Psalm 144:15 ...yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.
The Tidings of Zion is published quarterly by the Conference of Restoration Elders. It is under the editorial responsibility of the Coordinating Council, Richard Neill, Chairman. It is sent to all who desire to receive it.

An annual contribution of $12 is appreciated. (Please read and respond to the subscription article on page 3 of this issue.)

Purpose of the Conference of Restoration Elders

“To bring solidarity to a growing number of Restoration branches and Latter Day Saints in general during this period of disruption and fragmentation” (Conference Operating Guidelines accepted in 1996).

The Conference exists to:

1. Organize the coming together of Melchisedec priesthood, as well as the Aaronic priesthood members, for:
   • Spiritual preparation and to unify our efforts on behalf of the work to which we are called.
   • Much needed fellowship and fraternity to prepare us to defend and preserve the faith.
   • Identify and seek divine guidance concerning the critical issues now confronting the Church.
   • Chart a course of action that will maintain the gospel as restored in 1830 (Original Letter of Intention and 1993 Conference Materials).

2. Support Restoration branches in their efforts to work together.

3. Provide needed resources to branches and members as they are requested.

4. Offer ongoing support and resources to Restoration priesthood.

5. Offer support to the elders to take the gospel message to the world.

The Conference is not the Church, but a gathering of the Melchisedec priesthood to share in testimony, prayer, legislation, and preparation to return to our branches better equipped and unified to perform our duties to minister to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In addition, the Conference of Restoration Elders provides a forum for Aaronic priesthood and member alike to share in fellowship and to be nurtured in the Word. The Conference helps the scattered Saints and isolated branches throughout the world to enjoy the hope that we find in Jesus Christ and each other.

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Changes to Your *Tidings of Zion* Subscription – Please Read and Respond!

Dear Saints,

Each year the cost of printing and mailing the *Tidings of Zion* (TOZ) has continued to increase. The Conference of Restoration Elders (CRE) has never required a subscription fee for covering these costs but instead has relied on donations. Unfortunately, donations have not kept pace with the ever-increasing costs of printing and mailing the *Tidings*, so the 2020 CRE passed the following resolution:

**Resolution to charge a subscription price for *Tidings of Zion***

*Be it therefore resolved,* that the Publication Council begin to charge a yearly $12.00 subscription for those individuals who wish to receive the *Tidings of Zion* magazine; and

*Be it also resolved,* that an election card be placed in upcoming issues and on the Elders Conference Website with the following options for election of subscription media similar to the following:

- Continue sending paper copy for $12
- Continue sending paper copy but I am unable to cover the cost at this time
- Please cancel my paper subscription. I will download an electronic copy.
- Please use the additional funds enclosed for a gift subscription to...or as a donation

*Be it further resolved,* that in those cases where the *Tidings of Zion* is being used in the mission field, that where possible, each mission board bear the subscription cost.

Additionally, not having an updated mailing list can be costly as well.

In response to the above action taken by the 2020 CRE, and in an effort to update the *Tidings*’ mailing list, we are **REQUIRING** that everyone who receives the TOZ fill out and mail in the enclosed subscription election card, OR go online using this link https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TidingsofZion to complete the card. Our preference is that you use the online option. You **MUST** do one or the other, or you will **not continue to receive printed copies of the TOZ after the next issue.**

The subscription election card (printed or online) will ask you to select one of the following options:

1. I would like to receive a printed copy of the TOZ, and will donate $12 annually to cover the cost.
2. I would like to receive a printed copy of the TOZ, but am unable to cover the cost at this time.
3. I would like to receive a printed copy of the TOZ, and my Branch will cover the annual $12 cost.
4. I would like to continue to receive a printed copy of the TOZ, and have already sent $12 or more to cover the annual cost.
5. I would like to have the TOZ emailed to me, and would like to cancel my print subscription if I have one.
6. I will access the TOC on the CRE website. Please cancel my print subscription if I have one.
7. I do not wish to receive the TOZ in any form.

As you can see, if the annual subscription cost presents a financial challenge at this time, we encourage you to select option 2. If you choose to continue to receive printed copies of the TOZ, you **MUST** include your current address. If you choose to have the TOZ emailed to you, you only need to provide your email address.

To donate your annual subscription, or to donate additional funds to cover the cost of printing and mailing the TOZ, you may do so electronically by going to the CRE website at www.eldersconference.org, and selecting the **Donate to TOZ** button under the TOZ image; Or mail your check to: (On the check **memo line**, please note **For TOZ**)

CRE Tidings of Zion
PO Box 4085
Independence, MO 64051

Thank you for your continued consideration and support for the *Tidings of Zion.*
Cor 3:6-9 I Paul] have planted; Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God; ye are God’s husbandry; ye are God’s building.

In a season riddled with uncertainty, apprehension, and cancellations, elders from around the world hearkened to the call to “Settle This in Your Hearts: Take Up Your Cross and Be My Disciple” as they joined together in conference from June 21 – June 26, 2020. Because of restrictions on large gatherings due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Conference and In-Town Reunion adopted a “virtual” format for this year. This included online meetings via a Zoom platform for conference sessions, classes, and preaching services. The gathering of the Saints has been and always will be of utmost importance in our worship. The CRE was blessed by the efforts of many who organized a much-needed modified schedule for 2020 and provided the technology to make it run.

One great blessing that came from the online sessions was that we had the ability to join with elders from every nation on earth. We had members from Europe, Australia, the Philippines, Africa, and across the Western Hemisphere join together for discussion, worship, and business that would affect the entire Church. To God’s glory, we were able to share with brothers who never have been able to travel for such a conference experience. Some joined from their homes in the early hours of the morning, some midday, and some in the still darkness of the night as we met as one. As the world turned to bring the same sunrise across the geographical expanse that separated us, each day revealed the sense that hearts knit in purpose to the Father were indeed one, and that Christ was King over all the world and over all people. It was the business of the Kingdom that we sought to engage in as we met for business each day.

The week began as elders shared reports of progress in mission areas around the world. Quorums were organized to discuss issues and concerns and to give support for one another. With some practice and experimentation, our online discussion and voting protocol was refined and seemed to work well for those credentialed elders who joined in. We should be clear that in the same vein that elders are not able to join with us year in and year out for many various reasons such as travel, work, etc., there were many this year who were hampered by technology issues or who felt uncomfortable with such a platform. This is certainly understandable, but we pray that the efforts of those who were able to attend will bear fruit for the Saints as a whole.

An updated summary of the week’s activities can be found on the eldersconference.org website. We would invite you to visit this site frequently. Minutes for each day’s sessions, as well as a summary of the resolutions the conference passed, can be found on that site. Currently on this site there is a picture of a “Cross and a Heart” on it with the title “Restoration Branch Family Reunion & Conference of Restoration Elders.” That link will allow you to open the 2020 CRE Notebook. There you can click on minutes, reports, resolutions, etc.

Although there are several other resolutions listed on the CRE website, I would call attention to the following few: a resolution to suspend the Kirtland Priesthood Retreat for 2020 due to the closure of several sites and potential restrictions placed on us at that venue this fall, and a resolution on a Call for a Solemn Assembly to be held September 27, 2020 weekend. Additionally, resolutions on Quarterly Elder’s Meetings and Priesthood Education/Training were passed. There was also concern that our income was not meeting our budget, so there were resolutions to modify our 2021 budget and also to charge a subscription price for Tidings of Zion of $12 annually. There has always been a suggested donation associated with the Tidings of Zion magazine, but we hope that this request for subscription will not be a burden to anyone and that perhaps many will still continue to donate above and beyond that amount so others may reap the benefits of the Tidings of Zion.

From around the world and in deep humility, we have planted and watered. May God give the increase where He will.
## Conference Officers
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Secretary: Dave Joyce  
Treasurer: Ray Lane  
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**Book of Mormon Internship Program for 2020**

By Lynn and Sugar Baumgart  
Blue Springs, Missouri

This year, amid a world-wide pandemic and a time of conflicting views and uncertainty, we wondered what the Lord had in store for the 2020 Internship program. None of us know exactly how the last days, in this dispensation, will play out; however, the scriptures give us some rather detailed clues and admonish us to hold fast and prepare ourselves.

Having already identified the 2020 team, we felt it was important to zoom and get feedback from them in regard to our situation. It was unanimous amongst our group of interns that many had waited a long time for this experience and had no second thoughts about moving forward. We then called each set of parents to make sure they agreed and again heard the same resolve. We found a great deal of strength emanating from the young folks in the faith and their parents as well. The board from the Foundation approved, so onward we went.

We took every precaution to prevent being exposed to the pandemic. We obtained an automatic thermometer and an oxygen gage, and every morning we took temperatures and oxygen levels. Two masks were available for each intern and staff member when required. We were all spaced strategically apart from each other, and interns were admonished to try and stay out of large crowds. After two weeks of internship, we were quarantined to each other. Our team-building activities and classes were held at Colbern Road Restoration Church because of a bigger space to spread out.

