

WELCOME FAMILY



What's a Family Tree Gathering?

By Sally Johnson Odekirk

Church Magazines

In the April 2014 general conference, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded us of the importance of family history and temple work. He said: “We finally have the doctrine, the temples, and the technology for families to accomplish this glorious work of salvation. I suggest one way this might be done. Families could hold a ‘Family Tree Gathering.’ This should be a recurring effort” (“Roots and Branches,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 47).

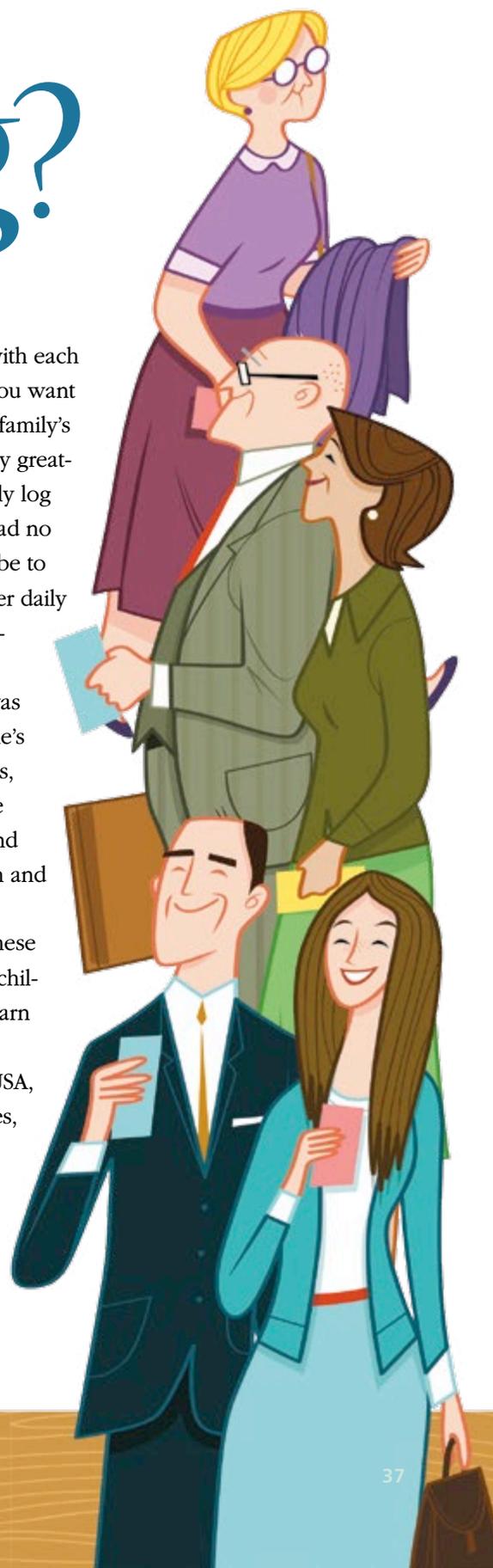
What is a family tree gathering? It is a time when your family can learn about and preserve your family’s story, including making sure that temple ordinances are done for your ancestors. It can be as simple as a series of family home evenings or be part of a traditional family reunion. The important thing is to have fun making memories together and to build bonds of love for each other, for loved ones long gone, and for future generations.

Over a period of time, here are some things you might try:

1. Set aside time to look for ancestors whose temple ordinances need to be done. Then make assignments and attend the temple together to do this essential work.
2. Have a day when family members can bring existing family histories, stories,

and photos and share them with each other. Decide together how you want to preserve and present your family’s stories. For example, when my great-grandmother Kittie kept a daily log during the 1930s, she likely had no idea how important it would be to her posterity. In addition to her daily activities, she recorded important family information and stories she heard when she was young. Eighty years later, Kittie’s journal unites her descendants, who treasure it and cooperate in finding ways to preserve and share the stories with children and grandchildren.

