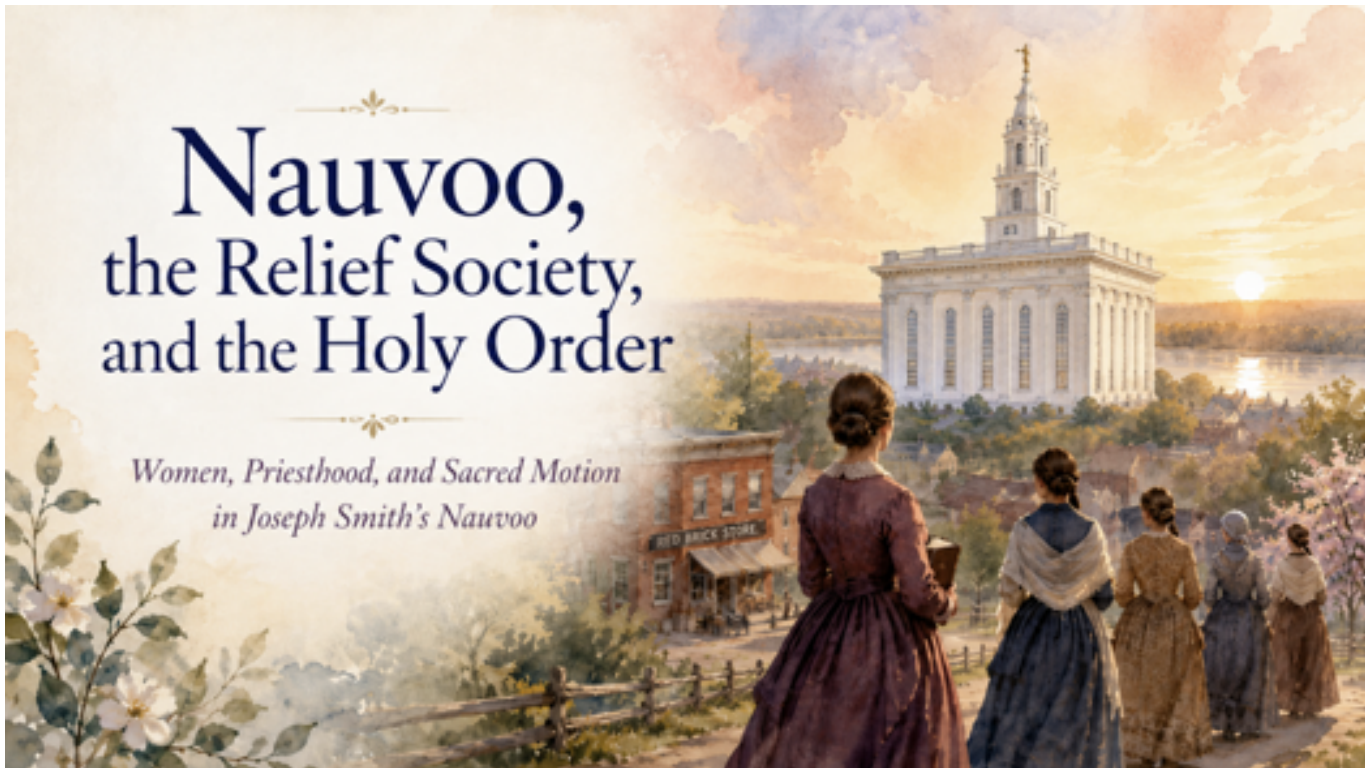


Fluid Revelation and the Living Temple Ordinance

The Relief Society and Entrance into the Holy Order

6 Nauvoo, Women, and the Holy Order



This week we are tracing the Saint's move from their refugee survival at Commerce into the organized female covenant body of the Relief Society and then into women's participation in the Holy Order. Read the sources as a sequence. Women first sustain the community through nursing, textile labor, healing, and spiritual gifts. Joseph then organizes them under a presidency with their designed laws, minutes, and is given revelation of their own authority. In late 1843, women begin receiving and administering the Nauvoo temple ordinances. The assignment asks you to dive into the contemporary records from later recollections and to identify where the evidence is direct, where it is retrospective, and where an interpretation depends upon the convergence of several sources. Study this diachronically and realistically. Help yourself understand what is happening and put extra weight on the theophonic text.