We had classes each day, Monday through Wednesday, covering subjects related to Prayer, Fasting, Recognizing the Holy Spirit, Witnessing to Evangelicals, Apologetics, Repentance, Archeology, Language of the Book of Mormon, Studying the Book of Mormon & Hebrew Poetry, The Pride Cycle, Servanthood, Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon, Evidences of the Book of Mormon, What Joseph Smith Couldn’t Have Known, Parable of the Olive Tree, Stewardship, and testimonies. On Wednesdays we had a Fasting Prayer Service. We also spent time in prayer each day and worked on the program our male staff member, Taylor Morrison, designed. Thursdays were spent doing service projects. These were organized by our female staff member, Rachel Mann. The first service project was Team Jesus, where the interns worked on cleaning up the area around the building. Team Jesus works with homeless people whom they call The Beloved. Other projects the team took part in were helping at the Book of Mormon foundation, lending a hand with painting projects, or helping some families with yard projects.

On even-numbered years, we usually go to Palmyra to witness to the evangelicals that protest the pageant and church historical sites; however, with this year being altered with the pandemic, everything was closed. Instead we went to Noah’s Ark in Kentucky and The Creation Museum. Both were very interesting. The interns enjoyed seeing the replica of the ark—the vastness of it and how they might have fed and taken care of the animals. On the way to the ark, we stopped at Cahokia Mounds in Illinois to see the ruins and pyramid. After visiting the sites in Kentucky, we stopped at The Serpent Mounds in Ohio.

When we returned home, we visited six different congregations. We shared with them in song, testimony, and our program, which Taylor designed for us.

Despite our pattern being broken this year and our exposure to Covid-19, the Lord protected and blessed us greatly, and not one of us came down with the virus. What the interns can take away from this experience is that sometimes we have to step out in faith. The acronym for faith is: “Fabulous Adventure In Trusting Him.” None of us can be sure what we will have to face in our fast-changing world; however, we found the 2020 interns to be very willing and flexible in facing the challenges this world presents to them.
2020 CMRB Older Youth Camp

By Monica Twombly
Independence, Missouri

We had the priviledge of directing CMRB Older Youth Camp this past summer. God blessed us through the week with wonderful youth, classes, and weather. The first blessing was that Brian was originally planning to be on a work trip the week of camp, but due to the pandemic, the class was moved and his schedule was free to direct the camp that week.

Our theme for the week was “The Straight and Narrow Path” from 2 Nephi 15:10. On Sunday evening, we met at camp to renew friendships and make new friends. Our pastor, Elder Tom Mitchell, taught a class on the camp theme that evening.

Our daily theme for Monday was “Study.” Bob Schrunk came in the morning and taught a class on studying. He shared a neat example of growing dozens of sweet potato plants from a single sweet potato. This taught us about how God’s work can help us to grow and bear fruit by providing us the nutrients we need. Monday evening, Amy Jo and Robert Gillam came out to share their testimonies of Christ and to lead a game night. It was fun playing new board games with them.

Our theme for Tuesday was “Obedience.” Aaron Smith taught the morning class on obedience to the Lord and His commandments. Tuesday evening, Andrew Naylor shared testimonies and we played a few rounds of Underground Church.

Our theme for Wednesday was “Prayer,” and Pat Chadwick came and taught the morning class. She shared many of her testimonies on prayer and reminded all of us how important and powerful prayer is in our daily lives. Wednesday evening, Mike Ballantyne came out to share his insights and testimonies, and we had a beautiful prayer service that evening.

Our theme for Thursday was “Charity,” and Cara Smith taught a class on relationships. She talked about how important it is to have God in all our relationships and that He needs to be the center of any relationship we have. Thursday evening, Jack Hagensen shared his testimonies of Christ and several of his missionary testimonies. Also, that evening, the youth had a chance to share their talents. There were various talents, from acting to singing to other musical talents.

Our theme for Friday was “Simplicity.” Friday did not go as planned as we had learned that one of the campers tested positive for COVID-19. God had bigger plans for us that day than the plans we had laid out for the youth. That morning we had a prayer service, and a camper led class instead of our guest speaker. That evening we were able to hear how God was working through Ed Turner’s life via Zoom and ended the evening with our dedication service.

It was a blessed week! Even though everything didn’t go as planned, God directed the week and blessed the youth. At the end of the camp, many of us needed to quarantine apart from family. The effort to work with family, pray through the best path forward, and offer one another options was truly a slice of Zion. We were reminded of the great love that God has for each of His followers and that He will care for us as we strive to walk His straight and narrow path.
Camp Bethel 2020 preparations began just like any other year—lining up staff, purchasing and organizing needed supplies, and preparing the grounds, cabins and class materials. Although many other regularly scheduled activities and events in our society were being postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19, we continued with camp prep as usual. We knew there was a possibility camp could be shut down, but we didn’t let that discourage us.

Years ago, Camp Bethel was quite large for a non-Center-Place gathering, and many of the Tidings readers may be alumni. But in recent years, we have not had more than twenty-five to thirty campers, and we average about fifteen staff members. This year we had many more volunteers than normal! We were excited and looking forward to having a large staff-to-camper ratio.

Nine days before Camp, I received a phone call—one of our counselors from Missouri let us know he’d tested positive for COVID-19. We found out a third of our staff would be in quarantine and not able to help. We had planned to place fewer campers in cabins so we could keep people spread apart a bit. Iowa’s governor had given recommendations for social distancing but was less stringent than Missouri’s guidelines. Each year we encourage campers and staff to take precautions against the spread of illness; this year would be amplified! Even so, we had campers and staff calling and messaging us with concerns, and the Saturday just before camp, it was suggested that we cancel. We felt assured the Lord wanted this camp to take place and continued preparing.

Within a couple of days, we were notified that all youth camps that hadn’t been already cancelled
were doing so. Quickly, we realized Camp Bethel was the only Restoration youth camp available within a four-hundred-mile radius of the Center Place. This is when things got very “real”! We had many families signing their children up for camp. We were scrambling to purchase more supplies, clean more cabins, and find more staff. Praise the Lord! Many local people volunteered to help as much as they could at this late notice.

Camp, though about triple its usual size, went off without a hitch! Campers and staff enjoyed beautiful weather, lots of recreation, time for getting to know each other, and spiritual campfires, classes, and services. Many of our new friends from Missouri discovered “the Iowa camp” is different from what they’re used to. There were a few hiccups, but all-in-all Camp Bethel 2020 was a great success!

We would be remiss if we didn’t share about this year’s theme. During 2019’s dedication service, it was impressed upon Karla to use “Survival of the Faithful” for the 2020 theme. The first week in April, she discussed the desired verse with a staff member to no avail. For some reason, today’s modern technology hadn’t come up with the verse reference either. With the media and other sources circulating more fear than faith, we knew it was important to base our camp on this particular verse. The very next Sunday, the priest used I Nephi 7:37 as his sermon text—the exact scripture we’d been looking for. The Lord gave us just what we needed, and He will always give us what we need! So, during our current and upcoming trials, folks, keep the faith! Remember,

THE RIGHTEOUS NEED NOT FEAR!!!
Michigan Reunion 2020

By Kathleen Modders
Lake Orion, Michigan

The Great Lakes Restoration Branches Reunion, held in Vassar, Michigan, was a success and such a blessing. The theme this year was “Upon this Rock.” It truly was our own piece of Zion for the week. Although numbers were down this year, it was a great gathering of the family of God. Everyone’s spiritual batteries were recharged. Many testimonies were shared and some new ones gained. It was the perfect opportunity to refocus our lives on the Kingdom of God. The teachers, speakers, and reunion staff put in a lot of time and effort to make the week a successful, blessed week. Everyone gathered together and joined our Christian walk.

One of the great things was the campfires, which were run by Grace Johnson. She just graduated not too long ago and has stepped up into one of the staff positions to help make the reunion a great blessing while worshiping in song and testimony.

We couldn’t have had such a spirit-filled experience without all the hard work and dedication of the camp staff, guest ministers, and teachers. There were so many involved to make the week a success. Sister Christina Mervyn taught the little lambs, age 4 and below. She is so great with the toddlers. Sister Kelli Williams taught ages 5 through 1st grade. She is so passionate and loves the little ones so much. Sister Cory Eliason taught 2nd grade through 5th grade. She puts so much into her teaching and creates all kinds of props for a great atmosphere. Priest Mike Modders and Elder PJ Fought taught grades 6 through 12. They both are a great team teaching the teenagers. Brother Andrew Smith taught the young adult class. He traveled from Missouri to teach, and it was an honor to have him come for the week. The nightly sermons and adult classes were taught by our visiting ministry: High Priest Cloyce Coffman, Elder Tom Mitchell, and Elder Howard Parker. These three men brought such great ministry to all who attended the reunion. We were truly blessed.

