

## Church Officers, 1830–1839

In spring 1830, JS organized the Church of Christ with elders, priests, and teachers. Over the next five years, he developed and adapted church organization to a growing membership, adding the offices of high priest, deacon, bishop, patriarch, apostle, and seventy and organizing quorums, councils, presidencies, and bishoprics. The first chart that appears below, titled “Church Structure, 1835–1839,” outlines the ecclesiastical structure that emerged by 1836. The three subsequent charts supply the names of church officers in Kirtland, Ohio; Missouri; and the Commerce (later Nauvoo), Illinois, area. They also track major changes in personnel. Because of the constant change in church organization between 1832 and 1834—the period covered in JS’s first journal—a chart showing officers for that period is not supplied. During 1835–1836, the period covered in JS’s second journal, JS worked to refine organizational structure and fully staff church positions in preparation for the solemn assembly to be held in the House of the Lord in Kirtland. The chart dated March 1836 presents the resulting organization. The next chart, dated spring–summer 1838, approximates church organization and officers named in JS’s two 1838 Missouri journals. The final chart, dated October 1839, reflects the early reorganization efforts that followed the Mormon exodus from Missouri to Illinois. It presents church organization and leadership as it existed by the conclusion of JS’s first Illinois journal in 1839.

### Church Presidencies and Councils

At the church’s organization in April 1830, JS was recognized as first elder and Oliver Cowdery as second elder. On 8 March 1832, JS was “president of the high priesthood,” and Jesse Gause and Sidney Rigdon were his “councillers of the ministry of the presidency of th[e] high Pri[e]sthood.” The term “counsellor” was still used in a revelation of 8 March 1833 designating these officers—by now Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams—as being equal with JS in holding the keys of the kingdom.

Beginning in June 1830, JS used gatherings or “conferences” of church officers as deliberative bodies in which to conduct the business of the church, including disciplinary proceedings. In time, “general conferences” involving a substantial proportion of church officers were supplemented by more frequent ad hoc, or “special,” conferences. Beginning in 1832, the term “council” was used interchangeably with “conference” for these smaller, ad hoc meetings. JS and his counselors played leading roles in the proceedings.

JS formalized the practice by organizing in February 1834 at Kirtland “the high council of the Church of Christ,” a standing body consisting entirely of high priests. Thereafter, the term “assistant president” was generally applied to those who had earlier been called counselors to JS, and members of the high council were called the presidency’s counselors, thus avoiding confusion in the use of the term counselor. JS and his assistant presidents served as the presidency of the high council as well as the presidency of the high priesthood and therefore the presidency of the church. In July 1834, a similar high council was orga-

nized in Clay County, Missouri, which was designated the high council for Zion, and JS ordained David Whitmer president of the high council, with William W. Phelps and John Whitmer as David Whitmer's "assistants," after which JS ordained "their twelve Counsellors"—the members of the high council. Whitmer was recognized as "President, head and leader in Zion (in the absence of br. Joseph Smith jr.)."

In December 1834, JS reorganized the church presidency, adding Oliver Cowdery as an assistant president, ranking before the existing assistants, Rigdon and Williams. JS also ordained Hyrum Smith and Joseph Smith Sr. as assistant presidents.

