

# Ensign



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**COVER STORY**

## A Season for Angels, p. 10

Learning from Joseph Smith's Journals, p. 34

Latter-day Saints in Mongolia, p. 54

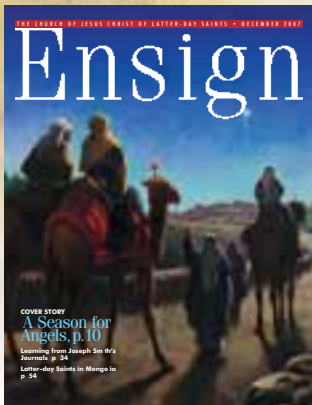
and bowed himself with O. bowlers, in solemn but silent  
 prayer to the Most High. After rising from prayer the  
 following vision was granted to both of them.  
 The vision was taken from their vision and the  
 eyes of their understanding were opened. They saw the  
 Lord standing upon the right hand of the Father  
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 and let the hearts of all my ~~people~~ people rejoice, who  
 have with their might, built this house to my name,  
 for behold I have accepted this house and my  
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 in consequence of the blessing which shall be put  
 to out, and the punishment with which my  
 servants have already been endowed, and shall  
 hereafter be endowed in the house, and the feet  
 of this house shall spread to foreign lands, and  
 this is the beginning of the blessing, which shall

**Joseph Smith's Second Ohio Journal, 1835-36**

While most of the Prophet's second Kirtland journal was recorded by Warren Parrish, as noted in the accompanying article (see pp. 34-39), Warren Cowdery, brother of Oliver Cowdery, was scribe for this entry of April 3, 1836. Here, on the last pages of this journal, Warren Cowdery recorded the vision that became Doctrine and Covenants 110. During this vision on Sunday, April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, Christ appeared to the Prophet Joseph and Oliver. Then Moses, Elias, and Elijah each appeared and committed their keys to the Prophet.



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## ON THE COVER

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Back: *Madonna and Child*, by Avard Fairbanks.



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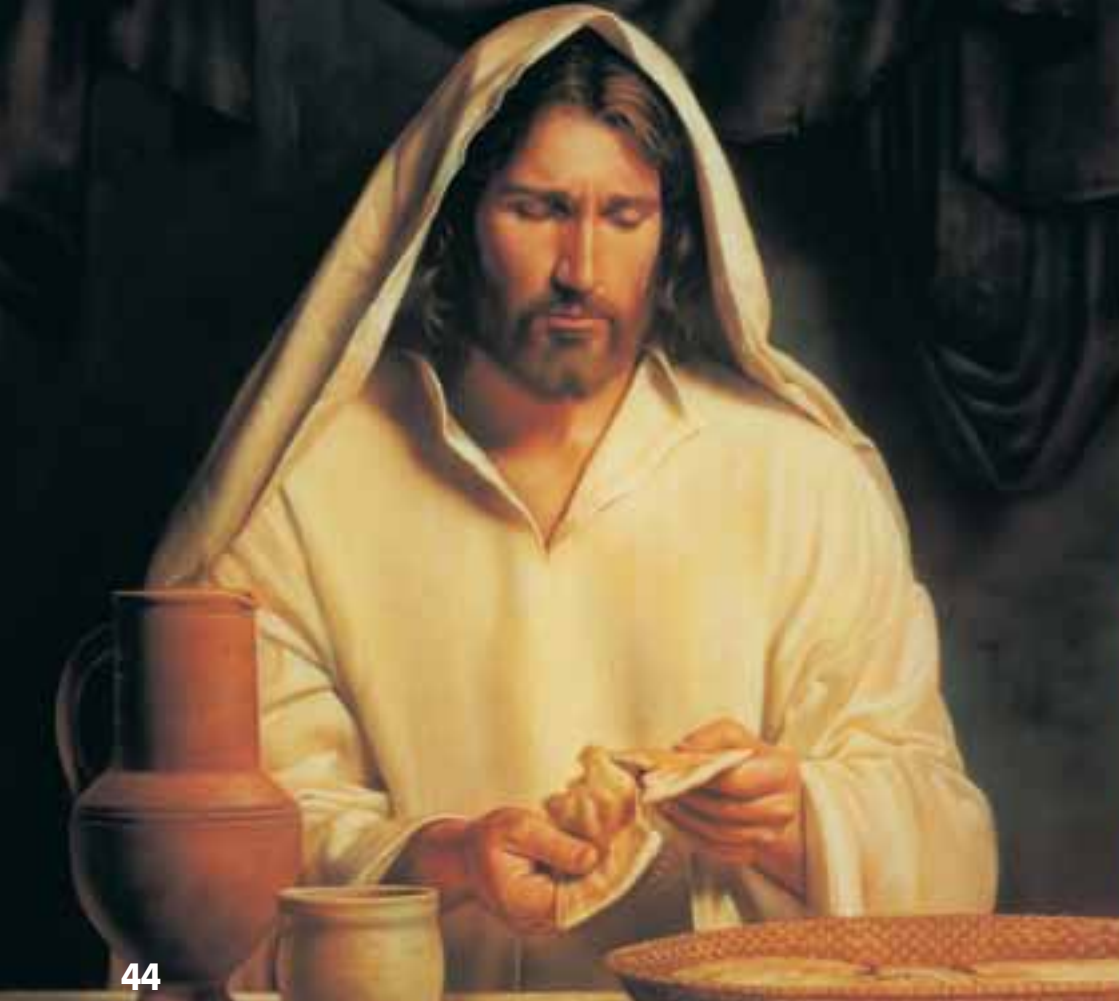
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**DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?**

The *Ensign* invites you to share your experiences with applying the scriptures. Has a story or verse in the scriptures ever changed your outlook, brought comfort, or provided an answer to a question or problem? How have such experiences affected the way you view scripture study? Please label your submission “A Scripture That Changed My Life” and send it by January 18.

We also welcome other submissions that show the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. **Ensign Magazine Writers’ Guidelines** are posted at <http://ensign.lds.org>.

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## USING THIS ISSUE

**Celebrating Christmas.** Even if Christmas is a difficult season for you, there are many ways to find happiness. See **pages 10–21** to learn about how you can feel the “good tidings of great joy” (Luke 2:10).

**Using agency to teach children.** Pushing children can generate feelings of resentment and resistance. Find out how teaching children with and about agency led to better results for two parents (**p. 25**).

**Learning about the Prophet Joseph Smith.** The journals of the Prophet Joseph Smith teach us much about the first President of the Church and early Church history (**see p. 34**). You can find additional information from this period—including the journal entries of others, quotations, photographs, artwork, and maps—at the Web site [JosephSmith.net](http://JosephSmith.net).



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## COMING IN JANUARY

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# These, Our Little Ones

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

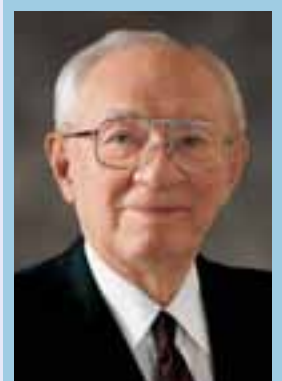
Once when our grandchildren were small, my wife and I took some of them to the circus. I recall that I was more interested in watching them and many others of their kind than in watching the man on the flying trapeze. I looked at them in wonder as they alternately laughed and stared wide-eyed at the exciting things before them. And I thought of the miracle of children who become the world's constant renewal of life and purpose. Observing them in the intensity of their interest, even in this atmosphere, I felt my mind revert to that beautiful and touching scene recorded in the book of 3 Nephi when the resurrected Lord took little children in His arms and wept as He blessed them and said to the people, "Behold your little ones" (3 Nephi 17:23).

It is so obvious that the great good and the terrible evil in the world today are the sweet and the bitter fruits of the rearing of yesterday's children. As we train a new generation, so will the world be in a few years. If you are worried about the future, then look to the upbringing of your children. Wisely did the writer of Proverbs declare, "Train up a child in

the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

When I was a boy, we lived on a fruit farm in the summer. We grew great quantities of peaches. Our father took us to tree pruning demonstrations put on by the agricultural college. Each Saturday during January and February, we would go out to the farm and prune the trees. We learned that by clipping and sawing in the right places, even when snow was on the ground and the wood appeared dead, we could shape a tree so that the sun would touch the fruit which was to come with spring and summer. We learned that in February we could pretty well determine the kind of fruit we would pick in September.

E. T. Sullivan once wrote these interesting words: "When God wants a great work done in the world or a great wrong righted, he goes about it in a very unusual way. He doesn't stir up his earthquakes or send forth his thunderbolts. Instead, he has a helpless baby born, perhaps in a simple home and of some obscure mother. And then God puts the idea into the mother's heart, and she puts it into



*As we train a new generation, so will the world be in a few years. If you are worried about the future, then look to the upbringing of your children.*

the baby's mind. And then God waits. The greatest forces in the world are not the earthquakes and the thunderbolts. The greatest forces in the world are babies."<sup>1</sup>

And those babies, I should like to add, will become forces for good or ill, depending in large measure on how they are reared. The Lord, without equivocation, has declared, "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40).

#### **Four Imperatives**

If I may be pardoned for suggesting the obvious, I do so only because the obvious is not observed in so many instances. The obvious includes four imperatives with reference to children: (1) love them, (2) teach them, (3) respect them, and (4) pray with them and for them.

There once was a commonly seen bumper sticker that asked the question, "Have you hugged your child today?" How fortunate, how blessed is the child who feels the affection of his or her parents. That warmth, that love will bear sweet fruit in the years that follow. In large measure, the harshness that characterizes so much of our society is an outgrowth of harshness imposed on children years ago.

The neighborhood in which I grew up was a microcosm of the world, with many varieties of people. They were a close-knit group, and I think we knew them all. I think also we loved them all—that is, except for one man. I must make a confession: I detested that man. I have since repented of that emotion, but as I look back, I can sense again the intensity of my feeling. Why this strong antipathy? Because he whipped his children with strap or stick or whatever came to hand as his vicious anger flared on the slightest provocation.

Perhaps it was because of the home in which I lived, where there was a father who, by some quiet magic, was able to discipline his children without the use of any

instrument of punishment, though on occasion they may have deserved it.

I have since discovered that the man I disliked was one of that very substantial body of parents who seem incapable of anything but harshness toward those for whose coming into the world they are responsible. I

have also come to realize that this man, who walks in the memories of my childhood, is but an example of uncounted thousands across the world who are known as child abusers. Every social worker, every duty officer in the emergency room of a large hospital, every police officer and judge in a large city can tell you of them. The whole tragic picture is one of beating, kicking, slamming, and even of sexual assault on small children. And akin to these violent child abusers are those vicious men and women who exploit children for pornographic purposes.

I have no disposition to dwell on this ugly picture. I wish to say only that no one who is a professed follower of Christ and no one who is a professed member of this Church can engage in such practices without offending God and repudiating the teachings of His Son. It was Jesus Himself who, while holding before us the example of the purity and innocence of children, declared, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . . , it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). Could there be a stronger denunciation of those who abuse children than these words spoken by the Savior of mankind?

#### **Begin at Home**

Do you want a spirit of love to grow in the world? Then begin within the walls of your own home. Behold your little ones, and see within them the wonders of God, from whose presence they have recently come.



***When I was a boy, we learned that by clipping and sawing in the right places, even when snow was on the ground and the wood appeared dead, we could shape a tree so that the sun would touch the fruit which was to come with spring and summer.***



President Brigham Young (1801–77) once said: “A child loves the smiles of its mother, but hates her frowns. I tell the mothers not to allow the children to indulge in evils, but at the same time to treat them with mildness.”<sup>2</sup>

He further stated, “Bring up your children in the love and fear of the Lord; study their dispositions and their temperaments, and deal with them accordingly, never allowing yourself to correct them in the heat of passion; teach them to love you rather than to fear you.”<sup>3</sup>

Of course, there is need for discipline with families. But discipline with severity, discipline with cruelty, inevitably leads not to correction but rather to resentment and bitterness. It cures nothing and only aggravates the problem. It is self-defeating. The Lord, in setting forth the spirit of governance in His Church, has also set forth the spirit of governance in the home in these great words of revelation:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained . . . , only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . .

“Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

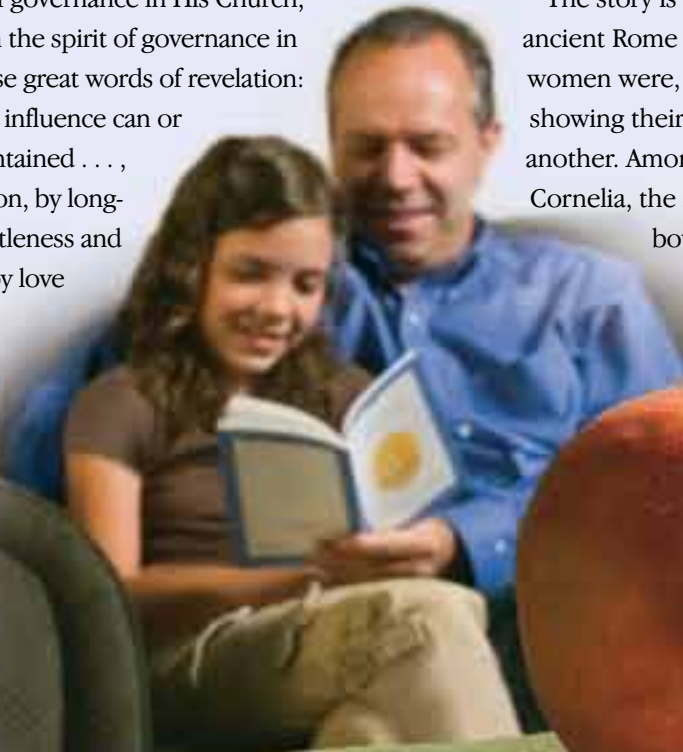
“That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death” (D&C 121:41, 43–44).

### **The Endurance of Example**

Behold your little ones, and teach them. I need not remind you that your example will do more than anything else in impressing upon their minds a pattern of life. It is always interesting to meet the children of old friends and to find in another generation the ways of their fathers and mothers.

The story is told that in ancient Rome a group of women were, with vanity, showing their jewels one to another. Among them was Cornelia, the mother of two boys. One of the women said to her, “And

**B**ehold your little ones, and teach them. Your example will do more than anything else in impressing upon their minds a pattern of life.





**T**he noble Roman mother responded, pointing to her sons, “These are my jewels.” Under her tutelage they grew to become two of the most persuasive and effective reformers in Roman history.

where are your jewels?” To which Cornelia responded, pointing to her sons, “These are my jewels.” Under her tutelage and walking after the virtues of her life, they grew to become Gaius and Tiberius Gracchus—the Gracchi, as they were called—two of the most persuasive and effective reformers in Roman history. For as long as they are remembered and spoken of, the mother who reared them after the manner of her own life will be remembered and spoken of with praise also.

May I return again to the words of Brigham Young: “Let it be your constant care that the children that God has so kindly given you are taught in their early youth the importance of the oracles of God, and the beauty of the principles of our holy religion, that when they grow to the years of man and womanhood they may always cherish a tender regard for them and never forsake the truth.”<sup>4</sup>

I recognize that there are parents who, notwithstanding an outpouring of love and a diligent and faithful effort to teach them, see their children grow in a contrary manner and weep while their wayward sons and daughters willfully pursue courses of tragic consequence. For such I have great sympathy, and to them I am wont to quote the words of Ezekiel: “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son” (Ezekiel 18:20).

But such is the exception rather than the rule. Nor does the exception justify others of us from making every effort in showing forth love, example, and correct precept in the rearing of those for whom God has given us sacred responsibility.

Nor let us ever forget the need to respect these, our little ones. Under the revealed word of the Lord, we know they are children of God as we are children of



CORNÉLIE MÈRE DES GRACQUES. BY NOËL HALLÉ

God, deserving of that respect which comes of knowledge of that eternal principle. In fact, the Lord made it clear that unless we develop in our own lives that purity, that lack of guile, that innocence of evil, we cannot enter into His presence. Declared He, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

Channing Pollock once wrote these interesting and provocative words: “Contemplating the adolescence through which we scorned the wrong, some of us must wish . . . that we could be born old, and grow younger and cleaner and ever simpler and more innocent, until at last, with the white souls of little children, we lay us down to eternal sleep.”<sup>5</sup>

### Sources of Strength

Behold your little ones. Pray with them. Pray for them and bless them. The world into which they are moving is a complex and difficult world. They will run into heavy seas of adversity. They will need all the strength and all the faith you can give them while they are yet near you. And they will also need a greater strength which comes of a higher power. They must do more than go along with what they find. They must lift the world, and the only levers they will have are the example of their own lives and the powers of persuasion that will come of their testimonies and their knowledge of the things of God. They will need the help of the Lord. While they are young, pray with them that they may come to know that source of strength which shall then always be available in every hour of need.

I love to hear children pray. I appreciate hearing parents pray for their children. I stand reverently before a father who, in the authority of the holy priesthood, lays his hands upon the head of a son or daughter at a time of serious decision and in the name of the Lord and under the direction of the Holy Spirit gives a father’s blessing.

How much more beautiful would be the world and the society in which we live if every father looked upon his children as the most precious of his assets, if he led them by the power of his example in kindness and love, and if in times of stress he blessed them by the authority of the holy

priesthood; and if every mother regarded her children as the jewels of her life, as gifts from the God of heaven, who is their Eternal Father, and brought them up with true affection in the wisdom and admonition of the Lord.

Said Isaiah of old, “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isaiah 54:13). To which I add, “Great also shall be the peace and the gladness of their fathers and mothers.” ■

### NOTES

1. In Charles L. Wallis, ed., *The Treasure Chest* (1965), 53.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 340.
3. *Teachings: Brigham Young*, 172.
4. *Teachings: Brigham Young*, 172.
5. “The World’s Slow Stain,” *Reader’s Digest*, June 1960, 77.

## IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. Show a picture of the Savior with children. Invite the family to read and discuss some of the scriptures that President Hinckley quotes in the article. Illustrate the scriptures with examples from the article. Conclude by sharing how these scriptures have guided you.
2. To demonstrate the ripple effect, drop a small object into a bowl of water. Read portions of the “Four Imperatives” section to emphasize the effect of parents’ actions on their children. Conclude by reading the last two paragraphs of the article.
3. If the family has young children, illustrate the power of example by having family members mimic one person. That person could clap hands, take three steps, turn around, and so on. Read the first paragraph in the section “The Endurance of Example,” and share the story of the Roman woman and her attitude toward her children. Discuss how her example influenced her sons. Consider sharing one or two quotations from that section. Testify of the power of example.

# A Season for ANGELS



*Not only is the story of the Savior's birth replete with heavenly messengers, but heavenly beings were also present at significant events throughout His life.*

**BY ELDER MERRILL J. BATEMAN**

Served as a General Authority from 1992 to 2007

**A**t the beginning of each Christmas season, our thoughts turn to the birth of the Savior. For believers, Christ's birth and death are the two greatest events in the history of the earth or, for that matter, eternity. It is almost an anomaly that in the untold years the universe has existed, its two greatest events occurred within a 33-year span in a vassal nation on a small planet the Lord calls His "footstool" (see Isaiah 66:1).

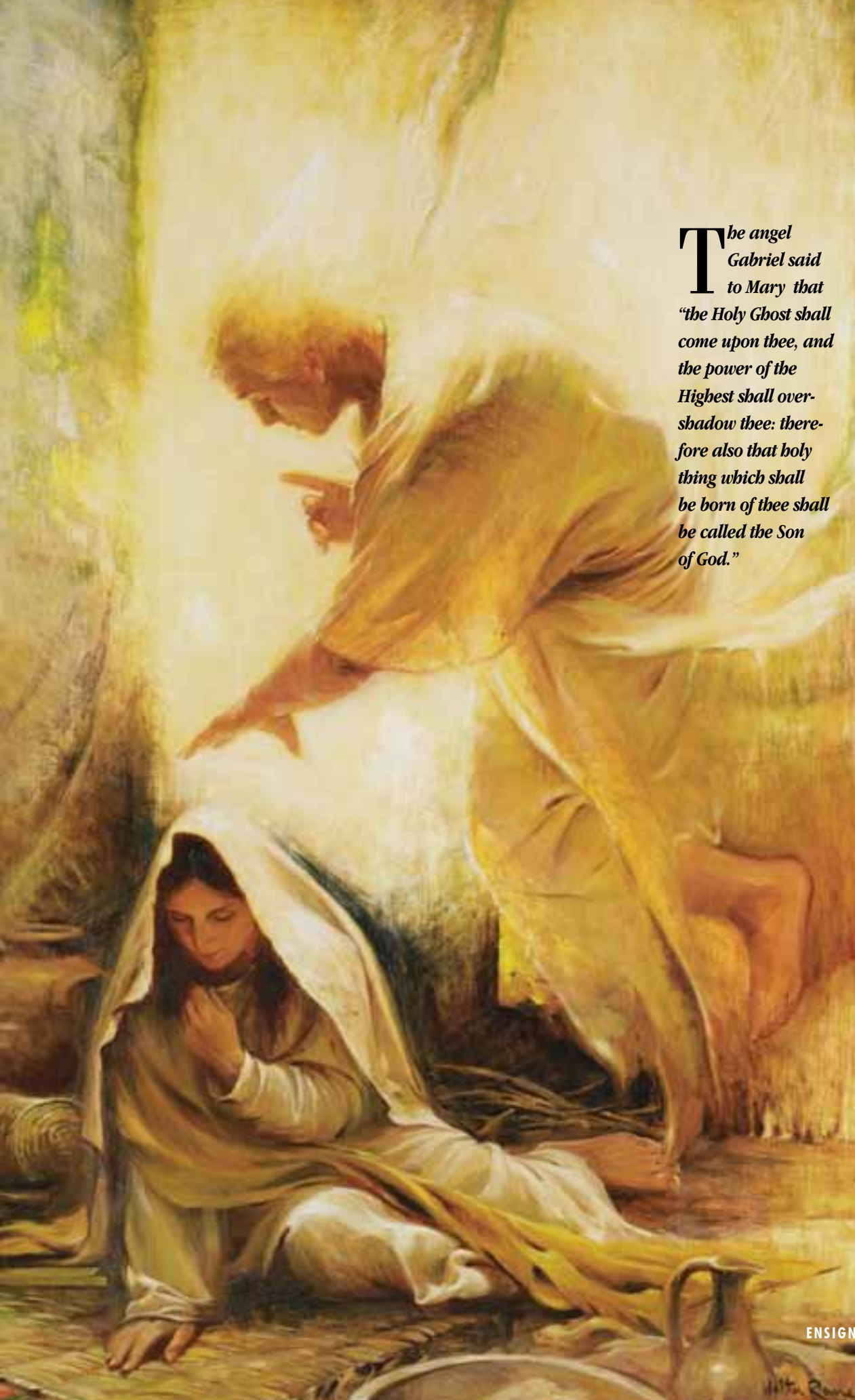
Christmas carols are a special feature of the season. They bring feelings of joy to our hearts as they describe the events and significance of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note that many Christmas hymns speak of angels. This is because the biblical record contains numerous accounts of heavenly beings speaking to mortals before and at the time of His birth. An angel announced His pending birth to the young woman Mary and to Joseph, her espoused husband (see Luke 1:26–33; Matthew 1:20–21). An angel accompanied by a heavenly choir heralded the birth to the shepherds in the fields (see Luke 2:8–14), and angels kept watch over the family during the early

years when Herod tried to destroy the young Jesus (see Matthew 2:13, 19–20). Not only is the story of the Savior's birth replete with heavenly messengers, but heavenly beings were also present at significant events throughout His life.

