

Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs

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Information and Suggestions for Patriarchs

To the Stake Patriarch

The Patriarchal Office

One of the offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood is that of patriarch. Patriarchs are called and ordained to give patriarchal blessings to worthy members of the Church within the patriarch's designated area of responsibility. This is a sacred, spiritual calling.

The patriarchal office is unique. It is one of blessing, not of administration or counseling. Other officers are called to administer the organizations and programs of the Church and to counsel Church members. If members seek counsel from the patriarch on matters that do not pertain to patriarchal blessings, he should refer them to their bishop or their quorum leader, who can advise them or direct them to additional help if needed.

The call of a patriarch is for a lifetime, so he is not released. However, if necessary he may be given nonfunctioning status, excusing him from giving blessings, as outlined in "Changes in Status for Patriarchs" (pages 9–10).

A patriarch should be devoted to his calling. At first he may have some feelings of loneliness if he has been accustomed to working with others in a ward or stake. But as he receives the spirit of his calling and devotes himself to it, he will find it to be spiritually fulfilling.

Relationship with the Stake President

The Quorum of the Twelve has delegated to stake presidents the responsibility to supervise the work of patriarchs in the stakes of Zion. The stake president instructs and interviews patriarchs as outlined in "Supervising the Stake Patriarch" (pages 8–9). The patriarch consults with the stake president whenever he needs counsel on matters that pertain to his calling.

Preparation for Giving Blessings

Patriarchs are expected to be deeply spiritual men who are close to the Lord. The following suggestions will help patriarchs prepare to give blessings.

A patriarch should be personally worthy to receive guidance from the Holy Spirit. The sacred nature of a patriarchal blessing requires a patriarch to make most earnest solicitations for divine guidance in his inspired utterances and declarations in the promises, cautions, and admonitions he gives to the recipient.

A patriarch should maintain a close and loving relationship with his wife and family. He should meet all the standards listed in the temple recommend interview. He should study the scriptures, especially the life and teachings of the Savior, and apply those teachings in his life. He should avoid contention, conflict, and controversy in personal relationships and in associations he may have in the community.

A patriarch should seek to gain a thorough knowledge of the gospel and to learn all aspects of the patriarchal office. He should study the lives of the prophets and patriarchs, the lineage of Abraham and his successors, and the tribes of Israel and their mission and promises. He should also study the inspired blessings given to family members by Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Lehi, Alma, Mormon, and others. In addition, he should study the principles outlined in "Declaration of Lineage" and "History and Doctrine Concerning the House of Israel" (pages 3–4 and 12–13).

A patriarch should learn the covenants of the gospel and the eternal principles of the plan of salvation. He should also learn about the gifts of the Spirit as outlined in Doctrine and Covenants 46, Moroni 10, and 1 Corinthians 12. In addition, he should be familiar with the Lord's counsel that pertains to receiving revelation (see, for example, D&C 6:15, 22–23; 8:2–3; 9:7–9; 11:13–14; 112:10; and 1 Nephi 17:45).

Because a patriarch should be worthy at all times to receive impressions from the Holy Spirit, it should not be necessary that he fast each time before giving a patriarchal blessing.

When and Where to Give Patriarchal Blessings

Patriarchal blessings may be given in a patriarch's home, in a Church office, or in any other suitable room within the stake where the atmosphere is quiet and spiritual.

A patriarch should schedule blessings at a time when, through prayer and meditation, he can be fully in tune with the Spirit.

When possible, blessings should be scheduled at times that do not conflict with Church meetings that either the patriarch or the recipient should attend.

Patriarchal blessings are given in private. A spouse or parents may accompany the member. Any other guests should be kept to a minimum.

A patriarch should not be alone when giving a blessing to a sister.

Getting Acquainted with and Counseling Those Who Come to Receive Patriarchal Blessings

Before giving a blessing, it is desirable for the patriarch to talk briefly with the recipient to get acquainted and to feel his or her spirit. However, the patriarch does not interview the person for worthiness. Nor should the patriarch ask questions or discuss matters that might interfere with a full and free outpouring of impressions of the Spirit when the blessing is given. The blessing should not be given from what the patriarch may know about the person, but rather from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in concert with the patriarch's thoughts and capacity to express them.

