

# BMC Newsletter

Book of Mormon Central

September 2018

## Experience the Book of Mormon: BMC Conference 2018



Conference attendees at BMC Conference 2018

The 2018 annual Book of Mormon Central (BMC) Conference was held Saturday, April 7th at the Utah Valley Conference Center. The conference was a success by most every measure. A larger hall was rented in anticipation of a larger crowd, and we were not disappointed. In 2017, the attendance at the BMC Conference doubled from the previous year. This year, the attendance doubled again with registration numbering 578 people. An admission discount was offered for students and CES workers. Seventy-five CES employees attended the conference this year.

Attendees were invited to experience the Book of Mormon, in addition to listening to great presentations about the Book of Mormon. During breaks between speakers, conference participants could choose to involve themselves in several hands-on experiences with virtual and physical objects, as well as peruse the merchandise of a bookstore and other vendors. The conference exhibits included 1) a genuine Bedouin tent (similar to that most-likely used by Lehi and his family in the wilderness); 2) replica artifacts of the Liahona, Laban's sword, the Golden Plates, the Urim and Thummim, the

## Brant Gardner Joins BMC Staff



Book of Mormon Central is happy to announce that Brant Gardner has joined Book of Mormon Central as a part-time Research Associate following his retirement as a software consultant and product manager. Gardner received an M.A. in Anthropology from the State University of New York, Albany and furthered his studies in a doctoral program at SUNY in Mesoamerican ethnohistory.

Brant Gardner has published widely and presented at scholarly conferences on a variety of Book of Mormon topics. He is the author of *Second Witness: Analytical & Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*. This six-volume commentary on the Book of Mormon focuses on its spiritual, theological, cultural, textual, and historical context.



Authentic Bedouin tent at the BMC Conference 2018

Breastplate, and the wooden chest that held the plates while Joseph Smith worked on the translation; 3) a full-scale replica of the press used to print the Book of Mormon along with the supplies needed to operate a 19th century printing press (courtesy of the Crandall Printing Museum); 4) virtual reality tours of the Jerusalem temple of Herod at the time of Jesus Christ (courtesy of 4th Wall Virtual Reality); 5) virtual reality tours through the lens of Stylometry and Book of Mormon

authorship; 6) a BYU traveling exhibit containing original ancient Roman “sealed” metal plates, containing, among other things, an ancient Roman military diploma dating to AD 109.

The winners of the 2018 Book of Mormon Central Art Contest were announced at the conference and the finalist art pieces, along with other art contest submissions from this and previous years, were displayed in an art gallery.

## Book of Mormon Central Art Competition 2018

[Book of Mormon Central's 2018 Art Contest](#) received submissions from artists from all over the world and of all ages, both amateur and professional. Three Grand Prizes, sixteen Honorable Mentions, and seven Youth Division Honorable Mentions were awarded this year.

First prize went to Courtney von Savoye, an Art Major at Brigham Young University Idaho, for her work entitled *Reap Your Reward*. This

piece was inspired by Alma 32, where Alma explains the nature of faith being something believed and not seen. The expression on the face of the young woman portrayed in the painting captures the wonder and gratitude for her faith and belief.

Second prize went to Andrew Knaupp, a Visual Arts graduate from Brigham Young University, for his beautiful oil painting of

## Volunteer Spotlight Lynn McMurray



Lynn McMurray is a retired attorney from the law firm of Kirton McConkie. McMurray has great interest in Book of Mormon geography and has chosen to volunteer his time with Book of Mormon Central by studying, reviewing, and analyzing various proposed models for Book of Mormon geography. He will be applying a universal methodology to see if consensus can emerge as to the location of particular Book of Mormon sites.

McMurray has been a Mission President and a Bishop of a young single adult ward of the Church. He has spent many hours discussing and building testimonies of the Book of Mormon. Watch two BMC videos of interviews with Lynn McMurray where he presents object lessons explaining how The Book of Mormon is a [rope for our testimonies](#) and [fills our minds with truth](#).



Mary Elizabeth Rollins reading her first copy of the Book of Mormon.

Melissa Horlacher received the Third prize for her Mesoamerican-stelae-style watercolor portrayal of Coriantumr, entitled “An Account of one Coriantumr.”

