

# The Gospel News

## Church Established in Cuba

By Brother Timothy Mott

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Mothers  
Day*  
*ℳ*

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**T**he island of Cuba (pronounced Coo-bah) was visited by Christopher Columbus on October 28, 1492, and he referred to the land as "the sweetest thing in the world." This sweetness soon turned to bitterness, as Spanish conquistadors quickly decimated the indigenous population of over 100,000 on the island, and slave labor was introduced. Cuba became a place of anguish for many as oppression became the norm. However, on February 12th, 2022, the sound of the Restored Gospel was declared to the land, and Cuba indeed became sweet, as the fruit most precious and sweet above all was partaken of freely for the first time.

On August 30, 2019, a young man named Maikel Batista was continuing a spiritual journey of discovery when he stumbled upon the Wikipedia page featuring The Church of Jesus Christ with headquarters in Monongahela,



The first converts in Cuba. Puerto Padre, Cuba

PA, USA. The spirit spoke to him that he needed to investigate further, and that same day Maikel began corresponding with Evangelist Miguel Bicelis. Maikel had previously received a copy of the Book of Mormon from another faith but recognized that the gifting organization did not truly follow all the teachings of this new book, especially Alma 13's discussion of a holy priesthood being called after the Order of the Son of God. He had taken Moroni's charge to heart but knew that another organization must exist that matched the scripture that he had accepted to be the Word of God. Brother Miguel continued explaining our doctrine, and later recollected "Once Maikel realized he found the Church, everything changed. It changed his life. On paper, the Church had the truth. But once he delved in, the Holy Spirit confirmed it to him." Maikel began passing along his newfound truth to others around him, including pastors in other Christian organizations. Soon, he began meeting and teaching the doctrine of Jesus Christ as The Church of Jesus Christ is blessed to understand. At the October 2021 General Church Conference's gathering of the Quorum of 70 Evangelists, Brother Miguel presented a case study of why Cuba should be the next country to receive the Restored Gospel. The brothers agreed, and approval was soon given by the Quorum of Twelve Apostles for the first missionary journey to the island of Cuba.

An investigation was conducted into the specifics of both the US Embargo and Cuba's internal visa requirements. God led and provided reassurance with each step of the way, and on February 11, 2022 Brothers Miguel Bicelis, Joel Gehly, Bryan Griffith, and Timothy Mott landed in Havana, (Continued on page 4)

<p>Wonderful Mothers And Women In The Scriptures!</p>	<p>Sarah-Wife of Abraham: God promised them "I will bless Sarah and give her a son ...She shall be a mother of nations, Kings of people will come from her!</p> <p>(Genesis 17: 15-16)</p>		<p>Rebekah: Brave girl who left home to marry Isaac. She was the mother of Jacob, later called Israel. He had twelve sons; they became the people that include Jews and Native Americans.</p> <p>(Genesis: 25th Chapter)</p>
<p>Jochebed Mother of Moses: The Pharaoh ordered all Hebrew babies killed. She hid her baby 3 months, then made a basket for him to float and hide.</p> <p>(Exodus 2: 1-10)</p>		<p>Pharaoh's Daughter: This Princess became an adoptive mother for baby Moses and gave her protection to his Mother to help her- even though the Pharaoh was killing all other Hebrew baby boys.</p> <p>(Exodus 2: 5-10)</p>	
	<p>Abish Servant of the Lamanite King: Was secretly a follower of God. When the King and Queen fell overwhelmed by the Spirit of God, She bravely handled the crowd.</p> <p>(Alma 19: 17-30)</p>		<p>Naomi mother-in-law of Ruth: She taught her dead son's wife Ruth enough about God that Ruth was converted. Her son is an ancestor of Jesus.</p> <p>(Ruth 1:14-16)</p>
<p>Hannah Mother of a great prophet of God: Hannah begged God for a child and promised she would bring him to the temple to serve God. She did. Young Samuel grew up to be a great prophet for God</p> <p>(1 Samuel 1:17-27)</p>		<p>Mary Mother of Jesus: An angel came to tell Mary that she was highly favored and blessed among all women. Her baby would grow up to be Jesus, the Messiah of the world!</p> <p>(Matthew 1 21-23 &amp; Luke 1:30-33)</p>	<p>Celebrate Women This Month!</p>

**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.

Wordup



**"Well, Well, Well" By Brother Doug Obradovich**

**"This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" – Matthew 3:17**

to selfcare (almost identical to James' (1:27) description of "pure religion"). Isaiah's "well" was James' "unspotted from the world" (1:27). WELL #1 = RIGHTEOUSNESS, a learned behavior!

beyond this life. Moroni confirmed that Jesus' pure love, "endureth forever." WELL #3 = GOD'S APPROVAL, given as the result of love-driven, righteous perfection.

There are few things more empowering than to hear your parents say how proud you've made them. Now imagine the voice was sourced from the heavens. But more on that later.

Mark (7:35 & 37) captured Jesus' healing of a deaf man and the reaction of the eyewitnesses, "Straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain" and "Were beyond measure, astonished, saying, He hath done all things WELL." Those watching had no questions about all they had seen, regardless of never having witnessed anything like it before. Their amazement wasn't just because of what they saw Jesus do, but He did "all things" flawlessly. WELL #2 = PERFECTION, presented as Jesus' WELLNESS.

