

Joseph Smith Sr. Family Reunion Meeting in the Kirtland Temple

August 1, 2026



Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion in Kirtland, Ohio – 2026
Report by Frances Orton



Smith family, welcome to the beautiful Kirtland Temple. It's been 190 years since the dedication of the temple. My name is Steve, Steven Orton, as my mom would say. My wife, Frances Orton, and I serve as co-chairs of the Joseph Smith Senior and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion.



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We'll begin this meeting by singing an opening hymn. Now Let Us Rejoice. This song was sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, after which Gracia Jones will offer the invocation.



Gracia Jones reminded us in her opening prayer that there are many here from beyond the veil we thank thee for them, all the sacrifices that they made in order that this gospel can be restored to the earth. We pray now for all who participate this night, that thy spirit may attend each of us, that we may be able to walk away from this night with our souls uplifted and our faith increased.”

Steve Orton continued introducing the program, Gracia is our eldest attendee at this reunion and was at the very first reunion. Her son David Denning was born at the end of that reunion 50 years ago.

Smith Family Testimonies as part of the 2026 reunion in the Kirtland Temple

Introduction --- Frances Orton

Lucy Smith --- Abby Vidal Scott

Don Carlos Smith --- Jon Benware

Katharine Smith --- Taylor Hagan and Vicki Hardy

William Smith --- Steve Siebers

Samuel Smith --- Douglas Ralph Smith

Emma Smith --- Tara Carrin

Joseph Smith Jr --- Chase Washburn

Sophronia Smith --- Courtney Nelson

Hyrum Smith --- Josh Abbott

Alvin Smith --- Freddie Hicks

Lucy Mack Smith --- Stacy Tanner

Joseph Smith Sr. --- Gary Smith

Congregational Hymn The Spirit of God
(Song sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple)

Ancestral Keys --- Craig Ballard, *Joseph Smith Sr. Family Board Chairman*

Significance of the Kirtland Temple --- Elder Nathan L. Johnson

Closing Song --- Gordon Flade --- *Solo: I Know That My Redeemer Lives*

Benediction --- Elder Pella



Frances Orton --- The Smith family is the core family of the Restoration. The Prophet Joseph's work could never have been done by him alone. It became a family responsibility. They not only shared in its glorious events, but they suffered persecution, abuse, imprisonment, and even death. All these things seem to strengthen their testimonies. Each family member believed Joseph's work was of God. We are sharing Book of Mormon testimonies born by Smith family members. Each family member knew and testified that it was true. Their testimonies reflect our ancestors' deep faith and devotion. There are many more that could have been published. There are many, many more that were unspoken.



Lucy Smith



Abby Vidal Scott

“Joseph’s remaining two sisters, Sophronia born in 1803 and Lucy born in 1821, also believed in Joseph. Although documented testimonies from them is scarce, it is known that they had strong testimonies and bore them publicly. William, their brother, said, “All believed it was true, father, mother, brothers and sisters.”¹ One reason they believed was that Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack gathered their family together in evenings to learn of Joseph’s experiences and scenes he witnessed while translating. Sophronia and Lucy, along with the others learned and developed testimonies while, as Mother Smith stated, “Joseph commenced telling us the great and glorious things which God had manifested to him.” Joseph related scenes in great detail. For example, “He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent; their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, and their buildings, with every particular; he would describe their mode of warfare, as also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them.”²”

¹ William Smith "Testimony," Saint's Herald 31 (1884), p.644

² Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, p. 86-87, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/93>



Don Carlos Smith



Jon Benware

Don Carlos Smith was the youngest of the Smith sons. At Don Carlos's death, the prophet Joseph paid tribute to his younger brother's long held witness as he stated that Don Carlos was "one of the first to receive my testimony."³ The evening after the Book of Mormon plates were shown to the Eight Witnesses, Joseph Smith said that "all the witnesses, as also Don Carlos bore testimony to the truth of the latter-day dispensation."⁴ The spirit of testimony marked Don Carlos' entire life. In 1830, when but fourteen, he accompanied his father on a mission to St. Lawrence County, New York. By testifying and providing them Books of Mormon, they were instrumental in the conversion of his cousin and future church leader George A. Smith.⁵ When the Smith family arrived in Kirtland in February, 1831, Don Carlos was exhausted from his journey, and fell asleep in his chair during the first Sunday meeting they attended. Nonetheless, said James Henry Rollins, "after several had spoken Don Carlos awoke and arose and bore as strong a testimony as I ever heard, of the truth of the work."⁶ This spirit of testimony of the Book of Mormon guided him throughout missions in Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, and Ohio. He later went on missions to Tennessee and Kentucky, to raise money to buy out the claims and property of the mobbers in Daviess County, Missouri. His own journal tells of experiences in which he testified to mobs and mobbers who were violently unfriendly to the Latter Day Saint cause.⁷ Don Carlos also was one of the few who Joseph selected to bear testimony at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Joseph simply recorded that "President Don Carlos Smith also bore testimony of the truth of the work of the Lord in which we were engaged."⁸

³ History of the Church, Vol.4, p.392

⁴ History of the Church, Vol.4, p.392

⁵ History of the Church Vol. 4, p. 393.

