

# ASIA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

### Obedience

**Elder Wisit Khanakham**

Of the Seventy, Asia Area

I was born in a very small village unknown to the public, with no electricity or water supply readily available. The place was called Ban Pong, in the sub-district San Pu Loei of the Doi Saked District, in the Chiang Mai Province, located in the northern part of Thailand. I grew up as a country boy running around the rice fields, taking care of the cattle, and was raised in a strictly religious farming family with self-discipline to live providently.

Sixty-three years ago, from the time I was four years old, I had to walk two kilometers to attend a community school. When I was eight to eleven, I also had to walk four kilometers to another public school. I then attended a public secondary school and finished high school education in a private school. I continued my education in Ramkhamhaeng University and graduated as an English major with a minor in economics.

I have always enjoyed public service projects. While in the university, I volunteered as a

tutor for English and American literature courses on behalf of the English Club. I have since taught English classes in a private high school, a private commercial college, a public vocational college, and a public welfare school. Additionally, our family assisted a Church member to hold many English camps for the technical and nursing colleges in the Trang Province, in the southern part of Thailand, as voluntary outsources. Teaching is truly my favorite profession. Further into my professional life, I have also worked for the Church as manager of the Thailand service center, and also as manager of regional materials management.

When I was very young, there were Protestant missionaries that would visit our small village. They would sing and preach to us. It was all good because village people would greet them and talk to them, but after they finished visiting our village and left, people in my village would say rude things about them and also made fun of the name of Jesus Christ whom they preached. This caused me to have many questions about this Jesus Christ: “Who is He and why



*Elder Wisit  
Khanakham*

do they say such horrible things about Him?” It wasn’t until a long time later that I would receive answers to many of my questions.

One of my classmates in high school asked me, “Wisit, do you believe that God lives?” I said to her, “No, impossible.” Her second question was, “Wisit, do you believe that man can talk to God?” I said to her, “You are crazy!!!” I soon met the missionaries when I joined the MIA program and started to listen to their discussions. A while later I decided to get baptized as my father permitted me to sign the paper on his behalf.

Throughout these 43 years in the Church, I have been called to serve in different assignments in the branch, district, mission, and stake levels. My favorite assignment is to be an usher because it allows me to greet new faces on Sundays and help them feel at home and ready to worship in sacrament meeting. Previous callings and releases have also helped me develop leadership and continue in spiritual maturation.

We have two children, Wisoodthiporn and Wisuchalak, who are 31 and 30 years old. We belong to a returned missionary family. My wife, Sumamaan, our son Wisoodthiporn, and I served in the Thailand Bangkok Mission, and our daughter, Wisuchalak, served in the Oakland California Mission. My wife and I have just completed our mission as support members and leader senior missionaries in October 2013. Serving a mission is the best thing we have done in our mortal life.

I am so thankful and grateful for my mother, although she disagreed with my new belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. I was cut off from my family after my baptism; many who knew me mocked my faith and testimony with unkind words and

made me feel very lonely. Yet nothing could stop me from worshipping the Lord. When I decided to quit my full-time teaching job to serve a full-time mission, my mother intended to release me from the family will. Nevertheless, all my trials and tribulations in life produced for me a strong faith and testimony in Jesus Christ. And because of our LDS lifestyle, our family has been accepted by my parents, family members, cousins and our neighborhood; all past conflicts were reconciled before my mother passed away.

Obedience has been an essential part of my personal spiritual growth since the early days of my conversion in 1971. Because of this important principle, my faith in and testimony of Jesus Christ has grown gradually. I had neither a vision nor any pictures of what the desired results of the teachings of Christ would turn out to be. However, I knew in my heart that the famous scripture story that young Saints all shared about how Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, his son, and how both Abraham and Isaac yielded to the will of God was real and not a fairy tale (see Genesis 22:1–13, 16–18). “And it

came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of ” (Genesis 22:1–2). I have learned that obedience leads to action. I always remember what the Lord expected me to do after my baptism. The more I learn, the more I am edified by the Holy Ghost that revelations in the scriptures are true especially “by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21).

Whenever I see new converts of the Church, it reminds me of when I too was a new convert. I did not have a vast knowledge of the scriptures or the teachings of the Church. I just kept pressing forward, letting my faith carry me on. I have full confidence in the new converts of the Church, that they will grow and progress and receive the gospel blessings in their lives by obedience. As President Joseph Fielding Smith declared, “I know that I can find [salvation] only in obedience to the

laws of the Lord in keeping the commandments, in performing works of righteousness, following in the footsteps of our file leader, Jesus, the exemplar and the head of all.”<sup>1</sup>

I have followed the Ten Commandments to the very best of my ability since my baptism. I continue to partake of the sacrament every Sabbath day, pay a full tithe faithfully, serve in the Church willingly, study the scriptures, pray, and participate in family home evenings—all very simple things to do in life. I have finally proved to myself that obedience is required for two major things: “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34), and I never neglect what the Lord wants me to do. “Be not weary in well-doing, for . . . out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). I testify that the Church is true and that the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are called of God. We will be blessed as long as we continue to be obedient in the Lord’s way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* (2013), 229.

