



AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

A Review of 2012 Area Goals

By Elder Brent H. Nielson
First Counselor in the Area Presidency

Last year we introduced the Area Goals for 2012. It was an important moment for all of us as leaders in the Church because it allowed us to identify a vision and become united as we establish the Church together in the Philippines. We have been very impressed with what you have accomplished in your individual wards and branches. It has been a miracle to see the results of your good efforts. But we have only begun. There are still mountains to climb and rivers to cross as we move the work forward with faith here in the Philippines.

We would like to share with you what we have accomplished together and to look forward to 2013 and share with you our new goals. They will look very familiar to you and you will see that our emphasis has not changed, but we have added a few items that will sharpen our focus.

This past year, the center of our goals has been to feast upon the words of Christ. We understand that doctrine properly understood changes behavior. It is the study of the doctrine that leads to conversion, and it is the study of doctrine that helps us become better husbands and wives, parents and children.

This year thousands of members have diligently feasted upon the words of Christ and have felt the power of the Spirit come into their

lives. It has strengthened them and their families.

As we move forward into 2013 we know that we have much to do to help our members understand the doctrine, and so we are retaining feast upon the words of Christ at the center of our goals.

It is our hope and prayer that thousands more of our members will experience the revelatory blessing of the scriptures and understand that it is the key to hearing the voice of the Lord and receiving revelation for themselves and their families.

This past year we have encouraged our members to strengthen their families by holding family home evening, participating in daily family prayer and scripture study and with each member having their own scriptures. We also asked each of the wards and branches to increase the number of temple recommend holders.

We are pleased to report that this year, over 40,000 members purchased their own scriptures. During 2012 we were also able to increase the number of temple recommend holders in the Philippines from 30,519 to 32,722. This is 2,200 additional members who have received their

recommend this year.

In 2013 we will continue to diligently follow this important prescription to strengthen our families. We have added that we will strengthen our families as each family fasts, pays fast offerings and each member is a full tithe payer. Our families will become stronger as we receive the promised blessings from paying our tithing and fast offerings.

In order to establish the Church in the Philippines, we must have real growth. This is accomplished as we increase the number of active Melchizedek Priesthood holders and increase our sacrament meeting attendance.

This year we have experienced miracles as we have reached out to the less active and brought them back. We have increased the number of active Melchizedek Priesthood holders in the Philippines from 22,173 to 24,158. This is an increase of almost 2,000 active Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

Our sacrament meeting attendance has also increased dramatically. Last year at this time we had 115,652 members attending sacrament meeting. Now it has increased to 121,446. This is almost 6,000 additional members





attending sacrament meeting.

In 2013, you will notice that this goal has changed slightly. We will continue to increase the number of Melchizedek Priesthood holders and increase our sacrament meeting attendance, but this year we have moved increasing the number of temple recommend holders under establishing the Church. We have done this because in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all roads lead to the temple. We want to increase the number of members at sacrament meeting, but our ultimate goal is to receive all of the ordinances available to us in the temple.

The future of the Church in the Philippines will depend upon how you and I teach and train the rising generation. We have incredible young men and young women here in the Philippines. I have traveled all over this country since I arrived and have met many of them. They are wonderful. We need to be sure that we are pointing them in the right direction as parents and leaders. We do that as we help them serve full-time missions.

Already in 2012 we have more young men who have applied to serve full-time missions than we ever have had in the history of the Church in the Philippines. By the end of this year, 1,054 young men and young women will have received their calls to serve missions. That is more than we have ever had. With the announced change in the age for missionary service, we see a bright future in the Philippines.

Young men serving missions is an area that still needs great improvement here in the Philippines. Actually we need to double or triple the number serving full-time missions. We

have not yet come close to the 32,000 young men who are eligible to serve in the Philippines.

We are pleased to report that we have also seen an increase in the attendance of our young single adults (YSA). Last year, we had 18,735 YSA attending church. This year that number has increased to 19,449.

Moving forward to 2013, we must maintain our focus on getting young men on missions. We will continue to focus on activating and retaining our YSA. You will see that we have added a critical new goal as we strive to save our rising generation. We must help them be sealed in the temple. Too many of our returned missionaries and YSA are delaying marriage and as a result are missing out on the wonderful blessings of having an eternal companion. This will require a change in the culture in the Philippines and a new focus on the teachings of the prophets and apostles.

