



Church History Advisers

CHURCH HISTORY GUIDES

COLLECTING,
PRESERVING,
AND SHARING
CHURCH HISTORY



Church History Advisers

CHURCH HISTORY GUIDES

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Church History Guides: Church History Advisers **Overview**

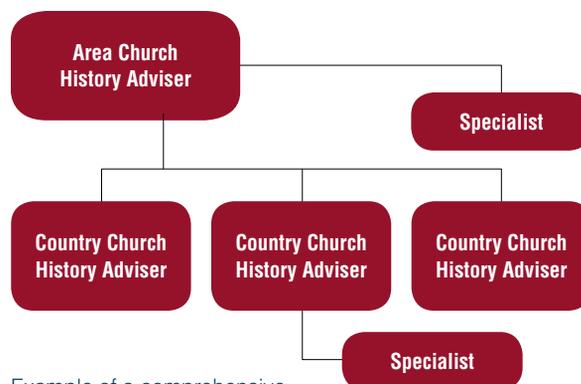
Purpose

Church history advisers are called by direction from the Area Presidency or the member of Presidency of the Seventy supervising the area to coordinate all Church history activities in an area. This includes:

- Creating an annual area Church history plan that reflects the priorities of the area's leadership.
- Implementing the plan and managing Church history work accordingly.

Organization

Depending on the size and needs of an area, an organization may look like this:



Example of a comprehensive organization.

Training others is an important role of Church history advisers.



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Introduction



South America Northwest Area Church history advisers, with a member of the Global Support and Acquisitions Division, meet with Elder Rafael E. Pino of the Seventy.

As recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord commanded that the Church keep a record and a history continually of all important things that transpire in Zion, including the manner of life, faith, and works of the Latter-day Saints (see D&C 47:3; 69:3; 85:1–2). Since 1830, the Church has worked to collect, preserve, and share its history.



Today, the Church’s size makes a decentralized approach to Church history work necessary. In a decentralized model, Area Presidencies provide leadership and resources, and the Church History Department provides support and training.

Church history advisers are called by direction from the Area Presidency or member of the Presidency of the Seventy supervising the area to coordinate all Church history activities in an area. In large or diverse areas, the Area Presidency may also call country or regional Church history advisers, establish Church history committees, and call specialists to assist with specific work. Men, women, and couples are eligible to serve in these positions. Priorities set by the Area Presidency determine the size of the organization. Leaders should be aware that involving others is a good way to share responsibilities, train new people, and identify those who may be able to serve as future area or country Church history advisers.

Right: Area Church history advisers gather for a training in Salt Lake City.



Doctrinal Foundation

CHURCH HISTORY WORK BRINGS members closer to Christ by helping them remember “what great things the Lord hath done” (title page of the Book of Mormon). Hope and confidence are increased as a result of learning about others who have faced challenges and, with the Lord’s help, overcome them. Learning from history helps us avoid repeating mistakes and provides a sense of identity and heritage. In this way, Church history blesses current and future generations.

Additional insights can be gained through studying the following scriptures and the material found in the “Resources” section which begins on page 13.

Doctrine and Covenants 21:1

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you.”

Doctrine and Covenants 47:3

“And again, I say unto you that it shall be appointed unto him [the Church historian] to keep the church record and history continually.”

Doctrine and Covenants 69:3, 5

“Continue in writing and making a history of all the important things . . . concerning my church. . . .

“And also, my servants who are abroad in the earth should send forth the accounts of their stewardships.”

Doctrine and Covenants 85:1–2

“It is the duty of the Lord’s clerk, whom he has appointed, to keep a history, and a general church record of all things that transpire in Zion, . . .

“And also their manner of life, their faith, and works.”

Alma 37:6–8

“By small and simple things are great things brought to pass. . . .

“. . . And by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls.

