

AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

The Prophetic Promise of the Messiah

By Elder Kevin W. Pearson

First Counsellor in the Area Presidency

The birth of Jesus Christ in the meridian of time was one of the most anticipated events in all recorded ancient scripture. Beginning with Adam and continuing with every ancient prophet through the ages, the promise of the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Saviour, and the Only Begotten Son of God was foretold.

The righteous have worshiped the Father in the name of the Son and have exercised faith in Him, repented and covenanted through baptism and received the gift of the Holy Ghost in every age where the Melchizedek Priesthood has been available on the earth. The prophets foretold of His coming in the meridian of time to prepare His people, and the prophets of the Restoration continue to warn the people of His Second Coming and the need to prepare to meet Him.

Sadly, there were but few looking for Jesus of Nazareth when He came: “Notwithstanding his mighty works, and miracles, and proclamation of the truth, in great power and authority, there were

but few who hearkened to his voice, and rejoiced in his presence, and received salvation at his hands” (D&C 138:26). Contrast that with “the angel [and] a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:13–14).

The birth of the Son of God would have been one of the most acknowledged and celebrated days in all of recorded history in the pre-mortal realm. His mission there would be the very foundation of the Father’s plan of salvation. Who in the heavens would not have known of that event? Thirty-three years later, as President Joseph F. Smith in vision witnessed, “there were gathered in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality . . . they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand. They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their



Elder Kevin W. Pearson

redemption from the bands of death” (D&C 138:12,15–16).

He will come again, and all His words will be fulfilled which He has caused to be spoken through His prophets. As we look to the Saviour this Christmas, may we also heed the voices of His holy prophets, for a voice of warning, teaching, counsel, instruction and guidance, that we might ever be found with the “valiant in the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:79), that we “may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true follows of his Son, Jesus Christ; that we may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear [again] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48).

Consider these prophetic messages as you celebrate Christmas in your home this year.

The Christmas Spirit

“With the birth of the babe in Bethlehem, there emerged a great endowment—a power stronger than weapons, a wealth more lasting than the coins of Caesar. This child was to become the King of kings and Lord of lords, the promised Messiah—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

“Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. During His earthly ministry, He taught men the higher law. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He blessed the sick. He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life. To us He has said, ‘Come, follow me.’

“As we seek Christ, as we find Him, as we follow Him, we shall have the Christmas spirit, not for one fleeting day each year, but as a companion always. We shall learn to forget ourselves. We shall turn our thoughts to the greater benefit of others. . . .

“There is no shortage of opportunities to forget self and think of others. Such

opportunities, however limitless they may be, are also perishable. There are hearts to gladden. There are kind words to say. There are gifts to be given. There are deeds to be done. There are souls to be saved. . . .

“As we lift our eyes heavenward and then remember to look outward into the lives of others, as we remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive, we, during this Christmas season, will come to see a bright, particular star that will guide us to our precious opportunity” (Thomas S. Monson, “In Search of the Christmas Spirit,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1987, 5–6).

A Season for Gratitude

“What a wonderful season this is, this Christmas season. All of the Christian world, while not understanding the things that we understand, pauses for a moment and remembers with gratitude the birth of the Son of God. . . .

“In that spirit we reach out to embrace one and all with that love which is of the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We Latter-day Saints are a vast concourse of people bound together in a oneness of love and faith. Our blessing is great, as a people and as individuals. We carry in our hearts a firm and unshakable conviction of

the divine mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Creator who, under the direction of His Father, made all things, ‘and without him was not anything made that was made’ (John 1:3). He was the promised Messiah, who came with healing in His wings. He was the worker of miracles, the great healer, the resurrection and the life. His is the only name under heaven whereby we must be saved. . . .

“We love Him. We honor Him. We thank Him. We worship Him. He has done for each of us and for all mankind that which none other could have done. God be thanked for the gift of His Beloved Son, our Savior, the Redeemer of the world, the Lamb without blemish who was offered as a sacrifice for all mankind.

