

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • DECEMBER 2005

# Ensign



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**Treasured in Her Heart, by Kathy Lawrence**

*Mary "brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes. . . . And all they that heard [of the angel saying this infant was Christ the Lord] wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:7, 18-19).*



# Ensign

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## Prophet of God, Mighty Servant



*Those who would accept the revelation without accepting the revelator—the Prophet Joseph Smith—would pluck the fruit from the tree while cutting off the root from which it grows.*

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

**A**n acquaintance said to me one day: “I admire your church very much. I think I could accept everything about it—except Joseph Smith.” To which I responded: “That statement is a contradiction. If you accept the revelation, you must accept the revelator.”

It is a constantly recurring mystery to me how some people speak with admiration for the Church and its work while at the same time disdaining him through whom, as a servant of the Lord, came the framework of all that the Church is, of all that it teaches, and of all that it stands for. They would pluck the fruit from the tree while cutting off the root from which it grows.

The code of health followed by Latter-day Saints, which is so widely praised in these days of cancer and heart research, is in reality a revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1833 as “a Word of Wisdom” from the Lord (see D&C 89:1). In no conceivable way could it have come of the dietary literature of the time nor from the mind of the man who announced it. Today, in terms of medical research, it is a miracle whose observance has saved incalculable

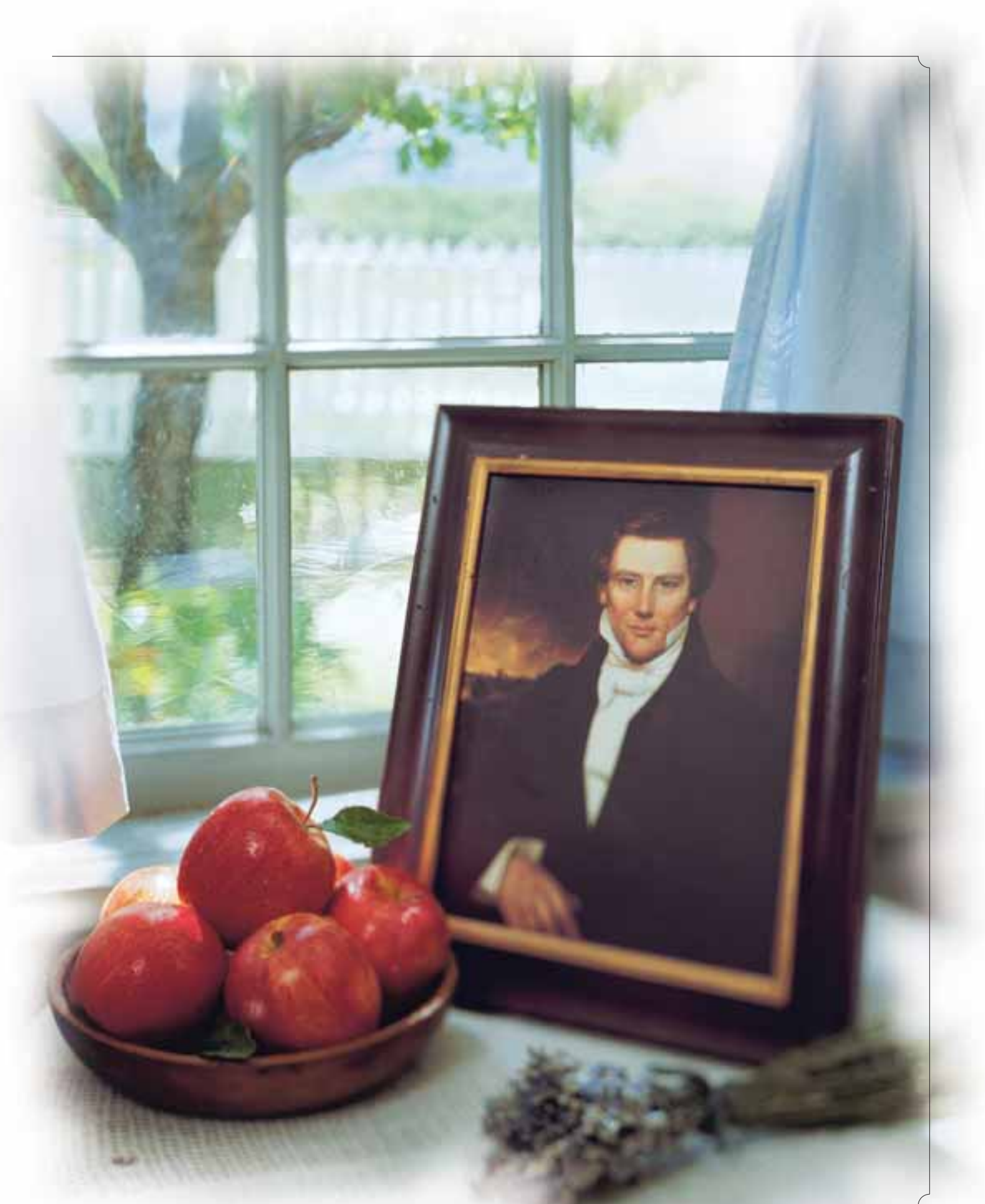
suffering and premature death for uncounted tens of thousands.

Family history research has become a popular hobby in recent years. Thousands of eyes across the world have been turned to what is described as the Latter-day Saint treasure-house of family history data. But this tremendous program of the Church did not result from the pursuit of a hobby. It is an extension of the teachings of Joseph Smith the Prophet. He declared that we cannot be saved without our forebears, those who did not have a knowledge of the gospel and consequently could not fulfill its requirements nor partake of its opportunities (see D&C 128:9, 15).

The remarkable organization of the Church was framed by him as he was directed by revelation, and no modification or adaptation of that organization is ever considered without searching the revelations set forth by the Prophet.

Even the welfare program, which some are prone to regard as of rather recent origin, is founded and operated strictly upon principles enunciated by Joseph Smith in the early years of the Church. This is likewise true of the family home evening program, which is







no more than an extension of early revelation on the responsibility of parents “to bring up your children in light and truth” (D&C 93:40).

### Proclaiming a Prophet

Once while riding in a plane, I engaged in conversation with a young man who was seated beside me. We moved from one subject to another and then came to the matter of religion. He said that he had read considerably about the Latter-day Saints, that he had found much to admire in their practices, but that he had a definite prejudice concerning the story of the origin of the Church and particularly Joseph Smith. He was an active member of another organization, and when I asked where he had acquired his information, he indicated that it had come from publications of his church. I asked what company he worked for. He proudly replied that he was a sales representative for an international computer company. I then asked whether he would think it fair for his customers to learn of the qualities of its products from a representative of its leading competitor. He replied with a smile, “I think I get the point of what you’re trying to say.”

I took from my case a copy of the Doctrine and Covenants and read to him the words of the Lord expressed through Joseph Smith, words which are the source of those practices my friend had come to admire in us while disdaining the man through whom they had come. Before we parted, he agreed to read the literature I would send to him. I promised him that if he would do so prayerfully he would know the truth not only of these doctrines and practices which had interested him, but also of the man through whom they were introduced. I then gave him my



WE DO NOT WORSHIP THE PROPHET JOSEPH.  
BUT WE RESPECT HIM; WE REVERENCE HIM  
AS AN INSTRUMENT IN THE HANDS OF THE  
ALMIGHTY IN RESTORING TO THE EARTH  
THE ANCIENT TRUTHS OF THE DIVINE  
GOSPEL, TOGETHER WITH  
THE PRIESTHOOD.

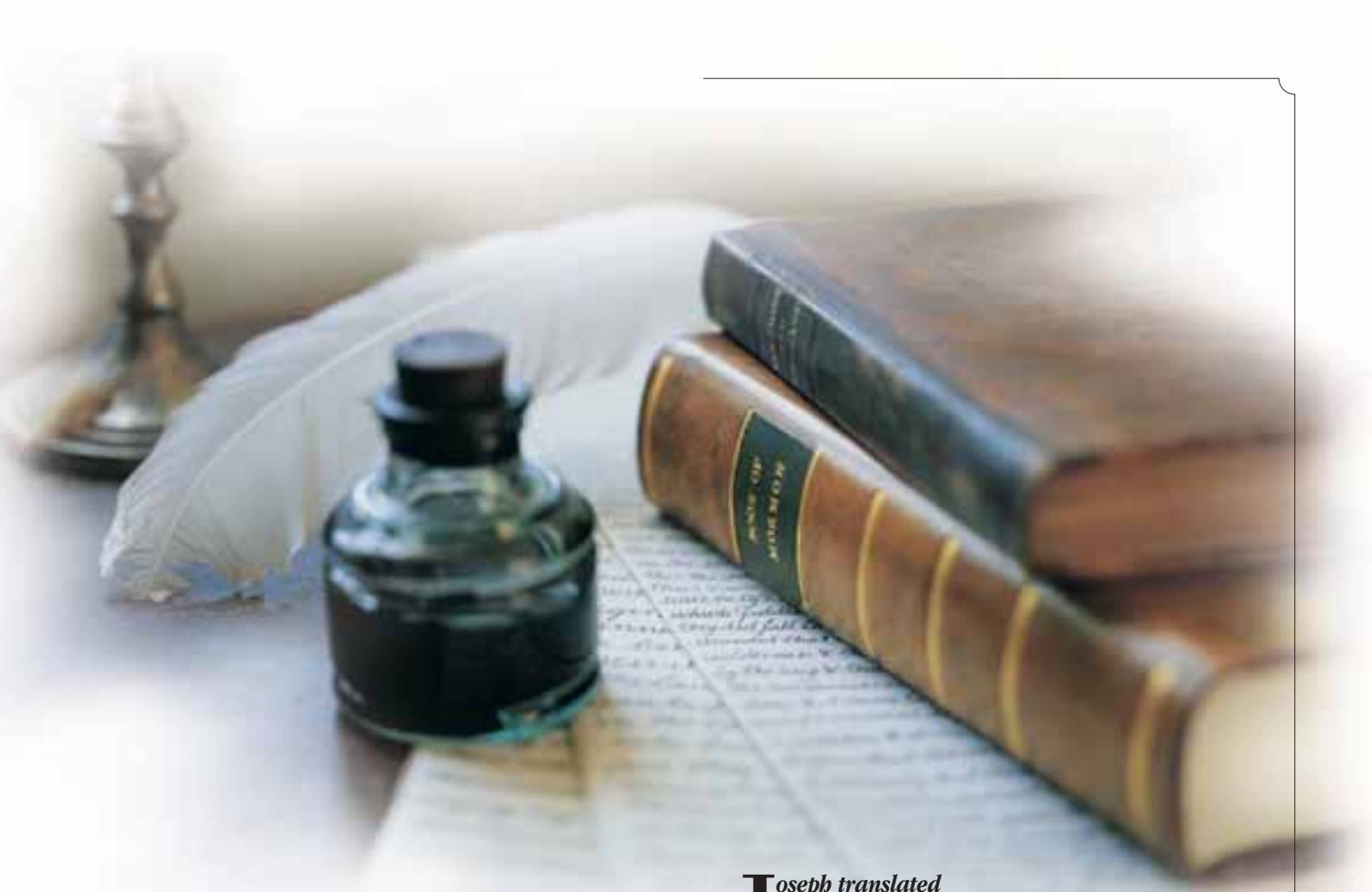
testimony of my conviction concerning the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith. That baby boy born 200 years ago this month in humble circumstances in rural Vermont was fore-ordained to become a great leader in the fulfilling of our Father’s plan for His children on earth.

We do not worship the Prophet. We worship God our Eternal Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But we acknowledge the Prophet; we proclaim him; we respect him; we reverence him as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in restoring to the earth the ancient truths of the divine gospel, together with the priesthood through which the authority of God is exercised in the affairs of His Church and for the blessing of His people.

The story of Joseph’s life is the story of a miracle. He was born in poverty. He was reared in adversity. He was driven from place to place, falsely accused, and illegally imprisoned. He was murdered at the age of 38. Yet in the brief space of 20 years preceding his death, he accomplished what none other has accomplished in an entire lifetime.

He translated and published the Book of Mormon, a volume which has since been retranslated into scores of languages and which is accepted by millions across the earth as the word of God. The revelations he received and other writings he produced are likewise scripture to these millions. The total in book pages constitutes approximately twice the volume of the entire New Testament of the Bible, and it all came through one man in the space of a few years.

In this same period he established an organization which for 175 years has withstood every adversity and challenge and is as effective today in governing a worldwide membership of some 12 million as it was in governing a membership of 300 in 1830. There are those doubters who have strained to explain this remarkable organization as the product of the times in which he lived. That organization, I submit, was as peculiar, as unique, and as remarkable then as it is today. It was not a product of the times. It came as a revelation from God.



### **Immortality and Eternity**

Joseph Smith's vision of man's immortal nature reached from an existence before birth to the eternities beyond the grave. He taught that salvation is universal in that all men will become the beneficiaries of the Resurrection through the Atonement wrought by the Savior. But beyond this gift is the requirement of obedience to the principles of the gospel and the promise of consequent happiness in this life and exaltation in the life to come.

Nor was the gospel he taught limited in application to those of his own and future generations. The mind of Joseph Smith, tutored by the God of heaven, encompassed all mankind of all generations. Both the living and the dead must have the opportunity to partake of gospel ordinances.

Peter of old declared: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6). In the case of the dead there must be vicarious work if they are to be judged according to men in the flesh, and in order to accomplish

**J**oseph translated and published the Book of Mormon, a volume which has since been retranslated into scores of languages and which is accepted by millions across the earth as the word of God.

this, they must be identified; hence the great family history program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was not established to satisfy the interests of a hobby but to accomplish the eternal purposes of God.

Within the space of that 20 years preceding his death,

Joseph Smith set in motion a program for carrying the gospel to the nations of the earth. I marvel at the boldness with which he moved. Even in the infant days of the Church, in times of dark adversity, men were called to leave homes and families, to cross the sea, to proclaim the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Prophet's mind, his vision encompassed the entire earth.

For our general conference meetings twice each year, members gather in North, Central, and South America; in the British Isles and Africa; in the nations of Europe; in the islands and continents of the Pacific; and in the ancient



lands of Asia. These are the flowering of the vision of Joseph Smith, the prophet of God. He was indeed a mighty seer who saw this day and greater days yet to come as the work of the Lord moves over the earth.

This magnificent flowering would amaze those men with painted faces who, in a cowardly attack, shot and killed the defenseless Prophet that sultry June day in 1844. It would amaze Governor Thomas Ford of the state of Illinois, who had pledged to protect the Prophet and then left him to the mercy of the merciless mob. It was this same Thomas Ford who concluded in his history that Joseph Smith “never could succeed in establishing a system of policy which looked to permanent success in the future” (quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:347).

It is this same Thomas Ford who today lies buried in a cemetery in Peoria, Illinois, largely forgotten, while the man he had judged a failure is remembered with gratitude over the earth.

#### **Praise to the Man**

When I was a boy 12 years of age, my father took me to a meeting of the priesthood of the stake in which we lived. I sat on the back row while he, as president of the stake, sat on the stand. At the opening of that meeting, the first of its kind I had ever attended, 300 or 400 men stood. They were from varied backgrounds and many vocations, but each had in his heart the same conviction, out of which together they sang these great words:

*Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!  
Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.  
Blessed to open the last dispensation,  
Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.*  
(“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27)

Something happened within me as I heard those men of faith sing. There came into my boyish heart a knowledge, placed there by the Holy Spirit, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of the Almighty. In the many years that have since passed, years in which I have read much of

his words and works, that knowledge has grown stronger and ever more certain. Mine has been the privilege of bearing witness on continents north and south, east and west, that he was and is a prophet of God, a mighty servant and testifier of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Great is his glory and endless his priesthood.  
Ever and ever the keys he will hold.  
Faithful and true, he will enter his kingdom,  
Crowned in the midst of the prophets of old.*  
(*Hymns*, no. 27)

That testimony I reaffirm now, in the name of Him of whom Joseph Smith was a witness and of whom I also am a witness, even the Lord Jesus Christ. ■

#### **IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS**

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. A few examples follow:

1. Show a picture of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and invite family members to tell what they know about him. Make a list of their responses. Compare this list to what President Hinckley says in this article. Discuss ways family members can better know the Prophet and his teachings. You may want to encourage family members to plan a special family activity on December 23rd to celebrate Joseph’s 200th birthday.
2. Invite family members to share experiences they have had talking to others about the Prophet Joseph Smith. Read about President Hinckley’s experiences. Consider practicing what a member could say to someone who asks about Joseph Smith.
3. Read or sing “Praise to the Man” (*Hymns*, no. 27), and study President Hinckley’s testimony at the end of the article. Invite family members to write or share their thoughts and feelings about the life and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith.



## FAMILY OF JOSEPH SMITH SR. AND LUCY MACK SMITH

BACKGROUND: AFTER MUCH CONTEMPLATION, © AL ROUNDS, MAY NOT BE COPIED; JOSEPH SMITH SR. PORTRAIT AND FAMILY SKETCHES BY WILLIAM WHITAKER; LUCY MACK SMITH PORTRAIT BY LEE GREENE RICHARDS



**Joseph SMITH Sr.** was born July 12, 1771, in Topsfield, Massachusetts. He married **Lucy MACK** on January 24, 1796, in Tunbridge, Vermont. Lucy was born July 8, 1775, in Gilsun, New Hampshire. They were the parents of 11 children, listed here in order of birth. Joseph Sr. died September 14, 1840, in Nauvoo, Illinois. Lucy died May 8, 1856, in Nauvoo, Illinois.

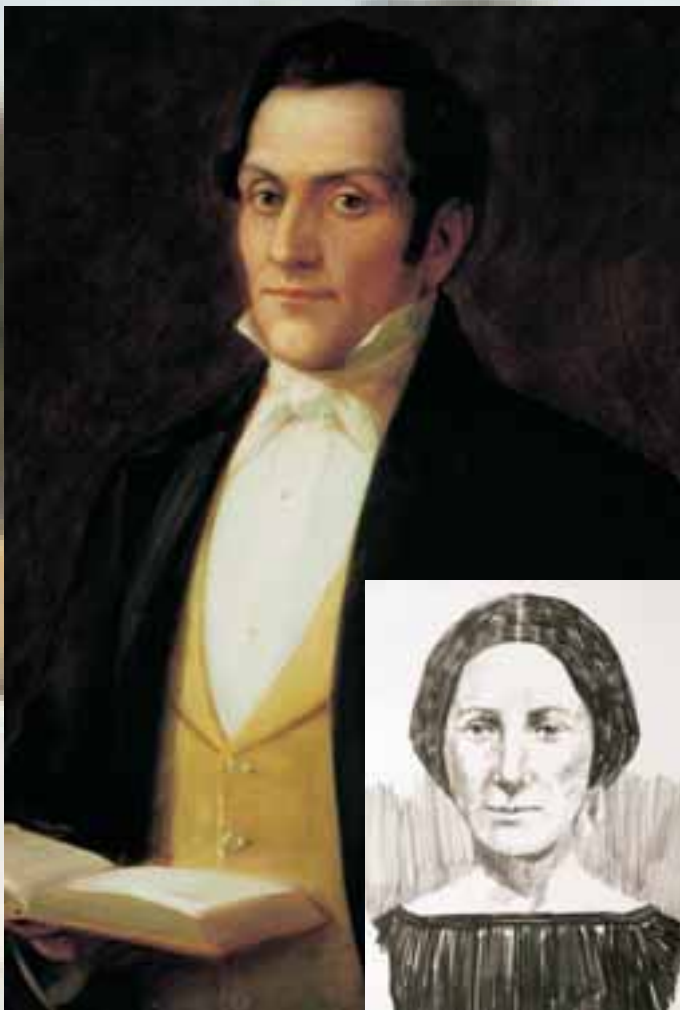


**Alvin SMITH** was born February 11, 1798, in Tunbridge, Vermont, and died November 19, 1823, in Manchester Township, New York, at the age of 25.

**\*Infant son SMITH** was born and died in 1797, Tunbridge, Vermont.

# THE FIRST FAMILY OF THE RESTORATION





**Hyrum SMITH** was born February 9, 1800, in Tunbridge, Vermont. He married **Jerusha BARDEN** on November 2, 1826, in Manchester Township, New York. They had six children. After Jerusha's death, Hyrum married **Mary FIELDING** on December 24, 1837, in Kirtland, Ohio. They had two children. Hyrum was martyred June 27, 1844, in Carthage, Illinois. He has 13,583 known descendants.\*\*

**Sophronia SMITH** was born May 17, 1803, in Tunbridge, Vermont. She married **Calvin W. STODDARD** on December 2, 1827, in Palmyra, New York. They had two children. After Calvin's death, Sophronia married **William \*McCLEARY** on February 11, 1838, in Kirtland, Ohio. No children. She died October 28, 1876, in Colchester, Illinois. Sophronia has five known descendants.\*\*



**Joseph SMITH Jr.** was born December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont. He married **Emma HALE** on January 18, 1827, in South Bainbridge, New York. They had 11 children. The Prophet Joseph was martyred June 27, 1844, in Carthage, Illinois. He has 1,112 known descendants.\*\*

**Samuel Harrison SMITH** was born March 13, 1808, in Tunbridge, Vermont. He married **Mary BAILEY** on August 13, 1834, in Kirtland, Ohio. They had six children. After Mary's death, Samuel married **Levira CLARK** on April 29, 1841, in Nauvoo, Illinois. They had three children. Sometimes called the third martyr, Samuel died July 30, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois, of injuries sustained while riding from Nauvoo to Carthage to aid his brothers. He has 460 known descendants.\*\*



**Ephraim SMITH** was born and died March 13, 1810, in Royalton, Vermont.





**William B. SMITH** was born March 13, 1811, in Royalton, Vermont. He married **Caroline A. GRANT** on February 14, 1833, in Kirtland, Ohio. They had two children. After Caroline's death, he married **Roxie R. GRANT** on May 19, 1847, in Knox, Illinois. They had two children. After they divorced, William married **Eliza E. SANBORN** on November 12, 1857, in Kirtland, Ohio. They had three children. After Eliza's death, William married **Rosella GOYETTE** on December 21, 1889, in Clinton, Iowa. No children. William died on November 13, 1893, in Osterdock, Iowa. He has 234 known descendants.\*\*



**\*Katharine SMITH** was born July 28, 1813, in Lebanon, New Hampshire. She married **Wilkins J. SALISBURY** on January 8, 1831, in Kirtland, Ohio. They had eight children. After his death, she married **Joseph YOUNGER** in Illinois. Soon afterward, they divorced. No children. She died February 1, 1900, in Fountain Green, Illinois. Katharine has 92 known descendants.\*\*



**Don Carlos SMITH** was born March 25, 1816, in Norwich, Vermont. He married **Agnes Moulton COOLBRITH** on July 30, 1835, in Kirtland, Ohio. They had three children. He died August 7, 1841, in Nauvoo, Illinois. Don Carlos has six known descendants.\*\*



**Lucy SMITH** was born July 18, 1821, in Manchester Township, New York. She married **Arthur MILLIKIN** on June 4, 1840, in Nauvoo, Illinois. They had nine children. She died December 9, 1882, in Colchester, Illinois. Lucy has 92 known descendants.\*\*■

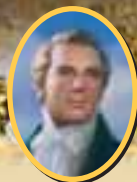
*\*In some cases spelling or historical discrepancies exist.*

*\*\*Descendants identified as of February 12, 2005.*

#### SOURCES

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2. Web site of the Joseph Smith Sr Foundation: [www.josephsmithsr.com](http://www.josephsmithsr.com).
3. Joseph Smith Family Book, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
4. "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, Mar. 1979, 42–44.
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7. *Church History in the Fulness of Times* (Church Educational System manual, 1993).





