Leading a Great Ward Mission
This guide was prepared for the use of missionary leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New England. It should be studied in conjunction with Preach My Gospel (referenced herein as PMG, followed by a page number), and the First Presidency’s letter of February 2005, Missionary Work in the Ward, (referenced as MWW).

This guide is not an official publication of the Church. Copies of this guide and other materials mentioned herein can be obtained from missionaryleaders.org or by emailing missionaryleaders@yahoo.com.
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The Duties of a Ward Mission Leader

1. Lead the Members of Your Ward in Becoming Enthusiastic, Committed Member Missionaries

Be an exemplary member missionary. Teach the members of your ward how to share the gospel with others and inspire them to do so.

Assist the bishop in leading the ward council to develop and implement a ward mission plan. Ensure that members of the ward council hold themselves accountable for achieving the goals they set in this plan.

Help the other ward missionaries to become great member missionaries and have a productive, rewarding, faith-building experience while serving in their assignment.

2. Strengthen the New Converts

Oversee the process in your ward by which new converts become strong, committed, capable Latter-day Saints.

3. Support the Missionaries

Help your full-time missionaries bring new members to the Church.

- Inspire your ward members to find people for the missionaries to teach by your example and through developing and implementing your ward mission plan. This is the most powerful way to support your missionaries.

- Convene a coordination meeting with the missionaries every week. Plan how ward members will help each investigator progress to baptism and grow in faith thereafter.

As a member of your ward council and priesthood executive committee, take the lead in reviewing missionary matters in these meetings, ensuring this time is spent productively.

Assist the bishop and high priests group leader in their responsibility to bring less-active members into full activity through the Five Family Program.

Plan and conduct baptismal services that build the faith of all who attend.
Section 1:
Lead the Members

Becoming an Exemplary Member Missionary

The greatest contribution you can make as ward mission leader is to lead the members of your ward, by precept and example, to become active member missionaries \((\text{PMG p. 218})\). You were not called to be a ward mission administrator, but to be the leader. God’s prophets have called upon members of the Church to share the gospel and have promised great joy, forgiveness of sins and other blessings to all who do. Yet most members are so timid and preoccupied with other concerns that they don’t actively seek to bring others to the Church of Jesus Christ.

There is no administrative solution to this problem. It requires leadership. Members need role models. Visualize your challenge this way: it is as if the members of your ward are walking across a glacier and are huddled along the edge of a deep crevasse, unable to progress because they’re afraid to jump across. The crevasse is member missionary work. If you and other Church leaders try to push the members from the rear, they will dig in and resist. If instead you ask them to step aside, jump across yourself, and then turn around to say with a helping hand, “This is a delightful, faith-building experience! Here’s how to do it. Let me help you,” then many members will follow your lead.
Becoming the Missionary Leader in Your Ward Requires Four Steps:
1) Learn; 2) Do; 3) Teach; and 4) Testify.

Learn

How can you become a successful member missionary? The Ensign article, “Seven Lessons on Sharing the Gospel,” has helped many people who did not know how to share the gospel, or were afraid to do so, to become enthusiastic missionaries. One of its messages is that many members find missionary work to be difficult and daunting because they’ve been following a set of incorrect principles. A summary of that article is on the next page, but we encourage you to read the entire article in the appendix to this guide.

Do

Reading is only a start. The next step is to begin following the seven lessons on sharing the gospel. You’ll learn best when you do it.

Teach

After you have “jumped across the crevasse,” you need to teach these principles to the members of your ward. A few in your ward won’t be interested. But most members of the Church want to share the gospel with others – they just don’t know how. A set of three member missionary Sunday School lessons has been prepared to help you or another ward missionary to teach these seven principles to the members of your ward. These lessons can be found on the website, missionaryleaders.org or by email to missionaryleaders@yahoo.com.

Testify

As you teach the members of your ward how to share the gospel, you can motivate them to do what they’ve been taught by bearing your personal testimony of the joy you’ve experienced as you have done so. Testimonies motivate action. You and your ward missionaries must not hide your exemplary candles under a bushel. After you study the seven principles on the following page, read on the next page a true story of the Cambridge First Ward after a few members let their missionary light shine. The names in this account have been changed.
### Seven Principles of Member Missionary Work

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Though these statements are false, many members’ efforts to share the gospel seem to be guided by them:</th>
<th>The principles in this column should govern the way we try to share the gospel:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We can predict from a person’s behavior, appearance and habits whether he or she will be interested in learning about the gospel.</td>
<td>1. We cannot predict in advance – and in fact we should not pre-judge – whether someone might be prepared to be touched by the Spirit.</td>
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<td>2. We cannot invite people to learn of the gospel until we have “prepared” them. We need to transform our relationship into a deeper friendship before they will be ready to receive our invitation.</td>
<td>2. We needn’t transform people into friends before we can invite. We can invite anyone – friends, neighbors, work associates, classmates and strangers. As long as we invite them in an honest way so that they can feel our love for them, they will not be offended.</td>
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<td>3. People will become interested in the Church if we show how much the Church can help them.</td>
<td>3. Most people have a deeper need to give service than to receive it. When we invite people to serve in the Lord’s work, they often feel the Spirit and see the meaning the gospel can bring to their lives.</td>
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<td>4. We are only successful if the people we invite accept the missionary discussions and get baptized.</td>
<td>4. We succeed when we invite. Our responsibility is to give them a chance to exercise their moral agency.</td>
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<td>5. Because the missionaries are young and inexperienced, I’m not sure I can trust them to teach my friends effectively.</td>
<td>5. We can trust the missionaries. God always has chosen the simple, the weak and the young to be His messengers of truth. He magnifies them through the power of His Spirit.</td>
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<td>6. I want to share the gospel, but I’m busy today. I fully intend to begin sharing it tomorrow.</td>
<td>6. Deadlines help us get important things done. Elder Ballard has promised that if we set a date as a commitment to the Lord that we will find someone for the missionaries to teach, God will bless us to find someone.</td>
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<td>7. Because I am so busy doing all I can to magnify my calling and raise my family, I just don’t have time for missionary work right now. Because of my circumstances the Lord will exempt me from keeping this commandment.</td>
<td>7. If we lack the time and energy to do what God has commanded, and yet we are desperate to do good, God will bless us with miracles. When He trusts that we’ll invite them, He will put people in our paths.</td>
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Notice in this story how one person’s testimony inspired two others. Theirs, in turn, inspired more members – until the spirit of member missionary work had spread throughout the ward. If you and your ward missionaries will do what these members did, you will do more to quicken the pace of member missionary work in your ward than almost anything else you can do.

A True Story

The members of the Cambridge First Ward hadn’t referred anyone to the missionaries in over a year when Sisters Susan Jones and Laura Winn were transferred there a few years ago. Spencer Quinn, a member who was attending a graduate school in New England, felt prompted to invite an acquaintance, Chip, to meet with the sisters. The Spirit was strong as the sisters taught the first lesson. After Chip left, Brother Quinn said, “This feels so wonderful. We’ve had a special spirit in our home all week as we’ve prepared for this.”

Sister Jones responded, “Next Sunday is fast and testimony meeting. Would you bear your testimony about how this has made you feel? I think it would really help the other members.”

The next Sunday Brother Quinn offered his testimony. “Two weeks ago I was sitting here in sacrament meeting when I got this feeling that I should call one of my classmates, Chip, to ask if he’d like to learn about the Church. This impression was such a surprise because I only know Chip casually. But I called and said, ‘As you may know, I’m a member of the Mormon Church. It always has meant a lot to me. I just had this feeling that I should call you to see if, before too much time passes this semester, we could invite you to our home so we could explain a bit about what we believe.’

“To my surprise, Chip said he knew I was a Mormon and had wanted to learn about the Church for years. He hadn’t asked me because he was embarrassed. I then told him about these great sister missionaries in our ward and how they have this set of lessons designed to introduce people to the basics of our beliefs – and he signed up for them.

“What I wanted to bear my testimony about is the Spirit that has come into our home since we’ve been teaching Chip with Sisters Jones and Winn. There is no peace in the world like the peace the gospel brings when it is taught by the Spirit of God in your home. I am so grateful for this opportunity the Lord has given us and wanted to share this with you.”

Two weeks later Brother Quinn was eating lunch on the library steps at school when an LDS classmate, Gary Muir, joined him.
“Spence,” Gary began, “do you remember when you bore your testimony about studying with Chip and the missionaries? As you were speaking I said to myself, ‘If Spence can do that, I can too.’ So this morning I asked this guy in my section if he’d come to our home to learn about the Church and he said, ‘Yes!’ I just had this feeling about him and then I thought of how you had invited Chip. So, thanks for the inspiration!”

Later that week, another LDS student, Richard Slovacek, invited one of his classmates to hear the missionary discussions and he accepted.

