

# NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Teaching the Gospel in the Savior's Way

By Elder James J. Hamula, Area President

When Jesus was on the earth, he “went about all the cities and villages, *teaching* in their synagogues, and *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35; emphasis added). We would do well to see the connection between the Lord’s teaching, preaching and healing of the people (see Jacob 2:8; James 1:21).

As Jesus looked upon the multitudes, “he was moved with compassion on them, because they *fainted*, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36; emphasis added). Jesus then said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37–38).

As in the Lord’s time, there are many in our time who are “fainting” and need the nurture of the Lord and His servants. Many “faint” because they are “wander[ing] in the wilderness”,

being “hungry and thirsty” and having “no city to dwell in” (Psalm 107:4–5). Speaking of our day, Amos saw “a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.” Said Amos, “They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11–12).

Sadly, the greatest victims of this famine appear to be among the rising generation. “In that day,” concluded Amos, “shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst” (Amos 8:13). Because of their inherent dependence on the old, the young’s hunger and thirst can only be ascribed to the failure of the old—their parents, leaders and teachers—to impart the bread and water of life to the young.

In the Church today, we rightly claim that the word of the Lord has been imparted to us. But can we—the parents, leaders and teachers in the Church—rightly claim that we are imparting the word of the



Elder James J.  
Hamula

Lord to our youth in a manner that moves them to understand, embrace and live by the word of the Lord? Failure to impart the word of the Lord to our youth in a manner that allows them to understand, embrace and live by the word of the Lord results in their fainting for hunger and thirst (see Judges 2:10–13; 1 Nephi 2:12; Mosiah 26:1–4) and wandering away into strange roads and forbidden paths (see 1 Nephi 8:28, 32).

It is contrary to the Lord’s desire that his people go away with “nothing to eat” (Matthew 15:32; see also Mark 8:3). In His absence, it is incumbent on

us—we who are the parents, leaders and teachers in the Lord’s Church today—to teach and preach the word of the Lord, as it has been given to us, in a manner that the young among us may be nourished and healed unto everlasting salvation by that same word.

The Church’s new youth curriculum, announced by the First Presidency of the Church at October general conference and available to all parents, teachers, advisers and leaders of youth in the Church, calls on all of us to impart the word of the Lord to the youth of the Church in a different way than we have in the past. It calls on us to abandon the “stand-and-deliver” model of teaching, by which the teacher talks at the student and the student simply notes what the teacher says. Instead, the new youth curriculum calls on us to “mentor” students through a self-learning process that invites them to act for themselves on the truth that is imparted.

For a model on how to mentor in this way, we may look to the Savior for His way of teaching the gospel. As we consider how the Lord taught the gospel, you will envision the following hallmarks

of His manner of teaching and desire to do the same:

- He loved those he taught;
- He knew who they were and what they could become;
- He prepared Himself through fasting and praying;
- He used the scriptures to teach and testify;
- He shared simple stories, parables and real-life examples that related gospel principles to those he taught;
- He asked questions that caused them to think and feel;
- He inspired their confidence to share their thoughts and feelings, and was sincerely interested in their answers;
- He invited them to testify;
- He trusted them;
- He invited them to act in faith;
- He was their example and mentor.

The Lord’s call for more labourers in the harvest is a call to join Him in teaching the gospel His way. It is my prayer that we may let go of our way of teaching the gospel and learn to teach the gospel the Savior’s way, and thereby heal and nourish our students such that they will “never . . . fall away” (Alma 23:6). ■

## Called to Serve

By Catherine Vaughan

The collective intake of breath in the conference centre, and at many venues around the world, was an indication of the momentous announcement when President Thomas S. Monson began his opening remarks in the October 2012 general conference. The age for missionaries serving was lowered to 18 years for young men, and 19 years for young women. It was one of those moments when many members of the Church will remember where they were when they heard the news, as they recount the effect it had on them and their families.

In the surprising announcement, the prophet said, “I am pleased to announce that effective immediately all worthy and able young men . . . will have the option of being recommended for missionary service beginning at the age of 18, instead of age 19. . . . As we have prayerfully pondered the age at which young men may begin their missionary service, we have also given consideration to the age at which a young woman might serve. Today I am pleased to announce that able, worthy young women who have the desire to serve may be recommended for missionary service beginning at age 19, instead of age 21” (“Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 4–5).

Already the policy change has resulted in a vast increase in missionary applications from throughout the Pacific Area being submitted, and many young men and women are enthusiastically taking advantage of the option to serve a mission now, rather than later.

Auckland New Zealand Henderson Stake president Glenn Burgess commented, “On the morning of the announcement our stake high council was meeting. We were able to watch the press conference release live, which brought a ‘WOW’ response to those watching. It was exciting news to hear such change, especially for the young women. There has been much talk amongst the youth, YSA, parents and leaders, as to what it will actually mean and how preparations will need to be made that much earlier. Previously, when young women left the youth programme, their planning did not necessarily include missionary service, as it was still three years away. Now that it is only a year, it certainly brings it into consideration. In the first four weeks after the announcement our stake had three young men and three young women register their online applications. Of those registered, one young man was 18 and all three young women were 19.”