Each time Jesus would fulfill God's expectations, The Good Father publicly commended The Good Son. Matthew recorded God's endorsement of His baptism, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am WELL pleased." The beautiful hymn affirms, "It is WELL with my soul," but consider how much more fulfilling it will be to hear God's voice confirm the WELLNESS of your soul, as promised by all Moroni envisioned. In the moment you transition from earth to heaven, you will secure possession of God's love for eternity, when God grants His APPROVAL of His Son's RIGHTEOUSNESS and PERFECTION within you. And in that moment, you will hear Him introduce you to your fellow-inhabitants of His glory, "This is my beloved child, in whom I am WELL pleased. Enter in."

In the 1990 movie, "Ghost," the main character, Sam Wheat, said to his wife as he transitioned from mortal existence to eternal life, "It's amazing, Molly. The love inside, you take it with you." But more on that later.

Moroni (7:47) wrote, "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; whoso is found possessed on that the last day, it will be WELL with him." Those who serve Creator and His creation have an extraordinary reward awaiting. This verse captured what Sam Wheat attempted to articulate concerning love; that it remains within us

Well, well, well, it absolutely is amazing, Molly!

**B-T-P Blast From The Past**

By Sister Kellie Speck

**On May 15, 1829 an angel visited to restore priesthood authority.** Oliver Cowdery was one of the scribes that helped while Joseph Smith translated the plates and was one of the three witnesses. At that time there was much confusion and strife over religion. Cowdery and Smith began to pray for the restoration of the authority. An angel visited them and said, "I am thy fellow servant. Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer this priesthood and this authority, which shall remain on the earth, that the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness!"

*"And the Gospel, she's my mother. With my mother I'll remain." –Here He Placed Me, Here I'll Stay," The Songs of Zion*



## Nursing Mothers

By Brother Anthony Scolaro

I worked with a man years ago who had majored in Classics and studied Greek and Latin. To my delight (this was before the Internet), he could tell me the meaning of Latin phrases. One that I had wondered about was “alma mater.” I learned that it means “nourishing mother,” literally, “nursing mother.” I had only heard it used in connection with colleges and universities, but I grasped the metaphor—a term of endearment, paying tribute to the institution that helped build and enrich a person’s life. I never gave it much thought, but in hindsight, while I don’t question the value of education, seeing one’s school as a nursing mother might be overstating things a bit.

When you consider the stage of life when children actually have to be nursed, a number of descriptive terms come to mind:

- Helpless
- Dependent
- Defenseless
- Innocent
- Unlearned
- Demanding
- Immature

The words above will elicit a range of emotions. If you’ve ever nursed and cared for very young children you will have likely experienced the gamut of feelings from wonder and delight, to care and compassion, to annoyance and exasperation. The truth is, babies exhibit all of the traits listed here. What makes nursing mothers and fathers willing to take in stride the not-so-pleasant aspects of rearing a child and attending to their needs “24/7”? The answer, of course, is love.

The bond of natural affection that develops between parents—mothers especially—and their children gives us an amazing ability to exercise unconditional love and tireless care toward our young ones. A parent will dive in where an outsider might hesitate when it comes to something like cleaning up a soiled baby. In the fullest sense of the word, “nursing” requires a measure of humility as it involves a kind and delicate touch when dealing with private and often unpleasant aspects of personal care.

We also encounter the term “nursing mother” in the scriptures. It’s a key phrase when it comes to prophecies and the future expectations of The Church of Jesus Christ. Isaiah (49:23, also quoted in 1 and 2 Nephi) likens the gentile nations to nursing mothers and fathers when describing the care and concern exercised toward the House of Israel. It says, “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

Like the term “alma mater,” I hadn’t really thought much about the weight of meaning that verse carries. Because of their natural affection, parents will go to any length to care for their children. Likewise, God’s love in us will enable us to do things we would otherwise balk at. Lick up the dust of someone’s feet? In one interpretation, perhaps this verse can be understood to say that like nursing parents, even the highest echelons among the gentiles will shamelessly humble themselves and demonstrate Christ’s love to such a degree that Israel cannot deny Him as their Messiah.

This love goes way beyond any natural affection. How is it otherwise possible? Moroni 7:48 tells us: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.” With that kind of love, we can truly be the nursing fathers and mothers the Lord has called us to be.

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Cuba. After greeting Maikel Batista the group began an eleven-hour journey eastward from Havana to the city of Las Tunas, Cuba. A vision was given of a closed door, wherein the Lord’s angel knocked the door off its hinges, allowing the team to pass. A second vision was received back in the United States of a protective bubble around our vehicle. This was quite prophetic, as our 1957 Chevrolet narrowly missed a horse-drawn cart with three young men in the black of night in one of Cuba’s various provinces. Arriving in the early hours of the morning, we praised God for his protection.