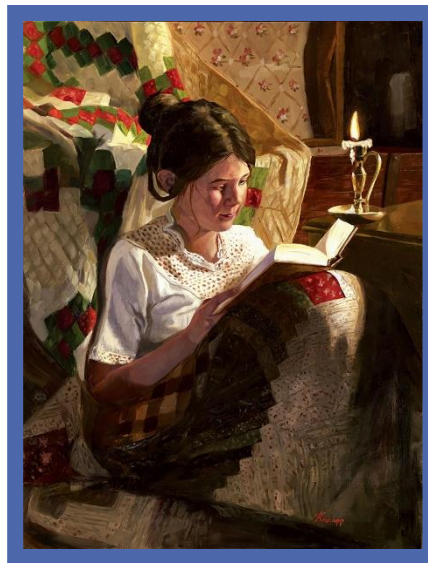
Every quality piece of art submitted is put in the Book of Mormon Central Archive [Artwork Gallery](#) to be viewed and accessed by readers. These art pieces are a valuable resource for illustrating Book of Mormon Central KnoWhys and videos. Since April, several of this

year’s submissions have already been used in videos and to illustrate KnoWhys. We are always in need of excellent works of art that relate to the Book of Mormon

## Art Contest Winners



*Reap Your Reward*  
Courtney von Savoye



*Mary Elizabeth Rollins Reads the Book of Mormon*  
Andrew Knaupp



*“An Account of One Coriantumr”*  
Melissa Horlacher

## MormonVoices: An Affiliation of Three Non-Profit Mormon Organizations



MormonVoices is an affiliation formed in 2018 to bring together three not-for-profit Mormon corporations: Book of Mormon Central, The Interpreter Foundation, and FairMormon. Book of Mormon Central and these two affiliates provide professional support to one another in their various programs and operations. They will undoubtedly co-sponsor many events and engage in many mutual

endeavors in the future. Each affiliate will continue with its individual mission and will continue to have separate operational costs that need to be supported by donors.

Book of Mormon Central remains committed to its original mission to “increase understanding and faithful engagement with the Book of Mormon.” As stated on our website, Book of Mormon Central

(BMC) exists to invite all people, especially the rising generation, to (1) build faith in Jesus Christ; (2) learn and cherish pure doctrine ([1 Timothy 1:3-4](#)); (3) “remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon” ([D&C 84:57](#)); and (4) access scholarly evidence from BMC to answer hard questions about the

Book of Mormon, including its origins—so that they “may know the truth of all things” ([Moroni 10:5](#)).

In order to continue the operations of Book of Mormon Central and further disseminate the message of the Book of Mormon, we ask that you reach out to people you know

who may be interested in donating to Book of Mormon Central.

The MormonVoices [website](#) welcomes donations that benefit the mutual endeavors of all three organizations. The members of this association are still looking for a better name than MormonVoices.

## Mary Whitmer Oil Painting

In honor of Book of Mormon Central’s co-founder, Lynne Hilton Wilson, BMC commissioned an oil painting of Mary Whitmer and Moroni by Robert F. Pack. This beautiful piece of art, depicting one of the many faithful women in LDS history, was appropriately unveiled and presented at FairMormon’s first Women’s Session at its annual conference, August 1, 2018.

In addition to the Three and Eight Witnesses of the Golden Plates, there were “unofficial” witnesses, including some of the prominent women of the early restoration. However, among these women, Mary Whitmer’s experience was unique in that she actually *saw* the plates shown to her by an angelic being. Her story and its significance is explained [in a recent KnoWhy published this month](#).



*Mary Whitmer and Moroni: Earliest of the 1829 Witnesses: Love’s Labors Blessed*  
by Robert F. Pack

## Additions to the BMC Board of Trustees and Board of Advisors



Tyler Perry, President of Perry Homes Utah, has joined Book of Mormon Central as a member of the Board of Trustees. Perry chairs the newly-formed Book of Mormon Central Advisory Board. Individuals who have been invited to sit on the Advisory Board love the Book of Mormon and have proven successful in their respective careers. They are willing to share their knowledge and expertise in ensuring the continued success of Book of Mormon Central.

