

# PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL ORDAINED TWELFTH PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

By David Mitchell  
Assistant Editor

As the year 1973 waned, momentous events occurred for the Church and kingdom of God on earth in the passing of President Harold B. Lee on December 26, and in the ordination on December 30 of President Spencer W. Kimball as twelfth President and prophet, seer, and revelator of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Four days previous, President Lee had entered the Salt Lake LDS Hospital after spending an enjoyable Christmas day with his wife and family members.

"The President," said his personal secretary, "felt ill at ease and wanted a checkup. As Sister Lee and I accompanied him to the hospital, he commented on the many pleasant things that had occurred during the Christmas season. Suddenly everything changed. Before we hardly realized what was happening, our beloved prophet was called home." President Lee was three months short of his 75th birthday.

President Lee's death at about 9:00 p.m. was attributed to lung and cardiac failure. At his bedside were Sister Lee, his daughter Helen, President Spencer W. Kimball, and President Marion G. Romney, second counselor to President Lee.

President N. Eldon Tanner was in Phoenix, Arizona, but returned to Salt Lake City the next morning.

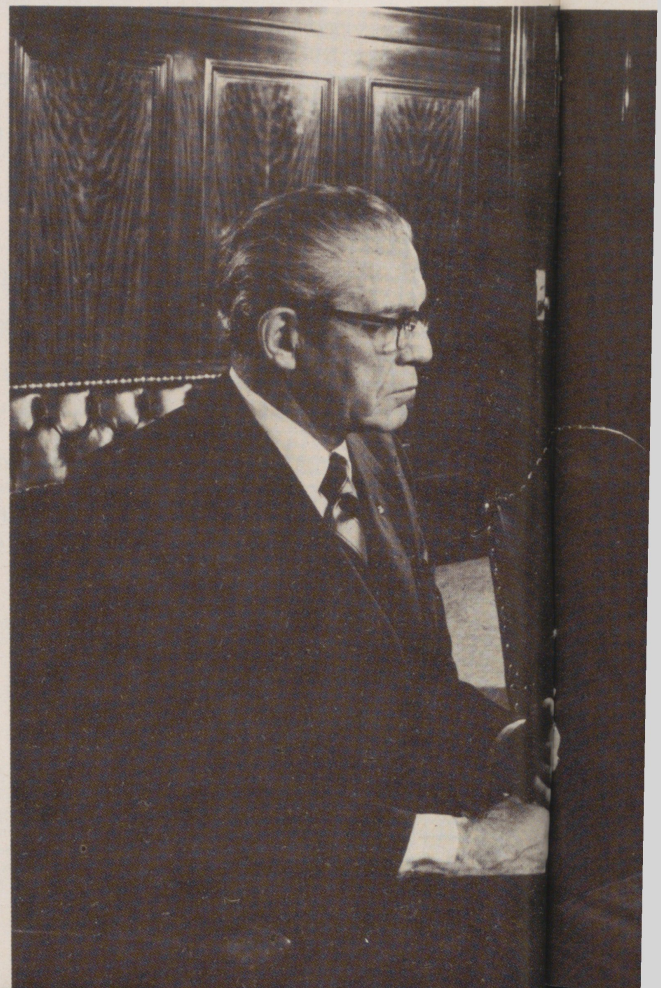
For the next two days, President Lee's earthly remains lay in state in the Church Administration Building, where some 15,000 men, women, and children filed by to pay respect to the deceased President. On Saturday, December 29, funeral services were conducted in the Tabernacle, where the Tabernacle Choir sang some favorite hymns of President Lee. Speakers were President Spencer W. Kimball, then President of the Council of the Twelve, President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, and Elder Gordon B. Hinckley

of the Council of the Twelve. (See pages 86 to 96 for their funeral sermons and eulogies.)

The next day, December 30, was the Lord's Sabbath. On this snowy, blustery day, members of the Council of the Twelve, the governing body of the Church following the death of a president and the dissolution of the First Presidency, gathered at 3:00 p.m. and met in the Salt Lake Temple to consider the reorganization of the First Presidency.

