

42. Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Mexico City Mexico Area Conference 1972, 45.
43. Doctrine and Covenants 97:21.

The choir sang “How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place.”

President Hinckley

We are grateful to the choir for their beautiful music. Following my remarks, they will sing “Come, Ye Thankful People,” and the benediction will then be offered by Elder W. Douglas Shumway of the Seventy. We shall meet again at 2:00.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

President Hinckley’s health

My brothers and sisters, let me first deal with a personal matter.

The President of the Church belongs to the entire Church. His life is not his own. His mission is to serve.

Now, as all of you know, I am somewhat old in years. I had my 96th birthday last June. I have learned from many sources that there is considerable speculation concerning my health. I wish to put the record straight. If I last a few months longer, I will have served to an older age than any previous President. I do not say this to be boastful but rather grateful. Last January I underwent major surgery. It was a miserable experience, particularly for one who had never previously been a patient in a hospital. Following this was the question as to whether I should undergo further treatment. I chose to do so. My doctors have called the results miraculous. I know that the favorable results come from your many prayers in my behalf. I am deeply grateful to you.

The Lord has permitted me to live; I do not know for how long. But whatever the time, I shall continue to give my best to the task at hand. It is not an easy thing to preside over this large, complex Church. Nothing escapes the attention of the First Presidency. No major decision, no expenditure of funds is made without their approval. The responsibility and stress are great.

But we shall carry on as long as the Lord wishes. As I said last April, we are in His hands. I feel well; my health is reasonably good. But when it is time for a successor, the transition will be smooth and according to the will of Him whose Church this is. And so, we go forward in faith—and faith is the theme I wish to discuss this morning.

Moving forward with faith

From the beginning this Church has moved forward with faith. Faith was the strength of the Prophet Joseph.

I am grateful for the faith that took him into the grove to pray. I am grateful for his faith to translate and publish the Book of Mormon. I am grateful that he went to the Lord in prayer that was answered with the bestowal of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. I am grateful that in faith he organized the Church and set it on its course. I thank him for the gift of his life as a testimony to the truth of this work.

Faith was also the moving power behind Brigham Young. I often reflect on the tremendous faith he exercised in bringing a very large number of people to settle this Salt Lake Valley. He knew very little of the area. He had never seen it, except in vision. I suppose he had studied what meager information there was, but he knew almost nothing of the soil or the water or the climate. And yet when he

looked upon it, he said without hesitation, “This is the right place, drive on” (in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:224).

And so it has been with each of the Presidents of the Church. In the face of terrible opposition, they have moved forward with faith. Whether it was crickets destroying their crops. Whether it was drought or late frost. Whether it was persecution by the federal government. Or, more recently, whether it was an urgent need to extend humanitarian aid to victims of the tsunami, or earthquakes, or floods in divers places, it has all been the same. Welfare shelves have been emptied. Cash by the millions has been dispatched to those in need, regardless of Church membership—all in faith.

Suffering and faith of pioneers of 1856

This is an important anniversary year in the history of the Church, as all of you know. It is the 150th anniversary of the coming of the Willie and Martin handcart companies and the Hunt and Hodgett wagon companies which accompanied them.

Much has been written concerning this, and I need not go into detail. All of you are familiar with the story. Suffice it to say that those who set out on the long journey from the British Isles to the valley of the Great Salt Lake began their travel in faith. They had little or no knowledge of what they were getting into. But they moved forward. They began their journey with great expectation. That expectation gradually failed them as they moved west. As they commenced the tedious journey following the Platte River and then up the valley of the Sweetwater, the cold hand of death took its fearsome toll. Their food was rationed; their oxen died; their carts broke down; they had inadequate bedding and clothing. Storms raged. They sought shelter, but they found none. The storms

beat about them. They literally starved to death. Scores died and were buried in the frozen ground.

“Go and bring in those people”

Fortunately, they were passed by Franklin D. Richards on his way from England. He had a lightweight conveyance with horses and was able to travel much faster. He came on to this valley. It was this very season of the year. The general conference was in session. When Brigham Young received the news, he immediately stood before the congregation and said:

“I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak to-day and during the conference, it is this, on the 5th day of October, 1856, many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with hand-carts, and probably many are now 700 miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, ‘to get them here.’ I want the brethren who may speak to understand that their text is the people on the plains, and the subject matter for this community is to send for them and bring them in before the winter sets in. . . .

