



CELEBRATING THE BIRTHDAY OF RELIEF SOCIETY

“A READERS’ THEATER”



Organization of Relief Society by Nadine Barton

“Celebrating the 175th Birthday of the Organization of Relief Society on March 1842”

A Readers’ Theater by Cecile Scribner

Presented in Elk Ridge, Utah March 2017

Also presented in Elk Ridge, Utah March 2011 for the 169th Birthday of Relief Society

Cast of Characters:

Brigham Young
Mother Smith
Joseph Smith
Joseph F. Smith
Gordon B. Hinckley
John Taylor
Linda K. Burton
Bonnie Parkin
Eliza Snow
Bathsheba Smith
Emma Smith
Martha
Restoration Singers (one man in audience)
Early Relief Society Members (Restoration Singers)
Artist

Piano
Violin/Flute/Harmonica/Trumpet

Music: Piano is most important in a Readers’ Theater. Other instruments add variety and a lot of volume when needed. It’s up to the director to decide which instruments to use when, and it usually depends on who’s available to play what. Sometimes a soloist is soft and a violin or flute would be better under his/her singing, etc.

Set-up: All the performers, (except the restoration singers at the end of production) are up on stage, or a platform close to the audience. They are all perfectly still, as if we’re just looking at a picture of them. The only one “alive” is Bonnie Parkin. Linda K. Burton comes up from the audience. When Bathsheba sneezes, everyone “comes alive.” During the songs when it involves all the women, you can have the restoration singers who are seated in the audience, stand and sing the songs with them - they stand right where they are seated.

Scene 1 (only one scene)

Music: Piano and Violin - “Awake, Ye saints of God, Awake” written by Eliza Snow – just one or two verses while the performers come up and take their place on the stage. While they are standing in place, an artist starts at the left and pretends to be painting a picture. As she waves her paintbrush over the group, as she moves from left to the right, they take a pose and hold it, so when she is through, the group looks like a painting.

Bonnie Parkin: Welcome, Sisters. I’m not sure all of you will recognize me. My name is Bonnie Parkin and I served as General President of Relief Society between 2002 and 2007. Do you realize that while I was president there were more than five million women in this organization from 165 nations across the earth. . . Sister Burton, is that you I see visiting us tonight? Please come up so all these people will know who you are.

Linda K. Burton: Hello, everyone. How wonderful to be with you tonight.

Bonnie: Sister Burton, it is so fitting for you to be here as we celebrate the 175th Anniversary of Relief Society. You’ve been president of this World Wide Organization for five years now! Do you have a message you’d like to leave with us tonight?

Linda: Well, first of all, why don’t you call me “Linda.” Since you were president in 2007, Bonnie, our organization has now grown from five million to six million members and we are now in 170 Countries. On the day Relief Society was organized in March 1842, Emma Smith declared, “*We are going to do something extraordinary. . . we expect extraordinary occasions and pressing calls.*” Those pressing calls and extraordinary occasions presented themselves frequently then – as they do now. (*quote from Linda K. Burton, April 2016*)

Bonnie: Emma Smith was an extraordinary person! Just look at this beautiful photo we have of her and Joseph and some of the other Presidents of Relief Society and Presidents of the Church. (*she points to the picture that is formed by the performers on the stage or platform*)

Linda: Oh yes, I recognize them – Why, here is Eliza R. Snow and up there next to Joseph Smith is Emma Hale Smith, and standing right next to you, Bonnie is Bathsheba Smith. Oh my, there’s Mother Smith, a woman who bore more trials than almost any other woman I’ve ever known or read about. And right in the middle is Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus.

Bonnie: And then, of course our Presidents: Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Joseph F. Smith, and Gordon B. Hinckley – all of them gone now, but oh, the legacy they have left!

Linda: It seems there are a few other men in this photo that I don’t seem to recognize.

Bonnie: I have no idea who they are either, but as you know, if you mention “food” the men will always show up.

One of Men Singers in Audience: Did someone mention “food!” I’m always there for the good refreshments you sisters provide. (*and he joins the others up front*)

Bonnie Parkin: See what I mean! Go ahead, Brother _____, why don’t you just join the others in this photo. (*To audience*) I’ve invited you all here tonight to enjoy this photo while I tell you the stories of each of these remarkable Relief Society Presidents. First of all, let’s start with Bath.

