

BYU RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

FALL 2022

REVIEW

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



*Exploring
Jordan*
Student Mentoring
and Learning

Enlarging the Borders of Our Knowledge



Picture a small circle with an exclamation mark in the middle. Everything you know fits inside that circle. Now picture question marks just outside the circumference of that circle. Those question marks represent the borderland between what you know and what you don't know. Our most relevant and pressing questions at any given time reside along that border of knowledge.¹

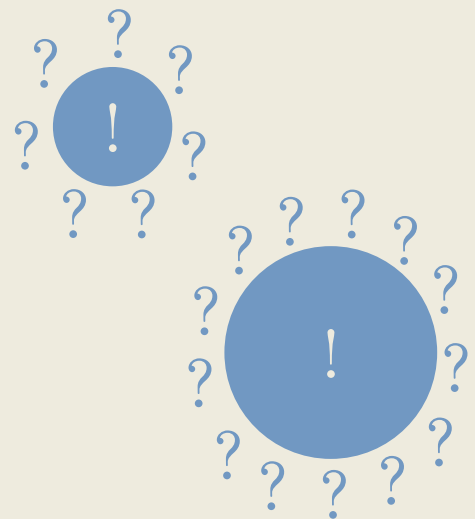
As we spend appropriate time standing on the edge of that circle, looking heavenward as we contemplate our most pressing questions, we are more likely to expand our knowledge in directions the Lord wants us to go. The circumference of our gospel knowledge and wisdom expands outward as we “seek learning . . . by study and also

by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118). As that knowledge grows, our capacity to ask more questions at deeper and broader levels also grows. The more we expand the borders of our knowledge, the more our capacity to think, feel, and act in more Christlike ways increases.

The living prophets, scriptures, and personal revelation are divine sources of truth. We can turn to them not only for answers but also for help to know what questions to ask. Gratefully, the Lord has provided us with many additional resources for helping us expand the boundaries of our knowledge. The Religious Studies Center (RSC) has been just such a resource to me for over thirty years. The next time you visit rsc.byu.edu or pick up an RSC publication, pay attention to what happens out in the borderlands of your knowledge.

We are grateful to all who contribute in meaningful ways and to you faithful and diligent truth seekers. Thank you for your goodness and your desires not only to expand your own individual knowledge but also to be devoted disciples of Christ seeking to help enlarge our shared borders of understanding and faith.

Tyler Griffin
Associate Dean, BYU Religious Education



1. I was first introduced to this concept by Taylor Halverson.

BYU

Religious Education

REVIEW

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On the cover: Students exploring Petra on camelback. Courtesy of Aaron Schade.

<p>RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER Founded in 1975 by Jeffrey R. Holland Director Scott C. Esplin Associate Director Gaye Strathearn</p>	<p>Publications Director Jared W. Ludlow Associate Publications Director Michael A. Goodman</p>	<p>REVIEW STAFF General Editor Jared W. Ludlow Managing Editor Brent R. Nordgren</p>	<p>Editors R. Devan Jensen Don L. Brugger Alaina Dunn Publications Coordinator Joany O. Pinegar</p>	<p>Photographers Brent R. Nordgren Richard B. Crookston RSC Student Editors Annalyn Douglas Abby Larkins Erica Smith</p>	<p>DESIGN & PRODUCTION Hales Creative, LLC Creative Director Kelly Nield Designers Kelly Nield Anika Meyers</p>
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THE WORLD IS OUR CAMPUS

JARED W. LUDLOW (*jared_ludlow@byu.edu*) IS THE PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR OF THE BYU RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER.

As I write this note at the end of the summer, it still feels too hot to be starting a new academic year. In fact, Utah set a record for the most days over 100 degrees, and it still may not be over. Despite the heat, many religion faculty and students took advantage of the summer to learn, travel, and excavate.

- Religion faculty members helped in archaeological excavations in Israel at places like Huqoq, Tell es-Safi, and Tel Shimron, and in Jordan at a site highlighted in this magazine issue: 'Ataruz. These experiences—though hot, dirty, and labor intensive—gave students invaluable field experiences and glimpses into the ancient world.
- The BYU Jerusalem Center reopened for the spring/summer semester for the first time since COVID shut it down in March 2020. Several religion faculty members helped shepherd students through great learning experiences in the Holy Land, Jordan, and Greece. More



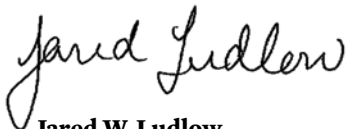
students and a new rotation of faculty will continue at the Jerusalem Center in the fall.

- Church history trips for faculty and students to significant Restoration sites from New York to Nauvoo helped strengthen their testimonies of the amazing heaven-opening experiences that occurred there.

Besides sharing some of these experiences, in this issue we also discuss the significant Latter-day Saint/Community of Christ dialogues that have been ongoing and have led to one of our recent publications, *Restorations: Scholars in Dialogue from Community of Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. We also review the development of the Church History

Symposiums held every other year, including the latest one on religious freedom among different global communities and time periods.

Truly the world can be our campus. But even as we travel to or study about different destinations, we are reminded that this mortal life is only a small part of a grander, eternal plan. Being at religious sites help us understand a bit more about the work our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ have done to aid us here on earth. Thus, the primary work of Religious Education—to provide spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging experiences—occurs in classrooms, offices, and wherever students prayerfully read their scriptures seeking answers and enlightenment. We look forward to the opportunities that this academic year will bring to provide the environment for these miracles to take place. ✂



Jared W. Ludlow
BYU Religious Studies Center

Free Events

Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

Friday and Saturday, October 21–22, 2022

The theme for the 51st Annual Sperry Symposium is “The Household of God: Families and Belonging in the Social World of the New Testament.” The New Testament contains much counsel for household conduct, familial relationships, and belonging to “the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). Jesus, Peter, and Paul all taught about the important contributions that families, single members, and widows make in the kingdom. For more information, visit rsc.byu.edu/conferences/sperry.

BYU Easter Conference

Friday, April 7, 2023

The BYU Easter Conference will be held in the Joseph Smith Building auditorium on April 7 beginning at 7:00 p.m. Each speaker will talk about various aspects of the Savior: his life, his mission, his Atonement, and his influence in our lives today. For more information, visit rsc.byu.edu/conferences/easter.

These events are free of charge. For more details, please visit us online at rsc.byu.edu/conferences or contact Devan Jensen at 801-422-9304.



Faculty Highlight: Jared Halverson

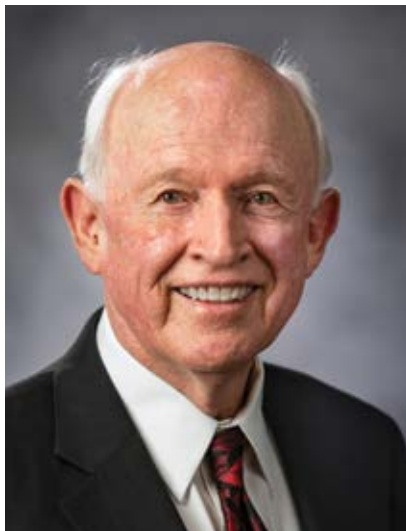
JARED M. HALVERSON (jared_halverson@byu.edu) IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURE AT BYU.



AFTER TWENTY-THREE YEARS OF TEACHING IN THE SEMINARIES AND institutes of the Church—including eight years directing the Nashville Institute and eight years at the University of Utah—joining the faculty at BYU is a homecoming for Jared Halverson. Raised in Southern California and Texas, he came to BYU as an Ezra Taft Benson scholar and was a wide receiver on the football team. After his mission to Puerto Rico, he taught at the Missionary Training Center, worked at the Religious Studies Center, and studied abroad in Jerusalem. He earned a BA in history and an MA in religious education from BYU, as well as an MA and PhD in American religious history from Vanderbilt University, focusing on scriptural reception and rejection history, secularization, and anti-religious rhetoric. He is frequently involved with interfaith dialogue, has been a featured speaker in both devotional and academic settings from coast to coast, and hosts a popular YouTube channel and podcast called *Unshaken*. His wife, Emily, is a writer, editor, and substance abuse disorder counselor. They have five children. ✂

Faculty Highlight: Byron Merrill

BYRON R. MERRILL (byron_merrill@byu.edu) IS A TEACHING PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURE AT BYU.



BYRON R. MERRILL IS A TEACHING PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF Ancient Scripture at BYU. He was born in Palo Alto, California, to parents from Arizona pioneer families. He served a mission in northern France and Belgium. Brother Merrill received his BA in history from BYU and his JD from the University of California. He worked as an estate planning attorney in California from 1975 to 1989 and then joined the BYU faculty in August 1989. He is the author of *Elijah: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, as well as several articles in Church and BYU publications. He taught at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies in 1994 and again in 2007. He is deeply involved in researching the family history records of the early French Protestants known as the Huguenots. His hobbies include family history, music, cooking, gardening, and raising animals. Brother Merrill is married to Tricia L. England. They are the parents of six children and the grandparents of twenty-three. ✂

Staff Highlight: Alex Socarras

ALEX SOCARRAS (alex_socarras@byu.edu) IS LEAD DESIGNER AT THE BYU RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER.



