

## **“Gathering Together in the Latter Days”**

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**SISTER JEAN B. BINGHAM:** It is so wonderful to meet with you in this format! We are living examples of the power of gathering despite challenging times.

In these past two years, much has been said about gathering Israel on both sides of the veil. In October 2018, President Russell M. Nelson invited every woman to “shape the future by helping to gather Israel.” He reiterated what he had said to the youth the previous June when he declared that “this gathering is *the greatest* challenge, *the greatest* cause, and *the greatest* work on earth today!”

What does that mean: “gathering Israel?” Israel is a name for God’s covenant people. That is *us*—and many others scattered throughout the world who are willing to follow the teachings of the restored gospel and example of Jesus Christ. “Gathering Israel” simply means bringing yourself, your family and other loved ones—either living now or who have passed to the other side of the veil—closer to our Heavenly Father and His Son, our Redeemer. The goal is to unite families who are prepared to live with Them eternally.

But why now? Why is it so important now? Because we in this last dispensation have been given the charge to prepare the world for the Second Coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

President Nelson explains that clearly: “A necessary prelude to that Second Coming is the long-awaited gathering of scattered Israel. This doctrine of the gathering is one of the important teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“We not only teach this doctrine, but we participate in it. We do so as we help to gather the elect of the Lord on both sides of the veil.”

This is truly the latter day—our day! This “now” is filled with great challenges as well as great opportunities. Earthquakes and fires, wars and contentions, economic stresses and government instability, widespread famine and worldwide diseases, not to mention attacks on the sanctity of the family and the home, all create great upheaval and uncertainty. As President Nelson observed, “We have great cause for concern. But we do not need to let our fears displace our faith. We can combat those fears by strengthening our faith.”

That is why each of you wanted to gather at this Women’s Conference: to strengthen your faith in God the Eternal Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ. With all the uncertainties in life, we *do* know that we are daughters of our Heavenly Father who loves us, and we surely love Him. We understand there is a divine plan that helps us become our best selves when we choose to follow Jesus Christ and take advantage of the gifts of His Atonement for each of us. What blessings this knowledge brings!

So take heart; at the same time that we are experiencing these major challenges, this is an unprecedented time of great opportunities for personal growth. We are being reminded of those things of lasting value on which to focus our energy. We are learning to share the message of the gospel through technology as well as personal connections. We are increasing our understanding of the value of temples. All these efforts are part of the gathering.

So, how do we accomplish this gathering? Again, President Nelson enthusiastically and clearly tells us how: “*Anytime* you do *anything* that helps *anyone*—on either side of the veil—take a step toward making covenants with God and receiving their essential baptismal and temple ordinances, you are helping to gather Israel. It is as simple as that.”

As we look at the various opportunities to help in the “gathering,” Sister Eubank’s and my thoughts immediately went to several important responsibilities we each have as covenant members of the Church: ministering, missionary efforts, temple and family history work, and caring for those in need. You wonderful women are fulfilling these assignments in simple yet remarkable ways. We have heard about some of your efforts and would love to share some of the marvelous examples of what you sisters are doing around the world.

## Ministering

**SISTER SHARON EUBANK:** At first glance, you would think a global pandemic would make ministering harder, but in fact it has simply brought out our creativity in new ways. “Something extraordinary” is not going to be stopped by a little social distancing! Here are three examples from Relief Society sisters around the world who are finding creative ways to minister in challenging times.

Sister Anika in the Hannover, Germany stake made a simple two-minute video to send to families with children so they could learn Primary songs at home. Here’s a look at it: (video shown).