One of the young women is Cheyenne Joseph, a law student at Auckland University. She said, “I have always wanted to serve a mission. When the mission age was lowered I immediately went to see my bishop. I had my papers in within three weeks. The whole experience has strengthened my testimony tenfold, especially in regards to faith. In 3 Nephi 24:10 it speaks about the Lord opening the windows of heaven and pouring out a blessing that there will be no room to receive. I have never fully understood that scripture until now. The Lord has blessed me so much, and the blessings continue to come. I searched for a job all last year. I applied everywhere and couldn’t get work. The day after

I submitted my mission papers, I was offered a full-time job. The Lord will always provide a way that we may accomplish what He has asked of us. As I reflect back I realise that the Lord was preparing me for this time. I am so thankful to be a part of this gospel.”

President Anthony Poutu from the Whangarei Stake is enthusiastic about the announcement. He said, “The change in missionary age came as a great source of joy and excitement in our stake, and many of our older youth and younger YSA are very excited about the inspired change. I also felt it was in part an answer to many prayers around the world in regards to concerns we have had for our YSA. In the first few weeks after the announcement we had nine potential missionaries begin preparations to serve in the near future, most of whom are sisters. This is an increase of over 100% of missionaries serving from our stake.”

President Poutu shared the example of YSA student Brooklyn Holtz, who was recently made dux of her school and received a scholarship for her education next year. She now desires to serve a mission and is hoping to defer the scholarship until after her mission. If it can’t be deferred, she still wants to serve anyway, and is willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to serve.

Te Waipounamu Stone went to see President Poutu the day after the announcement, and has now started on his mission papers. He has been attending the Mission Preparation class since then, and is preparing well.

Closer to home, President Poutu’s own daughter Tempest had always planned to serve a mission when she turned 21, which is still 18 months

away. When the announcement came the family was excited because she could now submit her papers. However, initially Tempest was not as excited, as she was relying on the extra time to prepare. She prayed for direction and received a powerful witness to submit her papers in January. She is now preparing for her mission with full purpose of heart.

Bishop Grant Stone, from Aeroview Ward in Auckland commented, “The announcement was one of surprise and excitement, also one of prophetic vision from President Monson. I immediately thought that this would possibly double the existing missionary force, and that there must be something big looming on the horizon! It also confirmed that the Second Coming grows closer, and that we need to be doing all we can to hasten the work along.”

Bishop Stone continued, “There was a buzz and energy in the air on hearing the announcement which was discussed at length by members, and in particular our young men and women. It seemed that it opened up an amazing opportunity and bridged the gap between leaving school and serving a mission. Youth could see the possibilities of service open up to them immediately. For some, it was, ‘Wow, I can go now and don’t have to wait.’”

Sunset Ward’s bishop, Matt Murray, is also seeing the effect firsthand. Shortly after the announcement he was driving home after a meeting. “A family popped into my mind, so I turned the car around and went and knocked on their door,” he said. “The mother said, ‘Bishop, I had you on my list to call tonight because I really needed to talk to you about my son.’ I told her



IMAGE COURTESY OF ROSE JOSEPH AND USED WITH PERMISSION

*Cheyenne Joseph*

that I had an impression to come by and visit. Her son expressed a desire to serve as a missionary as soon as possible. So I met with him and while I was there we were able to activate his online missionary application.”

Bishop Murray said that immediately following conference he had five young members of his ward apply to serve as missionaries. “This has created a lot of excitement among our young people,” he said.

Across all wards and stakes, it is the young women who are celebrating the age change the

most. Bishop David Clarke from Albany Ward said, “Immediately after the change we had three young women aged 19–20 years come to see me about specific impressions they had felt during the announcement by President Monson. All three registered online and began preparing for their missions. It seems that their excitement is having an impact on others who are on the verge of thinking about serving a full-time mission.

***Tristen Teixeira,  
Brandon  
Ormsby, Bishop  
Matt Murray,  
and Kendal  
Niuelua are  
excited that  
the missionary  
age has been  
lowered.***

Waikato University academic Dr. Michael Walmsley, a member of the Church, said, “Certainly the age change has created a buzz among the young women, and I think many more will consider going on a mission as part of their overall education plan. Long term this

will strengthen Latter-day Saint youth, couples and families, as more young people have the unique experiences of missionary service earlier in their lives.” Dr. Walmsley’s daughter Jenna and son Ryan are both preparing to serve missions.

Libby Rapata from Torbay Ward also activated her mission papers as soon as the age change was announced. “I’m very excited for the age change as I know it prompted a large number of young women to serve, who might not have chosen to go on a mission at the later age,” she said. “I’m also eager to see what the large influx of missionaries will do for the Church. I felt a sense of urgency to share the gospel and serve a mission when I learned of the age change.”



IMAGE COURTESY OF JEREMY HIGGINS AND USED WITH PERMISSION.



