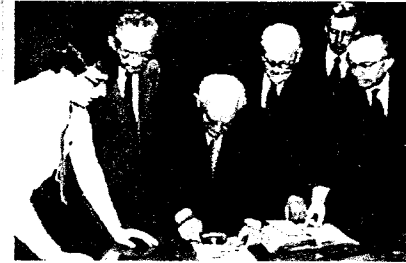
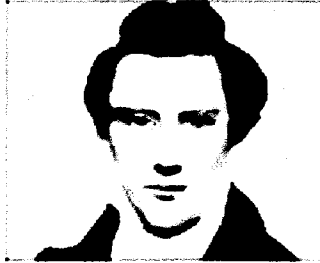
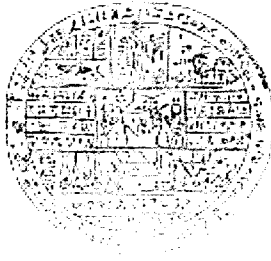


# THE NEW EXPOSITOR



No. 2 Summer 2007

## Tips on Organizing Meetings of Ex-Mormons

By Jeff Ricks

*Editor's note: Former Mormons often are at a loss to know how to go about setting up a group of like-minded people to meet together and discuss their mutual concerns. One of the most successful organizers of such groups is Jeff Ricks, of Logan, Utah, who established the Post-Mormon Community organization. We asked him to share his experience.*

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For about eight years after I left the Church, I felt alone. I could no longer relate to my Mormon friends, nor could they to me. I didn't know how to make non-Mormon friends, and even my family distanced themselves from me. I wanted to find others who might have followed the same path out of Mormonism as I, but didn't know how.

Then in 2002 I met my first former Mormons when I learned through the Internet of a party some of them were having in Salt Lake City. I attended the party and had a great time. A few weeks later, after attending a meeting of the

Northern Utah Post Mormons, a support group in Ogden, I decided to establish a similar group in Cache Valley where I live. I decided to pattern it after a singles group I was attending at the time that met once each week, where singles would get together for nothing more than to eat and talk. The group's format was simple and therefore easy to maintain, and it worked well — it met the need. They ran a free ad in the newspaper each week informing the community of their meetings, which caused new people to show up regularly, and that kept the group from getting stagnant. I decided to follow the same format for our Post Mormon group, and now five years later, our Cache Valley Post-Mormon Chapter still follows the same procedure:

- Meet regularly at the same time and place.
- Keep the format simple (just eat and talk).
- Run an ad in the newspaper each week.

That simple formula is the secret of our success. We deviate from it occasionally to include a party in the home of one of our members, but when we do we still hold the weekly meeting, so we'll be there for members of our community who are finally ready to take the bold step to meet other former Mormons.

Through the PostMormon.org website we've duplicated that formula, with some variations, in other parts of the world. As of this writing there are 25 Post-Mormon community chapters, ranging from

some which are just getting started to those that are well seasoned and thriving. At the rate we're growing it's possible we'll double that number over the next 12 to 18 months due to a successful public awareness campaign we're undertaking. That campaign involves erecting billboards in various communities and encouraging the local press to write articles about them and about the Post-Mormon Community organization.

From the time we saw our first billboard go up Logan, at the end of March, the number of hits on our website has grown from just over 500,000 to 6 million hits per month, and we've almost doubled our number of registered users of our website from around 800 to 1,600 members. Our chapter network has grown from 12 chapters to 25, with more being added almost every week.

If you, the reader of this newsletter, are interested in starting a chapter in your area, go to *PostMormon.org*, then to the *Our Community* main menu item at the top of the page, then to *Post-Mormon Chapters*, and finally click on *Starting a Post Mormon chapter FAQ* and follow the instructions. We'd like to see your chapter become part of the Post-Mormon Community Chapter Network!

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## Some Thoughts About September Dawn

*By Ed Bliss*

1857 is remembered in Mormon history as the year of Mountain Meadows.

2007 will be remembered in Mormon history as the year of September Dawn.

As I write this, the movie hasn't been released yet, so I haven't seen it. But Sandra Tanner, who attended a pre-release showing, tells me that "It's a bit melodramatic — the Mormons really come off as a bunch of wild-eyed fanatics and the Fancher party are pictured as practically ready for sainthood. I assume this was true to a certain degree, but seemed a bit too much. But it does get the story out to the public."

Getting the story out to the public is important, and it is especially important to get the story out to members of the LDS church, many of whom are unaware, or only vaguely aware, of what happened. As an example, although I grew up in the Church it wasn't until after my mission that I even heard of the Mountain Meadows Massacre — and even then I got the impression that it was a minor footnote in Mormon history, a trivial incident involving a miscommunication of some kind. Little did I know that it involved the cold-blooded murder of 120 innocent men, women, and children.

The controversy about what happened at Mountain Meadows will never be settled. There are three scenarios: (1) It was secretly ordered by Brigham Young; or (2) although Brigham didn't order it, his vitriolic rantings created the atmosphere that caused it to happen; or (3) it was the work of over-zealous local Mormon leaders, particularly John D. Lee.

