



First Presidency, ca. 1974. Courtesy Church History Library.

A Prophet's Journey

The Journals of Spencer W. Kimball

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The Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently released the journals of President Spencer W. Kimball online. President Kimball is well known for his advocacy of keeping personal journals and histories. He passionately preached about their worth and importance. “We renew our appeal for the keeping of individual histories and accounts of sacred experiences in our lives—answered prayers, inspiration from the Lord, administrations in our behalf, a record of the special times and events of our lives,” he taught. “Stories of inspiration from our own lives . . . are powerful teaching tools. I promise you that if you will keep your journals and records they will indeed be a source of great inspiration to you, each other, your children, your grandchildren, and others throughout the generations.”¹

Throughout his life, President Kimball practiced what he preached. His journals rank among the very best kept by Church leaders and compare in importance to the Wilford Woodruff journals. The Woodruff journals stand as an essential source for nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint history, just as the Kimball journals do for the twentieth century. Both journal collections compare not only in chronological length but also in detail, insight, and ability to capture the personalities of their authors.

After his death, President Kimball's extensive journals remained in the custody of his family until they were donated to the Church in December 2008 by Edward L. Kimball, a son of Spencer and Camilla

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “Therefore I Was Taught,” *Ensign* 12, no. 1 (January 1982): 4.



Spencer W. Kimball playing piano surrounded by grandchildren, 1951. Courtesy Church History Library.

Kimball. The journals fill twenty archival boxes (10.5 linear feet). The volumes were digitized in 2013. In 2023 they were prepared for access in the Church History Catalog. This is the first time the journals have been publicly available.

Spencer W. Kimball was born on March 28, 1895, in Salt Lake City, Utah, and spent his youth in Thatcher, Arizona. As a young man, he was called to serve a mission to Germany, but the outbreak of the First World War resulted in a reassignment to the Central States Mission. Though he dabbled with journal writing in his youth, he began a daily journal during his missionary service. After his mission, he returned to Arizona and married Camilla Eyring on November 16, 1917. Spencer ran a real estate and insurance business and served as president of the Mt. Graham Stake. The Kimballs lived in Safford, Arizona, until 1943, when Spencer was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which they moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. On December 30, 1973, he was ordained as the twelfth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His twelve-year presidency was marked by rapid growth in membership, an increase in the number of temples from fifteen to thirty-six, the restructuring of the Seventy, new editions of the scriptures, and the

revelation extending priesthood ordination to all worthy male members and temple blessings to all worthy members of the Church. President Kimball died in Salt Lake City on November 5, 1985.

The earliest journals in the collection are composed in the traditional sense with daily entries, but after his call as an Apostle, Elder Kimball expanded the scope of his journal by inserting what might be considered scrapbook elements. He supplemented his daily entries with additional contextual material, including newspaper clippings, letters, photographs, maps, and travel documents accumulated while on Church assignments and other activities. By volume, this supporting documentation is extensive and at times complicates the navigation of chronological journal entries.

Most entries were typewritten, but occasionally some appear in long-hand, possibly when Kimball did not have access to a typewriter. Red-pencil underlining, marginalia, and handwritten annotations made by Kimball appear throughout, suggesting that he reviewed and referenced his journals regularly.

The journals were the primary source for the two seminal works on the life of Kimball—a biography cowritten by his son, Edward L. Kimball, and grandson, Andrew E. Kimball Jr., and a later book by Edward focused on his father's presidency years.² Edward Kimball's heavy use of the journals is evident from occasional notations in his hand and some obvious rearrangement that presumably occurred over the course of his research. Edward's handwriting is smaller than President Kimball's, and some of his additions appear in the form of a typescript using a more contemporary printer. For instance, personal journal entries for the later years of President Kimball's life are not extant, but Edward inserted typed notes he had taken from an office journal kept by staff covering the years 1978 to 1981.

Preparing a journal like this for public release is complicated due to its recency and because President Kimball was involved in many confidential matters, including disciplinary councils, restoration of blessings, and private meetings with individuals. Furthermore, he included material (such as newspaper article clippings) that remains under copyright.

2. Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977); Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005).

As the archives of a religious institution, the Church History Library collects and preserves records that document the Church and its members. Archival and manuscript collections are treated differently from other types of records in the way that they are housed, described, and accessed due to factors such as physical condition, scope and complexity, donor-imposed restrictions, or content. Before they were released, the Kimball journals were carefully reviewed according to the Church History Department's access policy. Excerpts containing sacred, private, or confidential information were identified, and the corresponding digitized images were redacted.³

In the case of the Kimball journals, privacy does not refer to President Kimball's privacy but rather to details about individuals whom he counseled or interviewed in private settings. A concerted effort was made with the cooperation of the Kimball family to minimize redaction throughout the journals and where possible only redact the names of individuals. In addition to privacy concerns, entries with content related to sacred temple rites and ceremonies were redacted. Moreover, beyond private priest-penitent communications, there are categories of information classified as confidential that were redacted. For example, some of the journals include details about disciplinary action and meeting minutes of the presiding quorums never intended for public consumption.⁴

Call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Kimball journals capture details of typical day-to-day happenings and family life as well as major life-changing events like his 1943 call to the Apostleship. Several entries colorfully recount his reaction to a conversation with President J. Reuben Clark, first counselor in the First Presidency, informing him of the call to the Twelve by telephone. By this time, President Heber J. Grant's poor health required many of his previous responsibilities to be handled by his counselors:

As I opened the front door of my home—coming to luncheon Eddie was saying “No—he isn't here—Oh yes here he comes now—”

I took the phone and my heart beat like a diesel as I heard the operator saying[,] “Mr. Kimball, Salt Lake City is calling—Just a minute please[.]”

3. Less than one percent of the journal was redacted.

4. The Church History Department's current access policy is available at <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/library/access?lang=eng>. See also Keith A. Erekson, “A New Era of Research Access in the Church History Library,” *Journal of Mormon History* 46, no. 4 (October 2020): 117–29.

The voice came[,] “Spencer, this is Brother [J. Reuben] Clark. Do you have a chair?”

“Yes—Brother Clark.”

“The Brethren have selected you as one to fill the vacancies in the quorum.”

“O! Brother Clark!” as I sat upon the floor and gasped[,] “Not me surely.”

As I hesitated to catch my breath[,] he said[,] “Are you there?”

“Yes,” I said. “I’m trying to catch my breath but you have me all of a sweat[.]”

“Well, it is pretty warm here in Salt Lake too,” He laughed [and] said[.]

(But I was sitting in the direct blast of a new cooler[.])

“That means that I must leave here and move up to Salt Lake?” I asked[.]

“Yes[,] ultimately.”

“But, Brother Clark, I am so small and weak and unworthy of such a great honor—Surely there must be some mistake[,]” I countered.

“Well, so far as we know[,]” he answered[,] “You are one of the finest young men in the church[.]”

“Could I have a little time to catch my breath and collect my thots [sic]?”⁵

He described his immediate reactions as family members became aware of the news:

Camilla, Andrew and Eddie heard my end of the conversation and were definitely wondering. I told them and charged them not to mention it to any one till I returned from Salt Lake[,] still thinking it a mistake or a dream.

I went about my work the balance of the day in a daze—I showed houses “for sale” but I spoke only words, empty ones for my mind was so completely occupied[.]

By 5.P.M. I realized I was of no value to my work. I lay down in the back room a few minutes then went home— I hadn’t been able to get my customary siesta at noon because of my shock— I tried again now— The pent-up tears of many dry years came forth as I realized how small and weak I was in proportion to the bigness and strength needed in such a work[.]