The first converts were baptized on the next day as we journeyed to the Puerto Padre water’s edge. Our brothers took time to teach those assembled the meaning of a covenant, as well as the Church’s belief in the Book of Mormon and our desire to see God’s covenant with the House of Israel fulfilled. Our new Cuban friends sat with intent focus on the message and were soon given the opportunity to make their desire known. We had expected perhaps 10-12 souls to come forward, but almost every adult present was desirous to be part of the Restored Gospel, and twenty souls were baptized. The youngest was a teenager, while Brother Secundino Leyva-Vargas is believed to be the oldest convert in Church history, at 102 years old.



First formal service of The Church of Jesus Christ in Cuba on February 13, 2022. Las Tunas, Cuba

Sunday was a joyous day for our fledgling congregation, as they were able to witness

the blessing of children and partake in the Lord’s Supper for the first time. Apostle Joel Gehly was inspired to preach from Revelation 3 and teach the Cuban people that God has accepted This Church He did the Church of Philadelphia. Brother Joel soon declared to the people, that The Church of Jesus Christ has been established in Cuba! As we opened the meeting for testimony, Sister Teresa responded with gladness to hear the proclamation and explained that Cubans are a simple people from a land made up of four letters (C-u-b-a). She praised God that He brought them four missionaries (one for each letter) to teach a simple message to a simple people.

As we started our weekday activities, each day was to be filled with ministerial training in the morning and early afternoon, with an evening service for the entire congregation. We were extremely blessed that Brother Maikel located a home-based hostel for the missionary team to stay, which was only a ten-minute walk to the Church meeting location. Brother Miguel Bicelis conducted the training with the other brothers providing assistance. We opened the training to other ordained officers who were interested to learn the intricacies of the Gospel. The Lord opened the minds of the Cuban saints, and they quickly absorbed the Restored Gospel.



Missionaries: Brothers Timothy Mott, Joel Gehly, Miguel Bicelis and Bryan Griffith. Las Tunas, Cuba

The Spirit of God soon confirmed that two of our new brothers were being called into the ministry, Brothers Maikel and Juan. The Las Tunas Mission is composed of their two congregations that operate on separate sides of the city. They meet together as often as resources allow, as transportation can be problematic and cost-prohibitive at times. In addition to our two new ministers, the Lord called two teachers, three deaconesses, and one deacon.

We traveled a second time to the Caribbean Sea on the second Saturday of the trip, as

eight converts had made their wishes known to join the fold. Altogether, twenty-eight (28) souls rendered obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ over the course of our visit. The Saints are engaged and thrilled to be a part of The Church of Jesus Christ. They are already giving their testimonies to others in the town, as well as throughout the island. The Gifts of the Spirit have begun working with the group as well, exemplified by our humble deacon, Brother Luis, as he received a beautiful vision of the authority of the ministry being conferred at the moment our first two ministers in Cuba were ordained.



Additional converts commit to the Lord on February 19, 2022, including five young people. Bahia de Manatí, Cuba

The work of The Church of Jesus Christ in Cuba is simple and complex. The embrace given to the Restored Gospel by our new Saints with their simple, pure understanding is a beautiful thing to witness. We faced stiff opposition from the enemy in various forms as the trip progressed, and challenges remain. Various barriers still stand before us; however, God has reminded time and again that He is in charge of this work. One of our brothers had a vision when the missionaries were ending the day in prayer one evening. He saw a map of Cuba, and angels descending in great numbers to the shores. “The angels stood on all beaches facing the interior of the island. In a moment, they raised trumpets and blew a great sound of victory unto heaven. It was heralding the presence of The Church established in the entire nation.” We marveled at how quickly the work unfolded before our eyes, as the Lord seemingly had already taken charge well in advance of our first steps on the island. However, the Lord lovingly told us through His Word coming forth back in the United States - “Thus saith the Lord! Have I not said that a nation would be born in a day? Marvel not now at these things, but prepare yourselves for the things you will see. Thus saith the Lord!” We humbly look to the future now, understanding that God has a precious nation

(Continued on page 6)

He is raising up that will be a blessing to the entire work in the Americas. As you reflect on the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ in Cuba, please pray for the Lord's divine hand to continue to go before us, and please pray that we be able to walk by the Spirit, fulfilling His Designs.

## The Book of Mormon is the Word of God



Brother Juan Rodriguez-Oliva realizes the Book of Mormon is the true Word of God. Las Tunas, Cuba

While Brother Maikel Batista had approximately two and a half years to study the Book of Mormon, a majority of our new saints accepted The Church of Jesus Christ and its doctrine with a simple belief. They saw the fruits of the Spirit and felt convicted by God's Spirit that their covenant was being made in truth. God took their simple belief and began layering greater understandings on top of it. For Brother Juan Rodriguez-Oliva, this meant setting aside his previous understandings as a Protestant Minister, and making a conscious decision to start again from "square one." While training during the week, the group was discussing the Apostasy and Restoration in great detail, and Brother Juan arose and began to speak. The Spirit whispered to one of our missionaries and told him to record (seemingly a strange moment in the middle of a training session). Brother Juan explained that he had accepted the Restored Gospel on pure faith, but had prayed to the Lord that he needed divine confirmation of the veracity of the Book of the Mormon. This picture captures the exact moment when Brother Juan held the Book of Mormon to his chest and tearfully declared to the assembled brothers that the Lord spoke to him, confirming that "the Book of Mormon is the Word of God."