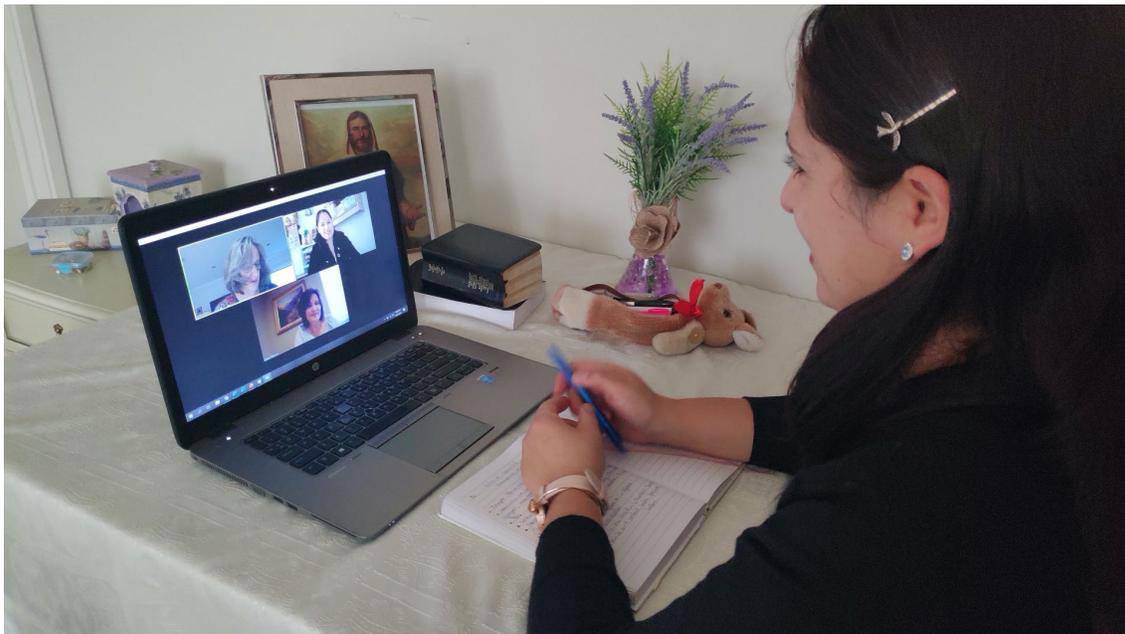
I don’t know that song in English, so it will always be in German in my mind. A lot of counseling and ministering is now taking place over technology. Suddenly the technology is available so we feel we are in the same room even though we are many miles and time zones apart. Maybe your photo libraries have begun filling with pictures like these:



This is our general presidency meeting.



This is the Relief Society general board meeting together.



. . .and this is the Takapuna ward Relief Society presidency meeting over technology in New Zealand.



(If you look closely you can see a husband in the background taking the photo!)



Sister Bernice and her daughter in Accra, Ghana area took food and made a visit to a neighbor family they knew was struggling.



They not only helped the family who was having a hard time but got to spend time walking and talking together which Bernice says is precious to her to spend that time with her daughter.



In the Pacific Area, Sister Ellie made white sacrament cloths for their ministering families to use when they blessed the sacrament at home. She said: "When we went into COVID-19 lockdown and started to think of doing the sacrament at home, I thought about how I wanted this to be a special, sacred and reverent time. The next day I went

and bought the best fabric I could afford and made the cloths for my family and. . .[our] ministering families.”

Now Sister Bingham will give some examples of sharing the gospel by sharing friendship and testimony.

