

New Zealand Local Pages

Joseph Smith Jr.— Prophet of the Restoration

By **Elder F. Michael Watson**

Second Counselor in the Area Presidency

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are part of history—an eternal heritage!

“The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing, persecutions 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.”¹

This eternal truth did not die on June 27, 1844, when the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were martyred in Carthage, Illinois. What earthly clocks do not permit time for, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ can show us the path that reaches beyond time and through the veil.

Testaments continue to validate what young Joseph

learned for himself in the spring of 1820 when the Father and the Son appeared and declared to him what he had sought after in humble prayer.

“In the same way that I know Jesus is the Christ—and that is by revelation from the Holy Spirit—I know that Joseph Smith is and was and everlastingly shall be a prophet of God. . . . In a spirit of testimony and thanksgiving, . . . as set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants: ‘Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it’” (D&C 135:3).²

President Joseph Fielding Smith

“Joseph Smith, the young man not schooled in the theologies of the day, not schooled in the high schools of learning of his day, . . . [was] one who could be submissive to the teachings and whisperings of the Spirit. Joseph Smith could not have established this Church. He could not have brought forth the work

of the Lord, the Book of Mormon. . . . Joseph, by the power of . . . God, . . . did perform the miraculous service of bringing forth the kingdom out of obscurity in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.”³

President Harold B. Lee



**Elder F. Michael
Watson**

“That new day dawned when [a] soul with passionate yearning prayed for divine guidance. A spot of hidden solitude was found, knees were bent, a heart was humbled, pleadings were voiced, and a light brighter than the noonday sun illuminated the world—the curtain never to be closed again.”⁴

President Spencer W. Kimball

“The Prophet Joseph Smith was not only ‘one of the noble and great ones,’ but he gave and continues to give attention to important matters here on the earth even today from the realms above. For in the eyes of the Lord . . . it is all one great eternal program in which the Prophet Joseph plays an important role—all through the eternal priesthood and authority of God.”⁵

President Ezra Taft Benson

I am grateful for my . . . testimony of the simple story of . . . the lad under the trees kneeling and receiving heavenly visitors—not one God, but two separate, individual personages, the Father and the Son, revealing again to the earth the personages of the Godhead. . . . I bear witness that it is . . . one of the greatest single events in all history.”⁶

President Howard W. Hunter

The story of Joseph’s life is the story of a miracle. . . . In the brief space of 20 years preceding his death, he accomplished what none other has accomplished in an entire lifetime. He translated and published the Book of Mormon, a volume which has since been retranslated into scores of languages and which is accepted by missions across the earth as the word of God. . . . He established an organization which . . . has withstood every adversity and challenge and is as effective today in governing a worldwide membership . . . as it was in governing a membership of 300 in 1830. . . . Joseph Smith set in motion a program for carrying the gospel to the nations of the earth. . . . Members gather in [nations of the earth twice a year] and are the flowering of the vision of Joseph Smith, the prophet of God. He was indeed a mighty seer who saw this day and greater days yet to come as the work of the Lord moves over the earth.”⁷

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Volumes have been written concerning the life and accomplishments of Joseph Smith. . . . In the course of his ministry he was visited by John the Baptist, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John, that the Restoration of all things might be accomplished. He endured persecution; he suffered grievously, as did his followers. He trusted in God. He was true to his prophetic calling. He commenced a marvellous missionary effort to the entire world, which today brings light and truth to the souls of mankind. At length, Joseph Smith died the martyr’s death, as did his brother Hyrum.”⁸

President Thomas S. Monson

The Prophet Joseph Smith’s counsel to President Brigham Young was given in a dream President Young had after the Prophet’s death: “Be sure to tell the people to keep the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful not to turn away the small still voice; it will teach you what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom.”⁹

With the exception of the Prophet Joseph, seven of the prophets of God heretofore referenced, I have known and worked with personally. Alongside each, I wish to add my own witness.

Over the span of many years in personal study, and of time to ponder and pray, the promises

of our Lord and Savior have been realized through personal spiritual confirmations. There has come a conviction that God our Father in Heaven lives and loves us, and His Son, Jesus the Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. Joseph Smith was the Prophet of the Restoration. This assurance, through the whisperings of the Spirit, even the Holy Ghost, provides the polar star of direction toward all that is desired in the eternal glories.

