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# Mormon Worship

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**Mormon Worship.** Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter\*-day Saints (LDS), worship God, the eternal Father, and Jesus Christ.

**Sacred Spaces.** LDS doctrine designates temples as the most sacred sites of worship, the believers' homes as the second most privileged spaces for devotional acts, and the chapels, or meetinghouses, as the third most important. A temple (more than 100 worldwide in 2000) is a holy place, a "house of the Lord."

**Sacraments.** Only members in good standing may enter the temple to perform sacraments or "saving ordinances" for themselves and vicariously for the dead, such as the following: proxy baptism\*, priesthood\* ordination, washing and anointing, clothing in sacred garments worn throughout life, "endowment" (the making of a covenant, including obedience and sexual purity), marriage, and sealing (a ceremony that promises that family bonds will endure eternally). Mormons are reluctant to discuss the particulars of temple worship publicly, for it is the most sacred aspect of their faith.

The home is the most sacred locale outside the temple. LDS families are encouraged to practice personal and family prayer, daily Scripture readings, and Monday night "family home evenings," which include song, prayer, a lesson based on a theme from the Gospels, and/or a family activity.

The majority of a Mormon's public devotional life unfolds in a congregational meetinghouse known as the ward house or chapel.

The principal weekly worship service is the "sacrament meeting," attended by all members. LDS prophet Joseph Smith taught that everything in the gospel is an appendage to the doctrine of Christ's atonement\*. Accordingly, the purpose of the Sunday meeting is to partake of the Eucharist, "the sacrament," in commemoration of the Lord's suffering in Gethsemane and death on Calvary. Broken bread and cups of water are passed to members of the congregation with solemnity; two rote prayers are spoken by priests (usually young men of 16–18 years), who consecrate the emblems. Congregational singing opens and closes the meeting and precedes the passing of the sacrament, and devotional talks given by lay members follow it (there is no professional clergy). No formal liturgy exists. The only variation in format occurs on the first Sunday of the month, when members spontaneously approach the pulpit and "bear testimony," or publicly profess their faith in Christ and cardinal LDS tenets. Services are always conducted in the local language, but are otherwise essentially identical in all countries and cultures.

Like many Christians, Mormons believe that true religion and worship require a life of service. With no paid ministers, the largest missionary force in the world, and a comprehensive welfare program, committed Mormons attempt to enact the LDS Scripture passage that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God." **See also LATTER-DAY SAINTS, CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF; MORMON, BOOK OF; SMITH, JOSEPH; YOUNG, BRIGHAM.**

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