ALEX SOCARRAS IS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER AT THE BYU RELIGIOUS STUDIES Center. He graduated from BYU–Idaho with a BA in art. There he discovered his interest in printmaking. Alex enjoys creating woodblock prints and oil painting. He is originally from Colombia, where he studied graphic design. After some time away from design, he moved to Miami and joined the Church. He served a mission in Orlando, Florida. Besides art, Alex enjoys reading, watching movies, figuring out what kind of music he likes, replaying the one song he knows on the ukulele, and spending time with his wife, Rachel, and their son. At the Religious Studies Center, he contributes to the design, typesetting, and layout of various publications. ✂

Faculty Highlights: Stephan Taeger

STEPHAN TAEGER (stephan_taeger@byu.edu) IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURE AT BYU.



STEPHAN TAEGER JOINED THE FACULTY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN the summer of 2022. He was born and raised in western Massachusetts. Following a mission to Las Vegas, he received a bachelor’s degree from Utah Valley University, a master’s degree from the University of Utah, and a PhD from BYU in instructional psychology and technology. Before joining the faculty of Religious Education, Stephan was employed with Seminaries and Institutes from 2005 to 2022. His research focuses on homiletics, narrative instructional design, and ancient scripture. Other academic interests include philosophy, theology, and interfaith dialogue. Some of his current projects involve studying how the indirect nature of story can help listeners overcome self-deception and the influence of learning modality on spiritual experience. In his free time, Stephan loves reading, writing, hiking, and music. He and his wife, Kirsten, have six children. ✂

INTERVIEW

WITH REID L. NEILSON

New Assistant Academic Vice President Discusses Charge to Elevate and Align Religious Scholarship at BYU

An interview with Reid L. Neilson by Jared W. Ludlow

In August 2022 Reid L. Neilson returned to BYU to undertake a newly created position as assistant academic vice president for religious scholarly publications. Because this administrative change will directly affect Religious Education at BYU and its research and publishing endeavors, Jared W. Ludlow, publications director of the Religious Studies Center, sought occasion to learn more about Dr. Neilson's appointment.

Ludlow: Welcome back to campus. Could you give us a little bit of your academic background and your career trajectory that started here at BYU and have now brought you back?

Neilson: Thanks for the warm welcome back to campus, Jared. This really has been a homecoming of sorts for me. I began my academic career here at BYU sixteen years ago when I started as an assistant professor of Church history and doctrine in fall 2006. I had just finished my PhD at the University of North Carolina at

Chapel Hill earlier that spring and was so excited to be back in Provo, where I had taken my undergraduate degree in international relations and graduate degrees in business and history. As I began as a faculty member at BYU, I felt like I had won the lottery—to be in the company of scholars and administrators whom I admired greatly. After three years in Provo, I was recruited by Elder Marlin K. Jensen, then the Church Historian and Recorder, to leave BYU and move up to Salt Lake City to manage the Church History Department, which I did for the next decade. Then I was called to lead the Washington DC North Mission with my wife, Shelly, from 2019 until 2022. As I prepared to return to employment, I was invited by the Church Commissioner of Education to fill this newly created position here at BYU, which has brought me full circle to BYU. I'm very grateful for this new and exciting opportunity!

Ludlow: Since your position as the assistant academic vice president for religious scholarly publications is a new one, could you share with us what this position entails and how you are proceeding in it?

Neilson: In the past, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, the Religious Studies Center, and BYU Studies have all reported to different university administrators. While all three organizations have been successful in their own spheres and with their own reporting lines, there seems to have been a sense that there could be greater collaboration and synergy if all three organizations were able to operate more closely together under a shared administrative umbrella. I now have the good fortune to be working with the leadership and staffs of all three organizations. I think we can learn even more from each other as we counsel together and advance the university's mission as a joint team. Right now I'm trying to learn all I



Reid L. Neilson.

“We can and need to be better in building on past successes with our religious scholarship at BYU and also making any necessary adjustments to support and sustain the Brethren in their inspired initiatives.”

can and am getting to know everyone I can to better understand the good that has been done and how we might move forward in meaningful directions.

Ludlow: What is your vision for religious scholarly publications and gospel scholarship here at BYU and within the Church?

Neilson: As I explored this new opportunity with Church and university leaders, two words were

shared with me many times as I asked about what they hoped for the future of all three organizations. Those words were *elevate* and *align*. As I’ve reviewed my notes from those meetings, most of the discussions were centered on those two hopes and expectations. Of course, these admonitions should come as no surprise since we are all trying to personally and professionally elevate and align our lives and careers here at BYU to the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ. But there certainly was

a sense communicated to me that we can and need to be better in building on past successes with our religious scholarship at BYU and also making any necessary adjustments to support and sustain the Brethren in their inspired initiatives. This is an exciting time to be involved in both scholarly publications and gospel scholarship, which are complementary.

Ludlow: Since you have published many religious scholarly publications yourself, what advice would you give for those who are doing or who would like to do research and writing in this area?

Neilson: I would encourage them to develop a passion for doing the hard work of religious scholarship while keeping in mind the blessings that come from that labor of love. Since I began at BYU sixteen years ago as a scholar, I have found great joy in research, writing, and publishing. When I am perusing old documents, drafting a paragraph, chasing down a footnote, or reviewing page proofs for a forthcoming article or book, my heart rejoices in a special way. I feel alive both spiritually and intellectually using the talents and interests the Lord has blessed me with. I’ll forever be grateful that BYU and the Church have provided me opportunities to both learn how to be a historian of religion, especially of the Latter-day Saint past, and to spend my professional life “enlarg[ing] the memory” (Alma 37:8) of my fellow Saints and extended family members. ✕

A Birthday Commemoration Grows into the Church History Symposium

Carmen Cole

CARMEN COLE IS SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER AT THE BYU RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER.

It started with a birthday commemoration for Oliver Cowdery. Even before that, a commemoration for Joseph Smith.

Alex Baugh, professor of Church history and doctrine, and two close friends, visited the Joseph Smith Memorial and birthplace in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 2005, to commemorate Joseph Smith's 200th birthday. He and his friends were planning to attend the Churchwide devotional scheduled later in the day but had some extra time before the event. Since Oliver Cowdery was also born in Vermont, about sixty miles away, Alex thought he and his friends could take a quick trip to Rutland County.

"Let's go see Oliver Cowdery's birthplace," he said, "and so we went. It was a snowy, overcast, New England winter day, and after we arrived, I found it, and the Church actually had a marker there. The marker said that Oliver was 'born in Rutland County, Vermont, in 1806.' And I'm thinking, 'We've had all this hoopla about Joseph Smith in 2005; we need to honor Oliver Cowdery next year on his 200th birthday.'"

Alex came back from his trip and approached Paul Peterson, who



Daguerreotype of Oliver Cowdery taken in the 1840s by James Presley Ball. Library of Congress / Wikimedia Commons.

was the department chair of Church history and doctrine at BYU to propose the idea of holding a symposium on Oliver Cowdery in less than a year for his 200th birthday in 2006.

After some initial hesitancy by administration, the first Church History Symposium, on Oliver Cowdery, was hosted on November 10, 2006. As part of the agreement, a book of presentations from the symposium



Oliver Cowdery birthplace marker. Photo courtesy of Alex Baugh.

was also published in 2009: *Days Never to Be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery*.

During this process, Alex suggested hosting a Church history symposium every year, and the idea was approved. Conferences followed on Wilford Woodruff (2007), John Taylor (2008), preserving Latter-day Saint history (2009), the history of Church organization and administration (2010), the growth and development of missionary work

(2011), Joseph F. Smith (2012), Joseph Smith's study of the ancient world (2013), and the global reach of the worldwide Church (2014).

Alex had a number of other key history members he wanted to highlight in future Church history symposia. After the first three events, Professor Richard Bennett, the new RSC associate director at the time, changed the future course of the symposium by announcing several additional topics that included more thematic subjects instead of featuring only individuals.

In 2012 the Church History Department in Salt Lake City began teaming up with BYU and the RSC to host the symposium. Reid Neilson was the managing director of the Church History Department at that time, so he was the contact person, and he loved the idea.

Following the 2014 symposium, the Religious Education administration decided to make the Church History Symposium a biennial event to allow more time to plan and prepare between conferences.

The 2016 symposium featured Latter-day Saint women's history, the 2018 event took up the intersection of business and religion, and in 2020 the theme was "Visions and Visionaries" for the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's First Vision.

