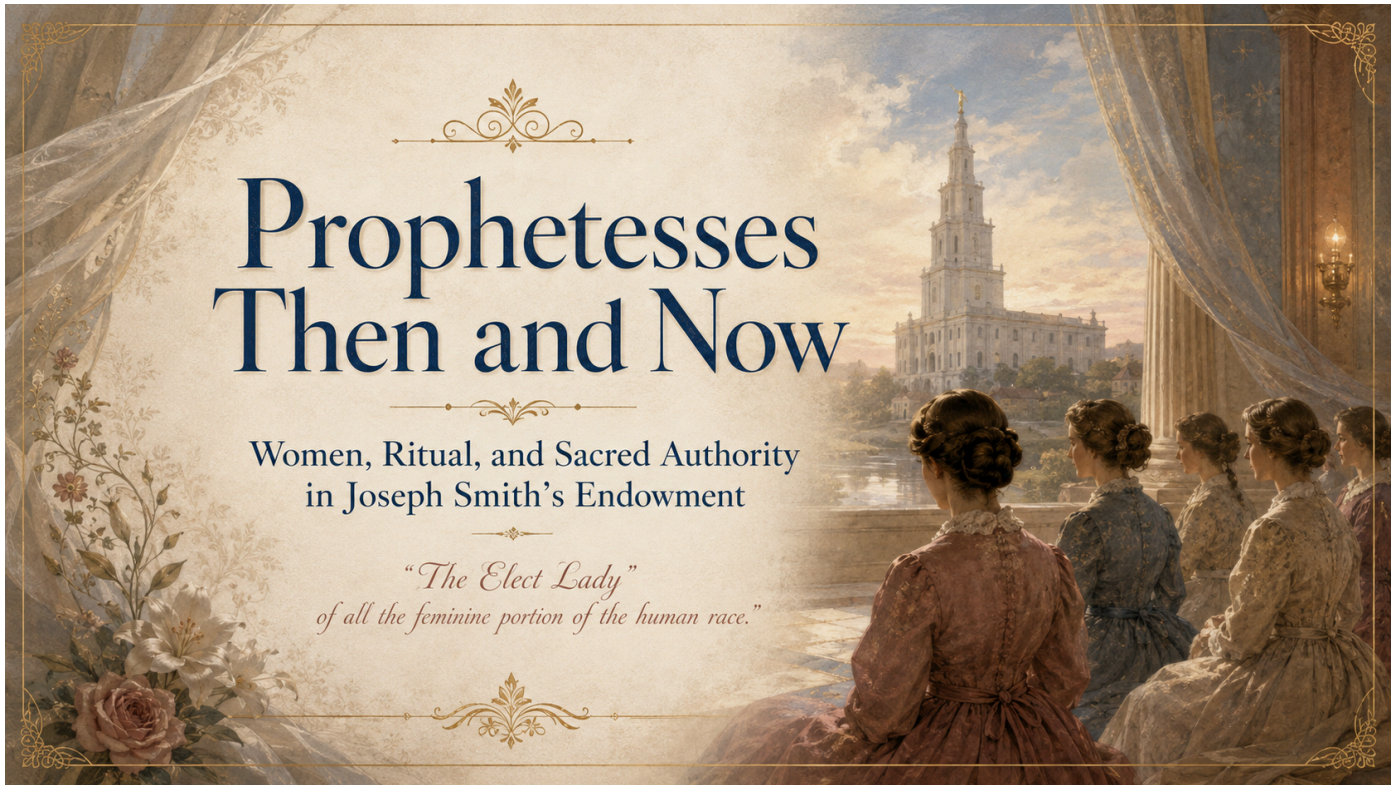


# Prophetesses Then and Now

*Prayer circles, women's presidency, moral oversight, property, prophecy, and the cosmology of exaltation*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Welcome to this week's homework, which brings together the major themes of our class by tracing how Joseph Smith's developing temple theology created new forms of covenant participation, sacred authority, and religious responsibility for women. You will examine the historical development of the prayer circle from the School of the Prophets and Kirtland worship into the endowed quorum and the Nauvoo Temple, then compare that ritual pattern with the scriptural ministries of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Anna, Philip's daughters, and the elect lady of 2 John. From there, you will study Emma Smith's revealed calling as an Elect Lady, her presidency over the Relief Society, the Society's charitable purse and moral oversight, Lucy Mack Smith's statement that iniquity could be detected and reproach removed from the heads of the Church, and Joseph's substantial transfer of Nauvoo property to Emma and their children. You will also consider Eliza R. Snow's work as secretary, teacher, recorder, temple leader, and later prophetic figure, together with the 1881 welcome that honored Eliza and Zina D. H. Young as an Elect Lady and her counselor, as presidents of the feminine portion of the human race, and as leading priestesses of the dispensation. The final section connects these developments to the King Follett discourse, where Joseph publicly explained the cosmology of divine progression, exaltation, eternal families, and the theological direction that later Latter day Saints expressed through the language of Heavenly Parents. Throughout the assignment, you will work directly with primary documents, distinguish contemporary evidence from later interpretation, and complete a Church Historian's Press research lab designed to help you locate transcripts, annotations, source notes, original images, and related documents with greater precision.



## From Prayer Circle to Prophetic Witness

*The modern culmination of the SHEMA where one covenant voice becomes sacred speech, interpretation, and testimony*

The prayer circle gathered endowed participants into a covenant body. Joseph Smith era records from December 1843 through February 1844 describe repeated prayer meetings of the endowed quorum. William Clayton's February 3, 1844 journal adds the ritual elements of sacred clothing, priesthood signs, and collective prayer. The first surviving explicit description of participants physically forming a circle appears in Heber C. Kimball's journal on December 11, 1845. In the temple, one person served as the voice of the group while the participants united their faith and petitions. Outside the temple, endowed Saints carried the same order into homes, upper rooms, missionary travel, wilderness settings, illness, grief, and communal danger.

