

# The Gospel News

## IN THIS ISSUE:

### Celebrate Fathers



Blast From The Past  
Page 2

Puzzle  
Page 2

Word Up  
Page 3

Editorial Viewpoint  
Page 5

GMBA News  
Page 7

Gospel Guidance  
Page 7

Ladies' Uplift Circle  
News  
Page 8

Children's Corner  
Page 10

Blessing Bits  
Page 12

*A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles*

## THE ARK OF SAFETY

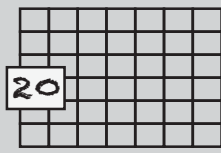
**M**any of the Messages from the Apostles over the recent years have referenced the importance of serving the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth, committing our lives and will to Him, and living more righteously as we engage and prepare for the latter-day work of the restored gospel. The Messages have emphasized the necessity of reading the word of God (Bible and Book of Mormon), and to fast and pray that we might purify and sanctify ourselves as we seek to raise the standard of Christ and seek more earnestly the gifts of God, that He and His church might be edified. We encourage these vital components be part of our lives because, "...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12), and as a Quorum of Twelve, we discern the signs of the times that prompt our desire to arouse your faculties to be prepared for great things that yet await The Church of Jesus Christ.

Today more than ever, we find the societal pressure enticing us to align with 'one side or another' and to accept standards that are inconsistent with the fundamental teachings of Jesus. We even find that through the tireless efforts of the enemy, there have been attempts to divide and discourage the Church – the Bride of Christ; yet there is hope and a solution!

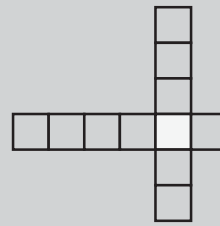
The Ark of the Covenant was one of the most instrumental symbols of faith and God's presence. The contents included the tablets of the Mosaic Law (the Ten Commandments), a pot of manna, and the rod of Aaron. The Ark's origin stemmed from the time Moses was commanded by God to "make an ark of acacia wood" (Exodus 25:10). For the Israelites, the Ark of the Covenant simply meant God's presence. Throughout the Old Testament, we read accounts of how God provided safety and success using the Ark as a symbolic representation of God's presence and power:

- In the Book of Joshua, chapter 3, we learn of the safety and power the Ark provided the Israelites as they passed over the river Jordan into the Promised Land as "Joshua said to the priests, Take up the ark of the covenant and pass before the people" (Joshua 3:6). As the priests came to the Jordan carrying the Ark, just as their feet touched the water, the waters were completely cut off and the Israelites passed over (the river) on dry ground!
- In the sixth chapter of Joshua, the Ark was instrumental in the Battle of Jericho. The Ark was taken around the city six times in six days and was preceded by seven priests who sounded seven trumpets made of rams' horns. On the seventh day, the Ark with the armed men and priests took their seventh march around

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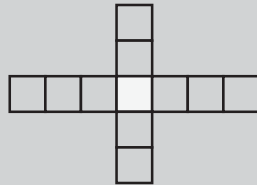


To honor Father's Day on June 20th, take this crossword quiz. Father's are horizontal. Children's are vertical. Have fun!

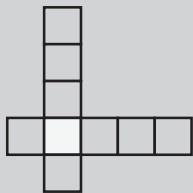
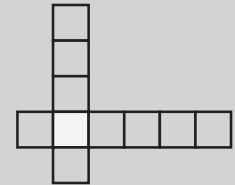


CLUE:  
Book sharers.  
Plus, their names share 4 letters with only 2 variants.

CLUE:  
Ram's fans.



CLUE:  
We're counting Fathers-in-law, too, you know.

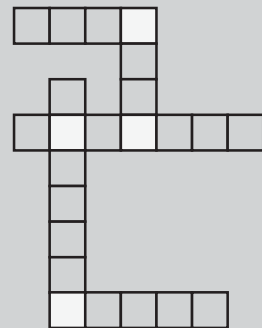


CLUE:  
Often found in the kitchen, strummin'.

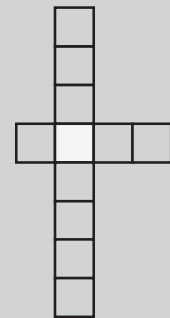


CLUE:  
Tough two-fer.  
One nice dad,  
Two nasty boys.  
Better check I Samuel.

CLUE:  
Father,  
son,  
grandson,  
great-grandson,  
great-great-grandson.



CLUE:  
The jealous dad.  
The boy who shoots the arrows.



# BFTP Blast From The Past

By Sister Kellie Speck

**Forty-four years ago this month, on June 26, 1977, my father, Brother.** John Bilsky, at the age of 36, was baptized. My Dad was not raised in our faith, and reluctantly went to Church for the first time with my Mom when they were 20 and heard Brother Harry Robison speak on "The Light of the World is Jesus". He told my mother in his own words, "I can't understand it, while that man was preaching I felt my chest become so tight like it was going to explode. It felt like something was pulling me towards him." The seed was planted. My mother knew he had the kind of heart that the Lord could touch, and someday he would accept the Gospel.

