



THE
New Era

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Brilliant Morning of
Forgiveness" on p. 4.

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(front) and Aldo Rebechi
(back)

Our Savior
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Christ
offers each of
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THE BRILLIANT MORNING OF *Forgiveness*

BY PRESIDENT BOYD K. PACKER

Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



John Breen, a survivor of the Donner Party, said, "It was long after dark when we got to Johnson's Ranch, so the first time I saw it was early in the morning. I could scarcely believe that I was alive."

Some who have spent a long winter of guilt and spiritual starvation emerge into the morning of forgiveness.

In April of 1847, Brigham Young led the first company of pioneers out of Winter Quarters. At that same time, 1,600 miles to the west the survivors of the Donner Party straggled down the slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains into the Sacramento Valley.

They had spent the ferocious winter trapped in the snowdrifts below the summit. That any survived the days and weeks and months of starvation and indescribable suffering is almost beyond belief.

Among them was 15-year-old John Breen. On the night of April 24 he walked into Johnson's Ranch. Years later John wrote:

"It was long after dark when we got to Johnson's Ranch, so the first time I saw it was early in the morning. The weather was fine, the ground was covered with green grass, the birds were singing from the tops of the trees, and the journey was over. I could scarcely believe that I was alive.

"The scene that I saw that morning seems to be photographed on my mind. Most of the incidents are gone from memory, but I can always see the camp near Johnson's Ranch."¹

At first I was very puzzled by his statement that "most of the incidents are gone from memory." How could long months of incredible suffering and sorrow ever be gone from his mind? How could that brutal dark winter be replaced with one brilliant morning?

On further reflection I decided it was not puzzling at all. I have seen something similar happen to people I have known. I have seen some who have spent a long winter of guilt and spiritual starvation emerge into the morning of forgiveness.

When morning came, they learned this:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (D&C 58:42).

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12; see also Hebrews 10:17).

When the prophet Alma was young, he





ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

spent such a time “racked,” as he said, “with *eternal torment*, [his] soul . . . *barrowed up to the greatest degree*” (Alma 36:12; emphasis added).

He even thought, “*Oh, . . . that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body*” (v. 15; emphasis added).

But his mind caught hold of a thought. When he nurtured the thought and acted upon it, the morning of forgiveness came, and he said:

“I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (vv. 19–20.)

Letters come from those who have made tragic mistakes. They ask, “Can I ever be forgiven?”

The answer is yes!

White as Snow

The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgres-

sion, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” That is, Isaiah continued, “if ye be willing and obedient” (Isaiah 1:18–19).

The grace of God promised in the scriptures comes only “after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

You may tell yourself that your transgressions are not spiritually illegal. That will not work; neither will rebellion, nor anger, nor joking about them. You cannot do that. And you don’t have to do it.

There is a way back. It will not help if, out of tender regard for your feelings, I avoid telling you about the hard part.

John Breen did not come to that morning at Johnson’s Ranch simply by desiring it. He wallowed and clawed his way up over the pass, suffering every step of the way. But once he knew he would survive and the suffering would end, surely he did not complain at the ordeal. And he had help all the way down. He was with rescuers.

When an offense is minor, so simple a thing as an

apology will satisfy the law. Most mistakes can be settled between us and the Lord, and that should be done speedily (see D&C 109:21). It requires a confession to Him, and whatever obvious repairs need to be made.

With sincere repentance as a pattern in our lives, measured by our willingness to “confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43), the Lord has promised that we may “always *retain* a remission of [our] sins” (Mosiah 4:12; emphasis added).

Alma bluntly told his wayward son that “repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment” (Alma 42:16).

The punishment may, for the most part, consist of the torment we inflict upon ourselves. It may be the loss of privilege or progress.² We are punished by our sins, if not for them.

There are some transgressions that require a discipline which will bring about the relief that comes with the morning of forgiveness. If your mistakes have been grievous ones, go to your bishop. Like the rescuers who brought John Breen down from the mountaintops, bishops can guide you through the steps required to obtain forgiveness insofar as the Church is concerned. Each one of us must work out individually forgiveness from the Lord.

To earn forgiveness, one must make restitution. That means you give back what you have taken or ease the pain of those you have injured.

But sometimes you cannot give back what you have taken because you don’t have it to give. If you have caused others to suffer unbearably—defiled someone’s virtue, for example—it is not within your power to give it back.

There are times you cannot mend that which you have broken. Perhaps the offense was long ago, or the injured refused your penance. Perhaps the damage was so severe

that you cannot fix it no matter how desperately you want to.

Your repentance cannot be accepted unless there is a restitution. If you cannot undo what you have done, you are trapped. It is easy to understand how helpless and hopeless you then feel and why you might want to give up, just as Alma did.

The thought that rescued Alma, when he acted upon it, is this: Restoring what you cannot restore, healing the wound you cannot heal, fixing that which you broke and you cannot fix is the very purpose of the Atonement of Christ.

When your desire is firm and you are willing to pay the “uttermost farthing” (Matthew 5:25–26), the law of restitution is suspended. Your obligation is transferred to the Lord. He will settle your accounts.

I repeat, save for the exception of the very few who defect to perdition, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. That is the promise of the Atonement of Christ.

How all can be repaired, we do not know. It may not all be accomplished in this life. We know from visions and visitations that the servants of the Lord continue the work of redemption beyond the veil (see D&C 138).

Morning Will Come

The Lord provides ways to pay our debts to Him. In one sense we ourselves may participate in an atonement. When we are willing to restore to others that which we have not taken, or heal wounds that we did not inflict, or pay a debt that we did not incur, we are emulating His part in the Atonement.

So many live with accusing guilt when relief is ever at hand. So many are like the immigrant woman who skimmed and saved and deprived herself until, by selling all of

The prophet Alma found forgiveness after he was “racked,” as he said, “with eternal torment, [his] soul . . . barrowed up to the greatest degree” (Alma 36:12).
But his mind caught hold of a thought. When he nurtured the thought and acted upon it, the morning of forgiveness came.



When we are willing to restore to others that which we have not taken, or heal wounds that we did not inflict, or pay a debt that we did not incur, we are emulating His part in the Atonement.

her possessions, she bought a steerage-class ticket to America.

She rationed out the meager provisions she was able to bring with her. Even so, they were gone early in the voyage. When others went for their meals, she stayed below deck—determined to suffer through it. Finally, on the last day, she must, she thought, afford one meal to give her strength for the journey yet ahead. When she asked what the meal would cost, she was told that all of the meals had been included in the price of her ticket.

That great morning of forgiveness may not come at once. Do not give up if at first you fail. Often the most difficult part of repentance is to forgive yourself. Discouragement is part of that test. Do not give up. That brilliant morning will come.

Then “the peace of God, which passeth . . . understanding” comes into your life once again (Philippians 4:7). Then you, like Him, will remember your sins no more. How will you know? You will know! (See Mosiah 4:1–3.)

Some years ago I was in Washington, D.C., with President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973). Early one morning he called me to come into his hotel room. He was sitting in his robe reading *Gospel Doctrine*, by President

Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), and he said, “Listen to this!

“ ‘Jesus had not finished his work when his body was slain, neither did he finish it after his resurrection from the dead; although he had accomplished the purpose for which he then came to the earth, he had not fulfilled all his work. And when will he? Not until he has redeemed and saved every son and daughter of our father Adam that have been or ever will be born upon this earth to the end of time, except the sons of perdition. That is his mission. We will not finish *our* work until we have saved ourselves, and then not until we shall have saved all depending upon us; for we are to become saviors upon Mount Zion, as well as Christ. We are called to this mission.’ ”³

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “*All are within the reach of pardoning mercy, who have not committed the unpardonable sin.*”⁴

And so we pray, and we fast, and we plead, and we implore. We love those who wander, and we never give up hope.

I bear witness of Christ and of the power of His Atonement. And I know that “his anger kindleth against the wicked; they repent, and in a moment it is turned away, and they are in his favor, and he giveth them life; therefore, weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Joseph Smith Translation, Psalm 30:5; see also D&C 61:20). **NE**

From an October 1995 general conference address.

NOTES

1. John Breen, “Pioneer Memoirs,” unpublished, as quoted on “The Americanization of Utah,” PBS television broadcast.
2. Forgiveness will come eventually to all repentant souls who have not committed the unpardonable sin (see Matthew 12:31). Forgiveness does not, however, necessarily assure exaltation, as is the case with David (see D&C 132:38–39; see also Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:25–27; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 339).
3. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 442; emphasis added.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 191; emphasis added.

Always REMEMBER HIM

The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the most important event in all of history. Yet how many are more excited about what the Easter Bunny brings on Easter morning than about what the Savior brought on that first Easter?

“On this Easter eve, may our thoughts turn to Him who atoned for our sins, who showed us the way to live, how to pray, and who demonstrated by His own actions how we might do so” (Thomas S. Monson, “Pathways to Perfection,” *Ensign*, May 2002).

The following ideas from the Chula Vista California Stake’s sophomore seminary class can help you remember the Savior this Easter.

- ❖ Pray for a better understanding of how His Atonement affects you.
- ❖ Sing hymns about the Lord.
- ❖ Spend family time learning about the Savior and His life.
- ❖ Write in your journal about what He has done for you.
- ❖ Try harder to act more like the Lord. Show more compassion. Be more forgiving.
- ❖ Read about the first Easter morning in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20.
- ❖ Carry a picture of the Savior with you.
- ❖ Study scriptures about Jesus Christ and the Resurrection.
- ❖ Write your scripture mastery references on Easter eggs and go on a “scripture egg” hunt.
- ❖ Create a “Week before Easter” calendar, with scripture references for each day about what the Savior did during His last week.
- ❖ Write your own Easter song or poem, and share it with others.
- ❖ Read *The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles* (*Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2).
- ❖ Watch the video *Special Witnesses of Christ* or *The Lamb of God*. **NE**



THE MIGHTY PRIESTHOOD OF GOD

Resolutely ♩ = 104–112

(Men's Voices)

Words and music by Stephen L. Brannen



1. As bro - thers called to serve in Zi - on, Each day we strive to do what's right, To
 2. As hum - ble fol - low - ers of Je - sus, We love to share His gos - pel truth. With
 3. As faith - ful work - ers in the king - dom, With glad - ness we will serve the Lord and



fill our lives with love and good - ness, With mer - cy, truth, and light.
 eag - er hearts we'll preach His mes - sage While we are in our youth. Oh, we'll
 bring sal - va - tion to His chil - dren, Ac - cord - ing to His word.



raise our songs of praise and glo - ry to His name; With the strength of youth His



Oh, we'll raise our songs of praise



truth we will pro - claim. As the might - y priest - hood of God, We will spread His word a - broad.



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“When you received the priesthood, you took upon yourself the responsibility to serve a mission. Now, in order to serve a mission, there are a lot of things you have to do. You have to be worthy in every respect. You have to prepare. You have to study the scriptures.

“But I promise you that if you will prepare yourself, if you will keep the Lord’s commandments, and if you will serve a mission, it will make a huge difference in your life, and it will make a huge difference in the world. Because on a mission, you not only teach others the truth, you learn more of the truth yourself.

“I can honestly say that I learned more eternal gospel principles on my mission than any other single place.

“Go on a mission. Prepare.”

—Elder John H. Groberg of the Presidency of the Seventy, from a youth devotional address given in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on June 8, 2004.

THE RESTORATION: TRUTH COMES AGAIN

The gospel of Jesus Christ has been revealed to the people of the world many times. It was given to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and other prophets, including Book of Mormon prophets—each time in a dispensation.¹ Even the Savior brought the gospel anew in His dispensation. The gospel needed to be restored many times because it was rejected or lost from the earth many times through the wickedness of the people. Finally, in this dispensation of the fulness of times, the gospel was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith for the last time.

Here are some of the firsts in our last dispensation that made the Restoration of the gospel and the growth of the Church possible (see D&C 66:2).

