

## THE PROCESS OF CHANGE WITHIN CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

There are three basic rules of organization in the church, the doctrine, the policies and the procedures:

### **The Doctrine**

The doctrine never changes. It is the same always. It is God ordained and God governed.

### **The policies**

The policies are to be followed until inspiration directs priesthood leaders to establish new approaches that better meet the needs of a growing church and its people.

### **The procedures**

The procedures enable the policies to work from day to day and may be changed whenever a need arises.

Because the demands of culture, politics and people change, an organization must change to meet ever changing needs. That change is needed, and that it is inevitable, was fully understood by President Joseph F. Smith as he gave a prophecy on priesthood in 1906:

*"It is truly said that the Church is perfectly organized. The only trouble is that these organizations are not fully alive to the obligations that rest upon them. When they become fully awakened to the requirements made of them, they will fulfil their duties more faithfully and the work of the priesthood will be all the more powerful and influential in the world. The presidents of stakes are taking up the work of the quorums and are endeavoring to arouse the members of the priesthood.*

*"We expect to see the day...when every bearer of the priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will understand his duty, will assume his own responsibility, will magnify his calling, and fulfil his place in the Church to the uttermost...When that day shall come, there shall not be so much necessity for the work that is now being done by the auxiliary organizations, because it will be done by the regular organizations of the priesthood. "The Lord designed and comprehended it from the beginning, and He has made a provision in the Church whereby every need may be met and satisfied through the regular organizations of the priesthood."*

We have seen significant changes in church government since the church began:

- When members were few, Joseph and Oliver were the only leaders needed.
- As the church gradually increased, it became necessary to make the following additions:
  - A first presidency and quorum of the twelve
  - A Presiding bishop of the Church
  - Stake Presidents and High councils in stakes
  - Bishops and their counselors in wards
  - Melchizedek priesthood quorums and their presidencies. (High priest quorums, are now presided over by the stake presidency)
  - The Seventy, once organized in the stakes, are now ordained high priests and are serving as general authorities in the several quorums of Seventy.
  - Assistants to the twelve, have been replaced by the Seventy.
  - Area Presidencies appointed worldwide to meet the needs of a world Church.
  - Regional Representatives have been replaced by Area Authorities.

It is obvious that while doctrine never changes, policy, guidelines and procedures must change as needed to keep the organization vibrant and alive, both to the needs of the people and in a changing world. Just as Joseph made needed changes as conditions altered, so have the prophets who followed him changed policy and organization as needs dictated.

Boyd K. Packer explained the process for change. I quote from the general conference in October 1990:

*"The Gospel plan was revealed line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. And it goes on: "We believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." (Articles of Faith 1:9)*

*"That principle of revelation has been with the church ever since. Those who hold the keys have obtained knowledge on*

*what to do. When changes have come, they have come through that process. The Lord does as He said He would do:*

*"I command and revoke as seemeth me good." (D&C 56:4)*

*"There will be changes made in the future as in the past. Whether the Brethren make changes or resist them depends entirely upon the instructions that they receive through the channels of revelation which were established in the beginning.*

*"The doctrines will remain fixed, eternal; the organization, programs, and procedures will be altered as directed by Him whose church it is."*

Boyd K. Packer Conference report, October 1989