
AKRON OHIO STAKE

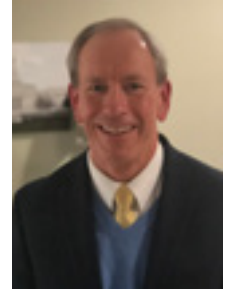
Stake Presidency Message

Joy and a Living Prophet

Hello Brothers and Sisters. Happy New Year to you all. I have recently been thinking about joy and the profound insight our prophet has given us about it.

As we start out a new year, I believe it is important to remind ourselves of the need to work at having joy in our lives.

I again listened, with appreciation, to President Nelson's masterpiece talk on joy given in October 2016, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2016/10/joy-and-spiritual-survival?lang=eng>. I recommend that we all listen to or read this talk once again. This talk is filled with the oft-quoted message that when our attention is properly focused, we can find joy regardless of our circumstances. Here it is in his words:



President Jensen

My dear brothers and sisters, the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.

When the focus of our lives is on God's plan of salvation, and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives. Joy comes from and because of Him. He is the source of all joy. We feel it at Christmastime when we sing, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come." And we can feel it all year round. For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is joy!

I love that direction and recognize it as extremely important for us to study and apply while living in a world full of wickedness and trials. That teaching is very enlightening, but only one of two that caught my attention from President Nelson's talk. I have been a member of the restored church all my life, but President Nelson taught me a completely new interpretation of a very valuable scripture when he quoted and explained a key point from [Hebrews 12:2](#):

Joy is powerful, and focusing on joy brings God's power into our lives. As in all things, Jesus Christ is our ultimate exemplar, 'who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.' Think of that! In order for Him to endure the most excruciating experience ever endured on earth, our Savior focused on joy.

This is a key teaching that I feel will benefit us more in proportion to the quality time we spend contemplating it. I encourage us all to bring more power into our lives by focusing on the joy that awaits us as we are faithful. We find this concept of envisioning the future we desire several times in the scriptures ([Alma 32:40-41](#); [D&C 46:7](#)) and is well known in the self-development world.

These two teachings can be a tremendous help to us as we begin this new year. Let us find joy regardless of our circumstances by focusing on Jesus Christ, His goodness, His greatness, and the plan of happiness. Additionally, let us endure our difficulties by envisioning the future joy that awaits us.

I am convinced these truths can be an extremely beneficial practice for us all. I am thankful for the guidance and direction we receive from a living prophet who teaches us how to better apply truths from our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ.

RELIEF SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

by Sister Lisa Kay, Stake Relief Society First Counselor

When I moved to the Akron Stake in 1995, Donetta was assigned as one of my visiting teachers. She and her companion came regularly and greeted me on Sunday at church. They didn't visit every month, but enough that I felt comfortable with them. I was married with a two-year-old, Donetta was single and never had children, and her companion was married with children from Primary to youth ages. But despite our different circumstances, we had lovely conversations about our lives and the Gospel, especially the monthly visiting teaching message.

Later my visiting teachers changed, but Donetta and I still enjoyed chatting at church. Many years later, I was assigned to be Donetta's visiting teacher. This time our visits occurred in her home. I was blessed by her strong testimony as we discussed the monthly visiting teaching message. She was understanding when I arranged a visit after not visiting for several months. She was accommodating if it was summer and I needed to bring my school-aged younger son, Carter. Carter enjoyed being with Donetta's rescued greyhound, and fortunately, the fondness was mutual.

But in April 2018, visiting teaching was retired and replaced by ministering. President Russell M. Nelson called it "a newer, holier approach to caring for and ministering to others." I, along with many others, wondered what this meant. At the time, I was serving as Canton Ward Relief Society President and had the opportunity, along with my presidency, to read the articles regarding ministering and watch the training videos. Eventually, I came to understand that ministering was trying to love and serve as our Savior Jesus Christ did, by comforting, teaching, loving, and serving those around us.

This close relationship doesn't happen immediately but with regular interactions. It takes time to get to know people, but as we keep trying,

our love will grow for those we serve.

Ministering interviews are a part of ministering. In the beginning, during the interviews I had sisters say they didn't understand ministering. I asked them how they served when they were visiting teachers. Sisters spoke of visits, cards, phone calls, sitting together in church meetings, talking about the Gospel, giving rides to appointments, and more. They told of their love for the sisters they visited. I was delighted to respond that they were already Ministering and to keep up the good work.

