



By President
Russell M. Nelson



As We Go Forward Together

Editors' note: President Russell M. Nelson, set apart as the 17th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on January 14, 2018, delivered these remarks on January 16, 2018, during a live broadcast from the annex of the Salt Lake Temple. He requested that his words be published in this issue.

Dear brothers and sisters, I'm humbled to be with you this morning. Four days ago we laid to rest a giant of a man, a prophet of God—President Thomas S. Monson. No words can do justice to the magnitude and magnificence of his life. I will forever cherish our friendship with gratitude for what he taught me. Now we must look forward to the future with complete faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Church this is.

Two days ago all of the living Apostles met in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple. There they made a unanimous decision, first, to reorganize the First Presidency now and, second, that I serve as President of the Church. Words are inadequate to tell you what it felt like to have my Brethren—Brethren who hold all the priesthood keys restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith in this dispensation—place their hands upon my head to ordain and set me apart as President of the Church. It was a sacred and humbling experience.

It then became my responsibility to discern whom the Lord had prepared to be my counselors. How could

I choose only two of the twelve other Apostles, each of whom I love so dearly? I'm deeply grateful to the Lord for answering my fervent prayers. I am very thankful that President Dallin Harris Oaks and President Henry Bennion Eyring are willing to serve with me as First and Second Counselors, respectively. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has resumed his place in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He has already received major assignments for which he is uniquely qualified.

I pay tribute to him and to President Eyring for their magnificent service as counselors to President Monson. They've been totally capable, devoted, and inspired. We

Monthly First Presidency Message to Be Discontinued

This message will be the last First Presidency Message published in the *Ensign* on a monthly basis. In the future, the First Presidency will share important messages as needed through the Church's various channels, including Church magazines and LDS.org.



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are very grateful for them. Each is willing to serve now where he is needed most.

As the Apostle second in seniority, President Oaks also becomes President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. However, given his call to the First Presidency and consistent with the order of the Church, President M. Russell Ballard, next in seniority, will serve as the Acting President of that quorum. The First Presidency will work hand in hand with the Twelve to discern the will of

the Lord and move His sacred work forward.

We are thankful for your prayers. They have been offered throughout the world for us. On the morning following President Monson's passing, one such prayer was offered by a four-year-old boy named Benson. I quote excerpts from his mother's letter written to my wife, Wendy. Benson prayed, "Heavenly Father, thank you that President Thomas S. Monson could see his wife again. Thank you for our new prophet.

Help him to be brave and not scared that he's new. Help him to grow up to be healthy and strong. Help him to have power because he has the priesthood. And help us always to be nice."

I thank God for children like this and for parents who are serious about their commitment to righteous, intentional parenting—for every parent, teacher, and member who carries heavy burdens and yet serves so willingly. In other words, for each one of you, I am most humbly grateful.



Keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available.

The Lord Is at the Helm

As we go forward together, I invite you to think about the majestic manner by which the Lord governs His Church. When a President of the Church passes away, there is no mystery about who is next called to serve in that capacity. There is no electioneering, no campaigning, but only the quiet workings of a divine plan of succession put in place by the Lord Himself.

Each day of an Apostle's service is a day of learning and preparing for more responsibility in the future. It takes decades of service for an Apostle to move from the junior chair to the senior chair in the circle. During that time, he gains firsthand experience in each facet of the work of the Church. He also becomes well acquainted with the

peoples of the earth, including their histories, cultures, and languages as assignments take him repeatedly across the globe. This process of succession in the leadership of the Church is unique. I know of nothing else like it. That should not surprise us, because this is the Lord's Church. He does not work after the manner of men.

I've served in the Quorum of the Twelve under five previous Presidents of the Church. I have watched each President receive revelation and respond to that revelation. The Lord always has and always will instruct and inspire His prophets. The Lord is at the helm. We who have been ordained to bear witness of His holy name throughout the world will continue to seek to know His will and follow it.



Stay on the Covenant Path

Now, to each member of the Church I say, keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.

As a new Presidency, we want to begin with the end in mind. For this reason, we're speaking to you today from a temple. The end for which each of us strives is to be endowed with power in a house of the Lord, sealed as families, faithful to covenants made in a temple that qualify us for the greatest gift of God—that of eternal life. The ordinances of the temple and the covenants you make there are key to

strengthening your life, your marriage and family, and your ability to resist the attacks of the adversary. Your worship in the temple and your service there for your ancestors will bless you with increased personal revelation and peace and will fortify your commitment to stay on the covenant path.

Now, if you have stepped off the path, may I invite you with all the hope in my heart to please come back. Whatever your concerns, whatever your challenges, there is a place for you in this, the Lord's Church. You and generations yet unborn will be blessed by your actions now to return to the covenant path. Our Father in Heaven cherishes His children, and He wants each of us to return home to Him. This is a grand goal of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—to help each of us to come back home.

I express my deep love for you—love that has grown over decades of meeting you, worshipping with you, and serving you. Our divine mandate is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, helping to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. This we will do with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that He is in charge. This is His work and His Church. We are His servants.

I declare my devotion to God our Eternal Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ. I know Them, love Them, and pledge to serve Them—and you—with every remaining breath of my life. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■