As we demonstrated during our broadcast last year we have many less-active members in the Philippines. As President Monson has so clearly taught, we must go to the rescue. In 2012 we have worked together as members, councils and missionaries to bring back the less-active. We have been very pleased with the diligence of all those who have made an effort. However, note that the goal was that every member rescues someone this year. Because we have over 121,000 active members in the Philippines, if we had all rescued someone this year, we would now have 240,000 active members, exactly twice what we

have today. All of us must become converted to this work.

We are grateful for the ward and branch councils who have worked with and maintained 15 names and have diligently brought back many to the blessings of the gospel.

We are retaining this goal for 2013, but you will notice some slight differences. We are asking that each member rescues at least one member this year and once they are back, prepares them to receive the ordinances in the temple. We will ask our ward and branch councils to continue to work diligently with the 15 names and be sure you involve the full-time missionaries as we teach these less-active members the doctrine of the gospel.

These are our new Area Goals for 2013. Thank you to each one of you for your valuable contribution to the work of the Lord this past year. Miracles have happened in many units in the Philippines. We are grateful for your good efforts. But can I say that we have not yet tapped the power and capacity of our members in assisting in this work. What we have accomplished has been done by a few good leaders. This year we must engage all of our members. We have begun to see what the Lord has in mind for the Philippines, now we invite all of our active members to put their shoulder to the wheel.

We ask each ward and branch council to work together this year again to set your own goals and to begin to act together to achieve those goals. This year, ask for revelation as to how we can engage all of our active members in accomplishing the Lord's work.

Brothers and sisters, we are moving forward with a vision of the work, united. Shall we not go on in so great a cause? In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Area Goals – Additional Focus in 2013

By Elder Michael John U. Teh
Philippines Area President

As an Area Presidency, we are very pleased with what has been accomplished last year as we focused on the area goals. We were amazed at how much has been achieved over a short period of time and with relatively little effort. Just imagine how much good we can do together if we continue our course and put forth a little more effort. Remember, this is just the beginning and the BEST is yet to come.

Our goals this year are the same as last year's but with two additional priorities. We feel that it is important for us to continue to emphasize these same things. The two additional priorities that will help us further strengthen families and save the rising generation are:

1. Each family fasts and pays fast offerings, and each member is a full tithe payer.
2. Increase the number of young single adults marrying in the temple (without delay).

I would like to share my thoughts on Fasting, Fast Offerings, and the payment of Tithing in this article. I also invite everyone to review my article in the October 2012 *Liahona* where I discussed extensively my



invitation for Young Single Adults to marry in the temple without delay.

PAYING A FULL TITHING

Most of us struggle financially. Family incomes are often not enough to take care of our needs. Because of these circumstances, most consider the law of tithing a very difficult commandment to obey. It would be well for us to consider that the early Saints were in a similar condition when God gave the revelation on tithing as recorded in section 119 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Allow me to enumerate some key phrases in that revelation:

1. And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people.
2. Those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually;
3. And this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood,
4. All those who gather unto the land of Zion shall . . . observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide among you.
5. If my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, . . . it shall not be a land of Zion unto you.

In an earlier revelation, the Lord has also forewarned His people of further testing they will go through:

"Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming." (D&C 64:23) We

often hear our leaders teach that tithing is paid with faith and not with money. It is because the law of tithing is counterintuitive. It is not logical and it does not make any sense. It will never be understood by men's intellect alone. The world's reasoning will go something like this: "If your income is not enough for your needs now, how will it be enough if you take out another 10 percent to pay tithing?"

That is where faith comes in. We need to choose whether we want 100 percent of our income without the Lord's help or we are willing to settle for 90 percent plus the Lord's help. Consider the following promises from the Lord:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3:10)

This is one of the few commandments that the Lord actually asks us to put to the test. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts." Do we doubt His intentions? What does it mean to have no room for all the blessings poured out from heaven?

He has also said: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." (D&C 82:10) So, when we do not pay our tithing, God is not bound and we are on our own. We are saying to Him, "I do not need your help and I will be alright."

Do you suppose that God cannot get along without our money? You and I know very well that He will do just fine without



it. Why then is He asking us to pay tithing? The simple answer is—God wants to know if we are willing to put Him first in our lives. He wants to know whether we love Him more than anything else. I also believe that He is always trying to find an excuse to bless us because He loves us. However, for the Lord to truly bless us, our motives for paying tithing must needs go beyond that of merely expecting blessings from Him. We must do so because we love Him and desire to do His will. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we must be willing to obey even if our very lives are threatened.

