

## **Saturday Evening Meeting, Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Reunion**

### **President Fred Larsen, August 2, 2014**

I am pleased to be here and share with you and I greet every one of you in the good name of the Lord Jesus Christ and trust that you have had a good family reunion thus far. We are pleased to provide the facilities for you.

I guess this is the evening that we are closing down to a certain extent and then you folks are going to have your services tomorrow morning and then you're off to Winter Quarters and Council Bluffs and then on your way back home.

I think it is appropriate that I say a few things about the Remnant Church as all of you are not familiar with the Remnant Church. In the year 2000 on April 6, a number of saints in this area came together in conference about 300 of them to organize the Remnant Church. The situation was the pattern was exactly as it was in 1850 – 1853 -54-55 in which a number of men gathered together selected a Chairman, a committee of three was selected, seven apostles to form the administrating governing body of the church. The conference approved that. In 2002 the church held a conference again on April 6 in which I came to the conference exactly like Joseph III came to the conference except not by a power on his own as I never intended to come to this office as President / Prophet of the church. I reluctantly asked the conference that if they would accept me I would take that role. That is what Joseph III did also in 1860. The church was fully organized at that point in time. We had the organic structure of the church exactly as it was when he organized it and the LDS church also – Presidency, Quorum of Twelve, Seventies, Patriarchs, Bishop's – exactly the same.

Our membership is about 2500 worldwide. We have about 600 or 700 in the center place right here and about 1500 domestic deal in the country. Our headquarters are over in the building across from the parking lot across from Community of Christ facilities there. It a school building that we own. With all those offices and the organization that functions the church. Over in the building also has a facility that has what we call lunch partners downstairs. With volunteer help is free hot meals are served three times a week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to about 100 to 130, 40, 50 people in the community. Many of them homeless. Some of them come for just social gathering but this is a service we provide over there.

We do use the inspired version of the bible, the Joseph Smith's translation, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. We don't have all those revelations that LDS one but the majority of them we use also. The other facilities we have are of course this place called the Gathering Place which we have 26 acres with this facility with ground up the hill there. This is the conference center and that is the worship center. We have a fellowship hall and a full kitchen and a Sanctuary. About 12 miles East of here we have a community of 200 acres and has about 8 to 10 homes right now we call Bountiful which is a community that we established to demonstrate living elbow to elbow. One has to consecrate to be part of that and it is designed for community living. With that is an introduction into the Remnant Church and that's why we are here.

I just want to say a few words about family. That is what Steve often addresses us at this gathering. Looking up the word family has its root in the Latin word familia which means household establishment. That's one definition and the primary definition of the word. But it also means people living in one

house, we don't all live in one house, but it also relates to a group of people related by ancestry or marriage. I think the one that is most fitting in describing the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack family is all those claiming descent from a common ancestor.

I guess we have to recognize that our common ancestor is Joseph Smith Sr. There isn't a lot written about Joseph Smith Sr. and I know we are familiar with their background and where they came from living back in Vermont. Of Course the offspring that came from Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack are those we represent here in terms of Hyrum, Joseph, Samuel, Catherine, William, and Lucy. Now I am not familiar with the history of all those lines. Obviously, Joseph Smith Jr I am very, very familiar with and those progenitors. But I ask the question: How is it that we are bonding actually. I am going to mention two ways that we are bonded. Actually, I think there are three. By history, by doctrine, and by family.

We are bonded by a common history whether we want to admit it or not. Ever since the martyrdom of Joseph the prophet one thing that has been a problem is on presidency or succession and leadership that has always haunted us. Unfortunately, it has always been a problem among restoration in our family.