Camilla ran her fingers thru my hair as I went thru a sustained convulsion ending in a release of tears, the first flood since the night more

5. Spencer W. Kimball, Journals, 1905–1981, July 14, 1943, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. This entry is dated July 14, 1943, but he is writing about events that occurred on July 8.

than 5 years ago when Brother [Melvin J.] Ballard notified me I was to be Stake President.⁶

Elder Kimball was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the October 1943 general conference along with Ezra Taft Benson. He handwrote the emotions felt that day:

Went to the offices of the Church early for my first meeting with all the Quorum of the twelve. Pictures were taken for the papers. The family came down—Camilla and I and the Bensons⁷ had dinner at Hotel Utah and the women had their pictures taken—At 2 P.M. the first session of the Conference began. I had been in my locked room for a final prayer before this great experience. Bro Benson and I sat on the first row in the audience.

(Preston and Harold Mitchell⁸ sat with us) Immediately after the opening exercises, the General Authorities were sustained and with the Twelve Apostles were the names 11-Spencer W Kimball, 12-Ezra T Benson. How weak I felt! How humble I was! How grateful I was when Pres McKay said the voting was unanimous. I seemed to be swimming in a daze. It seemed so unreal and impossible that I—just poor weak Spencer Kimball—could be being sustained as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ and tears welled in my eyes again as I heard myself sustained as an Apostle a prophet Seer, and Revelator to the Church.

We were called to the stand and took our places with the Twelve Apostles. I was next to Bro Lee who squeezed my arm in welcome. Thousands of eyes were upon us appraising weighing honoring us. What a sublime moment to feel that here were the great leaders of the Church upholding accepting and sustaining us – thousands of them representing the entire Church.

Mingled feelings of joy ecstasy – fear – humility.

After some other talks I was called on for my maiden talk—How I reached the pulpit I hardly know. What a moment. A sea of upturned wondering expectant faces met my first gaze. I began: My beloved Brethren etc. see the talk in the scrap book—⁹

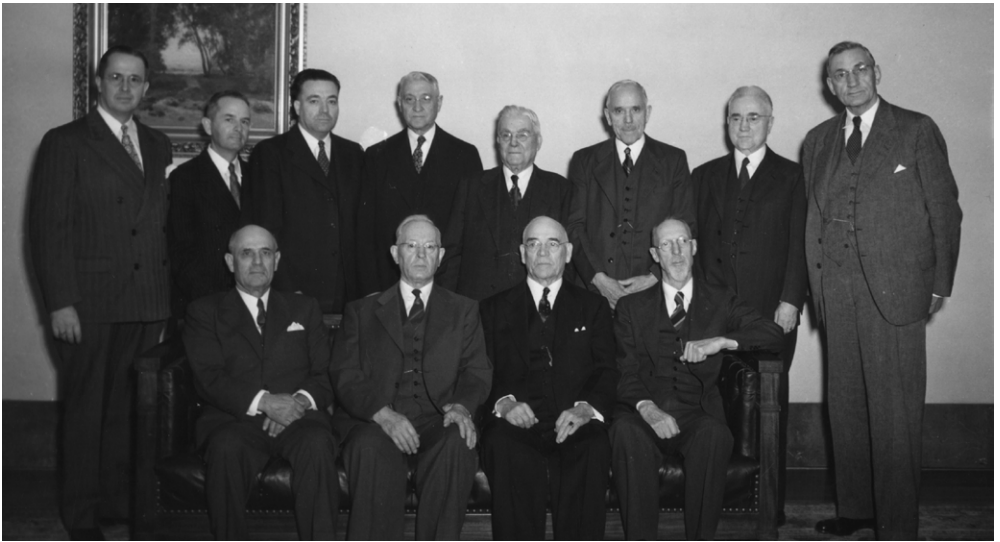
I must have taken about 15 minutes—I lost track of time as I poured out my appreciation and gratitude and bore testimony—As I took my

6. Kimball, Journals, July 14, 1943 (concerning events of July 8).

7. Ezra Taft Benson and Flora Smith Amussen were married on September 10, 1926.

8. Preston Woolley Parkinson (1903–2002) was Kimball's first cousin. Joseph Harold Mitchell (1895–1990) served as first counselor to Kimball in the Mt. Graham Stake presidency and had succeeded Kimball as stake president on September 12, 1943.