A PROPHET'S LIFE

# *The Cradle*

## Sharon, Vermont

Sharon, Vermont, could rightly be called the cradle of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it was here that Joseph Smith Jr. was born on December 23, 1805. The fifth child of Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Jr. was nurtured and loved as he developed gradually into his role as the Prophet of “the dispensation of the fulness of times” (Ephesians 1:10).

Joseph Sr. and Lucy both descended from New England families. They moved several times between 1796 and 1816 within Vermont and New Hampshire, where 10 of their 11 children were born.

In West Lebanon, New Hampshire, a typhoid fever epidemic struck. Seven-year-old Joseph Jr. (far right) was left with a serious infection in his left leg. Amputation seemed the only answer after two surgeries

failed, but Lucy insisted the doctors try again. The third surgery involved breaking off part of the bone with forceps. Joseph endured great pain, but the surgery succeeded.

After three years of crop failures, the Smith family moved to Palmyra, New York, in 1816.

The few lingering evidences of the Smith family’s time in Sharon, Vermont, include a stone bridge built by family members (right inset) and the hearthstone from the original cabin (above inset).

On the centennial anniversary of the Prophet’s birth, President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) dedicated the memorial cottage (left inset), which was used as a visitors’ center, and a granite obelisk (background). The obelisk is 38 1/2 feet high (11.7 m)—one foot for each year of the Prophet’s life. ■



BACKGROUND: PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN; ABOVE: DETAIL FROM BROTHER JOSEPH, BY DAVID LINDSLEY; LEFT INSET: PHOTOGRAPH MAY NOT BE COPIED; ABOVE INSET: PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN; RIGHT: JOSEPH SMITH AS A BOY, BY THEODORE S. GORKA







## The Early Preparation of the Prophet

# JOSEPH SMITH

*Many events and influences prepared Joseph Smith for the wonderful manifestation he received on a spring day in 1820 when he entered the Sacred Grove.*



**BY RICHARD LLOYD  
ANDERSON**

Contributing Editor,  
Joseph Smith Papers Project  
Brigham Young University



Before Joseph Smith Jr. received his heavenly visions, his parents sensed he was attuned to the things of eternity. His mother later wrote that Joseph was “less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study.”<sup>1</sup> An 1834 patriarchal blessing the mature Prophet received from his father reviewed Joseph’s searching prior to actually seeing the Father and Son: “Thou hast sought to know his ways, and from thy childhood thou hast meditated much upon the great things of his law.”<sup>2</sup>

Outwardly Joseph’s early life was ordinary, according to Mother Smith, who merely says it contained the “trivial circumstances” of a normal childhood.<sup>3</sup> But looking back, we can see how he was shaped by his pioneer heritage, his morally sturdy and God-fearing family, and his unique sensitivity to spiritual influences.

### Birth and Childhood

Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1805, the fifth child of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. Though skilled in making barrels and buckets, Joseph’s father generally farmed during the decade of the Prophet’s childhood in upper New England. Consequently, Joseph was trained in persistence through farm chores, unceasing even in Vermont’s cold, snowy winters. The 1834 patriarchal blessing commends Joseph for his family relationships: “Thou hast been an obedient son: the commands of thy father and the reproofs of thy mother, thou hast respected and obeyed.”<sup>4</sup>

Family misfortunes included sickness and crops destroyed by weather. This background helps explain Joseph’s limited education. Since poverty required hard work from all members of the family, he explained, “I was merely instructed in reading, writing, and the ground rules of arithmetic.”<sup>5</sup> Father Smith taught common school for several winters while the Smiths lived in the Prophet’s

birthplace. But young Joseph was not ready for regular instruction until after his family had moved to neighboring Royalton Township, where Joseph Smith Sr. appears on the tax records from 1809 to 1811. A granddaughter of Royalton deacon Jonathan Kinney said he “oft repeated” that “I taught Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, his letters while teaching school upon Dewey Hill about the year 1810–15.”<sup>6</sup>

### Typhoid Fever and Bone Operation

About mid-1812 the Smith family moved just across the Connecticut River to the village of Lebanon, New Hampshire. Living children at the time were Alvin (age 14), Hyrum (12), Sophronia (9), Joseph (6), Samuel (4), and

William (1). Two daughters and a son were born later. Fulfilling a dream for education, the parents enrolled eligible children in a neighborhood school and sent Hyrum five miles away to the “academy in Hanover,” which we know was Moor’s



**Family misfortunes and crop failures were instrumental in convincing Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith to move their family from Vermont to Palmyra, New York.**

Charity School, affiliated with Dartmouth College.<sup>7</sup>

The Smiths’ plans for stability and schooling were disrupted by a regional epidemic, then labeled “typhus,” which was actually typhoid fever. It peaked in 1813, when Lucy Smith says all her children were overcome.<sup>8</sup> Sophronia was near death and apparently stopped breathing, but Mother Smith implored God for healing and walked the floor with the child until she could breathe again. Sophronia finally recovered. Joseph, on the other hand, seemed near recovery when a painful abscess developed in his shoulder. This was lanced by a physician, and immediately the pain moved to his left shin bone. For three weeks Joseph suffered intense pain. A surgeon opened the infected area twice for drainage. Each time



**Above:** Joseph Smith Sr. was skilled in making barrels and buckets. **Right:** Replica of the crutch Joseph Smith used for three years after surgery on his leg. **Below:** Plaque marking the birthplace of the Prophet Joseph Smith.



the pain subsided and the leg began to heal until uncontrolled swelling returned. Joseph later recalled the incessant pain: “I endured the most acute suffering for a long time.” He also remembered the care of “Drs. Smith, Stone, and Perkins, of Hanover.”<sup>9</sup>

Nathan Smith and Cyrus Perkins were prominent as the main medical professors at Dartmouth College and partners in practice.<sup>10</sup> At the final crisis, medical students came with a doctor, undoubtedly Nathan Smith. They visited the home and discussed the option of amputation, since the main bone in Joseph’s lower leg was deteriorating. The boy and his mother insisted on a new procedure developed by Nathan Smith—boring into the edges of the dead bone and breaking it out, trusting that infection would cease and in time the remaining structure would regenerate. Dr. LeRoy Wirthlin studied Nathan Smith’s writings and student lecture notes preserved at Dartmouth and Yale, concluding that Lucy’s narrative exactly describes Dr. Smith’s methods, which were well in advance of their time.<sup>11</sup> The fortunate

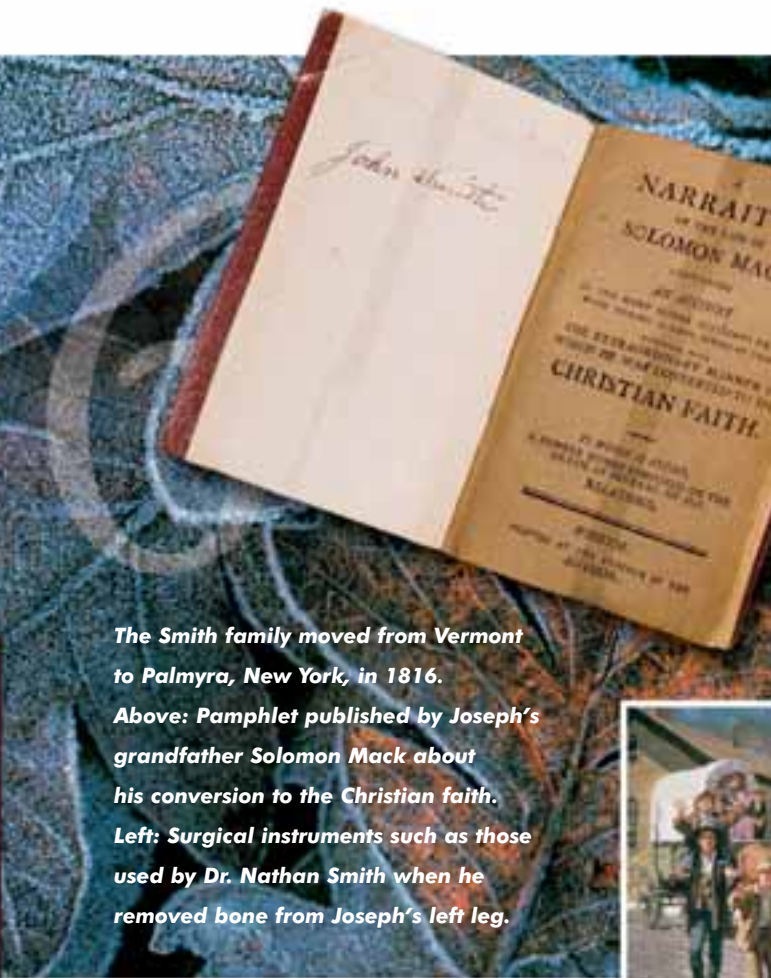
outcome reveals a doctor’s skill and the remarkable faith and courage of his seven-year-old patient. Lucy Smith’s account replays the wrenching details. Joseph refused the liquor that might dull his pain; he pleaded not to be strapped but rather held by his father’s arms; and through tears he begged his mother to leave the room, insisting “The Lord will help me, and I shall get through with it.”<sup>12</sup>

By November of that year, Nathan Smith had resigned from Dartmouth and began lecturing at Yale.<sup>13</sup> He had been the right doctor, providentially available at the right time.

### **The Move to Palmyra**

Joseph says he “went on crutches” for the next three years,<sup>14</sup> during which time the family sought to rebuild finances by renting a farm a short distance across the Connecticut River in Vermont. Their crops failed for three seasons, the last being 1816, when a late September frost destroyed the northern





*The Smith family moved from Vermont to Palmyra, New York, in 1816.*

*Above: Pamphlet published by Joseph's grandfather Solomon Mack about his conversion to the Christian faith.*

*Left: Surgical instruments such as those used by Dr. Nathan Smith when he removed bone from Joseph's left leg.*

New England harvest. Lucy's history describes her husband's subsequent trip to Palmyra, New York, to find a new home, and his letter that came before long, alerting the family to prepare to leave. Soon a Mr. Howard came with a team and wagon for the move.

The boy Joseph left New England conscious of strong family traditions. Both grandfathers, Asael Smith and Solomon Mack, had served in the American War of Independence, which began in 1775. And later the Prophet said, "Civil and religious liberty were diffused into my soul by my grandfathers while they dandled me on their knees." Joseph was probably 8 when he last saw his father's parents and 11 the last time he saw his maternal grandparents. Asael Smith was a universalist who believed Christ's Atonement would save all, and also a restorationer who "always knew that God was going to raise up some branch of his family to be a great benefit to mankind." Wife Mary Duty Smith was a lifelong Congregationalist, and both lived to see the Book of Mormon and believe it.



*The move to New York was difficult, but Lucy and the children rejoiced in being reunited with Joseph Sr., who had arrived in Palmyra ahead of them.*

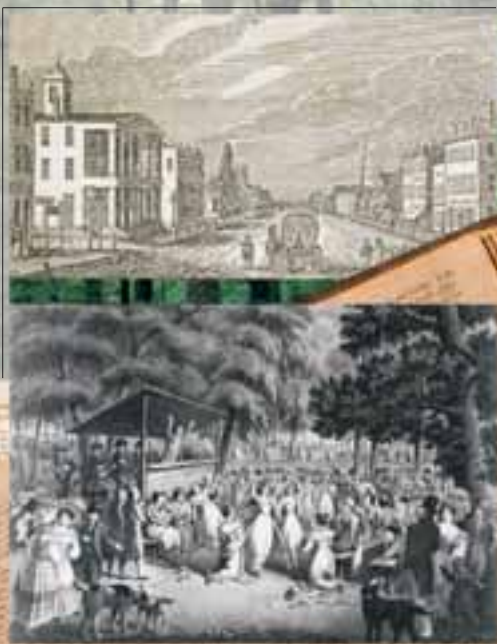
Asael wrote out his practical and religious convictions for his family. Similarly, Lucy Mack Smith's father, Solomon, died before the Church was restored, but published a pamphlet on how he was converted late in life to Christ's Atonement by the Spirit and by his wife's example. Lydia Gates Mack was also a lifelong Congregationalist of deep conviction. She stayed with her daughter Lucy before the Smiths moved west, and the boy Joseph knew of the aged grandmother's parting plea that Lucy "continue faithful in the exercise of every religious duty to the end of your days that I may have the pleasure of embracing you in another fairer World above."<sup>15</sup> Lucy's history shows that she and her husband perpetuated the Christian commitment of their parents as they fashioned their own family

life. Joseph later wrote that his father and mother "spared no pains to instructing me in the Christian religion."<sup>16</sup>

The move to western New York covered about 300 road miles in midwinter (1816–17). Lucy discovered their hired teamster was "an unprincipled and unfeeling wretch," wasting her resources and bullying her children, especially Joseph, whom he forced to walk, though the boy "was still lame." Joseph remembered "the most excruciating weariness and pain" as he was forced to stumble "through the snow 40 miles per day for several days." Lucy finally dismissed this teamster, arranging for Joseph to ride with another family traveling on the same road. Later, after the main group had gone ahead, Joseph tried to take his place on the last sleigh but was spitefully knocked down by the driver. Joseph said he was "left to wallow in my blood until a stranger came along, picked me up, and carried me to the town of Palmyra." This seems to have occurred some distance from the village, so the stranger evidently took Joseph into his own conveyance.<sup>17</sup> Joseph had received both cruelty and kindness, but mistreatment did not embitter the boy, who later recalled his early "native cheery temperament" (Joseph Smith—History 1:28).

Joseph remembered living for a long time in the village of Palmyra before moving to their farm, two miles to the





**Above:** Headstone marking the grave of Joseph's older brother Alvin in Palmyra. **Left:** Bibles printed in the early 1800s. **Upper left:** Etchings showing Palmyra, New York, in the early 1800s and a revival meeting like those Joseph Smith attended as a youth. **Background:** The Sacred Grove today.

south (see Joseph Smith—History 1:3).

Palmyra publisher Pomeroy Tucker wrote of the Smiths, mixing memory and hearsay. He personally remembered the popular snack shop of the Smiths, and he learned of hired farm labor and well-digging done by father Smith “and his elder sons.”<sup>18</sup> Lucy indicates that in their first year in the village she maintained a profitable business “painting oil-cloth coverings,”<sup>19</sup> while father Smith and the oldest brothers earned money for a down payment on a forested hundred acres. There they built a log home on the border running between Palmyra township and what would become Manchester township, and cleared 30 acres of heavy timber.<sup>20</sup> They moved into their new log house by 1819, since Lucy says they were settled there “only two years since we entered Palmyra.”<sup>21</sup> Alvin had turned 21, and Hyrum was 19. Now in the growth spurt of 13, Joseph retired many nights with muscles aching from working side by side with adults in these group labors. His older sister, Sophronia, and his next younger brother, Samuel, also made significant contributions.

### Family Relationships and Religious Sensitivities

As a young teenager, Joseph perceived the sacrifices others made for him, later expressing gratitude that had obviously been generated in youth. In Kirtland, Joseph sought to calm a family dispute involving his younger brother William, asking him not to distress their parents, who had cared for their children with “unremitting diligence,” spending untold hours “of sorrow, and anxiety . . . over our cradles and bedsides, in times of sickness.”<sup>22</sup> In temporary exile from Nauvoo in 1842, the Prophet dictated appreciation for friends and family, reflecting on “the scenes of my childhood.” He asked God to bless his counselor-brother Hyrum for his “faithful heart” and “for the care you have had for my soul.” He thanked God for “so honorable a parentage,” disclosing the lifelong impact of his oldest brother, Alvin, co-provider for the family before his death in late 1823 from an acute illness, possibly appendicitis. Joseph remembered that Alvin was “candid and sober,” minding his parents “in toiling all day.”<sup>23</sup> This emotional outpouring shows how deeply these role models impressed Joseph as he grew to be equally responsible and caring.

In an 1832 autobiography Joseph explains that when he was 12 years old he was overwhelmed with the forests and night sky, which spoke to his soul of the intelligence and power of their Creator.<sup>24</sup> This autobiography also establishes an extended period for his religious investigations, stating that “about the age of twelve years my mind became seriously impressed with regard to . . . the welfare of my immortal soul.” Related to personal salvation was serious study of the churches: “from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the . . . divisions, the wickedness, . . . and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind.”<sup>25</sup> In his later full history, the Prophet was more exact in stating the Father and Son appeared to him “early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty” (Joseph Smith—History 1:14). He was then in his “fifteenth year” (Joseph Smith—History 1:7). This means his period of investigation lasted about three years, culminating in the First Vision. Thus he began an intense search for the right church about early 1817, when his family arrived in a village heavily agitated by questions of accepting Christ and finding ways to serve him.<sup>26</sup> His mother verified the intense inner quest of her son prior to his 1820 vision. She wrote that he “always seemed to reflect more deeply than common persons of his age upon everything of a religious nature.”<sup>27</sup>

### A Fixed Determination

Character is formed by how we react to challenges. In early youth Joseph Smith showed intelligent awareness of others and self. He transcended difficulties by courage and faith in God. Joseph’s 1832 history shows he systematically studied by, as he recalled, “searching the scriptures, believing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God.” He then measured the available religious beliefs by the Bible, finding no church that was “built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament.”<sup>28</sup> He had exhausted his resources for answers (see Joseph Smith—History 1:12–13). “Information,” he later said, “was what I most desired at this time, and with a fixed determination to obtain it, I called upon the

Lord.”<sup>29</sup> As we study his life to that point, we see that his moral and spiritual heritage and his family’s religious convictions had helped prepare Joseph Smith Jr. for the great manifestation he received on a spring day in 1820 when he walked into the Sacred Grove and knelt in humble prayer. ■

*Richard Lloyd Anderson is a member of the Edgemont 14th Ward, Provo Utah Edgemont Stake.*

### NOTES

1. Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (1853; repr. 1995), 84. The main narrative for this article is based on this first printed edition of Mother Smith’s history and the preliminary manuscript on which it is based. Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have been standardized in references throughout this article.
2. In *My Kingdom Shall Roll Forth: Readings in Church History* (1979), 8.
3. *Biographical Sketches*, 73.
4. *My Kingdom Shall Roll Forth*, 8–9.
5. *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, rev. ed. (2002), 10.
6. Statement of Eleanor P. Skinner, Oct. 7, 1906, in photograph album presented to President Joseph F. Smith by Junius Wells, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Ph2348.
7. Richard K. Behrens, “Notes on the Education of Hyrum Smith,” unpublished manuscript in author’s possession (2001).
8. See Lucy Mack Smith, preliminary manuscript of *Biographical Sketches*, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
9. *Personal Writings*, 227.
10. See Oliver S. Hayward and Constance E. Putnam, *Improve, Perfect, and Perpetuate: Dr. Nathan Smith and Early American Medical Education* (1998), 136–38.
11. Wirthlin’s most complete discussion is “Joseph Smith’s Boyhood Operation: An 1813 Surgical Success,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1981, 131–54.
12. *Biographical Sketches*, 65.
13. See Hayward and Putnam, *Dr. Nathan Smith*, 201.
14. *Personal Writings*, 227.
15. Quotations and information in this paragraph are found in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage*, 2nd ed. (2003), vii, 37, 147–48.
16. *Personal Writings*, 10.
17. For Lucy’s account, see *Biographical Sketches*, 68–69; for Joseph’s account, see *Personal Writings*, 227.
18. Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (1867), 12.
19. *Biographical Sketches*, 70.
20. For chronology and manual labor, see Donald L. Enders, “The Joseph Smith Sr. Family: Farmers of the Genesee,” in Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds., *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man* (1993), 213–25.
21. *Biographical Sketches*, 71.
22. Letter to William Smith, Dec. 18, 1835, in *Personal Writings*, 142.
23. Journal, Aug. 16 and 23, 1842, in *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (1992), 416, 439–41.
24. This “History of the Life of Joseph Smith Jr.” appears in transcription and photocopy in *Personal Writings*, 9–20.
25. *Personal Writings*, 10–11.
26. See Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Joseph Smith’s Testimony of the First Vision,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1996, 15–16.
27. Lucy Mack Smith, preliminary manuscript of *Biographical Sketches*.
28. *Personal Writings*, 10–11.
29. Journal, Nov. 9, 1835, in *Personal Writings*, 104.



**For three years young Joseph was deeply concerned about the welfare of his immortal soul and sought to learn which church was true.**





*From the Prophet Joseph Smith's experience in Liberty Jail, I learned that we are never really alone in our suffering.*

**I**t is Christmas again. The woodsy fragrance of evergreens fills the air. The sound of Christmas carols wafts through malls, grocery stores, and tree lots. Ordinary houses become luminous, glowing in the dark with tiny twinkling lights. We feel anticipation, hope, and joy as we perform acts of service and reflect on the life of our dear Savior.

But Christmas can also evoke profound feelings of loss when the memories of loved ones no longer present are somehow amplified by the season.

Many years ago as a young girl, I learned how to find joy at Christmas even after losing the most important people of my childhood—my parents. The lesson came during a bleak emotional winter of my life. It was delivered by a young and earnest seminary teacher who taught me about a young prophet's struggle with suffering and in the process gave me the Savior's answer to one of life's most difficult questions: Why do good people suffer?

I was only 17. Life was full of promise. I had a strong group of friends in the ward I had attended all my life.

# WHEN CHRISTMAS HURTS

BY TAMERA SMITH ALLRED





I was one of the lucky ones who loved high school—I had already found my niche. I was a writer. I wrote for the school newspaper. I filled spiral notebooks with my views on the Vietnam War, the latest music and movies, and how I felt about my hair. I was part of a witty and wonderful debate group who challenged my intellect and kept me laughing. Scholarships, college, further training in an art I loved were attainable goals—so close I knew they would be reached.

