

Missionaries to the Saints

A. Glen Humpherys

Preaching the good word of repentance has characterized the Mormon missionary message since the Church was founded. Missionaries started traveling shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon, and invited everyone to accept the restored gospel. In addition to the missionaries called to take the new message to non-Mormons, some missionaries were called to repeat the doctrinal teachings to members of the Church. These specially called missionaries set the pattern of Church meetings, dominated the speaking style, and established the tradition of traveling speakers.

Auxiliary missionaries and home missionaries are callings which have ceased to function in the Mormon Church as independent assignments. Gone is the horseback missionary riding wintry trails to preach fiery reformation sermons to the Saints. However, remnants of these once vital callings continue in the traditional duties of many leadership offices in the Church. A high councilor speaking in a ward sacrament meeting, a General Authority visiting a stake conference, and an auxiliary board member conducting a regional workshop are examples in our day of the home missionary form.

From the organization of the Church until the exodus from Nauvoo in 1846, Mormon communities were located in partially settled regions of the American frontier. Missionaries traveling from Kirtland, Ohio; Independence, Missouri; or Nauvoo, Illinois visited Church members scattered along their routes of travel. These members not only opened their homes to the missionaries for meetings with local residents, but also provided lodging, financial aid, and traveling assistance. When the Church became centralized in Salt Lake City, the relationship of members to missionaries changed. The Saints living on the farms of isolated settlements were no longer hosts to traveling elders. Missionaries left the Great Basin to preach their message to the world, but the settlers left behind did not directly participate in the cottage meeting-neighbor conversion process which had been the common experience of the previous decades.

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During the 1850s-1870s Brigham Young called missionaries to travel among the Saints, preaching the need for repentance. Home missionary work borrowed the forms and procedures of full-time missionary work: holding public meetings, preaching, traveling in pairs, and relying on those who received the message to support the missionary. But the method most widely used by home missionaries was preaching to the Saints in a regular meeting.

In focusing on home missionary activities, it is evident that many special missionaries were called to do other work besides preaching to the Saints. These calls included sending special missionaries to mine gold in California, smelt iron in Parowan, process lead ore near Las Vegas, transport mail for the Brigham Young Express and Carrying Company, study at eastern universities, colonize various settlements in the West, or build chapels, schools, and temples.

Included among the home missionaries were forty-six elders called in January 1845 to act as agents in receiving tithing and donations for building the Nauvoo Temple. These men went on short missions contacting the scattered members of the Church between Illinois and the Atlantic Coast, returning to Nauvoo in the early spring of 1845 with the money they had collected.¹ At the October 1852 conference twenty-five elders were called to preach the gospel to Israel in the valleys of the mountains. These missionaries were both general officers of the Church and prominent elders such as David Pettigrew, a well-known veteran of the Mormon Battalion.² Brigham Young asked Cyrus H. Wheelock in January 1854 to preach in all the Salt Lake Valley wards, but did not give him detailed instructions concerning his calling. Brother Wheelock worked out the details with the local bishops.³ In the fall of 1854, Elders Wilford W. Woodruff and Ezra T. Benson visited several settlements under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. These missionary experiences were antecedents of the 1855 organization of Utah into six missionary districts and the appointment of home missionaries for each of these areas.⁴

Representative members of the Quorum of the Twelve and the presidents of the First Council of the Seventy met at the home of

¹Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1902) 7:368-69.

²*Deseret News*, 16 October 1852, p. 2.

³Bishops' Meeting with Presiding Bishopric, Minutes, 1858 to 1862, 31 January 1854, Church Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁴*Deseret News*, 28 December 1854, p. 157.

Parley P. Pratt, 15 October 1855, and organized the mission districts of Utah Territory as authorized by the recent general conference. Utah County comprised the first district; Juab, Sanpete, and Millard Counties were the second; Iron and Washington Counties the third; Davis County the fourth; Weber County the fifth; and Salt Lake and Tooele Counties formed the sixth missionary district. Six to twelve home missionaries were assigned to attend quarterly conference in each area. These missionaries were recently returned proselyting missionaries, General Authorities, and other prominent members of the Church. In addition to the conference speaking assignments, they scheduled other conferences and preaching meetings throughout the fields of labor assigned to them. Brigham Young felt strongly about this home missionary effort. Preaching in the Bowery at Great Salt Lake City, 8 October 1855, he stressed that not "in any other place on God's earth is there a people who now need preaching to more than do the Latter-day Saints in this Territory, and that too by faithful Elders, faithful ministers of the Gospel, messengers of life and salvation."⁵ From the ardent, sincere preaching of these home missionaries grew a reformation that had a lifelong impact on many Church members.

In the three decades following the 1855 call of home missionaries, three kinds of home missionaries developed and functioned concurrently. First, the General Authorities continued to call missionaries as they had in 1855 to travel to and work in various stakes. Second, the Relief Society, the Retrenchment Societies, Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, Sunday School, and the Primary each called missionaries to represent their cause like the missionaries called by the General Authorities. The third type of home missionary, which emerged in 1877, was the home missionary called by the stake presidents and high councils and sustained in the stake conferences to labor within the boundaries of the stake. By the middle of the twentieth century the duties of the home missionaries had been divided into the duties of stake missionaries, home teachers, visiting high councilors, and speaking companions to high councilors.

CHURCH-WIDE HOME MISSIONARIES

The Church-wide home missionaries created the style and traditional procedures which were used in subsequent missionary

⁵*Deseret News*, 17 October 1855, p. 156; Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1854-86), 3:115.

work to the Saints, and which persisted after the cause of home missionary work had withered. In 1855, a widespread vigorous missionary work was conducted both by regular officers of the Church and special missionaries. The need for reform was preached from the pulpit and taught in the homes. Repentance and rebaptism were the results of this concerted effort to bring the Mormons to a more spiritual style of living. James S. Brown described his labors as a missionary during the reformation by indicating that from 1856 to 1859 he baptized or rebaptized 400 persons and visited with the catechism from house to house.⁶

In 1861 Brigham Young called the prominent Salt Lake businessman George Goddard on a special mission to preach the cause of rags to the Saints. A new paper mill, erected in 1860 following the Utah War, needed rags to manufacture paper. Newsprint was in short supply and local resources were required to relieve the shortage without dependence on either overland wagon transportation or the United States' Civil War economy. Goddard was charged to gather rags for the operation of this Church paper mill. He preached the cause of rags in local meetings, from the pulpit in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, and in door-to-door campaigns. Despite the initial blow to his native English pride, Goddard attempted to fill the assignment to go to every town and settlement. He usually carried a basket on one arm and an empty sack on the other, gathering rags that could be used in the manufacture of paper. He garnered in his three-year mission 100,000 pounds of rags as well as the goodwill of many Church members and leaders.⁷

The First Presidency—Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel H. Wells—sent letters calling twenty-three elders as home missionaries in November 1863. They were appointed "to labor in the midst of the Saints, preaching in all humility and meekness, the spiritual things of the Kingdom of God, stirring up the people to repentance and remembrance of their first love, without finding fault with the Saints, and the blessings of the Lord will attend your ministry therein."⁸ Five of these brethren were asked to devote the principal part of their labors working with the Scandinavian members of the Church who had settled in Utah.⁹

⁶Diary of James Stephens Brown, 1859, holograph, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Cited hereafter as BYU.

