

CHURCH HISTORY GUIDES



Stake, District, and Mission Annual Histories



• COLLECTING, PRESERVING, AND SHARING CHURCH HISTORY •

CHURCH HISTORY GUIDES

Stake, District, and Mission Annual Histories

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Introduction



Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah

Preparing and submitting a stake, district, or mission annual history helps fulfill the Lord's charge: "Continue in writing and making a history of all the important things . . . concerning my church. . . . And also, my servants who are abroad in the earth should send forth the accounts of their stewardships" (D&C 69:3, 5).



Submitted annual histories are archived at the Church History Library.

The purposes of the annual history are to:

1. Bring members closer to Christ by helping them remember what God has done for His children and that He always fulfills His promises.
2. Document continually the contemporary history of the Church.
3. Present leaders with an opportunity to reflect on their efforts to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation.

This guide provides basic instructions and resources for compiling the annual history. For more information, visit lds.org/annualhistories.

Throughout this guide, *ward* and *stake* also refer to *branch* and *district*.

Doctrinal Foundation



The record that Mormon compiled anciently became an invaluable blessing to later generations.

The annual history brings members closer to Christ by helping them remember “what great things the Lord hath done” (title page of the Book of Mormon). Hope and confidence are increased as a result of learning about others who have faced challenges and, with the Lord’s help, overcome them. Learning from history helps us avoid repeating mistakes and provides a sense of identity and heritage. In this way, Church history blesses living and future generations.

Additional insights can be gained through studying the scriptures below and the excerpts from general conference addresses found in the “Resources” section (pp. 10–11).

D&C 21:1

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you.”

D&C 47:3

“And again, I say unto you that it shall be appointed unto him [the Church Historian] to keep the church record and history continually.”

D&C 69:3, 5

“Continue in writing and making a history of all the important things . . . concerning my church. . . .

“And also, my servants who are abroad in the earth should send forth the accounts of their stewardships.”

D&C 85:1–2

“It is the duty of the Lord’s clerk . . . to keep a history . . . of all things that transpire in Zion, . . .

“And also their manner of life, their faith, and works.”

Alma 37:6–8

“By small and simple things are great things brought to pass. . . .

“. . . And by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls.

“And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things [records] should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.”

Alma 37:14

“And now remember, my son, that God has entrusted you with these things [records], which are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations.”

Annual History Instructions

Overview

To fulfill the commandment “to keep the church record and history continually” (D&C 47:3), every Church unit is to compile a meaningful and accurate annual history.

Compiling the annual history should begin in January and continue throughout the year, with submissions due by March 31 of the following year. Every ward should create its own history and submit it to the stake. The stake will combine the ward contributions with its own history and submit a single report to the Church. (See “Submission Instructions” for more information.)



The assigned person gathers and compiles material for the annual history.



Cycle for preparing an annual history

The first step in the process is to assign the responsibility for compiling the history to the ward or stake clerk, a history specialist working under the clerk’s direction, or a missionary in the mission office. He or she should gather material throughout the year and may invite others to contribute stories and information. (See “What to Include.”) Near the end of the year, these materials are compiled and given to the unit’s priesthood leader for approval and submission.



What to Include

There are two options for compiling the stake annual history: basic or comprehensive. The stake president, considering the capacity of each unit in his stake, will determine which option to follow. A mission should follow the comprehensive option.

Basic Option

A basic annual history should contain the following:

Cover sheet. A cover sheet should be the first page of the annual history. A standard cover sheet can be found at lds.org/annualhistories or can be ordered through Church Distribution Services. The cover sheet should include:

- The unit's name and number.
- The year covered.
- The name of the person who compiled the history and the name of the unit's priesthood leader who approved it.

Unit's calendar. Include a copy of the unit's calendar showing major events that took place during the year.

Officers Sustained forms. Include the Officers Sustained forms read in ward and stake conferences. Missions should include the Officers Sustained forms read in branch conferences where branches are not part of a stake or district. These forms are printed from the Member and Leader Services (MLS) computer application found in most Church units.

Brief narrative describing the year's important events and developments. In chronological order, write a brief summary of the year's important events and developments, such as the dedication of a new building, the creation of a new unit, ward and stake conferences, temple trips, youth activities, service projects, a leader moving away, or growth in the ward. Include the date, location, attendees, what happened, and the impact of the event or development.