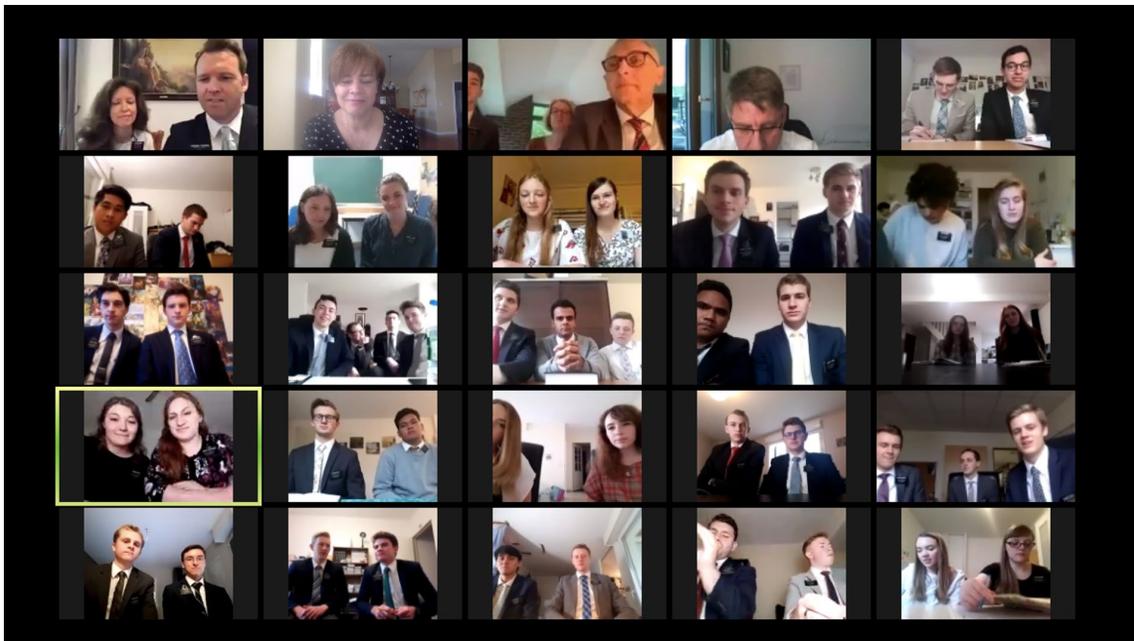
### Missionary Work

**SISTER BINGHAM:** Sometimes it takes a challenge to get us thinking about new ways to share the gospel. For example, how could you possibly do missionary work when you are confined to your apartment for weeks?

Watch what these sisters in the Milan, Italy Mission did! (Video shown.) Creative, fun and spiritual!



In the Kyoung-gi stake in Korea, sisters are inviting their friends to a virtual yoga class every morning. The best part, they say, is feeling connected and chatting before and after the yoga practice.



The Paris, France mission recently held a devotional for missionaries and friends to discuss what they had learned during the 39 days they had been staying home that they wouldn't have been able to learn otherwise.

One investigator friend wrote afterward: "Thank you from the bottom of my heart for having allowed me to participate at this evening's Zoom meeting. It was a blessing to see your beautiful faces and to listen to testimonies. So [now I will] offer my fears, my despair, my continuous heartbreak to our Heavenly Father, begging Him to rescue me."

### Temple and Family History Work

What about new opportunities to gather together through the work of uniting families for eternity? During this time when the temples are closed, many sisters are engaging more and more in family history.

A sister who was serving as a senior missionary in Independence, Missouri wrote: "Last week after meetings were canceled, we self-isolated at our apartment, using our phones and computers to keep in touch with members and to reach out to less-actives. To keep busy, I decided to do some family history, even though for quite a while it has been difficult to find new names. When I logged onto Family Search, I found a notification of a record waiting to be attached. That one record led me to find (in just five days) about 70 people in my line, most of whom needed multiple ordinances done. And there were many more I was able to attach that already had their work done! I consider it a true miracle. The flow of names stopped this morning — and this afternoon we found out we were all being released to go home. I feel truly blessed to have been able to serve here

in Independence, and I am sad to leave, but I also feel blessed to have been able to serve family on the other side of the veil during this difficult time.”



Sandy and her husband Steve have begun to use their regular temple time to help a Native American friend find and connect to her family on Family Search. With no access to the internet at home or in the community, and after collecting what oral histories she could, this sister, Suzi, was frustrated in her efforts to find out more about her ancestors.



Since the beginning of the COVID-19 closing of temples, Sandy and Steve have found eight more of Suzi's grandparents, aunts and uncles who can now receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. Sandy said, "There is such a joy in helping those who can't help themselves. . .to become more involved in their own family history. . . . Like President Nelson has said, there's really nothing more important for us to do right now than to be gathering Israel on both sides of the veil."

Now I'll ask Sister Eubank to give some examples about ways we can help care for those in need.

### Caring For Those in Need

**SISTER EUBANK:** Caring for those in need is part of our DNA when we are disciples of Jesus Christ. We are always looking to follow His example. Most opportunities aren't hard, they just require us to not procrastinate and think that someone else is going to do it.



