

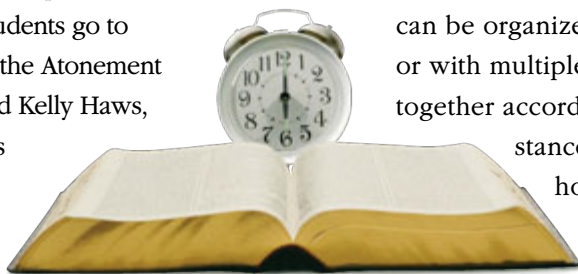
Early-Morning Seminary Celebrates 60 Years

By Breanna Olaveson

Church Magazines

Early-morning seminary can be challenging, but over the past 60 years more than a million teenage members of the Church have learned that rising before the sun and trying to focus not just their eyes but their minds on the scriptures is worth the effort.

“Spending a few minutes in the scriptures each day, bearing testimony, and feeling the Spirit has not only a strengthening effect as students go to school, but it has a healing effect as the Atonement of Jesus Christ acts in their lives,” said Kelly Haws, assistant administrator for seminaries and institutes of religion. “It’s a great opportunity for youth.”



The Birth of Early-Morning Seminary

The first seminary classes were held during regular school hours in 1912 in a seminary adjacent to Granite High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. However, as years passed, more and more Church youth were enrolled in the growing public school system that did not provide the opportunity to study the scriptures on a daily basis.

As Church membership grew rapidly in Southern California in the late 1940s, the need to educate young people in the gospel inspired a group of stake presidents to request the establishment of the Church’s seminary program in the Southern California area.

During the 1948–49 school year, Marion D. Hanks, who later served in the Presidency of the Seventy, had success teaching an early-morning seminary class at West High School in Salt Lake City. Holding similar classes seemed a logical solution

for the Saints in California, and the 11 stakes were approved to form 13 early-morning classes.

Meeting Diverse Needs

From the program’s official start during the 1950–51 school year, early-morning seminary spread across the United States and throughout the world, helping youth everywhere to learn the scriptures and apply gospel principles. Its official name was recently changed to “daily seminary,” because not all such classes are held in the early morning.

Part of what makes daily seminary so successful is its flexibility. Programs are organized at the stake and district level, and classes can be organized in a single ward or branch or with multiple wards or branches meeting together according to the needs and circumstances of youth, parents, and priesthood leaders.

While approximately 115,000 students still benefit each year

from released-time seminary held during school hours in areas with a large concentration of Church members, nearly 217,000 seminary students throughout the world participate in daily seminary.

Because some youth in the Church live too far from other Church members to attend either released-time or daily seminary classes, the home-study seminary program was established. Home-study students spend four days each week studying assigned material independently, then gather with other home-study students once a week to discuss what they’ve learned.

A Stone Cut without Hands

Today, seminary classes are held in every state in the United States and in 140 countries around the world. In 1948 Canada became the first country outside the United States to hold seminary. With the spread of early-morning seminary,

More than a million young Latter-day Saints have benefited from early-morning seminary since its beginnings 60 years ago.

Mexico followed in 1958, Finland and Germany in 1962, Japan in 1963, Panama in 1964, and more countries over the years. Most recently, seminary classes were established in 2008 in the countries of Benin, Georgia, and Morocco.

As seminary spreads around the world, a worldwide community of seminary students is developing. No matter where seminary students live, they memorize the same scripture-mastery verses, study the same passages of scripture, feel the same Spirit as their testimonies grow, and work to build the same kingdom.

The blessings they receive are as real today as they were 60 years ago, and seminary in all its forms continues to bless the lives of youth all over the world. ■

Bells Choir's Testimonies Ring Clear

By Natasia Garrett

Church Magazines

Twenty-eight pairs of eyes focus on the leader. Muscles tense; fingers flex; attention sharpens. At the signal, the group springs into a well-designed blur of color and sound. Their work requires total concentration—the uniting of many minds to a single effort. Their goal is lofty: to invite the Spirit of the Lord through the use of their talents. For these performers, bells give voice to the skills they've worked hard to develop.

Every Wednesday night, the members of the Bells on Temple Square rehearse in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. Their music represents a wide range of genres, and all of the pieces are demanding. The visually thrilling “Holiday for Strings” requires complex high-speed maneuvers, while the slower, more contemplative notes of “Amazing Grace” need perfect timing.

There's a lot of work involved in bringing the

Jennifer Probert rehearses with the Bells on Temple Square. Bell ringing can be similar to an intricate dance.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM C. OLSON

individual bells into harmony, especially with a group this big. Rehearsing can be difficult and even frustrating, but, like living the gospel, the result is worth the effort.

Trusting the Leader

During one rehearsal, within only a few measures, conductor Tom Waldron stops to coax more volume from the B notes. He has plenty of technical experience, both from his 28 years as a high school bell choir director and as the original conductor of the five-year-old Bells on Temple Square, but he also recognizes the spiritual aspect of what the bell choir does.

Bell ringer Scott Hixson says that rehearsals led by Brother Waldron are similar to devotionals. “Tom stops and shares his testimony, he shares stories from the scriptures . . . He really knows the mission of this organization.”

The ringers respect their conductor and admire him for what he helps them accomplish.

Bell ringer Jennifer Probert says, “We rely heavily on following our conductor . . . because the moment that clapper strikes, we get the sound of the bell.” The conductor has to coordinate the ringers so that the bells