

been controlled and accounted for in accordance with established Church policy and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,  
Church Audit Committee

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## The Church Statistical Report for 1989

### F. Michael Watson

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 1989. (Membership figures include estimates based on 1989 reports available prior to conference.)

#### Church units

Number of stakes ..... 1,739  
Number of districts ..... 432  
Number of missions ..... 228  
Number of wards ..... 11,536  
Number of branches ..... 5,769

Number of nations and territories  
with organized wards or  
branches ..... 128  
(These statistics reflect an increase of 32 stakes and 747 wards and branches during 1989.)

#### Church membership

Total membership at the close  
of 1989 ..... 7,300,000

Children of record baptized..... 75,000  
Converts baptized..... 318,940

#### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries ..... 39,739

#### Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Emeritus General Authority; Sister Lois A. Kjar Brown, wife of Elder Victor L. Brown, Emeritus General Authority; Marianne Clark Sharp, former counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency.

#### President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Edling and Brother Watson, for that significant information. Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session, and he will be followed by Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

## Elder David B. Haight

We have just had the privilege of sustaining, with our uplifted hands and deep affection, Ezra Taft Benson as God's living prophet; his inspired counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators; and the other General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And, of course, we acknowledge those other changes made in the auxiliary organizations. We have

heard the statistical report indicating a continuing worldwide growth of the Church, with its stabilizing influence, which is the product of the inspired doctrine and policies of the Church.

#### The growth of God's work

In a recent article, a non-Latter-day Saint scholar gave a fresh and most interesting review of this Church and its un-

predicted growth since its restoration 160 years ago. He described its growth as a "miracle" and an "incredibly rare event" (Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research*, Sept. 1984, p. 18).

In 1842 the Prophet Joseph Smith, in answer to an inquiry from the editor of a Chicago newspaper, made the prophetic declaration that "the truth of God will go forth boldly, . . . till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

### God's hand in Eastern Europe

During a brief period of weeks, we have witnessed some phenomenal changes in the world, particularly in the Eastern Bloc countries, changes which God-fearing men attribute to the hand of the Almighty in bringing about His glorious purposes to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord. Walls have come down, gates have opened, and millions of voices have chorused the song of freedom! We rejoice in the dawning of a brighter day.

The news media have made the events in Eastern Europe appear as a purely political revolution even though many of the oppressed have recognized it as a "religious renaissance" and have acknowledged the influence of divine intervention (*USA Today*, 16 Mar. 1990, p. 13A).

A prominent national magazine has editorialized on the reasons for this sudden, dramatic change. It was "an idea . . . democracy—and its phenomenally successful application in America [and some other parts of the world]."

The article concludes, "America's contribution to the world will continue to be in the realm of ideas and ideals" ("An American Vision for the 1990s," *Fortune*, 26 Mar. 1990, p. 14).

The peoples in Eastern Europe have slowly but effectively been exposed to ideals of truth and basic rights through

messages by satellite, radio, printed materials, even programs and recordings by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir; word of mouth; heart-to-heart contacts; and the light of Christ encouraging seeds of truth to seep into their consciousness—a precept here and a precept there—and when the opportunity arrived, they confidently seized upon it.

The transformation of once-mighty man-made empires with such speed and determination has released new springs of faith and hope in the hearts of hundreds of millions of oppressed souls. Where there was despair, now the bright light of freedom shines forth. This only could have happened in such a miraculous way by the intervening hand of the Almighty! "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14).

### God's works for His people

Just after the Israelites had walked across the Jordan River from Moab into Canaan, Joshua instructed twelve men, one from each tribe, to each take a stone from the dry riverbed of the Jordan to build a memorial unto the children of Israel forever. Joshua said: "When your children ask you what these stones mean, you will tell them about the time when Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground. Tell them that the Lord your God dried up the water of the Jordan for you until you had crossed, just as He dried up the Red Sea for us. Because of this, everyone on earth will know how great the Lord's power is, and you will honor the Lord your God forever" (see Joshua 4:21–24).

