

# NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### We Will See You Again

By Elder F. Michael Watson

Our journey through the Pacific has come to a close; we have referred to the Pacific as “Paradise,” “The Garden of Eden,” and “The Other Side of Heaven”. Memories will carry the love for people with whom we share a special kinship. A contemplative review of the time we have served in the Isles of the Sea has given much reflection to the sights and sounds of the beautiful vistas that open each and every day. These will be the June roses remembered in the December of our lives.

Meeting with the Saints in stake and district conferences as well as missionaries on mission tours were both important and rewarding as we had the opportunity to interact in the personal lives of priesthood and auxiliary leaders and felt the love and testimony from members. Such close associations with dear friends will remain as memories in our hearts that will provide solace to the soul then and now.

Travelling from one Island to another and throughout New Zealand and Australia, we observed the faith of the Saints to always be uplifting. We watched as they attended scheduled meetings, many times at great sacrifice, walking with weather-related challenges to worship and renew their covenants. We observed the remarkable singing talent of the Saints throughout the Pacific Area.

Public affairs provided insight, blessing both members and nonmembers who responded to the invitation to come and see what makes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints such an important religious organization.

A documentary on the history of the Church in Samoa continues today to identify and strengthen the Saints whose heritage comes from this beautiful isle of the sea.

We wish to give special thanks to the many serving in the Area office, service centres, and throughout the Pacific. We have observed the “golden thread” interwoven with these sweet spirits who are giving daily service, and have been magnified in so many ways. They are a valued strength to the Area Presidency.

In addition to the Area office, senior missionary couples are also called to various assignments becoming as it were, an extended arm of the mission president to missionaries serving in distant places. For all the hours and love so freely given, they are destined to receive the reward of, “well done thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles summarized our beliefs in Jesus the Christ and sets forth the teachings of which we espouse in the doctrine of Christ:

**H**e Is the Light

He is the Light of Bethlehem, born of Mary, His mortal mother, and His father, Almighty God.

He is the Light who was baptized by immersion by John the Baptist, and upon whom the Holy Ghost was manifest in the Spirit.

He is the Light in whom His Father was well pleased.



**Elder F. Michael  
Watson**

He is the Light at the head of the ancient church, organized with twelve apostles, prophets, and Seventies.

He is the Light of the Atonement fulfilled in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Golgotha, who took upon Himself the sins of the world, that all mankind may obtain eternal salvation.

He is the Light of the empty tomb, the resurrected Lord, with a glorified body of flesh and bone, who broke the bands of death and gained an everlasting victory over the grave.

He is the Light that ascended into the heaven before the eyes of His disciples with a promise that in like manner He would come again.

He is the Light that appeared with His Father and restored, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the same Church He established during His ministry here on earth.

He is the Light that leads and guides this Church today through revelation to a prophet, his counselors, and the Twelve Apostles.

He is my Light, my Redeemer, my Savior and yours.

President Thomas S. Monson, like those who preceded him, has declared his heartfelt testimony in these words:

“With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift up my voice in testimony as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He it was who died on the cross to atone for our sins. He became the first fruits of the Resurrection. Because He died, all shall live again. ‘Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: “I know that my Redeemer lives!”’ May the whole world know it and live by that knowledge” (“I Know

That My Redeemer Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 25).

Now to the testimonies of the prophets, seers and revelators, I wish to add my own witness of these divine truths.

Over the span of many years in personal study and of time to ponder and pray, the promises of our Lord and Savior have been realized through personal and spiritual confirmations.

The prophets of the Old and New Testaments had strong enough testimonies to leave a legacy to follow, build upon and encourage others to see. The Church of Jesus Christ was restored in these latter days to become the organized source of light and truth, even the fulness of the gospel provided through Another Testament of Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon. The priesthood of God was received and became the authority to act in His holy name.

The timeless events and experiences with our latter-day prophets of God whom we sustain only serve to cement our convictions. This is further bound by the eternal support and companionship of a beloved wife, the devotion of a loving family and the faith and prayers of wonderful people all over this vast world who have touched our lives deeply. As one of His especial witnesses, I add my testimony of these eternal truths.

With love to our eternal friends:

“We will see you again”

“Tatou toe feiloa’i”

“Ka tau toki fe’iloaki”

“Farerei faahou tatou”

“Nous nous reverrons encore”

“Eda na qai sota tale”

“Ti na manga kaitibo rimwi”

“Jenaaj bar loe eok”

“Bai mipela lukim u ken” ■

## Celebrating Something Extraordinary

By Emo Coe

Members of the Waterlea Park Ward Relief Society participated in the worldwide birthday celebration for Relief Society in March by continuing the tradition they set last year, inviting women from their local community to join them for a night of fun. The 171st celebration gave the sisters an opportunity to practice the words found

in Mosiah 18:29: “They did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants.”

