

- Report, Oct. 1982, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 77.
22. First session of member fireside conference in Lima, Peru, 9 Nov. 1996.
  23. Ephesians 5:33.
  24. In addition, worthy men are privileged to qualify for the oath and covenant of the priesthood, which will bless all men, women, and children whom they serve (see D&C 84:33–48).
  25. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
  26. Mark 4:17.
  27. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 21:5; 68:4.
  28. See Acts 27:30–31; 1 Nephi 18:21–23.
  29. “Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Hymns*, no. 105.
  30. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
  31. John Greenleaf Whittier, “Maud Muller,” *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* (1892), 48.
  32. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7. The Prophet Joseph included this concept of endurance in the thirteenth article of faith: “We have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things.”
  33. See Matthew 6:24.
  34. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28.
  35. Jeremiah 31:33.
  36. Moroni 10:32.
  37. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72; italics added.

## Sister Elaine L. Jack

### Laying a small stone at the gate of Relief Society

I grew up just a stone’s throw from the Alberta Temple in Cardston, Canada. In this small Mormon community at the foot of the Canadian Rockies, a temple stood as a powerful symbol of the strength and grandeur of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I made my most meaningful covenants within the walls of that temple.

Those walls are very significant to me. My grandfather John F. Anderson, a skilled stonemason from Aberdeen, Scotland, was called to dress the white granite stone for this holy temple. In 1915 at the laying of the cornerstone, he had the honor of acting as the chief mason under the supervision of Elder David O. McKay. In 1923, before the temple was dedicated, my grandfather laid the very last stone. Then, in his journal he recorded, “It was not the capstone, but a small stone at the front gate entrance.”

Today, I lay my small stone at the front gate entrance of Relief Society.

In the book of Omni, itself a small stone in the middle of the Book of Mormon, Amaleki writes: “I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, . . . and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26).

The Prophet Joseph Smith described offering “your whole soul” as serving God with all your “heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2). It is to put on the altar of God your time, talents, gifts and blessings, your willingness to serve, to do all that He asks. My grandfather offered to the Lord the stone he had placed so carefully. Today, I offer my years of service in the general Relief Society.

In 1991, at the invitation of President Hinckley, I returned to my childhood home in Canada to attend the rededication of the Alberta Temple. I will always remember the power that

filled the room as the session concluded and we stood to sing, "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" My heart was touched by the familiar words: "We'll sing and we'll shout with the armies of heaven, / Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb!" ("The Spirit of God," *Hymns*, no. 2). Hosanna is a righteous shout for joy, and this was a joyous occasion!

To our chorus the choir added the great "Hosannah Anthem." The words were meaningful then as I reflected on my grandfather's work to build the walls of that noble temple: "The house of the Lord is completed. May our offering by Him be accepted" (in *The Choirbook* [1980], 70). They strike me even more dramatically today as I complete my "house" for the Lord.

### **This Relief Society presidency has been building**

I find many parallels with building a temple and fulfilling a calling. We begin with bare ground, and we start to work. We survey the situation, pray for inspiration, thoughtfully formulate plans, send them for review, adjust, and plan again. We firm up a foundation and then add walls, a roof, and even gardens. Each administration builds on the solid bedrock of the past.

For the past seven years this Relief Society presidency has been building. We have added a Churchwide literacy effort to our education focus; we have emphasized the principle of watching over and caring for our sisters through visiting teaching; we have continued to place home and family at the center of our attention and honored the divine nature of women as they nurture, sacrifice, teach, and inspire. Wonderful things have happened because of the women of this Church, who have tended children and tended each other, taught self-reliance and taught of the Savior.

How I have loved working so closely with the wonderful women of this

Church as they have offered their souls to the Lord. To their stones, I add my own. I pray that it may be accepted.

### **"Something extraordinary"**

One of my prized memories of these past few years was the sesquicentennial in 1992, when we celebrated the founding of Relief Society, one of the oldest, largest, and, in my eyes, the most successful women's organizations in the world. It is still thrilling for me to remember the simultaneous broadcast to every continent of the world, linking sisters for the first time from Taiwan, Zimbabwe, Germany, Mexico, Korea, Australia, and America.

Emma Smith, the first president of this organization, said to the sisters, "We are going to do something extraordinary" (*Minutes of the Female Relief Society*, 17 Mar. 1842, 7, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Our celebration was indeed "something extraordinary." What began in 1842 with 20 women in Nauvoo, Illinois, now involves nearly four million women on every continent and in almost every country in the world. But what is significant is that it began with one woman, Margaret Cook, who offered to sew shirts for the men working on the Nauvoo Temple. She needed cloth and could not afford to buy it. Sarah Kimball offered the cloth, and within weeks the Relief Society was organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith under the inspiration of the Lord. It began with a small offering—at the front gate—and it has grown to a major force for good around the world, one stone at a time.