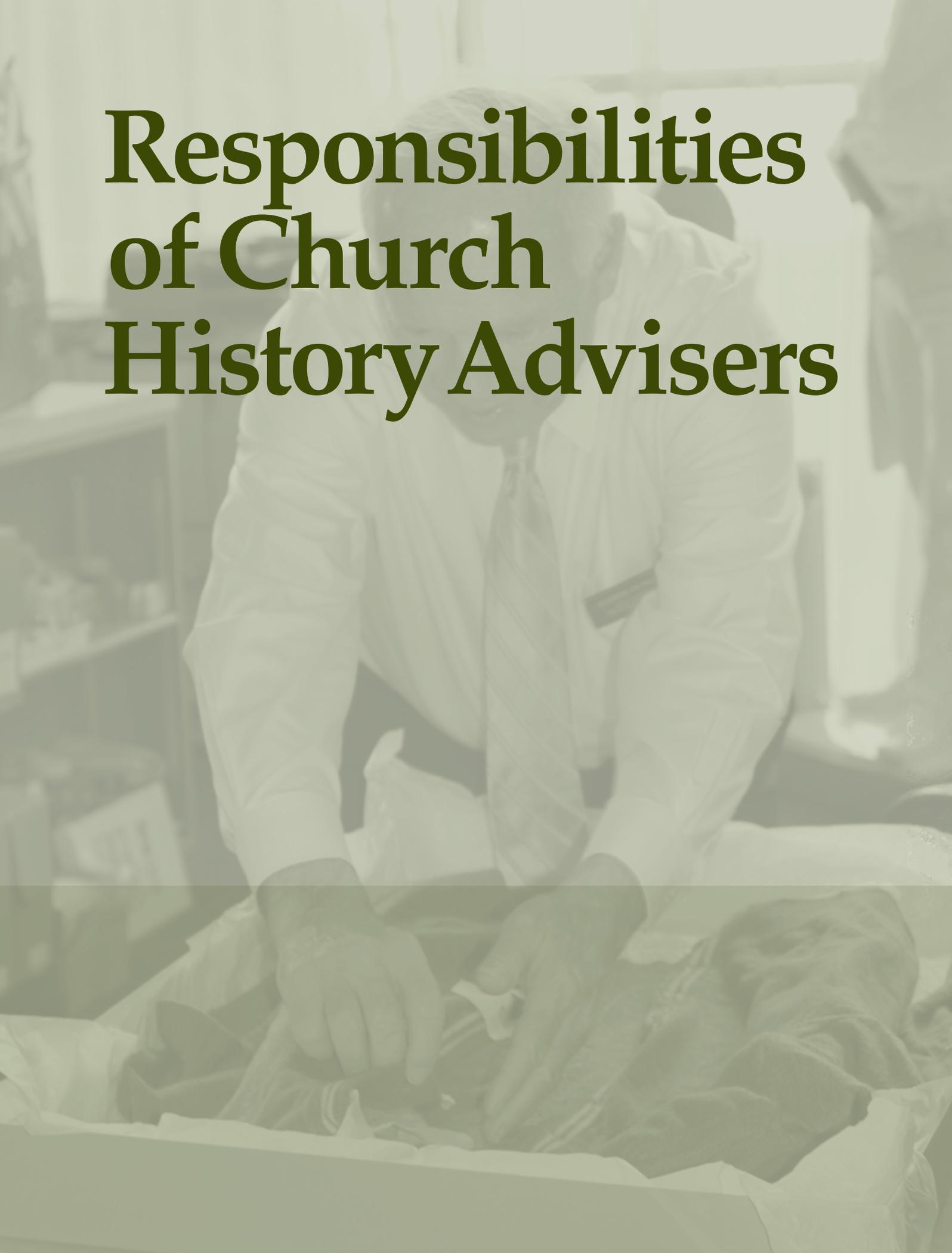
“And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things [records] should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.”



Alma 37:14

“And now remember, my son, that God has entrusted you with these things [records], which are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations.”

Responsibilities of Church History Advisers



Overview and Organization

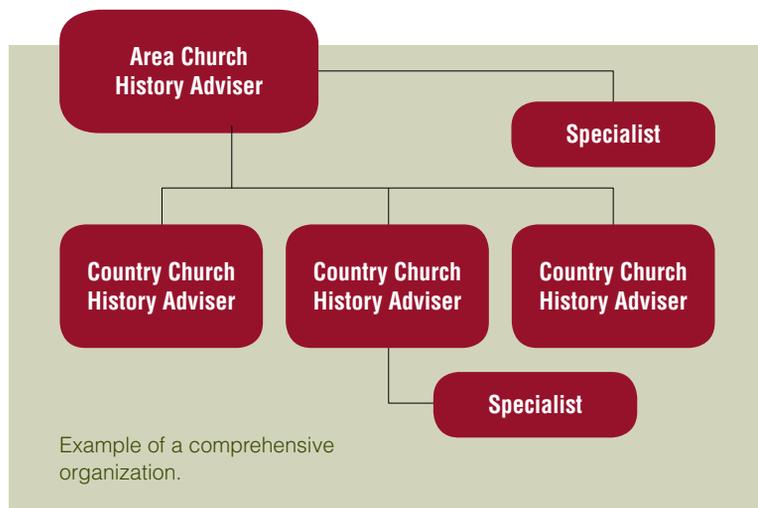
The organization required to support Church history work in an area is determined by the Area Presidency or the member of the Presidency of the Seventy supervising the area. Under the direction of these leaders, Church history advisers and specialists are called to coordinate all Church history activities in an area. This includes:

- Creating an annual area Church history plan that reflects the priorities of the area's leadership.
- Implementing the plan and managing Church history work accordingly.

Area Church history advisers report to the Area Presidency or the member of the Presidency of the Seventy supervising the area. The area Church history adviser may be assisted by country or regional Church history advisers and by specialists called to do specific tasks. These people are called and set apart under the direction of the Area Presidency. Regular contact between the area Church history adviser and those doing Church history work is important so that the Church history adviser can provide direction, feedback, and encouragement.

Country or Regional Church History Advisers

Church history advisers operating on a country or regional basis have responsibilities similar to those of the area Church history adviser but work in a smaller geographical area. They report to the area Church history adviser and should regularly coordinate their activities.



