

glyph *notes*

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“Aha! Moments” Abound on Guatemala Tour 2020

By Aaron Presler

The definition of “Aha! moment” according to Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary is this: “a moment of sudden realization, inspiration, insight, recognition, or comprehension.” In my own definition, it’s when a light bulb suddenly comes on in my mind and “I get it!”

Sixteen people ventured to Guatemala on February 20 to explore The Book of Mormon lands found there. Two days were spent in travel from the USA and back, leaving nine days to explore. For me, and I believe for others, those explorations

were ripe with “Aha! moments.” I have designed *glyph notes* since May 2007. Over these past 13 years, I’ve read many excellent articles written by various authors that draw parallels between archaeological discoveries and the narrative in The Book of Mormon.

This tour, in particular, brought moments when I found myself in the middle of an article I had read, but it was unfolding before me while literally standing on the very site described in such article. My intent is to share with you a few of those “Aha! moments” through selected excerpts from my 2020 tour journal.

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When drawings, articles and abstract concepts emerge as real stone discovered in dense jungle, it’s an Indiana Jones moment ... fortunately, without the temple full of snakes or the massive rolling boulder chasing us down a jungle path. But still, a genuine sense of adventure and discovery!

Sallie Presler



The 2020 Guatemala Tour group rested awhile in the royal palace complex, part of the Central Acropolis at Tikal. We sang “Blest Be the Tie that Binds” in the wonderful acoustics of this courtyard. Front row L to R: Pam and Michael Walker, Liz and Ted Combs, Art and Carol Chevalier, Laura Handy; Standing: Lyle Smith; Second row: Missy and Bob Bobbitt, Aaron Presler, Sherrie Smith; Third row: Tim and Janet Twombly, Suzanne Thomas. Not shown: Sallie Presler, the photographer.

“Aha! Moments” (Cont. from Page 1)

The Raised-up Sky Lord

Day 3, Saturday Feb 22: Our destination today is Quiriguá, a site containing the particularly meaningful Stela C—which features the Maya creation story carved in glyphs. It parallels rather dramatically our creation story found in Genesis and fits even more closely to the Inspired Version than the King James Version. It was long believed that the creation story described in the Popol Vuh, a Maya “history” written in the 1500s shortly after the European invasion, was influenced by the Catholic faith. But Stela C confirms this Maya creation story carved in stone around 700 AD, long before Columbus and Catholicism.

We faced a four-hour bus trip each way, so today began early, and although we always begin the day’s journey with a prayer to our Heavenly Father, it seemed extra essential today.

I have to say we have been doubly blessed today. Sherrie Smith was administered to yesterday and received strength enough to teach her “Intro to Reading Glyphs” class to us, and this morning, she’s with us for the journey to Quiriguá. Her scholarly grasp of Stela C and expertise in reading Maya glyphs is really unparalleled in the Restoration church. So, it’s a delightful gift to have her healthy enough to be with us.

An hour or so into the trip, our fearless social directors, Sallie Presler and Laura Handy, opened a time of sharing for the group. First, Carol Chevalier led us in singing several hymns. I cannot testify that we sounded great, but there’s always uplifting joy when the Saints sing favorite hymns together.

Missy Bobbitt shared her testimony of God’s grace and healing when she fell, causing a life-threatening head trauma. God led her through frightening experiences and ultimate healing to bring her to where she is today, both physically and spiritually transformed. An experience of that nature leads to changed perceptions and priorities. If I took away one specific point from Missy’s testimony it was “learn to praise God in everything, both in good and bad circumstances.”

Art Chevalier testified second. Though quite different than Missy’s, Art described his physical, emotional, and spiritual ordeal as a marine in the Vietnam War that also shaped many of my generation’s perceptions about life. He testified of God’s protection and guidance through the war, God’s continued blessing more recently through the loss of his wife due to cancer; and finally a new love in Carol. My take-home point from Art’s testimony

Pam Walker

This trip was a dream come true for my husband and me. I loved every part of the trip. To see the lay of the land, the highlands and lowlands was significant for me. Having a degree in education with a social studies emphasis, I believe geography is very important to the flow of the people. Seeing the highland/lowland areas just made it all come together for me. I loved being in what I believe to be The Book of Mormon lands.

The glyphs were awesome to see firsthand and to be able to clearly see the intricate stories being told on them. I was glad to be able to see the “and it came to pass” glyph up close and personal.

Another part was being with a wonderful group of people who I came to love. There were many wonderful experiences, like our boat ride across Lake Atitlán to visit Santiago, a present-day Maya village. We also experienced the Lord healing people who were on the trip. Some had health issues, but the Lord strengthened all of us to be able to climb the tallest pyramids.

was “God is faithful for a lifetime for those who love and trust Him.”

