

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD MEETING

The General Priesthood meeting of the Church was held Saturday evening, April 8, 1961, at 7:00 p.m.

President David O. McKay presided and conducted the exercises of the meeting. The Tabernacle Choir Men's Chorus, with Richard P. Condie directing and Alexander Schreiner at the organ, furnished the choral numbers for this meeting.

President David O. McKay made the following remarks as an introduction to the services of this meeting:

President David O. McKay:

You will be interested to know that these services are being relayed by closed circuit to members of the Priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, Barratt Hall, and in 285 other Church buildings from Coast to Coast and in Canada.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the Tabernacle Choir Men's Chorus, with Elder Richard P. Condie as director, and Alexander Schreiner at the organ. We shall probably also have a solo from Brother Dennis Clancy.

ELDER FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My dear brethren, I pray that the beautiful prayer that was offered by President Lewis may be answered in my behalf. I am aware of the responsibility that rests upon me, and I appreciate the opportunity of speaking to you tonight.

I rejoice in the wonderful messages that we have heard from President McKay and others who have spoken to us during this conference, and I am inspired by the great vision of our leaders. I am grateful for the knowledge that I have of the restored gospel and for the knowledge that I have of my Father in heaven and his Son Jesus Christ. The Prophet Joseph Smith is a great inspiration to me, and I thrill in testifying that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ did actually appear to him in the Sacred Grove.

We shall begin these services by the Tabernacle Choir Men's Chorus singing, "The Spirit of God Like A Fire Is Burning." After the singing Elder J. Earl Lewis, former president of the Canadian Mission, will offer the invocation.

The Tabernacle Choir Men's Chorus sang the hymn, "The Spirit of God Like A Fire Is Burning."

Elder J. Earl Lewis, former president of the Canadian Mission offered the invocation.

President David O. McKay:

The Tabernacle Choir Men's Chorus will now sing "Pilgrim's Chorus," directed by Elder Richard P. Condie.

The Tabernacle Choir Men's Chorus sang "Pilgrim's Chorus."

President David O. McKay:

Our first speaker this evening will be Elder Franklin D. Richards, Assistant to the Twelve.

I thrill throughout my body, mind, and spirit when I testify to the truthfulness of that great vision—the first vision of the Prophet Joseph, and I appreciate the wonderful things that the Prophet did in restoring the Church—he was an instrument in the hands of the Lord in restoring the gospel and the priesthood to the earth in this dispensation. I, like you, love and respect our great prophet and leader, President David O. McKay, and I know and testify that he is indeed the prophet of the Lord and the head of the Church of Jesus Christ on this earth today.

Now, brethren, truly the kingdom of God is going forward that the kingdom of heaven may come. President McKay has counseled us that every member of this Church should be a missionary.

Saturday, April 8

Second Day

Tonight my heart is really filled with the missionary spirit. Heretofore the missionary work has been performed chiefly by full-time missionaries and stake and district missionaries. Now as President McKay has told us, each and every one of us has the opportunity of being a missionary. What a glorious opportunity this really gives us when we appreciate what we can do as members of this Church in spreading the gospel.

Another great prophet, President George Albert Smith, said on the anniversary of the first hundred years of the Church: "As we stand on the threshold of a new century, as representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ in all walks of life, we have the responsibility to go among the people at home and abroad, and great will be our happiness as we participate in this new era of growth and development that lies ahead."

Yes, brethren, we are truly in a new era of growth and development, and personally I am grateful and thankful to be a part of it. Realizing this new era, the leaders of the Church are doubling the number of full-time missionaries, and more stake and district missionaries are being called today than ever before. Formerly, the missionaries spent a large part of their time in finding someone to teach, but now with every member of the Church being a missionary, by using the "share the gospel" program, the members, in effect, find the people to teach, and the missionaries now can spend a very large part of their time in teaching, mainly in groups.

This group teaching we have found to be very effective, both in saving time in teaching and in the psychology that results from teaching in groups. But, you may say, how can I be a missionary and participate in the "share the gospel" program? Well, there are several ways.

First, you can invite your nonmember friends, relatives, neighbors, business associates, or others that you might casually contact, into your homes, preferably in groups, and then let the full-time, the stake, or the district missionaries teach them the gospel.

Second, you can do missionary work by using the referral system. By the

referral system we mean sending the names of those friends or relatives who live outside of the area that you are living in, who you think would be interested in the Church, to the stake or mission president in the area in which the people live.

This morning we heard of the referral that resulted in the conversion and baptism of President John Taylor. Many wonderful people are being brought into the Church now through this referral system.

Third, invite your nonmember friends to attend auxiliary meetings and other Church meetings with you. Fourth, live your religion, love your neighbor. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16.)

