

Insights on Church Leadership

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Effective Correlation

A correlation council: a bishopric (or stake presidency) and the presidents of the organizations and quorums meet together and combine their resources to fulfill the mission of the church. We can also borrow the "concept" of a correlation council and extend it to any gathering of the leaders of an organization, quorum, or class.

Somehow some of us still struggle with the idea of correlation. We spend most of our meetings dealing with calendars, paperwork, and fail to address the needs of the people. All that change as the presidencies of the organizations and quorums gain a vision of the Church as a kingdom with many interrelated departments and functions, and understand the spiritual nature¹ of the work they are performing.

The Purpose of Correlation

In the revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord suggested that the service performed in his house could not be improvised:

"Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer ... fasting ... faith ... learning ... glory ... order, a house of God² ... Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.³ ... Go ye out from among the nations, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon. But verily, thus saith the Lord, let not your flight be in haste, but let all things be prepared before you ...⁴"

The idea then is to use our administrative meetings to plan how to use our resources to accomplish the mission of the church. So in these meetings we can define how to use our material resources (talks, hymns, prayers, lessons, visual aids, plays, special activities etc.) to invite the Spirit of the Lord to our worship services and into the lives of those we have been assigned to serve.

¹ See chapter 13 for a discussion on the spiritual nature of our seemingly bureaucratic functions.

² D&C 88:119

³ D&C 132:8

⁴ D&C 133:14-15

The next step is to determine who among our human resources (stake and full-time missionaries, visiting teachers, home teachers, or other regularly or specially assigned individuals,) will "give life" to those material resources we have chosen to use, and who will be responsible to invite both members and non-members to attend the activities we are planning. Since we may--and that's especially true in areas where the Church is still new--have a limited number of individuals available to perform these services, in our planning meetings we must also carefully consider how to delegate and assign these duties wisely.

Councils in the Church of Christ are fully productive only when their members are united in faith. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the order that existed in the councils of the ancient days:

"I had never set before any council in all the order in which it ought to be conducted, which, perhaps, has deprived the councils of some or many blessings. ... in ancient days councils were conducted with such strict propriety, that no one was allowed to whisper, be weary, leave the room, or get uneasy in the least, until the voice of the Lord, by revelation, or the voice of the council by the Spirit, was obtained, which has not been observed in this Church to the present time. It was understood in ancient days, that if one man could stay in council, another could; and if the president could spend his time, the members could also; but in our councils, generally, one will be uneasy, another asleep; one praying, another not; one's mind on the business of the council, and another thinking on something else."⁵

"... could we all come together with one heart and one mind in perfect faith the veil might as well be rent today as next week, or any other time ..."⁶

We can see that the degree of unity among the members of a council will determine the continuity and the strength of their spiritual experiences. Those experiences will in turn impact the quality of the decisions they will make. Therefore, it is important that all members of a council strive to let the spirit of revelation flow by having their thoughts and prayers focused on the matters to be discussed.

A Correlation Agenda

A good idea to help us all focus our thoughts and guide our prayers is to give each member of the council an agenda of the topics to be discussed in an upcoming meeting. Each member of the council should have a copy of the agenda. At the end of this chapter I included an old agenda I used years ago when I served as a bishop. Its purpose was to serve as a "schoolmaster," helping all members of the ward council focus their thoughts on the several aspects of the mission of the Church.

Revelation comes after pondering⁷. An agenda continually reminds us the topics that must occupy our minds as leaders. Should the Primary be involved in preaching the gospel? Most certainly--after all, children also have non-member friends. Should the Relief Society be involved in family history? You answer this one.

We must remember that the Ward Mission Leader and the High Priests Group Leader are just coordinators of, respectively, the missionary and the temple work in the ward. The concern and the initiative for missionary and for genealogical activities may come from every organization and quorum. Every organization and quorum is partly responsible for carrying out the mission of the Church--preaching the gospel, perfecting the saints, and redeeming the dead. When a bishopric coordinates all organizations and

⁵ TPJS, p.69. February 12, 1834.

⁶ *ibid.*, p.8. October 25, 1831.

⁷ 1 Nephi 11:1; Moroni 10:3-5

quorums to work as a team in all aspects of the mission of the Church their activities become interrelated. That is what correlation is all about.

This term, "interrelated" (or "interdependent") also implies that all organizations and quorums are equally important. All need each other; and all are equally necessary to the building up of the kingdom of God, so far as the current status of things is concerned. For example, the father in a less-active family will be the focus for the Elders Quorum or the High Priests Group⁸; the mother will be the focus for the Relief Society; the youth, the for Young Men or Young Women; the children, for the Primary. The organizations will work in partnership for the benefit and salvation of the family.

