

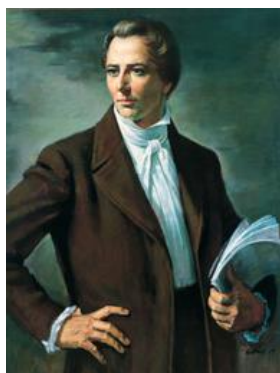
## Topic

Since the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830, 17 men have served as the president of the Church. Latter-day Saints consider each of these men to be **prophets** who received **revelation** from God. Each man possessed unique talents and gifts that helped the Church progress during that time and set the stage for future growth.

The first Church president, Joseph Smith, received authority to lead the Church from John the Baptist and from three of Christ's apostles, Peter, James and John, who received that same "power and authority" from Jesus Christ Himself (**Luke 9:1**). These men appeared as angels and bestowed the **priesthood** upon Joseph Smith. That same priesthood was subsequently passed down in an unbroken chain to the present day to the current Church president, **Russell M. Nelson**.

Following are brief biographies for each Church president.

### Joseph Smith



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Years as President: 1832–1844

Birth Date: 23 December 1805

Death Date: 27 June 1844

Born 23 December 1805 in Sharon, Vermont, Joseph Smith Jr. was the fifth of 11 children of Joseph Smith and Lucy Mack. He worked on the family farm in Vermont and later in western New York. In 1820 at Palmyra, New York, Joseph Smith saw **God the Father** and **Jesus Christ** in vision. Through revelation, he translated and published the **Book of Mormon**, organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 6 April 1830 and received revelations to guide the Church. Under his leadership, Latter-day Saints founded communities in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were killed by a mob on 27 June 1844 at Carthage, Illinois.

For a more in-depth biography of Joseph Smith, [click here](#).

### Brigham Young



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Years as President: 1847–1877

Birth Date: 1 June 1801

Death Date: 29 August 1877

Brigham Young was born 1 June 1801 in Whitingham, Vermont. In 1835, three years after he joined the Church, he was called to the **Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**. As successor to Joseph Smith, he led the **migration** west in 1846–47 to the Rocky Mountains and founded Salt Lake City. He was sustained as president of the Church on 27 December 1847. As Church president and territorial governor of Utah, he established Latter-day Saint settlements in Utah and throughout the American West. Under his direction, construction began on **temples** in Salt Lake, St. George and Logan, Utah. He brought the telegraph and the railroad to Utah and encouraged cooperative industry among Latter-day Saints. He died 29 August 1877 in Salt Lake City after nearly 30 years as Church president.

For a more in-depth biography of Brigham Young, [click here](#).



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## John Taylor

Years as President: 1880–1887

Birth Date: 1 November 1808

Death Date: 25 July 1887

John Taylor was born 1 November 1808 in Milnthorpe, Westmorland, England. An 1832 immigrant to Toronto, Canada, he was a cooper and part-time Methodist minister. He and his wife, Leonora, joined the Church in 1836. Two years later, he became an **apostle** and enjoyed close association with Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. John Taylor accompanied Joseph Smith to Carthage, Illinois, in June 1844 and was seriously wounded when Joseph Smith was killed. He was sustained as president of the Church on 10 October 1880. During his administration, President Taylor established Latter-day Saint colonies in Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, Canada and Mexico, oversaw the worldwide adoption of the Primary program for **children** and canonized the **Pearl of Great Price** as scripture. He died 25 July 1887 in Kaysville, Utah.



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## Wilford Woodruff

Years as President: 1887–1898

Birth Date: 1 March 1807

Death Date: 2 September 1898

Born 1 March 1807 and raised in Connecticut, Wilford Woodruff was a miller by trade. He joined the Church in 1833 and served two **missions** before being ordained an **apostle** in 1839. As a member of the **Quorum of the Twelve**, he completed four additional missions, presided over the **temple** in St. George, Utah, and served six years as Church historian. He was sustained as Church president on 7 April 1889. During his administration, he dedicated temples in Salt Lake City and Manti, Utah, oversaw the organization of a **genealogical** society and reemphasized the value of historical **record keeping**. In 1890, after much pondering and prayer, President Woodruff received a **revelation** that the Latter-day Saints should cease the practice of **polygamy**. He died in San Francisco on 2 September 1898.



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## Lorenzo Snow

Years as President: 1898–1901

Birth Date: 3 April 1814

Death Date: 10 October 1901

Lorenzo Snow was born 3 April 1814 in Mantua, Ohio. As a youth, he preferred academic study to an apprenticeship and study of Hebrew and theology led to his conversion to the Church in 1836. He served as a **missionary** and **apostle** before becoming Church president on 13 September 1898. He helped the Church recover from the challenges of the previous decades. He expanded missionary efforts and stabilized Church finances by encouraging the payment of **tithing**. As Church president at the dawning of the 20th century, he opened a new era in Latter-day Saint history. He died in Salt Lake City on 10 October 1901, at the age of 87.

