

RESTORATION BRANCH LEADERSHIP—WE ARE THE “BRANCH”

The Church exists where faithful members & priesthood are gathered

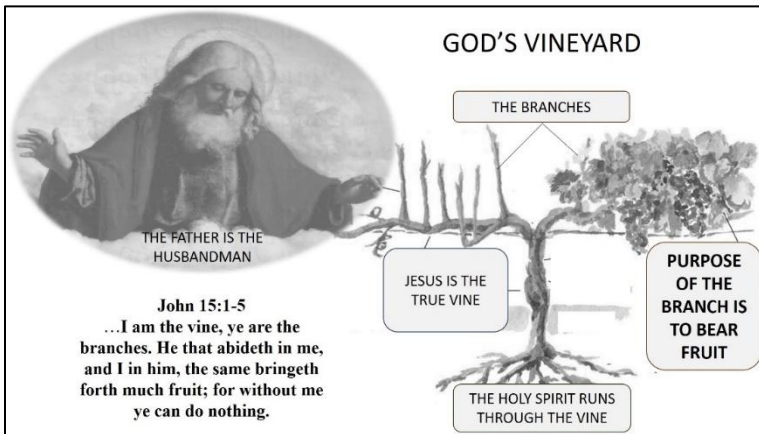
On the day of the Church's organization: *“The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree. Some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord and rejoiced exceedingly.”* (ChH, Vol. 1, p. 77) *The present day church of Jesus Christ was thus born of and by the power of the Holy Spirit brought into operation by priesthood. The divine life of the church was manifested at its birth, and it was by that life that the church continued to grow, evolving a living organism in the same likeness and having the same characteristics of the church of Jesus Christ in all ages...The church today remains the product of that power of life which was given through the holy priesthood by the will of God on the day of its organization.* Charles Fry, *The Nature of Priesthood*, 1959

A Branch is a Living Organism with Organization for a Purpose

Organisms spring from life that is within, which life remains the basis of all activity including growth and working out of purpose. The purpose, however does not originate in the organism but in the source of life or the Creator.

Charles Fry, *The Nature of Priesthood*, 1959

John 15:1, 4-5 captures the importance of remaining connected to the source of life to bear fruit:



- i. God is the Owner and Husbandman – the Lord of the Vineyard
- ii. Jesus is the vine through which the Holy Spirit flows
- iii. We, faithful priesthood, and members are the branch. We must abide in the vine to receive the Holy Spirit & bear fruit for the Lord of the Vineyard.

The Importance of Branches in the life of Christ's Church

The branch exists to bear fruit – It has no other purpose. The branch is connected to the vine with other branches that exist to bear fruit. The basis for branches bearing common fruit is their common connection to the vine.

The Branch is an essential component of furthering the work of the Kingdom in a specific portion of God's Kingdom.

A Spirit filled; well-functioning priesthood leads to a well-functioning branch.

When members and families understand their duty to each other, and those around them; *and*

When the Holy Spirit is resident within them, the Branch bears fruit and the work of the Kingdom moves forward.

There Is No More Important Element in The Framework of The Church, Than A Well-Functioning Local Branch

"The local church is the church in action." C. G. Mesley

"Branches are the primary congregational unit of the Church, and may be formed wherever six or more members in good standing may be resident in any one neighborhood, one of whom must be an elder, a priest, a teacher, or a deacon..." (Joseph Smith the III and Thomas W. Smith, *A Manual of Practice and Rules of Order and Debate*, 1876 & 1891)

The primary purpose of a Branch is twofold:

- 1) To feed and strengthen God's people, and
- 2) To invite others to become part of God's people.
 - a. It is where the daily work of the Kingdom takes place.
 - b. It is made up of priesthood and members
 - c. It contains the building blocks of Zion – Families
 - d. It is where each member can learn, gain strength, and find opportunity to participate in the work of the Kingdom