If the patriarch feels it would be helpful, he may briefly review the nature and purpose of patriarchal blessings. The patriarch may also briefly counsel the person regarding the use of the blessing as a guide for life. He could include any of the following thoughts in this counsel:

- A patriarchal blessing should be read periodically and prayerfully. It will provide insights and applications or warnings from time to time as they are needed.
- Each patriarchal blessing is sacred, confidential, and personal; friends and acquaintances should not read it. Patriarchal blessings should never be shared through social media or posted on the Internet, even anonymously. "Church members should not compare blessings and should not share them except with close family members. Patriarchal blessings should not be read in Church meetings or other public gatherings" (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 20.12.2).
- Although a patriarchal blessing is a sacred guideline from the Lord to help a person through life, a person should not expect it to outline all that will happen or to answer all questions. If a possible future development, such as a mission or marriage, is not stated in a patriarchal blessing, that does not mean it will not occur.
- A patriarchal blessing should be viewed from an eternal perspective. Blessings that are promised may not be fulfilled in this life but may be realized in eternity. The Lord will fulfill them in the time and manner that will be for the person's greatest benefit and that is consistent with a faithful life.

Content and Language of Patriarchal Blessings

A patriarchal blessing is given by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood and through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. At some point in each blessing, the patriarch should state that he is pronouncing it by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ.

A patriarchal blessing should include an inspired declaration of the recipient's lineage as outlined in "Declaration of Lineage" (pages 3–4).

A patriarchal blessing should also include inspired and prophetic statements about the life possibilities of the recipient. As the Spirit directs,

the patriarch identifies for the recipient accomplishments to be realized, challenges to be overcome, and blessings to be received. The patriarch also includes such promises, admonitions, and warnings as he may be prompted to give. In these ways a patriarchal blessing can help the recipient define his or her responsibilities and goals.

In each blessing the patriarch should make clear that the realization of the promises is contingent on the faithfulness of the recipient and the will of the Lord.

A patriarchal blessing should encourage the person to keep the commandments and to qualify for eternal life.

A patriarch should avoid wordy, complicated language. He should speak in his own words, using dignified, spiritual terms and clear, simple sentences.

A patriarch should pronounce only those promises that are prompted by the Spirit. He should avoid sensational or extravagant promises. For example, he should not make references to world calamities or the timing of the Second Coming.

A patriarchal blessing should focus on the future rather than the past. Accordingly, the patriarch should avoid long explanations about past events, including those that took place in the premortal existence or the Council in Heaven.

A patriarchal blessing should be in harmony with the teachings of the prophets.

A patriarch may use the term *seal* in patriarchal blessings, but he should avoid using language that could relate this term to the ordinances or blessings of the temple.

A patriarch should not allow a blessing to become overly long in preachment or exhortation. He should give a blessing, not a prayer or a sermon of admonition or information.

A patriarch should make clear that spiritual blessings come from the Lord and that he is the Lord's agent of communication.

Because the principles of the gospel apply to all who live them, there will be some similarities

in patriarchal blessings. However, no two blessings should be the same. Each son and daughter of God is different; therefore, each patriarchal blessing should be suited to each individual.

The common pronouns in current usage—*you*, *your*, and *yours* in English—should be used in speaking to the person who is receiving the blessing. Reverential pronouns, such as *Thee*, *Thou*, *Thy*, and *Thine* in English, should be reserved for addressing Deity.

Declaration of Lineage

A vital part of every patriarchal blessing is the declaration of lineage. A patriarch should study the scriptures relating to the history and lineage of the patriarchs from Adam to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and the other sons of Jacob, and Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

The patriarch is to discern and declare a person's lineage through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The declaration of lineage is not determined by a person's race or nationality. Because of the scattering of Israel among all nations of the earth, the lineage of Israel is found in people of most races and nationalities.

In declaring lineage, the patriarch identifies the tribe of Israel through which the person will receive his or her blessings. The patriarch also outlines the special promises and blessings the person may receive through that lineage. It should be understood that even though lineage may give a person the right to receive blessings in Israel, these blessings may be obtained only by faithfulness and obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

Many Church members are of the lineage of Ephraim, but some are of other tribes of Israel, such as Manasseh or Judah. It is not appropriate to designate the lineage of an individual as being from the tribe of Joseph only.

Because the tribes of Israel have intermixed, most people are of mixed lineage. Even family members can be of mixed lineage, and occasionally children of the same parents receive patriarchal blessings that declare their lineage to be from

different tribes. The blessing of one tribe may be dominant in one child, and the blessing of another tribe may be dominant in another.

Some Church members may not have any of the lineage of Israel. For these members, a patriarch may not be prompted by the Spirit to declare lineage from a particular tribe. Instead, he should declare that the individual will receive his or her blessings through Abraham.

On the subject of declaring lineage, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: "A declaration of lineage is not a scientific pronouncement or an identification of genetic inheritance. A declaration of lineage is representative of larger and more important things. . . . This declaration concerns the government of the kingdom of God, not the nature of the blood or the composition of the genes of the person being blessed" ("*Patriarchal Blessings*," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Patriarch*, Jan. 8, 2005, 8).