One might ask, "Why were angels so prominent at the Savior's birth? And why were they such an important part of His life and ministry?" The answers are twofold. The first pertains to the nature and mission of the personage whom they were heralding—a divine Being, the Son of God, the Only Begotten in the flesh who came to earth to save all of God's children. The second concerns the ushering in of a new dispensation, a period of time when the gospel would be restored in its fulness. The ministry of angels is to assist in the ushering in of dispensations (see Moroni 7:29–31). Let us discuss each of these reasons to provide a clearer understanding of the wonderful moment represented by the "meridian of time."

## **Heralding the Savior's Mission**

For thousands of years, ancient prophets had looked forward to the time when the Son of God would come to earth and atone for the



**T**he angel Gabriel said to Mary that “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”



Joseph contemplated a private disengagement. But then an angel appeared in a dream, telling him not to fear to take Mary as his wife, “for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”



An angel showed Nephi a woman “carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time.” Nephi then saw her “bearing a child in her arms.”

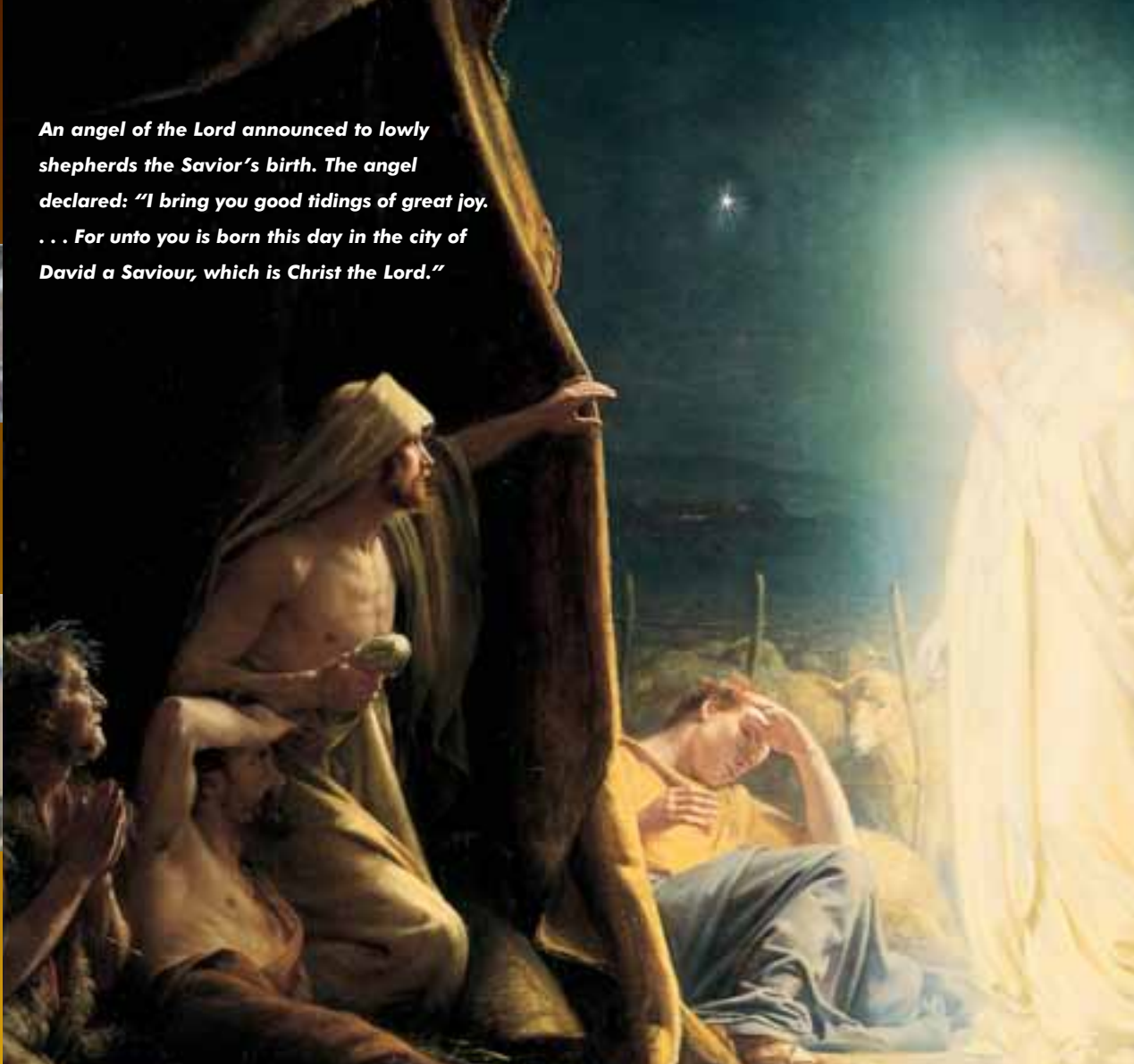
*An angel of the Lord announced to lowly shepherds the Savior's birth. The angel declared: "I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . . For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."*



*The angel Gabriel was sent to Zacharias to "shew [him] . . . glad tidings."*



*Zacharias learned that he and his wife, Elisabeth, would have a son and that his name would be John.*



sins of mankind. From Genesis to Malachi and from 1 Nephi to 3 Nephi, the Lord's messengers prophesied that the God of ancient Israel, the Son of the Father, would come to earth and ransom His people. The Lord told Adam that Satan would bruise the heel of their offspring, but that the seed of the woman (Christ) would overcome Satan's power as He bruised Satan's head (see Genesis 3:15).

Moses wrote of "a Star out of Jacob" (Numbers 24:17); the Psalmist spoke of the special relationship between the Father and the Son, of the Father's withdrawal during the Crucifixion, and of Christ's death (see Psalms 2:7; 22:1, 16; 34:20; 69:21); and Isaiah spoke of His miraculous birth, mission, and death (see Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 42:7; 53:5). The Book of Mormon contains even more detail concerning Christ's birth, mission, death, and resurrection (see Topical Guide, "Jesus Christ, Prophecies about," 252).

Prophets spoke often of Jesus's birth together with His death because these two events are inextricably linked—

the nature of His birth as God's Only Begotten Son created an infinite life that could only be extinguished voluntarily. Jesus said: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17–18).

The Savior's Godly status was preserved through His birth. His infinite and eternal nature gave Him the capacity to atone for the sins of all mankind and the power to rise from the grave and make possible a resurrection for every person who had or would live on the earth (see Alma 34:10, 14; John 1:1–3, 14; 11:25; Romans 8:11). As the "lamb without blemish and without spot," He maintained the inheritance of "divine power" to bless us with "life and godliness" during His earthly sojourn (1 Peter 1:19; 2 Peter 1:3).

The birth of Jesus Christ was extraordinary in that it involved the condescension of both the Father and the

Son—two eternal beings. When the prophet Nephi was seeking to understand the meaning of the tree of life, an angel showed him in vision a beautiful virgin in the city of Nazareth and asked the question “Knowest thou the condescension of God?” Nephi indicated that he knew God “loveth his children” but did not “know the meaning of all things.” The angel then showed Nephi a woman “carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time.” Nephi then saw her “bearing a child in her arms.” The angel said to Nephi, “Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?” (See 1 Nephi 11:13–21.) Nephi exclaimed that he now understood God’s great love for His children, a love so great that He would give His Only Begotten Son for the salvation of men and women (see 1 Nephi 11:22; John 3:16). The Father condescended in sending His Son; the Savior condescended in taking upon Himself a mortal body and offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Is it any wonder that angels were assigned to declare the Savior’s birth?

The first such angelic declaration was to the priest Zacharias. As he entered the Holy of Holies in the temple, he saw an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar. The angel said, “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee . . . glad tidings” (Luke 1:19). Gabriel explained to Zacharias that he and his wife, Elisabeth, would have a child and that he was to be named John. Gabriel also explained John’s mission as an Elias, or forerunner for Christ (see Luke 1:11–17).

A short time later, this same angel, Gabriel, appeared to Mary and announced that she would be the mother of the Son of God. She exclaimed, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1:34). Gabriel then stated that “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that

holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Although the name of the angel who appeared to Joseph is not given, it may well have been Gabriel who had the assignment. When Joseph learned that Mary, his espoused wife, was with child, he contemplated a private disengagement. But then an angel appeared in a dream, telling him not to fear to take Mary as his wife, “for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:20). The angel also told Joseph that the child was to be named Jesus (see Matthew 1:21).

The next angelic appearance occurred in the fields near Bethlehem when an angel of the Lord announced to lowly shepherds the Savior’s birth. The angel declared: “I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . . For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11). Other angelic hosts appeared, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth

peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). The shepherds then hurried to Bethlehem, where they “found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:16). Since it was springtime (see D&C 20:1), it is quite likely that the shepherds were recently engaged in the lambing process. Thus, the shepherds who delivered and cared for the lambs became witnesses of the birth of the Lamb of God to those in the surrounding area (see Luke 2:15–17).

Following the appearance of the Wise Men and Herod’s decision to kill all the male children under the age of two, Joseph was warned by

“the angel of the Lord” to take Mary and Jesus into Egypt and “be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” (Matthew 2:13). When Herod died, Joseph was once more instructed by the Lord’s messenger to “take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel” (Matthew 2:20).



**The birth of Jesus Christ was extraordinary in that it involved the condescension of both the Father and the Son—two eternal beings.**

### Ushering In a New Dispensation

The last prophet of the Old Testament was Malachi, who lived 400 years before the birth of Christ. At that time Israel in large part had turned away from the covenants made with Jehovah. Consequently, they were in apostasy. Although the Aaronic Priesthood was on earth when Jesus was born, the Melchizedek Priesthood had been taken from the earth. Therefore, there was a need for the priesthood and the gospel to be restored in their fulness.

Moroni taught that angels play a special role in the early stages of a new dispensation. He indicated that “the office of their ministry is . . . to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels [prophets] of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts” (Moroni 7:31–32).

At the beginning of a new dispensation following a period of apostasy, there is no one with priesthood authority to administer the covenants in their fulness. Consequently, the Lord sends messengers from the other side of the veil to return priesthood keys and the gospel plan to the earth.

It is not surprising then that an angel visited Zacharias and instructed him with regard to the mission of his son. Angels appeared to Jesus in the wilderness following the temptations of Satan and administered to Him in preparation for His ministry (see Matthew 4:11). The Apostle Paul indicates that “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.” Paul continues, indicating that Christ was “called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 5:5, 10). In other words, the higher priesthood came to Jesus from the other side of the veil.

After Jesus promised Peter “the keys of the kingdom”

(Matthew 16:19), He took the three chief Apostles, Peter, James, and John, up into a high mountain where He, together with Moses and Elijah, bestowed upon them these keys (see Matthew 17:1–2, 18:18; Bible Dictionary, “Transfiguration, Mount of,” 786). Why did Moses and Elijah appear? Moses returned the “keys of the gathering of Israel” while Elijah brought the sealing keys (see D&C 110:11, 14–15).

In three other key events, angels appear to prepare Jesus for the Atonement and the Resurrection. The first occurs in the Garden of Gethsemane when “there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him” (Luke 22:43). Although the Savior was to complete the Atonement on His own, instructions and support were given in the early stages.

The second event occurs at the tomb on the Sunday morning following the Resurrection. The women came early to the tomb with spices and ointments to care for the



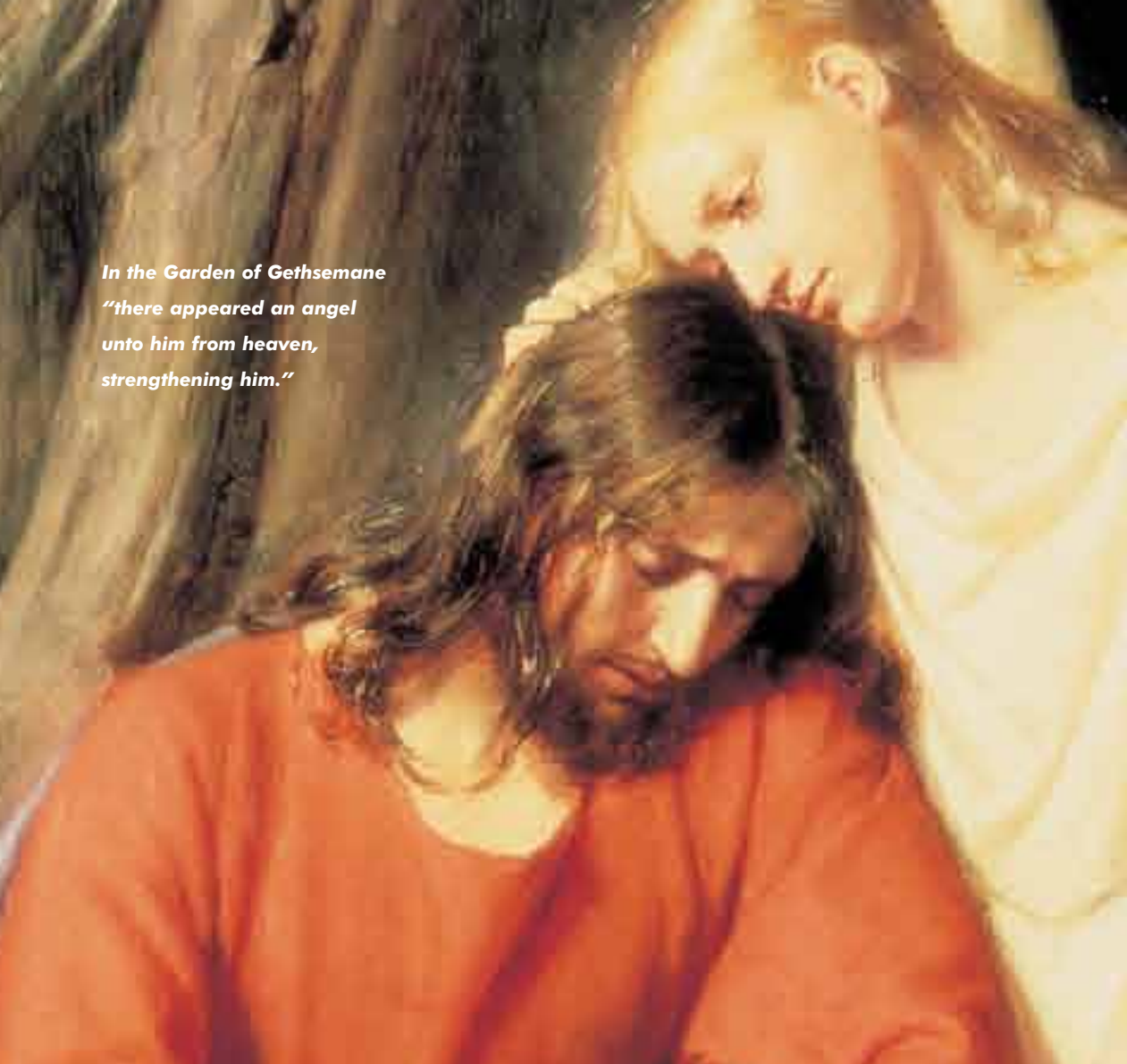
**On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus, with Moses and Elijah, bestowed upon Peter, James, and John “the keys of the kingdom.”**

body, which had been hastily encased as the Sabbath approached. To their surprise, they found the stone had been rolled away from the sepulcher. Two men in “shining garments” stood before them and said: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:4–7).

Why heavenly messengers at the tomb? Prior to the Savior’s resurrection, a few mortals had been raised from the dead, but no one had experienced the change from mortality to immortality, from corruption to incorruption. No one prior to the Savior had been raised in glory (see 1 Corinthians 15:42–43). Two witnesses from the other side of the veil provided the assurance that Jesus had been resurrected.

The final event occurs at Jesus’s ascension. Again, two men in white apparel assured the Galileans that “this same Jesus,





*In the Garden of Gethsemane  
“there appeared an angel  
unto him from heaven,  
strengthening him.”*



*At the tomb two men  
in “shining garments”  
declared that Jesus  
had risen from the  
dead.*



*At the ascension of Jesus,  
two men in white apparel  
assured the Galileans  
that Jesus would return.*

which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

These marvelous events associated with the Savior’s ministry and ascension required heavenly witnesses who left their testimonies written indelibly in the hearts of Church leaders who remained behind to carry on the work.

What is the lesson for us today as we enter a new Christmas season? Who will minister to those in need? Who are the angels that will prepare the way for His return? I have noticed that during the early stages of a dispensation, angelic ministers come from the other side of the veil, but as time elapses and the number of faithful members increases, more is expected of those in mortality. For example, when a new country is opened to the gospel, missionaries learn that many have been prepared in miraculous ways to receive the gospel, and miracles occur with some frequency to advance the work. Once a core of members is established, however, the Lord’s assistance

changes as He provides opportunities for the members to become the miracle workers.

Consequently, miracles during this Christmas season require our faith and works. As we sing the hymns of Christmas and speak of angels sent to earth to witness the Savior’s birth in the meridian of time, may we rise to the occasion and minister to those in need in our day. May we be reminded of our promises to “bear one another’s burdens, . . . to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . . and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that [we] may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

I bear witness that Christmas is a season for angels. As they ministered to the Savior and others in the “meridian of time,” may we, as angels of mercy, minister to other families and to those in need in the “fulness of times” so that the Lord’s work may move forward. ■

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*The holidays are often a difficult and lonely time for me. How can I feel more joy and peace during this season?*

**W**hen you're alone—whether as a young adult away from home for the first time, a married couple living far from loved ones, a single adult who has not married, or someone who has lost a spouse to death or divorce—the holidays can

be difficult. Perhaps you've already tried taking cookies to neighbors, visiting the sick, or counting your blessings. If it was nice but your loneliness still lingers, try these suggestions.

- **Inform family and friends that you're lonely.** We often assume they know and don't care. In reality, they may be surprised about your needs.

- **Keep yourself busy with holiday service you enjoy.** You'll spend less time feeling blue.

- **Take a trip.** There's no law stating

you must be home for the holidays. You might feel better if you're not surrounded by constant reminders of what you do not have.

- **Accept the kindness of others.**

Sometimes it's easy not to accept an invitation because you think the person is offering "just to be nice." If the person is thoughtful enough to offer, accept and be grateful.

- **Build new traditions.** Create traditions that include reading books, preparing foods, and attending events during holidays. Invite others to join you.

Remember, not every suggestion works for each person. Try them and see what works. Something that is effective this time may not be in the future, so keep the list handy. If all else fails, remind yourself that "this too shall pass."

*Cindy Beck, Utah*

Several years ago I was surprised to find myself facing a holiday season alone. My husband had passed away a few years before, and my daughters and their families, scattered across the country, found it impossible to come home. Time off from work for travel was not available.



I realized that self-pity would not change the situation and would only make me feel worse. I decided to concentrate on what was good about this time when everyone around me would be shopping, cooking, and welcoming family members. Members of the ward had been kind and extended invitations, but for me, participating in someone else's traditions was too hard.

With several days of free time, I decided to cook a scaled-down Christmas dinner for one and finally get to my genealogy. Although I had dabbled with family history for years, other responsibilities had taken priority, and my sporadic efforts sat in boxes and files. I decided this would be a wonderful uninterrupted time to work, and I began gathering the tools I would need.

As my time off began and I immersed myself in learning and research, I could scarcely find time to eat or sleep. I found a wonderful source for researching my German line and spent hours entering information into Personal Ancestral File and learning to use online genealogical resources. I found that, instead of

feeling alone, I seemed at times to be surrounded by these ancestors who seemed so eager to be found, and I was definitely not lonely.  
*Jeanette Dickson, Oregon*

When memories generate feelings of loneliness and dread, I fill each day—including holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays—with worthwhile, easy-to-reach goals, and I actively strive to reach them. This keeps me living in the present and generates feelings of satisfaction and joy. In addition, I can recall these experiences when difficult days arrive again in the future.  
*LaVerd John, Utah*

When loneliness creeps in, I've often found hope and courage in prayerfully studying and applying this principle that King Benjamin taught: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). I pray to Heavenly Father and plead for direction to individuals I can help.

As I've been inspired to visit the

temple more frequently, to take proactive steps in my missionary efforts and in my home teaching assignments, and to strive

to use opportunities to be of service to God's children, I have found that these things have proven to be great sources of joy and peace.

*Obioma Chimauzom Madumere, Nigeria*

I joined the United States Marine Corps some years ago and was between training over Thanksgiving. Due to the short length of the holiday, the instructors did not allow us to go home. However, they would not allow us to stay on base either. I was 19 and had never before been away from my family for any part of the holiday season. Needless to say, I was feeling very alone. In the branch I attended were wonderful senior missionaries who invited one of my fellow Marines and me to spend the holiday with them. We both accepted the invitation and had a very memorable holiday.