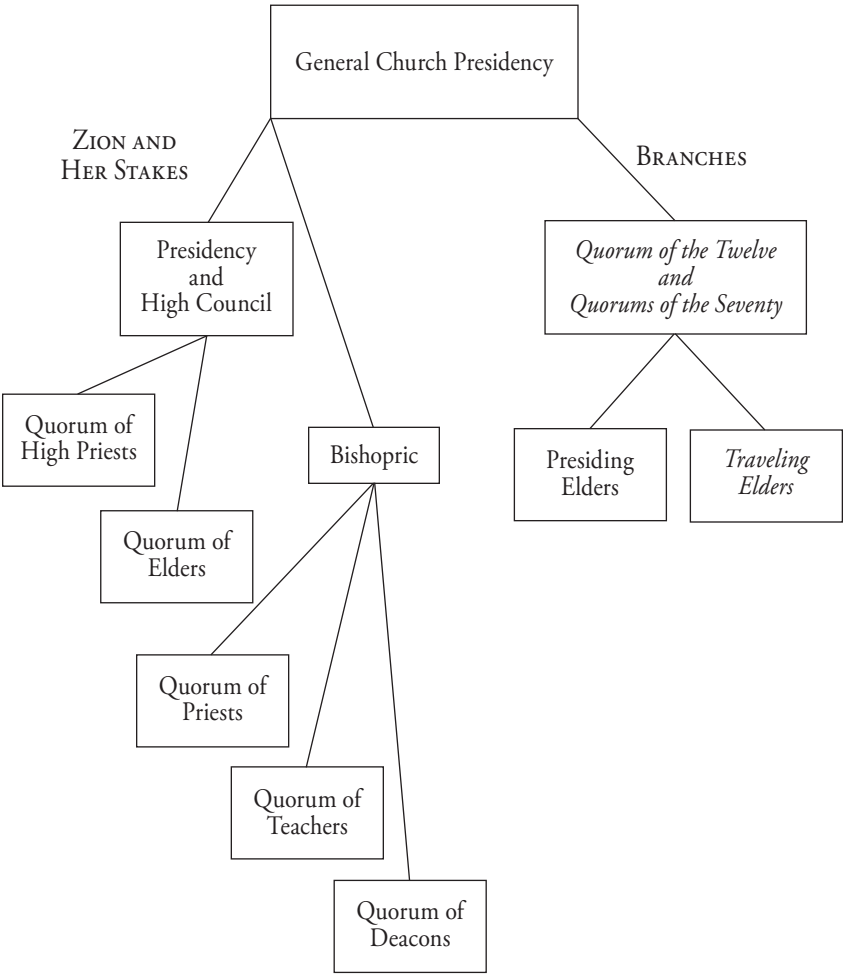
During late 1835 and early 1836, while members of the Missouri presidency and most of their high council were temporarily residing in Kirtland preparing to receive the promised endowment of power, the configuration of church councils held in Kirtland varied. Frequently a "council of the Presidency" met, consisting of members of both the general church presidency based in Kirtland and the Zion presidency from Missouri. When the high council was convened, it might consist of any combination of twelve members taken from the Zion high council from Missouri, the high council of the Kirtland stake of Zion, or the traveling high council—the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—with one to three members of the combined presidency serving as presidents of the high council for that particular meeting. Further complicating the scene, in addition to the presidencies of each high council, by 21 January 1836 one of the twelve regular members of each high council was designated its president. On that date, John Smith was recognized as "the president of the counsellors in Kirtland" and Simeon Carter as "the president, of the counsellors of Zion."

In late 1835 and early 1836, JS anticipated that he and his assistant presidents would move to Missouri by the following spring. Regulations for the approval of ordinations adopted in early 1836 seem to anticipate a level of interaction between Kirtland and Missouri church authorities that could take place only if they remained in close proximity—and it was anticipated that this would be in Missouri, not Ohio. However, the logistics of migration to Missouri and financial entanglements in Ohio precluded JS's relocation that year, and the presidency and high council of Zion eventually returned to Missouri without him and other leaders who continued to be based in Kirtland. The close working relationships, and indeed the interrelationships of 1835–1836, therefore never materialized again.

In 1837, contending with dissent in Kirtland and a perceived weakening of support among some church leaders in Missouri, JS reiterated his authority over the entire church. His 4 September letter to Saints in Missouri was headed "Joseph Smith J<sup>r</sup> Pres<sup>t</sup> of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints in all the world." It also applied the term "first Presidency" to the presidency of the church who were then located at Kirtland. This was not a new position or assertion of authority for JS but clarified arrangements that may have seemed ambiguous. Some may have misinterpreted the earlier configuration of presidencies as a decentralized leadership with one presidency responsible for each of the church's two main divisions, Missouri and Ohio. JS's reassertion of churchwide leadership caused Hepzibah Richards to write from Kirtland in January 1838 that "the presidents, Joseph & Sidney & Hiram returned from Missouri a few weeks since. They are elected to the first presidency, or to preside over all the churches instead of this place only." The term "first presidency," first used officially in 1834, came into more general use during 1838 and eventually supplanted other nomenclature.

The September 1837 conference documents a transition in terminology and organization. In Kirtland in September, JS as president and Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams as his counselors constituted “the three first presidnts of the Church.” Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith Sr., Hyrum Smith, and John Smith were now “assistant Councillors,” and the seven were “to be concidered the heads of the Church.” After this conference, use of the titles “assistant president” and “assistant counselor” diminished. The last known use of “assistant” in connection with the First Presidency during JS’s lifetime was the temporary appointment of John C. Bennett as assistant president in Nauvoo, 1841.

