

# NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Seek Learning

By Elder Kevin W. Pearson,  
First Counsellor in the Area Presidency

The Church needs great leaders. With the rate of growth in the Church across the Pacific and across the world, the Church needs great leaders; men and women, young and old, who are willing and able to respond to the call to serve. Leadership can be taught and developed, but all great leaders are also great learners. Therefore, in order to develop great leaders in the Church, present and future, we must first develop great learners, men and women with a thirst for knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

In the early days of the Church, the Lord helped Joseph Smith understand this important principle as he established the School of the Prophets in late December of 1832 in Kirtland, Ohio. At the time, the Church was young and very thin on leadership talent and strength. The Quorum of the Twelve would not be called until 1835, nor would the Presidency of the Seventy. And so, the faithful few who had been gathered thus far, assembled each evening after a long hard day's work on the second floor of the Whitney school to learn. There they were taught by Joseph and by one another. "Seek learning, even by study and also by faith."<sup>1</sup> The Church would never develop leaders until it first developed learners.

Joseph Smith and Brigham Young had very little formal education. Emma Smith recorded that Joseph was hardly capable of constructing a sentence when he began translating the Book of Mormon. He struggled to even pronounce

the name *Sariah*, the name of Lehi's wife. Yet, the Lord would send angelic tutors beginning with Himself and His Beloved Son Jesus Christ to teach Joseph and to help him prepare and develop into the great prophet-leader of the last dispensation of times. Joseph is a prime example of what President Thomas S. Monson often teaches: "Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies." In time, Joseph Smith would become one of the most knowledgeable and learned men of his time, as the Lord poured out revelation upon revelation through the prophet. With the Holy Ghost as his near-constant companion, Joseph's ability to learn was quickened and expanded well beyond his innate ability. He became a great learner and a great leader.

In the Church of Jesus Christ, all leaders are teachers. Effective teaching inspires people to strengthen their relationship with God and live according to gospel principles. Great teachers are great learners. Effective leaders "prepare themselves spiritually as they keep the commandments, study the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets, pray, fast, and humble themselves before the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Great learners appoint the Holy Ghost to be their teacher, and prayerfully "seek learning even by study and also by faith." "Leaders' most powerful teaching comes from sharing their personal example. Leaders also teach by sharing their testimonies and conducting doctrinally based discussions in leadership meetings, classes, and activities."<sup>3</sup>



**Elder Kevin W.  
Pearson**

As the Lord continues to “hasten [His] work in its time”<sup>4</sup> a strong case can be made for greater urgency in strengthening and expanding priesthood and auxiliary leadership within the Church. That means greater urgency in personal spiritual preparation and learning among all members of the Church. Consider the following recent prophetic announcements:

1. The recent change in the age of eligibility for full-time missionary service. Missionaries must now be prepared earlier. The home is the new mission training center. The responsibility to teach our children the doctrine and to prepare them to teach others is the parents’. Learning must take place in the home.
2. The new youth curriculum. Parents, teachers, advisers and leaders of youth are called by the Lord to help the youth learn the gospel by their own study and faith, to discover the truthfulness of the gospel for themselves, and to strengthen their families and others by sharing their experiences, insights, and testimony. This will require parents, teachers and leaders to first become more effective learners, establishing a daily pattern of personal prayer, scripture study and obedience to have the Holy Ghost be their appointed teacher.
3. The Church’s *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* and the recent worldwide leadership training video, *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood*, are materials which emphasize what the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are teaching priesthood and auxiliary leaders about the pre-eminent role of the family and the priesthood.

Since “true doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behaviours”<sup>5</sup>, perhaps the following

doctrinal principles will help each of us become better learners and by so doing become better leaders and teachers.

1. Learning is the very purpose of the plan of salvation. We are here to learn obedience, to live by faith and to become like the Saviour.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of learning is not just to know, but to become.
2. Agency is the cornerstone to the plan of salvation and to learning. Learning requires that we exercise our agency and act. To “seek learning even by study, and by faith”, is an act of agency.<sup>7</sup> We get what we focus on consistently. What level of learning are you choosing?
3. Learning will continue long after mortality.<sup>8</sup> So will the personal habits and desires we have for learning. A thirst for knowledge is a key characteristic of discipleship.
4. Spiritual learning requires prayerful and diligent study, but also faith and experience based on obedience.<sup>9</sup> Learning is not a spectator sport. It requires our active participation. No generation has had greater access to the scriptures and the inspired words of living prophets. How diligent are we in our gospel study? With online study aids available through LDS.org, *Preach My Gospel*, and the scriptures themselves, we have little excuse for not being students of the gospel. Experience is a great teacher and a fundamental part of our mortal experience. Learning requires experience, and it is often the application of knowledge that leads to wisdom. It is acting in faith and applying principles of obedience that allow us to experience blessings.
5. The Holy Ghost is the ultimate teacher of all spiritual truths.<sup>10</sup> As we faithfully keep our covenants and humbly call upon the Father in the name of the Son, we are promised the Father

will send the Holy Ghost to us. An essential part of “seeking learning, even by study, and by faith”, is recognizing our constant need to have the Holy Ghost be our teacher.

