

AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Catch the Vision

By Elder F. Michael Watson

Established by prophets of God, the vision and clarification call has always been to bring souls unto Christ, to rescue the weary and lost, and to provide all the full fellowship which the gospel brings. As we begin this New Year, that same vision is an inherent responsibility for each member to catch, understand, and live.

The scriptures are replete with commands, promises, calls, and rewards for teaching the gospel. The word *command* is used deliberately and provides directive from which we, individually and collectively, cannot escape.

When Jesus took His Twelve Apostles to the top of the Mount of Olives, He defined the vision He had for them:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20).

May I suggest the Lord carefully chose His words in subsequent scriptures when expanding His vision to include every nation, every land, the uttermost bounds of the earth, the entire world, every tongue, every people, and every soul. (See Moses 6:36.)

Today, He needs us to serve with willing hearts to bring souls unto Him. We must clearly catch the vision and be prepared to lengthen our stride and to say as His servants: “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27).

A significant revelation states:

“For, verily, the sound must go forth from this

place into all the world, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth—the gospel must be preached unto every creature” (D&C 58:64).

It was President John Taylor who said:

“God will hold [us] responsible to the people [we] might have saved, had [we] done [our] duty.”

Speaking in the October 1966 general conference of the Church, President David O. McKay indicated that scientific discoveries of recent years would make possible the preaching of the gospel to every kindred, tongue, and people.

President Spencer W. Kimball expounded on such discoveries and indicated that Father in Heaven has now provided us with the ability to produce communication opportunities with possibilities beyond comprehension. Such advances are to help fulfil the words of the Lord that “the sound must go forth from this place unto all the world” (D&C 58:64).

Even though there are millions of people throughout the world who cannot read or write, there is a way to reach them through the electronic media.

Some today have echoed President Kimball’s thoughts that that the advent of the technology of yesteryear and that which is yet to be produced are but tiny miracles, which will be recorded by historians as events even greater than the invention of the printing press.

People throughout the world are anxious and willing to learn, if only they can hear the sound in



**Elder F. Michael
Watson**

their own language and in a manner that they can grasp and understand.

“For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12).

Many members of the Church have already caught the vision and can truly testify such truth is available, here and now, for all to instil as daily bread in their lives.

“Blessed forever be his holy name; great and wondrous are his ways. Let all nations give heed to his servants, for they are preparing the way for his coming; yea, when he shall come in power and great glory, to take unto himself a kingdom, prepared and made ready in the due time of the Lord; for this is the Lord’s work; woe be unto him who putteth forth his hand, his influence, his energies, or any of his powers to oppose it” (Brigham Young, *Millennial Star*, vol. 15, pp. 106–107).

“Our voices must be heard in opposition to these dangerous trends which are designed to destroy the faith of mankind,” Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said during a CES devotional in March 2011. “The Lord literally answers our prayers through the service that we give to others. Be an example of Christlike service and help others return to their Christian faith by encouraging them to get out and serve their fellowmen.”

Our current prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has quoted the First Presidency, who in 1839 said, “Upon your diligence, your perseverance and faithfulness, the soundness of the doctrines which you preach, the moral precepts that you advance and practice . . . hang the destinies of the human family.”

President Monson reaffirmed that the First Presidency today has never been more unified in

that same commitment for each of us to provide for the present and future.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, may we catch this vision and step forward, assume our responsibility, preserve the noble heritage of the past, and instil in the minds of those whom we serve the Prophet Joseph Smith’s declaration of:

The Standard of Truth

“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” (*History of the Church*, 4:540). ■

LOCAL PAGES

Newcastle Stake Country Fair

By Karen Coulson

Blustering August winds were no deterrent for the Newcastle stake members as they gathered from as far as Taree and Tamworth to the Cessnock Showground for the Stake Country Fair last month. With over 600 people coming through the showground gates, the day proved to be not only a fun family day, but a great missionary opportunity, with

friends, neighbours, and relatives of members also attending.