Bathsheba W. Smith: Ah Choo (*all “come alive” and look at Bathsheba – they react to her sneeze*)

Mother Smith: Oh, bless you, Bathsheba!

Linda: My goodness! Are you okay, Sister Smith?

Bathsheba: Oh, I just don’t think I’ll ever get used to these cold winters. But what a very nice building this is. So warm. My, my, we never had anything like this.

Eliza: You are so right, Bathsheba. I remember how cold it was that first winter after we arrived in Salt Lake City, and that winter on the plains that so many of our women experienced – oh, please, just let us forget those memories.

Bonnie: And yet. . . those are stories I could hear over and over again. They give me strength. I just wish I could’ve walked the streets of Salt Lake and Nauvoo in those early days and mingled with you and the others. I feel so much love for the early saints.

Bathsheba: That is so much like you, Bonnie. Believe me, we know about you as well, and know that you have an incredible ability to love. I just know you’d like to have all these families into your home and serve them some of your famous chocolate chip banana bread.

Mother Smith: Oh, that sounds so tasty!

Bonnie: Wouldn’t that be a gathering! and yes, I would love every minute of it. All of us together, from different generations, enjoying each other’s company. Wonderful!

Eliza: (*Starts humming quite loudly.*) **“In Our Lovely Deseret,” p. 307 written by Eliza R. Snow**

Bathsheba: There you go, Eliza. Every situation brings music out of you.

Eliza: Oh, yes. Can you just see the gathering of Saints at Bonnie’s house – and particularly the children. Sisters, we must always keep ourselves surrounded by children, and we must teach them!

(Violin starts playing underneath –)

(Eliza read first two lines, and sings the last two lines)

In our lovely Deseret, Where the Saints of God have met

There’s a multitude of children all around

They are generous and brave; They have precious souls to save

They must listen and obey the gospel’s sound.

Eliza: Ladies, please join me: (*All women*) (*Piano joins accompaniment here*)

They must not forget to pray, Night and morning ev’ry day

For the Lord to keep them safe from ev’ry ill,

And assist them to do right, That with all their mind and might

They may love him and may learn to do his will.

(Men join) Hark, Hark! Hark! ‘tis children’s music—Childrens’ voices, oh, how sweet

When in innocence and love, Like the angels up above

They with happy hearts and cheerful faces meet.

Linda: Eliza, you always bring such beautiful music and words to every event, even every trial. For well-over 150 years now we've been singing your music. And your words are more appropriate today than they ever were. *(Brigham Young tries to interrupt)*

Bathsheba: Eliza has been writing since she was a child. She was already famous by the time she was twenty years old. When John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826, she was asked to write words to a requiem in their honor. *(BY tries to interrupt)*

Eliza: Well, I was born a patriot – at least a warm feeling of patriotism inspired my childish heart and mingled in my earliest thoughts, as evidenced in many of the earliest productions of my pen. . .

Brigham Young: May I interrupt ladies. It's been all I could do to hold back in this conversation. Eliza was just one year older than the prophet Joseph Smith. She joined the Church in 1835, and by that time in her life, she already had published a book of poetry. She had become famous and sought after – she had autographs from Charles Dickens, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Victor Hugo, Abraham Lincoln and Queen Victoria to name but a few . . . Oh, by the way, she also had my autograph!

Gordon B. Hinckley: Yes, I too know her story. In 1837 she left her home and joined the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, and was in the midst of all the persecution. Remember what you said, Eliza, when you were taunted by a member of the mob militia? You were walking in the bitter cold as you were being driven out of Far West. He said, *“Well, I think this will cure you of your faith?”*

Eliza: Well, President Hinckley, I'd answer him the same today if I had the chance, *“No, sir, it will take more than this to cure me of my faith!”*

Mother Smith: And the soldier answered, *“I must confess, you are a better soldier than I am.”*

Brigham Young: Even driving her own team of oxen across the plains wasn't too much for Eliza. Fondly known by all as *“Zion's Poetess,”* she was one of the first to leave Nauvoo in February 1846. As you remember, the Relief Society didn't exist as an organization after we left Nauvoo, but twenty years later in 1866, I asked Eliza to be the next President.