The timeless events and experiences with our latter-day prophets of God, whom we sustain, cause us to remember that we are children of a loving Father in Heaven and that we should act accordingly. The significance of the life and history of the Prophet Joseph Smith and those who followed continue to provide the Standard of Truth. May we ever look toward the gifts of the Atonement and Resurrection, made possible by His Son, Jesus the Christ, with the eternal promise of life everlasting in the highest realms of the celestial kingdom. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church*, 4:540.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 541–555.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 541–555.
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 541–555.
5. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 541–555.
6. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 541–555.
7. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 541–555.
8. “Led by Spiritual Pioneers,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Aug. 2006, 7.
9. *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1846–1847*, comp., Eldon J. Watson (1971), 529.

Spotlight: Great Role Models for LDS Youth

By Blake Leitch

Role models have always been extremely important to youth in the world. However, as the world becomes increasingly relaxed towards morals and standards, role models that teach modesty, strength in character, and faith in beliefs are increasingly hard to find. Sport-crazy LDS youth in Australia and New Zealand are blessed to have role models like Will Hopoate and Paora Winitana to help show them what they can achieve with their beliefs.

Rugby league star Will Hopoate has recently come off a string of successes in his chosen profession. As a member of the NRL's Manly Sea Eagles, he won the NRL Grand Final in 2011, and was a key figure in the match. He was also selected as a player for the State of Origin New South Wales team, becoming the second youngest player ever for the Blues.

Despite showing high potential as a rugby league player, Brother Hopoate decided to fulfil his priesthood duty as a missionary, and he turned down a contract of several million dollars so he could spread the message that he loves. After being bathed in the limelight for a year, he swapped the sports jersey for a suit and name tag.

However, despite the lack of playing sports for two years, blessings have already come to Brother Hopoate. On returning to the NRL after his mission, he already has a guaranteed contract with the Parramatta Eels from 2014 onwards.

Brother Hopoate realises exactly why he is so lucky, which makes him stand out from other role models. "He blessed me to play first grade, He blessed me to play State of Origin, He blessed me to play in the finals. . . . In my heart and soul, I know that those things are blessings

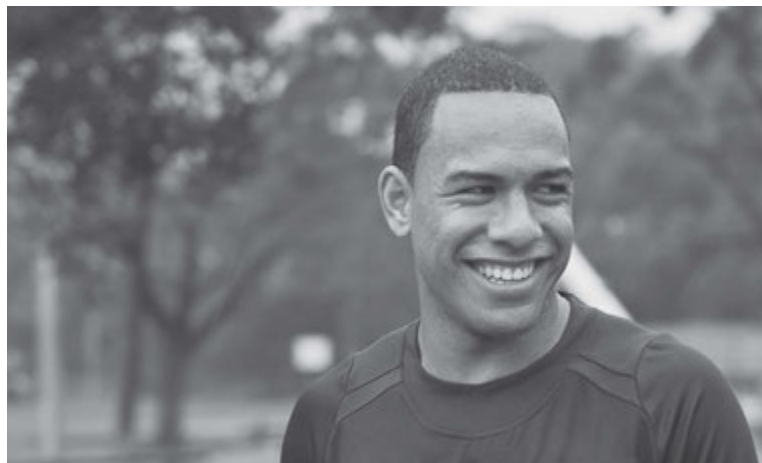


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Will Hopoate sacrificed a multimillion dollar NRL contract to serve a mission.

from God," he said. By realising his blessings, knowing their origin, and being unashamed of his beliefs, he shows the LDS youth just how much you can accomplish when you "put the Lord first in [your] life". And as for sacrificing two years to receive a lifetime of blessings, Brother Hopoate says, "That sounds like a good deal to me."

In New Zealand, basketball star Paora Winitana has been a great role model for the LDS youth for his entire career. After winning national championships with the Church College of New Zealand team, he went on to win the NBL Rookie of the Year award in his debut year. After high levels of success, resulting in opportunities to play in America on a full scholarship at the University of Wisconsin, Brother Winitana turned down the opportunity, as well as the possibility to represent New Zealand at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, so he could fulfil a full-time mission.

On returning from his mission, Brother Winitana was selected for the New Zealand Tall Blacks national squad. He made a decision to not play on Sundays after he returned from his mission in 2001. Despite what should be a large setback, Brother Winitana has played in the World Championships, the Olympics, and the

Commonwealth Games (Silver medal). He has also played in the ANBL for both the Adelaide 36ers and the New Zealand Breakers. Finally, he has also led his Hawke's Bay Hawks team to an NBL Championship in 2006 and has won multiple awards.