1 Refuge, Disease, and the Women Who Kept Commerce Alive

Emily and Harriet Partridge as a case study in female ministry before formal organization



Emily and Harriet Partridge arrived at Commerce after repeated displacement through Ohio, Missouri, Quincy, and Pittsfield. Their father pitched the family tent beneath an elm tree. Because the sisters had not yet contracted the local fever, Edward Partridge sent them among the sick. Emily cared for Ebenezer Robinson and his wife until she became ill herself. Harriet returned to the family tent sick before Emily. Harriet died on May 16, 1840, at age eighteen, and Edward died eleven days later on May 27. Their story is just one example of how women were already performing the embodied work of relief, healing by laying on of hands, and communal service before the Relief Society gave that work a formal ecclesiastical home. It first evolved naturally and God uses that natural evolution to teach what more it can be. We can look back and see what it was originally in the age of the first temple.

Required readings

1. [Emily Dow Partridge Young, Autobiography](#) **Primary source.** Read from the family's arrival in Quincy through the deaths of Harriet and Edward. Mark every action performed by Emily, Harriet, Lydia, and the women who cared for the Partridge children.
2. [A Beautiful Place, Saints, volume 1, chapter 35](#) **Historical synthesis.** Compare this narrative reconstruction with Emily's autobiography. Identify which details come from Emily and which details are supplied by the modern historical narrative.
3. [Joseph Smith Journal, July 21 through 23, 1839](#) **Primary source.** Read the contemporary journal entry describing widespread sickness and priesthood administrations. Pay attention to the admission that many remained sick and new cases continued daily.

Source questions

1. What forms of religious and communal authority appear in Emily and Harriet's actions before either woman holds a formal office?
2. How does the retrospective date of Emily's autobiography affect the way you use it as evidence? Name one detail that can be corroborated through another source.
3. What changes when Joseph's documented healing administrations are read alongside the women's daily labor of nursing, feeding, washing, carrying water, and caring for the dying?

2 Springfield, Legal Protection, and Masonic Authorization

Documented networks, institutional authority, and the limits of historical inference

SPRINGFIELD: THE LEGAL AND MASONIC NETWORK BEHIND NAUVOO
Illinois Networks that Secured Redress, Protection, and Priesthood Order, 1839-1842

I. JOSEPH'S ENTRY INTO SPRINGFIELD
Seeking Redress for Missouri
 Nov. 4-9, 1839
 Joseph Smith travels from Commerce to Washington to seek redress for injuries suffered in Missouri.
 "Nothing but a sense of humanity could have urged me on to so great a sacrifice—shall I see so many perish, and not seek redress?"
 Joseph Smith
 Joseph lodged with John Tenney, then with General James Adams, who became a trusted friend and political adviser.
 Nov. 9, 1839
 Adams writes a letter of introduction for Joseph and companions to President Martin Van Buren.
 JOSEPH SMITH
 JAMES ADAMS
 Lincoln's Documented Awareness March 1, 1840
 Abraham Lincoln writes to John T. Stuart:
 "I feel sure you will be able to do what I can do for the people here, and send them to you before long."
 JOHN T. STUART
 JAMES ADAMS
 ABRAHAM LINCOLN
 THE JOURNEY OF REDRESS
 COMMERCE (NAUVOO) May 1839
 SPRINGFIELD Nov. 4-9, 1839
 WASHINGTON CITY Nov. 11, 1839

II. SPRINGFIELD'S LEGAL AND POLITICAL WORLD
 SPRINGFIELD: LEGAL CAPITAL OF ILLINOIS
 The center of law, politics, and influence in Illinois.
 • Governor Thomas Carlin
 • Stephen A. Douglas
 • John T. Stuart
 • James Adams
 • Joshua Speed
 • Abraham Lincoln
 • and many others
 Dec. 16, 1840
 Nauvoo Charter becomes law.
 Lincoln congratulates John C. Bennett after the final vote.
 Joseph Smith Papers, 17:16 (Oct 16 to November 1, 1840)
 JOSEPH'S EXTRADITION HEARING IN SPRINGFIELD Jan. 4-5, 1841
 Joseph appears before U.S. Judge Nathaniel Pope at the Tenney Building.
 Tenney Building, Springfield (Pope's Courtroom before Lincoln's law office above)
 Mary Todd Lincoln sits with several prominent Springfield notaries beside Judge Pope during the hearing.
 Abraham Lincoln's law office occupied the upper floor of the same building.
 LINCOLN'S LATER COMMENTS ABOUT THE SAINTS June 1841
 Lincoln reportedly tells T. B. H. Bushman:
 "If Brigham Young will let me alone, I will let Brigham Young alone."
 Brigham Young Office File, Bushman Papers
 KEY POINT
 We can prove Joseph joined through Springfield and met with major leaders. We can prove Lincoln knew of Joseph's remarks and disavowed the Saints. We cannot prove a recorded meeting between Joseph and Lincoln. The documentary record shows meeting, awareness, and political interest.