## Joseph F. Smith



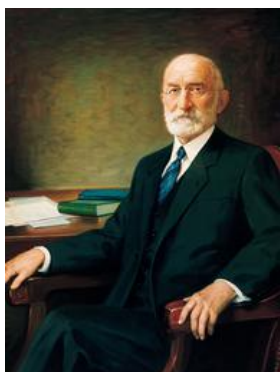
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Years as President: 1901–1918  
 Birth Date: 13 November 1838  
 Death Date: 19 November 1918

Joseph F. Smith was born 13 November 1838 in Far West, Missouri. In 1844 his father, Hyrum Smith, was martyred along with his uncle Joseph Smith. Young Joseph F. Smith helped his mother, Mary Fielding Smith, **migrate** to Utah in 1848. He served in Utah's territorial legislature from 1865 to 1874, served numerous missions and became president of the Church on 17 October 1901.

While ushering the Church into the 20th century, Joseph F. Smith brought Latter-day Saints to a better appreciation of early **Church history**. He worked to better educate the public about the Church by developing important Church historical sites in New York, Missouri and Illinois, building a visitors' bureau, and expanding Church **missionary** and **educational** systems. After 17 years as Church president, Joseph F. Smith died on 19 November 1918 in Salt Lake City.

## Heber J. Grant



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Years as President: 1918–1945  
 Birth Date: 22 November 1856  
 Death Date: 14 May 1945

Born on 22 November 1856 in Salt Lake City, Heber Jeddy Grant was raised by his widowed mother, Rachel Grant. By the time he was 15, he had begun a successful business career. Ten years later, he was called to the **Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**, where he served for 37 years. After becoming Church president on 23 November 1918, he dedicated three new **temples**, developed the **welfare** program and helped Latter-day Saints cope with the tragedy of

World War II. His business experience enabled him to modernize Church organizations and procedures. His **missionary** efforts, including extensive speaking engagements and friendships with national business leaders, brought the Church to the attention of the nation. After 27 years as president, Heber J. Grant died in Salt Lake City on 14 May 1945.

## George Albert Smith



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Years as President: 1945–1951  
 Birth Date: 4 April 1870  
 Death Date: 4 April 1951

George Albert Smith was born on 4 April 1870 in Salt Lake City. His father, John Henry Smith, and grandfather George A. Smith had both been counselors to Church presidents. While employed in the Federal Land Office for Utah, he was called at the age of 33 to the **Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**. Despite fragile health and impaired eyesight, he had a distinguished career as a Church leader. He became president of the Church on 21 May 1945. He

organized the Church's massive **humanitarian** assistance to Europe following World War II and championed Scouting among Latter-day Saints. After six years as president, George Albert Smith died in Salt Lake City on his 81st birthday, 4 April 1951.

## David O. McKay



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Years as President: 1951–1970  
 Birth Date: 8 September 1873  
 Death Date: 18 January 1970

Born on 8 September 1873, David Oman McKay spent his youth in Huntsville, Utah. He studied at the Weber Stake Academy and the University of Utah to prepare for a career in education. After completing formal schooling and a **mission**, he married his college sweetheart, Emma Ray Riggs, in 1901. Five years later, at the age of 32, he was called as an **apostle** and became president of the Church on 9 April 1951. He expanded the vision of the Church's worldwide mission, and under his administration, the first **stakes** were created outside of the United States. He also strengthened Church membership with a renewed emphasis on the value of **family** life and **education**. After 44 years in the **Quorum of the Twelve Apostles** and 19 as Church president, David O. McKay died on 18 January 1970 in Salt Lake City at the age of 96.

## Joseph Fielding Smith



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Years as President: 1970–1972  
 Birth Date: 19 July 1876  
 Death Date: 2 July 1972

Joseph Fielding Smith, the son of Joseph F. Smith, was born on 19 July 1876, in Salt Lake City and spent his entire life in Church service. During nearly three-quarters of a century, he was a **missionary**, Church historian, president of the Utah **Genealogical** Society and of the Salt Lake Temple, an **apostle** and Church president. He became president of the Church on 23 January 1970 at the age of 93. As one of the Church's most prolific writers, Joseph Fielding Smith's numerous books and articles helped educate generations of Latter-day Saints about the **history** and doctrine of the Church. Under his administration, missionary work continued to grow, the Ogden and Provo **Temples** were dedicated and the Church magazines were consolidated. President Smith died at his home in Salt Lake City on 2 July 1972.

## Harold B. Lee



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Years as President: 1972–1973  
 Birth Date: 28 March 1899  
 Death Date: 26 December 1973

Harold Bingham Lee was born on 28 March 1899 in Clifton, Idaho, and worked in education, business, and government. As a **stake president** during the Great Depression, he initiated a program of self-sufficiency and relief that grew into the Church's **welfare** system. After his call to the **Quorum of the Twelve Apostles** in 1941, he continued to work with the welfare program and initiated organizational changes to improve the coordination between Church **headquarters** and Latter-day Saint congregations around the world. These changes helped the Church prepare for its rapid expansion during the decades that followed. He became president of the Church on 7 July 1972. He traveled often during his tenure, which lasted only 18 months. President Lee died 26 December 1973 in Salt Lake City.

