

# The Gospel News

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*God Bless  
America*



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## ***Finding Jewels in Liberia***

**by Brother Dan McNamara**

I have always wanted to go to the continent of Africa. Lions, elephants, floodplains, deserts, jungles, gorillas... I thought all of those things were just waiting outside the jetway on the other side of a flight. A whole new world filled with everything covered in National Geographic documentaries, and I was slated to see it all. That was the hope I had when I heard "Brother, you're going to Africa."

It was the moment that Brother Phil Arcuri and I stepped off the plane that I realized I wouldn't be greeted by lions or elephants, but rather by a blanket of humidity and plenty of bugs. A sign that read "Welcome to Liberia" hung over the exit of the airport that I can only describe as organized chaos as I wrestled our luggage through the door. Brother Phil and I were there to visit the saints after a roughly nine-year absence of in-person interactions with anyone from the parent Church. We were greeted by brothers Anthony Gebah, Jackson Warlo (Presiding Elder), and Samuel Wialison.

We had arrived on a Friday evening, met with the ministry the next day, and were ready for church on Sunday. I want to focus on what we found that Sunday morning and in the days that followed.

Jesus states in Matthew 5:14, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." On Sunday morning we found that light, that city on a hill, in a small village just outside of Monrovia. Let me tell you, it was so beautiful, like a basket full of jewels and gems. I didn't find lions or a scene from National Geographic; I found The Church of Jesus Christ, the power of the restoration, and above all, God's beautiful people. Jesus also said in 3 Nephi 24:17, "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Surely, these are His jewels, and we thank God for not only sparing their souls but for sparing them through the pandemic, along with the other difficulties they face in their country. I found myself humming the tune "When He Cometh," #378 in the *Saints Hymnal*, quite often.

Over the course of the next few hours, we sat in the church building beneath the throne of God, worshiping Him in Spirit and in Truth. The saints sang the song "Down on My Knees" while Brother Phil and I felt right at home in the Spirit. Who knew you could fly all the way to Africa and find "home"? We heard the Restored Gospel that day, and the testimonies of God's power among His people!

(Continued on page 4)



(No pipers?  
What a drag.)  
Rev 18:22



(The Levites,  
a popular new  
smokehouse  
Christian brass band.)  
II Chronicles 5:13

(Happy Mirthday?  
not so much.)  
Ecclesiastes 8:15



(The choir  
I long to be a tenor in.)  
II Nephi 8:11

(Like Alma.)  
Alma 36:22



(They  
harmonize by ear  
with the sheep's  
baaaaas part,  
no doubt.)  
Psalm 65:13



(I Walk the Line?  
Walking on Sunshine?  
Jumpin' Jack Flash?  
Walk like an Egyptian?)  
Acts 3:8

(Don't these  
instruments have the  
loveliest sound?)  
Alma 26:3



(They must've been  
dancing really loud.)  
Luke 15:25



# BFTP Blast From The Past

By Sister Kellie Speck

**Forty-four years ago, in 1979, the Song of Zion, "The Ending of the Sorrow" was given to Sister Arlene Buffington.**

"As I lay my head on the pillow I felt the Spirit of God fall upon me and I started to sing this song. I went in the other room and shut the door. I just sang the song with the Spirit of God upon me and I got a pencil and wrote it."

*America, the Promised Land,  
Oft watered by the Father's hand.  
So blessed of fame, none can compare;  
A land that did away with prayer.  
The Father searches far and wide  
And finds a few who still abide.*

(continued on page 4)





## Purpose Statement

- To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people.

## Mission Statement

- The Church of Jesus Christ will teach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things commanded by Jesus Christ, while working to draw Israel to Christ through efforts focused on the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America



## Vision Statement

- Living and worshipping in unity and righteousness will result in the fullness of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, culminating in continuous growth of the Church and fulfillment of Christ's promises concerning His Kingdom on Earth.



## ***“He Cleanses Your Common”***

***By Brother Doug Obradovich***

***“Ye are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13)***

The Church of Jesus Christ’s embryonic years were defined by tremendous growth, which understandably generated remarkable growing pains. Such progress brought challenges, as new converts created a newly defined community of individuals that may never have been united in any other setting. As leader of The Church, Peter was not immune to this foreign blending of cultures, beliefs, and ethnicities, and may even have felt compromised in many strange ways. In fact, God utilized dietary practices to help expand Peter’s acceptance of others, teaching him to grow along with the Church.

One evening, God visited him as he slept, showing Peter multitudes of animals intended for feasting purposes in a dream. Peter rejected the offer (“Not so, Lord” – Acts 10:14), saying he had never eaten these

types of foods (following Hebrew law.) God explained the offering had already been blessed and Peter was permitted to partake: “What God hath cleansed, thou shalt not call common.”

God used this double entendre to teach Peter tolerance, as the many coming into the church, who might normally have been overlooked societally, had been hand-picked. God was informing Peter that each one was divinely blessed, and was granting Peter permission to partake without prejudice, “Peter, there is no class system in My church!”

