
Elder

D&C 79:1

In March 1832 the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that Jared Carter “should go again into the eastern countries, from place to place, and from city to city, in the power of the ordination wherewith he has been ordained (D&C 79:1). That ordination for Jared Carter was the office of elder in the Melchizedek priesthood.

Joseph Smith was the first elder of the Church (D&C 20:2). Oliver Cowdery was the second. By the time of Jared’s ordination in September 1831, there were dozens of elders in the Church. These elders were given the right and responsibility to “teach, expound, exhort, baptize, and watch over the church” (v. 42). They were given the right to administer and bless the sick and to “confirm those who are baptized into the church, by the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, according to the scriptures” (v. 41). They were told to “take the lead of all meetings and conduct the meetings as they are led by the Holy Ghost, according to the commandments and revelations of God” (vv. 44–45).

Jared used the rights and responsibilities of his priesthood office as he fulfilled his mission in 1832. He wrote, “The Lord has permitted me to administer the gospel to 79 souls and many others by my instrumentality have been convinced of this most glorious work.”¹

Elder D. Todd Christofferson, in his October 1998 general conference address, told the story of elders reaching out to help George Goates:

In 1918 Brother George Goates was a farmer who raised sugar beets in Lehi, Utah. Winter came early that year and froze much of his beet crop in the ground. For George and his young son Francis, the harvest was slow and difficult. Meanwhile, an influenza epidemic was raging. The

¹ Jared Carter Autobiography, typescript, 7. Church History Library.

dreaded disease claimed the lives of George's son Charles and three of Charles's small children—two little girls and a boy. In the course of only six days, a grieving George Goates made three separate trips to Ogden, Utah, to bring the bodies home for burial. At the end of this terrible interlude, George and Francis hitched up their wagon and headed back to the beet field.

[On the way] they passed wagon after wagon-load of beets being hauled to the factory and driven by neighborhood farmers. As they passed by, each driver would wave a greeting: "Hi ya, Uncle George," "Sure sorry, George," "Tough break, George," "You've got a lot of friends, George."

On the last wagon was ... freckled-faced Jasper Rolfe. He waved a cheery greeting and called out: "That's all of 'em, Uncle George."

[Brother Goates] turned to Francis and said: "I wish it was all of ours."

When they arrived at the farm gate, Francis jumped down off the big red beet wagon and opened the gate as [his father] drove onto the field. [George] pulled up, stopped the team, ... and scanned the field. ... There wasn't a sugar beet on the whole field. Then it dawned upon him what Jasper Rolfe meant when he called out: "That's all of 'em, Uncle George!"

[George] got down off the wagon, picked up a handful of the rich, brown soil he loved so much, and then ... a beet top, and he looked for a moment at these symbols of his labor, as if he couldn't believe his eyes.

Then [he] sat down on a pile of beet tops—this man who brought four of his loved ones home for burial in the course of only six days; made caskets, dug graves, and even helped with the burial clothing—this amazing man who never faltered, nor flinched, nor wavered throughout this agonizing ordeal—sat down on a pile of beet tops and sobbed like a little child.

Then he arose, wiped his eyes, ... looked up at the sky, and said: "Thanks, Father, for the elders of our ward."²

² D. Todd Christofferson, "The Priesthood Quorum," *Ensign*, November 1998.