Regardless of lineage, all who gain a testimony of Jesus Christ and accept baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost from the Lord's authorized servants are accounted as Abraham's "seed" as promised in the Abrahamic covenant (see Abraham 2:10; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 3:6). Therefore, the fulness of the Lord's blessings will come to all who obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

Recording Patriarchal Blessings

The patriarch must ensure that each patriarchal blessing is recorded so that accurately transcribed copies can be made. Blessings should be recorded on an electronic device for transcription later. It is often advisable to have a backup device recording simultaneously.

If the recording device malfunctions, the patriarch should, as soon as possible, record or write the blessing from his memory with the help of prayer and inspiration. If he prefers, he may give the blessing a second time.

A person who receives a patriarchal blessing may not be given a voice recording of the blessing.

Nor may a recipient or guest make a voice recording while the blessing is being pronounced.

Transcribing Patriarchal Blessings

After a patriarchal blessing has been given, it should be transcribed into a preliminary draft. The stake president or one of his counselors may call a scribe to assist with transcribing blessings, as outlined in "Calling a Scribe for the Patriarch" (page 9).

The patriarch carefully checks the preliminary draft to ensure that the transcription is complete and accurate. He also edits the blessing for spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, and content. He ensures that the words accurately convey the thoughts that were impressed on his mind and confirmed by the Holy Spirit during the blessing.

When the patriarch is satisfied that the transcription is correct, he or his scribe prepares a copy for his final review. The patriarch carefully checks this copy for accuracy, completeness, and proper formatting, and then he or his scribe prints a final copy. If a blessing is more than one page long, the copy should be printed on both sides of the same page. A patriarchal blessing rarely, if ever, should exceed two pages.

The patriarch signs the final blessing in dark ink. If he is not using the online submission system, he signs two copies—one for the recipient and one for the patriarchal blessing binder.

When transcribing a blessing in a language that does not use the Latin alphabet, the patriarch or his scribe should write the recipient's name in Latin characters in the blessing header.

Giving a Copy of the Blessing to the Recipient

A person who receives a patriarchal blessing should receive his or her copy of the blessing promptly. Generally this should be within a week or ten days and never more than two or three weeks.

No charge is to be made, nor gratuity accepted, for either the blessing or the copy.

Submitting Blessings to Church Headquarters

Patriarchs Who Are Using the Online Submission System. After the patriarch has completed his final review of a blessing, he or his scribe sends the electronic version to Church headquarters. As soon as the patriarch receives confirmation that the submission has been received, he or his scribe should delete or destroy all audio, electronic, and paper copies of the blessing. This includes copies stored on computers and portable storage devices.

Patriarchs Who Are Not Using the Online Submission System. The patriarch places the final copy of each blessing in the patriarchal blessing binder. At least once every six months, or more often if the binder becomes full, all blessings should be safely packaged and sent in the mail or personally delivered to the Church History Library. If the copies are mailed, the address is:

Patriarchal Blessings
15 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600

Patriarchs should not use staples or page protectors in an attempt to organize the blessings.

As soon as the patriarch receives confirmation that the Church History Library has received the blessings, he or his scribe should delete or destroy all audio, electronic, and paper copies of the blessings. This includes copies stored on computers and portable storage devices.

Equipment and Supplies

Many patriarchs use personal computers to transcribe, edit, and temporarily store blessings. When this is the case, the patriarch ensures that blessings are saved on a password-protected system to which only he and his scribe have access. Patriarchs who do not work with a scribe must make the stake president aware of the login and password.

"If the computer is to be turned over to anyone else, either by sale, for salvage, or for use by others, the patriarch should ensure that previously deleted blessings cannot be recovered through

any technical means. This should be done either by reformatting the hard drive or running a cleaning utility that will eliminate the possibility of recovering the text" (*Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010], 15.9). The stake technology specialist should be able to assist in this process.

When necessary, the Church provides each new patriarch with recording and transcription equipment. For patriarchs who are *not* using the online submission system, the Church also provides a binder for original copies of blessings and a supply of Patriarchal Blessing record forms. For more information, see "Providing Equipment and Supplies for the Patriarch" (page 9).

Addendums to Patriarchal Blessings

On rare occasions after giving a blessing, a patriarch may recognize that he has omitted the declaration of lineage. He may then lay his hands again on the recipient's head and give an addendum in which he identifies the lineage.

An addendum is given only when a declaration of lineage was not included in the original blessing. It should be brief—only two or three sentences to declare lineage. No other additions are authorized. An addendum is considered part of the original blessing, not a second blessing.

Before a Blessing Is Transcribed. If an addendum is given before a blessing is transcribed, it can be included in the transcription of the original blessing.