This practice gives the transition into prophetesses. Prayer gathers the covenant community so that it may speak to God with one voice. Prophecy returns sacred speech to the community through interpretation, warning, testimony, praise, preservation, and inspired instruction. The historical sources do not record Joseph formally creating an office titled prophetess. They do document women exercising many of the functions associated with prophetic women in scripture.

### Required readings

- [Doctrine and Covenants 88:119–141](#) — Read the ordered house, ritual salutation, washing of feet, and collective worship.
- [Joseph Smith journals, December 10 and 17, 1843; February 2 and 4, 1844](#) — Locate the prayer meetings of the endowed quorum.
- [Heber C. Kimball journal, December 11 and 21, 1845, MS 3469, CHL](#) — You can use the catalog to identify the manuscript and its repository and request access.



# The Prayer Circle in and Beyond the Temple

*Development, temple placement, and portable sacred order*

## The Prayer Circle Enters the Nauvoo Temple

*Sacred clothing, priesthood signs, one voice, and united petition*



- December 11, 1845**  
The earliest surviving explicit description of participants forming a circle.
- The recorded pattern**
  - Participants were clothed.
  - They formed a circle.
  - They offered the signs of the Holy Priesthood.
  - One person served as the voice of the group.
  - The prayer included the sick, families, protection, and the defeat of hostile plans.
- December 21, 1845**  
Unite our hearts and hands together, and act as one mind.

**Sources:** Heber C. Kimball, Journal, Dec. 11 and 21, 1845, MS 3469, Church History Library; William Clayton, Journal, Dec. 1845; untitled Nauvoo Temple ordinance document, circa Dec. 10, 1845, Church History Library.

On December 11, 1845, Heber C. Kimball recorded the earliest surviving explicit description presently identified of participants forming a circle, offering the signs of the Holy Priesthood, and joining in prayer. The petitions included the sick, families, protection, and the defeat of hostile plans. On December 21, George A. Smith instructed participants to unite their hearts and hands and act as one mind. Amasa Lyman explained that they had learned how to approach God and be recognized.