⁷Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 115-16.

⁸Brigham Young to John V. Long, 2 November 1862, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives.

⁹*Ibid.*

The *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* of January 1873 reported that the home missionaries were active in several parts of the territory, holding two-day meetings to increase interest in the work of God. In Salt Lake City they held special ward meetings on Sunday afternoons instead of requiring Saints to attend the usual meetings in the Tabernacle. This was especially advantageous to those who lived a long distance from the Tabernacle,¹⁰ and allowed the members to partake of the sacrament at a local meeting.

James S. Brown was called again as a missionary to the Saints in 1876. He had served as a home missionary during the reformation of the late 1850s and again in 1863. He was apparently an amputee, because he purchased a new artificial leg while on a mission to the eastern states in 1872. Despite this handicap, Brigham Young called him to work with the Indians in Arizona with the view of preparing the way for Mormon settlements there. While involved in this activity Brown brought a delegation of Navajo chiefs to visit Brigham Young in the fall of 1876. Following this meeting in Salt Lake, Brown was sent to visit the settlements and seek volunteers to move to Arizona. After another spring and summer in Arizona, Brown traveled as a missionary during the fall of 1877, visiting wards in southern Idaho and northern Utah. His home missionary assignment was to recruit colonists for the growing settlements in Arizona.¹¹

Representatives of Church education institutions were also called as missionaries and commissioned to visit local wards, speak in sacrament meetings, and hold special meetings to promote student enrollment. Karl G. Maeser, along with other faculty members of the Brigham Young Academy, such as James E. Talmage, made several education missionary trips in central and southern Utah. Each of these trips occurred after a letter of introduction was sent by the President of the Church to the local bishops and stake presidents in the visiting area.¹² In 1901, Ezra Dalby, accompanied by the stake president, went on a recruiting circuit of local Idaho communities preaching the cause of education and student attendance at the Fremont Stake Academy (later Ricks College).¹³ This practice of sending agents from Church institutions to local members has since become routine in the operation of Church schools, though no longer for recruitment purposes.

¹⁰"Utah News," *Millennial Star*, 35 (7 January 1873):14-15.

¹¹Diary of James Stephens Brown, 1876.

¹²Diary of James Edward Talmage, 2 June to 30 July 1880, BYU.

¹³Diary of Ezra G. Dalby, August 1901, microfilm of holograph, BYU.

As a missionary during 1889-90, Andrew Jenson traveled throughout the settlements speaking in Church meetings and studying historical records. He preached the responsibility of priesthood holders to keep a journal and gathered histories of the wards and stakes of the Mountain West. He was also a regular home missionary in the Salt Lake Stake, but continued his history missionary activities after his appointment as assistant Church historian in 1891.¹⁴

During the 1890s the serious financial needs of the Church were partially solved by calling Heber J. Grant and Matthias F. Cowley as fund-raising missionaries. In 1898 they went to the Pocatello Stake (Idaho) to raise funds to aid Church institutions such as the Oneida Stake Academy. This special assignment is an example of combined educational and fund-raising missionary work.¹⁵

AUXILIARY MISSIONARIES

Concurrently functioning with the specially designated missionaries were missionaries representing various auxiliaries which were being organized. The Relief Society, Retrenchment Society, Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, Sunday School, and Primary each sent missionaries to wards and stakes to preach in sacrament meetings, hold special meetings, and work with members and non-members. The mobile ministry of the auxiliary organizations stems from the Relief Society reorganization of 1866.

Perhaps the greatest auxiliary missionary was Eliza R. Snow, president of the Relief Society. Sister Snow had a long history of Relief Society service beginning with her call as secretary to the first Relief Society organized in Nauvoo, Illinois, 17 March 1842. Later, in 1855, she was placed in charge of the sisters' work in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. From this close association with spiritual ordinance work and a long association with women's organization activities, she developed a spiritual approach to teaching and missionary work. As president of the Relief Society, Eliza R. Snow traveled throughout the stakes assisting in the organization of Relief Societies, Primaries, and Retrenchment Associations. In her two decades of travel and meetings, she emphasized the need for repentance and demonstrated the influence of spiritual gifts in her own life. Her great work resulted not only in the spread of the

¹⁴Andrew Jenson, *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), pp. 186-95.

¹⁵James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 3:305.

auxiliary organizations, but also in the wide use of auxiliary missionaries who followed her example.¹⁶

In the fall of 1869 Mary Isabella Horne was called by Brigham Young on a mission to teach retrenchment among the wives and daughters of Mormondom. With Eliza R. Snow and Margaret T. Smoot, Sister Horne met with Brigham Young and received his instructions concerning the teaching of spiritual values to Mormon women. Brigham Young had organized his own daughters into a Retrenchment Society, and Sister Horne invited some of the Salt Lake Relief Society presidents into her home to organize the cause of retrenchment during the winter of 1869-70. The individuals who were invited to the retrenchment meetings were encouraged to organize the women of their own ward areas into Retrenchment Associations. Each of these units was independent and not directly connected with the others. The visits of Sisters Horne and Snow were responsible for the creation of many of the local organizations, especially in the Salt Lake Valley wards. Other women followed the strong example set by Sister Snow and not only carried the responsibility for their local ward, but also visited the meetings of sister organizations, often preaching at the meetings and occasionally speaking in tongues.¹⁷

Retrenchment meetings were held in the homes of local officers or in the Relief Society buildings. Minutes of many of the retrenchment meetings were published in the *Woman's Exponent*. These reports reveal that visiting sisters were encouraged to speak in the meetings not only to express their feelings about the role of women, but also to relay information about the meetings of similar societies. An example of this missionary visiting was the 20 April 1875 meeting in Bountiful where four sisters from Salt Lake were in attendance. Mrs. Zina Young, a wife of Brigham Young, spoke on home industry and the raising of silkworms as one manufacturing endeavor which could produce silk dresses and ribbons of local origin.¹⁸

In June 1875, Brigham Young and some other brethren were touring the southern Utah settlements, accompanied by Sister E. S. Barney, Eliza R. Snow, Mary I. Thorne, and Elizabeth Howard. On 21 June 1875, at a meeting of the women at Moroni, Sanpete County, Brigham Young spoke regarding these four sisters, and said, he

¹⁶Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from November, 1869 to June, 1910* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1911), p. 19.

¹⁷Gates, *History of YLMIA*, p. 31.

¹⁸*Woman's Exponent*, 15 May 1875, p. 186.