The First Vision

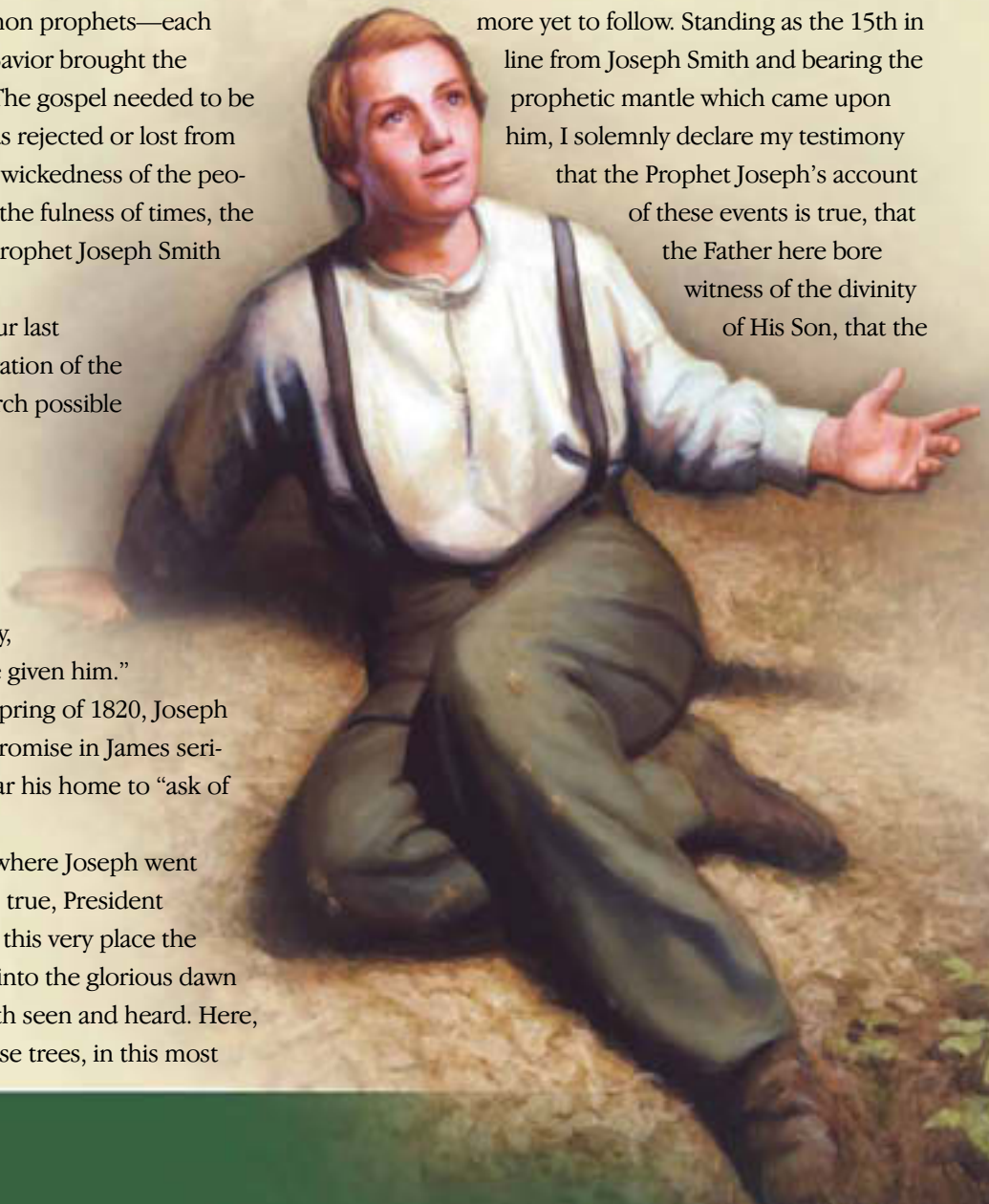
James 1:5 promises, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

After he read this verse in the spring of 1820, Joseph Smith Jr., then only 14, took the promise in James seriously. He went into the woods near his home to “ask of God.”

Speaking in the Sacred Grove, where Joseph went to pray to know which church was true, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “Here in this very place the long night of apostasy blossomed into the glorious dawn of a new age. God Himself was both seen and heard. Here, where we stand in the quiet of these trees, in this most

sacred of places, the nature of Deity was again revealed.

“The uncluttered and receptive mind of a boy became the instrument of the revelation here given and of many more yet to follow. Standing as the 15th in line from Joseph Smith and bearing the prophetic mantle which came upon him, I solemnly declare my testimony that the Prophet Joseph’s account of these events is true, that the Father here bore witness of the divinity of His Son, that the



Joseph Smith Jr.
was born in
Sharon,
Vermont.



1805

Joseph Smith
received the
First Vision in
the spring.



1820

John the Baptist
conferred the
Aaronic Priesthood
in May.



1829

Peter, James,
and John bestowed
the Melchizedek
Priesthood.



1829

FROM LEFT: JOSEPH'S FIRST VISION, BY DAVID LINDSLEY, MAY NOT BE COPIED; PHOTOGRAPH OF SHARON, VERMONT, BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN, THE FIRST VISION, BY DEL PARSON; THE RESTORATION OF THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD, BY DEL PARSON; THE RESTORATION OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, BY GARY E. SMITH, MAY NOT BE COPIED; SEVENTIES SENT FORITZ, BY DEL PARSON

Son instructed the boy prophet, and that there followed a train of events which led to the organization of 'the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which,' He declared, 'I, the Lord, am well pleased' (D&C 1:30)."²

The First Prophet

Joseph Smith Jr. was born in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1805. His parents, Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, were both religious people and brought their children up to believe in God and to seek for salvation. Joseph Sr. and Lucy had 11 children. Joseph was their fifth.

Joseph Smith was born to serve as the instrument in the Lord's hands to restore Christ's Church to the earth in this dispensation. President Brigham Young (1801–77) said of Joseph: "It was decreed in the counsels of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that he, Joseph Smith, should be the man, in the last dispensation of this world, to bring forth the word of God to the people, and receive the fulness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. . . . He was fore-ordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation."³

The First Ordinations to the Priesthood

On May 15, 1829, the Lord sent John the Baptist to confer the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the unfolding work of the Restoration. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said: "There on the bank of the Susquehanna River, near Harmony, Pennsylvania, John laid his hands upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and

ordained them, saying, 'Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins' (D&C 13:1). The messenger announced that he acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Ordination and baptism followed. . . .

"In due time, Peter, James, and John were sent to bestow the blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood. These Apostles sent by the Lord ordained and confirmed Joseph and Oliver to be Apostles and special witnesses of His name. . . .

"As a result of these experiences, all of us carry the requirement—even the blessed opportunity and solemn duty—to be true to the trust we have received."⁴

THEN AND NOW



1830: Fewer than 50 members
Now: More than 12 million members



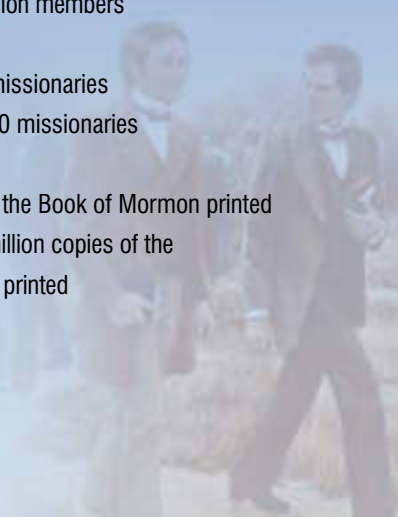
1830: Fewer than 20 missionaries
Now: More than 50,000 missionaries



1830: 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon printed
Now: More than 120 million copies of the Book of Mormon printed



1836: One temple
Now: 119 temples



The Prophet translated the Book of Mormon between April and June.



1829

The First Witnesses

Four years after Moroni's first visit to him, Joseph Smith received the golden plates from the angel Moroni at the Hill Cumorah and began to translate them. At first, no one else was allowed to see them, but later the Lord revealed that there would be three chosen to bear testimony of the Book of Mormon and the golden plates (see D&C 5:11–15).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told about these witnesses: "The three men chosen as witnesses of the Book of Mormon were Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. Their written 'Testimony of Three Witnesses' has been included in all . . . copies of the Book of Mormon the Church has published since 1830. These witnesses solemnly testify that they 'have seen the plates which contain this record' and 'the engravings which are upon the plates.' They witness that these writings 'have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us.' They testify, 'We declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true.'

"Further, 'the voice of the Lord commanded us that we

THE FIRST PRINTING

Because he worked under inspiration, Joseph Smith took only about 65 working days between the beginning of April and end of June 1829 to translate the entire Book of Mormon.⁸ The Prophet worked rapidly, rarely going back to revise the completed work. He had never studied ancient writings, and he did not refer to any sources outside the golden plates when he was translating.⁹

Oliver Cowdery, who acted as one of Joseph's scribes, said: "These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim."¹⁰

When the book was translated, Joseph and Martin Harris took it to E. B. Grandin to be published. Five thousand copies were printed, and the books were ready for sale in the spring of 1830.



An angel showed the gold plates to three witnesses.



1829

should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things.'"⁵

The Prophet was also allowed to show the plates to eight other witnesses. Their testimony is also recorded in the Book of Mormon.

The First Church Meeting

The organization of the Church took place in a small log cabin in Fayette, New York. To comply with the law for organizing a religious society, Joseph chose five men to assist him. The congregation of nearly 60 sustained Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as elders in the Church. The sacrament was blessed, the Saints sang together and prayed together, and some were baptized and confirmed.

"April 6, 1830, is a significant date for Latter-day Saints," said Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "It is the day The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. The translation and printing of the Book of Mormon had been completed, the priesthood had been restored, and now the Lord directed that His church should again be organized here on the earth."⁶

The Last Dispensation

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues to be led to new firsts through prophetic revelation. Many countries are now seeing their first

TOP: FROM LEFT, BY THE GIFT AND POWER OF GOD, BY SIMON DEWEY, COURTESY OF ALTUS FINE ART, AMERICAN FORK, UTAH, MAY NOT BE COPIED; PHOTOGRAPH OF GRANDIN PRESS; AN ANGEL SHOWING THE GOLD PLATES TO JOSEPH SMITH, OLIVER COWDERY, AND DAVID WHITMER, BY WILLIAM L. VAUGHAN, MAY NOT BE COPIED; PRINTING OF THE FIRST BOOK OF MORMON, BY GARY E. SMITH, ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH, APRIL 6, 1830, BY DALE KILBOURN; PHOTOGRAPH OF KIRTLAND TEMPLE; ELIJAH RESTORING THE KEYS OF THE PRIESTHOOD, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT, MAY NOT BE COPIED; BOTTOM: BUILDING THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE, BY WALTER RANE; INSET: THE LORD APPEARS IN THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE, BY DEL PARSON

The Book of Mormon was published in March.



1830

The Church was organized in Fayette, New York, on April 6.



1830

The Kirtland Temple was dedicated on March 27.



1836

On April 3, the Lord appeared to the Prophet in the Kirtland Temple.



1836

converts or first temples, and missionaries all over the world continue to spread the gospel to those who are hearing it for the first time.

You have a part to play too. Speaking of the pioneers who built up the early Church, President Hinckley said: “As great things were expected of them, so are they of us. We note what they did with what they had. We have so much more, with an overwhelming challenge to go on and

build the kingdom of God.”⁷

As you share the gospel and live faithfully, you will help to build God’s kingdom and carry it to even more “firsts” in this last dispensation. **NE**

NOTES

1. “A gospel dispensation is a period of time in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the keys of the holy priesthood” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Dispensation,” 67; see also Bible Dictionary, “Dispensations,” 657).
2. “Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 20–21.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 96.
4. “All That the Father Has,” *Ensign*, July 1989, 68.
5. “The Witness: Martin Harris,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 35.
6. “Heed the Prophet’s Voice,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 17.
7. “True to the Faith,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 66–67.
8. See John W. Welch, “How Long Did It Take Joseph Smith to Translate the Book of Mormon?” *Ensign*, Jan. 1988, 46–47.
9. See Neal A. Maxwell, “By the Gift and Power of God,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1997, 39–40.
10. Joseph Smith—History 1:71, endnote.
11. “Receiving a Testimony of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 30; see D&C 110.



THE FIRST TEMPLE

The Church was organized again on the earth. “But the work of the Restoration was not over,” explained Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of

the Twelve Apostles. “As in times of old, members of the Church were instructed to build a temple, which was dedicated in Kirtland, Ohio, on March 27, 1836. One week later, on April 3, a meeting was held there.

Following a solemn and silent prayer, Joseph and Oliver saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing before them. . . . Moses, Elias, and Elijah also appeared there and committed the keys of the kingdom, the saving ordinances, to Joseph.”¹¹

Only two years after the temple’s dedication and the restoration of sacred keys to the Prophet there, the Saints were forced to leave Kirtland and their first temple because of poverty, persecution, and apostasy.

Q & A

“Some people have told me I have an inferiority complex, but as far as I can tell, I’m just inferior. Since I’m not as smart or good-looking or talented as everybody else, what can I do to gain confidence and feel better?”

NEW ERA

It sounds as though you are using the world’s way for finding self-worth.

That way says, “If I’m better than others in some way, then I can feel better about myself.” This way always fails because everyone can find someone who is smarter, better looking, or more talented.

