

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD MEETING

The General Priesthood meeting of the Church was held Monday evening, April 4, at 7:00 p.m.

President George Albert Smith was present and presided and conducted the services.

The music for the meeting was furnished by the Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Elder Spencer Cornwall.

The Men's Chorus and the congregation sang as an opening number: "Come, All Ye Sons of Zion."

President J. Angus Christensen, of the Palmyra Stake, offered the invocation.

The Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir sang: "The Palms."

ELDER HAROLD B. LEE

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Last June I visited away out in Blake's Bay, with President S. Dilworth Young, at the home of a sister who was investigating the gospel, and as we talked to her about her study of the gospel, she said there was one thing about the teachings the missionaries had brought to her that she could not agree with. When we asked her what that was she said she could not believe in the gospel of the "second chance," meaning by that the work, salvation for the dead. Well, after this call tonight, after having had one chance in this conference, I began to understand what might be termed the gospel of the "second chance." They had given me the second chance to do what I had failed to do, probably, yesterday.

MEMBERS AWAY FROM HOME

I attempted to say something yesterday in the interest of those who are away from their homes, the priesthood members, the girls, and particularly our men in military service. There are some figures that are available from our quarterly reports, our annual report, that indicate that for the year 1948 we have had living away from their homes in the stakes of Zion 628 high priests, 417 seventies, and 4,362 elders, or a total of 5,407.

I asked Brother Palmer if he could tell me how many Aaronic Priesthood members there are in this group and I suppose he is still trying to find those figures. I would assume that probably the total number of Aaronic Priesthood members living away from their homes would not be less than the number of Melchizedek members, because most of those in military service at the present time hold only the Aaronic Priesthood.

In other words, we have approximately ten thousand members of the Church who are living away from their homes. (How many Aaronic Priesthood members, Brother Palmer?) 4,110 Aaronic Priest-

hood members added to the 5,400 would give us then a total of 9,500 members of the Church living away from their homes.

PURPOSE OF PRIESTHOOD REPORTS

Sometimes when we ask you to make reports, there seems to be a misunderstanding as to the purpose of those reports. We have dared ask each quarter for priesthood quorums to report on six activities. Those activities are designed to call your attention each three months to the things that over a century have been found to be the methods by which men can be won to activity in this Church.

Those things on the reports that you are asked to enumerate are: First, the number of council meetings you have held during that quarter. The ideal is that there should be a council meeting of the presidency of the quorum once each week. So we ask you to tell us how many you have held during that time.

The second thing, we have discovered, that brings men into activity is the number of visits that are made to quorum members. We ask you to report that.

The number that you have had out to socials, or rather the number of socials you have had during the quarter, and we are suggesting not less than one each month for a quorum.

The number of projects you have, which would invite the activity of quorum members, and the number of those using liquor and tobacco who have had carried to them the program designed to help them in their efforts to overcome the habit.

And finally, we have asked you to tell us how many you have corresponded with during that period.

The failure of priesthood quorums to follow up in any one of these activities is an evidence that they are not doing all they can to reclaim those who otherwise are slipping away from us.

We have asked you to report one very significant figure that is always one of great concern. We ask you to tell us those who are active and accounted for, the number, and that figure is arrived at by counting those who are present at their meetings. Those who are engaged in other church work during the priesthood hour and those who are away from their homes, not counting those who are on missions. That total figure for 1948 for the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums alone, the number who are active and accounted for, was 45,778, but the total number of members accounted for in the priesthood quorums with a few stakes not reporting, totals 104,953, which means if those reports are at all accurate that we have a total counted inactive or unaccounted for of 59,175.

Now, with those figures before us, it seems clear that in order for us to inaugurate a program that will tend to win them back we would do well to look to our reports as a matter of instruction rather than merely as a medium of reporting to the General Authorities.

CONCERN FOR SERVICE MEN

Now then, regarding those who are living away from home, particularly the service men. We realize that you do not have a great number away from home, but in two concentrated areas, one at San Diego where a large number of our boys are to be found and the other down at San Antonio, Texas, we have the distressing reports from both of these concentrated centers, where we have some hundreds of our boys, that by actual count there are few in those camps who have received a letter from their priesthood quorums or from their bishops, and they have not had their cards reported to the general office of the Servicemen's Committee so that someone living in a nearby branch or ward of the Church might be sent to bring them into our priesthood and church meetings.

Now, brethren, the First Presidency and the Twelve, after discussion, considering a program that would be designed to safeguard the welfare of these young boys, who, for the most part are untrained and inexperienced, ask that there be organized in each stake a committee composed of a member of the stake Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood Committees, and that under their direction there would be inaugurated an instruction to all priesthood quorums that would urge them to correspond with their absent members each month, enclosing therewith a tract on some gospel principle and a tract on the word of wisdom that might be obtained from the No Liquor-Tobacco chairman. That letter should be a letter of encouragement and of friendliness in order that they might feel their relationship to the quorum which sends the letter.

It has also been urged that all priesthood quorums send to each such absent service man a copy of the Era and the Church Section of the Deseret News, and that these be supplied by the priesthood quorums from funds which they will raise themselves.

Now, while we have but few from each quorum or from each ward, if we are not able to take care of the few I wonder what is going to happen to our young men when we get the many that we may get with an increasing of the draft or from compulsory military service, which we pray God may not come.

We ask you brethren to redouble your efforts, you stake presidents to again stimulate the carrying out of the instructions, bishops of wards, the presidencies of quorums, in order that these boys will be cared for and their lives safeguarded by that care.

We would like to commend the Presiding Bishopric, who this year have required as an item which they must attain to in order to get a standard quorum award, that they account for the absent members of their Aaronic Priesthood quorums who are away from their homes, not being content merely to count the boys who are now living at home. We ask you Melchizedek quorums to be just as attentive with regard to the boys of your quorums.

PRIESTHOOD COURSE OF STUDY

Now, one more matter. There has been prepared by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith an excellent course of instruction for all Melchizedek quorums under the title, "Church History and Modern Revelation." Each year there have been prepared thirty-six lessons with the understanding that three class periods of not less than forty-five minutes each be devoted to a study of the lesson manual each month, it also being understood that one of the four class periods might be devoted to a quorum business meeting where the membership of the quorum all reside in the one ward. Otherwise, there would be occasional time for an extra lesson, and so thirty-six lessons have been provided for the study of the quorums.

It has come to our attention that in some stakes and some quorums there has been a program that does not permit the carrying out of this lesson program. In some stakes there has been a ward teachers' report meeting being held during the time of the priesthood meeting once each month which, if you will think for a moment, would deny the possibility of carrying out the lesson instructions that have been provided. Also, in some quorums we have learned that the monthly quorum meetings have been held once each month where the membership of the quorum have been taken away from the priesthood meeting on that Sunday.

We ask you brethren to pay attention to the instructions that have been given as to the course of lessons in order that these difficulties might be overcome.

The Lord bless you, my brethren, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand."

And then, in the next paragraph he tells us to comprehend all phases of instruction pertaining to the earth, the heavens, to the end,

That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. Behold I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor. Therefore, they are left without excuse, . . ."

There are two things which the Lord here asks us to do. that we are to teach and to warn, testify of the truths of the Gospel and to warn the people of the evils in the world.

There are two great phases, departments, of our Church in