

BYU RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

FALL 2021

REVIEW

CALENDAR ✕ COMMENTS ✕ INTERVIEWS & SPOTLIGHTS ✕ STUDENT & TEACHER UPDATES ✕ BOOKS



The Smith Family Memorial Monument }

Honoring five generations of the
Prophet's ancestors in Topsfield,
Massachusetts

A Season of Change



Transition is inevitable in any organization, but as former students and longtime friends will note, personnel changes in Religious Education have been especially dramatic of late. Administratively, in a twelve-month period, we have witnessed the retirement of four former deans of Religious Education, multiple associate deans, and all but one past chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture and the Department of Church History and Doctrine. They have been joined by several other longtime teachers, prolific scholars, a seasoned editor at the Religious Studies Center, and sadly, by a colleague whose passing we continue to mourn. In total, these transitions represent hundreds of years of scholarly, pedagogical, and administrative experience that no longer fill with faith the classrooms of Brigham Young University. Most have gone on to well-deserved seasons of rest with family and friends, while others have accepted calls to serve in missions and temples.

In particular, we recognize the retirement of Dean Daniel K Judd, the immediate former dean of Religious Education. As a teacher, scholar, and administrator, Dean Judd was a compassionate colleague. His enduring scholarship, especially in religion and mental health, has shaped his discipline, and his influence as a teacher across four decades has touched thousands for good. Personally, he has mentored me in a Christlike way in the months following my appointment to succeed him. We also thank his two associate deans, Andrew H. Hedges and J. B. Haws, both of whom gratefully continue as faculty in Religious Education, though with different responsibilities. They epitomize the many who have recently retired as well as all who preceded them.

While these transitions are felt keenly by those of us asked to fill their shoes, we are grateful for continued associations and lingering memories of lessons taught and experiences shared. We are also committed to continuing the mission of Religious Education to assist individuals in their efforts to come unto Christ.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Scott C. Esplin".

Scott C. Esplin

Dean, BYU Religious Education

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Religious Education

REVIEW

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RESEARCH UPDATE

Caring for Those in Need: *Covenant of Compassion*

By Brock James Dowdle



FEATURE

The Smith Family Memorial Monument in Topsfield, Massachusetts

By Alexander L. Baugh



HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Thirty Years as Host of *Music & the Spoken Word*

By Christine Rappleye

Editor's Note 2

Diversifying and Deepening Expertise at the RSC

By Scott C. Esplin

Upcoming Events 3

Faculty & Staff Highlights 4

Research Update 8

Walking between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea:

Joseph F. Merrill

By Carmen Cole

Study Resources 22

Teaching Isaiah with a Restoration Focus by
Improving Historical Awareness

By Sean D. Hopkin

Notes: Faculty and Staff 24

Recent and Upcoming Publications 25

On the cover: Portrait of Joseph Smith, attributed to David Rogers, 1842. The Community of Christ.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER

Founded in 1975 by
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DIVERSIFYING AND DEEPENING EXPERTISE AT THE RSC

SCOTT C. ESPLIN (*scott_esplin@byu.edu*) IS DEAN OF BYU RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

“Brigham Young University is primarily a religious institution,” President David O. McKay told the campus community in 1937. “It was established for the sole purpose of associating . . . the facts of science, art, literature, and philosophy [with] the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹ The Religious Studies Center at BYU has recently taken this charge to heart, seeking to incorporate the broad view of truth within its mission to encourage, sponsor, and publish serious, faithful, gospel-related materials.

To aid in this task, a review board has been constituted. Scholars from a variety of backgrounds have been invited to assist in the solicitation and selection of manuscripts. While content will continue to undergo blind peer review, the board will help identify qualified reviewers as well as aid in the center’s overall direction. Furthermore, board members will represent the center and its mission to their constituents.

The following individuals have generously agreed to serve on the board:

- Julie K. Allen, BYU, Comparative Arts and Letters
- Phil Allred, BYU–Idaho, Religious Education
- Gerrit Dirkmaat, BYU, Church History and Doctrine
- Shawn Healey, Seminaries and Institutes
- Amy Hoyt, independent scholar
- Kerry Hull, BYU, Ancient Scripture
- R. Devan Jensen, BYU Religious Studies Center
- Jennifer C. Lane, BYU–Hawaii, Religious Education (retired); BYU, Maxwell Institute
- Chelom Leavitt, BYU, School of Family Life
- Kim Matheson, independent scholar
- Liel Maala, Church History Department
- Paul Murphy, Priesthood and Family Department
- Cameron Packer, Seminaries and Institutes
- Joany O. Pinegar, BYU Religious Studies Center
- Jennifer Reeder, Church History Department

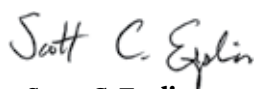


Jared W. Ludlow, new RSC publications director

- Becky Roesler, BYU–Idaho, Music
- Gaylamarie Rosenberg, independent scholar
- Adam Smith, Seminaries and Institutes
- John C. Thomas, BYU–Idaho, Religious Education
- Gerrit van Dyk, BYU, Harold B. Lee Library

Additionally, the university has announced the appointment of Jared W. Ludlow, professor of ancient scripture at BYU, to serve as the new RSC publications director. He will be assisted by Michael A. Goodman, an associate professor of Church history and doctrine, as associate publications director.

We are grateful for the consecrated service provided by the board and staff of the Religious Studies Center, as well as the faith-promoting content produced by its authors. We hope its products will accomplish the charge delivered by President McKay. “Teachers in the Church university are free to associate with scientific truths the revealed word of God. Thus all facts may be viewed by the students not through the green glass of prejudice or doubt, but in the clear sunlight of truth.”²



Scott C. Esplin

Outgoing RSC publications director

Notes

1. David O. McKay, “The Church University,” (Provo, UT) *Messenger*, remarks delivered at BYU, October 1937, <https://aims.byu.edu/https://brightspotcdn.byu.edu/3e/2a/7e333e2f49aba476da6a9041fd9b/the-church-university-david-o-mckay.pdf>.
2. McKay, “The Church University.”

Free Events

Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

Friday and Saturday, October 22–23, 2021

The theme for the 50th annual Sperry Symposium is “Covenant of Compassion: Caring for the Marginalized and Disadvantaged in the Old Testament.” The symposium will be held at the Joseph Smith Building and the Martin Building on BYU campus. The linking of Old Testament law with modern social concerns highlights the continued relevancy of the Old Testament for confronting modern challenges, including poverty, ethnocentrism, and the world’s growing refugee crisis. For more information, visit rsc.byu.edu/conferences/sperry.

Church History Symposium

Thursday and Friday, March 10–11, 2022

The theme is “Latter-day Saints and Religious Liberty: Historical and Global Perspectives.” The symposium will convene at BYU on March 10 and at Temple Square on March 11. Keynote speakers include Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Sarah Barringer Gordon, University of Pennsylvania Professor of Constitutional Law and History. For more information, visit rsc.byu.edu/conferences/church-history.

BYU Easter Conference

Friday, April 8, 2022

The BYU Easter Conference will be in the Joseph Smith Building on BYU campus beginning at 7:00 p.m. The keynote speaker will be author Virginia Pearce Cowley. The other two speakers are John Hilton III, and Jan Martin, respectively associate and assistant professors of ancient scripture at BYU. Each speaker will talk about various aspects of the Savior: his life, his mission, the Atonement, and his influence in our lives today. For more information, visit rsc.byu.edu/conferences/easter.

These events are free of charge, and registration is not required. Some event details are subject to change. For more details, please visit us online at rsc.byu.edu/conferences or contact Devan Jensen at 801-422-9304.



Staff Highlight: Adam Hellewell

ADAM HELLEWELL (adam_hellewell@byu.edu) IS A SECRETARY IN THE DEANS' OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT BYU.



BORN AND RAISED IN SALEM, OREGON, ADAM SERVED IN THE ARGENTINA Rosario Mission and graduated from BYU–Idaho with a degree in business management. Before joining BYU Religious Education, he worked as a legal assistant for attorneys in Oregon and Utah for nine years. As a secretary in the dean's office, Adam's responsibilities include working with the two associate deans, the Religious Education graduate programs, the Council of Religious Outreach, and the Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding. Adam and his wife, Amanda, live in Orem and enjoy hiking, photography, making and eating good food, and listening to records. ✂

Faculty Highlight: Krystal V. L. Pierce

KRYSTAL V. L. PIERCE (krystal_pierce@byu.edu) IS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURE AT BYU.