Today, every outreach of the Church must be endorsed by embodying Jesus’ message that those He chooses have already heard His empowering phrase, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” As God invites diverse individuals into His church to share pews with long-standing members, all must open hearts and minds. As Peter had to change his outlook, all must partake and understand that God does the cleansing; He washes off everyone’s “common” equally. No true and genuine follower should ever be viewed as or considered common again. We are not asked to tolerate one another; we are commanded to accept, embrace, and love

one another.

We all left our “common” in the waters of baptism. God’s message to His people is to see one another through His vantage point: His people are made uncommon by the blood of Jesus Christ. As we instruct the converts to walk from their sin in the newness of Jesus Christ, we must support our new brothers and sisters, and grant them the opportunity to grow beyond who they were. We become the generous facilitators to help them receive the same benefits each of us enjoyed. They are no longer who they were, but are instead “new creatures.”

Lastly, to anyone new to their walk with the Lord, please understand you are no longer average, normal, or common! You are now given to the greatness of Jesus Christ. You have been cleansed and covered by His Holy Spirit. You need never consider yourselves common again, with no need (or desire) to return to your past. Know that God has chosen you to accomplish greater things now.

How can I be so sure of this? Because God told us: “What God hath cleansed, thou shalt not call common.” Welcome to your new status: Uncommonly blessed!



(continued from cover)

During the next few days, Brother Phil and I spent hours with the ordained officers and anyone else that could come, talking about what makes our Church different from any others, the Restored Gospel. To our delight, the saints were so entrenched in the restoration that they would periodically repeat to us the scriptures from memory, clinging to the Book of Mormon.

When we weren't teaching, we were going into the village "on foot" to spread the Gospel. When we would go to the homes of the neighbors they would say "You are welcome," and set out chairs so we could share the Restored Gospel with them. As we visited one home, a woman standing a little way off (near a sign pointing to our Church) saw us and asked if she could join. She told us that she needed the Lord and that she was struggling. Right away, we had her sit in the chair and we anointed her. She thanked us and went her way. All glory to God, she was one of the first people in Church on the following Sunday with a smile on her face. A jewel in the making.

The second Sunday, our last day there, we were even more blessed than we had been during the week. The previous day, we had three baptisms, so we got to celebrate the Lord's work on Sunday. We also had the blessing of ordaining a deaconess, a teacher, and two new ministers (Brothers Anthony and Samuel) to the work.

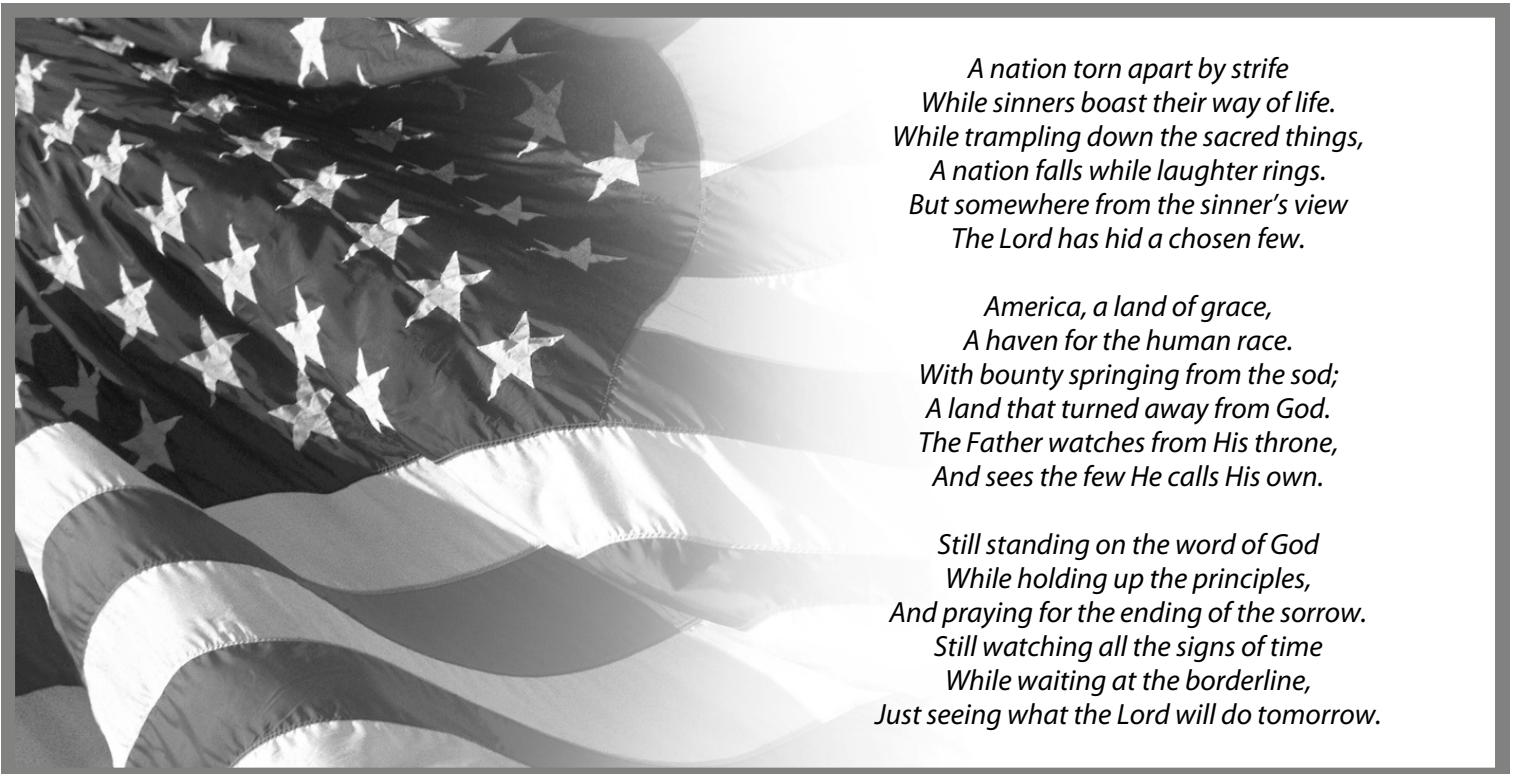
Little did I know, a local village councilman was present in our meeting. During the testimony portion of the service, he stood up and walked to the front of the room. He turned to the congregation and stated "This Church is welcome here in our village and should be respected as something important." He then went on to talk about how blessed he felt in the Spirit of God. It's wonderful when we find the city on the hill, but how incredible to have those outside the Church find it also! We were very blessed to be with our saints in Liberia, truly a beautiful sight that only the Lord could prepare.

