

AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Knowing the Calamity Which Should Come

By Elder Dale G. Renlund, Area President

In 1912, on the island of Larsmo just off the west coast of Finland, my paternal grandparents, Lena Sofia and Matts Leander Renlund, listened to missionaries from Sweden preach the restored gospel. Lena Sofia and Leander were baptized the following day. They found joy in their new faith and in being part of a small branch, the first in Finland. Unfortunately, life's fortunes changed for them as disaster struck.

In 1916 Leander's mother, who lived with them, died of tuberculosis. In 1917, Leander also died of tuberculosis, leaving Lena Sofia a widow and pregnant with her 10th child. That child, my father, was born two months after Leander's death. More family members died of tuberculosis. Lena Sofia eventually buried 7 of her 10 children, in addition to Leander. It was a major struggle for her, an impoverished peasant woman, to keep what remained of her family intact.

For nearly two decades, she did not get a good night's rest. She hustled at odd jobs during the day to scrape together food to eat. At night, she nursed dying family members. Death figuratively hung over their heads because timber was split and put in the roof rafters to dry. Those timbers were used to make coffins for those who would die.

I met Lena Sofia once in December 1963. I was 11 and she was 87. She was stooped from a lifetime of hard labour. She was so bowed over that when she stood from a seated position, her height did not change. The skin of her face and hands was weatherbeaten, as tough and textured

as worn leather. As we met, she stood and pointed to a picture of Leander and said to me, in Swedish, "*Det här är min gubbe.*"

Hope for the future

As I was just learning Swedish, I thought she had incorrectly used the present tense of the verb since she said, "This is my old man." Since Leander had been dead for 46 years, I pointed out this apparent mistake to my mother. My mother simply told me, "You don't understand." She was right. I did not understand and would not for some years to come. Lena Sofia knew that her long-dead husband was and would remain hers through the eternities. Because of the doctrine of eternal families, Leander had remained a presence in her life and part of her great hope for the future.

Family History work

Before the Helsinki Finland Temple dedication in 2006, my sister checked to see what ordinance work was needed for our father's line. What she found was a blazing affirmation of Lena Sofia's faith in the sealing authority. Lena Sofia had submitted the family records for her deceased children who were over 8 years of age when they died, so that temple work could be performed in 1938. This was at least four years before any formal classes were taught in family history work in Finland. These were among the earliest ordinances submitted to a temple from Finland.



Elder Dale G. Renlund

Through all her tragedies and hardships, Lena Sofia coped by keeping in mind the doctrines of salvation. She considered it one of God's great mercies that she came to know that families were eternal before these disasters befell her. A marker for her deep-seated conversion to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ was her work in family history.

Hardships

Over the course of human history, mankind has seen plagues, pestilences, wars, scourges, and all sorts of inhumanity. Some ask the age-old question, "If God did exist, would He not have done something about all of these problems?" As a Church, we not only declare emphatically that there is a God in heaven but that He has done something about it. Lena Sofia knew it, and knowing it got her through her challenging life. She, like the Saints mentioned by Paul, "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Hebrews 11:13).

God, our Heavenly Father, sent His Son to earth, to live and die as Jesus did, and to resurrect the third day and ascend to heaven. He broke the bands of death and gave all mankind the opportunity to repent and receive the saving ordinances of the gospel.

Referring to the difficulties that mankind would encounter in life, Jesus Christ said, "Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven . . . that faith also might increase in the earth; That mine everlasting covenant might be established; That the fullness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world" (D&C 1:17, 21–23).

Why keep the Lord's ordinances?

On September 21–22, 1823, Moroni appeared four times to the 17-year-old Joseph Smith. Moroni describes what the Lord was going to do about the world's calamities. After informing young Joseph about the golden plates, Moroni began quoting prophecies from the Old Testament, beginning with the third and fourth chapters of Malachi. The last part of Malachi 3 discusses a concern by the people of God. Looking around and seeing that those that were less faithful nonetheless appeared blessed and happy, they asked God the question of what good it was to them that they had kept God's ordinances. Malachi states that:

"And the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

"Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (3 Nephi 24:16–18).

God is saying that His people should not judge the benefit of living the gospel too soon, because the time would come when one would clearly see the benefit. As stated by Moroni, as he quotes Malachi:

"For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble . . . that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (3 Nephi 25:1).

The Lord's Intervention

Without the Lord's intervention, individuals—no matter how happy and blessed they appear—

would have neither ancestry (root) nor posterity (branch). With the Lord's intervention, however, the blessings of ancestry and posterity would be preserved, as explained by Moroni as he continues to quote Malachi:

“Behold, I will reveal to you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

“. . . And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming” (Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39).

The Sealing Authority

Without the sealing authority, the earth and every aspect related to it would “be utterly wasted” (see D&C 2:1–3).

What is the Lord's plan to deal with calamity? Restore the priesthood; restore sealing authority. These restorations ensure our eternal happiness.

One of the clearest markers for a deep-seated conversion in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is participating in family history work and temple worship. There is a great need to redouble our efforts in both. The First Presidency has encouraged that where time and circumstances permit, members are to replace some leisure activities with temple service.

