

UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND LOCAL PAGES

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

God's Love

By Elder José A. Teixeira, Portugal

Europe Area President

Our Heavenly Father loves us and wants the best for each one of us. His concern for His children is evident, although many, perhaps overwhelmed by the common problems and challenges of this life, fail to see this constant manifestation of love and concern of a loving and kind Father. It only takes a short break for reflection and a careful look around us to soon realize the love that God has for His children.

Let us think for a few minutes of all the favorable circumstances in which we find ourselves today. I am sure that as we all ponder on this matter we will increase our gratitude for the love that God has for each one of us.

First matter to reflect upon: God continues to reveal His will to His servants the prophets.

What a wonderful feeling of security and peace to know that God continues to reveal His will today to His servants the prophets. This is one of the greatest blessings that God gives us, the knowledge of His will!

The Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of His Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith in this dispensation allows all who wish for this to perform the ordinances and covenants that will grant us to one day return and live once again in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

As we treasure up, through study and through faith, the words of the prophets contained in the holy scriptures, along with the words of the living prophets, we will be blessed with the desire to continue to keep and live the commandments and thereby have peace and tranquility in our



Elder José A. Teixeira

hearts, because we know that we are on the right track, that our families can be together, and we will have more strength to win the challenges of mortality—these are priceless blessings.

Today the Lord guides His Church through a living prophet and twelve Apostles, just like in the ancient times. I testify that President Thomas S. Monson is the prophet for our days and express my gratitude in knowing that God continues to love us by transmitting His will to a prophet by revelation.

God's love will be even more visible in our lives as we put into practice simple steps that will help us guide our lives, such as:

- Read the scriptures daily
- Use the *Ensign* magazine
- Study the teachings of the general conference

These habits will allow us to be attentive to the teachings that God has for us when we need them the most.

Second matter to reflect upon: The temple is the house of the Lord, where we can find peace and learn the gospel.

The Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph Smith at the beginning of this dispensation, along with all the prophets that followed him, to build temples so that individuals and families can develop a deep and intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, thus learning His will, receiving inspired counsel and making covenants in the house of the Lord.

Our Heavenly Father has not abandoned His children and continues to reveal His will in our days, giving us the security and the confidence that we need in order to continue on the right path. He gives us the opportunity to perform the ordinances

and covenants in His temple that will allow us to live a clean and pure life and to prepare ourselves to return to His presence.

With the increase of temples being built all around the world, today more than ever the temples of the Lord are more accessible.

In the Lord's temples we can grow closer to God and to His Son, Jesus Christ.

The scriptures are beautiful as they describe the attitude of the people back in the days of King Benjamin. In the Book of Mormon in Mosiah 2:5–6 we read:

“And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another.

“And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple.”

My challenge is that we can also have a similar attitude as the people back in the days of King Benjamin, and plan to visit the temple more often. The attitude of those who are facing the temple begins with the individual and family preparation, in our daily life, by living God's commandments each day.

Without the temple we couldn't seal our families for all eternity. Inside the temple we learn eternal principles. What we learn in the temple helps us in our self-improvement and gives us the direction and guidance we need in life.

There are many other manifestations of God's love all around us, yet today I leave my testimony on these that are well within our reach: the temples of the Lord and the words of the prophets today!

I testify that God lives and loves us. He has blessed us with these blessings so that we can feel His love towards us. Today is the day to make the relevant decisions that will grant us to also put our tents, our lives, facing Him. ■

Their Patience Has Been Rewarded—New Chapel for Tendring

By Jane Gough

Over 100 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gathered to celebrate the opening of their new chapel in Colchester Road, Weeley, with a special service attended by Councillor Peter Balbirnie, Vice Chair of Tendring District Council, and other local councillors. The meeting was under the direction of Simon Fagg, president of the Ipswich Stake. Those assembled heard of the spiritual journey which has lasted for 35 years.

Doreen Baker, the longest serving member of the original Clacton Branch, spoke

first, and told of the different venues where the members gathered to worship. They started in a run-down Nissan hut in Great Clacton, where the roof leaked whenever it rained. After the challenges of meeting in four different halls, they moved to the Tendring College of Technology in Thorpe-le-Soken, and the renamed Tendring Branch was formed on 24th October 1993, with Hayden Dixon as branch president. The Tendring Branch continued to meet there until the Tendring chapel opened on 27th October 2013.



Former branch presidents of the Tendring Branch—Presidents Dixon, Brown, Francis, Watling, Morton and Rowe.

BY JORDAN LAU

There were talks by past branch presidents who had previously served in Tendring: Hayden Dixon, Andrew Brown, Kevin Francis, Jason Watling, Sam Morton and Nigel Rowe, some of whom had travelled many miles for

this special occasion. Current branch president Nigel Rowe said that the desire of the members was to emulate the Saviour, Jesus Christ, by serving those around them.