Photographs are encouraged. Clearly label them with the date, location, and a brief description of the setting. If possible, provide the full name of everyone in the photograph.

If possible, obtain a signed Permission to Use Photographs form for every photograph or audio-visual production included in the annual history. The person responsible for compiling each unit's history should ensure that a signed form from every contributing photographer is placed at the back of the annual history. (The form can be found in the "Resources" section beginning on page 9 or at lds.org/annualhistories.)

Comprehensive Option

In addition to the contents required for a basic annual history, a comprehensive history contains the following:

Priesthood, auxiliary, and member reports. The annual history provides an opportunity for leaders to reflect on their efforts to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation. These reports are an important part of the unit's history. To facilitate



Invite ward council members to contribute to the annual history.

the gathering of this information, the unit's leader may develop a simple set of questions for priesthood and auxiliary leaders to answer. Questions may reflect a special emphasis or the unit's goals. The Priesthood and Auxiliary Report template may be used as an alternative to developing a unique set of questions. (The template can be found in the "Resources" section beginning on page 9 or at lds.org/annualhistories.) Distribute the questions early in the year to give people time to prepare their responses.

The annual history may also include significant first-person accounts from members who have experienced the hand of God in their lives. Stories about the manner of life, faith, and works of the members (see D&C 85:1–2) may be captured using the Recording Personal and Family Spiritual Experiences template, or they may be written as a simple narrative. (The template can be found in the "Resources" section beginning on page 9 or at lds.org/annualhistories.) Be sure to include the experiences of women and youth. Personal stories should be signed by the submitter and carefully reviewed for authenticity and appropriateness by the person compiling the annual history.

Additional information for missions:

- Invite the mission president to record his reflections on the past year. Include information about challenges, successes, and the development of missionary work in different areas of the mission.
- Ask missionaries and other individuals to use the Recording Personal and Family Spiritual Experiences template to share specific first-person accounts of how God has blessed their lives, as described above.
- Invite leaders of branches reporting to the mission to respond to a set of questions prepared by the mission president, or have them use the Priesthood and Auxiliary Report template.



Including photographs enhances the written reports.

Significant records created by or about the unit.

Consider including the following records:

- Reports with key statistics
- Newsletters
- Special programs and publications
- Slide shows and other audiovisual productions (in hard copy or nonproprietary electronic formats)
- Photocopies of newspaper clippings (include information that will identify the newspaper and the date it was published)

Additional items for mission histories:

- A roster of full-time missionaries serving in the mission at the end of the year.
- A record of missionary transfers during the year.
- Talks given by the mission president.

Privacy Guidelines

Confidential or private information. Confidential or private information should not be included in the annual history. Examples of such information include:

- Reports of confessions, Church disciplinary councils, or sensitive matters shared in nonpublic Church settings (such as leadership meetings).
- Financial records that document the Church’s income (including tithing and other donations), expenditures, and budgets.
- Personal financial information, including information about welfare assistance.
- Specific personal health information.
- Information whose release would violate applicable data privacy laws (for example, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, birth dates, criminal history, sexual history, or ethnic background).
- Specific wording or details regarding a temple’s interior, temple rites or ceremonies, the garment, or other temple clothing.

Exceptions for members. On extremely rare occasions, it may be necessary to include confidential or private information about members of the Church when such information is essential in documenting an important aspect of the unit’s history. When this situation occurs, the confidential or private information should be placed in a separate section and clearly labeled “Confidential.”

Permission to use identifiable information of nonmembers. Data privacy laws in many countries forbid using identifiable information of individuals (including their names) without first obtaining their written consent. Therefore, before information about any nonmember can be included in the annual history, a signed Annual History Consent Form needs to be obtained. This consent is required for references to members’

spouses, parents, or children who are not members of the Church. It is also required for references to specific nonmembers in the community at large. (Note that placing in the annual history a published record, such as a newspaper article, that mentions people who are not members of the Church does not require written consent from the persons identified in the record.)

If the person responsible for compiling the annual history wishes to identify nonmembers in the history, he or she must obtain from those individuals a signed Annual History Consent Form and provide each a copy of the Church Data Privacy Statement. The signed consent forms should be included with the annual history. (Copies of the Annual History Consent Form and the Church Data Privacy Statement can be found in the “Resources” section beginning on page 9 or at lds.org/annualhistories.)



Directories containing such information as members’ addresses and phone numbers should not be included in annual histories.



