

## **Pioneers—Anchored by Hope**

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**JANUARY 2017**

**AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE**

### **PART ONE**

In 1832, Welthea Bradford Hatch (a direct ancestor of my wife Shelley) lived with her husband, Ira Stearns Hatch, in the tiny town of Farmersville, New York, near Lake Seneca, about a hundred miles southwest of Palmyra. When missionaries Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt called at the Hatch home, Welthea purchased a Book of Mormon, and read it right away. Convinced of its truthfulness, she asked for baptism, but her husband, Ira, cautioned her to wait until she gave birth to the baby she was carrying. Shortly after the delivery, Welthea was baptized—but only after they cut a hole in the ice on the river in which the ordinance was performed![\[i\]](#)

Ira was intrigued by the gospel message but wanted more information. So he and Welthea traveled by buggy to Kirtland, Ohio, to meet the Prophet Joseph Smith. Upon arrival, they were told the Prophet could be found with a group of men cutting trees in a nearby grove. When they drove up to the grove, one of the men set his axe into a tree, strode over to them, and said: “Brother Hatch, I have been waiting for you for three days. The money you brought will be used to build the pulpit in the Temple.” This man was Joseph Smith. Needless to say, Ira was baptized and they returned to their home, gathered their belongings, and joined the Saints in Kirtland.[\[ii\]](#)

One of my own ancestors, Isaac Bartlett Nash, joined the Church in Wales and crossed the Atlantic and the plains before joining the Saints in Salt Lake City. After his arrival, he heard one of the presiding elders of the Church denounce the use of tobacco with these words: “There are Elders in this assembly who now have tobacco in their mouths, though even a hog would not chew the vile weed.” Isaac, with a chaw of tobacco in his mouth, quietly slipped it out, dropped it to the ground, and said: “Now stay there until I come for you.” And he never did.[\[iii\]](#)

One of the many pioneers here in Africa is Brother William E. Daniel Acquah. He joined the Church in the early 1980’s after much study and seeing the good example of his wife. They saw many blessings, both spiritual and temporal, because of the Church, helping them through many challenges, including the famine of 1983 in Ghana. Then, in 1989, the Church was shut down by the government. This period of time has become known as “The Freeze.” Members of the Church could not gather

together to attend Church. So, they kept the Sabbath Day holy in their own homes and families, and visited one another to support each other in their spiritual and other needs. Brother Andam says: “The Government may have succeeded in closing the doors to our meetinghouses, but that only brought the ‘Church’ into our homes. After Sunday devotional at home, we would go round and visit other members and see to their welfare.”

On one of those Sundays, Brother Acquah went to visit, and saw others (Brother Gorman, Myers, and Ewudzie) standing nearby, and they told him that one of their member friends, Brother Ato Ampiah and his wife, had been arrested for being members of the Church. When Brother Acquah and the others went to visit Brother and Sister Ampiah at jail that same day, they were asked if they were also members of the Church. Without hesitation, Brother Acquah replied: “Yes.” Because that was his answer, he and the others were thrown into a filthy jail cell, where they stayed—fasting and praying—for three days. While it was a shock at first, they felt peace and assurance as they fasted, prayed, and lifted the spirits of the other inmates—and as the members of the Church outside of the jail prayed for Brother Acquah and the others. After three days, they were miraculously released. They carried on with their lives as faithful Latter-day Saints, and then, on November 30, 1990, the announcement was made on the radio that the “Freeze” on the activities of the Church has been lifted.

What drove Welthea to seek baptism in a frozen-over river rather than wait until summer? What motivated Ira to travel from New York to Ohio prepared to donate money for a temple to be built by a church of which he was not yet a member? What enabled Isaac to abandon his homeland, sail the Atlantic Ocean, cross the plains, and then add chewing tobacco to the list of things he had given up? And, what moved Brother Acquah and others to bring the Church into their homes during the freeze, be faithful when unjustly thrown into jail, and to exercise the faith necessary to see the “freeze” come to an end?

President Gordon B. Hinckley observed, “The power that moved our gospel forebears was the power of faith in God. It was the same power which made possible the exodus from Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the long journey through the wilderness, and the establishment of Israel in the Promised Land.”<sup>[iv]</sup>

Faith is both a principle of action and of power.<sup>[v]</sup> It “is not to have a perfect knowledge of things.”<sup>[vi]</sup> It is an assurance of the Spirit<sup>[vii]</sup> that moves us to act<sup>[viii]</sup> to follow the Savior and keep all of His commandments, even through times of sacrifice and trial.<sup>[ix]</sup> As surely as

the sun rises in the morning, faith produces hope—the expectation of good things to come[x]—and brings us the power of the Lord to sustain us.[xi]

If faith was the power that moved our pioneer forebears, it was the hope produced by their faith that anchored them. The Book of Mormon prophet Moroni wrote:

...by faith all things are fulfilled—Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.[xii]

The faithful pioneers of long ago, as well as those of our day, such as Brother and Sister Acquah, were moved by faith and anchored by hope. Their bedrock faith in Christ moved them to act with the hope, the expectation, of better things to come—and not only for themselves, but also for their posterity—now and in eternity. Because of this hope, they were sure and steadfast, led to glorify God through any privation: hunger and thirst, heat and cold, monotony and loneliness, injury and sickness. And for those that were steadfastly faithful, the power of God was manifest in miraculous ways.

