

Australia Local News

The Lord Will Prepare the Way

By **Elder F. Michael Watson**

Second Counsellor, Pacific Area Presidency

Obedience to the laws and commandments of God has been, and ever will be, necessary for those searching to become recipients of promised blessings. It was He who declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹

The Prophet Joseph Smith, in May 1833, received a revelation in which the Lord declared:

“Truth is knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come; . . .

“And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

“He that keepeth His commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”²

The truth, which guides us, is available to everyone through the wisdom of a Heavenly Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost—it is by obedience that we learn of and receive the blessings which adherence to the laws and ordinances of the gospel promises.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), then-Second Counselor in the First Presidency, posed the question stated by T. S. Eliot: “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?”³ Humankind, in a desire to gain wisdom and move forward, has at times lost sight of the end result, where obedience to the teachings and experience of the ages could have made a course correction for the wanderer.

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, in speaking to a body of the Church assembled in October 2010, recalled the message of President David O. McKay (1873–1970) who, in the April 1957 opening session of general conference, counseled the Saints to “keep the commandments of God.”⁴

President Monson without equivocation declared: “This is the message we must give to our people today.”⁵

The words of President Monson ring true to an earlier time in the statement of Nephi to his father, declaring, “I will go and do the things which

the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”⁶

Today, as we remember the counsel of a prophet to faithfully keep the commandments, and as we recall Nephi’s response, we will in the end become a blessed people.

It was obedience to the heavenly counsel that destined young Joseph Smith to be a prophet of God. Following the direction given by the angel Moroni, and in keeping with subsequent instruction received, Joseph went as directed to tell his earthly father what had transpired. On that occasion, Joseph’s father, upon learning of what his son had been entrusted, said “that it was of God, and told [him] to go and do as commanded by the messenger.”⁷

Anything short of being obedient to the counsel Joseph had received from both heaven and earth would have changed the course of history.



**Elder F. Michael
Watson**

It is important to also have an understanding that disobedience to the commandments and the counsel given by our leaders and teachers will only result in feelings of remorse and grief. The redeeming virtue for such action, which is clear and unmistakable, is made possible through repentance and the Atonement of Him who paid the price for wayward children to return home to a loving Father in Heaven.

A hymn of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints contains the words *I'll go, I'll say, and I'll be*.⁸ This is the direction in life which we must seek and answer with hand and heart.

Our missionaries pray and they go, trusting in the Lord that He will give no commandment unto them, save He will prepare a way for them that they may be successful through their obedience and willingness to serve. Scriptural words provide the assurance, "Whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."⁹

Many who seek the truth and indicate a willingness to follow the teachings provided find promised solace, not only for time but for all eternity.

Individuals wishing to be counted among the believers, in many instances, already have a desire to be obedient and become followers of truth.

Such is the experience of individuals, both young and old, here in the islands of the sea whose obedience is with faith in every footstep.

The words of a Primary song, "A Child's Prayer," ring sweet and unmistakable: "Heavenly Father, are you really there? And do you hear and answer ev'ry child's prayer?"¹⁰ The answer is yes, He is there, and yes, He does answer the prayers of His children.

Obedience has been the hallmark of prophets, and this source of strength is available to everyone seeking to follow the divine direction given to the servants of God. The counsel of our prophet, President Monson, is to

impress upon the Saints being taught in the classrooms throughout the worldwide Church the need for obedience to the commandments, for therein is safety, therein is peace.

As we strive toward living in obedience and in doing as the Lord commands, even as direction is received through those of His chosen servants, we will be entitled to His blessings. May it ever be so. ■

NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:24, 27–28.
3. T. S. Eliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock,'" *The Complete Poems and Plays* (1930), 96; quoted in James E. Faust, "Voice of the Spirit," *Ensign*, June 2006, 4.
4. David O. McKay, Conference Report, Apr. 1957, 8.
5. October 2011 General Authority Training.
6. 1 Nephi 3:7.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:50.
8. "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
10. "A Child's Prayer," *Children's Songbook*, 12.