“He it was who directed the restoration of this, His work, in this the dispensation of the fullness of time. This is His Church which bears His Holy Name. . . .

“Christmas is more than trees and twinkling lights, more than toys and gifts and baubles of a hundred varieties. It is love. It is the love of the Son of God for all mankind. It reaches out beyond our power to comprehend. It is magnificent and beautiful.

“It is peace. It is the peace which comforts, which sustains, which blesses all who accept it.

“It is faith. It is faith in God and His Eternal Son. It is faith in His wondrous ways and message. It is faith in Him as our Redeemer and our Lord.

“We testify of His living reality. We testify of the divinity of His nature. In our times of grateful meditation, we acknowledge His priceless gift to us and pledge our love and faith. This is what Christmas is really about” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Season for Gratitude,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1997, 2, 4–5).

Giving as He Gave

“The Saviour dedicated His life to blessing other people. As expressed by His chief Apostle, Peter, ‘God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good’ (Acts 10:38).

“Never did the Saviour give in expectation of receiving. He gave freely and lovingly, and His gifts were of inestimable value. He gave eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and legs to the lame; cleanliness to the unclean, wholeness to the infirm, and breath to the lifeless. His gifts were opportunity to the downtrodden, freedom to the oppressed, forgiveness to the repentant, hope

to the despairing, and light in the darkness. He gave us His love, His service, and His life. And most important, He gave us and all mortals resurrection, salvation, and eternal life.

“We should strive to give as He gave. To give of oneself is a holy gift. We give as a remembrance of all the Saviour has given.

“Christmas is a time for giving. . . . This Christmas:

- Mend a quarrel.
- Seek out a forgotten friend.
- Dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust.
- Write a letter.
- Give a soft answer.
- Encourage youth.
- Manifest your loyalty in word and deed.
- Keep a promise.
- Forgo a grudge.
- Forgive an enemy.
- Apologize.
- Try to understand.
- Examine your demands on others.
- Think first of someone else.
- Be kind.
- Be gentle.
- Laugh a little more.
- Express your gratitude.
- Welcome a stranger.
- Gladden the heart of a child.
- Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth.

- Speak your love and then speak it again.

“Christmas is a celebration, and there is no celebration that compares with the realization of its true meaning—with the sudden stirring of the heart that has extended itself unselfishly in the things that matter most” (Howard W. Hunter, “The Gifts of Christmas,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2002, 18–19). ■

LOCAL PAGES

Penrith Stake Youth and YSA on a Mini Mission

By Lauren Townsend

Penrith Stake had 23 youth and young single adults participate on a Mini Mission weekend, in Sydney, earlier this year.

One week before the mini mission activity, the youth and YSA received their “mission call” letters in the mail. The young members arrived at the Minchinbury Chapel on the following Friday to be set apart, trained for a few hours, and then went to their areas to commence their mission with the full-time missionaries there.

Hannah Manning from Minchinbury Ward was assigned to serve in suburban Ashfield, near the city. She was told she would be serving in a Chinese Ward, and would be blessed with the gift of tongues. Having studied the language for two years, she said, “During the weekend, all these words were coming



Bailey Lazanski and Hannah Manning, from Minchinbury Ward.

back to me, and I also could pick up every now and then what they were saying to us sisters.”

Bailey Lazanski, also from Minchinbury Ward, served in the boundary for Mt Druitt Ward. He recalls the experience of visiting a less-active member in her home: “The spirit was more of a directing feeling, guiding us to where my companion and I needed to go. This lady had a fire burning [within herself] to re-hear the gospel and all it took was for us to take that candle out from under the bushel.” Brother Lazanski desires to serve a full-time mission now. “This mini mission helped build upon that foundation, and encouraged me to start doing more to prepare for my duty to God as a young man.”

Rowena Afualo served in the Richmond Ward. “It has strengthened my testimony more, if anything. I’m able to testify more strongly about the truthfulness of this gospel. I went with a goal, and



Rowena Afualo

that goal was to learn how to open my mouth, to be able to share the gospel with anyone anywhere. It has definitely made me want to serve my mission!”