Ministering interviews are a great opportunity to share with the Relief Society or elders quorum presidency member the strengths and the challenges of the members you minister to. Through these interviews, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents can let the bishop know of spiritual and temporal needs of the members. Presidency members have the opportunity to minister to the members being interviewed by showing that they care about them as well as those they minister to.

Sister Jean B. Bingham said, "Sometimes we think we have to do something grand and heroic to 'count' as serving our neighbors. Yet simple acts of service can have profound effects on others—as well as on ourselves."

I was blessed to continue to be Donetta's ministering sister until she returned to her Heavenly Father in January of 2020. At our visits, she told of meeting the missionaries in her late teens and her conversion and always growing testimony. We talked about the Gospel, her love of family history, her childhood living at a Boy Scout camp, her love of horses, and rescuing greyhounds and giving them a loving home. She was a wonderful storyteller. I never did anything grand or heroic. But being able to be there for her as her health declined blessed both of us.



Drive-by Ice Cream Social

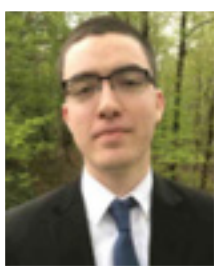
by Sister Robyn Taylor

In the early months of the pandemic, our former Bishop organized a “drive-by ice cream social” outside his home in an effort to reach out to ward members and provide an opportunity to see each other in a safe way. The sister missionaries from our ward came to help, and it gave them a chance to see ward members in person that they had only seen via video chat. Families lined up in their cars around the corner of the yard and gave their “orders” and were able to visit for a few minutes with the bishop and the sisters. Some members were able to visit with each other from their cars, or at least wave as they passed. It was good to get out and enjoy some fellowship, from a distance.

Ward Window



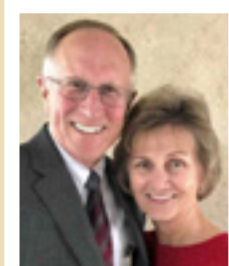
MISSIONARY UPDATE



SAMUEL RYDEN

Returning January 2021

Texas Lubbock
Mission



MAX AND KARY LEWIS

Returning January 2021

Ecuador Quito
Mission

A Message from Stake Patriarch J. Martin Jindra

I hope the Christmas season was one of love for the Savior and joy in your homes. Happy New Year, one and all, and I suspect for most of us a grateful goodbye to a most challenging 2020. We began the past year like most years in Ohio, with cold temperatures but no anticipation of what the year to come would bring. Pretty early into 2020, we heard rumors of a new virus that was wreaking havoc in parts of the world.

Soon it was very clear changes would be necessary in our country.

By the middle of March, our temple in Columbus was closed along with most other temples, Church meetings were suspended, and foreign missionaries were being sent to their home countries. We began a new worship service at home on Sundays, which continues for many of us. As time, circumstances, and opportunities arose, we were permitted to meet together with restrictions, to perform specific temple ordinances, and the missionaries were able to safely teach and provide service. These were just a few of the concerns for Church leaders as well as many other issues pertaining to our emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being in a worldwide church.

We also had changes in our day-to-day living as employers had to impose safe work environments, and restaurants had limited seating with social distancing or take-out only. Shopping was curtailed completely at some businesses, while others were open with limited numbers of customers, shorter hours, required social distancing and face coverings. Barbershops and hairdressers were closed, some doctors were doing virtual appointments, and hospitals were limiting elective surgeries. Exercise facilities were closed or open with restrictions. It has been a strange time with many other changes. If you were on a hiking trail or bicycle path, you probably encountered unprecedented numbers of individuals and families trying to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Many have struggled with sickness, unemployment, financial difficulties, mental or emotional stress, heartache, and even the death of loved ones during this unusual last year. What may have been most difficult was how we were limited in the number of individuals who could visit during our struggles because of the restrictions due to the pandemic. In the midst of our most difficult times, I know we can rely on and feel the love of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Even though many things changed and were more difficult for us, there were opportunities for spiritual growth as we studied together and worshipped at home on Sunday. Our daily prayers and scripture study seemed more focused and refined. We were realizing the

importance of having a Prophet guiding and preparing us for the challenges of 2020 with the introduction of the *Come Follow Me* lessons, and with adjustments to youth programs, temple ordinances, and missionary service. As we observed the refining touches to the Church over the last few years, little did we anticipate how quickly we would be fully engaged in weekly worship at home. This past autumn, President Russell M. Nelson said, “The road ahead will be bumpy; the destination will be serene and secure.” Quoting John 14:27, President Dallin H. Oaks reminded those who may be suffering of these comforting words of the Savior, “My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

We have just celebrated the birth of the Savior and the wonderful hope He gives us. Recently the news of vaccines approved for COVID-19 helps us look forward to a new year. As we reflect on the past and look to the future, might we consider counsel given by President Nelson 30 years ago addressing the students at BYU:

As we all contemplate resolutions for a new year, let us reflect on such a special behavioral blueprint given by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith during the Christmas-New Year holiday season of 1832–33.

