

Pulse of the Congregation



Newsletter of the Restored Church of Christ, Salem Branch



September, 2011

Important Dates:

- September 10: Youth Service Activity
- September 11: Baptism
- September 16: Youth Dinner and movie
- September 18: Confirmation Service
- September 18: LRS meeting
- September 22: LRS craft night
- September 25: Branch Business Meeting
- September 30-October 2: Regional Fall Conference
- October 11: Youth Pizza and Care Packages
- October 14-16: Priesthood Retreat
- October 21: Union Gospel Mission Banquet
- October 23: LRS meeting
- October 27: LRS craft night

Men's Retreat

by Brother Gary Livingston

Our Northwest Regional Men's Retreat was held at Pacific City during the weekend of July 10-12. Our theme was "Hope For A Better World" (Ether 5:4) and there were thirteen men in attendance. April Jones, Cristina Arndt, and Jan Esquivel were our cooks and provided wonderful meals for us. The Spirit of the Lord blessed us throughout the weekend through our worships, classes, and general fellowship. ...concluded on p. 3

He is With Us

by Brother Brian Herren

It would be difficult, in so short a space, to rightly deliver in text the items of our common experience, as seventeen of the Saints traveled to Kirtland and Palmyra, July 14-21, 2011. It seems unlikely that any of us could share all of the blessings that we received, and completely

record our testimony in this place. We might, by careful consideration and unsheltered witness, share a portion of the goodness and favor that our Lord has shown us. By way of His provision, we were able to enjoy a few remarkable experiences on this trip, and to receive at

His hand those blessings dependent upon His righteous apportionment. We were able to worship in the Kirtland Temple. I don't mean to suggest that we took a tour of the temple and counted it for the final blessing, though we did tour the temple, and even received a second, more special tour after hours. While I take nothing from this rich reward, my mind seems disposed to rejoice in a separate and more solemn occupation, when we were given a little over two hours, just this humble band, to

worship in the Kirtland Temple from seven to nine on one of the evenings. There were blessings realized during this time, and I know that those testimonies will come forth in time through those that the Lord has brought so to do. We also redeemed our time gratefully in

worship at Hill Cumorah, convenient to Palmyra, NY. A sunrise service at the top of the Hill Cumorah invited us to sing and to pray as a new day began. Sister Cessaries played the ocarina and our souls found rest. Sunrise and sunset services were also held in the Sacred Grove, where our Heavenly

Father keeps His peace to this day. To understand the intent of our travel requires one to relinquish those thoughts often exercised in vacation, and replace them with the notions which more properly negotiate the worship of the Saints. When we travel, we move to worship the Lord. We print hymnals to carry in our vest pockets and regularly enjoy prayer services and the sharing of testimonies along the way. I'd like to share, in a few words here, about our time in the Sacred Grove. ...continued on pg. 3



Fireside Chat

by Brother Kevin Herren



Brother John Larson

In April we were blessed to have the added ministry in this portion of the vineyard of Elder John Larson. During his visit he was able to do many things amongst the congregation including leading a song service, visiting the Oregon coast, coming to a prayer and testimony service in which several have testimonies of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and even deliver the Sunday morning message on sacrament Sunday. I was blessed to get to be part of a fire side chat on the Tuesday of his visit. The chat was a youth activity that was well attended. Kaitlin and Kirstin Conway and their friend Micah, Melissa Clark, Michael Livingston and Robert Ellison attended as well as a few young at heart. Sitting in front of the crackling fire, John brought a message of the love of our God. In true teacher fashion, there were question in which we were able to answer only when we had Mari belle the cat. Holding Mari belle gave us the opportunity to share with the group without being interrupted and with focus. We were able to hear what others thought, and how others felt within themselves. Topics were raised such as peer pressure, and popularity in school and among friends and family. With school being a time of such tremendous pressure ...concluded on page 2

A letter to the Salem Congregation

From Sister Jamie Leach



Sister Jamie Leach

I've been gone from home for just over six years and since then I've done a lot of thinking. Starting with Basic Training & Tech School, I've thought a lot about a very close group of friends I made in Stayton who helped me and my siblings through a rough time in our lives and they helped me straighten a path that was curving out of control and gave me the drive to join the Air Force. We made a lot of crazy choices, but we took care of each other. While I was stationed at my first duty location, Dover AFB, DE, I really gave a lot of thought to how I was raised by my family. I realized how lucky I am, to have been influenced by each of my family members. They always gave me love and support. I was raised closer emotionally to my extended family than some are raised with their immediate family. I started feeling very alone. I found my own close group of friends similar to what I had and created a family at work that I would give anything to. But when I PCS'd to Travis AFB, CA, I realized how fleeting all those connections were. I stayed in contact with everyone but the memories stayed the longest. Since I've been at Travis for the last four years, I've been thinking about another part of my family, the church. I was very lucky to be raised in a church with the dynamics that ours has. I'm not sure that most people in other churches can say that they remember their congregation since they were a child, being mentored and encouraged, feeling like there was no barrier between any member talking to someone in the priesthood, feeling comfortable enough to feel like it's your church, and that it's not about the image of being a Christian, but the heart. I'm so thankful to all of you in the congregation for your love and support throughout my life; for the genuine care and concern of my wellbeing since I've been in the military and for your prayers along the way. Thank you for taking such good care of my family. I feel blessed to have you all in my life and those blessing are reverberated every time you remind me of my place in the congregation. I love you with all of my heart. - Jamie

