

UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Steadfastness

By Elder Kent F. Richards, USA

Second Counsellor in the Europe Area Presidency

The Area Presidency has a marvelous vision for the growth of the Church in Europe. As described in the annual Area Plan, there is every possibility of doubling the number of members attending sacrament meeting by 2019. That vision is one of faith, hope, charity and hard work. Sometimes we think in terms of large numbers and large groups of people worshipping together. This is wonderful when it happens. We strengthen each other and serve each other. But, perhaps even more important is the sweet conversion that takes place in the heart of each individual and the power within a family to protect, strengthen and literally save each member.

Through this wonderful year of service here in the Europe Area, I have seen and felt the power of the Spirit of the Lord reaching into the hearts and homes of members in many countries. I have felt personally His love to each person. Sometimes I feel that more real good is done in a one-on-one visit with a struggling soul, than all that is said in a general session of stake conference. Of course, meetings are important because each individual can feel the sustaining influence of the Spirit, and the messages are personalized by the Spirit.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for each person is *continuing* faithful. I have seen many people who have

decided to take “time off” from being active. Even when they come back, they have a hard time regaining what they might have learned, felt and become had they remained throughout. The prophet Alma in talking about his faithful son Shiblon used some powerful words: “steadiness,” “faithfulness,” “continue,” “endureth to the end.”¹

There is great happiness and goodness in these words and what they signify. The ultimate object of our mortal journey is to receive the ordinances of the temple with their associated covenants, and then to keep those covenants into eternity. Indeed, they are eternal covenants made with our Father Himself. These ordinances and covenants are the very key to our eternal happiness—far overshadowing all of the challenges and seemingly insurmountable problems that often beset us.

The Savior Jesus Christ “brought us out” from our “Egypt”—our problems, our sins, our fears—“that he might bring us in” to peace and joy and enduring happiness and hope.² His promises are real. They are constant. They are personal. They never fail. He is standing with open arms eternally—for us to covenant in our hearts, and He lives for us to take upon us His name, to keep His commandments, and to serve others.

For most of us, it seems to be the most difficult to give back our precious resources—both time and means. Perhaps that is why the Lord instituted tithes and offerings as a standard for covenant making and



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steadfast faithfulness. But, with the commandment He promises such sweet blessings and assurances that far outweigh any difficulty. And most important, our faith is stronger. We are happier. There is real assurance that He knows us and that He cares.

“And thither ye shall bring your . . . tithes, and . . . your freewill offerings. . . . And there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice *in all that ye put your hand unto*, ye and your households, wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.”³ “For the Lord your God *proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

“Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him [reverence him], and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him; and cleave unto him.”⁴ Even though these words were spoken by prophets thousands of years ago, they still apply and are true. He needs our hearts and our covenants—so that He can bless us without measure. ■

NOTES

1. See Alma 38:2.
2. See Deuteronomy 6:23.
3. See Deuteronomy 12:6–7; emphasis added.
4. See Deuteronomy 13:3–4; emphasis added.

The Benefits and Joy of Interfaith Work

By Julie Harrald, public affairs community specialist for Leicester stake

Under priesthood leadership, our public affairs programme is one of our formal interfaces with the community. At local and national level we have competent people building links with the media, politicians, business, local government, charitable organisations and other faith leaders.

It is work that requires consistency and time so that relationships can be built, and those we work with come to know they can trust us, how to contact us, and who to speak to—without finding that our personnel has changed each time they try! As a consequence, a calling to public affairs requires long-term service: in the Leicester Stake the public affairs council members have given a combined total of over 60 years of service.

An area of endeavour that we have found particularly fruitful in the Loughborough Ward is interfaith work. In 1997 Bishop Arthur Hardy, now our stake director of public affairs, was inspired to reach out to all the other faith leaders in the town and invite them and their congregations to the Preston Temple open house, and we have been involved in interfaith work ever since. It has been so beneficial to all of our other areas of public affairs work that we wanted to share the experience to show what can be accomplished and encourage others.

For several years after that first contact, we attended monthly interfaith discussion meetings that were open to the public, and hosted and planned in turn by the various religions in the town. Over time, initial caution about us dissipated; we made friends and became reliable, active participants, as much able to listen as to talk—an essential quality in interfaith work.