9. See Spencer W. Kimball, in *One Hundred Fourteenth Semi-annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1943), 15–19.



Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, 1943. Bottom row (*left to right*): Stephen L Richards, Joseph Fielding Smith, George F. Richards, George Albert Smith. Top row (*left to right*): Ezra Taft Benson, Spencer W. Kimball, Harold B. Lee, Albert E. Bowen, Charles A. Callis, Joseph F. Merrill, John A. Widtsoe, Richard R. Lyman. Courtesy Church History Library.



Elders Spencer W. Kimball and Ezra Taft Benson at the April 1972 general conference. Courtesy Church History Library.

seat I felt I had failed and continued to tell myself that I had failed as Bro Benson gave his simple sweet spirited testimony. The balance of the meeting was a blur except I remember now Bp [Marvin O.] Ashton and others paid tribute to the two new Authorities and their humble testimonies.¹⁰

Swiss Temple Dedication

In the late summer of 1955, Elder Kimball filled an assignment to tour the European missions that concluded in Zollikofen, Switzerland, with the dedication of the Swiss Temple. For years, the Church had encouraged its members to remain in their homelands and build up stakes of Zion. But the distance required to travel to a temple prevented some European Saints from attending and prompted others to emigrate to the United States for easier access. The Swiss Temple was one of three temples built in the 1950s that were smaller than previous temples. They were the first to introduce a film presentation of the endowment ceremony.¹¹

The film made the endowment ceremony available in multiple languages spoken by Latter-day Saints across the European continent, and dedicatory sessions were conducted in numerous languages. Elder Kimball noted attending many sessions where he did not speak the language.

Elder Kimball also described the first time that temple ordinances were administered in the Swiss Temple. Many at the dedication had waited decades to receive their ordinances and anxiously remained near the temple for the opportunity. To accommodate the large numbers, the temple stayed open for long hours. Elder Kimball felt compelled to meet as many people as possible, which left him physically exhausted. “I shook hands with most of the hundreds of the people and missionaries from the two missions. . . . I was exhausted tonight I slept poorly. . . . It has been a long hard but delightful tour almost night and day but I am tired. My nerves are getting ~~taught~~ taut.”¹²

A few days later, he added, “I have shaken hands with nearly every member and missionary except I missed many the first day. I was glad

10. Kimball, Journals, October 1, 1943.

11. See *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 3, *Boldly, Nobly, and Independently, 1893–1955* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2022), 590–96. The Swiss (1955), New Zealand (1958), and London (1958) temples were all similar architecturally and in size. The Los Angeles Temple (1956) was the anomaly among 1950s temples and was much larger in scale.

12. Kimball, Journals, September 12, 1955.



Bern Switzerland Temple dedication, September 1955. Individuals pictured on the front row beginning eighth from left: Alice T. Evans, Richard L. Evans, Henry D. Moyle, Camilla E. Kimball, Spencer W. Kimball, David O. McKay, and Emma R. McKay. Seated second from right on the front row is Gordon B. Hinckley. Courtesy Church History Library.

to see the Saints from the various countries. Many remembered me and seemed pleased to see me.”¹³

Despite his fatigue, Elder Kimball continued putting in long days even after the dedication. After assisting at the temple into the early morning hours, Elder Kimball headed to his hotel in nearby Bern. His journal illustrates his resourcefulness at a time with limited modes of communication: “I left about 3:45 a.m. for Berne. It was very dark and still. At the station no train would run till 6 a.m.. I could not get an answer on the phone to call a taxi so I hitchhiked and a good Zollikofen farmer picked me up and gave me a ride to Berne in his market truck.”¹⁴

Health Challenges

The journals reveal Elder Kimball’s health struggles throughout the years as well as the full range of emotions such challenges produced, from joy

13. Kimball, Journals, September 14, 1955.

14. Kimball, Journals, September 17, 1955.

and triumph to sorrow and frustration. In 1957, Elder Kimball began to experience some throat discomfort, and his doctors referred him to a specialist in New York. Travel and the painful biopsy of his throat precluded any daily journal entries. He retrospectively summarized the experience with heavy underlining and handwritten notes labeled “Surgery” and “Operation”:

It is dark and gloomy outside, drizzling rain and the sun has not been out today. I wish I were as sure that my own sun would come up as I am of the solar one. From where I sit this moment, life looks drab and empty and drizzly. . . .