That is one of the great things about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through it we understand that our Heavenly Father

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



works through others. He knows what we need, and the Holy Ghost can prompt someone else to help. We can also find joy in acting on the promptings we receive.

The simple act of service that was shown by two senior missionaries not only brightened a bleak holiday for me but also has motivated me to do all in my power to serve others. Ultimately, that is how we find happiness in life, whatever the season.

*Elder Adam Johnson, Taiwan Taipei Mission*

When I was 29, my husband died unexpectedly, leaving me a single mother with five daughters, the oldest having just turned seven. I had no idea how we would survive Christmas without my husband. It took some time to figure out how to take the “hole” out of the season and make it “whole” again. No matter what the circumstance, some basic strategies can help alleviate feelings of loneliness.

First, fatigue is a major contributor to depression, and when do we have more to do than at Christmastime? Don't overload yourself. Know when to say no. Physical strength is essential to a

feeling of well-being. Get enough rest, skip the overabundance of sugar, eat healthy meals, and combine exercise with a good dose of sunshine.

Second, while service is an important antidote for grief, choose wisely things that are uplifting but that do not add to the chaos. In addition, don't be afraid to let others serve you. When people ask what they can do, tell them.

Third, for a while, memories may increase your sadness, so let go of traditions that get you down. Establish new traditions or try something different each year that enriches your holidays. Make it simple. Do something that you'll enjoy without hours of preparation. One year my daughters and I had a Christmas reading with scriptures and hymns interspersed. No rehearsals. No costumes. We just had fun and felt the Spirit.

Fourth, create an uplifting environment for yourself. Check your ward or



public library for faith-promoting DVDs. Associate with happy people.  
*CeLeste Mann, Texas*

After much soul-searching and prayer, this is what I have learned about feeling the spirit of the holiday season:

- Happiness is not the result of receiving many gifts but of righteous living.
- Service need not be a massive project but should be of real value to the recipient.
- A cheerful spirit is contagious. Surround yourself with friends and family, as a crowd of cheerful people can soften the effect of loneliness and despair.
- Praying with thanksgiving will help remind us of the good things in life. It forces us to look outward instead of hiding inside a shell of self-pity.

*James R. Osborne, Iowa*

As I approach my late 20s as a single adult, the holidays become harder each year. Even though my family lives nearby, the constant barrage of holiday cards I receive from friends with pictures of their new spouses or children is enough to start a pity party for myself!

But Christmas isn't a time to focus on ourselves—it is a time to celebrate the birth of our Savior and to cherish loved ones in our lives, both near and far. I have found that the following practices help me to avoid feeling alone during the holidays.

- **Adopting an attitude of “What can I do for others?”** There is always someone who can use a cheerful card,

## PEACE THROUGH THE ATONEMENT



*“The greatest of all acts in all history was the atoning sacrifice of our Savior and Redeemer.*

*“We remember that sacrifice at this time of year when we celebrate His birth. It is only through the atoning sacrifice of the Prince of Peace that we may know the true power of peace in our own lives.”*

**President James E. Faust (1920–2007),  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency,  
“The Power of Peace,” Ensign, Dec.  
2004, 5.**

• **Remembering the purpose behind the season.** Christmas can become such a busy time, but you can find peace and meaning if you make it a goal to ponder the scriptures and pray more earnestly during this time

a plate of cookies, or even a smile. Offer a ride to someone in your ward or neighborhood to see Christmas lights, invite a widow over for dinner or dessert, or donate to charity organizations. Phone calls are more affordable than ever, so use down time to catch up with family and friends. You can always find a way to brighten the life of somebody else, even if it is with a small gesture.

• **Creating and baking.** In tackling a new recipe or following the instructions of a detailed project, your mind is distracted from lonely feelings and focused on something worthwhile. You can later give your finished project to someone as a gift.

• **Re-creating favorites.** Remember things from your childhood that made the holidays unique and special. If you can't remember particular traditions, decide what is important to you and start your own holiday favorites.

of year. A trip to the temple can truly add a measure of the Spirit to your holiday. Christ is our Savior—let us all find comfort in the truth that He lives.  
*Erin Peer, Maryland*

Christmas is a time for children and celebrating the birth of the infant King, yet since the death of my infant daughter, I have often dreaded the holiday season. One year I decided to act preemptively. Instead of worrying that the sadness would return, I made a list of activities to do throughout the season and scheduled them in advance. Having things to look forward to filled my mind with happy thoughts and pushed sad ones away.

We planned times for visiting Temple Square, making cookies, cutting our own Christmas tree, reading

special Christmas stories, and participating in other family traditions.



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

As I enjoyed my other children, my husband, and the season, I found the sadness of past years never had the opportunity to catch up with me. I wasn't too busy to feel the emotions (both poignant and joyful), but I reclaimed the season as a happy time filled with activity and joy and in so doing was better prepared to cope with the tears and the laughter the season brings.

*Rachel Hixson, Utah*

I am elderly and live in an assisted-living center. The pace of life now means visitors come infrequently. Still, I have thought of several ways to overcome loneliness and feel joy and peace during the holiday season:

- If you are lonely, visit someone who is lonelier.
- Attend Church meetings. If you are able to drive, offer to take someone who needs a ride. While attending, offer

### SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Questions and Answers feature will focus on the following question:

*I love and am grateful for my young children, but I sometimes get distracted or discouraged by the practical details of raising a family and struggle to remember what an important work it is. How can I better align gospel truths about family with my day-to-day actions and attitudes?*

If you'd like to contribute your ideas and experiences, please label them "Family" and follow the submission guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words and submit them by February 8.

to help a family with their young children or sit by someone who is lonely.

- If you are able to read, share Christmas stories with others, such as children in elementary schools or the elderly.
- Invite someone to listen to a recording of Handel's *Messiah* with you.
- Telephone someone who will be glad to hear from you.
- Invite a family with young children to bring a family home evening to you.
- Take time to write your memories of Christmases past and share them with grandchildren, other relatives, or friends. This is a gift only you can give.
- Research your ancestors to learn about how they observed the holidays. Share your findings with relatives.
- Attend the temple often.
- Write letters to missionaries. ■

*Ruth Wilson Young, Utah*



# Guard Him, Joseph

Words and music by Sally DeFord

Gently ♩ = 70-80

*mf*

*mp*

1. Guard Him, Jo - seph, as He slum - bers There be - hind the sta - ble doors.  
 2. Guard Him, Jo - seph, through the dark - ness, Watch - ing o'er Him till the dawn.  
 3. Guard Him, Jo - seph, from all dan - ger, Keep thy vig - il nigh His bed.

Let no er - rant sound dis - tress Him; Tread thou soft - ly on the floor. Lin - ger watch - ful  
 Bid the shep - herds en - ter meek - ly, Stand in won - der, gaze in awe. Trim thy lamp and  
 Let no harm nor grief be - fall Him; Stand thou in a fa - ther's stead. When His mo - ther's


*mf*

round the man - ger; Hush thy voice and still the boasts, For thou hast with -  
 shield thy can - dle; See they burn all through the night, For thou hast with -  
 arms be - wea - ry, Hold Him gent - ly as thine own, For thou hast with -

*mf*

in thy keep - ing Christ, the in - fant Prince of Peace.  
 in thy keep - ing Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Light.  
 in thy keep - ing God's own well - be - lov - ed Son.

*mf*



# THE TRUTH FOUND ME

*I relied on my Heavenly Father during the years our family was imprisoned during World War II. A few years later, when the missionaries taught me about the Godhead, I recognized the Heavenly Father in whom I had always believed.*

BY MARIANNE ROHRBOUGH

I was born in 1932 far away from the restored Church of Jesus Christ; my family and I didn't even know there was such a thing. My father was the manager of a rubber and coffee plantation that bordered a tropical jungle on East Java, one of the bigger islands of what is now known as Indonesia. We were Dutch.

I cannot remember a time in my life that I didn't believe in God and Jesus Christ. We lived too far away from Jember, the closest town, to attend the church we belonged to, but my father read to my younger brother, Peter, and me from a children's Bible before we went to bed each night. I loved those Bible stories, and that homespun faith was strong in me.

World War II broke out; the Dutch East Indies, as Indonesia was then called, was conquered, and we spent two years in prison camps separated from my father. My mother; Peter; my four-year-old sister, Barbara; and I survived the ordeal, but our world was turned upside down when we found out that my father, who was in another camp, hadn't. I remember walking out of our barracks

after hearing the news. I looked up at the blue sky and said to my Heavenly Father, "Well, God, it's now between Thee and me. Thou art the only Father I have left."

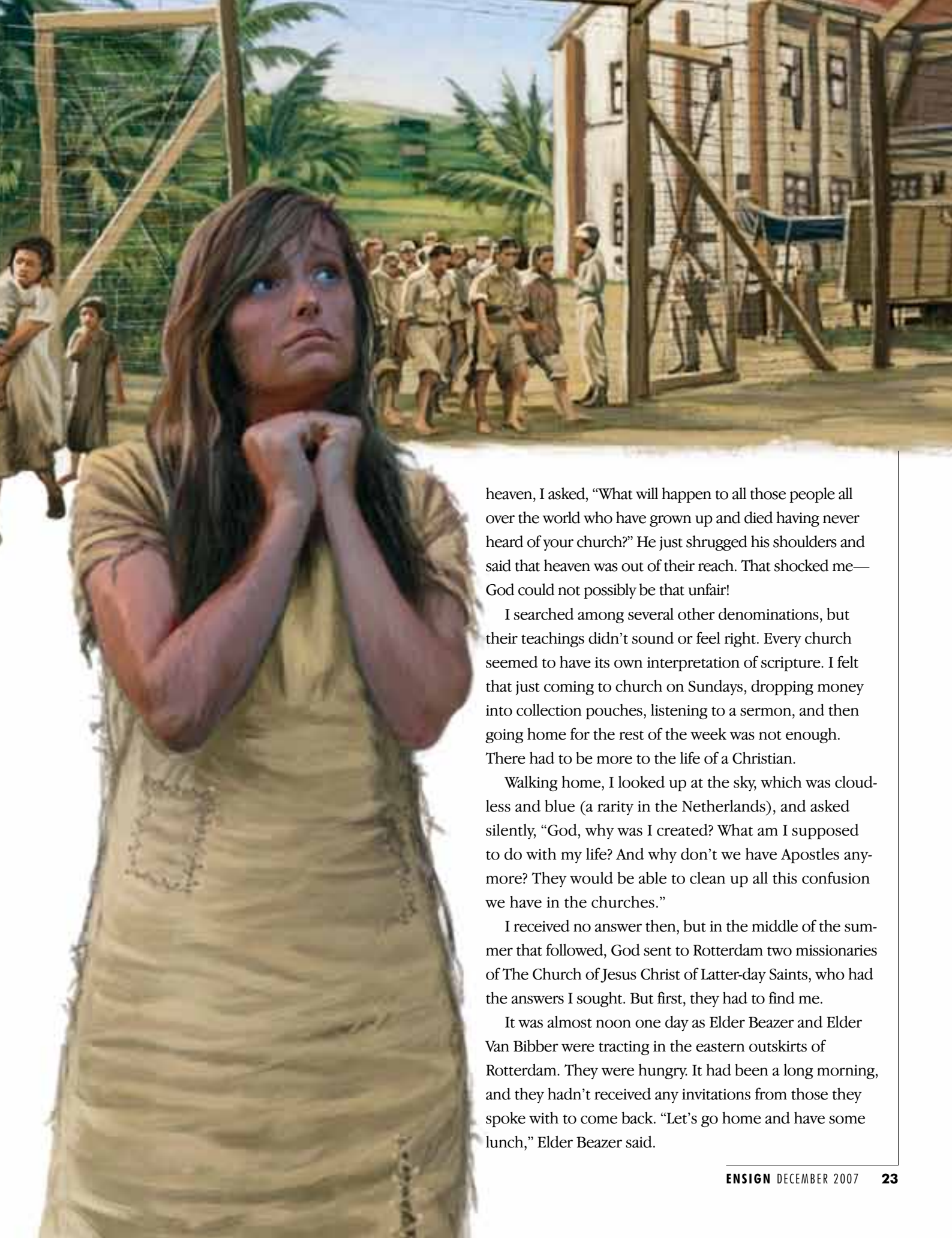
Shortly after, we were deported from Indonesia to the Netherlands. Two years later my mother remarried, and we moved to Rotterdam.

When I was 18, my mother wanted me to attend a confirmation class at our church. I was eager to go because I loved to learn about God. But it quickly became the most confusing time in my life. I was taught that God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost were the same person—that Jesus was God in physical form. That brought up a lot of questions in my mind: Who was in heaven while God was on earth as Christ? Was Christ praying to Himself when He prayed? How could God forsake Himself while He was hanging on the cross? How could God stand at His own right hand as Stephen saw in a vision? Things just didn't seem to add up, and when I said that I couldn't understand such things, I was told in a very decisive way by my teacher, "We can never comprehend God. The moment you understand God, He will cease to be God to you."

I was too timid to say anything more, but my teacher could tell that I didn't believe him. Consequently, I flunked the class.

Even though I decided not to go back, I still felt the need to belong to a church so I could draw closer to God. A friend talked me into seeing a clergyman of another faith, but when he told me that only members of his religion would go to





heaven, I asked, “What will happen to all those people all over the world who have grown up and died having never heard of your church?” He just shrugged his shoulders and said that heaven was out of their reach. That shocked me—God could not possibly be that unfair!

I searched among several other denominations, but their teachings didn’t sound or feel right. Every church seemed to have its own interpretation of scripture. I felt that just coming to church on Sundays, dropping money into collection pouches, listening to a sermon, and then going home for the rest of the week was not enough. There had to be more to the life of a Christian.

Walking home, I looked up at the sky, which was cloudless and blue (a rarity in the Netherlands), and asked silently, “God, why was I created? What am I supposed to do with my life? And why don’t we have Apostles anymore? They would be able to clean up all this confusion we have in the churches.”

I received no answer then, but in the middle of the summer that followed, God sent to Rotterdam two missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who had the answers I sought. But first, they had to find me.

It was almost noon one day as Elder Beazer and Elder Van Bibber were tracting in the eastern outskirts of Rotterdam. They were hungry. It had been a long morning, and they hadn’t received any invitations from those they spoke with to come back. “Let’s go home and have some lunch,” Elder Beazer said.



“How about one more door?” suggested Elder Van Bibber.

“All right,” Elder Beazer replied.

“One more door.”

They rang the doorbell, and a slim, dark-haired woman with brown eyes opened the door. After the young men introduced themselves as missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the woman invited them in. They taught her the first lesson and made an appointment to return.

When I came home from work that day, my mother greeted me with the words, “You’ll never guess who came to the door today.”

“Who?” I asked.

“Two young men from America. They wanted to talk about God, and I let them in.”

“Oh,” I said, uninterested. Had I been home to open the door, I wouldn’t have let them in.

“They explained God to me.”

I froze in my tracks. “What did you say?”

“They explained God to me,” she repeated. “Here, I’ll show you.”

Curious, I followed my mother into the parlor. From the coffee table she picked up a small piece of paper. On it the missionaries had drawn three stick figures. “One is God the Father, one is the Son, and the third is the Holy

Ghost. The Father and the Son have bodies of flesh and bones, but the Holy Ghost doesn’t. That is why He’s drawn in dotted lines. They are three separate beings.”

For a moment I just stared at her. “That’s it!” I finally said. “That makes sense.” I *knew* it was true.

Elder Beazer and Elder Van Bibber continued to teach my mother, and when I came home from the office, she taught me what she had learned. When she told me the elders had talked about apostles and prophets, things clicked. It all sounded so familiar to me.

Although my mother typically slept in on Sundays until noon, she started to get up early and take two different streetcars to get to the only Latter-day Saint branch building in Rotterdam, located on the other side of town. Since I always had more questions than my mother could answer after the missionaries’ visits to our home, she finally said, “Why don’t you just come with me to church on Sundays? Then you can ask them those questions yourself.”

I did, much to the surprise of the elders, who hadn’t known I existed. I kept going. The elders were transferred, and two others finished teaching me. On February 4, 1955, I was baptized. I was immediately called to serve as the Sunday School secretary, and a year later I was called on a full-time mission to the Netherlands.

I had finally come home, thanks to two elders who decided to listen to the Spirit and knock on one more door. ■

# We Let Them Learn

*When pushing our children brought the wrong results, we tried an approach that respected their agency.*

BY LAVERD AND FLORA JOHN\*

**I**n our old age we more fully understand the joyous blessings that come through parenthood. During our early years as parents, we behaved as if our children had been born *to* us—to have, to hold, and to mold. It was so easy to tell them what to say



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY, POSED BY MOHRELS

**P**ushing our children can generate feelings of resentment and resistance. We let our children learn by working with them or allowing them to do their assignments on their own.

and do, and if our directions were correct, we shared part of the credit for their successes. Eventually, we learned that pushing them—“do your homework,” “clean your room,” “do the dishes,” “take out the garbage,” “mow the lawn,” and so on—generated feelings of resentment and resistance.

### **Leading Instead of Pushing**

The day our family home evening lesson included the scripture “let every man learn his duty” (D&C 107:99), our eyes were opened, and our approach changed. To *let them learn*, we had to acknowledge that our children had been born *through* us with agency and the potential to unfold. We needed to develop greater self-discipline. We had already learned that the buds on our rose bushes would unfold into beautiful blossoms if we planted them in ample sunlight, kept them free from weeds, appropriately nourished them, and carefully trimmed them. So we began arranging situations for our children where they could unfold on their own. While this approach may not be equally successful with all children or in every situation, it proved to be effective in our family.

We began by working *with* our children as we led them into each assignment. “Do you need help with your homework?” “Do you have time to help us make the beds?” “We need some help in the yard.” This fulfilled their strong internal need to be needed. In addition, our leading moved them into action, which made it possible

for us to effectively guide them. Our former pushing approach was often a futile attempt to guide them while they were stopped. After we had established a routine, we generally withdrew and let them do the assignments on their own. In a short time, each of us was doing whatever needed to be done without being assigned to do it. In this way we were able to complete the household chores on weekdays and were able to enjoy a chore-free Saturday.

### **Why We Go to Church**

The *let them learn* concept helped us when Rose Marie, our 11-year-old, asked, “Do I have to go to church today?”

Our first impulse was to say, “Yes, you do!” But we quickly regained control and *let her learn* by saying, “We can’t answer that question.”

“Why can’t you?” she asked.

“If we say you have to go, you may go, but with a negative attitude toward learning. If we say you don’t have to go, you may stay home, and then the responsibility is ours. We lose either way. So you will have to decide whether or not to go.”

She pleaded: “Then can you tell me why you’re going? I don’t understand why it’s important to go.”

This question we could answer. We explained that six days each week are ours to do what we need to do or want to do. The Lord has reserved one day each week. On the Lord’s day we rest from our six days of labor, give thanks to the Lord, and learn what He wants us to know and do. When we meet with others to worship the Lord, His Spirit is present (see Matthew 18:20). In addition, during sacrament meeting we have an opportunity to review our actions of the past week, correct any mistakes we have made in keeping our promises to the Lord, partake of the sacrament, and renew our covenants with Him. By making these corrections and renewing our covenants, we lift ourselves to a higher level of righteousness. The Lord promises if we keep the Sabbath day holy, with thanksgiving and



## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Lay a piece of string on a table and push one end with your finger. Does it go in the direction you want it to go? Now pull the string with your fingers. Does it go where you want it to go? Use this object lesson to introduce the principles taught in the “Leading Instead of Pushing” section of the article.

2. After reviewing the “Financial Accountability” section, have each family member plan an activity using a limited budget. List in detail how the money is to be spent. As a family, choose the best activity and enjoy it together.

### The Blessings

We savored every experience as we let our children learn the warm feelings of satisfaction and the unbelievable blessings that come from keeping the Sabbath day holy, paying tithing, budgeting money, cooking meals, cleaning the house, keeping the yard in good shape, and belonging to a supportive eternal family.

Other experiences pale when compared to the experiences we have shared with our children. The simple phrase *let them learn* brought incredible blessings of satisfaction, joy, peace, and love into our lives. ■

*\* Author Flora Jobn has passed away since writing this article.*

**L**etting children learn and keep the principles of the gospel can yield marvelous blessings of peace, joy, and happiness.

a cheerful heart and countenance, the fulness of the earth is ours (see D&C 59:15–17). These are the main reasons we attend our meetings on the Lord’s day.

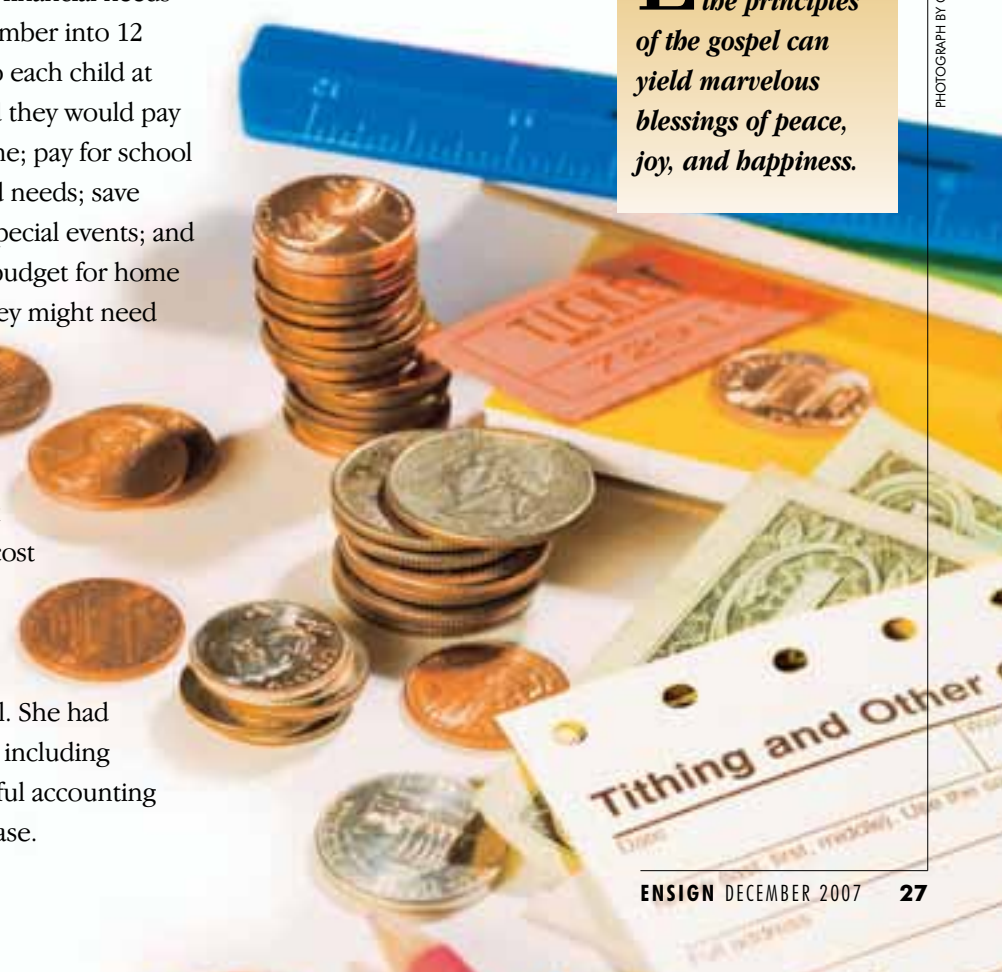
Our explanation *let her learn* the appropriate answer to her question. Her response was, “I want to go to church with you.”