And then tragedy struck.

My dearest friend, my father—a short, heavy man with a big round face, a broad smile, a kind word for everyone, and always a stylish hat—was killed suddenly in an unusual car accident. Norris William Smith had been teaching driver's education on a country road in the farming area outside our city, Idaho Falls, Idaho. It was the student's first drive. She was only 14. She pulled out in front of an oncoming farm truck, her view eclipsed by a dip in the road. The truck broadsided the car with the worst impact on the passenger side. By the time the ambulance reached the hospital, my father—a vibrant, healthy, happy man—was dead.

The loss was particularly profound for me because just eight years earlier my mother had died after a long and painful struggle with cancer.

Life as I had known it ended. For months after Daddy died I dragged myself zombielike through each day as if I were running through water. Accomplishing the most mundane task felt monumental. The joy and zest I had felt for life flatlined. My grades slid. My school attendance became erratic. Even the health I had enjoyed became fragile. I no longer cared about my writing, about debate, about life itself.

And then Christmas came. Christmas—it had been my favorite time of year, and that of my parents also. My mother had clung to life to get through one more Christmas. The house had always been beautiful with the smell of a fresh evergreen we had cut ourselves in the foothills near our home. Mom had piled plates with divinity, the white, gooey, dissolve-in-your-mouth candy of Christmas. And the house had been festive with Mom's homemade evergreen centerpieces—an artful touch of pine, candles, a few glass balls, and a spray of canned “snow.”

Even the year after my mother died, my father had carried on with amazing enthusiasm, considering the loss he had suffered. The tree went up. Excitedly, he and I raced together through the lighted, snow-filled streets of our little town buying Christmas presents. On Christmas morning at 3:00 a.m. when I woke up, he was so excited he leaped out

# FOR GOD SHALL BE WITH YOU

of bed with a string of bells, ringing them madly and shouting, “Ho, ho, ho, Merrrrrry Christmas!” And there under the tree was a gift I had been longing for: a little set of wicker furniture just the right size for my dolls.

Now it was Christmas again, and the sound of bells, the smell of evergreen, the sight and feel of snow filled me with such a searing pain I did not know how or if I could survive. I felt utterly alone in the world. It seemed Christmas was no more. The Christmas spirit was gone for me, buried with those two dear people so profoundly absent from my life.

One day, overcome by despair, I escaped the raucous noise of my high school during lunch hour and trudged across the street to the seminary building. No classes were in session, and the building was dark and quiet, offering me exactly what I wanted: solitude. I sat at my desk in the darkened room and wept openly. I didn’t want to be alive. Why couldn’t I have gone with my parents? How was I ever going to get through Christmas—or life—without them?

What I didn’t know is that my seminary teacher, David Beagley, stood quietly at the back of the room watching.

He was young and enthusiastic. Like my father, he had a broad smile and was able to make us laugh with his corny jokes. After a few minutes he quietly approached my desk. Sitting down next to me, he asked in barely a whisper what the matter was, although I’m sure he already knew. He had led my entire seminary class into my father’s funeral. But his question gave me the chance I needed to pour my heart out to someone, to share my sorrow.

After I had sobbed it out, he said he would like to tell me a story. The story went like this. It was the winter of 1839. The Prophet Joseph Smith had been illegally imprisoned again, this time in Liberty Jail, a dark dungeon of sorts in Clay County, Missouri. The Prophet had been in jail since November. The basement room where he and other Church leaders were being held was so small he could not stand upright. He had suffered from cold, filthy conditions, smoke inhalation, loneliness, and unwholesome food. The depth of his suffering came when he learned about the terrible condition of the Church members who were being driven from the state.

*When Brother Beagley finished telling me about Joseph Smith’s ordeal in Liberty Jail (opposite page), I knew there was a purpose to my pain.*





# FOREVER AND EVER • D&C 122:9

In utter despair he had gone to the Lord with one of the most poignant pleas in all of scripture:

“O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

“How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?

“Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them, and thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them?” (D&C 121:1–3).

God heard Joseph’s cry, and that prison was transformed into a holy place when a beautiful, gentle, compassionate response came to the Prophet:

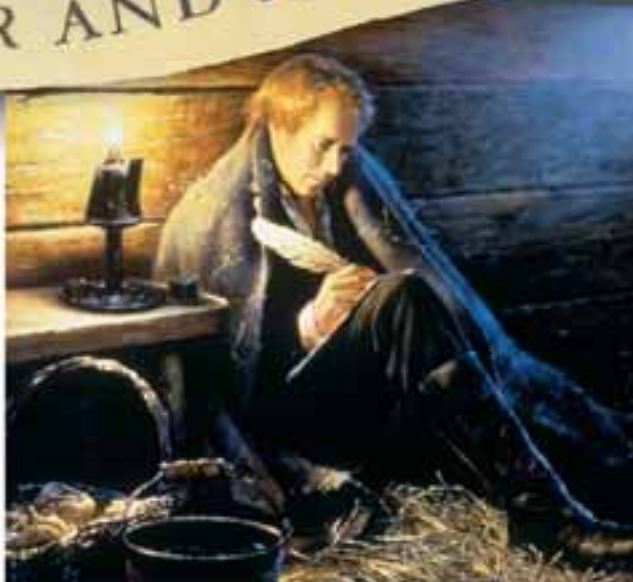
“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (vv. 7–8).

Then came the answer to one of mankind’s most difficult questions: Why does God allow people to suffer? “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:7–8).

And finally, “God shall be with you forever and ever” (v. 9).

Brother Beagley closed the scriptures. The room was utterly silent. My crying had stopped. The empty space in my heart was filled to overflowing with the sweet, warm feeling of the Comforter, and I felt comforted. I felt stilled. A lifting had occurred. My burden was being borne by Another.

From the Prophet’s horrible experience I learned we are never alone in our suffering. I saw that the Lord is aware of us and is close by. Most important, I learned that there is purpose to our pain, though sometimes it may be veiled for a time. I learned that even though our trials will not be taken away, Heavenly Father will visit us with His Spirit to



JOSEPH SMITH IN LIBERTY JAIL. BY GREG K. OLSEN. MAY NOT BE COPIED

comfort us and help us endure our suffering until our wounds are healed.

When I walked out of the seminary building that December day, the facts remained the same. I was without my dear parents. But my heart had somehow changed. For the first time since my father’s funeral, I was aware of a strength

I had never felt before. I knew I was not alone. I knew there were reasons for my loss that I couldn’t yet understand. But I knew I could go on.

My Christmas, perhaps my very life, was saved in that seminary room 30 years ago. As I write, I am looking at a picture of a beautiful family that has grown up around me—my precious husband, Brian; our six daughters; their husbands; our grandchildren. I am no longer alone, and death is not my companion. I am surrounded by life.

I still love Christmas. Every year my husband and I and our six daughters cut our own tree. The bells my father rang so many years ago are not silent—my husband has taken over the tradition of ringing them and shouting “Merry Christmas!” Each year I place the tiny wicker furniture set out under the tree. Now it is surrounded by a living room full of wicker—my furniture of choice. And like my mother, I have learned to make divinity.

And I have come to know that each Christmas there will likely be an afternoon, an evening, or a quiet morning when, unexpectedly and without notice, the grief will hit again. All these years later I still miss their laughter, their voices, their presence. But I no longer fight it. When it comes I have a good cry, I look at their pictures, and I get out my Doctrine and Covenants and read Joseph’s humble, sorrowful prayer and the Lord’s compassionate, triumphant answer. And once again I find the strength to go on with joy. ■

*Tamera Smith Allred is a member of the St. John’s Ward, Vancouver Washington West Stake.*



# The Real Christmas



**Howard W. Hunter was born in Idaho on November 14, 1907, to Nellie Marie Rasmussen and John William Hunter. He was ordained an Apostle on October 15, 1959, and became President of the Church on June 5, 1994. He passed away on March 3, 1995.**

*The real Christmas comes to him who has taken Christ into his life as a moving, dynamic, vitalizing force.*

**BY PRESIDENT HOWARD W. HUNTER (1907–95)**

Fourteenth President of the Church

**C**hristmas is a busy season. Streets and stores are filled with people making last-minute preparations.

Travelers on the highways increase, airports are crowded—all Christianity seems to come to life with music, lights, and festive decorations.

A writer has said:

“Of all holidays there is none that enters so fully into the human heart, and stirs so many of the higher sentiments. The thoughts, memories, hopes, and customs linked with it are bound by antiquity and nationality collectively; and by childhood and old age individually. They embrace the religious, social, and patriotic sides of our nature. The holly and mistletoe entwined among the evergreens, the habit of giving gifts to those we love, the presence of the Christmas tree, the superstition of Santa Claus, all combining to make Christmas the most longed-for, the most universal, and from every standpoint, the most important

holiday known to man” [Clarence Baird, “The Spirit of Christmas,” *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1919, 154].

## **The Origin of Christmas**

The season is steeped in tradition, and its roots stem back in history. The commencement of the holiday lies in pagan worship long before the introduction of Christianity. The god Mithra was worshiped by the ancient Aryans, and this worship gradually spread to India and Persia. Mithra at first was the god of the heavenly light of the bright skies and later in the Roman period was worshiped as the deity of the sun, or the sun god—*Sol Invictus Mithra*.

In the first century [before] Christ, Pompey carried on conquests along the southern coast of Cilicia, in Asia Minor, and many of the prisoners taken in those military actions were brought captive to Rome. This introduced the pagan worship of Mithra to Rome, for these prisoners spread the religion among the Roman soldiers. The worship became popular, particularly in the ranks of the Roman armies. We find today, in the ruins of the cities of the far-flung Roman Empire, the shrines of Mithra. Mithraism flourished in the Roman world and became the chief competitor of Christianity in the religious beliefs of the people.





A festive season for the worshipers of the sun god took place immediately after the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year—the time when the sun stands still after its annual dip into the Southern Hemisphere. The commencement of its climb from this low point was regarded as the rebirth of Mithra, and the Romans celebrated his birthday on the 25th of December each year. There was great merriment on this holiday—festivals and feasting, gifts given to friends, and the dwelling places decorated with evergreens.

Gradually Christianity gained a victory over Mithraism, which had been its strongest rival, and the festival day celebrating the birth of Mithra was used by the Christians to commemorate the birth of Christ. The pagan worship of the sun, deeply rooted in Roman culture, was replaced by one of the greatest festivals among Christians. Christmas has come down to us as a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing—a day of good cheer and goodwill to men. Although it has an earthly relation and significance, it is divine in content. The ancient Christian celebration has lived continuously through the centuries.

## The Meaning of Christmas Today

How is Christmas regarded today? The legend of Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, the decorations of tinsel and mistletoe, and the giving of gifts all express to us the spirit of the day we celebrate; but the true spirit of Christmas lies much deeper than these. It is found in the life of the Savior, in the principles He taught, in His atoning sacrifice—which become our great heritage.

Many years ago the First Presidency of the Church made this significant statement:

“Christmas, to the Latter-day Saint, is both reminiscent and prophetic—a reminder of two great and solemn events, which will yet be regarded universally as the mightiest and most wonderful happenings in the history of the human race. These events were [fore-ordained] to take place upon this planet before it was created. One of them was the coming of the Savior in the meridian of time, to die for the sins of the world; and the other is the prospective advent of the risen and glorified Redeemer, to reign upon the earth as King of kings” [“What Christmas Suggests to a Latter-day Saint,” *Millennial Star*, Jan. 2, 1908, 1].

In Paul’s short letter to the Galatians, he showed great concern over their apparent disbelief and their forsaking of his teachings regarding Christ. He wrote to them: “But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:18–19). In other words, Paul expressed himself as suffering pain and anxiety until Christ be “formed” in them. This is another way of saying “in Christ,” as that expression is used by Paul repeatedly in his writings.

It is possible for Christ to be born in men’s lives, and when such an experience actually happens, a man is “in Christ”—Christ is “formed” in him. This presupposes that we take Christ into our hearts and make Him the living contemporary of our lives. He is not just a general truth or a fact in history, but the Savior of men everywhere and at all

times. When we strive to be Christlike, He is “formed” in us; if we open the door, He will enter; if we seek His counsel, He will counsel us. For Christ to be “formed” in us, we must have a belief in Him and in His Atonement. Such a belief in Christ and the keeping of His commandments are not restraints upon us. By these, men are set free. This Prince of Peace waits to give peace of mind, which may make each of us a channel of that peace.

The real Christmas comes to him who has taken Christ

into his life as a moving, dynamic, vitalizing force. The real spirit of Christmas lies in the life and mission of the Master. I continue with what the writer defines as the real spirit of Christmas:

“It is a desire to sacrifice for others, to render service, and to possess a feeling of universal brotherhood. It consists of a willingness to forget what you have done for others, and to remember only what others have done for you; to ignore what the world owes you, and think only of . . . your duties in the middle distance, and your chance to do good and

aid your fellow-men in the foreground—to see that your fellow-men are just as good as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts—to close your book of grievances against the universe, and look about you for a place to sow a few seeds of happiness and go your way unobserved” [*Improvement Era*, Dec. 1919, 155].

In his contemplation of the Christmas season, James Wallingford penned these lines:

*Christmas is not a day or a season, but a condition  
of heart and mind.*

*If we love our neighbors as ourselves;  
if in our riches we are poor in spirit and in our  
poverty we are rich in grace;  
if our charity vaunteth not itself, but suffereth long and  
is kind;  
if when our brother asks for a loaf, we give ourselves  
instead;*

**W**hen we  
strive to be  
Christlike,  
He is “formed” in us;  
if we open the door,  
He will enter; if we  
seek His counsel, He  
will counsel us.



*if each day dawns in opportunity and sets in achievement, however small—  
then every day is Christ's day and Christmas is always near.*

[In Charles L. Wallis, ed., *Words of Life* (1966), 33]

A wise man has said:

"The most amazing thing about the Christmas story is its relevance. It is at home in every age and fits into every mood of life. It is not simply a lovely tale once told, but eternally contemporary. It is the voice crying out in every wilderness. It is as meaningful in our time as in that long-ago night when shepherds followed the light of the star to the manger of Bethlehem" [Joseph R. Sizoo, in *Words of Life*, 33].

It has been said that Christmas is for children; but as the years of childhood fancy pass away and an understanding maturity takes their place, the simple teaching of the Savior that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) becomes a reality. The evolution from a pagan holiday transformed into a Christian festival

to the birth of Christ in men's lives is another form of maturity that comes to one who has been touched by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Find the True Spirit of Christmas**

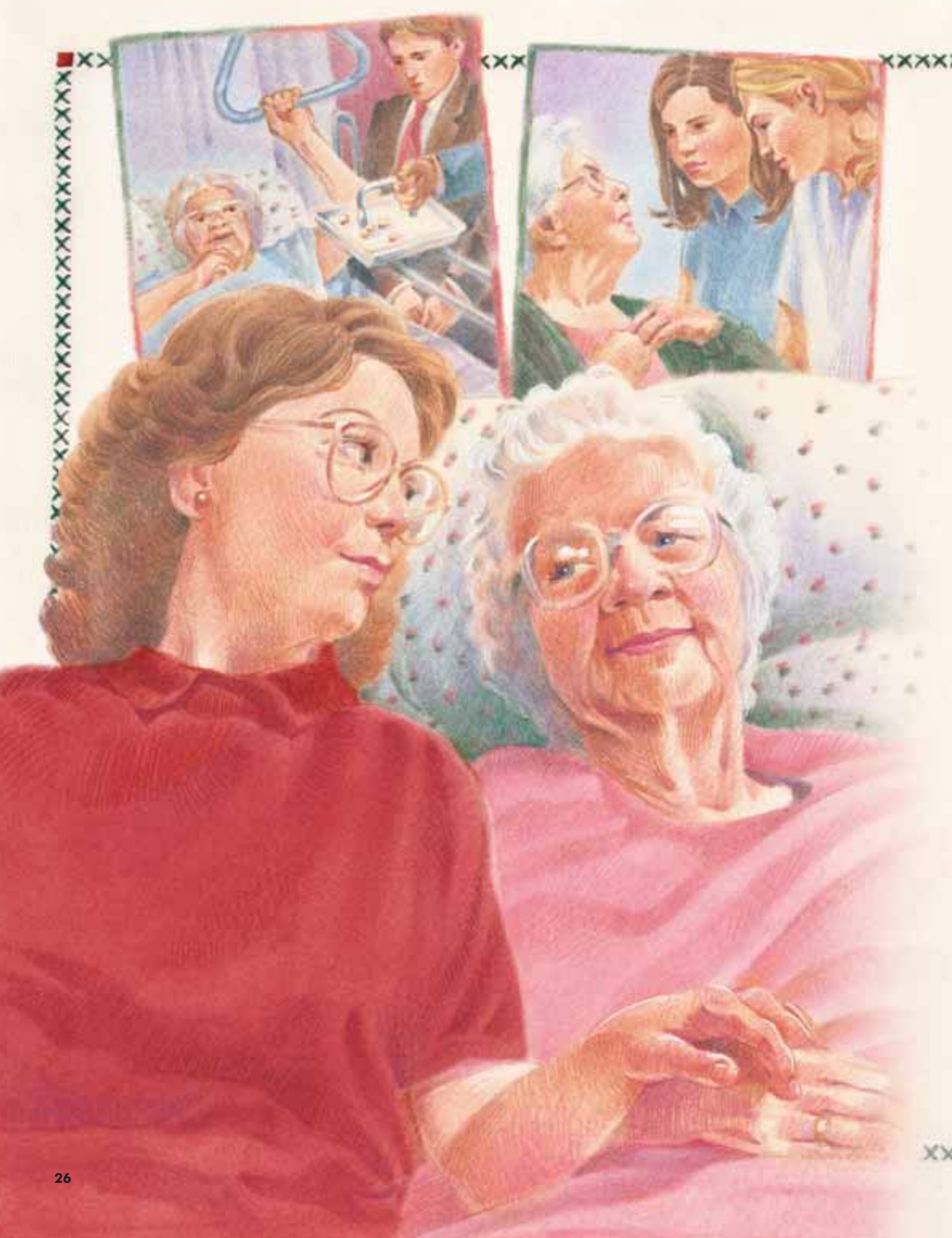
If you desire to find the true spirit of Christmas and partake of the sweetness of it, let me make this suggestion to you. During the hurry of the festive occasion of this Christmas season, find time to turn your heart to God. Perhaps in the quiet hours, and in a quiet place, and on your knees—alone or with loved ones—give thanks for the good things that have come to you, and ask that His Spirit might dwell in you as you earnestly strive to serve Him and keep His commandments. He will take you by the hand and His promises will be kept.

I know that God lives. I bear witness of the divinity of

His Son, the Savior of the world, and I express appreciation for the blessing of having upon the earth a prophet of the living God. ■

*From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on December 5, 1972; punctuation, capitalization, and spelling modernized.*









# BECOMING A WARD FAMILY

BY DAVID BROWN

*Acceptance and love are nurtured in the basic units of the Church. Read about how three wards put the gospel into action.*

**I**s it possible to be an only child and still have brothers and sisters? The answer is a definite yes—when you belong to a ward family.

Our knowledge of the premortal existence is a great blessing for the Church. We've all been related for a long, long time as spirit children of our Heavenly Father. That kinship is undeniable and perceived within our souls. Even after coming to earth we have two common ancestors—Adam and Eve—with more recent ties to Abraham and the inherited blessings promised to him.

Gospel principles and the basic organization of the Church are the same in every city and throughout every land. Members who visit a sacrament meeting while traveling out of town often claim to feel “at home” while sitting next to strangers. Fellowship permeates from member to member no matter where we are. Why? Because we know

we are literally brothers and sisters and the same spirit can be felt no matter where members attend Church meetings.

## **Easing Loneliness**

While I was bishop several years ago, an elderly woman in our ward, Sister Wanda White, was diagnosed with cancer. Later that year, as her condition grew worse, she was confined to a hospital bed in the middle of her living room. Thanks to medication and priesthood blessings, her pain was bearable, but her days seemed terribly long. She had only one relative and an occasional nurse to give her assistance. Our ward council discussed her plight of loneliness and laid out an ambitious plan for ward members to help.

The priests quorum volunteered to take the sacrament to her home each Sunday afternoon, along with a spiritual thought. The other priesthood quorums, Relief Society sisters, and Young Women classes took turns seeing her at various hours throughout the rest of the week, along with watchful home teachers and visiting teachers. As a result, she had someone call on her at least once a day for the last four months of her life.



## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussions, personal reflection, or teaching the gospel in a variety of settings.

1. Draw a circle. Ask family members to name as many ward members as they can and write these names inside the circle. Using a ward list, if one is available, note some of the members who were not included. Refer to the conclusion of the article and discuss how the family can reach out and enlarge their ward family circle.

2. Read the article's opening question and ask family members to respond. Relate a story from the article to illustrate how a ward is a large family. Invite individuals to share experiences they have had as members of a ward family.

### A Safe Harbor

A strong ward family is easy to recognize. The members are warm and friendly, testimonies are borne with conviction, charity abounds, activities are well attended, and dedicated home teachers rarely miss a visit. The chapel is not just a place of worship; it is a safe harbor from worldly cares, a place of belonging, of friendship and compassion. It's a place where people who are different can come together to be as one.

Christ commanded us to love one another. Simply showing up for church at the appointed time doesn't suffice. Love of others is not a gift bestowed upon us without effort—it is something we learn a little at a time through consecration and sacrifice.

No matter what our circumstances might be, we all have an inherent duty to reach out to fellow members and include them in our circle, making each ward and branch a family. That is why we call each other brothers and sisters. After all, there is no such thing as an only child in the kingdom of God. ■

*David Brown is a member of the Meridian 13th Ward, Meridian Idaho East Stake.*

*For more on this topic, see Virginia H. Pearce, "Ward and Branch Families: Part of Heavenly Father's Plan for Us," Ensign, Nov. 1993, 79.*

I knew something special was happening when the deacons reported after their first visit that she was a cool lady and had made them laugh. The Mia Maid class president asked if the girls had to wait until their next turn before they could go see her again. Of course, the answer was to go back as often as they could be helpful to her. Suddenly youth who had barely noticed this elderly sister a month before were sharing inspirational stories of their experiences in her home and were including her in their prayers.

Sister White told us repeatedly that we were earthly angels, a wonderful blessing in easing her burden of long, lonely days. The whole ward grew spiritually from giving her loving service. We came to understand more fully Christ's compassion for the sick and downhearted.