Needless to say, I fell in love with Africa and I found the true beauty the Lord had waiting for us. I hope you know that you are His jewels, too. He looks at all of us every day, smiling as He sees the light of His Son shining in us. You are so loved! One day this light and love will cover the whole Earth, when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

**The Church of Jesus Christ has ongoing missionary efforts throughout the world. We thank you very much for your constant prayers and support. If you would like to contribute financially to any missionary effort throughout the world, you may do so at: [www.thechuchofjesuschrist.org/donate/](http://www.thechuchofjesuschrist.org/donate/)**

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(continued from page 2)



*A nation torn apart by strife  
While sinners boast their way of life.  
While trampling down the sacred things,  
A nation falls while laughter rings.  
But somewhere from the sinner's view  
The Lord has hid a chosen few.*

*America, a land of grace,  
A haven for the human race.  
With bounty springing from the sod;  
A land that turned away from God.  
The Father watches from His throne,  
And sees the few He calls His own.*

*Still standing on the word of God  
While holding up the principles,  
And praying for the ending of the sorrow.  
Still watching all the signs of time  
While waiting at the borderline,  
Just seeing what the Lord will do tomorrow.*

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Carolynn O'Connor  
gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org  
734-260-0213

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Chuck Maddox, Jr.  
chuckmaddoxjr@thechurchofjesuschrist.org  
937-266-2506

**CONSULTANTS**

Alex Gentile  
Paul Liberto  
Leonard A. Lovalvo  
Anthony Scolaro  
Cathy Gentile

**CIRCULATION MANAGER**

Dianne Maddox

**DESIGN & LAYOUT**

Ken Lombardo

**COPY EDITOR**

Anthony Scolaro

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

Sophia O'Connor

**QUORUM OF 70 EDITOR**

Q70 Communication Team  
q70team@gmail.com  
313-820-1033

**GMBA EDITOR**

Kayla Smith  
aidenandlilly13@gmail.com  
703-336-3297

**GENERAL CIRCLE EDITOR**

LuAnn Carson  
uannie@comcast.net  
724-518-0491

**REGION EDITORS**

**ATLANTIC COAST**

Michael Zaino  
michaelzaino@thechurchofjesuschrist.org  
732-289-4191

**GREAT LAKES**

Kim Komjathy  
komjathy1976@gmail.com  
313-461-3176

**MIDWEST**

midwest@thechurchofjesuschrist.org

**PACIFIC**

Jody Greger  
cjcsldr@yahoo.com  
209-810-4880

**PENN-MID ATLANTIC**

Ray Intriери  
lemans65@gmail.com  
724-622-7249

**SOUTHEAST**

Mandy Griffith  
mandygriffith324@gmail.com  
727-264-7905

**SOUTHWEST**

Anthony Scolaro  
anthony.scolaro@thechurchofjesuschrist.org  
732-259-3861

## Capacity to Believe

By Brother Anthony Scolaro

The Lord reveals Himself to those who seek Him—in fact, the restoration story would never have happened without God’s continuing revelation. Because God is the same, we use the Bible and Book of Mormon to validate any experiences submitted to the Church today, and while they need to align with the scriptures to be accepted as revelation, they don’t merely restate what already has been written. Rather, the Lord’s revelations to the Church lend clarity and focus to what He has previously revealed to His people, both in former and latter days.

In a recently accepted revelation to the Church, we were encouraged as we seek to deliver the Gospel to Joseph’s descendants. In the experience, Joseph stated, “Hold to those concepts that He [the Lord] has directed you with in approaching my family. For remember, they are a people whom God has created with a special blessing and a capacity to believe.”