After a Blessing Is Transcribed. If the omission of a declaration of lineage is not discovered until after the blessing has been transcribed and given to the recipient, he or she should go to the bishop for a recommend to receive an addendum.

If a patriarch is using the online submission system, it will automatically assign the addendum the next number in the patriarch's sequence of blessings. If a patriarch is *not* using the online system, he fills out the top part of a new blessing form and gives the addendum the next available number in his sequence of blessings, just as he would a new blessing. He should clearly mark it as an addendum.

To submit an addendum, patriarchs who are using the online system follow the on-screen prompts or the instructions on the system's FAQ page. Patriarchs who are *not* using the online system send the original copy of the addendum to the Church History Library along with other blessings the patriarch has given; it does not need to be sent separately.

A copy of the addendum should be given to the recipient to attach to his or her original blessing.

Making Corrections to Patriarchal Blessings

If spelling, grammar, punctuation, or other typographical errors are discovered in a patriarchal blessing, only the patriarch who originally pronounced the blessing is authorized to make the changes.

On rare occasions it may be necessary to make a correction to a blessing that has already been submitted to Church headquarters. If this occurs, patriarchs who are using the online submission system follow the on-screen prompts or the instructions on the system's FAQ page. Patriarchs who are *not* using the online system must send a copy of the corrected blessing to the Church History Library (see the address in "Submitting Blessings to Church Headquarters" on page 5). The corrected copy may be sent separately or with other blessings the patriarch has given. He should clearly mark it as a corrected copy. It will replace the blessing that is on file.

Second Patriarchal Blessings

Occasionally a member may request a second patriarchal blessing. However, this is generally not encouraged and is rarely approved. If a worthy member has an important reason for such a request, he or she discusses it with the bishop. If the bishop feels that a second blessing is appropriate, he speaks with the stake president. The stake president then interviews the member and reads the original blessing with him or her. If he feels that a second blessing is appropriate, he

contacts the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve. If the Office of the Twelve gives authorization, the bishop may issue a recommend for a second blessing. The stake president also signs the recommend, and the patriarch may then give a second blessing.

A copy of the second blessing should be given to the recipient, and the original copy should be mailed directly to the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve at the following address:

Office of the Quorum of the Twelve
Patriarchal Blessings
47 East South Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1200

Requests for Patriarchs to Give Other Priesthood Blessings

In the priesthood is the power to bless. Those who hold the appropriate priesthood use it to bless their families and others, perform gospel ordinances, give priesthood blessings, share the gospel, and serve in the Lord's Church.

Patriarchal blessings are the only blessings that patriarchs are specially called to give. Church members ordinarily should go to husbands, fathers, home teachers, or other Melchizedek Priesthood holders for blessings other than patriarchal blessings.

Nevertheless, patriarchs may, as requested, administer to the sick and give priesthood blessings of comfort and counsel. Such blessings are of no greater significance than similar blessings given by other Melchizedek Priesthood holders, nor are they to be treated differently than these blessings. Such blessings should not be recorded or transcribed.

Counsel Not to Solicit Opportunities to Give Blessings

Patriarchs should not solicit opportunities to give patriarchal blessings. However, patriarchs may occasionally be invited to speak in Church meetings on gospel subjects, including the calling and duties of a patriarch.

Giving Patriarchal Blessings to Members outside the Patriarch's Stake

Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops states:

"A stake patriarch normally gives patriarchal blessings only to members in his stake. However, he may give blessings to members outside of his stake in the following circumstances:

"1. A patriarch may give patriarchal blessings to his own lineal descendants (children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren) regardless of where they live. The person receiving the blessing must have a recommend signed by a member of [his or her] bishopric. If the member lives in a different stake than the patriarch, the recommend must also be signed by a member of [his or her] stake presidency.

"2. A member who lives in a stake that does not have a functioning patriarch may go to a patriarch in a nearby stake. The member's recommend must be signed by a member of [his or her] bishopric and a member of [his or her] stake presidency. A member who lives in a district may also go to a patriarch in a nearby stake. The recommend should be signed by the branch or district president and [a member of the mission presidency].

"3. A member who speaks a language that is different from the language of the stake patriarch may go to a patriarch in a nearby stake to receive a blessing in his or her own language. The member must have a recommend signed by a member of [his or her] bishopric and a member of [his or her] stake presidency" (*Handbook 1*, 16.12.2).

Custody of the Binder of Blessings When a Patriarch Moves to Another Stake

This section applies only to patriarchs who are *not* using the online submission system. If a patriarch moves from one stake to another, he sends all blessings he has given to the Church History Library, making note of the number of the last blessing given. He reports his arrival to the president of the new stake as explained in "Changes in Status for Patriarchs" (pages 9–10). If, after receiving approval from the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve, he is sustained as a functioning

patriarch in the new stake, he continues to number his blessings consecutively. For example, if 854 was his last blessing in the first stake, then 855 would be his first blessing in the second stake.