Church Structure, 1835–1839



**Key**  
MAJOR JURISDICTIONS  
Standing organizations or officers  
*Traveling organizations or officers*

## March 1836

During the period covered in his 1835–1836 journal, JS worked to fully organize the priesthood units in preparation for the solemn assembly that was held in the House of the Lord in Kirtland, Ohio, on 30 March 1836. This organizational effort included staffing each quorum, council, or presidency; organizing each quorum with a presidency; and clarifying relations among groups.

### GENERAL CHURCH OFFICERS

<p><i>Presidency</i>  Joseph Smith Jr., president  Oliver Cowdery, assistant president  Sidney Rigdon, assistant president  Frederick G. Williams, assistant president  Hyrum Smith, assistant president  Joseph Smith Sr., assistant president</p> <p>During the period in which Missouri officers were in Kirtland awaiting the solemn assembly, the general church presidency (based in Kirtland) and the Missouri church presidency often functioned as a general presiding council, to which JS referred as “my council of the presidency” or, more commonly, as simply “the presidency” or “the presidents.” This council of nine men or an available subset functioned in Kirtland as a presiding council until the Missouri presidency returned to its local jurisdiction.</p>	<p><i>Patriarch</i>  Joseph Smith Sr.</p>
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### OTHER OFFICERS

Zion (Clay County, Missouri) Officers	Kirtland Stake Officers	Traveling Officers
<p>The Missouri Latter-day Saints, having been driven from their homes in Jackson County, were living primarily in Clay County in March 1836.</p> <p><i>Presidency</i>  David Whitmer, president  William W. Phelps, assistant president  John Whitmer, assistant president</p> <p><i>High Council</i>  The Missouri high council apparently retained its original order, based on the 7 July 1834 casting of lots, with replacement members taking the number of their predecessors. Although John Murdock was the president of the council in March 1836, he was still listed among the other members with his original number.</p> <p>Simeon Carter  Elisha Groves  Jesse Hitchcock  Calvin Bebee  Levi Jackman  Solomon Hancock</p>	<p><i>Presidency</i>  The presidency of the church presided over the Kirtland stake and its high council.</p> <p><i>High Council</i>  John Smith, president  John Johnson  Orson Johnson  Martin Harris  Samuel Smith  Jared Carter  Joseph Coe  John P. Greene  Thomas Grover  Noah Packard  Joseph Kingsbury  Samuel James</p> <p><i>Bishopric</i>  Newel K. Whitney, bishop  Reynolds Cahoon, counselor  Vinson Knight, counselor</p> <p><i>Presidency of Quorum of High Priests</i>  Don Carlos Smith, president</p> <p>CHART CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE</p>	<p><i>Quorum of the Twelve</i>  Listed in order of seniority—that is, age at time of appointment of the original Twelve.</p> <p>Thomas B. Marsh, president  David W. Patten  Brigham Young  Heber C. Kimball  Orson Hyde  William E. McLellin  Parley P. Pratt  Luke Johnson  William Smith  Orson Pratt  John F. Boynton  Lyman Johnson</p> <p><i>Quorum of the Seventy, Presidents</i>  The presidents of the Seventy presided over the Quorum of the Seventy. The presidents were apparently ordered by seniority of age.</p> <p>Hazen Aldrich  Joseph Young  Leonard Rich  Levi Hancock</p>

OTHER OFFICERS *CONTINUED*

Zion (Clay County, Missouri) Officers	Kirtland Stake Officers	Traveling Officers
<p>Peter Whitmer Jr. Newel Knight George M. Hinkle Lyman Wight Elias Higbee John Murdock, president <i>Bishopric</i> Edward Partridge, bishop Isaac Morley, counselor John Corrill, counselor <i>Presidency of Quorum of Teachers</i> George Johnson No evidence has been found of additional quorums functioning in Missouri at this time.</p>	<p>Unidentified counselors (Gideon Carter and Warren Cowdery in May 1837) <i>Presidency of Quorum of Elders</i> Alvah Beman, president Reuben Hedlock, counselor John Morton, counselor <i>Presidency of Quorum of Priests</i> William Cowdery Jr., president Unidentified counselors <i>Presidency of Quorum of Teachers</i> Oliver Olney, president Unidentified counselors <i>Presidency of Quorum of Deacons</i> Ira Bond, president Unidentified counselors</p>	<p>Zebedee Coltrin Lyman Sherman Sylvester Smith</p>

