

New Zealand Local Pages

The Value of a Returned Missionary

By Elder Kevin W. Pearson, First Counsellor in the Area Presidency

Over 56,000 strong, the missionaries are a force for good in the world. Through their efforts thousands of new converts come into the Church every year. Missionaries provide invaluable service to the Church and to people the world over.

But what is the value of a returned missionary to the Church? And why is it so important that the youth of the Church serve full-time missions? The answers to these questions provide a powerful case for parents, priesthood leaders, and youth to significantly increase the number of young men and women serving full-time missions. Preparing more faithful missionaries is how real growth happens in the Church. It is evidenced not only by the number of new converts that result from their service, but also by the impact the mission experience makes on each missionary; it positively shapes the rest of their lives.

To qualify for full-time missionary service, a young man or woman must prepare spiritually, emotionally, physically,

and mentally. Faithfully serving a mission develops a deeper personal understanding of the doctrines and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and provides a strong foundation for lasting conversion to the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Missionary service typically leads to temple marriage and the establishment of loving eternal family relationships. Couples sealed in the temple place greater importance on eternal families. They tend to have more children, and those children are more likely to become faithful adult members in the Church.

Consider this important point: a young man who faithfully serves a mission will likely marry in the temple and raise a righteous family. His children, and their children, will also likely grow up to be active faithful members of the Church. In three generations that young returned missionary's posterity will probably account for over 18 active adult tithe-paying members. By tragic contrast, a young man who does not serve a mission will likely not have

the same opportunity to learn and embrace the gospel principles. He is more likely to become less-active; possibly may not receive the Melchizedek Priesthood or the blessings of

temple marriage. Sadly, his family is less likely to be active in the Church, and if that occurs, in three generations his posterity will account for less than one active member. This is a sobering example of the value of a returned missionary.

However, preparing more faithful missionaries will do much to save the rising generations of the Church. Missionary work is much more than growing the Church through new convert baptisms. It is how we successfully prepare faithful, dedicated fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, and future Church leaders. Some 75 percent of all stake presidents and 66 percent of all bishops and elders quorum presidencies are returned missionaries. There is



Elder Kevin W. Pearson

no better training ground for future Church leadership, at every level, than a full-time mission.

Faithful children mostly come from faithful parents striving to live the principles of the gospel in their home. The most important things parents can do is to make and keep sacred covenants and to strive to raise their children in truth and righteousness.

However, there are many difficult challenges facing parents and families. Even faithful parents have children who struggle, notwithstanding their efforts. Extraordinary young men and women can come from homes and families struggling to live the gospel. Some will return and embrace the gospel later in life through the faith and prayers of parents and others. Still—the gospel of Jesus Christ blesses families.

All families experience challenges in raising righteous children and need the support of loving and caring priesthood and auxiliary leaders. The Church provides the organization and means for teaching the gospel. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders, including teachers, can assist individuals and families by teaching and testifying of the pure doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They strengthen individuals and families in their efforts to keep their sacred

covenants and provide counsel, support, and opportunities for service.

How can priesthood and auxiliary leaders support the efforts of parents in raising righteous sons and daughters who are worthy, prepared, and willing to serve full-time missions?

- Have frequent interviews with priesthood leaders. A wise bishop will make sure this happens early, and often.
- Ordain every young man at the appropriate age. Active participation in the Aaronic Priesthood is the best way to prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood and missionary service.
- Encourage all young men and young women to complete their secondary education. There is a clear relationship between education and missionary preparation. Education is a sacred duty; it prepares our youth for successful missionary service and to be self-reliant parents.
- Encourage every young man to achieve the Duty to God Award and every young woman to achieve the Personal Progress Award. This is how we establish testimony, personal growth, and service in our youth. They develop faith by doing.

- Encourage every young man and woman to attend and complete seminary. Seminary helps our youth learn to love the scriptures, understand the doctrines and become fully converted, and recognize the importance of the Holy Ghost in their lives.
- Encourage all young men and young women to attend Missionary Preparation classes. Even if serving a mission is not a near-term goal, it will still greatly enhance their spiritual development.