Church History Specialists

Specialists assist with such tasks as providing administrative support, translation, processing newly acquired records and oral histories, staffing a records preservation center, publishing articles or books, or posting historical content on a country website. Specialists report either to a country Church history adviser or to the area Church history adviser.

Area Church history advisers report to the Area Presidency or the member of the Presidency of the Seventy supervising the area.



Left: A Church history adviser prepares a textile for storage in a records preservation center in Temple View, New Zealand.



A Church history committee meets in South Korea.

Church History Committees

A Church history committee may be a useful way to involve others and to improve the implementation of the annual area Church history plan. Depending on needs, committees may be organized on both area and country levels. Possible committee members include Church history advisers and specialists; representatives from the Public Affairs Department, Family History Department, and Member and Statistical Records Office; local priesthood leaders; the area's executive secretary; and an Area Seventy priesthood adviser.

Global Support and Acquisitions

The Global Support and Acquisitions Division in the Church History Department works closely with the area Church history adviser and will maintain regular communication by phone, email, videoconference, and occasional face-to-face meetings.



Communicating by videoconference.

Area Church History Plan

An area Church history plan is prepared annually in conjunction with the area's work and resource planning cycle. Church history work should be included in the area's budget and represented in the area plan. Global Support and Acquisitions can be of assistance in the development of the area Church history plan by advising, suggesting, and sharing what others have done. Global Support and Acquisitions will also review the Church history portion of the area's budget. Budgets for areas in the United States and Canada are included in the Church History Department's budget.

The area Church history plan consists of:

1. A summary of previous efforts to collect, preserve, and share Church history.
2. High-level plans reflecting Area Presidency priorities for Church history work.
3. Implementation details.

Aspects of the plan may include the following:

Collecting

- Training leaders to prepare accurate and meaningful annual histories
- Creating area annual histories
- Collecting records from individuals
- Recording oral histories

Preserving

- Ensuring that records acquired locally are preserved; this may include having them duplicated and sent to the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah
- Overseeing local records preservation centers
- Coordinating requests for preserving historic places



Sharing

- Assisting with local historical events or celebrations
- Publishing Church history content on country websites, in Church magazines, or in books
- Placing historical markers
- Creating exhibits featuring Church history content

Partnering

- Building relationships with other Church departments in the area (prime candidates for collaboration include Seminaries and Institutes, Public Affairs, Family History, Media Services, and the director for temporal affairs)
- Becoming aware of other organizations that may have similar purposes

Implementation details such as objectives, due dates, and resource estimates (budget and people) should be included in the area Church history plan. The area Church history adviser may need to communicate with area office staff regarding the plan. For instance, there may be a need to pay shipping costs or remodel a room to accommodate storing records. Resources will be



Build relationships with other Church departments in the area.

needed to support the work outlined in the plan.

Possible expenses include:

- Laptop computer
- Internet connection
- Printer and scanner
- Cellular phone
- Digital audio recorder
- Digital camera or camcorder
- Office supplies and postage
- Travel

Purchased equipment belongs to the area and should be carefully maintained and monitored. However, historical records acquired by the area belong to the Church and are administered under the direction of the Church Historian and Recorder through the Church History Department. These records may be stored locally only with permission. (For additional information, see *Church History Guides: Records Preservation Centers*.)

Personal Research Projects

Church history advisers may find that, on occasion, individuals will contact them and request assistance for a personal Church history project. When this happens, Church history advisers should remember the following guidelines:

- Stay focused on the area Church history plan. Changes to the plan may be considered throughout the year but must be approved by the Area Presidency.
- The website history.lds.org can assist researchers with many of their needs.
- Inform Global Support and Acquisitions about personal Church history projects. Include the name, contact information, and research topic.

Church history advisers must also be careful to keep the work they do while serving in this

position separate from any personal Church history projects they may have, such as writing a book. Trust will be lost if members believe a Church history adviser is benefiting financially from his or her calling or is sharing information inappropriately

Church history advisers must not use their position for personal gain.



Church History Guides

To assist Area Presidencies in their Church history responsibilities, the Church History Department has created training materials that focus on specific aspects of Church history work. The Area Presidency decides which work is appropriate for their area at a given time. These decisions are incorporated into the area Church history plan.

Church history guides contain instructions for those who will perform the work. While guides are intended to be flexible, adhering to proven standards and principles will help workers avoid mistakes and increase their effectiveness. Guides and additional training are available through the Global Support and Acquisitions Division and at lds.org/callings/church-history-adviser.

 **Collect**

Stake, District, and Mission Annual Histories

Area Annual Histories

Oral Histories

Collecting Records

 **Preserve**

Records Preservation Centers

 **Share**

Church History Centers

Historic Places

Publishing Church History

Exhibiting Church History



Examples of Church history guides.