Spring–Summer 1838

In the two years between spring 1836 and summer 1838, there were substantial changes in church leadership, the result of two principal factors. First, in response to dissent among church leaders in late 1837 and early 1838, JS oversaw or approved the removal and replacement of several officers. Second, other officers in Kirtland, Ohio, followed JS in migrating to Missouri in 1838. Some but not all Kirtland officers were replaced. A few leaders stayed behind to oversee stake matters, while most loyal Latter-day Saints prepared to move to Missouri. As Caldwell County, Missouri, filled with Latter-day Saints, immigration was steered northward to Adam-ondi-Ahman, Daviess County, Missouri, where a stake was organized on 28 June 1838.

GENERAL CHURCH OFFICERS

<p><i>First Presidency</i> During a church conference held in Kirtland in September 1837, JS presented Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and himself as “the three first presidnts of the Church.” He then presented Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith Sr., Hyrum Smith, and John Smith as “assistant Councillors.” In a conference held in Missouri two months later, Williams was removed and replaced by Hyrum Smith. The assistant counselors were not presented for sustaining at this Missouri conference, and they were not again presented as such.  Joseph Smith Jr., president Sidney Rigdon, counselor Hyrum Smith, counselor Joseph Smith Sr., assistant counselor John Smith, assistant counselor</p>	<p><i>Patriarch</i> Joseph Smith Sr.</p>
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## OTHER OFFICERS

Zion (Far West, Missouri) Officers	Kirtland Stake Officers	Adam-ondi-Ahman Stake Officers	Traveling Officers
<p><i>Presidency (Pro Tempore)</i> Thomas B. Marsh David W. Patten Brigham Young</p> <p><i>High Council</i> Simeon Carter Jared Carter Thomas Grover John P. Greene Levi Jackman Solomon Hancock George Morey Newel Knight George M. Hinkle George W. Harris Elias Higbee John Murdock,     president</p> <p><i>Patriarch</i> Isaac Morley</p> <p><i>Bishopric</i> Edward Partridge,     bishop Isaac Morley, counselor Titus Billings, counselor</p> <p><i>President of Quorum of High Priests</i> Charles Rich Don Carlos Smith, the former president of the quorum of high priests in Kirtland, followed JS in migrating from Kirtland to Missouri but, according to JS's journal, had not yet arrived there as of 6 July 1838. He was later sustained in the same position in the central stake at Commerce, Illinois, which suggests the possibility that he replaced Rich after arriving. Smith served a fund-raising mission beginning 26 September 1838.</p> <p><i>President of Quorum of Elders</i> Harvey Green</p> <p><i>President of Quorum of Priests</i> As bishop, Edward Partridge presided over the quorum of priests.</p> <p><i>President of Quorum of Teachers</i> Albert Petty</p> <p><i>President of Quorum of Deacons</i> Unidentified</p>	<p>After JS's departure from Kirtland on 12 January 1838, a few leaders stayed behind to oversee stake matters while loyal Latter-day Saints prepared to move to Missouri.</p> <p><i>Presidency</i> William Marks John Smith Reynolds Cahoon</p> <p><i>Bishop</i> Newel K. Whitney Reynolds Cahoon and Vinson Knight served earlier as Whitney's counselors in Kirtland, but Cahoon was pressed into service in the temporary presidency of the stake in January 1838 shortly after JS's departure, and both apparently migrated to Missouri by summer 1838.</p> <p><i>President of Quorum of High Priests</i> Hiram Kellogg</p> <p><i>Presidency of Quorum of Elders</i> John Morton, president Hezekiah Fisk,     counselor Lahasa Hollister,     counselor</p>	<p><i>Presidency</i> John Smith Reynolds Cahoon Lyman Wight</p> <p><i>Bishop (Pro Tempore)</i> Vinson Knight</p> <p><i>High Council</i> It is unclear whether there was an established order of counselors in the Adam-ondi-Ahman high council.</p> <p>John Lemon Daniel Stanton Mayhew Hillman Daniel Carter Isaac Perry Harrison Sagers Alanson Brown Thomas Gordon Lorenzo Barnes George A. Smith Harvey Olmstead Ezra Thayer</p>	<p><i>Quorum of the Twelve</i> Quorum members held seniority according to age.</p> <p>Thomas B. Marsh,     president David W. Patten Brigham Young Heber C. Kimball Orson Hyde Parley P. Pratt William Smith Orson Pratt</p> <p>Quorum members William E. McLellin, Luke Johnson, John F. Boynton, and Lyman Johnson had been excommunicated. An 8 July 1838 revelation appointed John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and Willard Richards to replace the former quorum members, but none were ordained to office before December 1838.</p> <p><i>Quorum of the Seventy, Presidents</i> The presidents of the Quorum of the Seventy were reorganized in April 1837 amid confusion over the relationship between high priests and seventies. Presidents of the Seventy who had been previously ordained high priests were reassigned to the high priests quorum, and new presidents of the Seventy were appointed to replace the outgoing high priests. The presidents presided over three quorums of seventy. It is unclear whether there was an order of seniority among the presidents.</p> <p>Joseph Young Levi Hancock James Foster Daniel Miles Josiah Butterfield Henry Harriman Zera Pulsipher</p>