### Financial Accountability

Letting our children learn helped us cope with the never-ending challenge of providing for their financial needs. As they got older they needed money almost every day for one reason or another. We studied, pondered, and prayed for help in developing a plan that would *let them learn* how to budget their own finances. During a family council we were prompted to estimate the basic financial needs of each child for one year, divide that number into 12 equal payments, and give that amount to each child at the beginning of each month. We agreed they would pay tithing on their share of the family income; pay for school lunches, books, and other school-related needs; save enough to buy clothing; save some for special events; and allocate some for recreation. We would budget for home expenses, family events, and any help they might need with unexpected expenses.

Their response was enthusiastic. “This is a good idea! We will learn to pay our tithing, budget for our own needs, eliminate the need to ask you for every penny, and it will probably cost you less than you are spending now.”

A few months into the plan, Janene, who was attending junior high school, brought her budget to our family council. She had recorded every item she had purchased, including 25 cents for an ice cream cone. Her careful accounting easily convinced us she needed an increase.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH

# There Shall Be a Record Kept among You

*Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, the current Church historian and recorder, recently talked with Church magazines about the past, present, and future of this important office.*

**Why are Latter-day Saints taught that it is important to keep records and to gather and preserve Church history?**

**Elder Marlin K. Jensen:** The scriptures, especially the



Book of Mormon, make clear that “remembering” is a fundamental and saving principle of the gospel. We keep records to help us remember. Remembering the past gives us needed perspective as God’s children to have faith in our future destiny and thus to live more faithfully in the present.

On April 6, 1830, the day the Church was organized, the Lord commanded the Prophet Joseph Smith, “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you” (D&C 21:1). This is the revelation upon which the office of Church historian and recorder is based.

On that day the Prophet learned how important it is to the Lord for a history of the Church to be kept, and he soon called Oliver Cowdery to be the first Church historian and recorder. In the beginning Oliver recorded minutes of meetings, patriarchal blessings, membership information, and certificates of priesthood authority. He also began what might be called a narrative history of the Church.

Record keeping began with a commandment from God and continues to the present day.

**What does the calling of Church historian and recorder entail?**

**Elder Jensen:** The work of the Church historian and recorder is largely one of record keeping. It includes the gathering and preserving of Church history sources, the

recording of ordinances, and the collection of minutes. The scriptures also suggest there is a responsibility to ensure the records are used “for the good of the church, and for the rising generations” (D&C 69:8).

The roles of historian and recorder are complementary and at times almost indistinguishable. I think that’s why, in the early days of the Church, sometimes a recorder was appointed and sometimes a historian and why over time the roles were joined together in one calling.

**What is the purpose of recording and teaching Church history?**

**Elder Jensen:** The primary purpose of Church history is to help Church members build faith in Jesus Christ and keep their sacred covenants. In fulfilling this purpose, we are guided by three main considerations:

First, we seek to bear witness of and defend the foundational truths of the Restoration.

Second, we desire to help Church members remember the great things God has done for His children.





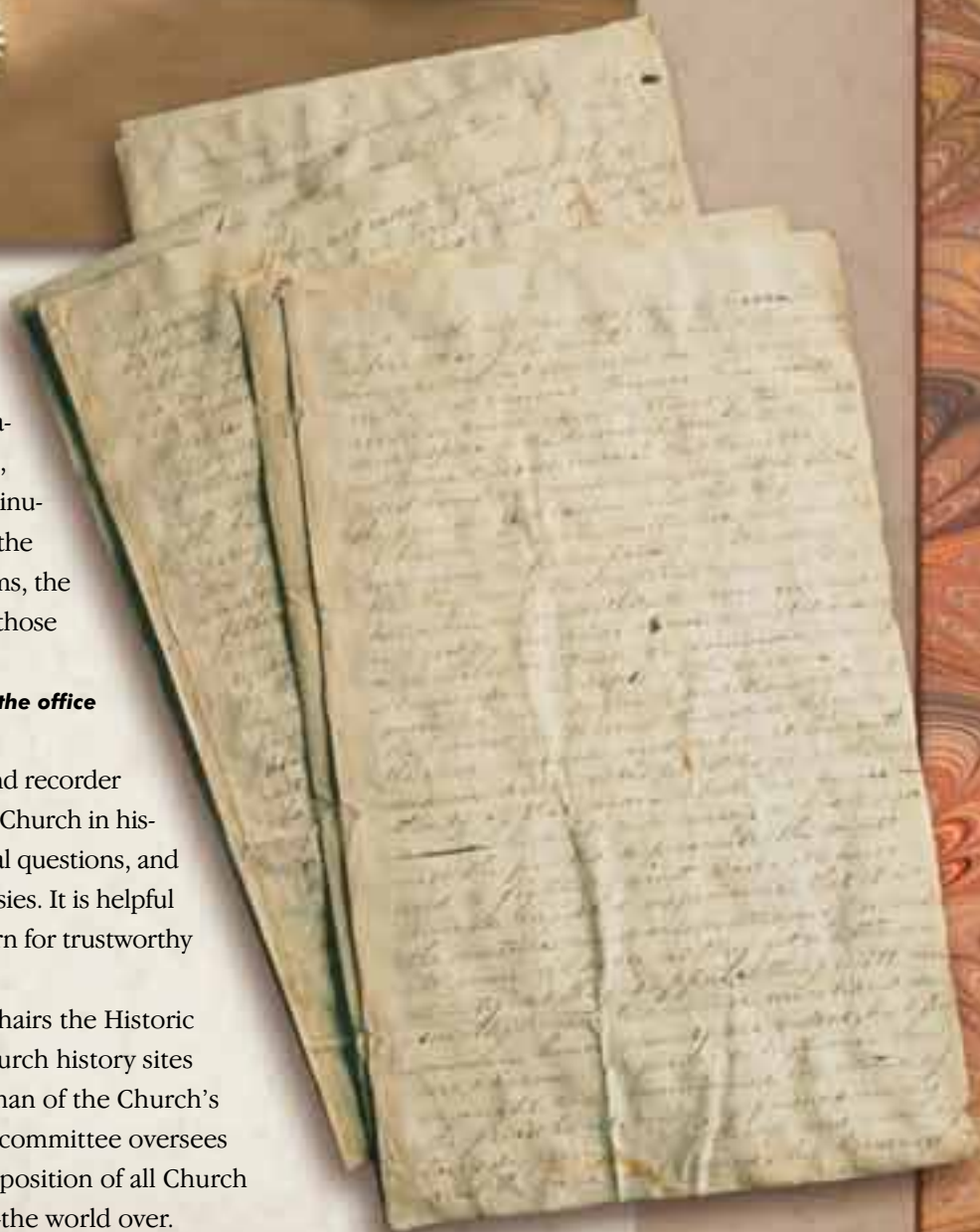
**Opposite page: Oliver Cowdery served as the first Church recorder. Below: Pages of this Joseph Smith journal show the revelation that became Doctrine and Covenants 121.**

Third, we have a scriptural charge to help preserve the revealed order of the kingdom of God. This includes the revelations, documents, procedures, processes, and patterns that provide order and continuity for the exercising of priesthood keys, the proper functioning of priesthood quorums, the performance of ordinances, and so on—those things that are essential to salvation.

**How else does the Church benefit from the office of Church historian and recorder?**

**Elder Jensen:** The Church historian and recorder can provide an authoritative voice of the Church in historical matters. There are always historical questions, and sometimes there are historical controversies. It is helpful to have an office to which anyone can turn for trustworthy answers.

The Church historian and recorder chairs the Historic Sites Committee, which administers Church history sites and landmarks. He also serves as chairman of the Church's Records Management Committee. This committee oversees the creation, management, and final disposition of all Church records—ecclesiastical and corporate—the world over.



OLIVER COWDERY WRITING WITH A FEATHER PEN, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT; PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG DIMOND AND JED CLARK; BORDER © ARTBEATS

## LEARN MORE ABOUT CHURCH HISTORY

The Internet makes Church history more accessible than ever. Following are some of the resources available in English on the Church history Web site at [www.lds.org/churchhistory](http://www.lds.org/churchhistory):

- Joseph Smith Web Site, which reviews the life and mission of the Prophet. It features historical photographs and documents.
- Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847–1868, which is a searchable database of individuals and companies traveling west to Utah.
- Historic Sites, which shows the location, pictures, and brief history of major Church sites.
- Museum of Church History and Art, which shows art and artifacts that document the history of the Church and its members.



Among the most essential and sacred records are those evidencing the performance of temple ordinances. They are preserved as a part of what I feel is that book “which shall be worthy of all acceptance” (D&C 128:24). Members can have confidence that all records, including those of their temple ordinances, are safe.

### ***How is the Church using technology to carry forth the work of the historian’s office?***

**Elder Jensen:** I work with the Family and Church History Department, which collects and preserves the essential materials of Church history. We are developing a technology plan that will better enable us to collect, preserve, and make Church history available for a global Church membership. Obviously the Internet will play an increasingly important role in what we do.

The books, documents, artifacts, historic sites, and pictures that we have collected through the years constitute in a sense the “crown jewels” of the Church’s history. We feel an obligation to share these in approved and appropriate ways with members everywhere. Viewing a page from the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon on the Internet or taking a virtual tour of the upper room of the Smith family cabin where Moroni appeared to young Joseph Smith are experiences that will connect members to our past in faith-promoting ways.

Technology will also better enable us to train and assist local leaders, clerks, and others who are responsible for the compilation of annual histories for stakes, wards, and missions. With the help of technology, historical information will flow more easily to and from Church headquarters.

### ***How can the history of the Church become a heritage for all of us, whether we are new members or have been in the Church for generations?***

**Elder Jensen:** Someone once said that a people can be no greater than its stories. The history of the Church begins with the compelling account of Joseph Smith and his search for the true Church. When we believe Joseph’s account, we become part of a great body of believers whose lives change by embracing the restored gospel.





This experience becomes a very important part of our common Latter-day Saint heritage. It also helps explain why the history of the Church's beginnings is so critical to the Church's existence and continued growth and vitality.

There are other great stories in our history that deserve to be known and taught at church and at home. The lessons of Kirtland, the trials of Missouri, the triumphs and eventual expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo, and the westward trek of the pioneers are stories that inspire Latter-day Saints in every land and language. But there are equally moving stories about

the rise and progress of the Church and the impact of the gospel in the lives of ordinary members in every nation touched by the restored gospel. These need recording and preserving as well.

The relationship between Church and family history is also worth considering. Usually a study of one will lead to a study of the other. Many of the Church's greatest stories are contained in personal and family histories, and these are a part of our individual and family heritages.

Finally, we need to remember that acquiring a heritage of Church history requires more than simply reading a history book. It includes visiting a historic site, visiting a



***In the mountains south of Salt Lake City, the Granite Mountain Records Vault houses microfilm copies of much of our Church and family history. Inset: An architect's rendering of the new Church History Library, to be completed in the summer of 2009.***

PHOTOGRAPH OF GRANITE MOUNTAIN RECORDS VAULT BY ELDON K. LINSCHOTEN

**As today, ancient prophets like Nephi kept a record of their history. Bottom: A replica of the Book of Mormon plates.**

museum to view historical artifacts, attending a family reunion, or keeping a personal journal. The key is for everyone to have personal involvement of some type with the past.

**What do you think has been most meaningful to you personally about serving as Church historian and recorder?**

**Elder Jensen:** I have come to realize that the scriptures contain sacred history. When the prophets wrote to us, they wove sermons and teachings into their historical narratives. For example, the Book of Mormon begins with the story of Lehi and his family. It is scripture, but it is also a narrative history. The Book of Mormon represents the finest type of historical writing we have. It is also

the best example of the connection between history and doctrine. I've come to understand and appreciate the power of scripture and history working together.

I have gained a testimony that all things are present before God—past, present, and future. That really harmonizes with the scriptural definition of truth, which is “knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). We live in the present. We can't see the future, but the past is available for us to see—if it has been preserved. Our past can give us a perspective and a foundation that we really can't get in any other way. Whether it is the history of our grandfather or the



DETAIL FROM NEPHI WRITING ON THE GOLD PLATES; BY PAUL MANN; PHOTOGRAPH OF GOLD PLATES REPLICA BY JED CLARK; JOSEPH SMITH WRITING; BY DALE KILBOURN

history of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the history of the trials of the Latter-day Saint pioneers during the early days of the Church or the history of Latter-day Saint servicemen during World War II—lessons from the past help us cope with our present and give us hope for our future.

I have come to appreciate the Prophet Joseph Smith more than ever before because of his monumental accomplishments as the founding prophet of this dispensation.

Of all the things I've come to treasure, I think the most important is the conviction that if we're honest in heart and desire to know God, we can come to know Him and feel accountable to Him. We have the example of the Prophet Joseph Smith to thank for that. He modeled it, he taught it, and he held out the promise that we can come to know Christ also. That's priceless to me. ■



## A CURRENT PROJECT OF INTEREST

### Joseph Smith Papers

**Elder Jensen:** I think the most significant project we are working on right now is the Joseph Smith Papers Project. This is a monumental multiyear effort to gather the documents that the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, caused to be written, or received, as well as the sermons he delivered, the correspondence that came to him, the legal matters in which he was involved, and revelations he received. We plan to publish those papers in a series of volumes.

# The Joseph Smith Journals

*The Prophet Joseph's seven journals are among the most important records that help us understand him and the development of the Church during his life.*

**BY MARK ASHURST-McGEE AND ALEX SMITH**

Editors of volumes in the Journals Series in the forthcoming *Joseph Smith Papers*, a multivolume work in progress at the Family and Church History Department. Over the next several years, the department will publish all of Joseph Smith's letters, journals, histories, revelations, and other documents.

**T**he Prophet Joseph Smith purchased his first journal on November 27, 1832—possibly in response to a revelation he received the same day concerning the necessity of Church record keeping (see D&C 85:1–5). It was a small pocketbook of 104 pages that he called a “Book for Record.”

The first words he wrote express his sincere intention “to keep a minute account of all things that [came] under [his] observation.” Joseph Smith, however, was more comfortable with the spoken word and expressed his frustration with the limitations of writing.<sup>1</sup> As a result, there were periods of effective journal keeping, but there were also gaps when months and even years went by in silence. Still, he returned again and again to journal keeping, or he arranged for others to carry on in his stead. Eventually, with the help of the faithful and dependable scribe Elder Willard Richards, the Prophet succeeded in establishing a method of steady journal keeping.

The journals produced by and for the Prophet contain several of the earliest existing copies of his revelations, and they provide the only detailed accounts of several of

his sermons. They are some of the most important records for understanding Joseph Smith and the development of the Church during his lifetime.

Following is a brief description of each of the Prophet's seven journals and information about several of the scribes who helped him keep them.

## **First Ohio Journal: 1832–34**

The Prophet Joseph faithfully kept this first journal every day for nine days and then stopped for almost 10 months. He resumed in October 1833, when he left home on a proselytizing mission to Upper Canada. The entries during this mission are a rich source of insight into his sincerity and the spiritual and emotional dimensions of his personality. For example, Joseph recorded for October 12: “I feel very well in my mind. The Lord is with us, but [I] have much anxiety about my family.” Later that day he received a revelation assuring Sidney Rigdon and him of their families' well-being (see D&C 100:1). On his return to Kirtland, Ohio, on November 4, 1833, Joseph dictated a journal entry to Oliver Cowdery, the second elder of the Church: “Found my family all well according to the promise of the Lord, for which blessings I feel to thank his holy name.”

Before long, he turned to other scribes for help. In addition to using Oliver Cowdery as a scribe, the Prophet called upon Elders Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, his counselors in the First Presidency. In March 1834, while on another mission, Joseph Smith asked his traveling companion, Elder Parley P. Pratt, to help him keep the journal.



Not all of the entries appear in chronological order. On several occasions, Joseph backtracked to record an earlier event. He also used the journal to keep financial records and other miscellaneous notes, which are interspersed throughout the book.

The journal's most consistent entries are between late February and April of 1834, when the Prophet was recruiting help and raising funds for the expedition to relieve the Latter-day Saints who had been driven from their homes in Jackson County, Missouri.

**Above: The first page of Joseph Smith's first Ohio journal. Inset: The front cover of this journal, bearing the Prophet's signature. Map: The Prophet's first and second journals were written in Kirtland, Ohio. His third and fourth were written in Far West, Missouri. His fifth, sixth, and seventh journals were written in Nauvoo, Illinois.**

### Second Ohio Journal: 1835–36

The Prophet's second journal was a medium-sized ledger of 220 pages called a "Sketch Book." It contains Joseph's activities in and around Kirtland from late September 1835 to early April 1836. Joseph and Oliver began the record and then quickly turned it over to Frederick G. Williams. Soon afterward, the Prophet asked Warren

Parrish to serve as a full-time scribe. Although Warren wrote most of the journal, Joseph Smith dictated much of it to him. The dictated entries are generally much longer than the entries Joseph wrote himself. And, while somewhat less personal, the dictated entries still bear the marks of Joseph Smith's style. The entries recorded by Warren Parrish and other scribes, including Warren Cowdery, account for every day of the period covered by the journal.

This second journal contains an account of Joseph's First Vision, where God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph in a grove of trees near his home. It also tells of the angel Moroni's appearances to Joseph Smith in 1823. The journal records the Prophet's early efforts to translate the book of Abraham. Of particular theological significance is the January 21, 1836, vision of the celestial kingdom of heaven and the revelation that "all who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God" (D&C 137:7)—foreshadowing the doctrine of redeeming the dead through vicarious ordinances.

The focus of the journal, however, is the preparation for the special solemn assembly held three days after the dedication of the

Kirtland Temple. In the solemn assembly, Church officers would be "endowed with power from on high" (D&C 105:11) to preach the gospel throughout the earth. Hence, the priesthood officers needed to be prepared. The journal reports the several councils and private meetings held to achieve harmony and work out personal differences among the brethren.

The Prophet spent a great amount of time reorganizing priesthood quorums and councils so they would be properly organized for the solemn assembly. He insisted that the brethren be trained in the School of the Elders and in the associated Hebrew school. The journal tells of Joseph's enthusiastic and dedicated study of the Hebrew language during this time. It traces the Prophet's efforts in these endeavors and concludes by describing the dedication of the temple, the solemn assembly, and the Sunday meeting of April 3, 1836. On this Easter morning, the resurrected Christ appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Elder Oliver Cowdery. Moses, Elias, and Elijah then appeared and



**The Prophet's second Ohio journal (above) contains a historical account of Joseph Smith's First Vision (depicted below), and it records the conferral of priesthood keys by Moses, Elias, and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836 (opposite page).**



conferred priesthood keys on the Prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery. This entry is now found in *Doctrine and Covenants* 110.

#### **First Missouri Journal: March–September 1838**

Joseph Smith's first Missouri journal is recorded on 69 pages of a large ledger. In this and the remaining journals, Joseph assigned his scribes to observe his activities and record them on their own. Although Joseph Smith's personal involvement was diminished, the perspectives of the scribes do provide different vantage points on the Prophet's life that we would not otherwise have.

This journal begins with a brief retrospective account, apparently dictated by Joseph Smith, of his arrival in the Latter-day Saint community of Far West in Caldwell County, Missouri. He had just fled the dangerous environment of apostasy and legal harassment in Kirtland following the financial collapse of the Kirtland Safety Society.

The entries that follow, however, are letters, revelations, and other documents copied into the journal with little or no connecting narrative. The journal was titled "The Scriptorium Book," apparently to indicate that it was a repository for various "scripts," or written texts.<sup>2</sup> Most of the letters and other items recorded in April 1838 document the events leading up to the excommunications of Church leaders Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer.

Except for one revelation, the journal was written by the Church's general clerk and recorder, George Robinson. When Brother Robinson's documentary record was finished, he began writing contemporary journal entries. By this point Brother Robinson had been appointed a scribe

to the First Presidency, and the journal focuses not only on the Prophet but also on his counselors—Sidney Rigdon and Hyrum Smith.

Between April and June 1838, Brother Robinson regularly kept the journal and recorded the First Presidency's efforts to plan the Latter-day Saint community of Adam-ondi-Ahman in neighboring Daviess County. Brother Robinson also recorded a number of the Prophet's revelations, including the revelation on tithing (see D&C 119).

Entries are consistent and detailed from late July to early September. These entries document the beginning of violent persecution of the Saints in northwestern Missouri. On September 2, 1838, George Robinson described the atmosphere in the area: "This looks a little too much like mobocracy; it foretells some evil intentions; the whole upper Missouri is all in an uproar and confusion." At the close of the journal, Latter-day Saints in Far West and other parts of Caldwell County, Missouri, began heading north to protect those in Daviess County from vigilantes.