President Kimball, 78, president of the Council of the Twelve by virtue of his seniority as an apostle, was ordained and set apart as President of the Church by the Twelve, with Ezra Taft Benson serving as voice. President Kimball then set apart his two counselors, the same counselors who had served President Lee—President N. Eldon Tanner and President Marion G. Romney. President Kimball then set apart Elder Benson as president of the Council of the Twelve by virtue of Elder Benson's position of seniority in the Twelve.

The elevation of President Kimball to President of the Church now leaves a vacancy in the Council of the Twelve, which is expected to be filled either prior to or at the 1974 April Annual General



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Conference of the Church. General sustaining of the First Presidency and the President of the Council of the Twelve by the membership of the Church will occur in stake conference between now and April General Conference. On April 6, at the conference's Solemn Assembly, sustaining of these brethren by the Church membership at large will be a part of the April General Conference proceedings.

On Monday, December 31, a press conference was held to announce the actions of the previous day. President Kimball made the following comments:

*This is a great experience, unexpected. As we approach this very great work, many thoughts have been running through our minds. We have the assurance that we are carrying forward the work of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of this church. We are but his earthly helpers.*

*Some of the things that we are especially interested in have been carried forward by President Lee, our predecessor. We will in large measure carry forward in the same program which we have helped in a small way to make and will give it greater emphasis*

*if we can. May I just mention a few of the things that we are especially interested in. We are especially interested in the family and the home and will hope to encourage and increase, if possible, this great work.*

*We think we have been reasonably successful with our youth. We have given them objectives, we have given them purpose in life, we have given them an opportunity to conduct their own work under supervision. Many of the problems that have affected youth in these past few years on campuses and elsewhere have been less exercised in our own group.*

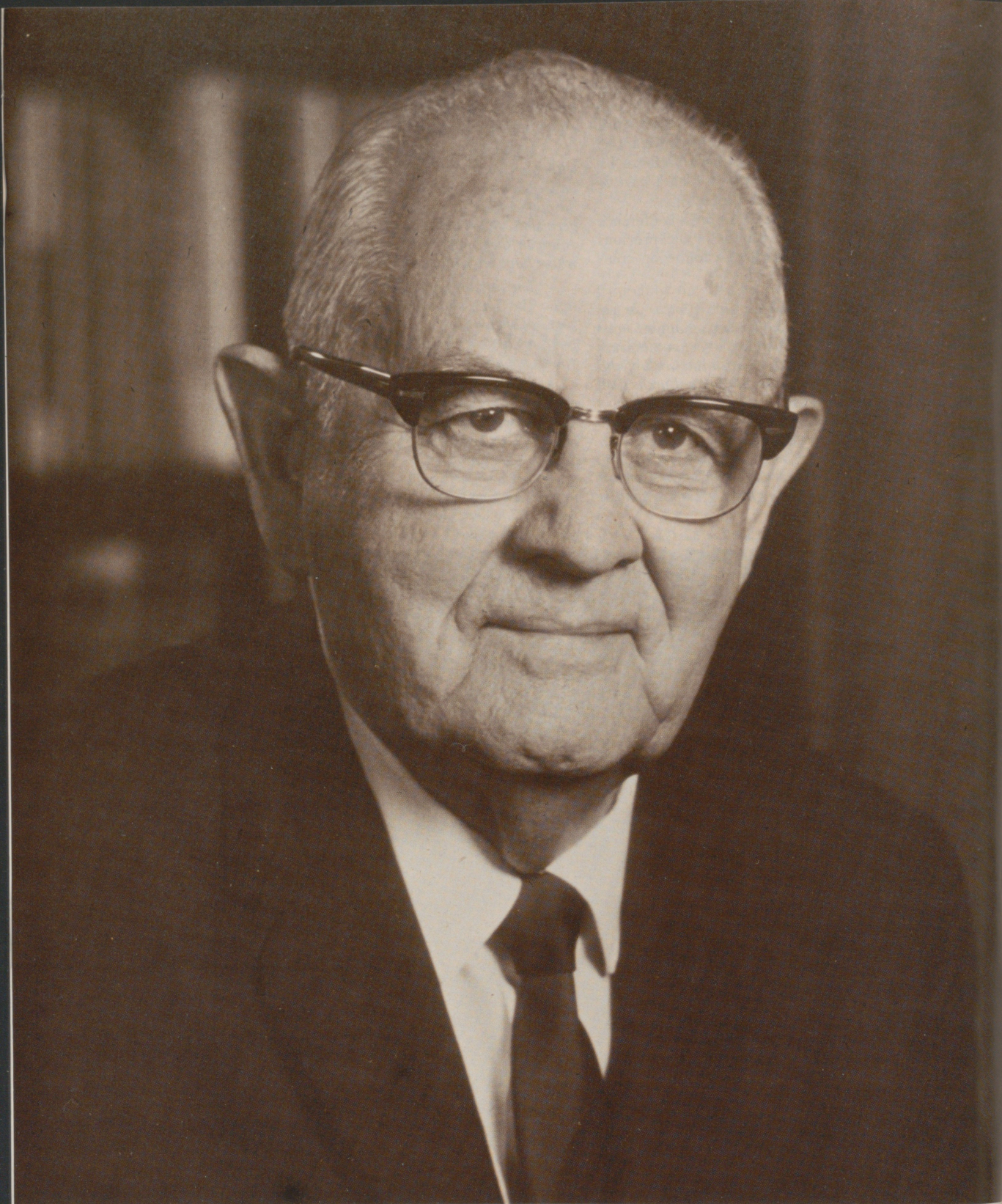
*The missionary work is one of our great objectives. We have some 18,000 missionaries giving two years of their lives in this cause, and we think it is a great movement. We are very proud of the work these young people do.*