About four hours into the trip, we finally pulled off the main highway. Nestled in the center of a massive banana plantation was Quiriguá. The second stela from the entrance is Stela C, the creation story. A fairly large group—French, if I interpreted their conversation correctly—already surrounded Stela C. So first we searched Stela A to find “and it came to pass” glyphs and found two or three, one with really clear detail. The significance of “and it came to pass” is threefold. First, it’s a common Hebrew phrase. Second, it’s also commonly found in Maya writing. And third, it’s found abundantly throughout The Book of Mormon. Coincidence or convincing parallels?

The French group finally moved on, so we surrounded Stela C, anxious to hear Sherrie explain first-hand the materials we studied in class last night. And so, she began.

In short, the carvings describe three gods (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?) responsible for the creation of the heavens, the earth, and the sea or waters. Each of the dominions were spoken into being and a stone (foundation) put in place to establish each dominion. Finally, the Raised-up Sky Lord (Jesus Christ) oversaw all creation ... that’s the Inspired Version!

Missy Bobbitt points out a king carved on one side of Stela C as Carol Chevalier looks on. The side just to the right of Missy's feather pointer (shown below) tells the Maya creation story including the bottom two glyphs that describe the Raised-up Sky God overseeing creation.



Sallie Presler



Sallie Presler

For me, this last sentence was my “Aha! moment.” As Maya writing is being read more accurately in recent years, this Raised-up Sky Lord and his

characteristics parallel very closely with what we know of Jesus Christ. Here I was, in the middle of a banana plantation, looking at glyphs carved in stone more than 1300 years ago that describe Jesus Christ. It can be debated as to whether the Raised-up Sky Lord is actually Jesus Christ or another personality similar to him, but the substance of this deity overseeing creation is carved in stone. The carving won't change. And what Joseph Smith translated in the Inspired Version of the Bible in the 1830s won't change. And the two match closely.

Massive Population, E Group, and a Glimpse of the Kingdom

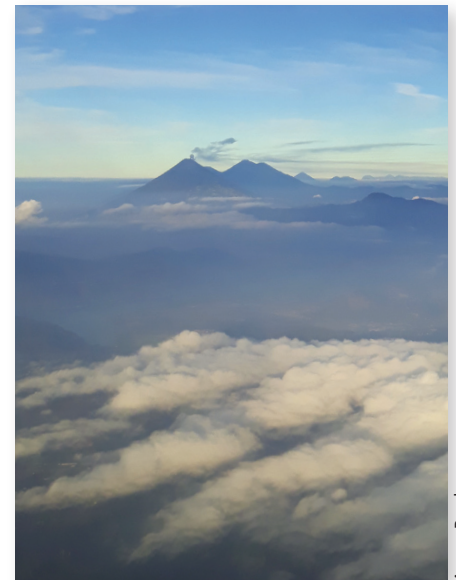
Day 6, Tuesday February 25: Today we would fly from Guatemala City to Flores in the lowland Petén area. Four a.m. came too early. We needed an early alarm to shower and finalize packing, yet Sallie and I still just barely made it to the hotel lobby at the scheduled time. However, the bus hadn't arrived

yet and wouldn't for another 25 minutes; so we were not in the least bit late. Even with the late arrival of the bus, we made it smoothly through ticketing and security with time to spare. I have a feeling the airline would have waited a little while longer for 16 people on a flight that only carries 30 or so.

The seats were unassigned; so first come first served. Sallie and I and Tim and Janet Twombly were the last four to board, so we took the last available seats at the very back of the plane. It was cramped and Janet's seat was weirdly and uncomfortably leaning forward. The absolute definition of “puddle-jumper;” however, the flight was only an hour long so it would be tolerable ... and Janet smiled determinedly.

The view along the way was terrific. Within a few minutes of our plane emerging from low clouds, a group of four volcanoes came into view. One of

the four spewed a column of ash skyward. So cool! The progression from high, rugged mountains, to lower packed mountains, to super flat plain was striking. It's easy to see how geography separated the Nephites from the Lamanites and that the mountainous barriers made it difficult to move armies between. Even the small mountains seemed like a grid pattern of cones with rather high peaks and deep valleys. An army on foot might get through; but only with vast amounts of energy spent. I can see why there was significant separation between Nephite and Lamanite for centuries.



Aaron Presler

A volcano spews majestically just as we are leaving the Lamanite highlands, that surround Guatemala City, on our flight to the Nephite lowlands of Petén.

