

## A Message from the First Presidency January 16, 2018

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**Elder D. Todd Christofferson:** Good morning. I'm Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and have been asked to conduct this morning's event as Chairman of the Church Public Affairs Committee. We welcome you from the Salt Lake Temple on this memorable occasion when we announce the call of a new First Presidency. We've chosen to speak first to you, the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We remember with fondness President Thomas S. Monson, whose funeral was held last Friday. When the President of the Church passes away, the First Presidency is automatically dissolved. The men previously serving as counselors assume their places in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and that quorum assumes leadership of the Church, with the senior Apostle at its head. Soon after the death of a President of the Church, members of the Quorum of the Twelve meet in the temple to consider reconstituting the First Presidency. Throughout our history, the senior Apostle has always become the successor President of the Church. This system precludes any posturing or campaigning for position and provides continuity, seasoned maturity, experience, and extensive preparation for the one who becomes President. As Elder John A. Widtsoe observed: "This is a wise procedure. It places at the head of the Church the apostle who has been longest in service. He's known well to the people and trusted by them. He himself knows the procedure of Church affairs. He is no novice to be trained for the position."

The new President is set apart by the Apostle next in seniority, joined by all the other quorum members by the laying on of hands. Guided by the divine inspiration he receives, the President selects his counselors and then, with the other Apostles, sets them apart. Following the reorganization of the First Presidency, the Apostle who has served the second longest is set apart as President of the Quorum of the Twelve. If the second-longest serving Apostle is called into the First Presidency, the Apostle next in seniority is appointed as Acting President of the Twelve.

That special meeting in the temple in this case took place last Sunday morning in a setting of fasting and prayer. As a participant, I must say it was a sweet, sacred experience in which the Lord's will was clearly manifest and all were in full accord. This experience confirmed once again that Jesus Christ directs His Church. We're pleased to announce to you this morning that President Russell M. Nelson was set apart as the 17th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on January 14, 2018, with President Dallin H. Oaks as First Counselor and President Henry B. Eyring as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. President M. Russell Ballard was set apart as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We will now hear from President Russell M. Nelson, followed by each of his counselors.

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**President Russell M. Nelson:** Dear brothers and sisters, I'm humbled to be with you this morning. Four days ago, we laid to rest a giant of a man, a prophet of God, President Thomas S. Monson. No words can do justice to the magnitude and magnificence of his life. I will forever cherish our friendship, with gratitude for what he taught me. Now we must look forward to the future with complete faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Church this is.

Two days ago, as Brother Christofferson has said, all of the living Apostles met in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple. There, they made a unanimous decision first, to reorganize the First Presidency now, and second, that I serve as President of the Church. Words are inadequate to tell you what it felt like to have my brethren, brethren who hold all the priesthood keys restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith in this dispensation, place their hands upon my head to ordain and set me apart as President of the Church. It was a sacred and humbling experience.

It then became my responsibility to discern whom the Lord had prepared to be my counselors. How could I choose only two of the twelve other Apostles, each of whom I love so dearly? I'm deeply grateful to the Lord for answering my fervent prayers. I am very thankful that President Dallin Harris Oaks and President Henry Bennion Eyring are willing to serve with me as First and Second Counselors respectively. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has resumed his place in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He has already received major assignments for which he is uniquely qualified. I pay tribute to him and to President Eyring for their magnificent service as counselors to President Monson. They've been totally capable, devoted, and inspired. We are very grateful for them. Each is willing to serve now where he is needed most.

As the Apostle second in seniority, President Oaks also becomes President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. However, given his call to the First Presidency, and consistent with the order of the Church, President M. Russell Ballard, next in seniority, will serve as the Acting President of that quorum. The First Presidency will work hand in hand with the Twelve to discern the will of the Lord and move His sacred work forward.

We are thankful for your prayers. They have been offered throughout the world for us. On the morning following President Monson's passing, one such prayer was offered by a four-year-old boy named Benson. I quote excerpts from his mother's letter written to my wife, Wendy. Benson prayed: "Heavenly Father, thank you that President Thomas S. Monson could see his wife again. Thank you for our new prophet. Help him to be brave and not scared that he's new. Help him to grow up to be healthy and strong. Help him to have power, because he has the priesthood. And help us always to be nice." I

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thank God for children like this and for parents who are serious about their commitment to righteous, intentional parenting—for every parent, teacher, and member who carries heavy burdens and yet serves so willingly. In other words, for each one of you, I am most humbly grateful.