While leaders do not establish quotas or reporting systems for temple attendance, members are encouraged to set personal goals for temple attendance. Each member determines his or her own level of participation in temple work. Members are encouraged to receive their own temple ordinances. Endowed members should

then hold a current temple recommend and go to the temple as often as circumstances and family needs allow.

Unendowed adults and youth ages 12 and older, including new members, are encouraged to have limited-use temple recommends and go to the temple often to be baptized and confirmed for the dead. Paraphrasing President Howard W. Hunter, (President of the Church, June 5, 1994–March 3, 1995) we wish to invite the members of the Church in the Area to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants; to have every adult member be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend; to become a temple-attending and a temple-loving people; and to attend the temple as frequently as time, means, and personal circumstances allow (see press conference, June 6, 1994).

Present realities may make it so that a member cannot be sealed to a spouse or to parents or to children. To those who find themselves in this situation, remain faithful, and realize that if you do your part all blessings this Church and gospel have to offer will be yours. Nothing will be denied you. As you diligently work on your family history and attend the temple where possible, you will feel a comforting spirit that will speak peace to your soul that all is well, that the Lord is pleased with you.

Because the Lord knew the calamities, difficulties and challenges we would face, He restored to the earth His priesthood, His sealing authority. Searching out our family history and participating in temple ordinances will help us keep an eternal perspective, just as it did for Lena Sophia. ■

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF FAITHFUL AND NGQABUTHO MOYO



Faithful and Ngqabutho Moyo

The PEF Programme Came to Our Rescue

By Ngqabutho Fidelis Moyo

We were both enrolled at the University of South Africa (UNISA) studying different programs, and our parents were helping us to pay our fees.

We followed the counsel of Church leaders and got married in 2008 despite all the odds, and that meant that we had to fend for ourselves. We managed to get funds to pay for the first semester, but we could foresee that we would not be able to

pay for the second semester.

Our financial situation worsened, because we were not formally employed. Times were hard in Zimbabwe during those days of hyperinflation, unstable economic environment and highly priced goods. By then we were also a couple of months pregnant.

The PEF program couldn't have come at a better time for our family.

When we heard that the PEF was now available we felt it was an answer to our prayers. We immediately applied, as we wanted to complete our degrees to improve our economic circumstances. On October 21 our baby was born. Two weeks later Faithful wrote exams, and she passed!

Amidst all this we were also called to serve in the Church in November 2009; Ngqabutho was called as the branch president for the newly organised Khumalo Branch (a calling he continues to hold until this day) and Faithful has served in the Young Women auxiliary as the first counsellor and currently serves as the seminary teacher.

We are truly grateful for the PEF programme, because without it we would probably not have completed our degrees. Ngqabutho completed his Bachelor of Commerce in Economics in 2011 and is employed as a Virtual Banking Officer at a local bank.

Faithful completed her Bachelor of Commerce in Financial Management in 2012 and currently works as an Administrative Assistant for the Bulawayo Zimbabwe Meetinghouse Facilities Department for the Church. ■



Community members rejoice over having clean water.



Villagers test the water project for the first time.

Ethiopian Water Project Serves Thousands

By Sister Susan Roberts

Over the past three years, LDS Charities have completed nine water projects in areas all over Ethiopia.

On January 31, 2013, one of the water projects was handed over to the local people at ShamoGado Village in Abomsa to manage. This project has been under development since August 2011.

The project consists of five water points where local residents can fill their containers for family

use. There is also a sanitation center with showers and toilets.

An older man said, with tears in his eyes, “Now maybe my children won’t be sick so often.” Before the water project, the villagers’ only water source was a local river which was also used for bathing, other sanitary purposes, and by animals. This project will improve the quality of life for approximately 9,000 people in this rural village area.

It was a very exciting day for everyone involved. The villagers butchered an ox and three sheep to feed about 600 people who came to celebrate. The festivities included dancing, singing, and honouring the full-time LDS Charities missionaries, Elder and Sister Campbell. ■

George Akera Gained a Testimony by Reading the Book of Mormon

By Elder Randal Knudsen

George Akera faithfully read the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and pamphlets from the Church daily for 14 years until he finally found the missionaries. George's search started in Uganda in 1996 while he was looking for a job. Two missionaries talked with him, gave him some pamphlets about the Church, and invited him to come to church the next Sunday.

George accepted the invitation; he liked the Sunday meetings and met with the missionaries immediately after church. They gave George a Book of Mormon and set a date

to meet with him. On Monday George received a job offer that took him about 350 km away from home, so he was unable to have the second discussion with the missionaries.

George took the Book of Mormon, Bible and the missionary tracts to his new job site and read them every night for the next 14 years. When he read the Book of Mormon George felt something different and knew that it was true. He prayed and promised himself that he would join the Church when he found it again.