Assigning a common trait collectively to any one group of people, be it a nationality, a race, socioeconomic background, or even region within a country, can fuel unfounded prejudices. Many of society’s evils—past and present—have stemmed from negative biases toward people based solely on their group, with no regard to their individual qualities. Yet God reminds us in this experience that collectively, the House of Joseph has been given a special blessing and a capacity to believe.

Israel’s (Jacob’s) blessing upon Joseph can be found in Genesis 49:22-26. But we are given to understand that the Lord also bestowed believing hearts upon all the House of Joseph. Moroni 10:11 amplifies Corinthians 12:9 in listing exceedingly great faith, which could be rephrased as a capacity to believe, as a gift of the Spirit.

Capacity is defined in the natural world as the ability to hold a certain amount. It usually has limits associated with it (e.g., “maximum capacity”). But in realms such as thought, emotion, and spirit—and even in our natural bodies’ strength and mobility—capacity can be elastic; it can expand or shrink based on use. While capacity to believe can be a spiritual gift, it is important for all of us to exercise the measure of faith that we have been given. Laman and Lemuel were of the same lineage as Lehi and Nephi, yet they hardened their hearts while their brother and father believed. The Book of Mormon states that unbelief will cause miracles to cease and angels not to appear and minister unto the children of men (Moroni 7:37). Unbelief will do away with the power and gifts of God among us (Moroni 10:24).

Just as exercise can increase our bodies’ capacity to do physical work, our souls’ capacity to believe can also expand through exertion of a different kind. Study, prayer, meditation—and yes, adverse situations—can bring us to depend more fully upon the Lord. We don’t usually categorize trials as being a blessing, but the scriptures (and many testimonies) give plenty of examples where this was the case. As Joseph stated to his brothers, “[...Y]e thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20).

Let us “be believing” (Mormon 9:27), and take part in God’s wonderful plan to restore Joseph, all Israel, and eventually every nation, kindred, tongue, and people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

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## MATTHEW 19:26

"BUT JESUS BEHELD THEM, AND SAID UNTO THEM, WITH MEN THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE; BUT WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE."

I grew up going to Church and Sunday school and listening to the lessons and the sermons that were taught and preached. I was the dorky Christian kid that went to school and defended my faith and what I believed in. The thing that I heard over and over again from multiple people was "That's what your parents believe, not what you believe," or "Why do people force their beliefs on kids who don't know what they are talking about"

Why do people in the outside world feel the need to belittle what we believe? Or make a child feel like they don't know what they are talking about or what they believe! I will always believe that there is a time and a place for everything, when to speak and when not to speak. But I also full-heartedly believe that God can work through you without you saying a word. So, the time is NOW to stand up for what you believe. Don't let that person that is working for the devil bring you down or make you feel inferior for

believing in a living God. My living God, Our living God!

Matthew 19:26 is one of my favorite verses to remember through a tough time of my life, it reminds me to pray. After I look outside or just around and see the miracles that He has performed. The way the earth turns so perfectly, the way gravity is at the perfect amount not to let us go or drag us down, the way a bird sings, or the way I take a breath and am able to live on another moment. In those moments I thank Him for allowing me to see the beauty in the world.

I also find that when I am going through a tough time and trying to handle it on my own, this verse comes to mind as well as the song "Praise You in This Storm" by Casting Crowns.

There always is and always will be a reason to praise His name! God bless.

## **What is your favorite Church summertime activity and why?**

"I cannot go to campouts, but I love VBS and MBA events. I always like seeing the pictures from camp and other church activities." -Sister Joann Cotellesse, Lakeside, AZ Branch

"Most of those activities I enjoy, but I would pick campout because we get to see brothers and sisters we don't see all the time and it's a good opportunity to invite friends to it." -Brother Michael Zaino, Edison, NJ Branch

"My favorite church summertime activity has to be Campout or VBS. Campout because it's just such a spirit-filled weekend and it's a great time to gather with the saints! VBS because I have the pleasure of being able to run it in my branch and I love to see how much the kids learn and how much fun they have!" -Brother Giovanni Lind, Lake Worth, FL Branch

"GMBA Campout." -Sister Donna Eskut, North Georgia Mission



# A Land Of Promise

by Evangelist Timothy Mott

The arrival of July signals celebrations of independence for both Canada and the United States. We celebrate liberation from tyranny, and the freedom to serve God as taught by the precepts of our religion. Along with you, I thank The Lord for His divine providence He has given us to enjoy in the form of our land's bounties. At a recent school celebration, my daughter sang patriotic songs of the greatness of this land, "O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain." I often tear up when I think of God's graciousness to us as the inhabitants of this wonderful land.

Freedom is a marvelous gift as it allows us to preach the Gospel without fear of reprisal or persecution. Not all of our fellow saints around the world can enjoy this same opportunity. Through the founding of the free nations of North America and God-given prosperity, the Gentiles have been given the tools necessary to spread the Restored Gospel around the world. No other people on the face of the earth are better equipped for such a work in modern times. What a wonderful opportunity, but it also signals greater accountability to fulfill God's plans.