For a while, they lived in Florida and would travel on old highways through the swamps for about 2 1/2 hours to get to the Fort Pierce Mission, held at Brother Frank and Sister Juanita

(Continued on page 11)

Brother Fred Olexa, Brother John Bilsky, Sister Jo Ann Devore,  
Brother Jonathon Olexa, Brother Bud Martin ►



## 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.



# "Everything Is a Team Sport"

By Elder Doug Obradovich

**"Love one another." (John 13:34)**

**M**artin Luther King, Jr. warned, "We must live together as brothers or perish together as fools. *We are God's favorite creation. We are not intended to simply dwell together 'as' brothers. We are brothers! What must our heavenly Father think when He sees our multiple divisions that can manifest in hatred, or at least in hateful thoughts, words, and deeds? What parent when they witness their children arguing, wouldn't try to help them find cohesiveness and peace? Never through favoritism by taking one child's side over the other; simply a desire to help guide them to solitude.*"

**Nearly the first thought recorded in The Bible,** "The Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone'" (Genesis 2:18). Yes, God was referencing Adam's specific need for Eve, but why would this be exclusive of man's general need for companionship? My son-in-law played golf in high school, which may appear to be an individual sport. It's not. My wife was a gymnast in younger years, which

may seem an individual sport. It's not. These are team sports. In fact, maybe everything is a team sport.

The list of team sports we participate in is a long one. Your family is a team sport. Your church is a team sport. Your neighborhood is a team sport. Your schooling is a team sport. Your workplace is a team sport. Any organization is a team sport. Like golf or gymnastics, your roles may manifest through individual efforts, but everything is a team sport. MLK points out your team is much larger than you might think. All of mankind is a team sport.

God's Word continually reminds us of this, "How good and how pleasant it is to dwell together in unity" (Psalms 133:1). "Two are better than one" (Ecclesiastes 4:9). "Minister the same one to another" (I Peter 4:10). "The whole body fitly joined together" (Ephesians 4:16). "That there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind" (I Corinthians 1:10). "There should be no schism in the body; but that the

members should have the same care one for another" (I Corinthians 12:20-25).

The strange phenomenon about teams is that their smallness can be the cause of divisions, as their drawing together pulls apart from the rest. Yes, you are an individual. Think bigger. Yes, you may enjoy a greater love for one specific person. Think bigger. Yes, you are a family. Think bigger. Yes, you are a member of a church. Think bigger. Yes, you are a specific ethnicity, color, gender, state resident, citizen of a country, inhabitant of a continent, and even one of 7.674 billion human beings alive today. Think bigger, think bigger, think bigger! Your team extends from Adam throughout all time to all people. Ever.

That. Is. Your. Team.

Everyone is your brother. Everyone is your sister. Which one would you risk hating? Which one would you dare offend with your words or actions? Which one deserves less than your best? Because everything is a team sport.



the city, and the people shouted a great shout, and the walls fell!

- Countless battles were won throughout the scriptures despite God's people being outnumbered, less experienced and far less capable; yet God's divine protection and power gave them the victory.

These accounts are often rehearsed or 'acted out' by our children in Sunday School or during a Vacation Bible School; however, the depth of the meaning is not lost on children alone—as the Ark, for 40 years, was carried through the desert as a symbol of God's presence with the following contents:

- the tables (tablets) with the Ten Commandments, written by the finger of the Lord (Exodus 31:18) representing the need to obey His Word and His Spirit,
- a pot of manna representing how the Lord took care of His people even under the harshest or most unlikely conditions, and
- the rod of Aaron representing the priesthood authority and power of God, who was able to cause his rod, overnight, to bud and produce almonds!

The Ark and the items contained in it were a reminder to exercise faith in righteousness, and in so doing, as Moses wrote in the 91st Psalm, we find refuge, protection, safety, love, deliverance, and salvation.

Similarly, Noah's Ark provided a physical place of refuge, protection, and safety. We are all familiar with the account (Genesis chapters 6-8) of how Noah was directed to build an ark because of the sinful conditions, taking every living creature into the Ark. While it took him 120 years to build the Ark, we read that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), pleading for all to repent of their sin and join his family in the Ark.

Beyond the children's story of Noah and the Ark, we recognize that the Ark is a 'type' of Christ. The Bible tells us that the world had become so corrupt, filled with wickedness, evil, and violence that God decided to cleanse it.

The image of Christ portrayed in the Ark offers many parallels.