## The Prayer Circle Beyond the Temple

*A portable extension of the endowed quorum*



- June 6 and July 12, 1844**  
Heber C. Kimball prayed while away from Nauvoo after clothing himself and offering the signs of the Holy Priesthood.
- Homes, upper rooms, and wilderness**  
Endowed Saints recreated sacred order wherever privacy and necessity required it.
- Common petitions**
  - Healing
  - Family protection
  - Missionary guidance
  - Deliverance from enemies
  - Communal crisis

**Sources:** Heber C. Kimball, Journal, June 6 and July 12, 1844, and Dec. 21, 1845, MS 3469, Church History Library; William Clayton, Journal, May 25 and Aug. 21, 1845, MS 31171, Church History Library; Hosea Stout, Journal, June 25, 1846, MS 8332, Church History Library.

Heber C. Kimball's entries for June 6 and July 12, 1844 show that endowed prayer was already portable during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Kimball clothed himself, offered the signs of the Holy Priesthood, and prayed while away from Nauvoo. William Clayton recorded additional gatherings on May 25 and August 21, 1845. Hosea Stout later recorded a related use of the true order of prayer with the laying on of hands on June 25, 1846. The temple supplied an ordered sacred setting, while the prayer keys could be used whenever privacy, danger, healing, missionary work, or grief required them.

### Required readings

- [Heber C. Kimball, journals, June 6 and July 12, 1844; December 11 and 21, 1845](#) — MS 3469, Church History Library.
- [William Clayton, journals, May 25 and August 21, 1845](#) — MS 31171, Church History Library.
- [Hosea Stout, journal, June 25, 1846](#) — MS 8332, Church History Library.

## Prophetesses in Scripture

*Women who preserved, judged, interpreted, and testified*



The Hebrew Bible and New Testament present prophetic women through several forms of ministry. Exodus 15:20–21 explicitly calls Miriam a prophetess and places her at the head of Israel's ritual song and embodied remembrance after deliverance through the sea. Judges 4:4–6 calls Deborah a prophetess and judge, showing revelation, public judgment, military instruction, and inspired poetry. Second Kings 22:14–20 presents Huldah as the interpreter who authenticated the book of the law and announced its covenant meaning to royal and priestly officials. Luke 2:36–38 calls Anna a prophetess and temple witness who recognized the infant Jesus and spoke of him to those awaiting redemption. Acts 21:8–9 describes Philip's four daughters by function: they prophesied. Second John addresses an elect lady, a phrase that may refer to a particular woman or a personified congregation. The scriptural record therefore distinguishes between a contemporary title and an observed prophetic function. That same distinction becomes essential when studying Emma Smith and Eliza R. Snow.