As we instill within our young men and women, at an early age, a vision of the great privilege they have to serve and the marvelous blessings which result from missionary service, we help them chart the course for the most important decisions in their lives.

The words of the Lord to John and Peter Whitmer also apply to each of us, and especially to the young men and women of the Church: “And now, behold I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” (D&C 15:6; 16:6).

A mission experience will

prove priceless to them and to their future families. “The worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). Serving a mission is how we save our youth—and how they save their own souls. It is one

of the many mighty miracles and tender mercies that evidence our Heavenly Father’s perfect plan of happiness. As we work and strive and pray to help each of our young men and women prepare to serve a

full-time mission, we are truly growing the Church and preparing a righteous generation for service in the home and in the Church. The value of a returned missionary who is truly converted is priceless. ■

LOCAL PAGES

Setting Goals Helps Golfer to Stay on Course in Life

By Catherine Vaughan

“Setting short-term and long-term goals is a big part of succeeding in life,” advises Compton Pikari, who is living proof that this is true.

Applying lessons learnt in early-morning seminary has helped 17-year-old Compton from Te Awamutu achieve some of his goals and win two major golf tournaments this year. In January he won the Junior National title, in Hamilton, for Under-19-year-old boys; in February he won the South Island Stroke Play Champion—Open Age Tournament, where the best players in New Zealand compete over four rounds.

Compton admits it was hard to get up for early-morning seminary over the four years, but the 2011 graduate thoroughly enjoyed reading all of the books of scripture. The discipline necessary to attend seminary helped him with his planning and taught him to manage his time better.

Though interested in golf since four years old, Compton only started playing seriously from the age of 11. As well as the two national titles he won earlier this year, he also recently placed 7th overall (out of 140 players) in the Trans Tasman Cup competition in Australia.

Juggling tournaments, regular practise, fitness training, and school work is not easy. In his final high school year, he is studying science and computer studies and hopes to be offered a scholarship to play golf and study Sports Science at university, either in New Zealand or in America.

Compton Pikari keeps his eye on the ball at a recent tournament in Auckland.

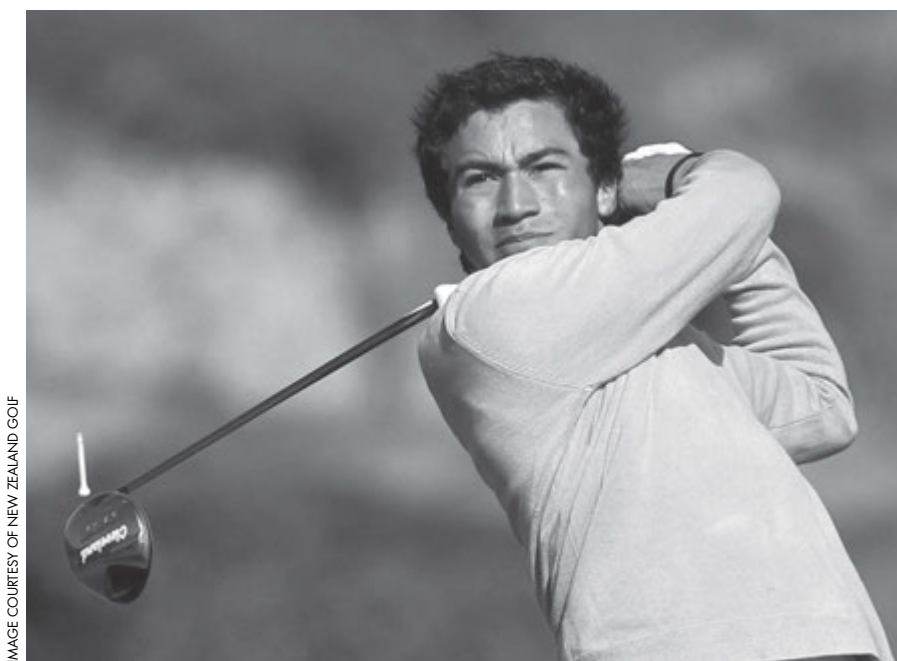


IMAGE COURTESY OF NEW ZEALAND GOLF

His next short-term goal is to be named in the New Zealand Sports Academy, where the top six players in each sport have access to top coaches and funding. If he does well in the New Zealand Secondary Schools Under-19 Championship in September, those goals could also be achieved.