- Noah was instructed to make a single door in the side of the Ark; it was the only entrance into the Ark, and access was controlled by God. Likewise, Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..." (John 10:9).
- Noah was also instructed to cover the Ark with a covering of pitch within and without. The pitch sealed the Ark and made it watertight, so that all inside would be saved. The words of King Benjamin reaffirm the salvation that comes through Christ, stating, "remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ..." (Helaman 5:9).

- Finally, the Ark carried all of its passengers safely to the destination that God had prepared for them (also see Ether chapter 6).

While we don't have possession of the Ark of the Covenant, nor a physical Ark like Noah's, we have been given an 'Ark'. We have been given a great 'Ark of Safety'—Christ and His Church!

On October 11, 2008, a dream was received, later supported by the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and accepted as a revelation by the Priesthood of the Church:

I dreamt that I was in a large auditorium (like, but not the General Church Conference Center). I recognized many of the Saints were there also. Some were moving about, some were seated. It was as if they were about to start a conference meeting. I looked to my left and I saw a large wall of windows and a set of glass doors. Through the windows I saw a blue sky, a few clouds and a large angelic figure.

I immediately shouted to all the people, "Look I see an angel of the Lord!" and I then heard the words, "**I WANT TO SHOW THEM MY STRENGTH AND POWER!**" At that very instant the angel began to move about and instantly the sky changed into strange colors, the wind began to blow with hurricane force. The people inside began to show fear but not panic. I shouted, "Don't be afraid; it's the Lord!" Then a fierce rain began to hit the glass windows and doors. I saw the water outside quickly rise to knee level, followed by a large wave which hit the windows and doors. The windows and doors didn't break, but the impact of the wave forced open the doors and water shot into the auditorium. Quickly the water was swirling around everyone's ankles.

Instantly, just as fast as it had started, the storm stopped! All the dark clouds were gone, and sunlight appeared. I then heard the voice say, "**I WILL PROTECT MY PEOPLE!**"

The following day at the General Church Conference, Sunday, October 12, 2008, this scripture was read twice by Brother Paul Palmieri (although completely unaware of the dream), "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory" (1 Nephi 14:14).

He further stated by way of encouragement, "that this scripture refers to The Church of Jesus Christ, our church. He continued by saying: That's the promise of God; **if we are united and live righteously, the great power of God will descend upon us. God's protection will be with us.** ... God will take care of us; regardless of the situation, the Lord knows exactly what He's doing. It isn't just all of a sudden, things are gone awry. I want you to feel comfortable in knowing that God is aware of exactly what is going on and He is making sure that our people are going to become stronger and

(Continued on page 9)

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# The Carpenter

By Elder Duane Lovalvo

As Father's Day approaches, I have been reflecting on some of the men in the scripture who stand out as great examples of fatherhood. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and David quickly come to mind. We also have the example of God himself, the Creator of mankind, who is the ultimate example of patience and love toward His children. There is one scriptural father, however, who is a bit underrated in my opinion. Yet, despite scarce scriptural references, we can still discern that he must have been a terrific father. That person is Joseph the carpenter, the earthly father of Jesus Christ.

We first learn about the integrity of Joseph in Matthew Chapter 1 when Mary was espoused to Joseph and was found to be with child. Upon learning that Mary was pregnant prior to their union, Joseph did not lose his cool. The scripture says, "**Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily**" (Matt 1:19). It may have been within his right to have Mary severely punished. Joseph, however, chose to exhibit patience, mercy, and kindness while no doubt feeling strong emotions of betrayal. Of course, he didn't have to wait long before the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him that the baby was conceived of the Holy Ghost and that he could go forward with their marriage.

Joseph was a just and faithful man. We have evidence of his righteous obedience of the Law of Moses in Luke chapter 2. When Jesus was eight days old "**they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord... And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said of the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons**" (Luke 2:22-24). How important it is for a father to be obedient to the commandments of God and to teach his children these things.

Joseph was dedicated to taking care of his family. While in Bethlehem, Herod sought to have Jesus killed. But, being warned again by the angel of the Lord in a dream, Joseph "**took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod**" (Matthew 2:14-15). Joseph guided and protected his wife and child on a difficult and dangerous journey to Egypt, where they stayed for three years. After the death of Herod, Joseph took his family on an even longer journey, 170 km (106 miles) further north to their home in Nazareth of Galilee.

Finally, we have the example of Joseph as a worker, provider, and teacher. One day, while Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, in his own country, many people began to say, "**Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon?... And they were offended at him**" (Mark 6:3). From this verse we can discern that Joseph probably passed on to Jesus his carpentry trade. It is evident he and his family were well known in his hometown. Clearly, the reason for this was that while growing up and into adulthood, Jesus would have worked with his father and brothers performing repairs or building structures in and around Nazareth.