Elder Harold B. Lee, in touring the Northwestern States Mission last summer, said, "This means let your light so shine that men shall be led to join the Church, or the kingdom of God."

But I can hear many of you say, "I know my friends and relatives wouldn't be interested. I have tried for years to talk to members of my family about religion, and it seems to irritate them," and other such things. But I ask you, do you really know that your friends would not be interested? Have you asked them? I suggest that you do ask them.

The people of the Northwestern States Mission, where I presided as president during the year 1960, as well as in many other places, have found thousands of people who are interested, who they thought were not interested, and this by merely asking two important questions, which you can do. First, "What do you know about the Mormon Church?" And regardless of their answer, "Would you like to know more?"

We found that approximately two out of every three that are asked these questions say, "No, I am not interested." In that event, just pass them off, possibly with a casual, "Well, maybe some day you will be." But don't irritate them or press the situation. There are thousands and thousands that are waiting and wanting to hear this message, and they have a right to hear it.

The one out of three who says, "Yes, I would like to know more," is the one to invite into your home for a group meeting with the missionaries. Or if that is not possible, give that name to the missionaries. I personally regularly ask these two questions: "What do you know about the Mormon Church?" and then, regardless of the answer, "Would you like to know more?"

By doing this almost daily I find many, many fine people who say, "Yes, I would like to know more," and I have never been embarrassed yet in asking that question. I have turned many, many fine referrals over to our missionaries. In fact, there is hardly a day goes by that I do not get a referral by asking these questions.

In asking groups of members all over the country to ask these questions, many times I have sensed a feeling of skepticism, but almost always afterwards someone has written me or sent word to me saying that although he was doubtful at first, he tried asking the questions, and was happily surprised to find many saying, "Yes, I would like to know more."

The opportunity will present itself to you as you go about from day to day if you are thinking about it. So I suggest, do think about it, and try it. Let's assume that a hundred members in a ward or branch asked these two questions only once every other day. They would ask on an average of three hundred a week, and experience has shown that approximately one out of every three will answer that he would like to know more. On this basis the missionaries would have about one hundred new people to teach each week in that ward or branch, probably many more than all of the full-time and part-time missionaries could possibly handle.

Keep in mind also that the young people as well as the old ask these questions, and the younger ones do not seem to hesitate like some of us older ones. I have some remarkable instances that I wish I had time to tell you about. Sometime maybe I can.

Speaking of referrals, I would like to read from a letter that I received just about two or three days ago from a person who apparently thought I was still president of the Northwestern States

Mission. I have sent the letter on to President Don C. Wood. She said: "Dear President Richards: Ever since I joined the Church three and a half years ago I have wished all my friends and relatives had the same opportunity to investigate the gospel, and I have decided it's time that I asked to have missionaries sent to my relatives. Most of them seem interested and curious about our Church since my brother and I joined it, so I am hoping and praying that they will recognize the truth when they hear it. It certainly leads to the happiest way of life, and I know I could have avoided pitfalls if I had only found it sooner. It's wonderful to have the true gospel to guide your children through their lives, and so dangerous to try and raise them without it." Then she listed the names and addresses of twenty-five friends and relatives, saying she would appreciate very much having the missionaries call on these twenty-five people, and she would be praying that they would be as happy to receive the gospel message as she had been.

As I left the Northwest in December, more than a thousand referrals were passing through our office each month, members wanting to share the gospel with friends and relatives, knowing the joy it would bring into their lives. Brethren, this is the "share the gospel" plan at work through the referral system.

I would like to say a few words about the auxiliaries as missionary aids. Invite your friends to attend the auxiliary meetings with you. I would say that this is one of the easier ways that we have of sharing the gospel. As an officer or teacher, or even a member of one of these auxiliary groups, you can be a missionary by following this program. You and the members of your family not only invite these people but make appointments to pick them up to attend Sunday School, Relief Society, Mutual, Primary, Sacrament meeting, or any other of the Church meetings.

Likewise, you can take these people to the social functions being given by the auxiliary organizations. They offer very pleasant occasions for these non-members, and when they come to feel the warmth and friendship that they find in this association, they are much

Saturday, April 8

Second Day

more susceptible to the teachings of the gospel.

This is a very practical way that you can participate. A striking example of this is an incident that happened last year in the Northwest. Sister Freeman, a convert of about two years, was serving as president of the Relief Society in one of the branches. There had been no missionaries in this branch for some time. In the spring, we discussed the "share the gospel" plan with the members of the branch, and we sent two missionaries in with instructions to use the "share the gospel" program. Soon after they arrived, they got in touch with Sister Freeman, and she wrote to me saying this: "A special thanks for sending these fine missionaries to our branch. We are thrilled and very thankful, and we are reorganizing our visiting teachers so that the presidency will be free to visit any contacts that the missionaries ask us to."

