

The Aaronic Priesthood Chorus sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

### President Lee

Bishop Victor L. Brown, Pre-

siding Bishop of the Church, will be our first speaker this evening.

Bishop Brown will be followed by Elder Robert L. Backman.

## Bishop Victor L. Brown

*Presiding Bishop*

This is a wonderful sight, brethren, to see so many priesthood holders gathered in one hall, and then to recognize so many gathered throughout the various other chapels and buildings. I am grateful to be with you tonight and to participate in this priesthood meeting.

### New MIA organizations

On November 9, 1972, the First Presidency announced the organization of the Melchizedek Priesthood MIA and the Aaronic Priesthood MIA. This decision by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve will have great impact on the lives of the members of the Church in years to come. President Lee referred to it as potentially one of the most significant changes in the Church in our lifetime. Having been involved in the development of the plan, I can testify to you that it came through inspiration from the Lord.

In great measure it fulfills the prophecy of President Joseph F. Smith, who said, "We expect to see the day, if we live long enough (and if some of us don't live long enough to see it, there are others who will), when every council of the Priesthood in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will understand its duty, will assume its own responsibility, . . . to the uttermost, according to the intelligence and ability

possessed by it. When that day shall come, there will not be so much necessity for work that is now being done by the auxiliary organizations, because it will be done by the regular quorums of the Priesthood. The Lord designed and comprehended it from the beginning, and He has made provision in the Church whereby every need may be met and satisfied through the regular organizations of the Priesthood." (*Conference Report*, April 1906, p. 3.)

### Aaronic Priesthood MIA

In the Lord's eyes the basic responsibility for our young people first rests jointly with parents and with the youth themselves. The Church and its organizations exist to aid parents in their sacred callings. It is in this light that we discuss the Aaronic Priesthood MIA this evening. With this change in organization, the Presiding Bishopric as the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, assisted by the Aaronic Priesthood MIA Young Men's and Young Women's presidencies and boards, became responsible on the general level for supporting the parents of youth ages 12 to 18. The MIA under this reorganization becomes part of the priesthood and is no longer an auxiliary.

Until tonight, this change has been limited to the general level

of the Church. It is my great honor and privilege now to introduce this change, as far as the Aaronic Priesthood MIA is concerned, to the stakes, missions, wards, and branches of the Church. What I shall tell you now has the approval and support of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and all of the General Authorities.

### **Ward organization**

Let us begin with the ward organization. The bishopric is the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood. This now means the total priesthood responsibility for Aaronic Priesthood MIA in the ward. The bishopric is directly responsible for all young men and women between the ages of 12 and 18. The bishop is president of the priests quorum and responsible for all priest-age boys and Laurel-age girls. One counselor is responsible for all teacher-age boys and Mia Maid-age girls; the other counselor, for the deacon-age boys and Beehive-age girls.

The bishopric will call and set apart four adult male leaders. One will be the president of the Aaronic Priesthood MIA Young Men. He will coordinate all activities of the adult youth leaders in the above three age groups under the direction of the bishopric. He will in large measure assume the responsibilities formerly held by the general secretary-Aaronic Priesthood youth. The other three will be advisers to these specific age groups and will be responsible for all their activities and functions. For instance, the deacons' adviser will teach the deacons quorum in priesthood meeting, be the Scoutmaster, and be involved in the activities of all the 12-through 13-year-old boys. The other two advisers will have the same responsibilities for their age groups.

The bishopric will likewise call four adult women leaders. One will

be set apart as the president of the Aaronic Priesthood MIA Young Women. The other three will be set apart as advisers to the three age groups, namely, Laurels, Mia Maids, and Beehive girls, just as their counterparts are the advisers to the young men. The Aaronic Priesthood MIA Young Women's president will then coordinate all activities for the young women under the direct supervision of the bishopric, as does her counterpart for the young men.

### **Service and activity committee**

A service and activity committee composed of not more than three men and/or women will be called to function under the direction of both presidents to provide leadership in these areas with special emphasis on service. There is a great desire in the hearts of our young people to be of service to their fellowmen—service such as helping a widow with her yard, taking a family home evening program to an elderly shut-in, helping the poor, the sick, the handicapped, or those who are in emotional distress. This limited committee will also be responsible for the activity projects, such as dance, drama, sports, athletics, etc. These leaders will not be known as drama director, dance director, etc., but will function on a broad base.

When the bishopric and Aaronic Priesthood MIA presidents and youth leaders request assistance in service and activity areas, this committee or its members individually will assume the responsibility. The committee will have available to them specialists in various areas of activity on a temporary basis. They may be adults or youth. For instance, a drama night will be directed by a member of the activity committee assisted by a specialist whom the bishop calls for that special project only.