Music: *Piano or violin (One verse – slowly and softly - plays while they are speaking) “Though Deepening Trials” by Eliza R. Snow*

Bathsheba: But President Young, Relief Society did exist in a way. As we crossed the plains, the sick were nursed, children were born, and mothers and babies were cared for during the long and difficult trek. The dead were dressed and buried by kind and gentle hands along the entire length of that trail from the Mississippi River to Winter Quarters and to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. *(quote from Gordon B. Hinckley)*

Linda: This is so important for our women to know today! *“It's important because it tells us who we were. We don't really know who we are today unless we know where we've been and what we were before.” (quote from Carol Cornwall Madsen, a professor emeriti of history at BYU)*

Gordon B. Hinckley: *“They were not just sunbonnet women that just trudged along in the dirt with their covered wagons. They were well read. They were articulate, They knew what they believed in. They knew how to move forward.” (quote from Carol Cornwall Madsen, a professor emeriti of history at BYU)*

Eliza: *“I will go forward. I will smile at the rage of the tempest, and ride fearlessly and triumphantly across the boisterous ocean of circumstance. . . and the testimony of Jesus will light up a lamp that will guide my vision through the portals of immortality, and communicate to my understanding the glories of the Celestial Kingdom.” (quote from Eliza Snow)*

Bonnie: (to audience) Eliza served as Relief Society President for twenty-one years until 1887—until she was eighty-three years old! Bathsheba, what was it like for you to be called as the Relief Society President—I think you might’ve been surprised when President Joseph F. Smith gave you that call.

Joseph F. Smith: Oh, I’ll say she was. But Bathsheba was the greatest example of Relief Society in the Valley—she had been there since the very beginning.

Bathsheba: Well, first of all, I was only nineteen years old when Relief Society was organized in 1842. I was the youngest woman in that meeting. I was seventy-nine years old when I was asked to be the President. What did they want with an old woman like me?

Joseph F. Smith: But, Sister Smith, you personally knew Emma and Joseph. When the Apostle David A. Patten was mortally wounded at the Battle of Crooked River, he was brought to a home you were in and you were there when he died. You attended the laying of the cornerstone of the Nauvoo Temple, and you crossed the plains with the Saints. Bathsheba, you were a Witness to History—our history!



“Come Let Us Rejoice” (The Foundation of the Relief Society) by Walter Rane

Bathsheba: No wonder I’ve been feeling tired lately! Do you know that in my lifetime I saw the Relief Society grow from a small group of sisters in Nauvoo to more than 40,000 members! I can hardly believe it myself.

Mother Smith: In those ten years you accomplished so much. You prompted the start of Mother Education Classes, focusing on child-rearing ideas. Well, of course you would do that because I think your strongest character strength was in your devotion to husband, family, and the gospel.

Eliza: Bathsheba responded to women of all ages. She felt that women needed to be spiritually self-sufficient and that Relief Society was the place for that to occur, and she believed that one of the most important things she could do as president was to serve in the temple.

Joseph F. Smith: And not just the Salt Lake Temple – she also worked in the Manti and Logan temples—those were not easy trips to make in our day.

Bathsheba: Did you know that my husband George and I were among the first to receive our temple endowments and be sealed together? And President Young, I was there and witnessed the mantle of the Presidency fall upon you. I could never forget that great manifestation.

Brigham Young: Nor I. Nor can I forget you as a young pregnant mother getting ready to leave Nauvoo with a one-year-old daughter and a three-year-old son, and then in Winter Quarters, you gave birth to your son John who only lived four hours. No, I could never forget that.

Bathsheba: *“When I heard the Gospel I knew it was true. I was baptized in 1837”*—I was young, only fifteen years old. *“When I first read the Book of Mormon, I knew it was inspired of God; when I first beheld Joseph Smith I knew I stood face to face with a prophet of the living God.”* That knowledge gave me strength my whole life.

Linda: (to audience) Bathsheba Smith, the last of the original twenty members of the Relief Society died in 1910, at the age of eighty-eight. She served for nine years as President.

Gordon B. Hinckley: I seem to relate to Sister Smith – the part about being an old president! And what about you, Sister Parkin? There is much these women could learn from you as well.

