

# Australia Local Pages

## A Time of Reflection

**Elder F. Michael Watson**

In the earliest record of holy writ we learn of the life and mission of our Savior, even Jesus the Christ. It was He who it was prophesied would come into the world. It was He who would provide for us the way, the truth, and the life.

By the prophets, the birth of the Savior was made known to the people of the Book of Mormon; also that the Son of God would come “to redeem all those who shall believe on his name” (Helaman 14:2).

From the eternal realms to an earthly sojourn, the Son of God came into the world. His mission is clearly defined in holy writ with the accounts of His teachings, His blessings and miracles, the Atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His death and Resurrection for all mankind, nothing wavering in His desire to do the will of His Father, Almighty God.

Through careful review, we arrive at the tantalizing conclusion that credible history was not written by those who had only knowledge of events as

recorded in books, but rather by eyewitnesses to those events.

In our day the Prophet Joseph Smith, in recounting his having been in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, stated: “I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it” (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

It is a time of reflection as we stop for a moment from the hustle and bustle of life to consider the deeper meaning of sacred events that have transpired and continue even today to change lives.

It was the Savior’s solitary life which provided a pathway of happiness—an iron rod—for those that follow Him with a desire and willingness to take upon them His name, to always remember Him, keep His commandments, and follow Him into the eternities. “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be



**Elder F. Michael  
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fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

Those who have felt the touch of the Master’s hand somehow cannot explain the change which comes into their lives. There is a desire to live better, to serve faithfully, to walk humbly, and to be more like the Savior.

Many years ago the First Presidency provided a message to the children of the Church in every land. In part it stated: “When Jesus was born, . . . our Heavenly Father’s love was showered upon the people of the earth. He sent His greatest of all gifts, His Only Begotten and Beloved Son, so that we all may someday return to our heavenly home” (“Christmas Message to Children of the Church in Every Land from the First Presidency,” *Friend*, Dec. 1972, 3).

Reflecting upon these words, we have the opportunity to mirror that same love in our hearts as we reach out, have the desire to be a better person, and serve others as He would were He living among us.

The standard of truth given by a prophet states: “No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecution may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:540).

The words of a hymn, penned from holy writ, give us the hope of the eternities and a better life:

Come Unto Him

*I wander through the still  
of night, When solitude  
is everywhere—  
Alone, beneath the starry  
light, And yet I know that  
God is there.  
I kneel upon the grass and  
pray; An answer comes  
without a voice.*

*It takes my burden all away,  
And makes my aching  
heart rejoice.*

*When I am filled with strong  
desire, And ask a boon of  
him, I see*

*No miracle of living fire, But  
what I ask flows into me.*

*And when the tempest rages  
high I feel no arm around  
me thrust,*

*But every storm goes rolling  
by When I repose in him  
my trust.*

*It matters not what may befall,  
What threatening hand  
hangs over me;*

*He is my rampart through it all,  
My refuge from mine enemy.*

*Come unto him all ye  
depressed, Ye erring  
souls whose eyes are dim,  
Ye weary ones who long for  
rest. Come unto him!*

*Come unto him!*  
 (“Come Unto Him,” *Hymns*,  
no. 114)

In the Lord’s service, the path is not always easy. It often requires sacrifices, and we will likely experience adversity, but in serving Him we will discover His hand truly over us.

And so in this time of reflection, it has never been about us, it has always been about Him. ■

## Seminary Classes Teach Youth Important Lessons in Life

By Catherine Vaughan

This year marks the 100th anniversary of daily release-time seminary classes, which began in 1912 in Salt Lake City. Seminary classes are now established in 135 countries throughout the world, including 13 countries within the Pacific Area. Just over 10,000 students from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands attend early-morning seminary every school day, as part of the 369,373 seminary students who are enrolled worldwide.

The early-morning seminary programme was introduced in Australia in 1968. Early-morning classes enable youth to learn and socialize together, and usually the classes are held in chapels or homes around the country prior to school. In addition there are small numbers of students who participate in seminary via home-study, and more recently, a pilot program of online seminary.

Enrolments figures from 1968–2010 show that 23,850 students have enrolled in seminary classes throughout Australia over the years, of which 13,595 successfully completed the four-year programme with the required 80% attendance, and graduated.