After teaching the first lesson in their homes, Sister Jones asked Brothers Muir and Slovacek, “In the next testimony meeting, could you bear your testimony about what it was like to ask your friend to study the gospel – and how it has affected your family? I think a lot of members want to invite people, but are afraid. You can help.”

Brothers Muir and Slovacek both bore their testimonies during the next fast and testimony meeting. In the following weeks, several other members of the ward found people for Sisters Jones and Winn to teach. In December’s testimony meeting, nearly every testimony was about an experience in sharing the gospel. By the time Sister Jones was transferred three months later, members of the Cambridge First Ward had found 35 people for the missionaries to teach and 14 people had been baptized.
Creating & Using a Plan to Lead Your Ward’s Missionary Efforts

Your ward mission plan can be one of your most valuable tools in becoming an effective leader of your ward’s missionary efforts. The ward mission plan involves all the leaders and members in the ward in a united effort to share the gospel, and to grow and strengthen the ward through missionary work and reactivation *(MWW; PMG p.220)*.

A great ward mission plan is simple and effective. Simplicity and effectiveness come from each organization in the ward committing to do one or two specific things repeatedly and consistently. A good ward mission plan can be written on a half page, like the one on the next page.
The Waltham Ward Mission Plan (a typical example)

Our Vision For The Waltham Ward: In five years we want two wards in Waltham, not one. Each ward will have more temple-worthy members than our present ward does today.

This Year’s Goals: This year we will grow Sacrament Meeting attendance from 136 to 160; and we will find 48 people for the missionaries to teach.

Our Tactics:

1. To prepare ourselves spiritually to be effective missionaries, we’ll ask each family in the ward to study Preach My Gospel for Family Home Evening each week.
2. Relief Society will invite a non-member friend to lead a class at each Enrichment.
3. The Primary will ask the family of each child being baptized to have the missionaries deliver invitations to the families of several of the child’s friends to attend the service.
4. The bishop will invite all adults and youth, ten people at a time, to attend a three-week class on how to share the gospel.
5. The missionaries will be home teachers to five less-active families at all times, as assigned by the bishop. We will treat them as investigators, using the Progress Report.
6. The high priests will ensure that each new convert visits the temple to perform baptisms for ancestors within two months of their baptism.
7. The YM/YW advisers will invite a non-member friend each month to lead an activity.
8. The Elders Quorum will hold four firesides on how to be good husbands and fathers, to which non-member friends will be invited.
9. A member of the bishopric, of each priesthood and auxiliary presidency, and the missionaries will confer after meetings each Sunday to list those members who ought to have attended Church, but did not. We will contact each of them that day to say that they were missed, to express concern for their well-being and to offer to help them attend Church next Sunday.

As you’ll read in the letter from the First Presidency in the appendix, creating and implementing a ward mission plan is not an option. It is the central tool you should use in organizing and leading your ward mission (PMG ch.13). Plans like the one above consist of three sections. You can visualize these as a pyramid, as shown on the facing page. The foundation of each plan is a long-term vision for the growth and strengthening of your ward (Proverbs 29:18). The foundation also defines specific yearly missionary goals that ward council members decide they will achieve in order to progress towards that vision. It includes the ward council members’ commitment to lead by example. Without a foundation of these elements – vision, goals and commitment – the plan will be a hollow administrative exercise. This foundation should be set after ward council members have fasted and prayed together about this commitment (Alma 6:6). The goals must be those the Lord would have the ward achieve.
The second section of the plan consists of building blocks, such as those listed as items 1-9 in the sample plan above. Each priesthood and auxiliary organization in the ward should contribute a building block. To be simple and effective, building blocks should have the characteristics noted below. As your ward council members propose building blocks they might contribute as their part of your plan, you should help them shape their ideas so they fit the pattern of “simple and effective.”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Complicated, Ineffective Building Blocks</th>
<th>Characteristics of Simple, Effective Building Blocks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Creating new programs and events is more difficult, though new traditions sometimes are important.</td>
<td>It is simplest to transform things we are already doing into missionary opportunities.</td>
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<td>The activities that comprise the building blocks happen once, or sporadically.</td>
<td>Activities that comprise the building blocks occur regularly and repeatedly so that they become habitual.</td>
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<td>Responsibility is diffused and vague.</td>
<td>Each quorum, auxiliary or person involved in implementing the plan has one or two specific things to do.</td>
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Some will have an instinct for devising simple, effective building blocks for the ward mission plan. Others may not. To help, we have distilled from ward mission plans across New England, lots of proven ideas for simple and effective building blocks that the leaders of each organization might consider adapting for your ward. These include building blocks for individual families that want to do their part. These can be obtained from missionaryleaders.org or by request to missionaryleaders@yahoo.com. You can print and distribute copies as needed to help your ward’s leaders define initiatives that are appropriate for their organizations.

A principle on page 4 is that many who are living in prosperous circumstances (Alma 32:4-14) have little interest in offers that the church will make them happier and better. Despite not wanting help with their lives, however, many of these feel a need to help others. When we invite them to work with us as we serve in the church, they can feel the Spirit as they serve just as we do. Many then realize that despite the comforts of their lives, something important has been missing – and they become interested in the church. Commitments to involve friends of other faiths to serve with us can be very effective building blocks. Specific ideas for how to do this can be found at missionaryleaders.org.

The third aspect of a great ward mission plan is the capstone depicted on the pyramid above: Holding yourselves accountable for implementing your plan and achieving your goals. The plan is your tool for leading the missionary effort. Don’t just write it on a sheet of paper and then store it somewhere in the bishop’s office for safekeeping. Rather, ward council members should use the process described here to hold yourselves accountable for achieving the goals you’ve set. This should be done monthly, in a ward council meeting. Each ward should hold at least one ward council meeting monthly. If your bishop chooses to hold one meeting, then help him manage it so that 20-30 minutes can be devoted to evaluating the progress toward the ward mission plan goals. Announcements and calendaring can be handled by email and photocopying. The wards and stakes that have been most successful in inspiring members to be better missionaries often hold two ward council meetings monthly. One of these focuses exclusively on the ward mission plan.
To help the bishop lead this discussion, you should create a chart like the one above or you may download a blank chart template from missionaryleaders.org. It divides the annual goals into 12 monthly steps. This example is for the Waltham Ward, whose goal is to grow sacrament meeting attendance from 136 in December to 160 by the next December (an increase of 24). Each month two additional people must start attending in order to keep on pace to achieve the annual goal. Their other goal is to find 48 people for the missionaries to teach. So, ward members need to have found four people by the end of January; eight by the end of February, 24 by the end of June and so on.

You should update the chart monthly and tape it to the wall during coordination and ward council meetings so you can all visualize your progress and hold yourselves accountable for doing what you each said you’d do. If you’re falling behind, you need to help your bishop lead a discussion about what else you as ward leaders can do to get back on track. In the Waltham Ward’s example above, they’re doing a good job.

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<th>Waltham Ward’s Missionary Goals</th>
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<td><strong>Sacrament Meeting Attendance</strong></td>
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progressing toward their goal for growing sacrament meeting attendance; to be on pace for achieving the goal of 160 by year end, they need to be at 146 by the end of May – and they’re at 144. Whatever they’re doing, it’s working. But they’re falling behind in finding people for the missionaries to teach. They need to brainstorm about what else they can do to inspire the members.

You may use a chart such as the one above or find a better way to return and report. You need to devise and vigilantly follow a method such as this. It is crucial that you and your bishop are so serious about your vision and your goals that you never dismiss falling short. Falling behind the pace required to achieve your goals should set off alarms in ward council meeting, triggering discussion about what else you need to do to get back on track. If you don’t take your goals seriously, your vision for growing and strengthening your ward will never be realized. The enclosed DVD, “The Mission of the Wilmington Ward,” can help you further visualize how to use your mission plan to lead your ward’s missionary effort.

As ward council members are released and new ones are called, you should meet with the new leaders to help them understand the role their organization has committed to play in the ward mission plan. This is important because in most wards the composition of the ward council changes significantly every year.

Your missionary high councilor should give you a copy of your ward’s present mission plan, if one exists, during your training. After reading this, evaluate your plan:

- Is it built on a foundation of vision, goals and commitment?
- Has each priesthood and auxiliary organization in your ward contributed a building block? And are these simple and effective in creating opportunities for members to invite people to learn of the gospel?
- Are the ward council members taking their vision and goals seriously? And are they returning and reporting to themselves, holding themselves accountable to achieve the goals they set?

If your ward’s present mission plan doesn’t yet meet this standard, discuss with your missionary high councilor and with your bishop when and how to lead your ward council to create and begin implementing a great ward mission plan.
Helping Your Ward Missionaries Succeed & Grow

Your third leadership responsibility is to structure the work of your ward missionaries so that they each grow in their faith, their capabilities as leaders and teachers, and their excitement for service as missionaries (PMG p.219).

