

# Opening Message

By President Russell M. Nelson

*President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

We are to seek, in every way we can, to hear Jesus Christ, who speaks to us through the power and ministering of the Holy Ghost.

My beloved brothers and sisters, as we welcome you to this historic April 2020 general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for reasons you know, I stand before you in an empty auditorium!

Little did I know, when I promised you at the October 2019 general conference that this April conference would be “memorable” and “unforgettable,” that speaking to a visible congregation of fewer than 10 people would make this conference so memorable and unforgettable *for me!* Yet the knowledge that you are participating by electronic transmission, and the choir’s beautiful rendition of “It Is Well with My Soul,” bring great comfort to *my* soul.

As you know, attendance at this general conference has been strictly limited as part of our efforts to be good global citizens and do all we can to limit the spread of COVID-19. This virus has had a major impact throughout the world. It has also altered our Church meetings, missionary service, and temple work for a while.

Though today’s restrictions relate to a virulent virus, life’s personal trials stretch far beyond this pandemic. Future trials could result from an accident, a natural disaster, or an unexpected personal heartache.

How can we endure such trials? The Lord has told us that “if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.”<sup>1</sup> Of course, we can store our own reserves of food, water, and savings. But equally crucial is our need to fill our personal *spiritual* storehouses with faith, truth, and testimony.

Our ultimate quest in life is to prepare to meet our Maker. We do this by striving daily to become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> And we do *that* as we repent daily and receive His cleansing, healing, and strengthening power. Then we can feel enduring peace and joy, even during turbulent times. This is exactly why the Lord has implored us to stand in holy places and “be not moved.”<sup>3</sup>

This year, we commemorate the 200th anniversary of one of the most significant events in the history of the world—namely, the appearance of God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to Joseph Smith. During that singular vision, God the Father pointed to Jesus Christ and said: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”<sup>4</sup>

That admonition given to Joseph is for each of us. We are to seek, in every way we can, to hear Jesus Christ, who speaks to us through the power and ministering of the Holy Ghost.

The purpose of this and every general conference is to help us to hear Him. We have prayed, and invite you to pray, that the Spirit of the Lord will be with us in such rich abundance that you can hear the messages that the Savior has especially for you—messages that will bring peace to your soul. Messages that will heal your broken heart. Messages that will illuminate your mind. Messages that will help you know what to do as you move ahead through times of turmoil and trial.

We pray that this conference will be memorable and unforgettable because of the messages you will hear, the unique announcements which will be made, and the experiences in which you will be invited to participate.

For example, at the conclusion of the Sunday morning session, we will convene a worldwide solemn assembly when I will lead you in the sacred Hosanna Shout. We pray that this will be a spiritual highlight for you as we express in global unison our profound gratitude to God the Father and His Beloved Son by praising Them in this unique way.

For this sacred experience, we use clean white handkerchiefs. But if you do not have one, you may simply wave your hand. At the conclusion of the Hosanna Shout, the congregation will join with the choir in singing “The Spirit of God.”<sup>5</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, this conference will be magnificent. This year will be extraordinary as we focus intently on the Savior and His restored gospel. The most important lasting effects of this historic conference will be as our hearts change and we commence a lifelong quest to hear Him.

Welcome to April 2020 general conference! I know that God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, are mindful of us. They will be with us throughout the proceedings of these two glorious days as we seek to draw closer to Them and honor Them. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.