

January 15, 2017 Ward Conference session of Relief Society We were blessed to have the Stake Relief Society presidency with us: Julie Slaugh, President; Lynne Buckner, First Counselor; Cindy Scharman, Second Counselor; and Mit Wasden, Secretary. They continued the theme of the conference of helping to secure our families.

Sister Buckner shared her appreciation for the work of our ward presidency and sisters in helping to support each other and those in need in the community with their service. She shared experiences of parents and families from the Book of Mormon, those like Lehi and Sariah who were faithful but had two of their sons who were unfaithful and disobedient and the heartache and sorrow they experienced over their disobedience. The prophet Alma sorrowed over his son, yet Alma the Younger repented and became a great leader. Family life and rearing faithful sons and daughters is a challenge to parents, and Sister Buckner shared four points that will help to see us through. 1) Prayer for inspiration in helping family members individually. 2) Faith to never give up. 3) Standing firm in our testimony and in the covenants we have made. 4) Placing our trust in God. The adversary tries every way possible to subvert the influence of the Spirit and faith in our Savior. We must build upon the rock of Christ throughout our lives. Sister Buckner shared her personal testimony of the Savior's promise: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you...." (John 14:27)

Sister Susan Stepan of our 3rd ward was asked to share some of her experiences regarding family history as a way to bless and strengthen our families. Her accounts of being able to find records of her husband's family were awe inspiring. He had only one ancestor that joined the church. After he had joined he was ostracized from his family. At the end of World War 1, the area of his birth underwent changes in geography and became Yugoslavia. In 1991, with further changes, it became Slovenia. The church had no records for that area, so Susan and her husband Don traveled to Slovenia and did a search of their own. When they returned they had photographed records dating back to the 1700's. They also came upon a publication of a brief history of a tiny village where Don had ancestors. The author had written information about several houses with names of families who lived there. Don and Susan managed to get a dictionary for the language and had further help when Don had a dream revealing which house to study. The result was the discovery of his ancestral family and the contemporary relatives. This all led to names being generated for the temple. They have created a wonderful book with pictures and stories about this amazing Slovenian family, and as they went on a recent family camping trip, they shared stories, experiences and pictures which strengthened their relationships and increased their love for their heritage.

Sister Julie Slaugh concluded the meeting by encouraging the sisters to become involved and active in family history and providing temple ordinances for those who are anxiously waiting for our help. This work of getting family members, and especially children, aware of their heritage helps provide them with an identity. Studies have been undertaken that show that children who have this knowledge prove to be stronger and more resilient as they grow up and take on more responsibility. They learn who they are and who they may become. It is one more tool to help strengthen our families and meet the challenges and joys of rearing children!