

Liahona



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Front: *The Desires of My Heart*, by Walter Rane, may not be copied. Back: Photography of modern
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THE FRIEND COVER

Illustrated by Rafael Rodrigues Choairy Rodart, Wenda Tahiaata, Lucar Ruan Pança Sutto,
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and Angelica Hernandez.

First Presidency Christmas Message

*A*t this glorious time of year, we bear witness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is indeed “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He is our Exemplar, our Teacher, and our Redeemer.

In this year commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, we gratefully acknowledge the Prophet’s unparalleled role as the great testifier of the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

As he boldly declared:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

“That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (D&C 76:22–24).

God be thanked for the gift of His Beloved Son. We add our testimonies that He lives and guides His people today.

May His peace be with you and your loved ones this Christmas season and throughout the coming year. ■



THE LORD APPEARS IN THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE, BY DEL PARSON



Prophet of God, Mighty Servant



BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

An acquaintance said to me one day: “I admire your church very much. I think I could accept everything about it—except Joseph Smith.” To which I responded: “That statement is a contradiction. If you accept the revelation, you must accept the revelator.”

It is a constantly recurring mystery to me how some people speak with admiration for the Church and its work while at the same time disdaining him through whom, as a servant of the Lord, came the framework of all that the Church is, of all that it teaches, and of all that it stands for. They would pluck the fruit from the tree while cutting off the root from which it grows.

The code of health followed by Latter-day Saints, which is so widely praised in these days of cancer and heart research, is in reality a revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1833 as “a Word of Wisdom” from the Lord (see D&C 89:1). In no conceivable way could it have come of the dietary literature of the time nor from the mind of the man who announced it. Today, in terms of medical research, it is a miracle whose observance has saved incalculable

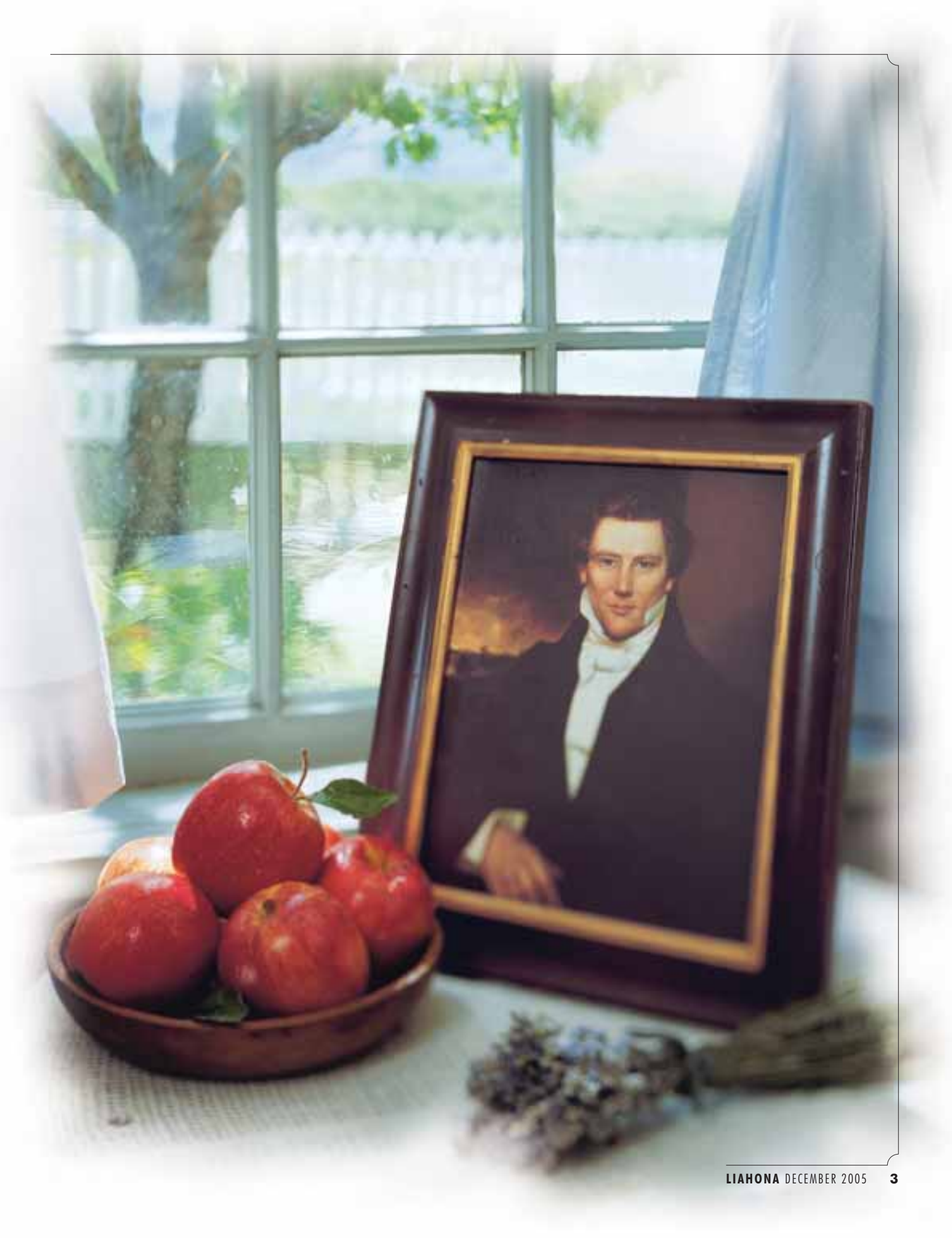
suffering and premature death for uncounted tens of thousands.

Family history research has become a popular hobby in recent years. Thousands of eyes across the world have been turned to what is described as the Latter-day Saint treasure-house of family history data. But this tremendous program of the Church did not result from the pursuit of a hobby. It is an extension of the teachings of Joseph Smith the Prophet. He declared that we cannot be saved without our forebears, those who did not have a knowledge of the gospel and consequently could not fulfill its requirements nor partake of its opportunities (see D&C 128:9, 15).

The remarkable organization of the Church was framed by him as he was directed by revelation, and no modification or adaptation of that organization is ever considered without searching the revelations set forth by the Prophet.

Even the welfare program, which some are prone to regard as of rather recent origin, is founded and operated strictly upon principles enunciated by Joseph Smith in the early years of the Church. This is likewise true of the family home evening program, which is

Those who would accept the revelation without accepting the revelator—the Prophet Joseph Smith—would pluck the fruit from the tree while cutting off the root from which it grows.





no more than an extension of early revelation on the responsibility of parents “to bring up your children in light and truth” (D&C 93:40).

Proclaiming a Prophet

Once while riding in a plane, I engaged in conversation with a young man who was seated beside me. We moved from one subject to another and then came to the matter of religion. He said that he had read considerably about the Latter-day Saints, that he had found much to admire in their practices, but that he had a definite prejudice concerning the story of the origin of the Church and particularly Joseph Smith. He was an active member of another organization, and when I asked where he had acquired his information, he indicated that it had come from publications of his church. I asked what company he worked for. He proudly replied that he was a sales representative for an international computer company. I then asked whether he would think it fair for his customers to learn of the qualities of its products from a representative of its leading competitor. He replied with a smile, “I think I get the point of what you’re trying to say.”

I took from my case a copy of the Doctrine and Covenants and read to him the words of the Lord expressed through Joseph Smith, words which are the source of those practices my friend had come to admire in us while disdaining the man through whom they had come. Before we parted, he agreed to read the literature I would send to him. I promised him that if he would do so prayerfully he would know the truth not only of these doctrines and practices which had interested him, but also of the man through whom they were introduced. I then gave him my



WE DO NOT WORSHIP THE PROPHET JOSEPH.
 BUT WE RESPECT HIM; WE REVERENCE HIM
 AS AN INSTRUMENT IN THE HANDS OF THE
 ALMIGHTY IN RESTORING TO THE EARTH
 THE ANCIENT TRUTHS OF THE DIVINE
 GOSPEL, TOGETHER WITH
 THE PRIESTHOOD.

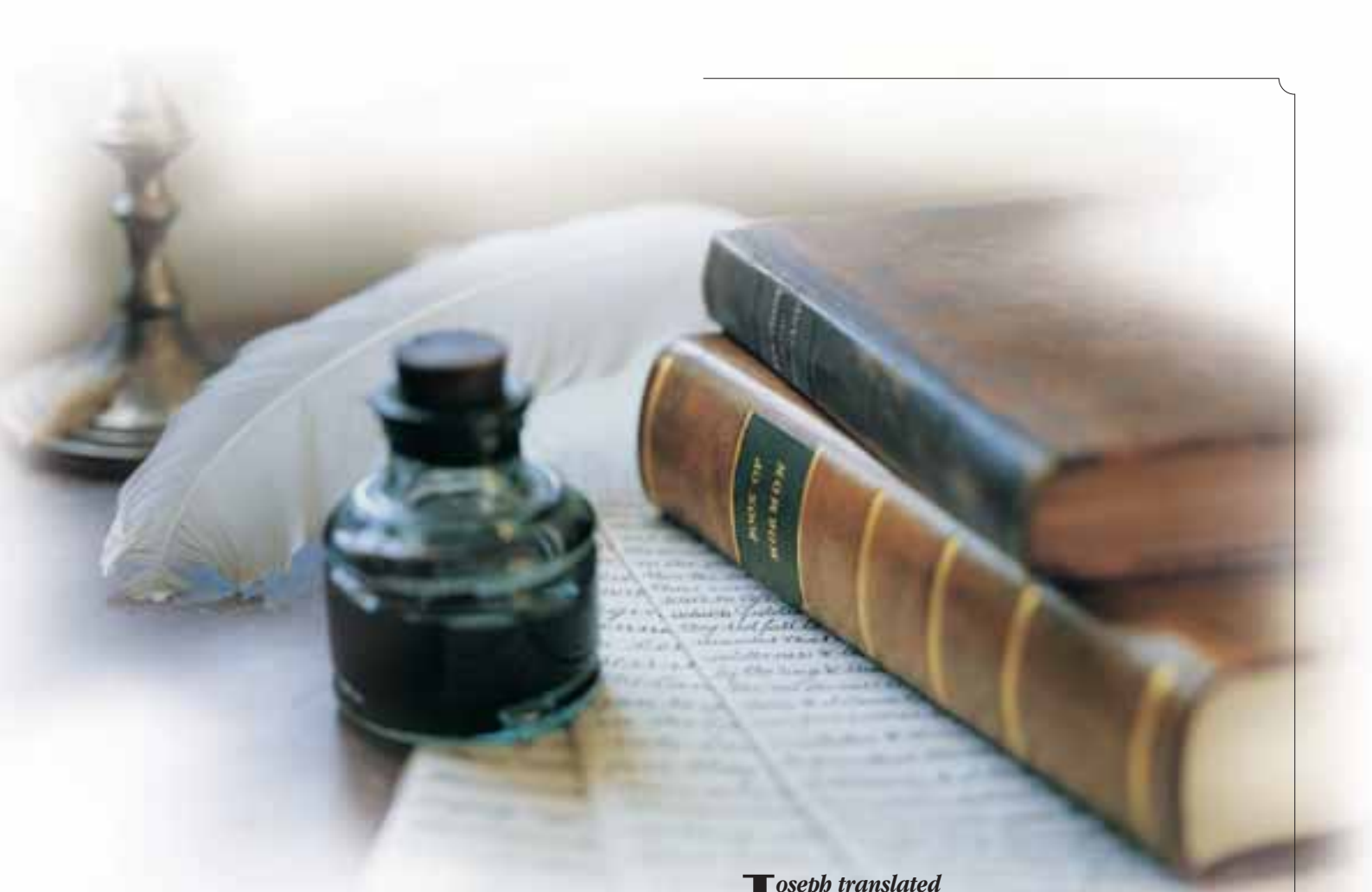
testimony of my conviction concerning the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith. That baby boy born 200 years ago this month in humble circumstances in rural Vermont was fore-ordained to become a great leader in the fulfilling of our Father’s plan for His children on earth.

We do not worship the Prophet. We worship God our Eternal Father and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But we acknowledge the Prophet; we proclaim him; we respect him; we reverence him as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in restoring to the earth the ancient truths of the divine gospel, together with the priesthood through which the authority of God is exercised in the affairs of His Church and for the blessing of His people.

The story of Joseph’s life is the story of a miracle. He was born in poverty. He was reared in adversity. He was driven from place to place, falsely accused, and illegally imprisoned. He was murdered at the age of 38. Yet in the brief space of 20 years preceding his death, he accomplished what none other has accomplished in an entire lifetime.

He translated and published the Book of Mormon, a volume which has since been retranslated into scores of languages and which is accepted by millions across the earth as the word of God. The revelations he received and other writings he produced are likewise scripture to these millions. The total in book pages constitutes approximately twice the volume of the entire New Testament of the Bible, and it all came through one man in the space of a few years.

In this same period he established an organization which for 175 years has withstood every adversity and challenge and is as effective today in governing a worldwide membership of some 12 million as it was in governing a membership of 300 in 1830. There are those doubters who have strained to explain this remarkable organization as the product of the times in which he lived. That organization, I submit, was as peculiar, as unique, and as remarkable then as it is today. It was not a product of the times. It came as a revelation from God.



Immortality and Eternity

Joseph Smith's vision of man's immortal nature reached from an existence before birth to the eternities beyond the grave. He taught that salvation is universal in that all men will become the beneficiaries of the Resurrection through the Atonement wrought by the Savior. But beyond this gift is the requirement of obedience to the principles of the gospel and the promise of consequent happiness in this life and exaltation in the life to come.

Nor was the gospel he taught limited in application to those of his own and future generations. The mind of Joseph Smith, tutored by the God of heaven, encompassed all mankind of all generations. Both the living and the dead must have the opportunity to partake of gospel ordinances.

Peter of old declared: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6). In the case of the dead there must be vicarious work if they are to be judged according to men in the flesh, and in order to accomplish

***J*oseph translated and published the Book of Mormon, a volume which has since been retranslated into scores of languages and which is accepted by millions across the earth as the word of God.**

this, they must be identified; hence the great family history program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was not established to satisfy the interests of a hobby but to accomplish the eternal purposes of God.

Within the space of that 20 years preceding his death,

Joseph Smith set in motion a program for carrying the gospel to the nations of the earth. I marvel at the boldness with which he moved. Even in the infant days of the Church, in times of dark adversity, men were called to leave homes and families, to cross the sea, to proclaim the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Prophet's mind, his vision encompassed the entire earth.

For our general conference meetings twice each year, members gather in North, Central, and South America; in the British Isles and Africa; in the nations of Europe; in the islands and continents of the Pacific; and in the ancient



lands of Asia. These are the flowering of the vision of Joseph Smith, the prophet of God. He was indeed a mighty seer who saw this day and greater days yet to come as the work of the Lord moves over the earth.

This magnificent flowering would amaze those men with painted faces who, in a cowardly attack, shot and killed the defenseless Prophet that sultry June day in 1844. It would amaze Governor Thomas Ford of the state of Illinois, who had pledged to protect the Prophet and then left him to the mercy of the merciless mob. It was this same Thomas Ford who concluded in his history that Joseph Smith “never could succeed in establishing a system of policy which looked to permanent success in the future” (quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:347).

It is this same Thomas Ford who today lies buried in a cemetery in Peoria, Illinois, largely forgotten, while the man he had judged a failure is remembered with gratitude over the earth.

Praise to the Man

When I was a boy 12 years of age, my father took me to a meeting of the priesthood of the stake in which we lived. I sat on the back row while he, as president of the stake, sat on the stand. At the opening of that meeting, the first of its kind I had ever attended, 300 or 400 men stood. They were from varied backgrounds and many vocations, but each had in his heart the same conviction, out of which together they sang these great words:

*Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!
Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.
Blessed to open the last dispensation,
Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.*
(“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27)

Something happened within me as I heard those men of faith sing. There came into my boyish heart a knowledge, placed there by the Holy Spirit, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of the Almighty. In the many years that have since passed, years in which I have read much of

his words and works, that knowledge has grown stronger and ever more certain. Mine has been the privilege of bearing witness on continents north and south, east and west, that he was and is a prophet of God, a mighty servant and testifier of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Great is his glory and endless his priesthood.
Ever and ever the keys he will hold.
Faithful and true, he will enter his kingdom,
Crowned in the midst of the prophets of old.*
(*Hymns*, no. 27)

That testimony I reaffirm now, in the name of Him of whom Joseph Smith was a witness and of whom I also am a witness, even the Lord Jesus Christ. ■

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. A few examples follow:

1. Show a picture of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and invite family members to tell what they know about him. Make a list of their responses. Compare this list to what President Hinckley says in this article. Discuss ways family members can better know the Prophet and his teachings. You may want to encourage family members to plan a special family activity on December 23rd to celebrate Joseph’s 200th birthday.
2. Invite family members to share experiences they have had talking to others about the Prophet Joseph Smith. Read about President Hinckley’s experiences. Consider practicing what a member could say to someone who asks about Joseph Smith.
3. Read or sing “Praise to the Man” (*Hymns*, no. 27), and study President Hinckley’s testimony at the end of the article. Invite family members to write or share their thoughts and feelings about the life and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE ARRIVAL OF THE SHEPHERDS, BY HENRI LEROLLE, ORIGINAL IN MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS, CARCASSONNE, FRANCE, USED BY PERMISSION, MAY NOT BE COPIED; NEPHI’S VISION OF THE VIRGIN MARY, BY JUDITH MEHR, DETAIL FROM KING BENJAMIN PREACHES TO THE NEPHITES, BY GARY L. KAPP, DETAIL FROM SAMUEL THE LAMANITE PROPHESIES, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG; JESUS CHRIST APPEARS TO THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH AND OLIVER COWDERY, BY WALTER RANE, MARY’S PSALM OF PRAISE, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT, MAY NOT BE COPIED; EVEN THE WISEMEN OF THE EARTH MUST FOLLOW DIVINE DIRECTION, BY J. LEO FAIRBANKS; JOHN BAPTIZING JESUS, BY HARRY ANDERSON; FLIGHT INTO EGYPT, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

1 >



December 14: The prophet Isaiah foretold and testified of the Savior's divine mission and birth in Isaiah 7:14–15; 9:6–7; 53.

2 >

December 15: Nephi saw in vision the Savior's birth and ministry before and after the Lord's Crucifixion. Read Nephi's account in 1 Nephi 11:9–33; 12:4–8.



3 >

December 16: King Benjamin testified of the coming of the Savior in Mosiah 3:1–12, 20–21.



4 >

December 17: The Lamanite prophet Samuel prophesied to the wicked Nephites about Christ's birth and death in Helaman 14.



12

December 25: Read and ponder "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles." You can find it at www.lds.org, in *For the Strength of Youth* (2001), or in the April 2000 *Liahona*. Write your testimony in your journal.