All age groups were catered to with sack races, tractor hayrides, a jumping castle, and farmyard petting zoo—complete with lambs, a calf, a Shetland pony, and brightly coloured chickens—for the younger Primary children.

A string-donut-eating competition, big foot race, and tractor

(ride-on mower) pull were all popular with the older Primary children. The tractor pull was a non-stop event as competitors lined up to be harnessed to a ride-on mower, and then timed to see who covered the designated distance in the shortest time.

The youth and those still young at heart tried their luck on one of the most popular events of the day—the mechanical bull. With the strongest of determination and grip, each entrant held on with all the strength they could muster, as the watching crowd cheered them on. Although the bull eventually “won” every time, the line of optimistic riders never diminished throughout the day.

Another long line formed for the popular fairy floss machine. Blue-tinged tongues were the norm among the children as they ate the fairy floss, as well as the popcorn and drinks that flowed freely.

Even though it was a Church event for the members, the stake activities committee, led by chairman Grant Hamilton along with Conan and Amy Hill, wanted to involve local community groups as another way to introduce the Church and its members to the wider community.

As a result, the Newcastle District Chess Association was invited to what proved to be



IMAGE COURTESY OF CARIBE TARAWA AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

Newcastle stake children enjoy the donut-eating competition.



IMAGE COURTESY OF CARIBE TARAWA AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

The hayride was a popular activity at the Newcastle stake country fair.

another popular event—a non-stop chess exhibition. Champion players from the association pitted their skill against young and old—with one champion playing 12 chess enthusiasts at a time. Some games lasted much longer than others, but all amateurs were eventually masterfully outclassed by the champions.

Members of the Country Women’s Association (CWA) were invited to judge the apple

pie competition but were unable to attend on the day. There were many volunteers for stand-in judges as more than 30 home-made pies were lined up for tasting.

The quality of pies was exceptional—with Brother and Sister Catton of the Salt Ash Branch winning the open category and 17-year-old Natalie Paynter of the Cesnock Ward also winning a prize for her

magical pumpkin pie. Within a matter of minutes, following the hours of baking and judging, the pies disappeared as they became afternoon tea.

Brother Hamiton said the day was worth all the effort to see so many Saints enjoying

fun times with their family and nonmember friends and catching up with friends from other wards and branches. The event provided a great opportunity for members to perform missionary work. Many members invited nonmember friends and

Harrison T. riding the mechanical bull.



IMAGE COURTESY OF PAULINE PARKIN AND USED WITH PERMISSION.



IMAGE COURTESY OF PAULINE PARKIN AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

Simultaneous chess games kept participants occupied. Aiden Scott (front of photo) plans his next move.

those who were less active.

“I know of one less active family in particular whose enthusiasm for Church activity was renewed as a result of attending the event,” said Brother Hamilton. “The family was welcomed and greeted by many past friends from their previous ward. Friendships were rekindled and invitations extended to attend the upcoming stake conference. I know their desire to attend more Church activities has increased. This and other similar missionary experiences occurred as a result of the country fair activity, which is a fantastic result.”

He put the success of the day down to the positivity and enthusiasm of everyone who attended and to the contributions of the volunteers who gave of their time to assist with the various activities. He acknowledged the efforts particularly of John Schroeder, who not only donated many of the materials for the event, but also supplied and drove the tractor for the popular hayride all day without a break.

“If the success of an activity can be gauged by the feedback and requests to hold the activity again, I think we’ll need to start planning for next year,” concluded Brother Hamilton. ■



(From left) Roland Seville; Stephen Jones, MP (holding copy of Book of Mormon); David K. Smith; and Bradley S. Ashpole.

Mittagong Politician Receives Book of Mormon

When Stephen Jones, Federal Member for Throsby, wrote and invited David K. Smith and his wife, Sue, to meet him at his mobile office at Tulip Park, Mittagong NSW, in October 2012, it became a missionary opportunity.