Women's Retreat

By Sister Cessaries Galusha

The regional Women's Retreat was held at Menucha again this year on May 13-15th. There were 28 who attended, including Gary Jones, Brian Herren, and Mitch Arndt, who brought ministry. Our numbers have increased from last year and hopefully they will continue to increase! Throughout the weekend the women shared and drew closer together, and worshiped the Creator in services of song and prayer and partaking of the sacrament. Each branch put together a thirty-minute worship for different times throughout the weekend. These included ...concluded on page 3

Fireside Chat

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...and judgment, it is easy to lose our sense of self-worth and forget how increasable we are. "What is a person worth?" "How do you decide if you are going to be friends with someone?" These are a few of the questions asked by John. As I sat there and observed, I could see that many of the kids, had never thought about these deep and often perplexing questions to adults, yet I heard profound utterances from the mouths of the young. I heard the message that it doesn't matter what the world does, only that we should do what is right before God. I heard that though our peers at school (or work) may think it to be quite odd, that we should love even those who are outcasts. I heard that God views me as someone that He loves beyond all measure man has invented, so much in fact that he would send down His only Son, who was loved above all else, and allow him to teach me and be sacrificed for me. What beautiful words spoken by beautiful minds, the minds of the innocent, the tender, the true.

The message of the evening was that of value. We are unable to place value on anything if we have no point of reference. Michael learned that as John attempted to buy his prized guitar for currency used in Africa, which turned out to be roughly 65 cents U.S. John used that to demonstrate that we cannot put a value of people since we did not create them and have no point of reference. It is our job to be friends to all and allow God, the creator of all, to judge us when the time comes. On the transverse, do not allow others to let us feel as though we are worth any less than anyone else no matter the circumstance. We are great in the eyes of God. We are of great value to the ruler of Heaven and Earth. Tremendous is the worth of every soul to our Father and unsearchable is the joy we will find in His kingdom.

Thank you to Brother Larson for your ministry and thank you to the youth for the lessons you have taught this adult to forget the complications of adulthood and remember the simplicity of the gospel. -"O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the Earth! Who has set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightiest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

-Psalms 8.

He is With Us

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Tuesday evening we had free time, which found several smaller groups of Saints in solemn meditation, having disbanded and walking the many trails independently. Having derived itself of at least 100 acres originally, the Grove is extensive, necessitating and multiplying many winding trails. The earth began to separate us from the daylight, the sun kept his place, and the Grove darkened. Some of us had flashlights. The separate groups wandered about in the Grove, and did so quietly and prayerfully. Several groups converged as if by specific appointment, though none were privy to such an arrangement. They seemed to come together in a particular place, a place of very old timber. This portion of the Grove, some later discovered, is home to the "Witness Trees", so called because these trees were alive at the time that Joseph Smith had his vision in that Grove. With some singularity of purpose, I mean to suggest these groups of Saints were brought together by the Lord that evening. Since we had crossed paths in a rather extraordinary and unexpected way, we knelt together in prayer, each making the offering of his or her heart plain before the Lord, and all those who might stand as witness in this sacred place. Having enjoyed the unrestrained pleasures of an exercised heart, each retired peacefully to his own.

The next evening was to be our final service in the Grove. We gathered a little bit later than we had anticipated, and I suppose some worried for the hour. Men's plans are the fickle imitations of their best desires, but so often we find the presence of the Lord in the frustration of our own disposition and the surrender of our finest processes. By the time of our arrival, the sun made clear his intent and the skies took to canvas the strokes of One unparalleled in creative majesty. The sun set softly and the Grove stretched out before us. As we walked the one-quarter mile to the Grove, we sang hymns together, we praised, and then before we entered, we stopped and approached God in prayer. We asked that God would accept our offering, and that He would be with us.

There are moments in one's life that resist even the most calculated recitation for the realization of items beyond man's common experience. Should I search the fullness of our language, yet I would be desperate and ill-equipped in my description of what we both saw and heard that evening. As we entered into the Grove we began to sing hymns of old, and we walked with peculiar solemnity. There was no distraction to our senses or individual pursuits to deter us, but the Saints had come to worship, just as so many have before us. As we walked in the path, side by side, and we sang hymns to the Lord, the Holy Spirit rested upon me in the most pleasing ways. I felt comforted, and I felt as though my friends, from whom I had been separated by the veils of time, were again with me. I felt that they were near me. I felt like our fathers, and our loved ones, and the Saints of generations past, were gathering and were close to us. I began to truly appreciate this presence on either side of us.

Later, others who had been near me bore their unsolicited testimony of our companions. As we pressed into the Grove, I heard singing nearby, as though another congregation had entertained a similar design. It was most certainly not our singing, but the voices did not seem so superior to ours as to dispel the thought that it might be another group of Saints. Only, there were no other groups in the Grove that evening.

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Men's Retreat

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The men bow in prayer

On Friday evening we had a short worship followed by prayers for the weekend. The men

from Salem

led our Saturday morning's worship service. Classes throughout the day were taught by Jeff Rew, Chris Humphrey, and Mike Terry. All three classes were excellent and there was great participation during each class. Saturday ended with Gary Jones leading us in evening chats. Sunday began with the Vancouver men providing a Sunday morning worship service and concluding with a Sacrament Service with brother Gary Jones in charge assisted by Mitch Arndt. The Lord continues to bless the men in our region and we are thankful we have these opportunities to grow closer to our Lord and to strengthen our bonds of fellowship.