The Bible is replete with admonitions to remember the mighty acts of God as He has intervened in history for His people. We are witnesses of His mighty, intervening hand in the world even today.

God is our Father. He is concerned about the welfare of His children everywhere. But even a patient, loving Heavenly Father must weary of tolerating ungodliness as evidenced when "the Lord rained upon Sodom and . . . Gomorrah brimstone and fire from . . . out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24).

### We need divine direction

Julia Ward Howe felt impressed to share her deep personal feelings for the need of divine direction in the struggle between the states in America. During the night, these eloquent words came into her mind and she quickly wrote them down:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the  
coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where  
the grapes of wrath are stored.  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of  
his terrible, swift sword;  
His truth is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that  
shall never call retreat;  
He is sifting out the hearts of men  
before his judgment seat.

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer  
him; be jubilant my feet!

Our God is marching on. ["Battle  
Hymn of the Republic," *Hymns*, no.  
60]

### God's work to restore the gospel

President Joseph F. Smith declared, "The Almighty raised up [this nation] by the power of his omnipotent hand, that it might be possible in the latter days for the kingdom of God to be established in the earth" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 409).

President Smith continued, "His hand has been over this nation, and it is his purpose and design to enlarge it, make it glorious . . . to the end that those who are kept in bondage and serfdom may be brought to the enjoyment of the fullest freedom and liberty of conscience possible for intelligent men to exercise in the earth" (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 409).

The religious freedom established in America made possible the coming forth of the plain and precious truths of the Book of Mormon "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations" (preface to the

Book of Mormon). These writings are to come unto the Gentiles that they may "know the decrees of God" and repent (Ether 2:11).

### Religious freedom and opportunities

It is incumbent upon the members of the Church who have had the gift of religious freedom to share this knowledge and testimony with the peoples of the world. Do not underestimate the profound influence—politically and socially—of the principles of the restored gospel upon all of mankind.

"Our mission [is] to save men," wrote Joseph F. Smith. "We have been laboring all these . . . years . . . to bring men to a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to bring them to repentance, to obedience to . . . God's law . . . to save [them] from error, . . . to turn away from evil and to learn to do good" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], pp. 72–73).

The opportunity for meaningful service to others is expanding rapidly. To some of us, it's just across the street; to others, across the ocean. The destiny of many nations is now being decided. Every generation is crucial. We may not be responsible for past generations, but we cannot escape the responsibility for this present one. It is beyond our comprehension to imagine the billions of souls who depend upon us to bring them—some way, somehow—this glorious message of the gospel. Of course all people will not respond, but all must be given the opportunity to hear and respond after being taught by the Spirit of Christ.

### Being connected to inward power

Several years ago, upon entering an electrical establishment, Elder James E. Talmage saw an impressive array of lamps, door chimes, and other electrical items. And "having chosen a lamp, [he] turned the switch to test the . . . light; but lo, there was no light. The attendant told [him] that the lamps were there as an exhibit only, *but were not connected up.*"

He reported, "I turned to the bells, but when I pressed a button I listened in vain for [a] responsive tinkle. And so with everything [else] in the shop—pleasing to look upon, some pieces artistic, all suggestive of usefulness, but, as displayed, they were [only] ornaments and nothing more, for they were not connected up."

Upon leaving the shop Elder Talmage thought, "A burning candle . . . is worth more in terms of utility than the most elaborate of electroliers without the current." Then a fitting parallel came to his mind of the "scriptural description of minds and souls darkened and deceived by outward appearances while devoid of spirituality: '*Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*' (2 Timothy 3:5)" (*Handbook of the Restoration* [Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1944], pp. 389-90).

A few years ago I had an interesting view of the tallest spire in Reykjavik, Iceland, as we were landing at the airport. We were told that this tall building was a church, and after greeting our Saints and inspecting our church building which I was to dedicate, I was curious to visit this other building we had seen from the air with the tall, stately spire. It was very impressive from a distance. However, as we approached the building we discovered that the front door was made of plywood and padlocked. A sign directed us to the back door. This large church building with such an impressive front and its high steeple, we discovered, was only a shell of a building. Though under construction for forty years, the weather-beaten framework was still in place—a reminder of ambitious plans on a grand scale but lacking the faith and foresight for its completion.

