

# BASIC UNIT PROGRAM

G U I D E B O O K

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## Distribution

The *Basic Unit Program Guidebook* provides guidelines for priesthood leaders in organizing units where the Church is in its beginning stages, where members are scattered or few in number, where leadership is just beginning to develop, or where members have special language needs or other special needs. Although these conditions exist more generally in missions, the Basic Unit Program may also be used in stakes that have similar circumstances, with the approval of the Area Presidency.

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# Introduction to the Basic Unit Program

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“We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church” (Articles of Faith 1:6).

During His mortal ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ established His Church among the believers in a simple way. He had His Apostles organize small groups of members with a presiding priesthood leader to minister to them.

The early Church members were able to grow and prosper in the gospel because Christ and His Apostles:

1. Kept the focus on teaching the principles and doctrines of the gospel.
2. Encouraged members to receive the ordinances and to make and keep related covenants.
3. Taught members to minister to one another’s spiritual and temporal needs.
4. Kept the organization simple.

The same principles of organization and administration were practiced by Church leaders in the Book of Mormon. “And thus did Alma and Amulek go forth, and also many more who had been chosen for the work, to preach the word throughout all the land. And the establishment of the church became general throughout the land” (Alma 16:15).

The same principles were also practiced in the early years of the restoration of the Church. Members of the

Church today are best served by following these same principles of organization and administration.

As authorized by the Area Presidency, the Basic Unit Program may be used for establishing and organizing the Church in areas of the world where:

1. The Church is in its beginning stages.
2. Members are scattered.
3. The number of members is small and leadership is just beginning to develop.
4. Wards and stakes are not yet organized.
5. Members have special language needs or other special needs.

With the Area Presidency’s approval, the Basic Unit Program may also be used where similar conditions exist in stakes.

As the Church is established under these conditions, members are organized into small groups called branches.

Guidelines for the Basic Unit Program are provided in this publication and in the *Family Guidebook* (item number 31180), *Branch Guidebook* (31179), *Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders’ Guidebook* (31178), and *Teaching Guidebook* (34595). When units are fully organized into stakes and wards, they should use the *Church Handbook of Instructions* (35205 and 35209).

# Five Elements of the Basic Unit Program

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“And now, behold, I say unto you that you shall go . . . and preach my gospel unto them; and inasmuch as they receive thy teachings thou shalt cause my church to be established among them” (Doctrine and Covenants 28:8; see also 33:5–6).

## 1. Organization

### Family



The family is the basic unit of the Church. You will find instructions regarding the family and living the gospel in the home in the *Family Guidebook*.

### Branch



When there are two or more families in an area, and at least one of the

members is a worthy priest in the Aaronic Priesthood or is a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder, a branch may be organized. The branch may begin simply, with only a branch president who looks after members by visiting their homes and encouraging them in their duties. In these circumstances, the branch holds only a sacrament meeting and a gospel instruction period, using the scriptures and the *Gospel Principles* manual (31110) or *Gospel Fundamentals* manual (31129). See Schedule A on page 8.

As the branch grows in membership and in available leadership, an elders quorum should be organized. The branch president may then use other priesthood holders to help watch over members through home teaching. During the Sunday gospel instruction period, a priesthood meeting should be held, as well as a combined meeting for women, young women, and for children. See Schedule A on page 8.

As membership and leadership continue to increase, and where meeting facilities are available, Aaronic Priesthood quorums and the Relief Society, Primary, Young Women, and Sunday School auxiliaries may be organized. Sunday gospel instruction classes are held as shown on Schedules B and C on page 8.

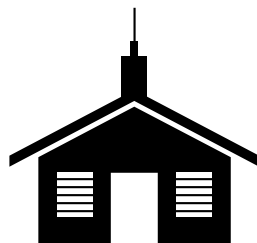
In summary, the program begins with an individual or family. Then a branch is organized. Then as the priesthood strength increases and membership grows, priesthood quorums and then the auxiliaries may be organized.

You can find more detailed instructions for establishing, organizing, and administering the branch in the *Branch Guidebook* and the *Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders' Guidebook*.

## 2. Meeting Places

Family home evenings, which are explained in the *Family Guidebook*, are held in members' homes.

Branch meetings are held in a home, a rented building, or a Church-owned building. The mission presidency can provide information on obtaining and maintaining a meeting place for the branch, as explained in the *Branch Guidebook*.



*Branch meetings are held in a home, a rented building, or a Church-owned building.*

### 3. Curriculum

The Church publishes curriculum materials for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in the home and in Church units. These materials are based on the scriptures and the teachings of the latter-day prophets. They help members learn and live the gospel. They also guide members in their study of the scriptures and the words of the latter-day apostles and prophets.