IDEA LIST

THE 12

READING DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

You can make this Christmas special by learning more about the Savior. Here are some scriptural selections to help you. Study one on each of the days leading up to Christmas.

5 >

December 18: Read the Prophet Joseph Smith's testimony of the Savior in D&C 76:19–24, 40–42.



11 >

December 24: On the eve of Christ's birth, the prophet Nephi prayed in behalf of his people who were about to be slain by the wicked. Read the Lord's response and the fulfillment of the prophet Samuel's prophecy in 3 Nephi 1:9–22.

6 >

December 19: The prophet Alma testified of the Savior and the power of His Atonement in Alma 7:7–13.

10 >

December 23: Read Matthew's account of the Savior's birth in Matthew 1:18–25; 2:



December 22: Read Mark's account of the Savior's baptism and ministry in Mark 1–2:13.



8 >

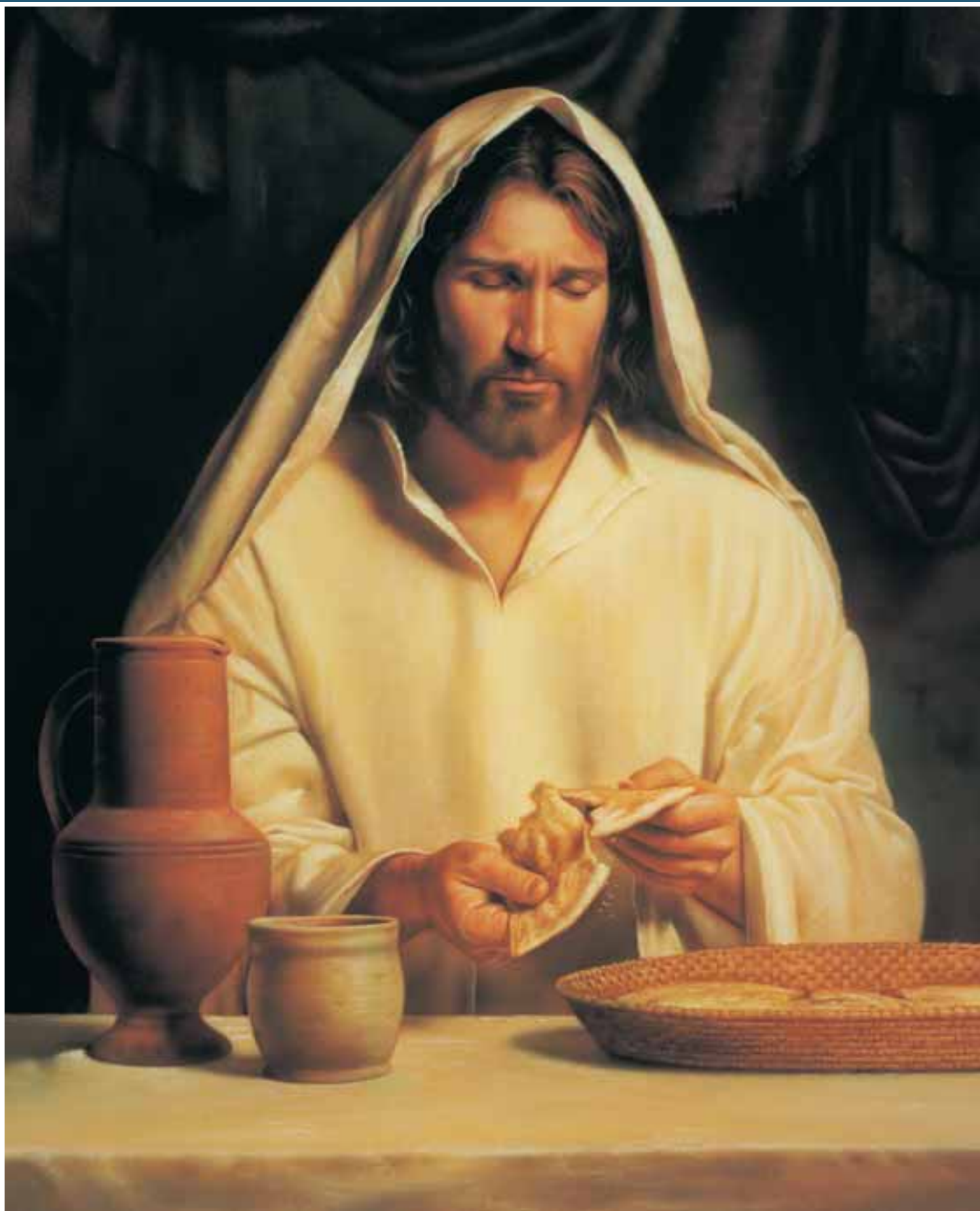
December 21: Read Luke's account of the Savior's birth and childhood in Luke 2.



7 >

December 20: Read about Mary's and Elisabeth's experiences in Luke 1.





Remembering Him Always

BY ELDER HENRY B. EYRING

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

In every sacrament meeting the word *always* is used in a covenant, a sacred promise with God that you are making. This is what you hear, read by authorized servants of God: “That they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and *always* remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may *always* have his Spirit to be with them” (D&C 20:77; emphasis added).

You promise to “always remember him.” You may have wondered, as have I, why He used the word *always*, given the nature of mortality as it weighs upon us. You know from experience how hard it is to think of anything consciously all the time.

I am not wise enough to know all of His purposes in giving us a covenant to always remember Him. But I know one. It is because He knows perfectly the powerful forces that influence us and also what it means to be human.

Opposing Forces

You and I can see evidence of the acceleration in the two great opposing forces around us. One is the force of righteousness. For instance, temples of God are being built at a rate across the earth that just a few years ago

would have been unthinkable. Missionaries are being called in numbers and to new places which change so rapidly that I have learned not to try to give the numbers or the places because my knowledge will have fallen behind the reality.

As has always been true, there is an opposing power. It is the power of sin, and it is visibly accelerating. I will not try to bring examples to your minds. The media and what you see in the lives of those around you present you with tragedy enough. And even in your experience, you surely must sense the ominous increase of toleration and even encouragement of the powers of sin to corrupt and torment.

The Master not only foresees perfectly the growing power of the opposing forces but also knows what it is like to be mortal. He knows what it is like to have the cares of life press upon us. He knows that we are to eat bread by the sweat of our brows and of the cares, concerns, and even sorrows that come from the command to bring children to the earth. And He knows that the trials we face and our human powers to deal with them ebb and flow.

He knows the mistake we can so easily make: to underestimate the forces working for us and to rely too much on our human powers. And so He offers us the covenant to “always remember him” and the warning to



We are promised that if we always remember Him and keep His commandments, we will always have His Spirit to be with us.

“pray always” (3 Nephi 18:18) so that we will place our reliance on Him, our only safety. It is not hard to know what to do. The very difficulty of remembering always and praying always is a needed spur to try harder. The danger lies in delay or drift.

Move Forward Spiritually

My message is a plea, a warning, and a promise: I plead with you to do the simple things that will move you forward spiritually.

Start with remembering Him. You will remember what you know and what you love. The Savior gave us the scriptures, paid for by prophets at a price we cannot measure, so that we could know Him. Lose yourself in them. Decide now to read more, and more effectively than you have ever done before.

Several Decembers ago I learned again the power that comes from trying harder to have the scriptures opened to our hearts. It began when I noticed the scriptures of a man sitting next to me in a meeting. I could see that he had marked them, as I had done, but with a difference. He had placed colored tags on the edges of pages, keyed to the colors with which he had marked the scriptures so that he could study all the scriptures that were helpful to him on a particular topic.

Within a day I had purchased an inexpensive set of scriptures. But it took more than a few days and more than a few prayers for me to know the topics that would open the scriptures anew for me. I chose the topics that would teach me of my call to be a witness of Jesus Christ. The first topic was the witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the next was that He is risen, and the third was that He is the head of His Church.

I would not urge you to buy a new set of scriptures nor to get colored tags and colored pencils nor to choose the topics I chose. But I plead with you to return to the scriptures in some way that opens your mind and heart to be taught.

Many of the scriptures have become familiar to us. Yet in just a few weeks what I remembered about the Savior and what I felt about Him were enriched.

I began to read with purpose. Perhaps it was because of the Christmas season, perhaps it was because I wanted always to remember Him, but I found myself drawn to the accounts of His birth. I read again His words, spoken to a prophet named Nephi, recorded in the Book of Mormon, familiar to us all. And yet it seemed new to me:

“Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given.

“And it came to pass that the words which came unto Nephi were fulfilled, according as they had been spoken; for behold, at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because there was no darkness when the night came” (3 Nephi 1:14–15).

Later, as I had never done before, I saw in my mind and felt in my heart the fulfillment of Samuel the Lamanite’s prophecy that the sun would set without darkness (see Helaman 14:3–4). I saw it at His birth, as if I were somewhere among the people in those lands of promise. And I saw it as it will be when He comes to stand, in resurrected glory, on the Mount of Olives. The darkness will be dispelled when the promised Messiah comes with healing in His wings. Knowing how much I need that healing, I feel my heart nearly burst with joy and love for Him at the thought of that light. I believe I will never see the dawning of a new day, as the sun banishes the darkness, without the sight triggering love in my heart for Him.

A Warning

I must add to my pleading a warning. You have the right and the obligation to choose for yourselves. You can



search the scriptures or not. You can choose to work hard enough, to ponder, and to obey His commandments so that the Holy Ghost can be your companion. Then you will come to know the Savior better and better, and your heart will swell with love for Him. Or you can choose to delay. You can choose to drift, deciding past efforts will be enough.

My warning is a simple matter of cause and effect. Jesus Christ is the light and the life of the world. If we do not choose to move toward Him, we will find that we have moved away.

“For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

“Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven;

“And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts” (D&C 1:31–33).

We are promised that if we always remember Him and keep His commandments, we will always have His Spirit to be with us. That light to our feet will grow dim if we choose to delay or to drift.

Promises

Now for the sure promises. First, if you will let your heart be drawn to the Savior and always remember Him and if you will draw near to our Heavenly Father in prayer, you will have put on spiritual armor. You will be protected against pride because you will know that any success comes not from your human powers. And you will be protected against the thoughts which come rushing in upon us that we are too weak, too inexperienced, too unworthy to do what we are called of God to do to serve and help save



His children. We can have come into our hearts the reassurance recorded in Moroni: “Christ truly said unto our fathers: If ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient unto me” (Moroni 10:23).

There is another sure promise. It is this: Whether or not you choose to keep your covenant to always remember Him, He always remembers you. I testify that Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, was and is the Only Begotten of the Father, the Lamb of God. He chose from before the foundations of the earth to be your Savior, my Savior, and the Savior of all we will ever know or meet. I testify that He was resurrected and that because of His Atonement we may be washed clean through our faith to obey the laws and accept the ordinances of the gospel.

I promise you that you will feel the influence of the Holy Ghost touch your heart as you search the scriptures with new purpose and as you pray earnestly. From that, you will have the assurance that God lives, that He answers prayers, that Jesus is the living Christ, and that He loves you. And you will feel your love for Him increase. ■

From a Church Educational System fireside address given at Brigham Young University on January 3, 1999.

would not urge you to buy a new set of scriptures nor to get colored tags and colored pencils nor to choose the topics I chose. But I plead with you to return to the scriptures in some way that opens your mind and heart to be taught.

The Real Christmas



Howard W. Hunter was born in Idaho on November 14, 1907, to Nellie Marie Rasmussen and John William Hunter. He was ordained an Apostle on October 15, 1959, and became President of the Church on June 5, 1994. He passed away on March 3, 1995.

The real Christmas comes to him who has taken Christ into his life as a moving, dynamic, vitalizing force.

**BY PRESIDENT HOWARD W. HUNTER
(1907–95)**

Fourteenth President of the Church

Christmas is a busy season. Streets and stores are filled with people making last-minute preparations. Travelers on the highways increase, airports are crowded—all Christianity seems to come to life with music, lights, and festive decorations.

A writer has said:

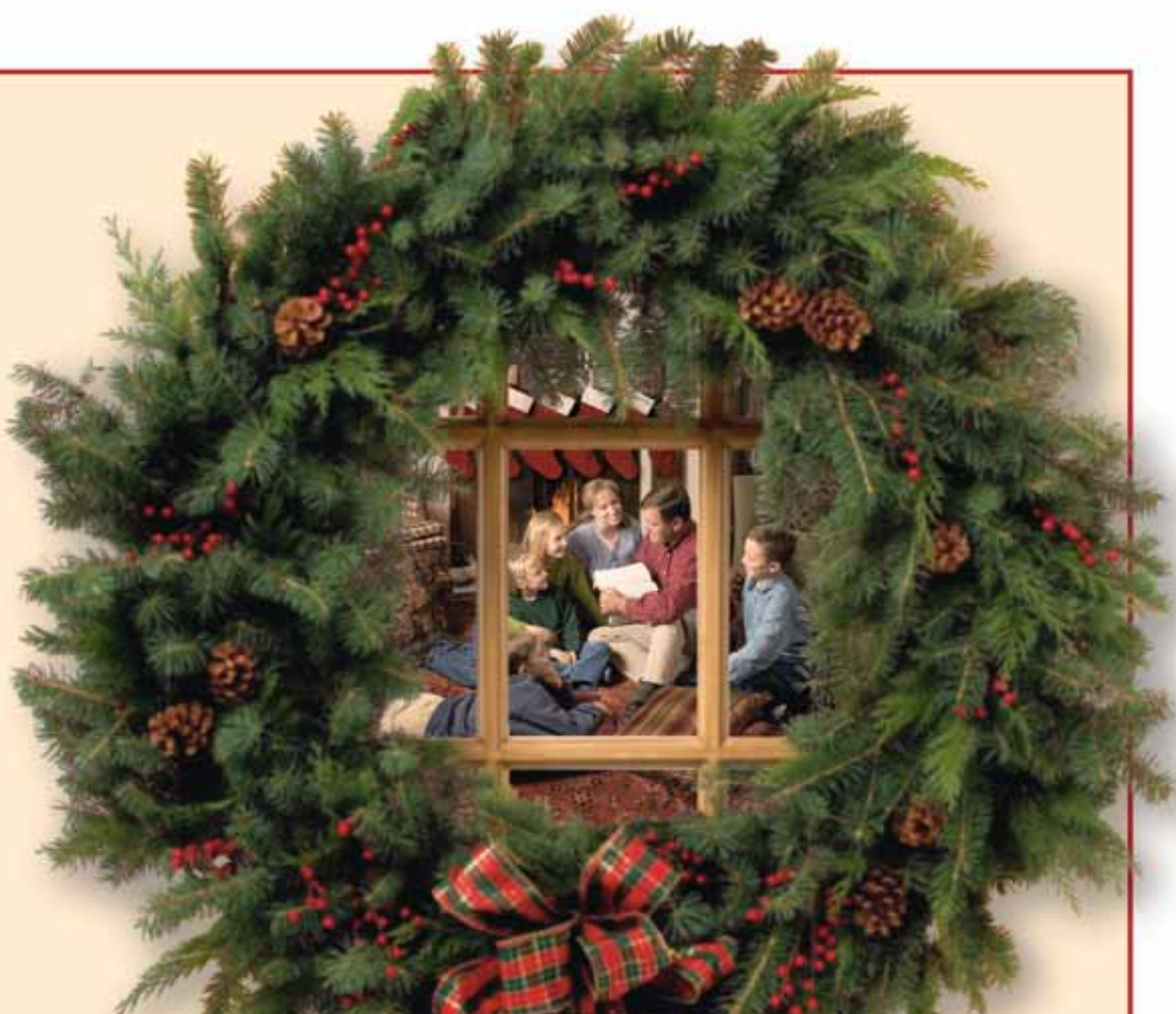
“Of all holidays there is none that enters so fully into the human heart, and stirs so many of the higher sentiments. The thoughts, memories, hopes, and customs linked with it are bound by antiquity and nationality collectively; and by childhood and old age individually. They embrace the religious, social, and patriotic sides of our nature. The holly and mistletoe entwined among the evergreens, the habit of giving gifts to those we love, the presence of the Christmas tree, the superstition of Santa Claus, all combining to make Christmas the most longed-for, the most universal, and from every standpoint, the most important

holiday known to man” [Clarence Baird, “The Spirit of Christmas,” *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1919, 154].

The Origin of Christmas

The season is steeped in tradition, and its roots stem back in history. The commencement of the holiday lies in pagan worship long before the introduction of Christianity. The god Mithra was worshiped by the ancient Aryans, and this worship gradually spread to India and Persia. Mithra at first was the god of the heavenly light of the bright skies and later in the Roman period was worshiped as the deity of the sun, or the sun god—*Sol Invictus Mithra*.

In the first century [before] Christ, Pompey carried on conquests along the southern coast of Cilicia, in Asia Minor, and many of the prisoners taken in those military actions were brought captive to Rome. This introduced the pagan worship of Mithra to Rome, for these prisoners spread the religion among the Roman soldiers. The worship became popular, particularly in the ranks of the Roman armies. We find today, in the ruins of the cities of the far-flung Roman Empire, the shrines of Mithra. Mithraism flourished in the Roman world and became the chief competitor of Christianity in the religious beliefs of the people.



A festive season for the worshipers of the sun god took place immediately after the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year—the time when the sun stands still after its annual dip into the Southern Hemisphere. The commencement of its climb from this low point was regarded as the rebirth of Mithra, and the Romans celebrated his birthday on the 25th of December each year. There was great merriment on this holiday—festivals and feasting, gifts given to friends, and the dwelling places decorated with evergreens.

Gradually Christianity gained a victory over Mithraism, which had been its strongest rival, and the festival day celebrating the birth of Mithra was used by the Christians to commemorate the birth of Christ. The pagan worship of the sun, deeply rooted in Roman culture, was replaced by one of the greatest festivals among Christians. Christmas has come down to us as a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing—a day of good cheer and goodwill to men. Although it has an earthly relation and significance, it is divine in content. The ancient Christian celebration has lived continuously through the centuries.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN LUKE, POSED BY MODELS

The Meaning of Christmas Today

How is Christmas regarded today? The legend of Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, the decorations of tinsel and mistletoe, and the giving of gifts all express to us the spirit of the day we celebrate; but the true spirit of Christmas lies much deeper than these. It is found in the life of the Savior, in the principles He taught, in His atoning sacrifice—which become our great heritage.

Many years ago the First Presidency of the Church made this significant statement:

“Christmas, to the Latter-day Saint, is both reminiscent and prophetic—a reminder of two great and solemn events, which will yet be regarded universally as the mightiest and most wonderful happenings in the history of the human race. These events were [fore-ordained] to take place upon this planet before it was created. One of them was the coming of the Savior in the meridian of time, to die for the sins of the world; and the other is the prospective advent of the risen and glorified Redeemer, to reign upon the earth as King of kings” [“What Christmas Suggests to a Latter-day Saint,” *Millennial Star*, Jan. 2, 1908, 1].