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“Aha! Moments” (Cont. from Page 3)

Suddenly, the mountains ended and the landscape was flat. Really flat. Flat jungle. As we approached the airport at Flores, I looked down at the flat plain with hundreds of mounds as far as I could see. At first glance, they just seemed like low hills. But there was such a geometry to the shapes and spacing, they had to be man-made. I'd read recently about the vast civilization being rediscovered in the Petén area, in particular with the help of Lidar images; but I'd never seen it quite like this ... so clearly evident to my own eyes. Wow! This was an “Aha! moment.”

The Book of Mormon describes a vast civilization in the centuries after the Nephites came to the new world. Yet for 150 or more years, archaeologists in Mesoamerica refused to accept more than a sparse population model.

Recent Lidar imaging has exploded that misinterpretation of history, leading to new conclusions that there truly was a massive civilization in the Maya area ... one more striking parallel to the Book of Mormon.

The airport at Flores had been upgraded since my last visit 15 years earlier. Then it was an open-air building with no windows and very loose security.

Today it was enclosed; and there was a McDonald's just down the street. Real uptown now!

The bus we boarded, headed for Tikal's Jungle Lodge, was a smaller one, but the ingenious packing skills of our driver squeezed in 16 people and all our luggage. We stopped briefly at the lodge to drop off Sherrie and Art, neither of whom were feeling well. Art has been fighting an upper respiratory problem, which was aggravated further by the early start and resulting lack of sleep. Sherrie is exhausted from the illness that nearly prevented her from coming on the tour at all.

Minus these two, we set off for Uaxactún. The last time I was here, the road to Uaxactún was little more than a jeep trail and could only be navigated by the bus, slowly and cautiously dodging low-hanging

foliage. Today, the road was widened, a gravel base had been laid down and the jungle had been cut back amply enough for much quicker passage. We reached the town in half the time of my previous trip.

The town itself seemed improved upon as well. There was a new school building and a few newer houses, too. But no children met the bus when we entered town. Last time a throng of kids selling cornhusk dolls, which were beautifully crafted by the way, swarmed us as we exited the bus. Today, no one. Disappointing.

In Uaxactún, there are three primary excavated sites to visit. We visited two. The third was closed, due to either construction on the roadway into it or ongoing excavation, I wasn't sure which. Where the first site was reachable by bus, our second site required a long walk through a neighborhood alley.



Left: Bob Bobbitt waves from the steps of the observation temple at Uaxactún which lies directly across from the three temples shown below. Below: Ted Combs walks from the center pyramid that lines up with the spring and fall equinoxes when seen from the observation pyramid. The left pyramid lines up with the summer equinox and the right one lines up with the winter equinox.



After visiting the first site, Lyle needed rest and put me in charge of leading our party to the second area.

Unexpectedly, I was standing directly in the center of a mostly excavated plaza. Three pyramids lined up precisely in a row in front of me with one observation pyramid standing behind me. It was exactly the triadic E Group that Lyle had written about in the 2nd Quarter 2019 *glyph notes*. From atop the fourth pyramid, the other three were positioned to line up exactly during the seasonal equinoxes with

Liz and Ted Combs

There were so many wonderful experiences on the recent tour of Guatemala, including the rugged volcanic beauty of the highlands, as well as the jungle locations, especially Tikal. We were blessed by how quickly the small group of travelers became close friends, caring for and watching out for each other. We worshiped together, shared testimonies of the goodness of Christ in our lives, and we prayed for one another.

The experience that stands out as a highlight of the trip was the visit to the remote site of Uaxactún. This small Maya village, built around an abandoned archeologist airstrip, is truly an isolated place. Several of our travelers knew of this village and came prepared to provide some fun for the children living there. After visiting several portions of the archeological site, we were preparing to leave but had seen only a few children. As the bus was slowly pulling forward, we saw a few children nearby and handed some toys out the window. Then a few more children appeared, and the bus stopped. Several travelers got off the bus and began to hand out the toys and treats we brought. Soon a large throng of children was lined up outside waiting for their turn to receive a gift. What a joy to watch the faces of the children light up for those few minutes of fun!

two boys playing in front of their ramshackle shack of a home. Tim Twombly asked the bus driver to stop and hand the boys tiny toy cars we had brought for just such children as these two. Within a few seconds, several other young boys dashed from the shack to get in on the action, followed by a younger girl. Sallie asked the driver to let her out of the bus and he obliged. She stepped off the bus with arms loaded like Santa Claus, with toy cars, Frisbees, pencils, crayons, soap bubble makers ... and a lot of all of them. Literally seconds later, kids were streaming from every home in the village until 30 or more eager boys and girls reached for a prized gift. Ted Combs bounded off the bus with an armload of balsa airplane gliders. Oh, boy! Sallie was SO in her element. This is exactly what she had envisioned for the children of Uaxactún. And Ted captured that joy, too.