So, from these few verses we can ascertain that Joseph had all the qualities of a great father. He was just and faithful to God, he had integrity, he was dedicated to taking care of his family, and he was a hard worker and a craftsman. What is the final piece of evidence that Joseph was a wonderful father, you might ask? Can it be that he was handpicked by God to be the earthly father of Jesus Christ? May you enjoy a wonderful and blessed Father's Day!

*Joseph was a just and faithful man.*

# HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

## What is your favorite part about being a father?

Continued from back

"Being a father has taught me so much about unconditional love and the love that God has for His children. There is nothing I wouldn't do for my children. I've always known God loves me like that, but now I have a personal taste of what that is like. I'm beyond blessed that God has that same love for me." – *Brother Ryan McDonnell, Bell, CA Branch.*

"For me personally the greatest joy I have in being a father is getting to see the pure innocence of my boys. My boys provide me hope for the future. Their love for God is inspirational at such a young age. My boys saying their dinner and bedtime prayers and asking me to read 'God' stories every single night is what I look forward to daily. Returning home from business trips and seeing their faces light up with excitement also provides

a great sense of joy!" – *Brother Dan Hemmings, San Diego, CA Branch*

"My father is a great man and always made time for my brother and me to experience things like playing in the woods and going fishing. I find myself trying so hard to follow his example and it is so rewarding to now watch my two small boys experience the same things that I did as a kid and watch them grow and learn with each experience. I treasure these moments with them and try to create as many opportunities like these that I can." – *Brother Jason Monaghan, Aliquippa, PA Branch*

"Finding out and knowing what a miracle it is to become a father continually puts everything into perspective for me. Witnessing my children grow and develop is

extremely exciting to me. Seeing them catch onto something or say a word you didn't know they knew how to say or comprehend yet is always so much fun." – *Brother Michael Bertolo, Detroit, MI Branch #1*

"Knowing God has my back when I dole out sage advice, no matter how perplexing. Being able to get away with dad jokes. Understanding how much God loved His son when I look into my children's eyes." – *Brother Ken Lombardo, Metuchen, NJ Branch.*

"Singing songs and being so silly they laugh and giggle." – *Brother Brad Everett, Detroit, MI Branch #1*

"Watching my son grow into his personality as a fun and creative boy who loves to express his imagination through play and at the end of the day as a family playing and laughing together." – *Brother Justin Shawver, Cincinnati-Morrow, OH Mission*

"No joy in life has been greater than the privilege of baptizing two of my children. And God taught me a lesson in the process to help me get over being embarrassed about having strangers around when we baptize, something that I struggled with in the past. My first son asked to be baptized on

a very hot August day, and there are few options for baptizing in the Phoenix, AZ area, so when we went to the baptismal site that afternoon, it was packed with people picnicking and tubing down the river. People on tubes were literally close enough for me to reach out and touch as we walked into the water, but I was so happy to be baptizing him that I was not embarrassed in the least and it did not diminish the blessing one bit. I think back on that now and just remember the blessing no matter who's around when we have a baptism." – *Brother Tim Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch*

"Seeing my children lend their God-given talents and acquired skills to benefit His Church and His kingdom." – *Brother Anthony Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch*

"Watching my daughters smile, laugh, and enjoy life's blessings. I enjoy being "Dad," helping them along life's way, and having the opportunity to be a positive example in their lives." – *Brother Patrick Monaghan, Columbus, OH Branch*

Emotionally - to feel the unconditional love of my children; Physically - to hold my children in my arms and know the Lord blessed me to have them in my life; Spiritually - to witness their spiritual growth, desire to enter into a covenant with Christ and serve the Lord. – *Brother Frank Natoli Detroit, MI Branch #1.*



# New Gospel News Series: Young People Writing Young People

In this new Gospel News Series, we will feature letters written to young people by young people. As young people, you are not the Church of tomorrow, you are the Church of today! So, in these letters, you might share advice, stories, encouragement, or something else with other young people—reminding all young people that we are united as friends, brothers, and sisters in Christ.

If you would like to write a letter for this series, please contact Sister Christine Martorana at [christinemaddox13@gmail.com](mailto:christinemaddox13@gmail.com).

Our first letter is written by Sister Kayla Smith, from the Herndon Branch in Virginia.

Dear young people,

When thinking about what to write for the letter, I tried to think about what we as the youth struggle with. How I could maybe help some way or another. Every time I'd try to sit down and try to write, my mind would go to Romans 12:1-2. Now, I thought I was being biased because these are the verses that were the camp theme when I was baptized. But I slowly realized I wasn't being biased; it's what we as the youth of the Church are struggling with. If you are unfamiliar with the verses, this is how they read:

***"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto***

***God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."***

What I find the most challenging about being young is that the majority of the world tells us that it is "wrong" or "not cool" to be a follower of Christ. I know myself growing up all I wanted to do was fit in. I didn't want to be the odd one out of the group. But the Bible and Book of Mormon teach us that when we are for Him, then we're not the odd ones. We are taught to take everything to God, the good and the bad, put it in His hands. I know firsthand that it is not as easy to do as it is to say, but with God for us, who could be against us?