In 1999, we joined as full members of Loughborough Council of Faiths (LCoff), the formal interfaith body in the town, established to be



PHOTOGRAPH BY JULIE HARRALD

The former Chairman of the County Council, Mike Jones, on Helping Hands Day.

a forum for doing business—a place where faiths can organise joint events and engage with local government and public services, such as health, police and education, including the local university. Over time, LCoff members come to know many of the long-standing borough councillors who have had the privilege of serving a year as Mayor. Many of them stay involved, and those who give most generously of their time or expertise are recognised as “Friends of Loughborough Council of Faiths”. Besides ex-Mayors, other “Friends” include the MP and the local newspaper editor. Thus, as active members of the Council of Faiths, we have become genuine friends and colleagues not only with the members and leaders of the other religions in the town, but many of the key opinion leaders.

These are some of the many good experiences and opportunities we have been given:

- The local MP and the chairman of the County Council and his wife have asked if they could join us in our Helping Hands projects.

- The Deputy Mayor and his wife attended our Easter Day sacrament service.
- We have taken our turn saying the prayer at the start of borough council meetings.
- We have performed music at the annual inaugural church service for the new Mayor.
- We have been leading participants in organising the annual town commemoration events for Holocaust Memorial Day.
- While serving for five years as secretary of the LCofF, our public affairs locality specialist helped the newspaper editor set up a regular “Faith Matters” column in the local newspaper.
- We have opened our building for rehearsals for several interfaith pantomimes.
- We were invited to have a seat on the county SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education), where one of our representatives, Denise Hardy, has now served for many years and is about to become Chair, and Arthur Hardy has recently had his portrait painted and exhibited in recognition of extended service.
- We have participated in many varied events at the university, organised by the chaplaincy there. Our young women touched hearts with their singing at the Quaker national conference when it was in the area.

Interfaith work requires us to be reliable, honest, open, listening, enquiring, informative and hard-working, but the opportunities and experiences are great. It gives us the opportunity to dispel misunderstandings about our beliefs and talk to those normally least likely to listen to us—those committed to other faiths. In the long term, we become respected as credible team players, keen to help and engage with the wider community.

If there is an interfaith group in your area, get involved, and if not, then start one! ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY JULIE HARRALD

The MP for Loughborough, Nicky Morgan, with members, erects a polytunnel for a community garden.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JULIE HARRALD

The former Deputy Mayor and Mayoress, Roy Brown and his wife, Gillian, with Primary children on Easter Sunday.

Interfaith—Coventry Stake

By Des Waddington

Representing Coventry stake on the Warwick District Faiths Forum (WDFF) for the last three years, Michael Bleach has regularly attended quarterly meetings and has participated in activities and events, including Faiths Calendar, Annual Faiths Trail and Multi-Faith Display at Leamington Peace Festival. A highlight was the meeting that was convened at Warwick chapel. Forum members had expressed the desire to learn more about the Church and were excited to have the opportunity of a tour of the building and an explanation about the basic beliefs of the Church.

The annual Faiths Trail offers a chance for people to see inside places of worship in the area and learn about the religions. Experienced guides offer a tour and an informative talk. On visiting a Buddhist place of worship, Michael said, “It has been a fascinating and rewarding afternoon that will help bring religious tolerance and understanding.”

Michael has participated for two years in the Leamington Peace Festival, which exists to promote peace, environmental harmony and living in cooperation with others.

In December 2011 and 2012, Michael and Sue Bleach visited the Sikh Temple in Leamington Spa to help insert the Faith calendar into cassette holders. A small group had convened and a production line was soon underway whereby the task was successfully completed. A complimentary lunch of various curry dishes cooked by Sikh volunteers was served. On removing shoes, helpers were treated to a tour of the huge, magnificent interior of the building, which proved very interesting.

Through the good relationships and links already established with other faith leaders, groups and formal organisations, it is hoped to take this work in our area to a new level. ■

Latter-day Saint Scripture

By Rob Collier

Grimsby 1st Ward

Whilst serving on the bishopric I was asked to attend an interfaith meeting to represent the Church at a local interfaith forum of which we had no previous experience. I was asked to speak about “The Latter-day Saint Sacred Text” to a collection of ministers and representatives from various faiths. Over the years I have become experienced and comfortable talking to people in other faiths, and as I prayed and pondered scriptures I moved comfortably through Latter-day Saint sacred texts and dwelt on the great blessing they are to us as members.

At the meeting I asked the question, “What is scripture?” I said that scripture has meant different things to different people at different times throughout history. Looking around the room I saw the various ministers and, knowing they held different Bibles as their sacred texts, I indicated that some had the Apocrypha included in their Bibles whilst others had not, while others in the room had various scriptures removed from their Bibles. I drew attention to 18 biblical references which alluded to books which are lost to us today. I suggested that scripture is like an iceberg, with only a fraction of the whole visible at a given time. Heavenly Father, who knows all things, gives and takes away according to his designs. What I said seemed to be warmly received so I pressed on and presented the standard works as our four sacred texts, and the eighth article of faith.