LOCAL PAGES

New Country Website Launched in Australia

A new website for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Australia (lds.org.au) has been launched to align with the latest version of LDS.org.

The new version of LDS.org was released on December 1, 2010, complete with a new visual design, an upgraded search engine and translated content. The new version of

the Australian Country Website has been created on the same platform as LDS.org and for the most part will look and function in the same manner as its parent site. This will enable members of the Church and others in Australia to access all of the global content, plus the have the benefit of Australian news and articles as well.

Transitioning

To make the transition to the new lds.org.au easier, a Learn About page is available containing instructional videos that explain how to navigate the new site. Please note: This Learn About page focuses on general topics pertaining to the LDS.org platform. Specific information relating to local Australian content can be found later in this article.

Further to this, existing bookmarks to pages on lds.org.au will be automatically redirected to equivalent pages on the new site.

Navigation

On the previous version of lds.org.au, the main navigation was placed horizontally along the top of the website. The new site contains two major forms of navigation as outlined below.

Main Navigation

The LDS.org menu contains links to tools and resources for the general membership. This is found at the top of each page.

Australian Navigation

The Australian menu containing links to tools and resources specific to the Australian Church membership is found under the main feature on the left hand pane of the home page.

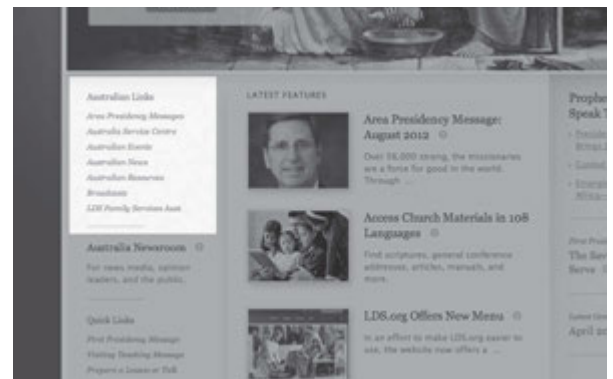
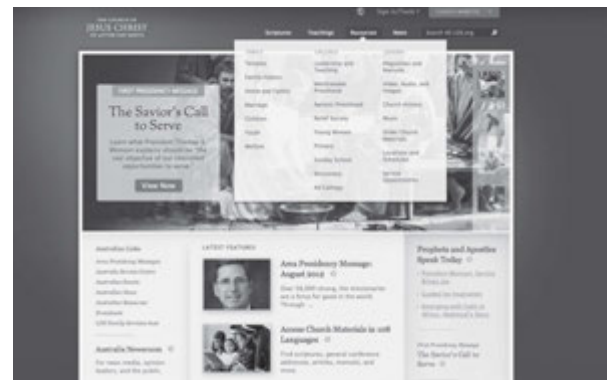
News and Events

The Church News and Events section, located at www.lds.org.au/news, allows users the ability to browse through local news articles from Australia as well as articles from the global news section of LDS.org.

This section of the site works closely with various sources to cover news and events of interest to Church members, provide global perspective, and cover stories from multiple angles. Articles can be filtered by topic on the Church News and Events page to help visitors quickly find information that's important to them.

Australia Service Centre

The Australia Service Centre is a dedicated section of the site that provides news, information, links, contact details and



IMAGES COURTESY OF CHURCH MEDIA LIBRARY

answers to frequently asked questions relative to Church administration and leader support in Australia. Job vacancies and other important information pertaining to the general Australian membership can be found here also.