The only one that we should try to impress is God first, ourselves second. In this day and

(Continued on page 11)



**Gospel  
Guidance**

**Enjoy the very first Gospel Guidance question and answer! Please send in your questions to [gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org](mailto:gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org). We want to hear from you!**

## Q. Geography of Israel: Why Is It Called a Land of Milk and Honey?

Canaan—an area corresponding roughly to the nation of Israel today—was first referred to as a land flowing with milk and honey by God Himself, in Exodus Chapter 3. He told Moses that He would bring His people out of Egypt to a promised land. So why did God call it a land of milk and honey? Some thoughts to consider:

### Unique features

A combination of natural circumstances make that area particularly suited for farming and agriculture. Canaan is located on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, within a larger region known as the Fertile Crescent. A few of the characteristics that make this spot of ground so productive are:

- Rich soil: A particular type of earth known as loess overlays much of the area. Owing to the size and unique shape of the wind-

blown dust particles that constitute it, loess has the ability to develop rich, well-drained topsoils.

- Favorable climate: The area around Jerusalem receives significantly more sunshine than nearly anywhere else, but while the same amount of sun has made deserts of other places on the globe, Israel receives just enough rain to keep it out of that category. In addition to the rainfall, sea breezes from the Mediterranean moderate both the summer and winter temperatures, prolonging the growing season. Harvests in Israel take place every month from April through November.

We get an idea of the land's fruitfulness in Numbers 13:23, where the spies that Moses sent into the land cut down a branch with "one cluster of grapes" and carried it between two men on a pole.

Psalm 105:44 really understates another tremendous advantage the Children of Israel enjoyed when they went into Canaan, saying simply, "they inherited the labour of the people." Think of what that means: Someone had already done the heavy lifting required to clear the ground. Far from encountering an untamed wilderness, the Israelites entered a land with a highly developed agriculture, fertile soil, terraced fields, and water cisterns already in place.

### Abundance

In contrast to the manna and water that Israel subsisted on for 40 years, milk and honey would have represented (and still do)

(Continued on page 11)



## A Lesson from My Father

By Sister Luann Carson

When my dad's teachers' union was on strike and he had five mouths to feed, he said not to worry—God would provide. Through every problem and rough spot in life, he had the same attitude of trusting God without fear. His example has always stayed with me.

Recently while hiking on a rough trail, I kept my eyes glued to my feet. I was nervous about tripping on a tree root, slipping on a loose rock, and falling on the rough terrain. At the crest of a hill I looked up in amazement. Wildflowers in a rainbow of colors blanketed the hillsides. At the bottom of the ravine, a creek flowed, creating rushing waterfalls. The sun glistened off of the water and the moist grasses, leaves, and tree needles. The sparkling sky met the hill with multiple shades of blue. The view was brilliant! I'd missed the beauty of it all because of my fear of being hurt.

Philippians 4:4, 6 & 7 tell us, "Rejoice in the Lord always...Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

In this verse, the word 'careful' means anxious; we are admonished to rejoice in God and not worry. We then will be blessed with peace.



As I rejoiced over the beauties of nature on my hike, I learned to be cautious, but also to enjoy my surroundings. I didn't completely stop watching the trail, but I kept my eyes mostly on the beauty around me.

Moses told the Israelites who were facing a tough time ahead to remember that, "The Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be

with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

Another biblical hero, King David, experienced many situations that warranted fear. In the Psalms, he often wrote encouraging words that we can apply to our own lives. Psalm 27:1 reads, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Later in Psalm 34, we read, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

God, our Father, doesn't want us to walk in fear, but instead to live trusting Him. I want to always walk (on my hikes and in my life) with my eyes on the beauty, without fear, knowing God will never fail me. You and I can do this only because we know God's promises. I John 4:18 tells us all, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."

## Zoom Experiences *By Sister Cindy Henderson*

At the time of writing this article, it has been a full year since our sisters have been able to meet in person for our branch's biweekly Ladies' Uplift Circle meetings. Due to the distance apart of our members and visitors, we normally rotate our meetings to be held in one another's homes. But this past year with the COVID-19 virus, none of this was possible.

Shortly after our branch ministry opened up Zoom meetings to keep the congregation united and able to hear God's word, our sisters, too, started Ladies' Circle meetings using this format. While it was a bit of a learning curve to deliver content, conduct meetings, and participate with one another in this new way, we discovered some unique benefits that have helped our sisters develop a closer relationship with God and one another.

Recently, I asked the sisters to help me complete a survey about using Zoom for our meetings, as

I wanted to convey a full range of experiences, beyond just what I had experienced as their teacher. Here are some of the answers I received:

### Question 1: How has being on Zoom for our meetings helped you personally while not being able to meet for in person meetings?