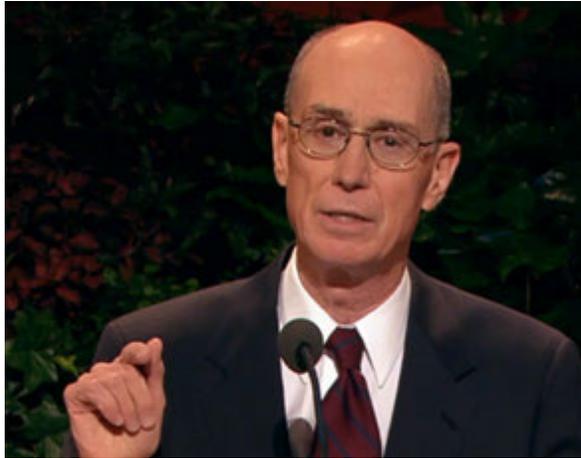
Church history advisers gather in Kenya for training.

Volunteer Disclosure Agreement

All Church history advisers are required to sign a volunteer disclosure agreement soon after they receive their call. The agreement can be found on the forms page at lds.org/callings/church-history-adviser. Please mail it to your Global Support and Acquisitions contact after carefully reading and signing it.

Resources

Quotations from Church Leaders



By remembering the past, Church members can receive blessings from the Lord. President Henry B. Eyring taught this principle in his October 2007 general conference address “O Remember, Remember” (see *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 66–69; included in this “Resources” section). President Eyring taught that by keeping personal records—and, by extension, Church records—we can receive such blessings as the following:

- We will see the hand of the Lord in our lives and recognize His kindness.
- We will remember the Lord.
- Our testimonies will grow.
- Our gratitude will increase.
- Our confidence that the Holy Ghost can help us remember will increase.
- We can avoid the temptation to forget God that comes with prosperity.

President Eyring joined his voice with those of a long line of prophets who have promised blessings predicated on obedience to the commandment to record and use personal and Church history. Below are a few sample statements from Church leaders on the importance of record keeping:

Joseph Smith (May 26, 1844)



“For the last three years I have a record of all my acts and proceedings, for I have kept several good, faithful, and efficient clerks in constant employ: they have accompanied me everywhere, and carefully kept my history, and they have written down what I have done, where I have been, and what I have said” (in *History of the Church*, 6:409).

Wilford Woodruff (Sept. 15, 1856)



From dedicatory prayer for Historian’s Office:
“We pray thee also to bless the quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Seventies; and all the authorities and quorums of thy Church and bless those of thy servants who are among the nations of the earth and grant that they may be inspired to send an account of their works that we may be enabled to keep a true and faithful record that when we have gone into the world of spirits that the saints of God may be blessed in reading our record which we have kept” (in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Sept. 15, 1856, page 4, Church History Library, Salt Lake City).

Spencer W. Kimball (Oct. 6, 1979)



“On a number of occasions I have encouraged the Saints to keep personal journals and family records. I renew that admonition. We may think there is little of interest or importance in what we

personally say or do—but it is remarkable how many of our families, as we pass on down the line, are interested in all that we do and all that we say. Each of us is important to those who are near and dear to us—and as our posterity read of our life’s experiences, they, too, will come to know and love us. And in that glorious day when our families are together in the eternities, we will already be acquainted.

“From time immemorial the Lord has counseled us to be a record-keeping people. . . .

“Let us then continue on in this important work of recording the things we do, the things we say, the things we think, to be in accordance with the instructions of the Lord. For those of you who may not have already started your books of remembrance and your records, we would suggest that this very day you begin to write your records quite fully and completely. We hope that you will do this, our brothers and sisters, for this is what the Lord has commanded” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 5).

Spencer W. Kimball (Oct. 4, 1980)

“Again, I urge you to be diligent in recording your personal and family histories. . . . In this, let us be an example to others and reap the benefits of stronger family units as we preserve our heritage” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 5).

Gordon B. Hinckley (Oct. 6, 1996)



“All of us need to be reminded of the past. It is from history that we gain knowledge which can save us from repeating mistakes and on which we can build for the future” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 85).

Gordon B. Hinckley (Oct. 3, 1999)

“My brethren and sisters, do you realize what we have? Do you recognize our place in the great drama of human history? . . .

“May God bless us with a sense of our place in history and, having been given that sense, with our need to stand tall and walk with resolution in a manner becoming the Saints of the Most High, is my humble prayer” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 74).

L. Tom Perry (Oct. 3, 1999)



“Have we preserved for our children the great stories of how the gospel was brought to and accepted by those early members of our families? Their study and acceptance of the gospel has opened for us the great opportunity of receiving eternal blessings. . . .

“These conversion experiences of our family members, who show us great commitment and faith throughout their lives, give us so much of what we enjoy today through the fruits of the gospel. Surely a knowledge of that faith and commitment must be passed on from generation to generation to deepen our desire to live with the same conviction they exhibited in their lives. Surely their testimonies add conviction and strength to our testimonies” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 76, 77).

Thomas S. Monson (Oct. 7, 2005)



“We benefit from what our fathers have done for us, and we have the privilege, through the sacred records which will be maintained here [in the new Church History Library], to provide a legacy for those who follow”

(in R. Scott Lloyd, “New Library for Sacred History,” *Church News*, Oct. 15, 2005, 3).

Additional Scriptures on the Importance of Record Keeping

Moses 6:5–6, 8

“And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration;

“And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled. . . .

“ . . . And this was the book of the generations of Adam.”