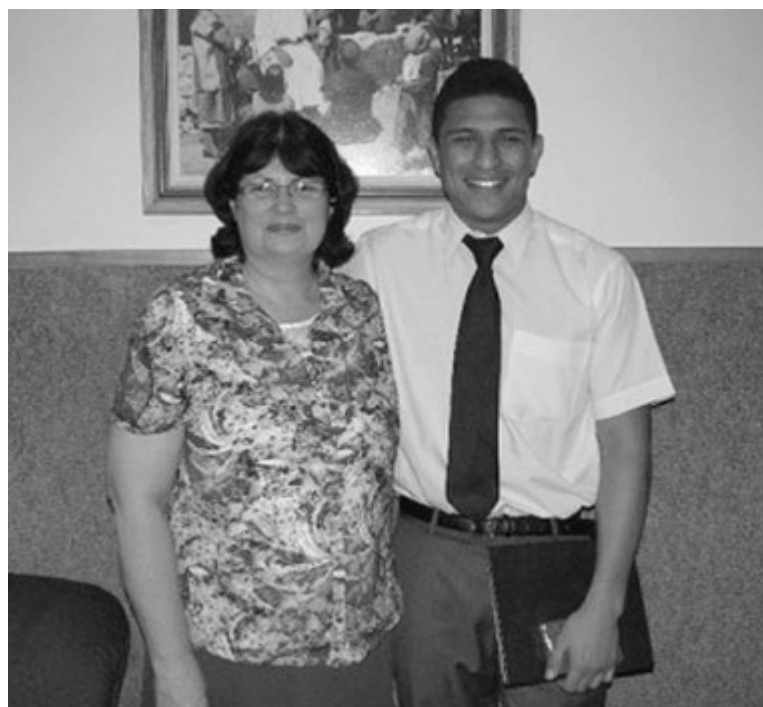
Elder Henry B. Eyring, First Counsellor in the First Presidency, said, “There are three powerful things seminary can do. First, it puts young people together who share the same values. Youth like to be with others who share their faith and who love the scriptures. Second, it puts youth together with a teacher who has a testimony, and they can feel the fire of it when it is borne. Third, seminary gets

young people into the scriptures. Going to the scriptures to learn what to do makes all the difference. The Lord can teach us. When we come to a crisis in our life . . . we should go looking in the scriptures for specific help. We will find answers in the scriptures. The Lord seemed to anticipate all of our problems and all of our needs, and He put help in the scriptures for us—if only we seek it.”

Seminary students put this to the test as they arise early, and with red pencil and scriptures participate in explaining, sharing and testifying of what the prophets have written. Many students have testified that strong bonds of friendship as well as strengthened testimonies have resulted from early morning seminary.

Melbourne seminary graduate Kaitlin Peka says that seminary is where she has learnt everything she knows about the gospel, and about life. She added, “Through my seminary lessons I really came to understand prayer. Now I know that when you pray you are actually talking to a real person, and it is a two-way conversation with my Heavenly Father. My mother was one of my seminary teachers and she taught me so much. You always remember your best teachers and the things they taught you.”

In the Brassall Ward of Queensland’s Ipswich Stake, the Samuela family had three children attending the class taught by Sister Joanne Pittman. Eighteen-year-old Helaman Samuela has now graduated, but as he prepares his mission papers he recognises his life is following a very different path to that of a lot of his 18-year-old friends. He comments, “I understand better now the power of free agency. I am blessed to be born in the gospel; however, that blessing would be wasted if I do not learn to apply the gospel principles that will enable me to be a part of my family forever, as well



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NICOLE SAMUELA

***Helaman Samuela and his seminary teacher, Joanne Pittman, after his seminary graduation.***

as guide me so that I may return to my Father in Heaven one day. My testimony has been strengthened as I learnt about scriptures which show how the Lord lives, and is active in the lives of those who choose to follow him. I graduated in 2010, but I now have the habit of reading my scriptures every morning, and praying to my Heavenly Father all the time. These are vital life skills I have developed because of seminary.”

His 16-year-old sister, Michaela, agrees. “My testimony was strengthened by the powerful stories of the pioneers. I hope to acquire as much faith as they needed to follow the Lord’s plan in the face of such adversity. I learnt that bad things happen to good people, and if we apply the gospel principles in our lives, especially in times of trial, we are able to have peace in our hearts that all will be well. I’m so grateful for seminary, and especially for early-morning seminary. I now recognise the promptings of the Spirit, and I understand that the Spirit testifies

the truth to you, and that has changed my life. I attend a private Catholic school, and as I begin each day in seminary I feel the Spirit, and it helps me not to be misled by the opinions of others.”

Levi Samuela has just completed his first year of seminary, and admits that getting up for early-morning seminary has made him more disciplined. The 14-year-old says that he puts a lot more thought into his choices now, based on the lesson he learns in seminary every day. “I’m more conscious of how I use my free agency now, and the example I am to others. I understand that we don’t have to be perfect to return to our Heavenly Father, but we have to be found clean. I am thankful for the atoning sacrifice of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and when I make mistakes I am more aware of the error I have made, and look to correct it to get me back on track, so I can have the Spirit with me again.”