It struck me that we would leave this humble, dusty, desolate village and return to our lives of abundance, and these children would remain here scratching out a life the best they could. It stood as an enormous gulf between wealth and poverty in the world. Yet, for a brief moment, there was a spark of joy glistening in the eyes of both those receiving and those giving gifts. I felt God's Spirit show me a tiny

sample of what the dream of Zion is. "And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them (Genesis 7:23). Sometimes an "Aha! moment" is simply a small revelation from the Holy Spirit.



Janet Twombly

Sallie Presler does her best impersonation of Santa Claus for eager Uaxactún boys and girls by handing out a slew of goodies including toy cars, bubble-makers, pencils, crayons ... even a soccer ball autographed by everyone in our group!

incredible accuracy. Had I carefully read Sherrie's material, I wouldn't have been so caught off guard, but instead, it was a genuine "Aha! moment" for me. It's a moment of standing in the midst of an article written by Lyle, but in the flesh.

We loaded onto the bus and began pulling out of the village. On the edge of the abandoned airstrip that split the town in two neighborhoods, we noticed

tied to a treat. A genuine "Aha! moment" for me was the realization that Oreo and Twix, two of my favorite treats, are found in The Book of Mormon!

**And We Will Fall Upon Their Necks
Day 8, Thursday
February 27:** One of the special things our social directors, Sallie and Laura, provided each morning was an inspirational scripture

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“Aha! Moments” (Cont. from Page 5)

And **moreover**, I say unto you, that the time shall come, when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (Mosiah 1:121; LDS 3:20).

Standing **betwixt** them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions; having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice (Mosiah 8:37; LDS 15:9).

This is powerful support for my long-held belief that my favorite treats are indeed Word of Wisdom food, because they are included in our scriptures. Okay; a sense of humor is one of the delights of these tours. This group of 16 has been a wonderful group to travel with, and all have a great sense of humor.

Today is a second Tikal day. Where yesterday we focused on the Grand Plaza area, which included a climb up the Grand Temple and an excursion through the palaces on either side, today we would get serious climbing in. On the agenda is Temple IV, the tallest at Tikal, and Lost World Pyramid, the structure now standing having no major additions since the time of Christ’s visit to the Americas.

It had rained around breakfast time, potentially causing footing on our climbs to be wet and treacherous. Lyle chose to stay at the lodge with Sherrie and avoid the uncertain footing. This left me to lead the group for the day.

After the long walk from lodge to site, we arrived at the base of Temple IV, ready to climb.

A wooden staircase snaked through jungle trees ascending what appears to the naked eye to be a random hill hidden in the jungle. It soon became clear that a temple of enormous height broke out of entangled



Left: The scripture from Genesis, “We will fall upon their necks,” is taken rather literally by Art and Carol Chevalier after completing their triumphant climb up Temple IV, while Laura Handy looks on. Right: Earlier, Bob and Missy Bobbitt, with Aaron Presler wedged in between, enjoy the jungle treetop view from atop Temple IV, the tallest pyramid at Tikal.

Tim Twombly

Thank you to Lyle and Sherrie Smith and PSI Tours for hosting the trip to Guatemala! It was very exciting to experience the lands where the Nephites, Lamanites, and Mulekites lived. We were asked to read The Book of Mormon, and Sherrie sent lots of information to read in preparation for the trip, which helped us to be more knowledgeable about the places we visited.

I was very impressed with the climate in Guatemala in late February. It is called the land of eternal spring, and it really was spring when we were there. Many of the trees had beautiful blossoms of yellow, red, orange, and lavender. It was the dry season at that time, which suited us well when visiting the jungle area. I hardly saw any mosquitoes.

The ruins were very impressive. We got to visit Kaminaljuyú, which may have been the city of Nephi; Quiriguá, which had a stela of the creation story; and several sites in the Tikal area. It was exciting to be able to climb on the pyramids and walk through the stone buildings from the Nephite era and shortly after. It was a confirmation of the great civilization that The Book of Mormon says was built up at that time.

The thing I appreciated most of all was being with those of like mind. Each one in our group had a great testimony of The Book of Mormon and a desire to serve our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Thanks again, Lyle and Sherrie. I also want to thank Aaron and Sallie Presler for their valuable contributions, especially their “sweet” scripture verse every morning at breakfast!



Sallie Presler

vines, grassy rubble, and strangling trees. Finally, well above the jungle canopy, the stairway ended, and I stepped out onto the high shelf atop Temple IV. This was not the tallest point on the pyramid—that was still 60 or 80 feet higher at what is called the “comb” of the temple. Climbing higher was no longer permitted as several visitors had fallen climbing the ladder to the topmost structure. We had reached the highest accessible point of the temple.