At first the use of a correlation agenda may be close to disastrous: we sometimes get so used to talking about the shortage of chalk, or about the noise of the children, or about the number of flowers to be bought to the next ward social, that the change of subjects from purely temporal to temporal with a spiritual focus may leave some of us speechless. Don't be surprised if in the first meetings nobody has any subject to correlate. Be patient, allow some time for the council to ponder on those topics, and then wait for the results. How can we be sure that positive results will come? Simple. This is the Lord's work.

Members of presidencies can help other leaders find the issues to be correlated during regular interviews. We may also use formal committees (especially in the Relief Society and in the Quorums) appointed to gather information on each specific area of the agenda. For example, in one meeting the presidency may decide to assign certain individuals to find information about unlisted job openings or low-cost educational opportunities available in the community. This information will later be shared with the other council members, who will in turn use it to help ward members in their efforts to become self-reliant.

At first, the idea of these committees can be a little confusing to some people, especially those who like to do everything "their way," but when we realize how independent we can be to organize these committees and also when we envision the potential benefits in the lives of the members, we start to get enthusiastic, and soon our meetings will become more effective, and the Spirit will also be poured more abundantly on the lives of the people.

The Role of the Auxiliary Organizations

Some of the church's organizations are called "auxiliaries" because they help the priesthood carry out the mission of the church. We should be careful with the term "auxiliary", since in some languages and cultures it carries the connotation of "secondary." They are of no lesser importance in the Church of Christ, and their objective is the same as the priesthood's: "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man⁹." The words of President Spencer W. Kimball, referring to the Relief Society, help us catch the correct vision:

"Relief Society complements priesthood training. The Relief Society is the Lord's organization for women. It complements the priesthood training given to the brethren. There is a power in this organization that has not yet been fully exercised to strengthen the homes of Zion and build the kingdom of God--nor will it until both the sisters and the priesthood catch the vision of Relief Society.¹⁰"

Therefore, a discussion of which organization would be the most important, or would have priority over the others is useless. All organizations and programs are equally important, and if we deal with

⁸ Yes, High Priests can also become less-active if not properly cared for.

⁹ Moses 1:39

¹⁰ Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.498. March 1976.

them without assigning ranks we will begin to visualize in an infinitesimal scale how the Lord works in eternity:

"He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever."¹¹

A Sample Ward Council Meeting Agenda

- ◆ Invocation
- ◆ Review of Minutes from Previous Meeting
- ◆ General Business: Calendar and Budget Review

Missionary Work (Counsel)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status Report <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Names and Status of Investigators 1.2 Council Members' Visits to Investigators with the Missionaries 2. Missionary Support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Referrals 2.2 Fellowshiping New Members and Investigators 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Missionary Activities and Programs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Special Meetings or Firesides 3.2 Expositions 3.3 Distribution of Scriptures, etc. 4. Community Service & Public Relations 5. Prospective Missionaries 6. Information About Ward Members on Missions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Council Letters to Missionaries
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Temporal Welfare (Assists)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Temporal Welfare <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Current Welfare Needs 1.2 Health Concerns 1.3 Educational Opportunities 1.4 Employment Opportunities 1.5 Home Storage 2. Spiritual Welfare <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Special Needs 2.2 Ordinances and Ordinations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Members' Activity <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Attendance in Meetings 3.2 Report on Retention of New Converts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.2.1 New Convert Checklist 3.3 New Callings and Assignments 3.4 Service Projects to Solve Members' Temporal Needs 3.5 Future Social Activities (cultural and sports)
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Family History & Temple Work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family History <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Report on Family History Activities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1 Journals or Oral Histories & Books of Remembrance 1.1.2 Status of Extraction of Names 1.1.3 Submission of Names for Temple Work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Temple Work <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Temple Attendance 2.2 Upcoming Temple Excursions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.2.1 Financial Assistance for Temple Patrons 2.3 Progress of Temple Preparation Seminar
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- ◆ Review Assignments to Council Members and Organizations
- ◆ Benediction

About the Author



Marcus Helvécio Tourinho de Assis Martins is a native of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in July, 1972. In August of 1978 he became the first black member to serve as a full-time missionary for the Church in the 20th century, serving in the Brazil São Paulo North Mission.

Since then, brother Martins served as bishop, counselor in branch presidencies, member of stake high councils, stake and ward executive secretary, high priests group leader, ward mission leader, temple officiator, stake and ward sunday school president, and teacher in primary, sunday school, and institute of religion. In the early 1980's he also translated the “Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ” into Portuguese.

Brother Martins has worked over the years as a systems analyst and independent consultant for the Brazilian government and a number of private corporations. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology of Religion, Race and Ethnic Relations, a Master's degree in Organizational Behavior, and a bachelor's in Business Management. He taught religion and sociology classes at Brigham Young University, Ricks College, and currently serves as chair of the department of religious education at Brigham Young University-Hawaii.

He and Sister Mirian Barbosa Martins, herself a native of Petrópolis, Brazil, and a returned missionary with several years of leadership experience, have four children: Flávio, Natália, Felipe, and Cristina.