

Helpful Suggestions for Priesthood Leaders

HOW TO FURTHER THE WORK OF SERVICE MISSIONS

The First Presidency stated the following in their letter to leaders and members dated November 2018:

A service mission is an acceptable offering to the Lord when a teaching mission is not possible. Therefore, referring to a teaching mission as a “real mission,” “normal mission,” or “traditional mission” is inaccurate and should be avoided. All missionaries represent the Lord and carry out His work.

Several helpful suggestions have been identified to help the service missionary program continue to embrace the vision of the First Presidency. The primary observation is that the work progresses and the culture changes best when priesthood leaders (including Area Seventies, stake and district presidents, and bishops and branch presidents) focus on the following guidelines:

- a. Give direct and repeated verbal and written support of the service missionary program.
- b. Give direct and repeated verbal and written support of the service mission leader couple.
- c. Encourage stake and district presidents, bishops and branch presidents, and ward and stake councils to meet regularly with and work with the service mission leaders.
- d. Invite the service mission leaders to meet with their stake or district, ward or branch, and coordinating council meetings.
- e. Invite service mission leaders to speak at stake conferences, sacrament meetings, fifth-Sunday meetings, and so forth.
- f. Invite service mission leaders to meet with Relief Society presidencies.
- g. Create a culture where service missionaries and teaching missionaries are treated as equals.
- h. Stake presidents consult with the local service mission leader prior to an early-returning missionary's homecoming.
- i. Stake presidents continue to have ecclesiastical responsibility for service missionaries serving from their stake. Creating a close, effective, caring relationship between the stake president and the service missionary will help the missionary feel equally appreciated by the Lord. The First Presidency has asked that missionaries meet with their ecclesiastical leader at least once during each quarter. In 2019 only 56 percent of service missionaries had this opportunity.