KRYSTAL V. L. PIERCE JOINED THE FULL-TIME FACULTY OF RELIGIOUS Education in 2020 after teaching part-time in the Department of Ancient Scripture since 2013. She received a PhD in Egyptian archaeology and Near Eastern languages and cultures from UCLA and an MA and BA in Near Eastern studies from UC Berkeley. She has taught classes on Egyptology and ancient Near Eastern studies at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, UCLA, and UC Berkeley. She has excavated at several sites in Egypt and Israel and is currently head registrar for the Tel Shimron Excavations in the Galilee region of Israel. Her research interests include social and cultural identities, expatriates and refugees, and personhood and gender in the ancient Near East and the Book of Mormon. Her most recent publication is the coedited volume *Excavations at the Seila Pyramid and Fag el-Gamous Cemetery* (Brill, 2020). She and her husband, Prof. George Pierce, have two children. ✂

Faculty Highlight: Mary Jane Woodger

MARY JANE WOODGER (maryjane_woodger@byu.edu) IS A PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY AND DOCTRINE AT BYU.



ALWAYS HAVING A GREAT LOVE FOR TEACHING, MARY JANE WOODGER taught home economics and American history in Salt Lake City. She then completed her MeD at Utah State University and received an EdD from BYU in educational leadership with a minor in Church history and doctrine. Dr. Woodger has the distinction of being the third full-time female professor to join the Department of Church History and Doctrine in 1999. Her teaching emphases have been Teachings of the Living Prophets and Global Church History. Her primary research interests concern twentieth-century Church history, particularly with the administrations of David O. McKay and George Albert Smith. Dr. Woodger has written and published over twenty books and authored seventy articles on doctrinal, historical, and educational subjects. She also researches topics relating to Latter-day Saint women's history and Church education. Awards Dr. Woodger has received include the Best Article of the Year Award from the Utah Historical Society, the Brigham Young University Faculty Women's Association Teaching Award, the Harvey B. Black and Susan Easton Black Outstanding Publication Award, and the Alice Louise Reynolds Women-in-Scholarship Honor. ✂

Faculty Highlights: Ryan H. Sharp

RYAN H. SHARP (ryan_sharp@byu.edu) IS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURE AT BYU.



RYAN SHARP JOINED THE FACULTY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN 2018 AFTER teaching for ten years in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. He holds a bachelor's degree from BYU and both a master's degree and PhD from the University of Utah. In addition to his love of teaching and writing on scripture, his research interests include organizational behavior and the development of psychological capital. He is the author of *Meeting Christ in the Book of Mormon* as well as several articles and book chapters related to restored scripture. He remains active in his academic field and is currently working on an invited chapter for an upcoming edited volume titled *Religion and Its Impact on Organizational Behavior*. He and his wife, Jessica, are the parents of six energetic boys. ✂

Caring for Those in Need: *Covenant of Compassion*

Brock James Dowdle

BROCK JAMES DOWDLE (brockdowdle@gmail.com) IS A MEDIA SPECIALIST AT THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER, MAJORING IN COMMUNICATIONS WITH AN EMPHASIS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS.

For years, the main mission of the Church included three themes: proclaim the gospel, perfect the Saints, and redeem the dead through vicarious saving ordinances. In recent decades, the increase in worldwide membership has drawn attention to a variety of global social issues, such as extreme poverty, natural disaster relief, and the growing refugee crisis, among others. These challenges inspired the rewording of the previous purposes and inclusion of a fourth focus—caring for those in need.

Echoing this directive, in October 2019 President Russell M. Nelson addressed the Church’s worldwide humanitarian efforts, declaring, “As members of the Church, we feel a kinship to those who suffer in any way. . . . We heed an Old Testament admonition: ‘Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy’ (Deuteronomy 15:11).”

The connection between this biblical teaching and President Nelson’s reemphasis on caring for the poor and needy encapsulates the inspiration for the 2021 Sidney

B. Sperry Symposium. The theme, “Covenant of Compassion: Caring for the Marginalized and Disadvantaged in the Old Testament,” not only seeks

to shed light on how prejudiced groups were perceived and treated but also highlights the continued



Elijah Raises the Widow's Son from Death, by Robert T. Barrett. Courtesy of Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



Courtesy of ChurchofJesusChrist.org

relevancy of the Old Testament for confronting modern challenges.

In harmony with the symposium's theme, editors Avram R. Shannon, George A. Pierce, Joshua M. Sears, and Gaye Strathearn compiled nineteen essays in *Covenant of Compassion: Caring for the Marginalized and Disadvantaged in the Old Testament*. This book, sharing its name with the conference, is a published collection of the religious scholarship from the symposium.

Arranged thematically, each section of the book is designed to illustrate different examples in the Old Testament of how assistance and care were given to the marginalized

Arranged thematically, each section of the book is designed to illustrate different examples in the Old Testament of how assistance and care was given to the marginalized and disadvantaged.

and disadvantaged. Contributors examine subjects including refugees, persons with disabilities, the impoverished, and women, and explore the relationship between these past social challenges to our modern-day issues. This edition celebrates the fiftieth year of the Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, which includes a special chapter by V. Wallace McCarlie Jr.

and Andrew C. Skinner in commemoration of the event.

Caring for the poor and needy has been an ever-important ambition across time, and we hope that each contributor will inspire us to turn to the past to help address the challenges experienced by the marginalized and disadvantaged today. ✂

Walking between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Joseph F. Merrill

Carmen Cole

CARMEN COLE (carmen@byu.edu) IS A DESIGNER AT THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER.

Apostle. Educator. Scientist. Founder of the University of Utah School of Mines and Engineering. Founder of the Latter-day Saint seminary and institute programs.

Devoted to both God and science, Joseph F. Merrill was a man like no other. When he was a young man, his home state of Utah was deeply divided between church and state. Merrill worked tirelessly over his life to bridge the gap between the two, resolving to walk the precarious line between “the devil and the deep blue sea.”¹

The many intricacies of Merrill’s life are brought to light in *Truth Seeker: The Life of Joseph F. Merrill, Scientist, Educator, and Apostle*, newly published by the Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book.

Along the path to building bridges between the worlds of academia and faith, Merrill left Utah to study in Baltimore, received his PhD from Johns Hopkins in 1899, returned to Utah as faculty at the

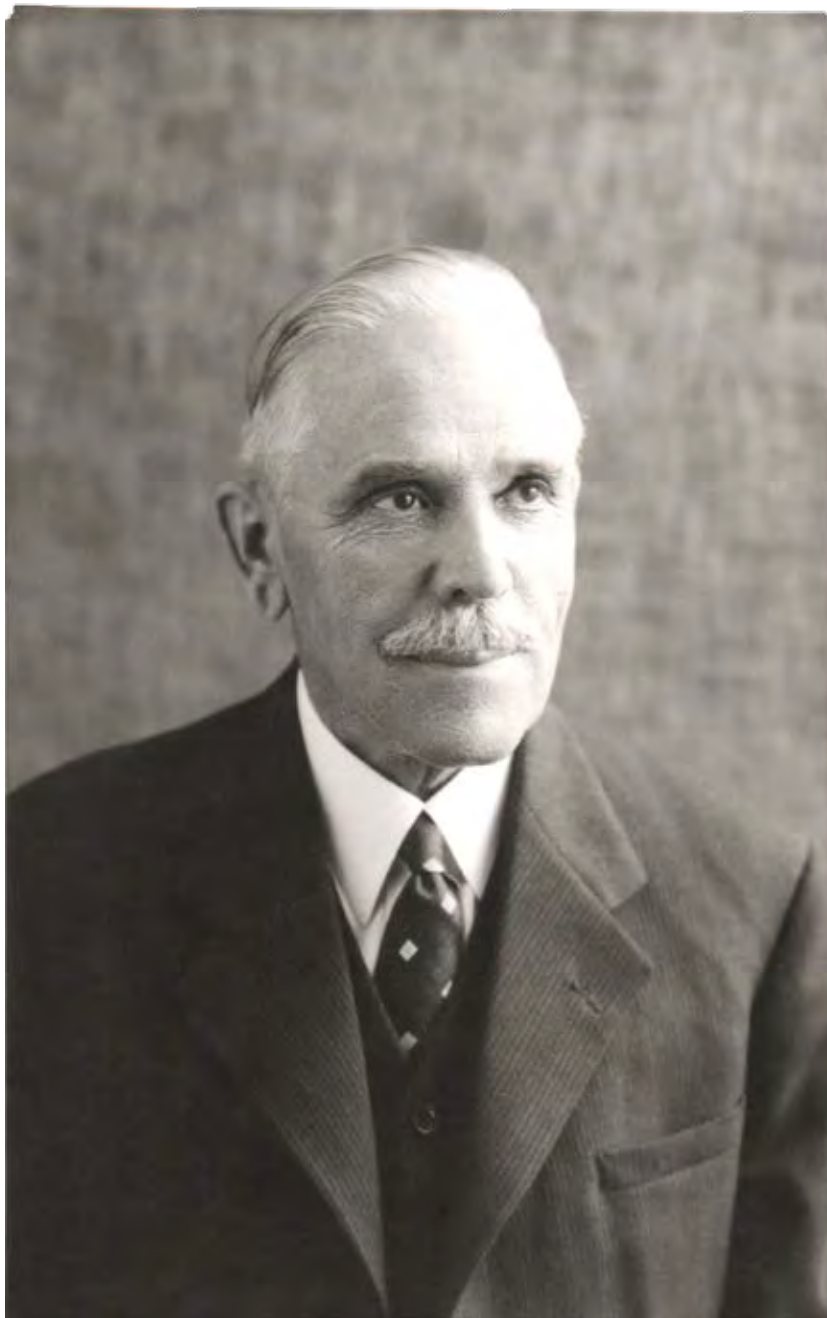
University of Utah, and spent thirty years working with colleagues at the University of Utah and the Utah State Legislature before successfully creating the School of Mines and Engineering at the University of Utah.

