

# AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Seek This Jesus

by Elder LeGrand R. Curtis, Jr.

Part of the Christmas story is the story of people seeking and finding Jesus. The wise men traveled a great distance looking for “he that is born King of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2). They found this king, the child Jesus, in Bethlehem. They worshipped Him and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (see Matthew 2:9–11). They sought and found Jesus.

The shepherds also sought Jesus. After the angel had appeared to them and told them of the birth of the “Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11), they said to one another:

“Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:15–16).

They sought and found Jesus.

Simeon had been seeking the promised Messiah for many years. He had been promised through the Holy Ghost that he would not die until he saw “the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:26). The Spirit moved him to go to the temple on the day that Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple “to present him to the Lord” (Luke 2:22) in accordance with the requirements of the Law of Moses (see Luke 2:22–27). There Simeon’s seeking ended. As promised to him through the Holy Ghost, Simeon found the Messiah for whom he had looked for so long. He sought and found Jesus.

These are three early examples of people looking for and finding Jesus. This continued to occur throughout Christ’s life. The sick sought Jesus and were healed.<sup>1</sup> The blind sought Jesus and received their sight.<sup>2</sup> The deaf sought Jesus and received

their hearing.<sup>3</sup> Nicodemus sought Jesus and was instructed (see John 3:1–21).

One of my favorite New Testament stories of someone seeking Jesus is that of Zacchaeus. Jesus was passing through his community, and Zacchaeus wanted to see him. But he was short in stature and could not see Jesus over the crowds that thronged the way. Not to be deterred, Zacchaeus climbed a tree to where he could see the Savior. When Jesus came to the tree, he looked up, called Zacchaeus by name, and told him to hurry home so that he could host Jesus there. In their meeting at his home, Zacchaeus proclaimed his devotion and Jesus said that salvation had come to Zacchaeus’ house. Zacchaeus’ determination to seek Jesus was rewarded. (See Luke 19:1–10.)

The opportunity to seek and find Jesus is not limited to those who lived during His lifetime. Moroni ended Ether chapter 12 with this stirring invitation:

“And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever” (Ether 12:41).

This invitation to seek Jesus is one of the main messages of the Book of Mormon—to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.”<sup>4</sup>

In the time of Christ, one could seek and find Him by going to where He or His Apostles, Seventies, or other designated disciples were teaching and then becoming one of His followers. The process is similar for us today. We seek and find Jesus by reading the scriptures, partaking of the words of His designated leaders at general conference, in the *Liahona*, and in our worship services.



**Elder  
LeGrand R.  
Curtis, Jr.**

We seek and find Him by praying to our Father in Heaven in Jesus' name. We seek and find Jesus by doing all the things that bring us closer to Him. He declared, "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me" (D&C 88:63; see also James 4:8).

Once we come to Christ, it is our blessed opportunity to be His followers by doing all that He asks of us. Some who sought and found Jesus during His lifetime ultimately chose not to do what Jesus taught and lost the blessings that they might have had. Some followed Jesus for a time, but then turned away (see John 6:66). The rich young ruler, for example, was interested in following Jesus until he learned of the sacrifice and consecration that

would be required (see Luke 18:18–23). To get the blessings it was not enough to seek Jesus, they needed to stay the course—doing all that He commanded them to do. The same is true for us. The blessings are of eternal significance and worth all we must do to stay close to our Savior.

At Christmas we celebrate the coming of our blessed Savior. What a blessing it is for us, like the wise men and the shepherds, to seek and find Jesus. ■

#### NOTES

1. See, for example, Matthew 8:2–4; Matthew 9:20–22; and Luke 17:12–19.
2. See, for example, Matthew 9:27–30; 20:30–34.
3. See, for example, Mark 7:32–37.
4. Moroni 10:32; see also 1 Nephi 6:4; 13:40; 2 Nephi 9:41; Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:25–26; Mosiah 3:17–21; 3 Nephi 9:20–22; 12:19–20.

## OUR HERITAGE

# Sacrificing to Build Up the Church in Cote d'Ivoire

By **Phillipe and Annelies Assard**

Accra Ghana Temple

The impact of the 1978 revelation extending the priesthood to every faithful, worthy male was not immediate in Ivory Coast, as it was in some English-speaking African nations. Church literature in English had found its way to Ghana and Nigeria, for example, prompting people to ask the Church for missionaries. But for French-speaking Cote d'Ivoire, on the Gulf of Guinea between Liberia and Ghana on Africa's west coast, the gospel entered through a different door.