It was a most victorious moment ... all fourteen of us standing at this high point together.

Today’s “Aha! moment” was a rediscovery of a Zion principle, not an archaeological one. Both Art and Carol, our oldest travelers, completed the difficult climb and were met with a cheer from the rest of us. The joy I felt at seeing those two make it to the top was greater than the joy I felt for myself; and I think others in our group felt the same way.

It is this joy we feel for one another that is at the heart of being the body of Christ. While personal salvation is vital—we all must be born again in Jesus Christ—the Restoration is also about the gospel of His Kingdom here on earth. Zion is about our shared experiences, first with the Lord and then, with each other in His kingdom. At this high place in Book of Mormon lands, I could almost see this scripture coming to life ... a group of His people gathered to a place of His choosing and raised up to meet Him.

And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine own elect from the four quarters of the earth, **unto a place which I shall prepare;** an holy city, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and

it shall be called Zion; a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there; and we will receive them into our bosom; and they shall see us, **and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks,** and we will kiss each other (Genesis 7: 70-71).

We stayed for awhile soaking in the same view that attracted George Lucas to film this exact view as part of *Star Wars, A New Hope*.

As enjoyable as it was, we didn’t linger too long. We had other worlds to conquer. We descended without incident and headed toward the Lost World temple. Essentially,

we were retracing our previous footsteps until we came to a crossroads. Carol was exhausted after having climbed Temple IV and requested a return to the shuttle drop off point. Sallie graciously volunteered to accompany her and Laura Handy decided to take the same option. We had a group prayer asking the Lord’s protection over both groups. We then parted ways.

Our next leg was a steep trail climb. I worried about Art, but

he seemed to possess an indomitable spirit this day.

At last we entered the Lost World. I was anticipating the climb up the front face, scrambling up steep stones to the top. This temple was built before Christ came to this continent. It was not added to and stands today just as it did when Christ visited this people and these lands. There is no clear evidence that Jesus actually visited here. It may not be exactly an “Aha! moment” but it’s spiritually sweet to imagine that He may have walked here and this is an opportunity to step where He may have stepped.

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Tim Twombly

From the top of the Lost World Pyramid, Janet Twombly and Suzanne Thomas enjoy the view that includes Temple IV in the distance.

EDITOR URGENTLY NEEDED for *glyph notes*!

Contact Sherrie Smith either by telephone: 816.838.5191 or email: precolumbiansi@gmail.com

“Aha! Moments” (Cont. from Page 7)

My only disappointment was the sign hanging from a barrier rope. It said, “No Climbing.”

Fortunately, a wooden stairway ascended another side, allowing visitors still to climb. And we did. All our remaining group minus Michael. His legs didn’t feel another tough climb was possible. Mine were feeling close to that, but I forged ahead with the rest.

My proudest moment was when Art made it to the top. This was his second major climb in about a half hour. I was amazed at his fortitude. I know he was really tired and not feeling too well. But he soldiered on. I was impressed!

Sallie had given the camera to me when she, Carol, and Laura headed back toward home. My main job was to take photos at the summit of the Lost World Pyramid. I was so tired that I totally forgot I had a camera. Didn’t snap a single shot!

Our next stop was Temple V. Last time I was here, it was the most terrifying climb of all. It is a steep and tall temple that had been closed to climbing via the steps. But a wooden stairway had been built along the side. It was a system of alternating ladders and platforms and climbing the vertical was challenging even for the stout-hearted. The wooden ladder no longer stands, so climbing Temple V is not an option.

Still, Temple V is a visual and photographic wonder. So we photographed it thoroughly.