1 Nephi 1:1

“I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.”

1 Nephi 19:1–2, 4

“And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I



might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them.

“ . . . The record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those . . . plates of which I have spoken. . . .

“Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record . . . which gives an account . . . of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people.”

1 Nephi 19:3–4, 18

“I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the instruction of my people. . . .

“ . . . And . . . [I have] commanded my people what they should do after I was gone; and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another. . . .

“And I, Nephi, have written these things unto my people, that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer.”

2 Nephi 29:11–12

“For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.

“For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.”

Mosiah 1:4–5

“For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in



the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time.

“I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct.”

3 Nephi 23:8–13

“And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him [the Savior], he cast his eyes upon them and said:

“Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so?

“And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.

“And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?

“And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written.

“And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded.”

O Remember, Remember

By President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Ensign, Nov. 2007, 66–69



“O remember, remember,” Book of Mormon prophets often implored.¹ My point is to urge you to find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness.

I was grateful for the choir in their broadcast this morning, which was about the Savior, and grateful to see that the words of one of the songs they sang, “This Is the Christ,” were written by President James E. Faust. As I sat down next to Brother Newell, I leaned over to him and asked, “How are your children?” He said, “When President Faust sat in that chair, that’s what he always asked.” I’m not surprised, because President Faust was always a perfect example of a disciple that was described in *Music and the Spoken Word* today. I always felt that when I grew up, I wanted to be like President Faust. There may still be time.

When our children were very small, I started to write down a few things about what happened every day. Let me tell you how that got started. I came home late from a Church assignment. It was after dark. My father-in-law, who lived near us, surprised me as I walked toward the front door of my house. He was carrying a load of pipes over his shoulder, walking very fast and dressed in his work clothes. I knew that he had been building a system to pump water from a stream below us up to our property.

He smiled, spoke softly, and then rushed past me into the darkness to go on with his work. I took a few steps toward the house, thinking of what he was doing for us, and just as I got to the door, I heard in my mind—not in my own voice—these words: “I’m not giving you these experiences for yourself. Write them down.”

I went inside. I didn’t go to bed. Although I was tired, I took out some paper and began to write. And as I did, I understood the message I had heard in my mind. I was supposed to record for my children to read, someday in the future, how

I had seen the hand of God blessing our family. Grandpa didn’t have to do what he was doing for us. He could have had someone else do it or not have done it at all. But he was serving us, his family, in the way covenant disciples of Jesus Christ always do. I knew that was true. And so I wrote it down, so that my children could have the memory someday when they would need it.

I wrote down a few lines every day for years. I never missed a day no matter how tired I was or how early I would have to start the next day. Before I would write, I would ponder this question: “Have I seen the hand of God reaching out to touch us or our children or our family today?” As I kept at it, something began to happen. As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done.

More than gratitude began to grow in my heart. Testimony grew. I became ever more certain that our Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. I felt more gratitude for the softening and refining that come because of the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ. And I grew more confident that the Holy Ghost can bring all things to our remembrance—even things we did not notice or pay attention to when they happened.

The years have gone by. My boys are grown men. And now and then one of them will surprise me by saying, “Dad, I was reading in my copy of the journal about when . . .” and then he will tell me about how reading of what happened long ago helped him notice something God had done in his day.

My point is to urge you to find ways to recognize and remember God’s kindness. It will build our testimonies. You may not keep a journal. You may not share whatever record you keep with those you love and serve. But you and they will be blessed as you remember what the Lord has done. You remember that song we sometimes sing: “Count your many blessings; name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”²

It won't be easy to remember. Living as we do with a veil over our eyes, we cannot remember what it was like to be with our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in the pre-mortal world; nor can we see with our physical eyes or with reason alone the hand of God in our lives. Seeing such things takes the Holy Ghost. And it is not easy to be worthy of the Holy Ghost's companionship in a wicked world.

That is why forgetting God has been such a persistent problem among His children since the world began. Think of the times of Moses, when God provided manna and in miraculous and visible ways led and protected His children. Still, the prophet warned the people who had been so blessed, as prophets always have warned and always will: "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life."³

And the challenge to remember has always been the hardest for those who are blessed abundantly. Those who are faithful to God are protected and prospered. That comes as the result of serving God and keeping His commandments. But with those blessings comes the temptation to forget their source. It is easy to begin to feel the blessings were granted not by a loving God on whom we depend but by our own powers. The prophets have repeated this lament over and over:

"And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

"Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their

feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity."

And the prophet goes on to say: "Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths!"⁴

Sadly, prosperity is not the only reason people forget God. It can also be hard to remember Him when our lives go badly. When we struggle, as so many do, in grinding poverty or when our enemies prevail against us or when sickness is not healed, the enemy of our souls can send his evil message that there is no God or that if He exists He does not care about us. Then it can be hard for the Holy Ghost to bring to our remembrance the lifetime of blessings the Lord has given us from our infancy and in the midst of our distress.

There is a simple cure for the terrible malady of forgetting God, His blessings, and His messages to us. Jesus Christ promised it to His disciples when He was about to be crucified, resurrected, and then taken away from them to ascend in glory to His Father. They were concerned to know how they would be able to endure when He was no longer with them.