#### **Second Missouri Journal: September–October 1838**

Scribe James Mulholland was one of many boarders in the Prophet's home over the years. He kept the Prophet's second Missouri journal in three pages of a handmade pamphlet. The entries cover only one month—from early September to early October. The journal, titled "Memorandum Etcetera," consists of brief notes regarding Joseph Smith's comings and goings, often tracking these movements to within the half hour. Written during a time of increasing conflict in Missouri, the journal may have been commissioned by the Prophet to provide a record that could be used in a court of law to document his daily whereabouts.

James Mulholland was not privy to the Prophet's intentions and activities, as was First Presidency scribe George Robinson. The last entry, dated October 5, 1838, concludes with "Did not see him all the afternoon; understood that he went from home." In fact, Joseph Smith had gone to De Witt, Missouri, to help the Saints who had been besieged by vigilantes.

**Below: The Prophet's first Illinois journal was a 15-page handmade "Minute Book," shown here with a replica of a handmade quill pen.**

#### **First Illinois Journal: 1839**

After a grueling confinement throughout the winter in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph and his fellow Latter-day Saint prisoners were granted a change of venue for trial. Apparently to spare the state from the publicity of a trial, the guards allowed their prisoners to escape while en route to the new venue. They crossed the Mississippi River into Illinois on April 22, 1839, where they joined the Saints from Missouri, who had received a sympathetic reception from the citizens of Quincy, Illinois. That same day the Prophet hired James Mulholland to again keep a journal for him. From April to October 1839, Brother Mulholland recorded the Prophet's activities in 15 pages of a handmade pamphlet titled "Minute Book."

The journal traces the Prophet's efforts once again to gather the Saints and to build the kingdom of God. He purchased land upriver at Commerce, Illinois, and instructed the Saints to move there. Though the area was plagued with malaria-carrying mosquitoes, the Saints began draining the swampy lowlands and transforming Commerce into a beautiful city, which they later renamed Nauvoo.

In late October 1839, Joseph Smith left Illinois for Washington, D.C., seeking relief and redress from the federal government for the deprivations

suffered by Latter-day Saints in Missouri. Two weeks before

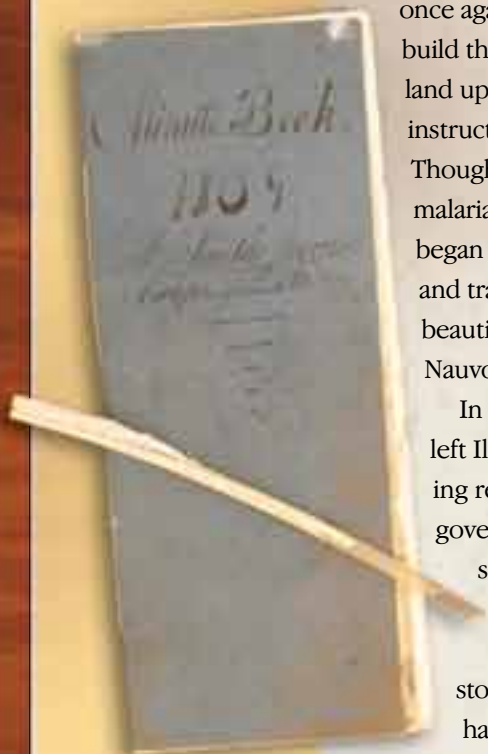
Joseph left, James Mulholland stopped keeping the journal. He may have stopped because he, like many others, had fallen ill, probably with malaria. He died while the Prophet was away.

#### **Second Illinois Journal: 1841–42**

In December 1841, a few months after his return from missionary service in England, Elder Willard Richards began the longest and most consistent journal-keeping effort of the Prophet's life. This and the succeeding Illinois journal contain entries for virtually every day from mid-December 1841 until the Prophet's death in June 1844. Elder Richards began this journal in a large ledger titled "The Book of the Law of the Lord." This record appears to have been created to fulfill the injunction to "keep a history, and a general church record of all things that transpire in Zion, and of all those who consecrate properties" (D&C 85:1). Transcripts of several revelations precede the 89 pages of journal entries, which are interspersed in a record of numerous donations to the Church.

This journal describes many significant events in the Prophet's life such as the creation of the Relief Society and construction of the Nauvoo Temple. The entries describe Joseph's activities as President of the Church, mayor of the city, storekeeper, chief justice, newspaper editor, commanding officer of the Nauvoo Legion, and other positions. The journal entries also contain revelations, a record of court cases, and correspondence with Joseph's wife, Emma, and others.

In June 1842, when Willard Richards departed for Massachusetts to move his family to Nauvoo, he transferred this journal to William Clayton. With periodic help from Eliza R. Snow and an unidentified scribe, Brother Clayton kept the remainder of the journal and donation record. The events of December 20, 1842, were the last entries recorded.







**Above: The third Illinois journal is a four-volume set for which Elder Willard Richards acted as scribe. The desk and document box shown here are believed to have come from the Smith family home in Nauvoo. Inset: This journal entry of April 6, 1843, records the opening day of a Church conference in Nauvoo.**

### Third Illinois Journal: 1842–44

Though half of the pages were still blank in the previous journal, a new journal, titled “President Joseph Smith’s Journal,” was started beginning on December 21, 1842, with Willard Richards again acting as scribe. This effort would eventually result in a four-volume, 1,045-page journal. It contains almost daily entries until June 22, 1844—just five days before the Prophet and his brother Hyrum were murdered.

The journal entries bear the stamp of their scribe, Elder Richards, but they capture the Prophet’s personality and character in ways that Joseph likely would not have written about himself. The entries range from lighthearted anecdotes to detailed accounts of legal cases over which Joseph Smith presided in the courts of Nauvoo. This wide scope of information helps us better understand the Prophet Joseph Smith. Some entries even provide insight into what he expected of the record keeping in his journal. For instance, on March 4, 1843, the Prophet told Elder Richards, “There

is one thing you fail in as historian—the naming or noticing surrounding objects, weather, etc.” Joseph’s review of this journal, though infrequent, demonstrates the importance he attached to providing historical context to the events of his life and the early Church.

Although the Prophet’s efforts to keep a record of his personal and ecclesiastical life waxed and waned, he eventually succeeded, with the help of others, in keeping a regular record of his doings. His journals serve not only as the basis for early Church history but as an example to us of the importance a record of our own life can have in the lives of our descendants. ■

*Spelling and punctuation modernized in all journal quotations; the journals are in possession of the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.*

### NOTES

1. See, for example, letter from Joseph Smith, Greenville, Indiana, to Emma Smith, Kirtland, Ohio, June 6, 1832, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois; letter from Joseph Smith, Kirtland, Ohio, to William W. Phelps, Independence, Missouri, Nov. 27, 1832, in Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, pages 1–4, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
2. See Noah Webster, ed., *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1845), “scriptory,” 731.

# A Mother

## AND AN OVERFLOWING HEART

**D**uring the Christmas season, our hearts are turned to the birth of the Savior. This may be especially true for new mothers. One such mother shares her experience.

“It was nearly two o’clock in the morning. My day had been filled with rocking my sick and crying baby instead of baking Christmas goodies as I had planned. Now, after bathing and dressing my son, I placed him in his crib and went to search through the last batch of wash for a clean blanket.

“As I walked back to his room, a picture of the nativity scene caught my eye. Something made me pause to look into the serene, innocent face of the sleeping Christ child. Suddenly I realized that this baby had grown up to know far better than I the pain of sacrifice. It was His mission to perform the greatest sacrifice in all of human history—the Atonement for the sins of all mankind.

“The Savior’s love for me filled my weary heart, and in turn, I was consumed with love for my own little boy. Hastily I went into his room and picked him up, eager to offer what small comfort I could. I rocked him by the light of our Christmas tree, humming soft Christmas carols. And whenever I looked into his little face, I was reminded of my



Savior, the baby in the manger.”

Following are paintings of mothers, who often represent the spirit of these words from President Gordon B. Hinckley: “Giving of self; giving of substance; giving of heart and mind and strength in assisting those in need . . . are of the very essence of the true spirit of Christmas” (“What Shall I Do Then with Jesus Which Is Called Christ?” *Ensign*, Dec. 1983, 3).

**▲ *Madonna and Child*,  
by Avard Fairbanks,  
plaster bas relief**



🎨 *Evening among the Roses*,  
by Trent Gudmundsen,  
oil painting,  
Seventh International Art  
Competition



🎨 *Mother and Child*,  
by Mary Teasdel,  
oil painting,  
Courtesy of the Alice Art  
Collection/Utah Arts Council



🎨 *Mother and Child*,  
by Fiona Phillips,  
oil painting,  
Seventh International Art  
Competition



🎨 **Elizabeth Teaching John,**  
by Ardith N. Oddous,  
oil painting

🎨 **Reunion,**  
by Benjamin Hammond,  
bronze sculpture,  
Seventh International Art Competition

🎨 **Mother and Child,**  
by Sarah Mathis Schulz,  
pastel painting,  
Seventh International Art Competition



◉ *Encircling Love,*  
by Sheri Lynn Doty,  
colored pencil



◉ *She Also Serves,*  
by Julie Lochridge,  
pastel painting,  
Seventh International Art  
Competition



◉ *Remember, My Son,*  
by Ann Marie Oborn,  
oil painting,  
Seventh International Art  
Competition ■



*I testify that Jesus is the perfect example and leader, not asking us to do what He has not done, not asking us to endure what He has not endured, giving us enough, but not more than we can manage.*

**BY ELDER NEAL A. MAXWELL**  
(1926–2004)

*Neal A. Maxwell was born on July 6, 1926, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to Clarence H. and Emma Ash Maxwell. He served for two years as an Assistant to the Twelve and for five years in the Presidency of the Seventy before being sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on October 3, 1981. He died on July 21, 2004, in Salt Lake City after an eight-year battle with leukemia. Elder Maxwell delivered this powerful testimony of the Savior during general conference in May 1976.*



**JESUS**

**OF NAZARETH,**

LEFT: THE LAST SUPPER, BY SIMON DEVEY, RIGHT: CHRIST CREATING THE EARTH, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT; FAR RIGHT: AND THE CHILD GREW AND WAXED STRONG IN THE SPIRIT, BY WALTER IRANE

**I**t matters so very much how we regard and view Jesus Christ. Some seek to substitute Caesars for Christ. Others are blinded because they are “looking beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14) when the mark is Christ. Many sects—without the reinforcing rods of revelation—have been badly shaken by theological tremors; the resulting ecclesiastical erosion has been so rapid it is measured in months, not centuries. Some crusaders without a cross have actually removed the divinity of Jesus Christ from the center of their doctrines—only to see all the other doctrinal dominoes tumble too.

Thus, foolishness, fear, and fashion have flattened the theology of many. For them, there is neither shelter nor landmark on the horizon.

There is, however, one people and one church bearing Jesus Christ’s name and built upon the fulness of His gospel. This people is seen by the world as eccentric, because they are so Christocentric!

This people strives to follow the counsel of the resurrected Savior, who said, “Hold up your light . . . unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do” (3 Nephi 18:24).

Today I desire to hold up that light by testifying of Jesus Christ and what He has done according to what I know, have seen, felt, and heard in my life. This testimony involves my

*Jesus helped to prepare this planet for us and led—not pushed—us from our premortal post. I thank Him for the untold things He did, across the ages of that first estate, to prepare perfectly for His unique role.*



*I testify that He was raised in a lowly town and thank Him for the example of rising above His beginnings without renouncing them and for then surmounting all that was set before Him.*

reason and my experience—the two limited but helping witnesses! Happily, there has been given to me the third witness of the Spirit—the unimpeachable and convincing witness!

My only regret is that what follows is apt to be the verbal equivalent of a child’s enthusiastic finger painting—because my tongue cannot tell all I know. Even so . . .

I testify that in our first estate Jesus was the incomparable individual among all our Father’s spirit children. He helped to prepare

# SAVIOR AND KING



***I testify that in eloquent example He partook voluntarily of the bitter cup in the awful, but for Him avoidable, Atonement.***

***I testify that Jesus was, in fact, actually proffered the kingdoms of this world by Satan. I thank Him for declining this specious offer since all eternity would have been shaken, for Jesus's grip on Himself was also mankind's hold on the future.***



this planet for us and led—not pushed—us from our premortal post. I thank Him for the untold things He did, across the ages of that first estate, to prepare perfectly for His unique role—while I was doing so very much less. I thank Him, further, for not deserting those of us who are slow or stragglers.

I testify that His intelligence is vastly superior in every field to the very brightest mortals in those fields and that His intellect in scope and truth far exceeds all human intellects. I thank Him for encapsulating that exquisite mind in both perfect love and perfect humility. His brilliance is not the “catch-me-if-you-can” kind, but a pleading and patient, “Come, follow me” (Luke 18:22).

I testify that His premortal performance reflected both an astonishing selflessness and

a breathtaking commitment to freedom as a condition of our genuine growth. I thank Him for combining His long view of our needs with a short step forward to volunteer His services. Never has anyone offered so much to so many in so few words as when Jesus

said, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27).

I testify that He assisted in the creation and management not only of this planet but also other worlds. His grasp is galactic, yet He noticed the widow casting in her mite. I am stunned at His perfect, unconditional love of all. Indeed, “I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me” (“I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193).

I testify that Jesus was, in fact, actually proffered the kingdoms of this world by Satan. I thank Him for declining this specious offer since all eternity would have been shaken, for Jesus's grip on Himself was also mankind's hold on the future.

I testify that He is the Divine Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. He who did not need to die Himself was willing to be bound



by the chains of death so He could break them for all mankind. I testify that He is thereby our advocate with the flawless Father. I thank Him for letting us decide how we will regard Him, our Rescuer. I thank Him for His discerning way of knowing us without controlling us, for never letting the needs of now crowd out the considerations of eternity.

I testify that in eloquent example He partook voluntarily of the bitter cup in the awful, but for Him avoidable, Atonement; we must, therefore, drink from our tiny cups. I thank Him for likewise not interceding on our behalf, even when we pray in faith and reasonable righteousness for that which would not be right for us. Our glimpse of Gethsemane should teach us that all prayers are petitions!

I testify that, though He never needed it, He gave to us what we desperately needed—that program of progress—repentance, which beckons us to betterness. I thank Him for helping me, even forgiving me, when I fall short, when I testify of things known but which are beyond the border of my behavior, and for helping me to advance that border, bit by bit. His relentless redemptiveness exceeds my recurring wrongs.

I testify that He has given us, and will give us, living prophets. I thank Him for His superb selection of His special witnesses and for His omniscient orchestration of their varied gifts in a symphony of salvation.

I testify that He was raised in a lowly town and thank Him for the example of rising above His beginnings without renouncing them and for then surmounting all that was set before Him.

I testify that the Jehovah introduced by thunderings and lightnings to a gathered Israel at Sinai (see Exodus 19:16–18) is the same Jesus who later lamented, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings” (Matthew 23:37). I thank Him for such repeated reachings out to mankind, whether in phenomenal power or in quiet conversation at a wellside.

I testify that He is the perfect example and leader, not

asking us to do what He has not done, not asking us to endure what He has not endured, giving us enough, but not more than we can manage. I thank Him who did everything perfectly for sharing His precious work with those of us who then do it so imperfectly.

I testify that He and the Father are serious about

stretching our souls in this second estate. I thank the Savior for truly teaching us about our personal possibilities and for divinely demonstrating directions—not just pointing.

I testify that just as He has helped to carefully construct this second estate for all mankind, He also has helped to carefully construct each of our little universes of experience. I thank Him for blessing me therein with a wife, children, parents, leaders, and friends to help me. I thank Him now for the tender times, the jarring times, the perplexing times, and even for the times when my learning is so painfully public—lest in such moments to come I am too taxed to testify or too anguished to appreciate.

I thank Jesus for foregoing fashionableness and for enduring not

only the absence of appreciation but also for speaking the truth, knowing beforehand that misunderstanding and misrepresentation would follow. I thank Him for His marvelous management of time, for never misusing a moment, including the moments of meditation. Even His seconds showed His stewardship.

No son ever complemented His Father so gracefully, honored His Father so constantly, or trusted His Father so completely as did Jesus.

Thus, I add my small voice to the anthem of appreciation that has proceeded from this pulpit over the decades. I gladly and unashamedly acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth, Savior and King!

Last of all, I witness that He lives—with all that those simple words imply. I know I will be held accountable for this testimony; but, as hearers or readers, you are now accountable for my witness—which I give in the very name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



**He who did not need to die Himself was willing to be bound by the chains of death so He could break them for all mankind.**



# FACING THE FUTURE WITH HOPE

BY ELDER LOWELL M. SNOW

Of the Seventy



*My witness is that the Lord promises you what He promised Joseph Smith—that every peril you pass through in this life will give you experience and be for your good.*

The effects of gravity can be frightening. As a younger man I loved flying a small airplane, but I sometimes dreaded the required practice flights with an instructor. To test my instrument skills and give me experience, my instructor would put a hood over my head to block from my view everything but the instruments while he turned the airplane every way but upside down.

At some point he would turn the wheel over to me and calmly request that I bring the airplane under control before we found ourselves in the middle of the nearest wheat field. As the instruments spun wildly, I fully expected the plane to stall and then literally fall from the sky before I could gain control. The falling always left me feeling helpless and certain that the effects of gravity could not be denied. But as I gained control and righted the airplane, aerodynamic *lift* would cause us to ascend into the heavens.

When we left our premortal home to come to earth, I suspect that our greatest fear was falling. Although we were glorious beings in heavenly surroundings, our Father desired more for us. He wanted us to gain a physical body, the experiences that go with it, and the opportunity to progress toward eternal perfection. When the great plan of the eternal God (see Alma 34:9) presented us with an opportunity to obtain a body and test our spirits under new and extreme conditions, we no doubt looked forward to our possibilities on earth (see Job 38:7). But I suspect we may have had some uncertainty about the consequences of the required fall. Our new life would be as fallen people on a fallen earth. As fallen men and women, there was the possibility we could become enemies to God if we used our agency unwisely (see Mosiah 3:19).

But our loving Father has reassured us that His “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8) was



founded on faith, not on fear of failure. It is a plan of mercy, a plan of redemption, a plan of restoration, a plan of salvation, and a plan of *deliverance* (see Alma 41:2; 42:5, 13–15). The central figure in this plan, the true Deliverer, is the Lord Jesus Christ. The deliverance offered was not to be limited by time. God’s deliverance would span all eternity, always safeguarding the agency so essential to our falling and then rising “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

God’s deliverance would be sure and infinite, comprehending every trial or crisis in our fallen world—conquering evil, sin, and death through resurrection and reconciliation. His premortal assurances of deliverance gave us cause to shout for joy (see Job 38:7), and most of the Father’s spirit children elected to come to earth. Nephi later echoed the Father’s parental promises,



***The “great plan of happiness” is a plan of mercy, a plan of redemption, a plan of restoration, a plan of salvation, and a plan of deliverance. The central figure in this plan, the true Deliverer, is the Lord Jesus Christ.***

saying he would “show unto [us] that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20).

Under divine direction the earth was organized, man was appointed a central role, and in time the Great Deliverer was sent to partake of the bitter cup and finish his “preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:19). But our memory of those primal promises has been intentionally dimmed, and we cannot now recall what we learned in those glorious courts on high. Instead of simply remembering, we are required to learn of and develop faith in God’s promised deliverance.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us by personal example how deliverance

from the power of a fallen and darkened world can come. In those sacred precincts of Palmyra, Joseph was seized by a power that entirely overcame him and had such an astonishing influence over him that he felt doomed to destruction. After he exerted all his powers to call for help, the light of God descended and delivered him from the enemy that held him bound. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:15–17.) In like manner, our deliverance from this fallen world requires us to cast the dark veil of unbelief from our minds and allow the light of the glory of God—the marvelous light of his goodness, the light of everlasting life—to fill our souls with hope (see Alma 19:6).

Images of a fallen world appear daily in our modern media, and they are not very flattering. A charitable description of mankind’s condition today might be: “We have fallen, and we can’t get up.” Much of the world seems to be headed in the wrong direction. Satan’s influence has become pervasive and is also picking up speed, while prophetic warnings of the fate awaiting the wicked have not yet penetrated enough hearts or minds. Even the righteous occasionally worry about whether they will be able to stay out of the crossfire in that terrible day. But the righteous need not fear, for when the Deliverer returns, He will be as the bridegroom at the wedding feast. The righteous will “be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7). To find deliverance in a day when “men’s hearts [are] failing them for fear” (Luke 21:26), we must watch for that great “day of gladness”<sup>1</sup> and make ourselves ready.

It is not just the tyranny of evil that threatens to destroy our hope for the future. At times we may feel that our personal lives are unraveling from the natural consequences of living in a fallen world. The agency of man allows the

introduction of chaos into lives that long for order, and nothing can seem more hopeless than the tattered lives of those we love. Can they, or we, ever be rescued? Is there any hope for them, or us? In moments of such despair, the priceless promise of God’s deliverance brings hope to troubled hearts.

Prophets have not only warned the wicked of the calamities that await them, but they have also borne witness that the righteous will be delivered. No prophet has framed it more simply than did President Gordon B. Hinckley in the program for Sister Marjorie Hinckley’s funeral: “It isn’t as bad as you sometimes think it is. It all works out. Don’t worry. I say that to myself every morning. It will all work out. Put your trust in God, and move forward with faith and confidence in the future. The Lord will not forsake us. He will not forsake us. If we will put our trust in Him, if we will pray to Him, if we will live worthy of His blessings, He will hear our prayers.”<sup>2</sup> President Hinckley’s optimism for the future is rooted in his firm knowledge that the Lord’s promises of deliverance are sure.

New Testament prophets and apostles also gave resounding testimony of the Savior’s power and purpose as a deliverer. John saw the Saints “coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

“And [he] heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. . . .



**After Joseph exerted all his powers to call for help, the light of God descended and delivered him from the enemy that held him bound.**



“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Revelation 21:2–5, 7).