Dee and Paul Ludy brought a wide variety of church books to sell between classes and services. It’s such a pleasure speaking with them. They are knowledgeable about each book and can tell you exactly what the book is about so you know if you want to purchase it or not. We also sold our camp t-shirts throughout the week. They were light blue with dark blue writing this year. All the proceeds go back into the reunion fund to offset the reunion cost.

Sister Shawn Ruch was our Youth Teacher Coordinator. She makes sure every teacher has a list of all the kids they will be teaching for the week. She is so organized and prepared and is such a great help to the teaching staff. Sister Kim Gilchrist was our Music Director. She is so talented with music and brought such a great ministry. Priest Mike Danicki was our Audio/Visual Coordinator. He does so much work! He records the video and audio and then makes CDs to send to Saints throughout the United States. So even if you were not able to attend, Mike has you covered. He is able to upload the audio and video of the sermons and classes to the Oakwood Restoration Branches Website, https://oakwoodrestorationbranch.org/videos/, for anyone to see.

Sister Helene Danicki is our Registration Coordinator. Helene is our hub! We honestly don’t think we can have our reunion without her. She does the registration and then coordinates rooms for everyone in the lodges and records the campsites for everyone in the RV or tent section of the grounds.

Our Camp Nurse was Sister Lynnette Daniels. She took care of everyone during the week. No boo-boo is too small for Miss Lynnette! Sister Wendy Nagy was our Recreation Coordinator. She schedules all the youth recreation each day and gets the adults together for the cornhole tournament. Elder Shaun Turner was our Talent Show Director. He goes around to everyone and signs them up to share their talents with the congregation. It’s always a pleasure to see everyone perform on the stage. Shaun always shows so much enthusiasm and helps everyone feel at ease.

Elder Marty Garn was our Family Olympics Director. Boy, is he fun! From the three-legged race to a tug-of-war, balloon toss, and so much more. He has a great big sense of humor too. After the water
balloon toss, he lined the participants up with their backs to the spectators, like it was another game. Marty gave them all a water balloon and said the goal was to see who could throw it the farthest. Well, needless to say, all the spectators got the balloons thrown at them! Everyone scattered!

Brother John Stokes drove the taxi cab/golf cart around for those in need of a ride. He went all over the campgrounds to find anyone who needed a ride. Elder Jay Havener was the Camp Pastor, in charge of the services, and was the Adult Class Coordinator. He gave spiritual counsel and administration to all those who needed it during reunion. He and Kathi are such a great blessing to our reunion. Deacon Matt Mervyn was our Head Deacon. He set up the service chairs and kept cold water bottles in the tabernacle for those who needed refreshing cold drinks.

Our Reunion Director was Elder Eric Eliason. He coordinated every aspect of the reunion and handled every hiccup that occurred. This year there were many restrictions and rules, but Eric took every one of them to heart and worked through them by holding meetings and placing phone calls so we could have a wonderful spirit-filled week of Zion. He pulled it off with great success!

Eric and Jay started the morning family devotions off with the RV campers and the lodge campers. Then each morning someone from each section volunteered to do the next day’s devotions. Classes were taught between breakfast and lunch, and then following lunch, rest period everyday was a must! The afternoon was filled with recreation time. After dinner was a nightly service where we were blessed to receive many spiritual words by our guest ministers focused on the “Upon this Rock” theme. We were also blessed with the three Eliason boys—Briggs, Bryer, and Ames—opening the tabernacle doors for us when going in and out of the classes and services. After service there was a campfire and a different Saint giving testimony every night.

The whole week was filled with laughter, love, and joy. All that attended were greatly blessed beyond measure. At the last service on Sunday, the priesthood members lined up as we entered into the tabernacle to shake hands and give hugs. God was with us each and every day, and we had a Zionic atmosphere throughout the entire week.

Covid, Zoom, and Gather

By Seventy Frank Dippel
Morgantown, West Virginia

Brothers and sisters, most of us have been in a lock down situation since March 2020. Thanks to God, some of our numbers have the God-given ability to work with technology. These able Saints have given to us the opportunity to give and receive ministry. Saints have been able to hear the word of God, been blessed by music, and shared in the testimonies of other brothers and sisters from around the globe. Thanks to God and all who have worked so diligently toward providing a wonderful blessing. Wasn’t it great to be able to worship every Sunday and Wednesday evening for months?

The past U.S. president made this statement, “never let a crisis go to waste.” Well, God is really the best at directing all of us toward being better at bringing ministry. God did not let this crisis go to waste. Instead, He opened unto the Church a greater opportunity to reach scattered Saints through the platform of Zoom.

Two things have transpired since March. Firstly, the All Saints Worship and Study Group was established, and Elder Larry Cottrill is its pastor. It provides the preached word, class time, and worship time every Sunday morning and fellowship ministry every Wednesday evening. It is proving to be a valuable tool to reach scattered Saints. If there are any scattered brothers and sisters with computer access, please make them aware of this ministry by contacting the Elders Conference. Secondly, The Elders Conference acted by combining the Evangelism Council and Domestic Outreach ministry. This places under the direction of this newly created council the responsibility of domestic outreach and the All Saints Worship and Study Group. The new council is willing to accept the challenge; however, be aware, there are a couple of serious needs.
The new Evangelism and Domestic Outreach Council has only four members. It would be wonderful to have a couple more legitimately interested Saints to assist in the creation of ministry and teaching aids for both in-person and online outreach.

The All Saints Zoom ministry needs preachers, teachers, presiders, and worship leaders. This ministry can be performed at home. Zoom can be linked at your home computer. You do not need to be at a facility where there is internet service. Stay at home if you are not being used, and preach, teach, preside, provide music, or share in a morning worship.

There have been text messages and emails sent out, trying to contact the larger branches that have a greater number of priesthood and ladies who are able to bring worship ministry. It is our hope that three to nine branches would accept some responsibility by providing ministry one week or bimonthly, if enough branches are willing to assist in this ministry. Every Sunday and Wednesday evening there are, in several branches, Priesthood members not being utilized. It would be a wonderful opportunity to make use of some underused members of Christ’s priesthood by sharing in this online (Zoom) worship. Brother Eric Odida has responded by sending to us a list of names and offices that could be utilized in offering worship. Brother Larry Cottrill has stated that he is getting sixty or more participants weekly and regularly. There are regularly thirty members from Africa, and it is late at night there. There are fifteen or more from the Philippines there for every service.

Our brothers and sister overseas are so incredibly grateful for this ministry. Zoom has given them an opportunity to be more of a part of the Church and even share in the Elders’ Conference. The Saints in other countries have been able to give and receive wonderful ministry, thus building unity. They are praying for continued worship with Saints in the Americas and desire to be a part of the Solemn Assembly. The Zoom ministry has opened amazing doorways for God’s Word. What a wonderful blessing! It is our shared hope that other branches will get on board. Thank you, from your brothers in Christ, members of the council.

**True Repentance**

By Pressler Odida  
Kisumu, Kenya, Africa

Many of us think repentance is as simple as asking forgiveness when you do something wrong. When it comes to repentance, it’s not about saying you’re sorry. It’s more of acknowledging that the sin you’ve been committing is intolerable and has always been intolerable before God. You were never supposed to do it in the first place.

It’s like a smoker when they realize smoking will kill them and they have to stop smoking. This smoking isn’t killing them now at this moment that they are stopping, but it’s been killing them over a period of years. It’s a destructive state that has been tolerated for a while now. The end stage consequence is a result of that prolonged behavior.

When we sin and repent of the same sin over and over, it’s like a smoker saying he will quit but then goes back to that cigarette in a week. The only time he will truly change is when he completely stops smoking. They want to stop it so badly that they’re given meds so that when they take a puff, their body reacts badly. They have no choice but to not even smell a cigarette.

Sin isn’t accepted as something you can do today then not tomorrow, and that’s okay. Sin is something that’s completely intolerable, and not for a period of time, but forever.

The whole concept of repentance is not to stop doing the sin alone, but to be so scared of that sin, and the consequences of the sin, that even thinking about it alone terrifies you. If you’re a thief, it’s one thing to say, “I won’t steal.” By the time you’re saying that, you’ve already weighed the option of stealing or not stealing. The only time you will change as a thief is when even the thought of you stealing scares you.

The only way we can truly repent is when the thought of committing that sin again is terrifying to us.
In 2005, I had a bout with heart disease. As my condition worsened, I could no longer lie down to sleep, and sleep itself became very fleeting. I had long hours when I was awake in the night. At the start, I would pray for my family and worry over them. As the disease progressed, I could no longer pray for my own family. Those prayers induced a fear of leaving them in death that made my condition much worse. So, I asked God for names of people for whom to pray.