Here is the promise. It was fulfilled for them then. It can be fulfilled for all of us now:

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."⁵

The key to the remembering that brings and maintains testimony is receiving the Holy Ghost as a companion. It is the Holy Ghost who helps us see what God has done for us. It is the Holy Ghost who can help those we serve to see what God has done for them.

Heavenly Father has given a simple pattern for us to receive the Holy Ghost not once but continually in the tumult of our daily lives. The pattern is repeated in the sacramental prayer:

We promise that we will always remember the Savior. We promise to take His name upon us. We promise to keep His commandments. And we are promised that if we do that, we will have His Spirit to be with us.⁶ Those promises work together in a wonderful way to strengthen our testimonies and in time, through the Atonement, to change our natures as we keep our part of the promise.

It is the Holy Ghost who testifies that Jesus Christ is the Beloved Son of a Heavenly Father who loves us and wants us to have eternal life with Him in families. With even the beginning of that testimony, we feel a desire to serve Him and to keep His commandments. When we persist in doing that, we receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost to give us power in our service. We come to see the hand of God more clearly, so clearly that in time we not only remember Him, but we come to love Him and, through the power of the Atonement, become more like Him.

You might ask, “But how does this process get started in someone who knows nothing about God and claims no memory of spiritual experiences at all?” Everyone has had spiritual experiences that they may not have recognized. Every person, upon entering the world, is given the Spirit of Christ. How that spirit works is described in the book of Moroni:

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him. . . .

“Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay

hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.”⁷

So, even before people receive the right to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, when they are confirmed as members of the Church, and even before the Holy Ghost confirms truth to them before baptism, they have spiritual experiences. The Spirit of Christ has already, from their childhood, invited them to do good and warned them against evil. They have memories of those experiences even if they have not recognized their source. That memory will come back to them as missionaries or we teach them the word of God and they hear it. They will remember the feeling of joy or sorrow when they are taught the truths of the gospel. And that memory of the Spirit of Christ will soften their hearts to allow the Holy Ghost to testify to them. That will lead them to keep commandments and want to take the name of the Savior upon them. And when they do, in the waters of baptism, and as they hear the words in confirmation “Receive the Holy Ghost” spoken by an authorized servant of God, the power to always remember God will be increased.

I testify to you that the warm feelings you have had as you have listened to truth being spoken in this conference are from the Holy Ghost. The Savior, who promised that the Holy Ghost would come, is the beloved, glorified Son of our Heavenly Father.

Tonight, and tomorrow night, you might pray and ponder, asking the questions: Did God send a message that was just for me? Did I see His hand in my life or the lives of my children? I will do that. And then I will find a way to preserve that memory for the day that I, and those that I love, will need to remember how much God loves us and how much we need Him. I testify that He loves us and blesses us, more than most of us have yet recognized. I know that is true, and it brings me joy to remember Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Mosiah 2:41; Alma 37:13; Helaman 5:9.
2. “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241.
3. Deuteronomy 4:9.
4. Helaman 12:1–2, 5.
5. John 14:25–26.
6. See D&C 20:77, 79.
7. Moroni 7:16–17, 19.

Remember and Perish Not

By Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy (Former Church Historian and Recorder)

Ensign, May 2007, 36–38



Remembering in the way God intends is a fundamental and saving principle of the gospel.

I feel honored to follow Sister Parkin. Her service and teachings as well as those of her counselors have blessed

all of us. About this same hour 18 1/2 years ago, I was standing near this pulpit waiting for the congregational singing to end, when I was to step forward and give my first general conference address. My anxiety at that moment must have been obvious. Elder L. Tom Perry, who was standing behind me, leaned forward and, in his positive and enthusiastic way, whispered in my ear. “Relax,” he said, “we haven’t lost anyone at that pulpit in years!”

Those encouraging words and the few minutes that followed in which I spoke for the first time to a worldwide audience of Latter-day Saints constitute a treasured memory for me. Like all of you, I am constantly accumulating a reservoir of memories which, when recalled, make up a very useful and often enjoyable part of my consciousness. And, despite resolutions I made as a young man never to weary others with reminiscing when I grew older, I now take great pleasure in sharing my own memories at almost every possible occasion. Today, however, I wish to speak of a more profound role of memory and remembering in the gospel of Jesus Christ than the passive recall and enjoyment of information.

If we pay close attention to the uses of the word *remember* in the holy scriptures, we will recognize that remembering in the way God intends is a fundamental and saving principle of the gospel. This is so because prophetic admonitions to remember are frequently calls to action: to listen, to see, to do, to obey, to repent.¹ When we remember in God’s way, we overcome our human tendency simply to gird for the battle of life and actually engage in the battle itself, doing all in our power to resist temptation and avoid sinning.