6. Learning our true relationship to God is the most important thing we can learn.<sup>11</sup> Understanding our true relationship with God is the beginning point for all spiritual learning and the foundation of a personal testimony.
7. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the enabling power for all learning. Obedience to God is the basis for obtaining and developing faith in the Saviour. The Atonement provides the power and “means unto men” to change, to repent, and to qualify for the Holy Ghost and the spiritual gift and power to learn.<sup>12</sup> Without the Atonement, we could not learn from experience without being condemned by the very experiences we need to grow.

If we are to save the rising generation, prepare a generation of powerful missionary teachers, strengthen future fathers, mothers, priesthood and auxiliary leaders and establish the Church, indeed if we are to save our own souls and prepare to meet the Saviour, then we need to hasten the work of learning. We need a generation of learners who “seek learning, even by study and by faith.” We need leaders who are diligent learners and powerful teachers. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
2. *Handbook 2*, 3.2.1
3. *Handbook 2*, 3.2.4
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:73.
5. Boyd K. Packer, “Do Not Fear,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 79.
6. See Abraham 3:25.
7. See 2 Nephi 2:16, 26.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18-19.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:118; 122:7.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2-3; John 14:26; Moroni 10:5.
11. See John 17:3; Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” p. 753.
12. Alma 34:15.

## Mana Mahuika— A Grand Heritage

By Jane Eyre

Eighty-four-year-old Hamiltonian matriarch Mana Mahuika did a recent tally of her offspring and was surprised and delighted to count 48 grandchildren, 98 great-grandchildren and 3 great-great-grandchildren. They are scattered throughout New Zealand, Australia and the United States, and she takes any opportunity to catch up with them. Earlier this year she travelled with her 19-year-old grandson, Elijah, to Brisbane to witness the blessing of her latest newborn great-grandson. Then upon returning home she said farewell to Elijah as he left for his mission to the South Philippines. Elijah’s brother, Israel, is currently serving in the North Philippines.

Big families are part of Mana’s heritage. She has 10 siblings and raised 10 children of her own with her husband, Nepia. She is of Tainui and Ngati Porou descent, and her great-grandfather on her father’s side was Gilbert Ormsby, who joined the Church in 1882 with his wife Raiha. Their legacy is far-reaching, with many of their descendants active in the Church throughout New Zealand,

but particularly in the Waikato area.

Mana was raised on her parents’ farm in Horotiu at a time when there were no chapels in the Waikato area, and members were scattered throughout the region. Sacrament meting and Sunday School were held in the home, occasionally joining with another family or two if transport allowed. She recalls, “I remember Mother’s special little plate for serving the sacrament bread. We would all drink the water from the same glass. All our lips fitted around that glass!”

Her father diligently taught the gospel to her and her siblings. Mana remembers just one Bible and one Book of Mormon in the home, and they were valued possessions. “It cost too much money to buy another Bible, and the Book of Mormon was rare. The missionaries gave us their copy,” she says. The missionaries would visit every three months because of the limited transport and large areas to cover. The elders were known to walk such distances as from Huntly to Raglan, 120 km round trip. Mana remembers Huntly receiving the first chapel for the Waikato area, and Hamilton’s

O'Neill Street chapel, where Mana worships today in the Hamilton East Ward, was the first in Hamilton city in 1959. Her mother took 10 years to join the Church, because as Mana says, "She loved her tea too much." But she eventually gave it up and was baptised in the Waikato River, which was a short walk from their farm. Matthew Cowley was a witness. Her mother became a "staunch member" and all the children were

eventually baptised in the flowing waters of the Waikato.

Mana remembers the persecution of the Church in those days. "It was terrible. It was even in the newspaper. It was really bad in this area, especially when they started building the temple and the college. They were dropping pamphlets around the place that criticised the Church. The only place that didn't have it was Huntly.

Those members were so strong. They stood their ground." When asked if the persecution affected her personally she says, "Not really. I'm always thankful for the teaching of my parents. I just knew in my heart that everything they had taught us was true. And it stuck with me."