Book of Mormon writers recorded their own witnesses of deliverance. Nephi prophesied in detail how Israel would be gathered and saved when the wicked burn as stubble, the kingdom of the devil is destroyed, and Satan is bound (see 1 Nephi 22:13–28). Alma reassured his son Shiblon: “I would that ye should remember, that as much as ye shall put your trust in God even so much ye shall be delivered out of your trials, and your troubles, and your afflictions, and ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

“Now, my son, I would not that ye should think that I know these things of myself, but it is the Spirit of God which is in me which maketh these things known unto me; for if I had not been born of God I should not have known these things” (Alma 38:5–6).

In fact, Alma knew from firsthand experience the reality of deliverance, for as a young man his soul had been racked with inexpressible horror as a result of his iniquity and rebellion against God. After he remembered the prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of the world and cried out in faith for deliverance, he could remember his pains no more but was filled with joy and marvelous light (see Alma 36:12–20). He experienced divine deliverance because he had, as he said, been born of God (see Alma 36:5).

The resurrected Christ explained how such a rebirth leads to deliverance: “My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; . . . that I might draw all men unto me, that . . . even so should men be lifted up by the Father” (3 Nephi 27:14). The tender mercies of a loving Father and His Only Begotten feel after us, seeking to lift us out of this fallen world back into the heavens. The gospel of Christ draws us *to* Him so we can be perfected *in* Him. We are *born* again in order to be *borne up* again.



**God proclaimed a deliverance that would overcome death, bind up the brokenhearted, liberate the captive, open the doors of the prison, and comfort all who mourn.**

As John confirmed, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

In our own day the Savior bore witness of His will and power to deliver us from this fallen world: “Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me” (D&C 50:41). His promises are sure, but for our hope to be sure we must *believe* Him, not just believe *in* Him.

My witness is that even though we live in a fallen world, we also live in the greatest dispensation this world has ever known. We are a favored people God has chosen just for this day. His promise of deliverance, extended before this world began and echoed throughout the ages, is sure. He proclaimed a deliverance that would overcome death, bind up the brokenhearted, liberate the captive, open the doors of the prison to those who are bound, and comfort all who mourn, while delivering “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (see Isaiah 61:1–3). No unhallowed hand can stop His work in our behalf; and when wickedness, terror, disease, disaster, and death rage among the children of men, breaking our hearts and attempting to break our spirits, we must “fear . . . not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (Exodus 14:13).

My witness is that the Lord promises you what He promised Joseph Smith—that every peril you pass through in this life will give you experience and be for your good (see D&C 122:7), that “thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 122:9). ■

**NOTES**

1. “I’m Trying to Be like Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 78.
2. “Put Your Trust in God,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2006, 63.

BY STEFFANI R. PACKER

**F**or most children, Christmas is a time of excitement and anticipation. For me, it was also a lesson in economics and math. As the youngest of five children, I feared that someone, somehow, would receive more presents than I would. As the days in December passed, I made it my personal mission to count all of the presents under the tree, ensuring that I had the most gifts, or at least as many as my siblings. When I had the most, I knew that my parents loved me more than anything, and I was convinced that I was their favorite child.

But most of the time, counting presents left me feeling unsatisfied, ungrateful, and upset. Even after Mom showed me from her store receipts that she truly had spent the same amount of money on each of the children, I still felt cheated somehow. In my young mind, the amount of money my mother spent didn't matter—the number of presents did. To me, gift plus gift equaled love.

As I grew, I began applying this equation to my relationship with my Heavenly Father by counting my presents from Him. Whenever I wondered if He loved me, I went through my blessings, keeping a running total in my mind. "Heavenly Father loves me because He has given me . . ." This worked incredibly well for many years. Because I had been blessed in numerous ways, I felt sure I was one of His favorite people. When I got married and had a baby boy, I added two more blessings to my list. My blessings were my measuring stick for Heavenly Father's love.



LEARNING  
NOT TO  
COUNT

Then came a problem. I began praying to have another baby. But after three miscarriages, I started feeling unloved. I tried counting my other blessings, but that didn't make me feel any better. Nothing seemed as important as the blessing Heavenly Father was denying me. If He loved me, as I thought my life had proven thus far, why wouldn't He grant me the blessing I so desperately wanted?

At 23, I was still figuratively counting presents under the tree. I began to realize that if Heavenly Father used blessings as His measuring stick for love, He must not love those whose lives were stricken with struggle and pain. Everything in me knew this wasn't true, and yet it was hard to believe He loved me when He wouldn't give me what I longed for.

I needed answers. If my blessings couldn't be the ultimate measuring stick, then what could I use to measure Heavenly Father's love for me?

On a day when I felt Heavenly Father didn't love me at all, my two-year-old son asked me to read to him from our children's Bible storybook. As I read the simple text describing the

*I have learned that the number of my blessings is not a measurement of Heavenly Father's love for me.*

greatest events ever to unfold on this earth, the birth of the Savior and His Atonement, I was reminded of what the Savior went through for me. He was the Son of God, the Only Begotten, and yet on this earth He descended below everything. He looked for "some to take pity, but there was

none; and for comforters, but [He] found none" (Psalm 69:20). Still He followed the Father's will—without indulging in self-pity.

I found my answer: the Savior's sacrifice is the ultimate evidence of Heavenly Father's love. He sent His Son to suffer beyond what any of us can imagine so we can find peace in this world and then return to Him one day. This is love.

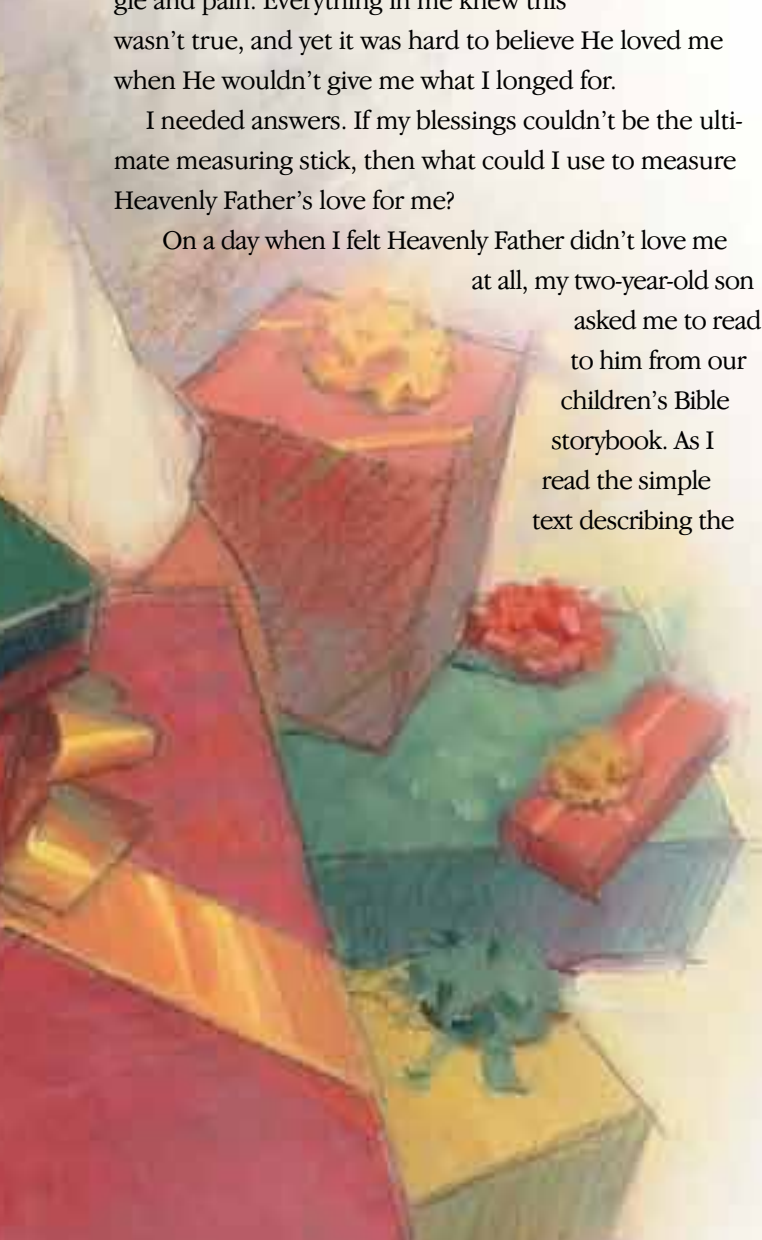
Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1926–2004) said: "When suffering and burdened Jesus entered Gethsemane, He 'fell on the ground' (Mark 14:35). He did not merely kneel down, pray intensely and briefly, and leave. His agonies were so great that He began to bleed at every one of thousands of His pores (see D&C 19:18). An angel, whose identity we do not know, came to strengthen Him (see Luke 22:43). Mark wrote that Jesus became 'sore amazed' and 'very heavy' (Mark 14:33), meaning in the Greek, respectively, 'astonished and awe-struck' and 'depressed and dejected.' None of us can tell Christ anything about depression!"<sup>1</sup>

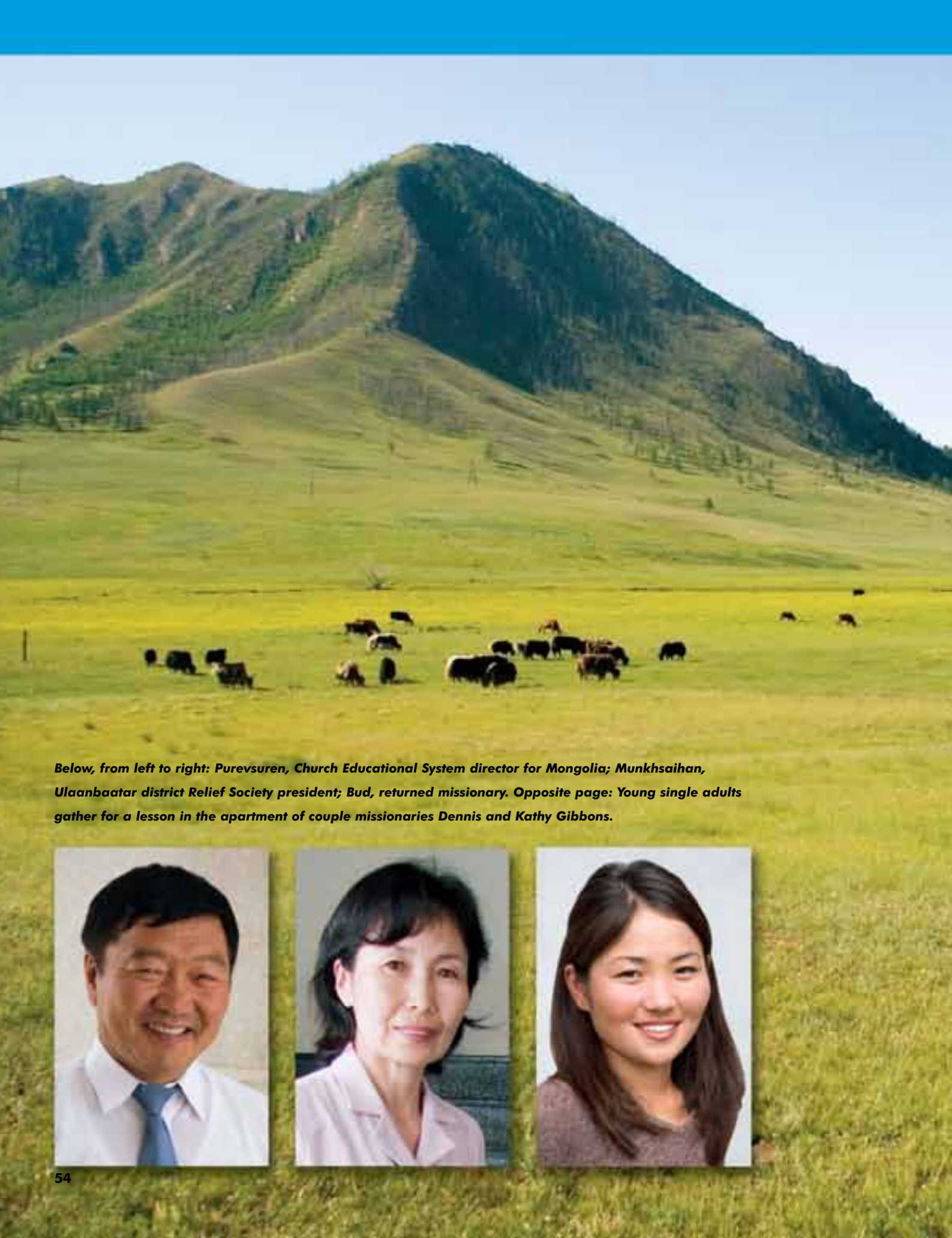
That afternoon I stopped feeling sorry for myself and realized that it wasn't about me but about Him. If I would turn to His Atonement every time I felt thwarted and alone, I would find love. While I recognize that my blessings come from His gracious hand, I knew that if I continued to measure His love by the presence or absence of these blessings, I would never feel secure in "the arms of his love" (see 2 Nephi 1:15).

For years I had been using a measuring stick to quantify Heavenly Father's love for me. Now I know that Heavenly Father's love cannot be measured. Through the gift of our Savior, I learned that the love of Heavenly Father and His Son is infinite. ■

**NOTE**

1. "Enduring Well," *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, 10.





*Below, from left to right: Purevsuren, Church Educational System director for Mongolia; Munkhsaihan, Ulaanbaatar district Relief Society president; Bud, returned missionary. Opposite page: Young single adults gather for a lesson in the apartment of couple missionaries Dennis and Kathy Gibbons.*





# Mongolia

## Steppes of Faith

*The gospel is relatively new to Mongolia, but as members change themselves through faith in Jesus Christ, they are changing the world around them.*

BY DON L. SEARLE  
Church Magazines

**S**culpted on a mountainside on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, Genghis Khan looks down on the capital of the Mongol homeland. The giant image of the great khan is a reminder that he once conquered an empire covering most of Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Eastern Europe. “In twenty-five years, the Mongol army subjugated more lands and people than the Romans had conquered in four hundred years. . . . Genghis Khan conquered more than twice as much as any other man in history.”<sup>1</sup> The

khan’s descendants and their influence would be dominant forces in history for centuries to come.

In July 2006, Mongolia celebrated the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Mongol Empire. Today, some might call this a “developing country,” but that term should be used in a positive sense. Energetic and creative Mongolians are rapidly developing both their country and themselves.

For some, this has included developing faith in Jesus Christ. From the 1920s until 1990, no religion was officially tolerated in Mongolia. Latter-day Saint missionaries arrived in 1993. Now there are 2 districts and 20 branches in Mongolia, with more than 6,000 members. Missionaries find that many Mongolians accept the gospel readily.

Following are just a few of their stories.

### Purevsuren

Sh. Purevsuren was introduced to God and Bible stories while studying at a university in the Soviet Union. (Mongolians ordinarily go by their first name, with initials of the surname in front for official purposes.) He bought a Bible from a fellow student because the book had Russian on one page and the same text in English on the facing page. Purevsuren read surreptitiously at night to learn English; reading the Bible openly would have meant expulsion.

His father had taught him Buddhist principles of honor and right, and Purevsuren had always





**Above: Odgerel (left), Ulaanbaatar district president; Soyolmaa, one of the first missionaries from her country; Ankhbayar, also a returned missionary. Below: A Primary leader teaches children a lesson. Opposite page, top: Adiyabold and his family in a Mongolian tent home. Opposite page, bottom: Odgerel (back row, wearing a cap) and his extended family, with members from four generations.**

tried to live by those. His spiritual interest in the Bible came only after he returned to Mongolia, married, and was a university professor. In connection with his work, he visited India. A Christian he met there gave him a Bible and shared feelings about the divinity of Jesus Christ. Purevsuren remembered his father's teachings about a life following this one. "I had a fundamental belief about God from my father," he says, and he began to wonder how God would want him to prepare for the next life.

As the head of a consortium of Mongolian educators, he was invited to visit the United States, where he first saw the Book of Mormon. In Utah, a Church member who hosted the tour group gave him a copy of the book. Purevsuren read in it briefly and then put it aside.

In September 2000, his family came into contact with LDS missionaries in Mongolia and listened to the missionary discussions. This time he read the Book of Mormon with new eyes and found truth he had been seeking. He and his wife were baptized and confirmed that November. Only a week or two later, he was called as branch president.

Their children were not interested at first in this new church. Their son, then in high school, was especially resistant but obediently agreed to his father's request to listen to the missionaries. Eventually, both children

were baptized and confirmed. Their son served a mission in Idaho.

Now Purevsuren is deeply involved in teaching young people as coordinator of the Church Educational System for Mongolia, a position he has held since 2001.

There are about 600 institute students in Mongolia and some 700 in seminary. Those numbers have grown by about 300 percent since 2001, even though students often face opposition from family members and the cost of attendance, in time and transportation, is high.

What is the most rewarding part of his job? "The best thing, I think, is seeing so many kids joining the Church through seminary" as students bring their friends.

### **Soyolmaa**

"I was a hard kid," U. Soyolmaa says, looking back on the period in high school after her parents died. She became involved in drinking and partying while at a university in Russia. After returning to Mongolia, she was surprised when a friend from those party days invited her to visit a church. Her friend seemed so changed.

Soyolmaa was not unfamiliar with teachings of Christianity, but at first she resisted her friend's invitation. When she finally said yes, she felt excited but did not understand why. At the Church meetings, she was captivated



immediately by feelings of peace, of belonging, of knowing where her life should go. Soyolmaa joined her friend's church, and in 1995 they were the first two missionaries called from Mongolia. Soyolmaa served in Utah.

Currently, she is director of Materials Management for the Church in Mongolia. She is also public affairs director for the country, a counselor in the district Relief Society presidency, and a Gospel Doctrine teacher in her branch.

"It is a privilege to be a member of the Church," she says. "Because I am in the Church, my life keeps climbing upward."

The Church is not well-known in Mongolia, and there is more negative information available about Latter-day Saints than positive. There must be constant efforts to spread truth.

Members are the best ambassadors for the Church. They stand out, she explains, because of "that light, that happiness" seen in their faces. They feel a confidence, a joy through the gospel that many others do not have.

Like Latter-day Saints elsewhere, she says, Church members in Mongolia "have the same beliefs, so in the gospel we belong to one big family."

### **Odgerel**

When his mother invited him to visit a Christian church in 1995, O. Odgerel did not know she was already a member. Working at a public library, she was in charge of renting out its assembly room. Drawn by singing she heard from that room one day, she was invited to join the meeting. Later, she listened to the missionary discussions and was baptized and confirmed.



Odgerel had been born in Russia while his parents were students there and had been educated in Soviet socialism; it was almost his religion. But when the Soviet Union fell apart, what he had believed in was gone. He turned to drinking and partying, thinking the only purpose in life was to enjoy oneself before dying. He soon realized, however, that this lifestyle was a dead end and he ought to abstain from things that he could see were harming him.

Like many other Mongolians, he found it easy to accept the Book of Mormon when he read it. "Mongolian people may receive the gospel really quickly because they can see the good things in it easily," Odgerel says. They "open their hearts to it very sincerely." So it was with him. He had felt there was a Supreme Being. Through the gospel, he found a God and a way of life he could believe in. "That was my happiest moment," he says.

Mongolian society could benefit from the reshaping that the gospel brings to people's lives, he says. Drinking is a problem; so too is immorality. In Mongolia, there is only the worldly model, now strongly reinforced via television, to shape behavior. There is no strong religious tradition in the country to work against it. But through the gospel of Jesus Christ, Odgerel says, people find a righteous way to direct their lives.

Odgerel is president of the Ulaanbaatar Mongolia District, which has 11 branches and some 3,700 members. About 70 percent of the members are single.

### **Ankhubayar**

From 2001 to 2003, E. Ankhubayar served in the Utah Salt Lake City South Mission. Now in his mid-20s, he is the young single adult leader in the Ulaanbaatar district.

He spoke no English when he received his mission call; two American missionaries read the letter to him. Now he



manages the one-room distribution center in the Church offices in Ulaanbaatar, helping members obtain gospel materials available in Mongolian and materials in English for those who can use them. He says that as a missionary, he helped people learn about the gospel, and he is still doing the same.

Ankhubayar came into the Church in 1998 with the rest of his family—parents and younger brother. While his family was attending a Church meeting, he had two dreams that influenced him. In both he was fleeing from certain destruction when a bright, shining personage saved him. Ankhubayar’s parents told him later that this personage was undoubtedly the Savior and invited him to pray about the meaning of his dream. The answer he received led him to listen to the gospel.

Before they joined the Church, “my family was not close,” he says. Now “we talk to each other. I can feel my mother and father’s love.” In the mission field, Ankhubayar felt like Church members were family. He works now to share the gospel with friends so they too can enjoy this feeling.

One person with whom he has shared the gospel is his girlfriend, who was baptized and confirmed. If they should marry, they would face the dilemma many young Mongolian couples struggle with: where to live. Housing is scarce, and the cost is too high for many young marrieds. They may end up living with parents in a small apartment or perhaps in the traditional *ger*, the circular, one-room tentlike home of the Mongol nomads.

### **Majigsuren**

Since missionaries in Mongolia are not allowed to proselytize, their contacts come through inquiries or referrals. When Mongolians find the gospel, the first people they refer to the missionaries are usually loved ones, so branches often include members of extended families.

Z. Majigsuren lives in a small apartment in Darkhan, Mongolia, with her husband, two teenage daughters, and several members of her extended family: Her daughter and son-in-law and their young daughter also live there. So too does a son with his wife and their baby.

Majigsuren’s son-in-law, A. Soronzonbold, is president of the Darkhan district. Her son, Kh. Sergelen, is first counselor in the presidency of the Darkhan Second Branch. And Majigsuren is first counselor in the branch Relief Society presidency.

Missionaries first came to Darkhan in 1996, and she was baptized and confirmed in 1997, one of the pioneer members in the city.

“I am very grateful that all of my children are members of the Church,” she says. Majigsuren remembers the fruit of the tree of life that Lehi saw in vision (see 1 Nephi 8). “I wanted to partake of that fruit and return to my Heavenly Father.” She wanted her children to partake also. She is grateful that two of them have now been sealed to their spouses in the Hong Kong China Temple: her daughter, K. Selenge, who is married to Soronzonbold, and Sergelen with his wife, T. Altantuya.