Australian Resources

The Australian Resources section provides a central location for accessing helpful tools and resources for the Australian Church membership. Resources available

include pages about upcoming conventions, upcoming national broadcasts, Church service missionary opportunities, *Ensign* inserts, educational assistance in the Pacific Area and more. ■

Church Recognises Work of Angel Hands's Co-Founder

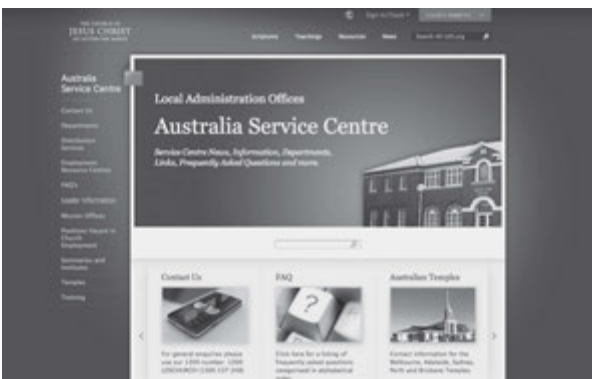
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has presented Western Australian Dr. Ann O'Neill with the John Simpson Kirkpatrick Standing for Something Award, in recognition of her work as a crime victims' supporter. A ceremony to mark the occasion took place on 15 May 2012, at the University of Western Australia campus in Perth.

Timothy Masson, president of the Perth Dianella Stake, presented the trophy and was accompanied by Justin Richards, president of the Perth Warwick Stake.

The Standing for Something Award, inspired by an ANZAC soldier who gave his life while transporting wounded soldiers from the battlefield at Gallipoli, honours Dr. O'Neill's courage in the face of personal tragedy and her remarkable efforts for the good of others.

Some years ago, Dr. O'Neill's two children were murdered and her own life was almost taken on one horrendous night. After this extremely difficult personal period, she turned to full-time university study. She completed a PhD with a ground-breaking dissertation, researching the social support available and necessary for secondary victims of serious crime.

In his presentation remarks, President Masson said, "Jesus Christ is recorded as saying, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation' (John 16:33). In life, tribulation is not distributed equally. Socrates said, 'If we were all to bring our misfortunes into a common store, so that each person should receive an equal share in the distribution, the majority would be glad to take up their own and depart.' There are those who, sadly, receive a distribution





Dr. Ann O'Neill receives the Standing for Something Award.

of tribulation that is unimaginable to the majority. Dr. O'Neill's remarkable story is a testament to the human spirit that hope can spring forth from even the deepest of despair."

Dr. O'Neill, along with a group of friends dedicated to compassion, human rights and social justice, founded Angel Hands Inc., a charitable organization which provides support to people affected by the death of a loved one through homicide, and to those who have experienced serious personal violence.

"Those, like Dr. O'Neill," said President Masson,

"who help others find hope and healing, provide the greatest of gifts."

As the director of Angel Hands, Dr. O'Neill champions the needs of crime victims. She also advises the Western Australian Justice Department on the impact of crime in the lives of those touched by it.

Dr. O'Neill was the WA State Finalist for Australian of the Year in 2011.

The Standing For Something recognition was accompanied by a bronze statuette of John Simpson Kirkpatrick bearing a wounded soldier on the back of a small donkey. ■

Love Thy Neighbour

By Lauren Townsend

Two of Leihana and Fale Mahe's family of seven children have disabilities. Their 13-year-old son, Isaiah, was born with Down Syndrome and is also hearing impaired. Isaiah is a deacon in the Minchinbury Ward in Western Sydney, and he enjoys passing the sacrament to the congregation. Although Isaiah cannot fully comprehend words, either written or oral, to fully understand the gospel, he recognizes that passing the sacrament is important. Isaiah is also involved with the Young Men programme. His participation in Church activities helps the other young men to fellowship with him.

His mother, Leihana, explains: "Isaiah doesn't have to fully understand [the gospel]. He can participate in the activities by being an usher and shaking hands with members as they arrive at the door. Although he does not talk well, he smiles at people, he looks for interaction, and he needs a circle of friends." Leihana then explains the importance of nourishing and developing a relationship with her four-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Ariana, who was born blind and later diagnosed with autism. "I would encourage members to repeatedly interact with people who have autism, to be able to knock down that wall of defensiveness," she said. "They don't need to be scared."