I found it interesting that the sisters in Nigeria are saying: "We value phone calls now more than ever. We talk about everything and just uplift each other since we cannot meet at church." Sister Shelley in Ghana called a sister who couldn't listen to general conference because her electricity was out and told her about the temple coming to Benin City. She said, "I worried because it was so late, but I felt impressed to call her. The sister said it was the best birthday gift she could have received."

Next is a story of how the Beira, Mozambique stake worked together to help keep public places safer from the transmission of COVID-19.



Due to the low number of COVID-19 cases in Mozambique, the government hasn't called for a total shut down. But they have made it mandatory to use face masks in all public transport and places.



Freeman Dickie, the Beira Mozambique stake president explains when he says: "Most of the people in Beira live below the poverty line and can't afford a face mask. During the worldwide fast, an idea popped up which we qualified as revelation. We counseled together as stake leaders and decided to help the government's efforts through church members.



“Through the bishops, we bought and distributed sewing kits to ward members to make an average of 100 masks per family.



“The masks would be given through the municipality to local markets, which have high concentrations of people. Today we collected 6,140 masks and handed them over to the municipality.



“The mayor of Beira, Mr. Davis Simango, joined us during the distribution of the masks in the market.



“...The stake Relief Society presidency [also wore] Helping Hands yellow vests to explain how to use a mask and distribute them to business owners.



“The feeling among the members who participated was great.



“Many speak of being the first time as a family they worked late into the night trying to reach a target of 100. They speak of how close they grew to know each other as a family. Most were using their hands to [sew] the masks.



“All felt a great love for their fellow citizens as they were ministering to those not of our faith.”

One final example: Many of the sisters living along the Wasatch Front in Utah are having the chance to participate in a medical mask sewing project. I thought you might like seeing how that project began and the impact it will have for hospitals and care centers across the state.



The idea for this project began early on the morning of March 20. Dr. Ron Day, a pediatric cardiologist at Primary Children’s Medical Center, had attended a staff meeting

where the shortages of medical protective gear were made plain. As a member of the Church, Dr. Day knew what committed Latter-day Saint volunteers were capable of. He called the Relief Society office and asked for help.



From that [an] initial partnership was born that included Intermountain Healthcare, Latter-day Saint Charities, University of Utah Health, and the Relief Society. The audacious goal we set was to sew five million clinical masks for the hospitals and caregivers in the state and beyond.



Giant rolls of medical grade surgical mesh were ordered from China and delivered to Salt Lake City.



A company in the valley agreed at minimal cost to cut the fabric into bolts. . .



. . . and then they used giant die-cutters to cut out the patterns and bagged them in kits of 100.



Sister Bingham participated in Governor Herbert's press conference inviting 50,000 volunteers to sign up and help sew the masks.



On April 21, volunteers began picking up the kits at specific Deseret Industries.



All kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds participated. . .



. . .and just like in Beira, Mozambique, it brought families together. . .



. . .and our community together, to benefit heroic medical professionals.

Sister Bingham noted that “gathering Israel” simply means bringing yourself, your family and other loved ones—living and dead—closer to our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Critical to gathering together in the latter days is the gift of the Holy Ghost. All of the examples we have described today have come as ordinary people follow the quiet promptings of the Holy Ghost. This is a gift each one of us has, [that] we’ve received at our baptisms, but it takes a lifetime of practicing to use it well.

Elder Larry Corbridge spoke at a BYU devotional a little more than a year ago and a specific quote from that talk has been in my study journal ever since. It is worth sharing today because it describes the price we must be willing to pay in order to gather together as God’s people. It is not an unbearable price, but it takes our best efforts. He says:

“Of all the problems you encounter in this life, there is one that towers above them all and is the least understood. The worst of all human conditions in this life is not poverty, sickness, loneliness, abuse, or war—as awful as those conditions are. The worst of all human conditions is the most common: it is to die spiritually. It is to be separated from the presence of God, and in this life, His presence is His Spirit. . . .That’s the worst.