The annual history is reviewed by the unit's priesthood leader for approval before it is submitted.

Submission Instructions

Annual histories may be submitted either electronically or in hard copy, but not both.

- Ward and branch histories are due to the stake by March 1.
- Stake, district, and mission histories are due to the assigned administrative office or the Church History Department by March 31.

Area Presidents may adjust these dates to meet the needs of their areas. Late submissions will be accepted; however, because the compilation of the annual history should occur throughout the year, it is best to finalize an annual history for a past year as early as possible in order to concentrate on the current year. A copy of the annual history may be retained locally, but copies should not be distributed widely.

When submitting the annual history, do not staple pages together or use ring binders or sheet protectors. Crafts, trophies, and other objects should not be submitted as part of the annual history.

Electronic Submissions

Stakes, districts, and missions may submit their annual histories electronically if the submissions meet the following criteria:

- The entire annual history is contained in a single PDF or Word file. Photographs or other attachments must be embedded in the file. (Do not e-mail audio or video files.)
- The file is no larger than 10 megabytes. A compressed file is acceptable.

Annual histories not meeting these criteria must be submitted in hard copy.

Send the electronic file to:

annualhistory@ldschurch.org

Include the following information in the body of the e-mail:

- The unit's name and number
- The year covered

Hard-Copy Submissions

Units in the United States and Canada should mail the original version of the annual history to:

Church History Department
Annual History
15 E. North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-1600

Units outside the United States and Canada should mail the original version of the annual history to the assigned administrative office, who will forward it to the Church History Department.

Resources

Excerpts from “O Remember, Remember,” by President Henry B. Eyring (general conference address)

Excerpts from “Remember and Perish Not,” by Elder Marlin K. Jensen (general conference address)

Priesthood and Auxiliary Report (template)

Recording Personal and Family Spiritual Experiences (template)

Permission to Use Photographs (form)

Annual History Consent Form

Church Data Privacy Statement



Excerpts from “O Remember, Remember”

By President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor
in the First Presidency

Ensign, Nov. 2007, 66–69



When our children were very small, I started to write down a few things about what happened every day. Let me tell you how that got started. I came home late from a Church assignment. It was after dark. My father-in-law, who lived near us, surprised me as I walked toward the front door of my house. He was carrying a load of pipes over his shoulder, walking very fast and dressed in his work clothes. I knew that he had been building a system to pump water from a stream below us up to our property.

He smiled, spoke softly, and then rushed past me into the darkness to go on with his work. I took a few steps toward the house, thinking of what he was doing for us, and just as I got to the door, I heard in my mind—not in my own voice—these words: “I’m not giving you these experiences for yourself. Write them down.”

I went inside. I didn’t go to bed. Although I was tired, I took out some paper and began to write. And as I did, I understood the message I had heard in my mind. I was supposed to record for my children to read, someday in the future, how I had seen the hand of God blessing our family. Grandpa didn’t have to do what he was doing for us. He could have had someone else do it or not have done it at all. But he was serving us, his family, in the way covenant disciples of Jesus Christ always do. I knew that was true. And so I wrote it down, so that my children could have the memory someday when they would need it.

I wrote down a few lines every day for years. I never missed a day no matter how tired I was or

how early I would have to start the next day. Before I would write, I would ponder this question: “Have I seen the hand of God reaching out to touch us or our children or our family today?” As I kept at it, something began to happen. As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done.

More than gratitude began to grow in my heart. Testimony grew. I became ever more certain that our Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. I felt more gratitude for the softening and refining that come because of the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ. And I grew more confident that the Holy Ghost can bring all things to our remembrance—even things we did not notice or pay attention to when they happened.

The years have gone by. My boys are grown men. And now and then one of them will surprise me by saying, “Dad, I was reading in my copy of the journal about when . . .” and then he will tell me about how reading of what happened long ago helped him notice something God had done in his day.

My point is to urge you to find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness. It will build our testimonies. You may not keep a journal. You may not share whatever record you keep with those you love and serve. But you and they will be blessed as you remember what the Lord has done. . . .

Tonight, and tomorrow night, you might pray and ponder, asking the questions: Did God send a message that was just for me? Did I see His hand in my life or the lives of my children? I will do that. And then I will find a way to preserve that memory for the day that I, and those that I love, will need to remember how much God loves us and how much we need Him. I testify that He loves us and blesses us, more than most of us have yet recognized. I know that is true, and it brings me joy to remember Him.