⁶ "A Life Sketch of James Henry Rollins (1816-1839)," Typescript, pp. 2-3, Brigham Young University, Special Collections.

⁷ History of the Church. Vol. 4, pp. 394-398.

⁸ History of the Church, Vol.2, p.427



Katharine Smith



Taylor Hagan and Vicki Hardy

Katharine Smith Salisbury was the last surviving child of Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. It is said that Katharine was frequently sought out by converts, missionaries, and reporters for her recollections of Moroni's visit, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the latter-day restoration. It is also said that she was quick to share her testimony of the truth of the work the family helped to establish.⁹ She gave one of her most powerful testimonies to an admiring Church conference just five years before her death. She declared, "I desire before I pass away, to place my testimony on record.... I am the only surviving sister of the martyrs Joseph and Hyrum Smith and will soon be 73 years old. I can testify to the fact of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and also to its truth.... I well remember the trials my brother had... he went frequently to the hill, and upon returning would tell us, I have seen the records, also the brass plates and the sword of Laban with the breast plate and interpreters... (I) shall soon pass away, but while I can I will bear my testimony to the truth of the latter day work, both spiritual and temporal. I know that it is true."¹⁰

Katharine, apparently like others in the family, also lifted the concealed plates. She once told her grandson Herbert S. Salisbury, who was a College President and Church historian, that while dusting up the room where the Prophet had his study, she saw a package on the table containing the gold plates on which was engraved the story of the Book of Mormon. She said she hefted those plates and found them very heavy like gold

⁹ "Birds of Passage," *Saturday Evening Post* [Burlington, Iowa], March 10, 1894, 11. As Cited in "Katharine Smith Salisbury's Recollections of Joseph's Meetings with Moroni," Kyle R. Walker, *BYU Studies Quarterly* 41:3

¹⁰ *The Saints Herald* 33, no. 17, 1 May 1886 <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=9d90d860-8920-4514-9356-f9d33ccc4490&crate=0&index=3>

and also rippled her fingers up the edge of the plates and felt that they were separate metal plates and heard the tinkle of sound that they made."¹¹

¹¹ "The Prophet's Sister Testifies She Lifted The B[ook]. of M[ormon] Plates," The Messenger (Berkeley, California), October 1954, 1, 6 (original newspaper clipping located in RLDS Church Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri). Cited in Vogel, Early Mormon Documents, p. 523.



William Smith



Steve Siebers

William always defended his brother Joseph and bore witness that he was a Prophet. William electrified an audience in 1844 as he delivered these irrefutable words of testimony. He said, "I hold in my hand the Book of Mormon.... The world has been filled with articles for the purpose of making it appear a falsehood.... One of the great hobbies raised upon which to fight is the angel's visit to Joseph Smith.... I well remember the effect produced upon my father's family, when he told (us) he was to receive the plates; how (we) looked forward with joy, and waited until the time should come... When Joseph received them, he came in and said: "Father, I have got the plates." All believed it was true, father, mother, brothers and sisters. You can tell what a child is. Parents know whether their children are truthful or not... Father knew his child was telling the truth. When the plates were brought in they were wrapped in a tow frock. My father then put them into a pillow case.... We handled [the plates] and could tell what they were. (As near as I could tell, they weighed about sixty pounds.) ...Being a mixture of gold and copper, they were much heavier than stone, and very much heavier than wood.... I expect to stand before angels and archangels and be judged for how I have told it."¹²

¹² William Smith "The Old Soldier's Testimony," Saint's Herald 31 (1884), p.643-644 .



Samuel Smith



Douglas Ralph Smith

I've got Samuel Smith, but a few decades ago, I asked my cousin, "When people ask you if you're related to Joseph Smith, what do you tell them?" He says, "Well, I don't say that I am." And I said, "Well, I do. I tell them so that they can know that those people were lived and they had children and they carried on their family's name." And they might see a trait that would remind them of the Smiths. Like I think Joseph Smith was said to have never returned an axe that wasn't sharpened. So I might return a chainsaw that's freshly sharpened and has new fuel in it. I might borrow your car and return it full of gas. My email signature is, "Honor your ancestors for their sacrifice and don't embarrass your descendants." My mom told me that the devil works hardest on the Smith family.

Samuel developed his testimony early in Harmony Pennsylvania where he lived with Joseph and Emma while Joseph was engaged in translating the Book of Mormon. Upon encouragement by Joseph, Samuel "retired to the woods... (and)... by secret and fervent prayer.... obtained revelation for himself sufficient to convince him of the truth."¹³ At age 22 he became one of the 8 Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and signed this formal statement with his father and brother Hyrum: "Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of (the Book of Mormon) has shown unto us the plates... which have the appearance of gold... we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness... for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that (Joseph Smith) has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it." He was the first missionary formally set apart by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Samuel forever endeared himself to the John Young family, including sons Brigham and Phineas, as he gave Phineas the Young's first copy of the Book of Mormon. As Samuel presented it, he bore this witness. "I know the

¹³ History of the Church, Vol.1, p.44

book to be a revelation from God, translated by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, and that my brother Joseph Smith, jun., is a Prophet, Seer and Revelator.”¹⁴



Emma Smith



Tara Carrin

Late in life, Emma told her oldest son, Joseph III, “My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity - I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he could at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.” She further elaborated, “The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen tablecloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.” When questioned if Joseph Smith could have dictated the Book of Mormon after having first written it, or having first read it out of some book, Emma responded, “Joseph Smith ...could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictate a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, and was present during the translation of the plates, and had cognizance of things as they transpired, it is marvelous to me, ‘a marvel and a wonder’ as much so as to anyone else.”¹⁵

¹⁴ History of Brigham Young,” *Millennial Star*, June 6, 1863, 360–61.