His work also inspired adding spiritual instruction alongside academic instruction. “With the help of others, Merrill created the

first seminary, a program that later became the signature educational program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. More than anyone, Merrill is responsible for the distinctive Latter-day Saint program of supplemental religious education now operating in dozens of countries and serving nearly a million students.”²



The first seminary near Granite High School in Salt Lake City. Courtesy of Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



In 1936 Joseph F. Merrill gave this photo to his daughter, Annie Ballantyne. Courtesy of Annie Whitton.

Merrill served as the commissioner of the Church Educational System from 1928 to 1933. As the Great Depression hit the United States and threatened the existence of religious education, he “twisted arms, threatened, and cajoled his way into transferring nearly every Church school to state control. In keeping the schools from outright closure, he

saved thousands of jobs and laid the groundwork for the current Utah system of higher education. At the same time, Merrill fought off a serious threat to the remaining system of religious education that arose from the Utah State Board of Education.”³

Author Casey Paul Griffiths says of Merrill, “Merrill’s scientific and administrative accomplishments

created an impressive legacy, but to this he added a third accomplishment of spiritual bridge building. In a time when the entire country was embroiled in the furious battles about the teaching of evolution and duels between the advocates of scripture and the learned scientists of the age, Merrill walked a narrow path between the two worlds.”⁴

One of Merrill’s contemporaries said about him, “Joseph F. Merrill is a man, who, if duty demanded it, would walk through fire.”⁵ Merrill himself proclaimed, “I am convinced that religion is as reasonable as science, that religious truths and scientific truths nowhere are in conflict, that there is one great unifying purpose extending throughout all of creation; that we are living in a wonderful, though at the present time deeply mysterious world; and that there is an all-wise, all-powerful Creator back of it all.”⁶

Read more about the adventures and challenges of Joseph F. Merrill in *Truth Seeker: The Life of Joseph F. Merrill, Scientist, Educator, and Apostle*, available now in stores and at deseretbook.com. ☒

Notes

1. Casey Paul Griffiths, *Truth Seeker: The Life of Joseph F. Merrill, Scientist, Educator, and Apostle* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), xv.
2. *Truth Seeker*, xvi.
3. *Truth Seeker*, xvi.
4. *Truth Seeker*, xvi.
5. *Truth Seeker*, xv.
6. *Truth Seeker*, 170.



The Smith Family Memorial Monument IN TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS





Topsfield

Boston

Topsfield, Massachusetts, located approximately twenty-five miles north of Boston, was the home of five generations of Joseph Smith paternal ancestors.

Alexander L. Baugh

ALEXANDER L. BAUGH (alex_baugh@byu.edu) IS A PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY AND DOCTRINE AT BYU.

Many Latter-day Saints are familiar with some of the more well-known historic sites and localities associated with the early history of the Church, places like in Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. But there are many other important locales Church members are completely unfamiliar with. Mention the significance of Topsfield, Massachusetts, for example, and few Latter-day Saints would be able to comment on this community's significance as it relates to the Restoration, which is probably understandable. But Topsfield's importance is indeed noteworthy in understanding the larger framework and history of the restored gospel. For more than 150 years, five generations of Joseph Smith's paternal progenitors were Topsfield residents, and the family legacy in this rural New England community continues to be felt to the present day. And while it is impossible to measure the overall influence and extent that Topsfield's cultural, social, economic, political, and religious environment had on these early generations of the Smiths, anthropologists would contend that the early conditions, circumstances, and forces that characterized families like the Smiths had long-lasting effects that impacted the character, attitudes, beliefs, and ways of thinking of their descendants in succeeding generations. In the case of Joseph Smith, his ancestral roots helped to shape not only who he was but also who he was to become.

The 1873 Smith Family Topsfield Memorial

In 1873 Apostle George A. Smith, who had served as the Church Historian and Recorder for sixteen years (1854–1870) and who was a cousin of Joseph Smith (the son of John Smith, a brother to Joseph Smith Sr.), arranged for a memorial to be erected in what is today the Pine Grove Cemetery, located near Topsfield's town center. The monument honors Samuel Smith I and his wife Rebecca Curtis, as well as Samuel Smith II and his wife Priscilla Gould, each of whom are believed to have been buried in the cemetery. George A. Smith did not include the names of Joseph Smith's first ancestors to live in the Topsfield region, Robert and Mary French Smith, because at the time of their deaths, the Pine Grove Cemetery did not exist, so they likely would have been buried elsewhere (probably on his property). Additionally, George A. Smith



George A. Smith monument in the Pine Grove Cemetery, Topsfield, MA, June 2021. In late 1873, Apostle George A. Smith (a first cousin to Joseph Smith), while in New England en route to Europe and the Middle East, made arrangements for the placement of a monument in the Pine Grove Cemetery in Topsfield in honor of Samuel Smith Sr. (1666–1748) and Samuel Smith Jr. (1714–1785) and their wives, all of whom are presumed to have been buried in the cemetery. Courtesy of Alexander L. Baugh.

did not include the names of Joseph Smith's paternal grandparents Asael and Mary Duty Smith, because Asael died in Potsdam, New York, and Mary died in Kirtland, Ohio. Nor did he include the name of Joseph Smith Sr. and his wife Lucy Mack (unlike her husband, she never lived in Topsfield), both of whom died in Nauvoo, Illinois.

The 2005 Smith Family Topsfield Community Markers

The first time I visited the Pine Grove Cemetery and saw the 1873 monument was in June 2002. The memorial had weathered, having been subject to the elements for well over a century. The inscriptions had eroded somewhat, and lichens were on the surface. In subsequent years I continued to visit the site when visiting Massachusetts and when conducting Latter-day Saint tours in the New England region.

In 2005 I was in my office at BYU when I received a phone call from Norman J. Isler, the president of the Topsfield Historical Society. I later learned he had the reputation as being the most knowledgeable citizen about Topsfield's history. How Norm's phone call was directed to me is still a bit of a mystery, but my guess is that he must have somehow found the number for the Department of Church History and Doctrine offices where he then talked to one of the secretaries who directed his call to me. The secretary who took the call must have known something about my background and interest in Church history sites, which is why the call was forwarded to me. I'd like to think it was providential.

Norm introduced himself to me and then told me the purpose of his call. He said he was aware that 2005 was the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith and that because five generations of his Smith ancestors lived in Topsfield, he was calling to propose the idea of having a historical marker placed in the community to share the Smiths' ancestral story. He also recommended where the marker could be located—namely, at the “Smith homestead,” situated on Boardman Lane about a mile north of the town center. He further explained that over the years when Latter-day Saint groups would stop in Topsfield to see the 1873 Smith memorial in the Pine Grove Cemetery, many would also go to the site of the old Smith homestead (which at that time was owned by Brian and Cathy Rossanos) and wander onto the property and take photographs. Norm felt that



Above: Smith family homestead historical marker, June 2021. In 2005, the Topsfield Historical Society and the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation (now the Ensign Peak Foundation) placed a historical marker on the site of the original Smith family homestead, which was occupied by four generations of Joseph Smith's paternal ancestors. Courtesy of Alexander L. Baugh.



Above Right: Historical marker on the Congregational Church grounds in Topsfield, June 2021. In 2005, the Topsfield Historical Society and the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation (now the Ensign Peak Foundation), in cooperation with the Topsfield Congregational church, placed a historical marker at this site. The first Congregational church in Topsfield was built in 1703, the second in 1759, and the third, shown in this photograph, in 1842. Joseph Smith's paternal ancestors affiliated and worshipped in the first and second Congregational meetinghouses. Courtesy of Alexander L. Baugh.

Right: Elder M. Russell Ballard and attendees on the occasion of the dedication of the historical marker on the Congregational church grounds, 15 October 2005. President Ballard is a descendant of the Topsfield Smiths through his great-great-grandfather Hyrum Smith. Courtesy of *Church News*.



if a historical marker could be placed near the side of the road, he believed visitors would be less inclined to walk aimlessly around and explore the Rossanoses' property.