Bonnie: President Hinckley, I had so many concerns when you called me to be President of Relief Society in 2002. I was worried about the deafness in one of my ears. Like Joseph of Old, I was imprisoned—not by bars but by vertigo. . .

Gordon B. Hinckley: My advise to you was to *“just turn your head,”* and listen with your good ear and with your heart.

Bonnie: In the end it did prove to be a blessing. I learned to truly listen more carefully and to focus on those speaking to me. I better understood their words and their feelings. I finally found the faith to accept my affliction. But President Hinckley, even a bigger concern of mine was that my family wasn't perfect.

Music: Piano or violin Page 293: “Each Life That Touches Ours for Good” by Karen Lynn Davidson – (start playing about halfway through Gordon B. Hinckley’s reading.)

Gordon B. Hinckley: *“Whose is?”* That’s why I told you what my father told me. Sister Parkin, *“forget yourself and go to work!”* And then I gave you *“an impassioned mandate. The older sisters in Relief Society must move out of their comfort zones. . . They must reach out to these younger sisters, making them feel comfortable. They need to help them learn to love Relief Society.”*

Linda: I agree with you so much! The older women and men are such examples to our younger generation. *“As covenant-keeping women and men, we need to lift each other and help each other become the people the Lord would have us become. And we need to work together to lift the rising generation and help them reach their divine potential as heirs of eternal life.” (Quote by Linda K. Burton April 2015).*

Bonnie: *“I know that the Lord loves the women of the Church. If I could have one thing happen for every woman in this Church, it would be that they would feel the love of the Lord in their lives daily . . . I love Relief Society! It has helped define me as a woman. . .” (Quote by Bonnie Parkin).*

Bonnie sings: *(2) What greater gift dost thou bestow, What greater goodness can we know
Than Christlike friends, whose gentle ways Strengthen our faith, enrich our days.*

Linda: Thank you, Bonnie. I wish every woman in Relief Society could feel that same love of the Lord in their lives today. There are so many who have allowed doubts to replace their faith. Emma Smith, our first president, had such marvelous faith and was tested over and over again. Her trials make mine seem so small. I wish I could've known her.

Joseph F. Smith: Well. . . I'm a particular fan of Emma. *(in thought)* Aunt Emma . . . I have such fond memories of her in those early days of my youth.

Joseph Smith: Finally . . . excuse me. . . if you don't mind, I would like to say something! After all, if you remember right. . . I was there!

Emma: And so was I! I think I heard someone mention my name. Oh my goodness, Eliza, Bathsheba and President Young – it's so good to see you again, and in your prime! You all look wonderful. And Joseph Fielding – look at you – so grown-up from that little boy I knew-- so mature, and so handsome. Surely you must know how proud Hyrum and Mary Fielding are of you.

Joseph F.: You can be sure that I can never hear that enough. . . I love you, Aunt Emma. I now know what an impact you had on the beginnings of Relief Society. As Uncle Joseph said, *"The Church was never perfectly organized until the women were thus organized."* *(Quote from Joseph Smith)*

Joseph Smith: That's right. The institution is of ancient origin – the same organization existed at the time of Christ. The original fledgling church relied on the participation of female disciples such as Mary, Martha, Tabitha, Priscilla and many others to strengthen and sustain the church.

Mother Smith: I so love Mary and Martha. When her brother Lazarus died, Martha exhibited such great faith. When Jesus was coming to their home in Bethany, Martha ran to meet him as soon as she heard he was approaching, and through her tears said,

Martha: *"Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died. But I know, that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."* *(John 11:21)*

Mother Smith: Jesus answered her saying, *"I am the resurrection and the life. . . and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."* Then he asked Martha, *"Believest thou this?"* and she answered:

Martha: *"Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."* *(John 11:27)*

Mother Smith: Oh. . . to now have Martha here with us as well. What Joy and what Honor is ours!

