

## President Monson

Thank you, brethren. The choir and congregation will now sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. Following

her remarks, the choir will sing “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.” Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

---

The choir and congregation sang “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

---

## Sister Anne C. Pingree

### African Saints seek temple recommends

I will never forget a sauna-hot day in the lush rain forest of southeastern Nigeria. My husband and I had traveled to one of the most remote locations in our mission so he could conduct temple recommend interviews with members in the Ikot Eyo district. Some in this growing district had been Church members less than two years. All the members lived 3,000 miles away from the nearest temple in Johannesburg, South Africa. None had received their temple endowment.

These members knew the appointed day each month we would come to their district, but even we didn’t know the exact hour we would arrive; nor could we call, for telephones were rare in that part of West Africa. So these committed African Saints gathered early in the morning to wait all day if necessary for their temple recommend interviews. When we arrived, I noticed among those waiting in the searing heat were two Relief Society sisters dressed in bold-patterned wrappers, white blouses, and the traditional African headties.

Many hours later, after all the interviews were completed, as my husband and I drove back along that sandy jungle trail, we were stunned when we saw these two sisters still walking. We realized they had trekked from their village—a distance of 18 miles round trip—just to obtain a tem-

ple recommend they knew they would never have the privilege of using.

### Recommends are symbols of faith

These Nigerian Saints believed the counsel of President Howard W. Hunter: “It would please the Lord for every adult member to be worthy of—and to carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.”<sup>1</sup> In her hand, carefully wrapped in a clean handkerchief, each sister carried her precious temple recommend. I carry their examples of faith carefully wrapped in my heart.

These two covenant Relief Society sisters embody the meaning of Alma’s teaching “concerning faith—faith is *not* to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye *hope* for things which are *not seen*, which are *true*.”<sup>2</sup>

Faith is the most personal reflection of adoration for—and devotion to—our Heavenly Father and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Anchored by this first and all-important principle of the gospel, we look to our Savior, knowing “Jesus [is] the author and finisher of our faith.”<sup>3</sup>

### Ancestors’ legacy of faith

My great-great-aunt Laura Clark Phelps was the first member of the Clark family who joined the Church. She was a

woman who uniquely demonstrated a faith in the Lord that stands fast, nothing wavering.<sup>4</sup>

Laura's legacy teaches much about the doctrine of faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."<sup>5</sup> She received her patriarchal blessing from Joseph Smith Sr. In it she was counseled to be faithful and she would have an inheritance in Zion. She was further told to "call upon God in faith, and if thou wilt thou shall have all of the desires of thine heart."<sup>6</sup>

Laura and her husband knew the Prophet Joseph Smith. On one occasion the Prophet and his brother Hyrum came running to their farm outside Far West, Missouri, where Laura hid them behind the clothes curtain. She calmly faced the mob leaders who rushed in shortly afterward in search of the Prophet.

Laura experienced the joys and privations of the early Church members in this dispensation. Her faith deepened as she was driven from her homes and separated from her husband on various occasions. As an efficient midwife, she worked and traveled day and night in all kinds of weather to help provide for her family. This overexertion and exposure took their toll. She died at the young age of 34, leaving behind her husband and five children. She did not live to see her children, her grandchildren, or her great-grandchildren following her in faith. She did not experience the blessings of receiving her own temple endowment in this earth life, blessings I believe she would have cherished.

Laura's faithful life bears witness of this verse from Hebrews: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."<sup>7</sup> Faith lived in Laura, and Laura lived her faith.

I love my great-great-aunt Laura and carry her example in my heart. She, like

those Relief Society sisters in Nigeria, reminds me "all things are possible to [them] that [believe]."<sup>8</sup>

### **Faith to see the promises that are afar off**

Faith, the spiritual ability to be persuaded of promises that are seen "afar off" but that may not be attained in this life, is a sure measure of those who truly believe. Elder Bruce R. McConkie expressed this truth in these words: "Faith in its full and pure form requires an unshakable assurance and . . . absolute confidence that [God] will hear our pleas and grant our petitions" in His own due time.<sup>9</sup> Believing that, we too can "stand fast in the faith" today and tomorrow.<sup>10</sup>

It matters not where we live or what our individual circumstances may be. Each day our righteous living can demonstrate a faith in Jesus Christ that sees beyond mortal heartaches, disappointments, and unfulfilled promises. It is a glorious thing to possess a faith that enables us to look forward to that day "when all that was promised the Saints will be given."<sup>11</sup>

As they walked with faith in every footstep along that sandy jungle trail in West Africa, those valiant Nigerian sisters could not have imagined that the walls of a holy temple of God would one day rise in their own nation. They could not have imagined that the inspired words of another prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley, would bring the promised blessings they hoped for and had seen "afar off." They only knew that the Lord restored His gospel in these times, that a testimony of that gospel burned in their hearts, that faith lit their way in life. Then they acted on a prophet's counsel to be worthy and to carry a temple recommend.

### **Miracle of a temple in Nigeria**

My husband and I tenderly recalled these sisters and so many other West African Saints on that remarkable day in

April 2000 when President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “We announce at this conference that we hope to build a house of the Lord in Aba, Nigeria.”<sup>12</sup> Brothers and sisters, I testify that sometimes “miracles . . . confirm . . . faith.”<sup>13</sup> The temples of Africa are a magnificent representation of miracles wrought by the faith of so many Saints in the small villages and large cities spread across that vast continent.

I am deeply grateful that I have seen the faith that brought two pioneers in Africa many miles to a temple recommend interview. I rejoice that the temple in progress in Nigeria will bring these women, their families, and thousands more the opportunity to use their recommends as both a symbol and embodiment of their faith.

### See afar off with spiritual vision

Sometimes those blessings in our lives that we have yet to receive lie beyond the scope of mortal eyes. I testify that it is always faith that allows us to see “afar off” with spiritual vision all that God intends for His children.

Just as surely as the sisters knew—who walked along that sandy jungle trail—I know that God lives. He loves each of us on every continent and desires to bless us one by one. I know that our faith in Jesus

Christ can sustain us each day as we “do all things that lie in our power,” knowing with the “utmost assurance”<sup>14</sup> that those promises we may see “afar off” will one day bring all the blessings we hope for. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5.
2. Alma 32:21; italics added.
3. Hebrews 12:2.
4. See 1 Corinthians 16:13; James 1:6.
5. Hebrews 11:1.
6. Morris Calvin Phelps, *Life History of Laura Clark* (Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.), microfilm, 3.
7. Hebrews 11:13.
8. Mark 9:23.
9. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 187.
10. 1 Corinthians 16:13.
11. “Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 111; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 88.
13. Bible Dictionary, “Faith,” 669.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.

---

The choir sang “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.”

---

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Television shows attack values, families

The fall of the year is when television airs its season premieres and introduces its new shows. A friend told me that there are 37 new TV series being inaugurated this fall. As he has read the reviews, he has found few if any of them he would want his children to watch. Most of the sitcoms, dramas, and reality shows contain immorality, violence, and subtle ridicule of traditional values and traditional families. Each

year the new shows seem to get worse, pushing the envelope of what the public will accept. What comes out of Hollywood, off the Internet, and in much of today’s music creates a web of decadence that can trap our children and endanger all of us.

### We must respond to threats against family

Church leaders have the responsibility to speak out on moral issues and to counsel individuals and families. The family is