"would appoint them a mission to visit every settlement in Sanpete County and see that they were properly organized and set to work."¹⁹

Other published letters detailed some of the messages delivered in the meetings held at Ephraim, Gunnison, Spring City, Cedar Fort, Farmington, and Willard, Utah. Sister Snow spoke at these meetings advocating a return to spiritual principles which included living polygamy, closing saloons, marrying in the Church, and home manufacturing, especially the culturing of mulberry trees and silk-worms. Education for women was also a topic strongly preached in the sermons of retrenchment sisters. Education—though not from gentiles—was the duty of a retrenched girl. Eliza Snow preached that "the sisters in Zion are required to form the characters of the sons who are to be rulers and bishops in the kingdom of God. Then women must be educated, intelligent, and holy."²⁰

In 1877 when the stakes of the Church were being reorganized, the stake Relief Society organizations were also visited and reorganized by officers of the Relief Society. Phoebe Woodruff and Mary I. Horne referred to themselves as home missionaries in recounting the Relief Society meetings and the organization of the Bear Lake Stake at Paris, Idaho.²¹

Mary Ann Freeze followed the example of Eliza R. Snow in actively preaching the cause of women's retrenchment. Sister Freeze was the president in 1875 of the Salt Lake Eleventh Ward Young Ladies' Retrenchment Association. She visited other wards in city and country to assist in the local organization of societies. By 1877 she was traveling to Spanish Fork and Alta, Utah, as a representative of a successful organization, and in 1878 she was appointed as the first stake president of the Young Ladies' Association of the Salt Lake Stake. She continued active preaching to young ladies' organizations in Salt Lake, Ogden, and Logan during the 1880s, and in 1898 was appointed to the general board of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association.²²

In 1878 Aurelia S. Rogers, disturbed by the ruffian attitude of the young boys she had observed, obtained the help of Eliza R. Snow and the approval of John Taylor in organizing a Primary Association in Farmington, Utah, under the direction of her bishop. Eliza R. Snow and Mary I. Horne visited the Primary organization

¹⁹Ibid., 1 July 1875, p. 21.

²⁰Ibid., 15 August 1875, p. 21.

²¹Ibid., 1 November 1877, p. 84.

²²Gates, *History of YLMIA*, p. 84; Diary of Mary Ann Burnham Freeze, 1882, holograph, BYU; *Woman's Exponent*, 1 April 1875, p. 166.

at Farmington on several occasions in 1878 and early 1879. They observed the Primary members making carpets and cultivating beans for a storage program to match the wheat stored by the Relief Society. However, the major purpose of the Primary was to teach gospel ideals by lessons and songs. The successful programs of Primary units were exchanged among communities by organization leaders such as Eliza R. Snow.²³

Both the Primary and the Sunday School sent missionaries from house to house to enlist the youth in the instruction work of these organizations. This work was continued nearly three decades with formally called Sunday School and Primary missionaries. All of these auxiliary missionaries followed the pattern set by the home missionaries of the 1860s and '70s. The method was traveling, the purpose was to organize auxiliaries and preach repentance, and the mode was calling a special meeting.

The Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association combined both the experience of foreign missionaries and the concept of home missionaries in organizing and calling MIA missionaries. Junius F. Wells had just returned from a mission to England when he was called to preach missionary preparation to the young men of the Salt Lake area, and his missionary experience shaped the nature of the young men's organization and their missionary work. He related his mission introduction experience as follows:

I found myself upon a mission before I was eighteen years old, standing for the first time in my life before an audience to speak. I was in Liverpool, six thousand miles away from home. I was introduced by the president, and being a son of President Wells, there was much expected of me. It took the president of the branch several minutes to introduce me, but it took me just one and one-quarter minutes to say all that I knew. I desired in my heart that my brothers should be better prepared than I was for such a position.²⁴

By call of Brigham Young, Junius Wells organized the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association in the Salt Lake Thirteenth Ward on 10 June 1875. The purpose of the association was to give young men speaking experience in preparation for missionary work. Following the organization of the first group, Wells traveled on a preaching tour with his father, Daniel H. Wells, to the communities of Southern Utah in September 1875. His visiting took him as far

²³Aurelia Spencer Rogers, *Life Sketches of Orson Spencer and Others* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1898), pp. 212-24.

²⁴Gates, *History of YLMIA*, pp. 80-83.

south as St. George, where he organized a YMMIA. At the October conference Wells was called on another mission to the eastern states beginning with Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois, and continuing to the New England coast area. Before he left, Wells organized associations in Brigham City, Mantua, and in several Salt Lake wards. By 1 November 1875, Wells had reported the results of his missionary labors in Utah and had left on his mission to the East.²⁵

Brigham Young had a strong feeling for the work with the young men, and on 6 November 1875, he called his son, Brigham Morris Young, to serve with John Henry Smith and Milton Hardy in continuing the missionary work in the YMMIA while Junius Wells was on his mission. While visiting the territorial settlements, they were to confer with the bishops and local authorities, organize associations, and attend to the election of officers. The stated purpose of these organizations was to provide opportunities for bearing testimonies and speaking the truths of the religion. Beginning their tour in December 1875, B. Morris Young and Milton Hardy held organizational meetings throughout the communities they visited. The first circuit of their travels was to Cache and Box Elder Counties in northern Utah. In March they canvassed Utah, Juab, and Sanpete Counties, holding twenty-eight meetings in twenty-six days, visiting twenty-four settlements, four Sunday Schools, and eleven day schools. Following the April conference in 1876, these same two brethren traveled from April to June, organizing the young men in Millard, Beaver, Iron, Kane, Washington, and Sevier Counties. In July they toured Oneida and Bear Lake Counties in Idaho and Rich County, Utah. Brother Young and Brother Hardy organized associations, distributed tracts, visited previously organized societies, and preached in public meetings. Their circuit was a forerunner of the general reorganization of the stakes conducted by the apostles in 1877.²⁶

Returning from the Eastern States Mission in November 1876, Junius Wells again became very active and interested in YMMIA work and visited local meetings of the associations. He went on another organizing and preaching tour with Milton Hardy and John Craner during July and August 1878, to Box Elder, Cache, Bear Lake, Rich, Morgan, Summit, and Wasatch Counties where they created stake organizations of the YMMIA. During this tour they held sixty meetings, stressing home manufacturing, the establish-

²⁵Junius Wells, "Historical Sketch of the Y. M. M. I. A.," *Improvement Era* 28 (June 1925):718-23.