IMAGE COURTESY OF LAURA PALMER - BACKYARD STUDIO AND USED WITH PERMISSION

**Chris Vaughan  
and Rachael  
Bennallack**

Michael Higgins, Harbour Stake president, said the announcement from President Monson has generated more activity and interest than he had anticipated. “When a prophet speaks and issues an invitation, miracles large and small occur,” he said. “The rising generation are in tune, and the response is wonderful. At the time of the announcement we had 22 missionaries from our stake serving, with a further six who had received calls and were waiting to enter the field. In the two weeks following the announcement we had a further 14 individuals start their application process online, and more coming

in every week. There is a newfound excitement across the stake. I can see that the number of missionaries serving from the stake will soon double. It is marvellous.”

President Higgins continued, “There are over 58,000 missionaries currently serving throughout the world. Many young men and women come home from their missions saying that their lives have been enriched by their experiences serving in far-flung places, teaching people about Jesus Christ and meeting people from many other countries. And they themselves have often changed and grown in absolutely miraculous

ways. They are more humble, more focused on helping others, more confident, more optimistic and ready to keep on making positive contributions in their city, town or village—and with their family and friends. Their missions,” he said, “become a solid foundation for the rest of their lives.”

New Zealand Auckland Mission president Paul Lekias said he is excited about the prospect of thousands of additional young men and women joining an already exceptional “army” of valiant servants, who leave behind education, family and friends to truly become disciples of Christ by inviting all to come unto Him. “This will not only influence the youth preparing to serve missions; the announcement will influence the entire membership of the Church,” he said.

A few months ago Chris Vaughan and Rachael Bennalack were planning their temple marriage. Then came the prophet’s announcement of the age change.

Nineteen-year-old Rachael said, “As long as I can remember I have always had a strong desire to serve a full-time mission. Following President Monson’s announcement, I was prompted to visit my past desire to serve a mission. This came as a shock to me, as although it was now a possibility for me agewise, I was engaged to be married very soon, to a wonderful returned missionary. After much prayer, fasting, studying and pondering, I received the answer and confirmation that I should serve a mission before getting married. This decision has brought to pass wonderful feelings of peace and comfort, as I know this is part of the Lord’s plan for me. From past experience, I have a strong testimony

of the importance of following the promptings of the Spirit, even when I can’t understand or comprehend its full purposes at this present time. My desire to serve has been strengthened by the way Chris fondly speaks of his mission, and the great love he has for the people he served. Dedicating 18 months of my life to sharing the wonderful blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ is an important way I feel that I can express my love and gratitude for all the Saviour has done for me.”

Chris knows the benefits and blessings of serving a mission. He returned home from the England Leeds Mission in early 2011. He added, “My mission developed me spiritually more than anything else I could possibly do, so I wanted Rachael to feel the things that I felt, and experience what I experienced during my 24 months. It was only after Rachael made this decision that I told her I always dreamed about marrying a returned sister missionary. As for marriage, if something is worth doing for eternity, then it is worth waiting for.”

At a press conference in October last year following the announcement, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, chairman of the Church’s Missionary Executive Council, said the matter had been prayerfully studied for many months. “This is an option that will allow more young men and women to enjoy the blessings of missionary service,” he said.

“It will also be a great blessing to their families now and in the future. We hope that many will seize this opportunity. We hope that it will also allow our youth greater flexibility in planning for

their schooling, careers, marriage and military obligations, when and if needed.”

Since the earliest days of the Church, more than one million missionaries have served worldwide, and with this change, many more missionaries will heed the call to serve the Lord. ■

## The Power and Significance of Seminary

By Emo Coe

Recently Quiana S. (aged 17) of Takapuna Ward in Harbour Stake, in Auckland, was selected to be one of the prefects at Takapuna Grammar School where she attends. “My school friends wanted me to go for it, but I told them I was already so busy, and the thought of the level of responsibility that comes with being a prefect seemed too much to me,” she said. However when she was selected, Quiana knew that the Lord knows each and every one of us, what we are doing, and our situations. “He knows what I’m capable of, so I knew with His help I would manage, and I said I’ll do it” she said.

Quiana acknowledges that the discipline of attending early-morning seminary every day has

given her direction in her life and guidance throughout her day. She said, “I attend seminary to learn how to become Christlike, through His example. I work on it every day. Christ teaches me how to be the best person I can be.”

“Most of my school friends are not members of the Church, but they respect my Young Women Church standards and values. They can see the effect that seminary has on me,” she added.

Quiana says she loves challenges, and the growth and learning she receives from taking on extra responsibility will help her as she finishes her education, and especially in her preparation towards serving a mission. The knowledge

she gains through seminary classes and scripture study will help her to relate to others and guide them by her example, both as a school prefect and as a missionary.

Quiana knows if she continues to make the right choices and follows the teachings of the Saviour, she can be an instrument in His hands, as taught in Alma 37:6: “But behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass.” ■

*Quiana S.*



IMAGE COURTESY OF QUIANA S. AND USED WITH PERMISSION.