Here are some important things to remember as we obey the law of tithing:

1. There are no promises to those who pay partial tithing. You are either fully committed or you're not.
2. Look forward to the promises for they are sure.
3. Recognize the Lord's timing.
4. The Lord knows what you really need.
5. The real test is when we pay tithing because we love the Lord and not only because we want the blessings.

In Matthew 22:35-40 we read the following account:

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.



On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Obeying the law of tithing helps us to keep the first and great commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind.

Clearly, obedience to the law of tithing is an expression of our love for Heavenly Father. It shows that we are willing to put Him first in our lives. I testify of the blessings the Lord has promised to those who pay a full and honest tithing.

TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

Love God

Tithing

Love Neighbor

Fasting and
Fast Offering

Fasting and Fast Offerings

What about loving our neighbor as ourselves?

One of the best ways we can consistently show our love for our neighbor is by fasting each month and giving a generous fast offering. Think about it for a moment. **How would you feel if a brother and his family would willingly go without food and drink for two meals to be able to help you in your difficulty? My**

heart will melt with gratitude for such an act of compassion and love.

The prophet Isaiah also provided wonderful insights into this noble act which blesses not only the receiver but the giver as well:

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am." (Isaiah 58:6-9)

We need to be engaged not only in a spiritual but also a temporal rescue of our brothers and sisters. After all, we did promise that we . . .

". . . are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death." (Mosiah 18:8-9)

King Benjamin even indicated that doing so will allow us to retain a remission of our sins:

". . . for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye

What More Can We Do?

By Elder Ian S. Ardern
Second Counselor in the Area Presidency

should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.” (Mosiah 4:26)

Fasting can also give us much-needed spiritual strength and sensitivity. Here is part of Alma’s description of the four sons of Mosiah:

“But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.” (Alma 17:3; see also verse 2)

I would like to reemphasize the following points regarding fasting and the payment of fast offerings:

1. Fasting is not complete without the giving of a generous fast offering.
2. Fasting and prayer brings with it an increase in spiritual power.
3. We have a responsibility to care for the poor and the needy.
4. God’s established way of taking care of the poor and the needy is through fasting and fast offerings.
5. Because the amount is determined by the cost of the two meals we don’t eat, everyone can and should give fast offerings.
6. God withholds blessings from those who do not fast and give fast offerings.

I testify of the power that comes to us and our families as we fast every month and give generously to the poor and needy through the payment of fast offerings. ■

It has been a wonderful year as we have watched the work move forward in the Philippines. I do note however that the Lord is easy to please and hard to satisfy and so we must do more, and we are equal to that task. We have moved forward a few centimeters but this year we must move forward by meters and that will take the involvement of all of us.



This moving forward, scripturally known as building the Church, is a commandment of God for we are told that “Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened...” (D&C 82:14). Nephi teaches us that the “... commandments of God must be fulfilled . . . and he doth . . . provide the means whereby [the children of men] can accomplish the things which he has commanded them” (1 Nephi 17:3). The Lord will not ask us to do anything without providing the way for it to be accomplished, and that is true of our area goals.

To accomplish our area goals we must first have a real desire to see them achieved. Scripture reads, “Therefore, if you have desires to serve God you are called to the work” (D&C 4:3). The prophet Alma testified: “I know that [God] granteth unto men according to their desire” (Alma 29:4). The doctrine is clear. If we desire something that is consistent with the will of God He will help us to achieve it.

Second, we must prepare ourselves spiritually, for in so doing we will be equal to the task given to us by the Lord. Our personal spiritual preparation would include sincere prayer, fervent fasting, feasting upon the words of Christ, service to others,

repentance and obedience to the commandments of God.

The third necessity to achieve our area goals is our combined faith in Jesus Christ. It will not be good enough for us to say to the Lord, “We want to have the members paying their tithes and offerings but by the way, there are a few of us in our ward council who are not.” Surely leaders must at least be doing what is being asked, so the Lord can see our faith

through our actions and then bless the lives of all the members to go and do likewise. One of Mormon’s greatest sermons is just 19 words long: “If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33). To go forward by meters is going to take the faith of all of us; there can be no exceptions. There can be no doubt in any of us that we can achieve these goals, for where there is doubt there is no faith.

