

# AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Together, We Can Make a Difference

By Elder F. Michael Watson, Second Counsellor in the Area Presidency

Years of service in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reflect, in transparent memory, what learning opportunities have been provided mankind to survive a world filled with dreams, challenges and experiences of a lifetime.

During the formable years of youth we thought we had it all wrapped up in tiny little packages, ready to open as vistas of new horizons were created in our mind's eye. We were ready for anything because we knew the desires of our heart and could always see the light at the end of the tunnel—or so we thought.

These same years were filled with education from those who were the teachers of experience. Then followed learning in communication skills and trying to understand people, who often had a different way of thinking. We came to envision a common thread, a converting belief, a fulfilment of a mission to mankind that was not about one's self. Each day would be quickly consumed, and often we did not take time to smell the roses.

As the time of hastening the work becomes more of a reality,

we as sons and daughters of the living God simply must work unitedly to remove from our hearts and to drive from our society, all elements of divisiveness in both word and deed. Such tend to limit a person's ability to progress, learn and be fully accepted in this vast world which we call home.

In doing so, an 18th-century clergyman indicated that if one has “not chosen the Kingdom of God first, it will in the end make no difference what you have chosen instead.”<sup>1</sup>

While we can agree to disagree on certain points of religious tenets, we can come together as a God-given human family to make life and this world a better place.

Ask yourself, what is it that you, honestly deep down in your soul, desire to receive? Perhaps it is a more sure answer to the following:

Where did I come from?

Why am I here?

Where am I going?

Responses to such questions cannot be defined from the philosophies of men, but must be revealed in time-tested principles



Elder F. Michael  
Watson

which serve as a constant guide. The theology we must come to understand is that all men and women are sons and daughters of God, that we lived with Him in a premortal state, and that the lives we live today are part of an eternal journey. Together we can make a difference through daily study from revealed scripture, pondering and divine answer through prayer.

Among us today are prophets, seers and revelators of whom it is written:

“Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”<sup>2</sup>

We are taught to believe and understand God is our Eternal Father in Heaven, His Son is in reality Jesus Christ, and we can

receive a witness by the Holy Ghost of what is assuredly true.

Continuing revelation is needed today as it was at any point in the history of the earth. Scriptural evidence given is clear:

“Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or the voice of my servants, it is the same.

“For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever.”<sup>3</sup>

Prophetic counsel has taught us that our faith must be constant in a world of shifting values. “We have seen a tremendous change in patterns of moral and spiritual conduct in the last few years. Churches are the great conservators of truth. [Our] religion continues to teach, without equivocation or apology, that personal virtue is to be cherished, that honesty and integrity are central to our conduct, that civility is to be practiced, that kindness is an incumbent responsibility, and

that respect for the beliefs and practices of others is a principle that cannot be avoided if one is a Christian.”<sup>4</sup>

We believe in a religion that honors and respects womanhood. “We declare without equivocation that in this Church a woman walks neither ahead of her husband nor behind him but at his side as his equal.”<sup>5</sup>

“Fathers have the basic and inescapable responsibility to stand as head of the family. That does not carry with it any implication of dictatorship or unrighteous dominion. It confers the mandate to provide for the needs of their families. Those needs are more than food, clothing, and shelter. Those needs include righteous direction and the teaching, by example as well as precept, of basic principles of honesty, integrity, service, respect for the rights of others, and an understanding that we are accountable, not only to one another but also to God, for that which we do in this life.”<sup>6</sup>

Women who choose to make a house a home make a far greater contribution to society than those who command large armies or stand at the head of impressive corporations. The influence of women who, in their own ways, build stable family

life and nurture for everlasting good the generations of the future can never be discounted.<sup>7</sup>

These same ideals require constant development among the youth of today, the pioneers of tomorrow, who will learn to go before and show others the way to follow.

Such principles and teachings we must never, ever, ever, give up. Life will never be the same for everyone, but one’s individual actions can help to heal hearts and homes. Together we must find joy in the worth of a soul as we journey.