## He is My Hope

**Sister Jasmi Joseph**

India New Delhi Mission, Bangalore first Branch

There have been times when I was having a hard time and could not make the correct decisions in my life. Work, problems, and pain were all part of my busy life.

In July 2011 my cousin invited me to attend church. I was introduced to the missionaries that same day. I began to listen to their message and felt the Holy Ghost as I learned the true gospel. I was also touched by the spirit of missionary work. I wanted to serve the Lord. On September 18, 2011, I was baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Since that day I have seen many changes in my life. As I met with the missionaries, my desire to serve a mission increased. I had a desire to serve God. I submitted my mission papers and awaited my call to serve as a full-time missionary. I was called to serve in the India New Delhi Mission.

Currently I serve in New Delhi and feel grateful to act as an instrument in the Lord’s hands. I love serving people



JASMI JOSEPH

**Jasmi Joseph**

and find true happiness as I do. I have learned many things about people. No matter what the problems I may experience, I put my faith and trust in God that He will strengthen me. During my service I have had family members depart this life. I found this very difficult, but I know Heavenly Father’s plan. What a wonderful blessing it is to realize that we will see our departed ancestors again as a family.

I am grateful to my Heavenly Father that He has allowed me to serve in His vineyard. I am also

grateful for my brother Robert Anthony who showed me the path back to my Heavenly Father. I am also grateful for Jesus Christ and His Atonement. I know that the teachings of

Jesus Christ are true and that by following Him we better understand our purpose here on earth. I also know the Book of Mormon is true and that the Prophet Joseph Smith restored

the gospel in these latter days. I also know that Thomas S. Monson is a true and living prophet who is helping us to follow a righteous path. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## Finding Joy in the Plan of Salvation

**Sister Palli Rohini**

India New Delhi Mission, Vizag Gajuwaka Branch

**M**y brother met the Elders in a hospital through a contact with my aunt. We invited them to come teach us. I felt a very warm feeling that I have since learned was the Spirit touching my heart as I learned from the messages they were teaching. On October 9, 2010, my brother and I were baptized.

I had a strong feeling that I should serve a mission. I had a desire to serve the Lord, but I was confused with my decision. As I read 1 Nephi 3:7 in the Book of Mormon, the Spirit touched my heart and encouraged me to make the right decision. I am thankful to my Heavenly Father that I am now serving.

Begin a missionary makes me very happy. I have found myself growing spiritually. I feel honored that I was given this great opportunity to serve. I have learned many things. I have had many special experiences in the mission field. After I had been serving for a month, my grandfather passed away. When I received the news, I was shocked. I didn't feel

that I could ever feel better again. The pain was very significant. My grandfather had played an important role in my life, and I missed him immensely. I asked myself, "Why does everything bad happen to me?" After a few days I gained a greater understanding of God's special plan for me. This is called the plan of salvation. I know that I can be with my grandparents and my mother again in the presence of Heavenly Father. I know that I will see them again. The gospel makes me

happy and gives me peace. The gospel has blessed my family's life as well.

I know that the restored gospel is true and that the Prophet Joseph Smith is the true prophet of the Restoration. He restored the gospel in these the latter days. I have changed because of what I have learned. It helps me make correct choices. I know that Thomas S. Monson is the true living prophet today. The Book of Mormon is the true word of God. It changes lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

**Palli Rohini**



PALLI ROHINI



## New Delhi District— Service Projects

Sister Monica Gupta

On May 10, 2014, the New Delhi District young single adults met to contribute to a noble cause of blood donation. A bus was provided by the Indian Red Cross Society, who made all the arrangements for the donors to donate blood. We began at 11:00 a.m. and wrapped up at 3:00 p.m. Many people came just looking at the bus from across the street to be a part of this service project. However, out of 70 people (members plus nonmembers), only 28 were eligible to donate. Ones who donated for the first time rejoiced with other donors, feeling good about their donations.

Along with donating blood, we had another service project going on in the sacrament hall, where young single adults were making “Get Well Soon” and “God Loves You” cards for the dying patients left in the hospitals by their families.



MONICA GUPTA



## Crafted by the Hands of God

By Ashish Pokhrel

I was born in Nepal to a wonderful family of five—parents, two sisters, and myself. They taught me how to love, to learn, and to respect others. Most importantly, they taught me to love God.

When I was 17 years old, my uncle, Hemanta, invited me to come with him to a Christian church—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I had never been to a Christian church before, but I trusted and loved my uncle. I also was extremely close to my cousins. I respected them because of the way that they lived. They used clean language. They did not drink tea or coffee. They were kind, loving, and disciplined. I remember observing them as they prayed before bed. I did not know at the time what they were doing, but I liked it. I wanted to be like them, so I decided to take up my uncle's invitation.

