

NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

AREA SEVENTY MESSAGE

Strengthening Families through the Melchizedek Priesthood

By Elder T. Marama Tarati

The prophetic exhortation of President Monson to “go to the rescue” and “save the one” has found an extraordinary echo in the objectives of the Pacific Area. One of the first priorities in establishing the Lord’s Church in the Pacific Isles through real growth has been increasing the number of worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

To reach the goals of this specific objective, the high priest groups and elders quorums, under the direction of ward councils and priesthood executive committees, have organized and participated in unprecedented rescue visits.

The results have allowed many less-active brethren to return to full activity and prepare themselves to be worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. This has allowed them the opportunity to also receive the sacred temple ordinances. This initiative has encouraged many families to enter the temples of the Pacific Islands to be sealed together for time and eternity.

How has this specific objective established the Lord’s Church in the Pacific Isles through real growth?

Over three years ago, the Pacific Area Action Plan had the vision for establishing the Lord’s Church through real growth, building on the very substantial and successful work of previous area leaders. The plan was strengthened by the objective to increase the number of Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

To establish and grow the Church in an enduring way, it is crucial to understand that, essentially, the Lord’s Church consists of people who receive essential priesthood ordinances from His authorized servants, keep the covenants associated with these ordinances, and qualify themselves to receive exaltation and eternal life through the sanctification of the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, the Lord’s Church must have His priesthood authority among its members. Only in this way can the essential priesthood ordinances and covenants



Elder T. Marama Tarati

be delivered to the people with any redeeming effect. This is what the Lord meant, among other things, when He said:

“Ye must take upon you the name of Christ. . . .

“And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day.

“Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name” (3 Nephi 27:5–7).

In short, acting “in the name of Christ” is acting with His authority.

This is, essentially, the gospel (see Jacob 7:6), and unless the

people of the Church are basing their lives squarely on this gospel, or doctrine, they are not the Lord's Church. "If it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel" (3 Nephi 27:8).

This is why the pattern for establishing the Church in an enduring way consists of gathering people, establishing priesthood authority and power among them, and teaching and assisting them to receive and keep the saving ordinances and covenants of the gospel and thereby be sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Real growth is realised as we:

1. Convert the people of the Pacific, especially families, to the gospel of Jesus Christ (see *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], chapter 1).
2. Establish and strengthen the Melchizedek Priesthood among them.
3. Assist them to receive all essential priesthood ordinances and covenants and thereby be sanctified by receipt of the Holy Ghost.

Indeed, real growth occurs as we increase the number of men who receive the Melchizedek

Priesthood and then lead their families and others to receive saving ordinances, and keep the associated covenants, as well as increase the number of young men and young women in the Church who remain faithful into adulthood and build their own families on priesthood ordinances and covenants.

Significant are the blessings promised by the Lord when the Church is established on the real growth principles identified above. "And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel then will the Father show forth his own works in it" (3 Nephi 27:10).

And further, "If you shall build up my church, upon the foundation of my gospel and my rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you" (D&C 18:5).

As previously stated, there is no Church without priesthood authority that is exercised to deliver essential priesthood ordinances and covenants to the people. Therefore, critical to establishing the Church and growing it in an enduring way is strengthening the priesthood.

There is no better way to strengthen families than to seal them to one other through

temple ordinances and covenants, and thereby qualify them to become eternal families, provided they keep their covenants. Further, families that receive and keep temple ordinances and covenants are far more likely to raise children to serve missions and receive temple ordinances and covenants themselves, which serves to establish and secure the future Church. ■

LOCAL PAGES

Saving the One

By Trevor A. Beatson

In one weekend in late 2013, Kaikohe "to the Rescue" Stake ordained 17 new elders. A lot of effort went into these brethren to ensure their progression at the ward and branch level. No more so than in the Otatau Branch, which has adopted a strong rescue and "save the one" spirit.

They don't just rescue the one though; they have rescued the many, including many of their family members. This little branch in the back blocks of Otatau ordained 5 new elders in the Kaikohe Stake conference in December 2013.

The Otatau Branch president, James Nephi Harris, set about the work of the rescue with his father and faithful first counsellor in the branch presidency, Panoko Harris. Together



they employed tactics similar to those of their tribal ancestors, who when they went fishing would stretch the net from bank to bank, hoping to get fish.

Brother Panoko Harris, in his testimony during the Saturday evening session of conference, said that together “they had decided to fish the banks closer to home” and were directed by inspiration to work closely with family members. He expressed his gratitude to the Lord for preparing his posterity to respond to the rescue.

