intellectual property, such as copyrights, trademarks, and other media. [185]

Priesthood hierarchy and church service



Russell M. Nelson, President of the LDS Church since 2018.

The LDS Church is organized in a hierarchical priesthood structure administered by its male members. Members of the church-wide leadership are called general authorities. They exercise both ecclesiastical and administrative leadership over the church and direct the efforts of regional leaders down to the local level. General authorities and mission presidents work full-time for the church, and typically receive stipends from church funds or investments. As well as speaking in general conference, general authorities speak to church members in local congregations throughout the world; they also speak to youth and young adults in broadcasts and at the Church Educational System (CES) schools, such as Brigham Young University (BYU). Local congregations are typically led by bishops, who perform similar functions to pastors in the Protestant tradition, or parish priests in the Roman Catholic Church.

All males who are living the standards of the church are generally considered for the priesthood and are ordained to the priesthood as early as age 11. [191] Ordination occurs by a ceremony where hands are laid on the head of the one ordained. The priesthood is divided into an order for young men aged 11 years and older (called the Aaronic priesthood) and an order

for men 18 years of age and older (called the Melchizedek priesthood). [2][5]:26 Additional authorities within the priesthood – called priesthood keys – are extended to holders of certain church leadership callings.

Some church leaders and scholars have spoken of women holding or exercising priesthood power. However, women are not formally ordained to the priesthood, and they do not participate in public functions administered by the priesthood—such as passing the Sacrament, giving priesthood blessings, or holding leadership positions over congregations as a whole. Since 2013, the Ordain Women organization has sought formal priesthood ordination for women. In 2019, LDS women received the right to serve as witnesses for baptism, a role previously reserved for male priesthood holders.

Each active church member is expected to receive a <u>calling</u>, or position of assigned responsibility within the church. Church members are expected to neither ask for specific callings, nor decline callings that are extended to them by their leaders. Leadership positions in the church's various congregations are filled through the calling system, and the vast majority of callings are filled on a volunteer basis. [u][v] Members volunteer general custodial work for local church facilities. [198]

Programs and organizations

Under the leadership of the priesthood hierarchy are five organizations that fill various roles in the church: Relief Society, the Young Men and Young Women organizations, Primary, and Sunday School. Women serve as presidents and counselors in the presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary, while men serve as presidents and counselors of the Young Men and Sunday School. The church also operates several programs and organizations in the fields of proselytizing, education, and church welfare such as LDS Humanitarian Services. Many of these organizations and programs are coordinated by the Priesthood Correlation Program, which is designed to provide a systematic approach to maintain worldwide consistency, orthodoxy, and



The campus of <u>Brigham Young</u> <u>University</u>, in <u>Provo</u>, <u>Utah</u>, one of several educational institutions sponsored by the church

control of the church's ordinances, doctrines, organizations, meetings, materials, and other programs and activities. [200][6]:184-215

The church operates CES, which includes BYU, <u>BYU–Idaho</u>, <u>BYU–Hawaii</u>, and <u>Ensign College</u>. The church also operates <u>Institutes of Religion</u> near the campuses of many colleges and universities. For high-school aged youth, the church operates a four-year <u>Seminary program</u>, which provides religious classes for students to supplement their secular education. <u>[2]</u> The church also sponsors a low-interest educational loan program known as the <u>Perpetual Education Fund</u>, which provides educational opportunities to students from <u>developing nations</u>.

The church's welfare system, initiated in 1930 during the Great Depression, provides aid to the poor. Leaders ask members to fast once a month and donate the money they would have spent on those meals to help the needy, in what is called a fast offering. [2] Money from the program is used to operate Bishop's storehouses, which package and store food at low cost. Distribution of funds and food is administered by local bishops. The church also distributes money through its Philanthropies division to disaster victims worldwide. [203]

Other church programs and departments include <u>Family Services</u>, which provides <u>adoption</u> resource referrals, <u>marital and family counseling</u>, psychotherapy, and <u>addiction counseling</u>; [204] the LDS Church History Department, which collects church history and



The church's <u>Family History Library</u> is the world's largest library dedicated to genealogical research

records; and the Family History Department, which administers the church's large family history efforts, including FamilySearch, the world's largest <u>family history library</u> and organization. Other facilities owned and operated by the church include Temple Square, the <u>Church Office Building</u>, the <u>Church Administration Building</u>, the Church History Library and the Granite Mountain Records Vault.