¹⁵ “Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints' Herald* 26 (1879):, p. 289)



Joseph Smith



Chase Washburn

Joseph Smith's whole life was spent in testifying to his God given experiences and mission. In the preface to the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith declared his simple, short and perhaps most powerful testimony: "I would inform you that I translated [the Book of Mormon], by the gift and power of God." On several other occasions he repeated that it had been done "by the gift and power of God." Joseph Smith was so determined to establish the Book of Mormon as the center of the restored Gospel that he said, "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."¹⁶ In perhaps his most impressive public display of testimony, Joseph stood side by side with his father and brothers Hyrum and Samuel at the October 1831 church conference. With an uplifted right hand, he formally swore his solemn testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon before the congregation.¹⁷ At the end of his life, Joseph paid the ultimate price as he was martyred at the hands of the mob in Carthage, Illinois. However, before the assassin's bullet took his life, he brazenly turned to the guards who held him captive and bore a powerful testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon."¹⁸ He closed his life with his testimony and literally "sealed his mission and his works with his own blood."¹⁹

¹⁶ History of the Church, 4:461

¹⁷ Luke Johnson Autobiography (1807-1838) History of Luke Johnson by himself. The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star 26 (1864):834-36; 27 (1865):5-7.)

¹⁸ See *History of the Church*, 6:600.

¹⁹ Doctrine and Covenants 135:3



Sophronia Smith



Courtney Nelson

Sophronia's testimony was also buttressed in one experience in Palmyra when Joseph handed her sister, Kathrine, the wrapped plates to hide from a pursuing mob. Katherine ran to the bedroom "where she and Sophronia slept. Sophronia threw back the bedding and Katherine put the bundle on the bed, quickly replacing the bedding. Both of them lay down on the bed and pretended to sleep" thus outwitting the mob.²⁰ A few references to testimony from Sophronia and Lucy have survived. An Elder from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, George F. A. Spiller visited Sophronia and her two sisters Katherine and Lucy. He recorded, "They testified that they knew that their brother Joseph was a prophet of God."²¹ Sophronia died in 1876. Her obituary noted that "She was ever ready to bear her testimony to the truth of the work."²²

²⁰ Hancock, "The Three Sisters of the Prophet Joseph Smith," 35. As cited in "Three Sisters of the Prophet Joseph Smith" Kyle R. Walker, "Katharine Smith Salisbury: Sister to the Prophet," MHS 32 Fall 2002

²¹ Letter 8 December 1856, George F. A. Spiller to Thos. B. H. Stenhouse
<https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/c875ccf4-42e8-4336-a4a1-608a0e61f880/0/602?lang=eng>

²² *Saints' Herald*, 1 Oct. 1876. As cited in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Ensign Magazine* March 1979 "What were Joseph Smith's sisters like, and what happened to them after the martyrdom?" *Ensign Magazine* March 1979
<http://bit.ly/3YwHNLG>



Hyrum Smith



Josh Abbott

Hyrum Smith's certain and unwavering testimony is documented as early as 1830 when he, along with his father and brother Samuel were allowed to view the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. As one of the Eight Witnesses, he testified for the rest of his life to the divinity of the Book of Mormon. His witness continues even to this day through the written testimony in each Book of Mormon. He testified that he "had seen the plates with his eyes and handled them with his hands." Hyrum's testimony is strengthened by his seemingly constant persecution, abuse and even imprisonment. An example is his long imprisonment in the Liberty jail after which he declared, "I was innocent of crime... I had been dragged from my family... I had been abused and thrust into a dungeon, and confined for months on account of my faith, and the 'testimony of Jesus Christ.'" However I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to... and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life."²³ In the end, Hyrum paid the ultimate price as he gave his life with his younger brother Joseph, in Carthage, as his final testimony.

²³ Times and Seasons 1 (1839): 23.



Alvin Smith



Freddie Hicks

Alvin, the oldest son, manifest his testimony of the reality of Moroni's first four visits to the Smith log home on his deathbed. Alvin died in 1823 at age twenty-five. This was barely two months following Moroni's first visit and four years before Joseph received the Golden Plates. Alvin fully believed in Joseph's mission and admonished Joseph with these words, "do everything that lies in your power to obtain the Record. Be faithful in receiving instruction, and in keeping every commandment that is given you."²⁴

²⁴ Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, p. 91, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/98>