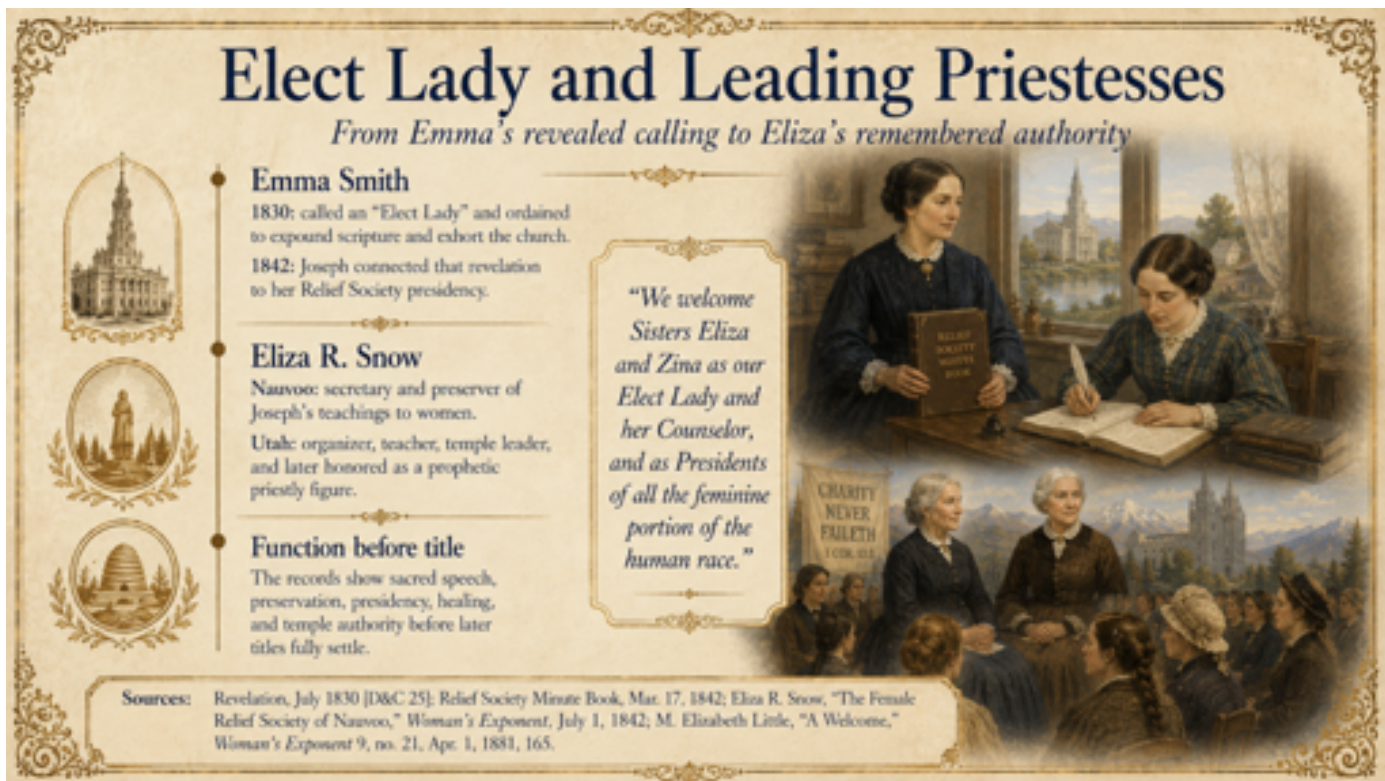


## Required readings

- [Exodus 15:20–21](#) — Miriam as prophetess, singer, and leader.
- [Judges 4:4–6 and Judges 5](#) — Deborah as prophetess, judge, and inspired poet.
- [2 Kings 22:14–20](#) — Huldah interprets the discovered book of the law.
- [Luke 2:36–38; Acts 21:8–9; 2 John 1](#) — Anna, Philip's daughters, and the elect lady.

## Elect Lady, Recorder, and Leading Priestesses

*Emma's revealed calling and Eliza's preserved authority*



The July 1830 revelation now found in Doctrine and Covenants 25 called Emma Smith an elect lady and promised that she would be ordained to expound scripture and exhort the Church. At the organization of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo on March 17, 1842, Joseph connected that revelation with Emma's election as president. The minutes record Emma presiding, selecting counselors, appointing officers, directing the Society, and establishing decisions that could become law and precedent for the organization.

Eliza R. Snow's securely documented Nauvoo title was secretary. Her work preserved the only contemporary minute book containing Joseph Smith's sustained teachings to women as an organized body. The record also preserves women pronouncing blessings, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, administering healing, and anticipating prophecy. Later Latter-day Saints described Eliza as a prophetess and priestess because of the functions she exercised, although no verified Nauvoo document presently records Joseph directly giving her the title prophetess.

***"We welcome Sisters Eliza and Zina as our Elect Lady and her Counselor, and as Presidents of all the feminine portion of the human race."***

M. Elizabeth Little, 'A Welcome,' *Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 21 (April 1, 1881): 165.

The 1881 statement is plural and historically specific. Eliza R. Snow was welcomed as the elect lady, Zina D. H. Young as her counselor, and both women together as presidents of the feminine portion of the human race. The same welcome described them as leading priestesses of the dispensation. This later Utah language shows how women interpreted the Nauvoo foundation and the broad authority that had developed from it.