Start by asking each ward missionary to dedicate a specific time each week to missionary work. Just as YM/YW advisers set aside every Tuesday or Wednesday evening to serve in their calling, ward missionaries should dedicate a regular time each week – several hours – during which they’ll magnify their responsibility.

Dedicating a time to serve helps your ward missionaries in many ways. First, it puts them in a rhythm. Service that is regularly scheduled doesn’t usually get postponed. For example, primary teachers don’t put off teaching Primary to a more convenient time. It is scheduled every Sunday. The schedule helps them to magnify their calling. Committing to a regular time of service automatically schedules ward missionaries to make the weekly home teaching visits that are so crucial for keeping new members active, for example (see more on this below). A second benefit is that the full-time missionaries know when members will be available to help them teach investigators.

You can do four specific things to help your ward missionaries, as follows:

Give Each Ward Missionary Specific Responsibilities

Be sure that each ward missionary has a tangible weekly duty and a responsibility for a specific building block in your ward mission plan. Each should commit to serve at a regular time each week. This helps them to serve as weekly home or visiting teachers to new members and to accompany the missionaries as they teach. In particular, one ward missionary should be responsible for the public affairs building block in the mission plan. If your ward has a public affairs specialist, that person should be called as a ward missionary. When possible, the Sunday School president should assign a ward missionary to teach the Gospel Principles class. Another should teach your Member Missionary class. They need these chances to grow more than you do. Your mindset should be to structure their work so that at the end of each week, your ward missionaries can put their hands on their hips and say, “I accomplished something important!” Ward missionaries should attend your weekly missionary coordination meetings. This is where you’ll be reviewing in detail your progress towards your goals in the ward mission plan.

Inspire & Teach How to Be a Member Missionary by Example

Teach them how to share the gospel, using the same materials you have studied. Assign one of your ward missionaries to teach the Member Missionary Sunday School class. Invite all ward missionaries to lift the bushel off of their exemplary candles by bearing
frequent testimony about how they feel and how they’re growing as they share the gospel with others, as described above.

**Train Them How to Help the Missionaries Teach**

Set aside a specific time each week to help the full-time missionaries know when members will be available to help them teach investigators. Ward missionaries should study thoroughly the five lessons in Chapter 3 of *Preach My Gospel*. They should also master Chapter 11, “How Do I Help People Make and Keep Commitments?” Page 160 will help them see that the primary role that members should play is to let the missionaries teach and to support their teaching with testimony. Mastering this material will enable them to support the full-time missionaries, who must be guided by the Spirit as they teach.

The case study “Committing to Commitments in the Augusta Maine Mission,” available on missionaryleaders.org or by email to missionaryleaders@yahoo.com, provides valuable additional training. It shows that when investigators don’t follow through on their commitments to read the Book of Mormon, pray and attend church, we often conclude that they didn’t *want* to keep the commitments. Often they don’t do them because they don’t know *how* to do these things. This case study can help you support the full-time missionaries in their responsibility to guide their investigators to make and keep commitments that will lead to a deep testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Direct Them in Strengthening New Members**

New converts experience a shock after baptism, going suddenly from daily visits with the missionaries to (at best) monthly visits from home teachers. To help with this transition, ward missionaries should be assigned as the home and visiting teachers to new converts for their first four months after baptism. They should visit each new convert weekly, generally during the block of time they have set aside during the week for this service. Immediately after baptism they should help new converts begin their family history research so that they can go to the temple to be baptized for ancestors within 1-3 months of baptism. They should (either alone or with the full-time missionaries) teach the five lessons again (*PMG ch.3*). They should teach the new members how to magnify their callings in the Church. The next section of this guide shows in more detail how you can help transform new converts into capable, committed Latter-day Saints.
Interview each of your ward missionaries once a month, so they can report to you on their stewardship over their specific responsibilities in the ward mission and its plan.

Service as a ward missionary has been a frustrating experience for many. This is often because ward mission leaders did not give them specific, meaningful, challenging responsibilities to accomplish. They were told to share the gospel and help the missionaries, but that’s about all the direction they were given. They didn’t know what they were supposed to do, when they should do it or whether they were succeeding or failing in their callings. As a result, most bishops have hesitated to call members to serve as ward missionaries because most of them have unproductively languished in the assignment.

In many wards there are no ward missionaries, aside from the ward mission leader himself. If this is the case in your ward, don’t immediately ask your bishop for ward missionaries. First, define a structure in which these missionaries will work. Define a set of tangible, specific, meaningful responsibilities that will be given to each person. Then ask your bishop to call ward missionaries to fulfill these responsibilities. If you do the things recommended in this section so that your ward missionaries are productive and are growing in their callings, your bishop will be eager to call more people to serve with you in the ward mission.
Becoming a Great Ward Mission Leader: Review 1

At this point in your learning how to become a great ward mission leader, we invite you to stop. Within the next few days – on an evening or a Sunday – dedicate two hours to complete the following assignment in a quiet place. You are very busy, but if you will do this assignment, it will save you countless hours in your service as your ward’s missionary leader – and it will help you to be a much more effective leader. Please don’t exempt yourself. Do these seven things:

1. Kneel and pray aloud. Tell your Heavenly Father that you’ve been called to be a ward mission leader, not a mission administrator; and ask Him to help you understand and magnify your calling. Inform Him that you’re going to read pp. 1-15 again, as well as the Appendices, “Missionary Work in the Ward” and “Seven Lessons on Sharing the Gospel.” Ask for His help so that as you read, the Holy Ghost will help you to understand what you must do in order to magnify your calling and please Him with your service.

2. Read again the material in this guide to this point.

3. Write a two-paragraph answer to each of these three questions:
   a. What specific things must I begin doing in my life so that I can be an effective, exemplary leader of my ward’s missionary efforts?
   b. What changes do we need to make in our ward mission plan, and in the way we use our plan, so that all of the leaders and members in the ward become engaged in a united effort to share the gospel and to grow and strengthen the ward through missionary work and reactivation?
   c. What must I do to help our ward missionaries grow and succeed as they serve with me? How can we, as a committed band of member missionaries, inspire our ward members to enthusiastically share the gospel?

4. Kneel again in verbal prayer. Explain to our Heavenly Father what you have written. Tell Him that you’re now going to review and revise these paragraphs, and ask that the Holy Ghost might inspire you to understand even more deeply what you must do, and how to do it, so that you can become a great ward mission leader.

5. Review what you have written and revise these paragraphs as the Spirit directs you.

6. Kneel again to pray aloud a third time. Make a commitment to God that you are going to do the things that you’ve written. Ask Him to bless and magnify you, so that you truly can be the ward mission leader that He wants you to be – to become a tool in His hands to help many, many people come into His Kingdom during your time of service. Then listen as He answers you, through the Holy Ghost.

7. In your next training meeting with your missionary high councilor, and in your next meeting with your bishop, give them copies of what you have written so that they can better support you.
Section 2:
Strengthen the New Converts

Transforming Converts into Committed Latter-day Saints

Your first area of responsibility, as discussed above, is to inspire the members of your ward to become enthusiastic member missionaries. Your second area of responsibility is to strengthen the new converts in your ward so that they become committed, capable Latter-day Saints (PMG p.215). In New England the proportion of people baptized who are still actively attending Church five years later historically has been less than 20%. Helping our converts become strong, faithful, life-long members is urgent. They are children of our Heavenly Father.

This section of this guide summarizes a study, “How to Help our New Members Become Strong, Committed Latter-day Saints,” which the presidents of the stakes in New England prepared to examine why so many new members fall away from the Church and how to solve this problem. Wards that do the simple things recommended in this study have shown that the proportion of their new converts who remain active is significantly greater than has been the case in our past. Copies of this study can be obtained on missionaryleaders.org or by email to missionaryleaders@yahoo.com.
President Hinckley has reminded us that new members need friends, responsibility and nourishment in the good word of God (PMG p.215-216; Moroni 6:4). However, providing these things after baptism alone typically isn’t sufficient to transform our new members into strong, life-long Latter-day Saints. We need to do a better job before baptism preparing them to receive these things. Then we need to provide them.

The three sections below explain how we should better prepare investigators so that they: 1) Have supportive friends at home; 2) Are ready to accept responsibility after baptism; and 3) Know how to be nourished by the Spirit. The final section discusses how to do a better job providing these things after baptism.

**Better Preparation I: Friends at Home**

Home is where key decisions to remain worthy and active are made – like continuing to obey the word of wisdom and waking up to get to church. It is not surprising, therefore, that when new converts are baptized where there are other active members (family, roommates and friends) in their living situation, the probability that they will remain active is 85%. If the new members are the only people in their living environment who are committed to living the gospel, the probability that they will remain active is only 8%.