Lucy Mack Smith



Stacy Tanner

Lucy Mack Smith was fierce in her testimony and unrelenting in support of Joseph, her prophet son. It seems that she constantly and consistently bore a fiery testimony of the Book of Mormon. She once said that people often asked her about the details of its coming forth and as a result she had “almost destroyed my lungs giving these recitals to those who felt anxious to hear them.”²⁵ Mother Smith’s testimony is powerfully evidenced on her journey from New York to Kirtland on the Erie Canal. A heckler on the shore shouted to her and those on her boat, “Is the Book of Mormon true? That book” replied I “was brought forth by the power of God, and translated by the gift of the Holy Ghost; and, if I could make my voice sound as loud as the trumpet of Micheal the Arch Angel, I would declare the truth of the same from land to land, and from sea to sea... for I do testify that, God has revealed himself to man again in these last days.”²⁶ On another occasion, she and Joseph Smith Sr. could have received forgiveness of a debt if they would just burn their copies of the Book of Mormon. She responded to the offer with these words, “Now, here, sir ... Because God has raised up my son to bring forth a book, which was written for the salvation of the souls of men, for the salvation of your soul as well as mine... and you think, by this, that you will compel us to deny the work of God and destroy a book which was translated by the gift and power of God. But, sir, we shall not burn the Book of Mormon, nor deny the inspiration of the Almighty.”²⁷ One more account, when confronted in Palmyra by a former minister and some parishioners, confirms her consistency of testimony and fierce disposition. She boldly told the group, “If you should stick my flesh full of faggots, and even burn me at the stake, I would declare that Joseph has got that record, and that I

²⁵ Excerpts from the *Kansas City Times*, April 11, 1895 Proceedings of the Mormon Conference in Independence. As Cited in “Katharine Smith Salisbury’s Recollections of Joseph’s Meetings with Moroni,” Kyle R. Walker, As published in *BYU Studies Quarterly* 41:3

²⁶ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, p. 202, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/210?highlight=trumpet>

²⁷ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, p. 180, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/188?highlight=deny%20the%20inspiration>

know it to be true.”²⁸ burn me at the stake, I would declare that Joseph has got that record, and that I know it to be true.”²⁹



Joseph Smith Sr



Gary Smith

Father Smith was the first one to hear of Moroni’s visits to his son, Joseph Jr.. He was also the first one to believe in Joseph’s visions of Moroni. After being told that Moroni instructed young Joseph to meet him at the hill Cumorah, Joseph Sr. immediately accepted it and told his son “that it was of God, and... to go and do as commanded by the messenger.”³⁰ Father Smith walked thousands of miles bearing testimony of these events. His most prominent testimony is printed for the world to read in the front of each copy of the Book of Mormon as one of the eight witnesses. Joseph Smith Sr. boldly affixed his name testifying that he had “seen and hefted” the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. On one occasion he was imprisoned and told he would be released if he would deny the divinity of the Book of Mormon. Not only did he *not* deny it, but he converted two persons during his thirty-day confinement. In 1831, in a church conference, he stood with three of his sons and swore to the divinity of the Book of Mormon by raising his right hand. Throughout his life, Father Smith proved true to his calling to bear witness and testimony of Moroni and the Book of Mormon. At his funeral it was acknowledged that he “was chosen by the Almighty to be one of the witnesses to the book of Mormon (and that) From that time his only aim was the promotion of truth.”³¹ He was also recognized as being a “man faithful to his God and to the church in every situation, and under all circumstances.”³²

²⁸ Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, p. 163, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/171>

²⁹ Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, p. 163, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/171>

³⁰ Joseph Smith History 1:49–50.

³¹ Times and Seasons, Vol.1, p.171.

³² Times and Seasons, Vol.1, p.171.

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The family stood and sang The Spirit of God right after hearing the testimonies of the Joseph Smith Sr. Family. Some attending mentioned angels were heard up behind us adding their voices with our jubilant ones. There was power and energy as a family in the temple as we added our testimonies in song in this sacred space.



Melody Flade brought the spirit with her talent at the piano



Gordon Flade kept us in beat leading the music



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Report by Frances Orton



Craig Ballard, Joseph Smith Sr. Family Board Chairman

Brothers and sisters, cousins, it is a great opportunity for me to be here with you this evening in this most sacred place. I am very grateful to the Orton's for putting together yet another fabulous reunion. Thank you for all your hard work. I know it's not easy and we do appreciate it.

I find myself pretty tender tonight. My father loved this place. He loved the Kirtland Temple. He loved it because of what it represented. He loved it for the mysteries of the kingdom that were revealed here, for the things that were taught to the Prophet and to the saints here in the 1830s. And I think he loved it for the fact that it was this ongoing restoration, that Kirtland was part of this larger unrolling unveiling of the Lord's purpose for his children here on the earth.

Brothers and sisters, cousins, friends, we are uniquely blessed to be part of the first family of the of the restoration. I don't think it is possible to know the Prophet Joseph without first having heard all these things that you listen to about members of Joseph's family that were stalwart and true and were there for the Prophet Joseph whenever he needed them.

Father Smith was the first to acknowledge and testify that what Joseph had seen and heard was true. Lucy Mack, I tell you what, I'm not afraid of a lot of people on the other side, but If I do her wrong, I'm worried about her. She's tough. How remarkable she was to stand and boldly testify of the divine nature of her son's work. All his siblings were there.

This family, the Joseph Smith Senior and Lucy Mack Smith Foundation, Organization, Association, all of whom we represent here today. If you think about it, they needed each other and the Prophet Joseph was the first one to acknowledge that, that he needed them to help him with his divine work and mandate.

