

United Kingdom and Ireland Local Pages

A Gift for Jesus

By Elder Fernando Rocha, Portugal

Area Seventy

Another Christmas is upon us, with all the hustle and bustle that surrounds this time of year. We can so easily be swept up in the commercial and festive spirit of the season. However, the true symbol of Christmas is the birth of the baby Jesus, and He should be the centre of our attention.

What could be the most significant gift we can offer Him? He has said:

“Come unto me, and believe in my gospel, and be baptised in my name; for he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.”¹

We are living in a wonderful time. The Church is flourishing in the Europe Area, with several new branches, wards, and stakes having been created this year. I have felt great enthusiasm in all the wards and branches I have visited. I can see hope and faith in every footstep. I feel the devotion in the hearts of all those who engage in the work of salvation. The success stories are multiplying, with increasing numbers of our Heavenly

Father’s children joining the flock and many less-active members returning with a redoubled hope. I can testify that we are experiencing real growth in Europe.

At the last general conference, Bishop Richard C. Edgley, who had just been released from the Presiding Bishopric, said: “One of the most meaningful and important ways to establish real growth in the Church is to reach out and rescue those who have been baptised yet are wandering in a less-active state, void of the blessings and saving ordinances.”²

How can we engage more actively in this work of “reaching out” to rescue those who have strayed or to find those souls who seek Jesus? How can we as individuals help the Church to grow in Europe?

Last May I presided over the Maidstone stake conference in England. I wanted to talk about the challenge set out by the Area Presidency of making June a month of invitation. I thought it would be nice to invite

someone at the airport or during the visits that were scheduled for Saturday morning and thus use my personal example to motivate the Saints. However, this did not happen, and I returned to my hotel with a feeling of great sadness of “mission not accomplished.” Still, I had not given up.

At a reception that evening I met an African lady who helped me ever so kindly. I noticed by her name tag that she could speak three languages, including Portuguese. Soon we started talking and I was able to tell her the purpose of my trip to Maidstone. I invited her to listen to the missionaries and she promptly accepted. During our conversation I realized that she was Cape Verdean. I told her that I visit Cape Verde often and was very fond of a typical dish called *cachupa*. She told me that her mother was an excellent



Elder Fernando Rocha

cook and I would be welcome to have lunch with her.

Two months after our conversation I visited Cape Verde and went to see this young woman's mother with President Rosivelte Teixeira of the newly-created Praia Cape Verde Stake. We had the opportunity to speak with her mother and stepfather and introduce the Church to them. We were very well received and were invited to have lunch with them at a future opportunity.

From this visit I gained another referral of a daughter who studies in Portugal. Soon I arranged for her to be contacted by the nearest group of young single adults.

Extending invitations is simple—we just have to open our mouths and invite others to come unto Christ. I know that my gift of “reaching out” pleased our Saviour, and I will continue to invite all to come unto Christ and accept His invitation:

“Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”³ ■

NOTES

1. Ether 4:18.
2. Richard C. Edgley, “The Rescue for Real Growth,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 52.
3. Matthew 11:28–30.

Unusual Gift

By Arthur Hardy

Are you looking for something different? Do you need ideas for a special gift?

We are often told that the best gift is a “portion of thyself”.

For the last two years the leaders of the Church in Great Britain and Ireland have been encouraging members to donate a unit of blood as health and circumstances allow. As we approach Christmas, perhaps we can offer a special gift

of a blood donation and in so doing we may give the gift of extended life to someone whose life is threatened by serious accident or serious ill health.

If you need further information on how to do this, contact your ward or stake representative or your stake director of public affairs, or phone your local blood transfusion service and explain that you would like to donate a unit of blood as part of the ongoing support that Church leaders have organised. You can also go to the website www.blood.co.uk to find out more and make an appointment. ■

Gospel Gifts

By Marie Hunt

As the Government's consultation on the family drew to a close, members of the Chorley 2nd Ward (Chorley Stake) were encouraged to invite neighbours, family and friends to a special sacrament service to reaffirm the Church's strong support of the family.

Elder Stephen Kerr of the Seventy and his wife both spoke at the meeting along with stake president David Pickup and his wife, Janet Pickup. Elder Kerr encouraged the members to set their own houses in order regarding their family relationships and

responsibilities and reminded them that “the greatest work we will ever do is within the walls of our own home” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 134). Messages of support were received from other local organisations including Chorley MP Lindsay Hoyle; Home-Start Chorley, which has been helped in previous Helping Hands service projects; and St Mary's R.C. Church in the town.

The meeting was greatly enhanced by the presence of a specially commissioned choir from the missionary training centre. The missionaries—42 elders and 10 sisters—came from as far afield as China, Romania and France and had only been at the MTC for one

week before the meeting. They did a magnificent job under the direction of Sister Walker.

