

AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Make Things Happen

By Elder Kevin W. Pearson

First Counsellor in the Pacific Area Presidency

I believe there are three kinds of people in the world; those who make things happen those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened! This generalization may be a useful assessment of many Church members as one of the most historic Church events in missionary work unfolds—the surge in full-time missionaries. This is a time for all members of the Church to *Make Things Happen!*

By the end of 2013 there may well be over 90,000 full-time missionaries serving, nearly double the number serving just one year ago. All across the Church young men and young women in particular, are responding in record numbers to President Thomas S. Monson's prophetic call to serve. This surging wave of missionaries is now reaching every mission in the world. As a result, 58 new missions were created in July. Never before has the missionary force been so large, or contained so many sister missionaries. These are extraordinary times, and extraordinary times produce extraordinary people!

We know how the youth of the Church are responding to President Monson's call to serve; the question is how will the rest of the members respond? In the recent Worldwide Leadership Training Broadcast from the New Mission President's Seminar, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sent an equally prophetic and historic call to priesthood and auxiliary leaders and to members everywhere to step up and join this growing army of missionaries and be "one in purpose". President Monson stated: "Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together, to work together, to labor in the Lord's

vineyard to bring souls unto Him. He has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work."¹ Clearly the Lord is hastening His work in its time!²

What Are Prophets and Seers Seeing?

For the past five years, President Monson's prophetic call of "go to the rescue" has been a clarion call to priesthood and auxiliary leaders everywhere to bring back into activity the less-active and inactive members of the Church. For the past three years the Area Presidency has emphasized the principles of "real growth" and true deepening personal conversion through making and keeping sacred covenants. Across the Pacific Area, many leaders have caught the spirit of the rescue and are experiencing great success in helping individuals and families return to the blessings of living the gospel. As ward and stake councils mobilize under the inspired direction of priesthood keys, extraordinary things are beginning to happen. Is the Lord sending this surge in missionaries to help priesthood and auxiliary leaders accelerate the rescue? Is this also a call to save more of the rising generation by having more young men and young women prepare to serve and to become converted through their own missionary service? How will this change the next generation of Church leaders and prepare the Church for continued future growth?

Things to Understand about the Surge

1. This initial surge in missionaries will not last. In 18 to 24 months this first and largest wave of missionaries will be gone. The number of



Elder Kevin W. Pearson

missionaries serving may never be as large again. We can't wait; we need to make things happen NOW. Ward and stake councils must act decisively to fully utilize this "missionary moment" by ensuring missionaries assigned to their wards are kept busy and productive. Ward mission leaders are the key, but the responsibility rests on the bishop and ward council. Each ward needs a mission plan to effectively utilize this surge in missionaries. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders need to lead out and make things happen. We encourage every ward to dedicate one night a week working together with the missionaries, to reach out to less-active members and invite them to come back.

2. The work of salvation includes everyone. Missionaries and members are charged to bring others unto Christ³, including nonmembers, less-active members, and active members. The Lord makes no distinction among His children; all are beloved. Members and missionaries must be "one in purpose". Elder Neil L. Andersen stated: "We work together in faith and unity, faith that the Lord will guide our steps, and unity with each other and the missionaries, always motivated by our love for Him, our love for one another, and our love for those we serve."⁴
In 1999 President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught that with concerted effort between members and missionaries we could double the number of baptisms.⁵ The same is also true of reactivation. With concerted effort between the members and the missionaries we can double the number of individuals and families we bring back into the Church.
3. Missionaries are called to assist members to do their sacred duty to "go to the rescue" and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not being asked to assist the missionaries. We are being asked to assist *the Lord* in hastening His work

of salvation. The missionaries are here to assist us. They don't need more sign-up lists to feed them. They are not starving for food. They are starving for people to teach! Missionaries will always prefer to *teach* with members than to *eat* with members. It is time to engage in missionary work and not just missionary maintenance. Let's serve with them side by side. The surge in sister missionaries will allow auxiliary leaders and women in the ward to take a more active role in the process of conversion and reactivation.