Behind the Scenes

Brent Nordgren, operations and production supervisor for the Religious Studies Center, served as a member of the Church History Symposium committees from 2008 to 2020. His role was to be the institutional memory and represent



Alex Baugh. Photo by Brent R. Nordgren.

the RSC's publishing interests. Thus far, Brent has been the longest serving committee member. He recalled that after the first Church History Symposium, "Kent Jackson asked me to help out because the RSC was already doing most of the planning and facilitating of the event. Faculty members were mostly responsible to recruit the lecturers and serve as chairs or cochairs. They also became the editors of the volume published later by the Religious Studies Center."

Brent's secondary role was to advertise and market the symposium. With all the details involved in that, he was surprised to discover how much he liked all of it. "I actually enjoy organizing events," he said. "These were fun and worthwhile times." From these years of experiences, Brent especially appreciated all the people he met and became acquainted with, including General Authorities and some of the foremost Church historians.

Printed Volumes from the Church History Symposium

- 2006 *Days Never to be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery* (published 2009)
- 2007 *Banner of the Gospel: Wilford Woodruff* (published 2010)
- 2008 *Champion of Liberty: John Taylor* (published 2009)
- 2009 *Preserving the History of the Latter-day Saints* (published 2010)
- 2010 *A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration* (published 2011)
- 2011 *Go Ye into All the World: The Growth and Development of Mormon Missionary Work* (published 2012)
- 2012 *Joseph F. Smith: Reflections on the Man and His Times* (published 2013)
- 2013 *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World* (published 2015)
- 2014 *The Worldwide Church: Mormonism as a Global Religion* (published 2016)
- 2016 *Mormon Women's History: Beyond Biography* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press Mormon Studies Series; published 2017)
- 2018 *Business and Religion: The Intersection of Faith and Finance* (published 2019)
- 2020 *Joseph Smith and His First Vision: Context, Place, and Meaning* (published 2021)
- 2022 *Latter-day Saints and Religious Liberty: Historical and Global Perspectives*



Audience at a BYU Church History Symposium. Photo by Brent R. Nordgren.

Alex remembers the 2020 symposium as especially memorable because of the Covid-19 pandemic. “It was the most interesting one because the conference was scheduled the very week when everything was shut down—which we didn’t know beforehand. President Dallin H. Oaks agreed to speak at that, and things were starting to shut down the first week or two of March and—no kidding—we were worried that they were going to shut us down because everything was closing out, but that was the last event that was held” before everything went remote. As the symposium was ending, President Oaks, the keynote speaker, finished speaking and “they gave us about ten minutes to make our way out,” Alex remembers.

Devan Jensen, executive editor at the Religious Studies Center, began helping with the symposium in 2020. “I was a member of our talented symposium team,” he said. “I helped the committee solicit presentations and papers, publicize the event, and represent the RSC’s publishing interests. Together, we created a call for proposals, vetted those proposals, offered feedback, and facilitated the

presentations. Our greatest challenge was hosting a conference during the pandemic. We created two live-streaming teams: one at BYU and one at Temple Square.”

Alex has been grateful for the symposiums and the opportunities to team up with the Church History Department. “It was really something. I felt good about how all of the things have gone,” he says. “Nothing’s been entirely smooth, but I’ve liked the arrangement of every other year and that we have cooperation with the Church History Department and how we’ve involved them, and while we’ve kind of been the main driver in the past, at the same time, I think we see it as an equal partnership.” He adds that the Church History Department has “some wonderful people with expertise in some areas that we don’t have in Religious Education.”

Moving Forward

The theme of the 2022 Church History Symposium was “Latter-day Saints and Religious Liberty: Historical and Global Perspectives.”

“Religious liberty is a theme of great importance to people

“Religious liberty has been, not just for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but other faiths as well, a very consequential thing.”

—Robert (Bob) Freeman

throughout the world and Latter-day Saints in particular,” Devan explains. “According to our eleventh article of faith, ‘we claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience’ and want to preserve that liberty for all people. Professor Robert Smith proposed the conference theme, which was received enthusiastically. Promoting religious freedom goes hand in hand with promoting civil liberties for all nations. We all benefit from a global ecology of protection of our civil rights.”

Robert Smith and Robert Freeman—the two Bobs, as they are affectionately known by their committee members—served as cochairs for

the 2022 symposium. Both are faculty in Religious Education, and both are juris doctors. Bob Freeman, professor of Church history and doctrine, agrees with the importance of the 2022 theme. “This is one of the more distinctive themes that we’ve had thus far. The dominant aspect of this symposium was how the subject of religious liberty fit into the Restoration.

“For me personally, the global piece of this is remarkably important,” he continues. “Recently I have been having experiences in the ‘global Church,’ if you will. For example, I’ve been in London and Rome, and I am also learning of the beginnings of the Church in Austria. I’m realizing that in order for the Church to have the privilege to have a presence—to have a standing, to have the possibility of a proselytizing experience with missionaries—there was a need to secure religious liberty.

“What we enjoy today as a worldwide Church comes in consequence of expanding religious liberty along the way. Defending religious liberty has been consequential for our church and for other faiths as well. To explore these ideas so participants tied into that was a great dividend of the symposium.”

The 2022 symposium took place on March 10 (on BYU campus) and 11 (in Salt Lake City). Keynote speakers included Sarah Barringer Gordon, University of Pennsylvania professor of constitutional law and history, and Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Professor Gordon argued that since key aspects of American religious liberty have

Religious Liberty in the News in the Past Year

- President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints speaks at the Notre Dame Religious Liberty Summit at Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome on July 20, 2022. President Oaks calls for a global effort to protect religious freedom for all people.
- The Department of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University together with the Church History Department host the 2022 Church History Symposium on March 10–11, 2022.
- In the Sunday morning session of the April 2022 general conference of the Church, Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles speaks on religious freedom in an address titled “To Heal the World.”
- On National Religious Freedom Day, January 16, 2022, Elders Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Ronald A. Rasband, all of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, each write social media posts stating religious freedom is fundamental to societal well-being and protecting all faiths is critical.
- President Oaks speaks on December 14, 2021, at Sapienza University in Rome, Italy, on the topic “Religious Freedom in an International Context.”
- On September 13, 2021, Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles speaks on religious freedom at the G20 Interfaith Forum in Bologna, Italy. “When religion is given the freedom to flourish, believers everywhere perform simple and sometimes heroic acts of service.”
- At the University of Notre Dame’s first Religious Liberty Summit on June 28, 2021, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explains what we lose when we are (borrowing a phrase from one Jewish leader) “tone deaf to the music of faith. My plea today is that all religions work together to defend faith and religious freedom in a manner that protects people of diverse faith as well as those of no faith.”

Sources: Compiled from information available at churchofjesuschrist.org and rsc.byu.edu.

played out in courtrooms, law should be integrated into the many disciplines impinging on religious studies. If not, “the picture of religious liberty in America is flatter, narrower, and, yes, less interesting than the reality.” She noted how the “religious half” of the term *religious liberty* is “too often assumed but not explored.” Elder Gong, who gave the concluding keynote address, emphasized that religious liberty is deeply rooted in our history and global experience as a church. It is also interwoven into our doctrine (such as in Doctrine and Covenants 98, 101, 109, and 134) and is “fundamental to God’s plan.” With

the exception of the most recent symposium (its proceedings are forthcoming), most past presentations are available online at <https://rsc.byu.edu/conferences>. ❧

The next Church History Symposium is scheduled for March 2024. The call for symposium papers will be announced a few months beforehand on rsc.byu.edu. The printed volume for this year’s conference, Religious Liberty and Latter-day Saints: Historical and Global Perspectives, will be available for purchase in 2023. Video recordings of the presentations are available now at rsc.byu.edu/conferences.



Excavating 'Ataruz, Jordan

STUDENT MENTORING AND LEARNING

BY AARON P. SCHADE, CODIRECTOR OF THE KHIRBAT 'ATARUZ PROJECT

The archaeological site of Khirbat 'Ataruz is located on the ridge of Jabal Hamidah in central Jordan. Situated along ancient trade routes and road systems, the site holds a long-standing place of importance in the ancient history of Jordan. Stories of the past—from the Iron Age, Roman, and Islamic periods—are being revealed at the archaeological excavations at 'Ataruz.

From a historical perspective, 'Ataruz is an important site mentioned in the Bible and plays a significant role in the famous Mesha Inscription housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris. According to the inscription, and the general backdrop described in 2 Kings 3,

'Ataruz dates to the ninth-century-BC wars between the Moabites and the Israelites in the region. At 'Ataruz a massive Iron Age temple complex, with accompanying destruction layer, provides the framework of the story. Excavations are helping to fill in details of the events and subsequent settlement patterns of this once-developing Moabite dwelling. Excavations in 2022 included work on the stepped-stone sequence ascending the east-west access point to the temple complex on the acropolis, along with the architectural remains of cultic installations with their attendant vessels, pottery, and objects.