In his closing remarks, President Fagg gave thanks and

appreciation to all who had contributed to the establishment of the Tendring Branch, especially the women, who are the bedrock of family life, which is paramount to the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ■

Faith, the Musical

By Sophie Rayton

Faith, the Musical is currently touring around UK stake centres. The cast, choir and production crew consists largely of members from the Cheltenham Stake, where the musical originated, with others travelling from all over the UK. The team willingly give of their time and talents to sing praises unto the Lord and honour early British pioneers who heeded a prophet's call to "come to Zion".

The musical relates the factual account of the Oakey family, who joined the Church within what is now the Cheltenham Stake. The family joined the Willie and Martin handcart companies and travelled by foot on a perilous journey of over a thousand miles to reach the Salt Lake Valley.

The full-scale theatre production debuted at the Bacon Theatre in Cheltenham and went on to the Conference Center Theatre in Salt Lake City. It has since been adapted into a travelling fireside presentation which particularly invites those who are new in the gospel to come and feel of the Spirit.

Former Cheltenham Stake president Ben Lowater, who commissioned the musical

BY DAVID MARKHAM



*The character
Rebecca Oakey in
Faith, the Musical*

*The cast of Faith,
the Musical*



BY BERNARD HAW

and co-wrote the original script, plays the part of Thomas Oakey and narrates the fireside presentation. President Lowater comments, “The events of the lives of British pioneers truly inspires us today with hope, courage and faith.”

Martin Lock, from the previous London Temple presidency, plays the role of influential early pioneer John Benbow from Herefordshire. Bro Lock reflects on the fireside by saying, “It will inspire and provide a deeper insight and appreciation of our pioneering heritage—a story of strength and commitment to the cause of truth and the establishment of the restored Church.”

Bishop David Markham, who composed the music and directs the musical, said of the music, “Virtually all the songs speak of Christ, of His atoning sacrifice and of His redeeming love; a powerful

work composed whilst under the inspiration of the Spirit and dedicated to all those who have sacrificed their lives for the Lord.”

Everyone involved in the musical has felt of the profound promise found in Doctrine and Covenants 25:12: “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.”

The tour began in April 2013, visiting stake centres in Hyde Park, Wandsworth, Stevenage and Birmingham, and continued onto Belfast, Merthyr Tydfil, Poole, Plymouth, Reading and Bristol. Through 2014 the fireside plans to visit stake centres in Glasgow, Crawley, Maidstone, Portsmouth, Northampton, Leicester, Liverpool and ending in Preston. ■

Are You Decorating Your “Family” Tree?

By Joseph Leece, Area Family History Consultant

No, we are not going to tell you that there are only nine months to go until Christmas. The tree we are talking about is your family tree. You may not be aware that in recent times the family history experience has changed. The key to the change lies in the name “family history” rather than “genealogy”. Genealogy tends to be about the information relating to places and dates of birth, marriage or death. Family history, on the other hand, comprises the stories, memories and family traits that make us feel connected to our ancestors, and often turns our hearts towards them.

The new booklet *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together* is a great place to start capturing and preserving your family story.

(Incidentally, it is also valuable for introducing new members or investigators to their family history, so it is a valuable missionary tool.)

The booklet is available from the Church distribution centre and online at lds.org/callings/temple-and-family-history/sunday-lesson.

Your own tree will sparkle even more as you add photographs and stories. Go to FamilySearch.org for easy instructions about how to decorate and grow your tree, or talk with your ward family history consultant.

Making it easier to record and preserve family histories helps us connect with our past, share memories with others now, and create a legacy for the future. Happy decorating! ■

50th Anniversary of Merthyr Tydfil Chapel

By Tracey Prior and Freda Entwistle

BY FREDA ENTWISTLE



Merthyr Tydfil Stake recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the chapel in 2013 with a series of events culminating in an Anniversary Spectacular and in a special Sunday commemoration service, where members of the stake, past and present, came to give thanks and share experiences. Celebrations began with a gathering of all invited guests in the reception lounge, where the stake presidency and Church leaders mingled and met with local dignitaries, visiting Church authorities and both visiting and resident building missionaries, and their representatives. After dinner, Stake President Govier introduced Elder Hans Boom, Area Seventy, who thanked all those who had been involved in the preparations and spoke of those, present and past, who had helped to build the chapel fifty years ago. He also mentioned the two shovels, which were on display, that had been used to

Elder Hans Boom (Area Seventy), Bishop Pulman, Mayor Graham Davies, Stake President Ian Govier and Elder Patrick Kearon (First Quorum of the Seventy)

Entertainment at the Merthyr Tydfil's 50th anniversary celebrations

BY FREDA ENTWISTLE



break the ground on the chapel site by President David O. McKay and were given to Ralph Pulman Senior and Emlyn Davies following the groundbreak-

ing ceremony in 1961.