*I have been especially interested in the Indian program. My father was called on a mission to Oklahoma to work among the Indians. When he finished, he moved to Arizona at the request of the First Presidency, and that is how I, born in Salt Lake City, came to be an Arizonan. We have 60 million people in this hemisphere that we call Lamanites. They are*

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*The new First Presidency and the president of the Council of the Twelve face the press.*

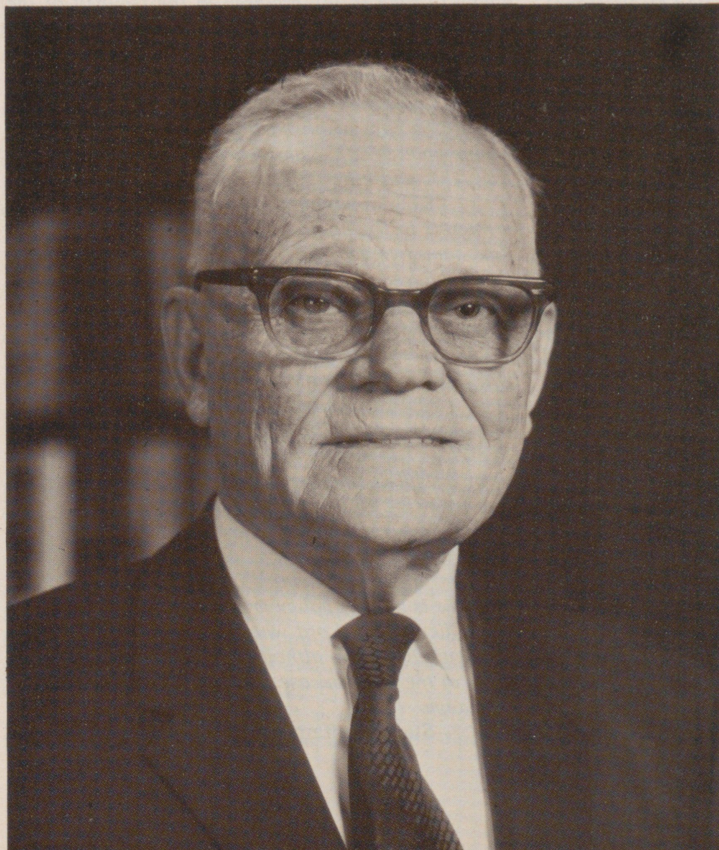




President Spencer W. Kimball  
Twelfth President of the Church



President N. Eldon Tanner  
First Counselor in the First Presidency



President Marion G. Romney  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