Through our humble efforts in reaching out for a common goal that year, we had truly become a ward family. Those feelings still exist to this day, though many members have come and gone. New families and individuals are welcomed with open arms. They feel acceptance and love and then readily pass it on.

**When our ward's compassionate service leader heard of the impending death of my unborn baby, she came over to visit. As we talked, my burdens became lighter.**





## SHARING WORDS OF COMFORT

**M**y husband and I had been happily anticipating the arrival of our fifth child. But during what I thought would be a routine sonogram in the middle of the pregnancy, the doctor told me that the baby had an untreatable genetic defect and would soon die. I was then faced with the task of comforting my other children while attempting to maintain our normal routine. Two days later while I was at home, an unbearable sadness pressed down on my heart. I recognized I was greatly blessed to have four healthy children, but an overwhelming sense that things had not gone the way I wanted occupied my every thought.

While in this state of mind I received a call from Sister Kathy Cunningham, our ward's newly called compassionate service leader. She said she wanted to come by to visit. When she arrived, I poured out my sorrow and frustration. As we talked, a change started to come over my heart. The problem was still there, but the sadness became manageable. Things seemed to fall into perspective, and I was again aware of how many blessings I had in my life. Her sharing my pain touched me deeply, and my burdens became lighter.

Support continued from the ward as other sisters shared words of comfort and brought dinners for our family. This led me to feel a part of a loving community, and I had a greater sense of connection with the ward. Over time and through the encouragement offered, I gained a sense that the loss of our baby was part of Heavenly Father's plan. It appeared to be an opportunity for growth for me, my family, and many ward members. ■

*Kimberly Hirschi, San Diego 12th Ward, San Diego California North Stake*

## MORE THAN A SOCIAL ORGANIZATION



*"This Church . . . is far more than a social organization where we gather together to enjoy one another's company. . . . It is the kingdom of God in the earth. It behooves us to act in a manner befitting membership in that kingdom."*

**President Gordon B. Hinckley, "An Ensign to the Nations, a Light to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 84.**



***Through sign language classes organized by a sister in my new ward, I taught others how to communicate with me.***

I enjoyed teaching the one-hour weekly classes and did so for almost five years. Several of the class members became proficient enough to serve as interpreters in Sunday School and Relief Society when Sister Hara wasn't available due to other callings, so all of us involved with the class gained from the experience.

Teaching sign language was a challenge for me at times, and learning it, I'm sure, was a challenge for others. But being able to communicate with each other is a blessing that has helped us become good friends in the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

*Melinda Riddle, Maple Ridge Ward, Abbotsford British Columbia Stake*

## A SIGN OF FRIENDSHIP

**I** am deaf and the only member of the Church in my family. After my mission, I worried about returning to my hometown of Kamloops, British Columbia. I wondered if I would be able to find a place to worship where I could communicate with my brothers and sisters in the gospel.

I wrote to my stake president and within a few weeks received a reply telling me that a woman named Sharon Hara in the Kamloops Second Ward knew sign language. I wrote to her, and she seemed anxious to help me.

Soon after my arrival, Sister Hara began sign language classes in her home so other people could communicate with me. The class eventually became so well attended that we moved it to the ward meetinghouse. Then we had two separate classes, one for adults and one for children. Later, teaching a sign language class became part of my calling, and we extended the class to the whole community, not just the ward.

I enjoyed teaching the one-

# Mission Blessings in the *Golden Years*

*Senior missionaries bring blessings to themselves and the people they serve—and also to their children and grandchildren at home.*

## ***Bless Grandma and Grandpa***

By Mark Crane

**I**t began with the first letter we received from my mother. She and my father were brand-new missionaries in the Florida Tallahassee Mission. She told of a recent conference they had attended. As everyone was saying good-bye at the conclusion of the meetings, she noticed that her companion was missing. Hearing male laughter, she followed the sound to a classroom and found herself in the midst of a leg-wrestling tournament, which my dad

had organized. “I got there just in time,” she wrote, “to see some 20-year-old elder flip your dad across the room.” So much for my worry that a mission might turn Dad into some sort of somber old gentleman.

In reading that letter I began to discover the delights and blessings of being the child of missionary parents. When I served a mission in my youth, I understood on some level that my family loved the letters I wrote them. But at that somewhat selfish age, I didn’t appreciate how eager my family was for my success or how much prayer and worry they invested in my mission.

Now the tables were turned. I was pleasantly surprised to find myself rifling through the mail each day for missionary news, devouring every line. I soon noticed that our family prayers took on a new urgency. Our children no longer prayed the generic, “Please bless the missionaries.” They prayed the specific, “Please bless Grandma and Grandpa on their mission.”

When my parents were called on that first mission, they were both in their mid-50s and not

***Elder and Sister Crane (right) with a soon-to-be baptized member and a member missionary (left) who helped in his conversion.***





retired. But the seasonal nature of farming allowed them to spend the winter in the Lord's service. So their mission call was for six months. Those six months seemed to fly by.

What a shock it was to see them when they came home. My parents had become a force. The same remarkable changes that most parents recognize in their young missionary sons and daughters had taken place in Mom and Dad. The most dramatic change was that they just hummed with energy. Enthusiasm is an amazing tonic. They looked and acted younger. My mother ignored some of the chronic health problems that had slowed her down for years. And maybe it was my imagination, but my parents seemed to be more in love. Once, in a private moment I will always cherish, my mother told me of some occasions when my father had taught the gospel with great power. With love and admiration in her voice, she said, "Your dad is the most amazing man." I also noticed that their mission experience had been fun. Any conversation about their mission was punctuated with frequent and persistent laughter.

And my parents didn't serve just one mission. The next winter they returned to Florida. During the ensuing years they served eight more six-month missions, making ten in all. They missed many family events—births, baby blessings, baptisms, ten Thanksgivings and Christmases—and none of it seems much like a sacrifice. The compensating blessings are too great.

How thankful I am for parents who set the example. We try to teach our children that they have an obligation to share the gospel. Nothing gives life to that teaching quite like beloved grandparents who forgo the comforts of retirement to serve the Lord. This example becomes a powerful force in an extended family.

A few years ago our oldest son, Matt, was serving a mission in California while my parents were serving in Virginia. I noted that Matt never once wrote a letter home complaining about how tough missionary work is. I have to credit his grandparents for that. How can a young elder in his physical prime think of complaining when his grandmother—in her late 60s with lung problems, back pain, and numerous allergies—is knocking on doors in another state?

My parents' missions have shown me the error of the notion that once a child is raised, the parents' work is done. Wonderful as my childhood training was, I believe some of the greatest parenting my mother and father have done has occurred after I became an adult. And while they have helped baptize or activate many people, I believe their most profound ministry has been to their own grandchildren.

My parents' letters taught volumes of gospel lessons. Stories of serving in an inner-city branch in Washington, D.C.; hiking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon to teach investigators; laboring with impoverished single mothers, wealthy stockbrokers, fishermen, potters, farmers, addicts, alcoholics, ministers, police officers, and the elderly—what better way to teach grandchildren the worth of every soul?

The greatest thing my parents have done for their posterity is to leave them in the Lord's hands and accept calls to serve Him as missionaries. ■

*Mark Crane is a member of the Morgan Ninth Ward, Morgan Utah Stake.*

## **A Wonderful Reunion**

By Ejnar Iversen

My wife, Martha, and I were called from our home in Canada to serve in the Denmark Copenhagen Mission. After two weeks full of excitement and learning at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, and a long flight from Salt Lake City, we arrived in Copenhagen on June 22, 1999. President and Sister Rasmussen, our mission president and his wife, met us at the airport and took care of us for the next two days. We were then given a car and asked to live in Aabenraa and help in the Sønderborg Branch with missionary and membership work.

The first Sunday at sacrament meeting we greeted members and introduced ourselves. Shaking hands with





***If Elder and Sister Iversen had not served a mission, they would have missed a wonderful reunion with a dear friend.***

a middle-aged gentleman, I said, “I am Einar Iversen.” He replied, “I am Bent Bisgaard.” We looked at each other and could hardly believe our eyes. It was the same Bent Bisgaard who 32 years earlier had joined the Church while living with us in Canada. He said he lived in Fredericia and had been assigned to speak in our branch that day. What a wonderful reunion it was—much more than a coincidence. We felt that our Father in Heaven had sent him to welcome us.

In 1967 Bent had come to British Columbia, Canada, where I worked at the government employment office. He was looking for work and a place to stay. I found him work, and Martha and I agreed that we had room for one more boarder. We already had two, one of whom was Svend Hansen, a strong Church member.

Svend soon challenged Bent to read the Book of Mormon, and Bent did so with the intention of finding fault with it. Finding none, he wanted to be baptized. He was the first person baptized in our new stake center.

Soon afterward Bent returned to Denmark, and we were concerned that he might lose touch with the Church. But he attended church in Denmark, and it happened to

be a fast Sunday. He was sitting at the back of the chapel minding his own business when he was asked to bear his testimony, something he had never done before, in either English or Danish. He wished he could disappear, but instead he stood and told how Svend Hansen had challenged him to read the Book of Mormon. As soon as he mentioned Svend’s name, people looked up in surprise. After the meeting Svend’s many friends wanted to know how he was doing.

Suddenly Bent had many new friends, and he felt right at home. He has since worked many years with the youth and served on the high council of the Århus Denmark Stake.

Martha and I are very happy to have known Bent and Svend all these years. And had we not served as a missionary couple, we never would have had this wonderful reunion. ■

*Einar Iversen is a member of the Chilliwack Ward, Abbotsford British Columbia Stake.*

## ***Healed Hearts and Family History***

By Brunhilde Gehrman

**A**lthough we live on the east coast of Queensland, Australia, we are Germans. My husband, Siegfried, was born in Danzig, and I was born in what is now the Czech Republic. When we considered going on a mission, we had concerns. Our family is constantly growing. The separation would be very hard for us. Our little house couldn’t be rented, and there were financial worries. We discussed it together and spoke about all the pros and cons. But in the end we knelt down and asked our Father in Heaven for guidance. After that it was very easy. We both had a good feeling and the certainty that we should go on a mission.

In the application the bishop gave us, we could list the country we wanted to go to. Of course that was Germany. And although it seemed rather doubtful that we would be sent to the other side of the world, our Heavenly Father knew exactly what we needed. We were asked to fulfill a temple mission in Freiberg, Germany. I was excited because I still understand the Czech



language from my youth and can speak a little bit. I knew that members from Eastern Europe often visit the Freiberg temple.

We began our mission on February 25, 1992. Our temple president was Jiří Šnederfler, and his wife, Olga, was the temple matron. What excellent people they were—loving and always friendly.

We experienced only good things in Freiberg. Everyone was helpful and nice. We worked hard, and we were a large family of temple workers who loved each other. We still keep in touch with many of them.

The highlight of our mission was the visit from the first members in Ukraine. We had prepared ourselves. The mission president's wife spoke Russian, and even I learned part of one of the ordinances in Russian. These members had such a reverence for the house of the Lord. As they came and left, they bowed in humility. They were so happy they could receive their endowments, and many cried for joy and didn't want to leave the temple.

Polish members come often to Freiberg, and at first my husband was nervous about meeting them. His grandmother had starved in a camp in Poland after World War II. But through meeting with these brothers and sisters and worshipping together with them, my husband was emotionally healed. This was a great blessing brought about by our mission.

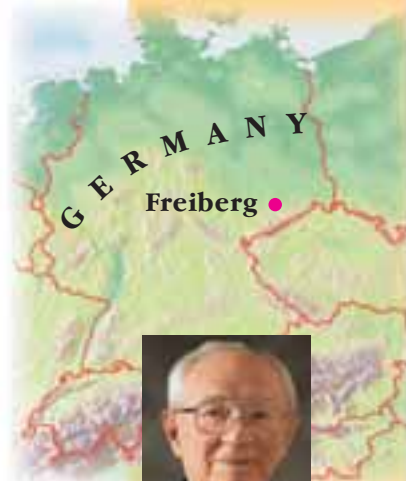
My great blessing was becoming acquainted with a Czech sister named Marie Smidova. With her help I was able to begin work on my family history. There were no Church microfilms from the region I needed, and my knowledge of Czech isn't sufficient to write to Czech officials for information. Sister Smidova has done much for me, and I am very thankful for her help.

When we returned home after 18 months, we were amazed at how our financial situation had improved. Our little house waited for us, and our children prepared a lovely welcome. After a year we went to Sydney, Australia, to serve a temple mission there for a year.

We are thankful for the experiences we have had through our work. We would remind every senior couple of the saying of President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985): “Do it now!” ■

*Brunhilde Gebrmann is a member of the Kawana Waters Ward, Nambour Australia Stake.*

**Elder and Sister Gebrmann have served temple missions in both Germany and Australia.**



## TO THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH

*“There is a constant need for more couple missionaries. They perform wonderful service throughout the world. You [leaders] need not wait for the couples to volunteer. The sacrifices associated with serving the Lord full-time will abundantly bless the couples, their families, and the people they serve.”*

**President Gordon B. Hinckley, “To the Bishops of the Church,” Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, June 19, 2004, 27.**





STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

## ADAPTING TO CIRCUMSTANCES

*The last in a series giving insights for your study and use of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”*

*“Fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.”<sup>1</sup>*

### Less Than Ideal

In an ideal world all adults would be happily married, all marriages would be blessed with children, and all family members would be healthy, obedient, and supportive of each other. But life is rarely ideal. Each individual experiences adversity, and no family’s mortal sojourn is consistently trouble free. Without trial, weakness, illness, and death, we would



not learn the lessons we came here to learn. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained: “If we look at mortality as a complete existence, then pain, sorrow, failure, and short life could be a calamity. But if we look upon life as an eternal thing stretching far into the pre-earth past and on into the eternal post-death future, then all happenings may be put in proper perspective.”<sup>2</sup>

### Shifting Responsibilities

Disease, disability, death, divorce, and other disruptive factors can create challenges. In such situations, “individual adaptation” of roles may be necessary. A father may need to



take on additional household and nurturing responsibilities, or a mother who has been a full-time homemaker may need to enter the workforce. Even children may need to accept new responsibilities.

When unsettling events occur, the extended family may also need to assist. Support may range from providing financial assistance to donating time to tend children, help with chores, or care for an ill or disabled family member.

The degree of extended-family involvement depends on the situation and the family's needs.

Even without the effects of serious adversity, the extended family can be an important support system. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "To build a foundation strong enough to support a family in our troubled world today requires the best effort of each of us—father, mother, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on. Each must contribute energy and effort in driving piles right down to the bedrock of the gospel until the foundation is strong enough to endure through the eternities."<sup>3</sup>

### Adversity

You may wonder why your family has to endure adversity and the disruption it brings. The answer, and the comfort, can be found in the gospel's eternal perspective. The Apostle Paul taught that our "affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). How is this possible?

Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy reminds us: "Trials and tribulations take many forms: the death of a loved one, a marriage that is different than expected, no marriage, a divorce, a child born with a disability, no children, losing a job, parents who make mistakes, a wayward son or daughter, ill health. The list is endless. Why did God make allowances in His plan for disappointment, pain, suffering, and death? Is adversity necessary for one to



**Without an eternal perspective, there are no meaningful explanations for the trials we face in mortality.**

build a Christ-centered life, to receive the image of God in his or her countenance?

"An understanding of the plan of salvation, of premortality, earth life, and life after death provides perspective. . . . Opposition, disappointments, pain, suffering, and death are necessary to protect agency and provide for spiritual development (see 2 Nephi 11). On the other hand, if life were limited to our mortal experience, adversity could not be understood. . . . Without an eternal perspective, there are no meaningful explanations

for man's inhumanity to man or for earthquakes, floods, or children with disabilities.

"We should remember that it was Satan who wanted an earth with no disappointments, no tests, no adversity, and no glory except for himself."<sup>4</sup>

### Healing through the Atonement

Although this mortal existence is meant to test us, we are not without divine help. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: "It is important to understand that His healing can mean being cured, or having your burdens eased, or even coming to realize that it is worth it to endure to the end patiently. . . .

"Recognize that some challenges in life will not be resolved here on earth. . . . He wants you to learn how to be cured when that is His will and how to obtain strength to live with your challenge when He intends it to be an instrument for growth. . . .

"When you feel you can do no more, temporarily lay your challenges at His feet. . . . The Lord will give relief with divine power when you seek deliverance in humility and *faith in Jesus Christ*."<sup>5</sup> ■

### NOTES

1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 38–39.
3. "Born of Goodly Parents," *Ensign*, May 1985, 23.
4. "Living a Christ-Centered Life," *Liabona*, Dec. 1999, 20; see *Ensign*, Jan. 1999, 13.
5. "To Be Healed," *Ensign*, May 1994, 7–8.

# POWERFUL NURTURING

*True power is found in the hands of a worthy nurturer, especially at mealtimes.*



**BY JULIE B. BECK**  
First Counselor in the  
Young Women General  
Presidency

**M**y mother is a champion nurturer. It is not uncommon for her to ask visitors if they are hungry, and one doesn't often leave her home without first eating a sandwich or warm soup. When my father was the mission president in São Paulo, Brazil, my mother fed 22 people nightly at our large dining room table. As a child I was enraptured by the dinner conversation, which usually centered on the missionary stories and efforts of those who ate with us. My mother, a strengthening influence to hundreds of missionaries, created the dinnertime venue where seeds of gospel testimony were sown and nurtured.


"The Family: A Proclamation to the World" states, "Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children."<sup>1</sup> A good nurturer carries power and influence. The Latin word *nutrire*, from which the English word *nurture* originates, means "to suckle

or nourish," or, in the full interpretation, "to feed, foster, care for, or rear." True power is found in the hands of a worthy nurturer, especially at mealtimes.

## **A Mother's Love**

I know of a mother who used her nurturing power to strengthen and bless a son and bring him back to Church activity. At age 18 the son announced that he did not intend to serve a mission. His activity in the Church dwindled. But the mother had faith, and she was a powerful nurturer. Every morning at 4:00 a.m., when her son got up to go to work, the mother arose at the same hour. She lovingly prepared a breakfast for him and packed a large lunch that he could take with him. She sat with him while he ate his breakfast and listened as he talked through his struggles in those dawn hours. This went on month after month for more





than a year. Then one morning the son told his mother he was going to make the changes necessary to qualify to serve a mission. She listened morning after morning as he talked about his feelings and challenges, encouraged him as he met with the bishop, and fed him at her table in her consecrated home. Eventually her son received a mission call. He served an honorable mission and continued into temple marriage and faithful fatherhood. He later said of the mighty change that took place in his heart: "I could not resist the love of my mother. The pull she had on my spirit during those reflective early morning breakfasts was too powerful to resist."



## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussions, personal reflection, or teaching the gospel in a variety of settings.

1. Plan family home evening around dinner-time. Copy the scripture stories mentioned in the article onto pieces of paper and place them underneath a few of the dinner plates. Discuss these stories and plan ways to make meals a time for nurturing.

2. List ways your mother or another nurturer has influenced your life. Read the section “A Mother’s Love” and discuss the power of nurturing. Send a letter of appreciation to this person.



### More Than Casseroles and Soup

As a young mother I did not fully understand my power as a nurturer. Though we were a busy family, I considered everyone’s presence at dinnertime nonnegotiable. It was our most consistent gathering time, and everyone planned to eat together before going on to other activities. I learned of the influence of my nurturing when our youngest daughter wrote in a college paper: “Dinner in our home was not just an eating ritual, but a special time for the family to communicate and to share our thoughts and stories of the day. . . . We often sat together for over an hour as we savored the conversation as much as the food.”

I thought I was just cooking casseroles and soup. But I had created the venue, the reason to gather. Because I prepared a meal

to share with my family, something special happened. It was a simple process, and our style changed with the ages of our children. When they were young we could discuss a picture from the Gospel Art Picture Kit (item no. 34735) or memorize a scripture. When they were older we asked more questions and shared experiences. Over the years our children grew and matured, and we loved each other.

Mothers, who are “primarily responsible for the nurture of their children,” can be a powerful force for strengthening families when they use mealtimes to gather loved ones. They follow the example of the Savior to calm, teach, and help their families remember important things as they feed, cultivate, educate, and rear at the consecrated tables in their homes. ■

#### NOTE

1. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

### Meals in the Scriptures

Many significant events in the scriptures are centered around meals. To solidify important spiritual teachings, the Savior fed people physically. When teaching His higher law to 5,000 people, He filled them with loaves and fishes (see Matthew 14:15–21). Before His atoning sacrifice, He called His disciples not to a final meeting but to a last supper. There He taught them to “love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). After His Resurrection, on the shores of Galilee, He bid His disciples to “come and dine. . . . Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. . . . So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me . . . ?” (John 21:12–13, 15). It was also at a meal that Jesus gave the earthshaking charge to the Apostles to “go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

The Lord knows that food and the circumstances in which we partake of it can help us remember some important things. We remember people we have shared a meal with, and we remember where we have eaten special meals. The children of Israel celebrated feasts to commemorate blessings of the Lord, such as the Passover. Each week we are nurtured by the Lord as we partake of the emblems of His atoning sacrifice, represented by bread and water—two essentials of life. The Savior taught, “For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (John 6:55–56). Through nurturing emblems we promise to “always remember Him” (D&C 20:77, 79).



# One Family's Testimony of Tithing

BY DON L. SEARLE  
Church Magazines

**W**hat does the Lord mean when He says to those who pay tithing, "I will . . . open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing" (Malachi 3:10)? A family in San Salvador, El Salvador, can tell you from experience of the blessings that come.

After José Antonio Salazar and his wife, Noemí, joined the Church in 1975, they did their best to teach their children the gospel by precept and example. Their daughter, Cecelia Noemí, grew up to serve a mission, then marry a returned missionary, Luis Ricardo Arbizú. Luis, who also grew up in a home where obedience to the gospel was taught, is currently administrative coordinator for the Church Educational System in San Salvador. Luis and Cecelia have two children, Silvia Noemí, 17, and Luis Ricardo, 10.

José expresses gratitude for everyday blessings that have come, he believes, as a result of faithfully paying tithing. "We have had bread every day," he says. "We have lacked for nothing." He is grateful for general good health. He speaks of the blessing and opportunity to serve as a temple worker while he and his wife lived in Los Angeles, California. "What more could I ask of Him? What more?"

His wife, Noemí, says not only have they never lacked anything, but they have been given means and opportunity to help others. She believes spiritual opportunities have come through obeying the law of tithing and other commandments. "It has been a blessing to me always to have a calling in the Church."