The Lord promised Lehi and his descendants a Land of Promise-through prophecy, a land designed to be free from sin. Because of the sin of others, Lehi's extended family was given the opportunity to inherit the land for themselves as the Lord desired a faithful people to serve Him. However, sin entered, opening the door for the age of the Gentiles. Through Nephi's writings in 1 Nephi 13 we further understand that the founding of the Gentile nations in the Americas was orchestrated by the Almighty. Where the descendants of Lehi (the Lamanites) had much to lose, the Gentiles had much to gain.

Students of the Book of Mormon are given a glimpse of God's greater plan when we read the allegory of the olive tree in Jacob 5. This scripture tells us of a time when God's chosen people, Israel, would disobey, making way for the Gentiles to also receive God's promises. But this same story helps us understand that the Gospel is destined to return to the House of Israel after disobedience by the Gentiles. As The Church of Jesus Christ in North America, we understand that the decay of righteousness in the society around us signals greater urgency for the final phase of the plan outlined in Jacob 5-the restoring of the Gospel to the House of Israel.

Our leadership is planning and implementing a renewed focus on the work with the House of Israel in the Americas. You have read several articles regarding outreach in Oklahoma, but understand that plans are underway to spread the Good News to other tribes of Israel throughout the Americas. The Native American Operating Committee

(NAOC) has been commissioned to develop the road map to be followed by missionary teams. Resources and finances are being redirected so that a greater focus may be placed on this work.

As you celebrate independence, remember that it is a gift from the Almighty God, a gift designed to allow us to fulfill our role as Gentiles in the restoring of the House of Israel to the Father's covenants. May God bless all those sincere believers in His promises, and may we as The Church of Jesus Christ be focused on our central role in His plans. Look to future issues of the Gospel News to hear more about the developments and plans surrounding the work before us. Above all, please be prayerful for God's continued divine providence, that we as His people would be fruitful in accomplishing His work.

*Originally published in the July 2014 issue*

## Journal Exercise

How has God proven this scripture to you?

### Joshua 1:9

**Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.**

# FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

# LONGSUFFERING

MEEKNESS GOODNESS PEACE *Love*  
*Faith* TEMPERANCE JOY GENTLENESS

## *Hannah's Longsuffering*

*By Sister Linda Scolaro*

**W**hat do you think of when you read the following?

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Longsuffering
- Gentleness
- Goodness
- Faith
- Meekness
- Temperance

Galatians 5 refers to these qualities as the fruits of the Spirit. In examining them closely, I realize how many of these characteristics I lack in my own character. One fruit or attribute that I can personally relate to is longsuffering. At the very least, I can relate to the patience aspect of longsuffering. There have been times when patience was essential because God didn't answer my prayers quickly. Waiting on the Lord is always best, but it is not always easy. Now I ask, who do you think of when it comes to the fruits of the Spirit? When it comes to longsuffering, the first woman in the Bible who comes to my mind is Hannah.

Hannah could not conceive a child. For many years, she went to the house of the Lord to pray. The scripture mentions an adversary who provoked her and ridiculed her situation. How hurtful was that? However, Hannah persevered and faithfully went to pray. Scripture says she did this year after year. One day, she poured out her heart and soul. When Eli realized she was sincere, he said "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." As the story goes, Hannah did

conceive a baby boy named Samuel and dedicated him to the Lord.

Hannah truly displays longsuffering. She faithfully prayed year after year. She did not give up. My favorite part of the story is that in total she bore five children, three sons and two daughters. This did not happen quickly; Hannah had patience. She also had patience when her adversary mocked her.

The power of negative words is so strong that scripture says Hannah did not eat. Think about the words that are often said to a childless couple. Sometimes a question as simple as "What are you waiting for?" or "When are you going to start a family?" can feel very adversarial because the person asking doesn't know the circumstances.

Hannah found comfort in pouring out her soul in prayer. What an example she portrays of longsuffering, and what I should do when I don't know what to do — pray! Merriam-Webster defines longsuffering as "suffering for a long time without complaining: very patient during difficult times." As I reflect on the times when I waited for answers, I can't honestly say I didn't complain. Did Hannah complain? No, she remained very patient during difficult times, and the Lord rewarded her faith with her desire and more.

So, if you are experiencing something today that requires patience and waiting, find strength from this amazing woman. To me, she epitomizes longsuffering, and she gives us a great example to follow during rough times in remaining faithful and seeking the Lord's will for our lives without complaint, but with acceptance and longsuffering.



# Light Overcomes Darkness, Let Your Light Shine

By Brother Dean Longrie

We hear or read the news daily and it seems like most crime happens at night, in the darkness. You and I have the opportunity every day to bring light into the darkness. The following 5 amazing facts will help define what the "Light" includes in our life and in our service to God.