### Required readings

- [Revelation, July 1830 \[Doctrine and Covenants 25\]](#) — Emma's revealed calling as an elect lady.
- [Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, March 17, 1842](#) — Emma's election, ordination, and presidency.
- [M. Elizabeth Little, "A Welcome," 1881](#) — Read the formal Kanab welcome to Eliza and Zina.
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## Emma Smith, the Society's Purse, and Moral Oversight

*Spiritual presidency, charitable funds, and responsibility for iniquity*

**Emma Smith and the Purse of the Society**  
*Presidency, charity, and material stewardship in Nauvoo*

**DOCUMENTED ANCHORS**

**1 — July 1830**  
"Thou art an elect lady to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church."  
Source: Revelation, July 1830 [D&C 25].

**2 — March 17, 1842**  
"Mrs. Emma Smith was unanimously chosen President."  
Source: Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book.

**3 — Relief Society stewardship**  
The Society gathered charitable funds for the poor, and material stewardship operated through Emma's presidency and the Society's officers.  
Spiritual presidency and material stewardship moved together.

Sources: Revelation, July 1830 [D&C 25]; Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, Mar. 17, 1842; Mar. 24, 1842; Mar. 31, 1842.

The Relief Society possessed its own institutional financial structure. On March 17, 1842, Elvira A. Cowles was appointed treasurer, and Joseph Smith gave a five-dollar gold piece to begin the fund. On March 24, Emma explained that members could donate property such as jewelry and clothing as well as money, with the contributions placed into the treasurer's hands. On March 31, the Society commissioned Elizabeth Jones to collect donations for the poor, the widow, and the fatherless. The record therefore establishes a women's institution gathering, recording, and distributing money and material property through Emma's presidency and the Society's officers.

**"Mother Smith rose and said she was glad the time had come that iniquity could be detected and reproach thrown off from the heads of the church."**

Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, March 31, 1842.



Lucy Mack Smith's statement followed Joseph's teaching that one principal object of the institution was to purge out iniquity. The surrounding epistle asked whether the Relief Society could be trusted with matters that properly belonged to the women, especially preventing corrupt men from claiming authority from Joseph or other Church leaders in order to deceive women. Lucy's exact words speak of detecting iniquity and removing reproach from the heads of the Church. The broader context assigns the women a meaningful role in moral discernment, protection, and institutional accountability.

### Required readings

- [Relief Society minutes, March 24, 1842](#) — Emma explains that property may be donated and placed with the treasurer.
- [Relief Society minutes, March 31, 1842](#) — Joseph on purging iniquity and Lucy Mack Smith on the heads of the Church.
- [Copied epistle, March 31 and April 2, 1842](#) — The Society is asked to protect women from men falsely claiming Church authority.
- [Nauvoo Female Relief Society report, June 30, 1843](#) — Review the Society's donations, expenditures, and annual financial report.

## Emma Smith and the Transfer of Property

*Sixty-eight Nauvoo lots and family financial security*

# Emma Smith, Stewardship, and Oversight

*Why the Relief Society mattered in Joseph Smith's Nauvoo*



### President

Emma presided over the Society as its elected and revealed leader.



### Instruction

*"I now turn the key to you in the name of God."*  
Joseph Smith, Apr. 28, 1842



### Charity

The sisters were organized to search out objects of charity and relieve the poor.



### Oversight

The Society was expected to strengthen virtue, expose wrongdoing, and guard the moral life of the community.



*Emma's presidency was spiritual, communal, and material.*

Sources: Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, Mar. 17, Mar. 24, Mar. 31, and Apr. 28, 1842.

A separate legal document expands the material dimension of Emma's position. On July 12, 1843, Joseph Smith, acting as sole trustee in trust for the Church, executed a deed transferring sixty-eight Nauvoo lots to Emma Smith and their children. The Joseph Smith Papers values the property at ten thousand dollars and explains that it represented slightly more than ten percent of the original plat of Nauvoo. The deed's language states that Joseph granted, bargained, sold, conveyed, and confirmed the property to Emma and the children and their heirs forever.