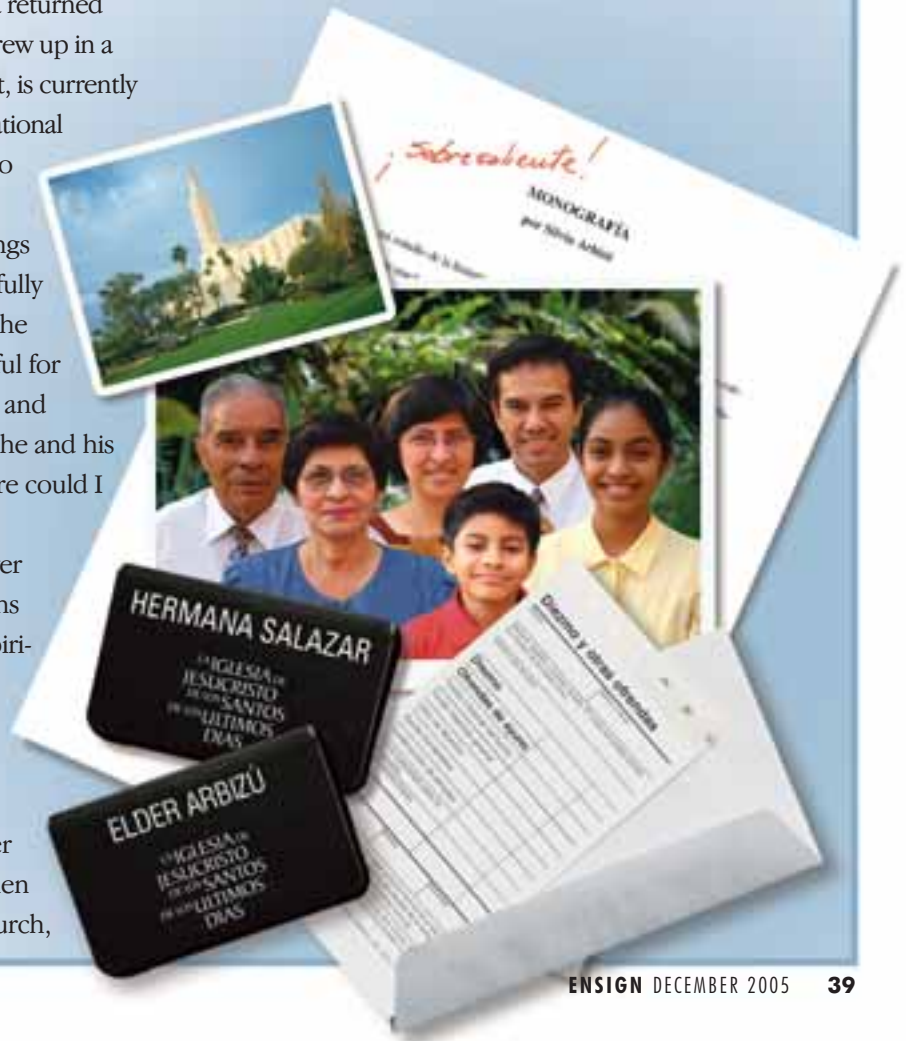
Son-in-law Luis Arbizú recalls that his mother had a small business selling prepared food. When she quit selling on Sunday after joining the Church,

the Lord blessed her to make up the difference. When Luis and Cecelia married, he had a very small salary. But shortly after he was called to serve in a stake presidency, his salary tripled and his wife was able to quit her job to stay at home.

Cecelia comments that when the Lord says He will open the windows of heaven, most people think of material blessings. "The great needs are not material but spiritual," she says. Among her family's blessings: "Our children are obedient."

Luis Ricardo says that as a result of paying tithing his own family has never lacked for anything needed. He is grateful for parents who are examples of obedience.

Silvia says that through obedience to the law of tithing and other commandments, "I have seen blessings in my studies. I feel my testimony has grown greatly." Obedience, she explains, "has helped me testify strongly of Jesus Christ, and this will strengthen my future home." ■







**Above: *Blessed Art Thou among Women*, by Walter Rane:** “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin . . . ; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, . . . Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:26–28, 30–32).

**Right: *Behold the Lamb of God*, by Walter Rane:** “And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:6–7).

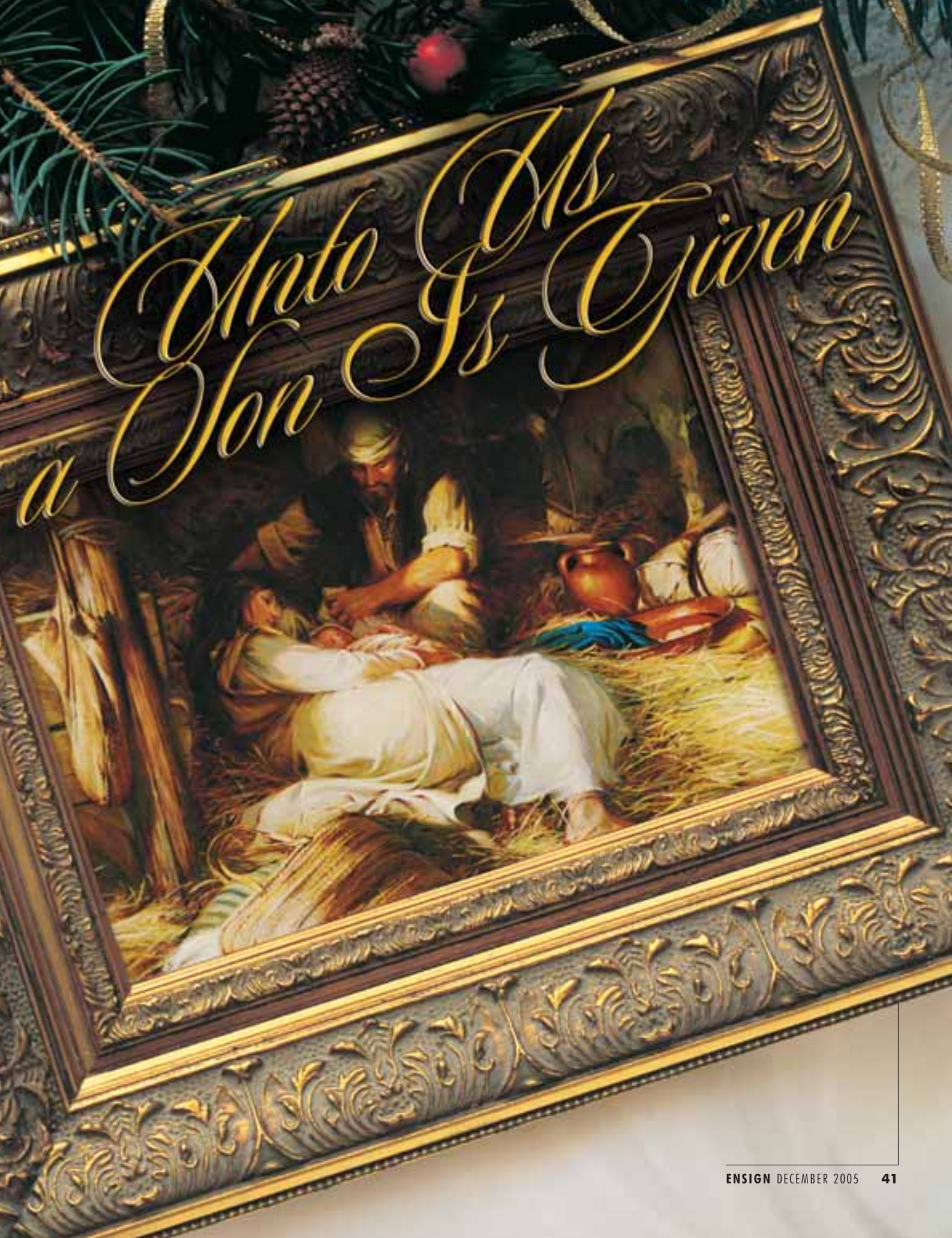
**A**nciently, Isaiah prophesied of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ when he wrote, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

In Book of Mormon times, King Benjamin prophesied of Christ when he taught: “The Lord Omnipotent who reigneth . . . shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles. . . .

“And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary” (Mosiah 3:5, 8).

The following artwork captures holy events surrounding the birth of the Savior as well as other experiences in His youth.





# Unto Us Is Given a Son





**Above: Annunciation to the Shepherds,** by Carl Heinrich Bloch: “And behold, there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you,” said Samuel the Lamanite about 6 b.c., speaking of the birth of Christ. “And behold this is not all, there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven” (Helaman 14:5–6).

**Right: The Birth of Jesus Christ,** by Carl Heinrich Bloch: “And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:15–16).







**Above: *Simeon Reverencing the Christ Child***, by Greg K. Olsen: Joseph and Mary brought Jesus “to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; . . . And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout. . . . And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. . . . And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him” (Luke 2:22, 25–30, 33).

FAR LEFT: ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS, BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH; NEAR LEFT: THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, BY CARL HEINRICH BLOCH, ORIGINAL AT THE CHAPEL OF FREDERIKSBORG CASTLE, DENMARK, USED BY PERMISSION OF THE FREDERIKSBORG MUSEUM, MAY NOT BE COPIED; RIGHT: SIMEON REVERENCING THE CHRIST CHILD, BY GREG K. OLSEN, MAY NOT BE COPIED





**Above: *And the Child Grew and Waxed Strong in Spirit***, by Walter Rane: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).



**Right: *Growing in Wisdom***, by Simon Dewey: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).





**Above: *Christ in the Temple***, by Heinrich Hofmann: "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. . . . And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (Luke 2:41–43; 46–47). ■

# The Quorum of the First Presidency



*The place of the President of the Church and that of the First Presidency in having responsibility for the entire Church in all the world is clearly set forth in revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants.*

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

**F**rom the time of the organization of the Church there has been designated one presiding authority over the entire body. On April 6, 1830, it was “given to Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church” (D&C 20:2).

Less than two years later, on January 25, 1832, he was ordained “unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood” (D&C 81:2; see also D&C 82).

As the Church matured, further revelation defined the office of the President and the Quorum of the First Presidency:

“And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside

over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses . . . to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church” (D&C 107:91–92).

And again:

“I give unto you my servant Joseph to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be a translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet.

“I give unto him for counselors my servant Sidney Rigdon and my servant William Law, that these may constitute a quorum and First Presidency, to receive the oracles for the whole church” (D&C 124:125–26).

“Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church” (D&C 107:22).

## Set Forth by Revelation

The place of the President of the Church and that of the Quorum of the First Presidency in having responsibility for the entire Church in all the







**President Gordon B. Hinckley (center); President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor (left); and President James E. Faust, Second Counselor (right), have served together in the First Presidency for more than 10 years.**

world is clearly set forth in these revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants.

At the same time, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is spoken of as being “equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned” (D&C 107:24).

The Seventy, likewise, “form a quorum, equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named” (D&C 107:26).

The question arises, How can they be equal in authority? Speaking to this question, President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) taught: “I want here to correct an impression that has grown up to some extent among the people, and that is, that the Twelve Apostles possess equal authority with the First Presidency in the Church. This is correct when there is no other Presidency but the Twelve Apostles; but so long as there are three presiding Elders who possess the presiding authority in the Church, the authority of the Twelve Apostles is not equal to theirs. If it were so, there would be two equal authorities and two equal

quorums in the Priesthood, running parallel, and that could not be, because there must be a head” (*Elders’ Journal*, Nov. 1, 1906, 43).

Likewise, the Seventy, who serve under the direction of the Twelve, would become equal in authority only in the event that the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve were somehow destroyed.

There have been lengthy periods when there was no Quorum of the First Presidency. Following the death of the Prophet Joseph, the presiding authority rested in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with Brigham Young as President. This continued for three and a half years. Following the death of Brigham Young, the authority again reverted to the Quorum of the Twelve and continued so for three years and two months. Following the death of John Taylor, one year and nine months passed before the First Presidency was reorganized.

Since that time a reorganization of the Presidency has occurred within a few days following the death of the



***As a practical matter, the Twelve and the Seventy are given much of the responsibility, under the direction of the First Presidency, for the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church.***

President. In every case the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has become President of the Church. Seniority is determined by the date of ordination to the apostleship.

### **Delegating Responsibility**

It is obvious that while the First Presidency presides and has jurisdiction over all elements of the Church, there must be delegation of authority and responsibility to others in carrying forward the vast undertakings of the Church throughout the world.

“The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews.

“The Seventy,” likewise, “are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations” (D&C 107:33–34).

Thus, as a practical matter, the Twelve and the Seventy are given much of the responsibility, under the direction of the First Presidency, for the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church. This includes the proclamation of the gospel to the

nations of the earth and the administration of the various programs involving the members of the Church.

To accomplish this, other work must be done. Houses of worship must be constructed and maintained, translations of Church literature must be made, publications must be printed, and many other matters of a temporal nature cared for. The Presiding Bishopric is given responsibility for these. Again under the direction of the Presidency, the Bishopric establishes the methods and the means for the collection of the tithes and offerings of members, sees to the welfare needs of the poor and distressed, and manages many other functions.

And so, with this relatively simple and well-understood management structure, the Church carries forward its vast program throughout the world. The Church’s organization is designed in such a way that growth can be accommodated through enlargement of the body of the Seventy as ecclesiastical officers and the addition of employees dealing with temporal affairs.

Further, an article of our faith states, “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

In other words, we believe in continuous revelation. It is the peculiar responsibility of the President of the Church to receive revelation for the entire Church. Every other officer is entitled to receive revelation concerning his particular responsibilities and obligations, but revelation affecting the entire Church is given only to and through the President.

### **Direction by Revelation**

We have the standard works which have been accepted as scripture by action of the membership of the Church. Then the question naturally arises, Has other revelation been received since, and is it being received today?

I have no doubt of it.

My Church service includes 3 1/2 years as an Assistant to the Twelve, which group became part of the First Quorum of the Seventy; 20 years as a member of the



Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and 24 years as a member of the Quorum of the First Presidency, as President for the last 10 years. I have seen many changes which I am absolutely certain came of revelation.

From time to time, I have been interviewed by representatives of the media. Almost invariably they have asked, “How does revelation come to the prophet of the Church?”

I reply that it comes now as it has come in the past. Concerning this, I have recounted to these media representatives the experience of Elijah following his contest with the priests of Baal:

“And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11–12).

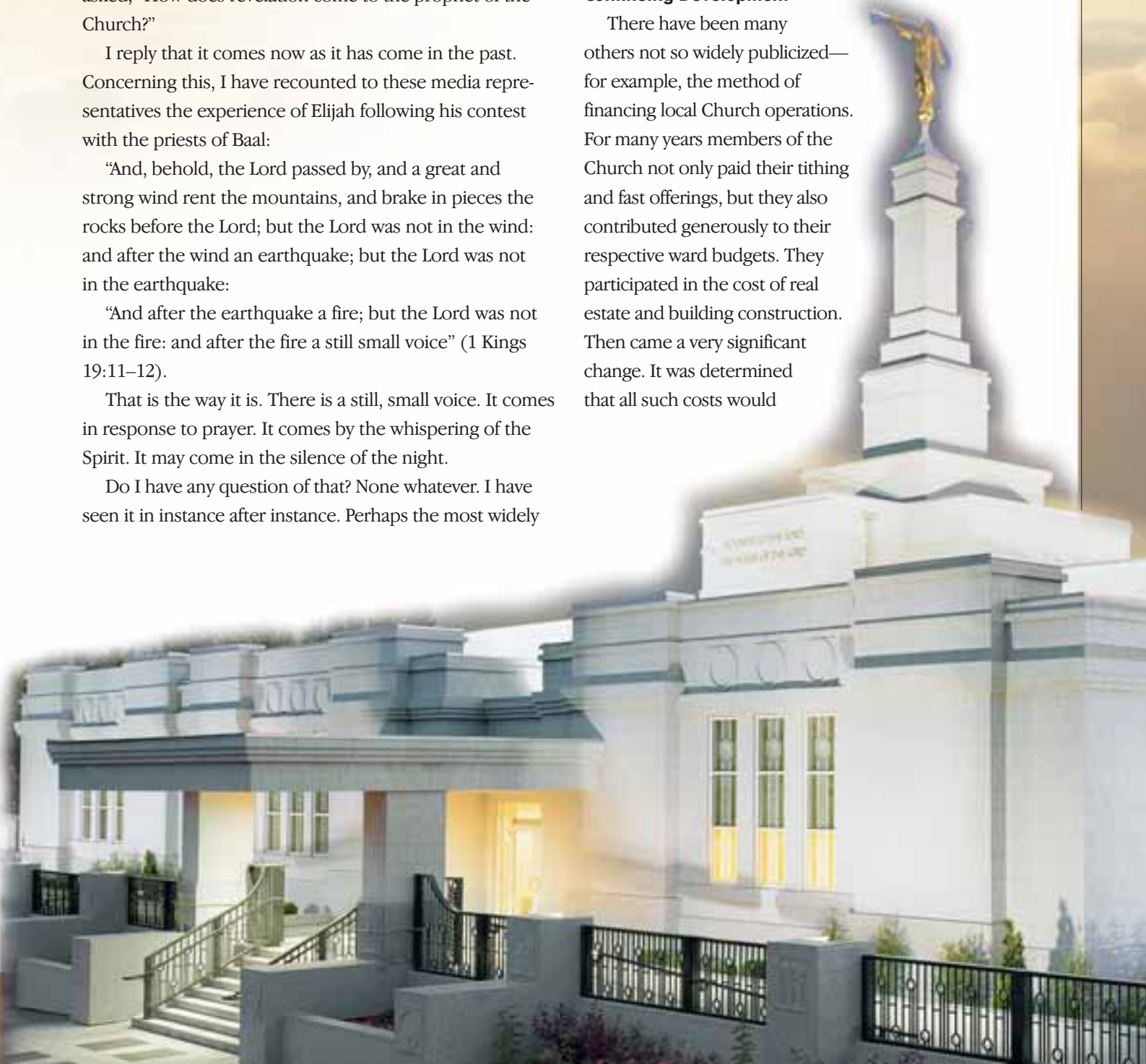
That is the way it is. There is a still, small voice. It comes in response to prayer. It comes by the whispering of the Spirit. It may come in the silence of the night.

Do I have any question of that? None whatever. I have seen it in instance after instance. Perhaps the most widely

publicized revelation in recent years was that given to President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) concerning the eligibility of all worthy men to be ordained to the priesthood (see Official Declaration 2). The outcome of that revelation has been tremendous.

### **Continuing Development**

There have been many others not so widely publicized—for example, the method of financing local Church operations. For many years members of the Church not only paid their tithing and fast offerings, but they also contributed generously to their respective ward budgets. They participated in the cost of real estate and building construction. Then came a very significant change. It was determined that all such costs would



come from the tithing funds of the Church. This change represented a great act of faith based on revelation.

Today all such financing is provided through tithing. And the remarkable and wonderful thing is that the Church has never been in better financial condition than it is today. The Lord has kept His ancient promise as He has given modern revelation.

The concept of small temples came, I believe, as a direct revelation. I have spoken at various times on how this occurred. The resultant blessing to our people with the erection of these smaller temples has been remarkable.

Another example: some years ago it became apparent that the Salt Lake Tabernacle could not accommodate all who wished to attend our general conferences. But what could we do?

I am satisfied that the construction of our great Conference Center came about as a result of the expressed will of the Lord given through revelation. The construction of this building was a bold undertaking. It meant tearing down a historic structure and replacing it with this great auditorium complex, involving millions of dollars.

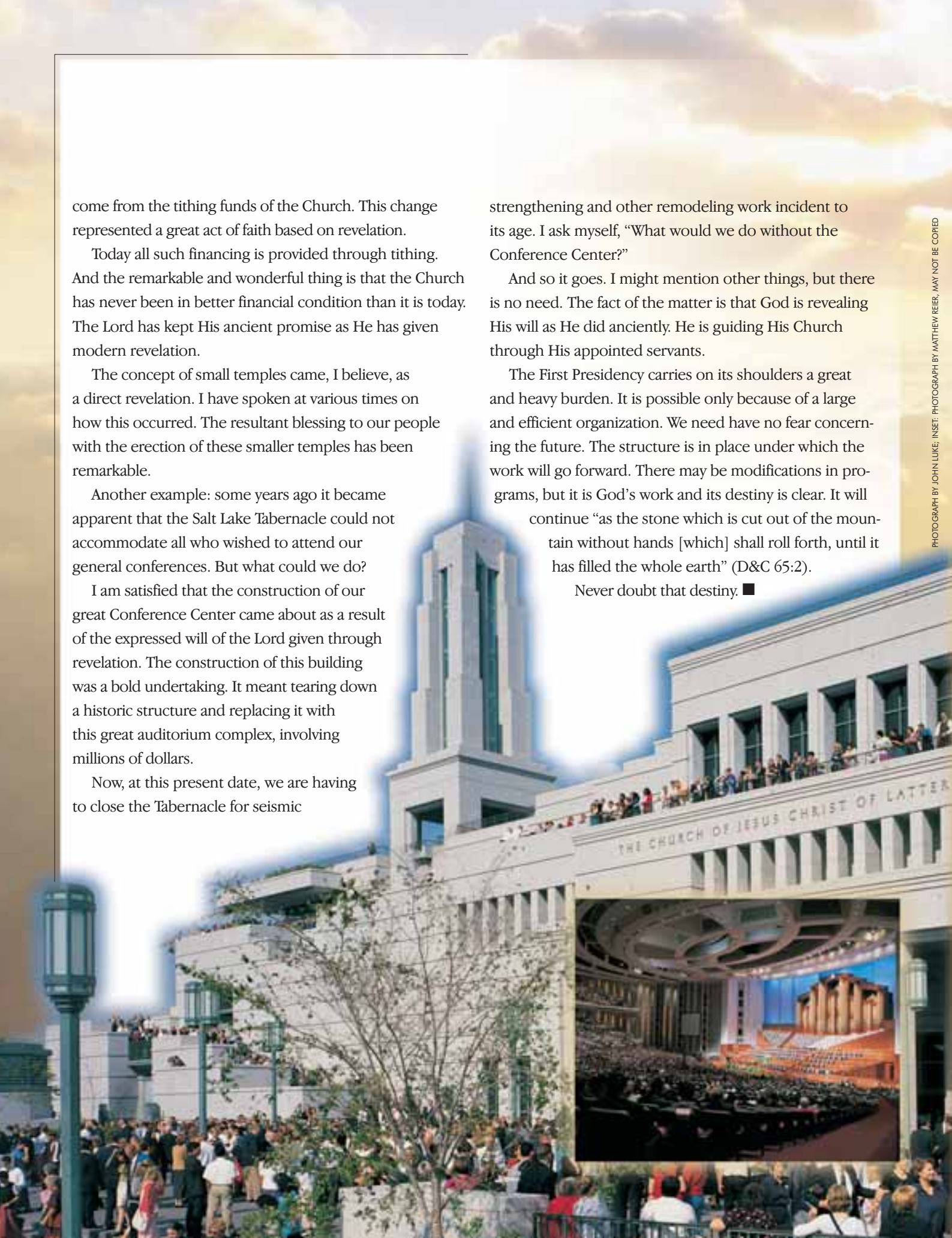
Now, at this present date, we are having to close the Tabernacle for seismic

strengthening and other remodeling work incident to its age. I ask myself, "What would we do without the Conference Center?"