"Give Utterance to the Message of the Lord"

Addressing patriarchs, President Spencer W. Kimball said:

"In a real sense, your voice is to give utterance to the message of the Lord which he has in store for the individuals who come to you. You are not the source of the promises; you have no blessings for anyone; you are but the [conduit] through which the blessing flows [and] through which the promises are carried. You must be sure that you do not arrogate to yourselves any of these powers. One of the most important qualities for a patriarch to possess is that of *humility*. . . .

"Patriarchal blessings are revelations to the recipients . . . to protect, inspire, motivate toward activity and righteousness.

"An inspired patriarchal blessing could light the way and lead the recipient on a path to fulfillment. It could lead [him or her] to become a new [person] and to have . . . a new heart" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 505).

To the Stake President

Calling and Ordaining Stake Patriarchs

Patriarchs are called to serve in stakes of the Church as indicated in *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops*:

"The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles directs the calling of stake patriarchs (see D&C 107:39). To recommend a man to be called as a stake patriarch, the stake president completes a New Patriarch Recommendation form [available on LDS.org] and submits it to the Quorum of the Twelve. In making this recommendation, he should fast and pray for the Spirit to direct him. The recommendation should be approved by his counselors.

“A man whom the stake president recommends as stake patriarch should be a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He should be mature in the gospel and the Church, a worthy husband and patriarch in his own home, and sensitive to guidance from the Spirit. He should have received his own patriarchal blessing, and normally he should be age 55 or older. He must be married.

“If the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles approves the recommendation, the stake president may be authorized to interview and call the patriarch, present his name for a sustaining vote in the general session of stake conference or in a stake general priesthood meeting, and ordain him. Because the calling of patriarch is an office of the Melchizedek Priesthood, a patriarch is ordained, not set apart” (*Handbook 1*, 15.1).

The ordination of a patriarch is performed in the same manner as other ordinations to offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood. However, the stake president may not assign a counselor to perform the ordination, nor should he invite others to stand with him during the ordination of a patriarch. A patriarch is not given priesthood keys because the calling is not one of priesthood presidency.

After the ordination, the stake president submits the Report of Ordination of Stake Patriarch form to the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve. He may email the form to:

Q12patriarchs@ldschurch.org

He may mail the form to:

Office of the Quorum of the Twelve
Patriarchal Blessings
47 East South Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1200

A certificate of ordination will be sent to the stake president to give to the patriarch.

Calling a Second Patriarch

“The Quorum of the Twelve normally does not approve calling a second patriarch for a stake unless the present functioning patriarch is unable

to give the number of blessings requested. Nor does the Quorum of the Twelve normally approve an additional patriarch simply because a stake is geographically large or includes members who do not speak the majority language. If a stake includes members who speak different languages, bishops and stake presidencies may authorize them to go to a patriarch in a nearby stake who can give the blessing in the member’s own language” (*Handbook 1*, 15.2).

For instructions about how to proceed if a patriarch moves to another stake, see “Changes in Status for Patriarchs” (pages 9–10).

Supervising the Stake Patriarch

The Quorum of the Twelve has delegated to stake presidents the responsibility to supervise the work of patriarchs in the stakes of Zion. The patriarch and the stake president should have a close working relationship.

The stake president instructs a newly called patriarch in the sacred, revelatory nature of the office before the patriarch begins giving blessings. The stake president ensures that the patriarch has access to this publication and carefully reviews its instructions with him. It is available to patriarchs and stake presidents on LDS.org. If a patriarch does not have access to the Internet, the stake president or patriarch may order a copy of the booklet from Church Distribution Services.

“The stake president interviews the patriarch at least twice a year. He also reviews the blessings the patriarch has given at least twice a year. As needed, the stake president may make general suggestions about the content of the patriarch’s blessings. The stake president also discusses the patriarch’s feelings about the work, the health and welfare of his family, and any other matters on which the patriarch seeks or needs counsel” (*Handbook 1*, 15.4).

As necessary, the stake president ensures that the patriarch follows the guidelines in this publication for preparing transcriptions of blessings, giving copies to the recipients, and sending copies

to Church headquarters (see pages 4–5). If a non-functioning patriarch gives blessings to his lineal descendants, the stake president also reviews those blessings and ensures that they are sent to Church headquarters.

The patriarch consults with the stake president whenever he needs counsel on matters pertaining to his calling. If a stake president needs counsel on these matters, he addresses the questions to the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve. With the authorization of the stake president, the patriarch may confer with a visiting General Authority about questions that cannot be handled within the stake.