In Paul’s short letter to the Galatians, he showed great concern over their apparent disbelief and their forsaking of his teachings regarding Christ. He wrote to them: “But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:18–19). In other words, Paul expressed himself as suffering pain and anxiety until Christ be “formed” in them. This is another way of saying “in Christ,” as that expression is used by Paul repeatedly in his writings.

It is possible for Christ to be born in men’s lives, and when such an experience actually happens, a man is “in Christ”—Christ is “formed” in him. This presupposes that we take Christ into our hearts and make Him the living contemporary of our lives. He is not just a general truth or a fact in history, but the Savior of men everywhere and at all

times. When we strive to be Christlike, He is “formed” in us; if we open the door, He will enter; if we seek His counsel, He will counsel us. For Christ to be “formed” in us, we must have a belief in Him and in His Atonement. Such a belief in Christ and the keeping of His commandments are not restraints upon us. By these, men are set free. This Prince of Peace waits to give peace of mind, which may make each of us a channel of that peace.

The real Christmas comes to him who has taken Christ into his life as a moving, dynamic, vitalizing force. The real spirit of Christmas lies in the life and mission of the Master. I continue with what the writer defines as the real spirit of Christmas:

“It is a desire to sacrifice for others, to render service, and to possess a feeling of universal brotherhood. It consists of a willingness to forget what you have done for others, and to remember only what others have done for you; to ignore what the world owes you, and think only of . . . your duties in the middle distance, and your chance to do good and

aid your fellow-men in the foreground—to see that your fellow-men are just as good as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts—to close your book of grievances against the universe, and look about you for a place to sow a few seeds of happiness and go your way unobserved” [*Improvement Era*, Dec. 1919, 155].

In his contemplation of the Christmas season, James Wallingford penned these lines:

*Christmas is not a day or a season, but a condition
of heart and mind.*

*If we love our neighbors as ourselves;
if in our riches we are poor in spirit and in our
poverty we are rich in grace;
if our charity vaunteth not itself, but suffereth long and
is kind;
if when our brother asks for a loaf, we give ourselves
instead;*

When we
strive to be
Christlike,
He is “formed” in us;
if we open the door,
He will enter; if we
seek His counsel, He
will counsel us.

*if each day dawns in opportunity and sets in achievement, however small—
then every day is Christ's day and Christmas is always near.*

[In Charles L. Wallis, ed., *Words of Life* (1966), 33]

A wise man has said:

“The most amazing thing about the Christmas story is its relevance. It is at home in every age and fits into every mood of life. It is not simply a lovely tale once told, but eternally contemporary. It is the voice crying out in every wilderness. It is as meaningful in our time as in that long-ago night when shepherds followed the light of the star to the manger of Bethlehem” [Joseph R. Sizoo, in *Words of Life*, 33].

It has been said that Christmas is for children; but as the years of childhood fancy pass away and an understanding maturity takes their place, the simple teaching of the Savior that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35) becomes a reality. The evolution from a pagan holiday transformed into a Christian festival

to the birth of Christ in men's lives is another form of maturity that comes to one who has been touched by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Find the True Spirit of Christmas

If you desire to find the true spirit of Christmas and partake of the sweetness of it, let me make this suggestion to you. During the hurry of the festive occasion of this Christmas season, find time to turn your heart to God. Perhaps in the quiet hours, and in a quiet place, and on your knees—alone or with loved ones—give thanks for the good things that have come to you, and ask that His Spirit might dwell in you as you earnestly strive to serve Him and keep His commandments. He will take you by the hand and His promises will be kept.

I know that God lives. I bear witness of the divinity of His Son, the Savior of the world, and I express appreciation for the blessing of having upon the earth a prophet of the living God. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on December 5, 1972; punctuation, capitalization, and spelling modernized.



One Family's Testimony of Tithing

BY DON L. SEARLE
Church Magazines

What does the Lord mean when He says to those who pay tithing, “I will . . . open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing” (Malachi 3:10)? A family in San Salvador, El Salvador, can tell you from experience of the blessings that come.

After José Antonio Salazar and his wife, Noemí, joined the Church in 1975, they did their best to teach their children the gospel by precept and example. Their daughter, Cecelia Noemí, grew up to serve a mission, then marry a returned missionary, Luis Ricardo Arbizú. Luis, who also grew up in a home where obedience to the gospel was taught, is currently administrative coordinator for the Church Educational System in San Salvador. Luis and Cecelia have two children, Silvia Noemí, 17, and Luis Ricardo, 10.

José expresses gratitude for everyday blessings that have come, he believes, as a result of faithfully paying tithing. “We have had bread every day,” he says. “We have lacked for nothing.” He is grateful for general good health. He speaks of the blessing and opportunity to serve as a temple worker while he and his wife lived in Los Angeles, California. “What more could I ask of Him? What more?”

His wife, Noemí, says not only have they never lacked anything, but they have been given means and opportunity to help others. She believes spiritual opportunities have come through obeying the law of tithing and other commandments. “It has been a blessing to me always to have a calling in the Church.”

Son-in-law Luis Arbizú recalls that his mother had a small business selling prepared food. When she quit selling on Sunday after joining the Church,

the Lord blessed her to make up the difference. When Luis and Cecelia married, he had a very small salary. But shortly after he was called to serve in a stake presidency, his salary tripled and his wife was able to quit her job to stay at home.

Cecelia comments that when the Lord says He will open the windows of heaven, most people think of material blessings. “The great needs are not material but spiritual,” she says. Among her family’s blessings: “Our children are obedient.”

Luis Ricardo says that as a result of paying tithing his own family has never lacked for anything needed. He is grateful for parents who are examples of obedience.

Silvia says that through obedience to the law of tithing and other commandments, “I have seen blessings in my studies. I feel my testimony has grown greatly.” Obedience, she explains, “has helped me testify strongly of Jesus Christ, and this will strengthen my future home.” ■





TEN PERCENT PLUS ALL YOUR HEART

**PAY YOUR TITHING FROM A WILLING HEART
AND NOT JUST FROM YOUR POCKET.
(SEE D&C 64:34.)**



A PROPHET'S LIFE

The Cradle

Sharon, Vermont

Sharon, Vermont, could rightly be called the cradle of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it was here that Joseph Smith Jr. was born on December 23, 1805. The fifth child of Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Jr. was nurtured and loved as he developed gradually into his role as the Prophet of “the dispensation of the fulness of times” (Ephesians 1:10).

Joseph Sr. and Lucy both descended from New England families. They moved several times between 1796 and 1816 within Vermont and New Hampshire, where 10 of their 11 children were born.

In West Lebanon, New Hampshire, a typhoid fever epidemic struck. Seven-year-old Joseph Jr. (far right) was left with a serious infection in his left leg. Amputation seemed the only answer after two surgeries

failed, but Lucy insisted the doctors try again. The third surgery involved breaking off part of the bone with forceps. Joseph endured great pain, but the surgery succeeded.

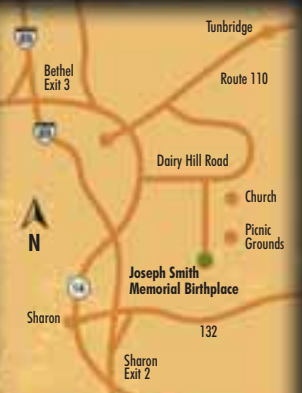
After three years of crop failures, the Smith family moved to Palmyra, New York, in 1816.

The few lingering evidences of the Smith family’s time in Sharon, Vermont, include a stone bridge built by family members (right inset) and the hearthstone from the original cabin (above inset).

On the centennial anniversary of the Prophet’s birth, President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) dedicated the memorial cottage (left inset), which was used as a visitors’ center, and a granite obelisk (background). The obelisk is 38 1/2 feet high (11.7 m)—one foot for each year of the Prophet’s life. ■



BACKGROUND: PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN; DETAIL FROM BROTHER JOSEPH, BY DAVID LINDSLEY; LEFT INSET: PHOTOGRAPH MAY NOT BE COPIED; ABOVE INSET: PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN; JOSEPH SMITH AS A BOY, BY THEODORE S. GORKA



President Brigham Young (1801–77) said: “The Lord had his eyes upon [Joseph Smith], and upon his father, and upon his father’s father, and upon their progenitors clear back to . . . Adam. He has watched that family and that blood as it has circulated from its fountain to the birth of that man. He was fore-ordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation.”¹

Joseph Smith learned much from his ancestors and his upbringing in New England, including hard work, devotion to God, and patriotism. This family tree will tell you a little more about his ancestors.²

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 96.
2. This information comes from *Church History in the Fulness of Times* (2000), 15–27.
3. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley (1958), 182.
4. Quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage* (1971), 112.
5. See John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet* (1989), 23–24; see also 19–30.

1 Robert Smith
Robert was the Prophet’s third-great-grandfather. He left England when he was a teenager to move to America. He arrived in Boston in 1638.

2 Mary French
The Prophet’s third-great-grandmother, Mary, had 10 children. She and her husband spent most of their married lives in Topsfield, Massachusetts.

3 Samuel Smith Sr.
Samuel was born to Robert and Mary in 1666. He was known as a “gentleman” in Topsfield’s town and county records.

4 Rebecca Curtis
Rebecca had nine children. Her first son was Samuel Jr.

5 Samuel Smith Jr.
Samuel was well known as a Christian, a community leader, and a supporter of the American War of Independence.

6 Priscilla Gould
Priscilla died after having five children. After she died, Samuel married her cousin, who then raised Priscilla’s children.

9 Joseph Smith Sr.
Joseph was a good man who believed in God. He met his wife, Lucy, at her brother’s store in Tunbridge, Vermont, and they were married in 1796. Several times, Joseph had dreams that prepared him for the coming of the gospel and to support his son in his calling. Lucy said he was “an affectionate companion and tender father as ever blessed the confidence of a family.”³
He was one of the first baptized when the gospel was restored, and he became the first patriarch of the Church in this dispensation.

8 Mary Duty
Mary had 11 children. She moved with her husband from Massachusetts to Vermont as they looked for new farmland. In her later years, Mary had a strong testimony that her grandson was a prophet. In 1836 Mary went to Kirtland, Ohio, to gather with the Saints. She died 10 days after arriving there.

Joseph Smith’s

7 Asael Smith

Asael, born in 1744, was the Prophet's grandfather. He was elected to many offices during the 30 years he lived in Tunbridge, Vermont, and was known for his community service. He believed in a loving God and in life after death. He also had a testimony of the Savior. Asael predicted that "God was going to raise up some branch of his family to be a great benefit to mankind."⁴

In his old age, Asael read the Book of Mormon. And when he died in late 1830, he knew the Book of Mormon was true and that his grandson was a prophet.

15 John Mack

John was Joseph Smith Jr.'s great-great-grandfather. When he was 16, he left Inverness, Scotland, and arrived in New England in 1669.

16 Sarah Bagley

Sarah and her husband spent much of their lives in Lyme, Connecticut. They had 12 children.⁵

13 Ebenezer Mack

Ebenezer was John and Sarah Mack's eighth child. He and his family lived on the Mack estate but had very hard economic times there.

14 Hannah Huntley

Hannah married Ebenezer when he was 30.

11 Solomon Mack

Born in 1732, Solomon was only four when he was apprenticed to a nearby farmer. He was an apprentice until he was 21. After that, he enlisted in the French and Indian War and was a merchant, a land developer, a shipmaster, and a farmer, among other things. He had many unfortunate incidents during his lifetime, including being hit by a falling tree. Later in his life, he read the Bible and was converted to a life of service and devotion to God.

Solomon died a few months after Joseph received the First Vision.

12 Lydia Gates

Lydia was a schoolteacher. She married Solomon in 1759 and taught her eight children, and probably her husband, to read and write and also about religion.

10 Lucy Mack

Lucy came to a decision when she was about 19 that Christ's Church was no longer on the earth. Once, when Lucy was very ill, she pleaded with the Lord for her life and promised Him that she would serve Him the best she could if He would spare her. She heard a voice giving her comfort, and she kept seeking for a religion that would bring her closer to Him. Joseph Smith Jr. was her fifth child, and the gospel he restored was an answer to her prayers. Her children were an unnamed child, who died shortly after birth, Alvin, Hyrum, Sophronia, Joseph, Samuel, Ephraim, William, Catherine, Don Carlos, and Lucy.

Joseph Smith Jr.

The Prophet Joseph was born on December 23, 1805, the 5th of 11 children. Joseph married Emma Hale in 1827. They had 12 children, including 2 adopted children. He was martyred on June 27, 1844. "[He] left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people" (D&C 135:3).



Family Tree

Questions & Answers

“My friend says he would be interested in joining our Church if he just didn’t have to believe the Joseph Smith story. How do I answer him?”

L I A H O N A

What would the Church be like without Joseph Smith? Would we have the priesthood or a prophet today? Would we have the Book of Mormon, temples, eternal families, modern revelation, or an understanding of the nature of the Godhead?

It appears that your friend enjoys and believes some things about the Church. Remind him that if he believes the Church is good and of God, then Joseph Smith must have been called of God. Without the Prophet Joseph we wouldn’t have the Church and its blessings in our lives.

Does your friend understand the Apostasy and the need for a restoration of the Church, priesthood, and gospel of Jesus Christ? Does he understand that the Church is always led by prophets, such as Moses and Abraham? If so, testify that Joseph Smith was the prophet of whom the Lord said, “Unto him will I give power to bring forth my word” (2 Nephi 3:11) and to bring the Church “out of

When the gospel is on the earth, a prophet leads the Church. Joseph Smith was the first latter-day prophet.

Many blessings come from Joseph Smith’s efforts: he translated the Book of Mormon, he received the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, and the priesthood was restored through him.

Believing that these blessings came from God helps us know that Joseph Smith was called of God.

Share your testimony with your friend, and invite him to study the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s history and pray about them.

obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church” (D&C 1:30).

Another evidence of Joseph Smith’s divine calling is the Book of Mormon. As your friend reads it, he could prayerfully ask, “Did Joseph Smith write the Book of Mormon, or did he translate it by the power of God?” The Lord said that He gave Joseph Smith “power to translate . . . the Book of Mormon” (D&C 1:29). If the Book of Mormon is true, then Joseph Smith was a true prophet.

Your friend’s testimony can be strengthened by hearing others’ testimonies. You could invite him to meet with the missionaries, if he hasn’t done so already. Your friend can read Joseph Smith’s own testimony in Joseph Smith—History (in the Pearl of Great Price). These testimonies can invite the Spirit to confirm the truth of Joseph Smith’s experience to your friend.

Finally, invite your friend to pray with faith, as Joseph Smith did. As he sincerely seeks the truth, a confirmation of the Spirit will come.



READERS



I believe our Church exists because of Joseph Smith and his incredible vision of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Pray for your

friend that his heart may be softened. Tell him to pray with his whole heart. God will hear him and answer his prayer.

*Katlyn Birdwell, 19, Naches Ward,
Selah Washington Stake*

Those who choose to join this Church will have to have a strong testimony about Joseph Smith's work. We should understand that the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored through the Prophet Joseph and that the truthfulness of the Church is based on his First Vision. To help your friend, I suggest that you bear your testimony about Joseph Smith and show him a good example of love and friendship.

*Anna Lavrentyeva, 18, St. Petersburg Tsentralny
Branch, St. Petersburg Russia District*

Joseph Smith's mission is one of the foundations of our testimonies as members of the Church, because the Restoration of the gospel came to us from him. If his story is false, then our Church is false. On the other hand, if his story is true, it would follow that our Church and its teachings are true. An investigator, therefore, must first accept the story of Joseph Smith as true before he could join the Church.

*Christina E. Baliao, 21, Baguio University Ward,
Baguio Philippines Stake*



God used a modern prophet to restore the gospel of Christ. By doing that, He showed us again that He is the same today, tomorrow, and forever.

Andreas Stokholm Baxter, 17, Ballerup Ward,
Copenhagen Denmark Stake

Try bearing your testimony of the truthfulness of Joseph Smith’s story. It will surprise you how big of an effect a testimony can have on your friends. Tell your friend to read Joseph Smith—History and to ask God if it is true. Also, if your friend believes the Book of Mormon to be the word of God, then the Joseph Smith story must be true. Joseph Smith must have translated the Book of Mormon with the power of God. If your friend believes the other doctrines of the Church to be true, then this belief means that the Joseph Smith story is true.

Jordi Hunt, 13, Sugar City Third Ward, Sugar City Idaho Stake



It is impossible to believe that this is the true Church without having a testimony of the First Vision, of the Restoration of the true Church, and of Joseph Smith as a prophet of God. If

anyone has any doubt, that person can ask God, and He will answer the prayer as He promises in James 1:5 and Moroni 10:3–5.

Elder Javier Pulido, 21, Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission

Our faith in the restored gospel is based on the reality of Joseph Smith’s vision. Without Joseph Smith we would not have the Book of Mormon and we would not have the Church, for he was the one through whom the Lord restored the Church. If your friend does not believe in it and does not have a testimony of it, he should pray about it.

Fabiola Erlacher, 15, Linz-Urfahr Ward, Salzburg Austria Stake



“We declare without equivocation that God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, appeared in person to the boy Joseph Smith. . . .

“. . . Our whole strength rests on the validity of that vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 80.



Bear your testimony of Joseph Smith to your friend. Tell your friend to read the story for himself and pray about it. He will get an answer, as Joseph Smith did.

Rebecca Burk, 16, Globe First Ward, Globe Arizona Stake



The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, is the pinnacle of our religion. Without it, the necessary authority to organize the Church of Christ

wouldn’t be on the earth. God doesn’t change. He has always called prophets and will continue calling them so that His designs may be achieved.

Stephan Cerqueira Levita, 18, Ilhéus Centro Branch,
Itabuna Brazil Stake

Liahona and readers’ answers are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Youth readers: Send your answer, along with your name, birth date, address, ward and stake (or branch and district), and a photograph (with your parents’ written permission to print the photo) to:

Questions & Answers 1/06

50 E. North Temple St., Floor 24

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail: cur-liahona-imag@ldschurch.org

Please respond by January 15, 2006.

QUESTION

“My parents are divorced, and sometimes I feel like we aren’t a ‘real’ LDS family because we aren’t sealed in the temple. I’m beginning to feel alienated from the Church. How can I deal with these feelings?” ■

Rejoice in the Atonement of Jesus Christ



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.

The Prophet Joseph Smith: “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it” (*History of the Church*, 3:30).

How Do We Rejoice in the Atonement?