October 1839

Following their forced expulsion from Missouri in spring 1839, the Latter-day Saints regrouped in Illinois. After JS’s escape from incarceration in April 1839, he began to reorganize the Latter-day Saints at Commerce (later Nauvoo), Illinois, and across the river in Iowa. Banished from the land they considered Zion, the Latter-day Saints denominated Commerce, now the central church unit, a “stake” like other major church units.

GENERAL CHURCH OFFICERS

<i>First Presidency</i> Joseph Smith Jr., president Sidney Rigdon, counselor Hyrum Smith, counselor	<i>Patriarch</i> Joseph Smith Sr.
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OTHER OFFICERS

Commerce Stake Officers	Iowa Stake Officers	Traveling Officers
<i>President</i> William Marks <i>High Council</i> It is unclear whether there was an established order of counselors in the Commerce high council. Samuel Bent, the oldest member of the council, may have been president. Samuel Bent George W. Harris Henry Sherwood David Fullmer Alpheus Cutler William Huntington Thomas Grover Newel Knight Charles Rich David Dort Seymour Brunson Lewis Wilson <i>Bishops</i> Newel K. Whitney, Middle Ward Edward Partridge, Upper Ward Vinson Knight, Lower Ward <i>President of Quorum of High Priests</i> Don Carlos Smith	<i>President</i> John Smith <i>High Council</i> It is unclear whether there was an established order of counselors in the Iowa high council. Asahel Smith John Burk Abraham Smoot Richard Howard Willard Snow Erastus Snow David Pettigrew Elijah Fordham Edward Fisher Elias Smith John Patten Stephen Chase <i>Bishop</i> Alanson Ripley	<i>Quorum of the Twelve</i> The original members continued in their age-based seniority; newer members followed, ordered by age amongst themselves. On 16 January 1839, the First Presidency instructed Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young to appoint the oldest of the original members to be president of the quorum. Young was sustained as president on 14 April 1840. Brigham Young, president Heber C. Kimball Orson Hyde Parley P. Pratt William Smith Orson Pratt John E. Page John Taylor Wilford Woodruff George A. Smith A July 1838 revelation appointed John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and Willard Richards to replace excommunicated quorum members William E. McLellan, Luke Johnson, John F. Boynton, and Lyman Johnson. Page and Taylor were ordained 19 December 1838. Woodruff was ordained 26 April 1839, as was George A. Smith, the latter filling the vacancy left by the apostasy of Thomas B. Marsh. Richards,
CHART CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE		



OTHER OFFICERS *CONTINUED*

Commerce Stake Officers	Iowa Stake Officers	Traveling Officers
		<p>still proselytizing in England, was not ordained until 14 April 1840. By this time, David W. Patten had been killed in the Missouri conflicts and Thomas B. Marsh had apostatized, as noted above, with Orson Hyde, who soon returned to the church. A conference held near Quincy, Illinois, on 4 May 1839 resolved that the apostolic privileges of Orson Hyde and William Smith be “suspended” until the next church conference, at which time they would be allowed to give an account of their conduct. Both were “restored” to their offices at a conference held in October 1839. The quorum reached a full contingent of twelve men with the appointment of Lyman Wight in 1841.</p> <p><i>Presidents of the Seventy</i> The presidents of the Seventy presided over three quorums of seventy and a number of seventy not assigned to a specific quorum. It is unclear whether there was an established order of seniority among the presidents.</p> <p>Joseph Young Levi Hancock James Foster Daniel Miles Josiah Butterfield Henry Harriman Zera Pulsipher</p>