A little background: My branch had been through some of the worst infighting and bickering any Restoration Branch could endure. Our attendance was a quarter of what it had been. The attacks on each other were deep and cutting. Even though I was not on the same “side” as several people, I had been praying for them. You should also know that I adhere to rules in my prayers. Those rules include that I do not ask God to reward others for their deeds to me. I certainly don’t want to be rewarded according to my deeds to others. I generally pray that the person I am in conflict with will know how much God loves them and that God will bless them. Those were the prayers I had been offering for these individuals, so I wasn’t completely surprised that these were the people I felt God was asking me to pray for.

As my condition worsened, I could no longer think of names on my own, and I would ask the Lord for the names. I kept receiving the same three or four people. There was once I asked the Lord, “Can’t I have any other people to pray for?” I immediately got the same names, and I got them over and over so that I spent a long time in prayer for them.

Finally, my condition was so bad that I was admitted to ICU. My condition continued to deteriorate there. My niece came to see me and she looked at the monitor and could read the vital signs. I couldn’t really speak much to her. She started crying and left. It was Wednesday night, and she headed to church. What happened there was related by two families to me afterward.

When my niece entered the church building, she told the people that without prayer I would surely die. Then, a strange thing happened. A wind, a mighty rushing wind, came from the back of the building to the front of the building. The first three people to stand and pray were the very people I had been praying for. They begged God with tears that my life would be spared.

My life was spared, and I was moved out of ICU the next day. While I was in a regular room, I asked God why my life was spared. I opened my Book of Mormon randomly. The following words from Alma 8:33 were enlarged, darkened, and raised above the page: “It is by the prayers of the righteous that ye are spared.”

Obviously, God heard and answered their prayers. And just as obviously, my prayers on their behalf played a role. But here is the thing: If I had known my life was dependent on their prayers, I would have been praying with more fervor. I never had any idea that I would ever need anything from them. I certainly never thought my life would be dependent on their prayers.

Secondly, until then I did not consider people who opposed my ideas to be particularly righteous. I was supporting ideas fundamental to the Restoration. How could they, who opposed those ideas, be righteous? And yet the evidence is there that they were. Maybe the Lord looked at their hearts and saw people willing to do anything for Him and what they believed He wanted. I don’t know what qualified them as righteous, but in spite of the fact we had very opposing views of the Church, they were righteous. And in spite of these differences, they begged God with tears that my life would be spared. God presented them and me with something more important than our differences.

Before this, I was of the opinion that God would “sort out the mess in the church.” Of course, what I really meant was that God would show the people who didn’t agree with me that they were wrong and they would admit it, repent, and ask for forgiveness. But what God showed me was that He will indeed sort out the mess, and that doesn’t involve the “other side” repenting and begging for forgiveness. It involves me repenting and letting the Holy Spirit do its job. My job is to love.
The Lord Tests His People Before He Imposes Greater Tasks

By Seventy Richard Neill
Independence, Missouri

The title of this article comes from a magnificent and inspired quote from President-Prophet Frederick M. Smith. (1915-1946) The quote is not to be found in a revelation brought forth through President Smith. The statement can be found in the Saints Herald, February 25, 1931. Herbert Hoover was the President of the United States of America (USA), and the USA was in the early phase of a worldwide economic collapse known as the Great Depression.

The full quote by Frederick M. Smith is this, “We are in the midst of trying times, but we as a people have been tried before, and are perhaps willing to be tried again, for the Lord tests his people before he imposes greater tasks.”

This would prove to be a prophetic statement. Little did the world and the nations know, or the Church know in 1931, what was going to take place and how long the suffering would continue around the world. The Great Depression would lead directly into World War II. Many young lives would end prematurely due to the time and circumstances they were placed in. During World War II, the young men who were the first wave to storm the beaches of Normandy found themselves in a place where death would become the fate of many. Those who ended up in concentration camps found themselves in a world where they had no agency, and the camps became known for death and horrible despair.

We find this testing throughout the Scriptures. Adam and Eve were in a beautiful garden, but first Eve, then Adam, fell to temptation. They were tested, and they ate the forbidden fruit. We find that Adam and Eve, through repentance, would be reclaimed into the presence of God.

The children of Israel were tested on the journey to the promised land. Because of their disobedience and murmuring, many of them did not enter into the promised land.

Job was allowed to be tempted by Satan. The Lord withdrew His protection from Job, and he lost many of the things he highly valued, including his sons. Job overcame the testing.

The nation of Israel, before the birth of Jesus, was conquered several times, and even when Jesus came to the earth as a baby, Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire.

Even Jesus was tempted and tested by the devil and the leaders of Israel. After Jesus was baptized, He went into the wilderness in order to fast for forty days and nights, and He communed with God. The tempter, the devil, came to Jesus and placed three temptations before Him. The first temptation was when the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread. Jesus had the power to accomplish this feat, but this was not the plan of God for Him to do so. The second temptation was for Jesus to be placed on the pinnacle of the temple and cast Himself down and have the angels save Him. The third temptation was for Jesus to be set on a high mountain, and He was told by the devil that He could have charge over all of “these things”—the world—if Jesus would worship the devil.

However, Jesus could not give in to these temptations and still abide the celestial law. We find some understanding about the celestial law in D&C 85:6a: “And again, verily I say unto you, The earth abideth the law of the celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law.” What must Jesus do to fulfill “the measure of His creation”? We find in Revelation 13:8 these words telling us that Jesus is, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” From the dawn of creation, Jesus was already slain in principle. At the time of Jesus’s birth, the angels brought forth the proclamation to the shepherds as to who Jesus is: “Fear not, for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11.) So, let us look at these three temptations, once again, that were made by the devil to Jesus in the wilderness.
Let’s begin with the first temptation. Jesus was not brought to the earth to save Himself by turning stones into bread. There was no need of having bread available to eat, for Jesus is perfect and was not in need of that type of temporal salvation. He came to be a Savior unto all the people of the world who would follow Him. Jesus did not need to turn the stones into bread because He is the Bread of Life. John 6:32-35 states, “but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Consequently, if Jesus would have turned the stones into bread, He would have broken the celestial law. The fulfillment of the measure of His creation was for Him to be the “Bread of Life” to save others, not in turning stones into bread for Jesus to satisfy and save Himself.

In the second temptation, we find the test would be for Jesus to cast Himself off of the temple and once again save Himself. This same temptation would reappear at the cross. This was a cruel form of testing. At the cross, the devil used some of the very people who Jesus had come to save to be His mockers. Only this time, instead of Jesus being on the pinnacle of the temple, He was lifted up on the cross. “And they who passed by {Jesus hanging on the cross} railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou who destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise, also, the chief priests mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe” (Mark 15:34-36.) Those doing the taunting were telling the truth, for if Jesus had come off the cross to save himself, all of mankind would be lost. We can only be saved because the perfect, unblemished sacrifice was made to atone for the sins of all those who would become believers and disciples of Jesus Christ.

We now come to the third temptation. The devil offers to give all of the kingdoms of the world to Jesus if Jesus would “fall down and worship me” (the devil, Matthew 4:9.) So how would this violate the celestial law? Let’s go back to the very beginning when Satan and Jesus came before God with their different plans of salvation.

Satan was not going to give agency to mankind, as he would make everyone bow down to himself. Not one person would be lost, but no one would be able to choose God as their Father because they would be given no choice. Jesus said to God that He would protect man’s agency to choose God, because Jesus said to the Father, “thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Gen. 3:3.) If Jesus would have accepted the plan of the devil in this temptation, then the devil, not God, would have the glory, and that would violate the oath Jesus had made to God and would in turn have violated the celestial law. The devil is known as a liar. He could not keep this promise to Jesus that “all these things” would be His, because “these things” were not Satan’s to give. They were God’s alone to give. If Jesus would have violated the celestial law, all mankind would be lost, because Jesus “was slain from the foundation of the world” as the perfect and righteous sacrifice.

We find testing going on in the Book of Mormon from the very beginning of the book. Nephi was tested by his older brothers, Laman and Lemuel. Getting the plates from Laban would prove to be a test. Because of his faith, Nephi was able to accomplish the Lord’s plan.

Instead of adding a new list of people from the Book of Mormon, I want to focus on the words “probation” and “probationary,” which are used thirteen times in The Book of Mormon. These words are defined very well in the book of Alma 9:40-43: “And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea, the death which has been spoken of by Amulek, which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man, in which he might repent; Therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state, which has been spoken of by us which is after the resurrection of the dead. Now if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead; But there was a plan of redemption laid, which shall bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, of which has been spoken.”

We see once again the plan of redemption or
salvation was “laid from the foundation of the world,” and that plan must include Jesus’s death on the cross. This scripture describes that there is a space of time for men to repent and prepare to meet God. This space of time provides for a time of testing the agency of man. Men and women would need to understand and believe that repentance involves accepting God by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at Calvary—that this is the only way that mankind can be saved, and we must have faith in God and Jesus and endure to the end.