²⁶*Ibid.*

ment of libraries, and personal improvement; they also advocated a monthly conjoint meeting between the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations and the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations. (Retrenchment Associations had taken on these new names.)²⁷

In 1878 local members began visiting the young men's organizations of the Salt Lake wards on a formal basis. A rotating system of monthly visits by representatives of each of the city wards provided preaching experience for the representatives. The circuit functioned by having each association send two members to visit the meeting in the next numbered ward of the twenty-one wards in the city; the Twenty-First Ward sent visitors to the First Ward. The following week representatives were sent to the next ward in the numerical sequence, and thus the system continued until each ward had been visited by representatives of all other wards. The complete circuit required five months. The representatives not only attended the meetings of other wards to observe the procedures and functions, but also briefly addressed the associations they were visiting. In the weekly meeting following their visits, the representatives reported to their home wards the topics and procedures observed at the meetings last visited. From the meeting schedule, which was published along with the visiting appointments, it is interesting to note that one ward met on Monday evenings, eleven met on Tuesday, five on Wednesday, and two on Thursday evenings.²⁸

After the initial organizing visits and the subsequent visits to elect stake officers, the YMMIA conducted membership drives by meetings and personal visits in the style of home missionaries. These 1870 activities of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations set the precedent for later missionary action in the 1890s, but during the 1880s auxiliary missionary work was not pushed as a vitally needed force in rescuing the young. Current organizations and newly organized stakes involved many of the young men who were stirred into leadership roles by the association's activities. In addition, stake-called home missionaries were actively preaching in sacrament meetings. Because of these forces, together with the legal difficulties many members faced by enforcement of the antipolygamy laws, the focus of church attention was turned away from traveling missionary work. By 1896 the political status of Utah was settled when statehood was granted. However, the young men born

²⁷*Woman's Exponent*, 1 September 1878, p. 52.

²⁸Y. M. M. I. A., " *Juvenile Instructor* 13 (15 December 1878):286.

since the organization of the YMMIA in 1875 were only partially involved in the activities of the association. A new wave of missionary work splashed across the stakes of the Church under the sponsorship of the YMMIA.

"Be not satisfied, rest not content, until every young man professing the name of Saint in Zion is enrolled in the cause of Mutual Improvement."²⁹ This 1880 call to do missionary work was used as the basis of a new thrust of MIA missionary activity following the MIA general conference in July 1897. B. H. Roberts and J. Golden Kimball organized the MIA missionary work in a manner which enabled newly-called missionaries to labor for a three-month mission during the winter of 1897-98. Originally, Elders Roberts and Kimball hoped to call men they knew personally to travel out to the stakes of the Church as missionaries. However, they did not know a sufficient number of elders who were free to donate their time. Thus letters were sent to all stake superintendents asking them to consult with the president of the stake and supply a list of about eight names of young men suited to do this kind of missionary labor.³⁰

President Wilford Woodruff issued calls to the MIA missionaries similar to the calls he issued to traveling missionaries. One hundred and fifty-six elders responded to the call, eighty-eight of whom labored in stakes other than their own, and sixty-eight of whom worked within their own stake areas.³¹ Among those who labored in their own areas were missionaries called from eight stakes—St. Joseph, St. Johns, and Snowflake, in Arizona; San Luis, in Colorado; Alberta, in Canada; and San Juan, Wayne, and Uintah, in Utah. In twenty-three stakes missionaries from outside the stake were used to press the work. This system was adopted in an attempt to avoid local jealousies and preconceived attitudes toward individuals who needed missionary help.

Traveling without purse or scrip these missionaries depended on local members for food, lodging, and transportation during the missionary effort which started in American Fork, 2 December 1897, and lasted until the following February. Local association leaders were helpful in supplying lists naming enrolled young men and also lists of those who were indifferent to both Church and association work.

²⁹"Our Missionary Work," *Improvement Era* 1 (December 1897):138-39.

³⁰"Report of M. I. A. Missionary Labor, 1897-8," *Improvement Era* 1 (May 1898):533-39.

³¹*Ibid.*

Three kinds of meetings were held in an effort to stir men into activity. First, public meetings were scheduled with local bishops and held in ward houses as a means of introducing the program to a large number of individuals. Second, conversational meetings were held in the church vestry or in the sitting room of a house that was centrally located. The individual who volunteered his home also invited his friends to attend these small, informal gatherings. The missionaries usually spoke at the meeting, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in general and the cause of Mutual Improvement in particular. Following the remarks of the missionaries, questions were encouraged from the men and boys in attendance. Elder A. H. Snow of Brigham City, working with the Logan Fourth Ward, reported that one conversational meeting had nine boys in attendance ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-one. Seven of these nine had not been associated with the work of MIA. After getting the boys to feel at home and talking to them about an hour, the question and answer period started. Among the questions asked at the meeting was, "How did Joseph Smith get authority to baptize and organize the Church? Other questions on infant baptism, and changes in ordinances touched on many basic beliefs of the Mormons and were not confined to the narrower scope of association work."³²

In addition to the conversation meetings, the MIA missionaries did a great deal of visiting in the homes of the young men. These home visits were used both to enroll men in the MIA and to invite them to attend the public and conversational meetings. After visiting and meeting with most of the young men in a ward, the elders moved to another ward in the stake. By such means these serious, preaching missionaries covered most of the stakes, contacting and enlisting the majority of the young men who were not previously closely associated with the Church programs.

As a result of this three-month missionary campaign, 13,035 were added to the membership rolls of the association. This work had been pursued not only with wayward and indifferent Church members, but also with non-Mormons living in Utah. In addition to enlarging the list of names on the association roles the general influence of the missionary work was favorable. "Quite a general awakening of interest has been effected in the great work of the Lord. Many hundreds have been converted to the faith of their fathers, and have been started well along the path of duty."³³ Bishops

³²"M. I. A. Missionary Work," *Improvement Era* 1(February 1898):295-99.

³³"Report of M. I. A. Missionary Labor," p. 539.

and stake presidents noted a general improvement in the activities of members of their units. They reported that attendance had increased at Sunday Schools, theology classes, quorum meetings, and general meetings of the Church. This MIA missionary work also increased the payment of tithes and offerings as well as spreading the observance of the Word of Wisdom. Parents and local officers gave enthusiastic support to this movement as local positive benefits were observed.

The missionary effort was repeated from December 1898 to February 1899, with about 150 missionary elders visiting the stakes in the cause of Improvement Association enrollment. The purpose of their work was to bring about the reformation and perpetual progress of the youth of the Church. New names were added to the membership rolls of the MIA, but in much smaller numbers than the previous year since this second effort was largely a follow-up type of recruiting. A significant difference in the 1897-99 MIA missionary campaign was the number of baptisms reported as a result of the missionary work—twenty-six in one stake and eighty-five in another. The first year, 1897-98, resulted in a great number of young men becoming members of the Improvement Association. The effort in the following year was to convert those enrolled to a strong standing in the faith and stalwart, permanently reformed membership in the Church.³⁴ This was a dedicated, preaching missionary work which conducted nearly 17,000 personal visits and held more than 904 public meetings.³⁵

A change in the MIA missionary procedure was proposed by President Joseph F. Smith and B. H. Roberts at the MIA conference of July 1899. The form of the missionary work was changed and new functions were assigned to the missionaries. Forty elders from many stakes of the Church responded to the missionary call. This represented a drastic reduction in the number of missionaries used in the two previous winters when nearly 150 elders were serving on missions to the Saints. The forty missionaries met in Salt Lake City for five days of training during October 1899. These MIA missionaries were to take the information received in the training sessions to the local association officers of the wards and stakes. Their mission was to work with the leadership of the auxiliary organizations in the stakes and let the local leaders be responsible for the missionary work with the wayward and indifferent in their local areas. This

³⁴"Report of M. I. A. Missionary Work," *Improvement Era* 2 (March 1899): 395-97; "A Word to Missionaries," *Improvement Era* 2 (December 1898):156.