Providing Equipment and Supplies for the Patriarch

If a new patriarch needs recording and transcription equipment, the stake president indicates this when he submits the Report of Ordination of Stake Patriarch form. The Church then sends the equipment to the patriarch. If an existing patriarch needs recording and transcription equipment, the stake president asks the stake physical facilities representative to obtain it through the Church's Purchasing Division. This equipment belongs to the stake and should be returned to the stake president if the patriarch moves, is put on nonfunctioning status, or dies.

For patriarchs who are using the online submission system, the stake supplies blank paper for printing blessings. For patriarchs who are *not* using the online submission system, the stake president provides a binder for original copies of blessings (for filing at the Church History Library) and a supply of Patriarchal Blessing record forms. This paper is acid-free archival quality bond. If the stake president does not have these items, he indicates what is needed on the Report of Ordination of Stake Patriarch form. If a patriarch needs additional Patriarchal Blessing record forms, the stake president can order them from Church Distribution Services.

The stake supplies the patriarch with postage and envelopes.

Calling a Scribe for the Patriarch

It is recommended that the stake president or one of his counselors call a worthy, skilled member of the stake to type the patriarchal blessings given by the patriarch, unless he can transcribe them himself and prefers to do so. The scribe is usually the wife of the patriarch. However, more than one scribe may be called if needed. The scribe provides this service as a stake calling, without financial remuneration. The scribe should be cautioned that every blessing is sacred and confidential; no copy of any blessing may be retained for personal use.

Changes in Status for Patriarchs

Because the call of a patriarch is for a lifetime, he is not released. However, he may be given nonfunctioning status, excusing him from giving blessings, as explained in *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops*:

“If a patriarch is incapacitated by age or illness, as determined by the stake president or the patriarch, the stake president writes a recommendation to the Quorum of the Twelve that the patriarch be given nonfunctioning status. If the recommendation is approved, the patriarch's name is not presented for a sustaining vote in the next stake conference when Church officers are sustained. The stake president notifies bishops not to send members to that patriarch. The stake president also ensures that all the blessings the patriarch has given are sent promptly to the recipients and to Church headquarters. . . .

“A patriarch is also given nonfunctioning status if he leaves to serve a mission, is absent from his home for other reasons, moves to a different stake, or is approved to be called to a position of Church administration (see [*Handbook 1,*] 15.7 and 15.8). In such circumstances, the stake president notifies the Quorum of the Twelve in writing and follows the instructions in the previous paragraph. A patriarch is not automatically returned to functioning status when he completes his missionary service or other Church assignments (see [*Handbook 1,*] 15.6).

"A patriarch who is given nonfunctioning status may continue to give patriarchal blessings to his lineal descendants only (children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren) if the stake president determines that he is able to do so. The stake president reviews these blessings and makes sure [they] are sent to Church headquarters.

"Returning a Patriarch to Functioning Status. To return a patriarch to functioning status, the stake president interviews him carefully and sends a written recommendation to the Quorum of the Twelve. If the recommendation is approved, the patriarch's name is presented for a sustaining vote in the general session of stake conference or in a stake general priesthood meeting.

"Patriarchs Who Move to a Different Stake. If a patriarch moves to a different stake, his status automatically becomes nonfunctioning. He contacts the president of the new stake as a courtesy to inform him of his residence there. If the stake president wants him to serve as a patriarch in the new stake, he contacts the patriarch's former stake president to confirm the patriarch's worthiness and past service. The new stake president then follows the procedure in [the preceding paragraph to recommend returning the patriarch to functioning status].

"If the stake president decides not to recommend having the patriarch serve in the new stake, the patriarch remains on nonfunctioning status. . . . However, the stake president should notify the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve of the patriarch's [residency] in the stake.

"Patriarchs Who Are Called to Another Church Position. A patriarch may not be called to a position of Church administration, such as bishop, high counselor, or stake president, unless the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve approve the call in advance. Such a request is rarely approved. If it is approved, the patriarch is given nonfunctioning status" as outlined above (*Handbook 1*, 15.5–15.8). Functioning stake patriarchs should not be given any additional callings or assignments without prior approval from the Quorum of the Twelve.

If a patriarch is called to serve as a General Authority, Area Seventy, or member of a stake, mission, or temple presidency, he is given nonfunctioning status.

If a stake president would like a patriarch to be returned to functioning status after he is released from another calling, he follows the procedures in this section.

Death of a Patriarch

When a patriarch dies, the stake president notifies the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve promptly. The stake president obtains the binder of blessings (if applicable) and any patriarchal blessing equipment owned by the stake. He sends the blessings the patriarch has given to the Church History Library.