4. Mission training centres cannot prepare missionaries in two weeks; they must arrive more prepared. This means that the home must now become the new MTC. Parents have always had a sacred responsibility to teach their children to understand doctrine.⁶ We can help our missionaries be more prepared by using *Preach My Gospel* in the home to help them understand the basic principles of the gospel and of missionary work. We can help them love and understand the Book of Mormon and its essential role in conversion, beginning with their own conversion, long before they enter the mission field. We can help young men and women be worthy and prepared to go to the temple prior to missionary service and to honour sacred temple covenants. Family home evening and family scripture reading has never been more important. Parents, start preparing your children early—and don't give up.
5. The new youth curriculum, combined with the changes in age requirements for full-time missionary service, is clear evidence of the Lord's desire to fortify and prepare the rising generation. He is hastening His work among the youth of the Church like never before. They are being asked to step up and to be "a light unto the world."⁷ This means parents, leaders and teachers need to personally step up and become more effective

learners so they can be more effective teachers. They need to make things happen.

How Can Individuals Make Things Happen?

First and foremost, we can live exemplary lives that reflect the teachings of the Saviour and let our own light so shine that others seeing our good works will be drawn to the Saviour.⁸ Second, we can pray every day for opportunities to share the gospel. Heavenly Father will hear and answer those prayers. Third, volunteer to go with the missionaries on arranged “splits” to visit less-active members, help fellowship and teach investigators or befriend new members. We can share our testimonies and inspiring Church media on our social networks with friends and family. We can be bold and “just ask” someone to come to our home for family home evening, to a Church activity, to a baptismal service, or to Sunday services. As we do so with love, seeking the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord, He will make things happen through us.

These are the promised “latter days”⁹ when the Lord promised to gather all of Israel for the last time. We can have assurance that the Saviour, Jesus Christ, is standing at the head of His Church and directing the timing of this great surge in missionaries. We need them now, because He has prepared a way for us to accomplish the thing which he has commanded us to do.¹⁰

Those with eyes to see and ears to hear¹¹ need not wonder what is happening. Those willing to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to follow His latter-day prophets will not be content to merely watch these things happen. Motivated by our love for the Saviour and all of the Father’s children, each one of us can help to make things happen. We can personally become an integral part of this surge. We can make a great difference. We can be prompted by the Spirit to identify those

prepared to receive the gospel. With love we can invite them to “come and see”¹² and experience the blessings of the gospel. We can reach out. We can be the means of rescue. We can “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places”¹³ and in doing so, the Lord will make things happen through us. I bear personal witness of the truth of these things. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, *The Work of Salvation: Worldwide Leadership Broadcast*, June 23, 2013, hasteningthework.lds.org.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:73.
3. See *Preach My Gospel*, Missionary Purpose, Chapter 1.
4. Neil L. Andersen, *The Work of Salvation: Worldwide Leadership Broadcast*, June 23, 2013, hasteningthework.lds.org.
5. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 104.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 103:9.
8. See Matthew 5:16.
9. Topical Guide, “Last Days”, “Latter-days”.
10. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
11. See Matthew 13:16; Mark 8:18.
12. John 1:39.
13. Mosiah 18:9.

LOCAL PAGES

The Spirit Moves in Wonderful Ways

By LeeArn Rapanana

Anthony Gray had affiliations with the gospel most of his life but didn’t realise it until recently. His first cousins are members of the Church in New Zealand, and he also has extended family who married into the gospel. At high school his best friend was a less-active

member. However, Anthony never saw himself as a religious person and was not really open to the Spirit until January 2012.

My daughter Tazmin Rapanana (now a year 12 student) and Anthony had been friends for about a year prior to their friendship blossoming. When Tazmin



Tazmin holding her little brother Velan's hand before he passed away.

asked Anthony to attend her little brother Velan's funeral on the 13th of January 2012, Anthony had no intention of intruding on our grief, and he felt it was probably the wrong time to meet her family for the first time.

Our youngest son, Velan, was born a normal, healthy little boy. However he had a seizure, which caused a massive heart attack, and he was clinically dead for 20 minutes before they were able to revive him. He was left with acquired brain injury, unable to see, hear, or speak. As a result of the lack of oxygen to his brain his legs were also affected, resulting in them being joined from the heels to his groin. He could not eat ordinary foods and relied on a scientific solution that was

infused via an IV tube. However, Velan was a blessing to his family and all who knew him.