About six months later I was interviewing one of the elders working in the area. I asked him how things were going in the branch. He said, "Simply great. Do you know how many non-member women were out to the opening Relief Society meeting in the branch?" I guessed six or eight, which I thought would be pretty good. He said, "Thirty-four!" This, brethren, is the "share the gospel" plan in action in the Relief Society. Thanks to Sister Freeman and her fine members, because of this activity many wonderful members are now enjoying the benefits of the gospel.

As a result of the "share the gospel" plan, actually thousands of people are being brought into the Church every month. The effectiveness of this plan is especially impressive in the Northwestern States Mission, where we adopted it early last year. By the members of the stakes and districts working with the full-time missionaries, 775 converts were baptized in January and February of this year, compared with 106 a year ago—nearly seven and a half times as many. This figure does not include many more baptisms by stake missionaries.

In the eight eastern United States and Canadian missions that Sister Rich-

ards and I visited during January, February, and March of this year, the "share the gospel" plan has been introduced, and the number of baptisms so far this year is approximately double that of a year ago for a comparable period. But amazing as these figures sound and are, the important thing is that a great many more of God's children are enjoying the blessings of the gospel than otherwise might be.

And what is our responsibility? It is to give every one of God's children the opportunity of enjoying the blessings of immortality and eternal life. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, ". . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5.)

Yes, baptism is necessary, and we must be baptism conscious. On several occasions bishops and branch presidents have said to me, "President, having all of these people coming into the Church is wonderful. We need them." But also another great blessing is received by members participating in this "share the gospel" plan. Many who had been relatively inactive became active again. An increased spirituality is definitely noticeable among the ward members who are sharing. It is like love, as you give it to others it increases in yourself.

Further, by members sharing the gospel with friends a great many very fine converts are coming into the Church, many who are making wonderful leaders almost immediately after baptism.

Brethren, remember the word of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph: "And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:13-16.)

Yes, the "share the gospel" plan is really here. Every member of the Church a missionary! This also means

group teaching to a very large extent, and this plan is very simple and extremely effective. President Moyle has said: "We can go out into the mission field, we can go out into the world, we can go into our lives, and accomplish anything that we desire to accomplish. Whenever the Lord calls upon us to do anything, he makes us equal to the task."

I know this is true. Let everyone of us be a missionary. It is wonderful. And may we have the faith and the determination and the courage to make

this "share the gospel" plan an effective vehicle in bringing great numbers of souls into the kingdom of God. Let us always keep in mind that the purpose of missionary work is to bring souls into the kingdom of God through the ordinance of baptism.

May the Lord bless us to this end, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us.

ELDER GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My dear brethren, I count this a great privilege and a great opportunity. I feel the weight of this responsibility and seek the inspiration of the Lord. As I envision the vast network of Church buildings, 285 of them reaching all the way to New Zealand across an expanse of 12,000 miles, with thousands upon thousands of men and boys who are assembled tonight, I think of Wilford Woodruff's story of the first meeting that he attended with the Prophet Joseph Smith.

On a Sunday morning in 1834 in Kirtland, Ohio, all of the priesthood were called together. They met in a little, rough log cabin. Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Parley and Orson Pratt, and William E. McLellan all spoke, and then Joseph spoke and said: "I want to tell you this: You know no more concerning the results of this work and what lies before you as elders of Israel, and before this people, than a group of children." He then went on to say that this work will fill the whole earth, and all nations will have to hear the proclamation of the gospel. (*Mill. Star*, Vol. 54, p. 605.)

Were those men here tonight they would marvel at the accomplishments that have been wrought. Never has the work of teaching the gospel moved so splendidly forward as it is moving today. Never before was so much being accomplished. I think you may be interested to know that during the ten years that President McKay has stood

as President of the Church, more than 24,000 full-time missionaries have gone into the field, notwithstanding the fact that many of our young men were prohibited from going because of military problems beyond their control. During this same period more than 261,000 converts have been baptized into the Church. I can think of no more fitting memorial to the marvelous work of our great missionary President than the fact that in these last ten years more than a quarter of a million people have entered the waters of baptism. There were 48,500 plus last year, the equivalent of ten or twelve average stakes, and a hundred wards.

We now have approximately 8,500 missionaries in the field who are working, I think, as missionaries have never worked before, averaging 210 hours a month of actual proselyting per missionary. We have approximately seven thousand additional missionaries in the stakes. But with all of these, "the laborers are few and the harvest is great." (See Luke 10:2.)

"... Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." (John 4:35.)

I believe, my brethren, with all my heart that the field is white ready to harvest. We had nearly 50,000 baptisms last year. I think it not at all unrealistic to believe that we could have 100,000 converts a year in the Church if all of us were alert to the opportunities that are about us and would go to work