Finances

Since 1941, the church has been classified by the \underline{IRS} as a $\underline{501(c)(3)}$ organization and is therefore tax-exempt. Donations are tax-deductible in the United States. The church has not released church-wide financial statements since 1959. In the absence of official statements, people interested in knowing the church's financial status and behavior, including both members of the church and people outside the church, have attempted to estimate or guess. [208]

In 1997, *Time* magazine called the LDS Church one of the world's wealthiest churches per capita. The church has stated that its for-profit, non-profit, and educational subsidiary entities are all audited by professionals independent from other church entities. [210]

The church receives significant funds from tithes and fast offerings. It has been estimated that during the 2010s its net worth increased by about \$15 billion per year (\$18.5 billion in 2022^[151]),^[150] and by \$22 billion during the COVID-19 pandemic.^[211] According to a 2020 estimate by *The Wall Street Journal*, the LDS Church's investment fund had a net worth of around \$100 billion.^{[212][213]}

The church's assets are held in a variety of holding companies, subsidiary corporations, and for-profit companies including: <u>Bonneville International</u>, <u>KSL</u>, <u>Deseret Book Company</u>, and holding companies for cattle ranches and farms in at least 12 U.S. States, Canada, New Zealand, and Argentina. Also included are banks and insurance companies, hotels and restaurants, real estate development, forestry and mining operations, and transportation and railway companies. [214][215] Investigative journalism from the <u>Truth & Enternational</u>



<u>Deseret Book Company</u> headquarters in Salt Lake City

<u>Transparency Foundation</u> in 2022 suggests the church may be the owner of the most valuable real estate portfolio in the United States, with a minimum market value of \$15.7 billion. [214] The church has also invested in for-profit business and real estate ventures such as <u>City Creek Center</u>. [215] The Church-owned investment firm <u>Ensign Peak Advisors</u> publicly reports management of \$37.8 billion of financial securities, as of 2020. [184]

Culture

Due to the differences in lifestyle promoted by church doctrine and history, members of the church have developed a distinct culture. It is primarily concentrated in the Intermountain West. [216]

Many of the church's more distinctive practices follow from their adherence to the Word of Wisdom—which includes abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, coffee, and tea—and their observance of Sabbath-day restrictions on recreation and shopping. Common, distinctive cuisine includes funeral potatoes and Jello salad. [217]

Cultural taboos exist on piercings^[w] and tattoos^[140] and the church counsels against the use of crosses as symbols of worship. [218]

Media and arts

LDS-themed media includes <u>cinema</u>, <u>fiction</u>, websites, and graphical art such as photography and paintings. The church owns a chain of bookstores called Deseret Book, which provide a channel through which publications are sold; church leaders have authored books and sold them through the publishing arm of the bookstore. <u>BYU TV</u>, the church-sponsored television station, also airs on several networks. The church also produces <u>several pageants</u> annually depicting various events of the primitive and modern-day church. Its <u>Easter pageant *Jesus the Christ*</u> has been identified as the "largest annual outdoor Easter pageant in the



The Church-sponsored <u>Tabernacle Choir at Temple</u> <u>Square</u> has received various awards and travelled extensively since its inception.

world".[219] The church encourages entertainment without violence, sexual content, or vulgar language; many church members specifically avoid rated-R movies.[220]

The church's official choir, the <u>Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square</u>, was formed in the mid-19th century and performs in the <u>Salt Lake Tabernacle</u>. They have travelled to more than 28 countries, [221] and are considered one of the most famous choirs in the world. The choir has received a <u>Grammy Award</u>, four Emmy Awards, [223] two Peabody Awards, [224] and the National Medal of Arts.

Political involvement

The LDS Church states it generally takes no partisan role in politics, [226] but encourages its members to play an active role as responsible citizens in their communities, including becoming informed about issues and voting. [227] The church maintains that the faith's values can be found among many political



Mitt Romney, an LDS politician who was runner-up in the 2012 United States presidential election

parties. [227][226] It also generally does not take sides in global conflicts. [228]

A 2012 <u>Pew Center</u> on Religion and Public Life survey indicates that 74 percent of U.S. members lean towards the <u>Republican Party</u>. Some liberal members say they feel that they have to defend their worthiness due to political differences. Democrats and those who lean Democrat made up 18% of church members surveyed in the 2014 <u>Pew Research Center's</u> Religious Landscape Survey.