Following the meeting I was asked lots of questions and have been able to dispel a few myths and to build on some new-found relationships. I have met with several ministers since, given a few tours of our chapel, and I have passed books and literature which is hoped will continue to build relationships of trust. ■

My Experience Joining SACRE

By Greg Nettleship

I thought that joining SACRE, The Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, might not be easy. However, an initial meeting with the chair of SACRE in my home city of Sheffield was very positive. He was impressed with our commitment to education and tolerance for those of other faiths, and invited me to the next meeting where my application would be discussed.

I attended only as an observer but I could answer questions. I was surprised at the level of misunderstanding and hostility. My answer to a question asking whether we were Christians sparked a lively debate between some members. The votes were evenly split and it was referred to a city cabinet member for a decision. We invited the stake to pray and fast for a successful outcome. Weeks later I was thrilled to see that we had been accepted.

I have attended all the meetings since becoming a member of SACRE. Through my networking and participating in the business of the meetings, the Church is now better known, and no longer is there hostility or even the slightest resistance towards us. In fact, a recent SACRE meeting was held in one of our meetinghouses. The premeeting tour of the building was well received and everyone thanked us for being invited.

In answer to prayer, the Lord has brought about a change of heart. Lack of knowledge and mistrust have been replaced by enlightenment and respect. I find it a joy to work with others of faith while helping bring the Church out of obscurity. ■

Thought for the Day on BBC Radio Bristol

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARTIN TURVEY



Martin Turvey, president of the Bristol stake, presents a regular "Thought for the Day" on BBC Radio Bristol.

In 2009, Martin Turvey, president of the Bristol England Stake, was contacted by BBC Radio Bristol to ask if he would present a "Thought for the Day" on a regular basis. The 90-second segment is presented daily from a wide range of religious leaders in the south west of England. Martin eagerly accepted, and after some training delivered his first thought in October 2009. Over almost four years of presenting around 10 thoughts each year,

he has built a good rapport with the show presenter, Steve LeFevre, who had started just before Martin. Where time is available, there's often also a brief interaction about other topical matters.

The segments are broadcast live from the studio, although on one occasion Martin participated in a special outside broadcast from Bristol Airport. This gave him a wonderful opportunity to highlight the ease of travel from Bristol to Salt Lake City in just a few hours, compared to the early day LDS pioneers from the south west who would have had to get to Liverpool, take a ship to New York, and then travel 1500 miles across the plains.

The association with BBC Radio Bristol has also led to other contributions. Martin was recently featured in a Sunday morning programme about how ministers came to their role. He was also interviewed last year about the impact on the Church of Mitt Romney's US election bid, and before that Radio Bristol did an entire show about the family history efforts of the Church.

This has developed into an extremely positive relationship with the radio station for mutual benefit. ■

An Amazing Outreach

By Jeremy Dick, Oxford Ward, Reading Stake

As bishop of the Oxford Ward, I was a worried man: I had invited the Oxford Council of Faiths to hold their bi-monthly meeting in the Oxford LDS chapel, and it was not in a good state! Because we were awaiting some major restorative work on the building, it seemed a little run-down and rough at the edges. What would 35 representatives of other faiths think!

I should not have been concerned! Everyone—the Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Anglican, Catholic, Unitarian, Humanist, Pagan and other Oxford groups—loved the building and its facilities. Several communities struggling themselves to find places to meet asked how we managed to find such a location, with parking, in such a busy city.

Through that one event—and subsequent meetings in various places in the city—we have been able to educate many influential community representatives in their understanding of our faith. They know that we are ordinary people, committed Christians, and have a healthy, optimistic approach to life. That is the power of engaging in interfaith work!

Oxford Ward members have been involved in Council of Faiths now for over three years. Apart from hosting and sending a representative to meetings in other groups' facilities, we have also twice seen the ward choir sing in the City Hall as part of the National Interfaith Week. Members also participate in the annual 700-strong multifaith Friendship Walk through the city. We now know representatives of other faith communities and are able to invite them to ward conferences and other appropriate activities. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY DICK



A friendship walk in Oxford.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY DICK



The Reading friendship walk.