³⁵"Our Work," *Improvement Era* 2 (May 1899):553.

precedent-making change created the basis for visits, training workshops, and leadership meetings of auxiliary general boards and even Regional Representatives of the Twelve Apostles.³⁶

Through these training missionaries local officers were given a clear outline of the functions of the officers of the organization. Because this was a leadership training movement, however, it lacked some of the zeal that had accompanied the preaching work of the two previous years. The reports indicated that the problems of officer turnover and the overburdening of local officials delayed the progress of the organizational work in 1900. Local leaders did not like the idea of a person from the local area being called to go to Salt Lake, receiving special training, and then coming back home with instructions for running the program, but having no responsibility to carry out the instructions. The idea was adapted further for the next session held in 1900-1901. The stake leaders came to training sessions and then returned to lead the local work of visiting directly with the association members as a local missionary of the MIA.³⁷

From 1901 to 1904 the responsibility of local missionary work was left with the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association of each ward. The work had begun to falter on the local level as some of the same persons were repeatedly contacted by various missionaries. Also, the reform zeal was waning without the input of traveling elders. New calls were issued for traveling elders to assist the local missionaries, but dramatic success was not forthcoming. The forms of missionary work were being perpetuated by an organization after the effective function had dissipated.³⁸

HOME MISSIONARIES WITHIN THE STAKES

The third branch of missionary work to the Saints was the calling of home missionaries within the stakes. These home missionaries comprised the largest group of missionaries in the Church. Within this large missionary corps considerable variety existed among stakes in the functions, calls, duties, and terms of service. Each stake president was able to regulate the home missionaries to meet local needs.

³⁶"Our Work," *Improvement Era* 2 (August 1899):792; "The Missionaries, Their Preparation and Labor," *Improvement Era* 3 (November 1899):75.

³⁷"Missionary Labor," *Improvement Era* 3 (July 1900):715-16.

³⁸"Missionary Work," *Improvement Era* 4 (May 1901):554; "Local Missionary Work," *Improvement Era* 3 (October 1900):952-54; "A Call for Missionaries," *Improvement Era* 4 (June 1901): 632-33; "Responsibilities of Officers in Missionary Work," *Improvement Era* 5 (December 1901):155.

The reorganization of stakes in 1877 created many new local leadership positions. This reordering of the local organizations came during the active work of home and auxiliary missionaries, and temple building in Salt Lake, Logan, Manti, and St. George. The territorial economy had been permanently altered by the joining of the transcontinental railroad lines at Promontory Point in 1869. The railroad facilitated the travel of emigrants from Europe to Salt Lake City and enabled Utah agricultural products and metal ores to be sold on a national market. Conversely, manufactured goods from eastern factories came to Utah in exchange for cash. Brigham Young proposed home manufacturing to curtail the outflow of gold and silver from the Great Basin into the national economy. The reorganization of the local units of the Church was an attempt to solve many of the problems of the time. The creation of new stakes and wards put new men in positions of leadership and changed the roles of continuing leaders. Spiritual awakening, home manufacturing, cooperative marketing of farm commodities, and promotion of education were all discussed in the circular letter of the First Presidency, dated 11 July 1877. This letter also detailed the duties of the newly appointed stake leaders and became the basis for calling home missionaries to promote temple building, repentance, and economic stability.

The final duty of the presidents of the different stakes listed in the 1877 circular letter was to visit wards.

The presidents of the different Stakes should make arrangements to travel and visit as frequently as possible in the various Wards under their jurisdiction, and elders, sound in doctrine and full of the Spirit of the Lord, should be appointed to preach from time to time, that our meetings may be more interesting and instructive.³⁹

Home missionaries were the elders called to visit the wards. However, there was considerable doubt about their abilities to make the meetings more interesting and instructive. Therefore, a theme continually repeated in the instructions to the home missionaries for the next half-century was to improve their speaking abilities and make their remarks interesting. Despite these often-repeated instructions, almost no formal program developed to achieve this result. A few of the men called as home missionaries had been trained to preach polished missionary sermons as the major method of gaining converts. However, starting in the 1850s and becoming more predominant toward the end of the century was the distribution or

³⁹Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:293.

sale of tracts and books as the primary missionary activity, making foreign missions less effective training experiences for polished public speaking. Mutual Improvement Associations did attempt to promote good public speaking during the first few years of their organization. However, this program trained young people, creating an unfortunate situation as the older, less skilled men were the major part of the membership of the home missionary and high council groups. An undercurrent of boredom with home missionary and high councilor sermons was a contributing factor in low attendance rates and the almost total absence of youth from sacrament meeting, especially on "dry council" Sunday.

A description of the formulation, operations, successes, and failures of home missionary work throughout the Church may be obtained from the analysis of two representative stakes. Home missionary activities have been pieced together from an examination of the records of the Salt Lake Stake and the Cache Stake, Logan, Utah. Salt Lake Stake represented a populous, urban area and Cache Stake a scattered, rural one. Both stakes had been visited by home missionaries during the 1860s and 1870s, so the style and function of home missionary work was part of the local mode of worship.

The Salt Lake Stake, while not always the first in establishing new programs, had a strong, well-organized home missionary group and provides a basis of comparison and contrast. Following the intent of the 1877 circular letter, a corps of home missionaries was called by the stake president, Angus M. Cannon, in October 1877. The earlier calling of home missionaries by General Authorities could be confused with this selection of twenty-eight elders called to serve in the Salt Lake Stake because Charles C. Rich and Lorenzo Snow, both apostles, assisted the stake president in setting the missionaries apart.⁴⁰

The first of a long series of home missionary monthly meetings was held on 11 October 1877 at the Council House in Salt Lake City. At that meeting it was decided to meet in the Council House regularly at seven o'clock on the last Wednesday evening of each month for instruction and prayer. A special appointment book containing the elders' ward visiting schedule was placed in the office of John Taylor, president of the Quorum of the Twelve, and presiding head of the Church in the period following the death of Brigham Young.⁴¹

⁴⁰Salt Lake Stake (SLS), Historical Record, Minutes 1876-80, 8 October 1877, p. 88, Church Archives.

⁴¹Ibid., 10 October 1877, p. 89.