At the time, I was a board member of the Mormon Historical Sites Foundation (now the Ensign Peak Foundation), a nonprofit group organized to identify, commemorate, and fund the construction and placement of monuments and markers of historical sites associated with the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I told Norm a little about the organization and

then mentioned that the idea of placing a historical marker like the one he was proposing was exactly the type of project the foundation would likely be willing to support. I told him I was confident the organization, chaired by Kim R. Wilson, would agree to fund the proposal, which they did.

A short while later, as the plans for the marker were going forward, Norm proposed having a second marker, one about the religious ties and affiliation the Smiths had with the Congregational Church in Topsfield. This

additional proposal was approved by the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation board and by Norman B. Bendroth, the minister of the congregation at the time, who gave his permission to have the marker placed in the northeast corner section of the church property. In my efforts to compose each of the marker's inscriptions, Norm provided helpful feedback and recommendations. A local monument company made and installed the two markers followed by a formal dedication held on October 16, 2005. Elder M. Russell Ballard, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and a Smith descendant, spoke and offered the dedicatory prayer.

The 2020 Smith Family Memorial Monument

In September 2018, I had a phone conversation with Becky Smith, an independent Latter-day Saint historian who has written and published several guidebooks on early Church history sites, and who, along with her husband Greg, regularly conducted Church history tours. She and I have been friends for many years, exchanged ideas from time to time, and collaborated on a few projects together. In this conversation Becky told me that she and her husband Greg had just returned from the East, where she was doing some research in order to update one of her guidebooks. She mentioned that while they were in Topsfield they noticed again the condition of the marker George A. Smith had erected in 1873. It was discolored, lichens were everywhere, and the inscriptions were getting much harder to read. They also took time to visit with Norm Isler, who was still serving as the president of the Topsfield Historical Society. In their meeting, the subject of getting the monument professionally cleaned came up. However, Norm told them that because the cemetery was owned by the town of Topsfield, they must write up a formal proposal in order to receive permission from Topsfield's Parks and Cemetery Commission and superintendent Steve Shepard. He also mentioned that it might be a difficult proposition because the commission generally did not approve disturbing any part of the old cemetery or doing anything to an original gravestone.


As Becky and I talked about the possibility of getting the 1873 marker cleaned, we also talked about how wonderful it would be if another monument could be placed or erected near the old one—one that would highlight each of the five generations of Joseph Smith's ancestors who

lived in Topsfield, not just Samuel I and Samuel II and their wives, whom George A. Smith had memorialized on the 1873 monument. We even talked about modeling the monument after the Joseph Smith Memorial in Sharon, erected in 1905 by Junius Wells, only on a smaller scale, and constructing it from the same granite that came from the E. L. Smith "Rock of Ages" quarry in Barre, Vermont—the same quarry where the granite for the Joseph Smith Memorial had come from. When it came to the cost for the marker, I thought a conservative figure would be around twenty thousand dollars, thinking once again that if our plans materialized, we could run the idea by Kim Wilson to see if the Ensign Peak Foundation would agree to fund the project.

A short time later, Becky made a phone call to the Joseph Smith Memorial Visitors' Center in Sharon, Vermont, about a matter unrelated to cleaning the 1873 Smith marker in Topsfield and was put in contact with Kay Godfrey and his wife, Debra, who were serving as senior missionaries at the site. During one of their subsequent conversations, Becky mentioned to Kay about her efforts to try to find someone and some way to get the marker in Topsfield cleaned. Kay was familiar with the history and legacy of the Smith family in Topsfield, having directed several Church history tours over the years. In fact, he regularly took his tour groups to see the 1873 Smith monument in the Pine Grove Cemetery, and the markers at



Norman J. Isler, president of the Topsfield Historical Society, June 2021.
Courtesy of Alexander L. Baugh.



the Congregational Church and at Boardman Lane. Becky then asked him if he would be willing to meet with Norm and the Topsfield's Parks and Cemetery Commission to try to secure permission to have the 1873 marker cleaned. She also ran by Kay the other idea of looking into the possibility of placing a new historical monument honoring the Topsfield Smiths in the Pine Grove Cemetery, which he agreed to do. On March 21, 2019, Kay traveled to Topsfield, where he met Norm to discuss both matters. Norm was very supportive of both propositions and made arrangements for Kay to make a presentation to the Parks and Cemetery Commission in one of their upcoming meetings.

On April 9, 2019, Kay, Debra, and Norm formally met with several Topsfield officials, including representatives from the town's selectmen (the town's executive body), the Parks and Cemetery Commission, and Steve Shepard. In the course of the discussion, it became evident that the officers were open-minded but cautious. Approval to have the 1873 marker cleaned was given, with the recommendation that it be done by a professional company capable of doing the work without damaging the original stone. Much more discussion however, focused on the proposal to construct a memorial dedicated to the five generations of Joseph Smith's paternal ancestors. Fortunately, Kay came to the meeting well prepared. In his presentation he included a detailed drawing of the proposed monument, which was similar in design and appearance to that of the Joseph Smith Memorial in Sharon, although considerably smaller. This new proposed monument was ten feet in height and scaled to approximately one-fifth the size of the original made from stone from the quarry in Barre, Vermont. And, like the memorial in Sharon, Kay proposed that it consist of five separate granite stone sections, which he intuitively suggested symbolically represented the five generations of Topsfield Smiths. The location of the structure was also an issue, but it was subsequently determined that if approved, it should be placed in the vicinity of the 1873 monument. Finally, it was determined the color of the stone used in the new monument should be the same as the 1873 original. (This was later scrapped, however, when following the cleaning, it was discovered that the stone used was actually brownstone, a type of reddish sandstone, completely different in color and texture than the gray granite from the Barre quarry.) Although Kay and Norm came to the meeting with expectation that their proposals

might very well be rejected, they came away encouraged by the fact that permission was given for the cleaning of the 1873 monument, in addition to receiving consideration for a new memorial.

These officials had come to recognize that a new monument dedicated to the Topsfield Smiths would serve as an appropriate memorial to a remarkable family whose descendants had left an impactful and lasting legacy on the religious landscape in America.

What occurred during the next few weeks was totally unexpected. On April 29, when Kay met for a second time with Topsfield's Parks and Cemetery Commission and other community leaders, they had taken ownership of the monument project. In the interim, these officials had come to recognize that a new monument dedicated to the Topsfield Smiths would serve as an appropriate memorial to a remarkable family whose descendants had left an impactful and lasting legacy on the religious landscape in America. In addition, the section in the cemetery where the monument would be located was in need of some renovations and conservation, and the placement of a new memorial could be the means to make some necessary enhancements and improvements to the surrounding cemetery property. The new monument also had the potential to draw more visitors to the community (especially Latter-day Saint groups), and it would be a way to foster goodwill among religious groups in the area. Recognizing the potential of the project, community leaders implemented some plans of their own.

On May 14, 2019, when Kay met with the Parks and Cemetery Commission to learn of their plans, he was surprised to discover the commissioners had already contracted with a professional landscape architect who had produced several detailed architectural drawings for a memorial that included several features and structures that went considerably beyond the singular monument Kay had initially proposed. The design of the monument itself consisted of two base stones, a four-sided inscription

stone with space for biographical and historical inscriptions for Robert, Samuel I, Samuel II, Asael, and Joseph Smith Sr., a collar stone, and an obelisk-type column set on top of the collar. But the sketches also included a garden-like plaza, measuring 30 by 38 feet, outlined with granite curbing, interspersed with granite posts that were linked with a black iron chain to set off the site from the surrounding graves. Each quarter section of the plaza also included a granite stone bench. To facilitate construction, the site would also need to be excavated, but the original 1873 marker would not have to be moved, allowing it to be situated eleven feet to the north of the new monument. To provide access to the memorial site, plans called for a “stone dust” walkway to be installed from the main cemetery roadway and parking area to the site (a second walkway was later added). A final inclusion was the removal of a number of large, aging trees near the new memorial. To get some idea what the entire project would cost, the commissioners requested Brent and Theresa Lane, owners of Kimball Memorials in nearby Danvers, Massachusetts, submit a bid as to what the project would cost.