The two presidents of the Aaronic Priesthood MIA will each have a secretary to complete the ward organization.

### **Youth committee**

The bishop's youth committee, composed of quorum and class officers, will continue to function but with greater emphasis placed on leadership training for the youth. Young quorum and class presidencies have much to offer if helped to learn and allowed to perform in their callings. It is of the utmost urgency that every bishop in the Church organize his bishop's youth committee and help them to function effectively in this new organization. Their involvement and contribution are of great importance to this realignment of responsibilities.

The bishopric now has more direct priesthood responsibility for all youth of the ward between 12 and 18 than ever before. This responsibility is in partnership with parents, and it is essential that the energy and talent of youth themselves be used.

This modified organization is primarily ward oriented.

### **Stake organization**

In many aspects the stake organization parallels that of the ward. The stake presidency is the presidency of the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods of the stake. One member of the stake presidency will be appointed chairman of the Aaronic Priesthood MIA of the stake. He will supervise matters involving the youth between 12 and 18 in the stake under the overall direction of the stake presidency.

Four high councilors will serve under his supervision. One will be designated as the adviser to the Aaronic Priesthood MIA of the stake. This includes young men and

young women. There are no Aaronic Priesthood MIA presidents on the stake level. This high councilor will see that the entire youth program of the stake functions properly, of course, reporting to the chairman. A second high councilor adviser will be responsible for the young men of priest age, another of teacher age, and the third of deacon age. They will also work with the advisers of the young women of the same age group.

The stake president will call four adult women advisers. One will be set apart as the adviser to the Aaronic Priesthood MIA Young Women of the stake. Another will be the adviser to Laurel-age girls, another to the Mia Maid-age girls, and the fourth the Beehive-age girls. To assist these leaders, there will be an assistant stake clerk for the young men and a young women's secretary.

As on the ward level, a service and activity committee of not more than three adults, men and/or women, will be called. Again, they will not be known as dance or drama directors, etc. They will function under the supervision of the advisers to the Aaronic Priesthood MIA. As needed, they will have specialists available to them on a temporary basis to perform a stake service or activity for a single project. These may be adults or youth. A stake youth committee will be formed as needed to further involve the young people themselves.

### **Regional activity**

Regional activity for these ages is to be deemphasized. If it seems appropriate to have regional activities, the service will be provided through temporary appointments from the Quorum of the Twelve or, in the case of athletics, through the Melchizedek Priesthood MIA regional organization.

These changes have been presented to all Regional Representatives of the Twelve. Bishops and stake presidents will receive more detailed information in the near future, including job descriptions of each position. This organization is to provide experiences that focus on the relationship that youth have with the Savior.

### Objectives listed

In summary, may I list some of the objectives of these changes:

1. Aaronic Priesthood MIA actually is now priesthood oriented.

2. Our interest is centered on each individual youth, not on programs alone. We must provide activities for those who do not presently come to church as well as for those who do.

3. Direct involvement of young people themselves is of the utmost importance.

4. There will be greater accountability for our stewardship as leaders.

5. All that is done is intended to strengthen the family.

6. Finally, because of the emphasis on people rather than programs, local leaders, both youth and adult, will have the opportunity to determine in great measure the appropriate activities for their young people.

### Implementation of program

Inasmuch as these modifications will be reviewed in detail at June Conference, it is essential that the new stake Aaronic Priesthood MIA organization be implemented as soon as possible so that the proper stake officers will come to conference. We realize there will be limitations of distance as far as

attendance at June Conference is concerned, but would hope that all stakes throughout the Church would implement the new organization as soon as possible. Sufficient information will come through the mail for this to be accomplished. Stake leaders will then train ward officers so that the entire program on both the stake and ward levels will be functioning by September 1 of this year. Until instructions come after June Conference, the ward organization and program should continue as at present.

You will be interested to know that June Conference is not an auxiliary conference but will be a priesthood conference. The First Presidency will preside and conduct the opening and closing sessions of the conference. President Harold B. Lee will give the keynote address.

Never has the Lord blessed the earth with a finer generation of youth, nor has there ever been a time when Satan has been more active in influencing the lives of our people. I pray the stake presidencies, bishoprics, and all leaders of youth will sense the urgency of the needs and the lateness of the hour, that we may be magnified and made equal to our responsibilities, that through our love of youth and dedicated leadership, all young men and women in our stakes, wards, and branches may taste the sweetness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and draw close to him in this life so they will be worthy to be with him in the life to come. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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### President Harold B. Lee

We will next hear from Elder Robert L. Backman, President of the Aaronic Priesthood YMMIA.