Back in 1963, the members of the Church met in a small wooden hut at Penyard, Merthyr Tydfil. Freda Entwistle recalls: "Every Sunday when it rained, I remember how we would place saucepans on the floor to catch the rain as it came in through the roof." The members responded with enthusiasm to the news that a new chapel was to be built. Building missionaries were called and a building schedule began. When the branch president, John Mahoney, received

a letter from President David O. McKay expressing his desire to dedicate the new building in August of 1963, these plans had to be revised, but the members responded and the chapel was finished in time for the dedication.

Today, this chapel is home to two wards and is also the Merthyr Tydfil Stake Centre. Julie Jones, a stake public affairs representative, said: "It was great to see people here this weekend celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Church building. It was wonderful to listen to the stories from 1963 when the building was built, and to see the growth that has taken place. Over 550 people from Merthyr and surrounding areas attended the Sunday commemorative service this weekend, a substantial increase from the days of old Penyard." Special guests over the weekend included Elder Hans Boom, Area Seventy; President and Sister Govier; Mr Denis Sullivan, MT Scout deputy commissioner; President and Sister James Hayes, Cardiff Stake presidency; and building missionaries Jim Perry, Tony Hipkins, Geoff Robinson, Mrs Susan Harrald (wife of the late Fred Harrald), Arnold Jones, Leighton Jones, Morgan Evans and John Headington. Elder Patrick Kearon of the Europe Area Presidency stated: "It is nice to look back and rejoice, but look forward and energetically engage. Look

around you—that great missionary William Henshaw brought 500 people into the Church in this area. There are 500 of you here today. There is work to do. We must be rekindled. We cannot look back and think that is it.”

The Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil, Graham Davies, attended the Sunday service and said: “I am tremendously impressed. Looking around now at this vast congregation, I wish all of our churches and chapels were as full as I have seen today and I wish you every blessing for the future.”

Merthyr Tydfil Stake includes wards and branches in Merthyr

Tydfil, Aberystwth, Newcastle Emlyn, Llannelli, Swansea and Milford Haven and has a Church history that dates back to pioneer times when a great number of Welsh Saints answered the call to go west. There are families in the stake today who can trace their heritage back to family members who had to remain behind in Wales. There is a great deal of strength in this wonderful stake, which is demonstrated in many ways from the high percentage of seminary graduations, which is the highest in Europe, to the number of missionaries serving all over the globe. ■

Nativity story along with a selection of Christmas “Mormon Messages.”

Ysgol y Dwyfan, another local school, brought several classes for a tour of the building. Both children and teachers enjoyed the experience, as did the Scout group who also attended. One of the boys was so excited to see a large picture of the Saviour, he said: “I just want to put it under my arm and run home with it and have it on my wall”. Everyone was invited to write a gift tag to the Saviour and hang it on a Christmas tree. There were messages like “I will walk the dog”; “I will help with Christmas dinner”; “Help those who are less fortunate” and “I will stand by my Mum forever”. The Cub Scouts and their leaders were so impressed that they they expressed an interest in attending a sacrament service to learn more about what it is to be a Mormon.

The children who came along just seemed so wrapped in the Spirit as they walked around the displays, they just didn’t want to leave. A visitor started to cry as soon as she entered the building and another wanted to go home and bring his sleeping bag so he could sleep in that Spirit-filled room over night! The Scouts said they had such a lovely experience: “We are definitely coming again next year. A great start to the season! Do you mind if we bring our group to a Church service?”

There were over 175 visitors, of which nearly a hundred were nonmembers. “The feedback was very positive”, said Bishop Bristow. “We wanted to spread a little Christmas cheer through the true meaning of Christmas, and I think we achieved it. It really was a wonderful way to get us in the

Newcastle Emlyn Festival

By Shelley Bristow

On 29th and 30th November, Newcastle Emlyn Ward, Merthyr Tydfil Stake, held their first Nativity Festival attended by over 175 people, 100 of whom were members of the public. Members of the ward worked together to transform the chapel into a truly magical exhibition, with posters, displays, videos and a craft room. The foyer and chapel were decorated with over a hundred nativities from around the world ranging from a life-size stable scene to miniature glass tree ornaments.