The official church stance on staying out of politics does not include if there are instances of what church leaders deem to be moral issues, or issues the church believes "directly affect [its] mission, teachings or operations." [226] It has

mission, teachings or operations." [226] It has previously opposed same-sex marriage in California Prop 8, [233] supported a gay rights bill in Salt Lake City which bans discrimination against homosexual persons in housing and employment, [234][235] opposed gambling, [61] opposed storage of nuclear waste in Utah, [236] and supported an approach to U.S. immigration policy as outlined in the Utah Compact. [237] It also opposed a ballot initiative legalizing medicinal marijuana in



Church president Thomas S. Monson (left) and apostle Dallin H. Oaks (right) presenting U.S. president

Barack Obama with his genealogy at the Oval Office in July 2009

and 2021, the church stated its opposition to the <u>Equality Act</u>, which would prohibit discrimination in the United States on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, but supports alternate legislation that it says would protect both LGBTQ rights and religious freedom. [240] In 2022, the church stated its support for the <u>Respect for Marriage Act</u>—which codified same-sex marriage as legal in the United States—due to the "protections for religious freedom" it includes. [241]

In the <u>117th United States Congress</u>, there are nine LDS Church members, including all six members of Utah's congressional delegation, all of whom are Republicans. <u>[242]</u> <u>Utah's</u> current governor, <u>Spencer Cox</u>, is also a church member, <u>[243]</u> as are supermajorities in both houses of the <u>Utah State Legislature</u>. <u>[244]</u> Church member and current <u>U.S. Senator</u> <u>Mitt Romney</u> was the Republican Party's nominee in the <u>U.S.</u> 2012 presidential election. <u>[245]</u>

Demographics

The church reports a worldwide membership of 17 million. [3][247] The church's definition of "membership" includes all persons who were ever baptized, or whose parents were members while the person was under the age of eight (called "members of record"), [248]: 145–146 who have neither been excommunicated nor asked to have their names removed

Utah. [238] but supported a possible alternative to it. [239] In 2019

Pew 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study ^[246]	LDS (U.S.)	U.S. Avg.
Married	66%	49%
Divorced or separated	7%	11%
Have children under 18	41%	31%
Attendance at religious services (weekly or more)	77%	40%

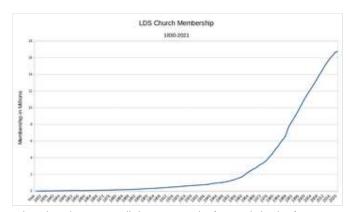
from church records. [248]:116,148-149 As of December 2011, approximately 8.3 million members reside outside the United States. [x][247]

According to its statistics, the church is the fourth largest religious body in the United States. [251][252] Although the church does not publish attendance figures, researchers estimate that attendance at weekly LDS worship services globally is around 4 million. [253] Members living in the U.S. and Canada constitute 46 percent of membership, Latin America 38 percent, and members in the rest of the world 16 percent. [247] The 2012 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life survey, conducted by

Pew Research Center 2014 Survey: Ethnicity ^[249]	LDS (U.S.)	U.S. (2020) ^[250]
White	85%	62%
Black	1%	12%
Latino	8%	12%
Asian	1%	6%
Other/Multiracial	5%	21%

Princeton Survey Research Associates International, found that approximately 2 percent of the U.S. adult population self-identified as Mormon. [246]

Membership is concentrated geographically in the Intermountain West, in a specific region sometimes known as the $\underline{Mormon\ corridor}$. Church members and some others from the United States colonized this region in the mid-to-late 1800s, dispossessing several indigenous tribes in the process. $\underline{[47]}$: 28,249–250,365 $\underline{[48]}$



The church saw prodigious numerical growth in the latter half of the 20th century, but the growth has since leveled off.

The church experienced rapid numerical growth in the 20th century, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. [255]:1 In the 21st century, however, church membership growth has slowed. [256][257] In 2022, eight of the top ten nations with the highest LDS membership growth rate were in Africa, [258] and Latino people are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups with millions of LDS adherents in Latin American countries. [259]

In the United States, church members tend to be more highly educated than the general population. [260] The racial and ethnic composition of membership in the United States is one of the least diverse in the country.