Excerpts from “Remember and Perish Not”

By Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy (Church Historian and Recorder)

Ensign, May 2007, 36–38



If we pay close attention to the uses of the word *remember* in the holy scriptures, we will recognize that remembering in the way God intends is a fundamental and saving principle of the gospel. This is so because prophetic admonitions to

remember are frequently calls to action: to listen, to see, to do, to obey, to repent [see 2 Nephi 1:12; Mosiah 6:3; Helaman 5:14]. When we remember in God’s way, we overcome our human tendency simply to gird for the battle of life and actually engage in the battle itself, doing all in our power to resist temptation and avoid sinning.

King Benjamin called for such active remembering from his people:

“And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

“But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not” [Mosiah 4:29–30].

Realizing the vital role remembering is to play in our lives, what else ought we to remember? . . . I suggest that the history of the Church of Jesus

Christ and its people deserves our remembrance. The scriptures give the Church’s history high priority. In fact, much of scripture is Church history. On the very day the Church was organized, God commanded Joseph Smith, “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you” [D&C 21:1]. Joseph acted on this command by appointing Oliver Cowdery, the second elder in the Church and his chief assistant, as the first Church historian. We keep records to help us remember, and a record of the Church’s rise and progress has been kept from Oliver Cowdery’s time to the present day. This extraordinary historical record reminds us that God has again opened the heavens and revealed truths that call our generation to action. . . .

. . . Remembering enables us to see God’s hand in our past, just as prophecy and faith assure us of God’s hand in our future. . . .

. . . We often speak of remembering our sacred covenants and God’s commandments and of remembering and performing saving ordinances for our deceased ancestors. Most importantly, we speak of the need to remember our Savior Jesus Christ and not just when convenient, but always, as He asks [see 3 Nephi 18:7, 11]. We witness always to remember Him as we partake of the sacrament. In return, we are promised His Spirit will always be with us. Interestingly, this is the same Spirit sent by our Heavenly Father to “bring all things to [our] remembrance” [John 14:26]. Thus, by worthily receiving the sacrament, we are blessed by the Spirit to enter into a wonderfully beneficial circle of remembering, returning again and again in our thinking and devotion to Christ and His Atonement.

Coming unto Christ and being perfected in Him is, I believe, the ultimate purpose of all remembering [see Moroni 10:32–33]. Therefore, I pray that God will bless us always to remember, especially His perfect Son, and perish not.

Priesthood and Auxiliary Report

Below are suggested questions to help priesthood and auxiliary leaders contribute to the annual history. (This template is intended as a guide and need not be strictly adhered to.) Detailed information, including photographs, will improve the value of the history. **Use additional pages for answering if needed.**

Describe efforts to help members live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Describe missionary work in your ward or branch.

Describe efforts to care for the poor and needy (do not use names without permission).

Describe efforts to assist members to research their family history and perform temple ordinances.

As a leader, describe how you have felt the inspiration of the Lord and felt the hand of God guiding your efforts.

Describe additional information you feel is important to include in this report.

Recording Personal and Family Spiritual Experiences

President Henry B. Eyring has encouraged Church members “to find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness. It will build our testimonies. . . . You and they [your family members] will be blessed as you remember what the Lord has done” (“O Remember, Remember,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 67).

1. Outline

Date

When did the experience occur?
(Record the year, season, day, time.)

People

List the people involved in this experience.

Location

Where did it happen?
(List the place of this experience.)

Circumstances

What were you doing at the time?
(List historical and personal details.)

Wisdom

What did you learn from this experience
(in one sentence)?

2. Narrative

Now, write the entire story using the elements recorded in the outline. (This template is intended as a guide and need not be strictly adhered to. **Use additional pages for answering as needed.**)

3. Sign

Sign your submission to certify that it is your story and that it is truthful.

Permission to Use Photographs

For all photographs or audiovisual productions being submitted for inclusion in an annual history, the owner of the photographs or audiovisual productions completes this form and gives it to the person assigned to compile the history.

Terms, Conditions, and Owner's Agreement

I, the undersigned, am the creator and owner (the "Owner") of the photographs and audiovisual productions identified in the "List of Submitted Photographs" section below (the "Photographs").