Children from Bryn Saron, a local school, were invited to provide artwork and crafted nativities, creating a marvelous, colourful display, while the local Cub Scout group displayed a much admired abstract nativity stable. The craft room provided children with some ‘hands on’ Christmas fun, while a quiet educational area showed a short film of the

Scenes from the Nativity Festival display in the Newcastle Emlyn Ward



BY TONY BRISTOW

Christmas spirit, focus on the birth of the Saviour and remind us to follow His example of service, kindness and compassion. For some, it was the first time they had heard of the Saviour and the reason for Christmas. It worked on so many levels and with so many people that we're eager to do it again next year." ■

An English "YeYe" (Mandarin for Grandad)

By Maria Sanchez

BY ELDER ZHAO



He's called 'grandad', and that pretty well describes him. He looks like a grandad, and certainly acts like a grandad, to the many Chinese nationals who learn about the Church in the St. Albans area. Ron Stimpson is a resident of Hatfield, home of the University of Hertfordshire, a campus of 27,000, with a large Asian student population. And to these students so far away

Chinese students with Brother Ron Stimpson of the St. Albans Ward

from their homeland, he does what most grandads do—he opens his home, he opens his car, and he opens his heart.

He opens his home to the missionaries who need a place to teach. He sits in on many of the lessons and helps answer some of the questions these wonderful students have. He provides a mature perspective in helping to explain doctrine in a simple and understandable manner.

He opens his car doors and transports these Chinese to the St. Albans chapel for meetings, baptisms, and activities. He has been known to make several trips when there are more students that need transportation than can fit into his car at once. He has no expectations of

reimbursements for fuel, with no hesitation in delivering these students to where they need to be.

He opens his heart to these eager students who are learning for the first time that they have a God who loves them. Ron Stimpson cares about them and, through his example, offers them the kind of love and support that blesses their lives.

Jing, a Chinese student now returned to her homeland, said, "It all started when the missionaries came to my house teaching and they brought him. When they were leaving and we were saying goodbye, I said to him, 'Brother Stimpson, your lifestyle is similar to my own grandad's. Can I call you grandad?' I was surprised that he looked a bit surprised, but then he quietly responded, 'Yes'. Actually, for me, there is another reason to call him grandad—because as a Chinese, I felt a little bit uncomfortable to call a senior person by their name. That is why I rather call him 'grandad'. That is when I realized beside the good manner, when I call him 'grandad', I should really mean it." She continued, "I really admire him . . . he is such a positive man and doing such a good work. I surely learned a lot from him . . . he helped in many ways . . . he is like one of my grandads."

Of him, St. Albans Ward bishop Charles Farnsworth says, "He is a devoted and tireless supporter of the missionary efforts in our ward, and he has a very uplifting impact on everyone with whom he comes in contact."

But to the Chinese students, he is not a missionary, he is a grandad. Brother Stimpson is an official "YeYe" to the many Chinese who affectionately have given him that title. ■

The 'Good Samaritans' of Preston Stake Primary

By Janice Peers, Stake Primary President

During the month of June the Primary children throughout the Preston Stake were invited by the stake Primary presidency to be "good Samaritans". An initiative was developed which suggested that each day during the month of June, a "good Samaritan" deed could be performed. These deeds ranged from helping a sibling to writing to a missionary, feeding the birds, inviting a friend to a Church activity, saying a prayer for someone with a special need, helping to present family home evening, helping to prepare a meal, thanking someone who spoke in a sacrament service etc. Additionally the children were encouraged to read the story of the good Samaritan, to draw a picture and to relate the story to a friend.

The children were each given a printed diary with suggested daily activities. Parents were asked to sign off each completed activity.

Doing good on a daily basis and participating in the Good Samaritan Award also proved utterly irresistible to some adults, including Primary teachers and stake leaders, who took part enthusiastically.

The parents became fully involved with this challenge, and one family put up a bird table in the garden so that their children could have a good experience

feeding the birds. This activity is now being continued.

The participants were asked to comment at the end of the month on how they felt being a good Samaritan for a month. These are some of the comments:

"It made me feel happy helping others."

"It feels good that I have been a good Samaritan this month because I have been able to make myself and those around me happy. I know that Heavenly Father will be happy with me for trying hard."

"It has given me a lovely warm feeling inside to help others, especially when they don't know who helped them."

"I felt happy to be able to show kindness to others."

"I feel very happy and I feel very good inside."

"Doing these activities has helped me to concentrate on being more like Jesus. After a month of daily doing good deeds, I will now increase my efforts in the future."

All participants who completed the 30 activities were awarded a special "Good Samaritan Certificate", produced by the stake Primary presidency and the stake president, President Frank R. Blease. ■



BY PAUL PEERS

The Preston Stake presidency with some of the "good Samaritans" holding their certificates.

Editor's Note

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The signed permission of all participants in the photograph, as well as the photographer, are required for the Church to use the article. A form will be emailed or is available from your stake media specialist/director of public affairs.

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