Romans 5:10–11: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945): “I rejoice in knowing that Jesus is the Redeemer of the world, our elder brother, and that His name and His name alone, is the only one under heaven whereby we can gain salvation and come back and dwell with our Heavenly Father and our Savior, and our loved ones who have gone before” (*Teachings of Presidents of the*

Church: Heber J. Grant [2002], 225).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Jesus’ glorious Atonement is the central act in all of human history! It provides the universal Resurrection; it makes our personal repentance and forgiveness possible. . . . We are to change our thoughts and then behavior until we are turned away from our sins. . . . Repentance is thus a continuing process in which each of us needs to draw on the Atonement for real relief, real forgiveness, and real progress. . . . It remains for us . . . to claim the blessings of the great Atonement” (“Testifying of the Great and Glorious Atonement,” *Liabona*, Apr. 2002, 7–8, 13; *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 10, 15).

How Can We Claim the Blessings of the Atonement?

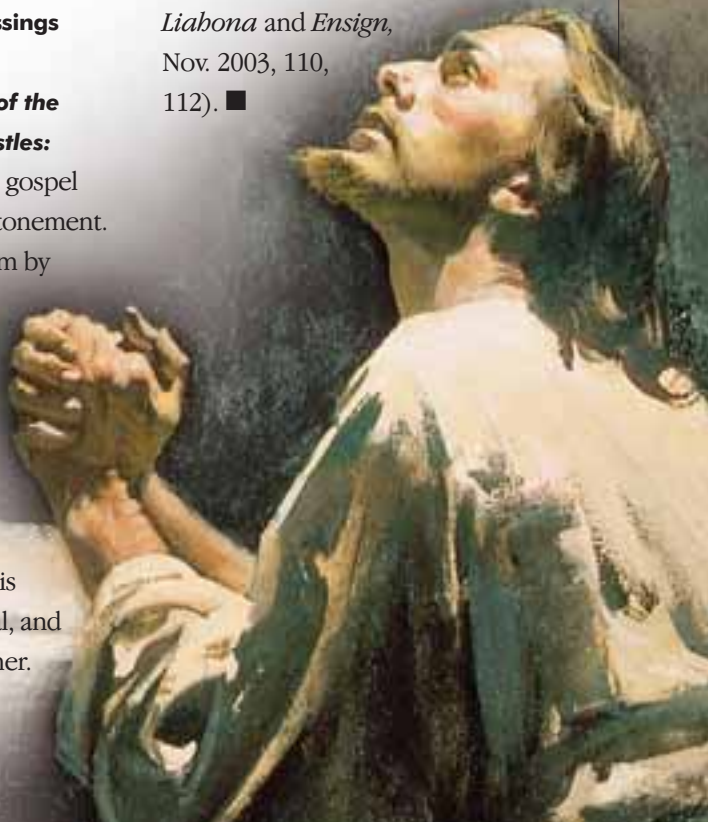
Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “Essential ordinances of the gospel symbolize the Atonement. Baptism by



immersion is symbolic of the death, burial, and Resurrection of the Redeemer.

Partaking of the sacrament renews baptismal covenants and also renews our memory of the Savior’s broken flesh and of the blood He shed for us. Ordinances of the temple symbolize our reconciliation with the Lord and seal families together forever. Obedience to the sacred covenants made in temples qualifies us for eternal life” (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: “It is essential to have Christ at the core of our lives. In these ‘perilous times,’ oh, how we need Him! He is the source of strength and safety. He is light. He is life. His peace ‘passeth all understanding.’ As our personal Savior and Redeemer, He invites us, one by one, with outstretched arms to ‘come unto him.’ . . . I testify that He is *always* there, His merciful, loving arms outstretched” (“Choose Ye Therefore Christ the Lord,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 110, 112). ■



Mission Blessings in the *Golden Years*

Senior missionaries bring blessings to themselves and the people they serve—and also to their children and grandchildren at home.

Bless Grandma and Grandpa

By Mark Crane

It began with the first letter we received from my mother. She and my father were brand-new missionaries in the Florida Tallahassee Mission. She told of a recent conference they had attended. As everyone was saying good-bye at the conclusion of the meetings, she noticed that her companion was missing. Hearing male laughter, she followed the sound to a classroom and found herself in the midst of a leg-wrestling tournament, which my dad

had organized. “I got there just in time,” she wrote, “to see some 20-year-old elder flip your dad across the room.” So much for my worry that a mission might turn Dad into some sort of somber old gentleman.

In reading that letter I began to discover the delights and blessings of being the child of missionary parents. When I served a mission in my youth, I understood on some level that my family loved the letters I wrote them. But at that somewhat selfish age, I didn’t appreciate how eager my family was for my success or how much prayer and worry they invested in my mission.

Now the tables were turned. I was pleasantly surprised to find myself rifling through the mail each day for missionary news, devouring every line. I soon noticed that our family prayers took on a new urgency. Our children no longer prayed the generic, “Please bless the missionaries.” They prayed the specific, “Please bless Grandma and Grandpa on their mission.”

When my parents were called on that first mission, they were both in their mid-50s and not

Elder and Sister Crane (right) with a soon-to-be baptized member and a member missionary (left) who helped in his conversion.



retired. But the seasonal nature of farming allowed them to spend the winter in the Lord's service. So their mission call was for six months. Those six months seemed to fly by.

What a shock it was to see them when they came home. My parents had become a force. The same remarkable changes that most parents recognize in their young missionary sons and daughters had taken place in Mom and Dad. The most dramatic change was that they just hummed with energy. Enthusiasm is an amazing tonic. They looked and acted younger. My mother ignored some of the chronic health problems that had slowed her down for years. And maybe it was my imagination, but my parents seemed to be more in love. Once, in a private moment I will always cherish, my mother told me of some occasions when my father had taught the gospel with great power. With love and admiration in her voice, she said, "Your dad is the most amazing man." I also noticed that their mission experience had been fun. Any conversation about their mission was punctuated with frequent and persistent laughter.

And my parents didn't serve just one mission. The next winter they returned to Florida. During the ensuing years they served eight more six-month missions, making ten in all. They missed many family events—births, baby blessings, baptisms, ten Thanksgivings and Christmases—and none of it seems much like a sacrifice. The compensating blessings are too great.

How thankful I am for parents who set the example. We try to teach our children that they have an obligation to share the gospel. Nothing gives life to that teaching quite like beloved grandparents who forgo the comforts of retirement to serve the Lord. This example becomes a powerful force in an extended family.

A few years ago our oldest son, Matt, was serving a mission in California while my parents were serving in Virginia. I noted that Matt never once wrote a letter home complaining about how tough missionary work is. I have to credit his grandparents for that. How can a young elder in his physical prime think of complaining when his grandmother—in her late 60s with lung problems, back pain, and numerous allergies—is knocking on doors in another state?

My parents' missions have shown me the error of the notion that once a child is raised, the parents' work is done. Wonderful as my childhood training was, I believe some of the greatest parenting my mother and father have done has occurred after I became an adult. And while they have helped baptize or activate many people, I believe their most profound ministry has been to their own grandchildren.

My parents' letters taught volumes of gospel lessons. Stories of serving in an inner-city branch in Washington, D.C.; hiking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon to teach investigators; laboring with impoverished single mothers, wealthy stockbrokers, fishermen, potters, farmers, addicts, alcoholics, ministers, police officers, and the elderly—what better way to teach grandchildren the worth of every soul?

The greatest thing my parents have done for their posterity is to leave them in the Lord's hands and accept calls to serve Him as missionaries. ■

Mark Crane is a member of the Morgan Ninth Ward, Morgan Utah Stake.

A Wonderful Reunion

By Einar Iversen

My wife, Martha, and I were called from our home in Canada to serve in the Denmark Copenhagen Mission. After two weeks full of excitement and learning at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, and a long flight from Salt Lake City, we arrived in Copenhagen on June 22, 1999. President and Sister Rasmussen, our mission president and his wife, met us at the airport and took care of us for the next two days. We were then given a car and asked to live in Aabenraa and help in the Sønderborg Branch with missionary and membership work.

The first Sunday at sacrament meeting we greeted members and introduced ourselves. Shaking hands with





If Elder and Sister Iversen had not served a mission, they would have missed a wonderful reunion with a dear friend.

a middle-aged gentleman, I said, “I am Ejnar Iversen.” He replied, “I am Bent Bisgaard.” We looked at each other and could hardly believe our eyes. It was the same Bent Bisgaard who 32 years earlier had joined the Church while living with us in Canada. He said he lived in Fredericia and had been assigned to speak in our branch that day. What a wonderful reunion it was—much more than a coincidence. We felt that our Father in Heaven had sent him to welcome us.

In 1967 Bent had come to British Columbia, Canada, where I worked at the government employment office. He was looking for work and a place to stay. I found him work, and Martha and I agreed that we had room for one more boarder. We already had two, one of whom was Svend Hansen, a strong Church member.

Svend soon challenged Bent to read the Book of Mormon, and Bent did so with the intention of finding fault with it. Finding none, he wanted to be baptized. He was the first person baptized in our new stake center.

Soon afterward Bent returned to Denmark, and we were concerned that he might lose touch with the Church. But he attended church in Denmark, and it happened to

be a fast Sunday. He was sitting at the back of the chapel minding his own business when he was asked to bear his testimony, something he had never done before, in either English or Danish. He wished he could disappear, but instead he stood and told how Svend Hansen had challenged him to read the Book of Mormon. As soon as he mentioned Svend’s name, people looked up in surprise. After the meeting Svend’s many friends wanted to know how he was doing.

Suddenly Bent had many new friends, and he felt right at home. He has since worked many years with the youth and served on the high council of the Århus Denmark Stake.

Martha and I are very happy to have known Bent and Svend all these years. And had we not served as a missionary couple, we never would have had this wonderful reunion. ■

Ejnar Iversen is a member of the Chilliwack Ward, Abbotsford British Columbia Stake.

Healed Hearts and Family History

By Brunhilde Gehrman

Although we live on the east coast of Queensland, Australia, we are Germans. My husband, Siegfried, was born in Danzig, and I was born in what is now the Czech Republic. When we considered going on a mission, we had concerns. Our family is constantly growing. The separation would be very hard for us. Our little house couldn’t be rented, and there were financial worries. We discussed it together and spoke about all the pros and cons. But in the end we knelt down and asked our Father in Heaven for guidance. After that it was very easy. We both had a good feeling and the certainty that we should go on a mission.

In the application the bishop gave us, we could list the country we wanted to go to. Of course that was Germany. And although it seemed rather doubtful that we would be sent to the other side of the world, our Heavenly Father knew exactly what we needed. We were asked to fulfill a temple mission in Freiberg, Germany. I was excited because I still understand the Czech

language from my youth and can speak a little bit. I knew that members from Eastern Europe often visit the Freiberg temple.

We began our mission on February 25, 1992. Our temple president was Jiří Šnedrfler, and his wife, Olga, was the temple matron. What excellent people they were—loving and always friendly.

We experienced only good things in Freiberg. Everyone was helpful and nice. We worked hard, and we were a large family of temple workers who loved each other. We still keep in touch with many of them.

The highlight of our mission was the visit from the first members in Ukraine. We had prepared ourselves. The mission president's wife spoke Russian, and even I learned part of one of the ordinances in Russian. These members had such a reverence for the house of the Lord. As they came and left, they bowed in humility. They were so happy they could receive their endowments, and many cried for joy and didn't want to leave the temple.

Polish members come often to Freiberg, and at first my husband was nervous about meeting them. His grandmother had starved in a camp in Poland after World War II. But through meeting with these brothers and sisters and worshipping together with them, my husband was emotionally healed. This was a great blessing brought about by our mission.

My great blessing was becoming acquainted with a Czech sister named Marie Smidova. With her help I was able to begin work on my family history. There were no Church microfilms from the region I needed, and my knowledge of Czech isn't sufficient to write to Czech officials for information. Sister Smidova has done much for me, and I am very thankful for her help.

When we returned home after 18 months, we were amazed at how our financial situation had improved. Our little house waited for us, and our children prepared a lovely welcome. After a year we went to Sydney, Australia, to serve a temple mission there for a year.

We are thankful for the experiences we have had through our work. We would remind every senior couple of the saying of President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985): "Do it now!" ■

Brunhilde Gebrmann is a member of the Kawana Waters Ward, Nambour Australia Stake.

Elder and Sister Gebrmann have served temple missions in both Germany and Australia.



TO THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH

"There is a constant need for more couple missionaries. They perform wonderful service throughout the world. You [leaders] need not wait for the couples to volunteer. The sacrifices associated with serving the Lord full-time will abundantly bless the couples, their families, and the people they serve."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "To the Bishops of the Church," Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, June 19, 2004, 27.





STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY

ADAPTING TO CIRCUMSTANCES

The last in a series giving insights for your study and use of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

“Fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.”¹

Less Than Ideal

In an ideal world all adults would be happily married, all marriages would be blessed with children, and all family members would be healthy, obedient, and supportive of each other. But life is rarely ideal. Each individual experiences adversity, and no family’s mortal sojourn is consistently trouble free. Without trial, weakness, illness, and death, we would



not learn the lessons we came here to learn. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained: “If we look at mortality as a complete existence, then pain, sorrow, failure, and short life could be a calamity. But if we look upon life as an eternal thing stretching far into the pre-earth past and on into the eternal post-death future, then all happenings may be put in proper perspective.”²

Shifting Responsibilities

Disease, disability, death, divorce, and other disruptive factors can create challenges. In such situations, “individual adaptation” of roles may be necessary. A father may need to

take on additional household and nurturing responsibilities, or a mother who has been a full-time homemaker may need to enter the workforce. Even children may need to accept new responsibilities.

When unsettling events occur, the extended family may also need to assist. Support may range from providing financial assistance to donating time to tend children, help with chores, or care for an ill or disabled family member.

The degree of extended-family involvement depends on the situation and the family's needs.

Even without the effects of serious adversity, the extended family can be an important support system. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "To build a foundation strong enough to support a family in our troubled world today requires the best effort of each of us—father, mother, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on. Each must contribute energy and effort in driving piles right down to the bedrock of the gospel until the foundation is strong enough to endure through the eternities."³

Adversity

You may wonder why your family has to endure adversity and the disruption it brings. The answer, and the comfort, can be found in the gospel's eternal perspective. The Apostle Paul taught that our "affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). How is this possible?

Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy reminds us: "Trials and tribulations take many forms: the death of a loved one, a marriage that is different than expected, no marriage, a divorce, a child born with a disability, no children, losing a job, parents who make mistakes, a wayward son or daughter, ill health. The list is endless. Why did God make allowances in His plan for disappointment, pain, suffering, and death? Is adversity necessary for one to



Without an eternal perspective, there are no meaningful explanations for the trials we face in mortality.

build a Christ-centered life, to receive the image of God in his or her countenance?

"An understanding of the plan of salvation, of premortality, earth life, and life after death provides perspective. . . . Opposition, disappointments, pain, suffering, and death are necessary to protect agency and provide for spiritual development (see 2 Nephi 11). On the other hand, if life were limited to our mortal experience, adversity could not be understood. . . . Without an eternal perspective, there are no meaningful explanations

for man's inhumanity to man or for earthquakes, floods, or children with disabilities.

"We should remember that it was Satan who wanted an earth with no disappointments, no tests, no adversity, and no glory except for himself."⁴

Healing through the Atonement

Although this mortal existence is meant to test us, we are not without divine help. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: "It is important to understand that His healing can mean being cured, or having your burdens eased, or even coming to realize that it is worth it to endure to the end patiently. . . .

"Recognize that some challenges in life will not be resolved here on earth. . . . He wants you to learn how to be cured when that is His will and how to obtain strength to live with your challenge when He intends it to be an instrument for growth. . . .

"When you feel you can do no more, temporarily lay your challenges at His feet. . . . The Lord will give relief with divine power when you seek deliverance in humility and *faith in Jesus Christ*."⁵ ■

NOTES

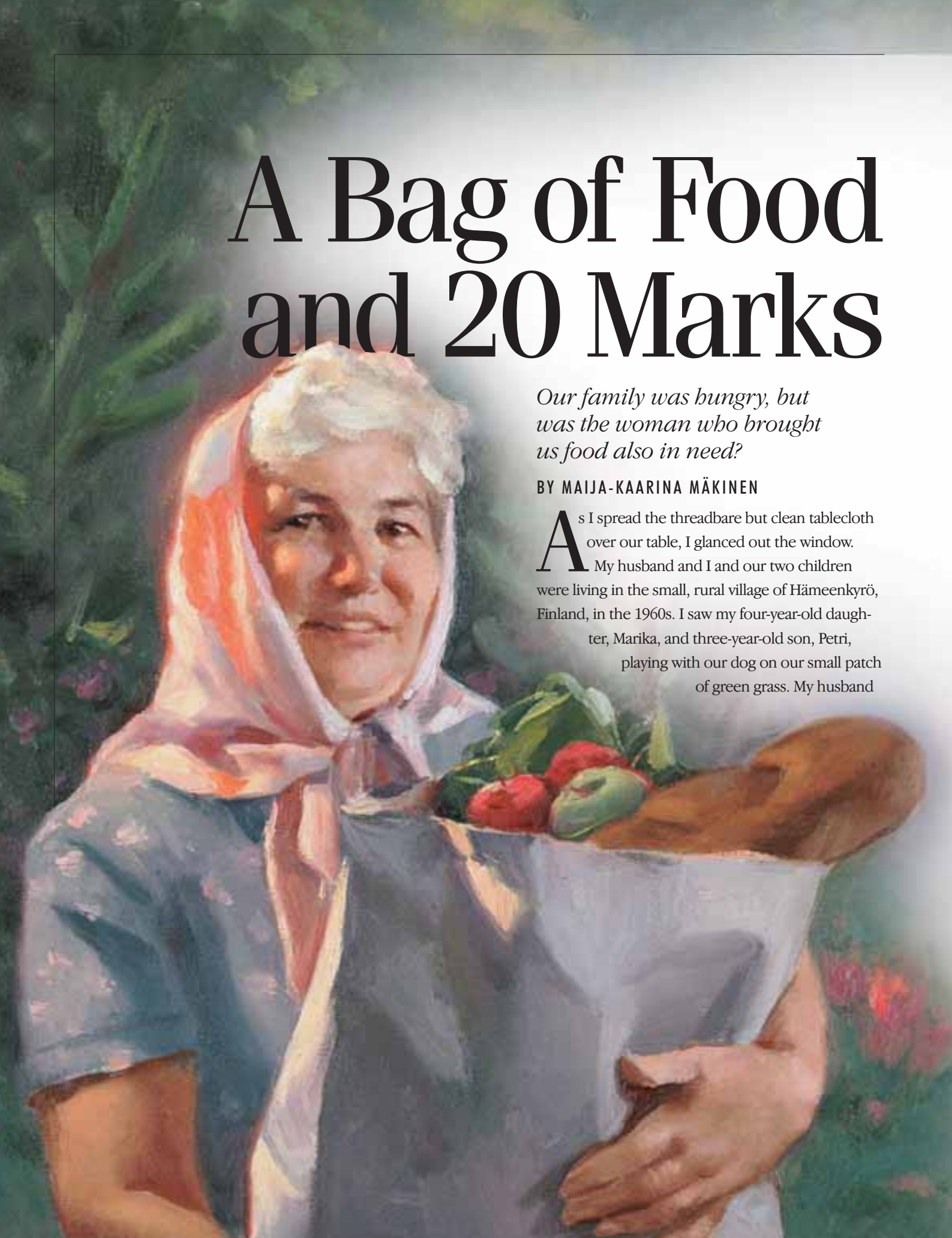
1. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 38–39.
3. "Born of Goodly Parents," *Ensign*, May 1985, 23.
4. "Living a Christ-Centered Life," *Liabona*, Dec. 1999, 20; see *Ensign*, Jan. 1999, 13.
5. "To Be Healed," *Ensign*, May 1994, 7–8.