the descendants of people who came over here long ago, 600 years before Christ. They are of Ephraim and Manasseh. We feel a special responsibility to these good people.

We believe in our countries. We teach our people that we should honor and obey and sustain the laws, and that we should sustain our leaders in their righteous endeavors.

I should like to also mention temple work, and its many aspects. We specialize also in temple work. It is a marvelous work. Just one element of it permits retired people to give of themselves in constructive labor.

We believe that we have in this Church the answers to all questions, for the Lord is the head of the Church, and he has given us this program. We feel that we have a program that will overcome the evils of the day.

In responding to the call to again serve as a counselor, President Tanner commented:

"I feel honored to be a counselor to President Kimball. He has been prepared for over 30 years. He has been prepared as well as a man could be prepared. Besides his natural abilities, he has the Spirit of the Lord for guidance. We believe and know that men are foreordained, and I feel very sure that President Kimball was foreordained and that his experience in the world has prepared him for this position. We have no doubt but that the work of the Lord will go forward."

In responding to his call to serve as counselor again, President Romney commented:

"I am very honored to be invited by President Kimball to act as his second counselor. I know that President Kimball is the Lord's choice, and he has been placed in the presidency of the Church by His will, and I shall do all that I can to support him, and to support the great work that the Lord has put upon The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the salvation of men throughout the world."

In responding to his appointment as president of the Council of the Twelve, President Benson commented:

"For 30 years I have had the honor of sitting at the side of Elder Spencer W. Kimball. We came into the Council of the Twelve at the same time. I know this man. I love him. I honor him. I respect him. I rejoice in the program which President Kimball and his counselors have had a major part in developing under the leadership of President Lee. I am confident that you will find no richer program anywhere in the world than we have in the Church for the building of men and women and providing the answers that face parents, families, and individuals. I know that through President Kimball's inspired leadership we will continue to strengthen that program and build on it. It is a program that is needed in the world. I am grateful to be associated with this work, which I consider to be the greatest work in all the world."

A question-and-answer period followed, dur-



President Ezra Taft Benson, new president of the Council of the Twelve.

ing which media representatives from throughout America queried President Kimball. The following summarizes that session:

—The President's state of health: *I was very happy to read to my brethren in the Council of the Twelve this morning a letter from my surgeon who performed the open heart surgery on me a year and a half ago. The letter said something like this: Perhaps no authority ever approached this position as well taken care of physically as he was sure I was. I have good health. I am amazed at my own recovery from this and other serious situations.*

—Role of women: *We believe that the place of women is in the home, as a general rule. We realize that some women may need to be employed when their children are grown, or when there have been problems in their home and the breadwinner has been taken from them. The most sacred privileges that a woman could have are in the home, to be a partner with God in the creation of children.*

—Church policy on excommunication: *I think that it will remain in large measure as it has been. President Lee had felt very deeply that there must be some discipline in order to keep the Church clean and free from the sins of the world.*

—Blacks and the priesthood: *I am not sure that there will be a change, although there could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father, and this is not my policy or the Church's policy. It is the policy of the Lord who has established it, and I know of no change, although we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case he should ever wish to make a change.*

—State of affairs in America: *We believe that*

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our people should sustain all the righteous activities and actions of their leaders. We do not feel that there is going to be any total disruption. We have hopes that all may straighten out well and that America might go forward. We are teaching our people to be true and loyal to their respective governments.

—Message to the members of the Church: Our message is what it has always been, and our hope is that our people will live the commandments of the Lord. They have been revealed in the holy scriptures and by the living prophets throughout these many years.