Church membership is predominantly white; [261] the membership of blacks is significantly lower than the general U.S. population. [249]

The LDS Church does not release official statistics on church activity, but it is likely that only approximately 40 percent of its recorded membership in the United States and 30 percent worldwide regularly attend weekly Sunday worship services. [262][y] A 2016 survey found a majority (54%) of millennials raised in the church had disaffiliated. Activity rates vary with age, and disengagement occurs most frequently between age 16 and 25. Young single adults are more likely to become inactive than their married counterparts, $^{[265]}$ and women tend to be more active than men. $^{[102]:55}$

Humanitarian services

The LDS Church is widely known for providing worldwide <u>humanitarian service</u>. [266][267][203] The church's welfare and humanitarian efforts are coordinated by Philanthropies, a church department under the direction of the <u>Presiding Bishopric</u>. [203] Welfare efforts, originally initiated during the Great Depression, provide aid for the poor, financed by donations from church members. Philanthropies is also responsible for philanthropic (that is, not tithing or fast offering) donations to the LDS Church and other affiliated charities, such as the Church History Library, the Church Educational System (and its subsidiary organizations), the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square and funds for <u>LDS missionaries</u>. [268][269] Donations are also used to operate bishop's storehouses, which package and store food for lower-income people at low cost, and provide other local services. [270] In 2016, the church reported that it had spent a total of \$1.2 billion on humanitarian aid over the previous 30 years.

Church humanitarian aid includes organizing food security, clean water, mobility, and healthcare initiatives, operating thrift stores, maintaining a service project website, and directly funding or partnering with other organizations. The church reports that the value of all charitable donations in 2021 was \$906 million. [15] Independent reporting has found that the



U.S. Navy sailors moving LDS Church–donated humanitarian supplies to Beirut, Lebanon, in 2006

Church's charity organization, LDS Charities, gave a total of \$177 million from 2008 to 2020. [271]

The church also distributes money and aid to disaster victims worldwide. [272] In 2017, the church partnered with Catholic Relief Services and other organizations to provide aid to several African and Middle Eastern nations. [65] In 2010, it partnered with Islamic Relief to help victims of flooding in Pakistan. [273] Latter-day Saint Charities (a branch of the church's welfare department) increased food production during the COVID-19 pandemic and donated healthcare supplies to 16 countries affected by the crisis. [274][275][276] The church has donated \$4 million to aid refugees fleeing from the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. [277] In 2022, the church gave \$32 million to the United Nations World Food Programme, in its largest one-time donation to a humanitarian organization to that point. [278]

Criticism and controversy

The LDS Church has been subject to criticism and the subject of controversy since its early years in New York and Pennsylvania.

Modern criticism of the church includes disputed claims, allegations of historical revisionism by the church, [279] child sexual abuse, anti-gay teachings, [62]:4,288-301 [280] racism, [281][282][283] and sexism. [284][285] Notable 20th-century critics include [287] and [287] and historian [287]

Child sexual abuse

The church has been criticized for a number of alleged abuses perpetrated by local church leadership. In other cases, church leaders have been criticized for allegedly failing to properly report abuse to law enforcement, [288] failing to keep records of sexual abuse claims which were reported through its Helpline phone number, and for citing clergy-penitent privilege laws when they do not testify in court or divulge information obtained through spiritual confessions. [289]

Scriptures

In the late 1820s, criticism centered on the claim by Joseph Smith to have been led to a set of gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was reputedly translated. [17]:116–118[27]:80–82,87

Mainstream archaeological, historical, and scientific communities have discovered little to support the existence of the civilizations described in the Book of Mormon, and do not consider it to be an actual record of historical events. Scholars have pointed out a number of anachronisms within the text. They argue that no evidence of a reformed Egyptian language has ever been discovered; the Book of Mormon explicitly claims to have been written in reformed Egyptian, and so the non-existence of this language would challenge the book's claims about its own origin. Also, general archaeological and genetic evidence has not supported the book's statements about any known indigenous peoples of the Americas. [294][295]

Since its publication in 1842, the Book of Abraham (currently published as part of the canonical Pearl of Great Price) has also been a major source of controversy. Numerous non-Mormon Egyptologists, beginning in the late 19th century, [296]:61 have disagreed with Joseph Smith's explanations of the book's facsimiles. Translations of the original papyri—by both Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists—do not match the text of the Book of Abraham as purportedly translated by Joseph Smith. [297]:61 Indeed, the transliterated text from the recovered papyri and facsimiles published in the Book of Abraham contain no direct references to Abraham. [298]:269[299][296]:66 Scholars have also asserted that damaged portions of the papyri were reconstructed incorrectly by Smith or his associates. [297]:25

Polygamy

Polygamy (called plural marriage within the church) was practiced by church leaders for more than half of the 19th century, [300] and practiced publicly from 1852 to 1890 by between 20 and 30 percent of Latter-day Saint families. [301][55] It was instituted privately in the 1830s by founder Joseph Smith and announced publicly in 1852 at the direction of Brigham Young. [55]