Called as a bishop in 2005, Bishop Winitana recognises the difference between his job and his religion. "Basketball is what I do, not who I am," he said. He also realises what the priorities are in his life. "I love basketball, but I am a father, a husband and a member of the Church first," he said. By putting his faith in God first, he has maintained success both on the court and with his family. ■

Young Genealogist Helps Others Catch the Bug

Twenty-one-year-old Stacey Hooper from Auckland has been interested in genealogy since she was five. Now she helps others get enthused about researching their family trees by serving as a volunteer family history consultant in her ward in Auckland.

Stacey says that family history is a great way to connect with our ancestors. "It can help us gain an appreciation for our families and really gives us a perspective of eternal families," she says.

Mormon Newsroom states: "The concept of a united family that lives and progresses forever is at the core of Latter-day Saint doctrine. Within families led by a father and a mother, children develop virtues such as love, trust, loyalty, cooperation and service."

The article continues: "According to Church doctrine, a marriage performed in one of the Church's temples does not dissolve at death as long as the couple remain faithful to their temple vows. Rather, the family relationship

continues beyond the grave, and individual family members can progress throughout eternity."

As young as Stacey Hooper is, she has been interested in family history for 14 years. "My mum used to take my sisters and me to cemeteries, where she would write a name in the dirt that she wanted us to find, and then we would all scatter around to try and find it first," she says. "When we got a bit older, we would write the names on the back of our hands so we wouldn't forget it." She started researching on her own when she was 12.

One of the most rewarding aspects of her interest in genealogy, she says, is how others respond to her assistance. "People that I have helped with their family history have been very appreciative of my help," she says. "Some have come back to me all excited because they were able to find information about ancestors that they had not been able to find before."

Stacey helps people of all ages get started in their research. She has trained teenagers, families and adults. She also encourages friends her own age in her ward and in other Latter-day Saint wards to get involved. And many of them are catching the bug. ■

Reaching Out to Those Who Are Less Active

By Lynne Hutchison

In 1990, 13-year-old Mereana Tango was the Beehive president in her ward Young Women group. On the class list she found the names of less-active sisters Tui and Luz Kereopa. She started contacting Tui and Luz and inviting them to Young Women activities. They always declined to attend, but undeterred, Mereana kept up contact with them anyway. Then, three to four years later, when the girls were of Laurel age, Mereana

took her whole Laurel class to the Kereopa home to visit, take some homemade goodies and get better acquainted.

A major youth activity was being planned—a ski trip to Mt. Ruapehu. Mereana encouraged Luz and Tui to go. After being involved in fundraising for the trip and then enjoying the wonderful activity, the sisters started coming back to church, and subsequently they, and all their family, became active in the Church again. Both sisters have since married in the Church and are raising their families as active Latter-day Saints. Although Luz now lives in Hamilton, Tui and Mereana still reside in the Auckland

New Zealand Harbour Stake, where they remain good friends.

Tui later said, “I always wanted to say no to Mereana, to tell her to go away, but she was too nice to me and I just couldn’t. Now I am so grateful for the effort she and all the Laurels made. Our lives totally changed for the better because of that effort.”

This story is one of thousands that occur every year as faithful Latter-day Saints prayerfully reach out to less-active members in their wards and stakes and help them in their journey of returning to full activity. There are many routes to success in this effort, but some key principles underlie many of these endeavours.

*Firm friends—
Mereana Tango
Nickelchok
(left) and
Tui Kereopa
Bennett.*



IMAGE COURTESY OF LYNNE HUTCHISON AND USED WITH PERMISSION

1. Prayerfully Visit and Establish a Relationship

Ward councils should prayerfully discuss how to reach the less-actives in their wards. Faithful home and visiting teachers, class and quorum presidencies and other ward leaders can be prompted by the Spirit to know who and how to make contact, and with the Spirit's guidance, the visit can touch the person, who in turn is being prepared to be touched.

Jared Cuff of the Torbay Ward is one such success story. He had become less active for some years after returning from a mission, but when priesthood leaders came to visit him with an invitation to return, he felt the Spirit and accepted. However, this renewed commitment was not to last, and due to various circumstances he gradually slipped backwards again.

“And then my life deteriorated,” he said. “I made a series of bad choices, and I hit rock bottom, with nowhere else to turn. In that state, the Spirit was able to work with me. It came as a sudden and powerful realisation that I had to get my life in order and go back to church. The change that happened then was like the change in the life of Alma the Younger.” From that time he started praying fervently and returned to Church activity. Now, more than 10 years later, with a loving eternal family of his own and as the high priest group leader in his ward, he is reaching out to others who have strayed.