This page: view west overlooking the Dead Sea. Jerusalem can be seen at the top of the mountain ridge. Opposite: BYU student Jacob Bellows excavating at 'Ataruz, Jordan. All photos courtesy of Aaron P. Schade.



Iron Age temple complex at 'Ataruz.



Emily Mehr, Warren Park, and a local worker named Haythem perform daily excavation work at 'Ataruz.

For BYU students Jacob Bellows, Emily Buss, Cory Clay, Emily Mehr, Chris Miner, Warren Park, Brandon Pritchard, and Mary Proteau, the summer included an archaeological, cultural, and religious experience in Jordan focused on mentoring and learning.

Before departure, BYU students participated in a preparation course that taught them basic skills and cultural and historical information, as well as archaeological principles and methodologies that would be applied in the field. On arrival, students worked with excavation director Dr. Chang-ho Ji of La Sierra University, Dr. Aaron Schade of BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture, and Dr. Choong Ryeol, Lee of Sahmyook University. Also joining the excavation was Dr. John McBride of BYU's Department of Geological Sciences, who conducted ground penetrating radar work at the site.

The mentored student opportunity was set up through BYU's Kennedy Center as an international study program, with generous support from the Department of Ancient Scripture, the Ancient Near Eastern Studies program, and BYU experiential learning funds. Students interacted closely with faculty as they learned and implemented archaeological methodologies of excavation. With the students' willingness to learn, hard work, and infectious positive attitudes, 2022 fieldwork was a huge success, helping to answer several questions set out in the objectives of the excavation campaign.

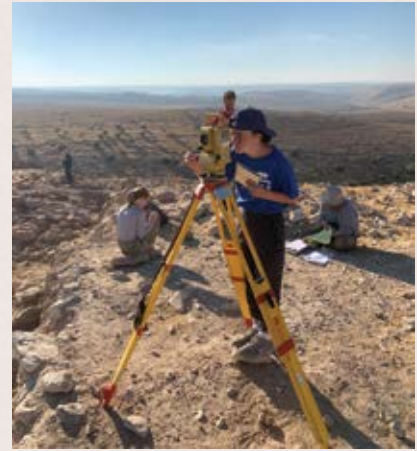
A significant component of the mentoring and learning experience was the opportunities for the students to



BYU students with Dr. Aaron Schade (far left) at Mount Nebo.



Dr. Choong Ryeol, Lee (right) and BYU student Emily Buss.



Above left: Dr. John McBride, BYU Department of Geological Sciences. Above center and right: BYU students Brandon Pritchard and Mary Proteau taking elevations.

Left: Students Jacob Bellows, Emily Mehr, and Chris Miner. Below: Student Cory Clay and workers schlepping quffahs (baskets) of dirt. Bottom: Jacob Bellows recording data on locus sheets.

engage in hands-on work in the field with daily application, discussions, and mentoring. This included implementing archaeological methodologies of excavation and the meticulous recording of data in the form of locus sheets and photographic progress and locus shots.

Additionally, student mentoring and learning included the capturing of 3D scans and images of artifacts from the Madaba Archaeological Museum that included objects, decorated pottery, figurines, statues, and inscriptions discovered at 'Ataruz.

Some students will also be trained in processing and generating the 3D models of excavated squares, objects, and artifacts. Others will learn photogrammetry, and efforts are being pursued for expanding and achieving a greater global outreach for the site and those interested in doing research on 'Ataruz and these artifacts. BYU student mentoring and learning helped achieve these arduous objectives and activities. From a mentoring perspective, our pedagogical goals were meant to produce skills, increase qualifications, and provide an academic training



Students Chris Miner and Emily Buss helping to capture 3D scans and images of artifacts at the Madaba Archaeological Museum in Jordan.



Above two photos: Dr. Schade and Jacob Bellows with friends and workers at 'Ataruz.



Brandon Pritchard creating 3D scans and models of discovered objects. His work has been instrumental in allowing efforts at 'Ataruz to capture and present data more efficiently and within a larger scope and framework.

that would enhance and bolster our students' success in their future academic and professional goals.

Students are also helping faculty better implement technological innovations in efforts of streamlining and presenting archaeological data in the form of modern advancements in tools as simple as a cell phone and 3D apps now available to everyone.

A highlight of student learning was the opportunity of regular engagement with local Jordanians. Working alongside the humble and beautiful people of the Beni Hamida tribe, students created friendships that are meaningful, deep, and lasting, all while developing an appreciation and

Impact of Past Student Experience

My participation in the archaeological dig in 'Ataruz, Jordan, in 2006 was a seminal experience in my life. I was able to foster genuine relationships with people of different faiths and cultures as we worked together at the dig site. Each of us took time to learn bits of the language of the other, and we were able to joke and laugh, as well as to create lasting connections, despite our language differences.

The experience was challenging at times. The incredibly early work hours, combined with meticulously detailed notations, drawings, and assessments, were no easy task. However, it was very rewarding to look back on the work we accomplished together in order to paint a picture of the culture we had uncovered.

Being able to develop relationships with Drs. Chang-Ho Ji and Aaron Schade was a major highlight. Dr. Ji taught me to see the bigger picture of what we were working to accomplish. His kind demeanor and adventurous personality were inspiring. Dr. Schade taught me the value of putting my all into whatever field of scholarship I would decide to undertake and also how I could glorify God through my scholarship. It was a lesson I will never forget. I am forever grateful for my opportunity to participate in the archaeological dig at 'Ataruz.

—Brian Passantino



Dr. Chang-Ho Ji enjoying some local cuisine with BYU students.



Above two photos: Cory Clay and other students were able to hike ancient road systems leading from the Dead Sea to the site of Machaerus, where, according to Josephus, John the Baptist's life was taken at the hands of Herod Antipas.

Impact of Past Student Experience

The archaeological field school at Khirbat 'Ataruz was a foundational experience for my future studies and for my perspective of ancient Near Eastern studies. As part of the program in 2016, I was able to work with the instructive and talented Dr. Chang-Ho Ji of La Sierra University as well as the ever-helpful Dr. Aaron Schade of BYU. They trained me in various archaeological tasks such as surveying, drawing, measuring, clearing, digging, sifting, sorting, cleaning, and identifying/dating. As a square supervisor, I coordinated a small team of friendly local Jordanians. We excavated down to the stone steps and beaten earth of the site from Iron IIA, almost three thousand years ago, pulling out dozens of buckets of pottery along the way. The program gave me a deeper connection to the people of the ancient past.

Every morning we would wake up early to drive to the tel (excavation site) and begin working before the heat of the day. I experienced some wonderfully beautiful sunrises over the Dead Sea and the hills of Dhiban. On clear days we could see clear across to the city of Jerusalem and its gleaming buildings. Only a few years later I would begin my master's studies in the Bible and the Near East there at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. As part of the program, I continued to learn about the Dead Sea and archaeology from, for example, Israeli archaeologist Doron Ben-Ami and Dead Sea Scrolls expert Esther Chazon. Throughout my career I will continue to study the history and archaeology of the Dead Sea, building on the foundation I started at BYU and 'Ataruz.

—Jared Ludlow Jr.

love for the wonderful people of Jordan and their love of God as Muslims and Christians within a diverse community. Many meals and activities witnessed conversations on topics spanning faith, history, and archaeology amid a multicultural and interfaith environment.

Throughout the excavation, students and faculty were able to visit relevant historical and religious sites and discuss important events that ensued there. Locations included Mount Nebo (with its numerous ties to the Exodus, Moses, and the content of books such as Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges), Machaerus (traditional site, according to the ancient historian Josephus, where Salome danced before Herod Antipas and John the Baptist was beheaded), Bethany (traditional site on the Jordan River where Jesus was said to have been baptized), Greek Orthodox and Franciscan churches (such as those dedicated to the memory of John the Baptist and

Continued on page 29

“I Think Brother Joseph and Hyrum Would Be Very Pleased”

Scholars from Community of Christ and BYU Religious Education in Dialogue

Casey Paul Griffiths and Andrew Bolton

CASEY PAUL GRIFFITHS (*casey_griffiths@byu.edu*) IS AN ASSOCIATE TEACHING PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY AND DOCTRINE AT BYU.

ANDREW BOLTON IS A FORMER MEMBER OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES IN COMMUNITY OF CHRIST.