Whenever the missionaries list an investigator on their progress report in your coordination meeting who is being taught singly (meaning that there are no committed members of the Church in their living situation and no friends or family are being taught with that investigator) it should be the trigger of a discussion about what the ward members can do to help the missionaries begin teaching family members and friends of that investigator. The purpose of this isn’t just to teach and baptize more people. It is a critical element of the formula for keeping that investigator strong and committed to the Church after baptism.

**Better Preparation II: Prepared to Accept Responsibility**

If investigators accept responsibility to make and keep personal commitments while studying with the missionaries, they will be better prepared to accept a Church calling. Each time investigators agree to make a commitment, they are exercising faith. When they
keep that commitment, they are repenting. As they make and keep commitments, therefore, they repeat cycles of faith and repentance. Baptism is an ordinance in which they make a major commitment to accept our Savior; to keep His commandments; and to serve others (Mosiah 18:8-11) in the Church. At the beginning of each lesson, therefore, missionaries should spend significant time reviewing the investigator's experience in keeping the commitments made in the last lesson. After they teach the lesson, missionaries need to leave sufficient time to invite them to accept the next commitments and teach them how to keep them (PMG ch.11). Your mission president has the primary responsibility for teaching these principles to the missionaries. You need to support that teaching as you and your ward missionaries work with the full-time missionaries, because making and keeping commitments is crucial preparation for their remaining active in the Church after baptism.

In particular, we must do a better job teaching investigators how to get to church and keep the Sabbath day holy on their own. When investigators respond to the missionaries' invitation to attend church by saying "I don't have a car," the missionaries should ask, "Who do you know who could bring you to church?" and explore those possibilities thoroughly. If there truly is no one, the missionaries should explore other means such as public transit, bicycles and walking. Only as a very last resort, after all other avenues have been explored, should the missionaries offer that members will pick them up. This is because investigators need to learn to take responsibility to get themselves to church as a prelude to faithfully magnifying other responsibilities as a member.

**Better Preparation III: Taught How to be Nourished**

Missionaries should not just ask their investigators to read the Book of Mormon and to pray. They must teach them how to do it – because it should not be read in the way that we are taught to read novels and textbooks. Following the pattern in Preach My Gospel (pp. 107-108), they should organize their lessons around questions to which investigators want answers and give reading assignments in the Book of Mormon that contain those answers. They should ask investigators to write answers to those questions in ways that cause them to ponder and pray deeply about what they are reading. Similarly, they need to carefully teach investigators how to offer effective personal, private prayers because in the religions in which most investigators were raised, they learned to recite rote prayers or rarely prayed at all.

There is a transformation process by which converts from a wide range of backgrounds can become strong, committed and capable Latter-day Saints. The process begins before baptism and continues afterward. With ward members’ guidance through this process, a much larger portion of new converts will remain faithful.
Again, your mission president has responsibility to teach these principles to the missionaries. Your responsibility is to support that teaching. These are explained more thoroughly in the working paper, “How to Help our New Members Become Strong, Committed Latter-day Saints,” and in the case study, “Committing to Commitments,” both of which can be obtained on missionaryleaders.org or by email to missionaryleaders@yahoo.com.
Three Things That Friends, Responsibility & Nourishment Provide

The sections above discussed preparing investigators with friends at home, an ability and willingness to accept responsibility, and an understanding of how to be nourished by the Spirit as they pray and study the good word of God. This section describes how you can provide friends, responsibility and nourishment after baptism. The table below lists three simple but powerful things you should do – each of which will provide each new member with these three necessities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things You Should Do</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Nourishment in the Good Word of God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Formulate an ideal calling for each new member that has the five characteristics listed on the next page 1-2 weeks before baptism. Recommend this to your bishop and if inspired to do so, he should extend this calling at the time of baptism.</td>
<td>In an ideal calling, new members always serve with another person. Working together forges much deeper friendships than other means of fellowship.</td>
<td>Receiving a calling at the time of baptism helps each new member feel important and needed in the ward.</td>
<td>In an ideal calling, the new member will learn the gospel while serving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Take each new member to the temple to be baptized for ancestors, if possible, within 1-2 months of baptism.</td>
<td>Attend temple with friends in the ward. Feel the love and protection of ancestors whose temple work the convert is doing.</td>
<td>Baptisms for deceased family members is a responsibility whose importance every new member can feel.</td>
<td>Attending the temple gives new members a near-term spiritual goal to prepare for. They will feel the Spirit in the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ask ward missionaries to set aside 1 or 2 consistent times during the week when they'll serve. Assign them as home/visiting teachers to new members during the first 3-4 months after baptism. They should visit them weekly during that set time.</td>
<td>Weekly visits from ward missionary home teachers will foster friendship, and ease the transition from daily visits by the missionaries.</td>
<td>During weekly visits the ward missionaries can help converts prepare family names for temple baptism; and teach them how to magnify the calling the bishop gave them.</td>
<td>Ward missionaries can teach the five new member lessons during these weekly visits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here’s more detail on why and how you can help your bishop in giving callings to new converts. The bishop is busy and won’t know the convert as well as you. You can help by carefully formulating and proposing this calling. The ideal calling for new members should have these five characteristics:

- Helps them feel needed and important to the ward;
- Requires them to attend church in order to fulfill the calling;
- Simplifies responsibilities: what to do and how to do it are straightforward, not ambiguous;
- Provides friendship: new member serves with another person, not alone; and
- Requires them to learn the gospel more deeply as they serve.

You should recommend to your bishop a responsibility for each convert a week before the convert’s baptism. If inspired to do so, the bishop should then extend this calling at the time of baptism. This is crucial, because most converts who become inactive begin falling away within the first few weeks of membership. Your new members need to feel important and needed in your ward from the very beginning.

Not every responsibility is a good one for new converts. The table on the opposite page shows how you can shape or create responsibilities that have each of the five characteristics of an ideal calling. For example, calling a new member to be the Gospel Principles teacher has three of the characteristics, but it’s complicated and he or she would serve alone. A calling as an assistant teacher, however, adds the other two characteristics. He or she would serve with another person. The main teacher could give simple assignments, such as to teach a specific principle in five minutes and then gradually give him or her more time in the lesson. This is a great responsibility for a new member. At the other extreme, as shown on the last row of the table, calling a new member to serve as a member of the ward Activities Committee is a bad idea.

Because many ideal callings entail serving as an assistant teacher, you should counsel with the presidents of those organizations to determine which of their teachers would be best at nurturing the new convert. This will ensure that each has a rewarding experience while serving.
Possible Callings for New Members

Note: Those callings that are *not* ideal are written in regular type. Those that have been shaped to have the characteristics of an ideal calling for new members are written in **boldface**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calling</th>
<th>Feel Needed &amp; Important</th>
<th>Requires Sunday Attendance</th>
<th>Straightforward &amp; Structured</th>
<th>Serving with Another</th>
<th>Learn the Gospel While Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gospel Principles Class Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Gospel Principles Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 3rd Hour Primary Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Primary Teacher, 3rd Hour</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Set up chairs in classrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up chairs in classrooms with another person</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up chairs in classrooms with another person and stock each teaching station with materials from media center that each teacher needs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chorister for Sacrament Mtg., R.S. or Priesthood</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorister; call up a different member each week to find out his or her favorite hymn and explain why in remarks just before singing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorister; ask a different member each week for his or her favorite hymn and explain why in remarks just before singing; read relevant scriptures and include those scriptures in the written program</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ward Missionary (as typically configured)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Missionary assigned as companion to another ward missionary, with responsibility to serve at a regular time each week helping to teach investigators and home teaching new members – teaching new member lessons, helping them get to the temple, sitting with them at church, etc.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sacrament Meeting Door Greeter</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Activity Committee Member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measurement

We have decided in New England that remaining worthy to attend the temple is our goal for all members, new and old. Each quarter your bishop will be asked to report to the missionary high councilor the following statistics:

Of those people baptized in the past 24 months,

- How many are known to the bishop to be worthy of a limited use or full temple recommend?
- How many are regularly attending church, but are not temple-worthy?
- How many rarely or never attend church?
Section 3:
Support the Missionaries

Becoming a Great Ward Mission Administrator

Although we emphasized in Section 1 that you were called to be a ward mission leader, ward mission leaders must shoulder important administrative responsibilities as well. This section reviews four of these responsibilities, as follows:

- Hold productive, motivating weekly missionary coordination meetings;
- Participate effectively in Ward Council and Priesthood Executive Committee;
- Assist the bishop and high priests group leader in their responsibility to bring less-active members into full activity through the Five Family Program; and
- Organize baptismal services that build the faith of all who attend.
Holding Effective Weekly Coordination Meetings

*Preach My Gospel* and the First Presidency’s letter, “Missionary Work in the Ward” both emphasize the importance of a weekly missionary coordination meeting. You, your ward missionaries, all full-time missionaries and counselors in the High Priests, Relief Society and Elders Quorum presidencies attend this meeting. Without exception, the wards whose members are actively fulfilling their roles in their ward mission plan and in finding people for the missionaries to teach are wards where counselors from these three presidencies attend coordination meeting. In wards where these counselors don’t attend, missionary work typically is viewed as the isolated responsibility of the missionaries and ward mission leader.