For over 60 years, the <u>church and the United States</u> were at odds over the issue: at one point, the Republican platform referenced "the twin relics of barbarism—polygamy and slavery." [302] The church defended the practice as a matter of religious freedom, while the federal government aggressively sought to eradicate it; in 1862, the United States Congress passed the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act, which prohibited plural marriage in the territories. [55]



Mormon polygamists in prison at the Utah Penitentiary, <u>c.</u>, 1889

In 1890, church president Wilford Woodruff <u>issued a Manifesto</u> that officially terminated the practice in the United States, [54] though it did not dissolve existing polygamous marriages of any couples, some of which continued to cohabit into the 1950s. [300] Some church members continued to enter into polygamous marriages in Canada and Mexico, but these eventually stopped in 1904 when church president Joseph F.

Smith disavowed polygamy before Congress and issued a "Second Manifesto," calling for all plural marriages in the church to cease. Several small fundamentalist groups, seeking to continue the practice, split from the LDS Church, but the mainline church now excommunicates members found practicing polygamy and distances itself from those fundamentalist groups. [102]:91[303]

Minorities

Black people



Green Flake, an enslaved Black man reported to have driven the first wagon of LDS pioneers to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847[304]

The teachings, attitudes, and practices of top LDS Church leaders towards Black people have changed significantly from its founding years to the modern times, and the church has faced criticism and controversy on these topics. [305]: 1–5 [306]: 5–7 [307] Joseph Smith allowed several black men to be ordained as priests during his presidency, but also taught that the dark skin of people of Black African ancestry was a sign of a curse from God. [308]: 213 [309]: 27 Both Smith and Brigham Young taught that Black people were subject to the Biblical curse of Ham, [310]: 126 [311] and curse of Cain. [309][310]: 256 Both made statements in support of Black enslavement, [305]: 22 and Young legalized Black slavery while acting as Utah territory's governor. [312][313]: 69 [314]: 34

From 1844 to 1978, the church barred Black women and men from participating in temple ordinances necessary for the highest level of salvation; [315][316][317] prevented most men of Black African descent from being ordained to the church's lay, all-male priesthood; [318]:64 supported racial segregation in its communities and schools; [305]:67,78[319] taught that righteous Black people would be made White after death; [281][320][321]:148 and opposed interracial marriage. [322][64]:89 Leaders taught on many occasions during this time that Black people were less righteous in the pre-

existence. [323]: 27 [305]: 56,66 [64]: 221 The temple and priesthood racial restrictions were lifted by top leaders in 1978 [305]: 106–107 [324] following public pressure during the United States' civil rights movement. [aa] In 2013 the church directly disavowed its previous teachings on race for the first time. [281][327] In 2018, the Church formed an alliance with the NAACP in an effort to improve race relations. [328]

Native American people

Over the past two centuries, the relationship between Native American people and the LDS Church has included friendly ties, displacement, battles, slavery, education placement programs, official and unofficial discrimination, and criticism. [329][330] Church leadership and publications taught that Native Americans are descendants of Lamanites, a dark-skinned and cursed people from the Book of Mormon.[331]: 196[330] More recently, LDS researchers and publications generally favor a smaller geographic footprint of Lamanite descendants. [ab][333] There is no direct support amongst mainstream historians and archaeologists for the historicity of the Book of Mormon Middle Eastern origins for any Native American peoples.[334][22][23]:259–267



Artistic depiction of Joseph Smith preaching to Native Americans in Illinois

Soon after Mormons colonized the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, Native American child slaves became a vital source of their labor, and were exchanged as gifts. [335][336]:273–274 The settlers initially had some peaceful relations, but because resources were scarce in the desert, hostilities broke out with the local Native Americans. [337] According to LDS Church Historian Marlin K. Jensen as more LDS immigrants arrived and took over the land of Native nations, "Resources the Indians had relied on for generations diminished, and in time they felt forced to resist and fight for their own survival ... the land and cultural birthright Indians once possessed in the Great Basin were largely taken from them." [337] Within 50 years of Mormon settlement, the population of Utah's Native Americans was reduced by almost 90%. [336]: 273

The church ran an <u>Indian Placement Program</u> between the 1950s and the 1990s, wherein indigenous children were adopted by white church members. Criticism resulted during and after the program, including claims of improper assimilation and even abuse. [338][281] However, many of the involved students and families praised the program. [339]:194–195 Church leaders taught for decades that Native Americans' darker skin would be made lighter due to their righteousness. [340][319][308]:64