Martha: I, too, am happy to be here among all of you and to reflect upon those days when I was in the presence of Jesus of Nazareth. It was uplifting and joyful. He was in our home often. A feeling of love always radiated from him. It was always an honor to serve him. And now to be sharing this moment with all of you, brings that same spirit of love to my heart. *(Music by an instrument can start playing as Martha is speaking)*

"I Feel My Savior's Love" by K. Newell Dayley and Ralph Rodgers, Jr and Laurie Huffman, Page 74, LDS Children's Song Book
(Sung by Martha) (Piano and/or violin)

*I feel my Savior's Love, And know that he will bless me.
I offer him my heart, My Shepherd he will be*

*He knows I will follow him, Give all my life to him.
I feel my Savior's love. The love he freely gives me.*

(Repeat chorus: All Women)

Joseph Smith: Sisters, you are always on hand. Even at the time of Christ, the sisters were always first and foremost in all good works. Martha was there. Mary was the first at the resurrection; and in our day, the sisters were the first to work on the inside of the temple.”

Brigham Young: (to audience) During the construction of the Kirtland Temple the women were called upon to grind their china into small particles to be mixed with the plaster used on the walls of the temple, which would catch the light of the sun and the moon and reflect that light to beautify the appearance of the building.

Emma: That's right, Brigham. This kind of sacrifice was natural for us. We wanted a ladies' society so we could organize ourselves even better – to be able to give more. And Eliza, remember how we asked you to write up a constitution for us?

Eliza: Yes, and then we presented this constitution and by laws to you, President Smith. We were so excited and thrilled at the prospect of this society. It just seems like yesterday when all these events took place. **(Music: “Praise to the Man”, Page 27) starts playing here)** I can still hear your voice as you spoke to us then.

“Praise to the Man” slowly. . . during Joseph's speaking. Don't play chorus.

Joseph: (wait until first line of music is played) Eliza, “the constitution and by laws are the best I've seen, but this is not what you want. Tell the sisters their offering is accepted of the Lord, and He has something better for them than a written constitution. Invite them all to meet me and a few of the brethren . . . over my store next Thursday afternoon, and I will organize the sisters under the priesthood.”

Eliza: Yes, I'll do that right away.

Men: “The Time is Far Spent.” P 266 written by Eliza Snow (Piano) - Play this through once while Eliza is gathering everyone. Second time through, the men sing:

*(Verse 4) Be fixed in your purpose, for Satan will try you;
The weight of your calling he perfectly knows.
Your path may be thorny, but Jesus is nigh you;
His arm is sufficient, tho demons oppose (repeat)*

Eliza: (goes through the audience, saying) Sisters, Joseph would like to meet with all of us. I think he has something important just for us, the time is far spent, there is little remaining, shrink not from your duty, Satan will try you but be fixed in your purpose, Please come, join us etc. – **(About five to eight more sisters, Restoration Singers, gather on stage to be part of the “organization” of the Relief Society.)**

(John Taylor and Willard Richards move up behind Joseph and Emma - or wherever - just to make room for the added singers as they come up)

Mother Smith: (to audience) When the twenty sisters met with the Prophet on Thursday, March 17, 1842, Elders John Taylor and Willard Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were also present.

Emma: As Joseph said, the object of our society is that we might “*provoke the brethren to good works in looking to the wants of the poor—searching for objects of charity, and in administering to their wants—to assist by correcting the morals and strengthening the virtues of the community.*”

Joseph Smith: “Sisters, you are not only to relieve the poor, but to save souls.” (Joseph Smith). Your purpose is to pursue the “*relief of poverty, relief of illness; relief of doubt, relief of ignorance — relief of all that hinders the joy and progress of woman.*” (John Widtsoe, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) Now it’s up to you to choose who you would have lead you in this organization.

Mother Smith: (to audience) It was unanimous. We all wanted Emma to lead us. Oh, if I could just tell you how much we all loved her.

Eliza: So true, Mother Smith. (to audience) Emma was amazing. Well, the whole Smith family was amazing. Their lives were all committed to the Gospel, and if it weren’t for their testimonies and strong faith in Jesus Christ, they could never have endured the persecutions, hardships and sorrows. What they achieved, and what they suffered, they did it together.