My father also loved this place for a lot of different reasons, but I want to remind you of just a few of the things that transpired here. Of course, we know that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery saw the Savior when he accepted this house right after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, right after that song we just sang, and they retired to this pulpit behind us, and they saw the Savior. He declared that He had accepted this house.

This was the beginning of this unrolling of the Restoration and rolling forward of the Restoration. If you recall, the Prophet Joseph talked about the keys, and I've been asked to speak a little about ancestral keys. I think this all ties in here but the keys to the Prophet Joseph were given to him were from Moses representing the gathering of Israel. Elias representing the Gospel of the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or we might call it perfecting the saints. The ordinances and covenants that we need to make to be able to return to our Father in Heaven, and Elijah who came and turned the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers.

I firmly believe that on the other side of the veil, they are praying a lot harder for us than maybe we are praying for them. Because they know what we don't, and they know where we need to be. And nobody wants to be the weak link.

My father taught 47 years, as a general authority, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and finally as the president of the Quorum of the Twelve. He never turned down an opportunity to teach about the restoration of the Gospel, about the divine role of Joseph Smith, and really the divine role of the Smith family.

You are amazing people because you belong to that first family of the Restoration. But he did say that it is very easy for us to sometimes forget where we came from, why we're here and maybe where we're going, the golden rule, right? Or the golden questions that we would ask. But as members of the Smith family, he mentioned in 2011, in this very reunion, he made some remarks.

Could I just see really quickly how many here are under the age of 18? Okay, there's a few of you. Great, great. This is for you specifically, and this is from an apostle and a prophet. He said, "I want you to do all you can "to continue to encourage the youth of the family. "I have great concern about the children, not only in our family but in the church. If we are not careful, we could lose the sense of what our roots are. Who are forefathers, are? What marvelous price, what a tremendous price they were willing to pay in order to bring about the fullness of the gospel on the earth again, and a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the prophet Joseph Smith.

We work hard out here in the West. Now we've got some work going on this is the place heritage park up in Salt Lake City, with the same effort to try to have everybody remember how the valley was in Salt Lake when it was settled. It was settled because our forefathers and particularly the Prophet Joseph had the remarkable experience, which is true, of living in the presence of the Father and the Son and the fullness of the Gospel Jesus Christ was restored to the earth through him. And those forefathers of ours who were pioneers of yesterday who made the effort to build the church from New York to the Salt Lake Valley going through challenges and difficulties that are hard to express. We must never ever lose sight or lose the sense of appreciation and gratitude for those who've laid this great work and have given so much.

Therefore, I am so anxious to see that the young children in the Smith family participate in the individual family organizations and ultimately in the Joseph Smith Senior Lucy Mack Smith Foundation so that they will be taught by their parents and grandparents what it means to be a member of the Smith family and what it means to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We all have a mandate, even young ones who might think I could have thought of something a little more exciting on a Saturday night but coming here to the Kirtland Temple and knowing who you are and what blood flows through your veins is important. I wholeheartedly commend you for being here and wanting to learn more about who you are and why you're here and I encourage you strongly to participate more fully to be part of this family going forward.

There's a lot of gray hair in this place and we need a lot more young blood to help us to perpetuate this going forward. Now one other thing that I would just like to share with you briefly. It goes along the same lines of what my father said, but this is, we have now had the 250th anniversary of our great nation, and really we know that it was only in this nation that we could have had a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ronald Reagan said something that I believe is very true and is apropos with what we're talking about tonight. He said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction." We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on. Even though we're Smiths, and we have the blood of prophets in our veins, it's not handed down for bloodlines. We have to fight for it. We have to do what we need to do to make sure that our testimonies are rock solid and that we stand strong so that we are not called out by Lucy Mack on the other side as being the weak link. That scares me to death.

There's a great quote from the poet G rtter, a German philosopher and poet. He says, "From whence your father's heritage is lent, earn it anew to really possess it." From whence your father's heritage is lent, earn it anew to really possess it. What does that mean? That means we are privileged to know what we know and to be who we are and to be where we are, but we have to earn it anew if we really want to have it, be part of us for eternity. I leave you with my testimony, brothers and sisters, that I know that the Prophet Joseph was and it is a prophet of God, that he restored the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fullness and it continues to roll forward through our Prophet today, President Dallin H. Oaks. I know that

the Book of Mormon is the Word of God and that it was translated as stated by the divine gift and power of God. I leave you with one, my wife and I served as mission leaders and she knows which scripture I'm going to pull up. It was in Kirtland that this scripture came about. And it is Doctrine and Covenants section 50 verse 24. I love this because it teaches an eternal pattern. which is of God is light. And he that receiveth light and continueeth in God, receiveth more light. And that light grows brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

I would ask my missionaries a lot of times, "What is the perfect day?" And they say, "Oh, the second coming." I was like, "That's not going to be a really great day for a lot of people. I mean, it's going to be an awful lot of stuff going on."

"Oh man, let's fast forward here." What is the perfect day? The perfect day is when we are like Him. The perfect day is when we become like Him and that light growth brighter and brighter until that perfect day when we see Him as He is and we know Him and He knows us. That is what was taught here in Kirtland by the Prophet Joseph, and I testify of its truth. We are here line-up-on-line, precept, upon precept, learning about who we are and what we can become. And my admonition to all of us is to stay in the course, keep the faith, and to make our Smith ancestors proud. I leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



Elder Nathan L. Johnson

Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion in Kirtland, Ohio – 2026

Report by Frances Orton



Well, dear friends, it is really a joy for me to be with you this evening, and what an incredible gathering of family! So grateful for the speakers and sharing those testimonies of the Smiths.

