

New Youth Programs

Latter-day Saints young men now will repeat a theme each week, just as their female counterparts have been doing for years. Activity Days, which have been held for girls in the past, now will be called **Primary activities**, and will include boys and girls, though they will meet separately. And there will be new rewards for both sexes who accomplish their individual goals.

These were among details about the new “Children and youth” program discussed Sunday in a 90-minute Face-to-Face presentation, broadcast globally from the Tabernacle on downtown Salt Lake City’s Temple Square. This new initiative will replace the faith’s existing children and young programs—including Boy Scouts – come January 1st.

The evening show featured multiple video clips from around the world as well as live participation from church leaders, including apostle Gerrit W. Gong, Primary General President Joy D. Jones, Young Women General President Bonnie h. Cardon and young Men General President Stephen W. Owen. “Our great desire is for you to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ,” Gong said in his opening remarks.

The apostle and other leaders reiterated that **all goals would be individual**, not assigned by the church. **Primary-age children**, starting the year they turn 8 years old, will be expected to choose one goal each year, while older youths will be urged to meet two goals annually in each area of growth—intellectual, spiritual, social and physical.

Children and youths will be given two types of emblems; belonging and achievement. To signify belonging, all 8-year-olds will receive a picture of the temple and a ring with a CTR (choose the right) shield surrounding a temple symbol.

At 12, boys will get a ring that point them to the temple, and girls will get medallion and gemstone necklace. Both groups will receive temple recommends holders.

At 18, young men will receive a vial for consecrated oil to use with priesthood blessings, given only by males, and young women will get a pendant to add to their necklaces.

As an emblem of achievement if they complete their goals and fulfill gospel requirements, young men and women will get a certificate signed by the governing First Presidency, the church’s top leaders, and a replica of the Christus statue in a crystal arch. Both groups will still go camping and participate in activities they choose, including girls going rappelling as in one of the videos. In addition to camping, trek and youth conferences, the teens can attend new multiday For the Strength of young conferences, modeled after Brigham Young University’s Especially for youth events.

Some gender differences are evident, however, in these for the two groups. The new Young Women theme, introduced at last month’s General Conference, uses “Heavenly Parents” as a term for deity (since Mormonism teaches of a Father and Mother in Heaven) while the Young Men theme mentions only “God.”

The girls promise to “strengthen my home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, and receive the ordinances and blessings of the holy temple,” while the boys say they will “use his [God’s] priesthood to serve other” and “prepare to become a diligent missionary, loyal husband, and loving father by being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.” Both sexes use the word “strive” to express a sense of effort.

That reflects the new Children and Youth logo, which features a symbol of the temple and the words, "Strive to Be." During Sunday's broadcast, the leaders encouraged members to use the phrase as a hashtag on social media as well.

In a surprise appearance, Latter-day Saint pop star David Archuleta introduced a new song, using a scripture from faith's foundational text, the Book of Mormon. It read, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."

The evening closed with a couple of families who separately sang a new Primary song in English and Spanish, "I Will Walk With Jesus." Article by Peggy Fletcher Stack in November 18, 2019 issue of the S.L. Tribune, "LDS Church shares more details on Primary activities for young men and women."