On June 3, the Lanes presented their estimate to the Parks and Cemetery Commission, which came in at a whopping \$220,000, a far cry from the original \$20,000 Becky and I had had originally proposed for a single monument. Understandably, when Kay saw the plans and the higher cost for the project, he had mixed feelings; he was pleased the commissioners accepted the proposal for the memorial, but frustrated that they had added so many costly embellishments. When Kay wrote Becky to tell her about the terms laid down by the commission, her reaction was much the same. Yet they both knew the only way the monument project was going to happen was if it was done according to the terms the commissioners had proposed. But the bigger question was, where could they come up with the money to fund such a project? Both Becky and Kay knew the Ensign Peak Foundation had previously helped fund other important and significant historic site projects, but in their minds this one was simply too costly even for the foundation to try to undertake. “I think this is a bust,” Kay wrote to Becky, “I don’t see this kind of money.” However, when Becky called to tell me about the commission’s decision and the cost of their revised and expanded proposal for the memorial, my reaction was just the opposite. I was thrilled and excited at the possibility. I



Above, left to right, top to bottom: Becky and Greg Smith, Kay Godfrey, Rick Cochran, and Kim Wilson, each of whom played important roles in the monument project.

Below: Construction and placement of the monument honoring the five generations of Topsfield Smiths, 15 September 2020. Kimball Memorials of Danvers, MA, was contracted to construct and install the monument and the plaza area honoring the Smith family. Courtesy of Kenneth R. Mays.



reassured her this could work if we could get the backing of the Ensign Peak Foundation, which I was confident we could do. After all, the foundation had funded the cost for the 2005 historical markers, and this would be a good follow-up project to the previous one. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the Ensign Peak Foundation was a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and as the chairman of the board, Kim Wilson was well connected and had an impressive track record of securing donors to fund past historic site projects.

While all this was taking place, the Godfreys’ mission at the Joseph Smith Memorial was coming to an end and

they were making plans to return to Utah. Providentially, a few weeks earlier, Rick Cochran, the Northeast Area regional public affairs director for the Church (now the regional communication director), visited the Joseph Smith Memorial, where he met Kay, who told him about his meetings with the Topsfield officials and his efforts to get approval for the new memorial. Topsfield was part of Rick's region, and he immediately took an interest in the project, which led Kay to ask Rick if he would take over for him. "If you do not help," Kay told him, "this project will not happen." Given that the monument project seemed to be something along the lines of his public affairs responsibilities, Rick agreed. Then, in early June, the two men went to Topsfield, where Kay introduced Rick to Norm Isler, Steve Shepard, and Bruce and Theresa Lane, the proposed contractors. It was around this time that the 1873 monument cleaning and restoration was completed. Becky and her husband Greg funded the cleaning operation.

With the Godfreys back in Utah, the next step was to arrange to get Kim Wilson and Rick Cochran together to talk things over and discuss particulars. Rick had made plans to travel to Utah for a grandson's baptism during the first week of July, which provided an opportunity to

get the two of them together. On July 8, 2019, Kim, Rick, Becky, Greg, and I met at Becky's home in Orem, where we discussed the whole situation. Rick laid out all the architectural designs the Topsfield Parks and Cemetery Commission had professionally drawn up, noting that they had added a few additional modifications, bringing the project to \$240,000. After considerable discussion, Kim felt the project was one the Ensign Peak Foundation would be interested in sponsoring, and he believed the board would support his recommendation. We also determined that in going forward we would make a goal to complete the monument project by June 2020 to coincide with the two hundredth anniversary year of Joseph Smith's First Vision. It would also be celebratory of the four hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Bay.

Within a matter of a few weeks, Rick secured a donation of \$120,000 from a private corporate foundation, half the amount needed to fund the project. But that donation was contingent upon securing contributions from other donors or entities for the remaining \$120,000. However, within a short time, he successfully obtained another sizable donation from a donor in the Boston area. Kim obtained substantial contributions from three benefactors



Completed plaza area for the monument to the Topsfield Smiths, June 2021. The plaza also includes the 1873 monument erected by George A. Smith, June 2021. Courtesy of Alexander L. Baugh.

in Utah, enough to begin actual construction on the project. A fourth benefactor later covered the remainder of the costs. All the contributions were managed through the Ensign Peak Foundation.

On August 19, 2019, Rick, Kim, and Richard Lambert (vice chair of the Ensign Peak Foundation) met in Topsfield, where they signed the contract with Kimball Memorials to begin work on the monument and its accompanying features. The agreement included a subcontract with the Rock of Ages factory in Vermont to cut the five granite sections of the monument. During the next few months, I, Kim, and Kenneth Mays (an Ensign Peak Foundation board member) canvassed a number of historical sources in order to provide accurate texts and information for the monument. Rick made numerous trips

to Topsfield, where he met with civic leaders and various townspeople to solidify plans for a formal dedication of the monument, which was initially scheduled for June 2020. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 outbreak in the early spring of 2020 and government restrictions to curtail the spread of the virus caused delays in the monument's construction, making it necessary to postpone the dedication indefinitely. On September 15, 2020, the five stone sections composing the monument were assembled and fitted together on the site, marking the final completion of the entire project. Expectations are for the dedication to take place sometime in 2022, with the hope that President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, will be able to attend and dedicate the edifice as a lasting tribute to an extraordinary family with a remarkable heritage. ✂

THE FIVE GENERATIONS OF TOPSFIELD SMITHS

Robert Smith (1624–1693)—Mary French (1634–1719). Robert Smith was born in England and in 1638, at the age of fourteen, immigrated to Boston as an indentured servant and became a tailor. He lived in Boston, then moved north to Ipswich, where he likely met Mary French, a native of Boston. The couple married around 1656 and lived in Ipswich before moving to Rowley (later to become Boxford). Together the couple had ten children, nine of whom lived to maturity. Later, Robert and Mary became residents of Topsfield, which marked the beginning of the Smiths' legacy in the community.

Samuel Smith I (1666–1748)—Rebecca Curtis/Curtice (unknown–1753). Samuel I married Rebecca Curtis/Curtice in 1707 (possibly a second marriage), and were parents of ten children. He was a landowner, practiced the carpenter's trade, and was a citizen of influence—holding offices of public trust. When his father, Robert, died in 1693, Samuel became the executor of the estate, which became known as the "Smith homestead."

Samuel Smith II (1714–1785)—Priscilla Gould (1707–1744). Samuel II married Priscilla Gould in 1734, and the couple had five children. Priscilla died in September 1744, a short time after the birth of her youngest child, Asael, Joseph Smith Jr.'s grandfather. The following year, Samuel married his second wife, Priscilla Gould, a cousin of his first wife with the same name. She had no children of her own and reared the five children left motherless the year before. Samuel was the most distinguished of the Topsfield Smiths, where he served as a Topsfield selectman (local government leader), town clerk, and a member of the Committee for Correspondence, Tea Committee, and Committee of Safety. Most notably, he represented Topsfield as a delegate to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 (the colonial assembly), and the Second Provincial Congress in 1775. He became a captain in the Topsfield militia.

Asael Smith (1744–1830)—Mary Duty (1743–1836). Asael (also Ashael) Smith married Mary Duty in 1767. In 1772, the couple moved from Topsfield to New Hampshire, during which time he served in the Revolutionary War. The couple and their ten

children returned to Topsfield in 1786, where, three years later, their last child was born. In 1791 the family moved to Tunbridge, Vermont. The family later moved to Stockholm, New York, where he died in October 1830. In May 1836, his wife Mary left Stockholm to join the Latter-day Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, where she died on May 27, only a few days after her arrival, at the age of ninety-two.

Joseph Smith Sr. (1771–1840). Joseph Smith Sr. was born on July 12, 1771, in Topsfield. The following year, his parents, Asael and Mary, moved the family to New Hampshire for fourteen years, then returned to Topsfield in 1786. During this time, Joseph Sr. became a member of the Topsfield Congregational Church. In 1791, at the age of twenty, he moved with his parents to Tunbridge, Vermont. In total, Joseph Sr. lived in Topsfield for about six years. It was not until after the family moved to Vermont that he met Lucy Mack. The couple married in January 1796. He labored as a cooper, farmer, merchant, and teacher. The couple had ten children, including Joseph Smith Jr., founder and president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Hyrum Smith, Patriarch of the Church and a counselor in the First Presidency.

Thirty Years as Host of *Music & the Spoken Word*

Christine Rappleye

CHRISTINE RAPPLEYE (rappleye@deseretnews.com) IS A REPORTER FOR THE CHURCH NEWS.

Lloyd D. Newell, a professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU, is perhaps better known for hosting each week's *Music & the Spoken Word* broadcast. Did you know he's been hosting it for over thirty years? In speaking with Brother Newell concerning this article, he said, "Teaching in BYU Religious Education over the years has complemented my Church calling to write and deliver the *Spoken Word*. Each time I enter the classroom and each time I produce an inspirational *Spoken Word*, I strive to teach truth and build faith, to offer encouragement and hope. They are similar messages, but one is in the classroom, and the other is over broadcast airwaves. It is a great honor and blessing to be part of both."