The solution is to apply the Lord’s standards for gaining confidence and self-worth. Because you are a child of God, you are not inferior or superior to others. “Thus saith the Lord: Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another” (Mosiah 23:7). People may have different talents than you, but you have your own strengths and gifts of the Spirit that you can share.

Heavenly Father wants you to feel better about yourself. In fact, one of the blessings of living the gospel is feeling peace and joy.

While Heavenly Father wants you to be happy, Satan wants you to be miserable. You

■ **The Lord wants you to be happy and confident.**

■ **No person is inferior or superior to another.**

■ **Don’t compare yourself with others. Do the best you can with what God has given you.**

■ **Your self-worth and confidence will grow as you live the gospel, serve others, develop your own talents, and seek to feel Heavenly Father’s love.**

can see this opposition in Moses’s life.

When the devil tempted him, Moses gained strength by praying and remembering that he was a child of God (see Moses 1:13, 24–25).

Like Moses, you are a child of God. Satan wants you to forget that. And he knows you will feel inferior if he can get you to think that you don’t “measure up.” So he wants you to judge yourself by the world’s standards: looks, popularity, intelligence, and so on.

The Lord’s standards are different: “The Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). If your heart is virtuous and loving, “then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). That’s the best kind of confidence.

Try these ways to feel better:

- As Moses did, pray that the Lord will help you remember that you are His child with an important work to do.
- Read your patriarchal blessing.
- Look for the good in yourself.
- Serve others. Willing service can bring feelings of joy and self-worth.



- Exercise. Physical activity is great for lifting your mood.
- Give thanks in prayer.
- Develop your talents by participating in activities you enjoy.
- Most important, keep the commandments. That's the path to happiness.

Feeling good about yourself doesn't come from being better than someone else. It comes from knowing you are loved of God and doing what He would have you do. **NE**

READERS



Talents and gifts are given to each one of us by God. The important thing is to have confidence not in ourselves but in Christ,

because He gives us the strength and the courage to do all things and helps us to realize how important we are and how great our worth is.

*Emilie Levert, 20, Lemoyne Ward,
Montréal Québec Stake*



When I hear about inferiority complexes, it hurts me inside because I think about how it must make our Creator sad to see that we do not like

ourselves. We forget too quickly that we are children of God and He loves us the way we are. All of us have different gifts. One person can sing well, and another can give good advice. Ask your friends and family what they like and appreciate about you.

*Deborah Torke, 17, Neumünster Ward,
Neumünster Germany Stake*



I pray to Heavenly Father so I can feel better and make my inferiority my strength. I try not to be too concerned about what other people say. I believe that everybody has a

gift. We just have to find it by putting every effort into doing so. The best I can do is to live with faith in Christ, trusting in Him. That's how I can have peace in my heart.

Srinakorn Supakote, 18, Korat Branch,
Khon Kaen Thailand District



Everyone has weaknesses, so we need to set goals to deal with them. The pamphlet called For the Strength of Youth will help us do so. If we study this pamphlet, we can discover

many talents. We must always pray, fast, read the scriptures, attend family home evening, and be sure of ourselves, and then everything will be all right.

Nikolay Losev, 17, Nizhegorodsky Tsentralny Branch,
Russia Moscow Mission



I know exactly how you feel. I used to feel like someone else was always going to be better, so why should I even try? Two main things helped me stop thinking this way: (1) I started

doing service for others. It made me feel special and important. And (2) I developed my talents. Everyone has talents. Always remind yourself that all of us are children of Heavenly Father, who loves us.

Lizzie Pecora, 16, Grouse Creek Ward,
Oakley Idaho Stake



Think about what is good about you. I'm sure you can find many things. Believe in yourself. When I feel inferior to someone, it's because I find the weak points in myself and



Self-worth . . . is best established by a close relationship with God.”

“If we love God, do His will, and fear His judgment more than men’s, we will have self-esteem. . . .

“ . . . Christ wants to lift us to where He is.”

—President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), “Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 6; “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 6.

compare them to other people’s strong points. So of course I feel inferior. If I were you, I would not compare myself to other people.

Shay Branch, 14, Greeley Fourth Ward,
Greeley Colorado Stake

Try reading the scriptures and praying for help. The scriptures are the word of God. If you search them carefully, you will find the answer. God will help you through this trial if you have faith.

Joseph Chittock, 12, Catford Ward,
London England Wandsworth Stake



I sometimes feel inferior. But I overcome it by always remembering that I am a child of God and He loves me. Then I gain more confidence, and I always feel better.

April Flores, 17, Catbalogan First Branch,
Catbalogan Philippines District

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send your answer to the question below, along with your name, birth date, ward and stake (or branch and district), and a photograph to:

Q & A, New Era

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Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail:

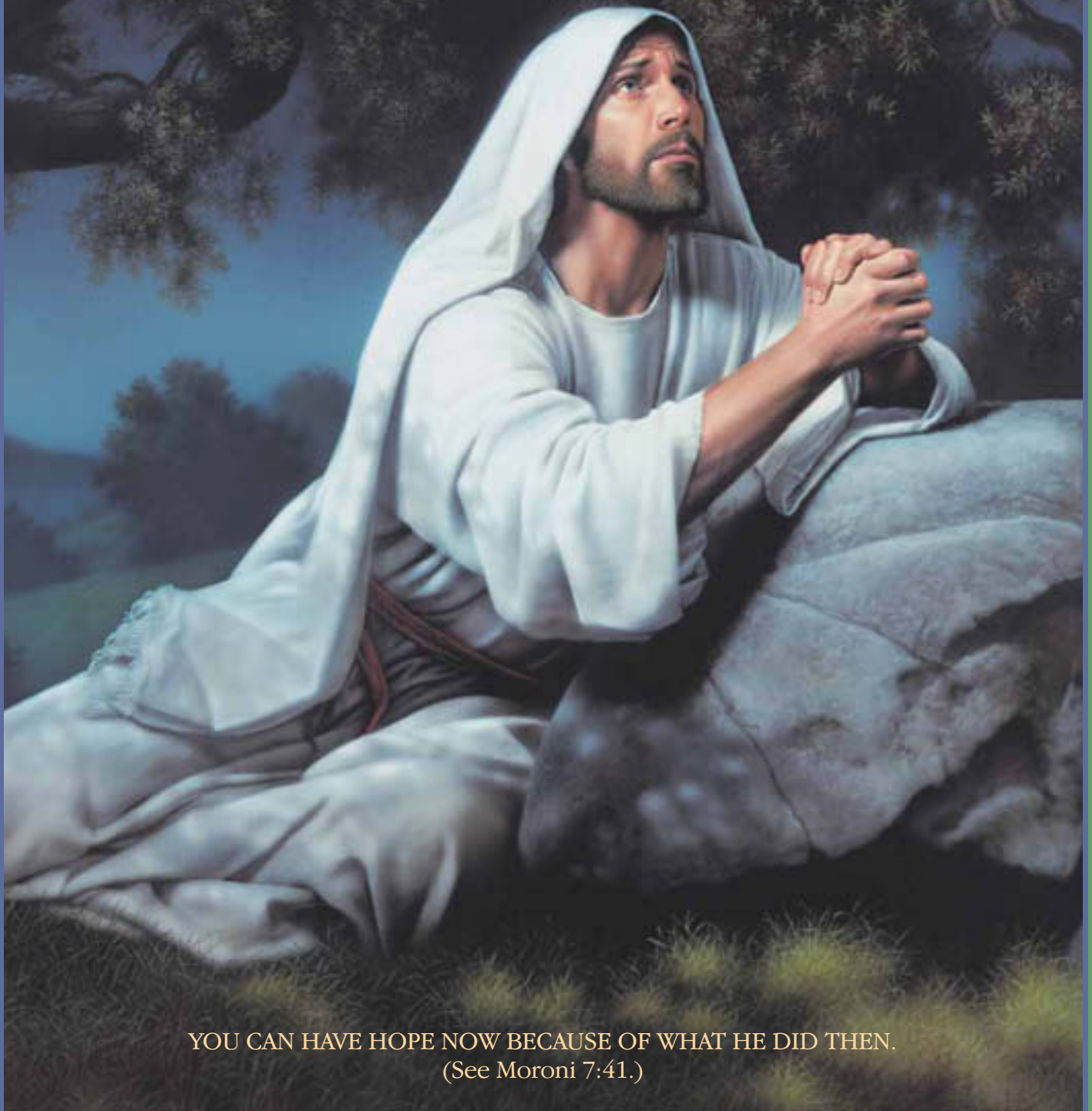
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Please respond by May 15, 2005.

QUESTION

“Kids at school harass and make fun of me because they know I’m a member of the Church. What’s the best way to handle it?”

NOW THERE IS HOPE



YOU CAN HAVE HOPE NOW BECAUSE OF WHAT HE DID THEN.
(See Moroni 7:41.)

YOUTH AT WORK IN FIJI



Young Saints play a big part in meeting members' needs.

BY ADAM C. OLSON
Church Magazines

Sikeli Vuli laughs as he tries unsuccessfully to remember how many times he's fallen in the river. Until not too long ago, an accidental swim was a fairly regular occurrence for those living in the small village of Navatuyaba, near Suva, Fiji.

That's because if you needed to go to the city, school, or local store, you would have to cross the river that snakes slowly by the village, take a long walk to the nearest bridge (about two hours), or pay hard-earned and scarce cash for a bus ride.

"I have to cross the river many times a day," says Sikeli, 13. "My friends live across the river."

Crossing the river was by far the easiest choice, even if it meant using an unstable raft made of a few long bamboo poles lashed together. And if there were more than a couple of people waiting, it was faster to hold your schoolbooks and school uniform above your head and swim across in clothes that could get wet, because you'd probably fall off the raft anyway.

At least, that's the way it was before the Church waded in and helped the members put a paddle to the problem. The Church provided a boat. You'd think it was an airplane, though, by the way the members' spirits have been lifted.

"We're grateful for the boat," says Litiana

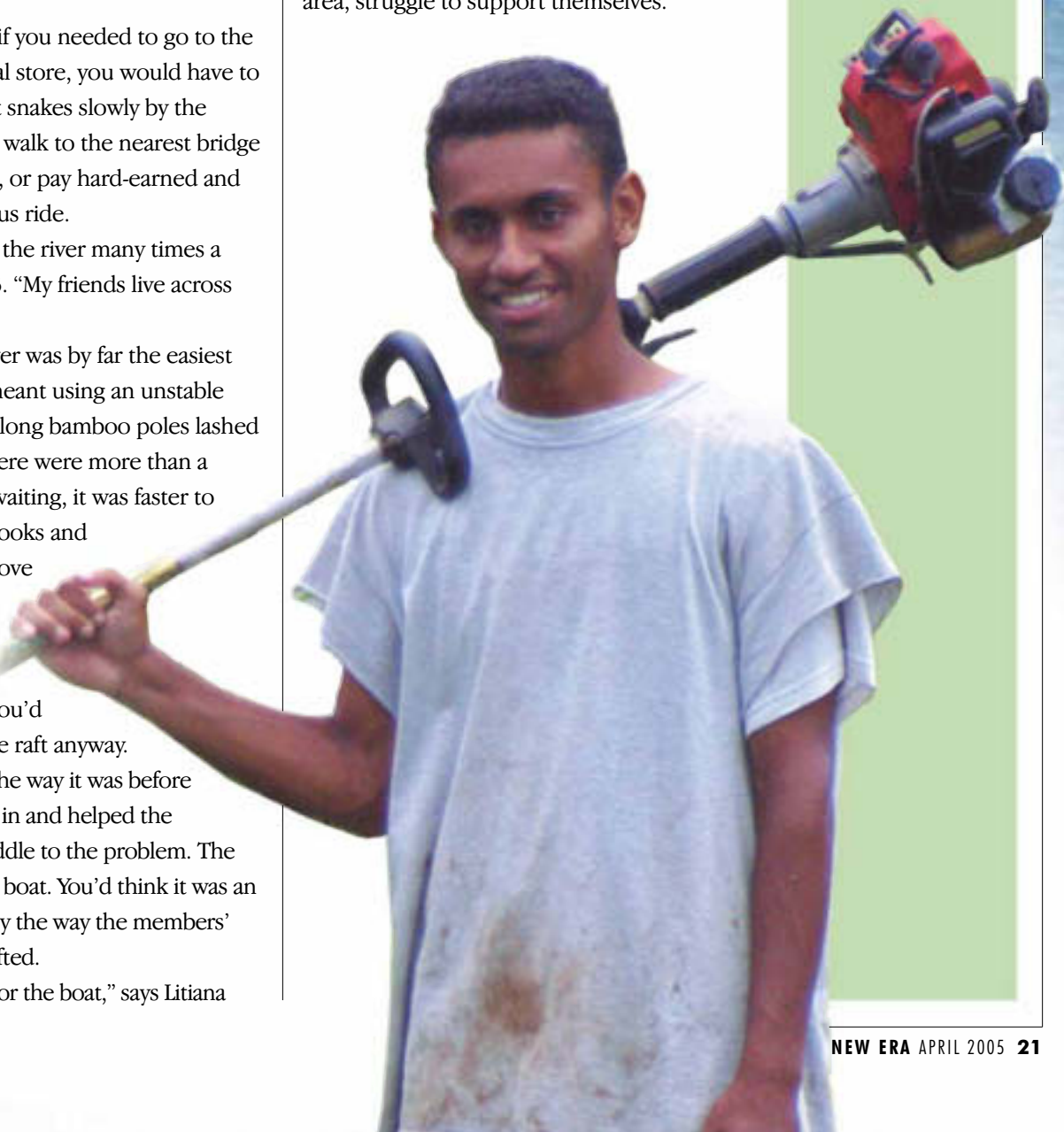
Delai, 12. "It's so much easier to get to the other side."

