

MY FAMILY HISTORY CHALLENGE

By Cristina Alvear

Bishop Page, the bishop of our young adult ward, started by explaining that family history and temple work aren't just for parents or grandparents—they are the responsibility of *our* generation and part of why *we* have been sent to earth at this time. Then came the challenge: FamilySearch indexing. In fact, he suggested that our ward index 100,000 names.

WHAT IS FAMILYSEARCH INDEXING?

For many years the Church has gathered genealogical records from hundreds of countries. The records have been scanned into computers. Now volunteers can download the digital images of those records and transcribe the information to create a searchable online index. Everyone can then access the indexes at familysearch.org.

Indexing projects are available in many languages. Become the newest member of a growing community of indexers by going to indexing.familysearch.org.

It would be a tremendous undertaking. Each person would need to index 1,000 names. Yet when Bishop Page asked who would commit to the goal, we all raised our hands.

The challenge quickly became important in my life. I downloaded the FamilySearch indexing software, read the tutorials, and began.

At first, it seemed difficult. The handwriting wasn't always easy to decipher. But each time I completed a set of names, I felt more confident.

Because my family is originally from Chile, I chose to index names in Spanish. Perhaps for that reason, the experience felt particularly personal. I didn't feel I was merely typing names because I realized that each one was a person who could receive the blessings of the temple.

I quickly discovered that indexing is a great activity to do on Sundays. Because I live far from family, I sometimes feel there isn't a lot to do after church. But indexing helps me use my time in a productive way, and I can listen to music or talks while I do it.

I was fortified when our stake president quoted President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the family history research that supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power.

. . . Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a people."¹

It can seem that young adults are especially bombarded by the "fiery darts of the adversary" (1 Nephi 15:24), and here I was being promised protection. I felt a strong desire to help my ward members experience that same blessing, so a friend and I organized an indexing party. Many people brought laptops. People already familiar with indexing shared their computers and answered the questions of those just starting.

Over the next several months, ward leaders also held activities dedicated to our goal. When anyone got discouraged, we encouraged each other. I was amazed at the sense of unity we developed from serving the Lord and each other, together.

In the end, our ward fell short of our goal of 100,000 names, even though many individuals completed 1,000 names. Our bishop's challenge, however, wasn't about numbers; it was about helping us gain a testimony of family history. And because it involved service, sacrifice, and saving others, we felt its purifying effect.

I am grateful for an opportunity to participate in the Lord's work. In doing His work, I came to know Him better as well. ■

NOTE

1. Boyd K. Packer, "The Holy Temple," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 35.