King Benjamin called for such active remembering from his people:

“And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

“But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.”²

Realizing the vital role remembering is to play in our lives, what else ought we to remember? In response, assembled as we are today to remember and rededicate this historic Tabernacle, I suggest that the history of the Church of Jesus Christ and its people deserves our remembrance. The scriptures give the Church’s history high priority. In fact, much of scripture is Church history. On the very day the Church was organized, God commanded Joseph Smith, “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you.”³ Joseph acted on this command by appointing Oliver Cowdery, the second elder in the Church and his chief assistant, as the first Church historian. We keep records to help us remember, and a record of the Church’s rise and progress has been kept from Oliver Cowdery’s time to the present day. This extraordinary historical record reminds us that God has again opened the heavens and revealed truths that call our generation to action.

Of all that has been collected, preserved, and written by historians over those many years, nothing exemplifies the importance and power of the Church’s history more than Joseph Smith’s simple and honest story of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appearing to him in what our history books now call the First Vision. In words that generations of missionaries have committed to memory and shared with seekers of truth the world over, Joseph describes the miraculous way in which he received an answer to his question posed in prayer of which Church is right:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”⁴

Hear him, Joseph did! And millions have heard or read and believed his account and have embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ he helped restore. I believe Joseph Smith and know he was a true prophet of God. Remembering his experience of the First Vision never fails to stir my soul to greater commitment and action.

No one has greater appreciation for the value of the Church’s history than President Gordon B. Hinckley. We love his delightful sense of humor, but his sense of history is equally keen. Inspiring stories and anecdotes from our past punctuate his writings and sermons. As our living prophet, he consciously emphasizes the past and the future to help us live more righteously in the present. Because of his teachings, we understand that remembering enables us to see God’s hand in our past, just as prophecy and faith assure us of God’s hand in our future. President Hinckley reminds us how members of the early Church faced their challenges so we, through the grace of God, can more faithfully face our own. By keeping our past alive, he connects us to the people, places, and events that make up our spiritual heritage and, in so doing, motivates us to greater service, faith, and kindness.

In an exemplary way President Hinckley also openly shares from his own personal and family histories. Scores of discouraged new missionaries have been comforted to learn that early in his own mission, President Hinckley was also discouraged and admitted as much to his father. He even courageously shared his father’s brief response: “Dear Gordon, I have your recent letter. I have only one suggestion: forget yourself and go to work.”⁵ Over 70 years later, we are all witnesses to how earnestly President Hinckley took that counsel to heart. His sterling character and prophetic wisdom provide persuasive proof for

the benefits of remembering the Church’s history as well as our own.

There is much more to say about memory and remembering in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We often speak of remembering our sacred covenants and God’s commandments and of remembering and performing saving ordinances for our deceased ancestors. Most importantly, we speak of the need to remember our Savior Jesus Christ and not just when convenient, but always, as He asks.⁶ We witness always to remember Him as we partake of the sacrament. In return, we are promised His Spirit will always be with us. Interestingly, this is the same Spirit sent by our Heavenly Father to “bring all things to [our] remembrance.”⁷ Thus, by worthily receiving the sacrament, we are blessed by the Spirit to enter into a wonderfully beneficial circle of remembering, returning again and again in our thinking and devotion to Christ and His Atonement.

Coming unto Christ and being perfected in Him is, I believe, the ultimate purpose of all remembering.⁸ Therefore, I pray that God will bless us always to remember, especially His perfect Son, and perish not. I gratefully testify of Christ’s divinity and saving power. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See 2 Nephi 1:12; Mosiah 6:3; Helaman 5:14.
2. Mosiah 4:29–30.
3. D&C 21:1.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
5. In Gordon B. Hinckley, *Faith: The Essence of True Religion* (1989), 115.
6. See 3 Nephi 18:7, 11.
7. John 14:26.
8. See Moroni 10:32–33.

There Shall Be a Record Kept among You

Church magazines interview with Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy (Former Church Historian and Recorder)

Ensign, Dec. 2007, 28–33



Why are Latter-day Saints taught that it is important to keep records and to gather and preserve Church history?

Elder Marlin K. Jensen: The scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, make clear that “remembering” is a fun-

damental and saving principle of the gospel. We keep records to help us remember. Remembering the past gives us needed perspective as God’s children to have faith in our future destiny and thus to live more faithfully in the present.

On April 6, 1830, the day the Church was organized, the Lord commanded the Prophet Joseph Smith, “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you” (D&C 21:1). This is the revelation upon which the office of Church historian and recorder is based.

On that day the Prophet learned how important it is to the Lord for a history of the Church to be kept, and he soon called Oliver Cowdery to be the first Church historian and recorder. In the beginning Oliver recorded minutes of meetings, patriarchal blessings, membership information, and certificates of priesthood authority. He also began what might be called a narrative history of the Church.

Record keeping began with a commandment from God and continues to the present day.

What does the calling of Church historian and recorder entail?

Elder Jensen: The work of the Church historian and recorder is largely one of record keeping. It includes the gathering and preserving of Church history sources, the recording of ordinances, and the collection of minutes. The scriptures also suggest there is a responsibility to ensure the records

are used “for the good of the church, and for the rising generations” (D&C 69:8).

The roles of historian and recorder are complementary and at times almost indistinguishable. I think that’s why, in the early days of the Church, sometimes a recorder was appointed and sometimes a historian and why over time the roles were joined together in one calling.