We were ushered into the waiting room and not long afterward were sent in to Dr. Hayes Martin. He barely spoke to us, was cold and calculating. He looked at my throat [a] few times and attended another patient while Dr. _____ and Dr. Taylor looked me over. When he came again to glance down my h throat again he dictated to a stenographer a few lines, indicated they would perform the biopsy the next day and left unceremoniously.¹⁵

After another instance of similar treatment, he wrote, “I felt like I was just one of a herd of cattle being inspected before the kill.” Recounting the events of March 5, he wrote, “This was a sad day. I entered the hospital with a voice and came out the next day without one.”¹⁶ Recovery was unpleasant:

Here was a lost day I had asked the woman Doctor, anaesthetist the night before, when she came to see me, how long I would be Unconscious and she replied, “just enough” I assumed that this meant that I would return to consciouness immediately after the operation was over as I did in Salt Lake in 1950 in a similar situation.¹⁷ But it was about 16 hours I lay in unconsciousness. What I said or did during that time, I have no way of knowing but the first thing I knew a nurse was turning me on one side, I suppose to change [the] sheets. I did not seem to realize what she wanted or what she was doing and she spoke very crossly to me several times. I finally got half way up on my knees and said “don’t be so cross.” Then she railed upon me. I said “I don’t know just what you want” and she kept muttering and scolding me for what seemed a long time.¹⁸

15. Kimball, Journals, March 8, 1957. Names in the journals are sometimes left blank, and Elder Kimball likely intended to add the name later.

16. Kimball, Journals, March 5, 1957. This entry was written out of sequence below a March 8 entry.

17. In 1950, Kimball had a spot removed from his throat, which was identified as noncancerous. See Kimball, Journals, March 8–13, 1950.

18. Kimball, Journals, March 7, 1957.

His greatest fear was that a total loss of his voice would make his service as an Apostle impossible. He reflected, "I have not feared to die so far as I can analyze it, but to face years of living without usefulness is frightening. After these years of extensive activity to think of being shelved for inability to serve is terrifying."¹⁹

To quicken his recovery, doctors instructed him not to speak. "I went to Priesthood Meeting with Andrew and was duly acknowledged but could not say a word. It was most difficult to sit in the class and say nothing. In Sunday School I was again acknowledged but could say nothing. Things were said in the class which I felt needed refutation but I was powerless."²⁰

Results of the biopsy were inconclusive, but by July Elder Kimball's throat had not healed, and he was advised to return to the specialist in New York for further testing. This time, doctors found a cancerous growth, and within hours they removed one of his vocal cords and part of another. The Kimballs remained in New York for several weeks before returning to Salt Lake City in early September. Elder Kimball slowly regained the ability to speak and was able to deliver his first sermon since the surgery on December 8 at a quarterly stake conference in Arizona.²¹ Yet his throat problems persisted, requiring additional biopsies and eventually radiation treatments in late 1971 to remove a cancerous tumor.²² His new voice was later described as "a quiet, persuasive, mellow voice, an acquired voice, an appealing voice," one that was "loved by the Latter-day Saints."²³

Ministering to the One

Despite his health challenges, Elder Kimball repeatedly reached out to people from all walks of life. Another experience portrayed in the journal demonstrates his compassion toward individuals amid the demands of a hectic schedule.