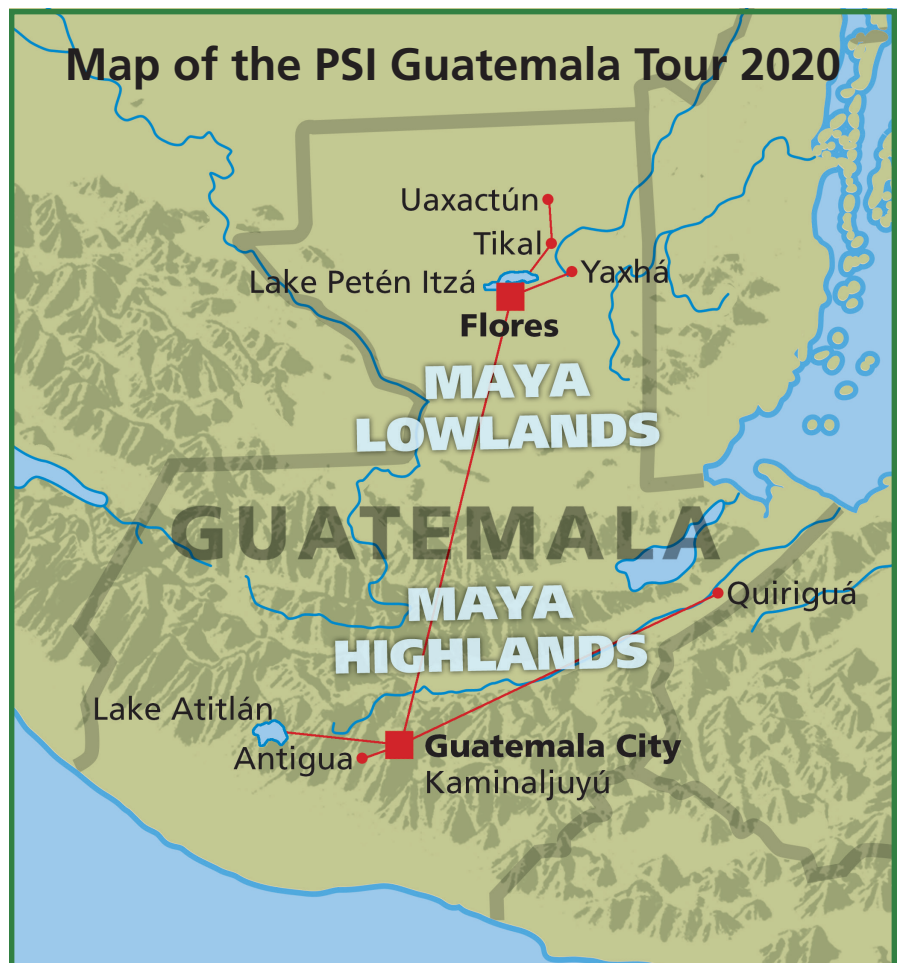
I mapped out the trail from Temple V to Temple I where the tram loads and unloads. It seemed obvious on the map but the reality was quite different. The trail was narrow and at times didn’t seem like a trail at all. It was constantly descending which was a good thing on my tired legs. But it was also a near constant tree root staircase. A slope is easier on my knees than the constant pound of descending stairs. My knees took a beating. And the others certainly must have been questioning my sense of direction and leadership. It truly looked like no one had traveled this path for months at least. We were torn between humming “The Old, Old Path” to encourage ourselves or imagine the theme music from *Jurassic Park* just before marauding dinosaurs devour their helpless prey! Finally, we emerged onto a main walkout, clearly relieved!

Perfect Triadic Temples

Day 9, Friday February 28: Yaxhá was off the main highway 10 or 15 miles, so that final stretch of road was rocky, winding, and hilly. It left Sallie and Art feeling more inclined to recuperate rather than explore, so we left them hanging out with the bus driver as the rest of us headed into the site. Yaxhá is largely unexcavated, with only three or four areas partially uncovered. Much of the site is jungle paths winding between forested hills that aren’t real hills, but uncovered structures. So much of the Maya lowlands are exactly this except without the groomed trails.

The first excavated pyramid was closed to climbing, and the wooden staircase was closed for repairs. I could hear a power saw from somewhere up the staircase, but out of sight. Disappointing? For most of the group perhaps, but I had climbed so hard yesterday, I was a bit relieved.

Our next excavated structure was a ball court. Pretty much every Maya community had a ball court, all with certain features in common—two parallel walls sloping toward the center, creating a symmetrical court. But the dimension and



Lyle Smith and Aaron Presler

Michael Walker

When we were asked to share our most meaningful experience during our Guatemala trip, it was a “no brainer” for me.

My most meaningful experience was a class taught by Sherrie Smith on the Mayan glyph that was translated as “and it came to pass.” Sherrie shared with us that the breakthrough in deciphering the Mayan glyphs came when it was realized that they were phonetic. She explained that the glyph consisted of three parts. The first part is written with an “i” but is pronounced like a long “e.” The second part is written with a “u” and is pronounced as a “oo” as in blueberry. Finally, the third part is written “ti” and is pronounced “tee” as in a golf tee.

What excited me was the connection I saw with the Mayan glyph and the Hebrew word for “and it came to pass,” which is spelled in English, vayehee. Phonetically, vayehee would be broken down as va-ye-hee and pronounced “vi,” with an “i” sound. Next, the “ye” is pronounced “ya” with a short “a” sound. And finally, the “hee” is pronounced like “he” with a long “e” sound.