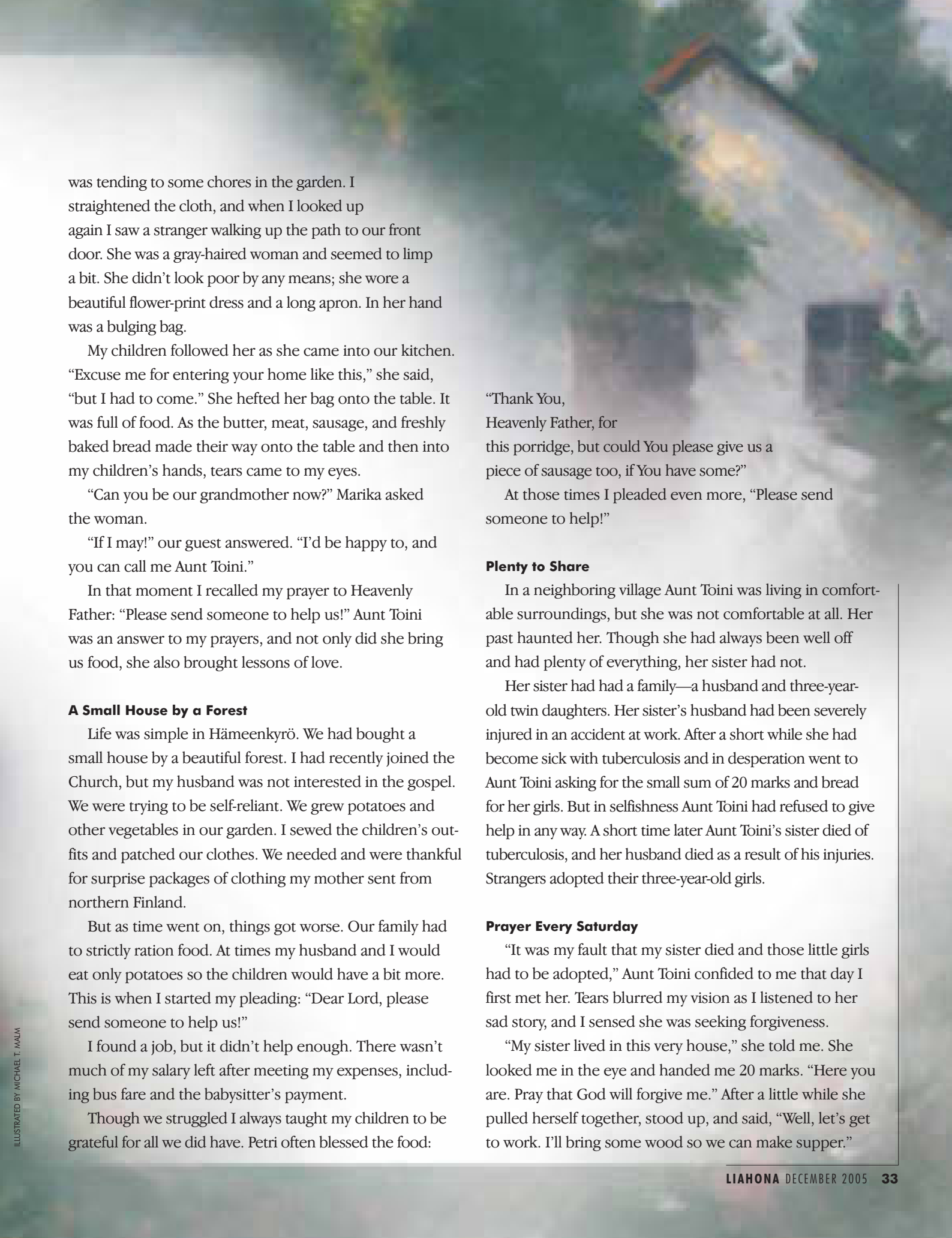
A Bag of Food and 20 Marks

*Our family was hungry, but
was the woman who brought
us food also in need?*

BY MAIJA-KAARINA MÄKINEN

As I spread the threadbare but clean tablecloth over our table, I glanced out the window. My husband and I and our two children were living in the small, rural village of Hämeenkyrö, Finland, in the 1960s. I saw my four-year-old daughter, Marika, and three-year-old son, Petri, playing with our dog on our small patch of green grass. My husband





was tending to some chores in the garden. I straightened the cloth, and when I looked up again I saw a stranger walking up the path to our front door. She was a gray-haired woman and seemed to limp a bit. She didn't look poor by any means; she wore a beautiful flower-print dress and a long apron. In her hand was a bulging bag.

My children followed her as she came into our kitchen. "Excuse me for entering your home like this," she said, "but I had to come." She hefted her bag onto the table. It was full of food. As the butter, meat, sausage, and freshly baked bread made their way onto the table and then into my children's hands, tears came to my eyes.

"Can you be our grandmother now?" Marika asked the woman.

"If I may!" our guest answered. "I'd be happy to, and you can call me Aunt Toini."

In that moment I recalled my prayer to Heavenly Father: "Please send someone to help us!" Aunt Toini was an answer to my prayers, and not only did she bring us food, she also brought lessons of love.

A Small House by a Forest

Life was simple in Hämeenkyrö. We had bought a small house by a beautiful forest. I had recently joined the Church, but my husband was not interested in the gospel. We were trying to be self-reliant. We grew potatoes and other vegetables in our garden. I sewed the children's outfits and patched our clothes. We needed and were thankful for surprise packages of clothing my mother sent from northern Finland.

But as time went on, things got worse. Our family had to strictly ration food. At times my husband and I would eat only potatoes so the children would have a bit more. This is when I started my pleading: "Dear Lord, please send someone to help us!"

I found a job, but it didn't help enough. There wasn't much of my salary left after meeting my expenses, including bus fare and the babysitter's payment.

Though we struggled I always taught my children to be grateful for all we did have. Petri often blessed the food:

"Thank You,
Heavenly Father, for
this porridge, but could You please give us a
piece of sausage too, if You have some?"

At those times I pleaded even more, "Please send someone to help!"

Plenty to Share

In a neighboring village Aunt Toini was living in comfortable surroundings, but she was not comfortable at all. Her past haunted her. Though she had always been well off and had plenty of everything, her sister had not.

Her sister had had a family—a husband and three-year-old twin daughters. Her sister's husband had been severely injured in an accident at work. After a short while she had become sick with tuberculosis and in desperation went to Aunt Toini asking for the small sum of 20 marks and bread for her girls. But in selfishness Aunt Toini had refused to give help in any way. A short time later Aunt Toini's sister died of tuberculosis, and her husband died as a result of his injuries. Strangers adopted their three-year-old girls.

Prayer Every Saturday

"It was my fault that my sister died and those little girls had to be adopted," Aunt Toini confided to me that day I first met her. Tears blurred my vision as I listened to her sad story, and I sensed she was seeking forgiveness.

"My sister lived in this very house," she told me. She looked me in the eye and handed me 20 marks. "Here you are. Pray that God will forgive me." After a little while she pulled herself together, stood up, and said, "Well, let's get to work. I'll bring some wood so we can make supper."

As she carried water from the well, I offered a different prayer: "Thank You, Heavenly Father! Blessed be the full bag and 20 marks!"

Every Saturday Aunt Toini came at the same time, with the bag full of food and 20 marks. She never asked how she could help; she just went to work. Occasionally she would stay at our house for a day or two. At those times she would always be the first to get up in the morning to make the porridge. She bought us some new pots and pans when she noticed the need. Sometimes she would wash our laundry by hand.

The weeks went by quickly as we looked forward to Saturdays and Aunt Toini's visits. I would sometimes tell her about the Church, and many times we prayed together. Marika and Petri were very happy every time she came, and Aunt Toini never forgot to bring some sausage for Petri. It seemed she enjoyed the time with our family, and I thought perhaps we were giving something back to her.

Flowers and Love

Aunt Toini visited us regularly for three years. Then one Saturday she didn't come.

Nor did she come the following day. Later we learned that Aunt Toini had just left a shop and was heading to our

small cottage when she collapsed to the ground, never to recover.

My husband and I and our children attended Aunt Toini's funeral. We didn't know anyone when we arrived, and we didn't know when it would be appropriate for us to lay our flowers on her

grave. We decided to be the last to lay down our flowers, to express our gratitude, to say good-bye.

After the funeral a woman approached us and told us she was Aunt Toini's daughter. "You could have laid your flowers down first. You were so dear to our mother," she said. "What was the power that changed her? She used to be a stingy and selfish person. But during the last three years she changed into a new person. She was so tender and loving."

I didn't know what to say except, "It was love."

Family and Temple Blessings

Though it has been more than 40 years since I first met Aunt Toini, I am still learning from the lessons she brought along with her bag of food. She was my teacher. She taught me how to long for forgiveness and how to give service and help. And now I realize that though she came to feed us, she too had been fed.

Twenty years after her funeral, Petri found that we are related to Aunt Toini through my husband's lineage. We performed temple ordinances for her. Oh, what a joyous day it will be when we meet each other on the other side of the veil!

Aunt Toini was an inspiring example of love and a change of heart. I'll forever remember her bag full of food and 20 marks and hope that I can walk the same path she did, for it is the path the Savior has set for us to follow. ■

Maija-Kaarina Mäkinen is a member of the Tampere Second Ward, Tampere Finland Stake.

GETTING ALONG WITH MOM

By Nicole Lerios Randall

Many teenagers have trouble getting along with their parents at some stage during their teen years. As a 16-year-old, I started to think that my mom and I would never have a conversation that didn't end with tears and slammed doors.

During one particular argument, I shouted some angry words, stormed into my bedroom, and slammed the door as hard as I could. I threw myself onto my bed with hot, angry tears streaming down my cheeks. Thoughts ran through my head: "How can I fix this? What can I do to stop this constant arguing?"

Then as clear as if the Mormon Tabernacle Choir were in my room, I heard these words: "He lives to comfort

me when faint. He lives to hear my soul's complaint. . . . He lives to calm my troubled heart. He lives all blessings to impart" ("I Know That My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 136). I felt the Holy Ghost's presence and the love of my Heavenly Father encircling me, and I knew that everything would work out.

That day was a turning point for me. Heavenly Father knew what I needed. Music is a huge part of my life, and I was blessed by listening to and learning the words of the hymns. They gave me comfort and strength when I really needed it, and they can help us through hard times.

Today my mom and I are the best of friends. We are both serving in the Primary in our ward, and I love that we can work together in our callings as well as at home. ■

Nicole Lerios Randall is a member of the Springs Ward, Benoni South Africa Stake.

NOW I LOVE SUNDAYS

By Lucile Sautron

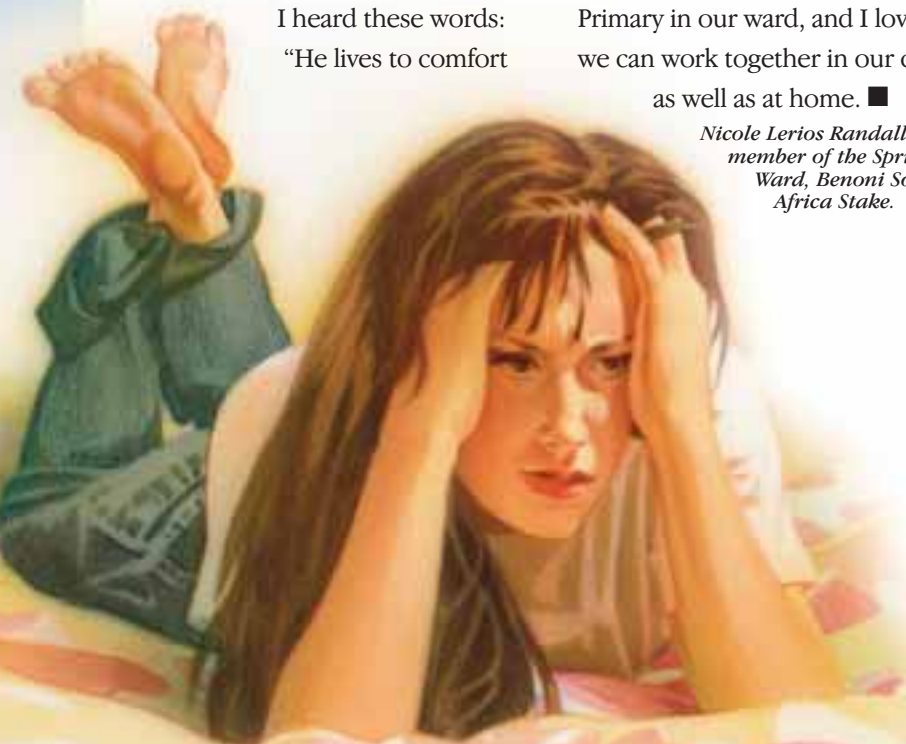
When I was a teenager, I set the goal of getting a degree in sports. I prayed a lot, asking the Lord to make it so practices would be on Saturdays. However, my team's practices were scheduled on Sundays. I had to make a choice: give up on my goal or skip church. Since both were important to me, I compromised. I would go to practices for two Sundays and then go to church on the third Sunday. Unfortunately, this little deviation from my faith led to sin, causing much suffering.

It did not take me long to realize my mistake. I asked to be on a different team. However, it was too late; the wrong had been done. I had half opened the door, and Satan had pushed it wide open. Eventually I gave up competitive sports.

I learned two valuable things. The first is that when we seek to compromise with the Lord, we are in great danger. The second is that I had made the mistake of believing my faith was strong enough that I could do without Sunday meetings. Our spirits need nourishment just as our body does. If we were to eat only one meal and then skip the next two meals, we could not remain in good health.

I love Sundays now. The Lord has blessed me in my studies and my health above measure. ■

Lucile Sautron is a member of the Basel Ward, Bern Switzerland Stake.



The Quorum of the First Presidency



The place of the President of the Church and that of the First Presidency in having responsibility for the entire Church in all the world is clearly set forth in revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants.

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

From the time of the organization of the Church there has been designated one presiding authority over the entire body. On April 6, 1830, it was “given to Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church” (D&C 20:2).

Less than two years later, on January 25, 1832, he was ordained “unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood” (D&C 81:2; see also D&C 82).

As the Church matured, further revelation defined the office of the President and the Quorum of the First Presidency:

“And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside

over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses . . . to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church” (D&C 107:91–92).

And again:

“I give unto you my servant Joseph to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be a translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet.

“I give unto him for counselors my servant Sidney Rigdon and my servant William Law, that these may constitute a quorum and First Presidency, to receive the oracles for the whole church” (D&C 124:125–26).

“Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church” (D&C 107:22).

Set Forth by Revelation

The place of the President of the Church and that of the Quorum of the First Presidency in having responsibility for the entire Church in all the





President Gordon B. Hinckley (center); President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor (left); and President James E. Faust, Second Counselor (right), have served together in the First Presidency for more than 10 years.

world is clearly set forth in these revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants.

At the same time, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is spoken of as being “equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned” (D&C 107:24).

The Seventy, likewise, “form a quorum, equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named” (D&C 107:26).

The question arises, How can they be equal in authority? Speaking to this question, President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) taught: “I want here to correct an impression that has grown up to some extent among the people, and that is, that the Twelve Apostles possess equal authority with the First Presidency in the Church. This is correct when there is no other Presidency but the Twelve Apostles; but so long as there are three presiding Elders who possess the presiding authority in the Church, the authority of the Twelve Apostles is not equal to theirs. If it were so, there would be two equal authorities and two equal

quorums in the Priesthood, running parallel, and that could not be, because there must be a head” (*Elders’ Journal*, Nov. 1, 1906, 43).

Likewise, the Seventy, who serve under the direction of the Twelve, would become equal in authority only in the event that the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve were somehow destroyed.

There have been lengthy periods when there was no Quorum of the First Presidency. Following the death of the Prophet Joseph, the presiding authority rested in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with Brigham Young as President. This continued for three and a half years. Following the death of Brigham Young, the authority again reverted to the Quorum of the Twelve and continued so for three years and two months. Following the death of John Taylor, one year and nine months passed before the First Presidency was reorganized.

Since that time a reorganization of the Presidency has occurred within a few days following the death of the



As a practical matter, the Twelve and the Seventy are given much of the responsibility, under the direction of the First Presidency, for the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church.

President. In every case the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has become President of the Church. Seniority is determined by the date of ordination to the apostleship.

Delegating Responsibility

It is obvious that while the First Presidency presides and has jurisdiction over all elements of the Church, there must be delegation of authority and responsibility to others in carrying forward the vast undertakings of the Church throughout the world.

“The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews.

“The Seventy,” likewise, “are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations” (D&C 107:33–34).

Thus, as a practical matter, the Twelve and the Seventy are given much of the responsibility, under the direction of the First Presidency, for the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church. This includes the proclamation of the gospel to the

nations of the earth and the administration of the various programs involving the members of the Church.

To accomplish this, other work must be done. Houses of worship must be constructed and maintained, translations of Church literature must be made, publications must be printed, and many other matters of a temporal nature cared for. The Presiding Bishopric is given responsibility for these. Again under the direction of the Presidency, the Bishopric establishes the methods and the means for the collection of the tithes and offerings of members, sees to the welfare needs of the poor and distressed, and manages many other functions.

And so, with this relatively simple and well-understood management structure, the Church carries forward its vast program throughout the world. The Church’s organization is designed in such a way that growth can be accommodated through enlargement of the body of the Seventy as ecclesiastical officers and the addition of employees dealing with temporal affairs.

Further, an article of our faith states, “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

In other words, we believe in continuous revelation. It is the peculiar responsibility of the President of the Church to receive revelation for the entire Church. Every other officer is entitled to receive revelation concerning his particular responsibilities and obligations, but revelation affecting the entire Church is given only to and through the President.

Direction by Revelation

We have the standard works which have been accepted as scripture by action of the membership of the Church. Then the question naturally arises, Has other revelation been received since, and is it being received today?

I have no doubt of it.