Though it seems convenient to hold this meeting before or after Sunday meetings, we urge you to find a better time because when families are waiting in the car, it is hard to have productive discussions on the topics of importance listed below. You should try to hold this meeting before PEC or ward council are held. If these meetings are held on Sundays, hold your coordination meeting on Saturday. This will help you collect the information and define the issues to present in PEC and ward council.

After you follow up on assignments made in the last meeting, your agenda should cover the following issues:

1. **Review Progressing Investigators:**
   - Are members assigned to be with the missionaries as they teach investigators? How can the members be more helpful?
   - Are investigators being taught how to keep commitments to keep the Sabbath day holy, to read the Book of Mormon and to pray?
   - If any progressing investigators are being taught singly, how can the members help the missionaries begin teaching friends or family members? Remember, this is a very important element of your plan to keep every new member active.
   - Be sure to have investigators who attend sacrament meeting sit near the front and center of the chapel. This minimizes the distraction they would experience in the back of the chapel.

Each Coordination Meeting Should Review:
- Investigators
- New Members
- Ward Plan
- Personal Missionary Experiences
2. Review the Progress of New Members; Report from Visiting Ward Missionaries:

- Progressing towards the temple to be baptized for family members within 1-3 months of baptism?
- Magnifying a calling that has been custom-tailored?
- Being taught the five new member lessons weekly?
- Has friends at home who support his or her efforts to live the gospel?
- Helping to teach the gospel to friends or family who have been referred to the missionaries?

3. Detailed Review of Ward Mission Plan:

- Aside from your setting a personal member missionary example, the most important thing you can do for the success of your ward mission is for you and those who attend the missionary coordination meeting to take seriously the goals you’ve set for growing and strengthening your ward. If you are desperately serious about growing sacrament meeting attendance and if you show in the chart on page 11 that you are falling short of your goal, those in the meeting will explore what else needs to be done to get more occasionally active and less-active members, and more investigators, to begin attending church faithfully. If the pace of member referrals isn't keeping pace with your goals, it will trigger a similar discussion exploring what might be done to inspire more ward members to find people for the missionaries to teach.

4. Testimony of an Inspiring Experience in Sharing the Gospel:

- As a volunteer or by assignment, you or another member attending the meeting should close by recounting an inspiring experience in sharing the gospel. It is important that this be done, because it can transform a meeting of administrative character into one where the Spirit testifies to each person’s heart of the sacred purpose of missionary work.
Contributing to Ward Council & Priesthood Executive Committee Meetings

You are a member of your ward’s priesthood executive committee and ward council. Time in these meetings should be spent reviewing progressing investigators and the less-active families the missionaries home teach. Missionaries typically attend to report on progressing investigators and because attending these meetings is valuable training for when they become ward leaders after their missions. The intent is that the missionaries should attend these meetings; however, at the bishop’s discretion, missionaries may be invited not to attend when matters that he deems to be confidential are being discussed (PMG p.215).

These meetings are the principal forums during which the bishop works with ward leaders to lead the ward in all of its dimensions. The time (15-30 minutes) that is allocated to discussions of the missionary effort is a precious stewardship. Manage it carefully so that not a minute is wasted (MWW).

Using the missionary time in this meeting to maximum effect requires making recommendations and giving the information that ward leaders need to help you and the missionaries with your investigators. Unless you guide them, some missionaries will know little beyond an investigator’s name when they present the progress report. The missionaries should provide rich information about the investigators – about other family members and friends, hobbies, educational background and where he or she is employed. These pieces of information are “hooks” that ward leaders can use to link the investigators (and their families and friends) with members that share things in common. It can also help ward leaders give investigators opportunities to begin serving in the ward before baptism.

If at all possible, ask the missionaries to take digital photos of their progressing investigators. You can then project them onto a wall or print and distribute these for ward council members when you pass out copies of the progress report. This greatly helps ward leaders put names with faces and to visualize that these are real people who really merit their attention and nurturing.

In one ward council each month you should take about 20 minutes to help the ward leaders return and report to themselves as they implement their building blocks of the ward mission plan to achieve the goals they set. Too many ward leaders pick goals as an
administrative exercise and never think about them again. Don’t let this happen. Show them your chart (such as the sample on page 11), and inspire the council members to take seriously the goals they’ve set. If they’re committed to making this progress, they will actively discuss what else they can do to keep on pace. If your ward council becomes energized about their missionary and reactivation efforts, it will transform the spirit of your ward. Your ward mission plan has great potential if you take it seriously.

President Hinckley promised,

“If you will inspire the members of our wards to invite people into their homes for the missionaries to teach, the Spirit of the Lord will come into their hearts; and many of the other problems in our homes and our wards will resolve themselves.”

*Training Meeting of the Seventy in Salt Lake City, April 4, 2002.*
Implementing the Five Family Program

In August 2006, Elder Earl C. Tingey, senior president of the Quorums of the Seventy, asked each of the stakes in the East and Northeast areas of North America to institute a practice wherein bishops and high priest group leaders (who have responsibility for prospective elders) assign the full-time missionaries to regularly visit five less-active families – families who, in their judgment, have strong potential to become active and refer others to the missionaries. Priesthood quorums may count these visits as home teaching visits.

The missionaries should befriend these families. As soon as it seems appropriate, the missionaries should ask permission to begin teaching the missionary lessons to them again. The missionaries should then treat these families as they would any investigator, including reporting their progress during PEC or ward council. They should use the same progress report forms.

If a family fails to progress, the bishop and the missionaries can agree to take them off their list of five, making a careful record in the area book about what was done. Likewise, if the family becomes fully active, the ward missionaries should begin weekly visits as their home teachers, treating them in every way as if they were new converts.

When a family moves off the list, either because they failed to progress or became active again, the bishop should assign another less-active family to the missionaries, so that missionaries are always assigned to visit five less-active families. We have found that doing this work benefits the missionary effort significantly – not just through reactivation, but through referrals from these families.
Organizing Effective, Inspiring Baptismal Services

There are three reasons why we hold a baptismal service instead of conducting the ordinance privately: 1) To provide a deep spiritual experience that will confirm in the heart of the new converts that they have made the right choice (PMG p.208); 2) To help their friends and family who are attending to feel the Spirit and desire to know more (PMG p. 209); and 3) To instill in ward members’ hearts a resolve to continue nurturing these converts and to enthusiastically find more people for the missionaries to teach.

The format we propose below follows the guidelines in Preach My Gospel. It also synthesizes ideas from many New England wards in order to address these three purposes. You should follow the inspiration of the Spirit as you plan baptismal services, but we hope these guidelines will prove useful. We’ll use the pronouns “she” and “her” in the following text to refer to both male and female converts.

Baptismal Service Checklist

☑ Arrange the service enough in advance that you can have a printed program. Some wards present a framed copy of the program to the new member as a keepsake.

☑ Be sure that adequate notice of the service is given to members, and especially to friends and family of the convert. It is very important that they come.

☑ Secure clean baptismal clothing of the right size.

☑ The font typically takes two hours to fill with warm water – so start this with plenty of time to spare. Be sure the convert arrives early, in order to dress in baptismal clothing and start the service on time.

☑ The baptizer should rehearse with the convert in a class room how to hold each other’s wrists and to hold the nose. The convert should be told to sit down onto his or her heels, rather than falling back straight.

☑ Tell the convert to bring an extra set of underwear and a towel. It’s a good idea to suggest to women that they wear an extra layer of underclothing such as a white t-shirt when they are baptized, so that when they emerge from the water with wet clothing there are no concerns about immodesty.
The service needs to be planned and announced with as much advance notice as possible so that many friends, family and ward members can attend. You or a member of the bishopric should conduct the service. After a hymn and invocation, a speaker can describe the restoration of the gospel and the meaning of baptism into the Church of Jesus Christ. Such remarks typically have been targeted at the convert. They should also be targeted to the friends and family members of the convert, so that they will understand she is making important covenants, and be prepared and committed to support her. The talk should end with a heart-felt testimony that invites the Spirit. This can be followed by a musical number, where possible. The baptism can then be performed, witnessed by two members who hold at least the office of priest.