Women's Retreat

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scriptures, hymns, testimonies, stories and ministry of music. Friday evening Barb Linthicum and Susan Ames engaged us in a fun mixer where we filled in the missing word for each scripture on a set of cards. Jan Esquivel directed the evening campfire and she led us in songs of praise, followed by small group prayers. On Saturday we partook of the Lord's Supper, worshiped Him in prayer and testimony, and the Spirit blessed us. The season drew long, but we were not constrained by time. Jan Esquivel then taught an abbreviated class before lunch. The afternoon was filled with a variety of activities including a craft, testimony sharing, book sharing, walks, a movie on the star of Bethlehem, a presentation on the Feasts of the Lord by Lois Anderson and more. Brian Herren taught a really wonderful class on Light, and how we are to shine brightly through all the storms of trial that come upon us. He used vivid imagery of lighthouses being consumed by the waves of the sea, but we must not give up. This was complimented by Dianna Clark's craft project following, which included lights. Songs of praise, and a campfire blessed by ministries of music and poetry made us to rejoice in the goodness of God. Sunday came all too quickly, and our service of sharing, testimonies and prayers ended our fellowship together. We all look forward to another retreat next year and continued growth in serving our God!

He is With Us

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I was so blessed. I was overcome. We continued and I had altogether lost my awareness of our travel as it were for the impulses which beset my mind in the pleasing graces of our Lord, when it became clear to my mind that I had not made plain a place of previous appointment for our meeting. I looked about so as to begin a more serious consideration of a suitable location for our worship, when I realized some familiarity in our locale. I had just walked down this path until I felt led to stop. We stopped, just where those Saints had met the night before, in that sacred place, where the Witness Trees were. As I recall, we gathered in a circle, and we offered up a prayer unto the Lord. The sounds of nature were voluminous and diverse around us, not so as to disturb us, but none could deny the insects, and the wind, and the leaves their place. The sounds were not distracting to our worship. They are beautiful in their own right, nevertheless, it was quite noisy in the forest, and I seemed disposed to believe that his own witness to his joy in the I felt that even the Grove had re-thanksgiving for what we brought the opening prayer for the service, the calm of the evening, and I re-would consecrate this hour so that and in "silence". As soon as I said too emphatic here, that Grove was bugs became a little bit less noisy bit. It was not left to the inexperienced there was a little bit less noise or a was as if the whole of all of creation was amazed. My brother later prayer and lifted his head to see about such an alteration in our environment. I could hardly continue with my prayer for my alarm and the strange awesomeness whereby God seemed at once to honor His children with so great a response. We continued in prayer and testimony, some standing who had scarcely done so before, and some professing as though the Spirit had captured them without any intent to relinquish His grasp. I became aware personally of something moving at our periphery, causing me to glance quickly toward the woods in my zealously and my eagerness to determine the nature of the movements. I could never fix my eyes adequately so as to discover the forms responsible, but saw many fluttering manifestations. I thought that perhaps I would turn and see a heavenly body, but I did not, though I knew there was something moving in the periphery around us. One later bore her testimony that something walked up and stood behind her. I removed my glasses because I thought that perhaps that the edges of my glasses were creating some type of infraction to the residual light, causing the most unusual visions. Just as sure as I removed them, there remained the movement of these forms and these bodies. I tried to draw near to my wife, Melissa, that I might share with her what I was seeing. I hoped to share my excitement, but there was so much happening by then. God had taken His place and we were truly led by His Spirit. There were so many things that were come upon us that I could not share with her in the moment all that was happening. I tried to take everything in. My brother Kevin stood and bore his testimony with some power in the Holy Spirit, and I felt led to stand and confirm those words and I shared others. Our brother Steve, who had had an affliction of his hand, stood up and testified right then that it was gone, that a large growth had been completely healed at once. ...concluded on page 5



Sacred Grove

each portion of creation bore Creator. ceived us with some joy and in our rejoicing. As I offered I prayed with thanksgiving for member praying that God it might be reserved in "peace" the word "silence", I cannot be *silent*. I don't mean that the or that the wind slowed a little ended ear to suppose whether little bit more. It was silent. It tion had retired her cause. I shared that he stopped his what had happened to bring



The ladies model their crafts at the Women's Fellowship Weekend

Women's Fellowship Weekend

by Sister Melissa Herren

On the weekend of April 8-10, nine women enjoyed a get-a-way to Sisters, Oregon. The destination could not have been named more aptly, as during the weekend we grew closer in our fellowship and bonds and came closer as sisters in Christ. Shortly after arriving, we explored the grounds and found a recreation hall that held a number of items, including a ping pong table. A competitive and rousing game of ping pong was played, with several of the women facing off. Ping pong balls were flying, quick moves were abounding, and a great time was had by player and spectator alike. After a delicious dinner, we all gathered together and were treated to a fashion show. Sisters Traci and Cessaries were the models and Sister Sue was the commentator. Aprons of various styles and colors were modeled along with some accessories... ...concluded on page 11

He is With Us

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I could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, and I could feel the fervor of the Saints. I could sense my brother, who was just swelling, and I felt him stand behind me. I could see his excitement, and I could hear the zeal in his voice as he spoke in the Holy Spirit. Let me here note that the Saints were alive. As we worshiped, we did so in the Lord. I am not sure how long we were there. Who could care for the time when we were so far removed from its touch? Perhaps a couple of hours passed, maybe more or maybe less. The Spirit brought everything out from us, and so we stood and we just sang. We praised. We glorified our Heavenly Father. At last, we exited.