His colleagues used to invite George to their churches, but he

never felt content. George would return to his room and continue reading his scriptures. He had many gospel discussions with friends, and they were amazed at his knowledge. They thought he was an inactive pastor, because he knew many things but did not attend any church. George continued reading the Book of Mormon and looking for the Church.

In 2010 while working in Masaka, Uganda, as a hotel security guard, George saw a senior missionary couple come to the hotel and recognized their name tags. He questioned them about their church to ensure that they were really missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. George then asked to join the Church.

The senior couple contacted the young missionaries, who travelled to Masaka to teach George. He was baptized in January 2011. Immediately George started telling everyone he met about the Church. The missionaries taught and baptized George's contacts. In July 2011, the Masaka Branch was organized, and George Akera was called as branch president. There are now approximately 150 members in Masaka Branch. President Akera still bears his testimony of the Book of Mormon. ■

The Akera family from left to right: Oden Justin, Atim Shella, George, Evelyn Alal and Chayo Alal.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RANDALL KNUDSEN

Lessons I Have Learned from My Stove

By Ikaneng Kato

There is a normal four-burner solid plate stove in my home. I live alone and often cook one-pot meals, so I use one particular plate more than the others. It is the front left corner plate, and it is convenient because of its larger size and proximity as I stand in front of the stove.

I noticed that this plate looks different from the other three and have wondered why. The other three plates tend to rust when a little drop of water lands on them. They lack the shine and glow of the plate that is used more often.

Alma asks, “Have you received [the Saviour’s] image in your countenances?” (Alma 5:14) How do we receive this image? It is received by those who have been spiritually born and strive to do the works of the Savior. It is an outward appearance from an inner change. My frequently used stove plate has become shiny and has a glow from service. Those who are constantly and happily in the service of their fellowmen are like my stove plate—shiny and glowing.

Plate four on my stove is continually in service. When we are constantly serving our fellowmen, we are happy to be engaged. Mormon taught, “by their works ye shall know them” (Moroni 7:5).

Due to constant use, plate four heats faster than any of the others. When we are called to serve, at first we may feel unsure and unlearned about what we are asked to do. We may be slow in fulfilling our callings. As we gladly work towards magnifying our callings, it becomes easier to do what is expected.

My stove has four plates, but only one is used



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SISTER KATO

and does the work. Three do no work. We have the choice to do the works of the Saviour or not. “He that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter” (D&C 50:24). As we continue to keep the faith, keep the commandments, honour the covenants we have made, and do works of righteousness, the Lord will bless us and give us more light and knowledge.

I know that as we do the things which the Saviour has commanded we can reflect the glow of His image in our countenances. We can also increase in faith through our works. Thankfully all members of the Church are called to serve their fellowmen in different capacities. None ever need feel like the three unused plates on my stove.

Each actively involved member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reflects a shine and glow in their countenance. Well-used plate four on my stove also shines and glows. ■

Sister Kato is second counsellor in the Bloemfontein District Relief Society Presidency. She is a member of the Maseru Branch in Lesotho.

Sister Kato in her kitchen.



Young missionaries ready to serve.

What YOU Can Do to Prepare for YOUR Mission

By Sister Edy Howes

What is the one thing prospective missionaries can do to be better prepared to serve? This question was asked of priesthood and mission leaders in the Africa Southeast Area. Their answers can help you prepare for your mission. Four of their suggestions are:

1. **“Always be worthy of a temple recommend** so the Spirit can be your constant companion” is the counsel of President Kenneth D. Reber of the South Africa Missionary Training Centre (SAMTC).
2. **Read the scriptures and *Preach My Gospel*.** Elder Carl B. Cook, First Counsellor in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency, encourages prospective missionaries to study

the lessons and recommended scriptures in *Preach My Gospel* chapter three, “Study and Teach.”

As you study, “apply what you learn. Strive to live in harmony with your understanding. Doing so will strengthen your faith, knowledge, and testimony. Acting on what you have learned will bring added and enduring understanding” (*Preach My Gospel*, 19).

Elder Cook reminds us, “As you diligently study *Preach My Gospel* and the scriptures you will be treasuring up in your mind and heart the things the Lord will prompt you to share with others. You will be prepared to be an effective instrument in His Almighty hand on the first day of your mission” (see John 7:17; D&C 84:85).

3. **Study the language in which you will be teaching** is the counsel of Zimbabwe Harare Mission president Bryson C. Cook. Seek to become more proficient speaking, reading (especially the standard works and *Preach My Gospel*) and writing the language of your mission even if you already have a basic knowledge of that language. This preparation fulfils the Lord’s commandment to “study and learn, and become acquainted with . . . languages, tongues and people” (D&C 90:15).
4. **Learn basic skills in cooking, cleaning, caring for your clothes, and personal hygiene,** urges Sister Janet Reber of the South Africa Missionary Training Centre. As a missionary you must be self-reliant in temporal responsibilities in order to be healthy and to be a positive representative of the Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is up to you to prepare.

Finally, you are the one who has to be prepared to serve. Start now to prepare or help someone you know to prepare to serve a mission. That preparation will bless you, your family and friends, and all those with whom you serve in the future. ■