Following Velan's passing we held our traditional Maori Tangihanga, and we had our son with us at home for one week before he was laid to rest. These traditions are a time for celebration for members of our Church, but losing our son was just so very hard. It was during the Tangihanga that I received a spiritual prompting from my son, telling me that I "needed to look after his friend Anthony." I didn't know anyone by that name, and when my daughter first starting talking about a new friend by the name of Anthony, I had not put the two together.

Meanwhile, Anthony decided that it would probably be best not to attend the funeral the following day. He retired to bed that night having made his mind up, but was awakened early, "before the birds" he said, to a beautiful morning that he still remembers as the day that changed his life forever. He decided that morning he would attend the funeral of Tazmin's little brother, and proceeded to prepare himself.

He went to a friend's home to borrow some clothes that would be appropriate to wear to the funeral. The morning didn't go smoothly, but he

now recognises that that was the adversary working. After a few "minor hiccups" he arrived at the funeral. Later that day he entered a message on his Facebook page saying, "Today I attended the funeral of a little boy. It was life-changing."

There were new things to follow. Anthony attended a few family activities with Tazmin, and learnt about family prayer and what the gospel meant to her. Her lifestyle was different from his, and he was intrigued and a little overwhelmed, looking into a life and lifestyle that was so completely different from his own.

He attended church that first Sunday after the funeral with Tazmin and our family, and discovered that Tazmin's father was the bishop of the Tweed Heads Ward, Gold Coast Australia Stake, at the time. He learned about praying as a congregation, words of counsel and partaking of the sacrament.

Anthony continued to attend church. We noticed little changes each week in his dress, in his appearance, and in himself. As his continued on his journey learning more about God and His plan of happiness, we saw Anthony's life change for the better.

As a family we had our family home evening on a Sunday night,

so before we took Anthony home we focused on the basic principles and other gospel teachings that were of real interest to him.

Anthony had also lost a little brother in infancy, so he was particularly interested to know where he was now. Life after death didn't seem so final with the knowledge he was receiving from our family and through the Spirit.

Not long after our little son's funeral, we opened our home to Anthony, and took him in as a member of our own family.

On 21 March 2012, Anthony was baptized by Tazmin's older brother Savern, who has been an example along with Tazmin in encouraging Anthony to take the next step, by preparing for a mission. Elder Savern Rapana is now serving in the Adelaide Australia Mission.

Life in the gospel has been one of growth both personally and spiritually. Anthony's family has seen a change for the better in him, and we are proud of his journey and the life he now holds so sacred. Anthony had

*Tazmin Rapana
and Anthony
Gray*

a desire to serve the Lord and teach others to come unto Christ as he has. He hoped to put his missionary application papers in as soon as possible. When the missionary serving age for young men was lowered he was even more enthusiastic to go and serve his Heavenly Father.

Anthony has expressed his love for his Heavenly Father and is grateful that he listened to the Spirit that morning in January 2012 to attend a funeral service for a little boy he had never met. The Spirit bears witness to him every day that God and Jesus Christ are real, that this journey of life is preparatory for a greater one to come, and the choices we make here are pertinent for our salvation. His understanding has vastly grown, for he now knows God lives, and He hears and answers his prayers. With this knowledge he knows he can live eternally with God and his loved ones again.

Recently, Elder Anthony Te Rare Pukeroa Gray was called to serve in the Philippines San Pablo Mission. He entered the MTC in August 2013.

How blessed we are to have three sons working for the Lord at the same time. Yes, three sons. We already know that our little boy Velan is working with our Saviour now. He started his work long before he passed through the veil. ■



IMAGE COURTESY OF SANDRA MCLENNAN AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

A Change of Plan

By Debi Mathieson and Sandra McLennan

Sister Kate Mathieson is the first sister missionary to serve from the Burleigh Heads Ward, Gold Coast Australia Stake. When President Thomas S. Monson announced the lowering of the missionary service ages for men to age 18 and for women to age 19, on the 6th October 2012, Kate Mathieson had just turned 18, and the thought of serving a mission was nowhere on her radar.

In March 2013 Kate said farewell to her boyfriend, Elder Marvin Boyce, as he left to serve in the Ukraine Kiev Mission, never realizing that in

just six months she would be saying farewell to her family and friends as well.

Kate's previous plan was to continue studying Occupational Therapy at Southern Cross University to graduate before Elder Boyce came home.