“Conversely, the best of all human conditions in this life is not wealth, fame, prestige, good health, the honors of men, or security. As wonderful as some of those things are, the best of all human conditions is to be endowed with heavenly power; it is to be born again, to have the gift and companionship of the

Holy Ghost, which is the source of revelation, clarity, love, peace, confidence, faith, and almost every other good thing.

“Pay whatever price you must pay, bear whatever burden you must bear, and make whatever sacrifice you must make to get and keep in your life the spirit and power of the Holy Ghost. Every good thing depends on that.”

**SISTER BINGHAM:** Isn't it interesting that each of these examples of love and service began with one person who listened to the Spirit? One woman, with her own hands and heart and talents, found a way to serve and lift and love. Sometimes that initial effort expanded to include a larger group of givers and receivers, but always the original recipient, if only one, was blessed. To God, the worth of one soul is great. He cares about the sparrow that falls—the seemingly insignificant “one”—as much as he does for those who are famous or seemingly perfect or hold important positions. The power of one is indeed powerful. “A waterfall starts but with one drop, and look what becomes of that.”

One by one, one step at a time, over time, we can accomplish great things. A friend of my mother's calls this the “Daffodil Principle,” named after an experience that forever changed her. You may have heard the story.

Some years ago, at her daughter's insistence, the two of them with little children in tow drove through a drizzling fog up over a mountain to visit a garden high in the hills of California. She didn't really want to go, but was willing because it would give her precious time with her daughter and small grandchildren. When they arrived, they walked through the gray drizzle and dark green forest, until they turned a corner on the path and were brought to a standstill by the amazing vista.



She said, "Before me lay the most glorious sight, unexpectedly and completely splendid. It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it down over the mountain peak and slopes where it had run into every crevice and over every rise. Even in the mist-filled air, the mountainside was radiant, clothed in massive drifts and waterfall of daffodils. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns, great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, saffron, and butter yellow."

When she inquired how this marvelous display had come to be, she learned that Gene Bauer, a retired high school art teacher, had begun planting daffodil bulbs when she moved to the area and had continued to add some every year for the next 40 years. How was it done? On a sign at the start of the path, Gene posted these words of explanation: "One at a time; by one woman, two hands, two feet, and very little brain."



The result of her patient, one-by-one work was this stunningly beautiful garden that covered five acres with more than 1,000,000 daffodils that bloom each spring. She invited anyone who wanted to “come and see,” to experience the gorgeous colors, to enjoy the calming natural atmosphere, and bask in the beauties of God’s creations—all for free.

The woman who visited the garden with her daughter reflected, “I thought of this woman whom I had never met, who, more than 35 years before, had begun. . .to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountaintop. . .Just planting one bulb at a time, year after year. . .This woman [unknown to many] had forever changed the world in which she lived. She had created something of ineffable magnificence, beauty, and inspiration.

“The principle her daffodil garden taught [me] is that. . .when we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. *We can change the world.*”

You, too, have done and can do magnificent things, one step at a time, with the Lord’s help. And as we join our small efforts together, just think of the influence for good we can have on the world around us!

**SISTER EUBANK:** Sometimes we feel like we don’t measure up to the grand measuring stick of what others are doing. We may feel that our contributions are so simple or so small that they don’t have much impact. Yet we know from the Savior’s example, that meaningful service does not have to be “flashy” or widely known to be of great value. Let me share one woman’s learning experience that resonated with me.

“Late one night, having spent a long day [working hard], I turned off the light and prepared to go. . .to bed. Before locking the front door, I opened it for a moment to take a deep breath of the cool night air. The moon was silver on the trees, but the night had a warm, dark feeling. I breathed deeply. . .a sweet fragrance filled my lungs. . .and I looked about me in wonder.

“Next to the door, a plant that had [previously] escaped my notice, a rather scraggly bush, had shot forth a tall, white stalk covered with blossoms. During the day the stalk had looked like a green knobby spike that needed to be pruned.



“But here, in the night, its green buds had opened and the white flowers were filling the blackness with a fragrance so sweet it was like a balm. The plant was night-blooming ginger, which flowers only in the darkest hours. During the day it would merit scarcely a glance.”