**1** When God first created the earth there was only darkness. Then He said, "Let there be light," and He saw that light was good. He then separated the light from the darkness, calling light day and darkness night (Genesis 1: 3-5). At a young age we learn that the source of our natural light is the Sun. It is later that we learn one source of our spiritual light comes from the Scripture, the Word of God. I was first introduced to the Word at Sunday School, which my parents took me to when I was only 4 years old. I clearly remember learning about the power of God through the story of David and Goliath, God triumphed over evil. I later remembered, at the age of 5, being asked to read from the New Testament. It was at our kitchen table in Milwaukee, WI, with my mother, her two sisters, and my grandmother. I felt very happy that they let me read with them. Do you remember your first introduction to the Word? Thank God for our mothers.

**2** The Psalmist (Psalms 119:105) tells us that the Word of God lights our path of life. Christ tells

believers, "Ye are the light of the world," and we must let our light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify our heavenly Father. (Matthew 5:14, 16). We must be careful that the light in us is not darkness. (Luke 11:35). How do we do that? We diligently and prayerfully read the Word. Christ then directs us to hold up our light so that it might shine into the world and that He, Christ, is that light that we hold up (3 Nephi 18:24).

**3** Christ told the brother of Jared that whatsoever thing persuades man to do good, comes from me (Ether 4:12). So let us shine our light from the word and love of Jesus to our neighbors, family, and friends. I was baptized in San Diego in January of 1963. One strong feeling I had after that was what a wonderful gift the Restored Gospel, The Church of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost were, and I wanted everyone to have it too. I have spent most of my adult life living many hundreds of miles away from the nearest Branch or Mission. One reoccurring thought has been, how can I share this

wonderful gift with others? The Lord has put the answer in my heart and mind many times. Let our light shine in our words and deeds. Do our best not to miss an opportunity to plant a seed.

**4** Unbelief in God is like a dark veil over man's eyes. This dark veil can be cast away from our mind by the marvelous light of God's goodness (Alma 19:6). Our light, from our love of God and following His commandments, can help others find their way to Him. Let our light shine brighter each day by praying, studying His Word, and increasing our Faith.

**5** As God's children we are the light to the world. He tells us repeatedly to not put our light under a bushel, but to lift it high on a candlestick, on a roof or hilltop. We are directed to hold up our light (3 Nephi 12:14). We can do that anywhere at any time; the Lord will provide us the opportunity.

## Ladies' Uplift Circle News

### Sister, How Are You Planted? By Sister Marty Jumper

There was much excitement and anticipation as the Penn Mid-Atlantic Ladies' Uplift Circle Fellowship Weekend began Friday evening, March 30, 2023. The plans for the weekend had been ongoing for months. It had been four years since we were able to have a Fellowship Weekend, so everything needed to be special for our sisters. Sister Jacqui King, Fellowship Weekend Coordinator, and Sister Joyce Jumper, PMA Area Ladies' Circle President, started by welcoming all in attendance and then turned the evening over to the

McKees Rocks Sisters who provided the evening activity. Going along with the weekend theme, "How Are You Planted?", the sisters gave us two paper flowers on which there was a question. This getting to know you better game was so enjoyable and brought a lot of laughter into the room. The session was closed in prayer and, of course, we spent the rest of the evening delighting in some goodies provided by our sisters.

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## Be The Salt Of the World

The salt would be good for nothing but to be thrown out and walked on the ground" (See 3 Nephi 12:13 and Matthew 5:13).

What this means is, if we do not stand up for God, for the right way to live and treat others, who will? The mean people will not do this. Be brave. Your example will touch others.

You are the salt. And salt is so important to our bodies. Our nerves need it, our fluids need salt. In the olden days with no electricity or refrigerators, people depended on salt to preserve their foods. The Roman soldiers were paid in salt, not money. Be strong. Be different and kind, even if others are mean. Jesus sees you.

Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon record the words of Jesus teaching us how to live. (Read 3 Nephi Chapter 12 and Matthew Chapter 5.) Jesus taught His people in Israel and in the Americas the same thing. "...I say unto you... You are the light of the world...let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven."

People see what we do. Be brave and stand up against evil by doing what Jesus teaches us. We are kind and loving. Everything we do that ripples out will be good and teach His way. Your friend and Sister in Christ,

*Sister Jan*

Dear Friends,

Did you ever drop a stone into a pond of water or a puddle and see the circle ripples that it makes? Did you notice how that circle keeps growing and spreading out? It will even go until it touches the edge of the pond, depending on how big it is. One stone can make the whole surface change.

Did you ever notice that when a kind and happy person comes into a group of kids and says a few friendly, kind things that everything changes? What happens is more people are kind and nice to each other. More people trust that it's safe to relax and not be attacked.

The same thing happens if a rude, angry, or mean person comes up. Maybe they are mad about something else, so they stir things up in an unhappy way. Many times, people will leave or be quiet, hoping the bully will leave and not even notice them.

Which person do you want to be? Which person do you like and trust? Which one would you want to be in a group with? Which one has some fairness, or kindness or love that rubs off on others?

Jesus had plenty to say about that. In the Bible He taught a huge crowd of people the way to be. He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (See Matthew 5:9). So when some mean person picks on someone else, can you change the mood and find a kind word? Don't be mean—be brave and kind!