The visiting system of the Salt Lake Stake was organized by dividing the wards into two groups—the city wards and the country wards. Home missionaries were assigned in a rotating basis to visit the city wards on the first and third Sundays and the country wards on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. This meant that each ward was visited twice a month by home missionaries, but the home missionaries were often assigned to make a speaking visit every Sunday.⁴² The country wards held their meetings starting about 11:00 A.M., with starting times ranging to 2:00 P.M. The city wards held evening meetings, most of which began at 6:00 P.M. and some at 6:30 P.M.⁴³ Travel to these settlements was often by horseback or railroad. Edward Stevenson, who had been called as a missionary in the Salt Lake area in 1867 and served until 1873, related that he was dependent upon his missionary horse to get him to all of his appointments. Brother Stevenson was called again in 1880 to serve as a home missionary in the Salt Lake Stake. This is an example of missionary service as a direct continuation of the methods, forms, and procedures of earlier missionary work.⁴⁴

In June 1879, the appointment book was moved from the office of President Taylor and placed in the office of the gatekeeper at the east gate of the Temple Block. That summer home missionaries enthusiastically preached in reformation style. Two-day meetings were held in Mill Creek Ward and West Jordan. These meetings were designed to teach in some depth and to motivate the local members of West Jordan, South Jordan, Herriman, North Jordan, and Mill Creek to repent, reform, and retrench their lives. The custom of holding two-day ward meetings did not flourish, although two-day stake conferences were standard. The regular twice-a-month visits to local wards became a sustaining feature of the home missionary assignment.⁴⁵

Several policies and procedures in the call and operation of a home missionary program were worked out and formalized in the 1880s. George Goddard protested, as the Salt Lake Stake Sunday School superintendent, that conflict existed in the call of home missionaries who were also Sunday School officers and teachers in their own wards. Because the starting time in the country wards for sacrament meeting was late morning or early afternoon, the home mission-

⁴²SLS, Home Missionaries Appointments 1877, pp. 1-8, Church Archives.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Diary of Edward Stevenson, 5 May 1872, microfilm of holograph, Church Archives.

⁴⁵SLS, Historical Record 1876-80, 14 June 1879.

aries from Salt Lake City were forced to miss morning Sunday School duties in order to travel to their appointments. Despite the disruption of the ward Sunday Schools the stake president and high council were reluctant to release the home missionaries, unsure of the policy regarding their call. For twenty years home missionaries had been called by the First Presidency of the Church and some doubt existed in the minds of stake presidency and high council as to whether or not they were authorized to release this set of missionaries. They did allow individuals to resign, but declined to release the Sunday School workers because these home missionaries were appointed by the highest authority of the stake, approved by the First Presidency of the Church, and sustained by a vote of the conference.⁴⁶

The question of personnel changes in the home missionary corps was decided for the Salt Lake Stake on 12 December 1881. One plan was to make a complete change of the group and call another set of home missionaries for a similar term at the end of which the group would again change completely. Some stakes, such as Cache and Utah Stake, adopted this procedure. The feeling of the Salt Lake Stake high council was that gradual changes should be the policy of replacement. This created a perpetuating missionary group which had some members serving for nearly twenty years, giving regular sermons almost every week. Changes were regularly made at stake conferences when the list of home missionaries was presented for a sustaining vote. However, releases did not keep pace with appointments. As some brethren became reluctant to continue aggressive missionary work they were still retained on the list of missionaries but not assigned to make visits. New men were then chosen to assist in the active missionary work, which resulted in the home missionary corps growing larger in size while diminishing in activity.

The high council sometimes assumed the role of home missionaries. At stake conferences both the high council and home missionaries were presented and sustained by the members. The high council was a judicial, advisory body that constituted a regular, well-organized, perpetual group. The home missionary group was also a perpetuating group. The high councilors and alternate members of the high council were sustained on the home missionary list. However, as the number of home missionaries grew to 150, the high councilors represented only a small portion of the group.⁴⁷

⁴⁶SLS High Council, Minutes 1878-82, 29 August 1881, p. 742, Church Archives.

⁴⁷Ibid., 12 December 1881, p. 780.

The qualifications of the men appointed as home missionaries were varied and many. The list of missionaries includes names of older men who were prominent in the community. Businessmen, such as Elias Morris and James P. Freeze, served as home missionaries. In the 1880s family names such as Wooley, Young, Richards, Wells, Cannon, and Pratt were sprinkled across the home missionary lists. Some able young men who would later become prominent also served as home missionaries, such as Andrew Jenson, later assistant church historian, and Matthias F. Cowley, later a member of the Quorum of the Twelve.⁴⁸

Speaking was the primary function of the home missionary. On some occasions topics were suggested by the stake president or other leaders for the home missionaries to take to all the wards. In 1890 home missionaries were enlisted in recruiting members for the Mutual Improvement Associations. Church schools was another topic home missionaries were assigned to discuss. But most of the speaking appointments were left unstructured and the missionary was free to choose his own topic. The talks were often nearly an hour in length and occasionally longer. The following note gives some insight into the type of preaching being done by the missionaries, especially in the meetings conducted in the Scandinavian and German languages. Posted in the appointment book was the notice to the missionaries, "Please do not speak, unless in the language, over thirty minutes."⁴⁹

After fast meeting was moved to the first Sunday of the month from the first Thursday, the schedule of visiting wards twice a month was altered. The city wards were still visited on the second and fourth Sunday, but the country wards were visited only on the third Sunday. This eliminated some traveling which was regularly done by railroad trains on which the home missionaries received half-fare reductions. After the division of the Salt Lake Stake, from 1901 to 1905, the home missionaries continued twice-a-month visiting on the second and fourth Sunday.⁵⁰

The home missionaries in the Salt Lake Stake were not only perpetuated as a group, but also honored by special seating at Tabernacle meetings, where seats to the right of the stand were reserved for them. Presented as business at the 1 April 1902 missionary meet-

⁴⁸Ibid., 13 January 1882, p. 785; SLS High Council, Minutes 1882-87, 21 July 1882, p. 61, Church Archives; SLS High Council, Minutes 1878-82, 16 July 1880, p. 529.

⁴⁹SLS, Home Missionaries Assignments 1883-85, 14 June 1885, Church Archives; SLS, Historical Record 1890-99, 24 September 1890, p. 56, Church Archives.

⁵⁰SLS, Home Missionaries Appointments, 1900-1904, Church Archives.

ing was the proposition that the home missionaries teach members to sustain themselves and thus reduce the welfare support being given by the Church. As part of their regular speaking routine, home missionaries suggested that as many as possible of the people dependent upon the Church for their support sustain themselves.⁵¹

In 1904 a major change in missionary work occurred in the Salt Lake Stake, when Nephi L. Morris, the stake president, announced at the 18 September 1904 stake conference that the missionary work previously performed under the direction of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association was to become the responsibility of the elders' quorums. This started a flurry of local missionary work for the winter of 1904-05. The home missionaries were still organized and preached on Sundays, but new elders were called as local missionaries to visit personally with both members and non-members.