What is the purpose of recording and teaching Church history?

Elder Jensen: The primary purpose of Church history is to help Church members build faith in Jesus Christ and keep their sacred covenants. In fulfilling this purpose, we are guided by three main considerations:

First, we seek to bear witness of and defend the foundational truths of the Restoration.

Second, we desire to help Church members remember the great things God has done for His children.

Third, we have a scriptural charge to help preserve the revealed order of the kingdom of God. This includes the revelations, documents, procedures, processes, and patterns that provide order and continuity for the exercising of priesthood keys, the proper functioning of priesthood quorums, the performance of ordinances, and so on—those things that are essential to salvation.

How else does the Church benefit from the office of Church historian and recorder?

Elder Jensen: The Church historian and recorder can provide an authoritative voice of the Church in historical matters. There are always historical questions, and sometimes there are historical controversies. It is helpful to have an office to which anyone can turn for trustworthy answers.

The Church historian and recorder chairs the Historic Sites Committee, which administers Church history sites and landmarks. He also serves as chairman of the Church’s Records Management Committee. This committee oversees the creation, management, and final disposition of all Church records—ecclesiastical and corporate—the world over.

Among the most essential and sacred records are those evidencing the performance of temple ordinances. They are preserved as a part of what I feel is that book “which shall be worthy of all acceptance” (D&C 128:24). Members can have confidence that all records, including those of their temple ordinances, are safe.

How is the Church using technology to carry forth the work of the historian’s office?

Elder Jensen: I work with the Family and Church History Department, which collects and preserves the essential materials of Church history. We are developing a technology plan that will better enable us to collect, preserve, and make Church history available for a global Church membership. Obviously the Internet will play an increasingly important role in what we do.

The books, documents, artifacts, historic sites, and pictures that we have collected through the years constitute in a sense the “crown jewels” of the Church’s history. We feel an obligation to share these in approved and appropriate ways with members everywhere. Viewing a page from the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon on the Internet or taking a virtual tour of the upper room of the Smith family cabin where Moroni appeared to young Joseph Smith are experiences that will connect members to our past in faith-promoting ways.

Technology will also better enable us to train and assist local leaders, clerks, and others who are responsible for the compilation of annual histories for stakes, wards, and missions. With the help of technology, historical information will flow more easily to and from Church headquarters.

How can the history of the Church become a heritage for all of us, whether we are new members or have been in the Church for generations?

Elder Jensen: Someone once said that a people can be no greater than its stories. The history of the Church begins with the compelling account of Joseph Smith and his search for the true Church. When we believe Joseph’s account, we become part of a great body of believers whose lives change by embracing the restored gospel. This experience becomes a very important part

of our common Latter-day Saint heritage. It also helps explain why the history of the Church’s beginnings is so critical to the Church’s existence and continued growth and vitality.

There are other great stories in our history that deserve to be known and taught at church and at home. The lessons of Kirtland, the trials of Missouri, the triumphs and eventual expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo, and the westward trek of the pioneers are stories that inspire Latter-day Saints in every land and language. But there are equally moving stories about the rise and progress of the Church and the impact of the gospel in the lives of ordinary members in every nation touched by the restored gospel. These need recording and preserving as well.

The relationship between Church and family history is also worth considering. Usually a study of one will lead to a study of the other. Many of the Church’s greatest stories are contained in personal and family histories, and these are a part of our individual and family heritages.

Finally, we need to remember that acquiring a heritage of Church history requires more than simply reading a history book. It includes visiting a historic site, visiting a museum to view historical artifacts, attending a family reunion, or keeping a personal journal. The key is for everyone to have personal involvement of some type with the past.

What do you think has been most meaningful to you personally about serving as Church historian and recorder?

Elder Jensen: I have come to realize that the scriptures contain sacred history. When the prophets wrote to us, they wove sermons and teachings into their historical narratives. For example, the Book of Mormon begins with the story of Lehi and his family. It is scripture, but it is also a narrative history. The Book of Mormon represents the finest type of historical writing we have. It is also the best example of the connection between history and doctrine. I’ve come to understand and appreciate the power of scripture and history working together.

I have gained a testimony that all things are present before God—past, present, and future. That

really harmonizes with the scriptural definition of truth, which is “knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). We live in the present. We can’t see the future, but the past is available for us to see—if it has been preserved. Our past can give us a perspective and a foundation that we really can’t get in any other way. Whether it is the history of our grandfather or the history of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the history of the trials of the Latter-day Saint pioneers during the early days of the Church or the history of Latter-day Saint servicemen during World War II—lessons from the past help us cope with our present and give us hope for our future.

I have come to appreciate the Prophet Joseph Smith more than ever before because of his monumental accomplishments as the founding prophet of this dispensation.

Of all the things I’ve come to treasure, I think the most important is the conviction that if we’re honest in heart and desire to know God, we can come to know Him and feel accountable to Him. We have the example of the Prophet Joseph Smith to thank for that. He modeled it, he taught it, and he held out the promise that we can come to know Christ also. That’s priceless to me.



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