He officially became the announcer on March 31, 1991. "To put this into perspective," the Tabernacle Choir Blog noted, "when he stepped up to the microphone, the Berlin Wall had recently come down and the two Germanys had just reunited months earlier, Iraq was invading Kuwait,

and 'Under the Sea' from *The Little Mermaid* won an Oscar. The first web pages were in their infancy, YouTube wouldn't be invented for another fourteen years, and a gallon of gas cost \$1.34. Times have changed, but the choir's program has remained a constant."¹

Spoken Word Announcers

The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square's Sunday morning show first aired more than ninety-two years ago on July 15, 1929, when nineteen-year-old Ted Kimball stood on a ladder to reach a microphone hanging from the ceiling and announce each



Candid shot of Lloyd Newell before a broadcast. Photos courtesy of Lloyd Newell.

musical number. Since that time, the broadcast has known only three announcers: Richard L. Evans, Spence Kinard, and Newell.

Richard L. Evans was the first regular announcer from the summer of 1930 until 1971—more than forty-one years. Spence Kinard announced from 1972 to 1990. Lloyd Newell began filling in at the end of November 1990, and he has been the voice for nearly one-third of all the 4,777 broadcasts.

When he was extended the calling and set apart in 1991, President Gordon B. Hinckley, then a counselor in the First Presidency, said that each week's message needed to be an "inspirational gem."

"Those two words ring in my ears and in my heart all the time," Newell said. When he writes the *Spoken Word* messages, he will ask himself, "Is this an inspirational gem? Does it enlighten and inspire? Does it add an insight or perspective that is wise and interesting and encouraging?"

President Hinckley also told him that this call would change his life, Newell said. "President Hinckley was right, it has changed my life and my family's life for the better. He understood it far better than I did. . . . I think he certainly had a greater vision for it than I did at the time."

Thirty Years Ago

Previously a news anchor for CNN and a TV station in Pennsylvania, Newell holds a master's in communications and a PhD in marriage, family, and human development from BYU.

Previously a news anchor for CNN and a TV station in Pennsylvania, Newell holds a master's in communications and a PhD in marriage, family, and human development from BYU.

"When I did the news, no one ever came up to me after a newscast and said that newscast really touched my heart or that really made a difference in my life," he said. But with the *Spoken Word* messages, "I'm blessed to hear that all the time."

Newell credits his wife and family for their constant support over the many years. "I could not have done this calling without my wife by my side, and the love and support of my family."

Newell works several weeks in advance on the *Spoken Word* messages. Ideas come from everywhere and anywhere. And he doesn't have a favorite—it's too difficult to pick just one.

"My antenna is always raised because I'm always looking for ideas and stories, universal principles and timeless truths that would make for a good *Spoken Word*," Newell said.

During the pandemic, he has continued to write and record new messages, continuing the historic record of the world's longest continuous broadcast. "We can't bring 500 choir and orchestra members in for a live broadcast during the pandemic, but I can go up to the Conference



Lloyd Newell with Walter Cronkite.

Center every few weeks and record with a production crew four or five new *Spoken Words* that will air over the next weeks," Newell said.

Delivering inspirational messages each week to an audience in the millions and being a key part of such a treasured and historic legacy such as *Music and the Spoken Word* is no small task. But with such a visible calling that he makes look easy, Newell said there have been personal challenges along the way.

"Of course I've had many times of feeling inadequate," Newell said. "How can I capture what I want to say or what I'm feeling and how can I deliver it in a way that would make a difference? . . . It is truly humbling. . . . But it is a great honor and blessing to be associated with the choir and its broadcast."



Lloyd Newell delivers his *Spoken Word* message.

As he reflected on thirty years of his association with the choir, Newell highlights the opportunities of touring with the choir and orchestra as they've performed in the United States and across the world and presenting a Spoken Word message.

A Global Ministry

As he reflected on thirty years of his association with the choir, Newell highlights the opportunities of touring with the choir and orchestra

as they've performed in the United States and across the world and presenting a *Spoken Word* message during the concerts, along with building relationships with people, from

those performing to those behind the cameras and in the production booths. And since his weekly *Spoken Word* messages are nondenominational, he treasures the many associations and interactions he's had with people from all walks of life and all religious backgrounds across the world.

"The essence of the broadcast remains still the same," Newell said of the program. "There is beautiful music from the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square and an inspirational message. It's different now as the technology has changed with more digital equipment and modern technology and that it goes beyond a radio and TV program to reaching countless people through online platforms.

"With this broadcast, we're trying to spread hope and goodness, truth and light," he said, adding, "the music is timeless," and the *Spoken Word* message "gives us a chance to talk about everlasting things and to offer perspective and encouragement and hope." ✂

Adapted, with permission, from Christine Rappleye, "Lloyd Newell Marks 30 Years of Sharing the 'Spoken Word'—and He's Still Creating Them in the Pandemic," Church News, April 16, 2021.

Note

1. "Lloyd Newell's 30 Years of Service to The Tabernacle Choir," Tabernacle Choir Blog, April 9, 2021.

Teaching Isaiah with a Restoration Focus by Improving Historical Awareness

Shon D. Hopkin

SHON D. HOPKIN (shon_hopkin@byu.edu) IS CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURE AT BYU.

Isaiah lived and taught over twenty-seven hundred years ago—a prophet from a foreign land, a foreign culture, and a foreign time for all modern readers. Before his words would ever be read in the latter days, they first had to be intelligible and applicable to the ancient Israelites that the Lord called him to lead. Isaiah’s body has long since been placed in the earth, and many Christian readers today consider the messages of the “Old” Testament to be outdated and irrelevant.

Nephi provided two crucial thoughts that encourage Latter-day Saints to read his words with a focus on the powerful truths of the restored gospel. First, he “read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah” to “more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer,” describing his efforts to “*liken all scriptures* unto [them], that it might be for [their] profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23, emphasis added). Second, he declared, “I know

that [the writings of Isaiah] shall be of great worth unto them in the last days; for *in that day shall they understand them*; wherefore, for their good have I written them” (2 Nephi 25:8, emphasis added).

Notwithstanding the ancient date of Isaiah’s teachings, Isaiah classes at BYU each semester fill to overflowing with intelligent, articulate college students who are excited to study and learn from his words. The students feel that way, for the most part, because they have learned from Nephi and from the words of the resurrected Christ that “great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1). They want to know what those ancient words might mean for them today, believing that those “in the last days” shall “understand them” (2 Nephi 25:8). The restored gospel—including the teachings of the New Testament about Jesus Christ—provides a crucial lens by which we can understand what Isaiah means for us today.

Along with this Restoration focus, I have found that carefully studying and distinguishing what Isaiah’s original audience might have understood in their day gives added depth, breadth, and beautiful nuance to a Restoration-oriented *likening* of Isaiah. I’ll give just one example of how improving our historical awareness and reading the scriptures in their historical context (a lifelong journey for all scripture readers), increases and enhances a Restoration understanding.

Most members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, along with other Christians, are thrilled to read the grand prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” This verse points powerfully to the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as taught in Matthew 1:22–23, and we should never lose sight of that most important of prophetic fulfillments. Understanding the historical

context of this verse—“What would this prophecy have meant to King Ahaz who first received it?”—only enhances its power and applicability. The verses immediately following the Immanuel prophecy (Isaiah 7:15–16) demonstrate that the sign of the young woman giving birth would be fulfilled first in Ahaz’s own day. (The Hebrew word *‘almah* that was originally spoken by Isaiah and that is translated as “virgin” in the King James Version means “young maiden.” Only in its Greek translation was a word chosen that literally means “virgin.”) According to Isaiah 7:15–16, before the prophesied child would be old enough to recognize the difference between good and evil, the threat from the combined power of Israel and Syria would be gone. As king of Judah, Ahaz could trust in the Lord and did not need to fear or make concessions to foreign powers. Although there is some debate about who this child may have been, the flow of the text seems to me to indicate that it was Isaiah’s own child, since Isaiah states shortly thereafter that his own wife, “the prophetess,” “conceived, and bare a son” (Isaiah 8:3). This interpretation coincides with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s understanding of this passage, which he describes as a “dual or parallel fulfillment” prophecy.¹

The historical context of the scriptural record creates the evocative image of a weak and vacillating king—the most powerful political force in Judah—who is too terrified to trust in the Lord, as he is confronted with the simple, powerful faith of



Isaiah, by Tedd Henninger. Courtesy of Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

a young woman—Isaiah’s wife, the prophetess—who has enough trust in the Lord that she is willing to give birth to a child amid impending doom. The birth of the child will be a testament to Ahaz that “God is with us,” that no matter how dark things may appear, God still has a plan and is still in charge, as demonstrated each time he sends a child to the earth, with all the hope and promise that childbirth entails.

