

MEETINGHOUSE PRIORITIES

OVERVIEW
OCTOBER 2014

This document is for the
teaching and training of Church
leaders and employees

This document provides an overview of Meetinghouse Priorities , with particular focus on the doctrinal foundation.

By way of context, this Meetinghouse Priorities effort began earlier this year under the authorization of the First Presidency. There is complete unity and support across the Presiding Councils of the Church (the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, the Presidency of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric) on these important matters. There is enthusiasm and a shared vision that this information will greatly bless the Church and its members in the coming years.

Pioneers Paved the Way for Growth



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The early pioneers are an inspiring example of preparing the way for the establishment and growth of the Church. Pioneers, just as their name suggests, blazed trails, planted crops and helped to support the journey of those to follow. Their foundation of faith has blessed many generations.

Our rich pioneer heritage has direct application today. We are at a similarly historic time as we prepare for the continued growth of the Church.

You are invited to read, ponder and apply Section 136 of the Doctrine & Covenants. It describes the instructions given by the Lord through Brigham Young to pioneer companies as they prepared for their journey to the West. Consider these verses and the principles we might apply to our situation today:

Areas Are Like Pioneer Companies



*“Let the companies be organized with captains of hundreds, captains of fifties, and captains of tens, with a **president and his two counselors at their head**, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles.”*

D&C 136:3 ₃

In verse 3 of Section 136 we read of how these early pioneer companies were to be organized.

*“Let the companies be organized with captains of hundreds, captains of fifties, and captains of tens, with a **president and his two counselors at their head**, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles.”*

If we replace the word ‘companies’ with ‘areas’, then the application is very clear today. Each area of the Church is led by an Area Presidency, with a president and his two counselors. They lead the work, administer in spiritual and temporal affairs under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve with temporal affairs support and resources provided by the Presiding Bishopric.

Let’s continue this comparison between pioneer companies and areas of the Church.

Self-Reliance

“Let each company provide themselves with all the...provisions...and other necessities for the journey, that they can.”

D&C 136:5



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In verse 5 of Section 136 we read of how these early pioneer companies were to provide for their journey.

“Let each company provide themselves with all the...provisions...and other necessities for the journey, that they can.”

In other words, the companies were instructed to be self-reliant. To do everything they could to provide for themselves. This principle of self-reliance has application to the areas of the Church just as we know it applies to us as individuals and families.

Providing for Others

“Let each company prepare houses, and fields for raising grain, for those who are to remain behind this season.”

D&C 136:9



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We continue in verse 9 where companies are instructed to provide for others.

“Let each company prepare houses, and fields for raising grain, for those who are to remain behind this season.”

The legacy of the pioneers paving the way for companies that followed in later seasons is a rich part of our heritage. In like fashion, the mature areas of the Church have the means and responsibility to provide for other areas where growth is rapid and conditions are less well developed. This principle of providing for others is consistent with the Lord’s way of compassion and service to others.

Wise Judgment

*“Thou shalt be diligent in **preserving** what thou hast, that thou mayest be a **wise steward**.”*

D&C 136:27



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Lastly, verse 27 discusses how wisdom plays a critical role in the Lord’s kingdom.

*“Thou shalt be diligent in **preserving** what thou hast, that thou mayest be a **wise steward**.”*

Wise judgment was needed by the pioneer companies to know how to best deploy the limited resources and talents within their companies. Similarly, each leader, employee and member of the Church must be wise and diligent with the resources and talents in their areas.

Areas of the Church are like these pioneer companies—on their journey to strengthen and expand the Church. Following the Lord’s pattern will enable this journey. Let’s summarize these principles and their application.

Guiding Principles

- 1. Self-reliance**—As areas mature and grow, they should become more self-reliant
- 2. Providing for others**—Mature areas should continue to assist less-developed areas
- 3. Wise judgment**—Authority and accountability should be paired with wise judgment to effectively manage resources

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First, **self-reliance**. As areas mature and grow, they should become more self-reliant. Local resources and expenses should be on a path to appropriately balance over time. This will bring great spiritual and temporal blessings across the Church.

The second guiding principle is **providing for others**—Mature areas should continue to assist less-developed areas. We recognize that all areas are at a different point in their journey. Some have achieved self-reliance. Others are developing and the time when they can be self-reliant may still be far ahead.

The third principle is **wise judgment**—Authority and accountability should be paired with wise judgment to effectively manage resources.

Headquarters' guidelines are not intended to be rigid, but should provide the necessary flexibility to allow local leaders and employees to be “anxiously engaged” in exercising wise judgment and adapting to local conditions.

We will now emphasize the power of the principle of self-reliance when applied to Church areas as well as to individuals and families.

“As the Saints work to become completely self-sufficient, **something very special happens that goes far beyond decreasing costs.**

Something special happens to an individual or to a **Church unit** when the people become more independent and self-reliant. They feel more confident, positive, and assured, and they reflect these feelings in their actions.”

-Elder M. Russell Ballard



Elder M. Russell Ballard has said:

“As the Saints work to become completely self-sufficient, **something very special happens that goes far beyond decreasing costs.**

Something special happens to an individual or to a **Church unit** when the people become more independent and self-reliant. They feel more confident, positive, and assured, and they reflect these feelings in their actions.”

Strengthening self-reliance will bring great blessings, not just to individual members and families, but also to entire wards, stakes and areas.

Adapting to Local Conditions

“And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the differences of administration, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men.”

D&C 46:15

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As we strengthen self-reliance and support growth in a diverse and global Church, we must be wise in adapting to local conditions.

In Doctrine & Covenants Section 46, we read about the variety of spiritual gifts.

