

NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Catch the Vision

By Elder F. Michael Watson

Established by prophets of God, the vision and clarion 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
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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 instill 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 instill 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

Salvation Army “Sings for Their Supper” in Invercargill

By Mary Ann McNab

The Invercargill Branch in southern New Zealand only has about 60–70 members attending sacrament meeting each week. But a few months ago, the branch held a Musical Soiree that saw around 250 people pack the cultural hall for an evening of musical

entertainment and cultural song and dance. The purpose of the event was to raise the profile of the Church in the community, at the same time gathering much-needed supplies for the Salvation Army Food Bank. “It was a chance for our branch to be actively involved in service



Back (from left) Sister Kezerian, President Kezerian (Wellington New Zealand Mission), President Mitchell (Dunedin District president), President McNab (Invercargill Branch president). Front (from left) Bruce Heather (Salvation Army Court and prison officer), Russell Healey (Salvation Army Corps sergeant major), Brenda King (Salvation Army Food Bank manager,) Sister McNab, Sister Risenmay, President Risenmay (Gore Branch president), President Gaskill (First counsellor Dunedin District presidency)

attendance, the Soiree was also a great chance to promote the Church in the area and hopefully help to open a few more doors for our missionaries. It was an opportunity to work side by side with another denomination in a common cause for good.”

The local mayor supported the event and promoted it by appearing in newspaper photographs, although he was unable to attend on the night. Groups from local Cook Island and Maori communities performed traditional dances. They were joined by St Joseph’s School Kapa Haka group; Golden Guitar winners; ukulele duets; saxophone, flute, and clarinet performances; and singers of varying ages. A local band provided polyfusion music to entertain the crowd, while MC Jason Gaskill kept everyone entertained with stories and humour between acts. The Salvation Army Band performed several numbers, which was a very welcome contribution to the event.



The Invercargill Salvation Army Band was a welcome addition to the night.

Admission to the Soiree was the donation of non-perishable food or toiletries, and a sizeable number of supplies was gratefully accepted by Brenda King on behalf of the food bank. ■

in the community,” explained branch president John McNab. “The Salvation Army performs a wonderful job of

assisting the less fortunate and we were glad to be able to help them,” he said. “With so many people from the community in

Family Home Evening Helps to Heal Family

By Roseanne Jones

When John and Rangi Williams lost their first great-grandchild in a tragic accident, it was family home evenings that brought their family together, and which became an important part of the grieving and healing process for family members.

Kingston Mauheni Shelford was just 18 months old when he died in accidental circumstances on 22 August 2011, in Gisborne.

Sister Williams said that following Kingston's death, their family began to have family home evenings together more often, and still continue to do so. They involve the whole extended family and the meetings are held at different homes on a rotating basis.

Brother and Sister Williams live in Opotiki, and have four adult children who have their own families. Three of these families live in the area, while the fourth lives in Hastings. The family from Hastings also participates when possible.



John and Rangi Williams with their family home evening trophy.

The couple has 17 *mokopuna* (grandchildren) and 2 *mokopuna tuarua* (great-grandchildren) living.

Family members began to appreciate how precious life is and Kingston's parents, who are not Church members, acknowledged the support from the family and that the family home evenings had helped them cope with the loss of their son.

"Sports have always been 'our thing' in our family," Sister Williams said. "Our children are all very competitive."

One of their children is Exia Shelford, who played for the Black Ferns, New Zealand's women's rugby team for eight years. Sister Williams is a sister to 1980s All Blacks flanker, Frank Shelford, and aunty to All Blacks No. 8, Buck Shelford.

"For our FHE activities we decided to have sports activities," Sister Williams said. "We have a 10-week competition of different sports. We have had basketball, netball, volleyball, and indoor hockey. We have a rule that the teams have to include at least one Primary-age child. Including the little ones helps them to have good hand-eye coordination, and they develop good ball skills.

"The cost of prizes was getting a bit expensive and so my husband and I came up with the idea to have a trophy that would move around with each competition and become like a living trophy."