Sister Smith was unable to attend the meeting, so Brother Smith invited his son-in-law, Bradley Ashpole, who was visiting from Queensland, and Roland Seville to help with the presentation of a Book of Mormon and other Church literature.

Mr. Jones was also presented with a brochure explaining the Mormon Helping Hands programme, as well as a list

of addresses of local Church leaders within his electorate of Throsby NSW.

Brother Smith read out and explained the inscription insert in the Book of Mormon, and quoted the poem titled, “If You Could See Your Ancestors,” by Nellie Winslow Simmons Randall.

Mr. Jones listened intently to the introduction to the Church, and advised his visitors he would read the Book of Mormon.

Brother Smith had a similar opportunity while working at the Prime Minister Lodge in Canberra ACT in 1975, when he presented the Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam with a copy of the Book of Mormon. ■

Pillowcase Project to Brighten Hospital Stay

By Caroline McIlwaine

It was a case of many hands making bright work when members of Adelaide’s Prospect Ward sewed 128 colourful pillowcases for the Pillowcases for Oncology Kids (POK) charity.

Media coverage of the POK initiative—designed to brighten hospital stays for children with cancer—caught the interest of Prospect Ward’s Relief Society president, Lisa Chalmers, and her counselors, Aesuk Kim and Tracey Hutchings.

Sister Chalmers said they knew the Relief Society sisters would love to get involved, but soon found that young children and teenagers, and even Bishop Herb Pressler, wanted to join in.

“We all recognised how overwhelming it must be for young children when they have to go into [the] hospital, and cancer can mean a long time away from home or frequent visits,” Sister Chalmers



(From left) Elizabeth Hatchard, Ketty Mibelli, Yesenia Garcia, Rebeka Bichiok, Lea Berridge, and Nyabuoy Bichiok.



IMAGE COURTESY OF GORDON THACKRAY AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

At left, Relief Society president Lisa Chalmers with counsellors Aesuk Kim (2nd left) and Tracey Hutchings (4th from left), present 128 colourful pillowcases to Pillowcases for Oncology Kids South Australia coordinator Teresa Lane (centre) and Denise Ellis, family service manager for the Childhood Cancer Association.

explained. “So many people were keen to help either by donating fabric or sewing—we all felt that getting a brand new, bright, cheery pillowcase to keep as your own would put smiles in children’s lives, and that it was a great project to support.”

The POK initiative is supported in South Australia by the Childhood Cancer Association, whose counsellors provide direct support to children with cancer and their families through a hospital visitation program.

According to the association’s family service manager, Denise Ellis, community support makes all the difference. “Without generous support from groups such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Prospect, we could not run this project for children with cancer and their siblings here in South Australia,” she said. “Their contribution of beautifully handmade pillowcases is our largest donation to date.”

The initiative began with 15-year-old Brittany Booth in N.S.W., after her own experience with cancer as a young child. Brittany wanted to ensure all children with cancer have a special pillowcase that they choose to help brighten up their room while staying in hospital.

Children with cancer must make frequent visits to the hospital, so it is very important that each child has something positive to associate with those visits. ■

Building Community Spirit in Papua New Guinea

American couple Larry and Colleen Clark met and married while they were studying at Brigham Young University—Hawaii in the 1960s.

Fast forward to today. They are enjoying a unique life in the remote area of Karu, in the New Ireland Province of Papua New Guinea. For more than 20 years they have called Papua New

Guinea home. They own a cocoa and copra plantation. Their son Shane runs a surf resort on the plantation.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, they associate often with the handful of other Mormons in the villages of the Karu area (seven to be exact) and with their other neighbours.

Recently, the Clarks hosted a community activity day in the village of Kanam, with a potluck meal and volleyball games. Sister Clark taught those interested in cooking how to prepare a banana cake in a tin over a fire.

More than 80 villagers participated, and many friendships were strengthened. The next



Villagers from Papua New Guinea's Karu area recently attended a baptismal service.

day, 17 non-Mormon villagers decided to attend Latter-day Saint worship services with the Clarks and other local Church members.

