

Missionary labors of Christian J. Larsen while in jail.

When Elder Johan Dorius was thrown in jail in Frederikstad, Norway, it was like a reunion. Inside the cell were two of his brethren, Elders Christian and Svend Larsen. A few hours later, they were joined by Elder Peter Beckstrom. In Norway, it was legal to preach a doctrine differing from the state religion if it was classed as a "Christian dissenter." But bitter opposition voiced by most of the nation's clergy, who profess Mormons were not Christians, led to the arrest of all eight LDS missionaries in the country during a three-day period in October 1852. The jailer, a man named Fjeldstad, treated the elders well. Through reading, singing, and praying together, the mission faith and determination increased. Two men arrested for preaching shared the cell with the Mormons. One, a Mr. Jacobsen, opposed the elders. He was soon removed to another cell. The other man, Johan Andreas Jensen, tolerated their views. At age 5, Jensen had gone to sea as a cabin boy. Over the next 30 years he worked his way up to become captain of a large ship. In 1849 he gave most of his possessions to the poor and began to preach repentance to his countrymen. He was thrown in jail for rebuking the king and Lutheran religion. At first, the elders' efforts to teach Jensen the gospel were rejected. On Sunday, Oct. 24, he joined in a gospel discussion with the missionaries and Fjelds. "Elder Christian Larsen in particular testified to the truth of the gospel under the influence of the Holy Ghost and made a lasting impression on them [Jensen and Fjeldstad]," according to the History of the Scandinavian Mission. "After Mr. Fjelds left the cell, the brethren continued to converse with Mr. Jensen until they were all brought under a most pleasant and divine influence." Jensen burst into tears, declaring he knew what they were saying was true. "His face literally shone with joy," the history states. Jensen was baptized Feb. 25, 1854, immigrated to America in 1863, and pulled a handcart to Utah. He settled in Ephraim, where one of his daughters married Andrew C. Nelson. The Nelsons' grandson, Elder Russell M. Nelson, was called to the Council of Twelve April 7, 1984. — Kevin Stoker  
(Another in a series of "Missionary Moments." Source: History of the Scandinavian Mission.)

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