“I try to be a good example wherever I go,” he said. “The Word of Wisdom helps me in my game [because I] eat properly and stay healthy. Nutrition has a big effect on your body. Staying fit and making wise choices help me achieve my goals.

“Attending seminary has helped my testimony so much,” he added. “It made me stronger, and I have

more faith, which helps me on the golf course. I pray while I am playing, and I am often prompted by the Spirit. If I am playing badly it helps me to settle down and play better. The Spirit helps me to stay focussed and stay on task.”

Compton recalls his favourite scripture mastery scripture, Moses 1:39, which says, “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” He added: “It helps me when I focus on the Lord’s plan. The Spirit helps me to remember what that plan is and to stay true to my testimony, especially when I am away from home.” ■

Wellington Interfaith Council Discussed Death, Faith, and Culture

As part of the City and Sea Museum’s Death and Diversity

exhibition in April, the Wellington Interfaith Council came together to discuss

death and related matters.

Energetic dialogue took place among panellists from six faiths who discussed death, the afterlife, and grief—and the impact that culture and faith have on people as they

Dr. Ben Gray, Presbyterian, Member St. Andrews On the Terrace; Paramjit Singh, Sikh; Peter Thomson, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Anne Heynes, Soka Gakkai International, Buddhist; Fred Albert, Progressive Jewish Synagogue; and Dr. Pushpa Wood, Hindu, participated in the Death and Diversity panel discussion.



IMAGE COURTESY OF TOM MCVIEY

deal with death. Panellists represented Presbyterian, Sikh, Latter-day Saint, Soka Gakkai International (Buddhist), Progressive Jewish, and Hindu faiths.

The coordinator of the activity, Dr. Pushpa Wood, said, "This was a unique opportunity for people of different faith and cultural traditions to share their understanding of death and their response to grief. This workshop created a positive platform for people to openly share their personal experiences. It was encouraging to see active participation from an audience with a broad cross-section of faiths and ethnic backgrounds."

Latter-day Saint Peter Thomson said, "There was a lot of discussion on how faith helps us cope with the grief associated with the death of a loved one. The views expressed were well received. We all learnt from each other."

The Museum's Wellington Director, Brett Mason, said, "Every culture has customs and rituals that are turned to at the time of a death. By getting to know these practices, we can get to the sense of identity and belonging of various ethnic community groups and the changes they've made since their arrival in New Zealand." ■

IMAGE COURTESY OF ROSEANNE JONES



Holding the "Lest We Forget" ANZAC wreath prior to the parade are from left: Algy Fermanis, Abish Jones, and Anthanee Fermanis.

Youth Mark ANZAC Day

By Rosanne Jones

Youth of the Opotiki Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints marked ANZAC Day this year by marching in the small town's memorial service and laying a wreath at the base of the cenotaph in the centre of town. Dressed in their Sunday clothes, the youth were a fine representation of the Church. A large number of people turned out for the service.

Algy Fermanis, age 17, said, "I felt happy to be wearing a suit and representing the Church in the parade. It made me feel special, and proud to be a member."

This sentiment was echoed by his 13-year-old brother, Anthanee, who said, "It was exciting to march in front of the

crowd, and I was proud to help lay the wreath on the cenotaph. I think the soldiers who died were very brave."

Linking the sacrifice of the soldiers to lessons learnt in the scriptures, 15-year-old Abish Jones, the branch's sole young woman, said, "Their sacrifice reminded me that lessons can be learnt from the past—such as people in the scriptures who made similar sacrifices for freedom."