3. On another occasion, share these stories and photos with your children to get them excited to learn about the lives of their family members. Jim Ison of Ohio, USA, added his grandparents’ stories, photos, and documents to his family tree on FamilySearch.org. He created albums on specific topics about his grandparents and then put together an “ancestor



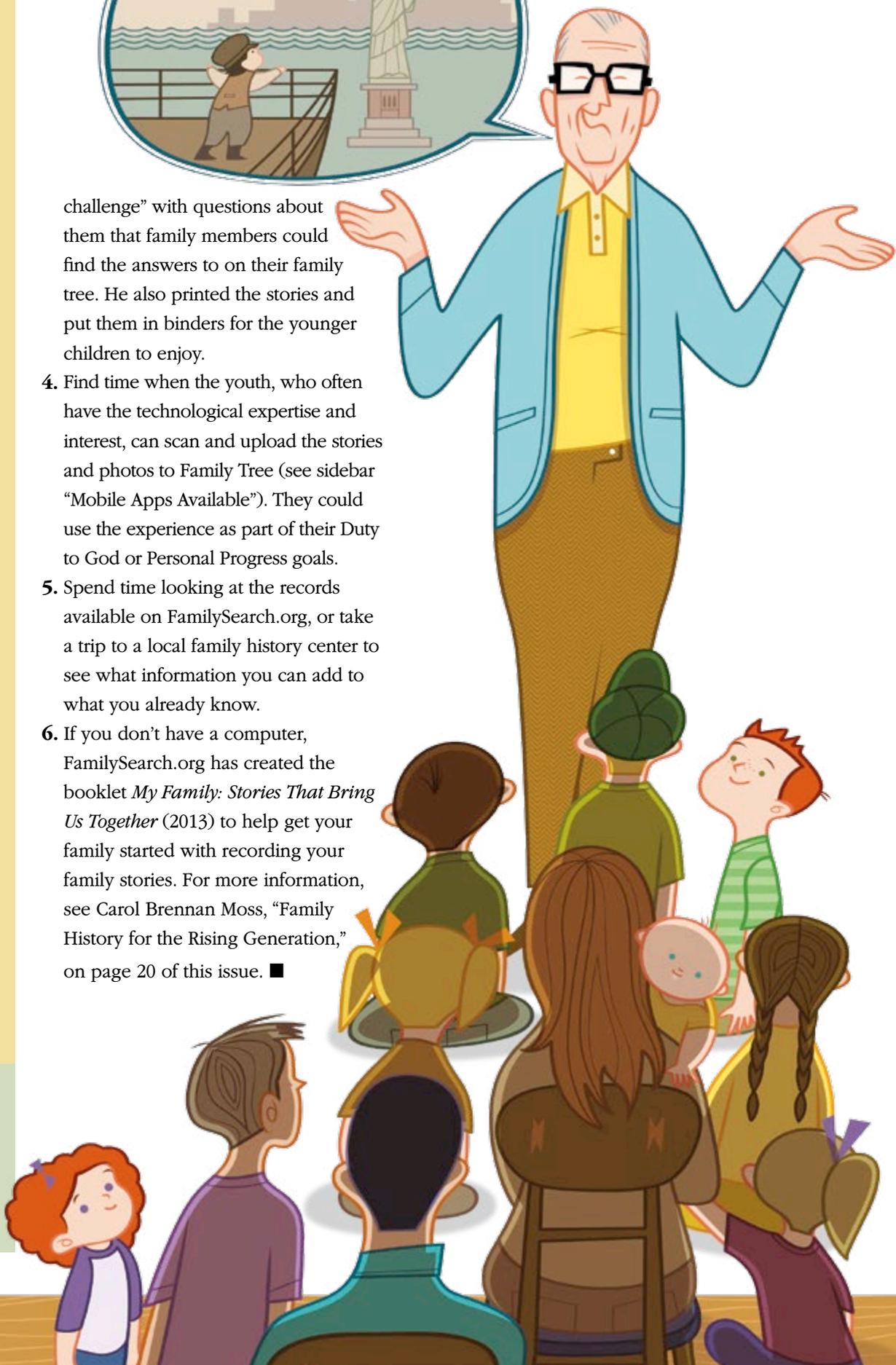
DRAWN TO FAMILY HISTORY

Stenner E., 17, of Wiltshire, England, describes the effect family history and temple work have had on his life: "Until I was 13, I never really thought about family history and did not understand it, although I liked hearing stories about my maternal great-grandparents and knew something about them. Then one day we had a Young Men activity where we started working on our family tree. I loved it! But I did not know how to do it myself, so my ward's family history consultant helped get me going. After a month of work, my siblings and I and two of our cousins went to the London temple and performed over 50 baptisms and confirmations for ancestors I found on my paternal great-grandmother's side. It was one of the most wonderful experiences I have ever had."

If you choose to hold a family tree gathering as Elder Cook suggests, consider sharing your experiences with us at lds.org/ensign (select "Submit Your Work").



- challenge" with questions about them that family members could find the answers to on their family tree. He also printed the stories and put them in binders for the younger children to enjoy.
4. Find time when the youth, who often have the technological expertise and interest, can scan and upload the stories and photos to Family Tree (see sidebar "Mobile Apps Available"). They could use the experience as part of their Duty to God or Personal Progress goals.
 5. Spend time looking at the records available on FamilySearch.org, or take a trip to a local family history center to see what information you can add to what you already know.
 6. If you don't have a computer, FamilySearch.org has created the booklet *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together* (2013) to help get your family started with recording your family stories. For more information, see Carol Brennan Moss, "Family History for the Rising Generation," on page 20 of this issue. ■



Suggestions for Holding a Family Tree Gathering

Think of what works for your family, and consider the following ideas:

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?

- Gather and share family records, photos, and artifacts before they get scattered and lost.
- Find ancestors who need their temple ordinances completed.
- Honor living relatives, listen to and preserve their stories, and teach children family stories.
- Create family history books or blogs.

WHOM SHOULD WE INVITE?

Gatherings can be as small and simple or as large as you would like. They could be:

- A series of family home evenings with your children (for ideas, visit lds.org/go/fheE1014).
- Grandparents sharing their stories with their family.
- A large gathering of family members descended from a common ancestor.

WHEN AND WHERE SHOULD WE MEET?

- You could have your gathering be part of a regularly held family reunion or have it Sunday evenings at a family member's home.
- If family members live far away from each other, you could have a virtual gathering using social media. Time and distance prevent me from taking a trip to see where Great-Grandmother Kittie lived, but our family can share the experience using social media.

WHAT COULD WE DO AT A GATHERING?

Work together to decide what your family's interests and resources are. You might:

- Make assignments to involve family members. Do you have a member who likes to

cook? Have that person collect and share family recipes.

- Have several computers available for uploading and looking at photos and stories on FamilySearch.org. You could create a "Who Is It?" activity and have members search for information about ancestors.
- Bring printed copies of stories and photos to share. Don't forget to bring binders and page covers to protect the papers.

SOME OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- When interviewing family members, be considerate of their feelings. There may be some experiences they do not wish to share, so respect their privacy.
- Artifacts need to be treated with care. If you have a fragile vase that belonged to your great-grandmother, consider taking photos of it to share instead of bringing it to a gathering.
- Photos and documents can become brittle with time. To help them last, make sure your hands are clean when handling them.
- The Church History Library has a series of short videos and information on how to preserve family photos and artifacts at history. lds.org/article/preserving-history-videos.
- Many family history centers now have free photo and document scanning services. Go to familysearch.org/locations/centerlocator to find the center closest to you.

See also the special section on family history in the October 2014 issue of the New Era for more ideas on how to make family history come alive.

IT ONLY TAKES THREE GENERATIONS

"It only takes three generations to lose a piece of oral family history. It must be purposely and accurately repeated over and over again through the generations to be preserved."

Aaron Holt, archives technician, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas, USA, examiner.com/article/oral-family-history-can-be-lost-three-generations.

MOBILE APPS AVAILABLE

Two new mobile apps, FamilySearch Tree and FamilySearch Memories, make it easier than ever to view your family tree and add photos, stories, and documents. Download these tools at lds.org/mobileapps.