LGBT people

The church's policies and treatment of sexual minorities and gender minorities have long been the subject of external criticism, [341][342][343] as well as internal controversy and disaffection by members. [344][345][346] Because of its ban against same-sex sexual activity and same-sex marriage, the LDS church taught for decades that any adherents attracted to the same sex could and should change that through sexual orientation change efforts and righteous striving. [62]:25–30,89–101 The church provided therapy and programs for attempting to change sexual orientation. [347]



Protesters in front of the Newport

Beach California Temple voicing their opposition to the church's support of Prop 8

Current teachings and policies leave homosexual members with the options of: attempts to change their sexual orientation, entering a

mixed-orientation opposite-sex marriage, or lifelong celibacy. [348][349][350]:20–21 Some have argued that church teachings against homosexuality and the treatment of LGBT members by other adherents and leaders have contributed to their elevated rates of PTSD and depression, [351][352][353] as well as suicide and teen homelessness. [62]:4,288–301 [354][355] The church's decades-long, political involvement opposing US same-sex marriage laws has further garnered criticism and protests. [62]:2–3,162–163 [356]

Baptismal candidates considering gender-affirming surgery are not allowed to be baptized, and those who have already had one need special clearance from the First Presidency through the local full-time mission president before baptism. [357][358]:145 Undergoing a "trans-sexual [sic] operation" (including genderaffirming surgery like chest surgery (i.e. top surgery)[359] may imperil the membership of a current church member. [360][361] Ordinances after baptism such as receiving the priesthood and temple endowments are only done according to birth sex. [362] Members that gender express through clothing or a pronoun change differing from the sex assigned at their birth will receive membership restrictions and a notation on their membership records. [362]

Criticism of Joseph Smith

In the 1830s, the church was heavily criticized for Smith's handling of a banking failure in Kirtland, Ohio. [27]: 195–196 [17]: 328,330,334 After the Mormons migrated west, there was fear and suspicion about the LDS Church's political and military power in Missouri, [ac] culminating in the 1838 Mormon War and the

Mormon Extermination Order (Missouri Executive Order 44) by Governor Lilburn Boggs. In the 1840s, criticism of the church included its <u>theocratic</u> aspirations in Nauvoo, Illinois. Criticism of the practice of <u>plural marriage</u> and other doctrines Smith taught were published in the <u>Nauvoo Expositor</u> in 1844. [17]:539 [ad] After Smith took a leading role in having the paper's printing press destroyed, he was charged with treason and jailed. While he awaited trial, an angry mob stormed the jailhouse and shot him fatally. [363]

In modern popular opinion, non-Mormons in the U.S. generally consider Smith a "charlatan, scoundrel, and heretic." [364] *The Book of Mormon* musical relentlessly mocks his account of the golden plates. [365] In 2007, Christopher Hitchens, writing in Slate magazine, lambasted Smith as a mountebank, charlatan, and fraud (and the church itself as a "ridiculous cult" and a "racket" that became a religion). [366]

Financial controversy

The church's failure to make its finances public has drawn criticism from commentators who consider its practices too secretive. [367][368][291]:516–528[369]

In December 2019, a whistleblower alleged the church held over \$100 billion in investment funds through its investment management company, <u>Ensign Peak Advisors</u> (EP); that it failed to use the funds for charitable purposes and instead used them in for-profit ventures; and that it misled contributors and the public about the usage and extent of those funds. [370][371] In response, the church's First Presidency stated that "the Church complies with all applicable law governing our donations, investments, taxes, and reserves," and that "a portion" of funds received by the church are "methodically safeguarded through wise financial management and the building of a prudent reserve for the future". [372] The church has not directly addressed the fund's size to the public, but third parties have treated the disclosures as legitimate. [212][213] The disclosure of Ensign Peak has led to criticism that the church's wealth may be excessive.

The church has transferred more than 1 billion dollars of tithing collected in Canada, tax-free, to church universities over a 15-year period. In October 2022, *The Sydney Morning Herald* announced that while the church publicly claimed to have donated US\$1.35 billion to charity between 2008 and 2020, its private financial reports showed that it donated only US\$0.177 billion. [375][ae]

In February 2023, the <u>U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission</u> (SEC) issued a \$5 million penalty to the church and its investment company, <u>EP.</u> The SEC alleged that the church concealed its investments and their management in multiple <u>shell companies</u> from 1997 to 2019; the SEC believes these shell companies were approved by senior church leadership to avoid public transparency. The church released a statement that in 2000 EP "received and relied upon legal counsel regarding how to comply with its reporting obligations while attempting to maintain the privacy of the portfolio." After initial SEC concern in June 2019, the church stated that EP "adjusted its approach and began filing a single aggregated report."