The quote used from President Frederick M. Smith referred to a people. We find references to “a people” in other places as well. We find references to a people throughout the Scriptures in regards to the House of Israel and the Church. The Lord has desired a people to rise up that would carry the messages of love, faith, hope, and the Kingdom to all people. The plan was for God to draw all men to Him through Jesus Christ. (John 12:32) There are testimonies of great men and women from the past who have dedicated their lives to this cause of the Kingdom on earth. There are dedicated and great people on the earth in our day as well. Zion shall not fail.

I want to step out of the context of the Scriptures to close this paper with a speech given on November 19, 1863. The speaker was President Abraham Lincoln (USA). In July of 1863 a great battle was fought in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, during the American Civil War. Many died on the battlefield—they gave their lives. This kind of testing for the nation wore heavily upon the President as he traveled to Gettysburg to deliver his two-minute speech. What could he say about so much death? What could possibly make any sense of this tragic event because a people of a “house divided” chose war instead of finding peace. Here is the entire speech:

“Four score and seven years ago (referring to since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776), our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

We learn as we go through testing, valuable and lasting lessons of understanding. We hope and desire that this understanding is not wasted. It is important for us to learn from our mistakes, learn from our past, and learn from one another. Above all, we must learn from God.

Sadly, the American Civil War has not been the last war fought. The Great Depression has not been the last testing of our resilience and preparedness as a people.

There is only one way to become free from those things that prove so vexing to our souls and that we seem to not be able to overcome in our own strength.

“Jesus saith unto him [the Apostle Thomas], I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6.)

The Church, also called the Body of Christ, must be the mirror image of the Lord. The mirror image of the Lord will be a body of people who have been tried and tested and who have “taken up the cross of Calvary.” The mirror image of the Living Christ is the True and Living Church.
What Will It Take?

By High Priest Paul J. Gage
Independence, Missouri

Various Saints, at times, have asked me what I thought it would take to truly bring the Restoration Branches together in a way that they might actually help establish Zion. The first thing I do is remind them that I am not “The Authority” on the subject, but simply state my personal opinion. “The Authority,” of course, is Jesus Christ! It is His Church, His Plan, and we are always on God’s schedule, because it was all planned from the beginning.

You see, since it is His Church, there is nothing out of order about it. So it does not need to be reformed again in any way. We, the people, are the problem, and so it is us that needs to be “set in order.” Has this ever happened before? Only since the Garden of Eden, down through the history of the House of Israel, including the Nephites, the Lamanites, and all the other ites even up to 2019. It happened with the Jaredites, the 1830ish Latter Day Saints, the 1860ish Latter Day Saints, the 1925, 1960, and 1984ish Latter Day Saints up to our day.

It seems to be the “pattern” of man that he has devised for himself which is outside God’s plan for mankind. We receive abundant blessings and enjoy them for a while, and then we lapse into apathy and complacency as if we deserved God’s blessings. Then we turn from God, bad things happen, and we start crying out to God again. So, as we show some measure of repentance and humility, God extends His mercy to us again, and we start all over.

So, what has it always taken for God to get the attention of those who call themselves “His people”? Cast out of the Garden, the flood with only eight saved, cities destroyed by fire due to their sins, 430 years of slavery in Egypt, wandering in the wilderness for forty years due to lack of faith, failure to follow God’s directions for cleansing the Promise Land, seventy years in Babylon and that wasn’t the only time, four hundred years of spiritual darkness from Malachi to Jesus. The list would be somewhat similar for all the other dispensations of time right up to 2020.

God said He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so what will it take to bring the Saints of 2020 to our knees and maybe flat on our faces, crying out to God for His help? The same thing it has taken all along. Maybe different ways, but the same in nature. Doctrine and Covenants 105:9-10 is very clear, and where will it start? “And upon my house shall it begin…”

There have been numerous experiences over the years about what it will take for us to submit to God. A vision attributed to George Washington tells of an invasion of America almost to the point of total destruction. In 1885, Alfred White had his “Redemption of Zion” vision. In the mid-1900s, Roy Weldon’s message of “Time is Running Out” was given, along with the 1991 Walter Weldon experience of “Tell My People.” Even more “up-to-date” visions, dreams, and messages mention such things as having wide-spread destruction, and so forth.

So, again, what will it take? Each reader can write their own response. As one song says, “Life was filled with guns and war, and everyone got trampled on the floor. I WISH WE’D ALL BEEN READY!”

Can we be ready? Yes, by following God’s plan for Zion. The Restoration Branches and the Saints that comprise them must become One in Christ before we can become one with each other. None of us, nor any Branch, can bring forth Zion on our own. I believe that is what Doctrine and Covenants 38:6a really means. “They were of one heart and one mind…”
In April of 2019, Elders Brian Mundy and Eric Woolery traveled to East Africa to bring ministry in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. While we were in Kenya, we assisted with a youth retreat at Lisana and also did some home ministry in Kisumu.

On Saturday April 20, Elder Joseph Ochieng came to pick up Brian so they could go to Awasi to bring ministry for the day. Brother Eric Odida went with his uncle to a funeral, and I stayed behind to do some home visits with Teacher Chrispin Nyang’wara. We went to visit the Walter and Evelyn Anditi home which is about two blocks from the Odida home. Walter was in the hospital in Germany at that time for a spinal condition. We visited with Evelyn and her sons, Hawley (12) and Nephi (6). Evelyn asked the question, “Why does God answer prayers?” I answered, “First, because He loves us, and second, because He wants to have a personal relationship with us.” I then shared a testimony from when I was about twelve years old and how the Lord showed me what His love felt like after I asked Him to do so. After this, Evelyn shared about when she was preparing for college exams and Eric Odida asked her to host a women’s retreat at her home. She prayed about it, knowing she really did not have the time to host the retreat. The Lord told her the decision was up to her. Though she needed to study for the exams taking place on Monday, she consented to host the retreat, even though she felt she was very unprepared to take the exams. After the retreat on Sunday afternoon, she studied for a couple of hours and then had to stop to take care of a meal for her family. The next morning, she went to take her exams, not feeling at all prepared.

As she came to each question, she heard a very soft voice whisper to her the answers to the questions she struggled with. She ended up with the best grade in her class and felt that God had blessed her because of the choice she had made to host the retreat. She had made a sacrifice. We shared several more testimonies with one another before Chris and I prayed with the family and left.

When Chris and I arrived back to the Odida home, Eli and Truphena Okecha were waiting for us. I shared with them and also Misael Onyiego a class on “How do you know you are Reconciled with someone?” Following that, Misael, Eli, and I went over questions and answered them concerning the Swahili translation of the Book of Mormon that Frank Frye had sent.

On Sunday April 21, Eric Odida, Brian, and I went to Lisana for a youth gathering with youth from six different Restoration branches. When we arrived at the church building, the presence of the Holy Spirit was very evident to me. As the youth were gathering, I was made aware again of God’s great love for His people, and especially for these high school and college age youth. The topic of the gathering was to be “Purity.” I had sought the Lord earnestly about what to share, and He had given me three things to stress to the youth. 1) God Loves them! 2) It is His goodwill/pleasure to give them the Kingdom. 3) He has given each of us a little portion of His Spirit before we were born to help us to know good from evil. During the prayer time before classes began, we prayed for needs that were presented to us. I prayed for Paul and Divian Makiwiti and also for Mama Nephi (Carolyn) who was afraid for herself and her children because houses in her area were being broken into. I felt a great portion of the Spirit as I prayed that the powers of heaven would send angels to protect Carolyn and her children and that her spirit of fear would be cast out in the name of Jesus Christ! After a few more prayers, we split into groups according to age or grade level. I took the parents, Brian took the high school, and Eric Odida the college. Each group went to separate areas.

The adult class talked about difficulties they are...
having in their homes with their children. The list is as follows: 1) Not obedient to parents—children seeking their own will, 2) Hardships on the parents which the child does not understand—when they can't have the things they want or need, 3) Pregnancy leads to leaving school, 4) Using alcohol and drugs secretly (this is thought to be why homes are being broken into), 5) Arrogance in the children—they feel they know more about God than the parents do, 6) Some children do not study or do their homework—there are times that there are no books (no money for them, students carelessness, schools do not have any available).

These are the prayer needs that came out of the adult class: 1) High-school-age girls are getting pregnant and having babies without knowing how to be a mother. 2) Pray for them to have wisdom. The adult parents asked, “How can we help keep the young people from getting into this situation?” My response was: 1) Abstain from sex, 2) If a young girl is struggling in how to be a good mother, the older ladies need to create a relationship with her so that valuable assistance can be given in a non-threatening/loving way. Older women need to strive to be a mentor to the young inexperienced mothers. This seemed to be a new thought to them.