“Many of the village members were involved in the activity and found that working together in a simple activity can be fun and flavourful. Community

togetherness is alive and well in Karu, Papua New Guinea,” Brother Clark reported.

In 2008, during April general conference, President Thomas S. Monson encouraged members of the Church “wherever they may be to show kindness and respect for all people everywhere.” ■

Become as Little Children

By Catherine Vaughan

A few years ago I was out shopping on a Saturday morning with my four-year-old grandson, Farrell. He is well known in our local community as a happy, loving child, with a smile that lights up a room,

always laughing and singing and full of the joys of life, despite the challenges he has faced.

His mother, our oldest daughter, died suddenly of a severe asthma attack when

Farrell was just six months old, and though his loving father has raised him beautifully, he hasn't known the comfort of his mother's hugs, or the special moments that a mother can provide.

This particular morning as we browsed through a large department store, Farrell sat in the trolley singing Primary songs. Out of the blue, he suddenly stated, “My mummy died, didn't she?” His comment surprised me as we hadn't been talking about her or anything that might have reminded him of his mother. I confirmed that she died when he was a baby, but said I was sure she was watching over him and was delighted with how big he had grown now.

He sat quietly for a while, then asked another question: “Is my mummy with Jesus?”

Again, I responded that she was with Jesus, and they both loved him very much. I wondered if he was trying to sort things out in his four-year-old mind and understand what death was all about.

In the bustle of a busy morning, our talk turned to other things. With a long list of errands to do for the family, the brief conversation slipped from my mind, and we continued with our shopping.

Later that night, as I was working on my laptop, Farrell climbed onto the couch beside me. Unexpectedly, he asked again, “My mum died, didn’t she?” I was a little distracted with my writing, so I simply replied. “Yes, she did, sweetheart.”

He sat quietly for a while, then pointed to a picture we have on the wall depicting two young heavenly angels. They look almost exactly like his mother, Rebecca, and our youngest daughter, Brittany—who tragically drowned at the age of 21 months. “If my mum is with Aunty Brittany,” Farrell continued, “are they both with Jesus?” I mumbled that they were, and continued writing.

More pondering. Then, as the information in his young mind started to come together, he had another question: “Does that mean Jesus has died too?”

Now he had my attention. “Yes,” I replied.

Immediately the thought popped into my head, “How do I explain to a little child about the Saviour’s resurrection, without him thinking his mother is suddenly going to come alive again?” I began to mull this over in my mind, when the next question came from Farrell: “How did Jesus die?” Using a

IMAGE COURTESY OF CHURCH MEDIA LIBRARY



Christ and the Book of Mormon Children, by Del Parson

simple explanation he could understand, I quickly responded, “Some bad men killed him.”

I was unprepared for what happened next. With his head in his hands, and his sweet soft voice brimming with emotion, he let out a long deep sigh and said, “Oh, that is the saddest thing I have ever heard.” His little mouth trembled as a few tears slid down his cheeks and splashed onto his hands. He wasn’t crying as a child normally does, but wept silently.

As I gazed at the anguished face of our little grandson, I suddenly realised that he felt the suffering and atoning sacrifice of the Saviour in a very real

and personal way. Much more than I ever had. While I had been responding to his questions with information about the Saviour, His Crucifixion, and the spirit world with my knowledgeable “adult” understanding, I had failed to feel the Saviour’s sacrifice fully in my heart, as Farrell was experiencing it.

Startled, I suddenly realised my grandson had become the teacher, and I, the student. As the Spirit bore witness of this child’s testimony, I felt humbled to be in his presence.

Taking him in my arms to embrace and comfort him, I looked into his eyes and saw him for who he really was, not just a little boy trying to make sense of the world, but an eternal son of God, who knew the Saviour personally.

As he snuggled into my arms and drifted to sleep, I was reminded of the scripture found in Matthew 18:3–5:

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.” ■