In the Book of Mormon and the Bible, Jesus was teaching His people about what was the strong way to live. He said, "I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its savor (flavor), how shall the earth be salted?"

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 N L L H Y M  
 B O T I X B T Y  
 X C F H B Y T Q O D  
 A T H G I L W O R L D M  
 W K R J F R D B E U J T A T  
 A A U T E F Y N R S L A K F J W  
 F N N J D L R O W A K J H L Z R K G  
 R N Y N B D X A U M V T W O X E X Q B X  
 D C A J L S R B E U E Z E D H E E V D E  
 I Z F O E W W K C E Y O T H N H H V  
 H W G S J Z W T Y M G E P S T T  
 Y C E H T N L S A F A B Z J  
 U A C Q H A P D W Y X G  
 S Z G Q S M D H E N  
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BRAVE

(continued from page 9)

Saturday, April 1, 2023, brought us together for a brief PMA Area Ladies' Circle business meeting. Sister Joyce Jumper led the members of the Area in a discussion, some pending business items, and the donation of funds to appropriate works of the Church. Outside, the spring showers turned to heavy rain, extreme storms, and the hotel even lost electricity for several hours, but nothing stopped the showers of blessings as we entered into the world of natural and spiritual husbandry with "How Are You Planted?"

The Aliquippa Ladies' Uplift Circle began with Sister Donna Bogle demonstrating how we must clear the soil of debris that would hinder the seed from taking root. We must do the same thing spiritually. Identify the things in our lives that separate us from God, ask for forgiveness, and then the seed (the word of God) is planted in good ground and can take root. It is watered and nourished by prayer, fasting, testimony and scripture reading. The natural seed will grow into a beautiful plant and the spiritual seed creates a beautiful saint. Alma 32:28 speaks of this very thing:

*...It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.*

Sisters Connie King-Gottschall, Sylvia King, and Cindy Bright presented a beautiful seminar continuing with the theme of the weekend and introducing "Three Sisters, Companion Planting." This gardening technique of the North American indigenous people plants corn, pole beans, and squash together as a trio because they support and strengthen each other as they grow. The cornstalk gives support to the growing bean. The bean has a dual purpose: The roots pull nitrogen from the air and bring it into the soil to benefit all three plants, and as the bean grows through the squash vines and winds up the cornstalk, it holds the three close

together. The large leaves of the squash provide shade for the soil, keeping it cool and moist and preventing weeds. The plant's prickly leaves keep pest away from the plant as it grows.

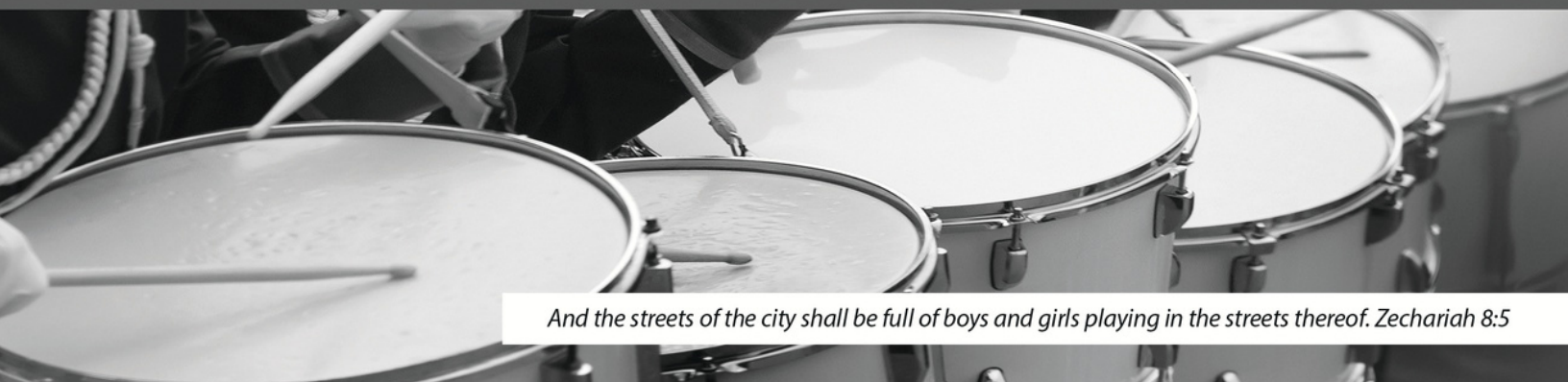
The Three Sisters sound very much like the Circle sisters. They are friends and want to be around each other and grow together. Through prayer, they protect and defend one another when needed. We each have been a corn, a bean, or a squash plant at one time or another. The Circle is a special garden, planted and maintained by our Lord.

At the conclusion of our seminar, the Young Ladies returned from their classes, shared some highlights of their lessons, and joined together as a group to sing "Lean on Me."