At the end of the weekend, the youth and YSA went back to the stake centre to be released. They concluded the weekend with a dinner, and closed with a testimony meeting. President Philip F. Howes, the Australia Sydney North Mission president, and Second Counsellor of the Penrith Stake presidency Mark Hamstead, also spoke at the testimony meeting.

Elder Davison from the stake high council, who was assigned to help the Young Women presidency to organise the eventful weekend, said that the message used to promote the Mini Mission weekend is from Doctrine and Covenants; “Now behold, a marvellous work is about to come forth among the children of men. . . . Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work” (D&C 4:1, 3). ■

Relief Society Service Project for Vulnerable Families

By **Caroline McIlwaine**

The Relief Society motto, “Charity Never Faileth”, came to life for Marion Stake Relief Society sisters who gathered earlier this year for the culmination of a six-month-long service project in support of Centacare, a community services organisation run by the Catholic Church.

The venture produced a mountain of food, toiletries, toys and bedding which represented a year’s worth of vital supplies for women and their young families fleeing domestic violence or similar situations via one of Centacare’s four “young family support service” emergency accommodation sites in Adelaide.

“The project was a really strong reminder of how blessed most of us are in our own families, and I felt grateful to be able to help these young women in crisis,” shared Louise Paton, a sister from the Mount Barker Ward.

“Our lives are so different but we have this connection: we’re women and we’re mothers, and we can all remember a time when others helped us in big or small ways. It was a privilege to be involved.”

The 441 packages created included pantry boxes with food basics, along with toiletry packs of sanitary items, shampoos/conditioner, soaps, tooth paste, brushes and deodorants.

Additionally, dozens of new quilts and pillows were handed over to the young family support service representatives, Cathy Araki and Vicki Lachlan, along with 145 children’s packs. Each pack contained a soft toy, book, pencils, colouring book and play toy in colourful bags hand-sewn by the Relief Society women as part of the project effort.

“We are so grateful for the women’s generosity and for the work of [the] Church,” Ms. Araki said.

“Primarily our role is to supply safe, emergency accommodation [for] young women and their children who very often come from domestic violence, or drug and alcohol-affected backgrounds, with the outlook of providing more stable accommodation within the community in the future.

“Where we can, we like to be able to supply some basic food, toiletries and bedding to help ease the stress of the situation, but often we need to rely on the generosity of the public as the budget does not stretch that far.”

She said the women who would receive the care packages were mostly under the age of 25, pregnant or parenting, and homeless. Often the young women escaping violence had no personal items to bring with them.



Marion Stake Relief Society sisters surround Centacare accommodation managers, Cathy Araki and Vicki Lachlan, at the centre, flanked by Marion Stake RS president Kylie Puckridge and Marion Stake president Paul Granger.

Easing those hardships was definitely worthwhile, according to Happy Valley Ward Relief Society president, Shirley Toker: “Providing relief, love and support is what the Lord asks of us. We are His hands and His heart. It was touching to . . . listen to the heartfelt gratitude from those whose lives our contribution will make a difference to.”

The Marion Stake Relief Society leaders—Kylie Puckridge, Samantha McKay and Lyn Heading—decided that the young family support service would be the focus of the annual service project for this year.

Kylie said there was overwhelming support for the idea.

“We all felt that this support service does a tremendous work in providing not only food and accommodation, but education and life skills to help prepare a better future for the mothers and their children,” she said.

“One of the purposes of Relief Society is to seek out and help people in need, and there is so much need in our community. This was a wonderful opportunity for us to reach out and help these young women who struggle against immense adversity.”

The benefits worked two ways: “We are definitely strengthened and uplifted by the good feelings that come from serving others and following the example of Jesus Christ,” she affirmed.

Marion Stake has held similar projects in recent years, assisting various charitable organisations.

