

Wickman, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 3, 1999, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we greet you this morning as we assemble in the first general session of the 169th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder Andrew W. Peterson.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the overflow

locations in the nearby Assembly Hall and Joseph Smith Memorial Building and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Tabernacle.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Robert C. Bowden, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gathering for conference

Welcome to conference! We again welcome you, my brothers and sisters, to this great world conference. Six months between conferences once seemed like a long time. Now it seems to pass ever so rapidly. We gather together again as a

great family, more than 10 million strong, to listen and learn from those who are called to lead, to renew our faith and build our resolution to live better, and to mingle together in pleasant sociality.

We are a happy and blessed people, working to build the cause and kingdom of God on earth. Regardless of race or

nationality, whether we be poor or rich, old or young, we meet to share our common testimony of the Lord, in whose name we worship.

Work of the Church moves forward

I am pleased to report that the Church is in good condition. The work continues to move forward; I will point out just two or three areas.

We now have approximately 60,000 missionaries. Come July there will be 333 missions. We are trying to fulfill the mandate of the Lord when He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

Additionally, there are 137,629 volunteers and missionaries in nonproselyting activities. These are, for the most part, mature individuals who contribute their time and talents without compensation of any kind but with a great love for the work of the kingdom. Their united contribution is the equivalent of 15,174 full-time employees with a payroll value of \$531 million. What a remarkable thing this is!

Our family history work goes forward with increasing momentum. There is a tremendous interest in one's roots everywhere. As the years pass, all of this will lead to the fulfillment of the great purpose for which this work is done. The hearts of the children are being turned to their fathers, that the purposes of the Lord may be fulfilled.

We are constructing temples on a scale never before dreamed of to carry forward this work to its destined conclusion. Since last October we have dedicated temples in Anchorage, Alaska; Colonia Juárez, Mexico; and Madrid, Spain. It is anticipated that we will dedicate 14 more during the remainder of this year.

This is a tremendous undertaking, with many problems, but no matter the

difficulty, things work out and I am confident we will reach our goal.

We are constructing chapels in large numbers to accommodate the needs of our people. There is an old proverb that says it is an ill wind that blows no good. The economic problems that have afflicted Asia and other parts of the world have brought lower real estate prices, thus permitting us to acquire building sites at lower costs.

In many areas of the Church, sacrament meeting attendance is up and the level of activity is increasing.

I mention these items simply to indicate the robust growth of the work throughout the world.

Strengthen and value each member

We are prone to speak of large numbers such as the total membership of the Church. But we must never forget that we are all individuals with our own needs and problems, our own hopes and dreams, our own faith and convictions. Some are strong, some weak, but we all try. We have problems to deal with—they are serious and difficult. We need one another to build and strengthen each other. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

We must never forget that we live in a world of great diversity. The people of the earth are all our Father's children and are of many and varied religious persuasions. We must cultivate tolerance and appreciation and respect one another. We have differences of doctrine. This need not bring about animosity or any kind of holier-than-thou attitude.

At this moment our hearts reach out to the brutalized people of Kosovo. It is difficult for us to understand how those who claim to be Christians can act so barbaric to those of another faith. I am grateful that we are rushing humanitarian aid to the victims of these atrocities.

I am pleased to report that the Church is better known and better understood. Generally the media have been kind to us. They have dealt honestly with us. There are exceptions, of course, and this we regret. The old images of the past continue to be dragged forth by those who deal in sensationalism and exploitation. But television images fade almost immediately with the tremendous amount of information given. Yesterday's newspaper is soon forgotten. Meanwhile the Church goes forward on its appointed mission in the direction of its appointed destiny.

We will work together with patience, never losing sight of the great mission given us by Him who is our leader and whose Church this is.

Now I invite you to listen to the Brethren and sisters. All who speak feel

the responsibility in so doing. Much of prayer and effort have gone into that which will be said. May our faith be increased in the great, salient underpinnings of our doctrine and our practice as members of this great Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "O My Father."

President Hinckley

The choir just sang "O My Father." We will now be pleased to hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Sunday School organized

On Sunday morning, December 9, 1849, at 8:00, about 30 children between the ages of 8 and 13 arrived in a small classroom that had been built in a home. They stamped their feet on the threshold, shook the snow off their coats and hats, then took their places on simple benches. They waited expectantly for the class to begin. It was a cold, snowy day outside, but the fireplace radiated a warm and friendly glow. Richard Ballantyne's eyes shone brightly as he called the Sunday School to order. He led the boys and girls in a song, and then he gave a quiet but fervent prayer, dedicating this room in his home for teaching children the gospel of Jesus Christ. His voice was rich, and his words rolled forth as words do under the spell of reverence and emotion. Thus we have the founding of the first Sunday School in the Salt Lake Valley.

Organizing a Sunday School was not foreign to him. In his native Scotland he had organized a Sunday School in the Relief Presbyterian Church, of which he was an active member. It was natural for him to have a great desire to educate young people in the knowledge of the gospel. He had been reared in a home where his father was fond of repeating from memory whole chapters of the Bible and then reciting them to his children. It was a home where they would not even take a sip of water without first taking off their hats and saying grace, as was also the custom before they would eat a meal.

Rumors were spreading around the Scottish home that a new prophet had been raised up in America. At first Richard paid little attention to these rumors, but as his religious questions became more perplexing, he openly sought further light and knowledge. It was in 1841 that Elder Orson Pratt appeared in