I taught the first combined class in which I shared the thoughts that were previously mentioned in the above paragraph. I stressed to the young people, specifically the girls, that they are God’s treasure. That chastity—purity of body—is important to God. Girls have the ability to conceive children and bring forth new life, so they are very precious to God. It is through them that the human race is continued, so sex is not for pleasure only but has a divine purpose in God’s creation. Boys are to honor and respect girls and NOT take advantage of them because they are God’s treasure! When I finished with the class, Eric Odida asked the youth what they had learned. They responded with 1) God loves us, 2) We are God’s treasure, 3) Chastity or purity of body is important to God, and 4) That God has given each of us a little bit of His Spirit to help us in knowing what is good and what is evil! Brian and Eric Odida both shared with me later that the youth were listening intently and there were times when they looked down because they were convicted by something that was said. After this class, we broke for lunch.

After lunch, Brian taught a second class. He covered many different topics. After Brian’s class, Eric Odida led a commitment service, during which about fifteen youth committed to seeking a better relationship with God and their parents. We finished around 5 pm. There were about sixty youth in attendance.

Back at the Odida home for evening devotions, I talked about taking time to be holy. I shared Arthur Oakman’s experience about when he went
to Elbert A. Smith because Arthur was having difficulties ministering to some people at the Stone Church. Brother Smith counseled Brother Oakman to develop a close personal relationship with his heavenly father, and in this way by living close to the Father, he would know how best to minister to people. Here is Brother Oakman’s testimony:

I was faced with a problem some years ago. I came here to Independence in 1936 to serve as pastor of the Stone Church, as green as a gourd.

I remember I was going up the aisle in the Auditorium one day and met Sister Charles Koehler who was the women’s leader. She looked me up and down and said to me, “Well, we will get acquainted with you.” They were giving up John Sheehy for me.

I started preaching on the campus and had some struggles. Finally, I went to Bro. Elbert Smith and said, “Bro. Elbert, I have a problem.” He said, “What is it?”


I said, “I seem to see that there is a parting of the curtain when you see things you hadn’t seen before. You look upon history with a new eye and a new discernment and you see God working in the events of history and your mind is inspired to see Him working. And out of that relationship between the divinely guided event and the divinely inspired mind you speak.” But, I said, “That’s not enough. A young fellow came to me the other day and said that his home was breaking up. I couldn’t help him. He was distraught and no view of history was going to help him. What can I do?”

“Well, Arthur,” he said, “you face the same problem that every man that grows faces. I can best illustrate it to you this way. I have been in the Presidency now for some thirty years or so. I know Fred M. inside out. I know how he feels about problems, I know how he thinks, I know his address, I know his moves, I know his philosophy, and I know him inside out. When he’s in California and I’m in Maine and a problem comes up, I don’t have to telephone him to ask him what to do; I know what he will do. I have lived with him; I have worked with him. I know how he thinks, and when these problems come to me, I know instinctively what the President of the Church would say or feel or do about it.

“Now,” he says, “that’s the problem you face. You need to be more the man of God than you are now, and you need to live with the Lord Jesus until you come to know how He thinks and how He feels.” Then, he says, “When you do this, you won’t have any problems going out and ministering to these people with their broken hearts and contrite spirits. You will know how the Master feels about them and what He would say to them and do for them, the counsel and the advice that He would give to them.”

I found that what Bro. Elbert says is true. The closer you live to the Lord Jesus, the more like Him you become. You come to know how He feels, how He thinks, and what He would do.”

Testimonies from the Philippines

- Before I joined this religion, I asked myself if I was ready to be a part of it. That was the biggest question running in my mind, and I really didn’t know the answer. Days had passed, and I realized that I needed to be baptized and that it was the right thing to do. I and my friend Angel Mae Nano, who also wanted to be baptized, approached Brother Murray and Sister Delma Broughton and told them we wanted to be baptized. We were baptized on November 19, 2016. I am so very happy that I am now a part of this Church, and because of this, I became closer to Jesus and learned more about His words. This is the first stage of my life, and I know there are more things that are waiting for me. I know that the Lord loves me, and I love Him too. Thank you very much, and God bless us all. – Jasmine C. Villasista, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines

Testimonies continued on page 26
"If my people, which are called my name, shall humble themselves (I’m going to paraphrase here) and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal them, and heal the church, and heal the land of Zion." (II Chronicles 7:14)

I was thinking about what we need to do as a people this week in our lives, and I prepared a list of ten things we know about Zion. We know more than ten, but with a large list, we wouldn’t get through it tonight. How did I make this list? By looking at the times in the scriptures when we see a people that lived righteously. And we can extract from them what it is that they were doing. If it worked then, it will work today. And if it works today, it will certainly work this week.

Number one: Doctrine & Covenants 36:10g, which is also similar to the Genesis accounts of chapters 6 and 7. “I am Messiah, the King of Zion.” One of the things we know about Zion is that Jesus is the King. It is the most important thing for us to know because in all of our disputations, all of our disagreements, the only thing that will ultimately matter is if we are on the side of our Lord in our understanding, in our actions, and in our reactions.

Number two: Genesis 7:23, which we’ve already read. The Lord called His people Zion…one heart, one mind…dwelt in righteousness…no poor among them.

Number three: Revelations 12:7, “…nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ.” The dragon could not prevail against the woman, could not destroy. Just like the Philistines would not have been able to hold back the people of Israel from reaching the promised land. The people of Canaan could not hold them back. And what we see in this day and age is that the Lord will not allow the dragon to overcome the woman. Who is this woman? For 1260 days, she was in the wilderness. If we were going to take this absolutely literally, we’d be talking about three or four years. We don’t have knowledge of anything that happened three or four years later, but if we use the common interpretation of a day representing a year, we find that 1260 years later would bring us to 1830. And what is the woman? It says, “…the woman, who is the church…” and the child is the Kingdom of God. Brothers and sisters, we have a purpose. We have been called out and brought out of the wilderness in these latter days to accomplish the task of the Lord, which is to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. And what it needs, and what it requires of us, is that we be a people united according to the celestial law. That we do impart of our substance, and that we do not all manner of evil, but we seek to live in righteousness. How we treat one another is crucial.

Number four: Doctrine & Covenants 98:7. This is the parable of the redemption of Zion — the Lord is speaking to a servant. “Gather together the residue of my servants; and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also…and redeem my vineyard, for it is mine…” Now add to this the scripture from Exodus chapter 14, where we learn that no one 20 years of age or older would enter the promised land; however, it was not only those over 20 whose carcasses would be left in the wilderness — it was also those who murmured. And brothers and sisters, why have we been wandering for these 24…30 years? With murmuring, there’s a need for an adjustment in our attitude.

Number five: Doctrine & Covenants 45:14, “And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing, with songs of everlasting joy.” We see a lot about immigration issues. But what we know is that those who are to come are the righteous. It is our responsibility not to just take the word out there as we have done and
continue to do with our missionary groups, but it is our responsibility to get out there and to help people, and to assist people to come to Jesus Christ, to be filled with His spirit, to seek to keep His commandments, to become righteous, to be able to come to Zion.

Number six: IV Nephi 1:17 (during the Golden Age of the Book of Mormon people), “And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of”…why?…”the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.” How many business meetings have we seen? How many times have we seen debate and contention? When I was in the district presidency at Philadelphia, I would be called sometimes to mediate within branches because of the contention that came up over business items in regards to things such as how they were going to add on to their church. In one case, how they were going to build a new church.

Number seven: Alma 11:26, “And there was no inequality among them.” This is about finances, but if that’s the sum total of our understanding, we understand very little about what that means. I read a book called The Invisible Saints by Roger Launius, a historian that stayed with the Community of Christ. His father did not. I don’t agree with him on all points, but he offered a perspective that challenged me on something that I had previously held to be true. The book had to do with the black population of the Church. He referred to how, within the life of the Church, we sometimes confused freedom and equality. Here’s the distinction he made. There were abolitionists in the 19th century, staunch abolitionists, who wanted the black people to be free but did not want them to be equal. And so what got wedged in there was a thing called segregation. I’m not here to discuss that. What I see is there are many things in the life of the Church. This scripture says there is no inequality among them. And brothers and sisters, let’s not just talk finances and who has more wealth in this sanctuary or in the Church. What you do with it is important, but that’s not the issue here. The issue is that we would find an equality between old and young, male and female, Aaronic and Melchizedek—however we want to look within the races of the Church, within the nations that are in the Church. We should stand out as a people, because the Lord said He’s going to gather out of all nations the righteous. All nations, races, and genders are going to be represented. There will be old and young, middle-aged and elderly. It’s time that we become that Church that stands for the principles of God, that we become a people that is free and equal. The opinions of everyone matter. When we are in business meetings, the vote of a seventy is no more significant than the vote of an eight-year-old child that has been baptized into the church. And even Elbert A. Smith wrote a hymn talking about the different priesthoods, when there would be no more debate. We understand that God created us all, and in His eyes, we are equal as a people.

Number eight: IV Nephi 1:13, “But they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer”…that we be a people that seek to keep His commandments and that we would continue in fasting and prayer.

Number nine: IV Nephi 1:3, “…and every man did deal justly one with another.” I have a parenthetical mark here that says, “Every person did deal justly one with another.” Whether it be in a business meeting…wherever it be.

