



Nauvoo Relief Society established in the Red Brick Store.

1840

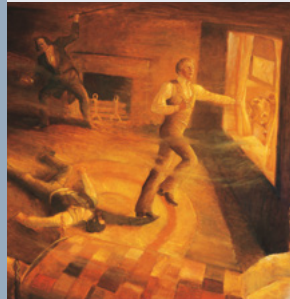
1842



EMMA H. SMITH
1842

1844

Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.



DETAIL FROM MARTYRDOM OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM, BY GARY ERNEST SMITH

First Utah Relief Societies formed to make clothing for Native American women and children.

1850

1854



Eliza R. Snow called by Brigham Young to oversee the establishment of Relief Society throughout the Church.

1860

The first Relief Society meeting hall was constructed by the Salt Lake 15th Ward Relief Society. Over 120 halls were constructed in the next 50 years.



ELIZA R. SNOW
1866

1868

1870

Utah women were among the first in the United States to vote.

1872



Woman's Exponent newspaper began publication and became the voice of the Relief Society for 50 years.

In

Utah

Relief Societies continued working to save souls and attend to needs. Relief Societies also ministered to arriving immigrants, including the survivors of the Willie and Martin handcart companies, providing supplies, food, and medical care. Beginning in 1868, local ward Relief Societies began to construct halls in which to meet, care for the poor, conduct business, and sell goods. The construction of ward Relief Society halls ended in 1924.

1. What is it about Relief Society that unifies women from different cultures and diverse situations?

Sister Burton: Knowing and living our purpose unites us across cultures. I met a woman in Uruguay last year who told me how she had been called to be Relief Society president at the darkest time of her life. She was tempted to say, “I can’t do it right now.” But because she had made sacred covenants, she said, “I will do what I’ve been asked to do. I have faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I know through His Atonement I can do it.” Then she said to me, “My calling brought light into my life as I served my sisters. I relied upon the Lord, and He blessed me.”

I recognized the purpose of Relief Society in her story. Her faith in Heavenly Father and in Jesus Christ and His Atonement helped her. She had made sacred covenants and wanted to keep them. As she worked in unity with the bishop, she fulfilled her calling. Now she

has a testimony that the Lord blesses us when we trust Him. I add my testimony to hers that our Savior Jesus Christ will help us through every mortal challenge and everything that seems unfair in this life.

Sister Stephens: Our faith in the power of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice is the great unifier. Our love for our Heavenly Father and knowledge of His great plan of happiness bind us together as we seek eternal life. Our sisters are single, married with children, or married without children. There are widows and those who are divorced. Our hope is that we can all work in unity and be one as we come to understand our identity, our work, and our purpose.

Sister Reeves: Unity brings us happiness because there is no contention and the love of God dwells in our hearts (see 4 Nephi 1:15). Unity crosses every line. Oh, how we want our sisters to



feel that love for the Savior. Oh, how we want to be one in helping accomplish His purposes.

2. What can women do if they don’t feel part of Relief Society?

Sister Stephens: The desire of our hearts as a presidency is that sisters understand their eternal identity.

We’ve always been part of God’s work. As women we have been endowed with special gifts to profit everyone. We were taught and trained in the premortal life what our work would be. We were in that great Council in Heaven where we chose Heavenly Father’s plan, which included the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We shouted for joy at the prospect of having a mortal body.

On earth, beginning with Mother Eve, women continue to be part of God’s work. The Prophet Joseph Smith organized women after the pattern of the priesthood—a pattern that has always existed—when he organized the Relief Society in 1842 in Nauvoo, Illinois.

President Russell M. Nelson, President