The Three Faiths Forum

From Charly Jones, Clapham Ward, Wandsworth Stake

While at university a few years ago, I got accepted onto an undergraduate ParliaMentors program with Three Faiths Forum, (3FF) whereby I worked in a trio with a member of each of the Abrahamic faiths: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. We worked together to develop a project for an inner-city London community, whilst being mentored by the MP Peter Bottomley. It was an incredible

experience, and above all, I learned a lot about what we all had in common as a group, as well as gaining hands-on experience of the work MPs do on a day-to-day basis.

Since then I have become an active member of the 3FF Alumni and have had opportunities to speak to a variety of bodies: a room full of international diplomats at St James' Palace, where we addressed the work we do on the

program; and the presentation of a thank you gift on behalf of 3FF to a BBC correspondent in City Hall. I have met various members of The House of Commons, House of Lords, reporters, and many other incredible people from different religious, political, and charitable organisations.

Interfaith work is so important and can achieve so much good. I have learned that there are many good people doing a lot of incredible work and trying to engage positively in the community, and I hope to follow their example. ■

Kettering Mayor's Holocaust Memorial Service

By Debbie Twigger

After several years of service by Laura Richards as a member of SACRE, and after many invitations to local Mayors and groups to attend Church events, the Mayor of Kettering, Councillor James Hakewill, invited representatives from the Kettering Ward to attend the annual Holocaust Memorial Commemoration. This was held at the Council chamber with this year's theme of "Build a Bridge". This was also the second year that Tony Twigger, representing the Church in Kettering, had been invited to offer a prayer and a reading and was the result of developing and building friendships locally. SACRE meetings have been



Cllr Val Carter, Mrs Christine Hakewill (Mayoress), Cllr Judy Caine (Deputy Mayor of Corby), Mr Paul Balmer, Cllr Jim Hakewill (Mayor of Kettering), Cllr Keli Watts (Deputy Mayor of Kettering), Colonel John Royle (Deputy Lord Lieutenant), Tony Twigger, Mrs Clary Pollack and Mr Fred Pollack Representing RAF Alconbury.

held in two Church buildings within the stake, and tours were given to all members to help them gain a better understanding of our beliefs and who we are as individuals. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN GORE

Scottish Interfaith

By Douglas Yates

Although efforts at interfaith interaction have been attempted in Scotland over the years, it was always met with a healthy degree of scepticism and an unwillingness, on all sides, to fully engage in any meaningful dialogue.

It was not until 2002 that serious and sustained efforts were made to connect with the then-Scottish Inter Faith Council and other interfaith groups. It was through regular attendance at meetings of the Scottish Inter Faith Council that the Church representative was able to give a presentation about the beliefs and works of the Church, and friendships were established with Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Unitarian, Jew, Quaker and several other faith traditions. At the same time discussions were progressed with Catholic, Salvation Army and Church of Scotland representatives.

Executive members of the Scottish Inter Faith Council were invited to the Scotland Edinburgh Mission office for informal talks, and work was also ongoing to become involved with interfaith groups throughout Scotland.

The Church has hosted five specific interfaith events during the last eight years in some of our stake centres where members of other faith traditions have participated fully in the programmes, which have been followed by socialising and food (remembering to have kosher food on a separate table).

Currently, as a result of persistence over the long term, we have Church representatives on interfaith groups in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Kirkcaldy, Dundee and East Renfrewshire, and are now members of Interfaith Scotland (formerly Scottish Inter Faith Council). We point out to other faith traditions that while we have no desire to be ecumenical, we do wish to look to work together in common causes which protect religious freedom and promote kindness, respect and love of humankind. ■

York Interfaith Success

By Bill Kimberling

In the York stake members are striving to exemplify the prophetic counsel from President Thomas S. Monson, who encouraged us “to show kindness and respect for all people everywhere” and taught “we can and should demonstrate respect toward those whose beliefs differ from ours”.

In 2011, York Interfaith Group (YIG) visited the York chapel for a tour and presentation of LDS life.

This has led to representatives from the Church speaking at and even chairing YIG meetings and representing them at York’s first and highly successful International Festival of Faith and Culture. Full-time missionaries mingled happily with organisers, members were on hand to assist at the family history stall, the press lauded the festival widely, and the Church received positive recognition in the official festival report.

So it’s perhaps fitting that President Monson’s exact wise words appeared recently on the YIG’s own official website. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN GORE

Members of the York Interfaith Group.

Editor’s Note

Please submit all stories and photographs to the editors, **Jason Watling and Debbie Twigger** at ukiensign@ldschurch.org. Stories should be in Microsoft Word and photographs in jpg format, around 3-4mb in size.

We need the signed permission of all participants in the photograph, as well as the photographer, for the Church to use the article and photograph. A form will be sent out upon receipt of the article or it can be obtained from us in advance or

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