Now, my friend Karl Anderson asked if I'd be willing to speak tonight in his stead, and I was honored, but also a little bit worried. When a congregation thinks that they're going to hear from Karl Anderson, and then you send in the second team, the second string is a far cry from the OG, and there's some worry there. And I, as we learn about the significance of Kirtland, as I often tease Karl, there's really no substitute for his eyewitness accounts of the 1830s.

Okay, there it took a little bit, but Karl is a dear friend and a mentor. I've had the privilege of serving with him here in this area in the Kirtland State for over 20 years, and I know that he would have loved to be here with you. He loved your dad (looking at Craig Ballard), and they had such a sweet friendship. Now, Sister Johnson and I have lived here in the Kirtland area for 27 years. I actually grew up just outside of Cleveland, and Camille is from Salt Lake City, and we met while we were both attending Boston College as undergraduates. I grew up here but didn't know anything about the church. Grew up about 30 miles from here and had no idea of the significance of this place, and of what Jesus Christ did here. And somehow, as I went to study Catholic theology in Boston. I happened to meet one of three members of church on that campus and had some amazing experiences there that led me to

join the church. And since then, we've been privileged to raise our five children just a few miles from here, and we have grown to love this place, to love the saints who sacrificed so much to help the Lord build up the church. And we have come to love the prophet Joseph, to love Joseph and Emma and Joseph Senior and Lucy Mack and all of your family. They are our friends. And so, as I thought and prayed about what I might share with you tonight, it's a little different being a friend of the Smiths and not a descendant. But as I thought about being here in this sacred gathering, in this truly sacred space, I was impressed again and again with the Kirtland Temple as a gathering point—a gathering point for the Smiths, a gathering point for the world, and really the first great loom of the restoration.

If you know how a loom operates and think of this place as being the center point for how individual threads of one family's faith were used by the Lord as the beginnings of His weaving the fabric of a worldwide covenant people. Now, this group tonight, you can trace your family threads back and see where they derive directly from Father Smith. But for so many others around the world, including me, we have been woven in later. The welt threads of the of the loom, now also connected in the larger fabric of the Church of Christ, and drawing back similarly with a spiritual inheritance to that fam that same family, and all of that was made possible by what the Lord has done, in particular what He has done here. And so, I'd like to talk a little bit tonight about the significance of this house of God as a connecting point for the Smith family, but also for the entire world. And I do so as someone who feels connected to the Smiths and an inheritor of that legacy in a different way, through a different lineage. Joseph Smith was the first president of our stake, the Kirtland Ohio stake, and when he left with the Saints in 1838, the stake was discontinued.

Then in 1983, as a new stake was being created out of units from the Cleveland, Ohio stake and the Akron Ohio stake, it was not created as a new unit, but as a reinstatement of that stake. Thus, in the history of the stake, there have been seven presidents of the Kirtland Ohio stake, and Joseph Smith is still listed as the first. Zane Lee was called a stake president in 1983.

Tim Hedrick replaced him in 1992, and I served under President Hedrick as one of his elders' quorum presidents as a relatively new member of the church, trying to figure out how this all worked. Then Walter Selden was called in 2001, and I served as his executive secretary for five years of his presidency. And then Michael Haymond was called as the fifth president of the Kirtland Ohio Stake, and I served as his counselor. And then I was honored to be called as the sixth president of the Kirtland Stake, tracing a lineage of service and leadership back to Joseph Smith, whom I love.

And during my years of service here, I felt deeply connected to all of the early saints, and I've been reminded of their continuing interest in and care for what happens in this sacred land surrounding this holy house that they sacrificed to build. And so, it's an honor to be here with you in this place of connections, connections for the Smith family, and for all of the people of God. Now, this was a coming together for the Smiths. All of the Smith family worked on the temple at some point during its construction from 1833 to 1836. Elder Ballard said of Hiram in 1833, when the Lord chastised the church for delaying the start of