Happy for the Help

The Navatuyaba Branch's boat is only one of many projects the Nausori Fiji Stake has undertaken to help the youth and other Church members. Finding a job in the area is nearly impossible for teens. Even for their parents it's hard. That makes for a difficult situation, and the members, like most in the area, struggle to support themselves.



From helping to raise pigs to tending one of the Church's welfare farms (far left), young members, such as Alifereti Suguta (below), are making a big difference.





Working on a welfare farm has not only helped provide food for stake members, it has also helped bring youth of the Navatuyaba Branch (above) closer together.

So why are the members so happy? Because they know the Lord loves them. “We know Heavenly Father cares about us because the Church is helping so much to meet our needs,” says Makereta Elder, 14.

Stake leaders have felt inspired to begin a number of programs to help support the members, and the youth are a big part of making these programs work. Apart from the boat, there’s a greenhouse, a group of new welfare farms, and even some livestock. And the youth in Navatuyaba love helping.

Pulling (Weeds) Together

One sound you don’t hear much in Navatuyaba is the low rumble of industrial farm equipment. That’s changing now that the tractor owned and operated by the stake is being kept in the village.

The 17 youth in the branch are grateful for the tractor. Without it, the Navatuyaba members would have to find a way to till two acres (0.8 ha) manually. But the tractor doesn’t do all the farm work. The members all work together planting, weeding, and harvesting crops such as taro and tapioca.

“We all help on the farm,” says Kuli Qaravanua, 15. “The youth weed and plant or bring refreshments when the adults are working.”

“I like working on the farm,” says Maca Baikeirewa, 14. “It helps my family in many ways.”

The blessings of the



farm aren't just about having food to eat. The youth are learning a lot about growing food and working hard.

"I think that working on the farm has brought the youth of our branch together," says Tulia Tinaimolikula, 18. "It has helped us learn about each other."

But, as Kuli says, "the tractor and farm especially help us have peace of mind. I don't have to worry about what I will have to eat tomorrow."

Living with Livestock

As enjoyable as working together on the crops is, it's not nearly as much fun for the youth as helping with the pigs and chickens.

The branch started out with 120 chicks, 64 chickens, and 4 pigs but will be expanding the chicken coop. The animals will be split between the branch and stake members. Some will be sold, some will be eaten, but they're as much entertainment as anything else.

The chicks are cute, and feeding the pigs can be fun, but the youth have learned by experience how difficult it can be to catch a pig that doesn't want to be caught.

Buoyed Up

When the topic of the Church welfare program comes up in some countries, many youth tune it out because they don't think it has much to do with them. For the youth of Navatuyaba, Church welfare is changing their



"Some people are like rocks thrown into a sea of problems. They are drowned by

them. Be a cork. When submerged in a problem, fight to be free to bob up to serve again with happiness."

—Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Finding Joy in Life," *Ensign*, May 1996, 24–25.

lives through pigs and tractors, chickens and farming.

Even the boat is more than just a way to get safely across the river. By charging a few cents per passenger, the branch can pay Litiana's family to maintain the boat. She and

her siblings take shifts answering the whistle from the other side of the river whenever someone needs a ride.

"It has blessed my family," Litiana says, smiling. "It helps us afford school supplies and food. And we pay tithing on what we earn."

The Saints in Navatuyaba aren't the only ones who have struggled to overcome obstacles without getting in over their heads. Through the Church welfare and humanitarian programs, the Lord provides a way for many to stay afloat during difficult times. And that's something to smile about. **NE**



Knowing that the Lord loves them enough to help meet basic needs through a Church-owned greenhouse (above) and boat (below) has changed the way these youth feel about the Church welfare program.





Center Stage in

BY NICOLE OAKESON

Light the lights. That's what the youth from the stakes in the Manhattan temple district did to celebrate the dedication of their temple. They became the biggest show ever to hit the stage of Radio City Music Hall.

When my friends and I heard that President Gordon B. Hinckley had asked the teens in our temple district to participate in the Manhattan New York Temple youth jubilee, we were excited because we would perform in Radio City Music Hall. We also thought it would be fun to practice with the other stakes in the area and meet new friends.

It wasn't until the first practice that it hit me that there was a more important reason I was participating in the jubilee—it was something the Lord wanted me to do.

Twelve stakes from the New York Manhattan Temple district were involved in the jubilee, and we practiced every Saturday for three months. Youth from 12 stakes were divided into six groups, and each group learned different songs and dances that represented some Church history events in New York and the ethnic diversity of our area. The practices took time, but knowing President Hinckley was coming to watch our performance gave me the push I needed to get things right.

When the night of the jubilee arrived, I had a bad case of the butterflies. But then I looked into the audience and saw President Hinckley. I had never seen him in person before, and it was incredible to be so close. In his presence, the Spirit was strong.

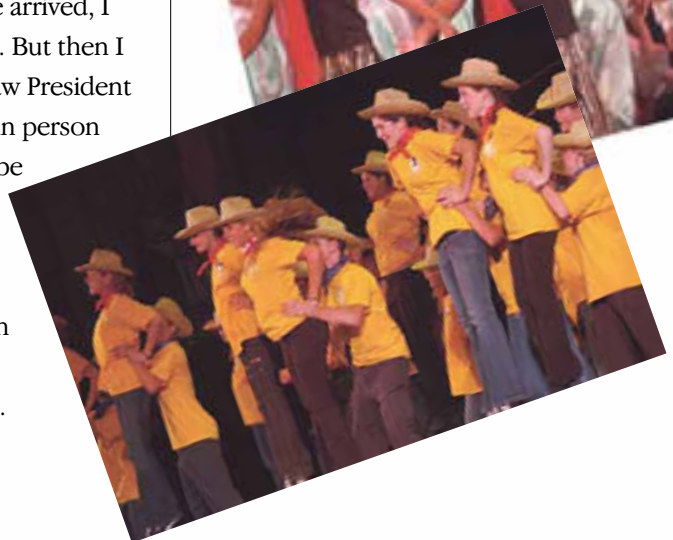
The night was a big success. Although we were performing in front of a huge audience, I was able to calm down and have fun.

The audience laughed and clapped throughout the performance. Nearly 2,400 youth participated. It was the largest group that has ever been onstage at Radio City Music Hall.

After the performance, we were invited to attend a devotional. At the devotional, President Hinckley said he asked the youth to participate in the jubilee because he wanted the Church to be fun for us.

Doctrine and Covenants 136:28 says: "If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving." The jubilee helped me appreciate just how much song and dance can lift our spirits and help us be happy. President Hinckley also read to us from his journal about the time two years before when he had been inspired to have the Manhattan temple constructed.

He told us that
Church



NEW YORK

President Gordon B. Hinckley has asked young Latter-day Saints all over the world to celebrate temple dedications in their area by participating in cultural arts performances. Teens in Manhattan weren't the first to perform for a temple dedication—they followed the examples of youth in Alaska, Ghana, Denmark, and Brazil.

The Manhattan New York Temple was dedicated by President Hinckley in June 2004. Church members in the area are grateful for this new temple and call it the "Miracle in Manhattan."



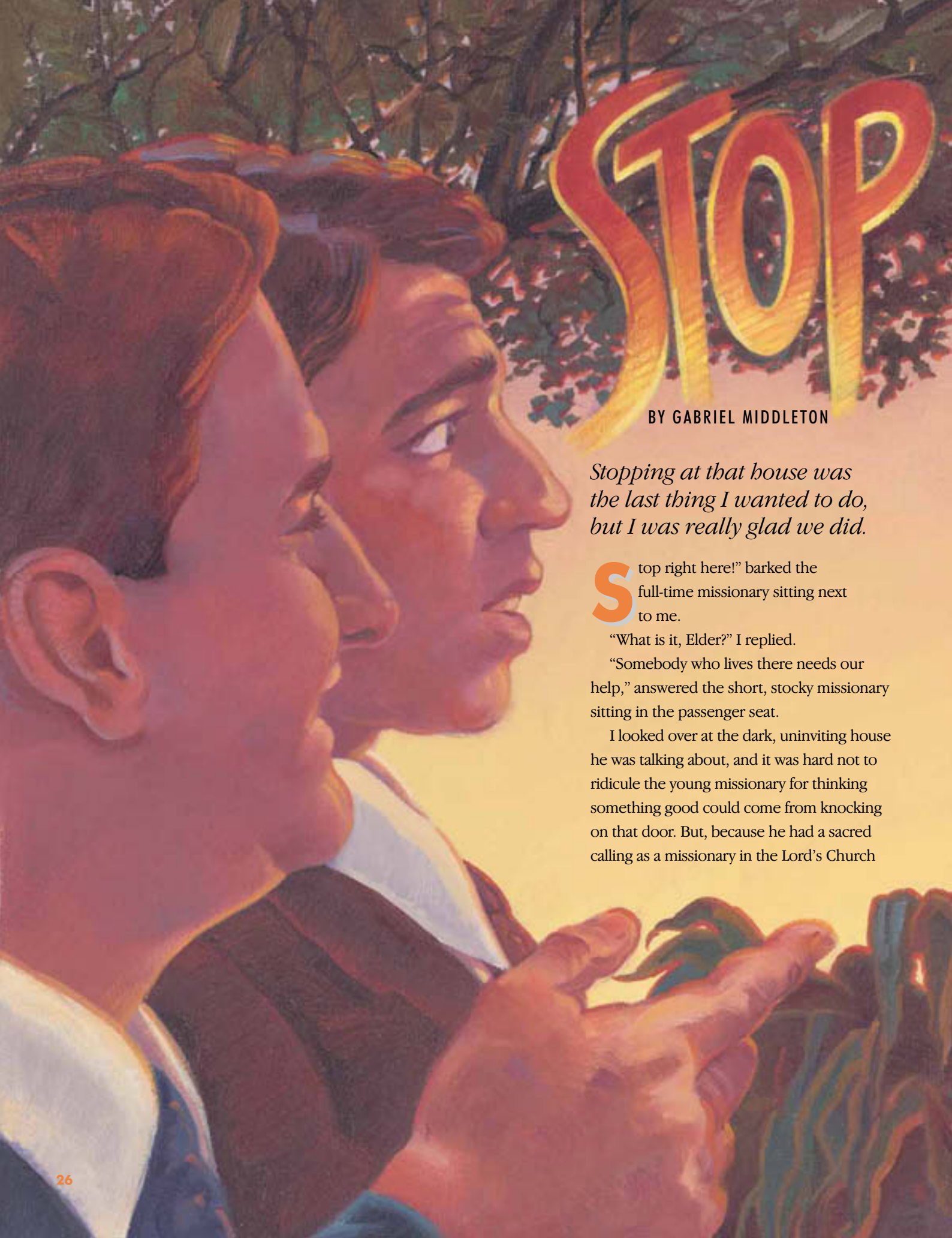
members in this generation have a great responsibility to make a difference in the lives of those we come in contact with.

The jubilee made a difference in my life. Meeting youth from other stakes has helped me become more outgoing and happy. I've also been blessed with many missionary moments with my friends at school who asked me about the jubilee and my reasons for participating in it.

Church members in this area have waited to have a temple nearby. I am grateful to a latter-day prophet who had the wisdom to allow the youth to celebrate the temple dedication through song and dance. It was truly a time of jubilation. **NE**

Nicole Oakeson is a member of the Morristown First Ward, Morristown New Jersey Stake.





STOP

BY GABRIEL MIDDLETON

Stopping at that house was the last thing I wanted to do, but I was really glad we did.

Stop right here!” barked the full-time missionary sitting next to me.