- I've been able to visit LUC in many branches as I join in their scheduled online meetings.
- I've met so many new sisters and feel so much love for them. (Sisters have joined us from Florida, Indiana, California, Arizona, Canada, and Michigan.)
- Being ill, I couldn't go anywhere but could still make connections.
- Being far from a branch, I can now reconnect with the saints. (A few of our sisters are long-distance visitors and are regularly a part of our circle meetings now.)
- I am unable to drive at night so online meetings meet my needs. (This has really

helped our older sisters who have vision problems and others who would otherwise have to drive alone long distances.)

- Snow days...meetings are still held despite inclement weather conditions that might normally result in a cancellation.
- Many who normally can't come out can attend more regularly, i.e., elderly, youth—can jump into meetings with less time away from school assignments, more family involvement as sisters and their daughters join in together.
- I am more comfortable as I study and interact in casual clothing.
- As a working mom, I can cook dinner and get chores done and still have church and family time. Zoom meetings aid in time management.
- I have learned how to share lesson topics via PowerPoint presentations that incorporate visuals, text, media, questions, and prompts that can be uploaded to Zoom to instruct and interact with our Circle sisters.

(Continued on page 11)



# State of the Soul After Death

By Apostle Jerry Valenti

**A**lma 40 reveals information that is of great interest to many people and is not spelled out as plainly anywhere else in the Word of God – it tells us what happens right after we pass from this life. None of us who are still alive have firsthand knowledge of what happens but Alma got it from a reliable source – an angel shared the information with him. Here are 5 amazing facts regarding the state of the soul after death.

**1 All Souls Return to God** – *“The spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body... whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (Alma 40:11).* The soul is an actual entity – It exists. It doesn’t disappear when life on earth ends. It leaves the body at that time and goes back to God who determines where it will reside until its resurrection (one of the two places described below).

**2 Paradise** – *“The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:12).* Paradise is not Heaven – it’s a resting place for the souls of the righteous as they await their resurrection and final consignment to Heaven. When Jesus was on

the cross and one of the thieves hanging next to Him recognized Him as Lord, Jesus said to him, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

**3 Outer Darkness** – *“The spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil... shall be cast out into outer darkness, there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth” (Alma 40:13).* As with Paradise, Outer Darkness is not the final home for the souls of the wicked – it’s a place where they await their resurrection. However, it’s not a restful place – these souls are anticipating “the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them”. Thus, the weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. See Matthew 8:12, 22:13 and 25:30 for Bible references to Outer Darkness.

**4 Resurrection** – *“Behold, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead... a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead. Now when this time cometh no one knows; but God knoweth the time which is appointed” (Alma 40:3-4).* Everyone who has died since Christ’s resurrection is awaiting a future resurrection. At that time, each soul is consigned to either the kingdom of Heaven or eternal separation from God.

**5 Restoration of the Soul to a Spiritual Body** – At the time of the resurrection, *“the soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame. And then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God” (Alma 40:23,25).*

## THE ARK OF SAFETY Continued from page 4

depend upon Him more, so that He can invest us with great power. I want you to feel comfort in the fact that you are not out there by yourself and if you are wondering what are we going to do—**What we're going do is trust in God!** We are going to put all of our trust in God; and He will see us through. He will make sure that The Church of Jesus Christ is blessed with Great Power.” ...He said, “that as long as we serve the God of the land, we will have His favor. If not, he will wipe away the unrighteous people off the face of the earth—because we must serve the God of the Land—Jesus Christ. And that is what this church is dedicated to do. **United as a people we will serve Jesus Christ.** Our families, our loved ones; in righteousness not just in works, but with our bodies, our lives, everything about us, that we will project to the people around us, to ourselves and, above all, to the Lord Jesus Christ, that **we will serve Him in righteousness and truth.** Because we have taken upon us the name of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, my brothers and sisters, I want you to rejoice today, not in what’s going

on in the world, but I want you to rejoice that you belong to the Lord. You belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and He is the one, when all else fails, that He is the one that is going to save you.”

This dream demonstrates God's power to judge, but also to protect and preserve those who serve Him. While we're affected by conditions of the world and the judgment upon it, the Lord will deliver His people. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever! We have a great 'Ark of Safety'—being held in the arms of Christ and being members of His Church. This dream is a reaffirmation of God's word. Let us take courage in knowing that the Lord will provide in time of need. He is our Saviour and asks that we put our trust in Him alone!

In the love of God,

### The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

James Crudup, Joel Gehly, John Griffith, Paul Liberto, Thomas M. Liberto, Leonard A. Lovalvo, Frank Natoli, Paul A. Palmieri, Peter Scolaro, Jerry Valenti



## Ask God For Wisdom

Both were sons. There was an accident and the other woman's baby died. It was very sad. So she got up at midnight and switched my baby with her baby! When I awoke in the morning, I saw the other baby and I knew he was not my son!"