So, how can those pioneers' faith and hope help anchor us in today's tumultuous world? I have three suggestions:

**1. Remember Them.**

First, we must remember them. Remember their stories, and the sustaining, saving, delivering power of God that came as a result of their faith and hope. Our pioneer forebears help us know who we are as a covenant people and confirm that our God—with whom we have covenanted and who “changeth not”[xiii]—will bless us in times of difficulty and trial, just as he did our pioneer fathers and mothers. Just as Alma taught, God “will fulfill all his promises which he shall make unto [us], for he has fulfilled his promises which he has made unto our fathers.”[xiv] Knowing this, we will be inspired by their stories to likewise act in faith and be anchored by hope. This is the anchor we seek in our morally, spiritually, and temporally tumultuous world: living, moving faith in Christ and the hope that anchors us in His ways.

The story of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies has become symbolic of the faith and hope of the early pioneers. It is a miracle only approximately 200 of the just-over 1,000 company members died

despite being on starvation rations, without winter clothing, and suffering from illness and exposure.[\[xv\]](#) The faith and hope-filled effort of their rescuers in response to the call for action by President Brigham Young, accompanied by divine assistance, saved the handcart companies.[\[xvi\]](#)

After leaving the Salt Lake Valley, the rescuers were hit by the same early, severe and unrelenting winter storms which had engulfed the handcart companies. In the face of nature's ferocity, some of the rescuers faltered in their faith, lost hope, and turned back. One of those who turned back was John Van Cott. Hosea Stout records:

Van Cott justified himself for returning and abandoning the handcart company as he could get no information of them and had concluded they had returned to the states, or stopped at Laramie, or been killed by the Indians . . . and for him to have gone further was only to lose his team and starve to death himself and do no good after all.[\[xvii\]](#)

Doubt and fear—as rational as they may have been—were (and always will be) the antitheses of faith.

In contrast, Reddick Allred, another one of the rescuers, was assigned to man a rescue station to give sustenance and relief to the handcart companies as they made their way. He steadfastly manned the station for three weeks (while suffering from pleurisy, a painful and potentially fatal lung condition) in hazardous winter weather. The very John Van Cott who abandoned his duty passed through the station on his return to Salt Lake City. Together, Van Cott and another man tried to persuade Reddick Allred to join them in turning back. Brother Reddick refused. According to his journal,

I declined the proposition . . . [and] advised him to stay, for the lives of the company depended upon us. He then said that he moved that as I was president of the station, they center their faith in me, that I should get the word of the Lord to know what we must do. To this I objected as [the Lord] already said what he would [have us] do.[\[xviii\]](#)

Such unwavering faith in times of trial—to hope for things not seen, but true—creates steadfast men and women, and gives sure, steady direction when potentially disorienting storms rage about us. One of the fruits of such faith is that those possessed of it will be in a position to nurture, rescue, and bless others. Imagine the warmth Reddick Allred felt as he saw the handcart company come into his station and he was there to help! Imagine the joy the company felt when they saw him!

May each of us remember the pioneers, both ancient and modern, and pass their stories along.

The second part of this article will be published in next month's issue of the Liahona. Please keep this issue on hand so that you can refer to it as you read the continuation of the article (Part Two) in next month's issue.

[i] History of Ira Stearns Hatch, 202.

[ii] History of Ira Stearns Hatch, 202.

[iii] Isaac Bartlet Nash, The Life–Story of Isaac B. Nash, 2.

[iv] Andrew D. Olsen, The Price We Paid (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book 2006), 243.

[v] See Lectures on Faith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 3. See also Jacob 4:6; Ether 12:7–22; Hebrews 11:4–40.

[vi] Alma 32:21.

[vii] See JST Hebrews 11:1 (at fn b, LDS edition).

[viii] See 2 Nephi 25:23; Alma 34:15–17; Ether 12:6; James 2:17–26.

[ix] See Ether 12:4–6; Lectures on Faith, 69.

[x] See Moroni 7:40–42.

[xi] See BD, “Faith,” LDS edition. See also Mormon 9:8–21; Moroni 7:33–37; Doctrine and Covenants 27:17; Alma 57:19–27; 58:10–13.

[xii] Ether 12:4.

[xiii] Mormon 9:19.

[xiv] Alma 37:17.

[xv] Olsen, The Price We Paid, 121.

[xvi] Olsen, The Price We Paid, 474.

[xvii] Olsen, The Price We Paid, 389.

[xviii] Olsen, The Pride We Paid, 160.

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- [1] Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 389.
- [1] Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 160.