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# Solemn Assembly

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D&C 108:4

In this revelation, Lyman Sherman is admonished to “wait patiently until the solemn assembly shall be called of my servants, then you shall be remembered with the first of mine elders, and receive right by ordination with the rest of mine elders whom I have chosen” (D&C 108:4).

A solemn assembly denotes “a sacred, sober, and reverent occasion when the Saints assemble under the direction of the First Presidency.”<sup>1</sup> The term “solemn assembly” was first used in the Old Testament to describe important gatherings during Passover and the Feast of the Tabernacles. Since the dedication of the first temple in ancient Jerusalem, the term has also been used in connection with temple dedications. Such was the case with the Kirtland Temple.

On March 27, 1836, Joseph Smith invited the Saints to participate in a solemn assembly where priesthood quorums and the general membership would sustain Church leaders and Joseph would deliver the dedicatory prayer. In that prayer, Joseph acknowledged that the Saints had convened in a solemn assembly and asked the Lord to let His glory rest down upon them as a blessing for their obedience.

The dedication proceedings of the Kirtland Temple set a precedent for later solemn assemblies. There are now three purposes for holding such assemblies: (1) dedication of temples, (2) special instruction to priesthood leaders, and (3) sustaining a new President of the Church. There is a pattern set for solemn assemblies that distinguishes them from other general Church meetings:

The priesthood quorums, commencing with the First Presidency, stand and manifest by the uplifted right hand their willingness to sustain the

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<sup>1</sup> David B. Haight, “Solemn Assemblies,” *Ensign*, November 1994.

President of the Church as a prophet, seer, and revelator, and uphold him by their confidence, faith, and prayers. The priesthood quorums of the Church so manifest by their vote. Then the general body of all the Saints stand and signify their willingness to do the same. The other leaders of the Church are similarly sustained in their offices and callings.<sup>2</sup>

Following the solemn assembly in which Howard W. Hunter was sustained as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Elder David B. Haight said:

We have sustained as God's prophet on earth a kind, sensitive servant of God—Howard William Hunter. He is a humble, faithful, scholarly, and gentle soul, one who has experienced deep sorrow and suffered serious infirmities and even a threat upon his life, but, with his Scottish ancestral determination, has never given in or given up.

How tenderly he cared for his Claire during her illness, sitting by her bedside night after night, caring for her every need. We are witnesses of President Hunter's deep sorrow and loneliness in the slow losing of his eternal companion.

President Hunter understands compassion, thankfulness, graciousness, charity, and gratitude towards individuals and towards mankind, and he has the saintly bearing of a prophet of God. He, in my estimation, is truly Christlike. ...

In February 1950, Bishop Howard W. Hunter was called to be the new stake president of the Pasadena California Stake by Elders Stephen L Richards and Harold B. Lee. President Hunter not only served his stake members with distinction but assisted the expanding Church in many priesthood leadership assignments in welfare, education, and missionary opportunities, and he had a significant role in the building of the Los Angeles Temple. ...

The calling to the apostleship was issued to Brother Hunter by President David O. McKay in October 1959. On that occasion President McKay said to him, "The Lord has spoken. You are called to be one of his special

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<sup>2</sup> David B. Haight, "Solemn Assemblies," *Ensign*, November 1994.

witnesses, and tomorrow you will be sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve.”<sup>3</sup>

I have the honor and privilege on this day to testify of President Hunter. With all my heart and every fiber of my body, I support, sustain, and express my love to President Howard W. Hunter as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the noble men—President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson—who stand by his side in the First Presidency. All are great men of God—faithful and fearless—who, as inspired servants of God, will lead the Church forward, on to greater heights and expansion throughout the world.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> David B. Haight, “Solemn Assemblies,” *Ensign*, November 1994.

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