I had not spoken anything to my brothers and sisters yet pertaining to those things which I both saw and heard, but as I was walking up the path, Brother Jim approached me and excitedly asked, “did you hear that singing tonight?!” Jim and I were separated in the way, leaving the conclusion of our discussion for a later time, but I was reassured by his independent witness. Sometimes something happens to us singularly and it’s so wonderful to have a confirmation of those things which you both saw and heard. I found Brother Kevin and Sister Trina and they were so excited, having remained in the Spirit.

Kevin then asked me, “did you hear singing tonight?!...there were others singing in the Grove!” He said, “did you notice in your prayer that as soon as you said ‘silent’ that the whole Grove was silent?!...and did you hear your words echo throughout the whole course of the entire Grove?” Sister Trina then turned to me and asked, “did you see, as we were walking down the path, the people that were walking with us, moving, advancing with us along the path?”

I cannot tell you the joy that I had in my heart. For all of our preaching and teaching, for all of our study and worship, could not instill in me that testimony, which we received by the hands of our Heavenly Father. We prepared before we left. We studied and prayed. We met together every Sunday evening. We fasted every Sunday for seven weeks, and broke bread together, and I bear my record that God was pleased, that He blessed us, and that those things which we saw and heard can never be removed from our bosoms. I bear record of these things today that our God might be honored and glorified, and that we might remember that He is with us today, just as He was with our fathers. Praise Him.

YAG Retreat 2011



Brother Brian



Brother Andrew



Brothers Brian, Jim, and Mike



YAG singing



Brother Jim and Sister Brittney



Brother Brian



Sister Cassaries



Brother Aaron



Sister Brittney

The Young Adult Retreat was held on a houseboat this year on Lake Billy Chinook, August 25-28. Brothers Mike Terry and Jim Clark provided the guest ministry for eight young adults. We began each day with hymns and prayer at 6:30 am, and concluded our activities with a worship service at 8:00 pm. In between, we had classes taught by Brothers Jim and Mike, swimming, singing, boating, hiking, eating, laughing, discussing the scriptures, studying, and fellowship. We saw a bald eagle, a forest fire, and the Spirit of God touch the lives of men. We heard beautiful song from the Saints, preaching, teaching, deep prayers, and comforting words from our friends. The theme of the retreat was taken from Deuteronomy 23:14: “The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp”. Brother Aquila Galusha designed the t-shirts, and did an outstanding work for our blessing. On Sunday morning, Brothers Mike, Jim, and Brian preached before we parted.

Goodbye

by Sister Trina Herren



Some of the Saints say farewell...for now

Our dear friends, Gene and Kathy Luffman, recently left us and moved to Texas to be with family, where they were received by their daughter Karen and 7

grandchildren. They will be deeply missed but not forgotten. Never fear, the “Geneisms” will live on through Kevin, you have taught him well. Gene’s infinite wisdom about anything pertaining to nature, or just about anything has impressed many and can never be replaced. The Sunday before their departure, a group of saints surprised them, at the home they have known for the last 35 years, to say goodbye for now but not forever. Hymns were selected by some of the saints and a few offered prayers for safe travels with a thankful heart for the time we were able to spend with these two wonderful people. Gene has shared some amazing testimonies over the years and a few have touched my very soul. Gene has been blessed with remembering his own birth, knowing how he will die, meeting some of our fore fathers, and many others. When I first joined the church, my fears and anxiety were overwhelming and freighting at times, but Gene was always willing to offer a smile or a kind word. Without knowing what was going on inside me, he was always able to make me feel right at home and welcome regardless of my indifference. Our beloved brother and sister, we wish you the best and will continue to pray for you and yours. You both will be in our hearts and may God use your wisdom and willingness of heart to further his will in other parts of this vineyard.

Brother and Sister Luffman’s new address is:

Brother Gene’s cell phone number is:

A Letter to the Saints in Salem

From Brother Gene Luffman

Just wanted to send to the saints in Salem a Big “Hi Ya’all!” from Texas. We moved into our new house on May 31. We were able to get into a nice house and purchase an additional lot in the back of us as well. The house is mostly brick on the outside. It has hardwood floors throughout. It’s about 2100 square foot, with 3 bedrooms and 2 baths. I want to try growing a garden, but I am a little late this year. As gardens get planted here about the first of March, and I need to get all of the Mesquite roots out of the soil. May be I can grow something or another. We have had about two weeks of temperatures in the range between 100 and 107 degrees and gave witnessed two good old Texas thunderstorms. When the thunderstorms come in; there is a constant flashing of lightening across the sky. There is a lake here in Iowa Park, and there are several other lakes nearby. I have only been able to go fishing a couple of times, as we have been busy setting up the house and spending time with the grandkids (11 of them!). We live about 15 minutes from Shepherd Air-force Base. This is where a lot of Air-force personnel receive medical training and technical skill. This is also the place that most NATO forces’ pilots learn how to fly fighter jets. About half our neighbors are in the Marines or in the Air-force. Fort Sill is about an hour north of us. We have a small group of Saints that meet every Sunday for worship. We have people come over the Red River in Oklahoma that meet with us as well. I was privileged to speak at last communion Sunday and serve communion as well to the Saints here. There are only two priesthood in the area that I know of and I am one of them. The other priesthood member is Kyle Wells and he is a Priest. The nearest branches (as I have been told) are either in Oklahoma City or in Dallas. Apparently, there is a lot of Saints that have been neglected outright by the COC or they just fell by the wayside as a result of all the commotion in the Center Place. So it looks as though I have my work cut out for me. If anyone is traveling through north Texas, we’re about 15 minutes west of I-44 and Wichita Falls, and a little over an hour from Amarillo. Please drop in and say Hi. We have plenty of room and even have an outside 220 outlet for a motor home, and plenty of room in the driveway. So ya’all come on down, ya hear? Love to hear from you. If you know of any Air-force people being stationed at Shepherd Air-force Base, or soldiers in the Army stationed at Fort Sill, in Lawton, OK, let me know and I will try to make contact with them. Love and miss Ya’all!!! Gene.....

Young Adult Group Garden

by Sister Trina Herren

Year number 2 of the YAG garden was once again a success. We lost a few faces to school this year but everyone pitched in to make this year as or more profitable than the last. The weather was challenging to find the optimal time to plant in order to obtain the best harvest possible, but the Lord provided (as always). A week arouse with exactly what we needed, not too much sun, not too much rain. As we gathered together to start the planting, a prayer was asked over us and the work to be done, then off to work we went. Some gathered seeds and plants from the store while others shoveled fresh dirt into an old wheel barrow with a gimpy wheel. ... **concluded on page 7**



Young Adult Group Garden

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The dirt was spread through the garden evenly before planning out where everything would find its home. Zucchini was a must along with carrots, beans, tomatoes, jalapenos, and of course pumpkins. New additions found a home in the garden as well. Snap peas did very well this year and the corn is almost ripe. Never would I have expected for the garden to yield so many little hot things as well as an entire Wal-Mart bag full of beans. The tomatoes took off with a bang and within days were falling over from the weight in which the stems were supporting. With such a blessing from the Lord, this allowed bread to be made from the zucchini and baskets filled with fresh veggies to be handed out. No one can say the Lord is not blessing his children with all that have been given to us in such a small simple way as this garden. It has provided not only food to eat, but labors of our hands and allowed the saint to gather together again and draw closer to one another. I speak for the YAG when I say thank you to all those who have allowed us to serve in such a small way as this. We hope the years to come will bring more wonderful harvests and a deeper love for one another and most of all a deeper love and thanksgiving to our King.

NW Regional Youth Camp

by Brother Gary Livingston



This year's Regional Youth Camp was held at Sky Camp located outside of Eugene, Oregon. We had a total of twenty-one campers. Our theme was "Rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God" which is found in Romans 5:1-5.

Classes were held each morning and were taught by Elders Mike Terry and Gary Livingston. Mike taught classes on Faith & Hope, Trust & Obey, and Love & Forgiveness. Gary taught classes on The Hope & Glory found in Tribulation, and The Comforter / Holy Spirit and the Refiner's Fire.

Prayer and Testimony services were also held each morning with wonderful participation from our campers. Fun activities took place in the afternoons while each day ended with a campfire which concluded with more prayers and testimonies.

The Spirit was certainly among us in our classes, worships, activities, campfires, and general fellowship. For several of our campers, this was the first time they had ever attended a church camp. It was a marvelous experience to feel the tremendous outpouring of God's love throughout this camp and to see His spirit work among our youth. The Lord truly did bless us in many ways.

May we continue to support our wonderful youth of our region as the Lord continues to work within their lives as they strive to come closer to Him.

For thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from my youth.

- Psalm 71:5

YAG Skydiving

by Brother Aaron Dukes

I learned something about myself recently. I learned that I am a control freak. The lesson came about when I realized that what I fear most about new and frightening activities is often the act of relinquishing control.

To put context into this realization, let's back up to the skydiving trip the Church's Young Adult Group recently went on. This trip had been planned for some time, yet for everyone the reality had just hit. We were about to jump out of a plane.

The fear of heights is an extremely rudimentary part of the human mind. Our lives would be considerably shorter if ledges and sidewalks held equal appeal as walking surfaces. So it is natural that there was a certain nervous excitement in the air as we walked to the front counter of the sign in building. We were given thick piles of paper explaining that we were no longer legally considered human beings and hinting that our life insurance providers were perhaps ill advised (this is an exaggeration, but seemed remarkably accurate at the time we were reading and signing our lives away).

Despite the butterfly nest which my stomach had developed, I finished the unsettlingly thorough waiver and prepared for training. The group filed into the back of the building, through a large room where parachutes were being packed and into a small classroom. After we had been instructed in what NOT to touch, and how to properly hold your body while traveling 122mph straight down, we filed back out the way we had come and went outside to await our plane. The short prayer we had while waiting seemed especially urgent for some reason.

While outside, we saw our first skydivers coming down. Watching those tiny specks blossom into brightly colored parachutes and glide effortlessly down to the ground had an amazing calming effect on all of us. Even Kevin, who is apparently afraid of heights, lost his apprehension. We were all ready.

