

# NEW ZEALAND 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 fulfillment 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



**Elder F. Michael  
Watson**

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 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 revealeth 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 Blessings of Pacific Service

By Catherine Vaughan

President Nelson Bleak and Sister Terry Bleak have just finished their second mission in the Pacific Area, and have learnt many wonderful lessons

about life from the people of the Pacific.

As a young man Nelson Bleak served in the Canada Montreal Mission from 1963 to 1965. In

*President Nelson and Sister Terry Bleak*



IMAGE COURTESY OF TERRY BLEAK AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

2006 the Bleaks were called to preside over the Marshall Island Majuro Mission for three years. While living in the remote but beautiful Marshall Islands they learnt that life doesn't require all of the luxuries that the world tells us we need to make us happy. They quickly grew to love the people they were serving and were enchanted by the humility and gratitude that the people in the Marshall Islands and Kiribati exhibited.

"Everyone around us was so humble and giving," said Sister Bleak. "With every conversation they expressed their gratitude for what they had. Many of the people were poor, but thankful that they had enough. It is impossible not to love people who are so positive and grateful."

President Bleak was particularly touched by the absolute faith the members of the Church have, and the conviction with which they expect things to happen. "They would request a priesthood blessing, look me right in the eye and say, 'Heal me, make me better'. There was no doubt in their lives. They knew the power of the priesthood and

the miracles it would produce."

In 2009 President Bleak was in New Zealand briefly for a mission president's seminar. At the conclusion of the training he was driven to the airport to return to the Marshall Islands. With some time to spare, he was taken to the Church-owned site in South Auckland to see the construction of the new Missionary Training Centre for New Zealand. As they walked around the site, President Bleak said he got goose bumps and the strong impression came to mind, "You will be here".

After their service in the Marshall Islands, the Bleaks returned home to Panaca, Nevada. Towards the end of 2010 they were called to serve in the Missouri Independence Mission. They prepared to start their new assignment and were all ready to leave, when just days before they were due to start their mission, they received a call from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Their missionary assignment had been changed, and the Bleaks were asked to preside over the newly opened New Zealand MTC. As President

Bleak accepted the new assignment, he felt goose bumps again and recalled the previous experience he had felt.

After two years of service working with newly called missionaries from throughout the Pacific, the Bleaks are humbled to have been part of the process of preparing missionaries for their assigned missions.

"Miracles happen with every intake", said Sister Bleak. "Many missionaries come into the MTC thinking they are ready, and they don't really need to be there. Then a miraculous transformation happens. They change from boys and girls with their own desires and agendas, to young men and young women with a purpose, and a willingness to do the Lord's work."

President Bleak adds, "They forget themselves. Their mission is not for their mum or dad, or for anyone else. It becomes their consecrated effort for the Lord. We give great credit to the teachers at the MTC, who enable the missionaries to learn how to feel the Spirit speak to them."

"The missionary training centre is like a cocoon," he adds.

“The missionaries enter the MTC as caterpillars, and are in a cocoon for a few weeks as they undergo their training. At the end of it, they emerge as beautiful butterflies, messengers of the Lord, as a powerful transformation takes place.”

Sister Bleak recalls a young missionary from the remote island Tanna in Vanuatu. Elder Rausika had never been to school, though his mother

taught him to read and write. The MTC experience was like a different world to him. He had never left his island, never been on a plane, never worn shoes, and never worn a coat or a tie. He was overwhelmed by the size of New Zealand, and the size of the buildings. Even by the array of food choices in the cafeteria. “He was so shy he wouldn’t speak, at all, to anyone. But he had a strong

testimony, and he had the courage to stay here, and learn. The day that he left the MTC to fly to his mission, he smiled at us and said, ‘Thank you for helping me’. To see the testimonies these young missionaries have, and the desire they have to serve their Heavenly Father, is such a thrill. There have been so many individual miracles during our time here. We are so grateful to have been a part of it.” ■

## The Blessing of Mothers

With Mother’s Day approaching around the Pacific, 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



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

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.”

In Auckland Harbour Stake, Lindsay Dil recalls, “My mother was an exceptional pioneer of the Church on the North Shore. I grew up with all-day visiting teaching outings by bus, all-day feeding the missionaries on chapel building projects, and trips to build the temple and Church College during holidays. When Mum was baking we always asked, ‘Who is that for?’ knowing she

was always looking for ways to help and serve others. Often of course it was for us, but it became a family joke that her baking was only ever for others.

“I grew up seeing by example that service is not negotiable in our family. Yet I also knew that every bit of service given was to bless our family, and we only ever felt love and care from her. I heard Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles quote the scripture, ‘wherefore thy duty is unto the church forever, and this because of thy family’, and when I think of Mum’s example, she exemplified this scripture.”

Dianne Denny has recently returned to Sydney, after living in New Zealand for the past decade. She says, “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.”

Nicole Samuela, formerly from New Zealand, and now living in 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.”

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, “Each one of our children has a personality so unique, there could not possibly be a one-size-fits-all style of parenting.”

She continues, “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.

“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.” ■

## Blessings of the Temple

This month marks the 55th anniversary of the dedication of the New Zealand Temple, in Hamilton, which was the first temple built within the Pacific Area.

Ross Cuff, a member of the temple presidency, recalls an experience he had that reiterated what a blessing it is to have a temple in this land.

He said, “Many years ago I attended a wedding in the temple, at a time when civil marriages were necessary before temple sealings could be administered. This particular time was also during a short period when civil marriages were able to be performed in a chapel area just inside the main doors to the temple, followed immediately by the temple sealing. Guests who were not members of the LDS Church were able to attend the civil service.

“At this particular wedding, after the civil ceremony was completed, those who were members of the Church and had temple recommends were invited to go out to the right, down to the sealing room, and those who did not have a recommend were ushered to the left, and out of the temple.

“On that day I was so grateful to have and be worthy to hold a current temple recommend that allowed me to ‘go to the right’. My temple recommend is important and sacred to me, and is the most important document I will hold in this life. Since I first went to the temple in 1964, I have never been without a current temple recommend and I am dedicated to continuing on this path throughout the rest of my life.”

Talking about setting goals to attend the temple,

Ruby Talataina from Samoa said, “As members of the Church, we have been taught to learn the principles of the gospel ‘line upon line’ and ‘precept upon precept’. At the age of eight, I made baptismal covenants with my Heavenly Father, and since then I have strived to live them each day of my

life. Heavenly Father wants us to strive to become the individual beings that he has made us to become. We can do so line upon line. With each covenant that we make with God, comes an added measure of expectations from Him for us. This is all part of our march towards godhood.

“With that, temple worthiness has always been a part of my focus,” she continued. “At this point in my single life, I feel I am now ready to enter and make temple covenants with my Heavenly Father. I know that once I do, I will be expected to do more, and to become better. It is also a step I am prepared to take towards adding an extra layer of protection on my body and spirit from the world. My bishop told me that when I receive my endowments I will have loved ones from both sides of the veil present. This has more meaning for me now because my father passed away six months ago; and I am humbled and grateful to know that he will be there for my endowment session when I make that step.” ■

IMAGE COURTESY OF CHURCH MEDIA LIBRARY



***The Hamilton  
New Zealand  
Temple***