In June 1957, Elder Kimball agreed to meet a man in his office at 2:30 p.m., but the man never arrived. Elder Kimball went looking for him and found him in a downtown Salt Lake City hotel. He described the man as

19. Kimball, Journals, March 8, 1957. This is an entry on the page following the earlier March 8 entry.

20. Kimball, Journals, March 10, 1957.

21. Spencer W. Kimball to Camilla Kimball, December 8, 1957, Safford, Arizona, in Kimball, Journals.

22. Kimball, Journals, October 13, 1971; November 9, 1971; December 31, 1971.

23. Boyd K. Packer, "President Spencer W. Kimball: No Ordinary Man," *Ensign* 4, no. 3 (March 1974), 4.

unsteady on his feet, with ruffled hair and a red face. “He embraced me and wept and pointed to the dresser covered with empty and partly filled bottles of 7Up and a half empty bottle of liquor. He was ashamed. He babbled on as a drunk would: how glad he was to see me, how he appreciated my coming; that I was the first one who showed that much interest in him.”

Elder Kimball immersed the man in a bathtub full of cold water and gave him some tomato juice. The man’s wife had wired some money, and Elder Kimball escorted him to Western Union to retrieve it. “I am sure many people who knew me were surprised at my company. The W.U. girls were asked by him if they were Mormons and he told them proudly who I was in loud drunken terms and language. The girls were as embarrassed as I.” The pair then made their way to the downtown Alcoholics Anonymous group, and Elder Kimball arranged for him to stay there. “While I did this he was tell[ing] the men in the room that I was his friend and I was an Apostle of the Mormon Church etc.” After returning to the hotel to check out, the man disappeared. “I went along 2nd South and stepped in every pool hall, café, and tavern down the line and couldn’t find him.” Needing to catch a train to Los Angeles, Elder Kimball abandoned the search. At the time, he was suffering from a severe case of sciatica, and “every step was torture.” Walking around town looking for the man made the pain nearly unbearable.

Back in Salt Lake City several days later, a concerned Elder Kimball sought out the man and found him “bright and cheery and clean and look[ing] like a new man.” This story of charity and ministering to the one is just one of many preserved in the journals.²⁴



Spencer W. Kimball on trip to Argentina, 1964. Courtesy Church History Library.

24. Kimball, Journals, June 8, 11, 1957.

Mentoring a Future Prophet

The journals document interactions and relationships with family, General Authorities, and others. This includes his friendship with his doctor and future Church President Russell M. Nelson. Their first substantial contact occurred when Elder Kimball was assigned to reorganize the Bonneville Stake presidency in December 1964. He noted in his journal that he called “Russell Marion Nelson, a doctor who is an eminent heart specialist,” as the new president.²⁵ Throughout his six and a half years as stake president, President Nelson counseled with and was mentored by Elder Kimball regarding serious problems in the stake.²⁶ But it was President Kimball’s health issues that solidified their close bond.

While attending an area conference in Manchester, England, in August 1971, President Kimball told Dr. Nelson of some heart pains. A few weeks later, Nelson was at Church headquarters for a meeting in his role as newly called Superintendent of the Sunday School organization.²⁷ President Kimball stopped him in the hall and invited him to his office so they could discuss his health. Tests were ordered that soon revealed serious problems that required surgery. In March 1972, the Kimballs, Dr. Nelson, and Dr. Ernest L. Wilkinson²⁸ met with Presidents Harold B. Lee and N. Eldon Tanner to discuss the extreme risks of the surgery. With the encouragement of President Lee, it was decided to proceed, and Dr. Nelson performed open heart surgery on President Kimball on April 12, 1972.²⁹

In subsequent years, Dr. Nelson performed an emergency appendectomy on Camilla Kimball and several more medical procedures on President Kimball. He regularly checked on the Kimballs, provided medical advice, ministered to individuals at the request of President Kimball, and traveled with the Kimballs to the South Pacific for area conferences, simultaneously filling the roles of Sunday School General President and personal

25. Kimball, Journals, December 6, 1964.

26. Russell M. Nelson, *From Heart to Heart: An Autobiography* (Salt Lake City: Quality Press, 1979), 161–62.

27. Russell M. Nelson served as Superintendent and President of the General Sunday School from June 1971 to October 1979. A year after he was called, the title was changed from superintendent to president on June 25, 1972. See “Title Change is Announced, YMMIA Counselors Named,” *Church News*, published by *Deseret News*, July 1, 1972, 3.