My Church service includes 3 1/2 years as an Assistant to the Twelve, which group became part of the First Quorum of the Seventy; 20 years as a member of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and 24 years as a member of the Quorum of the First Presidency, as President for the last 10 years. I have seen many changes which I am absolutely certain came of revelation.

From time to time, I have been interviewed by representatives of the media. Almost invariably they have asked, “How does revelation come to the prophet of the Church?”

I reply that it comes now as it has come in the past. Concerning this, I have recounted to these media representatives the experience of Elijah following his contest with the priests of Baal:

“And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11–12).

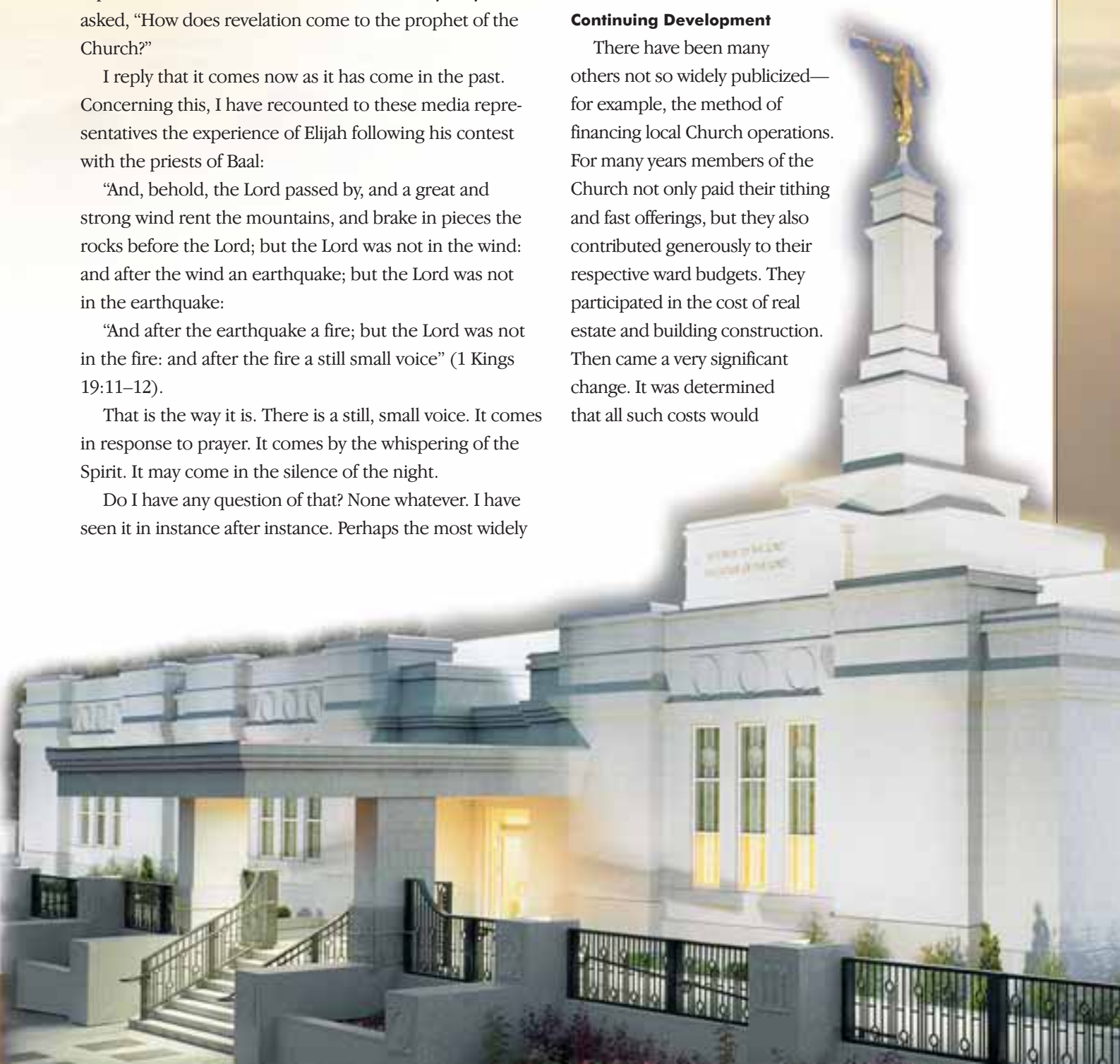
That is the way it is. There is a still, small voice. It comes in response to prayer. It comes by the whispering of the Spirit. It may come in the silence of the night.

Do I have any question of that? None whatever. I have seen it in instance after instance. Perhaps the most widely

publicized revelation in recent years was that given to President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) concerning the eligibility of all worthy men to be ordained to the priesthood (see Official Declaration 2). The outcome of that revelation has been tremendous.

Continuing Development

There have been many others not so widely publicized—for example, the method of financing local Church operations. For many years members of the Church not only paid their tithing and fast offerings, but they also contributed generously to their respective ward budgets. They participated in the cost of real estate and building construction. Then came a very significant change. It was determined that all such costs would



come from the tithing funds of the Church. This change represented a great act of faith based on revelation.

Today all such financing is provided through tithing. And the remarkable and wonderful thing is that the Church has never been in better financial condition than it is today. The Lord has kept His ancient promise as He has given modern revelation.

The concept of small temples came, I believe, as a direct revelation. I have spoken at various times on how this occurred. The resultant blessing to our people with the erection of these smaller temples has been remarkable.

Another example: some years ago it became apparent that the Salt Lake Tabernacle could not accommodate all who wished to attend our general conferences. But what could we do?

I am satisfied that the construction of our great Conference Center came about as a result of the expressed will of the Lord given through revelation. The construction of this building was a bold undertaking. It meant tearing down a historic structure and replacing it with this great auditorium complex, involving millions of dollars.

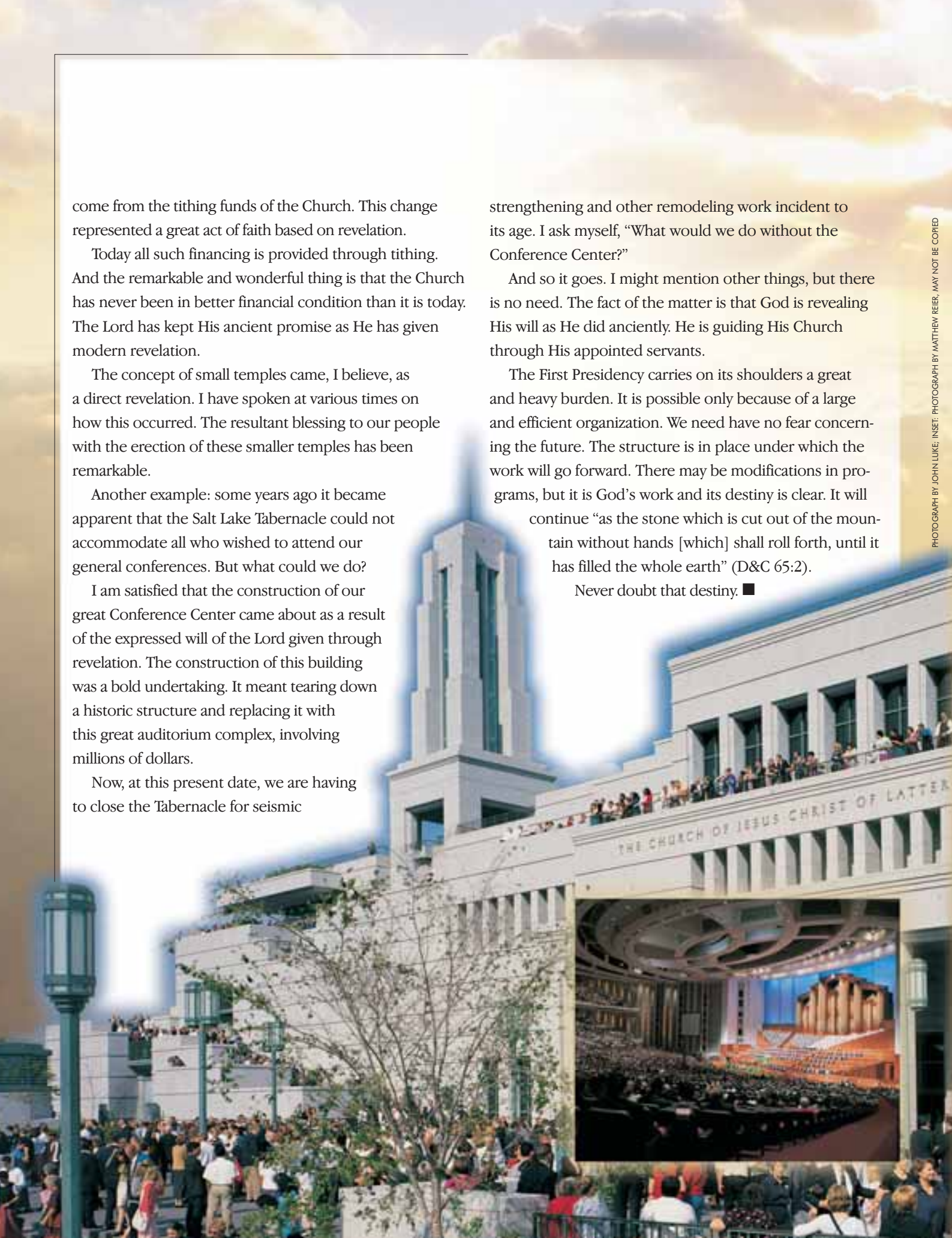
Now, at this present date, we are having to close the Tabernacle for seismic

strengthening and other remodeling work incident to its age. I ask myself, "What would we do without the Conference Center?"

And so it goes. I might mention other things, but there is no need. The fact of the matter is that God is revealing His will as He did anciently. He is guiding His Church through His appointed servants.

The First Presidency carries on its shoulders a great and heavy burden. It is possible only because of a large and efficient organization. We need have no fear concerning the future. The structure is in place under which the work will go forward. There may be modifications in programs, but it is God's work and its destiny is clear. It will continue "as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands [which] shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

Never doubt that destiny. ■



A Gift from the Heart

By Lucía Rivero Romero

In December 1996 I found myself serving a full-time mission in the Mexico Monterrey North Mission. My companion was a young sister from Utah. It was my first Christmas away from home without my children and grandchildren, and I couldn't stop thinking about what my children were doing and who was preparing dinner, since I wasn't there to do it.

I was quieter than usual, so my companion gave me a hug and said, "I'm going to make a delicious dinner for you." I looked at her lovely face and into her beautiful blue eyes that were looking back at me with so much love, the way my children and grandchildren look at me. I smiled at her.

The dinner she prepared was just a warm cinnamon drink, but for me it was a great delicacy. I was 46 years old, and she was only 21. Always I was concerned about giving, and I didn't think about receiving. As missionaries we did not have any money to give, so we gave love and service instead. Without my companion knowing it, I had bought a pair of gloves and

a scarf to protect her from the cold. That was my gift to her. But she gave me something that couldn't be bought with all the gold in the world: love and service.

That night her gift taught me that Christmas is for giving the most beautiful part of ourselves, the feelings of our hearts. Very shyly I took out my gifts for my dear

companion. I felt so humble to give her what I had bought, compared with her great love.

Every Christmas after returning home from my mission, I have shared with my children and grandchildren that wonderful Christmas. I will always be grateful to my Heavenly Father and to Jesus Christ for the holy season of Christmas and to my companion for her example of love. ■

Lucía Rivero Romero is a member of the Juárez Ward, Mexico City Tenayo Stake.

My companion's gift taught me that Christmas is for giving the most beautiful part of ourselves, the feelings of our hearts.



Each time a family member performed an act of service, we put one piece of straw into the manger.



Straw for the Manger

By Sue Jones

As our children's awareness began to grow beyond the protective walls of our own home, Christmas became more and more Santa and glitter. As this excitement and anticipation grew, the birth of our Savior seemed farther and farther from our hearts and minds. My husband, Bob, and I tried to bring the true spirit of Christmas back into our celebration in ways that would be meaningful to the entire family. One year we established a pattern of

traditions that has served us well and provided meaningful Christmases for many years.

We chose a family home evening lesson for the first week in December that focused on giving service as a way to celebrate the Christmas season. We made a cardboard manger and provided a container full of straw. Each time a family member performed an act of service, we put one piece of straw into the manger. The children eagerly sought

meaningful acts of kindness with which to earn a straw for baby Jesus's manger, and we filled the manger three times over that year.

Bob happened to spot an old-fashioned lantern in a store's display of Christmas decorations. He bought it, and it provided the inspiration for the culminating event of our religious celebration. After our family party and dinner on Christmas Eve, the children dressed for bed and gathered in the largest bedroom upstairs, away from the nativity scene in the living room. We turned off all the lights in the house and explained to the children that we would be taking

a pilgrimage to see the newborn King of kings. We prepared for our journey by singing traditional carols and then proceeded to the living room, singing "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful." Bob led the way, holding the lantern with its flickering candlelight to brighten our path.

Upon reaching the little stable, we sat quietly and sang a few more carols. Then we presented the manger to baby Jesus. It was filled with straw representing gifts of love we had given throughout the month. Everyone who wanted to do so expressed his or her love for the Savior. The Spirit of the Lord was in our home and our hearts that evening. The children went calmly and quietly to bed—still eager for the morning to come, but also feeling love and appreciation for the Christ child, whose birth we were celebrating.

Each year, as we get caught up in the frantic preparations for Christmas, we have a sense of peace, knowing that the commercialism will be tempered, at least to a degree, with a few moments of meaningful worship. Even at the height of anticipating Christmas morning, the children look forward to the special time we spend each Christmas Eve with the newborn King. ■

Sue Jones is a member of the Bountiful 31st Ward, Bountiful Utah Stake.

Unemployed for the Holidays

By Iris Lehmann

In January 2001 my husband, Peter, became unemployed, and shortly thereafter our third child was born. When Peter found a job 500 miles (800 km) away, we made a big move. And although he enjoyed the job, the year was very bad economically and we had barely enough money to pay for rent and groceries. Our small food storage quickly vanished, and Christmas was approaching. Then Peter's employer gave us an unexpected "Christmas bonus"—all the employees in Peter's department were declared unemployed for one month.

Thus, my husband was again out of work. But the Lord did not forget us. Peter was asked to help several members, and we were supported financially through this work. We were not forgotten for Christmas either. The sister missionaries rang our doorbell one day and presented us with a package on behalf of an anonymous family in our ward. When we opened it we found many lovingly wrapped gifts, each bearing the name of a member of our family. We also found an envelope containing extra

money—as if the presents had not been enough!

On Christmas Eve the doorbell rang again. A package on the doorstep again contained nicely wrapped presents for each of us. We were very happy. I thanked our Heavenly Father for the little miracles He had provided. And I was grateful to the members who were so loving, even though we had lived there for only five months.

We do not know who helped us during those difficult times, and I can't help but think of the Savior's words: "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink" (Matthew 25:35). ■

Iris Lehmann is a member of the Salzburg Ward, Salzburg Austria Stake.



The Clam Chowder Story

By Gary B. Lundberg

Every Christmas Eve my wife serves my favorite dish, clam chowder. We added the chowder to our holiday traditions not only because we enjoy the taste, but because it reminds us of the Savior's infinite love for us. After the last bite, we tell the clam chowder story, which happened years ago when our children were young.

It was a Monday evening, and I was on my way home from work, looking forward to a fun and relaxing family home evening with my wife and children. As I walked toward the back door, I anticipated the children playing nicely and dinner waiting on the table. Not so.

My wife, Joy, had arrived home just before I did. She had had a busy day, and now each of our children was trying to get her attention. As we began to sort out their needs, it seemed each had homework that had to be completed that evening. Joy was exhausted, we needed to prepare dinner, we needed to hold family home evening, and Joy had also committed to prepare clam chowder for 60 women who would attend the Relief Society luncheon the next day.

We divided up the tasks. Joy fixed dinner, I helped the children with their homework, and we held a short family home evening. I then put the children to bed while Joy started the

clam chowder. The children were all tucked in bed by about 9:30. I walked into the kitchen, and Joy was busily preparing the ingredients for the clam chowder. The process is quite lengthy and somewhat tricky. The chowder must be constantly stirred at the right temperature, or it will burn.

Joy had to leave at 8:00 the next morning, so the chowder had to be finished that evening. I asked her if she would like me to help. She said she could handle it, so I went upstairs to work on my electronics course.

About 11:30 Joy came into the room with a small bowl of chowder. I was in the middle of soldering a part in a circuit board. When I looked up she was gone. There sat the steaming bowl of heavenly soup. I put a big spoonful in my mouth, expecting ecstasy. I was startled. I couldn't believe what I was tasting. It was terrible! It tasted burned. Surely this couldn't be. How could I tell my wife?

Gathering all my tact and courage, I went downstairs. She was sitting in the kitchen, looking forlorn and tired. I said as gently as I could, "Honey, there's no way you can serve this. It's burned." She looked up and started to cry. "I hoped you wouldn't notice. I was stirring and stirring, and all of a sudden I noticed black flecks coming to the top. I quickly took it off the stove and poured it into

another pot, hoping I had caught it in time." The tears flowed freely, and she looked hopeless. "I am so tired, it's so late, and we don't have any money to replace the ingredients. What are we going to do?"

I put my arms around her and told her she needed to go to bed. She said, "But I can't. I still have carrots to peel and cut up." I walked her to the bedroom. We had a prayer, and she got in bed. She was already asleep when I closed the door and headed for the kitchen, wondering what I could possibly do.

I grabbed the cookbook and looked for "burned milk products" in the index. Nothing. I even tried calling an all-night radio program that discussed all sorts of topics. I couldn't get through, so I went back to the sink and peeled carrots. It was full panic time. I had done all I could do. Only one option left. I went into the dark living room and knelt down.

I felt a bit uncomfortable asking about such a trivial matter. But it was not trivial to Joy. "Heavenly Father," I began, "I know there are many people with big problems. But I have no other place to go. I have done all I know how to do. This problem is very big to my wife, and that makes it important to me. She is faithful and tries to do all she is asked to do." I took a deep breath. "Please, Father, take the burned taste out of the clam chowder before morning. Please forgive me for asking such a trivial thing, but please

help my wife." With that I went to bed.

About 6:30 a.m. my wife sat up in bed and said, "What am I going to do?" I told her the carrots were done, and she needed to get dressed and go try the chowder. She dipped out a small amount into a pan and heated it. As she tasted it she looked at me with tears in her eyes and said, "There are no black flecks and no burned taste. What did you do?"

As my wife tasted the clam chowder she looked at me with tears in her eyes and said, "There are no black flecks and no burned taste. What did you do?"

I told her what I had done, and we both realized the blessing He had granted us. We knelt in prayer and thanked our Heavenly Father for His love and concern for us.

What process did the Lord use? I don't know.

Why did He grant this petition? I don't know. All I know is that He said, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7:7), and I believed Him. And this time He granted the blessing.