If a patriarch who dies was using the online submission system, each recommend that appears under his name should be canceled. After a new patriarch has been called, each person should have his or her recommend reissued by the bishop or one of his counselors.

General Instructions

Those Who May Receive Patriarchal Blessings

Every worthy member of the Church is entitled to receive a patriarchal blessing. If a member lives in a mission district or in a stake where there is not a functioning patriarch, he or she may still receive a blessing. However, stakes should not organize or provide financial assistance for individuals or groups of members to travel to the nearest patriarch.

The bishop or one of his counselors interviews members who want to receive patriarchal blessings. If a member is worthy, the interviewer issues a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend (available through the online submission system or through Church Distribution Services). The recommend must also be signed by a member of the stake presidency if the blessing will be given by a patriarch who lives outside the member's stake.

Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops states:

“The person who issues a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend ensures that the member is of sufficient age and maturity to understand the significance and sacred nature of the blessing. Ideally the member should be young enough that many important decisions in life are still ahead, though older adults are also encouraged to receive their patriarchal blessings. Priesthood leaders should not establish a minimum age for a member to receive a patriarchal blessing.

“A new convert should understand the basic doctrines of the gospel before receiving a patriarchal blessing.

“If a [baptized] member has an intellectual disability, the bishop may issue a recommend only when, in consultation with the parents, he believes there is a sufficient level of understanding. Members should keep in mind that a patriarchal blessing is for the recipient and not for the parents.

“When possible, a missionary should receive a patriarchal blessing before beginning missionary service. If this is not possible, the missionary should obtain a recommend from a member of his or her bishopric and receive the blessing while at a missionary training center.

“If a missionary arrives in the mission field without having received a patriarchal blessing, the mission president is authorized to interview him or her and issue a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend. [The mission president] then contacts the stake president in the nearest stake in which a patriarch can give a blessing in a language the missionary can understand. If this is not possible, the missionary may need to wait until he or she returns home to receive a patriarchal blessing. . . .

“When a worthy member enters military service, priesthood leaders encourage him or her to receive a patriarchal blessing before reporting for active duty.

“If it is not possible for a member to receive a patriarchal blessing before leaving, he or she can receive it from a patriarch where the temporary

duty station is located. To do this, the member presents a recommend from a member of the home-ward bishopric to a member of the stake presidency where the temporary duty station is located.

“If a member entering the military does not have a recommend from the home-ward bishopric, he or she may receive a recommend from a member of the bishopric of the ward where the temporary duty station is located. That bishopric member interviews the member for worthiness and contacts the home-ward bishop before issuing a recommend.

“After a member of either of these bishoprics has signed a recommend, a member of the stake presidency where the temporary duty station is located interviews the person and signs the recommend if he or she is worthy” (*Handbook 1*, 16.12.1, 16.12.3).

Encouraging Church Members to Receive Patriarchal Blessings

Priesthood leaders and youth leaders should encourage worthy Church members to receive their patriarchal blessings. Parents should teach their children about the sacred nature of patriarchal blessings and encourage them to prepare to receive their blessings.

No stakewide or wardwide initiatives should be undertaken to focus on members who have not yet received a patriarchal blessing.

Helping Church Members Prepare to Receive Patriarchal Blessings

A member who desires a patriarchal blessing should make an appointment with a member of his or her bishopric for a Patriarchal Blessing Recommend interview. As soon as the recommend is received, the member should make an appointment with the patriarch. The member should bring the recommend to the appointment.

“Members should go to the patriarch with a prayerful attitude and in Sunday attire. They may fast, but fasting is not required” (*Handbook 2*, 20.12.2).

Receiving a Patriarchal Blessing in a Language the Recipient Can Understand

When possible, members should receive a patriarchal blessing from a patriarch who can give it in a language the person can understand. "If a stake includes members who speak different languages, bishops and stake presidencies may authorize them to go to a patriarch in a nearby stake who can give the blessing in the member's own language" (*Handbook 1*, 15.2).

If there is not currently a patriarch within a reasonable distance who speaks a language the member can understand, he or she should be reminded that receiving a patriarchal blessing is not a saving ordinance. The member may be invited to patiently pray and prepare for that day. Or the member may receive a blessing in a language that he or she does not understand as explained in the following section.

Translation of Patriarchal Blessings

The Church does not provide translations of patriarchal blessings. Nor are members encouraged to translate patriarchal blessings, since it is difficult to convey the inspired depth of meaning and feeling of a blessing. Nevertheless, if a member chooses to receive a patriarchal blessing in a language that he or she does not understand, it is that member's responsibility to find a trusted and worthy member of the Church who can provide a translation. The translator should be carefully selected, skilled in both languages, and capable of understanding the spiritual nature and confidentiality of the blessing. Translated copies of blessings are not filed in the archives of the Church History Library.