the Kirtland Temple, Hiram was the first to start digging its foundations. We recall in section 95 the Lord's rebuke of the saints that they had received the commandment, but they hadn't started. And now, when we fast forward to 1836 and the alignment of time that the Lord knew was necessary, that there was going to be an Easter Sunday that happened to be on Passover. The Lord knew this was coming. The Lord knew that Elijah needed to come, and the saints were risking his timing, and so he rebuked them. He called them his friends. But when the Lord says, "Thus saith the Lord unto you, whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten, that their sins may be forgiven. You know what's coming is pretty serious. A few days later, the building committee met. Hyrum Smith was its chairman, and on June 6, 1833, after the meeting, Hiram went to his parents' house, which was just beyond just three lots over from here, and found a tool. And was when his mother asked him where he was going in such a hurry, he replied, "We are preparing to build a house for the Lord, and I am determined to be the first at the work. Joseph, while being president of the church and managing so many affairs, worked right alongside the brethren. Heber C. Kimball recalled working with Joseph Smith, cutting stone down at the Standard Quarry. He did not put his hands in his pockets, but he put on his work clothes and went into the quarry. And during those years of construction, Lucy Mack recalled, there was but one mainspring to all of our thoughts, and that was building the Lord's house. And when the house was completed, the Smiths were among those who experienced the resulting spiritual outpouring. That season has been described as a modern-day Pentecost. Joseph Smith recorded, "It was a Pentecost and an endowment indeed, long to be remembered, for the sound shall go forth from this place into all the world, and the occurrences of this day shall be handed down upon the pages of sacred history to all generations, as the day of Pentecost. So shall this day be numbered and celebrated as a year of jubilee, and time of rejoicing of the saints of the Most High God. Eliza R. Snow described a meeting in which Joseph Senior prayed for a Pentecost. She said, "On fast days, Father Smith's constant practice was to repair to the temple very early, and offer his prayers before sunrise, and there await the coming of the people. And so strictly disciplined himself in the observance of fasting as not even to wet his lips with water until after the dismissal of the meeting at 4 p.m. morning when he opened meeting, he prayed fervently that the spirit of the Most High might be poured out as it was at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, that it might come like a mighty rushing wind.

It was not long before it did come to the astonishment of all and filled the house. It appeared as though the old gentleman had forgotten what he had prayed for when it came, he was greatly surprised, and exclaimed, "What is the house on fire? In January 1836, further bringing together the whole Smith family in a meeting with Joseph Jr. and Joseph Senior and other church leaders, including the first presidency, the presidents of the church in Missouri, the bishoprics of Missouri and Ohio, Joseph introduced the ordinance of anointing with oil. This was on the third floor in that western room. In that meeting, Joseph recorded, "The heavens were opened upon us, and." I beheld the celestial kingdom of God and the glory thereof, whether in the body or Adah cannot tell. I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire. Also, the blazing throne of God whereon was seated the Father and the Son. I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being

paved with gold. I saw Father Abraham and Adam, and my father and my mother and my brother Alvin, who had long since slept, and marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set His hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins. And then the Lord turned this very personal family experience into a learning for the whole world. Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying, "All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God. And all who shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom. And the joy and the excitement that must have occurred-it was said that there was so much excitement that they sent a runner down all of those stairs to go to the Smith home to fetch Lucy Mack, to fetch Mother Smith to tell her about this vision and what they had learned about their brother. And in the events of the dedication and the acceptance of the house, we see what was truly unique about this building. Ordinances were performed here. Yes, the beginnings of what might be considered the washings and anointing ordinances of the temple were performed here, but this temple was not to be an endowment house, nor a place for proxy ordinances that hadn't been revealed yet. There was no font, no celestial room, no holy of holies. This was a different kind of house. And to understand it, we need to look back and understand the Old Testament. The tabernacle in the wilderness was built as a house for the Ark of the covenant, David similarly built a tent as a resting place for the ark, and Solomon's temple was specifically built as a permanent house for the ark. In First Kings chapter eight, we read of bringing the ark into Solomon's temple as part of that dedication, and the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place. And it came to pass when the priests were come out of the holy place that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. Then spake Solomon, I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in forever. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, which He made with our fathers when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. Now that temple was a house for the ark of the Covenant of the Lord, that sacred vessel that was the physical symbol of God's love and His of His covenant, and we know now that what that was all pointing to. Jesus Christ is God's great communication of His love for us.

Remember that God loves the world, so if we ask, well, how much, how much does He love us? John three, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. And we remember that the worth of souls is great to God. And if we ask, well, how great, how great is great? Section 18. For behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him on conditions of repentance. The physical manifestation of God's love and covenant with ancient Israel was the Ark, and in our day, that physical manifestation is in the person of His beloved Son. And so, the Kirtland Temple, like Solomon's of old, was built as a place for the symbol of God's love to come in and dwell. This was built as a place for the Savior to come. That's why

Sidney Rigdon used as his text during the dedication the Savior's words: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head, declaring that now the Lord has. As a house, and thus Joseph prayed. And in the dedication, we ask thee, O Lord, to accept of this house the workmanship of the hands of us, thy servants, which thou didst command us to build, that thy glory may rest down upon thy people and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that Thy holy presence may be continually in this house, and that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord's house may feel Thy power and feel constrained to acknowledge that Thou hast sanctified it, and that it is Thy house, a place of Thy holiness, and just as the ark was brought into Solomon's temple, the Savior did come, and the purposes of this house were fulfilled. A week after the dedication, on April 3, 1836. Joseph and Oliver recorded, the veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were open. We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit before us. His eyes were as a flame of fire, the hair of his head was white like the pure snow. His countenance shone above the brightness of the sun, and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters. Even the voice of Jehovah saying, "I am the first and the last. I am He who liveth. I am He who was slain. I am your advocate with the Father, let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice. And I might say, let the hearts of the Smith family rejoice, who have with their might built this house to my name. For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here, and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. The Savior went on and declared, "And the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands. And this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people. Now, there's a perspective of these blessings that I'm sure the saints had, a fulfillment of the promises that they had been given, to be endowed with power from on high. There's a perspective of those of you who are inheritors of that legacy, who rejoice in seeing the rich tapestry the Lord is weaving and tracing back the threads of your testimony to the Smith family and their witnesses that we heard tonight. There's another perspective for those of us who, like in Jacob Five, have been grafted in, whose threads trace back differently, but who have been woven into this rich tapestry of the gospel of Jesus Christ, brought together by this loom that is powered by those priesthood keys that were restored here. I'm grateful, Brother Ballard, that you talked about those keys. I love what was done here.