Community of Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints share fourteen years of history—and nearly two centuries of separate growth and development. Both originating in the early years of the Restoration, the two churches also share similar heritage, teachings, and several important historic sites, such as Kirtland, Independence, and Nauvoo. Throughout their history there has been a sibling rivalry as the two faiths competed over claims to authority, scripture, and historical properties, among other issues. Even though their early leaders shared history and even some familial ties (like the Smith family), there have often been sharp exchanges on issues such as polygamy, ordination of Blacks, women, and, more recently, treatment of members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Relations began to improve when historians on both sides began to cooperate—for instance, in sharing documents from each other’s archives, beginning in 1968. Then academics from both traditions began

participating in the Mormon History Association and John Whitmer Historical Association, sometimes becoming presidents of each other’s association. However, at times the understandable intransigence on rival truth claims between the “Prairie Saints” and the “Mountain Saints” continued.

Since 2016, a twice-yearly gathering of scholars from Community of Christ and Religious Education at BYU has aimed to increase understanding and fellowship among these two members of the Restoration family. As disciples of Christ, members of both dialogue teams felt a keen desire to heal old wounds, build on common ground, and foster mutual self-respect.

The dialogue emerged from small and simple interactions. One of the first occurred in 2014, when Scott Esplin, now dean of Religious Education, sat next to Andrew and Jewell Bolton at a gathering of the John Whitmer Historical Association in 2014. At the time Andrew was serving as a member of Community

of Christ’s Quorum of the Twelve, while Jewell was an elder in the church. As Esplin remembered it, “conversation began with Andrew and Jewell Bolton about our respective life experiences and beliefs. I wanted to better understand the Community of Christ and to represent them properly when questions arise (as they often do) in my classes, and it quickly became clear that they had questions about our teachings as well. A lengthy, productive conversation emerged, followed by a lasting friendship. As we talked, others gathered at our table until there were several together, asking and answering questions in a spirit of genuine understanding.”¹ Of that encounter, Andrew Bolton remarked how Scott Esplin was authentic, nondefensive, and very thoughtful.

Another influential experience took place during the annual Book of Mormon in Zion conference in Independence, Missouri, when Andrew Bolton became acquainted with Robert L. Millet, an emeritus dean of Religious Education at BYU.²



Construction of Kirtland Temple by Walter Rane.

Millet had been involved in pioneering dialogue between Christian Evangelicals and BYU academics for about fifteen years and in conversations with other religions. He recalled, “Andrew asked if I thought that a Latter-day Saint/Community of Christ dialogue would be something worth doing. I expressed a desire to investigate the possibilities.”³ Bolton also came away from the experience with warm feelings: “I had been impressed by the kindly, insightful, and personable reasoning of Bob. . . . In addition, Bob Millet had inspiringly introduced me to the concept of ‘infinite atonement,’ for which I will be forever grateful. There were already blessings of Latter-day Saint/Community of Christ conversations happening.”⁴

Not long after that, Millet was at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, where he visited with Elder Jeffrey R.

Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. During their conversation, Millet asked Elder Holland his feelings about beginning a new interfaith effort with Community of Christ. “I specifically asked if he could foresee any problems in doing so. [Elder Holland] was quiet for a few seconds and then said, ‘No, I don’t see any problems there.’ He then added, ‘I think Brother Joseph and Hyrum would be very pleased.’”⁵

Several scholars from BYU and Community of Christ agreed to take part in the first dialogue session that year. The BYU cohort included Robert Millet, Keith Wilson, and Richard and Lani Moore. Representing Community of Christ were Andrew and Jewell Bolton, Lachlan Mackay, David Howlett, Matt Frizzell, and Shandra Newcom. Millet began the conversation by sharing guidelines for discussion based on his experience.

He quoted Krister Stendahl, a Swedish theologian and New Testament scholar, along this line:

- Ask a member of the faith what he or she really believes.
- Compare best with best.
- Leave room for holy envy.

Discussion can be fiercely honest, but love and friendship can grow.

This first meeting began a series of twice-yearly gatherings that took place in some of the most revered sites for both faiths, including the top floor of the Kirtland Temple, the Joseph Smith properties in Nauvoo, and the temple lot in Independence, Missouri.

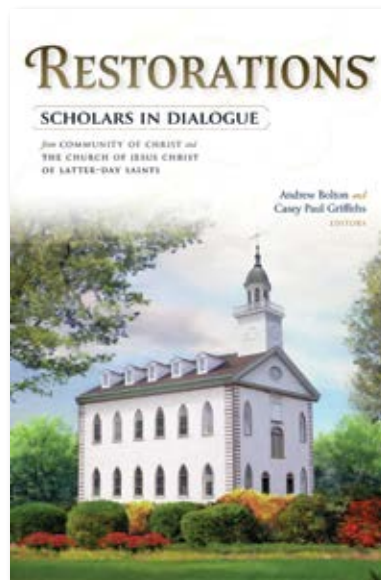
The meetings included a rotating roster of scholars from both faiths who complemented the core group. Both scholars and students from Religious Education benefited from the dialogue. Members of the

Community of Christ team became familiar faces in Religious Education classes, visiting in person and over Zoom. In one particularly memorable exchange, the Community of Christ team came to Utah to participate in a discussion with the entire faculty of Religious Education and also attend a performance of Handel's *Messiah* on Temple Square. A discussion about ordinances and sacraments took place in an endowment room of the Jordan River Temple before it was rededicated after renovation. Another dialogue took place in the Independence Temple, worldwide headquarters for Community of Christ.

After a series of productive meetings, both teams agreed to collaborate to produce a book based on their discussions. The result is *Restorations: Scholars in Dialogue from Community of Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. The book consists of a brief history of the dialogue and ten chapters of alternating exposition and response on different subjects. Topics highlight the differences and common ground shared by both faiths on Jesus Christ, scripture, ordinances and sacraments, apostasy and restoration, sacred spaces, Zion, and more.

Both groups carried many misunderstandings and misconceptions into our first conversations. Over time we gradually grew to respect each other and even became comfortable enough to engage in some good-natured teasing in our fellowship together. *Restorations* is filled with honest, frank conversations but also collegiality and friendship. From the

beginning we all acknowledged that our work was not about uniting the two churches or converting each other. Each faith has a unique and vibrant character that has flourished under greatly different circumstances and merits appreciation and study. This dialogue is about informed scholars from the two churches working together, with goodwill, to accurately understand each other.



The two churches share a formative foundation from our fourteen years of shared history. Their separate development, now approaching two centuries, has led to radically different views on a number of topics. Yet those shared years, brief though they were, created a bond between the two churches. Like two family members who come together in their mature years to reconcile their differences and embrace shared history, we have experienced an abiding sense of fellowship and understanding in our dialogues together. Our history,

doctrine, and shared sacred spaces will always connect us, but we are only just now finding that members from the two faiths can find connection, peace, and the grace of Jesus Christ as we create new sacred space together. Perhaps old rivals can become respectful friends.

Reading *Restorations* empowers members of both churches to also enter this interfaith discussion and to be more confident in initiating conversations when they meet someone from the “other church.” As taught by President Gordon B. Hinckley, Latter-day Saints have a mandate to participate in respectful interfaith dialogue. The peace mission of Community of Christ invites its members to also enter into respectful conversations with members of other faiths, including member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our hope is that fruitful dialogue will continue in widening circles. ✕

Notes

1. Scott Esplin, personal correspondence with Richard Moore, April 9, 2021.
2. The Book of Mormon Festival was created by Patrick and Jim McKay in 2009. In 2012 Keith Wilson and Richard Moore from Brigham Young University were invited to speak at the festival. Since that time, the annual event has become known as the Book of Mormon in Zion Conference, jointly planned by the McKay brothers and several faculty members from BYU, with speakers from various Restoration churches.
3. Robert Millet, personal correspondence with Richard Moore, February 26, 2021.
4. Andrew Bolton, personal correspondence with Richard Moore, January 14, 2021.
5. Robert Millet, personal correspondence with Richard Moore, February 26, 2021.

Expanding Gospel Learning: New Transcriptions of BYU Religion Content from Soar's AI

Brock James Dowdle

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

As the official research and publishing arm of Religious Education at BYU, the Religious Studies Center was designed to be a lifelong resource for gospel scholarship. Through printing high-quality books and periodicals, hosting academic-focused conferences and symposia, and releasing faith-centered videos and podcasts, the Religious Studies Center (RSC) has always had the goal of promoting deeper understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Consistent with this effort, the RSC has recently collaborated with Soar.com to produce quality transcriptions of all video and audio content created by BYU Religious Education through the years.

Soar was founded in 2017 by Paul Allen, the original founder and former CEO of Ancestry.com. Using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), Soar decodes sound into text to create full-length transcriptions of audiovisual content. This

speech-to-text technology allows users to search keywords or phrases across dozens of curated collections to find direct and precise results.

Soar's media transcription technology was initially developed to inscribe and index valuable business and educational content such as lectures, trainings, webinars, and teaching videos. Now the RSC is utilizing this software to convert religious addresses and scripture discussions into searchable text



transcripts previously unavailable in any written format.