For the period while you’re waiting for the new member to dress, you’ll need to plan something that will bring the Spirit even more strongly into the service. Some wards have a missionary teach a short version of a missionary lesson. Other wards ask the member(s) who helped the missionaries teach the new convert to speak to the group. They can help the members know her better and testify of the spirit they felt as they participated in her discovery of the truth.

After the new convert rejoins the meeting, she should be invited to bear testimony of what she has learned and felt while investigating the gospel and her spiritual aspirations as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ in the months and years ahead. Most converts can’t do this spontaneously, so those who’ve been teaching them will need to help them prepare this talk. If the convert isn’t comfortable bearing this testimony, you can ask a member to speak of the gift of the Holy Ghost. A good service should last no longer than 45 minutes, so be sure your speakers talk briefly, focusing on testimony. You can then end the meeting with a hymn and prayer. Refreshments may be served.

Logistical problems can drive the Spirit away from a baptismal service. The ward missionary you assign to be responsible for baptismal services should use the checklist on the previous page to be sure that all the details are taken care of before every baptismal service.
Becoming a Great Ward Mission Leader: Review 2 & 3

Now that you’ve read the entire guide, Leading a Great Ward Mission, we invite you to pause again to reflect on what you’ve learned and what you’re going to do with what you’ve learned. As you did with your assignment on page 16, we ask you again to dedicate two hours within the next few days to complete the following assignment. Doing this assignment will save you countless hours in your service as your ward’s missionary leader. It will help you to be a much more effective leader.

1. Kneel and pray aloud. Ask Heavenly Father to help you understand the material in the sections of this guide so that you can magnify your calling. Inform Him that you’re going to read pp. 17 - 32 again, as well as the working paper, “How to Help our New Members Become Strong, Committed Latter-day Saints.” Ask for His help so that as you read, the Holy Ghost will help you to understand what you must do in order to magnify your calling and please Him with your service.

2. Read again the material in this guide to this point, as well as the working paper, if possible, which you can download from missionaryleaders.org or obtain by emailing missionaryleaders@yahoo.com.

3. Write a two-paragraph answer to each of these three questions:
   a. What do we need to do in our ward in order to transform more of our new members into faithful, committed, capable Latter-day Saints?
   b. Of the things I’ve identified in (a) that need to be done, which can I do myself, and which tasks need to be done by others in the ward? How am I going to help them understand what they need to do and why they need to do it?
   c. What are the things I need to do every week and month, in order to magnify the administrative part of my calling? What changes do I need to make in my life to ensure that I do these things dependably and in a manner that will please God?

4. Kneel again in verbal prayer. Explain to God what you have written. Tell Him that you’re going to review what you’ve written. Ask Him to inspire you to understand what to do and how to do it, so that you can become a great ward mission leader.

5. Review what you have written and revise these paragraphs as the Spirit directs you.

6. Kneel again in prayer. Make a commitment to God that you are going to do the things that you’ve written. Ask Him to bless and magnify you, so that you truly can become a tool in His hands to help many, many people come into His Kingdom during your time of service and to remain strong and faithful throughout their lives. Then listen as He answers you through the Holy Ghost.

7. In your next training meeting with your missionary high councilor, and in your next meeting with your bishop, give them copies of what you have written so that they can better support you.
Appendix A:
Missionary Work in the Ward

A Letter from the First Presidency

February 2005

INTRODUCTION

In a letter dated February 28, 2002, the First Presidency announced that bishops and wards were being given increased responsibility for missionary work. Other letters dated March 28, 2002, and December 11, 2002, provided further instructions. The missionary manual *Preach My Gospel* (36617) also contains updated instructions on how full-time missionaries and ward and stake leaders coordinate their work. As a result of these changes, parts of the “Stake and Member Missionary Work” section in the *Church Handbook of Instructions*, Book 2, are out of date and are replaced by the following instructions.

These instructions include several references to the Progress Record form (36985). This form is used to review the progress of individual investigators, new members, and less-active members. For more information about the Progress Record form, see *Preach My Gospel*, page 142.

WARD MISSION PLAN

The priesthood executive committee, assisted by the ward council, develops a ward mission plan. The purpose of this plan is to encourage and organize missionary activities and to strengthen members in their missionary efforts. The plan should include goals, initiatives, and activities to:

1. Invite people to be taught.
2. Teach, baptize, and confirm investigators.
3. Befriend and strengthen new members.
4. Support priesthood leaders in the activation of less-active members.

Inviting People to Be Taught

The Lord has commanded every member to share the gospel (see D&C 88:81). The ward mission plan should include suggestions on how to encourage members to be personally involved in preparing people to be taught by the full-time missionaries. Every appropriate means should be used to invite people who are willing to listen to the message of the Restoration. Emphasis should be placed on inviting families whose members will come into the gospel together.

Suggestions for preparing people to be taught are found in *Preach My Gospel* (155–73, 220) and the “Stake and Member Missionary Work” section of the *Church Handbook of Instructions*, Book 2 (250–52).
Teaching, Baptizing, and Confirming Investigators

The full-time mission president holds the keys for convert baptisms. Under his direction, full-time missionaries have primary responsibility for teaching investigators. The bishop reviews the progress of investigators as they are taught, baptized, and confirmed.

Investigators are more likely to be baptized and confirmed and to remain active when they have close friendships with Church members. Whenever possible, members should participate with full-time missionaries when they teach investigators (see *Preach My Gospel*, 179). Members can be particularly helpful by sharing experiences and feelings and by bearing testimony. Teaching and developing friendships are most effective when investigators are taught in members’ homes.

For additional suggestions on teaching, see *Preach My Gospel* (29–88, 175–94).

Befriending and Strengthening New Members

President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught that every new member needs a friend in the Church, an assignment or responsibility, and gospel nurturing (see *Ensign*, May 1999, 108). The ward mission plan should outline how priesthood quorums, auxiliary organizations, and individual members can help befriend and strengthen investigators and new members during and after the teaching of the missionary lessons. Fellowship should be extended by all in the ward. The bishop and his counselors should prayerfully consider ways to help each new member feel welcome.

Part of the plan to strengthen new male members ages 12 and older should include receiving the priesthood. The bishop ensures that the Aaronic Priesthood is conferred on these brethren soon after they are confirmed.

For additional suggestions, see *Preach My Gospel* (213–23) and the “Gospel Teaching and Leadership” section of the *Church Handbook of Instructions*, Book 2 (307–10).

Helping Activate Members

The ward mission plan should also focus on how to help all members enjoy the full blessings of the Church. Accordingly, the plan should include suggestions on how to teach less-active members the gospel, invite them to attend Church meetings and activities, and help them participate in gospel ordinances and keep the associated covenants. The plan should also include suggestions for service and social activities that might bring less-active members closer to the Church.

As needed, the bishop may request that full-time missionary elders assist in home teaching and that full-time missionary sisters assist in visiting teaching part-member families and less-active members, or in otherwise visiting these members. Such visits are most effective when the full-time missionaries are accompanied by a member of the ward.

Normally, full-time missionary companionships should not be separated. However, they may be separated to go with different ward members when necessary to cover a large number of appointments.

For additional suggestions, see the “Gospel Teaching and Leadership” section.
of the *Church Handbook of Instructions*, Book 2 (307–10).

**STAKE AND WARD LEADERSHIP**

Ward priesthood leaders have primary responsibility for missionary work. Stake leaders provide support, instruction, and accountability.

**Stake Presidency**

Members of the stake presidency see that priesthood leaders and others are instructed in their missionary responsibilities. They also ensure that the doctrines and principles of missionary work are taught in the stake.

Members of the stake presidency monitor the progress of new members and review their status in regular meetings with priesthood leaders.

In monthly interviews with bishops, the stake president reviews the Progress Record form and discusses goals and plans for individual investigators, new members, and less-active members. He ensures that each unit has an effective ward mission plan.

The stake president meets regularly with the full-time mission president to coordinate the use of the full-time missionaries in the stake, including assistance they give in activation efforts. Where there are large numbers of stakes in one mission, this may be accomplished in coordinating council meetings. When meeting with the mission president, the stake president recommends the number and location of full-time missionaries working in the stake. He may also request assistance in training leaders and members. If necessary, one of the stake president’s counselors may represent him in these meetings.

**High Councilor**

The stake presidency assigns a high councilor to help oversee missionary work. This high councilor reports on missionary work in stake priesthood executive committee and stake council meetings. He also helps the stake presidency plan and conduct training for ward mission leaders, or he may conduct this training himself under the stake presidency’s direction. At the request of a bishop, the high councilor may help instruct ward priesthood and auxiliary leaders and ward missionaries.

**Bishopric**

The bishop directs the work of sharing the gospel, retention, and activation in the ward. He reports to the stake president on all of these efforts.

The bishop calls and sets apart a worthy, missionary-oriented Melchizedek Priesthood holder to serve as the ward mission leader. The bishop or his counselors call and set apart other members to serve as ward missionaries. The ward mission leader and ward missionaries should be sustained in sacrament meeting.