In an address to CES religious educators in 1977, then Elder Boyd K. Packer emphasized the importance of seminary by saying, “In the history of the Church there is no better illustration of the prophetic preparation of this people than the beginnings of the seminary and institute program. These programs were started when they were nice, but were not critically needed. They were granted a season to flourish and to grow into a bulwark for the Church. They now become a godsend for the salvation of modern Israel in a most challenging hour. We are now encircled. Our youth are in desperate jeopardy. These are the last days, foreseen by prophets in ancient times”.

The four-year seminary programme devotes a year of study to the Old Testament, New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants in conjunction with Church history. No better preparation for missionaries is possible, than with seminary and institute. ■

## Family History Researcher Wins Janet Reakes Memorial Prize

By Lanai Carter and Beth Smith

**A**s a teenager Beth Smith had a desire to start researching her family history. She had always been interested in history of any kind, but this led to a new world opening up, and some unexpected and surprising discoveries.

Beth, a member of Windaroo Ward in the Eight Mile Plains Australia Stake, Queensland, was awarded the Janet Reakes Memorial Award for 2010. This award is presented through the *Australian Family Tree Connections* magazine in honour of the famous family history researcher Janet Reakes.

The topic of the award was “My Most Travelled Ancestor”. Beth entered a story about her great-grandfather David Robertson, who was born in Scotland, married in New Zealand, had family in New Zealand, California, Melbourne and Ballarat, and then grandchildren in Fiji, and returned to Melbourne to die! She was overjoyed when she won first prize.

Her family history research started with pestering her maternal grandfather with questions. Beth says, “The real spark came when I joined the Church in 1960, at the age of 22. I was living in a small county town in Victoria, away from any public libraries or family history centres, and there was no Internet then! The missionary couple who baptized my mother and me were a great help with my research, as were other members of the Church in the area. However, most of my success came from writing letters to libraries, cemeteries, churches, government registrars and family

**Beth Smith with her compiled family history research on David Robertson and the Janet Reakes Memorial Award Trophy.**

history societies. I also eventually needed to use private researchers in some areas, usually with wonderful results.”

Beth fondly recalls highlights of her experiences with family history:

“We served two full-time microfilming missions—in New Zealand (1988–1989), Fiji, Queensland and Victoria (1992–1993) and a few mini-missions in Tasmania, Perth, Brisbane, and Ballarat. Not only did I discover fantastic research data in all those places, I met actual living relatives whom I had only known previously by correspondence.

“The highlight of my family history research came while I was in Fiji. I was able to search records in the Archives Library and also at the

family history centre, which had all of the LDS films of Fiji births, deaths, and marriages since 1875. This is where all of the data about my great-grandfather David Robertson was enlarged. I was able to procure large copies of government-produced photos which were included in the back of the Cyclopedia of Fiji. I found photos of David, his two sons, William [my grandfather] and Robert, and two of his sons-in-law. It is a pity that none of the women featured in this book.”

Beth found details about her family in jury lists, census records, and newspapers. She found David’s grandchildren’s school reports, and even the death notice in a newspaper [1873] for David’s second son. He had disappeared from the family and no one knew what had happened to him.

Beth shares the satisfaction of her work by saying, “I have found family history research to be exciting, fascinating, thrilling and so fulfilling. Along with many others who do this work I have found too many ‘coincidences’ not to know that Heavenly Father has been leading me and directing my path over these past 50 or so years.”

Despite her wonderful intentions, she says, “My efforts over the years have not been consistent. Life has a habit of becoming busy at times; there were gaps of several years between my research efforts.”

One of the many highlights of researching was discovering that one of her family lines in Australia had come from Barbados. Beth wrote to the Registrar there. They could not help, but gave her the address of a local solicitor who had the same name as she was asking about. She wrote to him, and soon a package arrived containing a 15-page handwritten family tree, with the request to please return when she had finished with it. She was overwhelmed by the trust he had shown in sharing his personal information.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LANAI CARTER

Beth provides an important tip for anyone undertaking his or her own family history:

“I learnt one valuable lesson quite early in my research—to organize my work, have some kind of a filing system and keep records of all correspondence. I learned this after paying twice for ‘No Record’ results from the Government Statist in Melbourne.”

She adds, “The most exciting part of this work is building up a skeleton of knowledge, such as names, dates and places, and adding the flesh of their lives—making my ancestors ‘real’ people. This obviously enriches temple work.”

In more recent years, she has added to her research via the Internet [[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)]. The LDS films have been a significant source of help, making it possible to see the actual record.

Her recommendations for others are as follows:

1. Begin with yourself, and work back step by step. Do not try to jump generations or link with famous names hoping they might be yours.
2. Contact and interview all living older relatives who may have information, photos, or certificates.
3. Organize your data into family files in folders or boxes.
4. Utilise resources available from family history centres.
5. Always verify your data, especially when it comes from family. Get copies of certificates, data from a family Bible, cemeteries, government birth, death, and marriage indexes online, etc.
6. Be patient. It takes time. Work at it consistently in small efforts. ■

## Western Australian Saints Celebrate

By Phil Baker

Temple workers and their spouses recently gathered within the shadows of the Perth Temple to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Perth Temple dedication.