One of the things that I thought was very interesting was we study the history. I am involved with the Mormon History Association and the John Whitmer Historical Association and I attend and participate in those meetings. One of the things that has been presented and come forth is a book called, Scattering Of The Saints: Schism Within Mormonism, written by [Newell G. Bringhurst](#). It is about Joseph and goes through all the other groups that have come out of that division and fussing over who is going to be the leadership. We talk about Brighamites, Josephites, Stangites, Culurites, Hedrikites, Rigdonites, Biclrites, Whities. Schism seems to be a way of life for us. One thing I do appreciate is (pointing to the top left hand corner of the book) the name Fred Larsen. We study we search and we discuss our history and it's unavoidable in our understanding of our ancestors. We are bonded by our history there isn't any question about that. But the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith is limited to those descendants that I have mentioned. We are also bonded by similar elements of our religious doctrine. One of the things I would read to you comes from what we call the revelations. Those are revelations that are brought to this church at conference by the President/Prophet of the church usually on an annual basis and sometimes but it is not predictable with regard to when that comes. I have brought about 14 of those messages that are included in our Doctrine and Covenants as our revelations beginning with our 145. One of those that came in 153, if you read them you won't find anything that is disjunctive, you won't find anything that's offensive. Just let me read one of those that I have picked out because it mentions something that we are involved in. In paragraph 2 B in our 153 was given in 2009. By the way, I preach a lot from this podium. I also preside at general conferences which we have 400 or 500 members that are voting in the legislation and other things. Actually, I really enjoy this to be honest about it you have to really love that.

It reads this way and it was brought to the conference and they approved it as the mind and will of God. "The hope of Zion is still alive in the hearts and minds of many and they will come to join your ranks in building up my kingdom. Be not over judgmental in receiving those that want to come. (Joseph III also said that in one of his revelations.) Receive them with open arms but be cautious to keep intact the sanctity and purity of my ordinances." Then it went on to say, "Leave not your heritage for you are called to implement the principles of my gathering of a righteous people even as revealed as through my latter day prophet Joseph Smith Jr. You are further called up to build up the waste places of Zion and establish my Kingdom which shall be a beacon to all people and a place of refuge for my faithful saints in

these last days. You have been called to renewal to prepare for the coming of the bridegroom. Let it be so.”

Indeed our belief is this is the center place of Zion. Joseph Smith Jr. believed that’s what it was and dedicated it. The temple lot and all those things whether it gets built there or somewhere else here there will be a temple built here in the center place. The fact that it says to leave not your heritage was a call to our people (many who are called Centers) to pay attention to what has come in the past and don’t shut that off. So it is that Joseph the prophet, the vision that he had in the grove, is a part of our doctrine. The Book of Mormon, the Articles of Faith, we all share in that. We may not all agree on the basics of the doctrines but we are respectful of our differences. That is so important. It allows us to be bonded in that family. With regard to the history as well as to the doctrine we share that in our ability to bond. We are bonded most of all by that definition that related by common ancestors regardless of the history and doctrine. This speaks to our desire I expect to fulfill the compassion of our ancestors. Their burning desire, their testimony and witness of the gospel, and building of the kingdom of God on earth, even Zion. And again I ask, can we really walk in their shoes? There is a challenge.

The theme for this reunion was, “Walking in their Shoes.” It has such a personal meaning for me because of my ancestry. I can only bear my testimony of that idea. As I read and prepare in teaching Joseph Smith’s revelations I put myself as closely as I can into the situation in which he delivered those. Because it is only out of that context that I can really truly understand. I believe I have one of the greatest understandings that has been given to me by the grace of God to understand what Joseph Smith Jr intended to do to build his kingdom.

I read Joseph Smith III’s revelations to the Reorganized Church as he followed on and he tried to bring together the scattered saints after the martyrdom. In one way to honor those walking in their shoes dealt with Emma. The fondest memory of having one of these reunions was at the Salt Lake Reunion in 2007. I was able to make a presentation on the Remnant Church in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building and were so very well received (Mary and I were) by the folks in Salt Lake City and it was a tremendous impression for me.

One of my fondest things to do is address the students at Brigham Young University. Which those young folks are working on the edge of trying to understand the things that they are taught and they learn this day this year are so far forward of what they had 10, 20, or 30 years ago. So it is that they are open and I so much enjoy that. The hospitality of our host family and there was one thing in particular that so impressed me. One of the folks from one of the Stakes in Sandy somewhere asked if they could present some kind of memento for me in terms of a picture. I told them that would be fine. They asked what one of my favorite paintings was and I said what it was. Lo and behold, toward the end of that conference, this was presented to me – Liz Lemon Swindle. It is one of my prized possessions that sits on the wall in my church office.