## Spencer W. Kimball



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Years as President: 1973–1985  
 Birth Date: 28 March 1895  
 Death Date: 5 November 1985

Born on 28 March 1895 in Salt Lake City, Spencer Wooley Kimball grew up in Thatcher, Arizona. After completing a mission and marrying Camilla Eyring, he settled in Safford, Arizona, to raise his family and run an insurance business. He was called as an **apostle** in 1943, and after overcoming severe health problems, he became Church president on 30 December 1973 at the age of 78. He led the Church with energetic determination during a period of dramatic vitality and growth. In the 12 years of his presidency, the number of operating **temples** doubled, the number of missionaries increased by 50 percent and the **priesthood** was extended to **all worthy male members**. He died in Salt Lake City on 5 November 1985.

## Ezra Taft Benson



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Years as President: 1985–1994  
 Birth Date: 4 August 1899  
 Death Date: 30 May 1994

Born on 4 August 1899 in Whitney, Idaho, Ezra Taft Benson learned early the principle of hard work on the family farm. He served a mission to Great Britain and after his return married Flora Amussen in 1926. He received his education in agriculture and went on to hold many important positions within the industry. While serving as an **apostle** he also served as Secretary of Agriculture in the cabinet of U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower from 1953 to 1961. He became president of the Church on 10 November 1985. He emphasized the importance of the **Book of Mormon** in daily scripture study, missionary efforts and gospel teaching. Despite his failing health, the Church continued to grow under his administration, **temples** were dedicated, and **missionary** work expanded around the world, particularly in eastern Europe. He died in Salt Lake City on 30 May 1994 at the age of 94.

## Howard W. Hunter



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Years as President: 1994–1995  
 Birth Date: 14 November 1907  
 Death Date: 3 March 1995

Born 14 November 1907 in Boise, Idaho, Howard William Hunter had a love for music in his youth. After high school, his band, “Hunter's Croonaders,” toured for five months on the SS President Jackson, which gave him the opportunity to see many exotic sites in Asia. Upon his marriage to Clara May Jeffs in 1931, he gave up his music career in favor of a stable family life. President Hunter began to study law and became a successful lawyer in California. He was called to be an **apostle** in 1959, serving for 35 years before becoming president of the Church on 5 June 1994 at age 86. During his short presidency, he encouraged Church members to become worthy to attend the **temple**, setting the stage for a decade of increased temple building. He traveled as often as his health would permit, dedicating two temples and

commemorating the 150th anniversary of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. He died 3 March 1995 in Salt Lake City.



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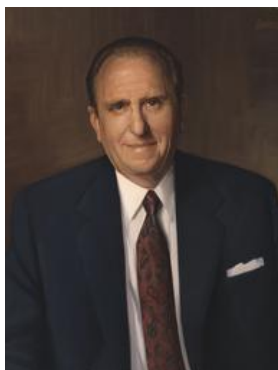
## Gordon B. Hinckley

Years as President: 1995–2008

Birth Date: 23 June 1910

Death Date: 27 January 2008

Gordon Bitner Hinckley was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on 23 June 1910. After graduating from the University of Utah, he was called to serve a **mission** to Great Britain. After he returned, he embarked on a lifetime of service for the Church. He was employed as the executive secretary of the Church Radio, Publicity, and Literature committee before he was called to be an **apostle** in 1961. He served as a counselor to President Kimball, President Benson and President Hunter before becoming Church president on 12 March 1995. During his administration, he directed the most intense **temple** building program in the history of the Church and established the **Perpetual Education Fund** to help young Latter-day Saints in developing countries gain an education and become self-sufficient. He also traveled around the world, meeting Latter-day Saints and encouraging them to fellowship new converts and befriend members of other faiths. Through television interviews and national press publications, he increased media attention and improved the public image of the Church. President Hinckley died on 27 January 2008 in Salt Lake City.



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## Thomas S. Monson

Years as President: 2008–2018

Birth Date: 21 August 1927

Death Date: 2 January 2018

Thomas Spencer Monson was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on 21 August 1927. He served in the United States Navy near the close of World War II. In 1950, at age 22, he was called as **bishop** and five years later was called to serve in a **stake presidency**. From 1959 to 1962, he served as president of the Church's Canadian **Mission**, headquartered in Toronto, Ontario. Shortly after his return from Canada, at the age of 36, he was sustained to the **Quorum of the Twelve Apostles** in 1963. He served as a counselor to President Ezra Taft Benson, President Howard W. Hunter and President Gordon B. Hinckley before becoming the president of the Church on 3 February 2008.

## Russell M. Nelson

Years as President: 2018–present

Birth date: September 9, 1924

President Russell M. Nelson was sustained and set apart as the 17th president and prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ on Sunday, January 14, 2018 in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple. Prior to his service as head of the Church, President Nelson served as president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from July 15, 2015, until his call as the Church's leader. He has served as a member of that quorum since April 7, 1984.

[Read more about President Nelson.](#)



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