III. THE MASONIC AUTHORIZATION CHAIN
 April 6, 1840
 JAMES ADAMS
 Elected Deputy Grand Master
 Grand Lodge of Illinois
 at Jacksonville, Illinois
 June 1841
 LUCIUS SCOWEL AND
 NAUVOO MASONRY
 Petition the Grand Lodge
 for a Representative
 (Buckley Lodge (Quincy)
 declares sponsorship)
 Oct. 15, 1841
 ABRAHAM JONAS
 Grand Master of Illinois
 Grants dispensation for a
 Temporary Lodge in Nauvoo
 Dec. 29, 1841
 NAUVOO LODGE
 Eighteen Masons meet in
 Haven Smith's office and
 organize the temporary lodge
 under dispensation.
 Mar. 15-16, 1842
 JOSEPH SMITH
 Mar. 15 - Entered Apprentice
 Mar. 16 - Fellow Craft and
 Master Mason
 (Authorized "at night" by
 Haven Smith)
 WHAT FOLLOWED IN THE RED BRICK STORE (UPPER ROOM)
 March 17, 1842
 Relief Society of Nauvoo Organized
 May 4, 1842
 Nauvoo Endowment
 Introduced to 9 Men
 (including James Adams)
 Summer-Aug. 1842-43
 Joseph Ordained
 High Priest (Men, then
 Women in Sept. 1842)

★ Springfield created the network. Masonry supplied an authorized ritual environment. Joseph transformed sacred motion into temple covenant. ★

SOURCES
 • Joseph Smith Papers: Letter to Emma Smith, 9 Nov. 1839; Letter of James Adams, 9 Nov. 1839; Documents, Vol. 9 (Dec. 1841-Apr. 1842).
 • Papers of Abraham Lincoln: Abraham Lincoln to John T. Stuart, 1 Mar. 1840; An Act to Incorporate the City of Nauvoo, 18 Dec. 1840.
 • Joseph Smith Papers: Part 3: Introduction (17 Dec. 1842-18 Jan. 1843); Journals, 2-3 Jan. 1843; Authorization from Abraham Jonas, 11 Mar. 1842.
 • Susan Emma Black, "James Adams of Springfield, Illinois: The Link between Abraham Lincoln and Joseph Smith," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (1999).
 • Richard L. Bushman, "Joseph Smith and Abraham Lincoln," in *Joseph Smith and the Discarded Restoration*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., 238-244.

NOTE: The evidence does not establish a recorded meeting between Joseph Smith and Abraham Lincoln. The sources show proximity, awareness, intermediaries, communication networks, and continuing political and social overlap.

Joseph entered Springfield in November 1839 while seeking legal and political redress for the Missouri expulsions. The documentary chain leads from Joseph's relationship with James Adams into the Illinois Masonic structure through which the Nauvoo lodge was authorized. The assignment is to reconstruct the chain without turning circumstantial proximity into an invented private meeting. But to also not ignore the obvious connection that are the most likely connection to the similarities of the Nauvoo Temple rites and the Freemasonry ritual drama. Every step should be labeled as documented fact, strong inference, or unresolved possibility.

Required readings

1. [Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, November 9, 1839](#) **Primary source.** Read Joseph's explanation for the sacrifice of the journey and his language of humanity, injury, and redress.
2. [Abraham Lincoln to John T. Stuart, March 1, 1840](#) **Primary source.** Identify exactly what Lincoln says about "Jo Smith" and what the letter proves about political awareness in Lincoln's circle.
3. [Authorization from Abraham Jonas, March 15, 1842](#) **Primary source.** Read the special authorization permitting Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon to receive the Masonic degrees rapidly. Note who possessed authority to permit the exception.
4. [Nauvoo Masonic Lodge minutes, March 15 and 16, 1842](#) **Primary source.** Construct an hour by hour chronology of Joseph's initiation, advancement, and raising as a Master Mason.

