

please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

As additional members of the First Quorum of the Seventy: Charles A. Didier, William R. Bradford, and George P. Lee. All in favor please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

As the Presiding Bishopric: Victor L. Brown, Presiding Bishop; H. Burke Peterson, first counselor; Vaughn J. Featherstone, second counselor. All in favor please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

As Regional Representatives: all Regional Representatives of the Quorum of the Twelve as they are at present constituted.

As Melchizedek Priesthood Department: David B. Haight, managing director, with James A. Cullimore and Marion D. Hanks as associate managing directors. The Melchizedek Priesthood MIA: Marion D. Hanks, managing director, all members of the committee as now constituted.

The Aaronic Priesthood under the direction of the Presiding Bishopric—Victor L. Brown, H. Burke Peterson, and Vaughn J. Featherstone—with Rulon G. Craven as director and all members of the committee as at present constituted. The Young Women: Ruth Hardy Funk, president; Hortense H. Child, first counselor; Ardeth G. Kapp, second counselor, with all members of the committee as at present constituted.

The Relief Society: Barbara Bradshaw Smith, president; Janath Russell Cannon, education counselor; Marion Richards Boyer, homemaking counselor; with all members of the board as at present constituted.

The Sunday School: Russell M.

Nelson, president; B. Lloyd Poelman, first counselor; Joe J. Christensen, second counselor; with all members of the board as at present constituted.

The Primary Association: Naomi Maxfield Shumway, president; Sarah Melissa Broadbent Paulsen, first counselor; Colleen Bushman Lemmon, second counselor; with all members of the board as at present constituted.

The Church Board of Education: President Spencer W. Kimball, Nathan Eldon Tanner, Marion G. Romney, Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, Boyd K. Packer, Bruce R. McConkie, Marion D. Hanks, Paul H. Dunn, Victor L. Brown, and Barbara B. Smith.

Church Finance Committee: Wilford G. Edling, Harold H. Bennett, Weston E. Hamilton, David M. Kennedy, and Warren E. Pugh.

The Tabernacle Choir: Oakley S. Evans as president; Jerold D. Ottley, conductor; Donald H. Ripplinger, associate director; Alexander Schreiner, chief organist; Robert Cundick and Roy M. Darley as organists. All in favor please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Thank you.

### President N. Eldon Tanner

President Kimball has asked me to invite Elders Cook, Didier, Bradford, and Lee to take their places on the stand with the other General Authorities.

We shall now hear from Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy.

## Elder Thomas S. Monson

of the Council of the Twelve

What a truly glorious period of the year is conference time. Temple Square in Salt Lake City is the gathering place

for tens of thousands who travel far, that they might hear the word of the Lord. Today the Tabernacle is filled to

overflowing. Friendly conversation has been replaced by the music of the choir and the voices of those who pray and who speak. A sweet reverence fills the air.

It is a humbling experience to gaze into your faces and to appreciate your faith and devotion to truth. Patiently do you sit on those historic benches which the passing of time has somehow not made more comfortable.

### **Message to a child**

Particularly am I grateful for the children who are here. In the balcony to my left I see a beautiful girl of perhaps ten years. Sweet little one, I do not know your name or whence you have come. This, however, I do know: the innocence of your smile and the tender expression of your eyes have persuaded me to place aside for a future time the message I had prepared for this occasion. Today, I am impressed to speak to you.

When I was a boy your age, I too had a teacher in Sunday School. From the Bible she would read to us of Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior of the world. One day she taught us how the little children were brought unto him, that he should put his hands on them and pray. His disciples rebuked those that brought the children. "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:14.)

That lesson has never left me. Indeed, just a few months ago I relearned its meaning and partook of its power. My teacher was the Lord. May I share with you this experience.

### **Christal Methvin**

Far away from Salt Lake City, and some eighty miles from Shreveport, Louisiana, lives the Jack Methvin fami-

ly. Mother, dad, and the boys are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Until just recently there was a lovely daughter who, by her presence, graced that home. Her name was Christal. She was but ten years old when death ended her earthly sojourn.

Christal liked to run and play on the spacious ranch where her family lives. She could ride horses skillfully and excelled in 4-H work, winning awards in the local and state fairs. Her future was bright, and life was wonderful. Then there was discovered on her leg an unusual lump. The specialists in New Orleans completed their diagnosis and rendered their verdict: carcinoma. The leg must be removed.

She recovered well from the surgery, lived as buoyantly as ever and never complained. Then the doctors discovered that the cancer had spread to her tiny lungs. The Methvin family did not despair, but rather planned a flight to Salt Lake City. Christal could receive a blessing from one of the General Authorities. The Methvins knew none of the Brethren personally, so opening before Christal a picture of all the General Authorities, a chance selection was made. By sheer coincidence, my name was selected.

Christal never made the flight to Salt Lake City. Her condition deteriorated. The end drew nigh. But her faith did not waver. To her parents, she said, "Isn't stake conference approaching? Isn't a General Authority assigned? And why not Brother Monson? If I can't go to him, the Lord can send him to me."