They personally invited members of the local community to participate in an evening that hosted a variety of team-related activities. A number of women from the local area accepted the

invitation to join the celebration. Throughout the evening a quiz about the history of Relief Society got everyone thinking, and some light-hearted fun was added by the sisters creating volcanoes out of ice cream, using different toppings and sprinkles to show lava-flow. The participants enjoyed the humorous competitiveness and the friendship displayed by all.

*Waterlea Park Ward sisters celebrate the Relief Society birthday with women from their local community.*



IMAGE COURTESY OF JOSEPHINE GARDNER AND USED WITH PERMISSION



**Young Single Adults Leah Lawrence and Cheyanne Keung celebrate the 171st birthday of Relief Society.**

Kimmy Tauri-Cecil, a member of the Cook Island Assembly of God, explained how she and her friends felt a closeness towards the Latter-day Saint Relief Society sisters and loved the

expression shared by the ward Relief Society president, Emo Coe, who said that we are all “sisters in Zion”.

Rossina Kruger (second counsellor) organised the

“working bee,” who prepared for the evening with beautifully made decorations, a hot dinner and a Relief Society birthday cake that was too beautiful to cut into pieces. Each sister was able to fulfil the goal of inviting a friend to join with them in “celebrating something extraordinary”. To complete the evening the sisters watched a video about the Prophet Joseph Smith and the organisation of the Relief Society in 1842. ■

**Waterlea Park Ward sisters make ice cream volcanoes.**



# Eternity Is Now

By Hillary Vos Katene

I returned home from serving in the Australia Perth Mission in November 2012. Full-time missionary service was everything the Lord promised it would be, and though I sincerely desired to move forward, at first I struggled making the necessary adjustments of being home. I just wanted to be a missionary!

An amazing family and supportive YSA helped me get back into the swing of things. Without realising it a month had passed, and I was excitedly off to attend the New Zealand YSA Convention.

Before it started, my brother, sister and I all decided on a goal to find five “potential investigators” (suitable dating options) over the duration of the conference. It seemed easy enough. By the last day of the conference I had met three people I was interested in dating. I realised that it was not about meeting a specific number, for “goals reflect the desires of our hearts and our vision of what we can accomplish. Through goals and plans, our hopes are transformed into action” (*Preach My Gospel*, p. 146).

Heavenly Father was very clear to me on what my next step in life was to be. So it was with this goal in mind that I had a “good thought”, which I have come to recognise as the promptings of the Spirit. When the conference finished, after the closing prayer and group photo, I felt prompted to go and talk to a certain young man I had seen earlier. I made my way through the crowd and introduced myself to him. It appears he had noticed me the day before. After chatting for a while we exchanged numbers, and set up a date for the coming Friday, two days later.

Little did we know at the time, but those seemingly insignificant actions entwined the first

threads of an eternal tapestry, that we now have the opportunity and blessing of being able to create together. We recognise the Lord’s hand in how perfectly everything fell into place. And not just with meeting, but a while later, Luke and I decided to make our eternity now, as we prepared to be married in the temple. We both feel super blessed and the “rightness” of it all is almost tangible.

It was being in the right place, at the right time, with the right intentions at heart, which enabled Heavenly Father to help me find the right person. You really have to take a risk; a leap of faith, a step into the darkness. For me personally, every time, without fail, He has been there to light the way, direct my path and provide for my needs.

