

New Zealand Local Pages

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



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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.

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, in 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

Come to the Temple

By President Ross J. Cuff

First Counsellor, Hamilton New Zealand Temple Presidency

There are many accounts in the scriptures demonstrating that throughout history the temple has played an important part in the lives of the children of our Father in Heaven. In this, the last dispensation, we know that it is in the temple that we learn of the crowning blessings and ordinances that can lead us to life eternal in the presence of our Father in Heaven and His Son Jesus Christ.

For example:

Chapters 6 to 8 of First Kings record King Solomon's building of a temple unto the Lord. Only the finest of materials were used to construct it. The dedicatory prayer offered by King Solomon asked that "Thine eyes may be open towards this house night and day. . . ." (1 Kings 8:29) and "Hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place" (1 Kings 8:30), indicating the special place that the temple would occupy in the lives of the people.

On January 1, 2000, at the commencement of a new century, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a special testimony of the Saviour. In it they said, "His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come" ("The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

Then in Isaiah 2 we read: "The mountain of the Lord's house shall . . . be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths" (verses 2–3). It is in the temple that our relationship with the Saviour and a fuller understanding of His teachings and His ways can be so much enhanced.

Chapter 52 of Jeremiah records the destruction of the temple and carrying away of the people out of Jerusalem to Babylon. Many years later under King Darius, and then King Cyrus, the Israelites were invited to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. In chapter three of Ezra, we learn of the joy of the people when the foundations were laid:

"And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets. . . .

"And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; . . . And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid" (verses 10–11).

Then when the temple was completed and at its dedication (chapter six of Ezra), the people offered as a sacrifice "an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, [and] four hundred lambs" indicating their "joy . . . in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel" (verses 17, 22).

Few will be unfamiliar with the wonderful address of King Benjamin recorded in the early chapters of the book of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon. King Benjamin invited the people to come to the temple to hear this important address, but "for the multitude being so great that king Benjamin could not teach them all within the walls of the temple" (Mosiah 2:7). So the people "pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple" (Mosiah 2:6). It is not surprising to me that for this very important event, the people gathered to the temple.

In the book of Revelation in the New Testament, in regard to the blessings that come from serving in the temple we read:

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes?

". . . And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he



that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. . . .

“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Oh, what incomprehensible joy in the presence of our Saviour we can look forward to as we strive to live righteously and to the fullest extent we are individually able, make those sacrifices that will be necessary to ensure that we feel of the Saviour’s love in His temple as often as we can.

A revelation received by Joseph Smith and recorded in section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants refers to the temple to be built at Kirtland:

“For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house” (verse 5). Then from section 109 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in the dedicatory

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prayer for the Kirtland Temple that was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith by revelation, we learn what that “glory of the Lord” can mean to those who are leaving the temple after serving therein:

“And we ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them” (verse 22). Given that this prayer was received through revelation, we can be confident that these wonderful blessings requested by a prophet of the Lord are being fulfilled and are available to us each time we leave the temple after service therein.

And then our current and beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has said: “The all-important and crowning blessings of membership in the Church are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God. . . . My beloved brothers and sisters, may we make whatever sacrifices are necessary to attend the temple and to have the spirit of the temple in our hearts and in our homes. . . . If you have been to the temple for yourselves and if you live within relatively close proximity to a temple, your sacrifice could be setting aside the time in your busy lives to visit the temple regularly. . . . As you and I go to the holy houses of God, as we remember the covenants we make within, we will be more able to bear every trial and to overcome each temptation. In this sacred sanctuary we will find peace; we will be renewed and fortified” (“The Holy Temple— a Beacon to the World,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 90).

To these wonderful witnesses of the divinity and importance of the house of the Lord, I add my own, which, over nearly 50 years of regular attendance at the temple, culminating in having the privilege and blessing of now serving full time for

a period, has progressively filled my soul with an undeniable testimony that the temple is truly the house of the Lord. My regular attendance at the temple with my eternal companion allows me to bear a firm witness that the work undertaken here is real, true and divine. Sister Cuff and I have seen the joy in those that come to the temple regularly, we have assisted young couples to prepare for and participate in their temple marriages, and we have subsequently seen many of them regularly return to further enjoy the wonderful spirit of the house

of the Lord, adding to our knowledge that this work is of eternal significance.

And so we say to all, “Come to the temple” and share in the eternal blessings that are here for all to receive, not only those blessings that come from performing the essential work for our kindred dead, but also for our own edification and spiritual upliftment that will continue to arm us with the blessings we need to assist us in our quest to achieve eternal life with those that we love. ■

New Pacific Area Director for Temporal Affairs

The new director for temporal affairs (DTA) for the Pacific Area, Terry Oakes, said he was surprised and excited when he was told his new assignment was to be the DTA for the Pacific. Having served in the New Zealand South Mission from 1965 to 1967, Brother Oakes is familiar with our part of the world, and he said, “This is a beautiful country, with wonderful people. I have a special feeling for New Zealand. I haven’t travelled a lot in the Pacific, but I think there is a special spirit about the island people.”

Brother Oakes has been in Church employment for 29 years. He worked in Welfare Services for 20 years, in Storehouse Production Distribution, Employment Resource Services, as Area Storehouse manager, and as the Managing Director for Welfare Services.