The other woman disagreed and said, "No! This child is my son; the other one is yours!" the two women argued before King Solomon.

Then Solomon said, "You both want this baby and say it is yours. So we will fix it. "Guard! Bring me a sword!" And they gave a sword to Solomon. He declared, "Divide the living child in two parts and give half to one woman and half to the other!" One of the women quickly begged, "Oh no! King—please—no! Give the baby to her alive!" While the other woman said, "No, that's fine. We will split the child."

Then the wise king stopped and said "Don't divide the baby! Give the baby to the woman

who did not want him to be injured. She is the real mother. She would rather give the baby away than have it hurt. She is the true mother!"

He was right. The joyful mother took her baby and left. All of the people heard of Solomon's wisdom. The King was so blessed by God that he became famous for his wisdom.

What is it that you need to learn, or have the courage to try? Do what this wise king did and tell God all about it. If it is the right thing, God will help you do it. If the answer is "No," you will see it doesn't work out.

Have courage. Trust. Pray and try! God is very interested in helping you learn new things and be a blessing to others. Serving God is full of amazing and interesting things!

With much love, your friend, *Sister Jan*

Dear Friends,

Since we can't stay babies, we all have to learn and change constantly! What if a baby who was crawling, fell down and then decided never to risk falling again? Silly thought; the world would be full of crawling grown-ups. But we humans have curiosity about things. We have things we want to reach for and learn to do! We get up and try again.

It is scary and hard sometimes to learn something new. But whether it is how to ride a bike, make a new friend, learn how to fix something, or make the right decision, we can do it! We know about God who is the great Creator.

He loves each of us. He can help us figure out what to do. He can send you help to understand!

In the Bible, Solomon was the new king of Israel; he was worried about doing his job the right way. (See 1Kings Chapter 3.) He prayed to God for help. In a dream God asked him what he wanted most. Solomon could have asked for riches, or a long life, or fame and power. What would you ask God for? Solomon said, "I am like a child I know not how to go out or come in, Lord. I need wisdom to rule these many, many people of my country." God was so pleased with this request that along with wisdom He also gave Solomon great riches, fame, and a long life!

As he sat on his throne in judgment one day, two women came to him. They carried a baby with them. Each one cried, "Oh King, this is my child! This is my son! Make her give him to me!"

One of the women explained, "Oh King, this woman and I live in a house alone together. I had a child and three days later, she had a child.

### 3 things I love about you Dad!

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Zoom Experiences Continued from page 8

- I can still teach and participate in our meetings even though I have had no access to cross the [U.S.-Canada] border this whole time. Even when our building opens back up, I may still need to teach remotely if the border remains closed.

### Question 2: How has this meeting format helped us collectively?

- There is stronger participation and we have larger numbers attending our Circle.
- Collections have gone up during this time period.
- At Church or in a home visit, you may not see all afterwards, as there is a need to get home at a good hour at night. With Zoom meetings, we have the choice to continue fellowshiping during the time we would otherwise be driving.

While we have missed the in-person visiting, one another's warm hugs, and the hospitality of the hosting sisters (and the yummy snacks), we all agree that we are excited to meet regularly and fellowship on Zoom with our sisters and young ladies during the pandemic.

## Blast From The Past Continued from page 2

Rogolino's home. He felt the love of God there and became close to the Church and the Brothers and sisters. Then he was drafted. Dad was on standby to go into Cuba in October 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis. He slept at the airport for 3 weeks when there was a tense 16-day standoff between the U.S. and Russia. Sister Rose Rogolino had a vision of my dad walking by in his uniform during their Church meeting, and knew he was in trouble. They all prayed, and the invasion was called off.

Brother Rocco Biscotti was sent to our house by the Lord. He pronounced a blessing on our home and became close to my father. The night after his first visit, my Dad had a dream that he was in a lot of pain. A doctor was standing beside him and a dove rested upon my Dad. After attending GMBA Campout in 1977 in the Pocono Mountains, the following Sunday my Dad asked for his baptism, along with Brother Jonathon Olexa and Sister Jo Ann Devore. It was quite a long struggle to that point, but he had many amazing experiences and was later called as a teacher. He developed pulmonary fibrosis and received a lung transplant which extended his life for 5 years until he passed from this life 11 years ago. His desire was to be with his brothers and sisters and kneel at the feet of Jesus. I have always thought of my Dad as a true soldier who fought and won many battles but most importantly the one for eternal life.

## Gospel Guidance

Continued from page 7

abundance and even luxury. Both are nutrient-rich foods. Both are produced in surplus—far more than what the animals need to nurture their young or sustain the hive. For millennia, mankind has cultivated cattle and bees, and harvested milk and honey for our own use. (Interestingly, Israeli cows today yield more milk per animal than in any other country of the world.)