“And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them.”<sup>8</sup>

Never say goodbye to friends made through the years, or family that can be united in eternity. We will see one another again because together, we can make a difference. ■

#### NOTES

1. William Law, 18th century clergyman.
2. Amos 3:7.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 1:37-39.
4. *The Mission*, preface by Gordon B. Hinckley.
5. *The Mission*, preface by Gordon B. Hinckley.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something*.
7. See Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something*.
8. 1 Nephi 17:3.

## The Blessing of Mothers

With Mother's Day approaching, our minds are turned to the women in our lives who have nurtured us, and to our own role in raising future generations.

"Motherhood truly is a lifetime opportunity for loving and giving our very best so that our children can fulfil the great potential each of them has within," said Karen Coulson from Newcastle Stake. "It's a time when not only our children learn and grow—we as mothers are on the biggest growth curve of our lives as we learn more fully what unconditional love is.

"As we strive to be guided by the Spirit in raising our precious children and be an example of Christlike love, we create a home that can be not only a haven from the world but also a place where our children learn that each of them truly is a child of God."

Brisbane mother Holly Atkinson recognizes the eternal nature of her role, saying, "The divine blessing of being a mother is something I cherish deeply. Ezra Taft Benson said, 'In the eternal perspective, children—not possessions, not position, not prestige—are our greatest jewels' (*To the Mothers in Zion*, pamphlet [1987]). I pray that my daily example infuses this very truth in the minds of my own young daughters. Almost 10 years of motherhood has taught me valuable lessons in selflessness, patience, charity, listening, the need of the Holy Spirit to gently lead as the Saviour does, and of consistent spiritual nourishment. When my daughters whisper that they want to be a mother too, as I tuck them in at night, I feel a reassuring burst of heavenly love envelope my heart. They see the joy I feel daily and desire that for themselves. Alone, that spurs me on to be better tomorrow than I was today."



YOUNG JESUS COMFORTING HIS MOTHER, BY DEL PARSON © 1996 IRI

Dianne Denny from Sydney recalls, "When I joined the Church in 1987, I was divorced and had two young teenage sons. I didn't have the privilege of being brought up in the Church, or having my children brought up with the wonderful principles of the gospel. I did my best with the limited knowledge I had, and often wonder how different things would be if we'd had the gospel in our lives then. I am proud of my boys, they have done well. But I know I could have done better."

She continues, “When I think of mothers, immediately my thoughts are turned to the words of the stripling warriors in Alma 56:47–48:

‘Now they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives; yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

‘And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it.’

Our children can have these same thoughts about us, if we lead by example and do the things we would want them to do.”

Lauren Townsend from Claremount Meadows Ward in Penrith, noted, “Prophets have taught us for years that family is very important, and that became my focus, and communication was a key to that. As a profoundly deaf mum to two hearing boys, people were curious as to how well I’d do with raising my children. When I joined the Church, I soon understood that Heavenly Father had already prepared a way for me to overcome that barrier. There isn’t anything that should hold us back if we have Him on our side. I was told that if I taught my sons sign language, it would not be good for their language development. I refused to believe that. We use sign language in our home, and my husband and I have a strong relationship with our boys.”

Nicole Samuela from Brisbane adds, “Motherhood is not only a privilege and a blessing but it has provided my greatest classroom. As I serve my children I have discovered so much about myself and strengthened my relationship with the Lord. I try to parent my children as Heavenly Father has parented me, with love, patience, and at times long-suffering. This has led to many wonderful

experiences, but the most important experience is witnessing my children develop a personal relationship with the Lord for themselves. They have recognised and become familiar with the Spirit and what it feels like, because that is the same feeling they get when they feel loved by Mum. It is hugely important to me to teach my children to understand that they have a Father in Heaven who loves them even more than I do. And to know they can turn to Heavenly Father at all times about anything, and receive inspiration and direction. The Lord brings us peace, which is powerful—especially when we live in a world that offers us none. This is especially important as they grow older. When my children were younger they would always be the first ones to suggest we pray so Heavenly Father could help us find things. Now they are teenagers their lost ‘items’ may be themselves at times, and the fact that they still quickly think to pray for answers is wonderful, and a huge comfort.