The trophy depicts the couple's combined ancestral heritage. "We named it after our *mokopuna*, the Kingston Memorial Trophy, and it will be a legacy that John and I will leave for our children and our descendants," Sister Williams said. "We hope that it will continue to bring unity to our family."

The integrated family home evenings are an important step in the healing process, as the gospel provides comfort and knowledge that families can be together forever. ■

Testimony of Prayer

By Ashaldine M.

(aged 10 years old)

I gazed out the window as cars streamed by, and the sun drifted slowly away. Sounds of birds chirping and the wind carrying away the leaves into a far distance filled my ears.

Our car was filled with excitement as we arrived at Totara Park for our activity. My whole family was smiling and enthusiastic. All except for me. I was frightened and knew my face was as white as the dress I had worn when I was baptised. I was silent the whole time, while my parents were chatting among themselves.

As I looked up the hill where we were about to go, I saw shadows lurking there. Creepy thoughts entered my mind, and the fear caused tears to stream down my face uncontrollably. Then, suddenly, I was prompted to say a prayer, so that my family and I would be secure as we walked into the night. I prayed and asked Heavenly Father to look after us.

Minutes later, we were halfway to the steepest hill, and the shadows began to form into bumpy shapes. As we passed them, they stayed still under the trees. I suddenly realised what they were. My fear turned into a grin. "Wait a minute. Those aren't monsters; they are cows," I mumbled, feeling relieved.

After we safely returned to the car, I prayed to our Heavenly Father again and thanked Him for watching over my family and me. I know that when we pray with a sincere heart our prayers can be answered, and we will be comforted by the Spirit. ■



IMAGE COURTESY OF ROSALYN CLARKE AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

(From left): Torbay Ward sisters Mable Cuff, Lindsay Chapman, and Laura Shields cut out heart pillows from donated fabric.

Church Donates 700 Heart Pillows

By Lynne Hutchison

More than 700 colourful heart-shaped pillows for mastectomy patients have been made and presented with love to Whangaparaoa's Gerti Weber, who started New Zealand's Heart Pillow Project earlier this

year. Gerti received the pillows on Sunday at a special function for Relief Society.

The small heart-shaped pillows are designed to be used under the arm of patients recovering from surgery such

as a mastectomy. They help to reduce swelling, pain, and shoulder tension, and provide support and comfort during what can be a difficult time for many. Gerti gives the pillows to hospitals and hospices where

many, not just mastectomy patients, have appreciated the support afforded by the cushions.

The involvement of local LDS women in the project started when Evelyn Martin,

a member of the Harbour stake Relief Society presidency, was searching for a service project that women from the Church could do for the community. Evelyn saw an article about the pillow project in the

Some of the Harbour Stake sisters who made the pillows with Gerti Weber (in centre of photo with short hair and glasses) of Whangaparaoa, who started New Zealand's Heart Pillow Project last year.



local newspaper, and found out that Gerti hoped to have 1,000 cushions made by the end of the year. So, Evelyn and her fellow presidency members, Andrea Bennalack and Charlene Sheward, contacted Gerti to see how local members could help.

As a result, women from the Church's 10 North Shore and Rodney wards and branches held activities to cut out and sew the heart pillows to the specified design. Members of the church donated the fabrics.

Gerti prefers to fill the pillows and to hand sew the openings herself, as she now knows just how much filling is

needed for comfort. "My main thing is that I want people to be happy with their pillows," she said. "They have to be comfortable."

Gerti writes a little note to go with every cushion.

She said, "I want to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped with these cushions."

Although she has received pillows from all over New Zealand, Gerti is grateful to the Harbour stake's Relief Society sisters for their work. "They are incredible," she said. And now, instead of the hoped-for 1,000 pillows, it looks like Gerti will have 2,000 by Christmas. ■

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

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.



Christ and the Book of Mormon Children, by Del Parson

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 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.” ■