Phonetically, vayehee has three syllables, va-ye-hee and also phonetically, the Mayan glyph consists of three syllables, i-u-ti. As soon as I realized this phonetic connection, I was humbled as I was flooded by the Spirit of the Lord. “O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he* is good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever” (Psalm 118:29).

proportion of each court varied widely from city to city. This one had much higher, steeper walls than Uaxactún’s. It

is only speculation as to how the game was actually played. Imagine future archaeologists finding baseball fields all across America, from little league fields in a tiny hamlet to major league stadiums in

huge cities. Imagine the game having been played not for 150 years, but for 1,500 years! And there were no rules actually found, just a few photos of some ball players. That’s the difficulty of speculating about this Maya game. How was it played in its early years? Did it change over the centuries? Then the game disappeared along with the Maya civilization. There are current descendants of the Maya today but no remnant of the game exists in their traditions for the last thousand years. So, most every interpretation is hugely speculative. It appears to have been important to their society, but were there religious connections or purely secular or political reasons?

Our final stop was the best. There are times when I stumble into an area that is so familiar because of having read about it in *glyph notes* ... not necessarily the exact area or place, but a place fitting a pattern significant to our Book of Mormon understanding. Lyle has recently written about the importance of the triadic temple formation in the Maya tradition, and its connection to The Book of Mormon. I climbed several stone steps to reach the raised plaza. I had saved my painful knees for this climb; not realizing why until I entered the plaza. I emerged in the center of a **perfect** triadic temple formation. How cool was that? Picture a square plaza with a temple standing on each of three sides. One slightly taller temple

faces the open side that contains the ascending staircase. Two slightly smaller temples facing each other and flanking the tallest one. Wow! It perfectly matched what I had read.

These are some of the moments that make these tours really worthwhile ... when drawings and articles and abstract concepts become real stone emerging from dense jungle.

It’s an Indiana Jones sort of moment ... fortunately, without the temple full of

snakes or the massive rolling boulder chasing us down a jungle path. But still, a genuine sense of adventure and discovery.



Discovering an outstanding example of triadic temples at Yaxhá, Pam Walker joins her husband Michael as he photographs this Maya pyramidal pattern.

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“Aha! Moments” (Cont. from Page 9)

Unexpected Museum Discoveries

Day 10, Saturday February 29: Today was our last full day in Guatemala. Tomorrow we will leave very early for our return flight and spend most of the day in airplanes or airports, making our way back home. But today, we visited Guatemala’s National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

As exciting as traipsing through jungle trails and up ancient pyramids is, sometimes a simple trip to the museum reveals unexpected surprises. I cannot say what discoveries were made by others in our group, but two stood out to me.

As I entered one of the rooms dedicated to Maya artifacts, I heard Carol exclaim from the far side of the room, “A stone box! It’s a stone box!” One of the criticisms of The Book of Mormon through the years was Joseph Smith’s description of the plates being found in a stone box. Archaeologists were convinced that no stone boxes existed in the New World, so obviously Joseph was making up this story. Yet here in the Maya portion of the museum was an ancient stone box. It was an “Aha! moment” for Carol; and I felt her enjoyment of that moment. For Carol, this was something she may have heard before from someone, perhaps Lyle, giving a slide presentation on archaeological evidences of The Book of Mormon at her congregation. Intellectually, she knew stone boxes had been found in Mesoamerica. But now it was not just something heard and known but seen with her own eyes. That’s exciting!

A few minutes later, I turned a corner and came face to face with a beautiful carving with numerous glyphs. I had never seen this carved stone before, neither in classes I had attended nor trips I had taken. Just as an exercise for myself, I began perusing the glyphs. Is it possible I could find an “and it came to pass” glyph? I did! I know that doesn’t seem like an earth-shattering discovery. But, yes, it’s cool to finally “get it;” to read for myself that one glyph and to grasp just a little tiny piece of the work that’s been done in the past 30 years deciphering the Maya glyphs. I connected firsthand with a phrase that is so Mayan, so Hebraic, and so Book of Mormon. It was a satisfying discovery and connection and revelation; all in one small glyph carved on a massive stone mounted in a museum sitting above an ancient city, that is quite possibly the City of Nephi/Lehi. And I had found it myself!

It’s little moments like this, along with bigger moments of adventure, exploration, discovery and revelation that make a PSI tour such a rich and memorable experience. 📷

Janet Twombly

From the first time I heard of ruins of ancient peoples in Mexico and Central America, I have had the desire to see them. So, when these tours by PSI have been offered, I have always wanted to go. It finally worked out for my husband and me to travel to Guatemala to the lands of Nephi and Mulek this past February 2020. We had a great group of people to travel with.

It was exciting to see the pyramids. Seeing the land and the structures left behind by these ancient peoples has helped to make The Book of Mormon come alive for me. Reading the information that Sherrie Smith sent out in preparation for the trip, along with reading The Book of Mormon again, and reading other books on archeology of this area in Mesoamerica gave the stories and accounts of events in The Book of Mormon more meaning and helped my understanding of what these people went through. Seeing some of their buildings, art, and evidence of their culture prove that these people were blessed by God and led to this land by him.