These verses from section 88 are worthy resolutions equally applicable in our day for this new year and for the next decade. The Lord said:

Cease from all your light speeches, . . . from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings. . . .

See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires.

Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.

And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.

Pray always, that ye may not faint, until I come. Behold, and lo, I will come . . . and receive you unto myself. [D&C 88:121, 123–126]

I know we are loved and watched over by our Heavenly Father. He knows us and sent His Son Jesus Christ as our Savior and Redeemer. We can receive inspiration and revelation through the Holy Spirit and should seek that sacred information. I am grateful for your support and sustaining love, and wish you all a good year.

Self-Reliance Corner

by Sister Diane Burgoon, Stake Self-Reliance Group Coordinator
330-430-9912, diane.burgoon@yahoo.com

Self-Reliance Groups

The following groups will be starting in January:

Regional Groups

Finding a Better Job will be held on Tuesday evenings beginning January 12

Starting and Growing a Business is scheduled for Thursday evenings.

Click here to register - [Register for Virtual Self-Reliance Groups](#)

Akron Stake Groups

Emotional Resilience will be held on Sundays at 4 p.m. starting January 17th.

Personal Finance will be held on Sundays at 6 p.m. starting January 17th.

We will have a minimum number required to hold a class. If we don't have enough, we will have to skip for now. Contact Sister Burgoon to register.

Manuals

For more information, you can view the manuals online at

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/self-reliance/manuals-and-videos?lang=eng>.

We will provide hard copy manuals for those attending.

BRECKSVILLE HOME STORAGE CENTER

6900 Southpointe Pkwy
Brecksville, Ohio 44141
440-526-4057
(Home Storage Center)

HOURS:

Thursday 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Wednesday and Saturday:
by appointment

My Foundation Principle – Use Time Wisely

The new year is always a great time to assess where we are in life and where we can improve going forward. Spending our time wisely is essential to completing our goals in life. Here are some suggestions from My Foundations:

1	2	3	4	5
LIST TASKS	PRAY	SET PRIORITIES	SET GOALS, ACT	REPORT
Each morning, make a list of tasks to do. Add names of people to serve.	Pray for guidance. Review your list of tasks. Listen. Commit to do your best.	On your list of tasks, put a 1 by the most important, a 2 by the next most important, and so on.	Listen to the Spirit. Set goals. Work hard. Start with the most important task and work down the list.	Each night, report to Heavenly Father in prayer. Ask questions. Listen. Repent. Feel His love.

Watch this video for a great example of someone who uses their time wisely:
[The Gift of Time \(churchofjesuschrist.org\)](#)

“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.” Alma 34:32

“Time is all the capital stock there is on the earth. . . . If properly used, it brings that which will add to your comfort, convenience, and satisfaction. Let us consider this, and no longer sit with hands folded, wasting time.” Brigham Young, in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 214.

Contact your ward Self-Reliance Specialist, or myself (contact information in header above), for more information on joining a self-reliance group or Pathway. If you have any other questions or concerns, please let me know.

The Lord has declared, It is my purpose to provide for my saints. D&C 104:15

Family History Corner

by Jeanne Peugh, Director



Family History - A Personal Responsibility

My comments come from Elder Theodore Burton, Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, *Ensign* January 1973

“I say to every member of the church that you have a personal individual responsibility to become engaged in family history work. The actual work must be performed by individuals. In our understanding it includes the whole plan of salvation, in which, through righteous living and revealed sacred ordinances, families are bound together, worthy to live in the Celestial Kingdom with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.”

“Elijah came to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers and their fathers to their children which makes family history and temple work a family affair.”

Families were from the beginning and will continue throughout all eternity. In our Book of Mormon studies, we read the joy Lehi felt as he read the records that he was a direct descendant of Joseph. The scriptures teach us the genealogy of Jesus Christ back to Adam.

Our patriarchal blessing gives us our lineage with respect to the Twelve Tribes of Israel. As we start this New Year, let us dedicate ourselves as individuals and families to have the desire to know who we are and where we came from. As we commit, may we feel the blessings of Abraham and strive to fulfill the promise made by Elijah. Please reach out to family history consultants in your ward or stake for help if you need assistance.