See also



- Anti-Mormonism
- Christianity in the United States
- Index of articles related to the LDS Church

- List of attacks against Latter-day Saint churches
- List of missions of the LDS Church
- Mormon (word)
- Mormonism and Islam
- Mormonism and Judaism
- List of new religious movements
- List of temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Notes

- a. The church president is often referred to as "the Prophet".
- b. Scholars and eyewitnesses disagree whether the church was organized in Manchester, New York at the Smith log home, or in Fayette at the home of Peter Whitmer; 17]: 109 Marquardt states that organization in Manchester is most consistent with eye-witness statements. 18]: 223[19] The LDS Church officially favors organization in Fayette. 20]
- c. In 1834, Smith designated Kirtland as one of the "<u>stakes</u>" of Zion, referring to the tent–stakes metaphor of *Isaiah*. [5]:175[26]
- d. Smith said in 1831 that God intended the Mormons to "retain a strong hold in the land of Kirtland, for the space of five years". [28]
- e. Brodie stated that the brutality of the Jackson Countians aroused sympathy for the Mormons and was almost universally deplored by the media. [27]: 137
- f. By summer of 1835, there were 1500 to 2000 Saints in Kirtland, and from 1831 to 1838, church membership grew from 680 to 17,881.
- g. Smith referred to the Far West church as the "church in Zion". [33]: 24 His statement calling Far West "Zion" had the effect of "implying that Far West was to take the place of Independence". [17]: 345
- h. Boggs' executive order stated that the Mormon community had "made war upon the people of this State" and that "the Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary for the public peace". [17]:367 In 1976, Missouri issued a formal apology for this unconstitutional order. [17]:398
- i. The <u>second anointing</u> ordinance provides a guarantee that recipients will be exalted. [36]: 189,191[37][38] Authors have stated that Smith's words were similar to those of Paul that faithful saints may become co-heirs with Jesus. [39][40][33]: 502–503
- j. Bushman described the Council of Fifty noting that Smith prophesied "the entire overthrow of this nation in a few years", at which time the Kingdom of God would be prepared to lead. [17]:519–521
- k. In this account, the personages in question are inferred—though never expressly stated—to be <u>God the Father</u> and his Son, <u>Jesus Christ</u>.[41]
- I. However, the <u>Catholic Church</u> considers doctrinal differences between the two groups to be so great that it will not accept a prior LDS baptism as evidence of Christian initiation, as it will baptism by other Christian groups, such as the <u>Eastern Orthodox</u> and <u>Protestant</u> churches. [89][90] The LDS Church, in its turn, does not accept baptisms performed in any other churches, as it teaches that baptism is only valid when it is conducted through proper priesthood authority. [91][36]:41
- m. Examples include the US Presbyterian Church, US Evangelical Lutheran Church, Catholic Church, US Episcopal Church, and Eastern Orthodox Church, US Episcopal Church, and Eastern Orthodox Church, [98]