Number ten: Doctrine & Covenants 102:3f, in which the same promise that was made to the children of Israel is made to the Saints of the latter days, and made to our generation. “Behold, I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion, for, as I said in a former commandment (and here we see that He has to repeat himself) even so will I fulfill, I will fight your battles.” We see the northern path was clear for the children of Israel. The Lord was going to create a fear upon anybody who would stand in the way. He would send hornets that would cause them to flee. Hornets are larger than wasps and from the same family. And so it is that He will fight our battles today. And if God is with us, who can be against us? If we are the minority report of the spies, if God delights in us, we cannot lose.

I leave with you, as a people, the challenge this week that we go forward together. We go forward in the days ahead and become a people who would be equal, who would love and cherish one another, and cherish those to whom we are to take the gospel.
A Testimony from Australia

By Elder Murray Broughton
Euroa, Victoria, Australia

I, Murray Gilbert Broughton, was born of godly parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, who were all members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. When I was twelve years old, I started having epileptic fits while working in the paddock cutting ferns with a fern hook. People on Strathbogie Road that went past our house would take me into their homes or to the Euroa Hospital, and my parents wouldn’t know where I was.

While I was in bed, I read the Book of Mormon all the way through, and tears would run down my face. I knew it was divine. The Book of Mormon is true, and it is of God. While reading Alma 4:6, “Nevertheless, the children of God were commanded that they should gather themselves together oft, and join in fasting and mighty prayer in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God,” and also Alma 12:1-5, I was led by the Spirit to ask my family to fast and pray for my welfare. Thus my mother, grandmother, aunties, and myself did fast and pray, along with my being administered to many times, for relief from these epileptic seizures. After nineteen years, I was healed!

I then met a lady from the Philippines, and we were married. I had prayed that I would meet someone who would be compatible and would accept the Church and become a member of it. This all happened as I had prayed.

I was ordained to the priesthood to the office of priest on January 21, 2001. I had been slow of speech with a stutter, and this was all taken away from me. I went to the Philippines right after my mother’s funeral and ended up in the hospital. I believe seeing the beggars on the street, my mother’s recent death, and the hot climate were just too much for me. When I went back again to the Philippines, we went to Agno Pangasinan, and we had Bible study around a table in 2009. I was then ordained an elder on the 2nd of May, 2010. For church services, we met in the lounge room of Delma Mother’s home then in tents outside before building a chapel to worship in. We made a font, a swimming pool outside, for baptisms, and many have been baptized there and at the sea, and other places in swimming pools in Trece Marires, and Antipolo. We have three branches organized in the Luzon area of the Philippines. God is so good! I have seen healings through administrations, blessings of children, and prayers being answered.

Our Pastor, Elder Geoffrey Grayden of the Kelvin View Branch in Victoria, Australia, passed away on July 24, 2017. He was a spiritual father to me and is sadly missed. Also his wife, Sister Elma Grayden, who played the organ, has since passed away. She was Apostle Butterworth’s granddaughter and was related to High Priest Francis Harper and the Frye Family in the United States.

We look for Zion. Zion the beautiful beckons us on. We thank our Heavenly Father for His Church, and we pray for unity among the branches and for a greater love for God and for each other. Let nothing separate us from the love of God and from each other. We must try to put God first in our lives. As we forgive others, God will forgive us.

I believe we are in the last days. Jesus Christ will come again! Are we preparing our lives that we can be in His presence? Fast and pray always and give thanks.
My Testimony

By Elder Julius N. Candido
Trece Martires City, Cavite, Philippines

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11.)

Being with the Church of Jesus Christ was a great journey and work for the Lord. There will be challenges along the way, but you only need to be still and trust the Lord’s plan and timing. I am a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Being baptized was a life-changing event, but it was not an easy road for me to take.

It was in the year 2009 when I was able to meet Brother Murray and Sister Delma Broughton. They had a vacation here in the Philippines, and I was able to meet them for the first time. My interest in knowing the Gospel started when brother Murray gave a book to me, Little Fella. He also gave me a book entitled Daniel in the Lion’s Den, which I found really interesting. Brother Murray even told stories about baptisms, and I told him I wanted to be baptized. He said I had to obtain approval from my parents since I was a young fellow at the time and told me that it would be a life-time commitment to the Lord.

I talked to my parents, but my mom disagreed and told me I was out of my mind. I realized then that it was not the right time and I needed to know more about the Church. The same thing happened when the Broughtons came back later that year around October, in May and October of 2010, and the summer of 2011. I was always disappointed because my parents would not agree for me to be baptized. My mom continued to say I was out of my mind and would not let me be baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ. I realized it would be difficult for me to convince her since she grew up having a different faith and attending a different church.

I prayed and prayed until finally when Brother Murray and Sister Delma came back in December of 2011, and by the grace of God, I was the first in our area to be baptized in Agno Pangasinan on December 26, 2011. I was so grateful and blessed at the time, because not only did my mom allow me to be baptized, but she was baptized also! I will always remember how God worked in my life and the lives of my family at that time. I learned to trust His plan and His perfect timing. Even my little brother, my older sister, and my father have now been baptized into the Church.

When I was fourteen years old, I accepted the Lord’s calling and was ordained a priest in God’s Holy Priesthood. It was never an easy road for me since Bro. Murray and Sr. Delma were not living in the Philippines to guide me, so I prayed about everything and relied on the books that they gave me until I learned to preach and handle services. At the age of sixteen, I was ordained to the office of elder.

The Lord has blessed me a lot through my journey and the many challenges I’ve had to face. When I graduated from high school, I had the feeling that I needed to be in Agno Pangasinan to study and support the Saints there. My parents did not have enough money to send me to college, but with the Lord’s help, I was able to attend college at my chosen school as well as serve the Saints in our branch in Agno. With the help of two amazing and lovely people who supported me all the way through my college life, I was able to graduate and pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers last year in 2019. It was a very happy time but also one of the saddest times in my life, as my mom passed away a month before the results of my examination came out. I really cried out to the Lord to give us a miracle and healing since my mom was a true follower of Christ, and I worked hard to fulfill my duties and responsibilities as an elder. But then again, the Lord works according to His plan, which may be different from what I am thinking and expecting. Even when my faith was challenged and I questioned the Lord, I realized I have to trust the Lord’s plan like I did when I’d just started to learn the Gospel.

I am still doing the work of the Lord and having
services in Trece Martires City Branch, where I’m now living, plus the Antipolo Branch and the Agno Branch when I have the time and opportunity. Sometimes the Lord’s plans may be different from our plans, but we always have to remember that His plans are way better than ours. We always have to be still and put forth an effort to obey His will.

Freedom
Stewardship Ministries Update

By Elder Bob Dickson
Grain Valley, Missouri

Saints, let me briefly provide an update on the activities of FSM. The Lord has been faithful in providing guidance to the leadership of FSM in these recent formative months. The leadership team would also like to thank the many Saints who have provided us with funds out of their surplus to make our activities possible. We continue to receive donations, both large and small, from brothers and sisters from throughout the Church. I am assured that the Lord is pleased with those sacrifices as we all seek to relieve those who have become burdened with high-interest debt to the world. You can make your donations electronically directly from the FSM page on the CRE website.

I can thankfully report to you that our activities have blessed many families in terms of one-on-one training on the law of stewardship and by the training sessions led by Brother Joe Burkart. We continue to be available to provide training to families and branches. Simply notify myself or Brother Joe Burkart of your training needs.

We have now provided debt relief to two families by refinancing their consumer debt at zero interest. By doing so, we have helped those families reduce their reliance on the world and have significantly increased their understanding of the Lord’s stewardship requirements for their lives. We have also been able to significantly increase the monthly cash flow for those families. We are currently working with an additional two families to refinance a portion of their debt. Brothers and Sisters, if you need assistance in these areas, do not hesitate to contact us. All of our assistance is completely confidential. We have both funds and time to devote to your family. We would like to also encourage all Restoration branches to consider joining forces with FSM so your members can enjoy all of its benefits. Please contact me for details.

Finally, please know that all FSM materials are available on the CRE website. You are invited to view the ninety-minute seminar that has been developed by Bishop Burkart. It can be found on the FSM page of the website.

FSM is simply Saints helping Saints. The invitation is made to each of you to avail yourself of the loving help!