And so it goes. I might mention other things, but there is no need. The fact of the matter is that God is revealing His will as He did anciently. He is guiding His Church through His appointed servants.

The First Presidency carries on its shoulders a great and heavy burden. It is possible only because of a large and efficient organization. We need have no fear concerning the future. The structure is in place under which the work will go forward. There may be modifications in programs, but it is God's work and its destiny is clear. It will continue "as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands [which] shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

Never doubt that destiny. ■





# Rejoice in the Atonement of Jesus Christ



*Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.*

**The Prophet Joseph Smith:** “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it” (*History of the Church*, 3:30).

## How Do We Rejoice in the Atonement?

**Romans 5:10–11:** “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

**President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945):** “I rejoice in knowing that Jesus is the Redeemer of the world, our elder brother, and that His name and His name alone, is the only one under heaven whereby we can gain salvation and come back and dwell with our Heavenly Father and our Savior, and our loved ones who have gone before” (*Teachings of Presidents of the*

*Church*: Heber J. Grant [2002], 225).

**Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:** “Jesus’ glorious Atonement is the central act in all of human history! It provides the universal Resurrection; it makes our personal repentance and forgiveness possible. . . . We are to change our thoughts and then behavior until we are turned away from our sins. . . . Repentance is thus a continuing process in which each of us needs to draw on the Atonement for real relief, real forgiveness, and real progress. . . . It remains for us . . . to claim the blessings of the great Atonement” (“Testifying of the Great and Glorious Atonement,” *Liabona*, Apr. 2002, 7–8, 13; *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 10, 15).

## How Can We Claim the Blessings of the Atonement?

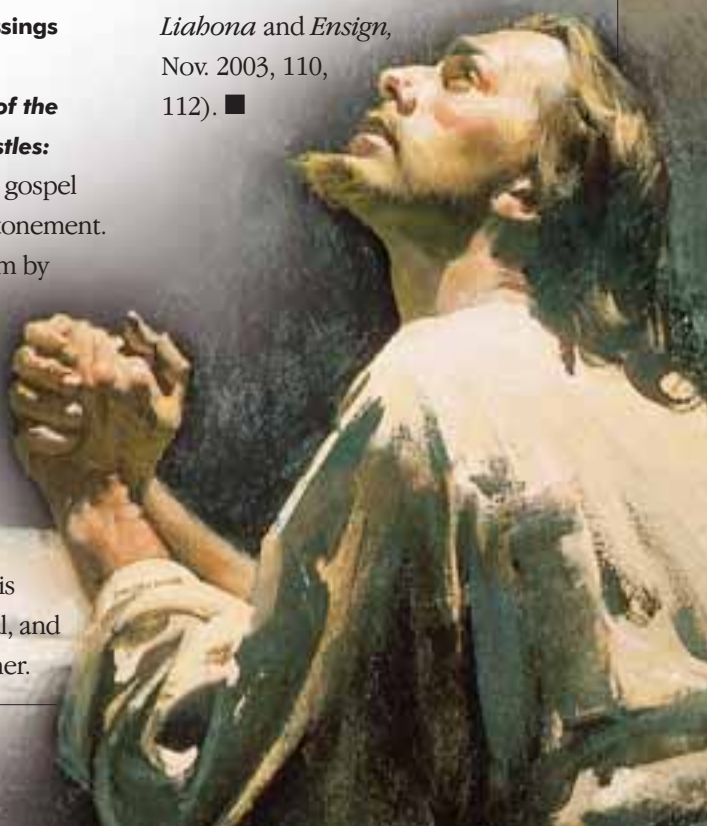
**Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:** “Essential ordinances of the gospel symbolize the Atonement. Baptism by



immersion is symbolic of the death, burial, and Resurrection of the Redeemer.

Partaking of the sacrament renews baptismal covenants and also renews our memory of the Savior’s broken flesh and of the blood He shed for us. Ordinances of the temple symbolize our reconciliation with the Lord and seal families together forever. Obedience to the sacred covenants made in temples qualifies us for eternal life” (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

**Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:** “It is essential to have Christ at the core of our lives. In these ‘perilous times,’ oh, how we need Him! He is the source of strength and safety. He is light. He is life. His peace ‘passeth all understanding.’ As our personal Savior and Redeemer, He invites us, one by one, with outstretched arms to ‘come unto him.’ . . . I testify that He is *always* there, His merciful, loving arms outstretched” (“Choose Ye Therefore Christ the Lord,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 110, 112). ■





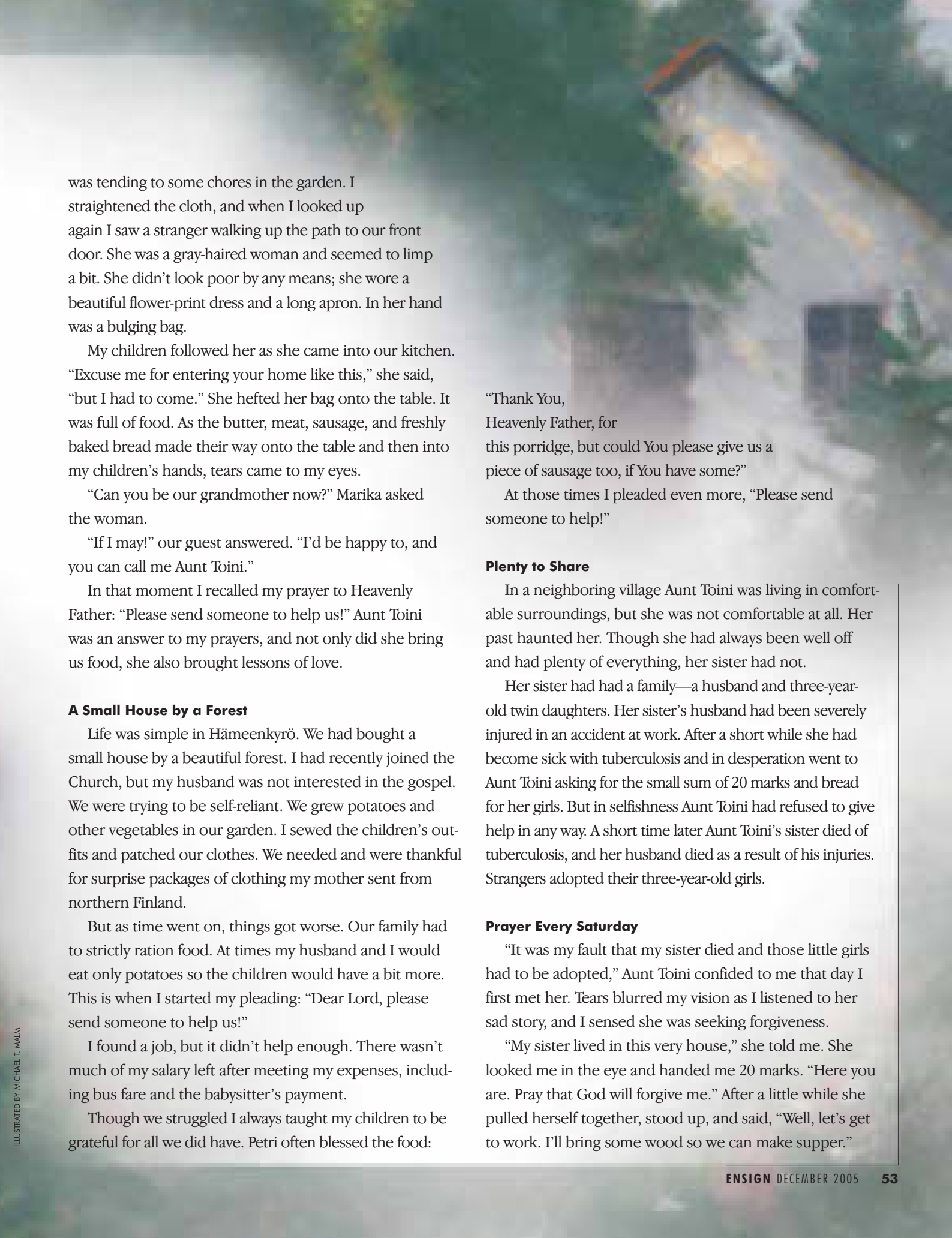
# A Bag of Food and 20 Marks

*Our family was hungry, but  
was the woman who brought  
us food also in need?*

BY MAIJA-KAARINA MÄKINEN

**A**s I spread the threadbare but clean tablecloth over our table, I glanced out the window. My husband and I and our two children were living in the small, rural village of Hämeenkyrö, Finland, in the 1960s. I saw my four-year-old daughter, Marika, and three-year-old son, Petri, playing with our dog on our small patch of green grass. My husband





was tending to some chores in the garden. I straightened the cloth, and when I looked up again I saw a stranger walking up the path to our front door. She was a gray-haired woman and seemed to limp a bit. She didn't look poor by any means; she wore a beautiful flower-print dress and a long apron. In her hand was a bulging bag.

My children followed her as she came into our kitchen. "Excuse me for entering your home like this," she said, "but I had to come." She hefted her bag onto the table. It was full of food. As the butter, meat, sausage, and freshly baked bread made their way onto the table and then into my children's hands, tears came to my eyes.

"Can you be our grandmother now?" Marika asked the woman.

"If I may!" our guest answered. "I'd be happy to, and you can call me Aunt Toini."

In that moment I recalled my prayer to Heavenly Father: "Please send someone to help us!" Aunt Toini was an answer to my prayers, and not only did she bring us food, she also brought lessons of love.

### **A Small House by a Forest**

Life was simple in Hämeenkyrö. We had bought a small house by a beautiful forest. I had recently joined the Church, but my husband was not interested in the gospel. We were trying to be self-reliant. We grew potatoes and other vegetables in our garden. I sewed the children's outfits and patched our clothes. We needed and were thankful for surprise packages of clothing my mother sent from northern Finland.

But as time went on, things got worse. Our family had to strictly ration food. At times my husband and I would eat only potatoes so the children would have a bit more. This is when I started my pleading: "Dear Lord, please send someone to help us!"

I found a job, but it didn't help enough. There wasn't much of my salary left after meeting my expenses, including bus fare and the babysitter's payment.

Though we struggled I always taught my children to be grateful for all we did have. Petri often blessed the food:

"Thank You,  
Heavenly Father, for  
this porridge, but could You please give us a  
piece of sausage too, if You have some?"

At those times I pleaded even more, "Please send someone to help!"

### **Plenty to Share**

In a neighboring village Aunt Toini was living in comfortable surroundings, but she was not comfortable at all. Her past haunted her. Though she had always been well off and had plenty of everything, her sister had not.

Her sister had had a family—a husband and three-year-old twin daughters. Her sister's husband had been severely injured in an accident at work. After a short while she had become sick with tuberculosis and in desperation went to Aunt Toini asking for the small sum of 20 marks and bread for her girls. But in selfishness Aunt Toini had refused to give help in any way. A short time later Aunt Toini's sister died of tuberculosis, and her husband died as a result of his injuries. Strangers adopted their three-year-old girls.

### **Prayer Every Saturday**

"It was my fault that my sister died and those little girls had to be adopted," Aunt Toini confided to me that day I first met her. Tears blurred my vision as I listened to her sad story, and I sensed she was seeking forgiveness.

"My sister lived in this very house," she told me. She looked me in the eye and handed me 20 marks. "Here you are. Pray that God will forgive me." After a little while she pulled herself together, stood up, and said, "Well, let's get to work. I'll bring some wood so we can make supper."

As she carried water from the well, I offered a different prayer: “Thank You, Heavenly Father! Blessed be the full bag and 20 marks!”

Every Saturday Aunt Toini came at the same time, with the bag full of food and 20 marks. She never asked how she could help; she just went to work. Occasionally she would stay at our house for a day or two. At those times she would always be the first to get up in the morning to make the porridge. She bought us some new pots and pans when she noticed the need. Sometimes she would wash our laundry by hand.

The weeks went by quickly as we looked forward to Saturdays and Aunt Toini’s visits. I would sometimes tell her about the Church, and many times we prayed together. Marika and Petri were very happy every time she came, and Aunt Toini never forgot to bring some sausage for Petri. It seemed she enjoyed the time with our family, and I thought perhaps we were giving something back to her.

#### Flowers and Love

Aunt Toini visited us regularly for three years. Then one Saturday she didn’t come.

Nor did she come the following day. Later we learned that Aunt Toini had just left a shop and was heading to our

small cottage when she collapsed to the ground, never to recover.

My husband and I and our children attended Aunt Toini’s funeral. We didn’t know anyone when we arrived, and we didn’t know when it would be appropriate for us to lay our flowers on her

grave. We decided to be the last to lay down our flowers, to express our gratitude, to say good-bye.

After the funeral a woman approached us and told us she was Aunt Toini’s daughter. “You could have laid your flowers down first. You were so dear to our mother,” she said. “What was the power that changed her? She used to be a stingy and selfish person. But during the last three years she changed into a new person. She was so tender and loving.”

I didn’t know what to say except, “It was love.”

#### Family and Temple Blessings

Though it has been more than 40 years since I first met Aunt Toini, I am still learning from the lessons she brought along with her bag of food. She was my teacher. She taught me how to long for forgiveness and how to give service and help. And now I realize that though she came to feed us, she too had been fed.

Twenty years after her funeral, Petri found that we are related to Aunt Toini through my husband’s lineage. We performed temple ordinances for her. Oh, what a joyous day it will be when we meet each other on the other side of the veil!

Aunt Toini was an inspiring example of love and a change of heart. I’ll forever remember her bag full of food and 20 marks and hope that I can walk the same path she did, for it is the path the Savior has set for us to follow. ■

*Maija-Kaarina Mäkinen is a member of the Tampere Second Ward, Tampere Finland Stake.*



## A Gift from the Heart

By Lucía Rivero Romero

**I**n December 1996 I found myself serving a full-time mission in the Mexico Monterrey North Mission. My companion was a young sister from Utah. It was my first Christmas away from home without my children and grandchildren, and I couldn't stop thinking about what my children were doing and who was preparing dinner, since I wasn't there to do it.

I was quieter than usual, so my companion gave me a hug and said, "I'm going to make a delicious dinner for you." I looked at her lovely face and into her beautiful blue eyes that were looking back at me with so much love, the way my children and grandchildren look at me. I smiled at her.

The dinner she prepared was just a warm cinnamon drink, but for me it was a great delicacy. I was 46 years old, and she was only 21. Always I was concerned about giving, and I didn't think about receiving. As missionaries we did not have any money to give, so we gave love and service instead. Without my companion knowing it, I had bought a pair of gloves and

a scarf to protect her from the cold. That was my gift to her. But she gave me something that couldn't be bought with all the gold in the world: love and service.

That night her gift taught me that Christmas is for giving the most beautiful part of ourselves, the feelings of our hearts. Very shyly I took out my gifts for my dear

companion. I felt so humble to give her what I had bought, compared with her great love.

Every Christmas after returning home from my mission, I have shared with my children and grandchildren that wonderful Christmas. I will always be grateful to my Heavenly Father and to Jesus Christ for the holy season of Christmas and to my companion for her example of love. ■

*Lucía Rivero Romero is a member of the Juárez Ward, Mexico City Tenayo Stake.*

**M**y companion's gift taught me that Christmas is for giving the most beautiful part of ourselves, the feelings of our hearts.



**E**ach time  
a family  
member  
performed an act  
of service, we put  
one piece of straw  
into the manger.



## *Straw for the Manger*

By Sue Jones

**A**s our children's awareness began to grow beyond the protective walls of our own home, Christmas became more and more Santa and glitter. As this excitement and anticipation grew, the birth of our Savior seemed farther and farther from our hearts and minds. My husband, Bob, and I tried to bring the true spirit of Christmas back into our celebration in ways that would be meaningful to the entire family. One year we established a pattern of

traditions that has served us well and provided meaningful Christmases for many years.

We chose a family home evening lesson for the first week in December that focused on giving service as a way to celebrate the Christmas season. We made a cardboard manger and provided a container full of straw. Each time a family member performed an act of service, we put one piece of straw into the manger. The children eagerly sought

meaningful acts of kindness with which to earn a straw for baby Jesus's manger, and we filled the manger three times over that year.

Bob happened to spot an old-fashioned lantern in a store's display of Christmas decorations. He bought it, and it provided the inspiration for the culminating event of our religious celebration. After our family party and dinner on Christmas Eve, the children dressed for bed and gathered in the largest bedroom upstairs, away from the nativity scene in the living room. We turned off all the lights in the house and explained to the children that we would be taking



a pilgrimage to see the newborn King of kings. We prepared for our journey by singing traditional carols and then proceeded to the living room, singing "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful." Bob led the way, holding the lantern with its flickering candlelight to brighten our path.

Upon reaching the little stable, we sat quietly and sang a few more carols. Then we presented the manger to baby Jesus. It was filled with straw representing gifts of love we had given throughout the month. Everyone who wanted to do so expressed his or her love for the Savior. The Spirit of the Lord was in our home and our hearts that evening. The children went calmly and quietly to bed—still eager for the morning to come, but also feeling love and appreciation for the Christ child, whose birth we were celebrating.

Each year, as we get caught up in the frantic preparations for Christmas, we have a sense of peace, knowing that the commercialism will be tempered, at least to a degree, with a few moments of meaningful worship. Even at the height of anticipating Christmas morning, the children look forward to the special time we spend each Christmas Eve with the newborn King. ■

*Sue Jones is a member of the Bountiful 31st Ward, Bountiful Utah Stake.*

## *Unemployed for the Holidays*

By Iris Lehmann

In January 2001 my husband, Peter, became unemployed, and shortly thereafter our third child was born. When Peter found a job 500 miles (800 km) away, we made a big move. And although he enjoyed the job, the year was very bad economically and we had barely enough money to pay for rent and groceries. Our small food storage quickly vanished, and Christmas was approaching. Then Peter's employer gave us an unexpected "Christmas bonus"—all the employees in Peter's department were declared unemployed for one month.

Thus, my husband was again out of work. But the Lord did not forget us. Peter was asked to help several members, and we were supported financially through this work. We were not forgotten for Christmas either. The sister missionaries rang our doorbell one day and presented us with a package on behalf of an anonymous family in our ward. When we opened it we found many lovingly wrapped gifts, each bearing the name of a member of our family. We also found an envelope containing extra

money—as if the presents had not been enough!

On Christmas Eve the doorbell rang again. A package on the doorstep again contained nicely wrapped presents for each of us. We were very happy. I thanked our Heavenly Father for the little miracles He had provided. And I was grateful to the members who were so loving, even though we had lived there for only five months.

We do not know who helped us during those difficult times, and I can't help but think of the Savior's words: "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink" (Matthew 25:35). ■

*Iris Lehmann is a member of the Salzburg Ward, Salzburg Austria Stake.*



## *The Clam Chowder Story*

By Gary B. Lundberg

Every Christmas Eve my wife serves my favorite dish, clam chowder. We added the chowder to our holiday traditions not only because we enjoy the taste, but because it reminds us of the Savior's infinite love for us. After the last bite, we tell the clam chowder story, which happened years ago when our children were young.

It was a Monday evening, and I was on my way home from work, looking forward to a fun and relaxing family home evening with my wife and children. As I walked toward the back door, I anticipated the children playing nicely and dinner waiting on the table. Not so.

My wife, Joy, had arrived home just before I did. She had had a busy day, and now each of our children was trying to get her attention. As we began to sort out their needs, it seemed each had homework that had to be completed that evening. Joy was exhausted, we needed to prepare dinner, we needed to hold family home evening, and Joy had also committed to prepare clam chowder for 60 women who would attend the Relief Society luncheon the next day.

We divided up the tasks. Joy fixed dinner, I helped the children with their homework, and we held a short family home evening. I then put the children to bed while Joy started the

clam chowder. The children were all tucked in bed by about 9:30. I walked into the kitchen, and Joy was busily preparing the ingredients for the clam chowder. The process is quite lengthy and somewhat tricky. The chowder must be constantly stirred at the right temperature, or it will burn.

Joy had to leave at 8:00 the next morning, so the chowder had to be finished that evening. I asked her if she would like me to help. She said she could handle it, so I went upstairs to work on my electronics course.

About 11:30 Joy came into the room with a small bowl of chowder. I was in the middle of soldering a part in a circuit board. When I looked up she was gone. There sat the steaming bowl of heavenly soup. I put a big spoonful in my mouth, expecting ecstasy. I was startled. I couldn't believe what I was tasting. It was terrible! It tasted burned. Surely this couldn't be. How could I tell my wife?

Gathering all my tact and courage, I went downstairs. She was sitting in the kitchen, looking forlorn and tired. I said as gently as I could, "Honey, there's no way you can serve this. It's burned." She looked up and started to cry. "I hoped you wouldn't notice. I was stirring and stirring, and all of a sudden I noticed black flecks coming to the top. I quickly took it off the stove and poured it into

another pot, hoping I had caught it in time." The tears flowed freely, and she looked hopeless. "I am so tired, it's so late, and we don't have any money to replace the ingredients. What are we going to do?"

I put my arms around her and told her she needed to go to bed. She said, "But I can't. I still have carrots to peel and cut up." I walked her to the bedroom. We had a prayer, and she got in bed. She was already asleep when I closed the door and headed for the kitchen, wondering what I could possibly do.

I grabbed the cookbook and looked for "burned milk products" in the index. Nothing. I even tried calling an all-night radio program that discussed all sorts of topics. I couldn't get through, so I went back to the sink and peeled carrots. It was full panic time. I had done all I could do. Only one option left. I went into the dark living room and knelt down.



I felt a bit uncomfortable asking about such a trivial matter. But it was not trivial to Joy. "Heavenly Father," I began, "I know there are many people with big problems. But I have no other place to go. I have done all I know how to do. This problem is very big to my wife, and that makes it important to me. She is faithful and tries to do all she is asked to do." I took a deep breath. "Please, Father, take the burned taste out of the clam chowder before morning. Please forgive me for asking such a trivial thing, but please

help my wife." With that I went to bed.