Members, she says, “need to come to church, they need to pray, and they need to keep the faith. The most important is faith,” because without that, they will not do the others.

Her son, Sergelen, became interested in the Church because he could see how his mother and sister had changed as a result of becoming members. He had listened as a senior missionary couple taught the story of Lehi to his mother, and he had realized that she too was trying to lead her children in doing right.

Like many Mongolian members, Sergelen says, “I love to read the Book of Mormon because each time I read I discover new things.” The story of Captain Moroni is a favorite. He is also moved by Jacob 6:11–12, calling on all to “repent ye, and enter in at the strait gate.”





“I’m so grateful I had the opportunity to serve a mission in Russia,” Sergelen says. He did not baptize many people, but he believes seeds were planted that will blossom in the future. Since 1993, more than 530 young people from Mongolia have served missions. More than 300 served in the United States, and a significant number served in Russia.

Sergelen’s brother-in-law, Soronzonbold, has been a member of the Church since he was 18, and now, in his mid-20s, serves as president of the Darkhan district, with its five branches. He is a university student. “I am grateful for my calling in the Church because I learn so much from it,” he says.

Mongolians are impressed, Soronzonbold explains, because members serve in the Church without pay.

“Before I became a member, I was very selfish,” he says. Now he has a goal of learning as much as he can about the gospel. “Our challenge is to learn and to share.”

#### **Munkhsaihan**

Before she found the gospel, A. Munkhsaihan saw the world as a dark place with little hope. Finding faith and hope through the gospel changed the world for her.

In the years before 1990, she taught Russian. But when the political and cultural climate of Mongolia changed, she found that she needed to learn English so she could teach it.

Munkhsaihan studied English for a year with Latter-day Saint missionaries. Before listening to the missionary discussions, she determined that she would examine their faith carefully. She found their religion was more than a faith based on true principles—it was a way of life. She was baptized and confirmed in June 2000, and the rest of her family joined the Church a month later. Now she sees the world as a much brighter place for her, her children, and her grandchildren. Currently, she serves as president of the Relief Society in the Ulaanbaatar district.

After the gospel changed her own life, Munkhsaihan wondered what would happen if she applied its principles in her work as a teacher. She began trying consciously to love all her students—and with some that was difficult. She began to pray for her students. Interestingly, she found *herself* changing; she developed a greater capacity to love them. Even though the students did not know she was praying for them, their attitudes toward her changed as well.

“As we exercise faith in the gospel, we can change ourselves,” she says.

And this, her experience suggests, is how the gospel may change Mongolia. As members change themselves through faith in Jesus Christ, they will change the world around them. ■

#### **NOTE**

1. Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (2004), xviii.

**Above, from left: Two Mongolian returned missionaries begin married life together. Majigsuren, a pioneer member in Darkhan. Tuvshinjargal, Ulaanbaatar district Primary president, and her daughter Anudari. Below: Likeness of Genghis Khan sculpted on a mountainside. Opposite page: Horsemen represent Mongol troops in the annual Naadam celebration.**



## Become an Instrument in the Hands of God by Exercising Charity



*Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet*

*the needs of the sisters you visit.*

*Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.*

### What Is Charity?

**President Howard W. Hunter**

**(1907–95):** “‘A new commandment I give unto you,’ [the Savior] said, ‘That ye love one another; . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ (John 13:34–35.) This love that we should have for our brothers and sisters in the human family, and that Christ has for every one of us, is called charity or ‘the pure love of Christ.’ (Moro. 7:47.) It is the love that prompted the suffering and sacrifice of Christ’s atonement. It is the highest pinnacle the human soul can reach and the deepest expression of the human heart. . . .

“The Savior has commanded us to love one another as he has loved us; to clothe ourselves ‘with the bond of charity’ (D&C 88:125), as he so clothed himself. We are called upon to purify our inner feelings, to change our hearts, to make our outward actions and appearance conform to what we say we believe. . . .

“Those who are filled with the love of Christ do not seek to force others to do better; they inspire others to do better, indeed inspire them to the pursuit of God. We need to extend the hand of friendship. We need to be kinder, more gentle, more forgiving, and slower to anger” (“A More Excellent Way,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 61–63).

### How Can Charity Help Me Be an Instrument in the Hands of God?

**Ether 12:28:** “Faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness.”

**Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve**

**Apostles:** “Once we see through the eye of faith that we are children of a loving Father who has given us the gift of His Son to redeem us, we experience a mighty change in our hearts. We feel ‘to sing the song of redeeming love’ [Alma 5:26], and our hearts overflow with charity. Knowing that the

love of God ‘is the most desirable of all things . . . and the most joyous to the soul’ [1 Nephi 11:22–23], we want to share our joy with others. We want to serve them and bless them” (“Cultivating Divine Attributes,” *Liabona*, Jan. 1999, 31; *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 27).

**Anne C. Pingree, former second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:** “We can alter the face of the earth *one family and one home at a time* through charity, our small and simple acts of pure love.

“Charity, the Savior’s pure love, is the ‘highest, noblest, strongest kind of love,’ which we ‘pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart’ to possess. Elder Dallin H. Oaks teaches us that charity ‘is not an *act* but a *condition* or state of being [one becomes].’ Our day-to-day offer-

ings of charity are ‘written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; . . . in [the] fleshy tables of [our] heart[s].’ Little by little our charitable acts change our natures, define our characters, and ultimately make us women with the courage and commitment to say to the Lord, ‘Here am I; send me’” (“Charity: One Family, One Home at a Time,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 108–9). ■



## *My Most Precious Gift*

By Consuelo Conesa Leone

**A**s I thought about all the gifts and cards we would be giving during another Christmas season, suddenly a question came to my mind. Of all the gifts I had received during Christmastime in the past, had any of them significantly affected my life? Then I remembered December 1963.

I was home alone because my parents had gone out. I was a young teacher at the time. Classes had ended, I was on vacation, and Christmas was fast approaching. I looked around for something to read, but I had already read everything in our home library. I decided to go see a neighbor who had a good book collection and had often loaned books to me. This time she offered a book that two young men—foreigners—had left with her.

“I’d like to know your opinion of it,” she said. “The content seems interesting.”

She then added that the young men were missionaries. Missionaries? My interest in the book immediately died. At the time I was not interested in anything having to do with religion, but I took the book anyway.

As I said good-bye, my neighbor added, “Inside the book you’ll find a little note they wrote, suggesting that before reading the book, a person

needs to say a prayer to God.”

Not having any plans that rainy Saturday, I decided to read the “interesting” book. I opened it and found the note written by the missionaries. I put the book on my bed, knelt down, and for the first time in my life, offered up a prayer to God in my own words.

As I started to read, the story captivated me. How was young Nephi able to exercise such unshakable faith? I wondered if I would ever be capable of doing something like that. As I read the book of Mosiah, I drew strength from the words of King Benjamin. At the time I had no idea I was reading a book that would become my favorite for more than 40 years.

During those years the book’s pages have provided me with much support, comfort,

and strength, and I have discovered many important insights that I shared in talks and lessons at the little Tucumán Branch in Argentina, where I was baptized and confirmed. Two years later, while serving a full-time mission, I also wrote little notes on pieces of paper, suggesting to investigators that they pray before reading the copy of the Book of Mormon my companion and I left in their hands.

So many years have passed since then. But how could I have forgotten the most precious Christmas gift I ever received and the neighbor who gave it to me? I can hardly remember her face, and I struggle to remember

her name—Marina. Thank you, neighbor. You have my eternal gratitude. ■

**I** had no idea I was reading a book that would become my favorite for more than 40 years.



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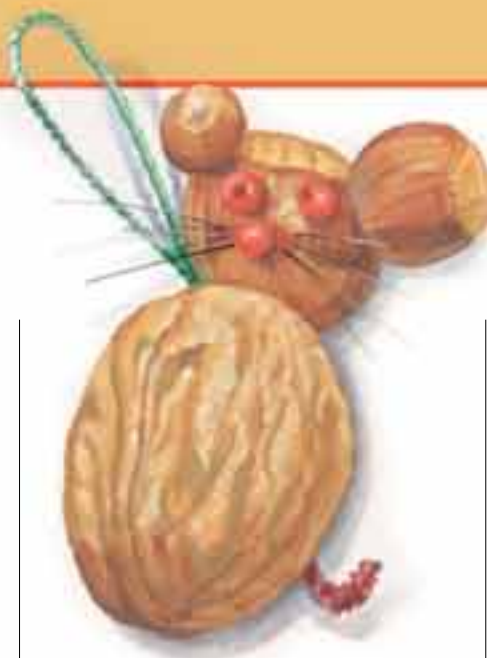
# Mother's Christmas Mouse

By Betty LeBaron Mostert

When I was a child in the 1950s and 1960s, our Christmas traditions were not elaborate—except for the stockings. Because we children enjoyed our Christmas stockings so much, we continued the tradition when we married and had children of our own. Buying surprises and assembling dozens of Christmas stockings, however, soon became too much for my aging parents, especially my mother, who had a serious case of rheumatoid arthritis that limited her mobility and energy.

Eventually, I volunteered to take over the project. Our annual extended family home evening, in which we acted out the Christmas story and opened our stockings, found me exhausted from the demands of being the mother of several small children and juggling the events of an active life. As I watched everyone dump treasures out of the gingham Christmas stockings I had carefully prepared, I was feeling a little sorry for myself.

As expected, my stocking was empty except for the standard candy cane and Japanese orange that I had placed there earlier. But as I shook



them out, I noticed a little bedraggled mouse made of a walnut and hazelnuts. One ear was much bigger than the other, and the whiskers were crooked. The tail had been cut too short, and the loop to hang it on the tree was off center. I was confused. Had someone's kindergarten project ended up in my stocking?

I looked up and saw my mother watching me from her wheelchair across the room. With a gnarled, bent finger, she beckoned to me.

"I wanted to do something for the Christmas stockings," she said. "They made these little mice in Relief Society, and they were so cute."

Her tears were close to the surface, and her gentle voice shook as she continued.

"I couldn't get my fingers to work, so I made only one. It didn't turn out, but I knew you wouldn't mind."

I looked again at the little mouse in my hand. She was right. I didn't mind. In fact, her little bedraggled mouse became the most precious treasure of all that Christmas.

For more than 20 years, I have tenderly removed the tissue paper from the misshapen mouse crafted

by misshapen fingers and carefully placed it on a branch. My angel mother has been free of her crippled body for several years, but her Christmas mouse reminds me of two profound truths.

The first is that my mother honored me by believing that I could look past the mouse's crooked ears and feel the love and sacrifice that went into its creation. The second is that if I, as an imperfect mortal, am capable of finding beauty in a humble little mouse, how much more is our Father in Heaven capable of seeing past our imperfect efforts and understanding our pure intentions.

I know that when we do our best to give to others and to Him, our gift is not just good enough—it is of incalculable worth. ■

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## A Christmas to Remember

By Jerry O. Thompson

My wife and I had been married less than two years; we were caring for a newborn; and, like typical struggling student families, we were stretching our finances trying to make ends meet.

Graduation was still a few years away, and we were trying to make the best of the Christmas season. I had several part-time jobs, and my wife, Lisa, was working as a secretary.



We didn't have a lot of extras, but we were happy.

A few months before Christmas, I was still getting to know the families I was recently assigned to home teach. One family in particular stood out because of the adversity they had recently faced. Two of their children had died in an accident from which the father was still recuperating, and the mother suffered from a crippling illness that had left her physically impaired. Despite these challenges, this family had a great spirit about them, and they set an example by the way they followed the commandments.

During my home teaching visit in December, I saw that they did not have a Christmas tree. My heart sank for their children. Knowing of their physical, spiritual, and financial struggles, my wife and I decided to do something for them.

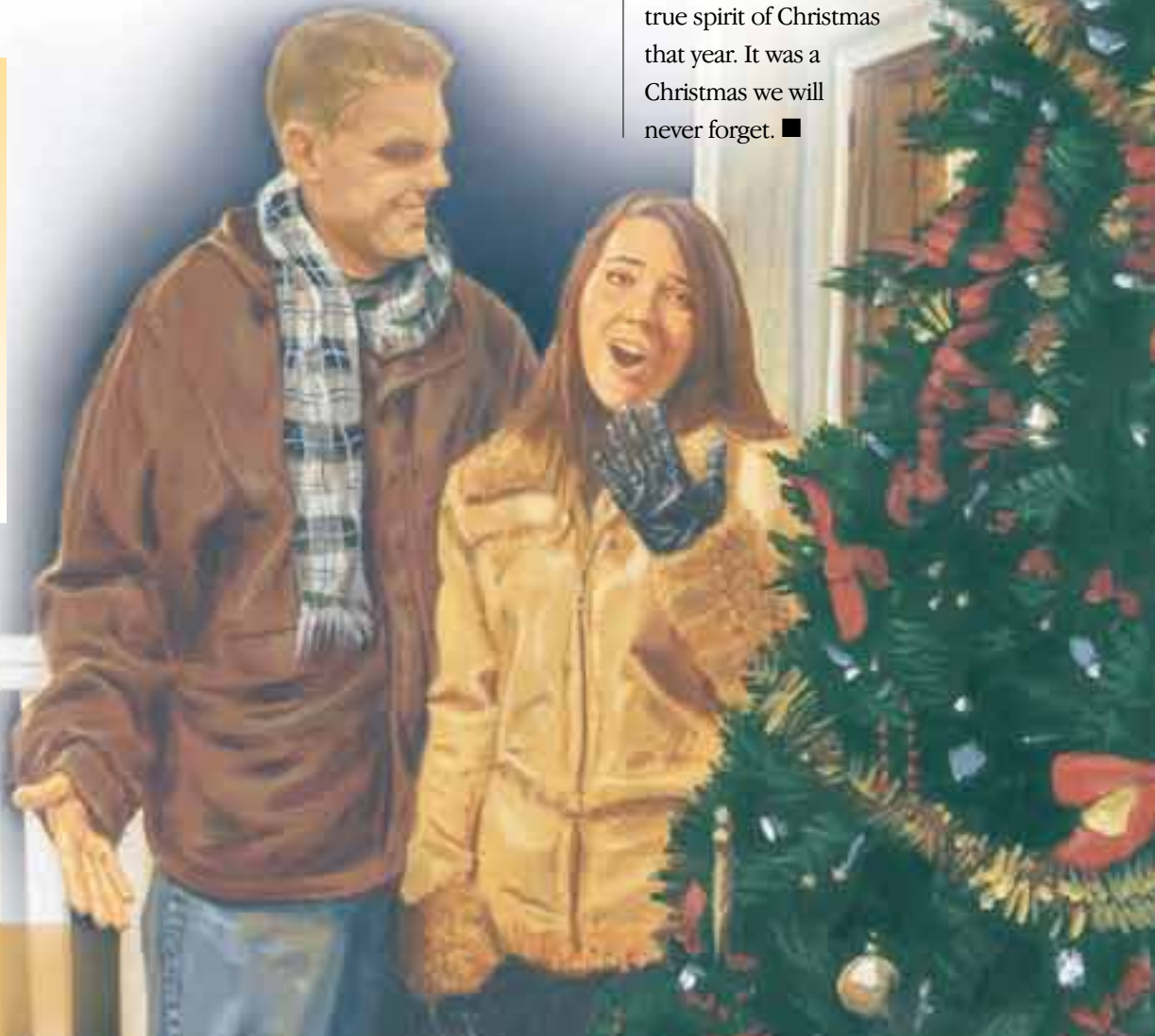
We had saved enough money to buy a Christmas tree, so we decided to go out on Christmas Eve, buy the biggest tree we could afford, gift wrap it, and anonymously leave it at this family's home. Fortunately, no one was home as we dropped off the tree. As we drove home afterward, we anticipated the joy they would feel

upon returning home and finding the tree waiting for them. This small sacrifice added a spirit of peace and joy to our holiday that I had not felt before.

When we arrived at our apartment, we had our own surprise waiting for us on the doorstep: a beautifully decorated Christmas tree! My wife wept as she beheld this anonymous gift of love given to us in our financial need.

We later found out that this gift was given to us by the same family to whom we had given our tree. Even in their dark hour, this family had sought to bless others. Our hearts were filled with the true spirit of Christmas that year. It was a Christmas we will never forget. ■

**W**hen we arrived at our apartment, we had our own surprise waiting for us.



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## *Did Heavenly Father Really Love Me?*

By Carol C. Watts

Usually I loved the music, activities, and excitement that accompanied the holiday season, but this season was different because our family had moved to a new town. I knew we needed to be there at that time, but I felt uncomfortable and out of place.

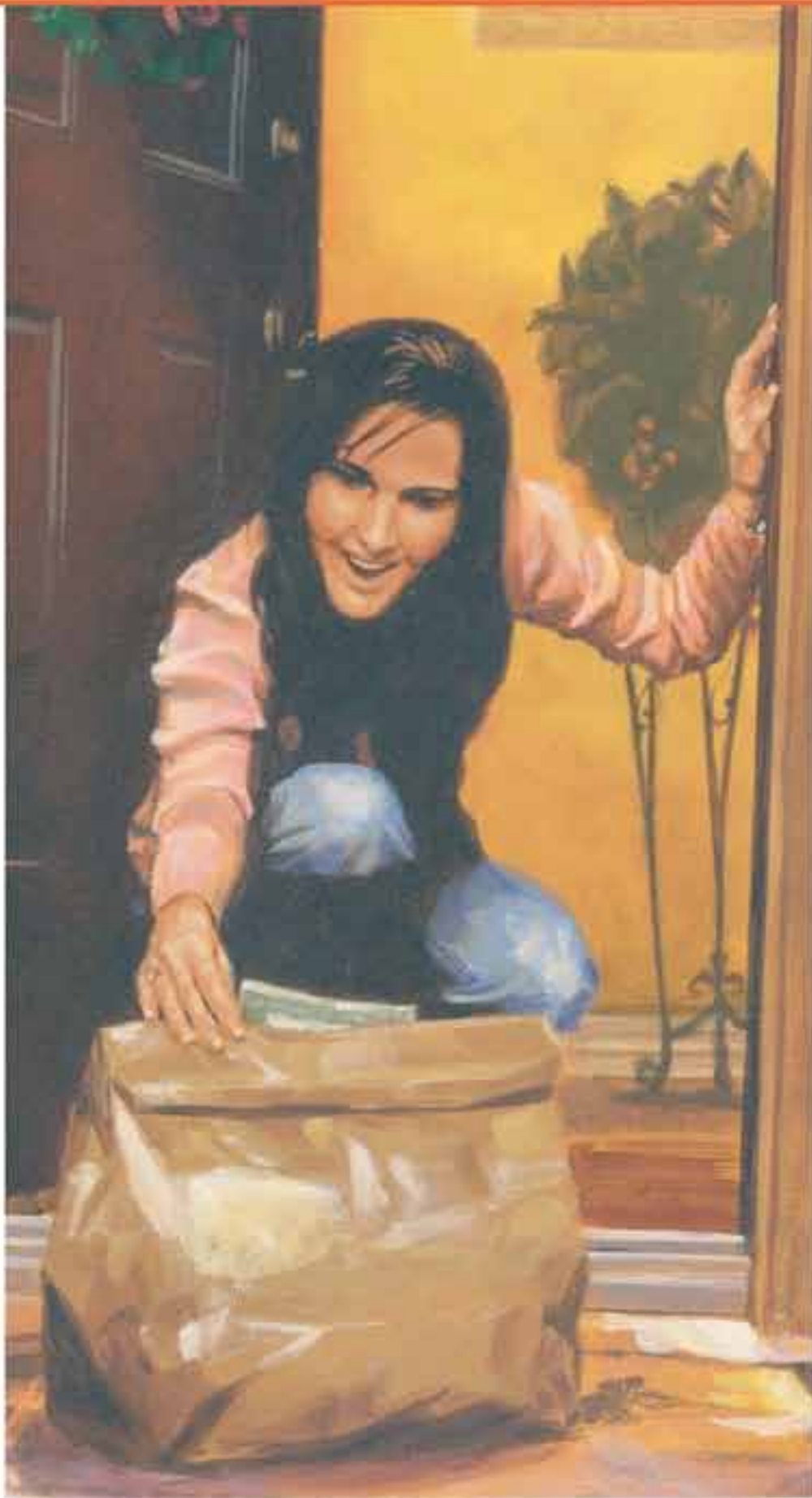
I voiced my discontent to my husband, Rob. We had moved several times since our marriage, and he knew I had trouble with feelings of insecurity. Rob asked me, “Do you realize how much Heavenly Father loves you?”

“Of course,” I replied.

“But,” Rob persisted, “do you feel *in your heart* that He loves you?”

Tears came as I realized that I did not. For as long as I could remember, I had felt that I was less than everyone else. Rob challenged me to pray and ask Heavenly Father to let me feel His love for me. That night I did so.

A couple days later I went grocery shopping. In addition to purchasing the usual items, I had planned to buy some ground beef and a roast. I realized, however, that we did not have enough money to afford the meat. It would be another week before we had any money. We also



needed fuel for the car so we could travel to an out-of-town family party.

We weren't destitute, but I prayed about our situation, telling Heavenly Father that it would be nice if we could somehow buy the needed items.

The next evening as I was prepar-

**A**s I was preparing dinner, the doorbell rang. When I opened the door, the only thing I found on the doorstep was a large paper grocery sack. I reached down to pick it up and saw a \$20 bill stapled to the top of the folded-down sack, with "Merry Christmas!" written in crayon across the front. Inside the sack were several packages of frozen ground beef, as well as a couple packages of steaks. I was dumbfounded. I had told no one that we were out of money until our next check, not even my husband. How could someone be so sensitive to the Spirit that he or she gave us not only the meat we needed but also almost the exact amount of money it took to fill up our car? During fast and testimony meeting, I expressed gratitude for the gifts, hoping that the person responsible was there.