D&C 120:1b *...branches and their officers...are to be considered as provided for by my law to carry on the work of the ministry in caring for the membership of the church*

Branch functions include providing a place:

- Where God's priesthood can offer personal ministry that strengthen's and support's His people
- Where God's people worship Him and experience His ordinances
- Where God's people learn His ways, & raise families in the Kingdom way
- Where God's people support one another
- From which God's people can invite other people to Christ, and His ways

Basic Framework of a Branch

Priesthood is to function in its office:

- Priesthood is instrumental for a Branch to function effectively. A *Branch* weakens when priesthood doesn't fully function as called.
- Branch priesthood leadership is primarily offered by *Standing Ministers* verses *Traveling Ministers*.

In Acts 6:1-7 we see the Apostles, because of local needs and circumstances, choosing and setting apart, seven honest men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, that they might be free to focus on prayer and sharing the gospel.

In D&C 122:7b it speaks of traveling ministers: [They] *leaving the branches and districts where organization is effected to the care and administration of the standing ministers.*

And in 9b it identifies the standing ministry: *Where organization has been arranged and officers have been ordained and set in order; the standing ministry in their order; high priests, elders, priests, teachers, and deacons.*

- Melchisedec priesthood carries presiding rights. Aaronic priesthood is supplementary & complementary to the Melchisedec in functions.
- Aaronic priesthood addresses physical, material, social and spiritual concerns of individuals and families in the Branch.
- Both priesthoods share some common responsibilities in accordance with the specific calling of their priesthood offices. D&C 42:5a-d speaks of these:

*And again, the **elders, priests, and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel** which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in which is the fullness of the gospel; and they **shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit**; and the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith, and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach. And all this ye shall observe to do as I have commanded concerning your teaching, until the fullness of my Scriptures is given. And as **ye shall lift up your voices by the Comforter, ye shall speak and prophesy as seemeth me good**; for, behold, the Comforter knoweth all things, and beareth record of the Father and of the Son.*

Priesthood Leadership in the Branch

A. *Branch President, Presiding Elder, Pastor*

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. Jeremiah 3:15

“A PASTORS HEART”

What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the wilderness after that which is lost, until he find it? Luke 15:4

The Branch President/Presiding Elder/Pastor, is the chief shepherd in the branch and presides over the local priesthood.

*“The presiding elder holds executive responsibility,
not as an autocrat, but as a guide in the affairs of the branch.
He is to oversee, and with the priesthood, feeds the flock.”*

G. G. Lewis, The Branch-Its Functions and Organization, 1946

In all the tasks identified below, branch priesthood is to assist the Pastor. Priesthood meetings *should be held regularly* for instruction, mutual encouragement, coordination of ministry, and to address branch concerns.

- i. Pastors should get to know members personally, and help them know, that they have an active part in the work of the Kingdom where they live.**
 - Encourage them to attend church regularly
 - Encourage and assist them in finding a way to actively serve
 - Assist them to form friendships & gain active fellowship in congregational
 - Ensure that records of member information are maintained and up to date. (name, age, address, contact information, etc.)
 - Ensure that members have learning opportunities to grow in their walk
 - Ensure that members receive priesthood, and other visits in their homes
 - Encourage members to share testimonies of God’s grace & goodness
- ii. Priesthood training and utilization under pastor's direction.**
 - Assign men to their responsibilities and expect them to fulfill them.
 - Offer classes of instruction and advice on performance of duties.
 - Assist with the performance of duties, endeavoring to teach.
 - Show appreciation where tasks are well done.
 - Encourage and work with inactive priesthood to embrace their calling.
 - Offer pre-ordination classes to those about to enter the ministry.

G. G. Lewis, The Branch-Its Functions and Organization, 1946
- iii. Counselors**
 - “Counselors are not provided for in the framework of the branch under constitutional law, but if needed, counselors may be selected and approved by the congregation...Priesthood may serve as a council.’
 - “Counselors must not dominate the situation; their function is to counsel and assist the branch president.” G. G. Lewis, The Branch-Its Functions and Organization, 1946

B. Ministry of the Aaronic Priesthood in the Branch

Joseph Smith had this observation concerning the ministry of the Priest, Teacher, and Deacon (Millennial Star, Vol. 15, pg. 850).