The story of the pioneer Church in Ivory Coast is one of hardship and sacrifice, diligence and perseverance. Most important, it is a story of faith in and love for the Savior.

Ivory Coast citizens who have the means often leave their country to obtain an education in European universities. In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of such Ivorian students were introduced to the gospel in Europe. Upon returning to their native land, these Latter-day Saints helped the gospel take root and grow.

One such Ivorian was Phillipe Assard. Phillipe left Ivory Coast for Germany in 1971 to attend engineering school in Cologne. While earning his degree, he met Annelies Margitta at a dance in her hometown of Remscheid. Before long, they married, Phillipe found employment, and the couple started a family.

In 1980 two full-time missionaries knocked on their door and presented the message of the Restoration, and the Assards quickly embraced the gospel. They were soon baptized and,

in Brother Assard's words, "overwhelmed with blessings." Phillipe and Annelies were sealed in the Bern Switzerland Temple, and Phillipe found a new job that allowed him to better meet the needs of his growing family, by then consisting of a son, Alexandre Joseph, and a daughter, Dorothée Anne.

Yet despite the family's improved economic conditions and increasingly comfortable life in Germany, Brother Assard began to feel drawn back to his native Ivory Coast. He realized the development his country needed most would come only through the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he was determined to play a part in introducing the gospel to his country. An application to a company looking for engineers in Ivory Coast bore no fruit, but Brother Assard decided in 1984 to return to his homeland anyway during a vacation and assess employment opportunities. He was disappointed to learn that the company he had sent an application to was having financial problems. No other work opportunities materialized.

"I returned to Cologne, but I had total faith in the Lord because I had this dream that the gospel must be established in Ivory Coast," Brother Assard recalls. "So in 1986, after many



**Phillipe and Annelies Assard**

prayers and fasting with my wife, I decided to return to Ivory Coast to give what I had received, to improve the lot of my family and my people."

Before leaving Germany, the Assards received their patriarchal blessings, returned to the temple in Switzerland, and traveled to Frankfurt, where they met with members of the Europe Area Presidency—Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin and Elder Russell C. Taylor. After explaining their desires to go to Ivory Coast, the Assards "received blessings and encouragement from them," Brother Assard says, "and Elder Wirthlin gave me a list of all known members in the country, which was only a handful."

Brother Assard quit his job, and the family sold their house and belongings. On April 10, 1986, the Assards left for Ivory Coast. They moved in with his parents in a small village near Abidjan—the nation's largest city and its industrial center, with a

population of about two million inhabitants. Neither Sister Assard nor her children could speak any French. Nevertheless, Alexandre and Dorothée were placed in school while Sister Assard learned French from her in-laws and Brother Assard looked for work.

For an entire year, Brother Assard fruitlessly sought employment while the strain of providing for his family weighed heavily upon him. He did not, however, let the difficulty of finding a job prevent him from moving the work of the Lord forward. He and Sister Assard sent letters to members on the list they had received in Germany. The Lucien Affoué family of Abidjan was the first to respond. The families rejoiced to know they were not alone. Other members in Ivory Coast also responded but were too remote to meet with them.

Brother Assard directed the growing branch until Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Alexander B. Morrison of the Seventy visited the country in 1987. At that time, United States Embassy worker Terry Broadhead was set apart as the first branch president with Brother Assard as his counselor. When Elder Ashton dedicated the land for the preaching of the

gospel in September 1987, the country had 16 Church members.

Brother Assard later became the first native branch president in Ivory Coast. He also served as district president and then as a stake president. Sister Assard has been a branch Relief Society president, Young Women president, and district Relief Society president. Her musical talent has proven invaluable in helping people learn Church hymns.

Temporal blessings soon followed the spiritual blessings. After being unemployed for a year, Brother Assard was hired by a European automobile manufacturer in Abidjan. His knowledge of French and German, along with his engineering degree, made a perfect match. He served as assistant technical director for the company until his retirement in 1997.