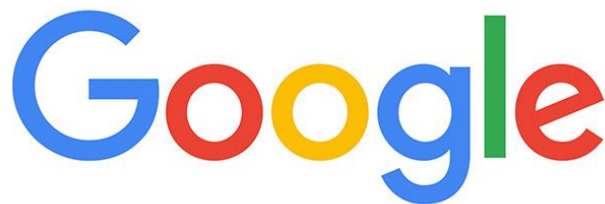
Members of the BMC Advisory Board include: Tyler Perry, chairman; Bob Babcock, Bryson and Jan Garbett; Brad Giles, Dick Gordon, Lindsay Hadley, Taylor Halverson, Dave Jenkins, Lucas Kjar, Harris Leck, David Lisonbee, Kirk Magleby, Trace Mayer, Frank McCallister, Gail Miller and Kim Wilson, Reid Moon, Scott Petersen, Duane Shaw, Stephen H. Smoot, Greg Trimble, and Jack Welch. We thank these individuals for their service and commitment to furthering the mission of BMC.

## BMC Staff Visit the Google Campus in California

Five BMC staff members went to California to meet with LDS members who work at Google. The Google employees encouraged BMC staff to focus on the Book of Mormon Interactive Scriptures App. BMC restructured its organization to concentrate employee efforts toward completing development of the interactive scriptural app.

Because of this focus, Book of Mormon Central has not been publishing KnoWhys as

frequently—only twice a week. KnoWhys are specifically being written on subjects and in formats that will be useful in the app. It should be noted that BMC KnoWhys have evolved. In the past, BMC researchers and writers collected and summarized work done by outside scholars. Many recent KnoWhys contain original research done by scholars with graduate degrees who work for BMC.



## Stake Fireside by Book of Mormon Central

The Hurricane West Stake (near St. George, Utah) hosted a special fireside presented by Book of Mormon Central researchers entitled, “The Book of Mormon and the Ancient Near East.” Jonathon Riley, David J. Larsen, and Stephen Smoot explained cutting-edge work on how the

Book of Mormon fits in an ancient Near Eastern setting, how the temple of Solomon influenced Book of Mormon teachings, and how texts from ancient Egypt support the Book of Mormon’s claims of having been written in “reformed Egyptian.”

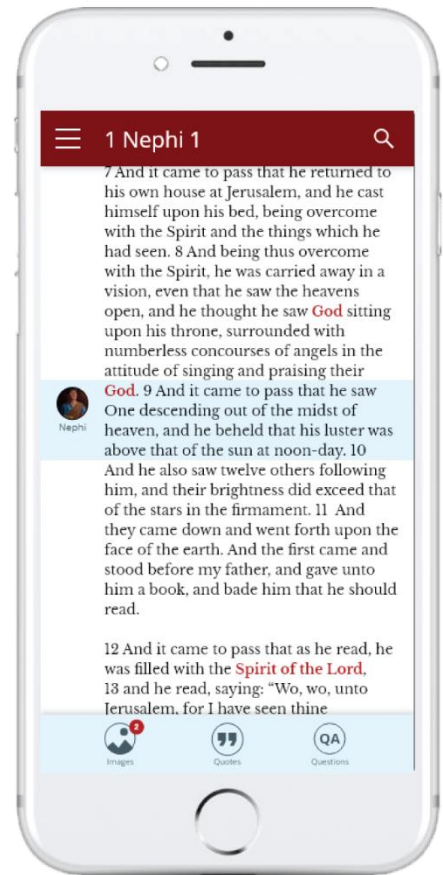


# Interactive Scripture App of the Book of Mormon

Book of Mormon Central is focusing staff resources and volunteer talent on the development of a Book of Mormon interactive scripture application. The first version will be released at the beginning of 2019 and will have the following features:

1. General paragraph formatting, in addition to the traditional chapter and verse formatting
2. Red lettering highlighting all references to and words of Deity
3. Speaker/Author identification of each section of the text
4. Answers to common questions that arise from particular verses
5. Quotations from General Conference and other sources explaining scripture passages
6. Photos and artwork illustrating scripture stories. We have recently procured permission to include the artwork of Robert T. Barrett and Clark Kelley Price in the app.
7. Videos for major textual units
8. Links to KnowWhy videos that apply to specific verses
9. Charts and graphs organizing and explaining material in quick and understandable formats

The BMC Book of Mormon scripture app will enhance the reading experience by increasing understanding of this marvelous and life-changing scriptures. There will be future releases with many more exciting features. If you have suggestions for future releases, please let us know.