“From a retrospect of the requirements of the servants of God to preach the gospel, we find few qualified even to be priests; and if a priest understands his duty, his calling, and ministry, and preaches by the Holy Ghost, his enjoyment is as great as if he were one of the presidency; and his services as necessary in the body, as are also those of teachers and deacons. Therefore in viewing the church as a whole, we may strictly denominate it one priesthood.”

i. Priests’ Ministry in the Branch to individuals and families:

- a. To visit the house of each member (17:10b)
- b. To exhort the members to pray vocally and in secret (17:10b)
- c. To exhort the members to attend to family duties (17:10b)

ii. Teachers’ Ministry in the Branch to Individuals and Families:

Standing minister appointed to watch over the church always (83:22), with special attention on social, interpersonal, and participation concerns.

- a. To be with and strengthen the church (17:11a)
- b. To see that the members do their duty (17:b)
- c. See that the church meets often (17:11b)
- d. To see that there is no iniquity in the church (17:11a)
- e. To act as peacemaker – see that there is no hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking (17:11a)

“When we consider the nature and scope of the teacher's work, one wonders at the little consideration given to this office.

His is a ministry of conciliation, as between member and member, between member and the society, and God. Jesus' ministry was to reconcile men to God; how like it is the task assigned to the teacher!” James A. Thomas

iii. Deacons’ Ministry in the Branch to Individuals and Families

Standing minister appointed to watch over the church always (83:22), with special attention on temporal considerations.

- a. To visit the homes of members, attending to their physical well-being
- b. To visit the poor, and ascertain and report their needs (GCR, No. 471)
- c. To perform any duties necessary by which the welfare of the Saints is secured through careful administration of the ordinances (GCR, No. 471)
- d. To maintain order in the church and care for the physical and social well-being of the people who come to worship (GCR, No. 471)
- e. To have charge and care of the place of worship (GCR, No. 471)
- f. To have charge of the treasury, if selected (GCR, No. 471)
- g. To teach and assist members regarding stewardship—doing an annual accounting, and financial management.

iv. Home Ministry Coordination

All three Aaronic priesthood offices are called to provide ministry to members in their homes. Many temporal and spiritual concerns can be identified and addressed through regular contact with the saints where they live. A Branch suffers when there is not adequate contact with members in their homes.

If possible, a *Home Ministry leader* to coordinate this function is advised. This person would assist the pastor to ensure that home ministry happens in an orderly way.

Branch Outreach and Leaders – The Work is Entrusted to All

If possible, it would be helpful to have a priesthood member to assist the Pastor with coordinating the outreach and missionary efforts of the Branch. While priesthood members have a calling to do the following, members are called as well:

- **to share the gospel**—members should be instructed and encouraged to look for opportunities to share their testimonies and the gospel message.
- **to be engaged with their community**—members should also find ways to participate with their neighbors and address needs in the community.
- **to seek after those who have become inactive or are lost**—members should also be encouraged to reach out to them in friendship.
- **to minister to newly won members**—existing members should actively work to include them in the work of the Branch.

“It is important to minister to those we have loved enough to win.”

“We grow by the number we keep!”

First Presidency - *Ministry to New Members* – L J. Lea

Branch Leaders that are Managers

It may not be needed, or possible, to find individuals to fill the following Branch leadership roles. However, how to accomplish the functions of these roles, still needs to be considered by the Branch President.

Treasurer – Oversees the financial concerns of the Branch. Includes keeping records of funds collected and spent, and providing financial reports.

Secretary/Recorder – Maintains membership, priesthood, and ordinance records, and keeps minutes of business meetings.