Since its launch, Soar has archived millions of hours of public video and audio content, including all recorded US State of the Union addresses and over 150 Utah Valley University lecture series speeches. Soar's plans include recording small-business podcasts, publicly available government meetings, and in-house corporate communication webinars. Currently the RSC has one of Soar's fastest-growing multimedia libraries, with over 725 videos and podcast episodes archived and available online.

The RSC's new audiovisual transcriptions come from the spiritually enriching content originally found on BYU Religious Education's YouTube channel. Collections currently available include the Roundtable Scripture Discussions, the new Book of Mormon Roundtable Discussions, BYU Easter Conference addresses, Church History Symposium presentations, speeches from the annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, videos related to the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history, and Y Religion podcast episodes.

Soar's AI software contains unique features not commonly available in online video streaming services like YouTube. In addition to the automated transcription service, Soar's technology gives website visitors access to the following features:

- Track speaking—follow along with the text while the speaker talks in the video

- Find in transcript—search specific keywords or phrases found within the text
- Find in video—highlight text in transcription to jump to specific sections of the video
- Share video clips—send clips to friends on social media or directly to their email inbox
- Copy and paste—easily quote speakers without having to manually transcribe their words
- Playback speed—speed up or slow down video and audio to preferred watching or listening pace
- Picture in picture—increase the size of the video and drag it anywhere on the screen

Faculty from BYU Religious Education assisted in suggesting, programming, and designing aspects of Soar's user interface. Marshall Morrise, web systems administrator for BYU Religious Education and the RSC, shared his experience collaborating with Soar to implement its program into the RSC's website:

“Not only are Soar's employees technically proficient, they are also really easy to work with. As the person responsible for integrating Soar's technology into our website, I passed along the things our design team wanted to adjust. They were more than willing to address our needs, but they were also very busy. So I decided to make our suggestions more concrete by writing the HTML, the CSS, and a little JavaScript too and sent it off to them. They integrated virtually everything I wrote.

This shows that they are focused on what works well regardless of the source. They communicate well, making it a pleasure to cooperate with them.”

The decision to implement Soar's software came from the desire not only to make gospel study resources more widely attainable but also to increase the accessibility of these teaching and learning materials. Having searchable transcripts allows anyone to find RSC content using Google or similar search engines. Written transcripts improve accessibility for people with hearing disabilities, allowing them to read the text of BYU religion content previously unavailable to them. Additionally, Soar's ML makes each transcript become more accurate at predicting difficult words or phrases, especially those commonly used in the Church like “Liahona” and “Anti-Nephi-Lehies.” Adopting this technology ultimately aligns with the RSC's mission to encourage, sponsor, and publish gospel-related materials that all “might know . . . the only true God, and Jesus Christ” (John 17:3).

Before its association with Soar, the RSC was in search of ways to improve its growing number of online scripture study resources. Jared Ludlow, publications director at the RSC and professor of ancient scripture at BYU, recounted being approached with the initial proposal to use Soar to enhance gospel teaching and learning:

“It was a natural fit for Soar to offer this tool for our content since



the main founder is a BYU graduate. The connection between us and Soar was originally made by Taylor Halverson, a professor at the BYU Marriott School of Business, and since then we've communicated regularly with Soar's employees. After taking their proposal to the Academic Council at BYU Religious Education, we immediately began sending Soar content to transcribe. Initially we were planning on adding a new video series every month, but within a month or two they finished transcribing all our content. We've noticed their service is particularly

useful for finding specific words or phrases and having the ability to go right to that spot in the talk. We really value our collaboration with Soar because of how it makes Religious Studies Center content more usable in classrooms and in personal study."

According to Soar's founder and CEO, Paul Allen, "the mission of Soar is to connect you to the most meaningful, inspiring, and empowering content that will help you thrive at work and in life" (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/paulballen/>). For Latter-day Saints and students of the gospel, nothing is more meaningful,

inspiring, and empowering than the teachings of Jesus Christ. With the help of Soar's AI transcription software, the RSC follows counsel that the Lord gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith: to have "a record kept among you" and to continually be "writing, copying, selecting, and obtaining all things which shall be for the good of the church" (Doctrine and Covenants 21:1; 69:8). ❧

Transcriptions of RSC videos and audio resources are now available online at rsc.byu.edu/media/search.

The Book of Mormon Academy at BYU

Charles Swift

CHARLES SWIFT (charles_swift@byu.edu) IS ASSOCIATE CHAIR OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURE AT BYU.

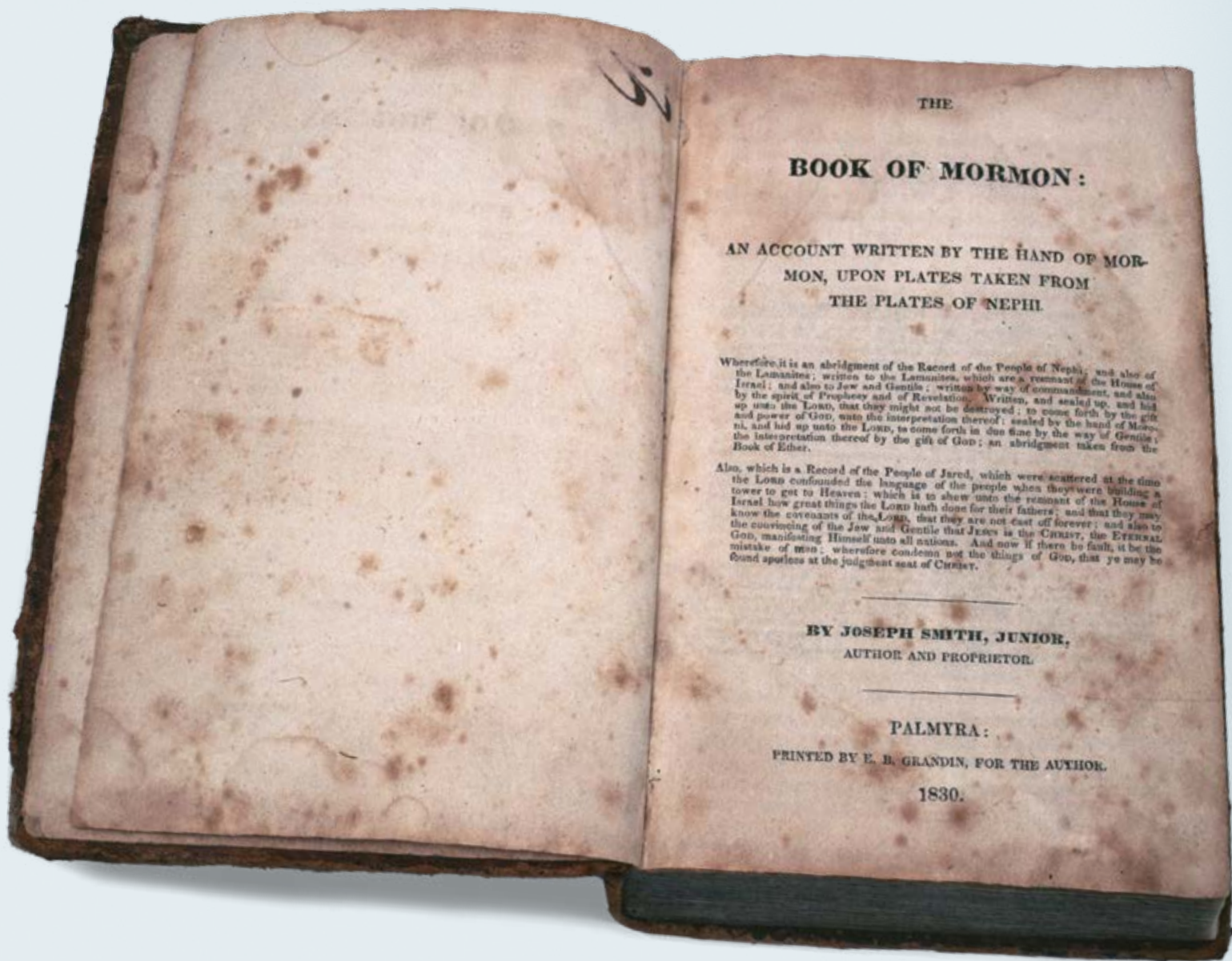
In October 2013 a group of professors belonging to BYU'S Department of Ancient Scripture gathered with their department chair to establish a new organization. These colleagues were dedicated, faithful scholars of the Book of Mormon and unified in their desire to help build a scholarly group centered on an intensive, collaborative study of that sacred text. They decided to name this new association the Book of Mormon Academy (BOMA).