The Saviour Jesus Christ shared a parable of a man who fell victim to a group of thieves and was then taken into care by a Samaritan. The example encourages members of the Church to love and care for one another. Likewise, the Church handbook specifies that "Church members are encouraged to follow the Savior's example of offering

hope, understanding, and love to those who have disabilities."¹

Eliza Young, a selfless young woman from Claremont Meadows Ward, Sydney, was born with Apert Syndrome, which is a disorder affecting the head, face and limbs of sufferers. Like any committed Saint willing to serve the Lord by participating in missionary work, Eliza works at the Carlingford Temple Office part time, doing data entry, filing, and family history-related work. She has also been called as a librarian at her ward. "I love to talk to people and to help them," she said. "I can get to know them too. What I like about church is being with people, as well as the gospel itself."

The Church handbook states that "the bishopric or stake presidency may call a ward or stake disability specialist to help individuals and families." The role of a disability specialist is to act as a resource for the ward and stake leaders, to help them ensure the meetings or activities are being participated in by members with disabilities, and meet their needs.²

Even with the absence of a Disability Specialist in any ward or stake, the spirit of the ward can remain strong when ward leaders and members are able to provide in their own time, with whatever resources there may be, to assist disabled Church members.

When the challenges seem overwhelming, Leihana is comforted with a favourite scripture found in Isaiah 41:10: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." ■

NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], "Members with Disabilities," 21.1.26
2. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], "Members with Disabilities," 21.1.26

Faith of Our Fathers—The *Julia Ann* Shipwreck

By Amanda Watts

Today's missionaries, when their service in the field is over, simply board a plane, belt up and wait to land in their home town. For two young American missionaries, John Eldredge and James Graham, returning home from Australia to the Great Basin in Utah in 1855, it was a far different experience. Together with 54 other passengers and crew they boarded the sailing ship *Julia Ann* on 7 September 1855, knowing they would be in for a two- to three-month wait before they would make land in San Francisco.¹ The young missionaries' assignment had been to preach and convert and to extol the importance of gathering to Zion as directed by Brigham Young; hence, 28 of those on board the ill-fated barque were LDS, many of them well known and hardworking pioneers of the Church in Australia.

Emigration cost Australian Saints three times that of British converts, but their desire to obey the prophet's call to build up Zion was uppermost in their hearts.² None aboard were to know how important their faith would be to them in the coming months.

On 3 October, according to a narrative written by passenger Esther Spangenberg, "the ship's Captain, B. Franklin Pond always felt uneasy in this area (the Scilly Isles) as his charts were not accurate and there were so many reefs that he stayed . . . on deck all day, then at 8 pm went below to get some sleep handing command over to Mr Coffin, an old and experienced Chief Officer. It was a dark night, without moon or stars when the ship hit on a reef, grating harshly on the rocks and lodged there."³

The *Julia Ann* began to break up, and huge waves kept pounding her. There was confusion everywhere, with mothers grabbing sleeping children

from their beds and screaming out in their attempts to keep them together. Very early on two young girls were swept overboard, Mary Humphries and Marian Anderson, never to be seen again. LDS passenger John McCarthy recalled, "I saw mothers nursing their babes in the midst of falling masts and broken spars, while the breakers were rolling twenty feet high over the wreck."⁴

A brave crew member managed to get a rope secured from the ship to a high rock on the reef, with a secondary rope to assist with ferrying passengers from the wreckage, whose stern was on the reef, to the relative safety of the reef. Mothers tied their babies to themselves, and the rescue began. Once on the reef some managed to get up on rocks, others gathered parts of the boat washed up on to the reef to use as shelter, and many were left standing huddled together in knee- to waist-high water as a protection from sharks that swam nearby.

Back on board, the horror of the waves washing over everyone continued and Eliza Harris, who was travelling without her husband, bravely strapped her baby, Lister, to herself, when a massive wave broke the ship in two, hurling debris in all directions. She was tragically washed overboard, unable to be rescued. Her two-year-old daughter, Maria, was helped to the safety of the reef. Martha Humphries was also swept away and drowned, but her three children crossed to the reef.⁵ The last 19 people on board refused to be parted from one another when suddenly the cargo end of the ship, full of coal, sank. This actually helped to lift the bow end and made it easier to get everyone else on to the reef quickly.