Source questions

1. List the documented links connecting Joseph Smith, James Adams, Abraham Jonas, and the Nauvoo lodge. Which link remains an inference?
2. Why does the written authorization from Jonas matter for evaluating Joseph's unusually rapid advancement?
3. How should a historian describe Joseph's relationship to Lincoln's Springfield world without claiming a meeting that the surviving record does not preserve?

3 Naming Nauvoo and the Restoration of Daughter Zion

Hebrew interpretation, prophetic personification, and revelation through accommodation



The First Presidency explained Nauvoo as a Hebrew name conveying a beautiful situation or place and the idea of rest. The name belongs beside Isaiah's Daughter Zion texts with the language being squarely rooted in the role of the Mother understood through the lens of Doctrine and Covenants 124. Joseph names the refugee settlement into its intended future. The linguistic assignment requires us to understand what the Hebrew forms can mean, identify Joseph's nineteenth century interpretation, and then explain how the prophetic image of Zion as mother produces the daughters of Zion from Isaiah in mother, bride, and city which has always shaped the theological argument since the obscurity of the Mother.

Required readings

1. [First Presidency Proclamation, January 15, 1841](#) **Primary source.** Read the explanation of Nauvoo and the Joseph Smith Papers annotation discussing Joseph's Hebrew study and the forms associated with beauty and rest.
2. [Doctrine and Covenants 124](#) **Primary source.** Mark every phrase concerning Zion, city, habitation, rest, temple, house, glory, and the gathering of the Saints.
3. [Isaiah 52, 54, and 62](#) **Primary source.** Begin with Isaiah 52 and continue into chapters 54 and 62. Trace Daughter Zion from humiliation and exile into beauty, marriage, children, and restored covenant identity.
4. [Louis C. Zucker, Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew](#) **Academic article.** Read the discussion of Joshua Seixas, Joseph's Hebrew training, and the linguistic background proposed for the name Nauvoo.

Source questions

1. What is the difference between saying that Nauvoo lexically means "woman" and saying that its language of beauty and rest participates in the restoration pattern of the women of the church as the Daughters of Zion?
2. How and more importantly why does Isaiah personify the covenant city as a woman, and which features of that personification become relevant to Nauvoo?
3. Explain how the naming of Nauvoo illustrates revelation through accommodation. How does God name and direct a future without forcing the people immediately into its final form?

4 Sacred Textile, Kirtland Gifts, and Something Better

From women who construct sacred space to women organized for sacred order

FROM SACRED TEXTILE TO PRIESTHOOD ORDER
Ancient weavers, Kirtland gifts, and the organization of women
EXODUS 35 | 2 KINGS 23 | FEBRUARY 22, 1836 | MARCH 17, 1842