From its beginning, BOMA was established “not to compete with any other existing Book of Mormon outlets”¹ but to pursue its own mission of “provid[ing] the public, as well as fellow colleagues and students, with rigorous, faithful research concerning the Book of Mormon” through publications and presentations.² While initially BOMA was seen primarily as a research think tank to assist faculty whose primary research interest was the Book of Mormon, its scholars later sought ways to share their findings with a wider audience.

A major way that BOMA has sought to share its research is through a series of books. BOMA's first publication, *Abinadi: He Came Among Them in Disguise*,

BOMA was established to provide “the public, as well as fellow colleagues and students, with rigorous, faithful research concerning the Book of Mormon.”

introduced readers to an in-depth study of a prophet whose page count is significantly smaller than his prophetic imprint. The book probes the Abinadi episode through an array of academic lenses: literary, intertextual, intratextual, cultural, historical, and theological.³ The second volume, *Illuminating the Jaredite Records*, presented an extensive study of the records of the people of Jared, particularly the book of Ether. Scholars explore the influence of these texts on later Nephite and Lamanite societies, their mention of intriguing cultural-historical aspects, their narratological structure, and their pedagogical value.⁴



The third book BOMA published, *Samuel the Lamanite: That Ye Might Believe*, focused on a careful look on the sermon and story of a peculiar prophetic figure: his prophecies, his sermon sources, his confrontation of prejudice, his ethics of wealth, and more.⁵ The most recent volume, *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon*,⁶ offers readers insights into the textual affinity of these two books in terms of their words (thousands of

biblical allusions interlace the Nephite text) and worlds (the influence of Moses, Deuteronomy, and the Tower of Babel in the Book of Mormon, as well as shared origins, culture, theology, and ritual). Members of BOMA are currently working on another multifaceted volume, on the prophet Jacob, that they hope to publish within the next two years. Some of the work from these volumes has been presented in public settings such as BYU's Education Week.

THEY SHALL GROW TOGETHER

The Bible in the Book of Mormon

Edited by Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick

The Book of Mormon Academy



SAMUEL THE LAMANITE

That Ye Might Believe

Edited by Charles Swift

The Book of Mormon Academy



ILLUMINATING THE JAREDITE RECORDS

Edited by Daniel L. Belnap

The Book of Mormon Academy



ABINADI

He Came Among Them in Disguise

Edited by Shon D. Hopkin

The Book of Mormon Academy



Through the lens of their respective disciplines—coupled most importantly with the lens of the restored gospel—BOMA members study the text of the Book of Mormon and produce writings they hope will benefit members of the Church in particular, but also other interested readers.

Preparing such books for publication is no small task, and BOMA's monthly meetings during the academic year are sometimes filled with discussions about an upcoming volume. For example, the scholars offer suggestions as they review possible topics for the book or listen to colleagues share the chapters they are working on. They also may devote most of the meeting to discussing a chapter in the Book of Mormon, exploring what insights and perspectives they can gain from one another and from what Church leaders and other working scholars have written. Additionally, they have been privileged to hear from guest speakers who generously share their understanding of the text. In the past, the chair of the academy has invited members of the group to present on various topics while leaving time for an enthusiastic, worthwhile discussion with colleagues who are united in their faith but who also bring a healthy diversity of perspective and opinion.

In fact, among the strengths of BOMA is this combination of unity and diversity. The latter is seen in their educational backgrounds: doctorates earned by current members of the academy include Hebrew studies, religion (early Christianity), New Testament, Near Eastern languages and cultures, English, Northwest Semitics, Near Eastern religions, instructional psychology and technology, history of Christianity, Egyptian archaeology, Egyptology, linguistic anthropology, sixteenth-century Bible translation, Hebrew Bible, and philosophy. Each of these disciplines prepares scholars to critically analyze texts and effectively discuss that analysis in writing.

Through the lens of their respective disciplines—coupled most importantly with the lens of the restored gospel—BOMA members study the text of the Book of Mormon and produce writings they hope will benefit members of the Church in particular, but also other interested readers. Over the past nine years, the Book of Mormon Academy has had several different chairs lead the organization, but one constant has been the commitment among its members to bring to the discussion table their skills, faith, and intellect as they study and search the Book of Mormon. ✂

Notes

1. Camille Fronk Olson, "Book of Mormon Academy: Proposed Purpose," January 2017, document in author's possession.
2. "Book of Mormon Academy," October 20, 2017, document in author's possession.
3. Shon D. Hopkin, ed., *Abinadi: He Came Among Them in Disguise* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018).
4. Daniel L. Belnap, ed., *Illuminating the Jaredite Records* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020).
5. Charles Swift, ed., *Samuel the Lamanite: That Ye Might Believe* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2021).
6. Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Fredrick, eds., *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2022).

FACULTY AND STAFF

APPOINTMENTS

Dallin Breen was hired as a Religious Education web and systems administrator. **Joshua R.**

McDaniel was appointed an assistant to the dean/controller.

David M. Calabro was hired as a visiting assistant professor of ancient scripture. **Jared M. Halverson** and **Stephan Taeger** were hired as associate and assistant professors, respectively (ancient scripture). **Justin B.**

Top was hired as an assistant professor (ancient scripture) and is associate graduate coordinator in the chaplaincy program.

Traci Wright was hired as an administrative assistant in the Department of Ancient Scripture.

Alaina Dunn was hired as an editor and **Alex Socarras** as the lead designer at the BYU Religious Studies Center.

Eric D. Huntsman began work as the associate director for academics at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. **Mark D. Ellison** taught summer term there. The new team of teachers at the Jerusalem Center for fall semester consists of **Frank F. Judd Jr., Mauro Properzi,** and **David Rolph Seely,** with Eric Huntsman continuing as associate director

AWARDS

Don L. Brugger and **Carter Charles** received the Outstanding Mentor Award. Carter Charles also received the Mormon History Association's Ardis E. Parshall Public History Award as part of the Century of Black Mormons team.

Connie R. Brace, Gerrit J.

Dirkmaat, and **Joshua M.**

Sears received the Outstanding Citizenship Award.

Rachel Cope, Joseph M. Spencer, and **Jordan T. Watkins** received the Harvey B. and Susan Easton Black Outstanding Scholarship Award. Jordan Watkins also received the best book award from the Society for US Intellectual History.

Mark E. Ellison and **Casey Paul**

Griffiths received the Outstanding Teaching Award.

John Hilton III received the Loretta C. Gledhill Teaching and Learning Faculty Fellowship.

Jared W. Ludlow received the B. West Belnap Citizenship Award.

Anthony R. Sweat received the university's Early Career Teaching Award and the Robert J. Matthews Teaching Award.

Mary Jane Woodger received the Richard Lloyd Anderson Research Award.

Fred E. Woods received the University Accessibility Center's Good Samaritan Faculty Award for Distinguished Contributions to Accessibility.

RETIREMENTS

Kent R. Brooks, Jeanine Ehat, Marshall Morrise, Vance Theodore, and **Keith J. Wilson** retired.

IN MEMORIAM

Charles D. Tate Jr. passed away on March 6. ☘

Continued from page 17



Above: Emily Mehr and Mary Proteau at Bethany, traditional site of the baptism of Jesus.

Below: Local Mosque in Madaba, Jordan. Students were able to enjoy visits in Madaba to various local churches and survey the layout of the land.



the famous St. George Church, which contains a mosaic map of the Holy Land from the sixth century AD), and, of course, Petra and other archaeological sites. These field trips became places of learning, inquiry, discussion, and at times they became spiritual pilgrimages for the students with many testimony-strengthening moments.

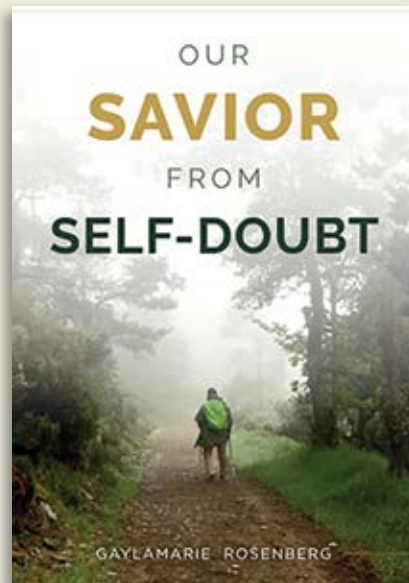
In sum, the student mentoring and learning process achieved at 'Ataruz provided an environment of intellectual and spiritual growth that enabled students and faculty to work together in an atmosphere of discovery. The experience facilitated learning in various spheres, ranging from



Above: Students exploring Petra. Below: Students floating in the Dead Sea.



archaeology and history to language, culture, and religions, all in a multicultural environment. As friendships were forged and new knowledge and skills acquired, students and faculty returned home having been enriched with a diversity of experience that will last and be cherished for a lifetime. ✂



Our Savior from Self-Doubt

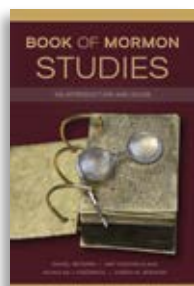
GAYLAMARIE ROSENBERG

Self-doubt limits our perception of our potential and diminishes our joy and hope in who we are and what we can become. When we don't feel good about ourselves, we have help. Jesus Christ saves us not only from our imperfections but also from our imperfect understanding of ourselves. This book explores sources of self-doubt and the impact of positive psychology in changing our thought patterns. It emphasizes an often-ignored dimension of the Atonement of Jesus Christ: how Christ helps us overcome self-doubt and unproductive thinking.