“I shall call upon the Bishops this day, I shall not wait until to-morrow, nor until [the] next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen, I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them; also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, . . . 60 or 65 good spans of mules, or horses, with harness. . . .

“I will tell you all,” said he, “that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains, and attend strictly to those things which we call temporal, or

temporal duties, otherwise your faith will be in vain; the preaching you have heard will be in vain to you, and you will sink to hell, unless you attend to the things we tell you" (*Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252).

Immediately horses and mules and strong wagons were offered. Flour in abundance was forthcoming. Warm clothing and bedding were quickly assembled. Within a day or two the loaded wagons were moving eastward through the snow.

When the rescuers reached the beleaguered Saints, they were like angels from heaven. People wept tears of gratitude. The handcart people were transferred into wagons so they could travel more quickly to the Salt Lake community.

Some two hundred died, but a thousand were saved.

Mary Penfold Goble among the victims

Among those who were in dire circumstances on the plains was my wife's great-grandmother. She was part of the Hunt wagon company.

Today, my wife's gravesite in the Salt Lake City Cemetery looks down at the gravesite of her great-grandmother, Mary Penfold Goble, who died in the arms of her daughter as she was entering this valley on December 11, 1856. She was buried the next day. She had lost three of her children on that long journey. The feet of a surviving daughter were terribly frozen.

What a story it is. It is filled with suffering and hunger and cold and death. It is replete with accounts of freezing rivers that had to be waded through; of howling blizzards; of the long, slow climb up Rocky Ridge. With the passing of this anniversary year, it may become largely forgotten. But hopefully it will be told again and again to remind future generations of the suffering and the faith of those who came before. Their faith is our inheritance. Their faith is a reminder to us of the price they paid for the comforts we enjoy.

The faith of a widow

But faith is not demonstrated only in big heroic events, such as the coming of the handcart pioneers. It is also demonstrated in small but significant events. Let me tell you of one such event.

When the Manti Utah Temple was under construction some 120 years ago, George Paxman worked as a finish carpenter. He and his young wife, Martha, had one child and were expecting another.

While hanging one of the heavy east doors of the temple, George suffered a strangulated hernia. He was in terrible pain. Martha laid him in a wagon and took him to the town of Nephi, where she put him on the train and took him to Provo. There he died. Spurning marriage, she remained a widow for 62 years, supporting herself with needlework.

Now permit me to diverge from this narrative to say that when I was engaged to marry my wife, I gave her a ring. When we were married, I gave her a wedding band. She wore them for years. Then one day I noticed that she had taken them off and was wearing this little gold wedding band. It had belonged to her grandmother. The ring had been given her by her husband, George. The ring was the only thing he left in this life. One day in the spring, Martha was housecleaning. She brought all of the furnishings out to give the house a thorough cleaning. Upon shaking the straw from the mattress, she looked down, and the ring was gone. She looked everywhere most carefully. It was the only physical remembrance of her beloved husband. She raked through the straw with her fingers but could not find the ring. Tears fell from her eyes. She went to her knees and prayed that the Lord would help her to find the ring. When she opened her eyes, she looked down and there it was.

Now I hold it in my hand. It is too small for all of you to see. It is 18-karat gold, old and scarred and bent. But it represents faith, the faith of a widow who

pleaded with the Lord in her extremity. Such faith is the wellspring of activity. It is the root of hope and trust. It is this simple faith that all of us so much need.

The need for increased faith

In the on-working of this great cause, increased faith is what we most need. Without it, the work would stagnate. With it, no one can stop its progress.

Said the Savior, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20).

To his son Helaman, Alma declared, “Preach unto them repentance, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; teach them to

humble themselves and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Alma 37:33).

May the Lord bless us with faith in the great cause of which we are a part. May faith be as a candle to guide us in the night by its light. May it go before us as a cloud in the day.

For this I humbly pray, in the sacred and holy name of Him who is the strength of our faith, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Come, Ye Thankful People.”

Elder W. Douglas Shumway offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 176th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 1, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 176th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.” Then President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by A. Roger Merrill, general president of the