Members of the bishopric also have the following responsibilities:

They use the priesthood executive committee and ward council to develop and implement the ward mission plan and to coordinate missionary, retention, and activation efforts (see “Ward Mission Plan,” pages 1–2).

They regularly review the Progress Record form in priesthood executive committee and ward council meetings. As needed, they make specific assignments to
help individual investigators, new members, and less-active members.

They get to know each investigator personally and oversee efforts to befriend and teach them.

They oversee efforts to minister to new members and sustain their activity.

They oversee the assistance of full-time missionaries in activation efforts.

A member of the bishopric usually presides at convert baptismal services in the ward. He or the ward mission leader usually conducts the services.

Ward Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders

Ward priesthood and auxiliary leaders should know the status of each new and less-active member and see that they are personally ministered to (see *Church Handbook of Instructions*, Book 2, 309). These leaders should ensure that home teachers and visiting teachers are assigned to strengthen and support new and less-active members, establish genuine friendships, and help them feel welcome in the ward.

At priesthood executive committee and ward council meetings, leaders should come prepared to discuss missionary, retention, and activation efforts.

Ward Mission Leader

The ward mission leader helps the priesthood executive committee develop and implement the ward mission plan. He also has the following responsibilities:

He prepares agenda items on missionary work and retention for priesthood executive committee and ward council meetings. He reports on the progress of specific investigators and new members in these meetings. He also reviews the Progress Record form.

He conducts the weekly missionary coordination meeting (see page 4).

He makes sure that following baptism, the first four missionary lessons are re-taught and that lesson 5 is taught (see *Preach My Gospel*, 29–88). He also provides priesthood and auxiliary leaders with regular reports of new members who need a Church responsibility.

He directs the work of the ward missionaries and instructs them. Under the direction of the bishop, he arranges for members to participate with the full-time missionaries as they teach investigators (see “Teaching, Baptizing, and Confirming Investigators,” page 1).

He organizes convert baptismal services in cooperation with the full-time missionaries, and he may conduct these services if assigned by the bishopric.

Ward Missionaries

Ward missionaries are called and released by the bishopric. They serve under the direction of the ward mission leader. The number of missionaries should be sufficient to support missionary, retention, and activation efforts, including teaching with the full-time missionaries.

Ward missionaries may be priesthood holders, sisters, or married couples. They must meet the worthiness standards required for a temple recommend.

There is no specified term of service or specified number of hours per week for
ward missionaries. They normally do not have other Church responsibilities, except for assignments as home teachers or visiting teachers, preferably to part-member and less-active families. They do not wear name tags.

Ward missionaries need not have assigned companions, but they should not go alone when visiting in homes. A man and a woman do not make visits together unless they are husband and wife.

Ward missionaries have the following responsibilities:

They participate with the full-time missionaries in finding, befriending, and teaching investigators.

They participate in re-teaching the first four missionary lessons and teaching lesson 5 to new members, in cooperation with the full-time missionaries and home teachers (see *Preach My Gospel*, 29–88). They also befriend less-active members and may teach them as assigned.

They attend the weekly missionary coordination meetings with the full-time missionaries (see the next column).

Priesthood Executive Committee and Ward Council

Priesthood executive committee meetings are used to make decisions, give assignments, and ensure accountability. Committee members develop a ward mission plan that is focused on the needs of specific investigators, new members, and less-active members. They coordinate the efforts of priesthood quorums, auxiliaries, and missionaries in accomplishing the plan. They also give direction for the weekly missionary coordination meeting.

The ward council helps the priesthood executive committee prepare and implement a ward mission plan.

Missionary work, retention and activation are on the agenda of each ward council meeting.

As needed, the bishop may invite the full-time missionaries to attend part of the priesthood executive committee or ward council meetings when missionary work is discussed.

Missionary Coordination Meeting

The ward mission leader plans and conducts a weekly missionary coordination meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to coordinate the missionary, retention, and activation efforts of the full-time missionaries and ward members. This meeting is attended by the full-time missionaries (where available), the ward missionaries, an assistant from the high priests group leadership, and a counselor from both the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies.

In this meeting the ward mission leader reviews in detail the progress of each person listed on the progress Record form. He coordinates visits and teaching appointments with investigators, new members, and less-active members.

Support for full-time missionaries, including transportation and meals, is coordinated in this meeting.

This meeting is also used to plan baptismal services after consultation with the bishopric.
Prior to His ascent to heaven, the Savior charged His tiny band of disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19). Although this task seems overwhelming, President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has called us to act with faith: “Some who measure that challenge quickly say, ‘Why, that’s impossible! It cannot be done!’ To that we simply say, ‘Perhaps, but we shall do it anyway.’”

The ability to share the gospel isn’t a “gift” that has been given to only a few Latter-day Saints and denied to the rest. We have concluded from our own experiences and from watching others that finding people for the missionaries to teach can be easy and natural for all of us—if we go about it the Lord’s way. Here are seven of the lessons we’ve learned about what His way is.

“Ideal Mormons” and “Deep Friendships”

The first two lessons, which we learned early in our efforts to be good member missionaries, have made sharing the gospel much easier: We simply can’t predict who will or won’t be interested in the gospel, and building a friendship is not a prerequisite to inviting people to learn about the gospel. We discovered these principles when we were newlyweds and the missionaries in our ward asked us to make a list of people with whom we could share the gospel. We were to start with those at the top of our list and begin “preparing” them through a twelve-step process. First, we were to invite them to our home for dinner and follow that by going to a cultural event together. The sixth, seventh, and eighth steps were to invite them to church, give them a copy of the Book of Mormon, and ask them to take the missionary discussions. The program culminated in the twelfth step—baptism.

We dutifully made this list, placing those we thought most likely to be interested in the gospel at the top. They looked like “ideal Mormons”—people whose values, such as clean living and commitment to family, mirrored our own. We then began building deeper friendships with them, adding additional social events to our already busy lives. One by one, those we thought might be interested in learning about the gospel declined our invitations when we got to steps six through eight. Our invitations didn’t offend them, but in their own way they told us they were happy in their present approach to religion. After much work over many months, we didn’t find anyone who was interested in learning more about the gospel.
New missionaries were then transferred to our ward. Knowing nothing of our history, they came to our home, unfolded an identical chart on our table, and asked us to make a list of people with whom we could cultivate friendships in preparation to teaching them the gospel. We protested, “We’ve tried this. It took a long time and didn’t work.” We explained that we felt we had honestly tried with everyone we thought was a candidate for hearing the discussions.

Desperate for a referral, the missionaries pleaded, “Don’t you know anyone we could visit?” We gave them the names of four couples we had excluded from our initial list. Among them were the Taylors (names have been changed). We warned that while the elders certainly could knock on the Taylors’ door, it would be a waste of time. Ken had bad feelings about organized religion of any kind. In addition, he was a tough rugby player and a high-volume consumer of ale.

The elders later returned, jubilant. The Taylors had invited them in, listened to the first discussion, and invited them back for the second. We subsequently became close friends with the Taylors as we studied the missionary discussions together. We would never have imagined that they would have had any interest in the gospel.

We learned from this experience that we simply cannot know in advance who will and will not be interested in learning about the Church. We thought we could judge and therefore excluded from our list many people whose lifestyle, habits, or appearance made them seem unlikely candidates. As we reflect upon those who have joined the Church, however, it is clear that few of them would have been on our list of “likely members” when they first encountered the Church.

Many who accept the gospel are troubled or needy (see Alma 32:2–3). Living the gospel transforms them. The only way all people can have the opportunity to choose or reject the gospel of Jesus Christ is for us, without judgment, to invite them to follow the Savior.

This experience also taught us that in most cases we don’t need to transform our relationships into deeper friendships as a prerequisite to inviting others to learn about the gospel. For most of our neighbors, classmates, work associates, store clerks, and those riding on the same bus, this was not necessary.

Full-time missionaries, for example, don’t wait to become friends with their contacts. They talk with everyone. A relationship of trust is built when they have the chance to teach. Over the past 20 years, we have observed no correlation between the depth of a relationship and the probability that a person will be interested in learning about the gospel. But the reverse is almost always true: Everyone who accepts an invitation becomes a closer friend, regardless of whether or not he or she ultimately accepts baptism. We have also learned that even when people decline our invitations, they are not offended if they can feel our love and God’s love when we invite them to learn about Christ’s gospel. They typically have expressed gratitude that we cared enough about them to want to share something so personal and important.