Continuing with Elder Talmage, he said: "Men may . . . erect church buildings—from humble chapel[s] to stately cathedral[s]—but [they are only] elaborate externals if they are not connected up with the source of divine wisdom and authority through the [current] of the holy priesthood . . . [and the] vitalizing

power of the Holy Ghost" (*Handbook of the Restoration*, p. 390).

Later, as we met in our smaller but adequate building in Reykjavik, it was comforting to know that it was not just a shell, but had the vitalizing power and Spirit of God in that little building.

### Preparing nations to accept truth

We declare in all solemnity that the Lord is now preparing the nations of the earth to receive the truth He desires them to have. But in order for a person to accept the truth, he must prepare himself by exercising faith in the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Such faith accepts the existence of God our Father, the teachings of Jesus concerning man's dealings with his fellowmen, and the teachings concerning Christ's relationship to God as His Son. Once a person has prepared himself to receive and accept truth, it is then sealed upon his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, who is the Testifier of Truth. It is then incumbent upon the person to conform his life to those standards of truth. This may require fundamental changes in life-style and the seeking of repentance for sins committed.

The Lord's power is at hand and evident. True believers will have unusual opportunities to be of service. I am convinced that those who labor unselfishly in behalf of others, with no thought of remuneration, will be physically and spiritually refreshed and renewed. We must prove ourselves, have the desire, and be found worthy to assist the Lord in accomplishing His purposes with men on earth.

I testify that the name of Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven whereby men may be saved and that all men, everywhere, must be brought to a knowledge of this truth if they are to receive the great, eternal exaltation provided by a gracious and loving Father.

The Lord instructed the young prophet Joseph in October of 1831:

"The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll

forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

I testify we are witnessing the fulfillment of this promise, and that this work, given by Almighty God to His Son to proclaim, to teach, and finally to judge, will be done with eternal love, in

the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy will now address us.

## Elder Hans B. Ringger

### What shall we do?

After the resurrection of Christ, the Twelve Apostles preached the gospel in the city of Jerusalem. Their message touched the hearts of many people, and, upon testifying of the truthfulness of the Resurrection, they were asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Ever since, this very question has been asked by people all over the world, by people like you and me. Daily we are confronted with decisions concerning the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of those around us. Our decisions are based upon our understanding of what is good and right for us, and we try to avoid pitfalls and mistakes. We hope for happiness, and we wish for comfort.

In my own life, this hope and wish for a happier and more meaningful life causes me to evaluate my daily decisions more carefully. And never do I feel the need for some guiding principle more than when I come to a crossroad, for without some direction I feel incapable of pursuing my course consistently.

### Act by the gospel of Jesus Christ

But it is one thing to know the way and another to take it. Some of us probably struggle to find guiding principles, some sort of foundation on which to build, and others have designed the perfect plan but never find the motivation, time, or courage to use it. In one way or another, we are paralyzed by the lack of understanding that true happiness comes

from realizing our plans, beliefs, and hopes.

I believe that the foundation and guiding light for all our decisions is the gospel of Jesus Christ and His message to the world. The teachings of Christ must be embedded in our desire to choose the right and in our wish to find happiness. His righteous life must be reflected in our own actions. The Lord not only teaches love, He *is* love. He not only preached the importance of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, He *lived* accordingly. His life reflected the gospel that He preached. There was and is total harmony between His thoughts and His actions.

I believe that if we want to be true Christians, our lives must be founded on true principles and our actions must reflect that. But I do not believe that we can pick and choose which principles are the most convenient ones. Today, however, I would like to mention those that are true to my heart and that have helped me in my quest to take the Christian course.

### Love is the essence of our lives

When a man asked Christ what he should do to inherit eternal life, He answered, "Love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27). Love is the essence of the gospel and the guiding light for a Christlike life. It not only teaches us to look upward but also to look around us. Our heart, might, and mind must be dedicated to the Lord and to our fellow men, women, and children.