Testimonies from the Philippines

- I am very blessed and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ Restoration Branch Antipolo. Brother Murray Broughton and his wife, Sister Delma, along with my family, are so blessed. We read the Bible, sing hymns, and have services too. I am very thankful as I learn more about the Bible. I teach the children to sing, read the bible, and color in coloring books about the Bible. I am very thankful to Mr. and Mrs. Murray Broughton. Because of them, we are members of the COJC Antipolo Branch. – Estrella N. Rosal. I am from Pagasa, Antipolo, Philippines

- I am thankful to God that He provides all we need every day, even if my husband has no work because of the lockdown in the Philippines. – Sister Charmaine Angkaw

- I feel in my heart that the Lord God is always there to protect, guide, and comfort me. – Sister Zenaida Natino Coladilla

Testimonies continued on page 29
Woodbine Reunion Photos
Stewardship Council and FSM Join Their Efforts Together

In a meeting on August 11, 2020, the Stewardship Council of the Conference of Restoration Elders accepted the challenge of Coordination Council liaison Brian Mundy to redouble our efforts in the area of stewardship training for the Saints. One of the greatest needs of the Saints in these latter days is certainly to develop and implement a greater emphasis in the area of Stewardship. As the Church is already aware, this great need is already the primary focus of Freedom Stewardship Ministries (FSM). FSM has already begun in earnest providing families with training in the areas of family budgeting and avoidance of debt. It is this joint mission that makes it obvious for us to join the efforts of the Stewardship Council and FSM.

As the Education Director for FSM and a member of the Stewardship Council, Bishop Joe Burkart will be working to implement the coordination of these two ministries to move the goal of Stewardship training forward. The initial step will be a “train the trainer” initiative that will provide priesthood, primarily Aaronic Priesthood members, with the tools requisite to go into branches and members’ homes with in-depth knowledge of the financial law of the Church. In these latter days, we as a church need to further develop our understanding of the distinction between “needs” and “wants” so we can strengthen our families and help to lift all members out of a harmful reliance on debt. As we do so, we will be able to truly achieve the Lord’s will that we have no poor among us.

You are invited to contact a member of FSM or the Stewardship Council if you have an interest in being a trainer. More to come as these ministries mature.

“And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them.” Genesis 7:23

Testimonies from the Philippines

God is good all the time. This is what I always say to myself. That is why I am alive. I am eleven years old. Since 2017, I was diagnosed of having Primary Tuberculosis, mild Scoliosis, and Arthritis. When I look back on that year, I was tired, crying in pain. We went to different doctors to find medicines. My parents spent too much of their money to find a right doctor for me. My parents never give up on praying, and I do not give up on praying either. Praying to the Lord is the only thing that makes me brave and to believe I will be healed. On December 2018, I asked Bro. Elder Murray Broughton to baptize me into the Church of Jesus Christ. I always felt I was healed already. I don’t have Primary TB anymore. I can handle the pain of my mild Scoliosis and Arthritis. I thank the Lord for healing me, forgiving me, and giving me a wonderful family who is always on my side, guiding and protecting me. Lord, bless my family. Let us love each other as we love you. Thank you for healing me and for everything. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever and ever, Amen! – Rhianna Joya Natino Maranan, Puerto Galera, Philippines

Testimonies continued on Back Cover

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Testimony from Freedom Stewardship Ministries (FSM) Recipient

The team at Freedom Stewardship Ministries felt like it would be appropriate to provide the generous Saints who have supported this ministry with a brief testimony from the first family to have received our support. This family was in a difficult situation in terms of consumer debt and in need of counseling in the area of financial stewardship. FSM met with the family on a number of occasions, going over the subject of family budgeting and other areas of the law of stewardship. The family joined with representatives in viewing the ministry’s training video, and we provided support in understanding the methods of avoiding future consumer debt.

It has now been approximately three months since FSM refinanced a portion of the family’s consumer debt at zero interest. Their monthly cash flow has been significantly improved, and the family is on the road to being debt free. Debt freedom will take some time, but there is light at the end of the road.

The following are direct quotes from the family:

“The flaxen chord around my neck has been loosed.”

“I see the sin I was enmeshed in now, and I had blinders on before.”

“I’m not alone in this journey.”

“I have a freedom that I never had before.”

Come and let FSM help you if you are in need. Get with your pastor to see if your congregation is willing to join hands with FSM! May God Bless you all.

CRE Financial Update

By Elder Ray Lane
CRE Treasurer
Sibley, Missouri

Brothers and Sisters,

We have completed a week of fellowship and business at the In-Town Reunion/Conference. This year has been quite an experience with all meetings and services via Zoom.

Even though we could not be together physically, we were able to come together in a way that allowed many to participate who otherwise would not have been able to because of distance and expense. This made it possible so all who wanted to participate could, no matter their physical location.

One of the items that was discussed in the business

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meetings was the budget for the year May 1, 2020 through April 31, 2020. Because of the income for the previous year, there was a resolution brought forward and revised that the proposed budget could not be more than 120% of the previous year’s income.

With the resolution approved, the original proposed budget was revised from $74,500.00 to $52,570.00. The Publication Council (Tidings of Zion) went from $33,000.00 to $22,070.00, and the Domestic Outreach and Evangelism Council went from $13,000.00 to $5,100.00. The Women’s Council also was cut by $1000.00. So you can see how contributions affect the programs that take place throughout the year.

Thank you for your needed support. May God continue to guide you and bless your lives.

The domestic outreach program continues to offer ministry throughout the United States and Canada. We have provided ministry for preaching, retreats, and youth ministry.

Please contact Brian Mundy 816-668-4521 or bmundy@bradlech.com if you would like to have ministry brought to you or if you are willing to travel and bring ministry.

Calendar Of Events

Central Missouri Rest. Branches Fall Retreats
Odessa Hills, Missouri
“The Tree of Life” I Nephi 3:69
Go to www.odessahills.com for more info.

Older Youth -
November 6th-8th - $45
Friday 7pm - Sunday 1pm
Directors: Sean and Rachel O’Keefe

Sr. High - 10th-12th grade -
October 9th-11th - $45
Friday 7pm - Sunday 1pm
Directors: Brian and Sue Schultz

Jr. High - 7th-9th grade -
October 16th-18th - $45
Friday 7pm - Sunday 1pm
Directors: Jesse and Kim Kelso

Junior - 4th-6th grade -
October 24th-25th - $40
Saturday 9am - Sunday 1pm
Directors: Chris and Nicole Capps

Announcements

SHARE WITH US!
Please send your articles, testimonies, branch news, youth activities, regional events, etc. Send to the CRE c/o Publication Council. Contact information is on the inside front cover of each Tidings of Zion.

LIVE STREAMING of SERVICES or UPLOADED SERVICES:
Belton, MO RB http://sermon.net/beltonrestorationbranch
Buckner, MO RB www.bucknerrb.org
Central Florida RB centralfloridarestoration.com
Colbern Road RB http://www.colbernrd.org/ministries/sermons
Garden City, MI RB gardencityrestorationbranch.org
Living Hope RB LivingHopeBranch.org
Oak Grove, MO RB http://www.ogrb.org/video.html
Oakwood, MI RB www.oakwoodrestorationbranch.org/mobile.html
Waldo Avenue RB http://www.waldoavenuerestorationbranch.org
Testimonies from the Philippines
(continued from page 21, 26 & 29)

God has answered our prayers. Thank you, Lord.

The year 2017 was an unforgettable year, as we experienced a roller coaster ride of trials and stress. It started when Joya, my nine-year-old daughter, got sick at the beginning of the year, and every month we had to bring her to the hospital. She had to undergo different blood tests and laboratories, including X-rays, a CT scan, and many more.

My worries for her brought me more stress while I was pregnant. My blood pressure was getting so high that I couldn’t control it anymore. I was also admitted to the hospital in my last term of pregnancy due to pre-eclampsia.

Joya was diagnosed last May with mild scoliosis, idiopathic rheumatic arthritis, and primary tuberculosis. My husband, Rey, and I were devastated on hearing all those diagnoses from the doctors, so we had to take her to a rheumatologist specialist to focus on just one problem at a time. We had to admit her overnight at Ma Estrella Hospital on July 23-25. Then we brought her home to Puerto Galera, but I had to go back on July 27 for an emergency caesarian operation. So many worries were on my mind at that time, especially for my unborn child.

I gave birth to my son named John Andray last July 27, 2017. He also has lots of complications since he was a premature baby and stayed in the NICU [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit] for 17 days. We were in Calapan City for a month. I remember when the doctors told us to prepare a sum of money for payment for blood testing for Andray in order to find out his sickness. We were devastated and felt so worried for our son. Rey and I prayed so hard, and I called all the prayer lines and Prayer Powers. I called my family and friends, our pastors, and the elders of our church and asked them to pray for Andray. Miraculously, the next day the doctors did the blood tests and found out that Andray had a jaundice problem. I had to admit that I was worried for my daughter’s and son’s health and was also worried financially, due to the fact we were always at the Hospital and indeed in need of financial support. But God truly finds a way, and I should not have been worrying. God will make a way!

I would like to thank our Almighty Father for everything, as he did not leave me and my family. I want to thank Him as Joya is getting better. Her last blood tests all had negative results, and John Andray is getting bigger. And to the family and friends who always pray, I thank you too. This is my testimony, that I always believe we need to have love, faith, and trust in the Lord, and everything will be fine.

– Joy Natino Maranan, Puerto Galera, Philippines