“As I prepare to send my eldest child into the mission field, letting go is hard. It is time for me to exercise faith in the Lord and the work we have done as parents, and let him go, so he can continue to learn and grow. I look forward to the wonderful reunion and embracing my child when he returns to me, better than he was when he left. Much the same as Heavenly Father has done for us when we left His presence to come to earth. I look forward to returning to His presence with as much enthusiasm. I hope to be able to walk into the Lord’s embrace a better person and be filled with the joy that comes with feeling that it was all worth it and hearing the Lord say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

In Sydney, as Lee-Anne Hulme and her husband prayed for children, they wondered if

Heavenly Father said, “You asked for it. Have I got one for you!” Lee-Anne said, “When our first son was born he was full of life, intellect and charm, and he has filled our lives with laughter and fun and challenged us to go beyond Parenting 101. Our second son was born 17 months later, quiet, focused and a talented sportsman—his motto of late is ‘Work Hard—Stay Humble’. They were followed by a daughter who is smart, beautiful and beginning those teenage years; and then our fourth child, another son, is gentle and caring. Each one with a personality so unique, there could not possibly be a one-size-fits-all style of parenting.”

She continued, “When I held those babies of mine I wondered, like most parents, how this little person would develop under our love and guidance. I thought about how this tremendous responsibility to rear them well was mine. Some days we did great, other days I fell way short, but there was always a silent prayer in my heart that I could try again tomorrow, and the next day, to be a better mother than the one I was the day before.

“Certainly I have learned more about myself over the years from being a mum. I know what breaks my heart, what fills me with joy, where I need to grow spiritually, and when I need to ‘lighten up’ and smile more. I have found myself, of late, tweaking my own behaviour which, not surprisingly, pays dividends over time as I see a little more patience, laughter and love amongst the children.

“As my son nears adulthood and has plans for his future, I find myself saying, ‘Wait . . . I forgot to teach you this’, or, ‘I need you to know that’. All he really needs to know is that he is loved by not only his earthly parents but also

his Heavenly Father, and while other things in life will challenge and stretch him, that will always remain constant and be a source of comfort and strength throughout his life. When I think back to the physical challenge it was to bring these children into the world, and the highs and lows of the journey since, I am so thankful and humbled that I have the name of Mum on my resume—the most important of work—and one which I will always be grateful I have been able to experience.” ■

## MP Speaks about Marriage at YSA Fireside

By Nadine Courmadias

On Sunday, 11 November 2012, The Honourable Kevin Andrews MP spoke to

around 300 young single adult members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on

*Graeme Cray, Damon Page, Lindsay Sanders, Kevin Andrews MP, Anthony Parton, Robert Dudfield, David Cray*



IMAGE COURTESY OF NADINE COURMADIAS AND USED WITH PERMISSION

the importance of marriage and family.

Mr. Andrews is the Federal Member for Menzies (an electorate in Melbourne), the Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services and is a devoted husband, father and Christian.

He quoted Professor Paul Amato, who said, “Studies consistently indicate that children raised by two happily and continuously married parents have the best chance of developing into competent and successful adults.”

“A happy marriage and family life remain the aspiration of most people,” said Mr. Andrews.

During his keynote address, Mr. Andrews shared the results of decades of social science research, confirming that a healthy marriage is the optimal relationship for the well-being of adults and children alike.

He listed eight modern myths about marriage and divorce—and then used research to disprove each one. For example, contrary to popular belief, premarital cohabitation actually increases the

likelihood that a couple will later divorce.