### **An inspired assignment**

Meanwhile in Salt Lake City, with no knowledge of the events transpiring in Shreveport, a most unusual situation developed. For the weekend of the Shreveport Louisiana Stake Conference, I had been assigned to El Paso, Texas. President Ezra Taft Benson called me to his office and explained that one of the other Brethren had done

some preparatory work regarding the stake division in El Paso. He asked if I would mind were another to be assigned to El Paso and I assigned elsewhere. Of course there was no problem—anywhere would be fine with me. Then President Benson said, “Brother Monson, I feel impressed to have you visit the Shreveport Louisiana Stake.” The assignment was accepted. The day came. I arrived in Shreveport.

### Busy schedule

That Saturday afternoon was filled with meetings—one with the stake presidency, one with priesthood leaders, one with the patriarch, then yet another with the general leadership of the stake. Rather apologetically, Stake President Charles F. Cagle asked if my schedule would permit me time to provide a blessing to a ten-year-old girl afflicted with cancer. Her name: Christal Methvin. I responded that, if possible, I would do so, and then inquired if she would be at the conference, or was she in a Shreveport hospital? Knowing the time was tightly scheduled, President Cagle almost whispered that Christal was confined to her home—*more than eighty miles from Shreveport!*

I examined the schedule of meetings for that evening and the next morning—even my return flight. There simply was no available time. An alternative suggestion came to mind. Could we not remember the little one in our public prayers at conference? Surely the Lord would understand. On this basis, we proceeded with the scheduled meetings.

When the word was communicated to the Methvin family, there was understanding but a trace of disappointment as well. Hadn't the Lord heard their prayers? Hadn't he provided that Brother Monson would come to Shreveport? Again the family prayed, asking for a final favor—that their precious Christal would realize her desire.

### Power of prayer

At the very moment the Methvin family knelt in prayer, the clock in the stake center showed the time to be 7:45. The leadership meeting had been inspirational. I was sorting my notes, preparing to step to the pulpit, when I heard a voice speak to my spirit. The message was brief, the words familiar: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:14.) My notes became a blur. My thoughts turned to a tiny girl in need of a blessing. The decision was made. The meeting schedule was altered. After all, people are more important than meetings. I turned to Bishop James Serra and asked that he leave the meeting and advise the Methvins.

The Methvin family had just arisen from their knees when the telephone rang and the message was relayed that early Sunday morning—the Lord's day—in a spirit of fasting and prayer, we would journey to Christal's bedside.

### The Methvin home

I shall ever remember and never forget that early-morning journey to a heaven the Methvin family calls home. I have been in hallowed places—even holy houses—but never have I felt more strongly the presence of the Lord than in the Methvin home. Christal looked so tiny lying peacefully on such a large bed. The room was bright and cheerful. The sunshine from the east window filled the bedroom with light as the Lord filled our hearts with love.

The family surrounded Christal's bedside. I gazed down at a child who was too ill to rise—almost too weak to speak. Her illness had now rendered her sightless. So strong was the spirit that I fell to my knees, took her frail hand in mine, and said simply, “Christal, I am here.” She parted her lips and whispered, “Brother Monson, I just knew you would come.” I looked around the room. No one was standing. Each was

on bended knee. A blessing was given. A faint smile crossed Christal's face. Her whispered "thank you" provided an appropriate benediction. Quietly, each filed from the room.

### A pure spirit departs

Four days later, on Thursday, as Church members in Shreveport joined their faith with the Methvin family and Christal's name was remembered in a special prayer to a kind and loving Heavenly Father, the pure spirit of Christal Methvin left its disease-ravaged body and entered the paradise of God.

For those of us who knelt that Sabbath day in a sun-filled bedroom, and particularly for Christal's mother and father as they enter daily that same room and remember how she left it, the immortal words of Eugene Field will bring back precious memories:

*The little toy dog is covered with dust,  
But sturdy and staunch he stands;  
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,  
And his musket moulds in his hands.  
Time was when the little toy dog was  
new,  
And the soldier was passing fair,  
And that was the time when our Little  
Boy Blue  
Kissed them and put them there.*

*"Now, don't you go till I come," he said,  
"And don't you make any noise!"  
So toddling off to his trundle-bed  
He dreamt of the pretty toys.  
And as he was dreaming, an angel song  
Awakened our Little Boy Blue,—  
Oh, the years are many, the years are  
long,  
But the little toy friends are true!*

*Ay, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,  
Each in the same old place,  
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,  
The smile of a little face.  
And they wonder, as waiting these long  
years through,*

*In the dust of that little chair,  
What has become of our Little Boy Blue  
Since he kissed them and put them there.*

("Little Boy Blue," *One Hundred and One Famous Poems*, Chicago: Reilly & Lee, 1958, p. 15.)

### "I am the resurrection"

For us there is no need to wonder or to wait. Said the Master, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26.) To you, Jack and Nancy Methvin, he speaks: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27.) And from your sweet Christal could well come the comforting expression: "I go to prepare a place for you. . . . that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2-3.)

To you, my little friend in the upper balcony, and to believers everywhere, I bear witness that Jesus of Nazareth does love little children, that he listens to your prayers and responds to them. The Master did indeed utter those words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:14.)

I know these are the words he spoke to an apostle on assignment in Shreveport, Louisiana—for I heard them.

To these truths I bear record, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us. We shall now hear from Elder A. Theodore Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Marion D. Hanks, Assistant to the Twelve.