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Congratulations Sister Nancy

by Brother Brian Herren



Congratulations to our Sister Nancy Curtis who won two blue ribbon "First Awards" at the Oregon State Fair. She was recognized for a quilt and a wall hanging, both of which are absolutely stunning. The wall hanging honors Brother Bill Curtis and his shipmates for their service in the Navy, and the quilt is replete with intricate detail and decoration.

YAG Skydiving

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Once we were called back in and suited up in our harnesses and equipment, it was out into a side field to wait for the plane. As it descended, my heart was already soaring up into the heavens. Our instructors packed us into the cargo compartment like sardines on to parallel benches facing rearwards, and off we went. As the ground dropped out from under us, my excitement grew. The fear hit at 3,000 feet. Looking down, the ground seemed amazingly far away, yet still far too close for my comfort. I couldn't imagine jumping out of this comfortably solid machine, but I could all too easily imagine the fall. But strangely, once we hit the jump zone at 15,000 feet or so, my fear melted away. The ground didn't seem real at that height, like a painting dangling just out of reach. Suddenly, the door was open, people were scooting towards the drop, and my instructor was yelling in my ear, "are you ready to sky-dive?"

And I was.

As we pushed forward towards the precipice, I thought of how hard it would be to push myself over. As my legs dangled over the edge, I thought of how impossible this was. As my balance shifted forward, I thought that I could never bring myself to overcome that ingrained instinct, "Don't Do It!" shouting in my mind. But I was already over, the world spinning, my stomach dropping, arms flailing, and every fiber of my natural body crying out that I had killed myself, I was dead. But the wind stabilized us. As I remembered the spread eagle position and leveled out, my breath was caught away by more than just the howling wind. The vista was amazing. The sensation of floating on air was amazing. Life was amazing. As I fell, pressure pounding at my skull, scarcely able to breath because of the hurricane around me, I cried out in joy. When the parachute opened, I was almost disappointed. But of course that was just one more amazing experience. My instructor handed me the controls, and I found myself flying the smallest most nimble aircraft in the world. When we touched down, I was speechless. We were all dumbfounded by what we experienced. Coming back to my original statement, when I sat on that precipice, I could not imagine throwing my control away by jumping out of that plane. But once I had been pushed out, once the decision was made, I discovered the joy of relinquishing control. There is something deeply amazing about just going along for a ride like that. I knew that there was nothing I could do to effect my descent. It was all in the hands of the instructor and gravity. But that's what made it so thrilling. So once in awhile it's important that I remember to give up control. Life's a wild ride, but I think it's more than worth it.

My Testimony from Kirtland/Palmyra

by Sister Traci Scuito

I too, have to say that this trip was a very meaningful one. I was lucky to have been blessed in my life to visit Kirkland twice and Palmyra three times, but this trip was the most memorable of all of them. I'm really appreciative of the church family that went with us and supported me. When went to the Kirkland Temple for our evening service, taking that first step in gave me a warm feeling, as if the Spirit was already with us. As we went to sit down I saw our priesthood sitting in the pews, I was overwhelmed with joy, knowing they were sitting where our past priesthood sat and preached it was a glorious sight for me. ...concluded on page 9



Sister Melissa Herren



Brother Kevin Herren



Sister Trina Herren



Sister Cessaries Galusha

My Testimony from Kirtland/Palmyra

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When we started singing one of the hymns we sang was The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning, I looked up from my travel hymnal, and I thought “it seemed to have gotten louder in here.” I even looked up to see who was around us, who was singing with us, because it was just an overwhelming degree of loudness, and I said to myself, ‘we are not alone’, and that was a wonderful feeling.

We had a sunrise service at Hill Cumorah and it was a nice service, but unfortunately, we heard the traffic like crazy. The Spirit was there, but not as strong as I have felt it, until Cessaries started playing her ocarina, then I heard no traffic it was silent. Cessaries was the only one playing, no singing, the traffic was gone, I only heard the birds singing with her as she played, and it was beautiful. As Steve and I quietly went off down the path afterward I mentioned what I felt during the service, and he said. “me too!” He felt the same way.

When we had the evening service at the Grove, it was very dark, and beautiful, and you could see the fireflies throughout the woods. I was amazed at how pretty it was. We offered prayers and the fireflies were out there just twinkling at a distance, and as more prayers came one right after the other, I would look up after each prayer, and the fireflies got brighter and brighter and there were more and more of them. It was like they were surrounding us, and it was a glorious sight. When we first started planning this trip we prayed and fated, and my one big prayer concern was I wanted to feel God’s Spirit, just once, I needed to feel His presence on this trip, and I was overwhelmed because I felt it through the whole trip, at times when I didn’t expect to feel it. I felt Him there with me, so my prayers were answered.