Trust the Missionaries

We learned a third lesson as the missionaries were in our home teaching Jack, a colleague of Clayton’s. One elder was newly arrived on his mission, and his senior companion from
Argentina was still struggling with English. As a result, when questions arose, Jack would instinctively ask Clayton, who answered—confident that he could answer more clearly and convincingly than these elders could. We got into a rhythm in which the elders would teach a concept, Jack would ask a question, Clayton would answer it, and then the elders would teach the next concept. Jack then asked a difficult question for which Clayton had no ready answer. And as Clayton paused, the Argentine elder offered a profound answer, given by the Spirit. When Jack asked the next question, Clayton waited to see if this elder could do it again—and he did. We learned an important lesson about sharing the gospel. Despite their inexperience, *we can trust the missionaries to teach the gospel well*, because whom the Lord calls, He qualifies.

**People Need to Be Needed**

The fourth insight coalesced as we moved an old, heavy refrigerator from the basement of an elderly sister Clayton home taught. We had tried to find another ward member to help us but could not. Desperate, we asked Jim, a nonmember neighbor, who happily agreed to help. It was a hot, horribly humid summer day, and soon our clothes were soaked with perspiration. When we reached the first turn in the staircase and had balanced the fridge on the landing, Jim said, “So tell me about the Mormon Church.”

Mopping his brow, Clayton responded, “Frankly, this is it.” He then explained how home teaching works and noted how much this sister needed us. We also told him that because graduate students and their families were moving in and out of our area all the time, our family was often helping someone load or unload a rental truck.

Jim was incredulous. “At our church we just listen to the sermon and go home. I have no idea who might need my help. They never ask, and there’s no way for me to offer. Will you ask for my help again when you need an extra pair of hands? I like this kind of thing.” Although Clayton had tried unsuccessfully to engage Jim in discussions about religion in the past, Jim was uninterested. But he was interested in opportunities to help others.

Here’s what this experience taught us: Many people who are satisfied with their lives feel a need to give service. The Light of Christ creates this desire to help. When our invitations to investigate the Church emphasize doctrine, we often do not connect with what people are looking for at the outset. When we involve them with us in serving others, they often find that the Church addresses an important need.

*Inviting others to help us with our work in the Church helps them feel needed and helps them feel the Spirit.* When these feelings come, many people often then realize that something has been missing from their lives. By helping us do God’s will, Jim learned far more about what the Church feels like than he ever could have through a conversation or from attending a ward social. As a result, Jim subsequently accepted our invitation to take the missionary discussions.

**What Is Success?**

Despite seeing much truth and goodness in our Church, Jim decided after the third discussion not to continue his investigation. Even though we know that many who discontinue investigating will later listen and accept the gospel, we were disappointed. But this taught us our fifth valuable lesson about member missionary work—we realized we had *succeeded* as
missionaries. Jim had become a great friend, and we had given him the opportunity to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ more deeply. Whether or not he ever enters the waters of baptism, he has taken a step along the path of his own eternal progression and has made some important correct choices. Most of us fear failure. Once we realized that we succeed as member missionaries when we invite people to learn and accept the truth, much of the fear that kept us from sharing the gospel vanished.

**Deadlines**

Following the counsel of Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught us our sixth lesson: Because we have so much to do in our busy lives, we need deadlines. Like it or not, we tend to postpone activities without deadlines, while things that need to be finished by a particular time seem to get done. Without explicit deadlines, even rewarding responsibilities of eternal import—like missionary work—can easily get preempted.

To help us, Elder Ballard has asked us to regularly “write down a date.” He explicitly counseled us that we need not write down a name. Rather, Elder Ballard challenged us to pick a date as a commitment to the Lord. He promised that if we then seek every opportunity to speak about the gospel with as many people as we can, the Lord will bless us by that date to meet someone who will accept our invitation to listen to the missionaries. Together we have accepted Elder Ballard’s challenge and have found someone for the missionaries to teach every year. Each time we have prayerfully set a date, the Lord has provided someone for us to teach.

But the people we have found have rarely been discovered easily. It has required daily prayer, frequent fasting, and creating opportunities to have gospel conversations. We have found it helpful to use “Mormon” phrases in our conversations—referring to activities at church, our children who are serving missions, experiences we’ve had in Church assignments, and so on. When we use these phrases, it is as if we are opening a door, inviting the other person to walk in and talk about the Church. Most people choose not to come through that door, and that’s fine. But sometimes they ask us about the Church. We then answer their questions. And if it seems appropriate, we open a second door—inviting them to a Church meeting or to come to our home so we can tell them more. Most of those we have invited decline, but some accept. Regardless of the outcome, we have found that if they feel our love, they often express gratitude that we would care enough to invite them.

Several years ago Elder Christensen set a date of January 31. Early January came, and despite having initiated conversations with dozens of people and inviting several of them to meet the missionaries, he failed to find anyone who was interested. He was scheduled to travel to Honolulu, Hawaii, for an academic conference on January 20, and the way his schedule looked, it seemed clear that he had to meet the person he could introduce to the missionaries on his flight to or from Hawaii. There was no other time. He pleaded in daily prayer that God would cause a person to sit next to him on the plane who would accept his invitation.

After all that effort, he couldn’t believe his eyes when he saw his seatmate—a man named Vinnie who was wearing a loud Hawaiian shirt unbuttoned to his sternum, sporting three gold chains on his hairy chest. Vinnie explained that he worked 11 months every year to save enough to escape to Hawaii for a month in winter to chase women. Clayton was so
disappointed. He had tried and prayed so hard to find someone—and instead he got stuck next to a man who didn’t seem to have a religious bone in his body. Discouraged, Clayton turned to some reading.

When the flight attendant brought lunch, Clayton put his reading down and made small talk with his seatmate. Vinnie asked Clayton if he had been to Hawaii before, and Clayton responded that he had attended a language training school in Laie en route to a mission he had served for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Korea. Surprisingly, Vinnie put his fork down and said, “So you’re a Mormon? The funniest thing has happened to me over the past year. I’ve never had any interest in religion, but I’ve had this growing curiosity to know more about Mormons. I don’t know why. Could you tell me a little about your church?”

For the next three hours, enveloped by a wonderful spirit, they discussed the gospel of Jesus Christ, article of faith by article of faith. Several times on the remainder of the flight, Vinnie interrupted to say thanks for telling him about the Church. As the plane landed, Clayton told Vinnie there were missionaries in his hometown and asked if they could visit him when he returned. Vinnie asked if there were missionaries in Honolulu. Clayton received this golden answer to his prayers by using a “Mormon” phrase to open the door to a conversation and by suspending his judgment of what might be in Vinnie’s heart.

**Constants and Variables**

We learned a seventh lesson from this experience: *When we are busy serving in the Church, we can expect God to bless us with miracles when we go and do the things He commands* (see 1 Ne. 3:7). In the equation that determines whether we can find people for the missionaries to teach, God’s role is a constant, not a variable. He always keeps His promises. The only variable is whether we have the faith to commit, obey, and expect miracles. Even more than other members, the busy men and women who lead our wards and stakes (or branches and districts) need to exercise this simple faith—because if they cannot speak in present-tense verbs and first-person pronouns about sharing the gospel, they cannot inspire others to fulfill our prophet’s member missionary call.

**Blessings**

Many of us know people who seem to be “natural missionaries,” almost as if they have an innate gift that makes sharing the gospel easy for them. We certainly are not naturals at this. We found the work to be uncomfortable and intimidating at the outset, but learning and following these lessons has helped us share the gospel in ways that have become natural.

The blessings that have come to our family from doing this work have been incalculable. Missionary work has brought the Spirit of God into our home and our hearts. About four years ago, for example, we invited one of Clayton’s former students, Sunil, to take the missionary discussions in our home. The missionaries did a wonderful job, and at the close of the discussion they both testified of the truths they had taught us. We both bore our testimonies, and Clayton asked one of the missionaries to close with prayer. Just then our son Spencer raised his hand. “Dad, can I say something?” He then rose to his feet and, looking at Sunil with the purest gaze, said, “Sunil, I’m only 11 years old. But I want you to know that...”
the things the missionaries have told you tonight are true. I know that God lives. I know that you and I are His sons and that Joseph Smith was truly a prophet of God.” As he shared his feelings, a sweet, powerful spirit came into the room.

The next day Sunil sent an e-mail saying that while he had appreciated the clear explanation of our beliefs that the missionaries and we had provided during the discussion, “when your son stood and said those words, I felt something inside that I have never felt before. This must be what you mean when you speak of the Spirit of God.”

Many blessings and friendships have come into our lives from trying to share the gospel. But this blessing has been one of the best: Having the missionaries regularly help us as a family teach the gospel to new and old friends through the power of the Holy Ghost has profoundly affected the faith of our five children and brought the Spirit of God into our home.

Notes
2. See “Write Down a Date,” Ensign, Nov. 1984, 15–17; see also “We Proclaim the Gospel,” Ensign, Nov. 1986, 31–33.