ANCIENT PATTERNS	KIRTLAND PATTERN Spiritual gifts and sacred textile labor	NAUVOO TRANSFORMATION From sewing society to Relief Society
EXODUS 35:25-26 Women wise of heart prepare the sanctuary  חכמת לב Hakmat leb women skilled and wise of heart קוץ Qatz they spun sacred materials אֲרָבוֹת Aravot woven women weaving in the temple precinct	FEBRUARY 22, 1836 "This afternoon the sisters met to make the veil of the Temple." Joseph Smith Journal  Temple clothing for worker needs Veils and curtains for the Temple Healing and prophecy Tongues in harmony	MARCH 1, 1842 A sewing society proposed to aid the temple.  MARCH 17, 1842 Female Relief Society organized in the upper room of the Red Brick Store. 
2 KINGS 23:7 (First Temple Period, c. 922 BCE) Women weaving in the temple of the Lord  הַנָּשִׁים Hanashim the women אֲרָבוֹת Aravot women weaving within the precinct of the house of Yahweh for Asherah Scholars debate what was woven: shawls, tent coverings, garments, curtains, hangings, or symbols "veils." The participation is certain.	IN KIRTLAND WOMEN: - Healed the sick and laid on hands (Sarah Leavitt, Edna Rogers) - Propheesied and interpreted tongues (Mary Fiddling Smith) - Sang in tongues in perfect harmony (Percival Huntington) - Participated in relief, healing, feeding, and temple labor WOMEN CONSTRUCTED THE SACRED INTERIOR. KIRTLAND ORDINANCES REMAINED MALE.	JOSEPH SMITH ORGANIZES WOMEN WITH: - Needlework for the Temple - Presidency (President, Counselors) - Constitution and law (Minutes as precedent) - Officers and minutes - Moral discipline, charity, fellowship - Temple preparation and priesthood gifts "This is not what the sisters want, there is something better for them." —Sarah M. Kimball (reminiscence, 1882)
SACRED LABOR BECAME SACRED ORGANIZATION. SACRED ORGANIZATION PREPARED WOMEN FOR SACRED ORDER.		
SOURCES - Exodus 35:25-26; Exodus 38:8 (JVP) 2 Kings 23:7 (JVP) - Discourse and Comments 88:67-68, 117-126, 122 - Joseph Smith Journal, February 22, 1836, Joseph Smith Papers, Journals, Vol. 1, p. 139 - Edward W. Tulidge, <i>The Women of Mormonism</i>, 1870, pp. 93-96 (Percival Huntington account, pp. 93-94) - Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, <i>Sweet Counsel and Seas of Tribulation: The Religious Life of the Women in Kirtland</i>, #10 Studies 20, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 131-162 - Annexed to Phyllis, <i>Women, Veils, and Kings: A New History of the Ancient Near East</i> (Oxford University Press, 2022), chap. 6 - Linda G. Vandross, <i>Fruit of the Bands: Women, Work, and Society in the Hebrew Bible</i> (Oxford University Press, 2022), chap. 1 - Scott B. Noegel, "The Women of Asherah: Weaving Wickedness in 2 Kings 23:7," <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> 83, no. 1 (2021): 298-319 - Debra C. Robinson, <i>The First Mormon Temple: Design, Construction, and Historic Context of the Kirtland Temple</i> (Signature Books), 2011, pp. 81-86 - Sarah M. Kimball, "Early Relief Society Reunions," March 17, 1882, in <i>The First Fifty Years of Relief Society</i>, Part 1 (CHP, 2011), pp. 6-12 - Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, March 17, 1842 (JVP) - David Lambert, <i>Veiled Roots</i>, Chapters 4-5		

The comparison between ancient sanctuary weavers, Kirtland women, and the proposed Nauvoo sewing society is typological and institutional. Exodus presents women wise and skilled of heart who wove the narratives of life on the temple veil for the sanctuary. Second Kings preserves women weaving within the First Temple period. Kirtland women were first asked to make the temple veils that separated sacred space in Kirtland. In Nauvoo, a proposed sewing society to support temple construction was first given to the sisters to organize as a presidency under, it led to the governing record, and a female covenant body. The comparison rests on the inspiration of these recurring functions in our modern times.

Required readings

- 1. Exodus 35:25 through 26 and Exodus 38:8 Primary source.** Read the women described as wise of heart, their spinning of sacred materials, and the women serving or assembling at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.
- 2. Second Kings 23:7 Primary source.** Identify the women, the location of their weaving, and the debated object described by the Hebrew word often translated "hangings," "houses," or "shrines."
- 3. Scott B. Noegel, The Women of Asherah Academic article.** Read the linguistic discussion of the women weaving in Second Kings 23:7. Record what the text establishes securely and what remains debated.
- 4. Joseph Smith Journal, February 22, 1836 Primary source.** Read the entry stating that the sisters met to make the temple veil and note the organized religious setting of the work.
- 5. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Sweet Counsel and Seas of Tribulation Academic article.** Read the evidence for women's prophecy, tongues, healing, and inspiration in Kirtland and identify how charismatic authority developed where formal office remained limited.
- 6. Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, March 17, 1842 Primary source.** Trace the transformation from a drafted sewing society constitution into presidency, law, officers, minutes, discipline, and temple preparation.

Source questions

1. What does the Hebrew phrase "wise of heart" contribute to the interpretation of women's textile labor as sacred intelligence rather than ordinary domestic work?
2. State the strongest academic comparison among Exodus, Second Kings, Kirtland, and Nauvoo. Then state one claim the evidence does not support.
3. Why does the creation of the Kirtland veil matter to an argument about women later entering the temple order rather than merely supporting it from outside?