As powerful as the image would have been for Isaiah’s original audience, it is enhanced in the New Testament when *the* virgin maiden, Mary the mother of the Son of God, faithfully submits to the will of the Lord and has the courage to give birth to the child of promise *par excellence* (Luke 1:30–38). Jesus’s birth amid the threat of Rome, of political bondage, of spiritual bondage, and of death will signify for all eternity that God’s plan of mercy will prevail.

And the image retains its power when “likened” again to our own

latter-day situation, when once again many are overcome by fear but when God will continue to demonstrate the promise of Immanuel, that he “is with us,” with the birth of each new child. As despair and anxiety increase and buffet God’s children in the latter days, faithful women and men—mothers, fathers, teachers, family members, and friends—will continue to show their faith in the midst of worldwide commotion by rejoicing in the birth of children and by teaching them of their divine origin and their role in God’s great latter-day work. When the winds of extreme individualism and rampant materialism appear too threatening, latter-day women and men can take strength in the powerful image of Mary and in the first image of Isaiah’s faithful wife, whose courage was greater than that of a king and whose act of love outshone the might of surrounding political powers.

This is just one of literally hundreds of examples when a Restoration-guided understanding is enhanced and strengthened through increased historical awareness. The depths of the teachings from this great Old Testament prophet—as with the depths of the restored gospel—are yet to be fully explored by any of us as we in “the last days” seek to “understand them” (2 Nephi 25:8). ❧

Note

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “‘More Fully Persuaded’: Isaiah’s Witness of Christ’s Ministry,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Study, 1998), 6.

FACULTY AND STAFF

APPOINTMENTS

Scott C. Esplin was appointed dean of Religious Education. **Gaye Strathearn** and **Tyler J. Griffin** were appointed as associate deans.

J. B. Haws was appointed chair of the Department of Church History and Doctrine, and there will be no associate department chair.

Charles L. Swift was appointed associate chair in the Department of Ancient Scripture.

Jared W. Ludlow was appointed publications director for the RSC. **Michael A. Goodman** was appointed associate publications director for the RSC.

Jenet Erickson was hired as an associate professor of Church history and doctrine.

Lee Harms was hired as an associate graduate coordinator in the chaplaincy program.

Julie Newman was hired as an RSC editor.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Daniel Becerra, author of a volume on 3rd–4th Nephi, received an Association for Mormon Letters Special Award in Religious Nonfiction for *Brief Theological Introductions to the Book of Mormon*.

Allen Blake Boatright and **Vance Theodore** received the B. West Belnap Citizenship Award.

Amy Easton-Flake received the Robert J. Matthews Teaching Award.

Casey Paul Griffiths and **Mary Jane Woodger** received a Latter-day Saint Publishing and Media Association award for their book *50 Relics of the Restoration*.

John Hilton III received a Latter-day Saint Publishing and Media Association award for his book *The Founder of Our Peace*.

John Hilton III and **Daniel Becerra** received the received the Harvey B. and Susan Easton Black Outstanding Scholarship Award (ancient scripture).

Kerry M. Hull received the Richard L. Anderson Research Award.

Michael Hubbard MacKay and **Anthony R. Sweat** received the Harvey B. and Susan Easton Black Outstanding Scholarship Award (Church history and doctrine).

Jan J. Martin received the outstanding teaching award in ancient scripture, and **Andrew C. Reed** received the outstanding teaching award in Church history and doctrine.

Marshall Morrise, Joany O.

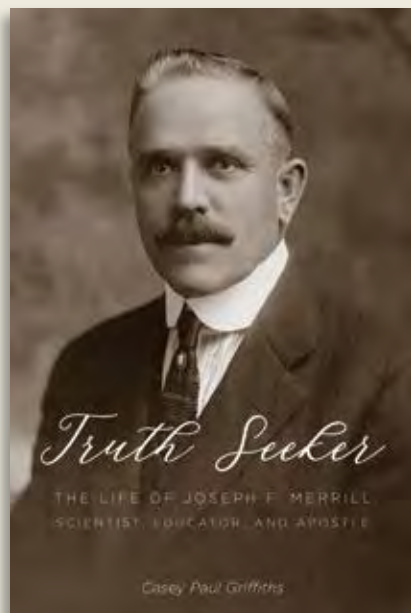
Pinegar, and **Keith J. Wilson** received outstanding citizenship awards.

Anthony R. Sweat received an Association for Mormon Letters award and a Latter-day Saint Publishing and Media Association award for his book *Repicturing the Restoration: New Art to Expand Our Understanding* (Provo, UT: RSC; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020).

Joseph M. Spencer, series editor and author of a volume on 1st Nephi, received an Association for Mormon Letters Special Award in Religious Nonfiction for *Brief Theological Introductions to the Book of Mormon*.

RETIRING

David F. Boone, Brad Farnsworth, Daniel K Judd, Dana M. Pike, Shirley Smith Ricks, Andrew C. Skinner, and **Brent L. Top** retired earlier this year. ✂

**Truth Seeker:****The Life of Joseph F. Merrill, Scientist, Educator, and Apostle**

CASEY PAUL GRIFFITHS

Joseph F. Merrill became the first native Utahn to earn a PhD. Working at the University of Utah, he labored to reconcile the secular world with the spiritual world of his youth. In 1912 he helped establish the first Latter-day Saint seminary at Granite High School. As Church commissioner of education, he helped establish the institutes of religion, with a mission to allow college students to reconcile the secular truths learned in university settings with the truths of the gospel. He created the Religion Department at Brigham Young University and encouraged young scholars to produce professional studies of the Latter-day Saint religion. In 1933 Merrill was called as an Apostle, where he continued his work to modernize the Church. In the final years of his life, Merrill continued to work to show that science and religion could be reconciled.

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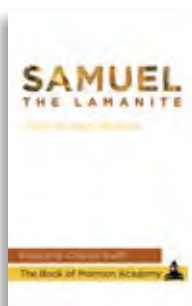
**Covenant of Compassion:
Caring for the Marginalized
and Disadvantaged
in the Old Testament**

EDITED BY AVRAM R. SHANNON, GAYE STRATHEARN, GEORGE A. PIERCE, AND JOSHUA M. SEARS

In general conference, President Russell M. Nelson spoke about poverty and other humanitarian concerns, declaring, “As members of the Church, we feel a kinship to those who suffer in any way. . . . We heed an Old Testament admonition: ‘Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy’ (Deuteronomy 15:11).” President Nelson’s linking of Old Testament

law with modern social concerns highlights the continued relevancy of the Old Testament for confronting modern challenges, including poverty, ethnocentrism, and the world’s growing refugee crisis.

US \$31.99



**Samuel the
Lamanite: That
Ye Might
Believe**

EDITED BY
CHARLES SWIFT

This third
volume by the
Book of Mormon

Academy at Brigham Young University is a study of the sermon of Samuel the Lamanite by means of four analytical lenses. The first, a prophetic lens, discusses the roles of prophets, the prophetic promise of “prolonged days,” and Samuel’s prophecies. The second lens is pedagogical, providing readers with a greater understanding of how to teach the sermon. Readers who take advantage of the third lens, which is cultural-theological, will discover a useful framework for comprehending the ethics of wealth in the sermon, witness how Samuel stands up to Nephite discrimination, and benefit from a detailed reading of the sermon that will enable them grasp how spiritual death divides both Christ and human beings. Lastly, the fourth set of lenses, literary in nature, assists the reader in recognizing a newly identified type-scene, traces possible sources Samuel may have relied on, explores sources Mormon may have turned to as he abridged the work, and studies parallels between the ancient sermon and a form of early American speech known as the “jeremiad.”

US \$27.99



**Saints at War in
the Philippines:
Latter-day
Saints in WWII
Prison Camps**

MICHAEL HAROLD
HYER

Members of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were among US soldiers in World War II who endured the atrocities of the Bataan Death March in the Philippines and the brutality of Japanese POW camps. This is the story, largely told through their personal accounts, of a group of twenty-nine Latter-day Saint POWs in the Philippines, the events that brought them together to form an informal branch of the Church in an infamous POW camp, a remarkable event in the history of the Church, and the events that would later pull them apart—twelve to their liberation and seventeen to their death.

PRICE \$25.99



**Joseph Smith
and His First
Vision: Context,
Place, and
Meaning**

EDITED BY
ALEXANDER L.
BAUGH, STEVEN C.

HARPER, BRENT M. ROGERS, AND
BENJAMIN C. PYKLES

Church members, whether they be renowned gospel scholars or newly baptized converts, often study Joseph Smith and his First Vision. While much is known about the boy prophet and his seminal vision, there is still so much more to learn. In this volume,

a collection of essays drawn from a BYU Church History Symposium, contributors relate a variety of topics to the context, place, and meaning of the First Vision. These essays include keynote addresses from Richard Lyman Bushman, Sheri Dew, and President Dallin H. Oaks and include discussions on topics ranging from the history and preservation of the Sacred Grove to the multiple cinematic depictions of the Prophet’s First Vision.