About two months after he left, Kate began to feel little promptings from the Lord that she too should prepare to serve a mission. As this was not a part of her plan she tried for two weeks to ignore the feelings and push them away, not mentioning a word to her friends or family.

When Elder Dallin H. Oaks came to speak to the YSA in Brisbane, Kate felt the promptings even more strongly than before.

Drew Mathieson, Debi Mathieson, Earl Mathieson, Sister Kate Mathieson, Lachlan Mathieson



IMAGE COURTESY OF SANDRA MCLENNAN AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

At lunch that Sunday when her mother, Debi, mentioned that she thought Kate would make a wonderful missionary, Kate shared the promptings she had received with her family. Tearfully, her mother explained she had received the same promptings for the past two weeks but was reluctant to say anything because it wasn't a part of "The Plan".

Kate knew her feelings were from the Lord and could not deny them, so she called her bishop for guidance.

Bishop Tony Hayden-Smith had no doubts that Kate should serve a mission, and during their visit he shared that there are people somewhere on Earth she had promised in the premortal existence to find. This fact hit home to Kate.

After fasting and sincerely praying with a willing

heart, she received her answer and began preparations immediately. Within two weeks all her paperwork was completed and submitted, which was a testimony to her that the Lord provides the way when we do as He commands.

Kate received her call three weeks later to serve in the Korea Daejeon Mission, reporting to the MTC in October 2013.

"Wherever we are called is where we are supposed to be. I cannot wait to wear the Lord's name right next to mine" said Kate. "I'm so grateful for my membership in the Church. The blessings and happiness that it brings to my life are incomprehensible. The Saviour undoubtedly has a beautiful, personal and specific plan for every single one of us. I can't wait to share His love and truth with others." ■

Tender Mercies of the Lord

By Elder Chad Norford

Elder Andrew Mitchell from Dunedin served his mission in 2004–2005 in the Australia Sydney North Mission. After one year in the mission field he felt like he had not found that one unique person or family. Then he was transferred to the Ourimbah Ward.

His new companion, Elder Ricks, had already found a family while out tracting and arranged to teach them. Elder Mitchell arrived in time to teach the first lesson. The Norford family soon became a very

significant part of his life. After six months, three members of the Norford family accepted the challenge to be baptised—Wendy, Chad, and Ellenis.

The Carnovale family were also members of the Ourimbah Ward, and they became close friends with the Norford family after their baptism, fellowshiping and supporting them. In early 2007 the Carnovales' youngest son, Joseph, was called to serve in the New Zealand Wellington Mission. At the end of that year tragedy struck, and

Elder Carnovale was killed in a bicycle accident while serving in the Masterton area just before Christmas. Now it was the Norfords' turn to support the Carnovale family through the devastating loss of their youngest son.

Gradually as the years passed, the Norford family became less active. After experiencing some hardship and regret, Chad Norford decided to pray and ask for some help and counsel. Chad prayed three times for guidance to help him return to the straight and narrow path. He received answers to his prayers, and the Spirit whispered that he should



Chad Norford with Elder Andrew Mitchell, who baptised him.

return to church and that he would soon be on a mission. Guided by the prompting he had received, Chad took the necessary steps to return to full activity in the Church and prepare to serve a mission.

When Chad's mission call eventually arrived, he was the first elder to go on a mission from the Ourimbah Ward since Elder Carnovale, and he was also called to serve in the New Zealand Wellington Mission. The Carnovale family were ecstatic, and gained tender mercies from the Lord as they watched their son's friend prepare to serve in

Elder Chad Norford with Greymouth Branch president, Andrew Mitchell

the very same mission their son had served in.

Westport Branch is a tiny branch in the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand. When the branch president, who happened to be the former Elder Andrew Mitchell, received a phone call from Chad Norford, he was surprised to hear that the young man he had baptised several years earlier was about to leave on his mission, and would be serving in New Zealand. Their paths crossed again when Elder Norford was

transferred to the Westport area. Soon after that he was called to serve as the second counsellor in the Westport Branch, with President Mitchell.

They both have a testimony that Heavenly Father places the right people exactly where He needs them, in the right place, at the right time.

As an added blessing to Chad Norford's mission, his mother returned to full Church activity, and entered the temple exactly one year after he left for the mission field. ■