The elders' quorum presidents and the bishops of the Salt Lake Stake submitted lists of elders to the high council for consideration. From those recommended the high council approved thirty-seven elders for the work. Eventually thirty-nine elders accepted the call as local missionaries. This was a dedicated and well-organized program to visit the population residing within the boundaries of the Salt Lake Stake. Record and report books were printed and missionary tracts were purchased by the elders' quorums of the stake. The local missionaries worked in four districts, with two or three wards comprising each district. They were regularly employed in various jobs and worked as missionaries on their own time, traveling in pairs within the district assigned to them by the missionary committee of the high council. The home missionaries reported from their November visits that the local missionary work was underway in each of the wards.⁵²

The work of the local missionaries was to visit the homes of all members of the Church and to hold cottage meetings for members and nonmembers, their purpose being to preach the basic principles of the gospel of Christ and bring about conversions and a renewed dedication. The local missionaries also spoke in regular meetings of the wards and called door-to-door throughout the stake. A young high councilor, Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., reported that in the first month of work the local missionaries visited 176 families of church

⁵¹SLS, Historical Record 1899-1904, April 1902, p. 100, Church Archives.

⁵²SLS, Historical Record 1904, 18 September 1904, p. 86; 12 October 1904, pp. 96-97; 23 November 1904, p. 116; 30 October 1904, p. 103; 23 November 1904, p. 115; 30 November 1904, p. 117, Church Archives.

members, 37 families of nonmembers, held 200 gospel conversations with church members, 43 gospel conversations with nonmembers, 73 prayers with families of members, 5 prayers with families of nonmembers, and held 11 cottage meetings.⁵³

The local missionaries, home missionaries, high council, and stake presidency met jointly in a regular monthly meeting from December 1904 to April 1905 to discuss the total missionary work of the stake. The local missionaries were making impressive accomplishments and the high council not only visited the local sacrament meetings as home missionaries, but also visited the local priesthood quorums. The attendance of the home missionaries at the monthly meeting declined rapidly as they felt others assuming their responsibilities. By contrast the activity and attendance of the local missionaries was high, and a spirit of dedication surrounded their labors. Elder Willard H. Farnes, president of the second missionary district, expressed the urgency of the local missionary work by "exhorting all to throw their energies into works of righteousness, because if they did not abide with Christ, touching the hem of his garment, they might find themselves, like Peter, sitting at the fireplace with the enemies of the Master."⁵⁴

Cottage meetings were a source of rivalry between the local missionaries and the acting teachers, who were elders called to act as teachers. An attempt to heal the rivalry created a change of focus for the local missionaries. They had started with a general missionary approach to all. After the acting teachers and the local missionaries found that they were both attempting to hold cottage meetings, the local missionaries were assigned to build the Aaronic Priesthood offices and lessen the load of the acting teachers.⁵⁵

On 2 May 1905, the local missionaries were released from their assignments and their work was celebrated by a reception hosted by the stake presidency. These missionaries had been very enthusiastic and successful, while the home missionaries had missed appointments, and the acting teachers were not able to generate the drive that had surrounded the work of the local missionaries. Following the experience of a successful year of local missionary work, the call of local missionaries was repeated again in the fall of 1905, with the more focused assignment to work in behalf of the causes of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums in the wards.⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid., 18 December 1904, p. 129.

⁵⁴Ibid., 2 December 1904, p. 122.

⁵⁵SLS, Historical Record 1905, 22 February 1905, p. 21, Church Archives.

⁵⁶Ibid., 2 May 1905.

Home missionaries continued to preach, visit, attend the monthly meeting, and be sustained in stake conference after the temporary program of local missionaries was discontinued. However, home missionary work was no longer characterized by a strong spirit of dedication. By the fall of 1907, thirty-eight home missionaries were sustained, but only fifteen were present at the 21 October 1907 meeting. This apparently was the last separate monthly home missionary meeting held on the Salt Lake Stake. Home missionary assignments were still made and the missionaries continued to work under the complete direction of the high council. An attempt was made to change the nature of the home missionary group by adding the recently returned foreign missionaries to the list of home missionaries in 1912.⁵⁷

In the stake conference of 10 March 1912, a dramatic shift of home missionary work occurred in the Salt Lake Stake when all the home missionaries were released. Following the example of other stakes, the Salt Lake Stake placed the entire missionary emphasis under the seventies. Missionary work approved by the First Council of Seventy was aimed at two groups of people within the stake. The first group consisted of nonmembers, many of whom had vague or wrong ideas about the Mormon Church. The second included nominal adherents of the Church who neglected their religious duties. The six quorums of seventy in the stake were assigned missionary conferences with the same boundaries as their quorum boundaries. Thus, the Salt Lake Stake Mission was first organized in March 1912. The presidency of the mission was composed of six presidents of seventy, one from each quorum, and the presidency of the stake.⁵⁸

The duties of the stake missionaries or seventies included making visits, distributing tracts, loaning religious books, holding gospel conversations, and baptizing converts. They also addressed the Saints in sacrament meeting, sometimes as companions to visiting members of the high council. The stake missionary program, under the direction of the seventies, became a regular feature of the stake organization with a permanent role of visiting the people in their homes..⁵⁹

Seventies were relieved of the duty of speaking in sacrament meetings after about a year of serving in that capacity. New missionaries were chosen in July 1913 by the high council. Twenty-nine

⁵⁷Ibid., 28 April 1905, p. 61; 8 November 1905, p. 147; SLS, Historical Record 1912, 19 February, p. 17, Church Archives.

⁵⁸SLS, Historical Record 1912, 10 March 1912, p. 25.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 29.

elders were called, many being recently returned missionaries, to serve as companions to members of the high council in speaking to the Saints. These home missionaries lacked the autonomy common to the first stake-called home missionaries of the 1870s. Recently returned missionaries were occasionally added to the home missionary list and the missionaries were assigned topics such as tithing, boy scout work, or civic beautification. Church causes on occasion enlisted these home missionaries in supportive, recruiting roles, such as the 1919 membership drive for 100,000 members of the MIA.⁶⁰

Home missionaries continued to be companions to members of the high council until after 1920. During this period many notices were made in minutes of the meetings stating that the home missionaries were performing in an uninterested and unsatisfactory manner. Bishops and bishops' counselors were assigned to accompany the high council on their preaching visits in order to give the bishoprics a wider experience in how meetings were being conducted in other wards of the stake. In an attempt to find something more meaningful for them to do, home missionaries were sent to preach to the ward meetings without high council members for a period of time before 1925 when it was again decided to have high councilors speak with a home missionary companion.⁶¹

In contrast to the method of using home missionaries in the Salt Lake Stake, the Cache Stake at Logan, Utah, structured the role of home missionaries in different ways. After 1871 home missionaries were called from the high council at Logan. Visits and two-day meetings were held in many wards in the early 1870s. In November 1876, about twenty-six missionaries were organized in Logan to preach to the surrounding wards during that winter. Later, after May 1877, when the Cache Stake was reorganized and Moses Thatcher was sustained as stake president, these men were called to various leadership positions. Other home missionaries were called in Cache Stake who continued the active tradition of preaching and personal visiting. They were assigned to ward meetings, and also spoke at the Sunday afternoon Tabernacle meetings in Logan.⁶²

⁶⁰SLS, Historical Record 1913, 16 July 1913, p. 80; SLS, Historical Record 1918, 30 January 1918, p. 81; SLS, Historical Record 1920, 14 March 1920, p. 160; SLS, Historical Record 1919, 27 August 1919, p. 137; SLS Historical Record 1922, 26 April 1922, p. 303, all in Church Archives.