About 6:30 a.m. my wife sat up in bed and said, "What am I going to do?" I told her the carrots were done, and she needed to get dressed and go try the chowder. She dipped out a small amount into a pan and heated it. As she tasted it she looked at me with tears in her eyes and said, "There are no black flecks and no burned taste. What did you do?"

***As my wife tasted the clam chowder she looked at me with tears in her eyes and said, "There are no black flecks and no burned taste. What did you do?"***

I told her what I had done, and we both realized the blessing He had granted us. We knelt in prayer and thanked our Heavenly Father for His love and concern for us.

What process did the Lord use? I don't know.

Why did He grant this petition? I don't know. All I know is that He said, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7:7), and I believed Him. And this time He granted the blessing.

Oh yes, the clam chowder was served to the sisters. They all commented on how delicious it was and asked for the recipe.

We find the Christmas season the best time of year to remind ourselves and our family of how much the Savior cares about us and that, to Him, even little things matter. ■

*Gary B. Lundberg is a member of the Edgemont 14th Ward, Provo Utah Edgemont Stake.*

## Five Tips for Singles

Being single in a family-oriented church may seem awkward at times. Yet I have learned that the following principles can help singles like me keep their lives running smoothly while feeling happy and fulfilled in the process.

**1. Take care of your health.** Your health is a primary source of your strength and independence. Take



preventive measures: eat right, get enough sleep, and exercise. When you get sick, quickly take the steps needed to recover.

**2. Know that you have purpose.** We prepared to come to earth at this time and at this place. If God believes there is reason to have me here, I can

believe that too. There must be good work that I can do, work that might not get done if I don't do it.

**3. Keep your home clean.**

Without a spouse, you may not always feel motivated to clean up after yourself. When I keep my home tidy, I feel a warm and welcoming spirit there, and I am always ready for visitors.

**4. Be thankful.** When you count your blessings, you recognize how much the Lord is involved in your life. Once I offered a prayer about all my "don't have" worries: "All my children have grown up and moved away," "I have to watch every penny," "I don't have a companion." I received an impression that my children are where they are supposed to be and that they love me. I also realized that I have what I need materially and that God can help me find joy in this life regardless of my marital status.

Keep the goodness of your life before you always by keeping memories in your photo album, in your journal, and on your walls.



**5. Communicate daily with Heavenly Father.** I can always pray to Heavenly Father and feel the peace of the Holy Ghost. I have also found that the more I connect with Heavenly Father, the better I am able to connect with those around me.

*Kayleen Silver, Tabiona Ward, Duchesne Utah Stake*

## Gratitude Chart

Gratitude is a memory of the heart," a French proverb reminds me whenever I look at my gratitude poster. One day when I was feeling sad, my sister gave me this poster, then blank except for the proverb, and instructed me to take time each day to list at least one thing for which I





was grateful. At first there seemed to be a lot of empty space staring back at me, but each day I was able to list something. Now that the chart is full, I can look at it whenever I feel bad and realize all the blessings I have, both temporally and spiritually. Interestingly, this reminder of my blessings helps me to better live within my means. When I'm tempted to buy that new stereo, for instance, I just look at my poster and remember all the temporal things I already have and am grateful for, as well as all the blessings that money can't buy.

*Jennifer Lucas, Irvine Third Ward, Irvine California Stake*

## Conference Calendar Gifts

A general conference quote a day—that's what we needed to internalize the Brethren's important messages. Also, since Christmas was coming, we decided to fill both spiritual and temporal needs by preparing inexpensive conference calendar gifts. After reviewing the most recent conference talks, we selected several inspiring quotations—enough for a daily dose from January 1 to early April, when the next conference would occur. My husband then created a simple template on the computer, dividing a page into fourths. Using online transcripts from the Church's Web site [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org), we copied and pasted each chosen



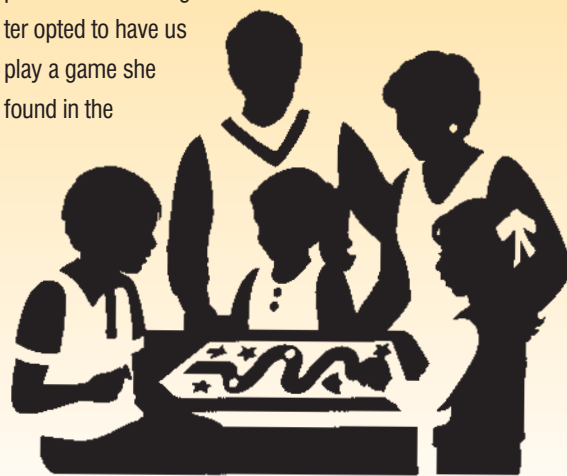
### A Buffet of Words

One of our favorite family night traditions involves a potluck—not the food variety but a buffet of words. We take turns sharing stories and activities from Church magazines. To keep the discussion interesting, we try to avoid reading word for word. Instead, each family member chooses and reviews

a favorite article in advance, then shares selected paragraphs or key ideas in turn. When a recent issue featured a song, one daughter chose to play it on the piano. Another daughter opted to have us play a game she found in the

*Friend*. We're excited to use the Church magazines in a variety of ways, and we've enjoyed inviting friends to join in our family fun.

*Ramona Dutton, Alamosa First Ward, Alamosa Colorado Stake*



quotation onto a template section. (Of course, we could have also handwritten the quotations.) After adding a date above each one and adjusting the fonts as needed, we simply printed the pages, copied them, cut them into quarters, and punched two holes in the top of each. After collating the calendar pages, we used large brads or twine for binding. With a magnet attached to the back of the stack, each calendar can hang on

a refrigerator, where the quotations are easy to see every day.

The calendars have been such a success that we continue to make them after many conferences.

The best part is that my husband and I learn the talks better than we ever did before, and our gift recipients say they love waking up to a new conference quote and thinking about it all day.

*Heidi Macdonald, O'Fallon Ward, O'Fallon Illinois Stake*



# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*How can we magnify our callings while at the same time following the counsel of Church leaders to reduce and simplify the work?*

**Using  
lds.org  
as well as  
the Church  
magazines  
can help  
with teaching  
preparations.**

When some people hear the phrase “magnify your calling,” they often feel they need to devote more time, make more handouts, or do something extra that would take more energy or add to their stress. This is a misconception!

When you put a magnifying glass

over an object,  
you are able to  
see it more

clearly.

Perhaps we could all simplify our lives by looking at our callings through a spiritual lens. Are we focusing on the essential things the Lord would have us do, or are we distracted from the essentials by adding unneces-

sary work that takes us away from our families or causes us undue stress? There must be a balance in all things. If we pray to know how the Lord would have us magnify our callings, He will help us do so.

*Meaghan James, Parkland Ward,  
Lakewood Washington Stake*

As a Young Women leader, I have simplified my teaching preparations by using the Church magazines and the Church Web site lds.org. I read the lesson ahead of time; then I have the lesson in my mind as I read the scriptures to prepare for Sunday School or while I read the *Ensign* and the *New Era*. I often find scriptures, articles, or thoughts that pertain directly to my lesson. I love how the topics in Church magazine articles connect with Relief Society, Sunday School, Primary, Young Women, and Young Men lessons. I use the Sunday Lesson Helps found at the back of each *New Era*, along with the suggested talks found in the Resource Guides for Young Men and Young Women in the May and November issues of the *Ensign* and *Liabona*. (The guide also points out which Personal Progress area each Young Women lesson pertains to.) I like to find articles and talks on lds.org and to cut and paste portions of the articles directly into my planned lesson.

*Linda T. Payne, Oak City Second Ward,  
Delta Utah Stake*

The Church exists to support and help individuals and families, not the other way around. Here are some helpful questions to ask when trying to magnify one's calling but simplify the work:

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRISTINA SMITH



- Am I overscheduling individuals or families in my ward? Can we coordinate so that most meetings and activities are held one night a week?

- Does a particular meeting or activity encourage members to live the gospel, receive saving ordinances, and prepare for exaltation?

- Are we focusing more on the people than on the program?

- Have I asked the individuals and families I serve or direct what kind of activities would best serve their needs, or am I promoting my own needs and pursuing my own personal agenda?

- Do I count the success of the meeting or activity by how many people attended or, rather, by the effect it had on those who did attend?

- Does a particular meeting or activity interfere with the family dinner hour?

*Ross and Janene Baadsgaard, East Bench Ward, Spanish Fork Utah  
Palmyra Stake*

When I was serving as elders quorum president, our presidency found that a little practical organization paid great dividends. We made clear assignments regarding who was in charge of what so that our efforts didn't have to be reorganized on an ad hoc basis every week or when something would arise. For example, I had primary responsibility for home teaching, one counselor handled quorum instruction, and the other took care of welfare and temporal needs. By having clearly defined roles, whenever something came my way I knew

## DON'T MAGNIFY THE WORK



*"May I give you a word of caution as you plan your activities. Make sure that the essential needs are met, but*

*do not go overboard in creating so many good things to do that the essential ones are not accomplished. . . . Remember, don't magnify the work to be done—simplify it."*

**Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Doctrinal Foundation of the Auxiliaries," Ensign, Aug. 2005, 67.**



**Don't magnify  
the work to  
be done—  
simplify it.**

exactly which member of the presidency would handle it. This helped simplify our approach significantly.

Additionally, I found that too many meetings can easily and unnecessarily complicate our callings. I didn't find it necessary to hold a formal sit-down meeting every week. Rather, I would coordinate with my counselors via phone calls and e-mail throughout the week. When we did hold formal meetings, I made sure to prepare adequately so we could focus on what needed to be done and be as effective as possible in our time together. With proper planning, we could have a productive and effective meeting in half an hour.

*John Replogle, Chevy Chase Ward,  
Washington D.C. Stake*

Here are two ideas to keep in mind while serving in the Church:

**1. Magnify your calling, not your "busyness."** Callings can keep us busy 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But most of us have other priorities as well. So, as guided by the Spirit, do what's most important. Be careful not to confuse "busyness" with progress. Remember the honeybee and the mosquito: both are very busy, but the bee is revered while the mosquito is swatted.

**2. Counsel with your spouse.** Your spouse is your partner and can be a great source of help in simplifying your schedule as you set your priorities.

*D. Gordon Wilson, Ensign Peak Ward,  
Salt Lake Stake*

PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

While preparing a stake Relief Society lesson on family traditions, I realized one of our “family traditions” was for me to neglect our children while I made laminated bookmarks for Relief Society lessons! My husband and I knew it was time to make some changes.

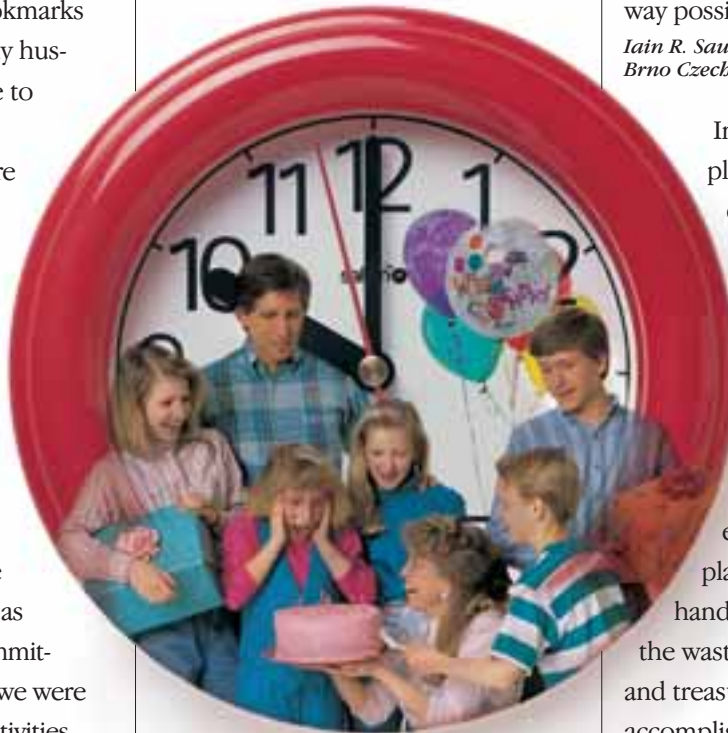
First, we needed to be sure that the time we spent during the week reflected our true priorities. We outlined our family goals and made sure we were fulfilling the basic gospel requirements: personal and family prayer, scripture study, and regular family home evenings. Then we scheduled time for home and visiting teaching, as well as other Church and family commitments. Often we found that we were not able to support all the activities that were available. In these situations we prayerfully selected those areas in which our service would be most effective.

Soon we found that chaos was replaced with harmony, both in our home and in our callings. Instead of making hand-painted, laminated handouts for lessons, we opted to be more prepared spiritually. We were better able to respond to the promptings of the Spirit because our days were no longer packed to overflowing. In planning activities, we chose simple refreshments and decorations, and we concentrated on filling members spiritually.

We have reaped the rewards of simplifying our service—both temporally and spiritually. We have found increased love in our home and

our family time, we need to talk to others about sharing the load or simply learn to say no to certain nonessential things in the nicest way possible.

*Iain R. Saunders, Brno Branch,  
Brno Czech District*



**Remembering that family time is sacred can help us simplify our schedules.**

fulfillment in our callings. We now live by the mantra “It doesn’t have to be laminated to be true!”

*Asbli Spillane Thompson, Bitburg Military Ward, Kaiserslautern Germany Military Stake*

Over the years I have realized that family time is sacred. Keeping this in mind simplifies things quite nicely. Nothing should get in the way of specifically planned family time such as family home evenings, private time for married couples, and regularly scheduled family outings. If our callings start to interfere too much with

In trying to “reduce and simplify,” we might ask ourselves questions such as these:

Do all cookies have to be homemade? Do we really need cookies? Could a handwritten note have more meaning than an expensive gift? Could a few telephone calls or an e-mail message take the place of a meeting? Will the

handout we are making go into the wastebasket, or will it be kept and treasured? Can we save time by accomplishing two tasks during one trip?

*Dorothy Moore, Malad First Ward,  
Malad Idaho Stake*

When I served as Primary president, I learned that fasting and praying as a presidency helped my counselors and me to serve far more effectively than spending the same amount of time planning grandiose activities and making extravagant visual aids. Not only did we receive new ideas for dealing with problems, but the Spirit touched the children in greater measure and prepared them to learn what we taught. ■

*Katherine Padilla, Kensington Ward,  
Washington D.C. Stake*



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND



Visitors to Temple Square will enjoy a blaze of holiday lights again this year.

## First Presidency Christmas Message

**A**t this glorious time of year, we bear witness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is indeed “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He is our Exemplar, our Teacher, and our Redeemer.

In this year commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, we gratefully acknowledge the Prophet’s unparalleled role as the great

testifier of the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. As he boldly declared:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

“That by him, and through

him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (D&C 76:22–24).

God be thanked for the gift of His Beloved Son. We add our testimonies that He lives and guides His people today. May His peace be with you and your loved ones this Christmas season and throughout the coming year. ■

## Christmas Devotional Scheduled

**T**he First Presidency will hold their annual Christmas devotional in the Conference Center on Sunday, December 4, 2005. The devotional will include messages from the First Presidency and music by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Check with local leaders for broadcast availability. ■

# Church Continues to Aid Hurricane Victims

Within just four weeks of each other in August and September 2005, deadly “sister storms” struck the Gulf Coast region of the United States. Hurricane Katrina, a category 4 hurricane that struck Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi on August 29, and Hurricane Rita, a category 3 hurricane that made landfall at the Texas/Louisiana border on September 24, together made for what some called the largest natural disaster in the history of the nation. More than 1,300 deaths, including two members of the Church, and over U.S. \$200 billion in damages are blamed on Katrina alone.

## Church Prepared to Assist

Before either hurricane struck, the Church was prepared with supplies in place and meetinghouses ready to act as shelters.

“We prepositioned supplies that we knew would be

needed, we had a communications system that we knew would work, and priesthood leaders had put together lists of Church members and knew where most of them were evacuating to,” said Garry Flake, director of Humanitarian Emergency Response.

Brother Flake said the Church’s commitment to preparedness makes it a reliable resource in times of disaster. “Many organizations are working on identifying needs and looking for resources at the same time,” Brother Flake said. “We have the resources. We just need to identify the need and make sure those resources are used most effectively.”

The Church is widely recognized for its ability to help with disaster relief, Brother Flake said. “I can go to the government or other agencies and tell them whom I represent, and they know immediately who we are and that we’re there to respond,” he said.

## Church Losses

The Gulfport Mississippi, Slidell Louisiana, and New Orleans Louisiana Stakes were hardest hit by the hurricanes. Two members were confirmed dead in the Waveland Ward of the Gulfport stake. All missionaries were evacuated early from areas affected by the hurricanes.

While some meetinghouses in Hurricane Katrina’s path sustained only minor wind and water damage, six Church buildings were significantly damaged: two in the Gulfport Mississippi Stake, three in the New Orleans Louisiana Stake, and one in the Slidell Louisiana Stake.

Brother Flake, who witnessed the damage from both storms, said that although Hurricane Rita’s destruction was less severe than Katrina’s, it was not insignificant. “They were sister storms in that there was a lot of damage—a lot of people displaced. There were businesses damaged. It’s going to take a long time to get people back.”

## Volunteer Efforts

In the wake of both storms, the Church’s relief

effort flowed steadily in the form of some 200 truckloads of food, hygiene kits, cleaning kits, school kits, medical supplies, and other relief supplies distributed to storm victims across the southeastern United States. Thousands of Church volunteers donated labor to assemble kits or assist with the cleanup. As Rita loomed, Church resources already in place during Katrina’s aftermath were simply expanded to cover Texas.

During and after the disasters, many Church meetinghouses served as shelters for evacuees in areas across the South. The Church also assisted other organizations, providing nearly 300,000 hygiene kits to the Red Cross and food to the Salvation Army’s kitchens.

In the aftermath of Katrina, a cleanup kit was introduced by Church Welfare Services for the first time. The kit consists of a five-gallon bucket containing bleach, dish soap, scrub brushes, gloves, dust masks, trash bags, a spray bottle, sponges, and rags. Members assembled the cleanup kits at bishops’ storehouses in Atlanta, Georgia, and Orlando, Florida. About 60,000 buckets



**A sea of tents provides shelter for members providing relief to hurricane victims in the United States.**



had been given to Church members and numerous others by early October.

Church volunteer labor on-site was coordinated through stake presidents under the direction of Area Seventies and in conjunction with county emergency operations centers and other organizations. The crews of eight to ten people cleaned up debris and helped homeowners make their homes livable.

Some volunteers traveled from locations as far as Anchorage, Alaska, to assist with the cleanup effort. By mid-October, members had donated 35,000 man-days of volunteer hurricane relief work. "It has been one of the larger relief efforts that [the Church] has ever done," said Elder John S. Anderson, an Area Seventy in the North America Southeast Area, who presided over Church relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina.

The volunteers' efforts were greatly appreciated. "The community really responded positively once they learned who we were and what we had to offer," said Elder Anderson.

He said seeing the Church's multi-faceted response to the Gulf Coast hurricane disaster has touched him. "It is just marvelous to see the resources of the Church prepared and ready to assist anyone in need and the willingness of all the volunteers who gave and sacrificed so much to come and assist," he said. "It was a great joy to be able to witness it. It has just been one of the highlights of my life." ■

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY CENTRAL AMERICA AREA



**Members in Guatemala load supplies to be distributed to victims of Hurricane Stan.**

## Church Sends Relief in Wake of Earthquake, Hurricane

The Church continues to provide relief assistance and to assess member needs in areas harmed by natural disasters. A 7.6 magnitude earthquake hit the region bordering Pakistan, northern India, and Afghanistan on October 8, 2005, causing tens of thousands of fatalities. The category 1 hurricane, Hurricane Stan, which struck Mexico and Central America on October 6, caused significant destruction and sustained flooding.

### Asian Earthquake

The 7.6-magnitude earthquake is estimated to have taken more than 50,000 lives, leaving 42,000 people injured and more than 3 million homeless. Substantial aftershocks and rain persist in the disaster

areas, hampering relief efforts.

All missionaries in the affected areas were reported safe, and there are no reported member injuries or fatalities. Several member homes in Faisalabad, Pakistan, sustained minor damage. The meetinghouse in Taxila, Pakistan, near Islamabad, also received minor damage.

Asia Area Church representatives recently met with Pakistani officials in Hong Kong. The Church has also contacted Islamic Relief Worldwide, a Muslim humanitarian organization with which the Church has previously worked. Islamic Relief agreed to provide transportation for Church-donated goods such as blankets, clothing, and first aid and medical supplies.

### Hurricane Stan

Tropical Storm Stan became Hurricane Stan, a category 1 hurricane, just as it made landfall on the southeast coast of Mexico, near Veracruz, on October 6, 2005. As it crossed Central America it caused torrential rain, flooding, and mudslides in Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador that killed at least two members of the Church and drove

nearly 200 member families from their homes.

One member was killed in Guatemala, another in Mexico. All missionaries were reported safe. As this report was compiled, nearly 40 communities where members lived were still inaccessible due to flooding and mudslides.

The storm damaged 9 meetinghouses. About 27 other meetinghouses were used as shelters in Guatemala and El Salvador, housing more than 2,300 people.

While the Church continued to account for members and to assess their needs, 6,000 food boxes and a quantity of emergency funds were sent in the initial response.

Hundreds of people have been reported dead, most due to the more than 900 reported mudslides. The excessive flooding has damaged homes and property and wiped out bridges. More than 118 communities are isolated and inaccessible due to storm-related conditions. ■



**An artist's rendering shows the exterior of the new Church History Library.**

## Church History Library Ground Is Broken

By Nicole Seymour, Church Magazines

**O**n Friday, October 7, the First Presidency and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as well as members of the Quorums of the Seventy, missionaries, and others, gathered for the groundbreaking for the new Church History Library. The building will serve as a mark of the significance of maintaining a connection to past and future generations through record keeping in the Church.

Work will begin later this year on the 250,000 square-foot building, much of which will be underground. It will be built on a plot of land that is presently a parking lot, on the intersection of North Temple and Main Streets, northeast of Temple Square in Salt Lake City. The new building, just east of the Conference Center, will be similar in design to the Conference Center. The building's architects and specialists from the Family and Church History Department have consulted with experts in record

preservation to ensure that the interior temperature, humidity, and lighting best favor the preservation of Church records.

President Hinckley expressed gratitude that records had been so dutifully kept. "I wish to say with gratitude and appreciation that the custodians of the records of the Church through all of the years of its existence have been so conscientious and dutiful, helpful and devoted, in every respect to the duties that devolved upon them."