## Cuba's Future is Bright



A Cuban map is presented to our Church President Las Tunas, Cuba

In their excitement for the Restored Gospel, the Cuban leadership team met several times to document all warm list locations where the Saints have family, friends, and other contacts interested to hear this beautiful Gospel. As Brother Maikel was involved in pastoral training throughout the island, several of these contacts are church leaders with their own congregations. The brothers presented the missionary team with a map of Cuba, pinpointing twenty-two (22) locations to target for expansion. The first such location is located in the Santiago de Cuba province on the east of the island, where Brother Jose and Sister Odalia reside. After receiving an invitation to come listen to the missionaries, they decided they would make the five-hour journey to Tunas to silently observe and report back to their congregations. During the first trip to the waters of baptism, the missionaries began singing a song written by the Saints in Mexico that speaks of the pureness of the doctrine of Jesus Christ as found in His Church, and that the world does not have this divine guidance. As the brothers sang, a sweet angelic voice was heard as if coming from on high, but it was actually Odalia being fed by the Spirit, singing the song word for word, even though she had never before heard it. The Spirit of God that Brother Jose and Sister Odalia felt through the message of the song and the ensuing preaching convicted them, and they were baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ. Plans are now underway to return to Cuba with a specific charge to

visit Santiago de Cuba, to help Brother Jose teach the Restored Gospel to the two small congregations he has raised up there.



Sister Odalia and Brother Jose, from Santiago de Cuba province.

## Visions of Aquamarine



Brothers Joel Gehly and Miguel Bicelis exhort the congregation at the waters of baptism, at Puerto Padre, Cuba.

When a sister had a vision of Cuba's baptisms taking place in aquamarine waters one week prior to the trip, the missionary team thought it strange. Las Tunas is a land-locked city, and with poor transportation infrastructure, it sits approximately two hours away from the Caribbean in either direction. Of course, we would rely on a nearby river or reservoir to perform baptisms, which a map showed to be plentiful. Upon arrival, the travel team was told that Cuba's dry season meant the rivers were all dry, and access to nearby reservoirs was prohibited due to their usage for drinking water. On Saturday, February 12, 2022, after a bumpy two-hour journey north to Bahia de Puerto Padre, twenty souls were reborn in the aquamarine waters of the Caribbean Sea, fulfilling the sister's vision.

(Continued on page 7)

## Teresa's Journey to Become Your Sister

Teresa Velazquez-Gonzalez was desperate in life. Conflict, persecution and strife had taken their toll and she knew that she had to escape along with her children to find a better life. Through fasting and prayer, the Lord told her to travel to the province of Las Tunas. Upon arrival, she began to walk through the streets of the city with a constant prayer in her heart to lead her to the correct final destination. She walked for hours and hours throughout the city, until the Lord directed her to a specific neighborhood where she was told she would meet a man of God. She made a turn onto a street and in the distance spotted a man that the Spirit confirmed was

the individual she was to approach. This man was Maikel Batista, and he testified of a new, better way he recently came to know, and that missionaries were coming to share the Good News. Teresa's journey was completed on Saturday, February 19, 2022 when she entered the waters of baptism along with her son, Daniel.



This photograph captures the moment where Sister Teresa was crouched on the shores of the Caribbean, peacefully watching her son Brother

Daniel and Apostle Joel Gehly in the distance conversing through hand signals, laughing, and enjoying God's goodness together.

**NEXT TRIP:  
MAY 13TH-23RD  
YOUR PRAYERS ARE  
APPRECIATED!**

GMBA News



## "Finer than Frog's Hair" in North Dakota!

By Sister Connie King Gottschall King



Hi there! I'm Sister Connie, originally from a small town in western Pennsylvania. The Lord brought me about nine and a half years ago to remote North Dakota (ND) (where there are only about 10 people per square mile) to live on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, home of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA) people. My prayer was that, if the Lord provided a job, then I would follow Him there. As you can see, that happened.

I would not have been able to move approximately 1,500 miles across the country to such an unfamiliar wilderness if I had not relied completely upon God. Relying on God is not a new thing for me. Having "goodly parents like Nephi of old," I was raised in the Vanderbilt Branch in a humble way from an earthly standpoint, but in a very "rich-beyond-measure" way, spiritually. My parents, Brother Lawrence (a faithful minister of God) and Sister Susanna King (deaconess and dedicated servant, having gone on to her reward) raised me to be kind to others and to look to the Lord for all of my wants and needs.

As I was growing up, we did not have much in the way of material things, but we had the Gospel and the joy of

the Lord! Both my dad and my mom have used the phrase, "finer than frog's hair." Have you ever heard that expression? It is something that I grew up hearing my mom say many, many times. When someone asks you how you are doing, and you answer, "finer than frog's hair," what you are really saying is (since frogs don't have hair, but instead have fine microscopic cilia) ... "I am really, really fine!"

Believe it or not, at the time of this writing, my dad reported that he had just stated, "we are finer than frog's hair in Pennsylvania," to the car salesman he had been negotiating with! My dad then went on to explain to the man what the expression meant.