US \$27.99



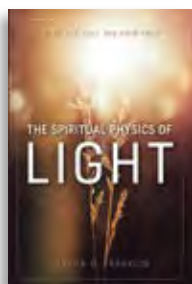
**All the Way to
Heaven:
Discovering
God’s Presence
in the Here and
Now**

DAVID GRANDY

This volume
explores the

possibility that mortality is framed and informed by God’s love in more ways than we normally suppose. We live within the cosmic embrace of God’s love, even when we encounter difficulties. Hence, as the medieval Catholic thinker Catherine of Siena suggested, “All the way to heaven is heaven” because gospel obedience brings joy and, in a perfectly natural way, fits us for the celestial kingdom. In the process we are stretched out along the long arc of God’s love. Our hearts turn to others, and not just to those about us but also to our ancestors and generations yet unborn. As we discover the depths of Christ’s Atonement, our everyday thinking and conduct begin to hum the miracles of God’s love, chief of which is that there is no bottom to that love.

US \$19.99



The Spiritual Physics of Light

AARON D. FRANKLIN

Light is everywhere! It gives us vision, keeps

us warm, and facilitates life. Light is even responsible for developments in communications technology, the internet, and space travel. However, light is not just a physical concept. It is a central theme used throughout scripture to literally and metaphorically describe spiritual concepts. Throughout history, scientists have studied light physically and theologians have studied light spiritually. But what if these two realms of study were combined? What if the physical light we see is actually related to the spiritual light discussed in scripture? Can we apply what we know about light scientifically to what we know about light doctrinally? In this book, engineer, chemist, and Professor Aaron D. Franklin explores these questions and more by connecting principles of physical light to gospel truths about spiritual light. In so doing, Franklin provides an accessible way for us all, no matter our scientific or doctrinal prowess, to learn how we see, feel, and know truth—which is, of course, light.

US \$19.99



Raising the Standard of Truth: Exploring the History and Teachings of the Early Restoration

EDITED BY SCOTT C. ESPLIN

This volume explores events and teachings of the early years of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Featuring scholars from Brigham Young University, the Church History Department, and the Joseph Smith Papers, the collection of prominent materials previously produced by the BYU Religious Studies Center is designed as a companion to personal and family study of the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history. Chapters explore Joseph Smith's accounts of his First Vision, the translation of the Book of Mormon, and the restoration of priesthood power. Doctrinal teachings about consecration, Zion, the kingdoms of glory, and work for the dead are also investigated, as are harrowing experiences in Liberty and Carthage Jails and the exodus to the West.

US \$29.99



Repicturing the Restoration: New Art to Expand Our Understanding

ANTHONY SWEAT

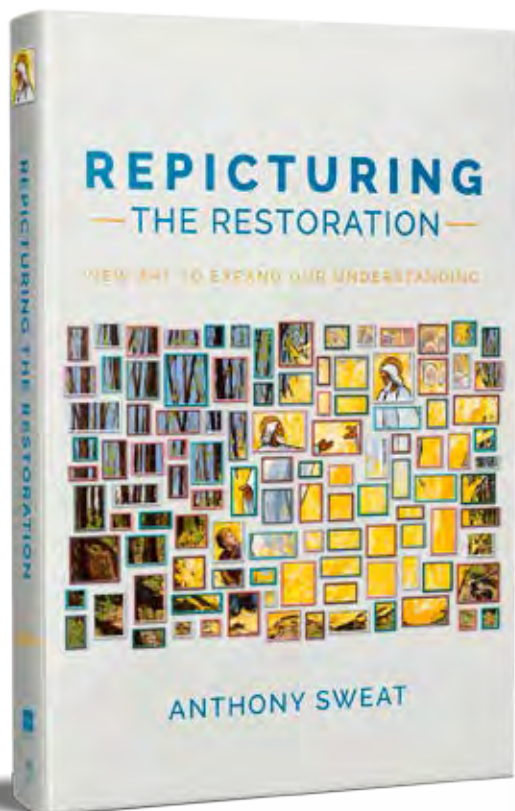
While existing

artwork that portrays the Restoration is rich and beautiful, until now many key events in Latter-day Saint history have surprisingly never been depicted to accurately represent important events of the historical record. The purpose of this volume is to produce paintings of some of the underrepresented events in order to expand our understanding of the Restoration. Each image is accompanied by a richly researched historical background, some artistic insights into the painting's composition, an application section providing one way this history may inform our present faith, and an analysis section offering potent questions that can be considered for further discussion. Through these new paintings, artist, author, and Professor Anthony Sweat takes readers through a timeline history of pivotal events and revelations of the early Restoration. This book is not just a wonderful art book, it is also a pedagogical book using art as a launching pad to learn, evaluate, apply, and discuss important aspects of Latter-day Saint history and doctrine as readers repicture the Restoration.

US \$29.99 ✖

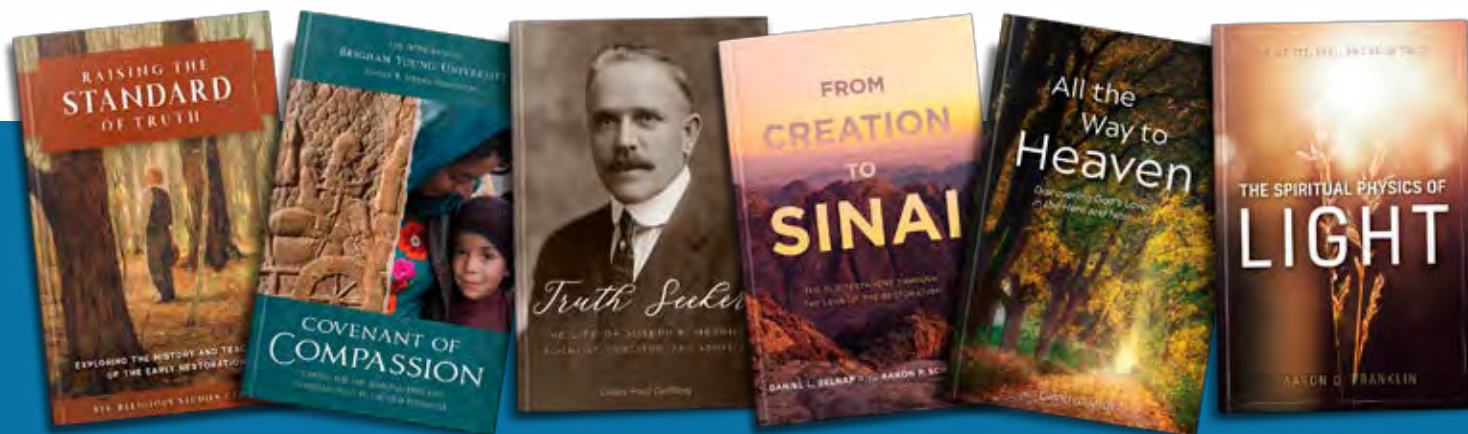
REPICTURING

— THE RESTORATION —



While existing artwork that portrays the Restoration is rich and beautiful, until now many key events in Latter-day Saint history have surprisingly never been depicted. This volume contains paintings of under-represented events with context, analysis, and insights to help expand our understanding of Church history. Through these new paintings, artist, author, and Professor Anthony Sweat takes readers through a timeline history of pivotal events and revelations of the early Restoration.

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INSPIRING LEARNING

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an opportunity of a lifetime



MYLA PARKE was an articulate child. Growing up the oldest in her family in Gilbert, Arizona, she became the unofficial editor of family communications.

"My parents were very big on me going to college," says Myla, who will be the first in her family to graduate with a bachelor's degree. It was during high school, while applying to BYU, that Myla first seriously considered her major.

"I took two weeks and really paid attention in my classes to see how I felt about what I was learning," she explains. "What was I really passionate about?" The lightbulb went off during a class on Shakespeare, and she knew she wanted to study English.

As Myla's penchant for language grew, so did her faith in the restored gospel. She served a mission in Los Angeles, where she gained a love for languages, including American Sign Language, something she has continued to pursue at BYU. With graduation on the horizon for both her and her husband, Myla began thinking about gaining career experience as an editor. When a donor-funded internship for an editorial assistant came up at the Religious Studies Center, she saw an opportunity of a lifetime.

At the Religious Studies Center, Myla has worked with incredible mentors to prepare the writings of scholars for publication. In turn, Myla has enjoyed helping other interns and developing leadership skills. She was recently named editorial lead on the Religious Education Student Symposium.

"I am very grateful to the donors who made this internship possible," Myla says. "For me this was not just any internship. I love religious education. I am interested in publishing material that will help others deepen their conversion and bring them closer to Christ."

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See page 3 for more information.