Abundance is a hallmark of the Lord, and generosity a hallmark of His people. The surplus He blesses us with is for sharing; not for storing in bigger barns (Luke 12:18). He instructed Israel to leave the corners of their fields for the poor and the stranger to glean (see Ruth). He commanded them to sacrifice their best livestock on the altar, give a tenth of their increase, and rest on the Sabbath. Some who don't walk with the Lord might see these practices as missed opportunities for gain, but when we trust and obey Him we learn that if we put God first, He always meets the needs of His people—often abundantly.

## Blessing and cursing

Nearly all of the 17 references to a land of milk and honey in the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) include a condition or requirement that the people remain faithful, keep God's commandments, and remember His mercies. Blessings are pronounced upon those who do, and woes upon those who do not. This principle of blessing and cursing is not unique to the land of Canaan; it is echoed in the Book of Mormon, where prosperity in another blessed land—the Americas—is promised the same number of times, always contingent on the people keeping God's commandments.

## Application today

The Lord has had milk and honey, figuratively speaking, and a promised land as well, for all who love and serve Him to this day. The Gospel that He has so abundantly given us, is meant for sharing. Israel did nothing to deserve the blessings that God bestowed upon them, and we should humbly recognize that neither have we. "Freely ye have received, freely give," Jesus told His disciples. I pray that we can all impart this spiritual milk and honey to others today.

## GMBA News

Continued from page 7

age, everybody is out to be better than the next person. But with going through the life that I've had, I have learned that the only person that you should try to be better than is the person you were yesterday. We are not put on this earth to judge people or to make ourselves out to be better than the next person. God put us here to shine the light that He has provided to us. To show others what the true Gospel is and what trusting in God looks like. Many people do not have the blessing of knowing our God. And what a blessing that is! I am very thankful that God called me to be baptized when He did.

Now, this is not a letter to try and get people to be baptized. But it is a wake-up call to look at yourself in the mirror. Is the person that you see looking back at you the person that you want to be in life? Is that person somebody that you think God would be proud of? I am begging you to not let this world change who you are. Do not let this world conform you to something that you are not. Keep your head high and don't let anybody take the crown that God has given you.

With Love, Sister Kayla Smith



# Blessing Bits

## BB Miraculous Healing

On October 9, 1950, as Brother Joe and Sister Margaret Benyola were returning home from General Church Conference, disaster struck as their car collided head-on with another vehicle. The three young boys in the car were injured, but Paul was hurt the most of the three, as he was knocked unconscious, suffered a concussion and several broken bones. Paul's parents were told it would only be a matter of a day or so before death came. Brother Joe requested the Church fast and pray. Sister Margaret had a vision where she saw all the prayers of the saints ascending to heaven as a bouquet of flowers. Paul finally regained consciousness and only two months later, Paul was out sledding with his friends. God had performed a miracle! (*From A History of The Church of Jesus Christ, Volume 2, p. 343*)

## BB He Shows us the Truth

"I was a young woman of twenty when I met this Gospel. My parents were Orthodox Jews. They taught me not to believe in Jesus. When I met up with this Gospel I was told

about the wonderful miracles in the Church. I was told about Christ – this man whom I did not particularly care for. A few months later, I received the following dream: I dreamed the Lord appeared to me. Jesus beckoned unto me to come to Him. I went and, as I got close to Him, I knelt and kissed His robes. When I arose, I said unto Him, 'All of those people claim to believe in you, but they don't.' He smiled and looked at me so sweetly and said, 'Follow me.' He turned and started away, and I followed." Testimony of Sister Evelyn Perdue (*From A History of The Church of Jesus Christ, Volume 2, p. 395*)

## BB He Offers Peace in a Time of Need

In recent months, my father, Brother Alex Gentile, was rushed to the hospital four times. During two of those times, we were informed that he may not make it. Due to COVID, we were unable to go into the hospital and hours would go by, sometimes as many as four, where we did not have any communication with the doctors. Each time the brothers and sisters joined us in prayer. Our trust was in the Lord

and His mercy, and while we did not know what the outcome would be, He provided us with "peace which passeth all understanding," (Phillipians 4:7) and comfort to carry us though. Although we still don't have all the answers as to what happened or why, we are grateful that his life was spared and he is grateful that the Lord has given him more time to work for Him. -SisterCarolynn O'Connor, Farmington Hills, MI Branch #2

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



**Question for this month:** Describe a time in your life when you felt "Surrounded."



**Answer from last month:** What is your favorite part about being a father? "My favorite part about being a father is praying with my children." – Brother Josh Gehly, Erie, PA Branch

Turn back to page 6 for more answers to this question.



...hear the instruction of thy father...for it shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. Proverbs 1:8,9