We got home Thursday evening, and Friday morning I was up early trying to get everything ready before I went to work, and my doorbell rang. I answered the door and found two people there. I assumed they were Mormon, and normally I try to brush them off because I never know what to say to them. I didn’t know what denomination they were, but we began talking and the woman asked me, ‘do you mind if I read a scripture?’ and I said, “No, that would be fine.” She asked me, “are you a Bible reading person?” and I said, “Yes! And as a matter of fact, we just came back last night for Kirkland, Ohio. We saw the Temple that Joseph Smith was directed to build. “We went to Palmyra, NY and saw the Grove where he was visited by our Heavenly Father and Jesus” and I looked at their faces and I said, “You don’t know what I’m talking about do you?” and they said, “No.” So I know I wasn’t speaking to Mormons. I never did find out what denomination they were. The gentleman asked, “So, that’s kind of like the LDS, right?” and I said, “Yes, but I’m not Mormon.” Then we got into a discussion of the difference between the churches. They were saying, “Oh, Joseph Smith wrote the book.” I said, “Yes, but he translated it through God’s power. He just didn’t willy nilly decide one day he was going to write a book. That’s not what happened.” I explained all that to them, they wanted to know why we needed another book when the Bible says these are all the scriptures we need. I told them the Book of Mormon is another testimony of Jesus Christ and they should not be afraid of it, but just read it. The gentleman thanked me for sharing with them. The reason I mention this, is because this was the first time I was able to answer all their questions! I was able to tell them the differences between the churches, and because of our studies, our trip and everything we saw, I was able to tell them this, which I hadn’t been able to before. I was able to explain how the Book of Mormon came about. I was excited to explain the reason behind it, and I was overjoyed, I was just...I want to use the word bubbly, but I don’t get bubbly, but I was just thrilled that I was able to explain to someone who doesn’t have our beliefs. And, it all came because God blessed me in the studying that we did, and on the trip itself I learned so much more. To God be the glory!

God is Alive, a Testimony From Our Trip to Kirtland and Palmyra

By Brother Steve Scuito

Well, I’m here to testify that our God is alive. He watched over us the whole time we were there. It started from when, as you know, for six weeks I’ve had a sling on, plus a belt across underneath my shirt holding my arm up because it hurt so bad. I’ve been on pain pills, I’d gotten down to one like every twelve hours. I had been on two every four hours. We got there on Thursday I was wearing the sling and the belt. We found out on Thursday that we were going to go on to Kirtland Temple and go from the basement to the bell tower, is what they said, and we’d be crawling between spaces. So on Friday I decided to take off the sling, but leave the belt on.

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God is Alive, a Testimony From Our Trip to Kirtland and Palmyra

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Brother and Sister Scuito

...It was pretty painful because my arm hadn't moved that much, I'd have it off at night, but it felt, you know, it was there and I felt it. So by Sunday I was able to crawl a little bit into the bell tower and climb the ladders without too much pain, I mean, crawl between the floors, and then crawl up the ladder, so it was actually pretty good.. At Kirtland, like I said, the family was really good that took care of us, the Websters, it was just amazing those people. They were the youngest in their congregation; she was 63 and he's 66. Everybody else at that congregation was older than that. So when we went there, it was kind of like, well except for their two grandchildren, they were the

youngest, but it was amazing to go there and see that. I'm not one to get up and talk as they've said, but when we went to the Grove that night, it was dark and you see the fireflies, and like they said, when everything went silent it was just kind of surprising. I'm just sitting there, and I have this cyst on the top of my hand here, and you know how it is, you got something and always rub it. I'd talked to Brian about it and it used to be one of those cysts where they used to take a Bible and smash it and that's how they cured it back then if it didn't go away in olden times. But I'm just sitting there rubbing it, while I'm sitting there thinking about, I really need a sign, even though it went silent during that time, I need my own sign that God's here. So I'm sitting there, just rubbing this lump on my hand, pushing it around and all of a sudden it's not there. I mean it's just completely gone. And I'm sitting there, then I worry, "where'd it go?", "what happened?", "did it break and it's spreading around or something like that or what?" I don't know what's going on. So I rub it for about another five to ten minutes and I cannot find it. I move my hand up and down like that, my fingers, and I can't feel anything, there's no lump, and it was an obvious lump. So I thought, "should I say something?" I'm just sitting there and I just feel, "what can I do?" I feel that if I don't say something, God told me that He's there, right now I should say something. So I get up and I testify, I have this testimony that, God is here, I mean I had this lump in the top of my hand, I mean I'm rubbing it, and all of a sudden it's just not there. I rub it for another five or ten minutes before I give my testimony. So I give the testimony that the cyst was just gone, it was nowhere to be around. So I sit down and I'm rubbing my hand and I can't find it still again. So about ten minutes later we get ready to leave, and I feel my hand and there it is again, and He was just showing me that He was there. I needed something to show that He was there. He took it away for that time and then He let it come back, knowing that it's harmless, but knowing that He showed me that He was there during that time. It was just amazing because, I knew that it was gone, for twenty minutes, and it was just amazing. And I talked to Brian later about it, and he says, "it can't hide anywhere, even if you push it way down it's going to still be there." And so it was gone for about twenty minutes, and then it came back, but it was just His way of showing that I needed something to show that He was there watching us and everything and He was there. So that is my testimony, it was just amazing a trip, and the Grove is just amazing, and the Websters were amazing too, and this whole group. I love them all. I mean, even though Kevin sets his alarm at what he says is 5:14 in the morning is actually 5:40 and then he goes back to sleep, I mean, what else can we say about Kevin? Gary talks in his sleep, he was one of them in our room. They said I snored, but I never heard it, you know, so I don't know about that part, but we had a great trip. Everything was remarkable about the whole trip and Brian planned all the greatest sites that we can believe. The Thursday after our Sunday service, I was reading my testimony and afterward I went to touch the cyst, and it was gone. It has been gone ever since.