The first materials that are made available in a language are the

*Gospel Principles* manual (or *Gospel Fundamentals* manual) and the *First Presidency Messages* and *Visiting Teaching Messages*. As the Church continues to grow, the scriptures, other curriculum materials, and Church magazines are made available.

When the branch grows to the point where priesthood and auxiliary classes are held, the following curriculum resources may be used as they become available:

Melchizedek Priesthood and Aaronic Priesthood	<i>Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part A</i> <i>Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood, Part B</i>
Relief Society and Young Women	<i>The Latter-day Saint Woman, Part A</i> <i>The Latter-day Saint Woman, Part B</i>
Primary	<i>Primary 3: Choose the Right B</i> <i>Primary 4: Book of Mormon</i>
Sunday School	<i>Gospel Principles</i> (or <i>Gospel Fundamentals</i> )
The scriptures, <i>Family Guidebook</i> , <i>Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders' Guidebook</i> , <i>Teaching Guidebook</i> , <i>First Presidency Messages</i> , <i>Visiting Teaching Messages</i> , and <i>Hymns and Children's Songs</i> may be used to supplement the curriculum materials listed above as needed.	

The curriculum year begins worldwide on 1 January. Appropriate curriculum materials with instruc-

tions are provided when a branch is organized and annually thereafter.

## 4. Teaching

Gospel instruction in the home and in Church meetings is essential for spiritual growth and for strengthening personal testimony. All members of the Church are teachers, whether as parents, leaders, classroom instructors, or home teachers or visiting teachers.

The home should be the central place where the gospel is taught. The home is supported by the teaching and learning that takes place in Church meetings.

The Lord said: “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” (D&C 88:77–78).

In the *Teaching Guidebook* you can find principles that will help you teach the gospel simply, beautifully, and effectively.

## 5. Records and Reports

The Lord has commanded the Church to keep records. Four types of records are kept in the branch: financial records, membership records, historical records, and member progress reports.

Record-keeping materials are provided when a branch is organized. Instruction on keeping records and on completing and submitting reports is provided under the direction of the mission president. Those who handle these sacred documents should carefully guard the confidential information in Church records.

You can find more information about Church records and reports in the *Branch Guidebook*.

# Principles and Cautions

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“And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength” (Mosiah 4:27).

The following principles and cautions are important for the Basic Unit Program to succeed.

**1. Seek the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in all you do.** The Holy Ghost will guide parents, branch leaders, and teachers to know what to do and how to do it. Pray humbly and sincerely for His direction. Carefully think through an issue, pray earnestly about what to do, decide what action to take, and seek confirmation from the Holy Ghost about what is right. He will bring understanding to your mind and heart, revealing a knowledge of what you should do.

“Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (D&C 112:10).

“Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation” (D&C 8:2–3).

**2. Teach the basic principles and doctrines of the gospel.** Read Mosiah 18:18–30. Note how the basic principles and doctrines were taught in Alma’s time.

**3. Focus on ordinances and covenants.** Help members (1) understand and receive essential priesthood ordinances and (2) make and keep the associated covenants.

**4. Establish the priesthood and the functions of the priesthood first.**

Do this before organizing the Relief Society, Primary, Young Women, or Sunday School auxiliary programs. Do not move too fast too soon. Priesthood leadership is best cultivated when Church resources are in proper balance with members’ needs. Leadership is weakened when branches expand organizations, meetings, and programs too quickly.



# Sunday Meeting Schedules

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Mission presidents should coordinate and clear the use of meeting schedules with the Area Presidency.

## Sunday Meeting Schedule A

For branches where the branch president is the only one who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood or where he is a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. (When an elders quorum president is called, the structure of the gospel instruction period changes as follows: all priesthood holders meet together, and all women, young women, and children meet together.)

Sacrament meeting
Gospel instruction meeting for adults, youth, and children

## Sunday Meeting Schedule B

For branches where the number of members is sufficient to begin organizing priesthood quorums and some auxiliary organizations.

Sacrament meeting		
Sunday School (youth ages 12 and older and adults)		Primary (children ages 3–11)
Priesthood meeting	Meeting for women and young women	

## Sunday Meeting Schedule C

For branches where the number of members is sufficient to create most or all priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations and where leaders and meeting places are available.

Sacrament meeting				
Sunday School (youth ages 12 and older and adults)			Primary (children ages 3–11)	
Opening exercises		Opening exercises		Opening exercises
Melchizedek Priesthood	Aaronic Priesthood	Relief Society		Young Women

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