“The statistics were fascinating,” said Alexandra Jenson, aged 19, who attended the fireside. “The research presented just confirmed to me all the things our prophets teach us about families.”

The findings presented by Mr. Andrews were complemented by talks by Melbourne Church leaders Robert Dudfield, Anthony Parton and Lindsay Sanders. They focussed on religious teachings rather than science, reminding the young single adults that “children are



*Young single adults with Kevin Andrews MP.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF NADINE COURMADIAS AND USED WITH PERMISSION

an heritage of the Lord” (Psalm 127:3) and “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God. . . .

“Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honour marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129).

Those in attendance also had the opportunity to participate in an open question-and-answer session with Mr. Andrews and to speak with him individually over supper after the conclusion of the fireside. ■

## Lifting Hearts through Service

By **Caroline McIlwaine**

The Adelaide 2012 Young Single Adult Convention gave 420 attendees opportunities to embrace its “Lift up your heart and be glad” theme. A highlight for many was the service project day, as they lent a hand in the community.

Stefany Clancy, 21, from Wollongong New South Wales, was among the crew packing home-start packs for the Ruf Us charity, aiding homeless people.

Ruf Us founder Aileen Jefferis gave a powerful talk at the convention fireside on Sunday night, helping all to understand what it’s like for her “street family”. Stefany said, “It was good to be part of a worthwhile project, and to reflect on all the things we have in our lives, that we take for granted.”

Ms. Jefferis said the donations greatly boosted her charity, which provides basics for people “sleeping rough” in the parklands and supports their long-term goals for housing and accommodation.

“We’re overwhelmed by the generosity and support of the LDS Church and its young people. We’ve had community support in the past but not to this level, so this is fantastic that we can provide more resources and support to those who need it,” she explained. “This is the largest donation we’ve had, with 100 toilet roll and water packs, 20 sleeping swags and home-start kits, and it will make a big difference for many.”

The donations included lightweight, weatherproof swags that pass for shoulder satchels.

“One of the reasons we prefer them is that it’s not so embarrassing for those sleeping rough if the swag resembles a shoulder bag, plus it has a good-sized pouch they can keep all their possessions in—including the hygiene-basics packs the Church also donated,” Ms. Jefferis added.

While the kits were packed, (as well as children’s activity packs for the city’s Women’s and Children’s Hospital), other volunteers donated blood to help prepare for emergency shortages over the New Year period.

Red Cross Blood Service’s Emma Schreiber said the large group booking showed great support. “We’re grateful that the group came in on New Year’s Eve, when donations were more important than ever,” she explained. “By donating blood, they have given the gift of life to patients, including those with cancer, unborn babies and road trauma victims.”

Donating blood is personal for Adelaide young single adult Debbie May, whose sister Roseanne is in remission

following a battle with leukaemia that included blood and bone marrow transfusions.

“I’m so grateful for the help and treatments my sister received, and this service project was important to me because I know there are lots of people out there who need the same kind of support and treatments,” said Debbie.

Area Seventy Elder Peter Meurs—who joined the YSA for their Sunday church meetings—commended everyone involved for providing “an excellent balance of social, service and spiritual experiences. “I was delighted to see so many YSA from all over Australia participating with such enthusiasm in all of the convention activities,” he said. ■

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*Lewis Showbrooke, Ruf Us charity founder Aileen Jefferis, Phil Why, Royal Campbell and Raife Campbell.*

## Local Ward Present at Memorial Services

By David Hoare

Each year the Sunbury Ward of the Melbourne Australia Deer Park Stake is represented at the local Shrine of Remembrance, on both Anzac Day (April 25th) and Remembrance Day (November 11th) for the memorial services.

This local effort is led by Paula Collett. Flowers are laid at the memorial by Paula, on behalf of the

ward, as a mark of respect for those who have died and given us the freedoms enjoyed today.

The Church is recognised for its contribution by the RSL presidency as part of the service providing a community opportunity to be caring, loving and respectful, along with all the other denominations represented. ■