***Hillary and Luke Katene shortly after their engagement.***

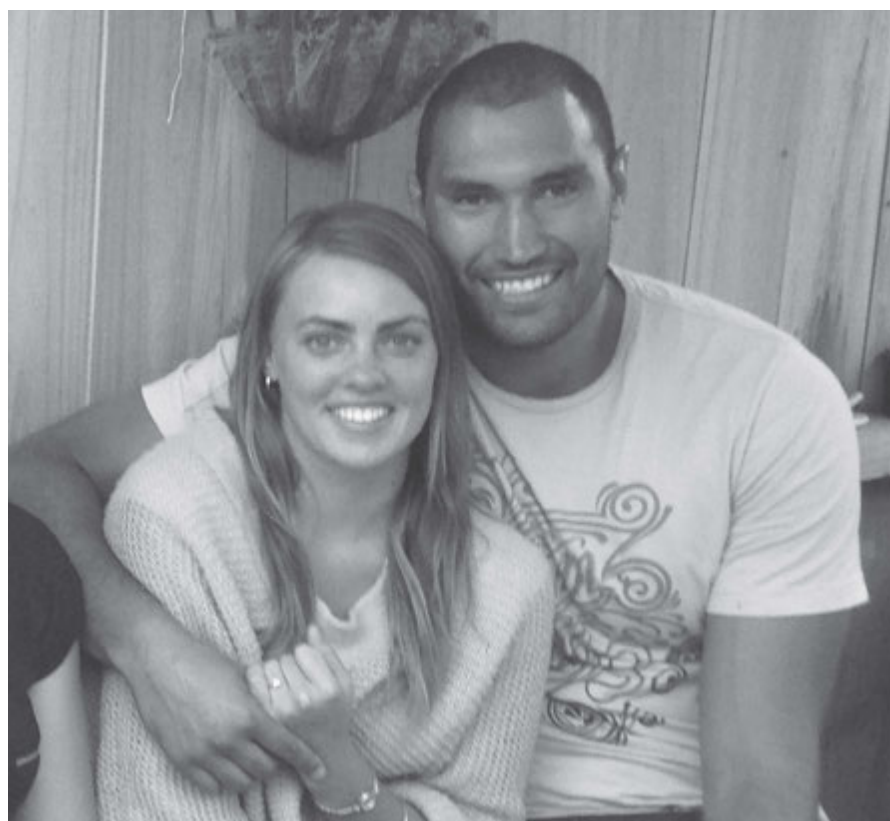


IMAGE COURTESY OF NEROU KATENE AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

The theme of the YSA convention was “Eternity Is Now” and only in retrospect can I chuckle at how fitting that was!

My husband, Luke, says, “You always hope for the best, dream you’ll meet that person and everything will fall into place, but to have it actually happen. . . . The fact we were both there, prepared,

willing to act, and then to fall in love. . . . If we didn’t meet at the YSA convention, would there have been another opportunity?”

The gospel of Jesus Christ, in its fullness, has guided and directed us to this point. We’ve used our individual agency righteously and we are already tasting the fruits of so doing. ■

## Modern-Day Pioneers

By Catherine Vaughan

Mention the word *pioneer* to a member of the Church, and it immediately conjures up visions of valiant Saints trekking across America, seeking a sanctuary where they would be free from persecution to live the eternal principles of the gospel they had embraced. The history of the Church is filled with heart-wrenching stories of the dedicated early members, who sacrificed the homes and comfort they knew and walked with faith towards the Salt Lake Valley, where Brigham Young had announced, “This is the place”. Heroic legacies of the hardship the early pioneers endured as they travelled through winter snow, navigating difficult mountain passes, confronting sickness and death along the way, illustrate the depth of their trust

in Heavenly Father and the strength of their testimonies in the sacrifices they made.

The Church is filled with pioneers, many of them now surrounded by the technology of a digital era. Though not called upon to walk a thousand miles, bury children by the frozen roadside, or donate all of their belongings to build a temple so they can partake of the sacred saving ordinances, the faith they exhibit and depth of their testimony-strengthening sacrifices is just as valid and inspiring.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Two companion qualities evident in the lives of our pioneers, early and modern, are *unselfishness* and *sacrifice*. . . . That same quality is evident

in the conversion stories of modern pioneers. Upon receiving a testimony of the truth of the restored gospel, they have unhesitatingly sacrificed all that was required to assure that its blessings will be available to their children, and to generations unborn.”<sup>1</sup>

Joyce Smale recalls being baptised at the age of 13, in 1953. Her mother, Hazel J. Smale, wrote about it in *As I Remember It 1953–1975: A History of the Napier Ward*, saying, “On the 27 June, 1953, a cold winter’s day with a 12-degree frost, a group of people gathered in a field at Omahu, Hawke’s Bay, (owned by Brother and Sister Karena), to enter into the waters of baptism, and to covenant with their Heavenly Father to keep His Commandments. Seven adults and one or more children from Napier were baptised.

“At the time there were no baptismal fonts in Hawke’s Bay. Many were baptized in rivers, among them our four youngest children. And so for the baptism of this particular group, a large hole had been dug in the ground with a tarpaulin placed in it and steps fashioned to facilitate entry.

“Brother and Sister Karena heated water in several old washing coppers to make it more comfortable for those being baptised, but as the baptisms proceeded the water cooled off, and by the time the Smales entered the water—it was cold! Sister Karena very kindly provided hot baths to help the sisters warm up. We were confirmed in Sister Karena’s living room and the spirit was beautiful.”