In the prayer President Hinckley offered before the groundbreaking portion of the ceremony, he said, "As we look to the past and are reminded of the past, to that which has been preserved in history, our hearts are filled with gratitude and appreciation and love and respect for those that have gone before. Great was their work, tremendous their sacrifice. We thank thee for them."

In his remarks about the Church History Library,

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "We benefit from what our fathers did for us, and we have the privilege, through sacred records to be maintained here, to provide a legacy for those who follow."

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "I believe that the principle benefit for the making and the keeping of records is to strengthen faith in those who make the history, and those who record the his-

tory, and those in the future who read of that history."

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, who serves as Church Historian and Recorder, said the current location of the library, in the Church Office Building across the street from the new location, has outgrown its capacity. He noted that Church membership has increased from about 5 million when the Church Office Building was completed in the 1970s to over 12 million today. ■

## Measles Initiative Saving African Children

**A** study published in the *Lancet*, an international medical journal, in September 2005, credits high-quality measles immunization campaigns such as the Measles Initiative, in which the Church is participating, for having reduced measles cases by 91 percent in 19 African nations from 2000 to 2003. This prevented an estimated 90,000 deaths in 2003 alone.

"One of the clearest messages from this study is that with the right strategies, a strong partnership of committed organizations, and the investment of sufficient resources, you can rapidly reduce child deaths in Africa," said Dr. Mac Otten, medical epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and lead author of the study. "A big reason for this success is the support from the Measles Initiative."

The Measles Initiative is a five-year program created in 2001 by the American Red Cross, the United Nations Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The goal of these organizations was to control measles deaths in Africa by vaccinating 200 million children in 36 African countries by the year 2006, preventing an estimated 1.2 million deaths.

Having worked with the Church before on disaster relief, the Red Cross approached the Church to support the initiative in 2002. After Harold Brown, managing director of Church Welfare Services, observed the Measles Initiative at work in Zambia in June 2003, the Church pledged U.S.



\$3 million to the effort over the remaining three years of the initiative.

"We were analyzing our major initiatives and felt the Measles Initiative was a good fit and a way for us to make a real difference," said Brother Brown. "There is really no way to convey what it is like to see the Measles Initiative at work. It's a logistics miracle, the way they can vaccinate millions of children in only a few days."

Measles-related deaths worldwide have plummeted 39 percent, from 873,000 in 1999 to an estimated 530,000 in 2003, according to the American Red Cross. The largest reduction occurred in Africa, the region of the world most affected by the disease; estimated measles deaths decreased by nearly half. Before the Measles Initiative, the disease killed nearly half a million children each year in Africa.

At the end of 2004, more than 150 million children in more than 30 countries had been vaccinated at a cost of less than \$1 per child. In 2005, the initiative's partners planned to vaccinate more than 45 million additional children, exceeding their original goals. (See accompanying article on Bonnie D. Parkin.)

"The Church has once again illustrated its significant commitment to ending suffering on a worldwide basis," said Marsha J. Evans, American Red Cross President and CEO, upon receiving the Church's pledge. "We cannot express our enormous gratitude." ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY DALE L. JONES



**Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society General President, participates in a measles vaccination campaign in Mozambique.**

## Sister Parkin Pitches In against Measles in Africa

By Adam C. Olson, Church Magazines

**B**onnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president, believes that when President Gordon B. Hinckley approved the Church's commitment to the Measles Initiative, he "didn't foresee this as just a way to protect children against measles, but as a way to give members a chance to serve."

In addition to pledging U.S. \$3 million dollars to the project, the Church has offered its buildings as vaccination centers and its members as volunteers. In an interview with the Church magazines, Sister Parkin said many members from among the more than 3,000 living in 16 branches in Mozambique participated in the Measles Initiative mass vaccination campaign held in areas outside of Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, during September 2005.

"The members really became involved in the community," said Sister Parkin. "This has helped bring the Church out of obscurity."

Many of the young men

and women and young single adults living in the campaign's target areas went door to door, notifying people of the availability and the importance of the vaccinations. Relief Society sisters helped to manage the hundreds of children who came for the vaccinations.

"I saw women who are no different than I am," Sister Parkin said. "They care about their children and their grandchildren. They came with children on their backs and one holding each hand. They walked the dusty road. I didn't see any one of them drive up. They wanted their children to be well. It was because of the love mothers feel for their families and their children, who aren't any different from my own grandchildren."

On one day of the campaign, Sister Parkin was helping with crowd control, checking children for the ink mark indicating those who had received the vaccination. One young boy didn't have the mark. Through her

translator, Sister Parkin asked why he hadn't received his shot. He said he was afraid. "Will you go if I go with you?" Sister Parkin asked. He agreed.

"It was a sweet experience," Sister Parkin recalled after returning from the trip. "Maybe I've helped one child. It was life changing for me."

More than nine million children were vaccinated during the vaccination campaign in Mozambique. The campaign was the second in which Sister Parkin has participated because of her role on the Church Welfare Committee. She also visited Ethiopia as part of the Measles Initiative in 2004.

Sister Parkin said part of her role was "to see that it really does come together the way it's planned."

Months of preparation precede a mass vaccination campaign. A full-time missionary couple, Elder Blair and Sister Cindy Packard, served a specialized four-month mission to lay groundwork for the September 2005 campaign in Mozambique. Part of their work was to publicize the event. They worked closely with Maria de Lourdes Mutola, an 800-meter gold medalist at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia, who is from Mozambique.

Elder DeMoine and Sister Joyce Findlay served as the missionary couple to coordinate the vaccination campaign in Ivory Coast—originally scheduled for September 2004, but postponed until August 2005 because of civil unrest. More than 700 members participated in the Ivory



**Children in Mozambique await their turn to be vaccinated against measles as part of the Measles Initiative.**

Coast campaign, which vaccinated nearly eight million children. Members helped educate and mobilize the population; printed posters, flyers, and stickers; participated in crowd control; stamped immunization records; and in some cases helped administer the vaccine.

Materials and ideas have flowed freely between campaigns. Artwork created in

Ivory Coast was used in Malawi and Tanzania. A radio spot developed in Madagascar was used in Ivory Coast.

"I feel blessed to be a member of the Church, which cares not just for its own members but for everyone," Sister Parkin said. "It's truly amazing. I'm grateful that I can tell my grandchildren what kind of church we belong to." ■

## Children in Ghana and Fiji Receive Children's Books

The Church's Humanitarian Field Services in partnership with Deseret Book recently donated 6,500 books to children in Ghana and Fiji. The shipment was the first for the partnership that began in September 2004. Through the program, called Chapters of Hope, Deseret Book raises money from its patrons to purchase selected books for children ages 6 to 18. Humanitarian Field Services shipped the books to Ghana and Fiji with other humanitarian aid supplies already planned for those areas. The books will eventually end up in schools,

orphanages, and libraries.

The books sent to Ghana include early readers, dictionaries, single-volume encyclopedias, illustrated fact books, and values-based novels.

While the books chosen are not religious books, copies of President Gordon B.

Hinckley's book *Way to Be* were included with this recent shipment. So far more than 15,000 books have been purchased through the program.

The Church's area welfare managers request the books for specific needs in their area. Senior missionary couples in receiving countries then help distribute the books. ■

## New Temple Presidents Prepare for Assignments

Thirty-five new temple presidents and their wives attended the annual temple president training in Salt Lake City on October 18 in preparation for their new assignments. The following presidents and matrons have been assigned. ■

**Adelaide Australia**

**Apia Samoa**

**Asunción Paraguay**

**Baton Rouge Louisiana**

**Bern Switzerland**

**Billings Montana**

**Bismarck North Dakota**

**Bogotá Colombia**

**Boise Idaho**

**Buenos Aires Argentina**

**Campinas Brazil**

**Columbia South Carolina**

**Freiberg Germany**

**Guayaquil Ecuador**

**Idaho Falls Idaho**

**Jordan River Utah**

**Kona Hawaii**

**Logan Utah**

**Madrid Spain**

**Mexico City Mexico**

**Mount Timpanogos Utah**

**Newport Beach California**

**Oakland California**

**Ogden Utah**

**Oklahoma City Oklahoma**

**Salt Lake**

**San Antonio Texas**

**San Diego California**

**Snowflake Arizona**

**Suva Fiji**

**Sydney Australia**

**The Hague Netherlands**

**Toronto Ontario**

**Vernal Utah**

**Washington D.C.**

Charles and Anne L. Parsons

Suau'upaia and Talaloa M. Pe'a

Richard R. and Jeannine George

V. Kenneth and Betty G. Dutile

Wayne M. and Connie A. Hancock

Robert M. and Estella W. Wilkes

Robert L. and Bonnie B. Holyoak

Lawrence T., Jr. and Eileen M.

Dahl

Harold G. and Carol R. Hillam

Ángel J. and Edith Leonor Sulé

Adhemar and Walkyria B. Damiani

Alvie R. and Ruth G. Evans

Manfred H. and Helga D. Schütze

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John H. and Jean S. Groberg

Robert L. and Janet W. Backman

Earl E. and Audrey L. Veloria

Dennis E. and Carolyn T.

Simmons

F. Burton and Caroline H. Howard

Ned B. and Jo Ann S. Roueché

Lawrence S. and Carole W. Clark

Stephen B. and Dixie Oveson

Darwin B. and Sandra L.

Christenson

Gordon T. and Connie W. Watts

H. Aldridge and Virginia L.

Gillespie

M. Richard and Kathleen H.

Walker

A. Ray and Sonya S. Otte

David E. and Verla A. Sorensen

Larry B. and LaDawn Brewer

Richard W. and Helen B. Wells

Frank H. and Maxine J. Hewstone

Marcus and Cornelia J. Reijnders

Harold F. and Maureen G. Walker

Norman G. and Lou Ann M. Angus

F. Melvin and Bonnie S. Hammond



## DVD Given in the Spirit of Sharing the Gospel

This issue of the *Ensign* includes a 76-minute DVD containing *Mr. Krueger's Christmas, The Restoration, The Nativity*, and carols by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. This year marks the 25th anniversary of *Mr. Krueger's Christmas*, featuring Jimmy Stewart and the Tabernacle Choir.

This Christmas classic, seen on television worldwide, has been digitally remastered and remixed in surround sound. The DVD is intended as a means for members to share the restored gospel and the spirit

of Christmas with their neighbors. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and chairman of the Missionary Executive Council said: "We hope that *Ensign* subscribers will take the opportunity to share this Christmas DVD with those who are not of our faith. It is an ideal way to help them understand our love for the Savior and the message of His restored gospel during this holiday season." Additional copies of the DVD can be obtained through local distribution centers. ■

## Call for Articles

In the August *Ensign*, President Hinckley challenged Church members to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year. If accepting this challenge has resulted in a noteworthy experience you would like to share, we'd like to hear about it. Please clearly mark your submission "Book of Mormon Challenge."

Additionally, we would like to hear about simple Christmas traditions and activities that have helped you and your family focus on Christ during the holiday season. Please clearly mark your submission "Questions and Answers."

Send submissions by January 16, 2006, to [ensign@ldschurch.org](mailto:ensign@ldschurch.org) or to *Ensign* Editorial, 50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA. At the top of your submission, write your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and ward and stake (or branch and district).

While we cannot acknowledge receipt of individual responses, authors whose submissions are selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope and allow up to a year.

## Comment

### Thanks for Pertinent Articles

I want to sincerely thank you for the July 2005 issue of the *Ensign*. At that time, I was in the process of finalizing a divorce. Although I often find an article or quote here or there that pertains to my current needs, I was absolutely stunned at how many of the articles in that particular month seemed directed toward me personally! I consider this blessing to be one of the Lord's "tender mercies." I know I am not alone in my efforts to heal from a divorce and in my journey of single parenthood. I also know that the Lord loves all of us and we are all welcome in His Church. And so I want to thank you for including articles that are very pertinent and helpful for those of us who are not in an ideal family situation.

Name Withheld,  
Mesa, Arizona



### Understanding Mental Illness

Thank you for the article in the October 2005 *Ensign* about understanding mental illness. Last year we had a child diagnosed with a mental disorder. Initially, we knew



nothing about the condition but learned that it is genetic and that, while it could be managed, our child would deal with it for life. As we came to terms with this reality, we grieved for our child. We wanted to share our feelings and educate others. But we were afraid our child would be labeled or judged, so we have told very few people. We hope this article will help dispel the stigma so people with mental disorders, their families, and those around them can communicate more openly and support each other better.

Name Withheld

### I Noticed the Change

I want to thank you for your recent article on missionary couples. As I read it, I remembered the mission my husband and I served. I returned a different person from the person I was when we left to serve in the Alabama Birmingham Mission. I quickly learned to love the people we served, and they had bushels of love for us. I don't know if anyone else noticed the change in me, but it doesn't matter because I knew.

Uneva Workman,  
Sequim, Washington

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**IBC** Inside Back Cover  
**OC** Outside Cover

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# MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

D E C E M B E R 2 0 0 5

quiet New England town, see page 10.

- What were the events and influences that prepared a seemingly ordinary farm boy to receive revelations from heaven after centuries of apostasy?

See page 12.

## Joseph Smith Remembered

This month is the 200th anniversary of the Prophet Joseph Smith's birth. To commemorate this important milestone, the *Ensign* offers a glimpse of the Prophet's family and early life.

- "The story of Joseph's life is the story of a miracle," writes President Gordon B. Hinckley. "He was born in poverty. He was reared in adversity. He was driven from place to place, falsely accused, and illegally imprisoned. He was murdered at the age of 38. Yet in the brief space of 20 years preceding his death, he accomplished what none other has accomplished in an entire lifetime." See "Joseph Smith: Prophet of God, Mighty Servant," page 2.

- Have you ever wondered what happened to the Prophet's brothers and sisters? See "The First Family of the Restoration," page 7.

- Sharon, Vermont, could rightly be called the cradle of the Restoration because this is where Joseph Smith was born. To read more about this

## Priesthood Quorum Series Concludes

President Gordon B. Hinckley has served in the First Presidency for more than 24 years. He is well qualified to teach us about this presiding quorum, page 46.

## Get the Christmas Spirit

- President Howard W. Hunter explores the real meaning of Christmas in this Gospel Classic. See page 22.

- What do you do when you're a teenager, both of your parents have died, and Christmas becomes the most

painful time of year? Read how a seminary teacher and the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith came to the rescue of one young teenager, page 18.

- What do an unexpected Christmas bonus, a loving missionary companion, a manger overflowing with straw, and a kettle of clam chowder have in common? The Christmas spirit, that's what. See Latter-day Saint Voices beginning on page 55 to capture some of it for your holiday celebration.



*Straw for the Manger, p. 56*

## Nurturing and Nourishing

"Mothers, who are 'primarily responsible for the nurture of their children,' can be a powerful force for strengthening families when they use meal-times to gather loved ones." See page 36.



*The Real Christmas, p. 22*

## A Mission in Your Golden Years?

The Cranes, the Iversons, and the Gehrmanns have a message for you who are now retired or soon will be. There are blessings to be harvested in the mission field—for you, your family, and the people you'll serve. See page 30.

## Magnify or Reduce and Simplify?

Is it possible to magnify a calling without also magnifying the time and work you spend on it? See what some of our readers say about reducing and simplifying

work while still getting results, page 62.

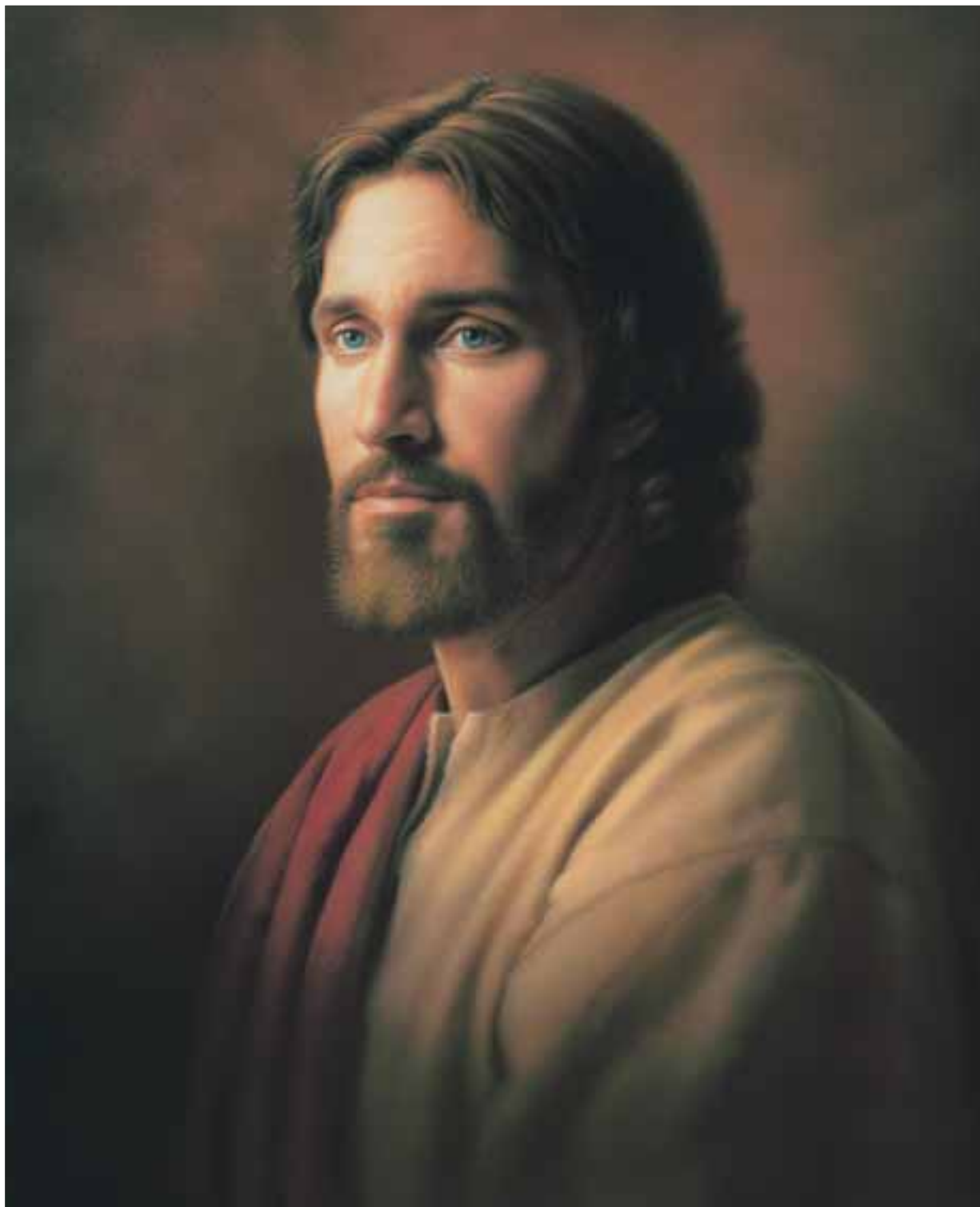
## Home Teachers, Visiting Teachers

Find the monthly messages on pages 2 and 51.

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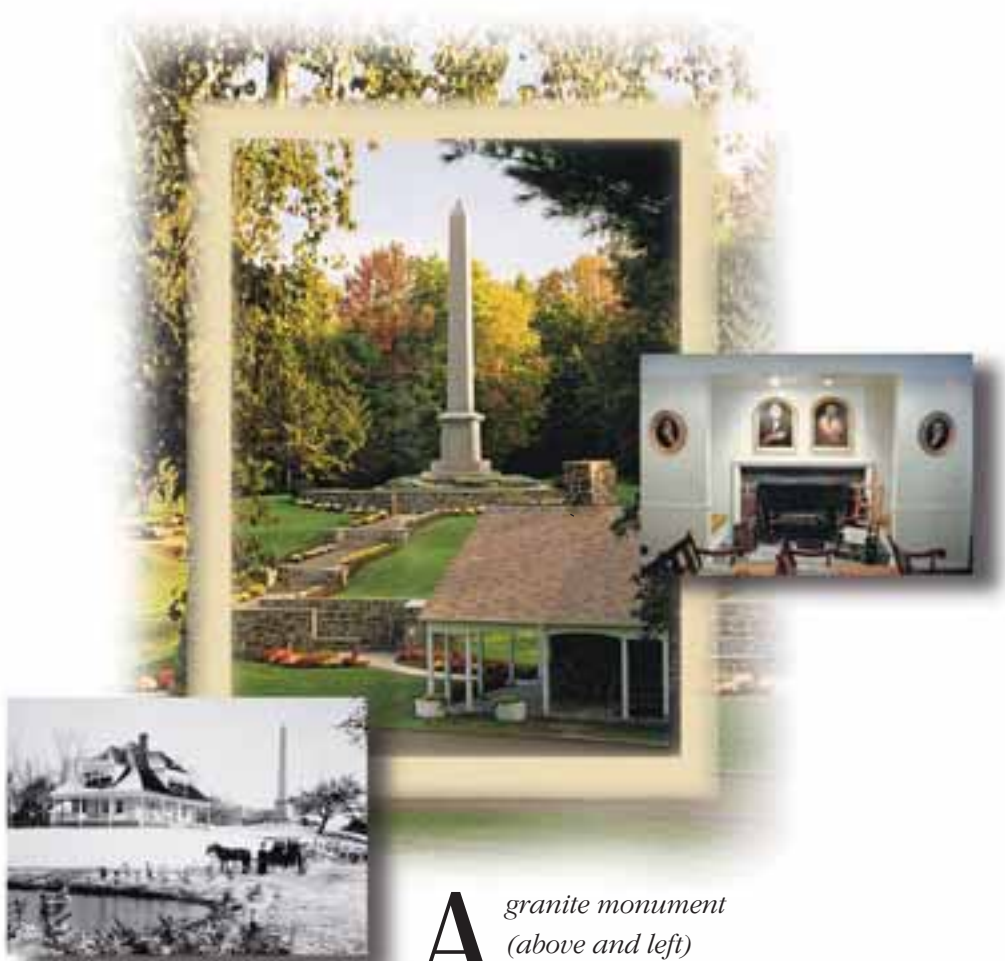




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**Divine Redeemer, by Simon Dewey**

*“Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend” (Mosiab 4:9).*



A granite monument  
(above and left)  
and a visitors'

center (right) mark the birthplace of Joseph Smith. "That baby boy born 200 years ago this month in humble circumstances in rural Vermont was foreordained to become a great leader in the fulfilling of our Father's plan for His children on earth." See President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Joseph Smith Jr.—Prophet of God, Mighty Servant," p. 2.