Bathsheba: “Some of the most impressive moments of my life were when I saw the Nauvoo legion on parade with the Prophet, then General Joseph Smith, with his wife, Emma Hale Smith, on horseback at the head of the troops. It was indeed, an imposing sight, and one that I shall always remember. He so fair, and she so dark, in their beautiful riding-habits ...” I was just nineteen, but I wanted to be like Emma someday. (actually a quote of Eunice Billings Snow)

Joseph Smith: Remember, Emma, the revelation from the Lord to you in 1830. “*Thou art an elect lady, who I the Lord have called. . .*”

Emma: But Joseph, how. . . just how can I . . .

(piano and/or violin: very quietly play a few measures of “Oh My Father”, page 292, written by Eliza R. Snow)

Joseph F. Smith: Those women chose my Aunt Emma not only because they loved her and respected her intellect, but also because they knew well her compassion for human suffering. Out of the eleven children that she bore, only five of them lived beyond childhood.

Eliza and Martha: Humming. “Oh My Father” Play this whole song through very slowly while the following words are spoken (both Mother Smith’s and Brigham Young’s.) (everyone hum)

Mother Smith: “I have never seen a woman in my life, who could endure every species of fatigue and hardship, from month to month, and from year to year, with that unflinching courage, zeal, and patience, which she has ever done; for I know that which she had to endure: She has been tossed upon the ocean of uncertainty; she has breasted the storms of persecution, and buffeted the rage of men and devils, which would have borne down almost any other woman.” (Quote of Lucy Mack Smith)

(John Taylor and Willard Richards lay hands on Emma’s head—keep there until music finishes)

Brigham Young: John Taylor gave Emma a blessing in which “*he confirmed upon her all the blessings which have been conferred upon her, that she might be a mother in Israel and look to the wants of the needy, and be a pattern of virtue and possess all the qualifications necessary for her to stand and preside and dignify her office, to teach the females those principles requisite for their future usefulness.*”

John Taylor: The women are now organized “*according to the law of Heaven.*” (quote by John Taylor) “*I suggest that the new organization be named the Nauvoo Female Benevolent Society.*”

Emma: Oh, I don’t think so, Brother Taylor. I don’t like the word *benevolent* – that name is associated to some corrupt organizations that we have known.

Eliza: I agree. We should not follow the popular institutions of the day. We need to set our own course.

Emma: Oh, sisters, I can just feel that we are going to do something extraordinary. . . . Mother Smith, can you feel it as well?

Mother Smith: Yes, of course I do. (*to audience*) Emma’s remarks were persuasive, and the name chosen for our organization was The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo.

Emma: Sisters, as I see it, our duties are to “*seek out and relieve the distressed-- that each member should be ambitious to do good.*” Sister Burton, I know you feel the same way, even now, even in your own time.

Linda: Oh, more than you can even imagine. We are at this very moment having our hearts touched by an “*extraordinary occasion.*” There are more than 60 million refugees worldwide. Half of those are children. I’ve met some of these women and children, and even after they’ve been given help by organizations, they still need a friend and ally who can help them adjust to their new home and feel connected. I have wondered many times since meeting these wonderful women, “*What if their story were my story?*” (*Linda Burton, paraphrased, April 2016*)

Bathsheba: Many of us here remember ourselves being forcibly driven from our homes – at one time, it was our story. You’re so right. You must seek these people out and help them feel loved . . . connected. Sometimes all you have to do is walk across the street to find a lonely, unconnected and unloved person.

Mother Smith: “*This institution is a good one. We must cherish one another, watch over one another, comfort one another and gain instruction, that we may all sit down in heaven together.*” (quote from Lucy Mack Smith)

Song: “As Sisters In Zion,” page 309, words by Emily H. Woodmansee. (1836-1906) Piano, violin or flute

(Two female soloists) *As sisters in Zion, we’ll all work together;
The blessings of God on our labors we’ll seek.*

(Joined by all women on stage) *We’ll build up his kingdom with earnest endeavor;
We’ll comfort the weary and strengthen the weak.*

(Men) *You are daughters of your Heavenly Father who loves you, and you love him, yes, you love him.*

Joseph Smith: My beloved sisters, “*You are now placed in a situation in which you can act according to those sympathies which God has planted in your bosoms. If you live up to these principles, how great and glorious will be your reward in the celestial kingdom! If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates. . .*” (*Joseph Smith*)

Emma: . . . And then Joseph turned the key to us in the name of God that our Society shall rejoice, and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time – this was the beginning of better days for this Society.