"If a member requires interpretation by sign language to understand the blessing as it is being pronounced, it is his or her responsibility to find a trusted and worthy member of the Church who can provide the interpretation" (*Handbook 1*, 16.12.5).

For assistance with obtaining a braille transcription of a patriarchal blessing, the stake president or patriarch may contact the Office of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Obtaining Copies of Patriarchal Blessings

A person who has received a patriarchal blessing should carefully safeguard the copy he or she receives. However, if it is lost or destroyed, another copy may be obtained through LDS.org. Members requesting a copy of their own blessing should sign in, provide the name of the patriarch who gave the blessing, and give the name of the stake and the approximate year in which it was pronounced.

A member who does not have access to the Internet may obtain a copy of his or her blessing by sending a written request to the following address:

Patriarchal Blessings
15 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600

The member should supply his or her full name, membership record number (if available), and birth date. If possible, the person should include the name of the patriarch who gave the blessing and the approximate date when it was given. Members should allow at least six months from the date the blessing was given before requesting a copy from the Church History Library.

History and Doctrine Concerning the House of Israel

Identity of the House of Israel

To understand the house of Israel, we must begin with Abraham. The Lord made the following covenant first with Abraham:

1. His posterity would be numerous.
2. He would become the father of many nations, and his posterity would be entitled to eternal increase.
3. All nations of the earth would be blessed through his seed.
4. His seed would bear the ministry of the gospel and the priesthood to all nations.
5. This covenant would be everlasting. (See Abraham 2:9–11; Genesis 17:7.)

These same covenant blessings were reaffirmed to Abraham's son Isaac and to his grandson Jacob

(Israel) (see Genesis 26:1–5; 28:1–4, 10–14). These blessings are of transcendent significance.

The house of Israel consists of the descendants of Jacob (Israel). Each of his twelve sons became the head of one of the tribes of Israel. His son Joseph received a double portion of the birthright, which was given to his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. They were then considered sons of Jacob and given tribal status (see Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 48:5–6). Ephraim was given the birthright (see Genesis 48:17–20), which includes the rights of the firstborn. The tribes of Israel, therefore, are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim and Manasseh (for Joseph), and Benjamin (see Genesis 29:32–35; 30:1–25; 35:18; 48:1–22). Levi's descendants were dispersed among the other tribes to serve as ministers.

The Scattering and Gathering of Israel

The scriptures speak of Israel being scattered “into all the kingdoms of the earth . . . , among all nations . . . [and] among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deuteronomy 28:25, 37, 64). In his day, Nephi said: “The house of Israel, sooner or later, will be scattered upon all the face of the earth, and also among all nations. . . . Yea, the more part of all the tribes have been led away; and they are scattered to and fro upon the isles of the sea” (1 Nephi 22:3–4).

The significance of the scattering and how it relates to the gathering of Israel is reflected in the blessing the Lord gave Abraham. The Lord said, “I give unto thee a promise that this right [of priesthood] shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:11).

The gathering of Israel consists of the restoration of the house of Israel “to the true church and fold of God” and of them being “gathered home to the lands of their inheritance” and being “established in all their lands of promise” (2 Nephi

9:2). Since the dispersion was over all the earth and among all nations, the gathering must be out of all nations and from all parts of the earth.

Israel today constitutes a large portion of the human family. The tribe of Joseph, meaning both Ephraim and Manasseh, shall gather first. Joseph will then “push the people together to the ends of the earth: and [those who do this] are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh” (Deuteronomy 33:17). Of the significance of Joseph's blessing, the Lord said, “For thou shalt be a light unto my people . . . and . . . bring salvation unto them” (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 48:11).

In due course, the other tribes will come “unto the children of Ephraim . . . and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even [by] the children of Ephraim” (D&C 133:30, 32).

Believing Gentiles Are Accounted as Abraham's Seed

The Lord told Abraham that his seed after him—that is, his natural descendants—would take the gospel and the priesthood “unto all nations” (Abraham 2:9). Then He said, “As many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father” (Abraham 2:10).

We call this adoption into the house of Israel. Paul repeatedly uses the word *adoption* to describe how we may become sons and daughters of God by faith (see Romans 8; 9; 11; see also 2 Corinthians 6:17–18).

King Benjamin speaks of faithful people becoming “the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters”; of them being “spiritually begotten . . . through faith”; and of them being born spiritually into the family of Christ (Mosiah 5:7). When a person is baptized of water and of the Spirit, he or she takes upon himself or herself the name of Christ and is adopted into His family. Therefore, it makes no difference whether the blessings of the house of Israel come by lineage or by adoption.