5 Emma Smith, Elect Lady, and the Mission of Relief

Revelation becomes presidency, and relief becomes organized salvation work

EMMA SMITH, ELECT LADY, AND THE MISSION OF RELIEF
Doctrine and Covenants 25, the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, and the movement from charity to covenant order
July 1830 | March 17, 1842 | March 24, 1842 | March 31, 1842 | June 9, 1842

I. THE ELECT LADY REVELATION
July 1830
Doctrine and Covenants 25
• Emma called an elect lady
• to expound scripture
• to exhort the Church
• to make a selection of sacred hymns
• fulfilled institutionally in Nauvoo
"Emma had been called and ordained to expound scripture and teach the female part of the community."
Relief Society Minute Book, 17 March 1842
Joseph interprets the 1830 revelation as a living office, not a private consolation. Emma's calling becomes public presidency.
SARAH M. CLEVELAND, Counselor
ELIZABETH ANN WHITNEY, Counselor

II. EMMA BECOMES PRESIDENT
March 17, 1842
Twenty women gathered in the upper room of the Red Brick Store.
Emma Smith elected President
Sarah M. Cleveland and Elizabeth Ann Whitney chosen as counselors
Ella R. Snow, secretary
Phoebe M. Wheeler, assistant secretary
Eliza A. Corcoran, treasurer
Joseph organizes the women with:
• Presidency
• Constitution and law
• Minutes and appointments
• Officers and appointments
• Moral discipline
• Temple preparation
"This Society is to get instruction through the order which God has established."
Minute and Discourses, 17 March 1842
"Let this Presidency serve as a constitution -- all their decisions be considered law."
Relief Society Minute Book, 17 March 1842
THE ELECT LADY BECOMES THE PRESIDING WOMAN. REVELATION BECOMES INSTITUTION.

III. WHY 'RELIEF' MATTERS
March 24, 1842
The name "Female Relief Society of Nauvoo" is adopted.
March 31, 1842
Joseph teaches the Society should move according to the ancient Priesthood and become a kingdom of priests.
June 9, 1842
Joseph teaches the Society is not only to relieve the poor but to save souls.
RELIEF AS BENEVOLENT LANGUAGE
• Relieve the poor
• Visit the needy
• Correct morals
• Strengthen faith
• Prepare women for temple blessings
• Save souls
"We are going to do something extraordinary."
— Emma Smith
Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book
SCHOLARLY INTERPRETATION
Relief Society was more than benevolence. It functioned as a female covenant order of preparation: charity, discernment, governance, healing, and holiness moving toward temple participation.
RELIEF BECOMES TEMPLE PREPARATION DISGUISED AS MERCY.

EMMA'S PRESIDENCY JOINED REVELATION, FEMALE GOVERNANCE, AND SACRED PREPARATION INTO ONE EMERGING ORDER.

SOURCES
• Doctrine and Covenants 25
• Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, 17 March 1842
• Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, 24 March 1842
• Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, 9 June 1842
• Joseph Smith Papers, "Minutes and Discourses, 17 March 1842"
• Joseph Smith Papers, "Discourse, 31 March 1842"
• Church Historian's Press, The First Fifty Years of Relief Society, Part I
• Gospel Topics Essays, "Joseph Smith's Teachings about Priesthood, Temple, and Women"
• Jill Mulvey Dyer, Carol Cornwall Maloney, Kate Haddock, and Matthew J. Green, eds., The First Fifty Years of Relief Society
• Jared Lundberg, Chapter 5, "Nauvoo and the Relief Society"

Doctrine and Covenants 25 calls Emma a daughter in Zion and an elect lady, then commissions her to expound scripture and exhort the Church. On March 17, 1842, Joseph reads that revelation into the organization of the Relief Society and interprets Emma's election as its institutional fulfillment. The naming debate then reveals the women's understanding of their work. Relief means active rescue, moral protection, governance, and the saving of souls. Emma's presidency joins the personal revelation of 1830 to a functioning female institution in 1842. The restoration language is clear.

Required readings

1. [Doctrine and Covenants 25](#) **Primary source.** Mark daughter in Zion, elect lady, office, expound, exhort, hymns, and the final statement that the Lord's voice is unto all.
2. [Revelation, July 1830 C](#) **Primary source.** Compare the early manuscript wording with the modern canonical text and review the historical annotation.
3. [Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, March 17, 1842](#) **Primary source.** Read Joseph's interpretation of elect as elected to a particular work, the appointment of Emma's counselors, and the debate between Benevolent and Relief.
4. [Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, June 9, 1842](#) **Primary source.** Read Joseph's statement that the Society exists to relieve the poor and save souls. Observe how material aid and repentance are joined in one mission.
5. [Something Better for the Sisters](#) **Academic chapter.** Read the scholarly reconstruction of the proposed sewing society, the organization under priesthood authority, and the temple trajectory of the Society.
6. [Joseph Smith's Teachings about Priesthood, Temple, and Women](#) **Official historical essay.** Record how the official essay distinguishes delegated priesthood authority, women's temple ordinances, and ordination to male ecclesiastical office.