Brother Panokos’ son Dean Harris then stood and bore his testimony, humbly saying he was one of the fish who was caught in that net and was grateful to be back. Tamanui Harris then bore his testimony, saying he was looking forward to seeing his father Dean receive the priesthood

from his grandfather Panoko, who would then join newly ordained Dean in ordaining Tamanui to the Melchizedek Priesthood.

President James Harris was excited that the blessings in his family didn’t end there, adding that they also ordained his daughter’s husband, Anton Tonga, and his sister’s son—nephew Tamati Astle. The Otua Branch also ordained Rameka Wharerau, a recent convert and relation, the same day, taking their total to five new elders.

“We have been going to the rescue almost every day. We are trying to be as obedient as we can to our leaders and aligning with the direction we have been given. That is where the blessings are,” President Harris said.

“This little branch has seen many blessings in a very short time as they have followed the

17 elders ordained in the Kaikohe Stake conference

prophetic direction we have all been given to go to the rescue. They seek the Spirit, and go and do,” President Beatson, Kaikohe Stake president remarked. “The efforts of President Harris and his

branch have been miraculous. We have seen growth in his branch from 32 attending sacrament at the start of the year, to between 65 and 70 attending now—for them it’s all about the family”. ■

“We Forgot about Winning and Just Wanted to Help”

By Karen Coulson

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

Ominous skies didn’t hamper the Spirit as over 300 young single adults gathered in prayer for a multi-stake activity day. The Stake of Origin

Raw Challenge was hosted by Newcastle Stake, and held at Doyalson on the NSW Central Coast. YSA travelled from as far afield as Canberra, Macarthur, Hebersham, Mortdale, Fairfield, Liverpool, Baulkham Hills,

Participants line up for the start of the Stake of Origin Raw Challenge.

Harbour, and Penrith, along with one YSA participant who came over from Hawaii to visit family and ended up on the course with his brothers.

What was meant to be a competitive event for many soon became one of working through the obstacles together, as those who were stronger helped those who were struggling. Through mud and water, over scramble nets, monkey bars and walls—the theme for the day became one of helping each other through rather than running by when someone was struggling.

The final wall, a curved stainless steel slide over 3 metres high, proved to be the biggest challenge of the day. A muddy crowd gathered as those who had completed the course stayed on to cheer everyone to the finish line. As people threw themselves at the slippery wall,



others who had already scaled the wall leant over, held by others, to reach down and catch the hand of those who were attempting to scale the wall. “It’s all about being there for each other—just like in the gospel,” said Funaki Fainu with a smile.

From the YSA perspective, they enjoyed not only the physical challenge but the co-operative spirit that permeated the day. “Everyone gave it a go,” said John Felila of Fairfield Stake.

Lepa Kava, also of Fairfield Stake, likened it to the gospel in action: “Not only did we get to do something physical, we got to help others as well. Sometimes we struggle in life—and this shows we can help each other through the tougher times”.

Sarah Weedon of Newcastle Stake agreed. She had signed up for the challenge, ticking the “competitor” box along with others who felt they could give their stake the edge. “But that soon disappeared as we just wanted to help each other. That would have to be my favourite part of the day—we forgot about winning and just wanted to help.”

Jennifer Fuggle of Newcastle Stake loved the unpredictability



of the course: “I loved the obstacle course—especially when we didn’t know what was coming next. The water was muddy, and so when you came over an obstacle and went into the water, you wouldn’t know if it was ankle deep or you’d suddenly go under. It’s just like life—you don’t know what’s around the corner, but you just have to keep going, knowing others have gone before and can support you through it.”

Damien Fleming, a former State Rugby Union player from

Teamwork was more important than winning.

Newcastle Stake, said, “It’s the coolest—it’s great having activities where everyone can not only have some serious fun but also work together as a team. Plus we still got a workout—especially as we helped others through obstacles and over walls.”

“It was so good to see everyone banding together throughout the whole course,” said Tenille Howard of Fairfield Stake. “Groups were forming as members from different stakes helped each other—even though we’d never met before.”



And the event was just what Raife Campbell from BYU–Hawaii was looking for as well. As vice president of the student body of BYU–Hawaii, Raife is always on the lookout for events for the 2500 students and YSA living in the area surrounding the university. Raife was in Sydney for the week on a BYU study group and heard about the event from his brothers. He signed up, and Saturday saw him knee-deep in mud and water traversing the course. “It was absolutely fantastic,” he said. “We’ve definitely got to do this.” He now plans to take the idea back to Hawaii and work

on creating a similar event for the YSA there.