I found myself wishing the stones could talk and tell the story of these peoples of the past. But archaeologists have learned an amazing amount of information. And much of it confirms the accounts given in The Book of Mormon.

I was also impressed with the Guatemalan people. They seemed to be hard-working and courteous.



Janet Twombly

An example of a Maya stone box delighted Carol Chevalier. This was just one of many discoveries we found at the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and throughout our 11-day tour of Guatemala.

glyph *quotes* *Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion.*

(1 Nephi 3:187 [LDS 13:37])

By Sherrie Kline Smith

It's been nearly 200 years since the Lord returned the fullness of the gospel to the world with the coming forth of The Book of Mormon and the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The very name designates that we are living in the latter days. And the hour and time in which we live seems ever so immediate. Are we ready for Zion?

The full quote (above) for this issue's column of "Quotes" reads, "Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the **power** of the Holy Ghost." *God is all powerful*, but when we are ready, and he chooses, *he can endow us with power* to help bring about Zion.

For more than seven years, from January 2013 to the present, the women's leader of the Oak Grove Restoration Branch, Pat Chadwick, has been sending out a monthly 5"x7" flash card about Zion. Most of these have excerpts from well-known church authors. Below is what was printed on the card for July 2019 from *The Word of Christ*, by Raymond D. Zinser. All instances of emphasized words have been added.

We live in a world where "power" in various forms is constantly displayed before us in mass media, nuclear bombs, criminal syndicates, natural catastrophes, violence, terrorist groups, etc. As we contemplate Zion, we are tempted to wonder how we will be able to survive in the face of the **power** of these threats.



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The Power of Direction, Affection, Protection and Correction

1. **Direction** – Christ is the only role model that we can follow as we seek direction in all our lives.

And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given, nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent (Mosiah 1:116 [LDS 3:17]).

2. **Affection** – Splitting the atom created consequences far beyond the immediate objective of the scientist. Even **more powerful is the element of love** in the universe. As **love** is shared or 'split off' it **produces a power** that has no equal in the universe.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19).


3. **Protection** – So many of us are tempted to believe that **power of people** is greater than the power of God. When we abide by the celestial laws on earth we can be assured of the protection of God. He will go before us, he will be with us, he will not fail us, and he will not forsake us.

And as the church shall move forward in its great work, the fulfillment of prophecy may cause the Saints to tremble at the exhibition of **divine power**, yet they shall rejoice in the protection of his grace (D&C 135:3b).

4. **Correction** – It is crucial for us to repent, for repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost are all steps to bring about the Kingdom of God on the earth (Zion).

Repent, repent and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (D&C 32:2f).

Zinser, Raymond D.

1984 *The Word of Christ*. Lamoni, IA: Educational and Management Services. Chapter 33 (467-479) 

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*“Aha! Moments” Abound
on Guatemala Tour 2020*

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Smile

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Smile

By Patricia J Beebe

*Music brings joy to my heart
Words from the soul, music can impart
Through harmony we can learn
to love one another*

*Different parts joined together,
complementing each other.*

A song that I used to sing to my two- and three-year-old Sunday school class members came to my mind yesterday as I was watching all of the news surrounding the pandemic which we are all experiencing; it was hard to smile. The song went like this:

Take that frown and turn it upside down and smile, smile, smile. It will make you happy, it will make you happy. Take that frown and turn it upside down and smile, smile, smile; it will make you happy; it will make you happy—come on sing my song.

The tune isn't important. Just saying the words out loud creates a rhythm and harmony unique to each one. It is truly a song from the heart. And it always worked, even when one of the littles was

crying. The song and happy faces of their peers brought a smile to each of their faces.

It appears that the days ahead will continue to be filled with worry and sadness. We must find a way to restore peace and happiness in our countenance. We are all little children in God's eyes, and I know in my heart that he enjoys the songs from our hearts.

There are many ways we can help bring hope, peace and happiness for ourselves and for others. PSI has chosen through its newsletter *glyph notes* to share the good news of the gospel as it is reflected in The Book of Mormon narrative. Hope, conscientious and unceasing through prayer, is the catalyst that brings about change. With your help, we can share the hope expressed by Moroni in the closing pages of The Book of Mormon with those who lack hope and to encourage those with hope to continue to share with others.

In isolation, we can still experience joy and happiness by banding together for a good cause. Won't you join with PSI in helping to bring a smile to another's face? A self-addressed envelope is enclosed in this issue. Any amount is welcomed and greatly appreciated. Take that frown and turn it upside down and smile, smile, smile. It WILL make you happy—come on sing my song. 