Source questions

1. How did inspiration to the women leaders of the time transform Emma's personal revelation into the public institutional authority then established on March 17, 1842?
2. Why does Emma prefer Relief to Benevolent, and what does the choice reveal about the intended mission of the Society? Keep in mind Joseph's teachings of the restoration of Lady Zion as the relief that will restore the covenant city.
3. How can the Relief Society be described as a preparatory female priesthood order while preserving the distinction between its authority and male priesthood offices?

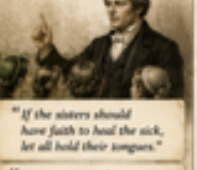
6 Women Enter and Administer the Holy Order

Contemporary evidence for healing, endowment, female officiation, and reciprocal covenant administration

WOMEN ENTER AND ADMINISTER THE HOLY ORDER

Healing, anointing, temple administration, and covenant partnership

APRIL 1842 THROUGH APRIL 1844

1 RELIEF SOCIETY ADMINISTRATION APRIL 19, 1842 Emma Smith, Sarah Cleveland, and Elizabeth Ann Whitney administer to Elizabeth Durfee.  <i>"She was healed, and thought the sisters had more faith than the brethren."</i> — Elizabeth Durfee Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, April 19, 1842 Sarah Cleveland and Elizabeth Whitney then administer to Abigail Leonard for the restoration of health. 	2 EMMA ENTERS THE HIGHEST ORDER APRIL 28, 1842 Joseph Smith teaches the sisters about healing and the keys.  <i>"If the sisters should have faith to heal the sick, let all hold their tongues."</i> — Joseph Smith to the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, April 28, 1842 <i>"I now turn the key to you in the name of God."</i> — Joseph Smith to the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, April 28, 1842 - Female administration was "according to revelation." - Those appointed to lead were authorized to appoint others. - The proper order would reach completion through the temple.	3 EMMA OFFICIATES FOR WOMEN SEPTEMBER 28, 1843 Emma Smith becomes the first woman to receive the Nauvoo endowment.  <i>"I am now at the highest and holiest order of the priesthood."</i> — Joseph Smith Journal, September 28, 1843 FIRST WOMAN ENDOWED The Joseph Smith Papers identifies the "companion" as Emma Smith. <i>"Emma began to help administer the ordinance to other women."</i> — Church Historian's Press, The First Fifty Years of Relief Society Emma receives the ordinance from Joseph's temple council. She then administers the ordinance to other women.	4 VILATE KIMBALL COMPLETES THE RITUAL LATE 1843–EARLY 1844 Emma, as president of the Relief Society and endowed in the Holy Order, officiates for other women.  <i>"My wife Vilate and many females were received into the Holy Order, and was washed and anointed by Emma."</i> — Heber C. Kimball Diary, January 1844 Elizabeth Ann Whitney officiates for Vilate Kimball (OCTOBER 1843). Vilate Kimball Anoints the First Women (JANUARY 1844). - Women received the ordinance through Emma's administration. - They then joined the same temple council with endowed men. - Women became female temple officers.
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HEALING ADMINISTRATION → ENDOWMENT → HOLY ORDER → RECIPROCAL COVENANT ADMINISTRATION

SOURCES:

- Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, April 19 and April 28, 1842 (CPL; Dyer et al., *First Fifty Years of Relief Society*, Part 1, 1:24–1:27)
- Joseph Smith Journal, September 28 and October 27, 1843, in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, Journals, Volume 3 (Dec. 1842–June 1844)
- Church Historian's Press, *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*, Part 1 (Introduction and documents)
- Heber C. Kimball Diary, January 1844, February 1, 1844, and April 1, 1844 (CPL; quoted in Helen Mae Whitney, "Women in Nauvoo," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (1882–83): 140)
- Willard Woodruff Journal, May 5, 1844 (CPL)
- Dewey S. Anderson & Gary James Bergeron, "The Anointed Quorum in Nauvoo, 1842–1845," *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 2 (2003): 129–131
- Jonathan A. Stapley & Kristine Wright, "Female Ethical Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (2011): 1–41
- Jared Lambert, *United Roots*, Chapter 5: "Nauvoo and the Relief Society"

This section is the documentary center of the homework. Pay close attention to the words used and build the chronology carefully as you study. Relief Society women first administer healing in a unique pattern within their organized meetings. Joseph publicly validates women's administration and turns over the keys to the women. Emma then becomes the first woman to receive the Nauvoo endowment on September 28, 1843, and begins administering the female portions of the ordinances to other women. By early 1844, endowed women perform ritual washings and anointings within covenant relationships. Changing how temple ordinances are done from this time forward. These actions belong to related stages of development, and each stage must be examined carefully on its own terms and context.