My mom also taught us to bring a lot of laughter to situations. She had a knack for joking and making everyone feel included, even amidst her own physical ailments and challenges. I don't think that my mom particularly liked frogs, however, she did fully rely on God (F.R.O.G.) pretty much every day. Yep! FULLY rely on God! Like the scripture in Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" or like my favorite, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me!" (Philippians 4:13).

Now, as a welcomed part of the MHA Nation, I completely subscribe to the F.R.O.G. and "finer than frog's hair" approaches!! The open lands of North Dakota, as you may know, have some extreme temperatures which may cause you to wonder... "do frogs live there?" Believe it or not,

frogs do live in North Dakota...where the winters are cold and the people are warm! However, while the ND frogs typically bury themselves deep into the ground to avoid the winter's harsh winds and freezing weather conditions, hibernation is not an option for me.

I am "Following God Thru the Wilderness" (Songs of Zion, #202) to

help others be able to be... "finer than frog's hair!" Without the strong foundation that the Gospel helped me build for myself and the support from my parents, I would not be able to share my testimony and live a Christ-centered life. I praise God that He is always with me, as I fully rely on Him.

### #202. FOLLOWING GOD THRU THE WILDERNESS

(Deuteronomy 2:7 "...He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee...")

1. Following God thru the wilderness, knowing His senses are keen, Following God when the road is so dark, knowing He sees the unseen, Trusting each day in His mercy, walking each day in His love. Following God when I can't see the way, knowing He leads from above.
2. Following God thru the wilderness, knowing He knoweth the way, Following God thru the enemy lines, driving their armies away, He's never lost any battles, He never fell to the foe, Following God when I can't see ahead, knowing He knows where to go.
3. Following God thru the wilderness, over the mountains we go, Following God thru the bright summer days, into the cold winter snow, Over the fire and the fury, over the ravage of war, On to that city we've longed so to see, there we'll find peace evermore.

# Happy Mother's Day

## Just Like My Mother!

### What is one trait that your mother had that you try to emulate the most?"

"Her faith and trust in the healing power of our Lord and Savior." -Brother Michael McGuire, Cape Coral, FL Mission.

"She always was kind and thoughtful of others." -Sister Joann Cotellesse, Lakeside, AZ Branch.

"Her hospitality and love for everyone." -Sister Betty D'Orazio, Metuchen, NJ Branch.

"My mother, Sister Isabella Bologna had a beautiful spirit of hospitality. Our home was always full on Sundays and holidays with brothers and sisters, especially those who did not have family nearby. She also entertained babies when their moms were sick. One morning, I woke up and there was a baby in a dresser drawer padded with blankets. Her mother was in the hospital and she needed someone to take care of her. My mother said, 'Yes, bring her over.'" -Sister Cathy Gentile, Farmington Hills, MI Branch.

"Hospitality." -Sister Gelsa Staley, Forest Hills, FL Branch.

"I have such close friends in the Church because of my mom's hospitality and love for the young people. My mom was always willing and excited to have a basement full of young people, and now I try to plan/host events for the young people to socialize and develop those same relationships." -Brother Chuck Maddox Jr., Forest Hills, FL Branch.

"Patience." -Sister Cathy Genaro, Forest Hills, FL Branch

"My mom has the gift of hospitality. She is always willing to invite people over, take them out to eat, or make them cookies just because. I've always admired this quality and try to follow her example in my own life." -Sister Alyssa Maddox, Lake Worth, FL Branch

"Her love and dedication to her family." -Sister Mary Bertolo, Detroit, MI Branch #1

"My mother always showed the love of God to all people." -Sister Bea Hopkins, Quincy, FL Branch

"My mother was always baking for church and I try to do the same for every fellowship gathering." -Sister Anita Znoy, Creekside, MI Branch

"The gift of generosity." -Sister Kim Morle, Atlanta, GA Branch

"Her passion for the things she does." -Brother Giovanni Lind, Lake Worth, FL Branch

"I can't limit it to just one! Supportive, faithful, prayerful & hospitable. Just to name a few!" -Sister KarenJo Pandone, Farmington Hills, MI Branch

"Love everyone and pray for everyone." -Sister Sharon Sloan, Forest Hills, FL Branch

"My mother was able to let things slough off. Her famous phrase was, 'I can't be bothered with that.' I should be bothered less. Right, Mom?" -Sister Dianne Maddox, Lake Worth, FL Branch

"My mother was steady and even-tempered, especially when it came to trusting in the Lord for outcomes and solutions. I try to follow her example when difficulties arise." -Brother Anthony Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch

"She had a lot of love for the brothers and sisters to share and was very cheerful. She already met our God, and her name was Martha Rodriguez." -Brother Carlos Rodriguez, Jr., Tijuana, Mexico Branch

"Faithful service to God, The Church of Jesus Christ, the family of God, and all its auxiliaries." -Sister Donna Bogle, Aliquippa, PA Branch

"Faith." -Sister Kathy Golling, Monongahela, PA Branch

"I always remember my mom reading the Scriptures. As a child, I would find her in the bedroom reading the Bible. When I was older and visited her, the Bible and Book of Mormon were always on the Kkitchen table. That was the first thing she did every morning." -Sister Flo Perri, Lake Worth, FL Branch