Oh yes, the clam chowder was served to the sisters. They all commented on how delicious it was and asked for the recipe.

We find the Christmas season the best time of year to remind ourselves and our family of how much the Savior cares about us and that, to Him, even little things matter. ■

Gary B. Lundberg is a member of the Edgemont 14th Ward, Provo Utah Edgemont Stake.



Did You Know?

“Far, Far Away on Judea’s Plains”

“Far, Far Away on Judea’s Plains” is the only Christmas song in the English hymnbook written by a Latter-day Saint author. In 1869, John Macfarlane of St. George, Utah, wanted his choir to sing a new carol for their Christmas program. After struggling to write one with no success, John awoke from a dream one night and wrote the lyrics and melody to “Far, Far Away on Judea’s Plains.” This hymn is a beautiful addition to our Christmas carols and is popular both in and out of the Church.

(See *Hymns*, no. 212.)



THE ETERNAL GIFT

“At this time of Christmas, this season when gifts are given, let us not for-

get that God gave His Son, and His Son gave His life, that each of us might have the gift of eternal life.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Son of God,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1992, 6.

Leadership Tip

After you've planned, prayed, and delegated responsibilities to your class or quorum members, you, as a leader, need to offer your help and support. Tell them you have confidence in their abilities, and let them know you love them. Encourage them to use their own ideas; don't insist that things always be done your way. By leading with love, you'll help every member develop his or her skills and talents.

Real Friends?

Friends have a lot of influence in our lives. Are your friends helping you be your best self, or are they leading you away from living the life you should? This quiz can help you see what kind of influence your friends have on you, and it might even help you be a better friend. Choose the answer that best describes how you think your friend might respond in each of these situations. Use the key at the end to find your score.

1. You're at a fun party, but then people start to drink. You want to go home, and your friend says:
 - a. You're right. We'd better go home. I'll call my mom to pick us up.
 - b. Don't be such a goody-goody. A little drink never hurt anyone.
 - c. Why don't you stay and have a little fun? You don't have to drink.
2. You're asked on a date, but you won't turn 16 for another few months. When you explain why you're not going, your friend says:
 - a. Are you crazy? You have to go! This is the biggest dance of the year!

- b. OK, but you'll regret not going. Can't you make an exception this time?
 - c. All right, if that's what you really want to do. It's nice that you stick by what you believe.
3. At school you have a geography assignment due, and everyone is sharing answers before class. You forgot all about the assignment, and your friend tells you:
 - a. Don't worry about it. One assignment won't matter.
 - b. If you hurry, you can finish it before class.
 - c. Quick, here's my assignment. You can copy mine.
 4. You and your friend are at a video store picking out a movie to watch. She picks a movie with bad content, and you explain why you don't watch inappropriate media. She says:
 - a. That's fine; let's pick another one.
 - b. We'll watch it at my house. Your parents won't know.
 - c. Come on, just this once. There's nothing really that bad in this movie.

Scoring:

- | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | a=3 | b=1 | c=2 |
| 2. | a=1 | b=2 | c=3 |
| 3. | a=2 | b=3 | c=1 |
| 4. | a=3 | b=1 | c=2 |

10-12 points: You have some great friends who support you in your beliefs. Try to be a good friend to them too as you support each other in living righteously.

7-9 points: Your friends seem to care about you, but they really don't understand what it means to live the gospel. Take the opportunity to explain your beliefs to them, and they will probably be understanding.

4-6 points: Your friends are not encouraging you to live the gospel and become a better person. Make friends with those who uplift you, respect your beliefs, and encourage you to stick to them.



Heavenly Father Listens

The article “Improving Our Prayers,” by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin in the August 2004 issue, was excellent. I know that Heavenly Father listens to us when we tell Him what is in our hearts, and He often answers our prayers through other people. When we pray, we come closer to Him.

*Luis Mario Marcelo Carvajal Arce,
Teno Branch,
Curicó Chile Stake*

Source of Inspiration

The *Liabona* is a guide to help me find the path to follow. I am grateful to our General Authorities who deliver messages to us—they are shepherds that Heavenly Father has given us to guide us. I can show my love for Him by obeying their counsel. I challenge all the youth to do the same.

*Alden Yengo, 17,
Kinsoundi Ward,
Brazzaville Republic of Congo Stake*

Testimony Strengthened

I want to express my gratitude for the *Liabona*. I wait eagerly each month for the magazine, and the day I receive it I read it cover to cover. Then throughout the month I read each of the messages more slowly. I enjoy the personal experiences of

members of the Church who are trying to live the gospel, and they inspire me to do the same.

*Blanca Carrillo de Garza,
Quéretaro Ward,
Monterrey Mexico Moderna Stake*

Study the Prophets

I really enjoyed “Building a Lesson from *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*,” in the June 2004 *Liabona*. I have benefited greatly from these lessons, and the books are a wonderful addition to my library. I look forward to the books still to come.

*Gilbert Staepels,
Antwerpen First Ward,
Antwerp Belgium Stake*

A Guiding Light

When I was baptized the missionaries gave me a copy of the *Liabona*, and there hasn't been a year since when I have not subscribed. It is a wonderful guiding light in my life. Heavenly Father answers my questions in its pages, especially in the First Presidency Message and the articles by other Church authorities. I know the Lord knows what is happening to me, and He answers my prayers through His servants.

*Rosario Elisa Gómez Castilla,
Belaunde Ward,
Arequipa Perú Zamácola Stake*

Give a Gift of the *Liabona*

Remember that friend at work who occasionally asks questions about the Church? That less-active family you home teach? That family member who needs strengthening? That returned missionary who learned a new language? They are all perfect candidates for a gift subscription to the *Liabona*.

You can order and receive the *Liabona* for yourself or as a gift in any of the following languages (frequency varies by language): Albanian, Armenian (East), Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Haitian, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Sinhala, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

Contact your ward or branch leaders or your local distribution center for subscription and ordering information.

the Friend



A Christmas Message from the First Presidency
to the Children of the World



A Joyful Season

Christmas is a wonderful time of year. It is a time to celebrate not only the Savior's birth but also His life and example. He showed us how to live and find happiness whatever our circumstances. He is the Son of the Eternal Father.

As we follow Him and reach out as He did—serving family and loved ones, seeking out those who are sick or hungry or cold or friendless—the joyful spirit of Christmas will enter our hearts. Then this Christmas, and every Christmas to follow, will be filled with hope and love. ●

BACKGROUND © PHOTOSPIN AND COMSTOCK, INC.; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE, POSED BY MODELS







I AM GRATEFUL FOR MANY THINGS

“And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

BY MARGARET S. LIFFERTH

First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency



Have you ever received a special gift that made you happy? How did you show gratitude?

This year, we have learned about a wonderful gift that Heavenly Father has given to His children. He gave us His Son and the plan of salvation.

Remember these words from “I Will Follow God’s Plan” (*Children’s Songbook*, 164–65)?

My life is a gift; my life has a plan.

My life has a purpose; in heav’n it began.

*My choice was to come to this lovely home on earth
And seek for God’s light to direct me from birth.*

Heavenly Father’s plan includes many gifts. We received a body and were born to a family. With the gift of agency, we can choose between good and evil. Because of our Savior, we will be resurrected, and if we choose good, we will receive the gift of eternal life. We are blessed with prophets, revelation, prayer, scriptures, priesthood, covenants, and temple blessings.

How do we show Heavenly Father that we are grateful for these gifts? Remember the next part of the song?

*I will follow God’s plan for me,
Holding fast to his word and his love.*

*I will work, and I will pray;
I will always walk in his way.*

We thank Heavenly Father in our prayers and by the way we live. And as we show our gratitude—

*Then I will be happy on earth
And in my home above.*

Blessings Gift Box

Color a small box or envelope to represent a wrapped gift. Then cut out the shapes on page F4. On the home shapes, write blessings you receive from your family. On the star shapes, write blessings you receive from the Savior. On the temple shapes, write blessings you receive by being a member of the Church. Think of other blessings to write on the gift shapes. Put all the shapes into the box or envelope. During family home evening, share the shapes and discuss the gifts we receive from Heavenly Father.

Note: If you do not wish to remove pages from the magazine, this activity may be copied, traced, or printed from the Internet at www.lds.org. For English, click on “Gospel Library.” For other languages, click on the world map.

Sharing Time Ideas

1. This year we have learned about the plan of salvation and its many blessings. Summarize the principles and accompanying blessings that have been taught each month. Remind the children that all over the world, children are living the plan of salvation. If possible, invite a returned missionary to share an experience of children living the gospel with joy. Divide the children into groups of five or six, and seat each group in a circle. Play a game of “Remembering Blessings.” The first child says, “I am thankful for _____.” The second child says, “I am thankful for (repeats the response of the first child and adds his or her own),” and so on. Pass out paper stars, and have the children draw a blessing. On a point of each star, punch a hole and loop a piece of string through it. Invite the children to share their Christmas ornament with their families.

2. Tell the story of the birth of the Savior by dividing the Primary into two groups. Provide the following references— Group 1: Helaman 14:1–7; 3 Nephi 1:4–21; Group 2: Luke 2:1–17. Choose a child in each group to read the scripture references as the other children role-play the story. Invite Group 1 to perform the story of Samuel the Lamanite. Invite Group 2 to perform the nativity. ●



FROM THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

A Gift of Music

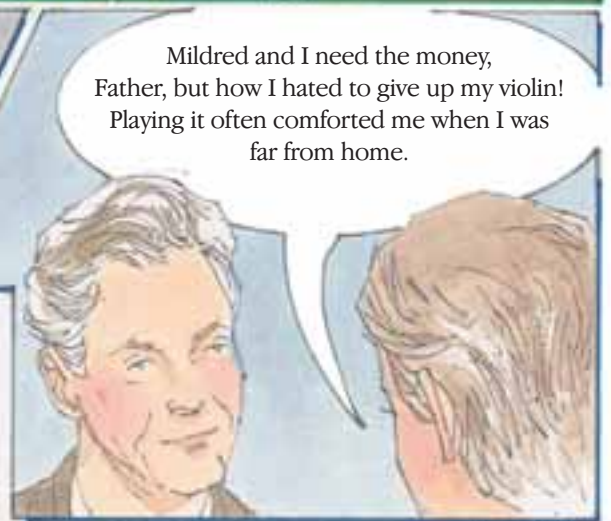
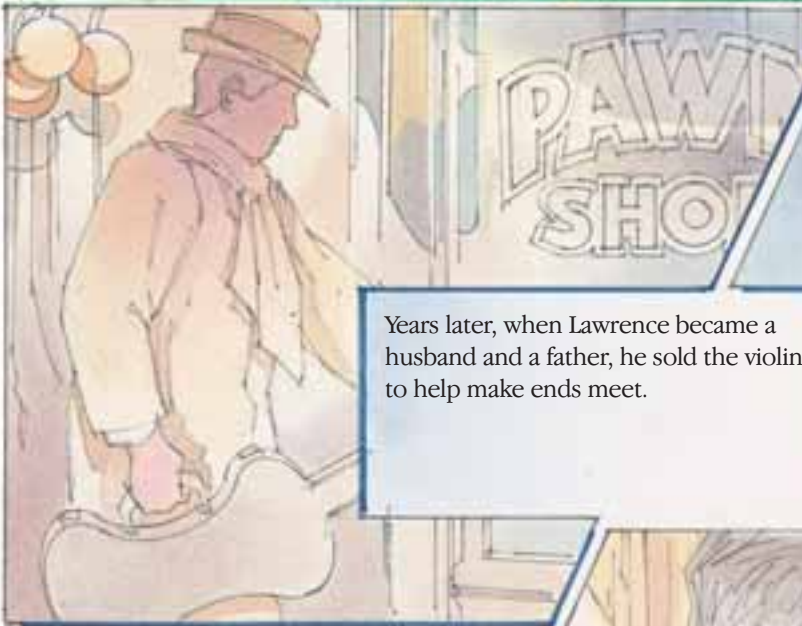
The McKay family loved music and learned to play instruments. President McKay's son Lawrence played the violin beautifully.

What a beautiful song.



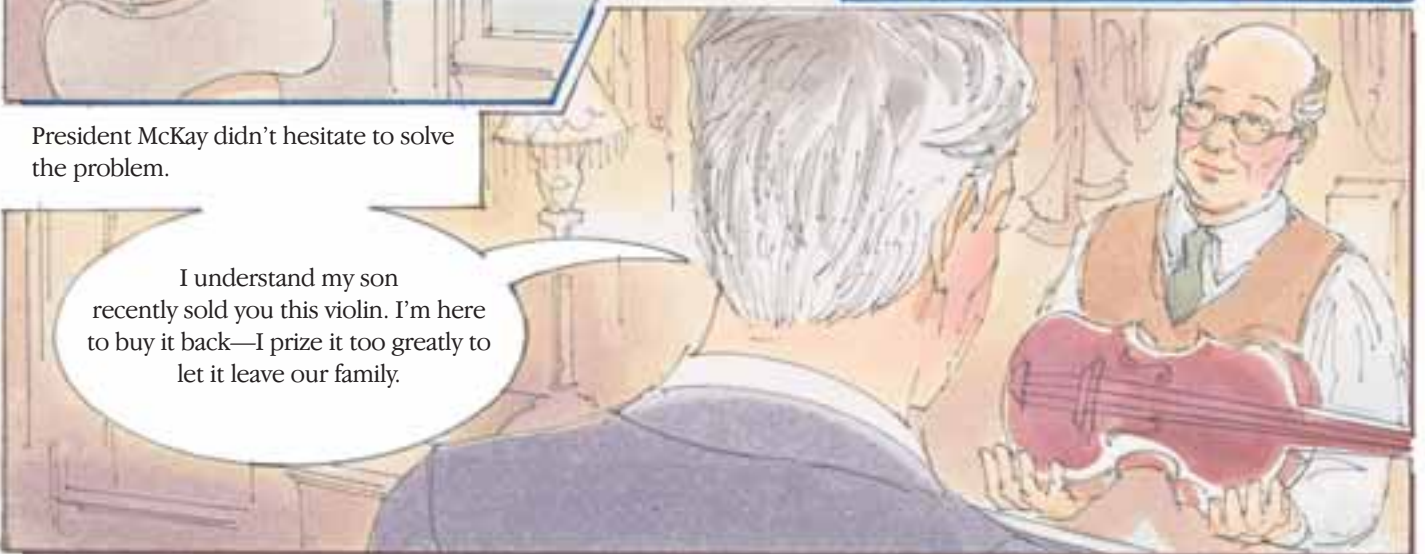
Mildred and I need the money, Father, but how I hated to give up my violin! Playing it often comforted me when I was far from home.

Years later, when Lawrence became a husband and a father, he sold the violin to help make ends meet.



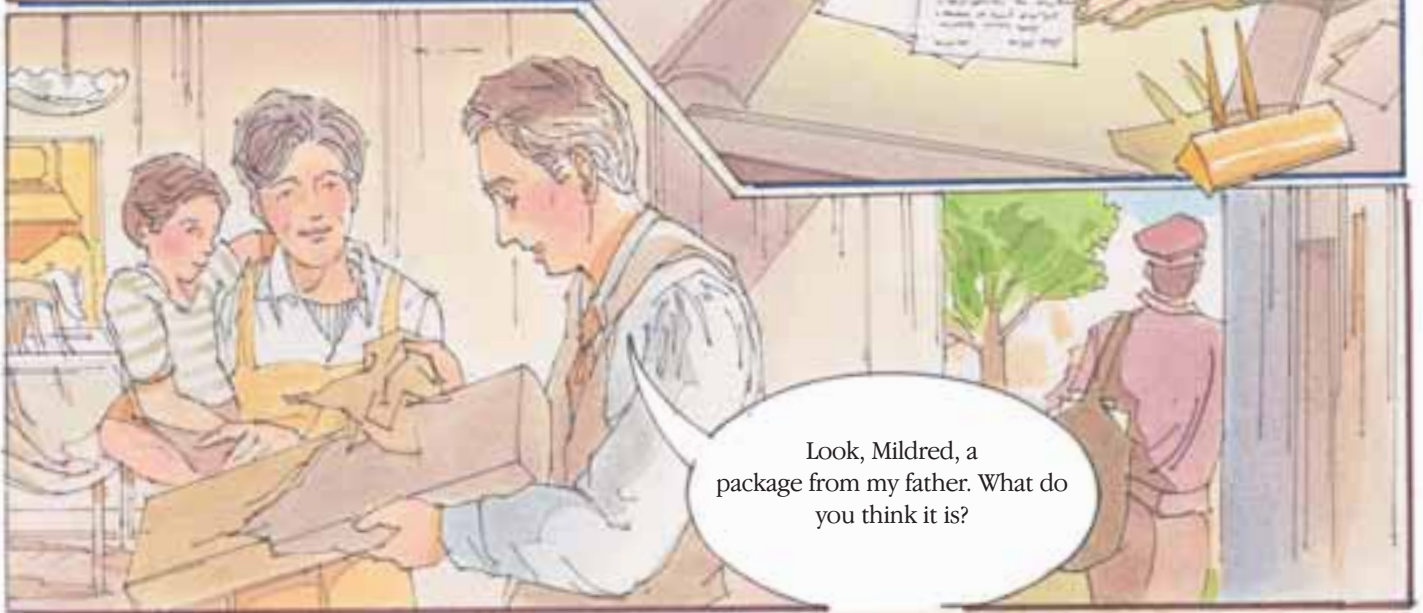
President McKay didn't hesitate to solve the problem.

I understand my son recently sold you this violin. I'm here to buy it back—I prize it too greatly to let it leave our family.