“What is it, Elder?” I replied.

“Somebody who lives there needs our help,” answered the short, stocky missionary sitting in the passenger seat.

I looked over at the dark, uninviting house he was talking about, and it was hard not to ridicule the young missionary for thinking something good could come from knocking on that door. But, because he had a sacred calling as a missionary in the Lord’s Church

RIGHT HERE

An illustration of a house at dusk. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light from the setting sun. A large, leafy vine hangs over the porch area. The house has a wooden door and a window with a grid pattern. In the foreground, a person's hand is visible, reaching towards the house. The overall mood is mysterious and atmospheric.

and I was only a 17-year-old convert, I obeyed his request and rolled my car to a stop.

It was a warm spring night in southern California. The only sound I heard as we walked up to the house was the symphony the crickets were performing. Though their music was pleasant, I still had an eerie feeling while knocking on the old door in front of us.

“Elder, I don’t think anybody’s home. We can try some other time.”

“Just wait,” the missionary pleaded.

Just as I was about to drag my temporary companion away from the dark doorstep, the door creaked open. In front of us stood a short, skinny man in his mid-30s. He wore a pair of tattered jeans and an off-white T-shirt decorated with small holes and grease stains.

ILLUSTRATED BY DILLEEN MARSH

Tears began to roll down the man's face.

"Are you the angels I asked for?"

"Who are you?" the man softly inquired.

"I am Elder Johnson, and this is my friend Gabe. We are here on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Tears began to roll down the man's face, and he started to sob uncontrollably. We stood in front of him, absolutely amazed at the scene that was unfolding before our eyes. Behind the tears he was shedding, the man's eyes lit up with hope.

"Are you the angels I asked for?" the man questioned.

It turns out that Sam, the man we were speaking with, had been planning to end his life that night. In a final prayer to God, he pleaded that he would receive forgiveness for what he was about to do. Finally, his last hopeful request was for the Lord to send him an angel in this time of great need.

A fire burned in my chest as I realized the Lord was using this missionary and me as instruments in His hands. I felt so foolish for doubting the elder's impression to stop.

This experience helped me realize I had

something important to do with my life.

I didn't know how many other people like Sam were across the world, but I imagined it was no small number. If I abandoned the opportunity to serve the Lord as a full-time

missionary, would I miss other opportunities to make the Lord's house calls in emergencies such as this? I dreaded the thought of leaving anybody stranded without the gospel. That's one reason I decided to serve in the Lord's royal army of missionaries.

I am grateful for the many people I met during my mission to Brazil who, like Sam,

were sad and alone until the Lord used me and other missionaries as instruments to bring them the gospel. It is truly rewarding to serve God in such a wonderful way. This opportunity is available to those ready and willing to serve the Lord as missionaries. Though the Lord has plenty of "angels," He could definitely use lots more. **NE**



Gabriel Middleton is a member of the BYU 84th Ward, Brigham Young University Ninth Stake.

LEARNING FROM

Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith was only 14 when his desire to know the truth drew him into the woods near his home to pray. In answer to his prayer, he was visited by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. They spoke to him, taught him, and answered his prayer.

This First Vision and many other wonderful events of the Restoration of the Church are hard for some to believe. But there are those who know that such a vision did happen in the spring of 1820 in a grove of trees on a small New York farm. Read on to learn from 14-year-olds around the world who believe with all their hearts that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.



I admire Joseph Smith for all he went through when he was only a teenager. Through it all he was still faithful and had an eye single to the glory of God.

He has taught me many things: to listen to the Holy Ghost, to do what is right, and to stand up for what is true.

I know that he was a prophet of God and that he restored the true Church. Without him we would not have the fulness of the gospel, and I wouldn't be where I am today. It humbles me. I am grateful for the restored Church.

Viliame Malani, Samabula First (English) Ward, Suva Fiji North Stake



Joseph Smith was very brave to do all that he did. But he was also well prepared, because a vision isn't given to just anybody. It has to be someone who is prepared.

By following the whisperings of the Holy Ghost, youth today can also accomplish many good things if we will decide to do them.

I know that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son and that the Savior counseled him not to join any church. I also know that Joseph Smith was very brave and died defending the gospel. And I know that if we search the scriptures, pray from our hearts, are obedient, and have faith in the Father and the Son, we will be able to return to Their presence.

Camila Eugenia Bardi Aguirre, Buenos Aires Ward, Cartagena Colombia Los Alpes Stake



WHY A 14-YEAR- OLD BOY?

“Joseph went in [to the grove] as a boy. I have wondered at times why the Lord would have him go in as a 14-year-old boy. Why didn’t He wait until [Joseph] was 20 or 30 or 40, when he would have had the weight of authority that comes with age? He went in—the Lord permitted it—and responded to his inquiry because he came in perfect trust as a boy. There was no doubt in his mind. He said that if anyone needed wisdom, he needed wisdom, and he asked for it, with full confidence that something would happen as a result of his prayer. We do not have anything of the words of Joseph’s prayer. But we know that he made inquiry and that a conversation took place. And Joseph Smith learned in those minutes, however long or brief, more about the nature of God than all of the learned divines of all time had ever learned.”

—President Gordon B. Hinckley,
“Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Aug.
1997, 3.



It is important to know that Joseph Smith could pray and have his prayers answered. But it is also important for me to know that I can have my own prayers answered by God.

I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith endured many difficulties. I know that it is because of him that the Church was reestablished, that the priesthood has been restored to the earth, and that we know more about Heavenly Father and the Savior. I try to follow his good example, but it is difficult. Sometimes I lack the faith. But then I think of what he went through, what he endured for us, and it gives me the courage to be a little stronger, to hold on a little longer. I know that we are in the true Church and that we owe Joseph Smith a great debt of gratitude.

**Randy Horita Tamarohirani, Mahu Branch,
Tubuai Australes District**





The Lord answered Joseph Smith's prayer. He answers the prayers of the youth. I can feel Him answer my prayers too. One day something bad happened between my friend and me. Later, while reading the *Liabona*, I read a verse that said, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44). It helped me get past what happened, and we became friends again. I feel that was an answer to my prayers.

Joseph Smith also organized missionary work, and through missionary work the Church has grown worldwide. Even as far away as Korea, we can know how to gain eternal life.

Ha-Nul Park, Sinchon Ward, Seoul Korea North Stake

I believe that Joseph Smith was visited by Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and given a special mission to restore the Church. I wonder how I would have reacted if Heavenly Father suddenly appeared. It would have been a tremendous shock for me. But Joseph Smith handled it calmly. He was really dedicated to finding the truth.

When I hear about all he went through to build the Church, it helps me not to complain so much or feel sorry for myself.

Without the Prophet Joseph there would be no Church. And the Church is my foundation.

Spencer Yamada, Manhattan Second Ward, New York New York Stake



One night I read the Book of Mormon and had a peaceful feeling. I knew then that the teachings in the Book of Mormon are true and that Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I also know that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon and restored the gospel to the earth.

Joseph Smith had many great trials and tribulations and was able to overcome them. He was also brave to stand up and testify to the preachers and professors of the other churches. Although they persecuted him, Joseph Smith knew that he had seen a vision and had the conviction to follow the truth. Through him, I learned how to stand up for the truth and endure to the end. **NE**

Fam Suet Ling Roslyn, Ipoh First Branch, Ipoh Malaysia District

Learning about Joseph Smith while I was small and reading stories about him have helped my testimony to grow. But as I have been getting older, I have been reading the scriptures more and thinking more about his experiences. The feelings I get when I am learning, thinking, or reading about him have helped my testimony to grow even more. Knowing his difficulties and experiences helps

me to choose the right when I am in situations that tempt or pressure me to do otherwise.

I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know that Joseph Smith really did pray in the Sacred Grove and see our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, who atoned for our sins.

Robin Renae Doney, Essex Ward, Montpelier Vermont Stake



CONFERENCE WORD SEARCH

See if you can find these conference-related words by reading forward, backward, up, down, and diagonally. (But don't do this word search *during* conference!)

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| APOSTLES | GOSPEL | SCRIPTURES |
| APRIL | INSPIRATION | SESSION |
| AUDIENCE | INSTRUCTION | SUSTAIN |
| BROADCAST | OCTOBER | TALKS |
| CHOIR | PROPHET | TESTIMONY |
| CONFERENCE | PULPIT | |
| ENSIGN | REVELATION | |

IT HAPPENED IN APRIL

April 14, 1832 Brigham Young and his wife, Miriam, (below) were baptized in a pond in New York.

April 1853 Missionary work began in South Africa.

April 1, 1898 Lucy Jane Brimhall and Amanda Inez Knight, the first single sister missionaries, were called to serve as full-time missionaries to England.

April 26, 1964 In Tokyo Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, dedicated the first Latter-day Saint meetinghouse in Asia.

April 1-2, 2000 General conference was held for the first time in the nearly completed Conference Center.



SHOW YOU CARE

As Jesus ministered to those around Him, He lifted the needy, gave hope to the discouraged, and sought out the lost. By His actions He showed people that He loved, understood, and appreciated them. Here are some ways we can follow the Savior's example and minister to others during group activities:

- ♥ See others as the Savior would see them.
- ♥ Mingle with everyone, not just close friends.
- ♥ Give everyone a chance to join in the conversation and feel part of the group.
- ♥ Make an effort to learn something new about someone. This effort will require asking questions and then listening.
- ♥ Share with others positive things you know about someone.
- ♥ Call people by their names.
- ♥ Make an effort to help others feel valued by expressing sincere encouragement and appreciation.



YOUR EXAMPLE

As the youth of the Church, your influence, your example can be a determining factor in someone's conversion to or lack of interest in the message of the Restoration of the gospel. Watch your physical appearance, your thoughts, your language, your actions."

—Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy, "The Power of Example," *New Era*, Oct. 1978, 5.



175TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHURCH

On April 6, 1830, 175 years ago this month, the Church was formally organized. In a simple meeting held in the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. and attended by around 60 people, 24-year-old Joseph Smith joined with five others—Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum and Samuel Smith, and David and Peter Whitmer Jr.—to meet New York's legal requirements for forming a religious society.

After a prayer, Joseph asked those present if they were willing to accept him and Oliver as their spiritual

advisers. Although they had already received the Melchizedek Priesthood, Joseph and Oliver ordained each other to the office of elder. They did this to signify that they were elders in the newly organized Church. The sacrament was administered, then Joseph and Oliver confirmed those who had been baptized as members of the Church. Next, some of the men were ordained to various priesthood offices. Following the meeting, others were baptized, including Joseph's mother and father.



PUTTING IT TOGETHER

It's great to combine learning a skill with fulfilling a Personal Progress project and serving a member of the ward," said one of the young women of the Exeter Ward, Plymouth England Stake. The young women made a quilt for Sister Etta Cunningham, an aging ward member who was then

suffering from cancer. The girls enjoyed the project as they learned a lot about piecing quilts. They also learned about having compassion for their elders.

Before Sister Cunningham passed away, she sent the girls a thank-you note, which they now keep in their Young Women book of remembrance.



STRONG ROOTS IN SMALL BRANCHES



Tina Dobravc is one of the teens in Slovenia who is helping to build the Church there.

BY JENIANN JENSEN
Church Magazines

Walk into the woods, and listen to the silence. See the sun filter through the canopy of trees. Feel the quiet wonder of Heavenly Father’s creations. Marvel at how the trees stand tall and firm and strong.

Joseph Smith came to woods like these when he knelt in prayer and brought new light to the world. He needed a place where he could be alone, a quiet place where he could think and receive answers to his questions.

Joseph Smith had his First Vision in New York in the northeastern United States, but these woods are in Croatia and Slovenia. Young men and young women gather here to meet in youth conferences. Just as the Prophet Joseph did, these youth are praying for answers and finding them in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Croatia and Slovenia

are countries east of Italy that were part of Yugoslavia until 1991. Latter-day Saint missionaries first came to this part of the world in the early 1990s. Since then, three branches of the Church have been established in Slovenia and seven in Croatia. The Church hasn’t grown large enough here to build meetinghouses yet, but the work moves forward. Most of the newest members are young men and young women, who meet as often as they can to find strength in their combined testimonies.

Standing Alone

In these small branches, being a Church member can be lonely. When Kristina Mestrov attends her branch meetings in Split, Croatia, sometimes only her mother and the missionaries are there with her. But she is doing her





best to change that. "I keep trying to be the best missionary I can," she says.

Many youth are the only members of the Church in their families. Petra Karaklajic of Zagreb, Croatia, longs for the day when her family will understand her beliefs. She says, "Some of my family members have a problem with my going to Sunday meetings and with some of the beliefs of the Church." But then Petra explains her formula for surviving: "Find out who you really are and where you have to go. And if you allow it to, the gospel will change your life for the better. Just give your best, and follow Jesus Christ. You are a beloved child of the living God."