US \$19.99

RECENT AND UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS

To purchase any of the following publications, please visit www.byustore.com and search by book title, or call the BYU Store toll-free at 1-800-253-2578.



Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide

DANIEL BECERRA,
AMY EASTON-
FLAKE, NICHOLAS J.

FREDERICK, AND JOSEPH M. SPENCER

Where does one go to learn more about Book of Mormon studies? For those who do not regularly engage with

scholarship, it's hard to know how to begin. There has been no general guide to Book of Mormon scholarship available to the public—until now. This introduction breaks down Book of Mormon studies, from its history to the obstacles that will need to be overcome. Additionally, this introduction provides readers with resources that they can turn to for further information on Book of Mormon studies.

US \$19.99



Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible

KENT P. JACKSON

This book examines what the New Translation is (today most Latter-day Saints refer to it as the Joseph Smith Translation), what it contains, what it teaches,

and how Joseph Smith arrived at its text. The author has written it with the intent to make the information accessible to scholars and general audiences alike and its chapters not only informative but also readable. Did some or all the text come through revelation, as he and his followers believed? What were the instincts that guided his work, and how did he translate those instincts into words? This book cannot answer the theological questions, but it can assess the evidence in the primary documents in an effort to understand how the New Translation came to be.

US \$24.99



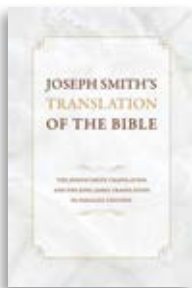
They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon

CHARLES SWIFT AND NICHOLAS J. FREDERICK, EDITORS

This fourth volume published by the Book of Mormon Academy at Brigham Young University is a careful study of the intersections of two ancient texts: The Book of Mormon and the Bible. The authors approach the two books of scripture from within two fundamental frameworks. First, several of the essays explore the books in terms of the worlds from which they come with their related ideals, interests, and origins. Second, a number of the authors analyze topics based on the texts themselves, closely studying the two texts and

helping readers better understand connections.

US \$29.99

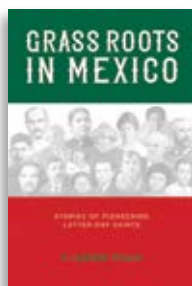


Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: The Joseph Smith Translation and the King James Translation in Parallel Columns

KENT P. JACKSON, EDITOR

This volume has the complete text of the Bible revision made by Joseph Smith, the Latter-day Saint prophet and founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presented with modern punctuation and spelling and with the original chapter and verse divisions created by Joseph Smith and his scribes. The Prophet labored on the Bible project from June 1830 until July 1833. The New Translation makes significant contributions to Latter-day Saint beliefs. This volume is published in parallel columns with the corresponding verses of the King James Bible.

US \$36.99 ✂



Grass Roots in Mexico: Stories of Pioneering Latter-day Saints

F. LAMOND TULLIS

This volume's first two chapters consist of synopses of events important to the history

of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Mexico. They establish a contextual background for the pioneer vignettes that follow. The vignettes are mostly about pioneer Mexican Latter-day Saints, focusing mainly on the circumstances of their lives as newly converted members of the Church, the nature of their conversions, and what happened to them and their families afterward.

US \$27.99



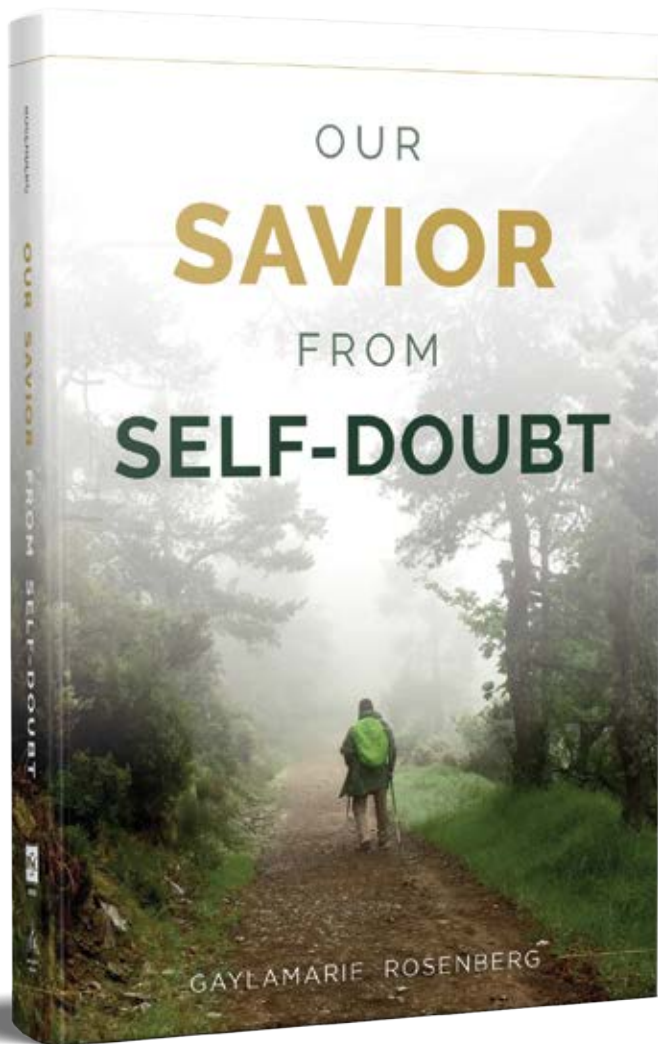
Restorations: Scholars in Dialogue from Community of Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

ANDREW BOLTON AND CASEY PAUL GRIFFITHS, EDITORS

This book contains reflections from two groups of scholars who trace their beginnings to the early Saints who built the Kirtland Temple. These scholars come from the two largest branches of the Restoration movement, Community of Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This book is filled with honest conversations between people of the two faiths but also collegiality and friendship. Centered on twelve themes, this dialogue is about bringing together informed scholars from the two churches working together, with goodwill, to accurately understand each other.

US \$18.99 ✂

OUR
SAVIOR
FROM
SELF-DOUBT



Self-doubt limits our perception of our potential and diminishes our joy and hope in who we are and what we can become. When we don't feel good about ourselves, we have help. Jesus Christ saves us not only from our imperfections but also from our imperfect understanding of ourselves. This book explores sources of self-doubt and the impact of positive psychology in changing our thought patterns. It emphasizes an often-ignored dimension of the Atonement of Jesus Christ: how Christ helps us overcome self-doubt and unproductive thinking.

These books are available in the BYU Store or wherever Latter-day Saint books are sold.



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Donors help married couple on educational journey

Brock Dowdle and Bailee Stones met in a singles ward. Their casual friendship grew through activities with their family home evening group, and the two began dating. Now they are married—and both employed at the BYU Religious Studies Center.

Bailee, from Highlands Ranch, Colorado, was finishing a degree in psychology on her way to a master's degree in social work. Brock, from La Verne, California, was pursuing a degree in public relations.

Brock was looking for a job that would complement his studies in PR. He saw a job posting for a student media specialist at the Religious Studies Center. The job entailed creating social media and web content, including video content, along with a bit of graphic design. It was a good fit, and Brock landed the job.

“For me, the job offered a chance to develop practical and tactical skills—how to build campaigns, develop networks, align our objectives with our target audience,” he explains.

The job turned out to be pretty intense for just one student, so the Center posted a second position. Bailee was visiting Brock at work one day when

someone joked that she should apply for the second position. “I’m a photographer, so I thought perhaps it would be fun to try,” Bailee recalls.

She was pleasantly surprised when she got the job. She soon realized that there was more crossover between her work and her studies than she originally thought. She was able to glean valuable insights from the editors that were especially helpful when she later published a paper on her research on alcoholism in a medical journal.

“I also find it very satisfying working for an organization that puts forth so much good,” she adds. “The Center works hard to strengthen people’s testimonies and faith.”

In addition to obtaining career-related employment that is subsidized by donor funding, Brock also received funding through the LA South Alumni Chapter Replenishment Grant.

“I like that the replenishment grant is based on the ‘pay it forward’ concept. I think it is a great program,” says Brock.

Conveniently, both Brock and Bailee will graduate in April 2023.



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See page 3 for more information.