Working wireframe of the upcoming app

## Feedspot.com Ranking

The Mormon Blogs List shows that Book of Mormon Central has risen in the rankings to become the *sixth most influential* digital property among Mormon blogs and news sources, just behind the Tabernacle Choir. This ranking applies search and social metrics to a data index of thousands of Mormon-oriented publications in an attempt to measure impact within digital communities

## BMC Co-Sponsors a Book of Mormon Pageant

The Columbus Branch of the LDS Church produced and presented a Book of Mormon stage play entitled, "Mormon Speaks." Book of Mormon Central was a co-sponsor of this pageant at the Murray High School auditorium on June 7–8, 2018. The Columbus Branch, located in south

Salt Lake City, serves a large population of refugees from Burma. The 49 actors or cast members in the play speak Karen or Karenni as their primary language. Since the Book of Mormon has yet to be translated into either of these languages, this play was the first time some of these

individuals were able to see and hear many of the marvelous Book of Mormon stories. The Columbus Branch is one of the highest baptizing units in the entire Church. The production and presentation of this play was a positive experience for all involved.

## Book of Mormon Central's Spanish Initiative



Some of Book of Mormon Central's Spanish staff at the 2018 BMC Conference

BMC began publishing material in English on January 1, 2016. One year later, publication began in Spanish. Almost as many Latter-day Saints speak Spanish as English. Saints in the Spanish-speaking world are hungry for reliable, faithful enrichment material. As of August, 2018, BMC has published over 400 KnoWhys in Spanish.

More than 250,000 people have visited our Spanish web page, 68,000 follow the BMC Spanish Facebook page, and more than 8,200 subscribe to our Spanish YouTube channel where the top video has nearly 100,000 views. We sponsored a first-

ever Book of Mormon Conference in Mexico City that drew several hundred participants. The most widely-used social network in Latin America is WhatsApp, and BMC currently has 17 active WhatsApp groups sharing our material in nine countries.

This feedback from Dinorah Castro is typical: "Muy interesante. Ya que tengo mas conocimientos sobre el Libro de Mormón, puedo compartirlo y darlo a conocer." "Very interesting. Now that I have increased understanding of the Book of Mormon, I am better able to share and present it."

## Fan Mail

Eduardo Garcia

"[BMC helped] strengthen my testimony of the Book of Mormon, because it not only confirms truths but also makes it be even more real. Love how we do not have to rely only on faith anymore because there is evidence also, which act[s] as another witness of its validity. Thank you."

Kurt Kammeyer

"[BMC] has confirmed what I already knew – that the Book of Mormon is true, in ways that even Joseph Smith may not have been aware of."

Julie Thompson Seal

"Favorite website."

Mary Cooper

"I have learned so much from your site that has helped my understanding and testimony of the Book of Mormon grow by leaps and bounds."

## BMC Now Has Its Own Blog

In addition to a website, Facebook page, YouTube channel, Podcast, etc. Book of Mormon Central now has its own Blog. Check it out! <https://bookofmormoncentral.org/blog>

## Elder Kevin W. Pearson Explains the Need for Financial Support of “Independent Trusted Organizations” Like BMC



Elder Kevin W. Pearson speaking at the 2018 FairMormon Conference. Image via [mormonnewsroom.org](http://mormonnewsroom.org)

Elder Kevin W. Pearson of the Seventy spoke at the annual FairMormon conference, sponsored in part by Book of Mormon Central. Elder Pearson explained that:

“Independent voices are needed in reaching out to those among us who are struggling to find and sustain faith. ... These faithful voices must be proactive and effectively engaged on all media platforms. This is part of our sacred and imperative duty to the rising generation and the pure in heart. ... Too many people are waiting for the Church to get this done. One of my core messages today is *do not wait for the Church.*

Independent [trusted] organizations need to engage in the conversation.”