- n. According to <u>Joseph Smith</u>, Jesus told him that the other churches claiming to be Christian creeds "were an abomination in the Lords sight; that those professors [of religion] were all corrupt".[100][101]
- o. A man may be sealed to more than one wife if his previous wives are either dead or legally divorced from him; a living woman, however, may only be sealed to one husband. [104][105] Thus, there is a common view within the LDS Church that though prohibited by the LDS Church in mortality, polygamy or "plural marriage" will exist in the afterlife. [104][106][105] "In the case of a man marrying a wife in the everlasting covenant who dies while he continues in the flesh and marries another by the same divine law, each wife will come forth in her order and enter with him into his glory." [106] Joseph Fielding Smith, then an apostle, stated in 1939 "my wives will be mine in eternity" in reference to his two deceased and one living partners. [105][107]
- p. Children born to biological parents who have been sealed to each other are considered "born in the covenant" and need not be sealed to their parents. [108]
- q. <u>Joseph Smith–Matthew</u> and the <u>Book of Moses</u>, containing translations and revelatory expansions of Matthew 24 and Genesis 1–7, respectively, are contained in the <u>Pearl of Great Price</u>.
- r. The initial incorporation by the non-existent <u>State of Deseret</u> was not legally valid, $\frac{[175]}{}$ but was soon ratified by the **Utah Territory** in 1851 $\frac{[176]}{}$ and 1855. $\frac{[177]}{}$
- s. During the Church's October 2018 General Conference, Nelson declared that the use of nicknames such as *Mormon* represented "a major victory for Satan." [181][10]
- t. General authorities consist of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, first two Quorums of Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric.
- u. The only paid positions in the Church are general authorities and mission presidents. [186][195]
- v. For a time, the church had a paid local clergy (e.g. stake presidents, bishops, patriarchs). However, that practice was discontinued in the early 1900s. [196][197]
- w. Leaders state women should only have a maximum of one piercing in each ear, and men should not have any.[140]
- x. Subtracting U.S. membership of 6,144,582 (December 31, 2011) from total worldwide membership (December 31, 2011) of 14,441,346, results in 8,296,764 (rounded to 8.3 million) members outside the United States of America.
- y. Reporting on a presentation given by the church's chief information officer, a *Deseret News* article indicated that one of Maxfield's statistics was that "about 36% [of church members] attend weekly sacrament meetings". The article was retracted with following disclaimer: "some of the statistics originally reported in this article have been removed because they have not been verified by the LDS Church. The information was removed at the request of the speaker." [263]
- z. Standard language references such as Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, eds., *The World's Writing Systems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) (990 pages); David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Roger D. Woodard, ed., *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) (1162 pages) contain no reference to "reformed Egyptian." "Reformed Egyptian" is also ignored in Andrew Robinson, *Lost Languages: The Enigma of the World's Undeciphered Scripts* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002). Smith's discussion of it is mentioned in *Fantastic Archaeology*. [292]

aa. Examples of public pressure include:

- In 1963, <u>Hugh B. Brown</u> made a statement on <u>civil rights</u> during <u>General Conference</u> in order to avert a planned protest of the conference by the NAACP. [325]
- During the late 1960s and 1970s, black athletes at some universities refused to compete against teams from church owned Brigham Young University as a form of protest. [326]
- A protest in 1974 was in response to the exclusion of black scouts to become leaders in church sponsored Boy Scout troops. [313]:185
- ab. Prior to 2006, the introduction to church-published editions of the Book of Mormon stated Lamanites form the "principal ancestors of the American Indians." Since the 2006 edition, the same passage now reads they are "among the ancestors of the American Indians." [332][21]
- ac. Bushman noted that in <u>Daviess County</u>, <u>Missouri</u>, non-Mormons "watched local government fall into the hands of people they saw as deluded fanatics". [17]:357
- ad. Historian Fawn Brodie argued that given its authors' intentions to reform the church, the paper was "extraordinarily restrained" given the explosive allegations it could have raised. [27]:374 A prospectus for the newspaper was published on May 10, and referred to Smith as a "self-constituted monarch". [35]:138
- ae. The Widow's Mite Report, an anonymous 3rd-party focused on analysis of church finances, evaluated SMH's claims and concluded they "offer only a partial picture" of the church's humanitarian giving during the period in question. [376]

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 'Mormon food' should be seen as part of a larger Western tradition of hearty meals, seasonal eating and food preservation that is in keeping with modern farm-to-table ideals As the church becomes more international, that Utah Mormon food is no longer the standard...

 Mormon home cooks are unusually adept in the kitchen by modern standards In the 1960s, Mormon women (like most Americans) enthusiastically embraced inexpensive convenience foods like canned fruit, instant potatoes and, of course, Jell-O. For some reason, the Utah Mormons took longer to come out of that phase... Powdered milk and eggs; dried beans; canned vegetables, fruit, and even canned meat and cheese are staples of many kitchens. (This may have something to do with the stereotypical blandness of traditional Mormon food.) ... For most Mormons over 40, two standard dishes sum up the tradition: green Jell-O and funeral potatoes."
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External links

Official church websites

- ChurchofJesusChrist.org (https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/) official church website
- ComeUntoChrist.org (http://www.comeuntochrist.org) official church website, with information about basic beliefs (formerly Mormon.org).

Other sites

- Works by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (https://www.gutenberg.org/author/ Church+of+Jesus+Christ+of+Latter-day+Saints) at Project Gutenberg
- Works by or about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (https://archive.org/searc h.php?query=%28%22Church+of+Jesus+Christ+of+Latter+day+Saints%22+OR+%22Mormo n+Church%22+OR+%22LDS+Church%22%29) at Internet Archive

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