

NEW ZEALAND 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

Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel

By Elder Mark James O’Brien

I was born and raised in Hamilton, New Zealand, and joined the Church on February 14, 2010, when I was 21 years old.

My friend Andrew Vercoe joined the Church, and then invited me to see the Christmas lights at the Hamilton Temple. While there, one of the missionaries spent time talking to me

about the purpose of temples and asked for an appointment to teach me. I reluctantly agreed to meet them in January, expecting them to forget, so I was surprised when they came by in the new year and presented a lesson on the Restoration. I didn’t feel anything different, but liked the missionaries and invited them back.



**Elder Mark
O'Brien at the
Preston England
Missionary
Training Centre**

The second lesson was about the plan of salvation, and I really felt the Spirit as they taught me. I continued the lessons, feeling the Spirit each time the missionaries came. I was baptized three weeks later.

As my knowledge and testimony of the gospel grew, I decided near the end of 2011

that I really wanted to become a missionary and share the joy the gospel had given me with people who did not have that feeling of peace. I felt strong promptings from the Spirit that I should serve a mission.

However, when I met my bishop to discuss serving a mission, I found that the

health standards for missionary service required me to lose weight. My weight was 165 kg, and I needed to lose 35 kg. Discouraged, I knew that I didn't have a lot of time to accomplish this goal because I was already 23 years old, and I knew that the maximum age for missionaries is 25.

I took the problem to the Lord, and found that with the Lord's help I could accomplish more than I thought was possible. Ammon, a great Book of Mormon prophet, testified of this when he said, "I know I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak . . . but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things" (Alma 26:12). The Lord sent me help in the form of a wonderful member, Wallace Hau. He is a physical trainer, and he said that working together we could burn the weight off in a few months.

I knew this had been an answer to my prayers. I made a real effort to follow a strict diet. There were many early mornings and hours spent in the gym, and my weight started to reduce. After six months I reached 138 kg. I was granted a 10kg allowance, and my mission papers were submitted.

I was so excited to send in my mission papers. Two months went by and I did not receive my call. I became discouraged, and as a result of not sticking to my exercise and diet routine, my weight started to increase again.

Eventually I received information that health issues would prevent me from serving a mission, as my blood pressure was too high. I was also informed that I

was still outside the maximum weight allowance. With my weight increase, I now had 20 kg to lose, and was nearly 24 years old with only one year left to meet all of the requirements. It had taken six months to lose the first 20 kg, and I knew it would not be easy.

Once again I turned to the Lord for His help. Fasting helped me to feel the Spirit, and I was touched by how much the Lord loved me. The words, "Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven," from the hymn "Praise to the Man" (*Hymns*, no. 27) strengthened my spirit.

With hard work the weight started to come off again, and I lost the extra 20kg in 12 weeks. Once my health was cleared, my mission application was submitted again.

Two days after my 24th birthday, I received my mission call. Oh, how great was my joy! I was excited and thankful to the Lord for His strength, support and love, and that He had made it possible for me to become a missionary. Even though I'm the only member of the Church in my family, my parents were very excited to see where I would be serving.

I was called to serve in the England Manchester Mission and assigned to report to the Mission Training Centre in

Preston, England, six weeks later. This was such wonderful and exciting news, but it would present my next challenge, that of obtaining a visa in six weeks.

Even though we completed all the paperwork within a week, it took three months for the visa application to be processed and accepted. During that time I felt peace. I learned through these experiences to rely on the Lord in all things. Sacrifice truly does bring forth great blessings from heaven.

We can take solace in the words of the Lord to Joseph Smith in the height of his trials and affliction while in Liberty Jail. The Lord said, "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; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes" (D&C 121:7–8).

I testify that we can overcome all our foes, whether they be weight loss, illness, sin, lack of family support, or any other form of affliction. If we exercise our faith in Jesus Christ and then act, the blessings of heaven will be upon us.

There is no more rewarding work than being a full-time missionary. I am grateful to the Lord each day for the opportunity to serve here in England. ■

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 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 return to church, and would soon be on a mission. Guided by the prompting he had received, Chad



IMAGE COURTESY OF CHAD NORFORD AND USED WITH PERMISSION

Chad Norford with Elder Andrew Mitchell, who baptised him.

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 the very same mission their son had served in.



Elder Chad Norford with Greymouth Branch president Andrew Mitchell.

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. ■

Primary Book of Mormon Challenge

By Emmeline Sunnex

On Sunday, December 2, 2012, a Book of Mormon graduation evening was organised for the Grandview Ward, Rotokauri Stake, Valiant 11 Primary class to celebrate their great achievement of reading the Book of Mormon from start to finish. Their teacher, Emmeline Sunnex, had issued them the challenge in January last year and provided them with hardcover copies of the Book of Mormon and a reading log to keep track of their progress.

Emmeline then encouraged them regularly throughout the year to read the Book of Mormon, phoning them on several occasions to encourage them to finish the challenge she had given them. The Book of Mormon graduation was attended by each of the children in the class along with their families and friends, around 50 in total. Each of the children shared a brief testimony and talked about one of their favourite Book of Mormon heroes.

Bishop Ra Bacon and stake president Todd Miller presented special gifts, which included Book of Mormon hero posters and journals to each of the graduates, including to their own daughters, Esther and Hannah.

The special evening allowed all who attended to feel the Spirit, and these six Primary children proved that you're never too young to read the entire Book of Mormon all by yourself. ■



From left to right: Isaac S., Esther B., Takaviri D., Emmeline Sunnex, Gabrielle T., Hannah M., and Trae T. were honoured for reading the entire Book of Mormon.