First, Moses appeared, and as they recorded, committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the 10 tribes from the land of the north, and we typically connect these keys to missionary work, which is right. These are keys held by mission leaders to oversee the work of full-time missionaries. Some Smith descendants who have served as full-time missionaries here in this area, and like my daughter, our fourth missionary, who's serving right now, and for me, these are the keys of adoption and belonging. What Moses came and restored was the authority that allows those like me, without lineage in the church or family history that traces back to our founders, to be brought in. And as the Lord described in section 84, and the sons of Moses and Aaron shall be filled with the glory of the Lord upon Mount Zion in the Lord's house, whose sons are ye, and also many whom I have called and sent forth to build up my church. The great message of Moses coming to this house to restore those keys is that the Lord can

call who He will and adopt them into His covenant people and into the house of Israel, and this is meaningful to me. I have three adopted siblings and three nephews and nieces who needed to be adopted by another family, and I've seen non-traditional family arrangements, and then I have my church family. When I joined, I was the only member in my family, and yet I have found fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters who have welcomed me. Dear Karl is one of my gospel dads, and from whom I learned about being a servant and a disciple of Jesus Christ. And as you welcome other converts of the church, you are fulfilling this great purpose of exercising those keys of adoption and belonging, expanding your family to embrace those who are woven in. After this, Elias appeared and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed, all generations after us should be blessed. And these are the keys that we traditionally attribute to the building up of the saints or the administrating of the church, the keys that stake presidents and bishops hold, and the great message of Elias coming to the house goes back even further than Moses to the time of Abraham, and the covenant the Lord made with him. The Lord promised Abraham not only that he would have seed, but that through his descendants all the earth would be blessed. From Abraham too, and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even life eternal. The Smiths were part of that fulfillment, and we get to be part of the fulfillment of that promise, as we are woven into the gospel to be covenant followers of Jesus Christ, we become the seed of Abraham, and our independent threads are connected to him, and the tapestry of God's promises becomes even more rich and beautiful. And after this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and he was there to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. And this weekend is a direct fulfillment of that promise in many ways. Joseph had his heart turned to the children, turned to you, as he offered the dedicatory prayer of this house. Do you know that he prayed for you? Did you notice that in section 109? O Lord, remember Thy servant Joseph Smith Jr. Have mercy, O Lord, upon his wife and his children, that they may be exalted in Thy presence and preserved by Thy fostering hand, have mercy upon all their immediate connections. Remember, O Lord, the presidents, even all the presidents of Thy church, that Thy right hand may exalt them with all their families and their immediate connections, that their names may be perpetuated and had in everlasting remembrance from generation to generation. You were prayed for at that sacred event, and here you are remembering their names and having your hearts turned to them. For me, these keys are what makes the Kirtland Temple so incredible.

In weaving this tapestry of the gospel, we typically think of a loom working forward, that the warp threads running vertically are set in place. The Lord did that in revealing those eternal truths that He had already put in place: His plan of salvation, the nature of God the Father and Jesus Christ, priesthood authority, covenants, and priesthood keys. And then He weaves in the weft threads, individual faithful lines, people of and families of faith like the Smiths, like father and mother Smith and their children, we think of this moving forward as other families are brought in and woven together. But what the keys of Elijah show us, and where the analogy breaks down a little bit, is that the tapestry is not just being woven in one direction. For me, coming into the gospel certainly meant that my little family and my

Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion in Kirtland, Ohio – 2026

Report by Frances Orton

children would have a vastly different spiritual reality than they could have without it, and I am so grateful for that. But it also means that my parents will have a vastly different spiritual reality as they joined the church a number of years after I did, and now my grandparents and great grandparents will now have a vastly different spiritual reality in the eternities. We performed work for them by virtue of those keys that were restored here, and the tapestry starts working backwards. As parents, our hearts are turned to our children, and as children, our hearts are turned to our fathers. My dear friends, this sacred house is significant because of the way it brought the Smith family together, but also the way that it draws together all committed followers of Jesus Christ, you are inheritors of the testimonies that we heard tonight. Testimonies of the Book of Mormon, yes, but more importantly, witnesses of Jesus Christ. Those who saw and communed with Him, and I stand and bear my witness that He lives. That this is. His house. He was here. I testify the divine call of the prophet Joseph. I love him, and I bear witness that Jesus Christ continues to do His work in each of your lives, I pray that you will remember the Spirit that has been here with us tonight, and that you will go forth and teach your children and testify of the experiences you have had, just as your ancestors did, of the truthfulness of this work, of the reality of our Savior, that He is the Redeemer of the world, and I testify of Him and bear that witness and express my love to you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.



Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion in Kirtland, Ohio – 2026
Report by Frances Orton



Gordon Flade sang the last musical number, I Know That My Redeemer Lives

The closing prayer was given by Smith Family member serving in the Kirtland area, Elder Pella.

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