The same day Joseph dictated the revelation on eternal and plural marriage. William Clayton recorded that after Emma rejected the revelation, Joseph instructed him to deed all unencumbered lots to Emma and the children. The Joseph Smith Papers editors suggest that the transfer may have been intended to secure their financial support

within the contested marital system. The evidence establishes a major transfer of Church-controlled real estate into family ownership. It does not establish that Joseph transferred every Church asset or that Emma became owner of the entire Church purse.

***“Deed all the unincumbered lots to E. & the children.”***

William Clayton journal, July 12, 1843, as cited in the historical introduction to the deed.

### Required readings

- [Deed to Emma Smith and Others, July 12, 1843](#) — Read the historical introduction and the legal conveyance.
- [Deed as recorded in the Nauvoo Registry of Deeds](#) — Compare the recorded legal copy with the draft.
- [Revelation, July 12, 1843 \[Doctrine and Covenants 132\]](#) — Place the property transfer within the events of the same day.

## Joseph’s Guarded Theology and the King Follett Discourse

*Private ritual instruction becomes public cosmology*



By the Nauvoo period, Joseph’s most expansive teachings were often given to smaller confidential bodies. Later reminiscences preserve statements that the Saints could not yet receive everything Joseph believed had been revealed to him. Those recollections should be identified as retrospective evidence rather than treated as contemporary transcripts. The institutional pattern itself is clear: plural marriage, the Holy Order, the Council of Fifty, prayer meetings, and temple instruction were often restricted to selected participants.

King Follett died on March 9, 1844, after a well accident. On April 7, 1844, Joseph used the general conference setting and the grief of Follett’s family to deliver his most expansive surviving public discourse on God and human destiny. The four contemporary reports differ in wording and detail, so the discourse must be reconstructed by comparing Thomas Bullock, William Clayton, Willard Richards, and Wilford Woodruff. Joseph taught that God had once dwelt as humans do and that human beings could advance toward divine glory.



The discourse never uses the title Heavenly Mother. It publicly articulates a cosmology of exaltation that gives intellectual coherence to the temple's developing teachings about husbands, wives, eternal kinship, divine inheritance, and eternal increase. A careful historical formulation is that the discourse provided theological architecture later Latter-day Saints used when speaking of Heavenly Parents.

### Required readings

- [Accounts of the King Follett discourse, April 7, 1844](#) — Compare the four contemporary reports before quoting the sermon.
- [Joseph Smith discourse, April 7, 1844, reported by Thomas Bullock](#) — Identify Joseph's teachings on God and human exaltation.
- [Joseph Smith Papers editorial introduction](#) — Review the documentary history and textual problems.

## Church Historian's Press Research Lab

*How to find, evaluate, and cite women's history sources*

The Church Historian's Press publishes documentary editions that combine primary source transcripts with source notes, historical introductions, annotation, biographical sketches, images, chronologies, and full citations. The First Fifty Years of Relief Society contains seventy-eight selected documents, including the complete Nauvoo Relief Society minutes. Its transcripts follow documentary editing procedures developed by the Joseph Smith Papers and normally present the earliest known extant version of a document.

| Step | Action                               | What to do                                                                                                                                                    |
|------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | Start with the collection            | Open The First Fifty Years of Relief Society or At the Pulpit. Use the table of contents and historical introductions to define the period and document type. |
| 2    | Search a distinctive phrase          | Search exact language such as "heads of the church," "elect lady," "turn the key," or "all the feminine portion."                                             |
| 3    | Open the document introduction       | Identify the date, author, recorder, original publication, repository, and reason the document matters.                                                       |
| 4    | Read the transcript before the notes | Separate the historical actor's words from the modern editor's explanation.                                                                                   |
| 5    | Follow numbered annotations          | Use the notes to identify people, parallel records, scriptural references, repositories, and related documents.                                               |
| 6    | Open the source note                 | Record manuscript title, date span, handwriting, page count, collection number, and present repository.                                                       |
| 7    | Check the original image link        | When available, compare the transcript with the manuscript image at the Joseph Smith Papers or another digital repository.                                    |
| 8    | Use reference materials              | Consult chronology, biographical directory, works cited, and lists of officers to avoid confusing people, dates, and later titles.                            |
| 9    | Build an evidence statement          | Write one sentence stating what the source explicitly says and another stating what may reasonably be inferred.                                               |
| 10   | Create a complete citation           | Include author or institution, document title, date, publication or repository, collection number, page, and stable online edition.                           |