Core primary sources

- 1. Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, April 19, 1842 Primary source.** Read Elizabeth Durfee's report that Emma Smith and her counselors administered to her and that she was healed. Note the subsequent administration to Abigail Leonard.
- 2. Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, April 28, 1842 Primary source.** Mark Joseph's statements about women healing, appointment, revelation, temple order, and the turning of the key.
- 3. Joseph Smith Journal, September 28, 1843 Primary source.** Read the entry recording the highest and holiest order and the companion. Use the annotation identifying Emma Smith and the entrance of women into the temple council.
- 4. Vilate Kimball Blessing Husband in the first of the 2nd Anointings Primary source.** Read the collection of rare sources. While they are not complete they are a good starting spot for you research into the evolution of these highest ordinances.
- 5. The First Fifty Years of Relief Society, part 1 introduction Documentary introduction.** Read the editorial explanation of Emma as the first woman endowed, her administration to other women, and the relationship between the Relief Society and the temple council.
- 6. The Privilege of the Sisters: Elizabeth Ann Whitney Documentary biography.** Trace Whitney from counselor and healer to endowed woman and temple officiator. Record the dates assigned to her temple participation.
- 7. Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo Published historical transcript.** Locate Helen Mar Whitney's publication of Heber C. Kimball's April 1, 1844 entry. Mark Vilate Kimball's washing and anointing and her claim in the first resurrection.

6 continued Research Leads, Later Memory, and Academic Analysis

Testing the strongest and weakest links in the priestesshood argument

Academic and retrospective readings

8. [Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, The Anointed Quorum in Nauvoo, 1842 to 1845](#) **Academic article**. Use the article to reconstruct membership, dates, meetings, and the development of the anointed quorum. Pay special attention to pages 129 through 131.
9. [Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism](#) **Academic article**. Read the analysis of women’s washing, anointing, laying on of hands, and healing as an ordered ritual tradition. Compare the authors’ categories with the Relief Society minutes.
10. [Eliza R. Snow, Female Relief Society, April 1868](#) **Primary source**. Read Snow’s statement that the Society derived its authority and influence from priesthood. Compare this later formulation with Joseph’s 1842 language.
11. [Eliza R. Snow, Eden Relief Society discourse, September 22, 1884](#) **Primary source**. Read Snow’s memory that Joseph turned the key of knowledge to the Relief Society. Identify the chronological distance from the Nauvoo events and the institutional memory it preserves.
12. [Sarah M. Kimball’s remembered formulation, documented by Church Historian’s Press](#) **Retrospective source guide**. Use the editorial notes to identify Sarah Kimball as the source for the phrase “under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood.” Keep this wording distinct from Eliza Snow’s own 1868 statement.

Chronology exercise

Date	Documented action	What the evidence establishes
April 19, 1842		
April 28, 1842		
September 28, 1843		
October 27, 1843		
January 20, 1844		

February 1, 1844		
April 1, 1844		
May 5, 1844		

Final Source Synthesis and Reading Record

Bring the documentary sequence together in one defensible historical argument

Final synthesis assignment

Write 500 to 700 words answering the following question: How did women move from sustaining sacred space, to governing a female covenant society, to receiving and administering the Nauvoo temple ordinances? Use at least four primary sources. Include one source from the Commerce crisis, one Relief Society minute entry, Joseph’s September 28, 1843 journal entry, and one source concerning Vilate Kimball or another endowed woman. Evaluate at least one later reminiscence by explaining both its value and its limitations.

Your response should distinguish three related forms of authority: charismatic spiritual gifts, Relief Society jurisdiction, and authority exercised through temple ordinances. Conclude by identifying the strongest documentary evidence for describing the Relief Society as a preparatory priestesshood and the most significant evidentiary gap that remains.

Reading record

- ☐ I completed the core primary sources.
- ☐ I completed at least two academic readings.
- ☐ I verified every quotation I plan to use.
- ☐ I distinguished contemporary evidence from retrospective memory.
- ☐ I recorded one question to bring to class.