The branch Relief Society president, Maraea Te Pou, taught Abish how to make the wreath from grapevines. It was beautifully decorated with handmade flax flowers, conifer foliage, and camellia. This project also went towards Abish's achievements in her Personal Progress goals. ■



Loading a trailer with donated items are Opotiki Branch members. From left: President No'oroa; Terry Sparks; Christine Herbert; Ena Herbert; Wayne Fermanis; Anthanee Fermanis; Maude Maxwell; Gaylene Kohunui, a voluntary worker for NZ Victim Support; and Eliza Herbert.

Opotiki Branch Responds to Neighbourhood Fire

By Roseanne Jones

A house just three doors down from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' meetinghouse in Ford Street, Opotiki, was home to a large extended family. It was destroyed on Saturday, 28 April 2012, after a fire broke out. Community support agencies were contacted for emergency help. One of those agencies contacted is managed by a member of the Church in Opotiki, Maude Maxwell.

At church the next day Maude put out a request to members for donations that would help the family. Within two hours members had gone to

their homes and returned with enough goods to fill a trailer. Some of the family's immediate needs were met. Branch president Tere No'oroa, and his first counsellor, Wayne Fermanis, delivered the donated items, which included clothing, fresh fish, cutlery and utensils, toys, bedding, linen, and grocery to the displaced family at their emergency housing. The family expressed their surprise and sincere gratitude for the assistance from the Church members.

The Church was one of the first organisations to respond to this tragedy. Later, other support groups provided for the family's long-term needs. ■



The Saviour taught us to show love and compassion.

Love One Another

By Tessa Dewsbury

At a recent Sharing Time with the junior Primary children in the Albany Ward of the Auckland New Zealand Harbour Stake, the Primary leader had carefully prepared several thought-provoking questions, each designed to encourage the children to consider what the Saviour would do in specific social situations. Every question invited the children to consider the *feelings* of the characters in each scenario.

The most important lesson taught that day was that the Saviour would have extended His hand of friendship, and most certainly He would have been kind to everyone. The Spirit was so strong in that session; without a doubt, the principles taught were exactly what the Lord would have us *all* learn.

Sometimes it's the simple things we get wrong. Perhaps it's just that we don't give serious thought to how our actions might make others feel; or perhaps we speak thoughtlessly and hurt people. If the truth be told, we could probably all do much better.

This counsel from the chorus of the Primary song "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus" (*Children's Songbook*, page 78) says:

*"Love one another as Jesus loves you
Try to show kindness in all that you do.
Be gentle and loving in deed and in thought,
For these are the things Jesus taught."*

Marjorie Pay Hinckley (wife of President Gordon B. Hinckley [1910–2008]) said: "There is no such thing as a small act of kindness." Every day we're working towards becoming our best eternal selves . . . this has to include being kind.

In the Book of Mormon index, on page 193, the word *kind* is cross-referenced to *compassion*. Compassion is more than just a sympathetic emotion; it is the desire to relieve the sufferings of another. Isn't that what Jesus Christ did during His earthly ministry—relieve the suffering of the people?

If we call ourselves followers of Christ, we need to study and understand what it means to be kind and compassionate. It is our duty to develop our capacity to treat others as we would like to be treated, and to teach our children to do likewise. Ephesians 4:32 teaches us: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted"—for these are the things Jesus taught. ■

New Zealand Saints Gather for Video Conference

All New Zealand stakes participated in a nationwide videoconference in mid-May, where members of the Church were addressed by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Elder Paul V. Johnson, a member of the Seventy; Linda S. Reeves, Second Counsellor in the general Relief Society presidency; and Elder Steven E. Snow of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Several members share below how the messages touched their hearts:

Shannon Gibson—Albany Ward, Harbour Stake: "I found Elder Bednar's talk on personal testimony and conversion truly inspiring. Being a relatively new convert to the Church, I initially struggled with my understanding of a testimony. I was baptised and lived according to my covenants, but I was not convinced that I had my own personal testimony of the gospel. I think I expected something really profound and instantaneous to take place at baptism. Though this may be the case for some, in my experience it was somewhat different.

