Highlights from the 187th Semiannual General Conference

God bless our prophet dear;
May health and comfort cheer
His noble heart.
His words with fire impress
On souls that thou wilt bless
To choose in righteousness
The better part.
("God Bless Our Prophet Dear,"
Hymns, no. 24, sung during the
Saturday morning session)

For more than 50 years, President Thomas S. Monson's touching personal accounts and powerful witness of Jesus Christ have been part of general conference. But because of declining health, both President Monson and Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were noticeably absent from conference.

Absent, but not forgotten.

Though President Monson watched from home and Elder Hales passed away peacefully in the hospital just prior to the final session, both were not only in our thoughts as we prayed for them, but their influence was also evident throughout the addresses.

President Monson was quoted by more than a dozen speakers, including President Russell M. Nelson (see page 60), who made particular reference to President Monson's invitation last conference "to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day."[1]

Elder Neil L. Andersen, the concluding speaker (see page 122), shared remarks that Elder Hales had been preparing for conference but was unable to deliver: "When we choose to have faith, we are prepared to stand in the presence of God," Elder Hales wrote. Certainly, Elder Hales chose faith.

Absent, but not really missing, President Monson and Elder Hales weren't at the pulpit, but they played an important part in making conference meaningful to many.

We ever pray for thee, our prophet dear,
That God will give to thee comfort
 and cheer;
As the advancing years furrow
 thy brow,
Still may the light within shine bright
 as now,
Still may the light within shine bright
 as now.
("We Ever Pray for Thee," *Hymns,*
no. 23, sung during the general priesthood session) ■

NOTE
1. Thomas S. Monson, "The Power of the Book of Mormon," *Ensign* or *Liahona,* May 2017, 87.