Of course, faith without works is dead and so the fourth requirement will be our good works. We must have a pure desire to succeed, prepare ourselves spiritually, and go forth with faith in Christ and work to achieve our goals.

I have already noted how grateful the Area Presidency is for what has been achieved to date and we know it has been achieved through the good works of many of you. Yet it is still not enough; there is more that needs to be done and so tonight we are calling for more; more faith and more effort from each one of us.

I think of the parable in Matthew chapter 21 where we read, “A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but

afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not (Matthew 21: 28-30). The Lord has called His sons and daughters to go and labor in the vineyard from Aparri to Zamboanga and everything in between, and some have said “I go” but they go not, and yet others have said they will go and have gone but have become weary in the task and not remained focused on it. They were like the cogon grass that President Teh spoke of last year. This year we must all go and we must all stay the course.

To help us stay the course I will share with you some practical ideas on how to achieve the goals which I have gathered as I have travelled around the Philippines. I offer special thanks tonight to the mission, stake and district Presidencies in Iloilo who shared their insights with me. The suggestions are not exhaustive but should be helpful for leaders and parents looking for a place to start.

I will address just one of the goals under each of the headings and give practical examples for each.

STRENGTHEN FAMILIES

Ideas to help each family member to have their own scriptures and to read them daily:

1. **Set a personal example by reading and pondering your scriptures each day.** Regardless of our circumstances, there is always time for time in the scriptures. Read to understand the doctrine so that you can share what you learn. I was always pleased to have my children see me reading the scriptures and I testify that it made a positive difference in their attitude about the scriptures.
2. **Use the scriptures when you teach.** Example is the silent teacher, and when family, ward and stake members see leaders teaching from the scriptures it will magnify the importance of

the scriptures. We encourage you to never teach a sermon without reference to the scriptures and the words of the prophets. Our promise is that of the Lord that as you study His word, “It shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:6).

3. **Set a family goal to read daily from the scriptures.** When our children were young (you can see by the calendar on the screen that this was in 1989) we marked a calendar for each day we read as a family from the Book of Mormon. The children were young and their attention span short so we settled on reading a page a day, and then each child took a turn reading and at putting a sticker on the calendar. They did not want to miss their chance to place a sticker and soon a habit of daily reading from the scriptures was formed.

Our second area goal has establishing the Church as its focus, and so let us look at two ideas that could help with this area of focus.

ESTABLISH THE CHURCH

Ideas to help increase sacrament meeting attendance:

1. **Set a goal.** Little progress will be made where there is no goal. Those bishops who increased their sacrament meeting attendance last year started by having a goal. They saw where they were, discussed the issue in ward council and determined where they wanted to be, made plans to get there and measured their progress along the way. Their motivation was not simply an increase in numbers but an increase in members who were able to attend sacrament meeting and renew their baptismal covenants and be edified by their fellow Saints. For these bishops, every number was accompanied by a name and his desire for them to attend was motivated by a love

for them. There is wisdom in following a prophet’s counsel.

2. **Plan sacrament services that will uplift those who attend.** Of course, those who attend sacrament services must prepare themselves spiritually for the meeting. In addition, careful planning by the bishopric makes a difference for good. Prelude music, starting the meeting on time, having the sacrament ready well before the meeting begins and well prepared speakers and musical numbers all make for an uplifting sacrament experience and will naturally result in an increase in attendance.

Our third area of focus is the rising generation. We have had more of them attending church and serving as missionaries than ever before but there is still ample room in our chapels and missions for young men and women.

SAVE THE RISING GENERATION **Ideas to help increase the number of young men serving missions:**

We are so passionate about this as an Area Presidency I will present three workable ideas.

1. **Find a replacement on release.** Each Stake and Mission President will release some full-time missionaries this year. A release of a missionary is just half of the journey. As you release a missionary we ask that you immediately call them to find their replacement and we do not refer to someone who is already preparing. The low-hanging mangoes are easy to reach. These are seasoned returned missionaries, so ask them to reach a little higher up the tree. Ask them to work with their bishop to identify someone who should be preparing but is not and to be their personal mentor to help them prepare for full-time missionary service. We release about one thousand Filipino missionaries each year and as every released

missionary fulfills his or her first priesthood-given assignment we will have an additional one thousand go into the field.