It is an exciting journey of personal discovery and realisation that everything begins with the relationship I have with my Heavenly Father. I understand each person experiences their conversion in a unique manner. For me it has been an extraordinary process which began with a righteous desire, humility in asking Heavenly Father in fervent prayer for that which I desire, acceptance of the answer to my prayers, and obedience in keeping my covenants, which results in the continuous growth in testimony and ongoing conversion. I better understand and appreciate the scripture "line upon line, precept upon precept".

Renee Solomon—Waipuna Ward, Panmure

Stake: “As I sat in conference I was moved by the comments of Elder Paul V. Johnson and Elder David A. Bednar. I found comfort knowing that the Brethren of the Church appreciate the efforts and challenges mothers of young children face. As Elder Johnson acknowledged his own mother’s experiences, I felt connected to other women of the Church who too share the same joy and frustration raising young children can bring. Elder Bednar’s talk reminded me to continually replenish our ‘oil of conversion’, and [also reminded me] that we cannot rely on past experiences and other people to prepare us for the Saviour’s coming.”

Paul Bennalack—Takapuna Ward, Harbour

Stake: “I am very grateful to have attended the New Zealand stake conference. I enjoyed all of the talks, but in particular the remarks from Elder Paul V. Johnson and Elder David A. Bednar. Elder Johnson spoke about the great role and importance of mothers. My own mother passed away earlier this year, and Elder Johnson’s comments reminded me of the great influence and wonderful example that my mother has been and continues to be in my life. I loved the insight that Elder Bednar’s teachings provided on the difference between *testimony* and *conversion*. Using the parable of the ten virgins, he strongly emphasised that the lamps represented our testimonies and the oil represented our conversion. As Elder Bednar spoke I certainly felt the Spirit bear witness that each of us must be truly converted (have oil in our lamps), and not just have a testimony (a lamp). I felt very blessed to hear an Apostle teach and bear witness of this important principle. It was a wonderful conference, and I am committed to be more converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Nicola Petty—Merivale Ward, Christchurch

Stake: “Elder Bednar’s talk was inspiring, particularly linking testimony with conversion, and the idea of burying our ‘weapons of rebellion.’

“We found Elder Johnson’s talk uplifting and reassuringly real. We like the idea that with nine children it was a wonder his mother ever ‘found her temper.’ We all appreciated that the leaders are aware of the challenges we are facing in Christchurch as a result of the earthquakes. It was gratifying that they have seen and thus have a firsthand inkling of what we are all facing.”

Talitimu Toleafoa—Massey Ward,

Henderson Stake: “I liked the way Elder Bednar counselled us about going back to the basics and being converted. Sister Reeves’ talk tied in with that by reminding us that we have to be spiritually converted and fed every day, and [we] can do that by having family and personal prayer, family and personal scripture study, holding family home evening, and attending the temple.

“As a family we met together after the conference to discuss the talks, and taught our children that we need to be fully converted to the gospel so that when trials and tribulations come, those challenges are a blessing in our lives, and not a burden.”

Pauline AhChee—Torbay Ward, Harbour

Stake: “I loved conference—it was so personal for New Zealand. What they said was specifically for the Saints here. Everyone who spoke has some connection to our country, or has been here. The speakers always seem to talk about something that is relevant in my life right now. It was uplifting, and I came away feeling renewed and strengthened.”

Adolf Johansson—Lynfield Ward, Mt. Roskill

Stake: “The conference was very inspirational; all the speakers spoke on topics that were very dear to the hearts of the people. Elder Bednar’s sermon on continual conversion and how to be converted unto Christ and never fall away was well received. We are also pleased with the translation of these proceedings, as it was very helpful to those who speak little English.” ■