The meeting was attended by Chorley Deputy Mayor John Walker and Councillor Eric Bell. After the meeting Bishop Pattenden presented both councillors with a framed copy of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World". ■

At a time when the world is experiencing challenges of various kinds, can we, as members of the Church, think of ways to share the greatest of all gifts at this special time of the year? Ed.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIPPA HUNT

From left to right: Bishop Christopher Pattenden, Rachael Pattenden, Elder Stephen Kerr, Debbie Kerr, Councillor Eric Bell, Deputy Mayor John Walker, Sister Walker, President Walker (MTC), Janet Pickup, and stake president David Pickup.

Many Gifts in Generous Community Service

By Esther and Louis Wall

Louis Wall, of the Stranraer Branch, Paisley Stake, started gardening before he can remember. He remembers when he was a child in Truro, his father was a keen gardener and he and Louis's mother encouraged Louis in his efforts. When Louis was a teenager his mother and sister went to Salt Lake for a holiday and Louis was given his first greenhouse. After 40 years it is still in use.

Louis trained and worked professionally as a gardener before a change of circumstances in 2003 prevented him continuing. He has not had paid employment since making the move to Scotland in 2005 to help care for his ageing father.

Louis is nuts about railways and got involved with a group which was trying to prevent the local railway service from being cut. It was not long before Louis's horticultural skills became apparent and he took on, single-handedly, planting and tending the plants at first four, then five stations.

Louis's work was well appreciated as the stations became blooming lovely. Volunteers gave occasional help and Louis sought out volunteers among people he thought would benefit from the sense of achievement they might get. This work culminated in Louis being nominated for an ACoRP award. He came third place in the United Kingdom for the Best Railway Volunteer at a ceremony in Sheffield in September 2011. He was featured on BBC Reporting Scotland for his outstanding work.

Louis's success encouraged him and he started to actively look for more and regular volunteers. He soon had six, then seven, and then eight stations to beautify and look after. He grows most of the plants from seeds and plugs at home in three greenhouses and his extra-large garden. He has to transport them 25 miles to his nearest station in Stranraer by car, and sometimes by bus. He then takes them to the required stations by train.

He has had to carefully work out his time schedules bearing in mind that sometimes he has only one or two minutes to offload at the stations.

His plants have encouraged staff and rail customers alike, and people have made tributes of how their beauty has lifted their spirits, brought them joy and even helped them face their difficulties. Girvan Community Council sent a letter expressing appreciation for the bright and colourful welcome visitors received as they got off the train. Volunteers have also blossomed along with the plants. They have learned new skills and gained hope, and two of them have found employment.

At the suggestion of First Scotrail Louis has taken on the task of inviting groups of schoolchildren to see his work at the stations. It is hoped that this will interest the upcoming generation in using public transport. By emphasising the volunteer work, they can learn that everyone can play a role in making not just stations but their own gardens and communities beautiful.

Louis was featured on television again on 27 September 2012 in the Beechgrove Garden, a well-loved Scottish gardening programme. Among the issues featured was how he kept midges at bay at a shelter in Barrhill Station, how he transformed an ugly perspex tunnel with hanging baskets and pot plants, and how he turned a drab railway entrance into a conservatory livened by magnificent planting, which was partly funded by members of the Paisley stake.

Louis's volunteering has been a benefit to himself, his other volunteers, First Scotrail, their



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LOUIS WALL

passengers and the communities they live in.

But that's not all Louis does. He cannot resist talking about the gospel as he travels up and down the line between stations. He used missionaries to help restore a memorial to railway staff who died serving with the armed forces during World War I. He followed it up with an article in the press including a picture of the volunteers. Last year at that historic moment of the 11th hour of the 11th month of the 11th year of this century, Louis and 10 missionaries participated in a Remembrance Day service at the memorial.

For Louis, the work he does brings together his passion for railways, plants and the gospel and the love he has for people so that he wants to share it all with them. ■

Louis Wall cares for the memorial at Ayr station with help from missionaries and friends.

The Wonderful Gift of Church Membership

By Kate Fletcher

When Oldham Ward (Ashton Stake) member Simon Cooper came back to church just under five years ago, he set himself several goals. One of those goals was to be a football coach with Manchester City Football Club, inspired by his coaching of local amateur teams. In July, those dreams came true as Simon started his first day as one of the youth coaches for Premier Division Champions, Manchester City.