28. Dr. Ernest Ludlow Wilkinson (1924–1992) was a cardiologist and the son of former BYU President Ernest Leroy Wilkinson (1899–1978).

29. Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 153–55; Kimball, Journals, September 15, 1971; March 13, 1972; April 12–15, 1972.

physician. At the time of Kimball's call as Church President in 1973, Nelson offered support by way of a visit and handwritten letter, causing Kimball to refer to him as "a real friend."³⁰ The letter touched President Kimball, and he transcribed it into his entry for the day:

The circumstances which have brought you to this sacred responsibility are many. Best known to me are those associated with the preservation of your life. You will recall it was President Lee who lent encouragement and support for you to proceed with the operation on your heart, even though you knew the risks were exceedingly great. . . .

Your surgeon wants you to know that your body is strong; your heart is better than it has been for years, and that by all of our finite ability to predict, you may consider this new assignment without undue anxiety about your health.

Now, may I presume to add a word of caution (as you did when setting me apart as Stake President in 1964) not to tax your capacity with excessive demands. Just as any delicate instrument can be misused, so the fine equipment you bring to this office can be overloaded. You must delegate and entrust to your beloved and capable associates everything that need not be done by you. Accurate medication, periodic checkups, proper rest and pacing will contribute as much to your total productivity as will your work.

Finally, I want you to know what a privilege it is to be your servant, for I know you have been sent, prepared, spared, and blessed by the Lord to lead His Church, with the special power that is uniquely yours.

I love and sustain you, always!

Devotedly,
Russell M. Nelson³¹



Spencer W. Kimball recuperating from heart surgery, 1972. Courtesy Church History Library.

30. Kimball, *Journals*, December 26, 1973; Russell M. Nelson to Spencer W. Kimball, December 30, 1973, in Kimball, *Journals*.

31. Kimball, *Journals*, December 26, 1973. Nelson's letter was dated December 30, but the transcript appears in the December 26 entry. The original letter was also retained in the journal.

In the late 1970s, President Kimball counseled Nelson to write an autobiography for family members. President Kimball agreed to write the foreword with the understanding that Nelson would compose the first draft for Kimball to review and revise. *From Heart to Heart: An Autobiography* was privately published in 1979 and included two chapters on his experiences with President Kimball.³² In 1984, amid health limitations, President Kimball approved the call of Russell M. Nelson to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles nearly twenty years after calling him as stake president. Their twenty years of close association illustrate how one prophet prepared and tutored a future one.³³

1978 Revelation on Priesthood

Among the most significant events of President Kimball's presidency was the June 1978 revelation extending the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church. Unfortunately, by 1977, President Kimball had stopped keeping a journal, though his personal secretary, D. Arthur Haycock, kept an office journal until 1981. In the 1980s, President Kimball's son Edward was permitted to take notes from the office journal covering the years 1977 to 1981. Edward's typescript of his notes was added to his father's personal journal at some point prior to its donation to the Church History Department in December 2008. The typescript included Edward's commentary, sometimes denoted with square brackets. Thus the 1977 to 1981 journal entries are Edward's notes of Haycock's office journal rather than President Kimball's personal writings.

Edward's notes on these office journal entries do not contain President Kimball's personal thoughts on the revelation, nor do they include details of President Kimball's persistent spiritual work in seeking the will of the Lord in the months preceding the revelation. His notes for June 9, 1978, are a verbatim copy of the office journal rather than the usually abbreviated summary.³⁴

32. Russell M. Nelson, *From Heart to Heart: An Autobiography* (Salt Lake City: Quality Press, 1979); personal communication from President Russell M. Nelson, February 18, 2023; Sarah Jane Weaver, "How the Unique Relationship between 2 Prophets Blesses the Church," *Church News*, February 26, 2023, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/living-faith/2023/2/26/23609442/sarah-jane-weaver-unique-relationship-between-two-prophets-nelson-kimball-blesses-church>.

