



What Have You Done for **THEM?**

A prompting in the temple helped me realize I could no longer ignore my duty to get started on my family history work.

By Aleta Goodman Breakwell

I had never done family history work. It sounded tedious and frustrating, so I avoided it. I told myself that my genealogical contribution was doing temple work for the names other people had identified. I also rationalized that since my mother is an avid genealogist, I was off the hook in terms of the hunting and gathering.



One day I was in the temple doing what I considered my part for the genealogical cause when I strongly felt it was time for me to learn how to do family history work. For the first time it occurred to me that although my mother had done a lot of research for my family, I had married into another family. I felt a distinct impression from the Spirit: “What have you done for *them*?”

Soon after that experience I somewhat grudgingly signed up for the basic family history course at church. While I was taking the class, my husband and I received an unexpected opportunity to go to England. It was not something we could have afforded ordinarily, and the circumstances were not likely to come again. We were thrilled with our good fortune!

After my husband’s parents accepted the gospel years ago, they began doing their family history work but had a very hard time with the Breakwell family line. They couldn’t find a certain grandfather, and 20 years of searching had led to nothing. When my husband and I planned our trip to England, we imagined how

wonderful it would be to find information on Grandpa, who we knew had been born in England; however, with nowhere to begin and not much time, the idea was appealing but seemingly impossible. Instead, we planned to fill our days with things we could manage.

Something I wanted to do while in England was visit the church where my husband’s parents were married. My mother-in-law thought I shouldn’t waste my travel time on something that didn’t have any sentimental meaning for them; they hadn’t lived in the area long and had chosen that church only because it was convenient. However, I thought the idea sounded romantic and insisted that we make the trip.

On the day we rode the bus to where my in-laws had been married, we found the church closed, and no one was around to speak with. We would have left immediately, except that we had to wait for a return bus, so we wandered around the churchyard for a bit.

The church was old and surrounded by a high wall. The grounds had once been a cemetery; however, the graves had

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

What are the Church's policies on submitting names for proxy baptisms and other vicarious temple ordinances?

1. Members are to seek out and identify their own ancestors. Those whose names are submitted for proxy temple ordinances should be related to the submitter.¹
2. Without exception, members must not submit any names from unauthorized groups, such as celebrities or Jewish Holocaust victims.²
3. Vicarious ordinances become effective only when the deceased persons for whom the ordinances were performed accept them in the spirit world and honor the related covenants.³

For more information, see *Member's Guide to Temple and Family History Work* (2009), 30–32.

been leveled to make a beautiful lawn, and someone had taken up the gravestones and temporarily stacked them along the wall. We strolled around the wall, idly reading names. At one place there was a large willow tree growing against the wall, and we ducked beneath it into the inviting shade. There were some gravestones behind the tree as well, which we read. And there was Grandpa's name! Grandpa was buried in the churchyard where my in-laws had married, and no one in the family knew it. We gathered all his needed information and upon returning home completed his saving ordinances in the temple.

I believe that my willingness to listen to

the Spirit's prompting to get involved with family history work, however unwelcome at first, is what led us to Grandpa. Even though I didn't actually use my new skills in the experience, I believe my obedience qualified me to help find the grandfather whose family I had joined. I testify that we each have a contribution to make to family history work, and the Spirit will guide us in our efforts. All we need to do is get started. ■

NOTES

1. See First Presidency letter, Feb. 29, 2012, available at <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/first-presidency-issues-direction-members-names-ordinances>.
2. See First Presidency letter, Feb. 29, 2012.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.1.2.



THE LORD WAS WAITING FOR US TO BEGIN



“Several years ago Sister Packer and I determined that we should get our records in order. However, under the pressure of Church responsibilities with my travels about the world, and the obligations with our large family

and a home to keep up both indoors and outdoors, there just was not enough time. But we were restless about this family history responsibility, and finally we determined that somehow we would have to make more time in the day.

“During the Christmas holidays when we had a little extra time, we started. Then as we moved back to a regular schedule after the holidays, we adopted the practice of getting up an hour or two earlier each day.

“We gathered together everything we had, and in the course of a few weeks we were amazed at what we were able to accomplish. The thing that was most impressive, however, was the fact that we began to have experiences that told us somehow that we were being guided, that there were those beyond the veil who were interested in what we were doing. Things began to fall into place.

“As I have traveled about the Church and paid particular attention to this subject, many testimonies have come to light. Others who assemble their records together are likewise having similar experiences. It was as though the Lord was waiting for us to begin.

“We found things we had wondered about for a long time. It seemed as though they came to us almost too easily. More than this, things that we never dreamed existed began to show up. We began to learn by personal experience that this research into our families is an inspired work. We came to know that an inspiration will follow those who move into it. It is just a matter of getting started.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Your Family History: Getting Started,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 12.