Education Leader – Assisting members, new and long term, to be instructed in the ways of the Kingdom, and how to walk in those ways, should be a priority focus of any Branch. This instruction occurs in the home through priesthood visiting, but also through educational opportunities within the branch. A branch education leader is the one who focuses on identifying learning opportunities within the Branch through securing teachers and materials.

Women's Leader – Women provide an important ministry in the home, the life of the Branch, and the communities where they live. A women's leader finds ways to include and strengthen women in the Branch through fellowship, learning, and service opportunities.

Youth Leader – Youth are the future of the Church. It is important to keep them engaged through fellowship, learning, leadership, worship, and service opportunities. A youth leader is the one who seeks to create these opportunities. Also, they seek out and develop youth as leaders in the branch.

Some Thoughts About Leadership

There is a difference between ***leading, managing, and following***. All three functions can be found in a Branch. Each member of a Branch is involved in one, or more, of these three functions. All three involve using leadership skills.

Executive leaders; such as a Branch President, focus on where we need to go, based on where we are and opportunities around us. They are generally vision driven, and find ways to help others understand the vision and move towards it.

This type of Leadership involves:

- Being led by the spirit, and through that Spirit, leading others
- Listening, looking, and gathering information before leading
- Forming a vision, and a direction, based on what's been learned
- Understanding that leadership is not about doing everything
- Understanding that we each have gifts, but no one has all the gifts
- Finding the gifts of others and encouraging them to magnify, and use them
- Identifying what needs to be done and delegating tasks to accomplish what needs to be done

Managers as leaders; are called upon to take responsibility, and exercise their gifts and talents, to manage a specific activity, or job within the Branch.

Followers as Leaders; see a need or an opportunity to serve, and step in to meet the need or serve, leading by example.

There is a difference between having a position of leadership in the Branch, and being a leader in the Branch. Few have a leadership position; all have the opportunity to offer leadership.

Members as Leaders in the Branch

Members are often thought of as *followers* only. However, members can offer leadership in a Branch without having a leadership role or title. Some ways Branch members can offer leadership includes:

- Supporting the ministry of the priesthood and encouraging others to do so
- Participating in the ordinances, and encouraging others to participate
- Supporting Branch leaders and encouraging others to do so
- Attending church regularly and encouraging others to attend
- Volunteering when something is needed, and inviting others to do so
- Keeping the financial law, and supports others to keep it
- Praying in public and regularly sharing their testimony
- Treating people well and with respect and encourage others to do so
- Visiting and supporting members in need and encouraging others to do so
- Living a Christian life and encouraging others to do so as well
- Sharing their testimony with others and inviting them to come to Christ

“Servant Leadership” and “Following”

The type of leadership priesthood and saints are to provide is, ***servant leadership***. Servant leadership involves leading from a place of serving rather than receiving.

Jesus was asked by His disciples, *Who is the Greatest?* In Luke 22:23-27, and in Mark 10:42-45 he compares how earthly leaders lead, with how he desired his disciples to lead, and established what it means to be a ***servant leader***. Christ then shows the disciples what it means to be a servant leader by washing their feet, and commands them to do the same.

Consider Who Christ is, and what He did for us: *Philippians 2:5-11*

Leading and Following – Both involve “Submission” (Choosing to Submit)

Servant Leaders submits his welfare to the welfare of those he is to lead – still has choice.

Followers must submit personal will to that of another – still has choice.

Christ represents the best of how to be a “Servant Leader” and a “Follower”

He Always did the Fathers will: (i.e., John 5:30; 6:38; 14:31)

Christ took up the “Cross” – and showed us the way – to be *followers* and *leaders*. On the “Cross” – Christ represents perfectly, what it means to be the, ***perfect follower*** and the ***perfect servant leader***. (Philippians 2:6-11)

In *Philippians 2:5*, we are admonished to, ***Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus***. So let it be!

[Prepared by Elder Vim Horn for the East Africa Priesthood Retreat–2025]