33. Russell M. Nelson became the seventeenth President of the Church on January 14, 2018.

34. For details regarding events leading up to the revelation, see Edward L. Kimball, "Spencer W. Kimball and the Revelation on Priesthood," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 2 (2008): 4–78.

6/9 “This morning at seven o’clock by prior arrangement met in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple with all of the General Authorities to consider with them the matter of giving the Priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church: (See copy of letter.)³⁵

“Immediately following the release of this announcement the telephones started to ring and rang continuously the balance of the afternoon. People, members and nonmembers, called from around the world to learn if what they had heard on the radio and TV was true.

“The First Presidency met with the Presiding Bishopric at 10:15 a.m. which was much later than usual due to our meeting in the Temple.

“At 11:00 a.m. the First Presidency met with a Mr. Ron Smith of Newsmaking International.

“This afternoon at 2:30, President David P. Gardner of the University of Utah brought Dr. Franklin, a black man, in to meet me and came into my office for a short visit.

“Had appointments with several of the General Authorities this afternoon on matters they needed to discuss with me. Also my counselors and I met with the Missionary Committee and then later with Brother Heber G. Wolsey and Wendell J. Ashton.

“It was a very busy day today and did not get away from the office until six o’clock tonight.”³⁶

Two days later, another entry provides some insight into the revelation’s impact:

6/11 to Honolulu; conf. with Kauai Hawaii Stake.

“On the 11th of June we took plane to San Francisco and Hawaii. . . . One good brother approached with two sons about eleven and twelve and a little later his wife, a colored black lady, a member of the Church, but they had heard of the change of policy of the Church toward the black people and she was weeping copiously. She indicated that the day before when they had heard the news that the black people would now be given the privilege of the gospel, she had wept all day long, so grateful was she. This is true of many people, both white and black, who have indicated that they wept all day when they had heard the enlightening news.”³⁷

About nine months after the revelation was announced, President Kimball reflected on the experience at a devotional for young adults:

35. First Presidency circular to all General and Local Priesthood Officers, June 8, 1978; “Every Faithful, Worthy Man in the Church May Now Receive the Priesthood,” *Ensign* 8, no. 7 (July 1978): 75; “Revelation Extends Blessings of Gospel,” *Church News*, June 17, 1978, 3.

36. Kimball, *Journals*, June 9, 1978.

37. Kimball, *Journals*, June 11, 1978.

“We had the glorious experience of having the Lord indicate clearly that the time had come when all worthy men and women everywhere can be fellowheirs and partakers of the full blessings of the gospel. I want you to know, as a special witness of the Savior, how close I have felt to him and to our Heavenly Father as I have made numerous visits to the upper rooms in the temple, going on some days several times by myself. The Lord made it very clear to me what was to be done.”³⁸

Legacy of the Kimball Journals

The Kimball journals are among the richest resources for Latter-day Saint history in the twentieth century. They provide readers with a window into Spencer Kimball's individual growth, showing his frustrations, struggles, extreme trials, compassion, and drive. Above all, they show his deep and abiding faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

President Kimball's lifelong commitment to keeping a journal reflects his numerous teachings on the subject. “Your own private journal should record the way you face up to challenges that beset you,” he taught. “Do not suppose life changes so much that your experiences will not be interesting to your posterity. Experiences of work, relations with people, and an awareness of the rightness and wrongness of actions will always be relevant.”³⁹ His journals embody the candid and honest type of personal histories he felt were important. Beyond their historical value, the Kimball journals serve as a model and motivation for our own record-keeping efforts.

The journals are now available on the Church History catalog at <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record/4c1c1ed1-f19b-45fc-b835-626343188f24/o?view=browse&lang=eng>.

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38. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Savior: The Center of Our Lives,” *New Era* 10, no. 3 (April 1980): 3.

39. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Angels May Quote from It,” *New Era* 5, no. 10 (October 1975): 4–5.