Tina Dobravc recently joined the Church in Celje, Slovenia. She has seen positive changes in her life since her conversion. But she has found it hard at times to live the gospel without her family's support. "In my home it is hard to bless the food or to pray alone," she says. "But I have to remember that it will be worth it. I know that my family will find happiness one day and that they will find the gospel." Tina serves in her branch as the activities leader.

Many of the youth must also stand alone among their friends. Many left friends behind when they embraced the gospel. A recent convert, Lucija Krajnik of Ljubljana,

At a youth conference in Slovenia (above), youth learn to trust each other. Left inset: Simon Stevanovic (center) is sharing the gospel with his parents.



At youth conference (above), the teens did not all speak the same language, but they had the gospel in common. They hope to be like the trees in the forest where they held the conference—strong and firm.

Slovenia, says: “Since joining the Church, I have needed to separate myself from my old friends because they were bad company. The best thing for me to do was to isolate myself from them and stay in contact with members and missionaries.”

Standing Together

Just as forest trees draw strength from one another, the youth gain strength from being together. At a recent youth conference, the first many had ever attended, 47 of the youth met together. They didn’t always understand each other because they speak English, Croatian, or Slovenian, but they had the language of the gospel in common.

Petra Karaklajic is strengthened by youth conferences and other activities with people who believe as she does. “When we are all together, we are stronger,” she says. “I feel very blessed that I have my brothers and sisters in the Church.”

Lucija Krajnik knows that she needs her friends in the gospel. “Where would I be if I didn’t have the Church?” she asks. “I am grateful to be a member of the Church and to have my friends by my side.”

The youth know that if they introduce the gospel to others, the Church will continue to grow. They often invite others to join with them to help them see the light of the gospel.

Simon Stevanovic of Celje, Slovenia, firmly believes that he needs to share the gospel with his friends and family: “We need



“We call upon every member of the Church to reach out to new converts, to put your arms around them and make them feel at home. Bless them with your friendship. Encourage them with your faith. See that there are no losses among them.”

—President Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Condition of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 4.

to encourage our parents and friends so that the Church will grow. We have lots of friends. We need to spread the gospel.” Simon is helping his father learn about the Church and looks forward to serving a full-time mission someday.

Ava Zupancic of Ljubljana, Slovenia, understands that helping others to be baptized is only the beginning. “It

really hurts me when I see people get baptized, and then, after some time, they do not come back,” she says. “This happens too often. We have to help new members!”

Remaining Strong

In these woods, even with strong roots and surrounding trees to protect you, storms sometimes rage and challenges come. But these youth know that fighting the storms is worth the effort.

“To be a champion,” says Davor Majc of Kranj, Slovenia, “you must get up, no matter how many times you fall down while trying to achieve a goal, and go again. Those who are waiting for you at the end will be cheering for you.”

Ivona Frcek of Zagreb, Croatia, testifies that “everything bad that happens shall pass. Just be strong and hold onto the truth.”

The youth of Croatia and Slovenia will continue to gather strength from each other and help others to find the answers to the important questions of life. They hope to be like the trees in the woods: tall, firm, unbending, and strong. **NE**

PPhillip and Ani Maxfield helped with this article. They served in the Croatia Zagreb Mission and are members of the Issaquah Fifth Ward, Bellevue Washington Stake.

Reading

IN TONGUES

Have a friend who speaks Spanish? Taking French in school? Received a mission call to Portugal?

The Church's *Liabona* magazine is printed in Spanish, French, and Portuguese—along with 47 other languages. The *Liabona* contains some of the same articles and features you find in the *New Era* but in different languages.

You can subscribe to any of these 50 language editions and view 12 of them online: Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish, and Spanish.

To find the *Liabona* online, go to the Gospel Library at www.lds.org. Under Church Publications, click PDF and then *Liabona*. Choose a language from the drop-down box labeled “Select a language,” and then click the issue you would like to see.



A

Here's how the April poster looks when translated into different languages for the *Liabona*. See if you can match the posters with the languages they are printed in.

1. Armenian _____
2. Cambodian _____
3. Chinese _____
4. English **A** _____
5. Finnish _____
6. Mongolian _____
7. Russian _____
8. Samoan _____
9. Tagalog (Philippines) _____
10. Tamil (India) _____
11. Telugu (India) _____

Answers: 1G; 2J; 3K; 4A; 5F; 6E; 7C; 8H; 9D; 10B; 11I



B



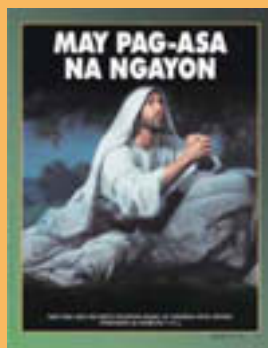
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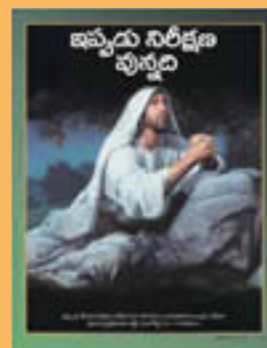
C



H



D



I



E



J



F



K



WHY I BELIEVE

BY SANDY LANCASTER

When I was young, I had an experience that helped me relate to the blind man described in John 9.

The man was blind from birth. The disciples asked Jesus, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but *that the works of God should be made manifest in him*” (John 9:2–3; emphasis added).

Jesus anointed the blind man’s eyes with clay and instructed him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man did as instructed and “came seeing” (John 9:7).


There were witnesses to this miracle who could not comprehend it. They took the man to the Pharisees, who questioned him about it repeatedly. The man finally told the Pharisees, “If this man were not of God, he could do nothing” (John 9:33). For this statement, he was cast out.

Then a great blessing occurred—an even greater blessing than having his sight restored. Jesus, having heard that they had cast the man out, found him and allowed him to declare his belief: “He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him” (John 9:38).

I was 11 years old when the “works of God were made manifest” in me. In the fifth grade, I developed warts on my hands. Both hands were covered with the ugly virus sufficiently enough to earn me the nickname “warthog” among my classmates. Needless to say, it affected my self-esteem and social life.

When my family moved from Utah to Idaho the following summer, I dreaded the thought of going to a new school. In my old class, I took plenty of teasing, but I also had two good friends who stood by me. This new place offered no such assurance.

I had warts on my hands, and I desperately wanted them gone. Nothing worked until I discovered the healing answer.



I began to search for ways to rid myself of my burden. With my mother's help, we tried over-the-counter remedies and even some home remedies, but the warts remained. Money was limited, so seeing the doctor for such a nonemergency was out of the question. I began feeling like there would be no end to this malady.

Towards the end of summer, it occurred to me to ask Heavenly Father for help. My family had been active in the Church for about two years, and I had been taught about the power of fasting accompanied by prayer, but I had never before taken the opportunity to do this.

Over two weeks I fasted every few days. I remember how hard it was to pass up my mom's homemade cherry pie, but I believed the outcome of my fast would be equal to my faith and sacrifice. I prayed earnestly in our backyard, where I could speak aloud and not be interrupted. At the end of the two-week period, my warts were gone. Every one of them had shrunk away.

When school started a couple of weeks later, I felt a new confidence. This confidence came, in part, from having healed hands that I did not have to hide, but more so from an internal seed that had sprouted to life.

I had gained personal knowledge of a great truth—that I was a daughter of Heavenly Father, the true

and living God. I knew that He loved me and that He heard and answered my prayers. Just as the man in the scriptures, the works of God had been made manifest in me, on a physical and a spiritual level.

A few years later, when I was a senior in high school, my philosophy teacher asked each of us to justify our belief in God. He asked us to "prove" God's existence. I shared this experience with my class and testified not only of God's existence but of His love for us. After the bell rang, my teacher pulled me aside and asked me to consider that perhaps it was the power of positive thinking, rather than God, that had caused my warts to disappear. I did not hesitate in my response to him that I knew

of a surety the source of this miracle.

Perhaps someday I too will be allowed the blessing of kneeling before my Healer and proclaiming, "Lord, I believe." **NE**

Sandy Lancaster is a member of the Parkside Ward, Magna Utah Stake.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

To learn more about believing in Heavenly Father, read these verses: Mosiah 4:9; 3 Nephi 18:20; D&C 35:8.

And read these articles in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org: "Miracles" (*Ensign*, June 2001), by Elder Dallin H. Oaks and "Do You Need a Miracle?" (*New Era*, Feb. 2003), by Elder Larry W. Gibbons.

THE EXTRA SMILE

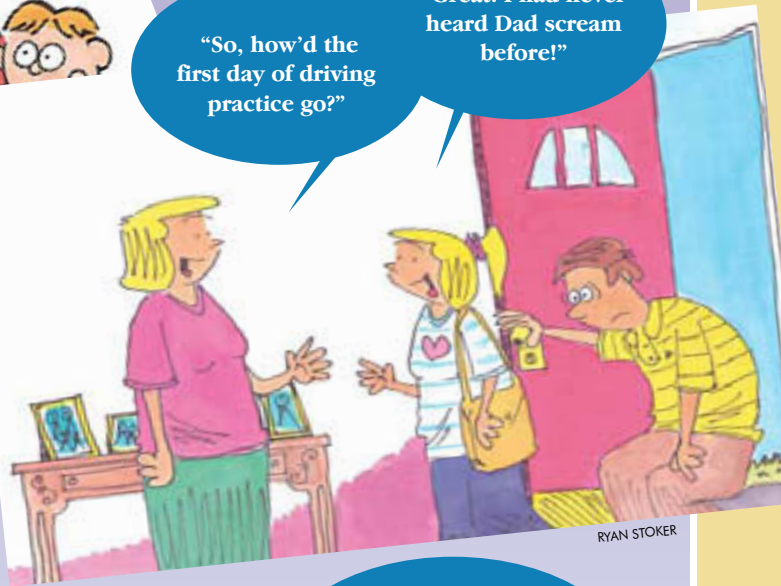
"Dad's never colored eggs before, has he?"



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

"So, how'd the first day of driving practice go?"

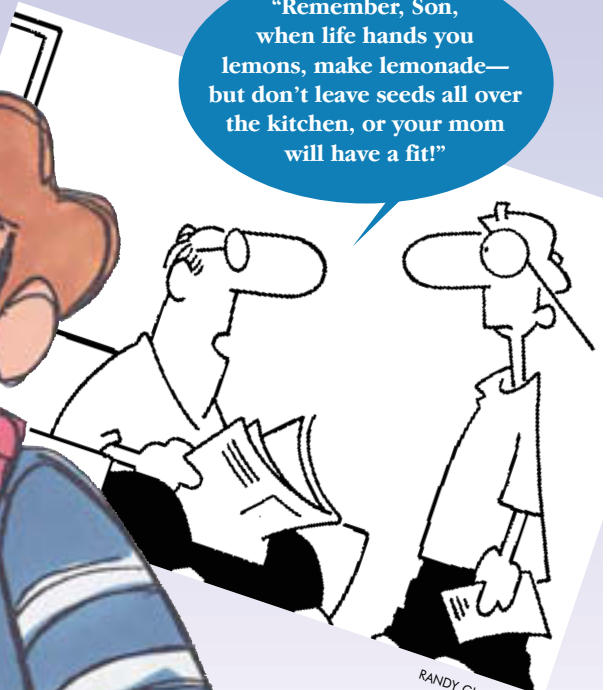
"Great. I had never heard Dad scream before!"



RYAN STOKER

"Sorry, I don't kiss on the last date."

"Remember, Son, when life hands you lemons, make lemonade—but don't leave seeds all over the kitchen, or your mom will have a fit!"



RANDY GLASBERGEN

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

IN A

Holy

BY ELDER LANCE B. WICKMAN
Of the Seventy

*Despite the buffetings of life,
we can always be in a holy
place.*



Like the sunrise, it dawned on me that because of our eternal covenants no matter what happened in the uncertain future just ahead, Pat would always be mine.

I shall never forget one night almost four decades ago. My bride, Patricia, and I had been married for two years. We lived in a small duplex on Oahu's north shore. I was an army infantry officer assigned to a unit at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Our brigade had been ordered to war in Vietnam. My plane was scheduled for departure after midnight, and a good Latter-day Saint friend had agreed to take me to the airfield at 11:00 p.m.