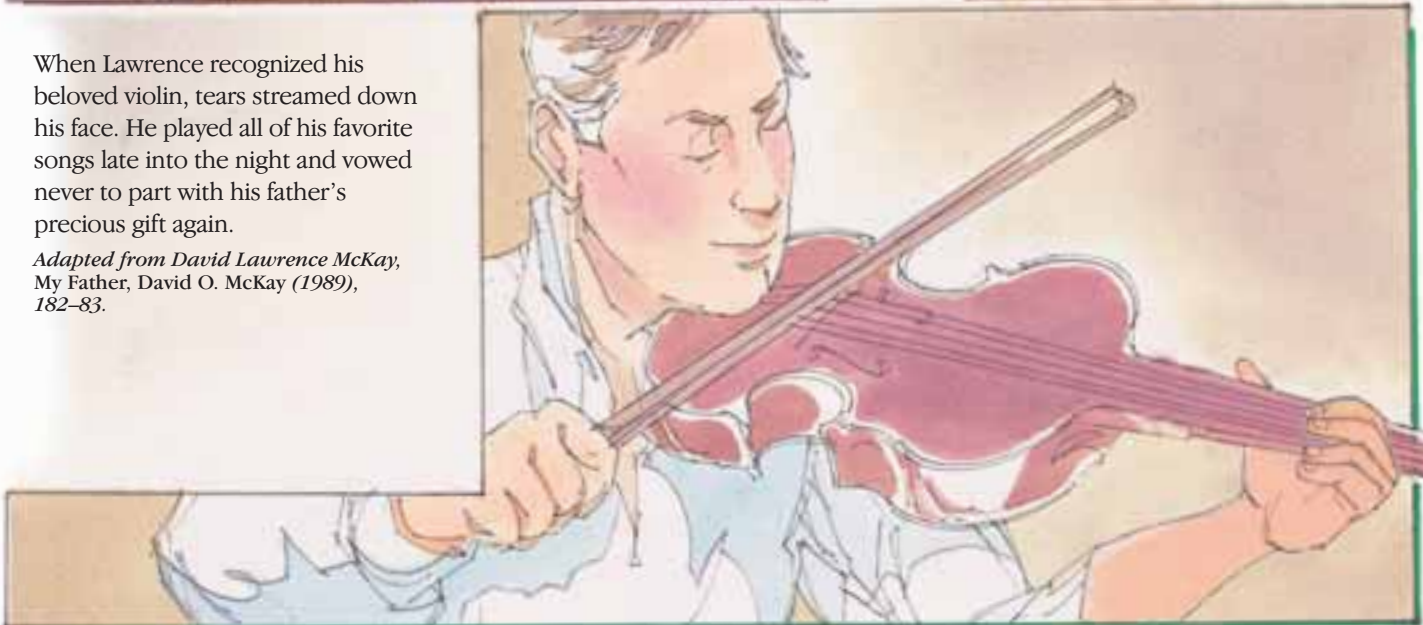
ILLUSTRATED BY MIKE EAGLE

President McKay composed a poem about how much he valued his son's musical talent and the memories they had made playing music together. A few months later, he put the violin and poem in the mail.



When Lawrence recognized his beloved violin, tears streamed down his face. He played all of his favorite songs late into the night and vowed never to part with his father's precious gift again.

Adapted from David Lawrence McKay, My Father, David O. McKay (1989), 182–83.





Christmas Advent Wreath

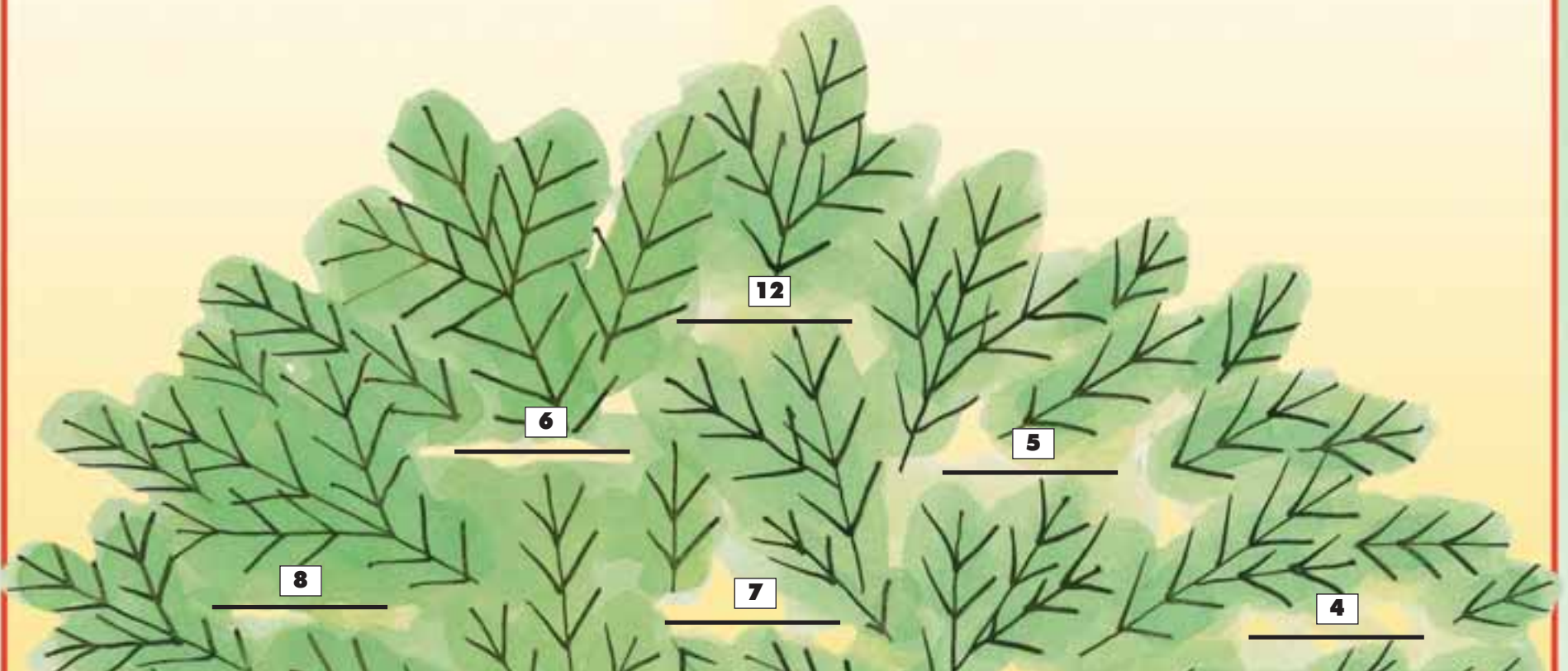
By Elise Black



Instructions

Remove pages F8–F9 and F16, and mount them on heavy paper. Cut out the numbered pictures, the wreath, and the slits marked with heavy black lines. Punch a hole near the top of the wreath, and attach a piece of string or

ribbon as a hanger. Beginning on December 1, find the numbered picture for that day. Read the activity on the tab, and do it that day. After you have completed the activity, place the tab in the corresponding numbered slot on the wreath so the picture can be seen.



Note: If you do not wish to remove pages from the magazine, this activity may be copied, traced, or printed from the Internet at www.lds.org. For English, click on "Gospel Library." For other languages, click on the world map.

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Important Places in the Life of the Prophet Joseph Smith

BY BRITNEY SCHETSELAAR
Church Magazines



1805—Sharon, Vermont

Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1805—only two days before Christmas! He lived on a farm with his father, Joseph Smith Sr.; his mother, Lucy Mack Smith; and his brothers and sisters.

1816—Palmyra, New York

Joseph's family moved to Palmyra in 1816, when Joseph was 10 years old. As Joseph grew he became very concerned about religion. At



the age of 14 he decided to ask God which church he should join. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared and told him not to join any of the churches. In 1823, when Joseph was 17, the angel Moroni came to him and said that an ancient record was hidden near his home.

1825—Harmony, Pennsylvania

In 1825 Josiah Stowell hired Joseph to work for him in



Harmony, Pennsylvania. There he met Emma Hale, and they were married on January 18, 1827. After moving back to Palmyra and receiving the gold plates, Joseph and Emma returned to Harmony and Joseph translated the Book of Mormon. On May 15, 1829, on the

FROM LEFT: DETAIL FROM JOSEPH SMITH, BY ALVIN GITTINS; PHOTOGRAPH OF JOSEPH SMITH MEMORIAL BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN; PHOTOGRAPH OF KIRTLAND TEMPLE; PHOTOGRAPH OF RED BRICK STORE BY DON O. THORPE, MAY NOT BE COPIED; PHOTOGRAPH OF CARTHAGE JAIL BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN

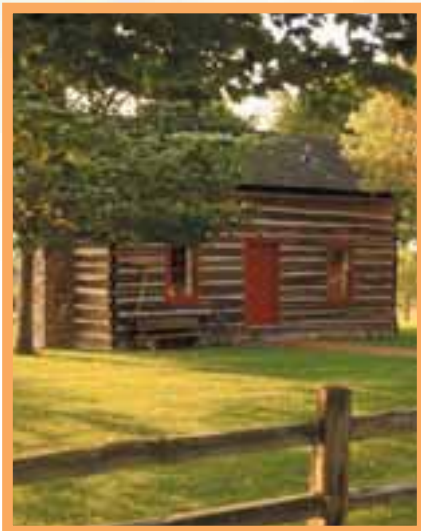
banks of the nearby Susquehanna River, Joseph and Oliver Cowdery were baptized and received the Aaronic Priesthood through John the Baptist. Later, in another location on the Susquehanna River, they were given the Melchizedek Priesthood through Peter, James, and John.

1830—Fayette, New York

On April 6, 1830, about 50 people met at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York, to organize The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were sustained as elders in the Church.

1831—Kirtland, Ohio

In February 1831 Joseph and his family moved with the Saints to Kirtland, Ohio. The Saints built the first temple in the latter days there and dedicated it in March 1836. For a time Joseph and Emma lived with



Newel K. Whitney and his family in the Whitneys' store. In Kirtland, the Saints witnessed many miracles, but they eventually had to leave because of persecution.

1838—Far West, Missouri

Joseph moved to Missouri in the spring of 1838. Far West served as Church headquarters. The cornerstones for a temple were laid, but the Saints were driven out by mobs before the temple was built.

1839—Nauvoo, Illinois

The Church bought swampland next to the Mississippi River in the spring of 1839. There, they built a city and named it Nauvoo. They also built a temple. Joseph led the Nauvoo militia, and he and Emma ran a red brick store where many important events took place.

1844—Carthage, Illinois

Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were arrested on false charges and put in jail in Carthage, Illinois. On



June 27, 1844, while Joseph and Hyrum waited for their trial, a mob attacked the jail where they were imprisoned. After Hyrum was killed, Joseph ran to the window. He cried, "O Lord, my God!" as he was martyred and fell. Joseph was 38 years old. He and his brother were buried in Nauvoo. ●



Nigerian Christmas

"From henceforth I shall call you friends" (D&C 84:77).

BY LORI MORTENSEN

Based on an experience of the author and her friends



Monday, October 11

Dear Grandma and Grandpa, (Oops! I mean Elder and Sister Wall. I keep forgetting!)

How do you like Nigeria? Mom showed me where it is on the map. It's very far away! But I'm glad you got to go on your mission. You always said you'd serve wherever Heavenly Father wanted you to go. Remember? But I still wish you weren't so far away.

Love,

Vera

Monday, November 1

Dear Vera,

Yes, Nigeria is far away from where you live, but we are so glad we're here. The people are so warm and loving, and Heavenly Father has blessed us so much. On Sunday, four children were confirmed. We met in a tiny chapel with a concrete floor, and the Spirit was so strong. It was beautiful!

Love,

Elder and Sister Wall

P.S. We love the Primary children so much that we want to give them a special Christmas present. Do you have any ideas?

Monday, November 22

Dear Elder and Sister Wall, (See? I remembered!)

I've got a great Christmas present idea! And I've even talked to Mom and the Primary president about it. But I'm not going to tell you what it is because I know how much you like surprises. (Remember the surprise birthday party Mom gave you, Grandma? You were so funny!)

I will give you a hint. It starts with the letter P, and we'll be sending it in a couple of weeks.

Love,
Vera

P.S. Can you guess what it is?

Friday, December 3

Dear Vera,
What could it be? Grandpa and I have been thinking about what you might be sending for the Primary children. We can hardly wait to find out!

There are lots of things that start with P in Africa—like pigs, parrots, and potholes! But I don't think that's the surprise you're talking about.

Love,
Sister Wall

Monday, December 13

Dear Vera,

Dalu and Merry Christmas! Dalu means "thank you" in Igbo (a language spoken in Nigeria). P stands for "pictures," doesn't it?

All the children here in our Primary liked the Christmas pictures you and your friends drew for them at the Primary activity.

We wish you could have seen them! All the children were smiling and laughing and saying how wonderful it was to hear from

faraway

Primary

friends who

love Jesus just like they do.

Thanks so much for your



Christmas present.
It was perfect!
(That starts with P too!)

Love,

Elder and Sister Wall
P.S. The Nigerian Primary children like to send surprises too!





"I love the people of this Church, of all ages, of all races, and of many nations. I love the children. They are very much the same the world over. . . . How lovely you are, wherever you are, you precious children."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "This Is the Work of the Master," Ensign, May 1995, 70.

Friday, December 31

Dear Elder and Sister Wall,

Please tell the Primary children in Nigeria dalu for their pictures! All the kids in my Primary liked them! We especially enjoyed the pictures with the palm trees, fans, and baskets.

Love,

Vera

P.S. Even though I still miss you, ever since we sent you the special present for your Primary children, Nigeria doesn't seem far away at all! ●

Lori Mortensen is a member of the Cameron Park Ward, El Dorado California Stake.



Getting to Know Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

To learn more about Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, match the lettered pictures above with the clues below.

- ___ 1. Elder Uchtdorf was raised in this country.
- ___ 2. He is the first Apostle to be called in more than 50 years who was not born in the United States, but he says he was not called to represent a certain group of people. Like all Apostles, he represents this perfect man.
- ___ 3. As a child, he worked hard in the family business, pulling a laundry cart behind one of these.
- ___ 4. Growing up in a war-torn city where buildings had been bombed, he found hope in reading and learning from these. One of his favorite verses was Romans 8:31: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He says: "This gave me comfort and courage, because at that time the future looked bleak."
- ___ 5. The Church building he attended as a small child had a stained-glass window depicting this event. Whenever the light shone through the glass, he thought about his testimony and developed a stronger appreciation for Joseph Smith.
- ___ 6. One of his first callings as a child was to pump this instrument so the congregation could sing.
- ___ 7. He married Harriet Reich, and they were sealed here in December 1962. They have two children.
- ___ 8. For 35 years he operated one of these. He eventually became chief pilot and senior vice president of flight operations for an airline.
- ___ 9. As he flew, he never grew tired of seeing these out the window. He also says: "I could see the beauty of the different countries with their different cultures. I know from going to those different places and seeing the people and the Church in those different places that the gospel is for everyone, no matter what nation you live in or what your traditions are. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Adapted from "Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Seventy," Liahona, Apr. 1999, F2-F4; see Friend, June 1998, 7-8; "Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf," Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 125-26.

Answers: 1E (Germany), 2A, 3D, 4I, 5B (First Vision), 6C, 7H (Bern Switzerland Temple), 8G, 9F



20 Draw a picture of an event in the Prophet Joseph Smith's life.



22 Let someone else be first.



19 Study about Joseph Smith (pp. F10–F11) with your family.



24 Read Luke 2:1–20 with your family.



23 Think about the Prophet Joseph Smith, born 200 years ago today.



21 Do the Sharing Time activity (pp. F4–F5) with your family.



14 Volunteer to say the family prayer.



17 Clean your room.



6 Give everyone in your family a hug.



5 Do a chore without being asked.



15 Name one way you can follow the Savior.



7 Read "Nigerian Christmas" (pp. F12–F14) with your family.



4 Thank your Primary teacher.



16 Read the Christmas message from the First Presidency (pp. F2–F3).



8 Draw a Christmas picture, and give it to someone.



3 Visit someone who is lonely or sick.



18 Remember the Savior during the sacrament.



11 Thank your bishop or branch president.



13 Name three things you are thankful for.



2 Choose the right all day.



9 E-mail, telephone or visit grandparents or relatives.



1 Secretly help someone in your family.



12 Sing a favorite Christmas song.



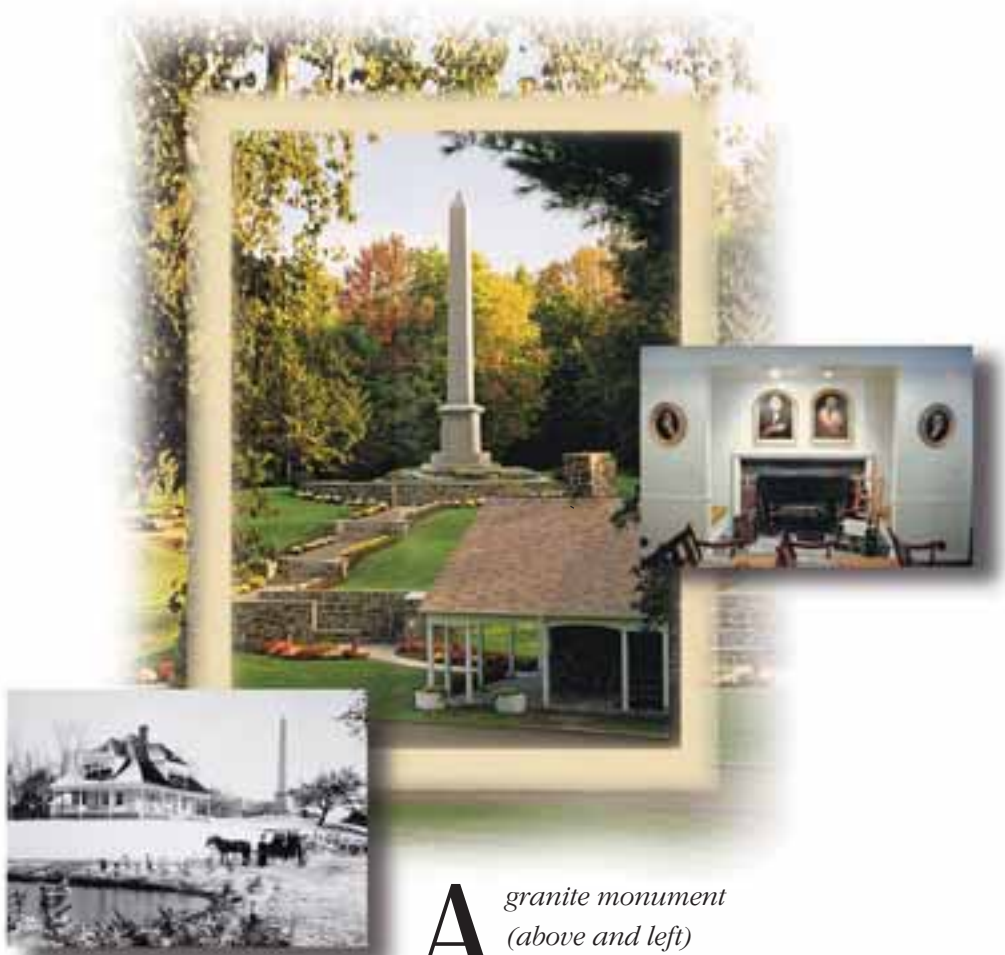
10 Take a surprise to a neighbor.

For activity and instructions, see pages F8–F9.



Treasured in Her Heart, by Kathy Lawrence

Mary “brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes. . . . And all they that heard [of the angel saying this infant was Christ the Lord] wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:7, 18–19).



A granite monument
(above and left)
and a visitors'

center (right) mark the birthplace of Joseph Smith. "That baby boy born 200 years ago this month in humble circumstances in rural Vermont was foreordained to become a great leader in the fulfilling of our Father's plan for His children on earth." See President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Joseph Smith Jr.—Prophet of God, Mighty Servant," p. 2.