Once married, Mana moved to the East Coast with her husband, a returned captain from World War II and not a member of the Church. In her new settlement Church meetings were held on the verandah of the local marae. They were not allowed to worship inside, as the marae was affiliated with another church. In time, Nepia grew curious and came to church with her, despite his strong Anglican heritage. There he encountered two old friends from his high school, and this was the start of his softening towards the gospel. "Especially when I would go to the temple, he wanted to become my eternal companion," Mana says. "So he decided to join the Church against his parents' wishes. The whole family turned against him so much that his father wrote him out of his will."

The trials didn't end there. The family home that Nepia had built was burnt to the ground in 1961. "I lost everything in it, even my tithing money and my



***Mana Mahuika with a photo of her deceased husband, Nepia.***

IMAGE COURTESY OF JANE EYRE AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

mother's jewellery. I was devastated," says Mana. Sadly, their insurance had lapsed.

While raising her 10 children, Mana began working to supplement the family income, and it took five years before they had enough savings to put down on another house, this time in Wellington. Mana is philosophical about the loss now, realising God had another plan and wanted them to raise their family in Wellington. There the family thrived with a bigger Church community and better schooling. "The fire turned out to be a blessing in disguise," she says.

All but 2 of her 10 siblings are still alive, and she is the eldest surviving. All but one remain active temple patrons. Between them they have sent 40 of their descendants on missions. She has concerns for her inactive offspring, and is quick to counsel them that the things of the world cannot replace the spiritual things.

Mana's full name is Manawanui, which means "big-hearted". You don't need to spend long in her presence to know that she is aptly named. And it takes a big heart to oversee such an expansive progeny. "I feel like Abraham whose seed was promised to be as numerous as the stars in the sky," she jokes. ■

## The Gospel Is True, Wherever You Are

By Jocelyn Fortune

My husband, Warwick, and I lived for five and a half years in the mountains of Irian Jaya (the easternmost province of Indonesia) where my husband was working as a geologist at a copper and gold mine.

When we first moved there in 1995, there were 12 members of the Tembagapura Branch, and we met each Sunday in the Tembagapura International School for our Church meetings. However, three years later, all the other members of the branch had either left to return to their home countries or had been retrenched by the mining company. Warwick and I were the only members of the Church left. I cried when we had our last meeting together with other members. Warwick continued working there for another two and a half years, and during this time we held our Sabbath day meeting in our own home.

Each Saturday night we would clean the downstairs area, ready for the Sabbath. In the morning we dressed in our Sunday clothes and went downstairs for our Church meetings. Warwick was the branch president, and I was his congregation. He would welcome me to

church and invite me to give the opening or closing prayer. We would try to do this without smiling too much, as it was quite clear that if I didn't accept the assignment there was no one else to do it!

We had the Church hymns on tape and played them quite loudly, so it sounded as if we had many other members of the Church singing with us. We partook of the sacrament each week, and held Sunday School Gospel Doctrine lessons.

Fast and testimony meetings were especially powerful for me. Standing up and bearing my testimony in front of my husband was a very tender and moving experience—one I will never forget.

During the time we were alone in Irian Jaya, we would get up each work day about 3:30 in the morning to get my husband off to work. We would have breakfast and read the Book of Mormon together before he left for work. We had our family prayers and individual prayers. If my husband had to go out on business I would watch conference videos on the Sabbath.

It was a time that I had dreaded (being without any

other members of the Church), but when we left Irian Jaya to finally return home to New Zealand our testimonies were still vibrant and strong, and we looked forward to serving in the Church and rejoiced in meeting with other members again. Through this

experience I have learned that whatever might happen in the future, I know that we can continue to be faithful, strong Latter-day Saints, through continuing to do the basics: individual prayer, daily scripture study, daily family prayers, family home evening

and partaking of the sacrament, even without the support and association of other members. The gospel is true wherever you live, and testimonies can continue to grow and be strengthened as we follow the living prophet and do the basics. ■

## New Zealand Pioneer

By Rangi Parker

Piripi Te Maari was one of Wairarapa's most revered leaders, a Rangatira (Chief) to the people of The Rakaiwhakairi Iwi, South Wairarapa.

Being well educated in both written and spoken Maori and English, he was commissioned to be the Clerk of the Maori Land Court for Takitimu, which covered Hawkes Maori Land Court for Takitimu, and the Wairarapa Districts, as an interpreter for the people with

*Te Ore Ore  
Marae*



IMAGE COURTESY OF ELDER EDWARD CLIFF PHOTO COLLECTION



little or no knowledge of English when they appeared in court. Piripi attended the Hui (meeting) that was held at Masterton with all the Maori leaders to discuss which one of the churches they should join. He recorded Potangaroa's prophetic account of the coming of the true Church, in both the Maori and English language. Piripi also became a pioneer for his family and his tribe by joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

He travelled with the first missionaries as they covered the southeast coast of the North Island, from Hawkes Bay through to the Wairarapa, as their interpreter preaching the gospel to the Maori people. ■