2. Become a Loyal Friend

A vital part of helping those who have strayed is to become a constant and loyal friend. Always include the less-active members in family and ward activities. Inclusiveness is essential if they are to trust you. Camping together as families, enjoying wholesome shows together, and working alongside each other in projects are some ways of bonding the relationship.

Pamela Reid of the Auckland New Zealand

Harbour Stake was assigned as the visiting teacher to a less-active young mother called Joanne Donson. Finding shared interests, they became firm friends and enjoyed many activities together, which led to Joanne's reactivation.

3. Perform Service for and with Them

A less-active father was overwhelmed when his ward members turned up to concrete his driveway. While the brethren toiled, the sisters were providing a barbeque and food. The young father was able to meet many ward members in his own surroundings, and he felt of the Spirit as they so willingly served his family. He returned to full activity and has never looked back.

4. Use the Direct Approach

Sometimes the Spirit prompts one to use the direct approach. There are many examples of less-active members such as Brother Cuff who have received a visit from a leader and have responded affirmatively to the direct question, “Will you come back?”

5. Extend an Assignment

In Joanne's case above, although Pamela had made the friendship, it was her husband, Paul, who was the catalyst for Joanne's return to full activity. At the time he was the stake president, and as he greeted Pamela and Joanne when they returned from an outing, he had a strong and unmistakable prompting to call Joanne as a counsellor in the stake Young Women presidency. Joanne was dumbfounded, but later accepted the call, returned to full activity in the Church, and has since blessed the stake and ward Young Women programmes with her talents and experience. Extending a calling or an assignment may not be for all, but when used as the Spirit prompts, it can be most effective.

6. Keep the “Bridges of Love” Open

Although we all want instant and positive responses as we reach out to less-active members, it often takes patience and time—sometimes years—for the desired and prayed-for outcome. We need to keep open the “bridges of love,” even if sometimes the less-active members try to burn them (see Don L. Searle, “Only a Matter of Time”, *Ensign*, Dec. 1990, 42). This means never giving up

on showing love, kindness and concern.

President Thomas S. Monson stated: “The work of reactivation is no task for the idler or dreamer. . . . Don’t postpone a prompting; rather act on it, and the Lord will open the way. . . . May we reach out and rescue those who have fallen by the wayside, that not one precious soul will be lost” (Thomas S. Monson, “Stand in Your Appointed Place”, *Ensign*, May 2003). ■



Hamilton Volunteers Give Marae a Lift

Around 150 members of the Hamilton stake spent a morning beautifying Fairfield College’s Aratiatia Marae in February, putting their scrub cutters, line trimmers, water blasters and paint brushes to good use on the day. They cleared invasive ground cover; lifted,

cleaned and stacked pavers; and painted the exterior of the Marae palisades.

The day closed with a group photograph in front of the Marae, some words of appreciation from school principal Richard Crawford, and a closing prayer.

“The grounds were left neat

and tidy through the use of rakes and grass blowers,” says Church spokesperson Sandy MacDonald. “The school pools were then opened by the principal for everyone to cool off after their hard work.”

The Mormon Helping Hands programme brings together members of the Church and their neighbours to provide community service and

encourages volunteers to partner with government and non-profit organizations to support

and improve the communities where they live. The Helping Hands programme reflects the

desire of Church members to follow the example of Jesus Christ by serving others. ■

Members of the Hamilton stake beautified the grounds at Fairfield College's Aratiatia Marae in February.



New Zealand Leadership Corrections

Bishop	Apanui T. Watene	Koromatua Ward	Temple View New Zealand Stake	New Zealand
Bishop	Christopher Graham Main	Papakura 1st Ward	Auckland New Zealand Papakura Stake	New Zealand
Bishop	Gordon Key	Lynfield Ward	Auckland New Zealand Mt Roskill Stake	New Zealand
Bishop	Grant Malin Stone	Aeroview Ward	Auckland New Zealand Harbour Stake	New Zealand
Bishop	Jonathan M. Warwick	Deseret Ward	Temple View New Zealand Stake	New Zealand
Bishop	Maurice R. Turketo	Cowley Ward	Temple View New Zealand Stake	New Zealand
Bishop	Sione Matakaiongo Aho Tangi	Pukekohe 2nd Ward	Auckland New Zealand Papakura Stake	New Zealand
Bishop	Sione Mohi Tu'itavake	Mt Roskill 2nd Ward (Tongan)	Auckland New Zealand Mt Roskill Stake	New Zealand
Bishop	Trealek H. Daji	Pukekohe 1st Ward	Auckland New Zealand Papakura Stake	New Zealand
Stake President	Charles Ruwhiu	Hastings New Zealand Stake	Pacific Area	New Zealand