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This experience was a turning point for me. Heavenly Father had answered my prayer. He did love me, He knew my needs, and He let me know by showing me. Since then I have sought to improve my ability to hear the whisperings of the Spirit. I often pray now that I might be an instrument in answering someone else's prayer. ■

## The New Recruit

By Henny Rasmussen

I picked up my husband's memoirs and read, once again, his account of finding the Church more than half a century ago:

"As a 20-year-old in 1951, I was at the school of sergeants at the Kronborg Castle [in Denmark]. On Christmas night I was on guard duty on the embankment that surrounds the castle. At one point I stopped, looked up to the stars, and felt that there was more between the sky and the earth than I had thus far thought. In other words, I began to believe that there was a God, which I had never really believed before. My parents were absolutely not religious, and they and I came to church only for baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals.

"When months later I became a sergeant, I got my own troop:

44 new recruits—or more exactly, 43 plus 1. This one was very different, and when I asked him what it was that made him different from the others, he said he would tell me in the evening inside my quarters.

"There he told me about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for five evenings in a row. On the sixth day, Sunday, I went to church. And with that my new life began.

"The Church involved me completely. Little by little I became acquainted with the members of the Church. I found out that my recruit was not so much different than the overall membership.

"I became convinced that the Church was true, that it was the Lord's Church—and I was baptized. A truly magnificent day."

I am grateful that my husband, Orla, who died in 1998, included these words in his personal history. That long-ago Christmas night, when my husband first sensed that God truly did exist, and his conversations with the new recruit are responsible for our meeting each other, being sealed in the temple, and having five children—who have now brought grandchildren and great-grandchildren into our family. We have had a rich life in the Church and many blessings. I am grateful for that Christmas night and for the new recruit in Denmark those many years ago. ■

## Our Christmas Experiment

When our children were still at home, we wanted them to enjoy all the sights and sounds of Christmas, including the excitement of Santa. But our focus needed to shift—more to Christ and giving and less to Santa and getting. We also wanted to lessen financial pressures and create a less hectic

holiday schedule. So we decided to try an experiment—and it has lasted throughout the years.

•**Emphasize Christ rather than Santa.** To focus on the spiritual aspect of the season, we displayed several nativity scenes and pictures of the Savior. On Christmas Eve we celebrated His birth by singing carols and reading scriptures. Before opening presents on Christmas morning, we knelt together to thank our Father in Heaven for the greatest gift of all—our Savior and His Atonement.

•**Reduce financial pressures.** We set up a special savings fund for our Christmas expenses and stuck to it. We

made a budget based on past Christmas spending and what we could afford to set aside each month. When it came time to shop, we kept a list of our purchases so we wouldn't accidentally overspend.

•**Simplify gift giving.** Santa had a short list because he gave just one present to each family member. We pooled the rest of our Christmas funds and focused on finding meaningful presents for each other.

•**Reduce time pressures.** We tried to complete our shopping before December 1 and wrapped gifts the same day we bought them. At the end of November, we made a list of our December obligations and the things we wanted to do as a family. Beginning with the most important activities, we scheduled each event on a calendar. But we tried to be flexible, realizing that some things could be postponed or canceled if needed. We also reserved a few evenings to stay home and relax.

Sometimes we accidentally slipped back into our old holiday habits, but we didn't keep them for long. For us, relaxing and enjoying a Christ-centered Christmas is the way we want to celebrate the season.

*Nanette Justus, Idabo*





**Food Storage Fun**

**T**here's one Monday night activity that has become a family holiday tradition. When our children still lived at home, we would go to the grocery store each December as a family and shop for food storage. We gave each person (or sometimes we organized into teams) a set amount of money to purchase food storage items.

The first year each

person was asked to purchase things that began with their initials. For instance, Eric Marcus could buy items such as elbow macaroni, mustard, or egg noodles. One year we decided to purchase ingredients for our favorite meals. Some years our teams consisted of family members paired off, boys against girls, or parents against children.

We then compared our shopping receipts

to see who had spent the closest amount to the allotted budget without going over. Or sometimes we rewarded the one who had the most items or the one who was the fastest shopper. Then together we put all our items away at home.

This tradition was such fun that we've continued it with our children's families. Though we still offer rewards to the thriftiest shopper, our biggest reward is

knowing that at least once a year we are contributing to our food storage needs—and having fun together.

*Shirley Oakes, Illinois*



*Scripture Countdown*

**A** few years ago at Christmas-time, I decided to focus less on the holiday's commercial side and more on the Savior. Since there are 24 chapters in the book of Luke, I decided to read one each evening until Christmas. I thoroughly enjoyed reviewing the events of the Savior's birth and life. The many miracles He performed, the things He taught, and the events surrounding His death and Resurrection became more profound to me. That Christmas I was able to focus on Christ and the true meaning of the holiday season.

*Stephanie Nixon, Florida*

*A Photo, a Sketch, and a Story*

**I**f compiling your life history seems too daunting, consider writing short experiences instead. Then share them with relatives. A few years ago my husband and I received such a gift from our daughter. She gave us a three-ring binder with a slip-in front cover that reads, "Stories from Our Family Trees." Inside are five wonderful stories, each page preserved in a sheet protector. The stories relate

interesting events about our living relatives and our ancestors and are written in language simple enough for our grandchildren to read. We recognized three of the stories from our family history books, but two were new to us. Each Christmas thereafter we received a few more stories to add to our book. This quickly became our favorite, most anticipated gift.

I decided to join in the fun by helping my busy daughter research the stories. We supplement each one with a photo, appropriate picture, or simple sketch. We hope that the easy, short format will be more interesting

and less intimidating to read than a lengthy family history book. Now in my 80s, I have a growing posterity, so we send a set of stories to each of my grown children. They are encouraged to photocopy additional sets for their children, and so on.

We encourage our family to share these wonderful experiences in Church talks and lessons, at family home evening, or at bedtime. What a great blessing it is to share meaningful, true accounts from our family tree, accounts that often focus on gospel principles and courageous lives.

*Fay Rich, Utah*

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for

# 2007

VOLUME 37

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**IBC** Inside Back Cover  
**IFC** Inside Front Cover  
**OC** Outside Cover

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## Elder Oaks Bolsters Members in Asia

**E**lder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited Church members in India, Pakistan, and Thailand from August 17 through 26, 2007. Elder Oaks and his wife, Kristen, were accompanied by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy, First Counselor in the Asia Area Presidency, and his wife, Diane.

Throughout the trip, Elder Oaks and Elder Hallstrom emphasized gospel fundamentals such as a testimony of the Savior, strengthening families, priesthood keys and temple ordinances, and the need to focus on training the youth as future leaders.

### India

Nearly 7,000 members live in India, where the predominant religions are Hinduism and Islam. Most members live in two districts in the south, including Bangalore, where the India Bangalore Mission is headquartered.

“When I last visited India there were only a few hundred members in the entire country,” Elder Oaks said at a district conference in New Delhi, the capital of India. “Now it thrills me to see how our membership has increased in numbers and maturity.”

Though it can be challenging, members of the Church in India, like many other Christians, are permitted to practice their religion. “They treasure their temple sealings,” Elder Oaks said, noting that 93 percent of the



COURTESY OF ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS

**Elder Dallin H. Oaks (back right), with his wife, Kristen; Elder Donald L. Hallstrom and his wife, Diane (back center); and President Karl L. Dodge and his wife, Gunda Le (back left), stand with members of the Chiang Mai district.**

endowed members in India hold current temple recommends.

### Pakistan

In Pakistan, Elder and Sister Oaks and Elder and

Sister Hallstrom visited the homes of various members and conducted a weekday fireside.

Only native Pakistani missionaries serve in this Islamic republic of about 170 million

people, a number that includes about 3 million Christians. “It is not easy to be a Christian in Pakistan,” said Elder Oaks. Many Christians live together in colonies.

### Thailand

Elder and Sister Oaks and Elder and Sister Hallstrom then flew to Thailand for a conference in the Chiang Mai district in northern Thailand, where there are about 875 members. Most of the more than 15,000 members in Thailand reside in the south.

Thailand is an economically thriving country. Approximately 95 percent of its citizens are Buddhists, though religious freedoms are granted to others. ■

*Adapted from Church News, September 22, 2007.*

## Elder Bednar Visits Ghana

**E**lder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spent June 11 through 17, 2007, in Ghana visiting with members and conducting affairs of the Church. Elder Bednar’s wife, Susan, accompanied him on the trip.

Elder Bednar addressed missionaries of the Ghana Accra Mission at the missionary training center in Tema. He also spoke to local employees at the Africa West Area office and volunteers who serve at the Accra Ghana Temple complex.

During his visit, he spent an evening conducting a

### First Presidency Creates Mission in India

**T**he India New Delhi Mission, announced recently by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, becomes the second mission in India, and brings the total number of missions in the world to 348.

The new mission, which opened on November 1, 2007, was created from the division of the India Bangalore Mission and the Singapore Mission.

The New Delhi Mission includes the northern portion of India and Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Bhutan.

Gary R. Ricks, serving with his wife, Florence, in New Delhi as a senior missionary, has been called as the new mission president.

The rest of the country will be retained in the India Bangalore Mission, with the addition of Sri Lanka. The Singapore Mission will include Singapore, East Malaysia, and West Malaysia.

The division will help reduce travel distances and increase the time the mission presidents will have to work with the missionaries. ■

90-minute question-and-answer session with some 800 young single adult members at the Accra Ghana Christiansborg Stake Center in the temple complex.

The primary purpose of Elder Bednar's visit to Accra was to create the Accra Ghana McCarthy Hill Stake. Elder Bednar's companion for this assignment was Elder

Adesina J. Olukanni, Africa West Area Seventy from Lagos, Nigeria. Other changes included the reorganization of the Accra Ghana Adenta and Christiansborg Stakes.

As part of this tour, Elder Bednar traveled to Togo and Benin on June 12 to dedicate the two countries for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■



**Elder M. Russell Ballard addresses common questions in video segments posted online.**

## Elder Ballard Answers Frequently Asked Questions

A series of video clips in which Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addresses some of the questions most frequently asked by the news media has been posted on LDS.org.

Elder Ballard covers topics such as whether Latter-day Saints are Christian and whether or not the Church supports political candidates.

The video clips, available in English, were produced to help better define the Church in the public mind—especially among journalists—because of increasing visibility in the United States. A series

of national opinion polls has shown that a large segment of the population knows little or nothing about the Church.

Responding to one of the most common questions—Are Mormons Christians?—Elder Ballard said: “[Jesus Christ] is the center of all that we do, all that we hope to be. All of our dreams and future aspirations are centered in our belief in Jesus Christ and our willingness to know what His teachings are and to strive to keep His commandments.”

The unscripted interviews were conducted by members of the Church's Public Affairs staff and announced during

an online news conference with the religion writers of several newspapers around the country.

Church spokespersons said that the posting of an interview with a senior Church leader was one of several steps being taken to more clearly define Latter-day Saint beliefs and practices. It is expected that other interviews will follow on a range of topics and will include other Apostles. Elder Ballard is presently chairman of the Church's Public Affairs Committee.

Elder Ballard responded to the following questions: Are you Christian? What is the role

of Jesus Christ in your faith? Do you worship Jesus Christ in your Sunday services? Why do some people say you are a cult? In what ways are you similar to other Christians? In what ways do you differ from other Christians? Was Joseph Smith a prophet? Are prophets necessary today? Is there scientific proof authenticating the Book of Mormon? Does the Church support political candidates?

To access the video clips, visit LDS.org, click on **Newsroom** in the lower right corner, and then enter the term “Elder Ballard interview” in the **Search** box. ■

## Christmas Lights, Efforts Help Testify of Christ

By Molly Farmer, Church Magazines

Hundreds of thousands of lights shine from Temple Square at the close of each year. Many glow from branches high in chestnut trees while others flicker and float in reflecting pools, but they all are meant to invite visitors to share in the message of the birth of the Savior, the Light of the World.

Volunteers and employees responsible for the Christmas decor and musical programs at Church headquarters log many hours making the grounds an inviting place for the Spirit to reside.

Preparations begin months in advance, with plans for the elaborate design drawn up early each year. Concerts and performances are booked the previous year, and the first lights are hung

as early as August in order to have the gardens ready for the end of November.

With millions of people visiting Temple Square each year—many during the Christmas season—groundskeepers take special care to create an environment that helps people feel the Spirit and learn more about the gospel. December is an especially appropriate time to “help people understand that we're here for the purpose of celebrating the birth of Christ,” said Eldon Cannon, group manager for Church facilities.

Getting that message out requires planning and labor. Each workday from mid-August until the day after Thanksgiving—when the lights are turned on—is



**Months of effort help make Temple Square at Christmastime a place where visitors can reflect on the Light of the World, the Savior Jesus Christ.**

thoughtfully planned, and gardeners and light-hanging crews work steadily to accomplish their goal.

“Our workers are just wonderful,” said Kathy Mills, Christmas coordinator for the facilities department. Employees are hoisted in lifts as high as 50 feet to wrap individual tree limbs in colorful lights. The result of all this work, which prompts visitors who visit the grounds to gaze in awe, makes the effort worthwhile, Brother Cannon said. Sister Mills added that dedicated volunteers donate about 2,000 hours of their time to the endeavor.

One of the most prominent trees on Temple Square, the 60-foot cedar of Lebanon, requires more than 1,500 strands of red lights before it’s fully lit. Sister Mills said the enormous, glowing tree is

an attraction in itself.

“[People] may be drawn by seeing this wonderfully lit square . . . but ultimately, behind it all, is a message about Christ,” said Richard Lenz, event coordinator at Temple Square.

Brother Lenz is responsible for overseeing some 400 musical and theatrical programs that occur between November 23 and December 24. An estimated 350 visiting choirs—the majority of which are high school choirs from Utah and Idaho—will perform this year in a variety of locations around Temple Square. The beautiful sights and sounds all combine to create a powerful impression, Brother Lenz said.

When the lights are turned off on New Year’s Eve, the clean-up work begins, and employees work until

mid-March to take down all the decorations.

“It’s a real commitment,” Brother Cannon said, but the effort is validated by the opportunities it affords. The yearly event allows members to “teach people about what we believe.”

Coupling visual splendor with personal testimonies makes the experience people have on Temple Square even more powerful. Many are drawn in to see the stunning *Christus* statue in the North Visitors’ Center, while others hear from missionaries who bear testimony of Christ.

Though the tradition of lighting Temple Square dates back some 40 years, organizers still add new elements to inspire people. Luminarias, a type of Christmas lantern common in Central and South America, line walkways

and are as well-loved by guests as the traditional lights, Sister Mills said. The paper bags that surround the lights proclaim messages such as “Joy,” “Merry Christmas,” and “Hope,” Brother Cannon said, and represent more than 100 languages. Organizers have also incorporated multicultural nativity scenes representing Asian, Polynesian, African, Middle Eastern, and Native American cultures.

“I think the message is universal,” Brother Cannon said. “It’s the joy and hope brought by Christ’s coming to the world. That message crosses all barriers.”

Though it’s a lot of work, Sister Mills, Brother Lenz, and Brother Cannon agree that preparing Temple Square for the Christmas season is a special endeavor that puts visitors in the Christmas spirit. The music, lights, gardens, and nativity scenes all come together to help people feel the love of the Lord.

“It’s something bigger than just the pieces,” Brother Cannon said. “The purpose of all of this is to teach people about Christ.” ■

## Mormon.org Redesigned

People interested in learning more about the Church can now access the doctrines of the restored gospel on the recently redesigned Web site, Mormon.org. The site is now easier to navigate and more closely aligned with the





**The redesigned Mormon.org is now more closely aligned with the principles taught from Preach My Gospel.**

material found in the missionary lessons from *Preach My Gospel*.

Those viewing the site's main page are given "answers to life's great questions" through a number of short videos featuring converts to the Church, said Scott Swofford, director of media for the Missionary Department. The men and women in the videos are all real members of the Church who share personal responses to questions such as Does God have more for me? and Does God really know me?

The site was redesigned so the core doctrines of the Church are easily accessible, though other doctrine can also be found using the glossary feature. There are links to meetinghouse locators for those interested in attending

a meeting as well as Book of Mormon and missionary request forms.

Also new to the site is the Ask a Question feature, which allows people interested in learning more about the Church to chat in real time with missionaries and trainers at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah. The goal "is to arm them with information and then get them to start a dialogue with full-time missionaries," Brother Swofford said.

The live-chat option has already proven to be a successful tool. The feature offers many opportunities for missionaries to share their testimonies, and questions can also be answered through e-mail correspondence.

Brother Swofford says the site will serve as a great

missionary tool for members of the Church who acquaint themselves with it. He said referring people to the Web site when they have questions about the Church is "a very painless way to do missionary work. It's a

chance for members to share their beliefs with other people."

The site is currently available in English and will eventually be available in other languages as well. ■

## Sister Inis Hunter Dies

Inis Bernice Egan Hunter, wife of President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), died at the age of 93 on Sunday, October 14, 2007, from age-related causes. President Hunter served as 14th President of the Church from 1994 to 1995.

Sister Hunter traveled with President Hunter as he performed his Church duties, which included the dedication of two temples.

She was born in Thatcher,

Utah, to Horace Walter Egan and Anna Bernhardina Jacobsson Tengberg.

Sister Hunter, President Hunter's second wife, was the mother of three children from a previous marriage: Barbara, Robert, and Elayne. Her funeral services were held on October 22, 2007, in Salt Lake City.

President Hunter's first wife, Clara May (Claire), died on October 9, 1983. ■

## Canadian Saints Committed to Humanitarian Aid

Some 60 members in the Petawawa Branch, Ottawa Ontario Stake, located 100 miles [160 km] northwest of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, have not only become committed to service themselves, but they have also excited the community about serving.

"Our little branch became infected with the humanitarian aid bug," explained branch member Mary Tromp, and they've infected others.

It began with a notice in the *Ensign* about the need for quilts in Chile. A sister in the branch presented the idea of making quilts for the needy to the Relief Society. They

soon took on the challenge of gathering fabric and batting and then working together at the meetinghouse and sisters' homes.

When it came time to tie the quilts, the Primary children joined in. As the project expanded, the children donated money and goods. "The wonderful part of all this was that the more we gave, the more we wanted to do," said Sister Tromp.

Word spread to nonmember friends who donated fabric, quilts, and clothing. As the public heard of the projects, help came from unexpected sources. A group of young mothers in a continuing

education program offered their services and sewed quilt tops. A fabric shop offered a discount on batting for the quilts. A Pembroke grocery store donated 200 dresses to the branch.

In February 2004, branch members loaded up their cars to deliver the quilts to the bishop's storehouse in Canandaigua, New York.

But the "bug" has only continued to spread. In June 2007, a member couple and their friends held a garage sale. All proceeds were given to the branch's humanitarian aid fund to purchase more items for hygiene kits and sewing supplies for quilts.

In June 2007 sisters made the seven-hour drive to the Canandaigua storehouse with the branch's latest offerings. Because the donations had outgrown the

capacity of their cars, the sisters drove a truck packed with 50 quilts, many hygiene kits, and boxes of children's clothing. The sisters remained in the area to serve in the storehouse's canning facility for half a day.

Sister Tromp explained: "We have been very blessed as we have been given the chance to serve our brothers and sisters. The joy that we feel will keep our fingers sewing and tying for the foreseeable future. Like the little train that could, our little branch could and did. What a blessing it is to serve our Savior. Every day He gives to us is a gift. What gifts can we give Him each day in return?"

For more information on how to assist the Church's humanitarian aid efforts, go to [www.lds.org/humanitarian](http://www.lds.org/humanitarian) services. ■



the *Ensign*. President James E. Faust's article, "Welcoming Every Single One," was so important. A friend told me in a discussion recently that the Church is really geared towards married couples and families. I shared the August issue with this article, and it was a comfort to my friend. Julie McDonald, Utah

#### Church Magazines Available Electronically

We would like to express our gratitude for the electronic versions of Church magazines. I found an article today that I used to teach a lesson, and my wife uses articles from the *Friend* as a source of inspiration as she teaches our grandchildren. We reside in the most remote capital city on earth, so the availability of the prophetic counsel as well as articles on gospel subjects are a wonderful lift in our lives.

Phil and Trish Baker, Australia

#### One Million Names

Several readers have expressed interest in the FamilySearch indexing project. Derek Dobson, product manager of FamilySearch Indexing, reported, "Since the article was published ["FamilySearch Indexing," August, 34], we have had almost 20,000 new

users register to participate as volunteers, and we are now indexing more than one million names per day. I anticipate that we will soon have over 100,000

users in the system and will be producing even more names per day that will be searchable online at [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org). Many thanks!"

#### Updates

The painting on the inside front cover of the July 2007 *Ensign*, *Celebration on July 4, 1847, Los Angeles, California*, is listed as a work by Charles Brent Hancock. The painting appears to be a work by pioneer Latter-day Saint artist C. C. A. Christensen. Definitive information is not available, but Charles Hancock is known to have used works by C. C. A. Christensen in a series of historical presentations. The painting was included in the book *C. C. A. Christensen: 1831-1912: Mormon Immigrant Artist* (page 89), published in 1984.

In the article "Are you Prepared?" (*Ensign*, August 2007, 30) President George Albert Smith (1870-1951) is credited with a quote in the section "Latter-day Prophets Speak on Preparedness" on page 33. The quote was actually from Elder George A. Smith (1817-1875), President Smith's grandfather, who served as a counselor to President Brigham Young. ■

## Comments

### Everyday Laughter

I want to say thank you for Gary K. Palmer's article, "The Power of Laughter," in the September 2007 *Ensign*. My wife and I read

### Trusting His Will

I just read Wendy Johnston's article, "Not My Will," in the August 2007 *Ensign*. I was very touched by her faith and courage.

I face challenges with my own children, and although my challenges are different from Wendy's, I was reminded that our trials give us the opportunity to seek and accept the will

of the Father for our families and ourselves. Suzanne White, Australia

### Welcoming All

I must write and thank you for the August 2007 issue of



the article and found it very helpful in reminding us to laugh and play in our daily interactions with each other and with our son.

Scott Johnson, New York



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**His Name Shall Be Called Wonderful, by Simon Dewey**

*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor; The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6; see also 2 Nephi 19:6).*



**Madonna and Child, by Avard Fairbanks**

**A**nd [the angel] said unto me [Nephi]: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.

*“And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look!*

*“And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.*

*“And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!”  
(1 Nephi 11:18–21).*