Murray Wilson from the Invercargill Branch, Dunedin District, is the only member of the Church in his birth family. Although his wife was born into the Church, she was less active when they met and married, so he was surprised when she announced one day that she had arranged for the missionaries to come and visit them.

Brother Wilson said, “From the first discussion when they

discussed the priesthood setup, and the twelve apostles, I knew what they were teaching was true. I looked forward to their next visit. At the second discussion they related Joseph Smith’s part in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and asked me to pray to know whether the book was true.

“At the end of the discussion when we kneeled to pray, I only got out three or four words, then was overcome and could not stop crying. My wife and the missionaries understood. Although I was sent to Sunday School in another church as a child, we only had set prayers, so this was the first time I had thought of prayer as really speaking to God. I was baptised within three weeks. My wife was able to answer some of my questions when the missionaries weren’t around.

“I was baptised in the Dunedin Branch in January 1972. The Dunedin brethren were truly brothers, and I received very good training in the priesthood. Recognising that I had received little schooling as a child, they encouraged me by assigning me things to do, which helped my development. I also served an adult apprenticeship in boilermaking, so I then had

some qualification, thanks to the church’s emphasis on education.

“I received the Aaronic Priesthood in March 1972, and after becoming an elder in November 1972, was sealed in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple in April 1973, to my wife and two existing children. Two years later our youngest son was born in the covenant. I know the Lord loves me and the Church is true.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) honoured the pioneer legacy when he said, “It is good to look to the past to gain appreciation for the present and perspective for the future. It is good to look upon the virtues of those who have gone before, to gain strength for whatever lies ahead. It is good to reflect upon the work of those who labored so hard and gained so little in this world, but out of whose dreams and early plans, so well nurtured, has come a great harvest of which we are the beneficiaries. Their tremendous example can become a compelling motivation for us all, for each of us is a pioneer in his own life, often in his own family, and many of us pioneer daily in trying to establish a gospel foothold in distant parts of the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Myrtle Gilbert from the Invercargill Branch in Dunedin District still faithfully attends sacrament meeting at the age of 89, despite debilitating pain that makes it difficult for her to sit for long. Relating her journey into the gospel, Myrtle recalls, “I was working in the same department at the hospital as a member of the Church, who invited me to join Church members who were hiring a bus for the day, to go to a beach on a public holiday. We had an enjoyable day, and my son had fun playing with the missionaries, who he thought at first were exchange students.

The missionaries invited him to hear the gospel lessons, which he did, and a week later he wanted to join the Church. He was only 14 years old, so he had to get permission from his father, who was not living at home. My son said it was the longest week of his life. As his father didn’t really say “No”, we went ahead. I was glad he wanted to join a church, as he was becoming a difficult teenager. He was baptised in March 1979.

Sister Gilbert continues, “I then took the lessons myself, only to see what the Book of Mormon was about. I was baptised in June

1979. My son went on a mission, married, and had six children.

“I was brought up [in another church], although I hadn’t been actively attending that church for some years. My husband was a lay preacher. Years before I got baptised, I always felt guilty when the missionaries knocked at our door, and I sent them away, saying I already attended a church. Joining the church rounded off my beliefs—I had felt there was something missing. I have had many callings. I have always believed in attending all meetings. You never stop learning, repeating the lessons every four years.”

A highlight of Myrtle’s gospel journey was being sealed to her husband and her son in the temple.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encourages modern Latter-day Saints to have in their footsteps the same dedication the pioneers had in theirs:

“We cannot begin to understand the journeys made by those who laid the foundation of this dispensation until we understand their spiritual underpinnings. Once we make that connection, however, we will begin to see how their journeys

parallel our own. There are lessons for *us* in every footstep they took—lessons of love, courage, commitment, devotion, endurance, and, most of all, faith.”

He continues: “We will learn, as did our pioneer ancestors, that it is only in faith—*real* faith, whole-souled, tested and tried—that we will find safety and confidence as we walk our own perilous pathways through life.

“We are all bound together—19th- and 20th-century pioneers and more—in our great journey to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and to allow His atoning sacrifice to work its miracle in our lives.”<sup>3</sup>

“We must be sure that the legacy of faith received from [the pioneers who came before us] is never lost. Let their heroic lives touch our hearts, and especially the hearts of our youth, so the fire of true testimony and unwavering love for the Lord and His Church will blaze brightly within each one of us as it did in our faithful pioneers.”<sup>4</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Following the Pioneers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Faith of the Pioneers,” *Ensign*, Jul. 1984.
3. M. Russell Ballard, “You Have Nothing to Fear from the Journey,” *Ensign*, May 1997.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “Faith in Every Footstep,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996.