⁶¹SLS, Historical Record 1920, 19 April 1920, p. 188; 14 April 1920, p. 187; SLS, Historical Record 1925, 17 November 1925, p. 64, Church Archives.

⁶²Cache Stake (CS), Missionary Meeting Minutes 1876-77, pp. 1-15, 50, 52, 53, and 100; CS, Historical Record 1877-84, 28 December 1879, p. 259, Church Archives.

Christian J. Larsen served as a home missionary in Cache and Box Elder Counties during the late 1860s. He also had missionary duties during the 1870s as a high councilor, both with the English-speaking Mormons and the Scandinavian Saints. In 1877 he was released from the high council to become a counselor to Bishop Melvin J. Ballard, but was not released from his duties as a home missionary. During 1880 Elder Larsen filled a three-month full-time home mission throughout Cache Stake where he and his companion visited from house to house and preached in public meetings. He reported at the January 1881 stake conference that in this missionary labor he "had traveled 500 miles, held 143 meetings, administered to 73 sick persons, and listened to the testimony of 313 Latter-day Saints bearing witness to the truth."⁶³

Home missionaries were called for a definite term of missionary work in the Cache Stake as regular procedure. Six months was the most common term, and missionaries were assigned to work in one ward for the period of their call. This resulted in the same two or three missionaries speaking in the local ward for the six-month duration of the call. The high councilors did not make regular visits and preaching tours to the local wards, but did do home missionary service when separately sustained as home missionaries. Therefore, during the 1880s, some periods of time elapsed when the local wards were left to develop their own preaching programs without missionaries from the stake.⁶⁴

The home missionaries were instructed in the Cache Stake to attend the Sunday Schools in the wards they visited, and use every opportunity to talk, and encourage the young in private.⁶⁵ The usual quality of their sermons may be judged from the following instruction "to take time to improve themselves as they may talk intelligently."⁶⁶ The reports of the home missionary labors in the Cache Stake during the months from December 1895 to March 1896 indicate that the group of missionaries visited 3,023 families, held 55 meetings, visited 22 Sunday Schools, visited 41 outsiders, and were turned away from 10 houses. By 1904 the home missionaries were serving for six-month periods on a rotating schedule of preaching in sacrament meetings and visiting Sunday Schools.⁶⁷

⁶³Diary of Christian J. Larsen, 1870, 1877, pp. 212-15, typescript, BYU.

⁶⁴CS, Historical Record 1882-98, 7 February 1886, p. 96; 5 November 1888, p. 231-32, Church Archives.

⁶⁵CS, Historical Record 1877-84, 13 May 1883, pp. 510-11.

⁶⁶CS, Historical Record 1882-98, 15 May 1898, p. 550, Church Archives.

⁶⁷CS, Historical Record 1882-98, 1894-95, inset between pp. 578-79; CS, Historical Record 1899-1903, 11 May 1902, pp. 364-65, Church Archives.

In January 1907, the high council became involved with a different version of missionary work among the Saints. The high councilors visited a ward and, with the cooperation of the bishop, called several acting priests to hold cottage meetings with the members and do visiting missionary work. The measurement of success of this program was the increased attendance at sacrament meetings, which ranged from nineteen percent to thirty-five percent for December 1906. The acting priests' missionary program was under the supervision of the bishops, but was directed by members of the high council.⁶⁸

In October 1908, the stake presidency of the Cache Stake invited the seventies of the area to perform some missionary work during the fall and winter of 1908-09. Their labors were preaching house-to-house and holding meetings, an action which was approved by the high council and the bishops. There began in that area a missionary movement under the direction of the seventies which grew into the stake missionary movement common to most stakes of the Church since that time. However, this stake mission included holding meetings both with members and strangers, while the stake missionary work as currently constituted developed into a system of work with nonmembers only.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

By the mid-1920s the home missionary visit (which was the leading form of conversion and reformation in the 1870s) had dissipated to monthly high council visits to the Saints in sacrament meeting. The term home missionary was at times applied to the visiting companions of the high councilors, and recently returned missionaries were at times called to work with the high councilors in preaching to the wards.⁷⁰ However, in many rural stakes the returned missionaries soon left to attend school or seek employment in the urban centers. In these areas stake missionaries, presidents of quorums of seventy, stake clerks, and priesthood quorum leaders are still enlisted into the preaching corps to tour the wards and bring the good word to the Saints. Many regular high council visits are scheduled on the second Sunday of each month. Other stakes send high council home missionaries on the third Sunday.

⁶⁸CS, Historical Record 1904-07, 5 January 1907, p. 307, Church Archives.

⁶⁹CS, Historical Record 1907-09, 14 October 1908, p. 236, Church Archives.

⁷⁰*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints General Handbook of Instructions*, Number 20 (Salt Lake City: The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968), p. 14.

Missionary work has been a characteristic of Mormonism since the publication of the Book of Mormon. During the 1830s and 1840s the missionaries frequently used the homes and hospitality of Church members in preaching the gospel message. However, direct member involvement changed after the Mormon group moved to the Mountain West. No longer did missionaries bring unifying messages to Church homes on their way to the mission field. Because missionaries left the communities of Utah, local members became isolated from Church functions, depending almost entirely on the zeal and ability of local officers.

Isolation, inactivity, loss of communication, and declining devotion to religious duty were situations which needed reform, thus prompting the creation of the home missionary system. As previously mentioned, the missionaries' function was to travel, preach reform and repentance and to open communication between the leaders of the Church and individual members. The missionaries' travels crossed organizational boundaries and broke down barriers of isolation. Traveling missionaries directly contacted Church members with personal and religious messages, thus bypassing less-than-zealous or inept local officers. The missionaries created a sense of belonging to a larger group, either stake or Church-wide. Exhortations to repent and increase religious devotion characterized each missionary wave. Each successive home missionary effort met with initial enthusiasm and success as needs for communication and identity were met, but often continued in form long after the program had ceased to function effectively.

As television, Church-wide magazines, and regional representatives bring direction and exhortation directly to the Church membership, the home missionary program becomes a rarely remembered, though significant, part of our past.