As we go forward together, I invite you to think about the majestic manner by which the Lord governs His Church. When a President of the Church passes away, there is no mystery about who is next called to serve in that capacity. There's no electioneering, no campaigning, but only the quiet workings of a divine plan of succession put in place by the Lord Himself. Now, each day of an Apostle's service is a day of learning and preparing for more responsibility in the future. It takes decades of service for an Apostle to move from the junior chair to the senior chair in the circle. During that time, he gains firsthand experience in each facet of the work of the Church. He also becomes well acquainted with the peoples of the earth, including their histories, cultures, and languages, as assignments take him repeatedly across the globe. This process of succession in the leadership of the Church is unique. I know of nothing else like it. That should not surprise us, because this is the Lord's Church. He does not work after the manner of men. I've served in the Quorum of the Twelve under five previous Presidents of the Church. I have watched each President receive revelation and respond to that revelation. The Lord always has and always will instruct and inspire His prophets. The Lord is at the helm. We who have been ordained to bear witness of His holy name throughout the world will continue to seek to know His will and follow it.

Now, to each member of the Church I say: Keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere. As a new presidency, we want to begin with the end in mind. For this reason, we're speaking to you today from a temple. The end for which each of us strives is to be endowed with power in a house of the Lord, sealed as families, faithful to covenants made in a temple that qualify us for the greatest gift of God, that of eternal life. The ordinances of the temple and the covenants you make there are key to strengthening your life, your marriage and family, and your ability to resist the attacks of the adversary. Your worship in the temple and your service there for your ancestors will bless you with increased personal revelation and peace and will fortify your commitment to stay on the covenant path.

Now, if you have stepped off the path, may I invite you with all the hope in my heart to please come back. Whatever your concerns, whatever your challenges, there is a place for you in this, the Lord's Church. You and generations yet unborn will be blessed by your actions now to return to the covenant path. Our Father in Heaven cherishes His

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children, and He wants each of us to return home to Him. This is a grand goal of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—to help each of us to come back home.

I express my deep love for you, love that has grown over decades of meeting you, worshipping with you, and serving you. Our divine mandate is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, helping to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. This we will do with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that He is in charge. This is His work and His Church. We are His servants. I declare my devotion to God our Eternal Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ. I know Them, love Them, and pledge to serve Them—and you—with every remaining breath of my life. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**President Dallin H. Oaks:** My dear brothers and sisters, I have sat beside President Nelson in the Quorum of the Twelve for almost 34 years. I know his love of the Lord Jesus Christ and his commitment to our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation. I know his love of the people. I know of his wisdom. I feel privileged to be called as a counselor to President Nelson in the First Presidency. I likewise feel privileged to be able to work with President Henry B. Eyring, whom I love and respect. With all my heart, I pledge my loyalty and support for President Nelson's loving and inspired leadership. I rejoice in the opportunity to give my full efforts to bear witness of Jesus Christ and to proclaim the truth of His restored gospel. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**President Henry B. Eyring:** I am grateful for the invitation to speak with you today. This is a great time in the history of the Church. Prophets in the past have said that the best is yet to come, and it has proved true. That is so because it is the Lord who leads His Church. He watches over all His Father's children in the world, and He qualifies and calls His servants to lead in inviting God's children to come home in heaven to Him. Joseph Smith was the first prophet of this dispensation. At the start, he could speak to all the members of the Church in one building, in one place. In just a few years, there were faithful members in nations across the world. Today, President Nelson addresses vast numbers of members who worship in thousands of buildings. The growth in the number of members and their spread across nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples are visible miracles. But the greater miracle, and the one which will accelerate, is the growth in faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord has prepared and chosen President Nelson to lead in that growth. He knows and loves the Lord. The growth will come as we each pray, work, and live to have the Holy Ghost as our companion in our lives. We are promised that blessing as we renew and remember covenants we make in the sacrament and in holy temples and so have the Spirit to be with us. Every association I have had with President Nelson and President Oaks has increased my ability to

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remember the Savior, keep sacred covenants, and find joy in the influence of the Holy Ghost. I am so grateful for the increase of that blessing in my life. I testify that the Savior and His Atonement make that gift possible. This is the Lord's true Church. President Nelson was called of God and, as His President, to hold and exercise all the keys of the priesthood passed to him from Joseph Smith through a line of true prophets. We are becoming ever more nearly as one in love through the gospel of Jesus Christ working in our lives. I express my love for the Lord and for His living prophet. This is a great time in the history of the Church, and yes, the best is still to come, because of our faith in the Lord, whose Church this is. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Elder D. Todd Christofferson:** Thank you, brethren. We love and sustain you. We invite all who have listened to or viewed this announcement to tune in on these same channels to a news conference by the First Presidency beginning at 10:00 a.m. mountain standard time. Now as we conclude, we express appreciation to all who have joined us for this historic announcement. Thank you.

THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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