With the announcement of the new First Presidency and the President of the Council of the Twelve, the Church leadership continues to reflect the international nature of the Church: President Kimball was born in Utah and raised in Arizona, President Tanner was born in Utah and raised in Canada, President Romney was born and raised in Mexico, and President Benson was born and raised in Idaho.

President Kimball was born March 28, 1895, served in the Central States mission, and married Camilla Eyring in 1917. They have four children, 27 grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren.

While living in Arizona, President Kimball was prominent in civic and business affairs, particularly insurance and real estate, and owned, in partnership, a radio station and other businesses. In 1943, while serving as president of the Mt. Graham Stake in Safford, Arizona, he was called by President Heber J. Grant to the Council of the Twelve. Since that time, he has carried the multitudinous variety of assignments given to a member of the Council of the Twelve.

In 1957, he underwent surgery for malignancy in his throat, an operation that took one vocal cord and part of the other. He has redeveloped the ability to speak, and his soft, husky voice has endeared him to Saints throughout the Church. A much more complete biography and appreciation of President Kimball will be published in the March ENSIGN, authored by Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve.

President Tanner (a biographical appreciation of whom was published in the November 1972 ENSIGN) comes to his call as first counselor in the First Presidency after having served three previous presidents of the Church as counselors: David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Harold B. Lee. He thus becomes the first man ever to serve four presidents of the Church as either a first or second counselor in the First Presidency.

Two other men—Joseph F. Smith and George Q. Cannon—served four presidents of the Church as counselors—Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow—but in both instances both served Brigham Young as counselors in the First Presidency, but not as first or second counselors in the First Presidency.

President Tanner served as second counselor to David O. McKay and Joseph Fielding Smith,

and as first counselor to Harold B. Lee and now to President Spencer W. Kimball.

President Tanner was born May 9, 1898, grew up on a Canadian farm, became a schoolteacher, entered political life where he became prominent in the Alberta provincial government, then entered private industry where he became president of major Canadian petroleum firms. While serving as president of the Calgary Stake, he was called in 1960 as an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve. Two years later, he was called to the Council of the Twelve, and one year later was called as second counselor to David O. McKay. He and Sister Tanner are the parents of five daughters and have 26 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

President Romney (a biography of whom was published in the November 1972 ENSIGN) was born September 19, 1897, raised on a farm in the Mormon colonies in Colonia Juarez, Mexico, and in his mid-teens left with his family for Rexburg, Idaho, where his father became president of Ricks College. He served a mission to Australia, then studied law and served as Salt Lake City, assistant county, and assistant district attorney for 11 years. He was president of the Bonneville Stake in 1941 when called to be an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, the same day that Harold B. Lee was called to the Council of the Twelve. He and Sister Romney have two sons and eight grandchildren.

President Ezra Taft Benson, new president of the Council of the Twelve, was born August 4, 1899, was reared on a farm near Whitney, Idaho, and graduated from Brigham Young University and Iowa State University. He served in Idaho as farm agent and university extension official, then went to Washington, D.C., to serve as executive secretary for the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. While in Washington, D.C., and serving as president of the Washington Stake, he was called to the Council of the Twelve in 1943, the same month that President Spencer W. Kimball was called to the Council of the Twelve.

President Benson was in Europe for a year following World War II, supervising the Church's distribution of goods and welfare to its Saints; he subsequently served two terms in the Dwight D. Eisenhower cabinet as Secretary of Agriculture.

Upon his return to Salt Lake City from Washington, he served two years in Europe as European Mission president. Thus, in the 30 years that President Benson has been a member of the Council of the Twelve, he has served more than a third of them away from the central councils and headquarters of the Church. He and Sister Benson are the parents of two sons and four daughters, and have 31 grandchildren.

The prayers of the Saints now hold in loving remembrance the names of these choice servants of the Lord, called at this time to bless the Church through inspired counsel and leadership that will be forthcoming through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. □