Elder Pearson offered a summary of “our sacred and imperative duty.” The fourth “duty” listed in his summary was to “support trusted organizations.” He explained:

“By support ... I am suggesting that, given the enormity of the challenge [of disseminating clear and positive content about the Church online], good people of faith are going to have to think about [where] they want to [put their] resources. [Trusted organizations] cannot possibly engage at the level they are capable of without more financial

resources .... [We] need independent voices. The official voice can’t support completely the independent voice or it’s not ‘an independent voice’ anymore.”

Following his presentation, Elder Pearson answered questions from the audience. First, Elder Pearson clarified that he was sent to speak at the FairMormon conference by assignment from the President of the Quorum of the Twelve and that he was speaking as a representative of the Church.

Elder Pearson was asked what organizations the Church views as



“trusted organizations.” His response was:

“There are other organizations such as Book of Mormon Central, the Interpreter, More Good ... there are a number of them. And by the way, they are filled with individuals ... who have spent their own time and their own resources to make this happen—and they need and deserve more help from us.”

The question was asked whether Stakes and [Church organizations] have permission to use these resources. “Yes, you can use them. Yes, you *should* use them. We need to get more resources in the hands of our youth, in [the hands of] our missionaries, and others, because there *are* faithful answers to critical questions.”

One comment from the audience stated that local Church leaders often get individuals coming to them with questions of history and doctrine. “Is it OK for me to refer them to Book of Mormon Central?” Elder Pearson responded, “Please, do it. Yes. Yes. Yes ... You’ve got to use both official Church resources and also these other trusted resources. There is a lot of great stuff out there that is not official correlated material, and it’s necessary, and we want more of it.”

There is a real need for the online voice of Book of Mormon Central, which produces trusted content geared to the rising generation. BMC publishes KnoWhys and videos on its website, videos on Facebook, podcasts, and discussion of contemporary Book of Mormon

issues through its blog. Additionally, BMC is broadcasting excellent content in Spanish to a large and appreciative group of users. Please consider whether you, or others you may know, would be interested in fulfilling your “sacred and imperative duty” by donating to the BMC organization.

You can watch Elder Pearson’s entire talk on the [FairMormon Facebook page here](#).

The *Church News* and the *Church Newsroom* reported on Elder Pearson’s talk. To read the *Church News* article [click here](#). To read the *Church’s Newsroom* article [click here](#)

## Fan Mail

We’d like to share comments from several of Book of Mormon Central’s many subscribers

### Curtis Strong

“As a new Gospel Doctrine instructor, I read many of the papers you post links to. I also love the KnoWhys and actually use a lot of the art work you have in those videos to display in class. ... Your site is really one of the best tools I have for getting to know the material better and giving my brothers and sisters a better experience in class. Thanks for all you do!”

### Bob, “near Baltimore”

“Our institute class we attend near Baltimore thanks you for BMC!”

### Kristy Carl Reese

“Thank you. I will use this for my personal studies for a long time.”

### Chris Reeve

“It’s wonderful to have so many reasons clearly explained why belief in the Book of Mormon does not mean we need to sell our intellectual soul.”

### Guy Wilcox:

“I cannot wait to get my [BMC] email, then after reading the message engage myself in further study.”

## Fan Mail (Continued)

### Anita Wells, Seminary Teacher at Waterford School in Salt Lake City

“[Book of Mormon Central] is getting some good traction with the seminary teacher community. Thought you might enjoy that on our seminary teacher Facebook group of 10,000+ teachers, the KnoWhy links are posted pretty often and linked to the various lesson ideas. There was a recent discussion with illuminating comments:”

‘I use them [KnoWhys] a lot...Then recently our youth did an activity and after a video one of my kids said, ‘and now you know why.’ The kids in my class all laughed (they got it). It was a cool moment of an inside joke.’

‘I wish I could tell [Book of Mormon Central] that the Doctrinal Mastery charts are amazing...’

‘I use BMC with almost every lesson. If not for what I directly share with the kids, for my own foundation and insight. It’s amazing. Such a wealth of information and interesting perspectives. I love it.’

‘The videos have really enriched our study of the Book of Mormon this year!’”



Book of Mormon Central Staff Members at the 2018 FairMormon Conference