"My mother was a very patient person and that's what I try to emulate." -Brother George Kovacic, Middle Tennessee Mission

"My mother was a very funny spiritual lady and she found humor in everything. I learned to laugh and thank God, got her sense of humor, it is such a blessing to see someone smile." -Sister Virginia Surprenant, Bell, CA Branch

"She sang soprano with so much energy and participated singing solos and duets with my dad and sang in the Church choir and community choirs." -Sister Diane Surdock, San Diego, CA Branch

"My mom is very caring for others." -Brother Michael Zaino, Edison, NJ Branch

"My mother, Sister Dorothy Henderson, was very loving to one and all! She had a great sense of discernment in all things!" -Sister Barbara Weiner, Irvine, CA Branch

"My mother is considerate of the less fortunate." -Sister Renée Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch

"My mom was never afraid to take on big roles in the Church, from running the Print House to being the adult sunday school teacher for many years, all while supporting my father and his work for the Church." - Sister Carolynn O'Connor, Farmington Hills

## 5 Amazing Facts

### Anticipation of Fulfilled Prophecy

By Brother Jerry Valenti

**5** Today, we live in anticipation of the fulfillment of numerous latter-day prophecies that have been foretold in the scriptures. Although the reasons may vary for looking forward to a prophecy being fulfilled, we as followers of Christ anticipate the excitement of being with the Lord and those who love Him. Here are 5 amazing facts regarding different reasons that people in the scriptures had for anticipating the fulfillment of a great prophecy—the coming to earth of Jesus Christ.

**1 Students of Prophecy** - People who study the scriptures and prophecies have a level of understanding regarding what will happen in the future. They look forward to the fulfillment of prophecy to validate that they have properly understood those prophecies. An example of this would be the wise men who traveled a long distance to Bethlehem (see Matthew 2:1-7) to see the Christ child, based on their understanding of where and when He would be born.

**2 Directly Involved** - People greatly anticipate the fulfillment of prophecies for which they are directly involved and/or used by God to bring them about. Mary and Joseph were used by God to bring forth the Son of God. Mary was the virgin foretold to bring forth the child and Joseph was the link to Bethlehem where it was foretold that Christ would be born.

**3 Extension of Life on Earth** - As foretold in Isaiah 65:20-22, we anticipate that life on earth will be extended for those who are alive at the time of Zion. In 3 Nephi 1, the Nephites had been sentenced to death and the only way their lives could be saved was for the sign to be given that Christ had been born. Just in the nick of time, Nephi was told that the prophecy would be fulfilled—the sign of Christ's birth was given and the lives of the Nephite believers were extended.

**4 Able to Die in Peace** - Witnessing fulfillment of prophecy helps to increase someone's faith in all that is anticipated, such that they can die in peace, knowing that the resurrection and eternal life await. The Lord revealed to a man named Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Christ child. When Simeon encountered Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus in the temple, he took the baby in his

arms and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:29-30).

**5 The Enemy** - The enemy is also aware of prophecies and will do his best to fight against the people of the Lord, sending discouragement and doubt and whatever can be thrown at them to try to take them off the path. When King Herod met with the wise men, he expressed interest in the birth of Christ so that he could worship Him (see Matthew 2:8) but the real reason he was interested was so he could try to kill Him.

## Ladies' Uplift Circle News

### It's Contagious By Sister Luann Carson

**W**hen a patient is admitted to the hospital with any communicable disease, they are assigned an isolation room. They are separated from other patients, and any caregiver is required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep from spreading the disease. All precautions are taken in order to contain the virus, bacteria or spore that promotes the illness.

We all tend to avoid contact with people who are coughing, sneezing, have a fever, or any symptoms of contagious disease. And with good reason! We don't want to be infected with sickness, we want to stay healthy.

Do you know what else is contagious? Anger and negativity! A bad attitude can infect people, sometimes spreading rapidly. We can actually "catch" anger and negativity just like we catch a cold. But there are some choices we can make. We can let the negativity infect us. Or we can avoid the people who have the potential to spread anger. Scripture reads, "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go" (Proverbs 22:24). Another choice (especially if avoidance isn't an option) is to wear our PPE. Does that include gown, mask, and gloves? Not really, in this circumstance. Our 'PPE' is the Spirit of God that we embrace. It fills us inside and out. It keeps us (like a mask) from breathing in the infectious particles of anger. His Spirit protects us (like gloves) when we touch negativity. It covers our entire being (like 'gowning up' before entering an isolation room).

Guess what else is contagious? Joy, the love of God, happiness, and inner peace! It's a great comfort to be in contact with people who are filled with these good things. You know the people I'm talking about. The ones you love to be around. They lift you up with their enthusiasm. Since joy can be contagious, when we find ourselves in contact with joyful, happy people, people who love God and want to serve Him, people who are giving, caring, and kind, we can 'catch' those things also. Joyful people can improve our moods and even our lifestyles! Surround yourself with people that have the positive qualities that you want. Or, better yet, be the person filled with joy that others want to be around.

