

President N. Eldon Tanner

President Kimball has asked me to introduce to you an expansion of the procedure for conducting Church affairs at the area and region levels. With the increased growth and internationalization of the Church and the great responsibility to promote the ecclesiastical and temporal work throughout the world in a more unified fashion, we are introducing an emphasis on the role of councils in Church government.

This action will maintain the orderly management of Church activity at all administrative levels. President Ezra Taft Benson, of the Council of the Twelve, and Bishop Victor L. Brown, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will explain details and indicate how this modification is to be implemented in the various parts of the Church.

Priesthood councils

Since its beginning, the Church has been governed by leadership councils. Priesthood councils are a fundamental order of the Church, as illustrated repeatedly in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Sometimes these councils are advisory in nature, such as with the ward council, where auxiliary leaders advise the bishop and Melchizedek Priesthood leaders in the affairs of the ward.

Sometimes these councils are regulatory bodies, such as with the General Church Coordinating Council which was announced by the First Presidency in 1977. This council consists of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric. In this council, policies and procedures are agreed upon, and the work of the Church is coordinated and correlated.

The Church Coordinating Council, after due deliberation, has approved the establishment of councils

at area and region levels throughout the Church and multiregion councils where necessary.

These councils will make it possible to integrate better all the affairs of the Church. Region and area leaders will be able to plan, coordinate, and regulate *all* the affairs of the Church at these levels in a forum that will provide for full expression of needs, concerns, and opportunities.

These councils will also provide a better means for implementing in the field the service functions of the temporal line established under the Presiding Bishopric.

The leadership of a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy in area councils and of a Regional Representative in region councils will ensure coordinated and regulated activities at each level of Church administration. These councils, properly organized and functioning, assure a unified approach to move forward the ecclesiastical and temporal work of the Church for the blessing of individuals and families.

Increase efficiency, spirituality

We are confident that this expansion of priesthood councils will not only increase efficiency and harmony, but raise the spirituality of the Church. As Paul beautifully states in Ephesians, chapter 4, the Church organization is given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13).

Now may I give emphasis to two subsequent verses of Paul's letter which we do not always quote, but which have particular meaning in

light of these newly announced priesthood councils:

"But speaking the truth in love, may [we] grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

"From whom the whole body *fityly joined together* and compacted by that which *every joint supplieth*, according to the *effectual working* in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:15-16; italics added).

Please note now, brothers and sisters, the whole body is compacted by that which every *joint* or *council* supplies. With this action today, we are completing the *linkage* of the

priesthood chain both ecclesiastically and temporally. We know that you leaders will give strength to and will benefit from participation in priesthood councils at your several levels.

May the Lord richly bless you in carrying forth this great work of establishing Zion and preparing us for the Lord's eventual rule on earth. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Tanner

President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

He will be followed by Bishop Victor L. Brown, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

President Ezra Taft Benson

My beloved brethren and sisters, as President Tanner has announced, we are pleased to announce today some developments affecting area and local Church administration. May I say at the outset that what you will see and hear is the result of months of prayerful study and deliberation. This presentation about Church councils is *not* a new program, but it is a reemphasis of a principle based on the scriptures and on traditional Church government procedures. Some of you who live in the United States will recognize in this presentation nothing more than what is already being done at your interim meetings.

Because this is such an important matter, I will stay with a written text, using visuals as needed. As I begin, however, I want you to know that this presentation has the whole-hearted endorsement of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, the First Quorum of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. We have no doubt that what we are presenting to you today will greatly

facilitate communication and unity at various Church levels and help move the kingdom forward.

Church government through councils

Some background may be helpful so you can more completely understand the significance of these developments.

Throughout the history of the Church, it has been a practice that essentially ecclesiastical matters be administered by the Quorum of the Twelve and that essentially temporal affairs be administered by the Presiding Bishopric. This practice continues to this day.

You are all, of course, familiar with the traditional administrative channel of authority to the field from the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, Area Supervisors, Regional Representatives, stake presidents, and bishops. This channel of authority remains unchanged.