Brother Oakes brings a wealth of experience with him. He was previously the DTA for the North America Northwest and Idaho Area for two years, and the DTA for the Asia Area for five and a half years.

He has a BA degree in Advertising and Public Relations, as well as a Masters Degree in Public Administration from Brigham Young University in Utah.

Prior to his Church employment, Brother Oakes owned and operated retail and wholesale auto parts stores and auto repair facilities.

He has served in several bishoprics, including as a bishop (twice), and as a branch president. He has also served in Young Men presidencies, on the high council, and as a Scoutmaster.

Brother Oakes and his wife, Gail,



IMAGE COURTESY CHURCH MEDIA LIBRARY

Terry Oakes, the new Pacific Area director for temporal affairs.

have been married for 43 years and have four children and seven grandchildren. ■



From left: Jared Haddock, Ryan Pedersen, James Allred, and Justin Cook.

Pacific Area to Feature in Online Leadership Training Films

A film crew from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, was filming in the Pacific Area for two weeks in June, filming local youth and elders quorums for the online Leadership Training Library and *For the Strength of Youth* in 2013.

Jared Haddock from the Priesthood Department; Justin Cook, a producer from the Publishing Services Department; James Allred, cameraman; and Ryan Pedersen, sound engineer, were in New Zealand one week. They filmed several Young Men quorums in Auckland as part of the Worldwide Leadership Training about *For*

the Strength of Youth and *Duty to God*, as well as training on developing effective quorums.

Filming included youth from Hillary Ward in Tamaki Stake, Takapuna Ward in Harbour Stake, and West Harbour Ward in Henderson Stake.

The film crew then flew to Samoa for a week, where they filmed additional Young Men groups as well as elders quorums in Apia.

The Pacific footage will be added to similar filming from Europe, Britain, and Central and South America to create the Leadership Training films and will be used internationally in the online library. ■

Senior Missionaries Making a Difference in Small Communities

By Catherine Vaughan

Senior missionary couple Elder and Sister Turner, serving in the New Zealand Wellington Mission, have set up a family history library and an addiction recovery group in the small community of Westport. These programmes are regarded as precious miracles to the isolated communities on the west coast of the South Island.

The family history library has been well received by the members, and efforts to inform the community through posters and fliers of the resources now available have resulted in a handful of the local community using the library at the Westport chapel. One person who is not a member of the Church is actively involved in indexing on a regular basis.

The Turners met with the local genealogical society to introduce them to the family history resources that the Church has available and encouraged them to support the indexing of New Zealand passenger ships' records.

The newly formed addiction

recovery group will be available to support active and less-active members who may have challenges of addiction within their families. It will be available to members in Westport, Greymouth, Nelson, and Blenheim.

Acting upon promptings of the Spirit, Elder and Sister Turner also organised the Westport Coal Project to fill the needs of members who are unable to afford the coal necessary to heat their homes adequately. The service project in July involved the entire district of missionaries and President and Sister Kezerian from the Wellington Mission, who all assisted the Turners in delivering coal to those in need.

A chance meeting with a local reporter from the weekly newspaper, *The Messenger*, which covers Westport and Greymouth, resulted in an article highlighting the initiatives the Turners have introduced to the area, and the difference they are making in the local community. ■

Helping Hands Song Now on YouTube

As a member of the popular children's entertainment group the Polkadots, Dionne Shaw usually writes upbeat, bubbly songs, with catchy rhythms that the audience members sing along to during concerts.

But as part of a bigger group, as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Dionne and her husband, Josh Shaw, recently wrote an inspiring song in support of the annual Mormon Helping Hands service projects, which are organised throughout New Zealand during March.

The song, which has had more than 5,000 hits on YouTube, has been used as the soundtrack on two videos, one of which shows the 2012 Harbour stake Helping Hands service project at Windy Ridge School, on the North Shore in Auckland. Most of the Polkadots are members of Harbour stake. ■



IMAGE COURTESY OF PAUL REID

The Polkadots record "Helping Hands". From left: Desiree Reid, Carly Tata, Sarah Midgely, and Dionne Shaw.

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



Jason Ropata, Rebecca Ropata, Jade Broczek, Mia Mueller, Evelyn Bigelow (front), Daniela Mueller (back) and Alice Ropata with some of the donations for Wellington Women's Refuge.

Wellington Members Donate to Local Food Banks

By Alice Ropata

For the last five years, Wellington members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have held an annual grocery collection for the Wellington Women's Refuge. This year, during May, Helping Hands from Tawa, Petone, Wainuiomata and Wellington donated groceries from their own cupboards.

The Women's Refuge is grateful for these donations, stating that Helping Hands have often provided six months' of groceries to their organisations. The groceries are used for women in violent situations who have had to leave their homes in a hurry with no resources. Food, toiletry, and baby care items provide much-needed

relief to these women and their children.

Wellington stake president George Harvey expressed his thanks to Church members at the close of the collection. "Serving in the community is important," he said. "Our continuing relationship with Wellington Women's Refuge helps women get on their feet again. It is heartwarming to see our Wellington stake members give generously to families within our community who are in need."

The Downtown Community Ministry Food Bank, the Wainuiomata Food Bank and the Night Shelter have also been recipients of Helping Hands grocery donations in past years. ■