"Optimism is a happiness magnet. If you stay positive, good things and good people will be drawn to you."— Mary Lou Retton

Although we think of bacteria (or germs) as bad, there are actually good bacteria. This type of germ can actually be beneficial to the body, protecting skin, cleansing the digestive system, and preventing disease.

So don't spread colds. Don't spread hatred, fear, or anger. Spread germs of kindness, joy, and the love of God.

II Nephi 2:25 reminds us that "men are, that they might have joy."



## John 1:14-18—Other Sheep

In the Bible in John 1:15 & 16, Jesus talks about His followers as being His sheep (a very important animal to humans). He calls Himself our Shepherd. Now a shepherd anywhere is with his sheep around the clock. A shepherd finds water, food, and a safe place from storms and wild animals. He guides and protects his sheep. At night he puts them in a fold, which is a pen where they can all stay safely together.

Jesus told His people over in Israel "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold: them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." (See John 1:14-18.)

The world does not know who these other sheep were. But we do. In the Book of Mormon after His death and resurrection, Jesus came to the Americas and met His followers here. He told them (See 3 Nephi 16), "then I will gather them from the four quarters of the earth." And when He was ready to leave He told them "But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost to God. He knows where he has taken them." (See 3 Nephi 17:4.)

He told them that they were His other sheep. (See 2 Nephi 29:12.) He also told them that

there were other people He was going to go and meet and teach.

These people also are His sheep! And it is our job to take the Book of Mormon and the Bible to the lost people of the world who do not know the great promises of God. There are millions out there who need to know the love and miracles of God.

Some of you will get to grow up and go talk to and share with these mysterious "other sheep." They are waiting, and God is preparing you. He is loving you and healing you and showing you His power. You already have a testimony of God's goodness in your life. Be the good person you already are. Love others and shine kindness on people.

Pray and ask God if there is someone you can help. Maybe they are one of the other sheep! You too can be a part of these exciting times of bringing the power and love of God to his other sheep!

With love, Your friend, *Sister Jan*

Dear Friends,

What is interesting about the Bible and the Book of Mormon is that they are books with many layers of understanding. We may read something one time, our elders may speak to us about things we have not thought about, and like little babies, our understanding of the things of God will grow and grow.

One of the most beautiful mysteries is the fact that God can and does see each one of us. We were specially created to do His will, to help others, and to serve Him of our own free will. We are promised a safe and beautiful place in heaven once we die also.

God does not force us to pray, talk to Him, or try new things that need His help. He just blesses us so much when we do. God and His son Jesus also know when we have done wrong things and need help to stop. The Lord Jesus came to earth as a human, and He understands how hard it is to follow His Spirit sometimes.

And when we fail, He also told us how to be sorry—to repent when we've done wrong. This balances our lives so we do not have to live with regrets and guilt. In the Bible, Jesus tells us we don't have to sacrifice animals and say specific prayers anymore. What He wants for us is a broken heart and a contrite (truly sorry) spirit.

The other interesting thing is that God made promises thousands of years ago to good people that served Him. God keeps His promises. We will see and have seen many of those deep, ancient promises come true in our lifetimes.

A good man named Israel, or Jacob, had twelve sons. When he died he put a blessing on each of them. His son Judah stayed in Israel and became the people called Jews. That's where we get our Bible, from wonderful Jewish believers! And remember, Jesus was a Jew too!

When Jacob blessed his twelve sons (See Genesis 49), Jacob told them what their families' futures would be. He told his favorite son, Joseph that his people would "go over the wall," meaning, cross the big oceans. He says that they would be hated and attacked, but God's blessings would be great on them, even greater than on all the others. Truly, this has happened to the Native Americans on this side of the world.

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## Denying Ho-Hum Normal (to Gain the Thrill of Different)

By Sister Michelle Watson

My husband, Michael, tells a lot of humorous stories from his childhood, and one of my favorites involves his middle school art teacher.

There was an unfortunate classroom incident concerning a mound of clay that resulted in the frazzled teacher literally shaking preteen Michael till his teeth rattled.

When Michael reported the episode at home, Mama Bear was not happy. She went full-on lioness.

Michael's mom decided to confront this art teacher the next day in the busy after-school parking lot. (Every soul in the school was in that parking lot.) She cornered him, aired her concern, and they actually had a very civil discussion about his treatment of Michael. It ended on good terms.

It being a Christian school, the teacher said, "Let's pray together."

All three of them joined hands and prayed.

Right there in the parking lot.

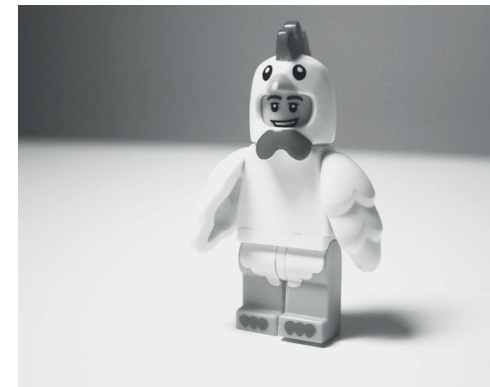
In plain sight of every soul in the school.

Michael said that, even at a Christian school, praying with two adults in a parking lot was...shall we say, not helpful for a 12-year-old kid trying to fit in with his peers.