The path was not easy and was fraught with difficulty and sacrifice for him, his wife, Mandy, and daughter Millie. He wrote his goals in steps on the wall and kept them there so he could see them every day. He got himself qualified, and



PHOTOGRAPH BY KATE FLETCHER

Simon Cooper is a new addition to the Manchester City coaching staff.

worked hard to provide for his family whilst achieving his goal, which included taking the UEFA badges.

As Simon started to live the gospel again, paying his tithing and serving others, he saw miracles in his life as he served

the Lord and shared the love of the gospel with those around him. As he shared his gift of Church activity by serving others, his life was blessed.

He wrote a best-selling autobiography, which outlined his colourful past and his challenges and how he came out of it. The book has helped many young people to turn their lives around. Amazingly, to Simon, it became number two in the Amazon sports books charts in 2010. Then to top it all, he received a video from Sir Alex Ferguson wishing him well in his efforts to get into coaching. The Manchester United manager probably didn't know Simon was a Manchester City fan.

Simon said coming back to church was the best decision he had made and he feels the Lord has blessed his life in so many ways and that has helped him to bless many other lives in return. ■

The Gift of Generous and Selfless Service

By Yvonne Runcie-McMahon

Members from three wards in the Liverpool Stake undertook a gruelling 84-mile challenge on Saturday, 22 September. Chris Miller, bishop of Warrington Ward, was inspired to take part in this challenge after a classmate of his son, Nathan, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer called Ewing's sarcoma. Bishop Miller said, "I just wanted to do something to help and make a difference."

A group of friends decided to support Bishop Miller and undertake the challenge to cycle to all



From left to right: Leon Woodward, St Helens; Nathan Oliver, Alex Runcie, Sean McMahon, and Bishop Miller, all Warrington; John Parry, Liverpool; and Jonathan Gray, Warrington, set off on their "Tour de Liverpool Stake".

of the chapels in the Liverpool Stake, encouraging friends and family to sponsor them.

The team set off on a beautiful frosty morning. They rode from Warrington Chapel to St. Helens Chapel then onto Wigan, Southport, Crosby and Liverpool before returning to Warrington just before 6:00 p.m. Following the team was a support vehicle driven by Joseph Oliver, St. Helens Ward. He proved invaluable to the team, providing the opportunity for mobile repairs and temporary respite for the injured and exhausted and directing them at key stages along the route.

On their return a wonderful warm reception greeted them, and friends and families gathered to congratulate them on their success. Friends of the Ava Scott Foundation (Ava is the young girl with the rare cancer) were also able to join in thanking the team for their efforts.

The oldest team member, Sean McMahon, 54, said, "I really enjoyed it—the weather was just perfect. I felt so good I could go and do it all again".

The challenge was not without problems—brake adjustments, punctures, and Bishop Miller crashed his bike into a hedge but recovered and continued. The team were novice cyclists for this type of challenge and all had tried to prepare for the event. This makes the success all the more remarkable as none thought they would complete the route. ■



The team of cyclists with members of the Ava Scott Foundation after their challenge.

New Presidency for Preston Temple

By the Editor

A new presidency for the Preston Temple was in place on 1 November 2012. Douglas Murray of Dundee, Scotland, is the new president with his wife, Aileen, as the matron. John Connolly is serving as first counsellor and David Flinn as second counsellor. Eileen Connolly and Eileen Flinn are serving as assistants to the matron.

"The telephone call from President Uchtdorf's secretary requesting a video conference interview with Aileen and me came right out of the blue", said President Murray. "I don't think anyone ever expects such a call, and we had a whole week to wait and wonder to realise the purpose of the interview. As we waited we pondered the questions we would be asked, but we knew that if a call was issued our answer would be 'yes'. We love the temple and have served as ordinance workers for over nine years. We have enjoyed some very special moments with many workers we now consider to be very special friends. This whole period has been one of continual spiritual enlightenment and we acknowledge that those who trained us will still be required to support us as we grow in these important callings."

Apart from a two-year break for national service in the Scots Guards, President Murray spent



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DOUGLAS MURRAY

President and Sister Murray

all of his working life with a very successful printing and publishing company in Dundee producing magazines and comics that were among the biggest-selling publications in the country. His background was typography and graphic design, and for over 20 years he was employed as the Publicity Manager for the company. He said, "I found it very interesting to be involved in the industry from the time of hand-setting type to the introduction of computerisation."

Prior to commencing his service as temple president, he served as a branch president (twice), counsellor in stake and district presidencies, stake president, bishop, counsellor in the Edinburgh Scotland Mission presidency, high priests group leader and ward mission leader.

Sister Murray was a stay-at-home mother for most of the

time their three sons were growing. After they had grown, she worked in administration at Dundee College of Education. She has served as stake Young Women president, ward primary president, counsellor in the ward Relief Society presidency and nursery leader.