Bonnie: (to audience) By the end of that summer, the Society had grown from twenty original members to over eleven hundred women. The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo was intact for two years, then came escalating turmoil in Nauvoo, which resulted not only in the martyrdom of the Prophet but also in the eventual expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo.

Gordon B. Hinckley: From that modest beginning has grown what I regard as the largest and most effective organization of its kind in all the world. At that first meeting, when Emma Hale Smith was elected president, she said that

Emma and Gordon B. Hinckley. . . . “each member should be ambitious to do good.”

Gordon B. Hinckley: That was the spirit then, and that is the spirit now. It must continue to be the guiding principle through all the generations that lie ahead—that “*each member should be ambitious to do good.*”

President Joseph F. Smith: “*This organization is . . . ordained of God to minister for the salvation of the souls of women and of men. . .*” Sister Burton, surely you have a thought about this. What would you leave for the women today – something they can remember as they face the world that is crying out for help – something that even the weakest among women can do.

Linda: Oh, President Smith, I do have a thought for all women today . . . and also for the men. It’s simple: “*First Observe, Then Serve. Serve without Remembering and Receive without Forgetting.*” (*Linda K. Burton quote*)

All in Unison: “*First Observe. Then Serve. Serve without Remembering and Receive without Forgetting.*”

(All women, including audience)– led by one of the women in front (As Sisters in Zion . . .)
How vast is our purpose, how broad is our mission,
If we but fulfill it in spirit and deed.
Oh, naught but the Spirit’s divinest tuition, Can give us the wisdom to truly succeed.

Men on stage: *You are daughters of Your Heavenly Father who loves you, and you love him, yes, you love him.*

(All Women on Stage)

The errand of angels is given to women; And this is a gift that, as sisters, we claim:
To do whatsoever is gentle and human, To cheer and to bless in humanity’s name.

Sing first verse together again (with audience) while men sing “You are daughters. . .”

*As sisters in Zion, we'll all work together;
The blessings of God on our labors we'll seek.
We'll build up his kingdom with earnest endeavor;
We'll comfort the weary and strengthen the weak.*



NOTES:

The Presidents:

Eliza R. Snow: “She was slightly above medium height and of a slender build; her bearing was as one graceful and dignified. Hers was a noble countenance, the forehead being unusually high and expansive and the features of a slightly Hebrew cast, exquisitely cut as those of an artistic specimen of the sculptor’s art. The most striking feature of all [was] those wonderful eyes, deep, penetrating, full of meaning and intelligence, often illumined with poetic fire. They were indeed the windows of a noble soul.

Bathsheba: A friend described Bathsheba as “a tall, stately woman, with an abundance of beautiful brown hair, dark eyes, smooth fair complexion. ... I noted her superiority, her dignity of carriage, yet, with all that, she was easy to approach, lovable in manner, for she ever gave a sweet smile and a word of encouragement to little children and young people, also care and tenderness to the sick or aged. She was artistic in temperament, loved the beautiful, appreciated refinement, and always dressed in good taste.”

Emma Smith: Five foot nine inches tall. Could ride horses expertly and maneuvered a canoe skillfully. She was large and well proportioned, of splendid physique, dark complexion, with piercing eyes that seemingly looked one through; noble in appearance and bearing. She had a lyrical soprano voice, a spirited attitude, and a quick wit that reflected her natural intellect. She was a brilliant conversationalist, articulate in both writing and speech—never used slang and was very particular about her grammar and her choice of words. Out of the eleven children that she bore, only five lived beyond childhood.

Bonnie Parkin: Bonnie was blond and youthful. She was a farm girl from Herriman, Utah. As she described herself . . . the most ordinary person you'll ever meet. Her traits are friendliness, kindness, hospitality, optimism and handling life with humor. She was blessed with a believing heart and had developed a strong testimony early in life. She was committed to education and was an avid reader and one of her favorite hobbies was gardening. She loved a good laugh and interaction with people. She was a wonderful cook. Sports oriented. She had a family of boys and skied with them and played tennis. She can create a meaningful conversation with anyone. Many people think Bonnie is their best friend.