Despite the bad weather, Brothers Panfilo DiCenzo, Paul A. Palmieri, Jim Speck, and Pete Oestreicher graciously came to lead us in our Sunday worship service. Opening, Brother Panfilo commented on the importance of being a tree planted by the water and reminded us to stay close to the river and to keep the love of God close in our hearts. Brother Paul told us that one of the characteristics of our tree must be that it bears fruit. When we delight in the Lord and His people, our tree bears fruit. Brother Jim reminded us that we need to be seen as the people of God. He admonished us to serve one another in love. After communion was served, a sister was anointed, and the testimonies started flowing and just kept coming.

Words of gratitude from Sister Joyce and Sister Jacqui to the Lord, who richly blessed our weekend, and to all who joined us in fellowship, concluded the Sunday meeting. Brother Pete closed in prayer and we enjoyed the last activity of the weekend, lunch. We parted being more deeply planted in the love of Jesus Christ.

*Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground:  
for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.  
(Hosea 10:12)*



*And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Zechariah 8:5*



# Blessing Bits

**BB Connecting the Dots** - In August 2022 our son, Michael, had just started third grade. He was really struggling to read, and was at a first grade reading level. The branch had been praying for him. One Sunday I really felt directed to have the brothers pray for him. Brother Roy Verstraete was visiting our branch and said a very powerful prayer over Michael. Almost immediately Michael started getting gains in his reading and as we finished the school year he was reading at a third grade reading level and now enjoys reading. His classroom teacher and all of his specialists are amazed at his progress. We know that God helped his mind connect all the dots and freed him from that struggle. Praise God!- Sister Rachel Cotellesse - Lakeside AZ Branch

**BB It's All in God's Timing** - In June 2020, my husband Billy's stepfather passed away. Unfortunately, a week after his passing, Billy was laid off from his job because he was lower in seniority at his company. When he called me to share the news, I said a little prayer while in Target and felt at peace.

In my mind, the phrase "4 months" kept repeating. I told my husband not to worry—I believed that God would make a way and they would give him his job back in 4 months' time. In the meantime, Billy found a job that he didn't love and we continued to be prayerful. The Lord came through, and by the fourth month, my husband got his job back without a dent in his benefits or years on the job, and with higher pay! Only God can do that, and He did it for our family!- Sister Vanessa Duvall - Irvine, CA Branch

**BB Sweet Fellowship** - When I moved to California in 2012, I didn't realize how difficult it would be to get back to General Church Conferences. It wasn't until April 2023 that I stepped foot back into the conference center in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. It made my heart so happy to be greeted by brothers and sisters that I hadn't seen in over a decade. I praise God that He allowed my family to attend and enjoy the many blessings of a weekend with the saints of The Church of Jesus Christ.- Sister Elizabeth McDonnell - Bell, CA Branch

Send us your Blessing Bits by contacting Sister Elizabeth McDonnell at [eksanchor@gmail.com](mailto:eksanchor@gmail.com). [in approximately 150 words]. Answers to Question of the Month to [gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org](mailto:gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org).

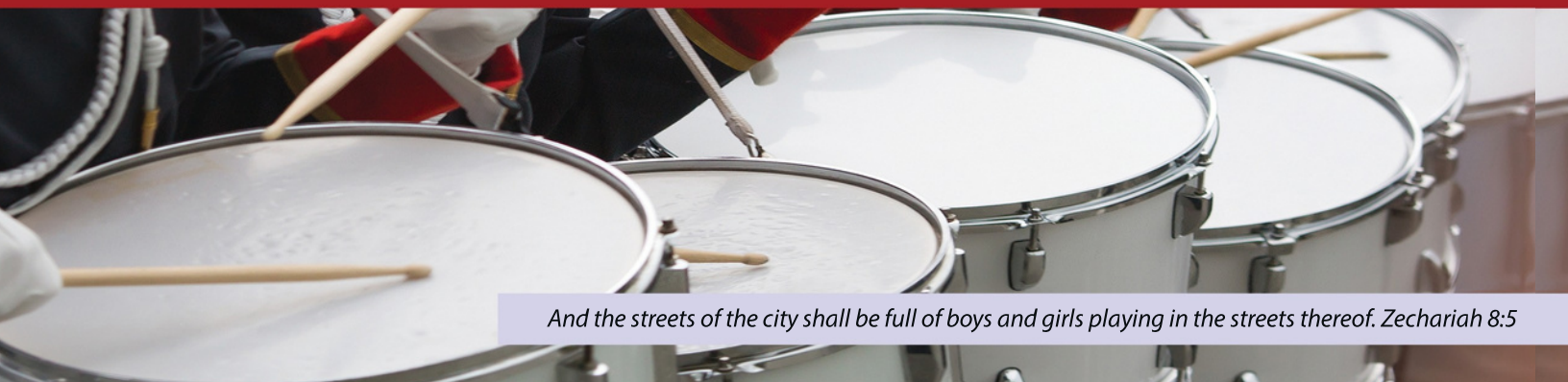


**Question for this month:** Please share what you wrote in your journal entry on page 7.



**Answer from last month:** What is your favorite Church summertime activity and why? (VBS, YIA, Campout, MBA socials, etc.)

Turn to page 6 for answers



*And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Zechariah 8:5*