I hereby grant Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its affiliated entities (collectively, "COP") a royalty-free, worldwide, unlimited, nonexclusive, nonterminable, perpetual license and permission to freely use the Photographs, including the right to reproduce, distribute, rent, lend, perform, display, broadcast, communicate to the public, alter, crop, edit, modify, adapt, prepare derivative works, and otherwise use the Photographs, either in whole or in part, in any and all media, in unlimited number, and by any and all means now known or hereafter devised, together with the right to freely sublicense others to do any or all of the foregoing.

To the full extent permitted by law, I hereby waive, forever and throughout the universe, any and all so-called "moral rights" now or hereafter recognized with respect to the Photographs and to each and every part thereof for any and all now known or hereafter existing uses, media, and/or forms. In this regard, I acknowledge and agree that I will not receive a credit on or in connection with COP's use of the Photographs.

I represent and warrant that the Photographs are original with me and have not been copied or derived from any other source and that I have the full and unconditional right to grant this permission to use the Photographs. To the best of my knowledge and belief, COP's use of the Photographs in accordance with this permission will not violate the copyrights or other rights of any other person or entity.

I warrant and represent that I have read this Permission to Use Photographs and that by signing below I have granted the permission set forth herein.

Name of Owner (please print)	Address
Signature	
Date	

Parental Consent If the Owner of the Photographs is a minor child, the Owner's parent or legal guardian must complete the following.

I, the undersigned, hereby warrant and represent that I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor child named as the Owner above, that I have full authority to execute this Permission to Use Photographs on behalf of the Owner, and that by signing below I have granted this permission on behalf of the Owner.

Name of parent or guardian (please print)	Address
Signature	
Date	

List of Submitted Photographs Continued on page 2. If more space is needed, use a separate, signed form.

Following is a list of the photographs and audiovisual productions I am submitting.

Brief description	Date	Location	Names of those appearing in the photograph or production

Although I am not a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("the Church"), I authorize the Church and its affiliated entities to collect, process, use, and transfer to other countries and/or legal entities my personal information and/or photograph as used in creating a local history of the Church ("History"). I understand that my personal information will be used only in accordance with the Church Data Privacy Statement, which I have had an opportunity to review.

I further authorize the Church and its affiliated entities to display or otherwise provide access to such personal information and/or photograph as part of the Church's efforts to publish or make available the History in any medium decided upon by the Church or its affiliated entities.

Name of the person submitting the data (please print)	Signature	Date

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, having an address at 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150, and its affiliated entities (collectively referred to as “the Church”) have adopted the following Data Privacy Statement* to inform individuals of the Church’s activities regarding the collection, maintenance, use, and transfer (collectively referred to as “processing”) of personal information.

1. The Church processes general and sensitive personal information about Church members. Personal information is usually collected directly from the Church member (or his or her parent, if a minor). Personal information may also be collected from ecclesiastical leaders or other official sources.
2. Personal information is processed to: (a) create and maintain Church membership, donation, historical, and genealogical records; (b) evaluate eligibility to participate in temple and other ordinances, missionary service, and volunteer and leadership positions; and (c) administer the Church’s religious education program.
3. The provision of personal information is voluntary. When providing personal information about anyone other than himself or herself, the Church member will obtain the other person’s consent and provide that person access to this Data Privacy Statement. This requirement does not apply where parents provide personal information to the Church on behalf of their minor children.
4. To protect the confidentiality of processed personal information, the Church uses technical and organizational

measures appropriate to the sensitivity of the information. Access to confidential or sensitive personal information is restricted to authorized Church officials and personnel. As local law may permit, certain general personal information (names, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses) may be distributed to Church members within the same ward/branch or stake/district.

5. Personal information may be transferred to other Church entities located both in this country and in other countries where less demanding data protection laws may prevail.
6. Upon written request and if local law so requires, individuals may be allowed to access their personal information, to specify that their personal information be corrected or updated, or to oppose processing of their personal information. Ward or branch clerks can provide general personal information to members and can advise members where to send written requests to access other personal information.
7. The Church retains personal information only as long as necessary for the purposes outlined in this statement. Some information is retained indefinitely as part of permanent genealogical, membership, historical, and other records.

Inquiries concerning this Data Privacy Statement or the safeguarding of personal information processed by the Church should be sent by e-mail to DataPrivacyOfficer@ldschurch.org.

Sample—Do Not Display

Notes

Lined writing area with horizontal lines.

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