Linda K. Burton: Linda was born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah. She was studying elementary education at the University of Utah when she met Craig P. Burton. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple and are the parents of one son and five daughters and are grandparents to nineteen. Before her call as the 16th Relief Society general president, she served for a short time as a member of the Relief Society and Primary general boards. As a teenager she lived in New Zealand for three years while her father presided over the New Zealand South Mission. Sister Burton loves walking with her husband, making family memories, and studying the scriptures. She loves the scripture found in 2 Nephi 5:27: "And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness." It is her testimony that true happiness comes by living the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Women, Priesthood and Temple Ordinances:

In the last two years of his life, Joseph Smith introduced temple ordinances and covenants to a core group of men and women. In May 1842, he officiated in the first temple endowments—a ritual in which participants made sacred covenants and received instruction regarding God's plan of salvation. Joseph Smith began sealing (or marrying for eternity) husbands and wives and then initiated women into the endowment by the end of September 1843. He taught men and women that by receiving temple ordinances, culminating in the sealing ordinance, they entered into an "order of the priesthood." (<https://www.lds.org/topics/joseph-smiths-teachings-about-priesthood-temple-and-women?lang=eng>)

Temple ordinances were priesthood ordinances, but they did not bestow ecclesiastical office on men or women. They fulfilled the Lord's promise that his people—women and men—would be "endowed with power from on high." That priesthood power was manifest in individuals' lives in many ways and was available to adult members, regardless of marital status. The endowment opened channels of personal revelation to both women and men. It bestowed a greater measure of "faith and knowledge" and the "help of the Spirit of the Lord"—power that fortified the Saints for subsequent hardships they would face as they traveled 1,300 miles across a forbidding wilderness and settled in the Salt Lake Valley. It prepared endowed Latter-day Saints to go forth "armed with thy [God's] power" to "bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings . . . unto the ends of the earth." Indeed, through the ordinances of the temple, the power of godliness was manifest in their lives. (<https://www.lds.org/topics/joseph-smiths-teachings-about-priesthood-temple-and-women?lang=eng>)



Jessica Ekstrom (violin), Carolyn Carter (piano)



Rebecca Devenport (artist)



Eliza R. Snow - Kendra Aston



Joseph and Emma Smith -
Randy & Carol Jones



Linda K. Burton - Jill Shipp,
Bonnie Parkin - Gina Bench



John Taylor - Jeffery Crippen



Gordon B. Hinckley - Scot Bell



Mother Smith - Kristen Webb



Bonnie Parkin - Gina Bench



Bathsheba Smith - Marielen Christensen,
Martha - Onna Oliver

**Elk
Ridge,
Utah
March
2017**





Restoration Singers - Doug Scribner, AJ Christensen



Brigham Young - John Calcote



Bathsheba Smith - Marielen Christensen



Joseph Smith, Emma Smith, John Taylor



Early Relief Society Member - Sherelda Crippen



Doralee Bush



Early Relief Society Members - Edna Martinez & Sue Peterson



Man in Audience - Ken Baguley

Cecile Scribner



Joseph F. Smith - Michael Brockbank



Artist Painting the Picture



Early Relief Society Members - Lisa Graham & Doralee Bush, Martha - Onna Oliver

Elk Ridge, Utah March 2017



**Elk Ridge, Utah
March 2011**



Carolyn Carter - pianist



Joseph & Emma Smith - Russ & Barb Adamson

Sherelda Crippen as Eliza R. Snow
Linda Goodwin as Mother Smith
Jill Shipp as Bonnie Parkin
Marielen Christensen as Bathsheba Smith
Scot Bell as Gordon B. Hinckley
Lele Neria as Joseph F. Smith
Randy Jones as John Taylor



John Calcote as Brigham Young
Others: Bronson & Lexie Oeser, Ann Brough, Julie Christensen, Tamara Holman, Neil Dykstra, Ryan & Liz Christensen, Jamie McKell, Sue Peterson, AJ Christensen, Doug Scribner, Cindy Cromar, June Christensen



Ilene Dykstra - violinist

**Celebrating
169th
Birthday
of Relief
Society**



Bonnie Parkin - Jill Shipp, Gordon B. Hinckley - Scot Bell



Bathsheba Smith - Marielen Christensen