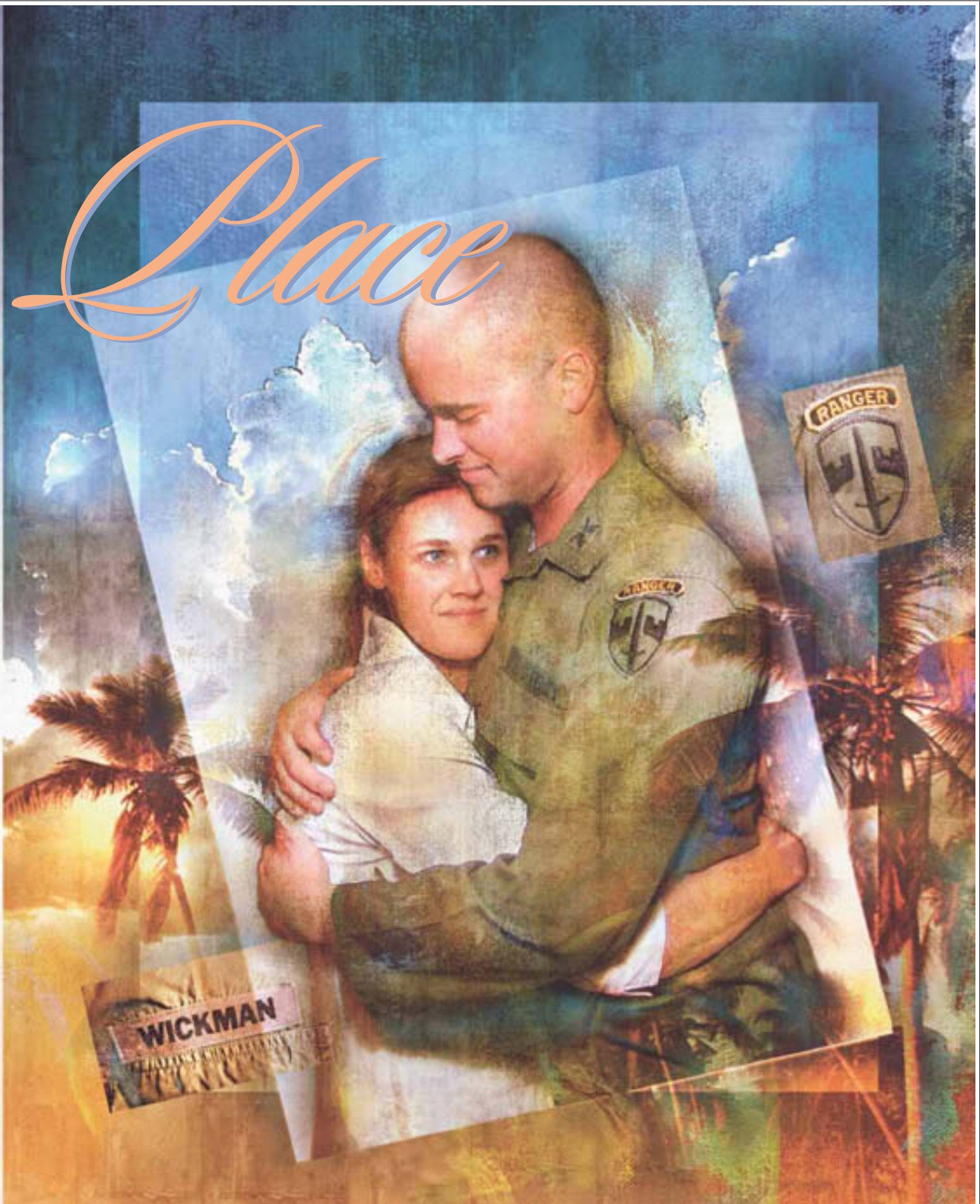
All through that long evening, Pat and I sat on the sofa in our tiny living room with our fingers intertwined, watching the hands of the clock approach the fateful hour and listening to the soft lapping of the surf against the shore. The ticking of the clock seemed a metronome of mortality in painful contrast to the muffled rushing of the eternal sea. At last the hour of parting arrived. Inside the doorway to our little home, I clutched my bride to my bosom and kissed her one last time, and then I was gone. As I closed the door, I wondered if I

had seen my sweetheart for the last time in mortality. It was truly night.

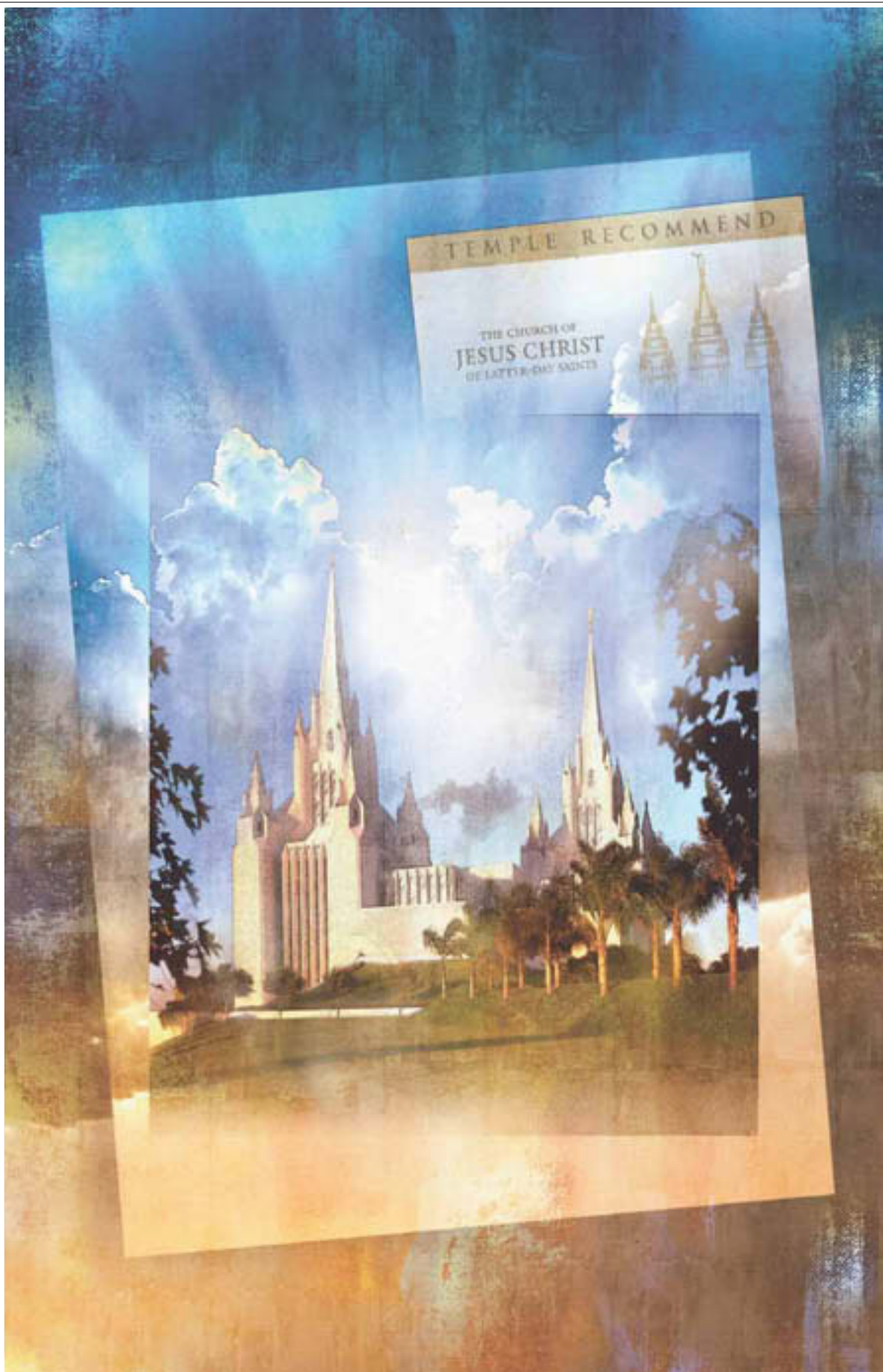
My friend and I drove silently in the darkness through the sugar cane and pineapple fields of Oahu. My heart felt as though it would break. Then as we passed Schofield, an unseen infantry unit on night maneuvers fired a flare. Its brilliance momentarily lit the inky darkness and seemed to ignite a spiritual flame in the blackness that invested my soul. My thoughts were drawn away from this saddest of days to the very happiest: back to that beautiful December day when Pat and I had entered the holy temple and there were sealed to each other, not just for this life only but for all eternity. I thought of the eternal covenants we had made. Like the sunrise, it dawned on me that no matter what happened in the uncertain future just ahead, Pat would always be mine. When I reached the air base, I telephoned her. In the spirit of a renewed hope and peace born of faith and understanding, we talked and laughed softly before once more bidding each other good-bye. It was only midnight, but for me the sun was already rising.

On another day in another place, however, the sun was setting on the mortal

Place



By being worthy to go to the temple and by visiting as often as possible, the temple will be in us. Then, despite the storms of life, we will always be in a holy place.



ministry of the Messiah as He departed the temple at Jerusalem for the last time. Climbing atop the Mount of Olives with His disciples, the Savior prophesied the cataclysmic events that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Coming. He then issued this admonition to His disciples, ancient and modern: “Then you shall *stand in the holy place*; whoso readeth let him understand” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:12; emphasis added; see also Matthew 24:15).

Latter-day revelations provide understanding. They teach that in our day, amidst strife and catastrophe and pestilence, there are two kingdoms locked in grim struggle for the souls of men—Zion and Babylon. More than once they repeat the command to “stand in holy places” for a refuge from these storms of latter-day life (D&C 45:32; see also D&C 87:8; D&C 101:16–23). Prominent among such holy places, and key to all the others, is the temple of the Lord.

The words *Zion* and *temple* belong in the same sentence together. In August 1833, as Saints attempted against much persecution to establish a geographic Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, the Prophet Joseph Smith was counseled in revelation to build a house unto the Lord “for the salvation of Zion” (D&C 97:12). The temple is the key to salvation, it said, because it is a place of thanksgiving, a place of instruction, and a place of understanding “in all things” (D&C 97:14). Then comes this glorious promise: “Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it *shall see God*. . . . Therefore, . . . let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn” (D&C 97:16, 21; emphasis added). For Zion, the pure in heart, the temple holds the key that unlocks holy places—places of rejoicing—while those in Babylon’s byways are condemned to mourn.

I was to bid my dear wife good-bye twice more during the tumultuous years of the Vietnam War. In a later year we would stand together and say farewell as a five-year-old son slipped from this world across the veiled threshold

into the next; and, later still, we would welcome a handicapped daughter into mortality. Life has brought us its challenges, as it does to all. But through the years I have come to appreciate the wisdom of a dear friend, a patriarch and temple sealer. “Lance,” he said, “the joy I receive is more than just being in the temple. *The temple is in me!* And when I leave the temple, its peace goes with me.”

So it can be for every righteous soul. When we visit the temple as often as distance and individual circumstance permit, *the temple will be in us*. Then, despite the buffetings of life, we will always be in a holy place. The house of the Lord beckons to all who would be numbered with Zion: “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths” (Isaiah 2:3).

The day of the San Diego California Temple dedication attended by our stake, I came into the celestial room a few minutes early, accompanied by my daughter and one of my sons. My dear Pat was directing the choir. As though joined by angels, they rehearsed these magnificent words from a beloved Latter-day Saint hymn:

*High on the mountain top
A banner is unfurled.
Ye nations, now look up;
It waves to all the world.
In Deseret’s sweet, peaceful land,
On Zion’s mount behold it stand!*
 (“High on the Mountain Top,” *Hymns*, no. 5)

Pat’s eyes met mine. For a brief moment I was transported back across the years, past the challenges and the heartaches to that wonderful day when together we had entered the house of the Lord. I drew my children close. In that instant, a wonderful, celestial feeling swelled my breast. I *knew* I was in a holy place. I felt a peace as I had on that dark night so many years ago—and again I rejoiced. **NE**

From an October 1994 general conference address.

STELLAR MISSIONARY

BY CYNTHIA KNIGHT

I am a space nut. I love the intricate formations of stars and planets. Last year, I entered a scholarship competition and won a week's stay at a space academy in Huntsville, Alabama. I was thrilled! I would be part of a team of other young people from all over the country.

As I began making plans for the trip, a thought occurred to me: Why not try to plant some gospel seeds at the space academy? I had been taught that I could pray for missionary opportunities, and I was aching to share the gospel with others. So for days before my trip to Alabama, I prayed for "seed planting" opportunities.

It was the first time I had ever asked for a missionary experience.

On the second day in Alabama I received the opportunity I had been praying for. I had set my scriptures on my bed, and one of my new friends read the title out loud as though it were a foreign language. I couldn't believe it! My friend, Sophia, had never heard of a Mormon and didn't know what LDS meant. I explained to her what the Book of Mormon is and what LDS stands for.