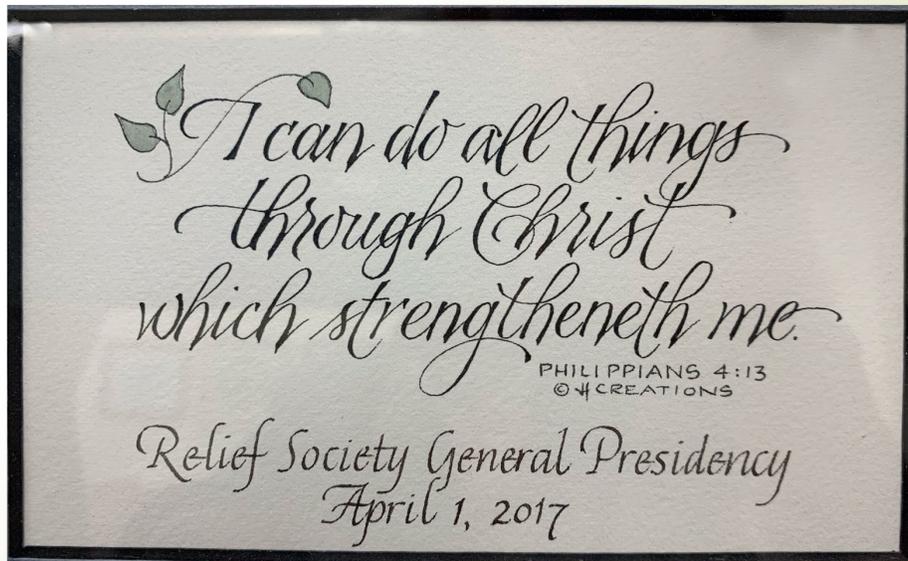
Like night-blooming ginger, you may flower in unlikely places. Be assured that your efforts are making a difference, that they are good enough. These ideas we’ve shared with you, and others that will come to you, can help you now or in the future. So gather your courage, your testimony, and each other. Connect with your sisters and brothers; doing so will remind us of who we are, will strengthen us, and lift us to a place of greater peace.

I share my unshakable testimony that as we turn to the Lord in our difficult circumstances and seek to know what He wants us to do through the Holy Ghost, He will send us to others and He will send others to us.

**SISTER BINGHAM:** The Apostle Paul lovingly counseled the Philippians to not be overly concerned about challenges, but “in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” And the promise is that if you do that, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” And then Paul tells us what to focus on in order to receive the peace we seek: “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest . . .just. . .pure. . .lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if there be any virtue. . . [or] any praise, think on *these* things.”

It is understandable that people are now stressed physically, economically, and emotionally. However, you have an advantage. Because of your knowledge and testimony of the gospel, your spiritual strength can help you not only cope, but be resilient in the face of these challenges. In one way, these current circumstances are a blessing, because they are forcing us to prioritize, to simplify, to be intentional, and to be creative. It’s a gift—and we are up to receiving it!

Finally, we can’t tell you all the things you should or could do to make this a time of peace and growth for yourself and others, but the Holy Spirit can. We are promised that “by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things.” Another favorite reassuring scripture, written in our hearts as well as framed in our offices is this:



“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Just a couple of months ago, my presidency had the privilege of meeting with the First Presidency in an informal chat. They were interested in our thoughts and feelings about you sisters, and the challenges we feel most impact your daily happiness and eternal progression. At the conclusion of our time, we asked President Nelson what message he

would like us to share from him. He said, as he often does, "Tell them I love them, I thank them, and we need them!"

We, too, love you, we pray for you, and we have every confidence that you are capable of great things. Done with simplicity and in the Lord's way, focusing on what is eternally important and seeking revelation through the Holy Ghost, you will accomplish astonishing things. We know that when we follow the example of our Savior Jesus Christ and put His teachings into practice, we are blessed. We know that our Heavenly Father loves each of His children, that we are in His hands, and that Jesus Christ will empower us through our covenants to meet every demand that life makes of us with faith and ultimate success.

May you feel the love of our Father in Heaven in the coming days and weeks and months and years. He will always be near! In the name of His beloved son, Jesus Christ, amen.