Sister Murray served a full-time mission in Scotland from March 1966 to September 1967. President and Sister Murray served a senior couple mission in the Canada Toronto East Mission from May 2007 to November 2008. Their mission president was Tad R. Callister, now of the Presidency of the Seventy.

President Connolly is from Northern Ireland and Sister Connolly is originally from Eire. Their home is now in Dublin. They have 6 children and 18 grandchildren.

President Connolly had a career as a financial administrator after many years in sales and marketing. Among other things he has been a branch president, district president, counsellor in a mission presidency and national director of public affairs for Ireland.

Sister Connolly has enjoyed being a homemaker and is a hair-stylist. She has served as stake primary president, ward Relief Society president and counsellor in a stake Relief Society presidency. She has also been stake family history director.

Commenting about their call, they said, "One of the great things about living in these islands as a Church member is the opportunities we get to serve. Neither of us is sure how to really prepare for this kind of call. We are quite awe-struck and realise what a truly wonderful privilege this is. However, in response to a challenge from our then-bishop (who also happens to be our son), we served as full-time ordinance workers in the Preston Temple for 16 months until April of this year. This turned out to be one of the very best times in our lives together. Not only did we have the privilege of being in the temple every day it was open, we also liked very much living in the beautiful county of Lancashire. We developed a huge affection for our fellow-workers, the patrons and the local members, who were also very warm and welcoming."

They are delighted and excited to be back, "having been given an opportunity very, very few people ever get."

Eileen Flinn has been a member of the Church from birth. She was born in Nottingham and sealed to her parents in the newly completed London Temple in 1959 along with her brother. President Flinn's mother joined the Church in Edinburgh in 1961; he and his two brothers were baptised in 1962. Eileen and

David were sealed in 1974 in the London Temple.

In 1998 President Flinn was serving as Nottingham Stake president when they were privileged to be invited to witness the dedication of the Preston Temple in the celestial room. In February of this year President and Sister Flinn started part-time work in the Preston Temple, serving two weeks in every eight weeks, enjoying the work and associations immensely, when they were surprised and honoured to be called as second counsellor to the president of the Preston Temple and assistant to the matron.

Service in the Church is a natural part of their lives and they will serve with enthusiasm, energy and love. As usual in a new calling there is much to learn and they hope to learn quickly and be of service in this new and exciting assignment.

In looking at what the new temple presidency hopes to achieve, they will build on the wonderful service of the previous presidency, "standing on the shoulders of giants".

"They have been an inspiration and have given much appreciated assistance to us as we

President and Sister Connolly



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JOHN CONNOLLY

prepared for our period of service to the members of the Preston Temple district,” said President Murray. “I loved how President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) issued an invitation to all Latter-day Saints ‘to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernatural setting for their most sacred covenants’. Part of our mission will be to increase attendance at the temple by inviting all to come to the temple—to step out of the world and embrace the peace and tranquillity evidenced in the house of the Lord.”

President Connolly added, “We want everyone coming to the temple to return home having felt, in some measure, the power of and love of God manifested in the Atonement.” ■



President and Sister Flinn

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DAVID FLINN

Delight in Having Served

With the fondest of wishes to all our dear friends



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF GRAHAM DUNN

The Ensign invited the previous temple presidency to reflect on their three years of service. Ed.

“We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company”. (Psalms 55:14)

This short scripture expresses our delight in having served in this special calling.

It has been the most uplifting experience to see the dedication, sacrifice and love demonstrated by staff, ordinance workers and patrons from this temple district. They have served despite all manner of challenges.

For three years we have felt the Lord’s hand in all that transpires within the walls of the Preston Temple.

He truly is in charge! Of this there is no doubt in our hearts.

Minor miracles happen almost by the hour while those of

greater significance occur on a regular basis.

Initially we were overwhelmed at this insight, but soon it became almost second place and what we have come to expect from the Lord as a consequence of His worthy, faithful children coming to the temple walking in the statutes and keeping the ordinances (see Ezekiel 11:20).

For us it has been a privilege to walk these hallowed corridors day by day somehow anticipating the presence of the Saviour as we turn a corner, step from the lift or open the doors of a sealing room.

This has been a blessing never to be forgotten and eternally cherished.

We truly encourage everyone to receive that precious recommend such that they can enjoy the sweet companionship of the Holy Ghost as they attend to the work of deceased loved ones. ■

The outgoing Preston Temple presidency are pictured left to right: Joseph Leece, Lyn Leece, Albert Roy, Aileen Roy, Keith Viner, Sandra Viner

Please submit stories as Word documents and photographs as jpg files to ukienstgn@ldschurch.org

EUROPE AREA (ENGLISH)