### **The Lord helps us prepare our offerings**

One of the things I recognize is that if we are obedient, faithful, and earnest, the Lord helps us prepare our offerings. We learn this from Nephi, who was told, "Thou shalt construct a ship, after the

manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters" (1 Nephi 17:8). Nephi was not from a seaside community; he had never built a boat. But his response was so full of faith and accountability: "Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?" (1 Nephi 17:9). Without hesitation or question, Nephi began to prepare an offering to the Lord in the shape of a ship.

When I was called to serve in this assignment, I, like Nephi, went to the Lord for help. My tools came in the form of two strong and capable counselors, Chieko Okazaki and Aileen Clyde. As a presidency we have been fortunate to have a board of 12 noble women, whose contribution has reflected dedication and skill, and an office staff, whose service has been generously and patiently given. Together, we have done "this work with holiness of heart" (Mosiah 18:12). And we have been blessed with the prayers and goodness of Relief Society women in all parts of the world, good women who take seriously the Lord's charge, "Be not weary in well-doing" (D&C 64:33).

### Expressions of gratitude

I want to express my gratitude to the many priesthood leaders who have counseled and directed us. They have needed our confidence and support just as we have needed their understanding and priesthood power. The Lord has called men of valor, wisdom, and heart to lead this Church. I have seen God inspire our leaders; I have seen them act decisively, compassionately, and carefully. I trust them; they have trusted us.

I know I speak for the women of this Church when I say to President Hinckley, President Monson, President Faust, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we stand by you, we support you, we

know you are latter-day prophets with the keys to the kingdom of God.

I also pay tribute to my husband, Joe, who has blessed me with his steadiness, his sense of humor and good judgment, and his righteous hands. My four sons have followed his lead as loyal supporters. I took it as the ultimate compliment when one of them said, "We've been training Mom to be a Relief Society president for a long time, and she finally got it right!"

### Look forward with hope

Our offerings embrace both the work we do and the heart with which we do it. The Lord calls this "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20). This union constitutes the soul. Amaleki spoke of offering "your whole souls" to Jesus Christ (Omni 1:26). Brothers and sisters, the time is past when we can merely believe in this gospel; we must be passionate in our belief and in our commitment to Jesus Christ and His plan. We must know, unequivocally, that He is with us, that He will guide and direct us. In His name we shape our offering. For the past few years I have represented all the women of this Church, a far-reaching responsibility. I believe that the Lord will measure my efforts by my heart and my spirit, as He does yours.

Today, Relief Society represents the hope expressed by President Emmeline B. Wells, who served in the early years of this century. Her guidance had helped Relief Society hold fast to its cherished traditions while going forward with faith in God and hope in the future. Fifty years later President Belle Spafford said, "Relief Society is only on the threshold of its divine mission" (in *History of Relief Society, 1842-1966* [1966], 140). Today, we are ready to step over that threshold into a new dimension of spirituality and light. I look forward with a perfect brightness of hope to the offerings of Relief Society sisters in the new century

that is before us. Our joy in the gospel of Jesus Christ and our place in His plan will draw people to us and change lives. We will lift and inspire a world so desperately in need of goodness. This new presidency will build an even greater sense of purpose and contribution. I commit my full support to President Smoot and her counselors as they add new stones to the building of the kingdom of God. Surely the strength of today will serve as a foundation upon which the women of tomorrow will build.

This Church has been built and will continue to grow through the steady efforts of the members who quietly do their part, who are struggling with daily challenges, who are humble, patient, and long-suffering. These are the hearts that fill with joy when they sing in dedication of their own offerings, "The Lord is extending the Saints' understanding" (*Hymns*, no. 2).

My heart is full of gratitude and great joy. Rejoice with me in bearing

testimony of the Savior: "Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us. He was followed by Sister Elaine L. Jack, who was released yesterday as the president of the Relief Society of the Church. I think she's going to continue as a member of Relief Society all the days of her life. She's converted.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "How Firm a Foundation."

Then we will hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

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The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

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### Bishop H. David Burton

All of our lives have been blessed through the great service of Sister Jack and her counselors. I'm sure I represent each of you in expressing our thanks.

#### The parable of the good Samaritan

Faithful disciples following the Savior heard gospel principles taught by thought-provoking short stories known as parables. After hearing many parables, "the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (Matthew 13:10). The Savior responded, "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13).

A lawyer chose to challenge the Savior on a point of doctrine. Attempting to

entrap Jesus, he asked, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). Jesus responded with a question of His own: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). The response of the lawyer, as recited from the law, was perfect: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27). Jesus acknowledged the answer and then replied, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28).

Having failed to confound the Master, the lawyer was embarrassed. He sought justification by making a further inquiry: "And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). We should be very grateful for the lawyer's second question.