My first visit to church was not what I had expected. People were extremely friendly and welcoming. But the entire service was in English, and at the time I did not speak English.



*New Delhi Service Project*

There was a sweet spirit throughout the day as we served together and returned home with the merits of love's labor in serving our needy brothers and sisters.

“Only he who does something helps others to live. To God each good work will be known” (“Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, no. 223). ■

The entire time in church, especially throughout the classes, I felt uncomfortable and nervous. I kept thinking that someone would call on me to speak. Luckily no one did. I decided I would not come back.

I did not go back for six months, until my uncle again invited me to church. I told him I did not feel comfortable because of my lack of English. He told me don't worry—that English would just come. So I came to church. After that Sunday I continued to go to church. I was taught by couple missionaries serving in Nepal as well as returned missionaries from Nepal. I do not remember much of the doctrines that the couple missionaries taught me. I remember them telling me about how I could see my grandfather again. I did not know how I would see him, but I trusted and believed that I would see him again. Although I cannot remember in detail the doctrines that were taught to me before my baptism, I can still remember the peaceful and joyful feeling that I had during those two months.

I was baptized on March 26, 2007. I was barely a convert for one year when, during the Christmas season of 2008, my

branch president in Nepal asked me if I wanted to serve a mission. I replied by telling him, “Sure President, but I do not really know what a mission is.” He smiled and told me to meet with him the next Sunday.

I imagined that I would go to some foreign country. Stay in a nice hostel where I would be fed nice food and learn about the Bible. Then on occasion we would go out and help people. That was the extent of what I understood about what a mission was. However, there was one thing that I clearly understood: If I wanted to go on a mission, I would have to learn English.

At the time my knowledge of English was extremely limited. I could only say small phrases like, “How are you?” and “I am fine, thank you.” I had read the Book of Mormon before in English (there is no Book of Mormon in Nepali), but as I read through the entire book, I did not understand one word. I just read because the couple missionaries told me to read.

I enrolled in college and began to study for a bachelor's degree in arts.

The mission was always on my mind. I remember going to

church each week and seeing men called “returned missionaries.” I remembered how they seemed different. How everyone respected and loved them. How they had a special spirit about them. I wanted to be like them. So I put forward the little faith and applied for my mission in May of 2009.

I received my call to serve in the India Bangalore Mission beginning in September 2009. My first year exams were scheduled to take place in October of that same year. However, the Lord had called me to His work. So I left my exams and went on a mission.

When I arrived in Manila, it was clear that I had not been prepared for what I was about to do for the next two years of my life. Instead of packing white shirts, ties, and slacks, I had instead packed five pairs of denim jeans, a couple of t-shirts, and a lot of hair gel. I did not realize then the work that I would actually be doing.

The Missionary Training Center was difficult for me. I was so overwhelmed with all of the studies. All were in English; my companions became frustrated with me when it came to teaching. I think they had the same





ASHISH POKHREL

**Ashish Pokhrel**

question that I had floating in my mind: “What are you doing here?” However, I did not want to go home. I had chosen to come to this place and I was determined to complete my mission.

I endured at the MTC and flew to Bangalore to start my journey. In my first interview with my mission president, the first words that came out of my mouth were, “President, I do not know English. I want to learn.” President Nichols reassured me that I would learn, and that my companion was there to help me. I felt comforted at that moment.

That feeling of comfort lasted for only a moment as I was assigned to my first area

in Bangalore (the city in our mission where everyone speaks the best English). I remember feeling inadequate every single day. I remember asking myself if I could do this for two years. Not only was the English difficult, but the work was just as challenging. We walked, and walked, and walked. We were rejected, yelled at, and scolded. On top of all of that, I was hungry, tired, and homesick. This was not what I had expected.

I desired to learn, and the Lord helped me to fulfill that righteous desire. My ability to speak English came the same way my testimony of the gospel did: through diligent study, a lot of prayer, and a desire to learn.

Looking back on the past two years in India, I feel the great importance of this latter-day work, of *missionary work*. I am so happy, and will be forever, for these two years that I have served God in India. I never thought that I was so special to God. I never knew who I was. I never wanted to know who I was or why. But God always knew who I was and who I could become.

Life could have continued on the way it was, but something stopped me and called me to

a different path. That path was the gospel. I still remember that day when I decided to follow Jesus Christ. It was not so easy, but I had a wonderful family to support me and encourage me to do well. I don’t know how God prepares people; people say He prepares them in various ways. And He did with me. And you all know from the things that you read above how God prepared me for the gospel and for His work. If God called me to be a missionary, which I never thought I would be one day, I believe He can do anything. One thing I have learned very clearly is that God doesn’t call prepared people, but He calls people to His work and prepares them. This is what happened to me. He has shaped, prepared, and molded me in these two years. He gave me His work to do and told me how. As I was willing to act on that, He changed me. I am grateful for His love.

In this church anyone can find the things that they are searching for. It has the fulness of the gospel. I am so happy that God has made it known unto me. I know these things to be true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■