### *Piripi Te Maari*

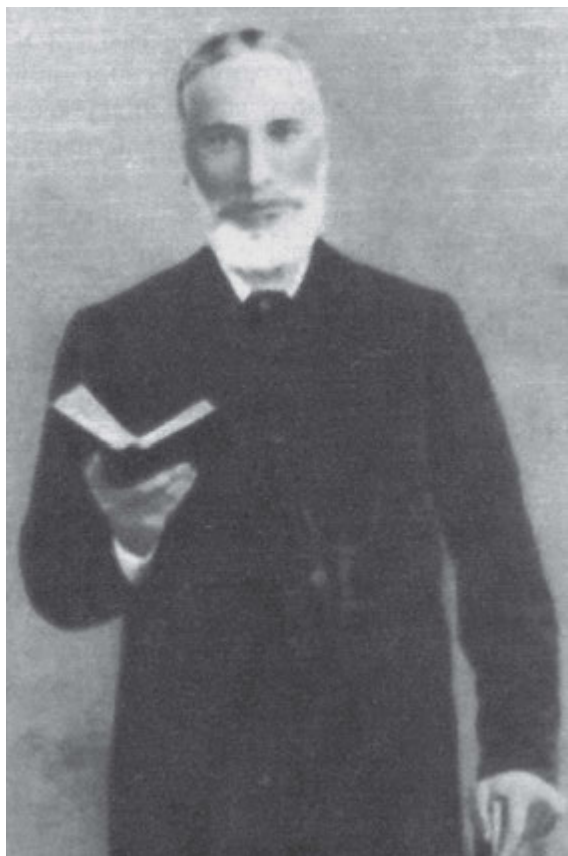


IMAGE COURTESY OF RANGI PARKER AND USED WITH PERMISSION

## The Peace of the Temple

By Catherine Vaughan

The scriptures tell us there must be opposition in all things, for without it we could not discern the bitter from the sweet (see 2 Nephi 2:11, 15).

Throughout our married life we experienced joy as each of our seven children came to join our family. We struggled financially raising a large family on one income, but were blessed abundantly in many other ways, as we served in various callings and actively lived the gospel.

When our youngest daughter, Brittany, accidentally drowned in 1998, it was a tough time for us all, and my husband and I sought the solace of the temple to heal our hearts. Knowing that we were sealed as a family for eternity brought comfort and helped us to endure the heartache.

We had barely recovered from the devastating loss of our little girl, when six years later our oldest daughter, Rebecca, had a major asthma attack and died suddenly. She was almost 20 and married with a six-month-old baby.

Once again we sought solace in the temple and were comforted to know that our two daughters were sealed to us forever, and we would get to see them again one day.

Adversity teaches us things we cannot learn otherwise. Through adversity I have come to know my Heavenly Father in a very personal way. He is real. In small and personal little miracles, I have come to know that He is there, and He knows who I am. He knows how I feel.

A year later, we prepared to do Rebecca's temple work for her 21st birthday. Her birthday was on a Saturday, and the whole family was going to the temple, even though the other children would not be able to go inside. We wanted the day to be a happy one, a celebration, and a



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reminder that our family was eternal.

Then the day before Rebecca’s birthday, I got a call to tell me my father had been killed in a hit-and-run accident crossing the road outside his house. A speeding drunk driver hit him, then drove off and left him on the side of the road.

My immediate reaction was that we would have to cancel the temple trip. But we realised that there was nothing we could do for my dad right at that moment, and performing the saving ordinances for Rebecca should have priority.

However, our carefully organised trip was in disarray. Phone calls from the police with updates on their hunt for the hit-and-run driver meant our travel to the temple was delayed. Our children were struggling with the grief of losing their grandfather so tragically. When we arrived at the temple I felt frazzled, my mind churning with the latest developments. I felt agitated and stressed.

But as I sat in the endowment session, I felt the peace and security that the gospel and knowledge of eternity can give us. I never had any flashy moments, no big experiences; neither my daughters nor my father appeared to me in the temple.

But I felt the Spirit whisper to my heart. I felt the comfort of a loving Father in Heaven.

When Joseph Smith was falsely accused and imprisoned in Liberty Jail for months, he cried out, “O God, where art thou?” (D&C 121:1).

In Doctrine and Covenants 121:7-8 we read the Lord’s response to that plea: “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment. And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.”

The Lord’s comforting assurance to Joseph Smith in his time of need is the very same promise He makes to us in our trials of faith: “Hold on . . . , fear not . . . , for [I] shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 122:9).

As we go to the temple and we remember the covenants we make there, it will help us to bear every trial and burden. The temple reminds us of our eternal goals and brings peace to our souls—the peace promised by the Saviour when He said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). ■