Presided over by temple president Geoffrey Liddicoat, other former and currently serving temple administrators shared uplifting memories of pioneer history which led to the culmination of the dedication of the temple in May 2001.

Some of the older members present warmly remembered the names of local Western Australia Church pioneers who contributed to the eventual building of the Perth Temple. Special tribute was reserved for the first missionaries who boarded the *SS Kanowa* in Adelaide and sailed to Fremantle in February 1907. In 1925 a small chapel was dedicated at Subiaco, an inner Perth suburb. Back then, baptisms were still conducted on the nearby banks of the Swan River, until a baptismal font was finally installed in 1937.

Those early Saints in WA yearned for the blessings of

receiving their own temple endowments, which often motivated many to relocate to Utah. Subsequent Saints, conditioned to the vast travel distances and financial sacrifices, were thrilled when news came in 1952 that a temple would be built much closer to home, in Hamilton, New Zealand. It was reported that Perth Saints completed more living endowments in the NZ temple in one particular year than any other visitors from Australian capital cities, despite being almost 5,500 kms away from the temple.

Adding to the spirit of the celebratory devotional, previous Perth Temple presidents and matrons shared personal thoughts and testimony via video. Their remarks added further insights and perspective on the blessings of having a temple in Perth, something that they hoped would be possible within their own lifetimes.

The inaugural temple president, Donald W. Cummings, recalled a meeting he attended in Salt Lake City in April 1980, along with two fellow Australian



**Perth Temple workers stand on the steps of the Perth Temple in Yokine.**

regional representatives, Ian Mackie and Bruce Mitchell. Church leaders informed them that a temple was to be built in Sydney, Australia. After the meeting concluded, then Elder Boyd K. Packer pulled them aside and told them that they would all live to see the day that temples would be built in every capital city of Australia. This exciting prophesy has now been achieved.

Memories flooded back to Philip Baker, who was sitting in the congregation. “In April 1980 I accompanied Adelaide *Advertiser* newspaper journalist Stuart Cockburn to Salt Lake,” Brother Baker said. “Stuart was covering the Church’s

150th anniversary celebrations. Stuart and I were invited to the *Christus* statue in the Visitors’ Centre at Temple Square, to attend a press conference. Underneath the outstretched hands of the Saviour, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) and his counsellors formally announced the plans for the construction of the Sydney Australia Temple. Stuart sensed the significance of the news to the Australian Saints. He immediately faxed the announcement to his Adelaide editor, to be included as a “man on the spot” insert. The full-page broadsheet, including the insert plus photos of the Salt Lake Temple, was published in the Adelaide

*Advertiser*, the *Perth West Australian* and the *Canberra Times* just days later. WA Saints would now be able to include a regularly scheduled visit to the Sydney Temple during their annual holidays.

But rarely was there ever a thought that a temple would be built in Perth, one of the most remote capital cities on earth. Speakers at the devotional recounted the absolute euphoria of the WA Saints when receiving the news of the construction of a temple in their beautiful city.

Perth Temple clerk of works, John Turner, recounted some remarkable changes of attitude with construction workers as they felt the spirit of their project

and caught the vision to exceed the highest quality specifications of any building they had ever worked on.

In May 2001 more than 38,000 members of the public participated in conducted tours prior to the temple dedication. Addressing hundreds of Church members at the cornerstone ceremony, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) brought laughter when he began his remarks with, “Perth, Perth, the ends of the earth”.

Recent Church converts Kevin and Jan Carter are now active Perth Temple workers. “We find within the temple walls a feeling

of great peace and security. The world and its troubles are left behind, as we literally feel of the Saviour’s love for us. We deem it a privilege to work for those who have passed on. What a spiritual dimension the temple has given us in our senior years.”

In his final remarks, President Liddicoat encouraged all who were attending the celebratory devotional to a greater commitment to temple attendance and participation. In closing, he quoted President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995): “Let us truly be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people. We should hasten to the temple as

frequently, yet prudently, as our personal circumstances allow. We should go not only for our kindred dead but also for the personal blessing of temple worship, for the sanctity and safety that are within those hallowed and consecrated walls. As we attend the temple, we learn more richly and deeply the purpose of life and the significance of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make the temple, with temple worship, temple covenants and temple marriage, our ultimate earthly goal and the supreme mortal experience” (“A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 5). ■



*Don Cummings, John Grincer and John Maile standing with current Perth Temple president Geoffrey Liddicoat, in Dianella chapel foyer on the eve of the temple devotional, 28 October 2011.*