The camaraderie also didn’t go unnoticed by brothers Laurie and Stephen Ellis, who, along with their parents, run and own Raw Challenge. “We really noticed a big difference with this group,” they said. “Not only did they have fun—they helped each other. No one went ahead as we often see in other groups who come here. Everyone worked together. Another thing we noticed was how the guys let the girls go through first—that’s something that really stood out. And we didn’t hear one swear

Helping one another through the challenges ensured everyone got through the course.

word all day—that is unique.

“There was no negativity at all. They were really encouraging and positive—just a really positive group of young adults. We really enjoyed working with them”.

At the end of the day, the final points were tallied—Fairfield Stake coming in first, followed up by Mortdale and then Newcastle Stake. Winner of the day, though, was probably Newcastle Stake president Jacob Whiting. Dripping in muddy water after being thrown into the tug-of-war trench, President Whiting good-humouredly said:

“I’m actually thrilled everyone would come this far north for an activity. It’s been a great event. Not only has everyone had fun—they’ve joined together to help each other overcome the obstacles they faced. I’m sure what they did for each other today will forge even stronger friendships between them. It’s such a positive thing to see gospel principles in action—helping, encouraging, courtesy and being their best selves in challenges. Seeing these fine attributes in the YSA assures me of the strong future of the gospel in action.” ■

My First Miracle

By T. Marama Tarati

In October 1976, I was ordained as an elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood at 25 years of age. Two months later, we were visited at home by my wife's sister and her partner, from New Caledonia. They were on holiday and decided to spend some time with us in Raiatea, the "Sacred Island" of the Leeward island group in the French Polynesian archipelago.

One evening my wife and I were preparing to show them the Church movie about the Three Witnesses when our neighbour and his wife arrived unexpectedly. Their baby son was very sick. He was crying, and suffering the effects of heavy vomiting and diarrhea. The parents asked me to take their little son to the hospital, which was an hour from our home. They knew I had a speedboat comfortable enough to travel safely

through the thick dark night to the hospital.

At first I wondered if this was an obstacle for us to face, to prevent us teaching our in-laws about the gospel. I decided to ask the Lord how to proceed. I prepared four pieces of paper and wrote four options, one on each of the four pieces of paper: (1) send the parents and the baby back home; (2) take them to the hospital through the dark night; (3) get them to ask another neighbour for transportation to the hospital; (4) give the baby a priesthood blessing.

I retired to a quiet bedroom, knelt down and asked the Lord to guide my hand to one of the four pieces of paper as an answer to my prayer. I picked up one of them, and the answer was to give a priesthood blessing.

Having received such a direct answer from the Lord, I was strengthened in my faith to give the sick child a blessing. I went into the other room to talk to the parents of the crying baby, and shared with them



The Raromatai district presidency, 1983–1985: Félicien Holman, first counselor; T. Marama Tarati, district president; Teivao René, second counselor; Sylvain Sinjoux, district clerk.

the teaching of the Apostle Paul in James 5:14–15:

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.”

I told them that I was an elder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as mentioned in James’ testimony, and asked for their permission to give a priesthood blessing to their baby son, as mentioned in the scriptures. Because they were worried about their son, and knowing me very well as the primary school principal of the village, they granted my request.

I asked my wife to come into the bedroom with the parents holding their baby, to join her faith to my anointing and priesthood blessing. I asked my brother-in-law if he believed in the power of the priesthood of God. He said: “Yes!” So, I invited him to join with us in the bedroom. When I asked my sister-in-law

***Elder T. Marama
Tarati with
Sister Christiane
Tarati in Tonga.***



the same question, she replied, “Not yet”, so she remained in the living room.

Having been ordained as an elder only three months earlier, I had never given a priesthood blessing but I had seen blessings given by other brethren. I had to perform the blessing alone because the next closest elder lived at the other side of the island, and we would have had to navigate in the dark through the lagoon and through a coral reef to get them at home.

When I laid my hands on his head to give the priesthood blessing, the baby was suffering and crying. At the end of the blessing he immediately fell into a peaceful sleep, and his parents were amazed.

I sent them home, and with the assistance of my dear wife, we showed our in-law guests the Church movie on the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, as originally planned.

The next morning, we were having breakfast when I saw the mother of the sick baby coming through the coconut trees. I was worried, thinking that the baby had become worse. When I enquired about the baby, she replied, “I came to thank you very much for the priesthood blessing you gave our son last night. Our little boy is healed, and he is playing in the garden this morning!”

This great news had such an impact on me that I was overwhelmed. I called my wife and our guests to come and hear the news, and asked my neighbour to recount the miracle that had happened.

After hearing the story, we all stood silently for a few moments, as we realized how powerful the holy priesthood of God is, and how a worthy and faithful elder calling on the powers of heaven can perform miracles among the people of men, healing the sicknesses, sufferings and pains of all God’s children. ■