Miss Spangenberg said, "I . . . cannot help but return thanks to Him who rules on sea and land, for His mercy and kindness to me and others, in

first rescuing us from a watery grave, and afterwards sustaining us through that night of horrors.”⁶ Her thankfulness was likely shared by her companions. The ship’s bell kept tolling all night, as if for the dead, when the waves hurled against it, and many shed tears for loved ones now gone.

Dawn arrived, and an island was sighted on the horizon. Hasty repairs were made to one of the *Julia*’s small boats that washed up on the reef, and an expedition set off, returning late in the afternoon to declare they saw birds and trees but no fresh water. Waiting survivors constructed rafts from broken ship parts and gathered a few provisions, some flour and beans, and a barrel of bread. Most had to endure a second night on the reef, and the next day the women and children were ferried to the island while the men walked all day around the reef to the island, coping with sharp rocks, rough swims and sometimes having to jump onto their rafts to avoid the 20 sharks that followed them!⁷ On their arrival the children rushed to show them how they had found fresh water after digging down in the sand. A fire was lit using a sun glass, and everyone ate roast shellfish.

The survivors needed building up after their ordeal, and they were blessed to find it was egg-laying season for turtles, so eggs became part of their diet, with coconuts as a treat, gathered from an island 15 miles away. Eventually Captain Pond began contemplating sailing for help and obtaining the services of a vessel large enough to rescue the surviving souls. Since they had first reached their island the wind had come from only one direction—the east. The nearest land that such a wind would blow them to was the Navigator Islands, 1500 miles west. The Society Islands were only 300–500 miles away, but to the east, and there was no wind to help them get there. Captain Pond prefaced his account of what happened next with these words: “I

can simply vouch for the facts, without any attempt to argue or explain.”⁸

He was uneasy about his decision to travel the long distance to the Navigator Islands, and when one of the Saints named John McCarthy told him of a “dream or vision in which he saw their small boat launch to the west but then float bottom up”⁹, the captain changed his mind and decided they should try for the much closer Society Islands. McCarthy soon told of a “second vision . . . he saw the boat bound eastward and after 3 days they reached a friendly island where a vessel was obtained.”¹⁰ Two members were part of the crew that set sail easterly, and as they departed the wind turned in that direction for the very first time. They sailed their small, ill-provisioned boat to Bora Bora in four days, enduring much, and fearing for their lives, and when land was sighted “tears of gratitude filled their eyes.”¹¹

Mercifully a vessel was eventually chartered, and 60 days after the *Julia Ann* went aground, all the survivors were rescued. In the words of John Eldredge, “I need not attempt to describe our feelings of gratitude and praise which we felt to give the God of Israel for His goodness and mercy in working a deliverance for us.”¹² ■

NOTES

1. “The Wreck of the *Julia Ann*”, *BYU Studies*, vol. 29, no 2, Spring 1989, by John Devitry-Smith, see copy of original article for footnotes.
2. LDS FAQ, *BYU Studies*, written by Marjorie Newton.
3. Quoted in Esther E. Spangenberg, “Particulars of the Wreck” in *Narrative of the Wreck of the Barque Julia Ann* (1858), 5.
4. John McCarthy Papers, 10.
5. John McCarthy Papers, 10.
6. “Particulars of the Wreck.”
7. “The Wreck of the *Julia Ann*.”
8. Autobiography of Captain BF Pond, 1895, 129.
9. Autobiography of Captain BF Pond, 1895, 129.
10. Autobiography of Captain BF Pond, 1895, 129–130.
11. Benjamin F. Pond, “The Boat Voyage” in *Narrative of the Wreck of the Barque Julia Ann* (1858), 31–32.
12. Journal History, 28 April 1856, LDS Church Archives.

.....
To submit articles or stories for the *Ensign* insert pages, please send them to: ensign-australia@ldschurch.org