When it was time to climb into bed, we continued our conversation. The topic changed as four other girls in our room joined the discussion, and eventually we were discussing . . . can you guess? Boys. I casually said that I wasn't going to date until I was 16.

As the week progressed, almost every night we'd discuss some of the Church's standards and beliefs. We talked about language, fashion, boys, and a little about the temple, sealings, and baptisms for the dead. We talked about charity, the theory of evolution, and the big bang theory.

Now that I'm back from the space academy, I reflect on my time spent there and the friendships I developed. The most important things I learned at the space academy were not about science and space. I learned that missionary experiences are everywhere. If you open your heart and mind and listen to the Spirit, you can spread the gospel wherever you go. **NE**

Cynthia Knight is a member of the Aloha Second Ward, Beaverton Oregon West Stake.

STEPPING INTO SERVICE

BY SAMANTHA NEWMAN

When my bishop announced that volunteers were needed for the Nauvoo Illinois Temple open house, I was ecstatic. My assignment was putting on and removing foot coverings from visitors' shoes so the temple floors would stay clean. As the day went on, I wasn't thinking too much about the importance of what I was doing. I didn't really think of it as service. But one visitor completely changed my outlook.

As I had done a thousand times that day, I leaned over to take the coverings off someone's shoes. When I looked up, looking back at me was a woman with a sweet, warm smile on her face, tears welling in her eyes. She gently

remarked, "This has always reminded me so much of washing someone's feet." She thanked me for the service, and she walked on.

Her words stayed with me. Every time I put on or removed the coverings after that, I thought about what she had said. She made a connection between what *I* was doing and something *Christ* did. Her words helped me to start seeing others in the way that the Lord sees each of us. I began to recognize in the people I met their incredible, divine worth. I finally knew what it was like to really *want* to serve others. **NE**

Samantha Newman is a member of the Provo 12th Ward, Provo Utah East Stake.

WHAT A FEELING!

BY CHRIS BEATTY

A scripture that always hits me with spiritual force is Enos 1:27. In this verse, Enos demonstrates his great faith in the Atonement and in Jesus Christ's love for him: "I soon go to the place of

my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest." The rest of the verse really hits me hard: "I rejoice in that day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall



I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father.”

How awesome it would be to have such confidence! The reunion between us and the Savior can be an incredible experience. What a feeling it would be to know our unwavering faith and righteous actions have made our Savior happy. **NE**

Chris Beatty is a member of the Rancho Del Mar Park Ward, Chandler Arizona Alma Stake.

LIKE LAMAN NO MORE

BY LURANA KUIIPO TESHIMA

Until recently, I had taken the Book of Mormon for granted. While I never questioned its validity or importance, I never appreciated it fully. I didn't understand how significant and true it really is. I feel like I was born knowing the story of Laman and Lemuel. I used to think, “How could Laman and Lemuel have been so stupid? They saw angels and knew that God lives and that Nephi was always right, yet they still went against him and disobeyed their parents.”

I despised these two until I realized that I am a lot like them, and I need to hear their story and learn its valuable lessons.

My 10-year-old brother has often said, “C'mon, Laura, get off the phone. It's time for family prayer and scripture reading.” And I didn't always say, “You're right, Dallas, I'm coming.” I usually had a Laman or Lemuel attitude towards the situation and my Nephi-like brother. I would say, “I'm too busy right now. Tell them that I can't come tonight.”

The Book of Mormon can influence anyone who reads it and ponders its teachings. It has taught me to not be so proud to think I am so righteous. I know without a doubt that the Church and the Book of Mormon are true. **NE**

Lurana Kuuipo Teshima is a member of the Willow Springs Ward, Las Vegas Nevada Sandstone Stake.

INSTANT MESSAGES features personal experiences, favorite hymns and scriptures, and other uplifting thoughts. If you have a personal experience that has strengthened your testimony and you'd like us to consider it for Instant Messages, please send it to

New Era
Instant Messages
50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail it to
cur-editorial-newera@
ldschurch.org

Please limit submissions to 400 words. They may be edited for length and clarity.

Mutual Activity Idea

• Get involved in humanitarian service. Set up several tied quilts to be donated to a homeless shelter, or assemble some school kits for children. Take breaks by playing games you learned during recess at elementary school like hopscotch, jump rope, four-square, or jacks.

Personal Progress or Duty to God

• If you feel a little like you could have sent in the question on page 16, set a goal to learn a new skill. Learn to lead the singing; enlarge, color, and mount some of the illustrated stories in the *Friend* for use in Primary or in your family home evenings; interview your oldest relative and write a short history of his or her life; learn to take photos and do a photo history of a day in your life.

Family Home Evening Ideas

• Read together the story “Why I Believe” on page 38. Talk about what it means to fast and pray. Make a goal to fast and pray about something specific on the next fast Sunday. Decide together who or what you will be fasting for.



• Use the poster from the January 2005 issue of the *New Era* as an illustration to review the First Vision. Read together Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20. Have each person tell what he or she has learned from the Prophet Joseph Smith as the young people did in the article on page 29.

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SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in May and November in the *Ensign* and *Liabona*), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 16–20.

Young Women Manual 3

Lesson 16: Temple Endowment

F. David Stanley, “The Most Important Step,” *New Era*, June 2000, 20.
 L. Aldin Porter, “Come to the Temple,” *New Era*, Oct. 2004, 8.

Lesson 17: Preparing to Attend the Temple

Howard W. Hunter, “Your Temple Recommend,” *New Era*, Apr. 1995, 6.
 “Baptisms for the Dead: What to Know Before You Go,” *New Era*, Apr. 2004, 34.

Lesson 18: Temple Marriage

The entire October 2004 issue of the *New Era* is dedicated to preparing for a temple marriage.
 Brad Wilcox, “Marriage Prep 101,” *New Era*, Oct. 1999, 30.
 Lara Bangertner, “Man of My Dreams,” *New Era*, June 2001, 8.

Lesson 19: Heritage

Q&A: “. . . Does it really matter if you’re related to pioneers?” *New Era*, July 1996, 16.
 Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Debt You Owe,” *New Era*, July 2001, 8.

Lesson 20: Understanding a Missionary’s Responsibilities

Q&A: “. . . How can I support him without making him homesick?” *New Era*, Feb. 1997, 16.
 David B. Haight, “A Spiritual Adventure,” *New Era*, June 2000, 6.

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Lesson 16: Jesus Christ, the Life and Light of the World

Boyd K. Packer, “The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” this issue, 4.
 Idea List: “Always Remember Him,” this issue, 9.
 Poster: “Now There Is Hope,” this issue, 19.

Lesson 17: The Holy Ghost

F. Melvin Hammond, “A Remarkable Feeling,” *New Era*, June 2002, 38.
 Q&A: “How can I tell inspiration from my own thoughts and feelings?” *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 16.

Lesson 18: Prayer

Gabriel Middleton, “Stop Right Here,” this issue, 26.
 Poster: “Need to Talk?” *New Era*, May 2004, 19.
 Amy Boylan, “Prayer in the A.M.,” *New Era*, May 2004, 42.

Lesson 19: Fasting

Sandy Lancaster, “Why I Believe,” this issue, 38.
 Esther Hansen, “The Real Fast,” *New Era*, May 2002, 11.

Lesson 20: Tithing—A Spiritual Test

Kristi Linton, “Money Matters,” *New Era*, Sept. 2004, 34.
 Q&A: “Why should I pay tithing on the money I’m earning now since I’m planning on using my earnings to pay for my mission? . . .” *New Era*, Mar. 2003, 16.



WE'VE GOT MAIL

NOT THE ONLY ONE

I wanted to thank all of the wonderful people who help put the *New Era* together, especially this past year. I have gotten a lot of encouragement from the articles and have felt my testimony grow stronger. It is wonderful to know that I am not the only teenager who has problems or trials. The *New Era* is a wonderful gift every month.

Ashley Wiese, Flat Rock Ward,
Columbus Georgia Stake

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I enjoy reading the *New Era*. Whenever I read it, I feel the Spirit. I especially like the articles by President Gordon B. Hinckley. I look forward to every new issue of the *New Era*. Thanks for all you do.

Isaac Slade, Kaysville Ninth Ward,
Kaysville Utah East Stake

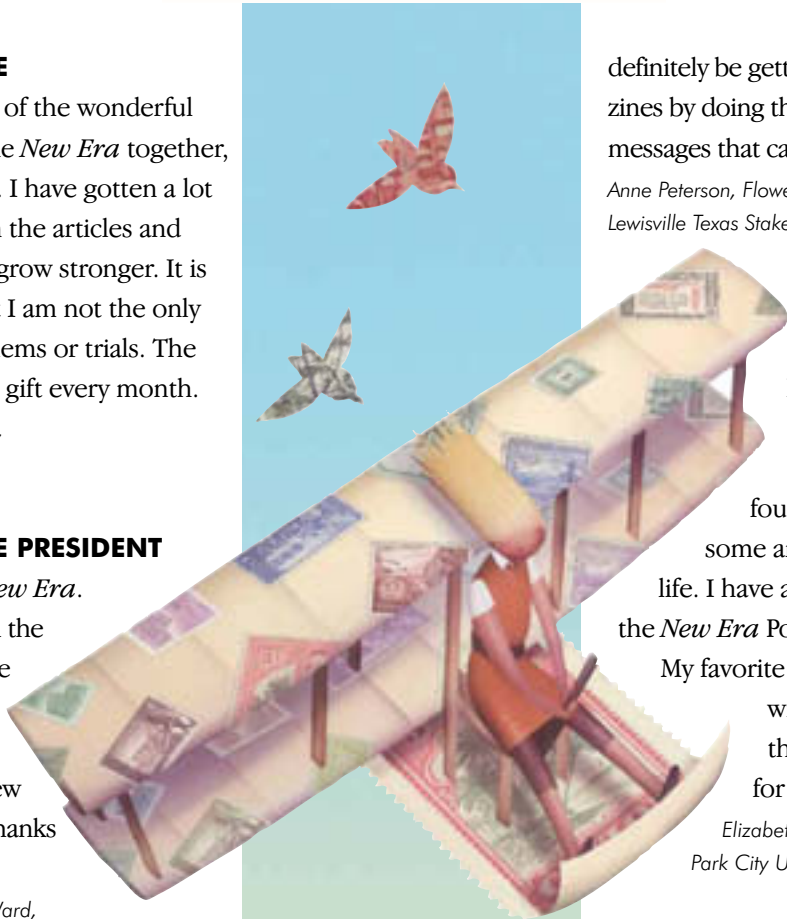
AMAZING

Thank you for the article "The One and Only" in the January 2005 magazine. This story was really good. It is amazing that someone believed in the Church even before she knew of the Church. Thank you for such a great article.

Kris Anderson, Vail Ward,
Tucson Arizona Rincon Stake

COVER TO COVER

When I read the *New Era*, I usually just pick and choose articles to read in it, depending on what looks appealing to me. But in our ward conference recently, we were reminded of Elder M. Russell Ballard's challenge to read our Church magazines from cover to cover. I liked this idea, and now I'm taking on the challenge. I'll



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definitely be getting more out of the magazines by doing this, and I will find even more messages that can apply to me personally.

Anne Peterson, Flower Mound Third Ward,
Lewisville Texas Stake

SAVING POSTERS

For quite some time I have been reading the *New Era*. It teaches me lessons, and frequently I have found that the Q&A gives me some answers that I need in my life. I have also been known to cut out the *New Era* Poster and hang it on my wall. My favorite said, "Discover the beauty within" (Nov. 2002). I kept that poster in my scriptures for almost six months.

Elizabeth Burns, Silver Creek Ward,
Park City Utah Stake

MORE HIDDEN FRUIT

I had already been reading the Book of Mormon for about four months, and I was almost half done when my Young Women leaders told us at New Beginnings that we would have to read the whole Book of Mormon this year. I was really frustrated and a little annoyed until I read the "Hidden Fruit" article in the Instant Messages section of the January *New Era*. Now I'm excited that I have a reason to read the Book of Mormon again.

Kira Carey, Rootstown Ward,
Akron Ohio Stake

We love hearing from you. Write us at the following address. Please include the names of your ward and stake (or branch and district).

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Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.



FREEDOM

BY TARA P. KLEMAN

The Lord resurrected.
Minds are free
like the wind,
released from woes,
and sorrows,
and grief.
Delivered from heartaches
as the air above,
we run liberated.
He lives!



“Save for the exception of the very few who defect to perdition, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. That is the promise of the Atonement of Christ.”

See “The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” p. 4.