The final day of the 2013 project brought together sisters from as far away as Kangaroo Island and Mount Gambier. They heard from Ms. Araki and Ms. Lachlan of the anonymous yet personal stories of women who struggled to find a safe refuge, and were thanked for their support.

“We were struck by the level of compassion shown by the Relief Society women, and were amazed by the sizeable donation,” Ms. Araki said.



The family support service representatives also met with some of the ward Relief Society leaders following the activity. ■

**Marion Stake
Relief Society
service project.**

Lessons in the Home

By Catherine Vaughan

As the mother of a large family, my life was always busy and loud. With a set of twins in the middle, our first six children arrived in just under eight years, and by the time our seventh child came along three years later, our house was bursting at the seams. We had always wanted a large family, so our hearts were full, and we revelled in the noise and

constant activity that accompanies a multitude of children.

Overall, the children were well behaved, and happy, and got along well together, enjoying the ready-made friends and play mates they had in the home. But having so many children so close in age also meant there were moments of conflict and disagreement. Sometimes I struggled

to keep a feeling of peace and harmony in the home, amidst the disputes and scattered toys. As the children grew, it seemed that I spent all my time repeating the same words over and over, especially when it came to their assigned weekly chores, clearing up after themselves, and dispute resolution. On more than one occasion I retired to my bedroom to kneel in prayer, feeling completely overwhelmed.

One rainy day, with everyone cooped up inside, my mother's voice of reason was completely lost amidst the noise and boisterous activity. No matter how many times I asked them to do things, it seemed to be ignored, or quickly forgotten. My vision of a perfect family with obedient, helpful offspring bore no resemblance to the free-spirited children enjoying this earthly adventure who inhabited our home.

Tired and frustrated, I stormed off to my bedroom, and threw myself down onto my knees at the end of the bed. As I poured out my feelings of annoyance to Heavenly Father, I complained about how my children never listen to me, and finished by saying emphatically, "How many times do I have to tell them?!"

In the silence that followed my little outburst, I very distinctly heard the quiet answer,

“About as many times as I have to tell you.”

My “righteous indignation” evaporated immediately as I recognised the validity of those words. It was true. I had to be reminded over and over to read my scriptures, to prepare for emergencies with food storage, to not be judgemental . . . I knew the list was extensive.

As I knelt there, pondering on the loving patience of our

Heavenly Father, and the many chances He has given me as I learn the gospel principles line upon line, precept upon precept, I repented of my previous anger and frustration.

I listened to the giggles and laughter coming from the other room, and I recognised that our home had been blessed with precious spirits, enjoying the excitement of having a physical body and earthly emotions. They

weren't being wilfully naughty, they were being children. They were sons and daughters of God, and I felt deeply humbled and blessed that they have been entrusted to my care while they are experiencing this earthly journey.

As I went back out into the lounge and they ran to hug me, I gave thanks for personal prayer, for Heavenly Father's plan, and the knowledge that families can be together forever. ■

MP Visits Mortdale Stake Centre

By Angelina Dycueco

State Member for Oatley and Chair of NSW Government Chinese Ministerial Consultative Committee, Mark Coure MP, met with the Mortdale

From left to right: President Graham Hancock, President Atili To'o, President Michael Laulu, Mr. Mark Coure, Elder Haynes, Sister Haynes.



Stake presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

On the evening of Mr. Coure's visit, the meetinghouse at Mortdale was alive with various activities.

Mr. Coure was shown the family history centre which provides assistance in the research and study of genealogy and family history, saw the stake youth choir rehearsing for the forthcoming stake conference, and observed Relief Society conducting a home, family and personal enrichment meeting.

The Mortdale Stake's community involvement through service projects was presented to Mr. Coure in a slideshow. During a discussion with the members of the stake presidency and those who were present, Mr. Coure acknowledged that religious organisations and the government work in partnership for the benefit of the community. He proposed to host a gathering of local religious leaders.

Mr. Coure said that he will tell others that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are Christians, and believe the Bible to be the word of God. ■