## Live example: “heads of the church”

1. Search the exact phrase in quotation marks.
2. Open the March 31, 1842 entry in the Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book.
3. Read Joseph’s statement that one principal object was to purge out iniquity.
4. Read Lucy Mack Smith’s complete statement and the paragraphs that follow it.
5. Open the copied epistle linked in annotation 8 to identify the specific danger being addressed.
6. Write one sentence quoting Lucy exactly and one sentence explaining the larger institutional context.

## Required readings

- [The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: About](#) — Understand the scope and selection of the documentary edition.
- [Introduction and Editorial Method](#) — Learn how versions, transcripts, and annotation were prepared.
- [Reference Material](#) — Use chronology, works cited, biographies, and lists of officers.

## Your independent search

Search phrase: \_\_\_\_\_

Collection and document title:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Author, recorder, or speaker:

\_\_\_\_\_

Source note and repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Exact quotation: \_\_\_\_\_

Editorial explanation:

\_\_\_\_\_

What the source explicitly establishes:

\_\_\_\_\_

What you infer and why:

\_\_\_\_\_

Chicago-style citation:

\_\_\_\_\_

Confidence level and reason:

\_\_\_\_\_



## Chronology Worksheet

| Date                | Documented development                                                                                                                                      | What the evidence establishes |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| July 1830           | Emma called an elect lady and commissioned to expound scripture and exhort the Church.                                                                      | _____                         |
| 17 Mar. 1842        | Relief Society organized; Emma elected president; Society officers and treasury established.                                                                | _____                         |
| 31 Mar. 1842        | Joseph teaches that the Society should purge out iniquity; Lucy Mack Smith speaks of detecting iniquity and removing reproach from the heads of the Church. | _____                         |
| 19 Apr. 1842        | Women bless, speak in tongues, interpret tongues, and administer healing.                                                                                   | _____                         |
| 28 Apr. 1842        | Joseph defends women's spiritual gifts and declares, "I now turn the key to you."                                                                           | _____                         |
| 28 Sep.–1 Nov. 1843 | Emma enters the highest order and then washes and anoints women entering the Holy Order.                                                                    | _____                         |
| 12 July 1843        | Joseph deeds sixty-eight Nauvoo lots to Emma and their children.                                                                                            | _____                         |
| Dec. 1843–Feb. 1844 | Endowed quorum gathers in sacred clothing, offers priesthood signs, and prays.                                                                              | _____                         |
| 9 Mar. 1844         | King Follett dies following a well accident.                                                                                                                | _____                         |
| 7 Apr. 1844         | Joseph delivers the King Follett discourse on God and human exaltation.                                                                                     | _____                         |
| 11 and 21 Dec. 1845 | Explicit circular formation and temple instruction on uniting hearts, hands, and mind.                                                                      | _____                         |
| 1 Apr. 1881         | Kanab women's formal welcome calls Eliza and Zina presidents of the feminine portion of the human race and leading priestesses.                             | _____                         |

# Final synthesis

1. Explain how the prayer circle transformed individual petitions into the united voice of a covenant body.

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2. Compare one Old Testament prophetess and one Nauvoo woman. Distinguish title, function, and later interpretation.

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3. Explain what Lucy Mack Smith's March 31, 1842 statement establishes about the Relief Society's responsibility for iniquity and institutional reputation.

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4. Distinguish between the Relief Society's charitable purse and Joseph's July 12, 1843 transfer of sixty-eight lots to Emma and their children.

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5. Explain how the King Follett discourse supplies a cosmology for exaltation while leaving Heavenly Mother unstated by name.

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6. Identify one claim from the class that required qualification after checking the primary document and its editorial introduction.

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7. Use the Church Historian's Press workflow to locate one additional document about women's spiritual gifts, presidency, property, or temple work. Provide an exact quotation and a complete citation.

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