“And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the **differences of administration**, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies **according to the conditions of the children of men.**”

This verse teaches that we must seek inspiration to adapt to “the conditions of the children of men” so that we can best administer to their needs. This has great relevance for how we manage meetinghouses as well as other resources throughout the world, where local adaptation is critical.

“‘Treating every member of the Church equally’ means meeting his needs in a way appropriate to his or her needs and country, not imposing the same chapel designs, the same organization structures, or the same programs on everyone everywhere. Giving a member in Peru what is preferred on the Wasatch Front can be giving him less than giving him a simpler building and program suited to him. And it can cost a lot more.”



-President Boyd K. Packer

The concept of local adaptation was beautifully captured by then Brother Henry B. Eyring, who recorded in his journal the prophetic counsel of then Elder Boyd K. Packer:

“‘Treating every member of the Church equally’ means meeting his needs in a way appropriate to his or her needs and country, not imposing the same chapel designs, the same organization structures, or the same programs on everyone everywhere. Giving a member in Peru what is preferred on the Wasatch Front can be giving him less than giving him a simpler building and program suited to him. And it can cost a lot more.”

What inspired counsel! We need to be wise in how we meet the needs of Saints around the world.

Meetinghouse Opportunities

- Significant improvement opportunities have been identified across meetinghouse facilities
- All areas of the Church – international and domestic – have potential cost savings
- This will require a multi-year, sustained implementation period

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With these doctrinal principles at the forefront, there has been a rigorous analysis of our meetinghouse operations and projects. We have identified significant improvement opportunities across worldwide meetinghouse facilities.

We want to reinforce that this is a global opportunity. All areas of the Church have opportunities for meetinghouse improvements. The priorities we highlight will be implemented in both international and domestic areas of the Church.

Please note that obtaining the potential benefits will require a multi-year, sustained implementation period. This is not a single-year project or initiative; it is a long-term change in how we plan, construct and maintain our facilities.

Meetinghouse Priorities

- ① Enhance **facilities master planning**
- ② Update **qualification standards**
- ③ Adapt **design and construction** to local conditions
- ④ Optimize **maintenance standards and practices**
- ⑤ Improve **purchasing effectiveness**
- ⑥ Strengthen **area responsibility and self-reliance**

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As a result of the studies performed, six opportunities have been selected for specific focus – we call them “Meetinghouse Priorities”.

They include that we:

- Enhance facilities master planning
- Update qualification standards
- Adapt design and construction to local conditions
- Optimize maintenance standards and practices
- Improve purchasing effectiveness
- Strengthen area responsibility and self-reliance

The first five priorities are focused on optimizing Church meetinghouse costs – how we plan, qualify, design & construct, maintain and purchase. More information will be shared around these priorities in future trainings.

The 6th priority is the key enabler for implementing these changes, and given its importance to this endeavor we highlight a few points in the following pages. These messages will be important for your involvement.

⑥ Strengthening Area Self-Reliance

- Tithing faithfulness should be at the core of self-reliance efforts
- Wisely and efficiently using Church resources will also contribute to the strengthening of self-reliance over time

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As we strive to strengthen self-reliance in all areas of the Church over time, there are two key points of emphasis:

First, tithing faithfulness should be at the core of our self-reliance efforts. Significant spiritual and temporal blessings will flow to members and families, as well as Church units and areas, as we teach and encourage members to live the law of tithing.

Second, wisely and efficiently using Church resources will also contribute to the strengthening of self-reliance over time.

Given the key role of tithing faithfulness, we ask that you ponder the following two quotes:

Blessings of Tithing Faithfulness



“The Church has the means to construct buildings, but the people will not be blessed unless they observe the Lord’s law of the tithe.”

- President Gordon B. Hinckley

As taught by President Gordon B. Hinckley, tithing is not a principle of finance, but a principle of faith and an essential condition to obtaining the Lord’s blessings.

He said:

“The Church has the means to construct buildings, but the people will not be blessed unless they observe the Lord’s law of the tithe.”

Blessings of Tithing Faithfulness



*“Always be active in the Church... Three words provide the formula: **pay your tithing.***

...I truly believe that the payment of an honest tithing will go a long way to ensure continued activity in the Church.”

- President Thomas S. Monson

Some years ago, President Thomas S. Monson drew a link between tithing faithfulness and Church activity.

Speaking to returning missionaries, he said:

“Always be active in the Church... Three words provide the formula: pay your tithing... I truly believe that the payment of an honest tithing will go a long way to ensure continued activity in the Church.”

Improving tithing faithfulness will help generate real growth and foster member activity within the area.

Counsel and Guidance

- This must be a long-term, sustained effort that changes attitudes and behaviors
- We should innovate and adapt to local conditions, while not being short-sighted
- We should strengthen area self-reliance over time, but not impose undue burdens upon members

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In closing, we want to highlight the unified counsel and guidance from the Presiding Councils of the Church, including the First Presidency. This provides wise direction as we move forward:

First, this must be a long-term, sustained effort that changes attitudes and behaviors. This cannot be a short-term initiative or project.

Second, we should innovate and adapt to local conditions, while not being short-sighted. We should not regret today's decisions ten years from now. This requires that we empower local leaders and employees to develop the right solutions for their areas.

Third, we should strengthen area self-reliance over time, but not impose undue burdens upon members. We should take a balanced and measured approach, that includes emphasis on tithing faithfulness.

As you can see, there is great balance and wisdom in this counsel.

In the months and years ahead we encourage you to prayerfully apply the principles and counsel taught in these materials. They will greatly bless the members and units in all areas of the Church.