A Little About Our Trip

by Sister Sharon Trammell

I wanted to share with you just a little bit about where the 17 saints stayed on our recent church history trip to Kirtland, Ohio and Palmyra, New York in July of 2011. We stayed in Painesville, Ohio, which is about 15 miles from Kirtland, at the home of some Saints from Thursday night through Sunday night. Then we traveled to Palmyra, New York and stayed at the Palmyra Inn from Monday night through Wednesday night. The Inn is right by the Sacred Grove, and has a walking path to go the short distance to the Grove so any time that anybody was led they were able to go over to the Grove and spend the time they wanted to there. It's a couple minutes drive from where we stayed at the Inn to Hill Cumorah. At Kirtland we were welcomed into the home and the hearts of the Webster family. Daryl and Fran Webster are a retired couple that have custody and are raising their two grandchildren, Michael, who's eleven and Gabriella, who's nine. When we arrived and got out of our cars we heard the sound of music, and as we stopped to listen, it was trumpets and they were playing Kumbaya, and it was very welcoming to me. We later found out that Daryl and Michael were on the back porch playing their trumpets. The Webster's opened their home with beds for all ten women in the basement, the seven men staying in Michael and Gabriella's rooms, who then slept in their grandparents' room. Fran had breakfast and dinner ready for us every morning and evening, even clean towels and washcloths on our bed every night. There's a local Restoration Branch in Kirtland, that's about 15 minutes away, but the Webster's are trying to help a small branch out, so they drive an hour and a half each way every Sunday to Youngstown. With their family of 4, they meet with 4 other saints at their church for Sunday morning classes and services. They have a potluck each week because of the distance they travel. I believe that this family is a wonderful example of loving and serving their neighbors and their Lord.



Our Group with the Websters

Sister Jamie Leach Promoted to Staff Sergeant

by Sister Nancy Curtis



Sister Jamie receives her honors with the support of family

Recently, we returned from California (Travis AFB) and wanted to share this special moment with you. We now have a Sergeant in the family! The Lt. Colonel told Jamie how proud he was of her and we were too! Out of 80,000 who took the test for Sergeant, only 40%

passed and Jamie was one of them. He also said that their unit was a family so he wanted Evelyn to attend also which says a lot for the Colonel since it's very hard to corral a three year old. It was a really nice day - Tuesday, Sept. 6th - that we'll always remember.

Women's Fellowship Weekend

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...found in the kitchen, such as mixing bowls, egg beaters and rubber scrapers. We found out a short time later that we were each to pick out an apron that we would get to keep as a memento of the weekend. Sister Sue had volunteered to plan our worship for the weekend and the central theme of the worship was "Loving and Serving Each Other." Along with the aprons, we were presented with a selection of buttons that we were to choose from that represented us in some way, or that we just generally liked. Each of us then gave one of our buttons to each of the women present. Later on in the weekend we sewed on the individual buttons to our aprons to have a reminder of each woman present that weekend. Saturday morning dawned and another delicious meal was served. After breakfast, we had another worship service where we sang and pondered the ways we could serve each other. Following the service, we all headed out to explore the downtown Sisters area. Fun and fellowship was plentiful and the weather treated us kindly. The afternoon hours of Saturday were spent leisurely in playing board games, putting together a puzzle (a puzzle was found that depicted Jesus and his disciples), sewing the buttons on to our aprons, and general fellowship and rest. Dinner was just as delicious as all the previous meals and our evening was completed by another season of worship. After breakfast on Sunday morning, we joined together again in worship to our Lord. Hymns were sung and inspirational stories and poems were read. Sister Sue also took the time to share with each one of us as to how she has seen us serve others. I would like to thank each and every woman that came on the weekend. They all have much to give and share, and it is a joy to be in their company. In addition to that I would also thank my Heavenly Father for his many blessings and care that he gives so freely. I know that he blessed us on that weekend and it is my prayer that we can keep these things close to our hearts.

Men's Fellowship Weekend

by Brother Jim Clark



*Extreme croquet in the snow
(brothers Travis & Ron pictured)*

On a beautiful weekend in March, the men were privileged to attend a fellowship weekend. Joining together in Sunriver Oregon, we were surrounded by nature and our Heavenly Father's creation. Blessed with a blanket of pure white snow, as well as

a warm afternoon of sunshine, there seemingly was something for everyone. As we sang, laughed, played, and prayed together our spirits were uplifted and united. We were taught a lesson in faith, through our brother Dave, that we would seek the Lord first in all things. For in Him there is no problem too small, and certainly nothing is impossible. Whether playing croquet in the snow, riding bicycles, or just conversing one with another in so many respects we were greatly blessed. Brother Ron Trammell kept us well fed and planned our meals expertly. There were the "Hot tub snowball slingers" (you know who you are), which seemed to have a bead on brother Steve. The ping pong sharks, and those who seemed to do a little too well playing Liars Dice. Yet as we joined together at our huge dinner table we came to realize just how much we love one another, and how much fun it is to meet together. We thank our Heavenly Father for the blessings we shared, his guidance and direction. The gospel bonds which were created and strengthened, shall not be forgotten. The message which was delivered unto us.

Men remember "Don't go casting your rings into the snow". We know and have been reminded of a better way. Our God is an awesome God!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!



The men after Sunday service

"I love all men, especially these my brethren and sisters" - Joseph Smith II
(*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 361).

"...let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" - Paul (*Galatians 6:10*)