Even though he was raised right, Michael didn't want to be seen praying out loud in public with two adults — holding hands no less.

For the record, now that Michael is an adult, he'll pray in any parking lot, anytime, anywhere. He doesn't care who sees. Thankfully, he grew out of that phase.

But sometimes we make it to adulthood and never really arc out of that immature mindset — the mindset that we want to look, act, and seem just like everyone



else even though God has called us to be different.

I repeatedly fall into this trap.

Even though I'm Christian, I feel the need to resemble those who aren't.

Why Do I Strive for 'Normal'?

I want to be seen as a "normal" person who also happens to be Christian. Like people are surprised when they find out. "Oh really? You are? Wow, you seem so normal!"

It's very important to portray cultural relevance, I tell myself. So, I binge that popular TV show, play that killing game ova-n-ova, and memorize the lyrics to the raunchiest songs in the Top 40.

I don't want people to think that following Christ means that you can't be normal. Tsk, tsk. Nobody's going to accept my invitation to church if I can't speak pop culture. I won't seem normal.

(I may do this out of false piety. "I'm not too holy to have a few drinks." "I don't want to appear self-righteous, so I'll laugh at that inappropriate joke.")

But, what's so wrong with being perceived as a Christian first and foremost?

A Peculiar Kinda Folk

1 Peter 2:9 says that Christians are a peculiar

people. For the longest time, I thought this meant "odd," but "peculiar" has several definitions. The one that KJV translators had in mind when they selected the word is actually "belonging exclusively to." As in, "the scent peculiar to dogs" or "the quirks peculiar to 12-year-old boys."

I am peculiar to God. I belong to Him — only Him. I'm part of a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." If I'm God's follower, then I should act like it (especially in public). And I should be known for it.

For me, a big part of self-denial is cheerfully forfeiting "normal" in favor of obedience to Christ.

The world doesn't need Christians who look like everyone else. It needs Christians who are dazzlingly different.

The world needs people who'll say:

"I'll pray for you right here in this parking lot."

"I've never seen that TV show, but I've seen miracles."

"I don't know that song on the radio, but I know the song of redeeming love."

Michael found himself in that parking lot prayer circle because he was a special treasure belonging to his mother. Am I willing to pray in a parking lot because I'm God's treasure? Or am I too normal for that?

I'm called to "show forth the praises of him who hath called [me] out of darkness into His marvelous light." A light that a weary world unknowingly craves.

When I lose my grip on normal, I gain the privilege of shining the light of Jesus Christ.

## May Blessing Bits

**BB My God, My Protector** - I have worked in a hospital the entirety of the COVID-19 pandemic and have, from time to time, worked with COVID patients. At the height of the pandemic, every morning before my shift my dad, Brother David Lovalvo, would anoint me. One morning before my shift, I got a call from my boss that I was going to have to work on a COVID unit. After I hung up, I went into my dad's room and he anointed me. Not five minutes later, I got another call from my boss saying there was a mistake and I'd be working on my home unit that day. I don't know what would've happened that day on the other unit, but it is just a small reminder that God was with me and protected me. To this day, I use this experience to help keep my mind at ease as I still face the uncertainty of the pandemic at work.—Sister Sydney Lovalvo, Farmington Hills, MI Branch

**BB Constantly Abiding** - I've had eight major abdominal surgeries in my lifetime. None were easy—many accompanied by extremely complicated recoveries which were physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing. During my most recent surgery in 2018, I was blessed to have a slightly different experience. This time many brothers and sisters related

experiences and comforting assurances that the Holy Spirit was abiding with me. One I received was as follows; "Brother Kevin, I wanted to share with you that as I was praying for you just now asking that God would be with you, I was given a vision where I saw a hospital room with you in a bed. Next to your bed appeared two angelic beings arrayed in white garments. They stood beside you, abiding with you. The vision ended. God bless you, my brother!" Mere description fails to convey it fully. I can only explain that the very atmosphere of the room was different than the many others in which I'd been hospitalized before. There was a tangible peace there. God's mercies made my burden easier and I knew He had answered the Saints' prayers on my behalf.—Brother Kevin Coppia, Creekside, MI Branch

**BB He is My Stronghold and My Refuge** - In September 2021, while I was hosting office hours for my Independent Studies students, I heard quite a bit of helicopter activity outside. I didn't think too much of it—it's not entirely uncommon—until it sounded as if there were several helicopters circling directly over my home. As I left the office, located at the back of the house, I could smell smoke and instantly thought of my two children who were napping upstairs. Assessing the situation in my home, I realized that we were safe, but as I looked out the window from our second-story, I could see

several rescue and fire crews were working to put out fires on the hills just across the street from us. I woke Rocco and Lucy, grabbed only what was absolutely necessary, and drove away from our home—prayerfully leaving it in God's hands. I praise God that I was able to get my children to safety and that He allowed our home to remain safe from any potential fire damage.—Sister Elizabeth McDonnell, Bell, CA

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



**Question for this month:** What is one quality about your dad or something he does that always makes you smile?



**Answer from last month:** What is one trait that your mother had that you try to emulate the most?  
Turn to page 8 for answers to this question.



*But great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea;... 2 Nephi 10:21*