2. **Preparation classes and institute.** If I were a bishop or stake president I would ensure that all my prospective missionaries were enrolled in Missionary Preparation classes. If there was no established class in my stake or district (and there are just 136 classes in all of the Philippines being held at the moment) I would call a returned missionary who is well versed in *Preach My Gospel* as the teacher and have the seminary and institute coordinator train him or her, supply the class manuals and then put the teacher to work. Part of the class could be a call to serve as a stake missionary and to then share the experiences of the work in class. A Missionary Preparation class can be held on a Sunday if it is not counted as an institute class.

3. **No person stands alone.** Priesthood and family stand shoulder to shoulder in their determination to have all young men and those young women who choose to serve missions. The home is the first Missionary Training Center and the first teachers are mothers and fathers. Of the missionaries called last year 69 percent of them came from families where both parents are members and an additional 15 percent came from families where one of the parents is a member. These numbers tell us we have a mighty army of member parents that can help prepare the young single adults to serve honorable missions. An idea that helped in our home was to have an expectation that our sons would serve. To help show that expectation to our youngest son, Sister Arden had him make and put the following picture up in the room he frequented

the most when he was not asleep...the television room. Six years later this was replaced with a mission call.

And then we made a display of mission calls from our family members. This is just one idea from a mother that made a difference and there are many others. We encourage you to act on what you believe will help your sons in particular serve the missions their priesthood obligates them to fulfill.

RESCUE THE ONE The fourth area of focus for our area goals is the rescue:

We have had a three-pronged approach to the rescue. The strongest approach has been that of the missionaries, but the strongest approach should have been the active members. If we took just the active youth and adults alone and each one brought just one person back we would have had an increase of over 80,000 in our sacrament attendance but alas, we did not.

Three simple ideas are as follows:

1. **None of us can afford to leave the rescue to someone else:** When a life guard sees someone drowning he or she does not say the water is too cold, I don't want to get wet, I am enjoying the sun at the moment, there could be a shark out there or I don't really know if he wants to be rescued. Inconvenient or frightening as the rescue may be, the life guard goes to the rescue. Each of us must go to the rescue of the members who have drifted into deep and troublesome water. A magic plan is not needed, a committee does not need to be formed and nor does there need to be a meeting held for a personal rescue. Each of us just needs to decide who the person is that needs to be rescued and go to work with the Lord and perform the rescue.

2. **Use the ward council:** Some wards have made good use of their ward councils and identified by name those they will rescue. Wards that use the New and Returning member report so they can follow the steps mapped out on the report have greater success at rescuing. Life guards do better when they have a rescue board to help them, and you will do better when you use the rescue tools the Lord has provided you. Simply put, each ward needs to work with names for as President Torres recently said, "I cannot interview numbers."

3. **Improved correlation with the missionaries:** We anticipate a significant increase in the number of missionaries serving in the Philippines and therefore you can expect to see missionaries assigned to more wards and branches. Having more does not mean more success unless we plan to use them wisely. Wise use of missionaries would include improved correlation with them in the rescue effort. Calling a returned missionary to serve as a ward mission leader, teaching him his responsibilities and then putting him to work will increase the number being rescued and retained.

Tonight we have reviewed a few simple ideas to help achieve the area goals. The best ideas will come as you sit in council and ask, "What more can we do and then act upon the council decisions and the promptings of the Holy Ghost?" Thinking alone will achieve nothing; we must stand and act, and my promise is that the rewards will be great.

Again, I give thanks for what has been achieved. We have every reason to be pleased with the results achieved but the journey has just begun and to quote President Teh, "the best is yet to come."

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

2013 Philippines Area Goals



Strengthen Families

- Every family has daily prayer, scripture study, and weekly family home evening.
- Each member has his/her own scriptures and reads them.
- Each family fasts and pays fast offerings and each member is a full tithing payer.



Establish the Church

- Increase the number of active Melchizedek Priesthood Holders from _____ to _____
- Increase Sacrament Meeting attendance from _____ to _____
- Increase the number of temple recommend holders from _____ to _____

FEAST upon the WORDS of CHRIST, for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.
2 Nephi 32:3



Save the Rising Generation

- Increase the number of Young Men serving missions this year from _____ to _____
- Increase YSA attendance from _____ to _____
- Increase the number of Young Single Adults marrying in the temple.



Rescue the One

- Each member rescues at least one member this year and prepares them to attend the temple.
- Every ward council prepares and maintains 15 names for activation by members for the missionaries to teach.