Regardless of which scenario you accept it is ridiculous to hold modern-day Mormons responsible for the tragedy. They should feel no

individual guilt. To paraphrase a famous dictum of Joseph Smith, men should be held responsible for their own sins, and not for a previous generation's transgressions. But there is a lesson to be learned from this terrible event which should resonate with every thinking Latter-day Saint, and it is this: *Obedience to Church authorities is not necessarily a virtue.*

The men who committed the atrocity in 1857 were not evil men, they were devout Latter-day Saints who believed they were acting in accordance with the will of God. Each knew in his heart that what he was about to do was unjust and cowardly, a violation of the law; but they believed they were following a higher law, the Law of Obedience. Whether they were being obedient to Brigham Young or to the local bishop, they were doing what every Latter-day Saint is taught to do, which is to obey those in authority in the Church. Always. Invariably. Without question.

President Heber C. Kimball put it this way: "Learn to do as you are told...if you are told by your leader to do a thing, do it. None of your business whether it is right or wrong." Or, as a more recent Church spokesman has said, "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan it is God's plan."

Well, as September Dawn reminds us, sometimes the thinking *hasn't* been done, and sometimes the plan *isn't* God's plan!

### How You Can Help

The Exmormon Foundation is an IRS Tax-exempt organization, and all donations made to the Foundation are fully deductible as charitable gifts. We welcome contributions of any size, and commit to using the funds carefully and efficiently in advertising our presence and supporting people in their journey out of Mormonism. You may make a donation by sending a check to:

The Exmormon Foundation  
Brian Madsen, Treasurer  
4332 Coldwater Canyon Ave. #1  
Studio City CA 91604-1470

## The 2007 Conference

"Transitions — Unlocking the Secrets to a Post-Mormon Life" will be the theme of the next annual conference of the Exmormon Foundation, to be held in Salt Lake City Oct. 12-14 at the Embassy Suites Hotel. Speakers will include Brian Patrick, Art Vanick, Dan Fischer, Bob McCue, Bill Gardner, and Janet Jacobsen. Details are on the Exmormon Foundation website.

### Letters to the Editor

Way to go! I enjoyed the first issue of *The New Expositor*, and especially enjoyed the article by Richard Packham, as I was not aware of the origins of the organization. I have attended two Exmormon conferences in Salt Lake City, and hope to attend every year. Much thanks to Sue Emmett for her work putting these conferences together.

*Dave Draper*

Is it possible to have some idea of where all the exmos are? I sometimes feel very much alone here in England, swamped as I am by all the Americans in the internet exmo group. Of course, one of the reasons is that the LDS Church is a lot less strong in this country...A second reason, of course, is that we Brits have a reputation for the "stiff upper lip," which means that an exmo struggling to cope would do so on his/her own, rather than ask for help. A third reason is that we have very few born-and-bred TBMs. Most of us were sucked into the church at some point in our lives and hence are not so deeply brainwashed.

*John Stanton  
Essex, England*

I was pleased to receive *The New Expositor*. Here is a donation to ensure there will be a second edition — unlike the original *Expositor*. I think it would be interesting to have an article on dwindling church membership. Nothing helps new exmos more than seeing that they are not alone, but are part of a larger movement.

*Tom Donofrio*

## Regional and Local Groups

*There are a number of regional Exmormon groups that meet annually, monthly, or sporadically. Following are the ones of which we are aware. If you know of others, or have corrections, email us at ed529c@verizon.net.*

### **Alaska**

recoveringinak@yahoo.com

### **Arizona Women's Yahoo Group**

Shelli Vaughn

webmomma@cox.net

### **Arizona**

Janet Nash

janet\_nash@yahoo.com or

480-786-9043

### **Cache Valley, Utah**

jeff.ricks@postmormon.org

### **California**

escapefrommoism@hotmail.com

### **Charlotte, North Carolina**

postmormonzeus@yahoo.com

### **Davis County, Utah**

johnjohnlarsen@yahoo.com

### **Houston, Texas**

heatherforever@gmail.com

### **New England**

dennygotout@yahoo.co

### **Ogden, Utah**

wgardi1095@yahoo.com

tj331@comcast.net

### **Pacific NW Yahoo Group**

sue97062@aol.com

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ExmormonsNW>

### **Portland, Oregon**

carlos.antonio.burrell@gmail.com

### **Salt Lake /Davis County**

Chad Spjut

exmo.gerechtigheit@yahoo.com

### **Sanpete County, Utah**

crisandwill@msn.com

### **San Diego, California**

abishconviction@gmail.com

### **San Francisco Bay Area**

Jerry Vaught

twentyhundred@aol.com

or 925-283-6278

### **St. George, Utah**

Arza Evans

arza34@msn.com

### **Seattle, Washington**

Sandy Crain

sandy98052@hotmail.co

### **Utah County**

Dianne Ormond

dormond2@nebonet.com

### **Utah State**

Steven Clark

utahexmormons-

owner@yahogroups.com

### **FRANCE**

Annie Sargent

annie.sargent@gmail.com

### **GERMANY**

<http://forum.mormonentum.de/>

### **SWEDEN**

Leif Erlingsson

leif@lege.com.

### **UK**

yourtruthinfo-

lifeline@yahoo.co.uk