The Assards are eternally grateful for their blessings and for the guiding influence that directed them to Ivory Coast. Thanks to that influence, Brother Assard has seen the fulfillment of his dream that the gospel would be established among his people. Brother and Sister Assard continue to further the work of the Lord as they serve a temple mission at the Accra Ghana Temple. They will return to their home in Cote d'Ivoire in October 2014. ■

## Calabar Bakes Cakes

By Sister Beatrice Bassey Ita

Relief Society President, Calabar Third Ward, Calabar Nigeria Stake



*One of the cakes that was baked and decorated by the sisters.*

The Relief Society is the organization for women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This group embarks on various enrichment activities which helps the sisters in the Church to be employed and also helps stay-at-home moms and wives in the Church. On May 15, 2014, the Relief Society carried out an enrichment activity on cake baking.

Almost all the sisters in the ward participated, along with sisters from other wards. The Relief Society room was filled to the brim with sisters. Sister Ita explains, "A sister who knew



**Beatrice Bassey,**  
**Relief Society**  
**President**

how to bake cakes volunteered to teach us how. It was a successful class, and we baked a beautiful cake using the Relief Society colors of blue and gold. It was so nice that we took a picture with it and showed it to other sisters."

Today our sisters are making contact with members who want cakes for their marriages and birthdays. Sister Ita remarks, "We have learned how to bake cakes, and we can do it individually. On Sunday I baked a cake for my daughter's birthday and it was used in Primary. It was a wonderful experience. My daughter, Janet, turned one on Sunday and she was happy. The sisters always come out in large numbers for enrichment activity,

and they were so happy to learn how to bake cakes.”

Interestingly, early this year, the Relief Society carried out its anniversary where its showcases several talents. Sister Ita explains, “We showcase our talents, the things we use our hands to do. We have been thought to do many things. While at the anniversary, we displayed all those things for members to see and learn from it. It was a fantastic experience. We use the opportunity to teach other sisters and investigators. It was a successful anniversary.” The Relief Society is an organization from the Lord that helps the sisters learn new things and live better lives. ■

## YOUNG SINGLE ADULTS

### Men in the Kitchen

May 1, 2014, was a great day for the young single adults of the Kumasi Bantama Stake to host a program called “Men in the Kitchen.” In our local dialect, it is called “bæma nkwan.” The sisters were watching to find a great future husband in the kitchen, proving that men can be great cooks in the home.

The program came with much determination and excitement as each ward, branch, or unit under the Bantama Stake was assigned various types of food to prepare. These foods were all the Ghanaian local dishes. They included *fufu* with light soup, *banku* with groundnut soup, *tz* and



*apeprensa, nuhu, eba* with *egusi* soup, *ampesi* with stewed tomatoes, and *ayoyo*.

**Men can cook.**

It was a great experience as the sisters watched the brothers adding either too much salt or too much pepper. Sister Comfort Asantewaa observed, “Wow, this is my first time seeing something like this.” She continued saying, “I admire the courage of the brothers. That proves that our brothers can really be good husbands for the sisters.” When asked if she had seen someone to marry, she declared, “Of course, yes, I have seen a lot. It’s now

left for me to make a choice and definitely my husband will be one of the cooks today.”

The environment echoed a lot of joyful moments as the stake presidency, President Samche, President Sosu, and President Aggrey all felt the joy of these young single adults as they showed what they can do for their future wives.

Brother Kimball Asamoah said, “What sisters can do, brothers can do better!” That statement triggered a little debate between the sisters and the brothers. Sister Rejoice Bansa said, “If what a sister can do, brothers can do better, why is it that there is too much salt in the food?” That made everyone laugh.

President Samche congratulated all the single adults for making the program interesting and said that since he has been a stake president, this was the program he has enjoyed the most.

Bishop Appiah of the Bantama First Ward in the Kumasi Bantama Stake said he feels happy when he sees the single adults proving to the world that it is not just meant for sisters to cook.

He shared his experience that one day his wife went to work, and he was on leave. Normally it is his wife who does all the cooking, but that day he decided to cook. When his wife went to the kitchen to cook, Bishop Appiah asked, “Where do you think you are going to?” She told him that she was going to the kitchen. Bishop Appiah said, “Honey, have a seat and I will serve you.”

The wife was surprised when she was served, and she ate the food and looked at the bishop and smiled. When Bishop Appiah asked her why she was smiling, she said, “This is the best food I have ever eaten. I love you, my dear husband.” Bishop Appiah said that before he served his wife, he tasted the food and realized there was too much salt in it. He was expecting his wife to tell him about the salt, but she still said that it was the best food she had eaten.

Even with the salt, the wife still ate all the food.

He advised the men that this is a great opportunity for them to be great cooks and to support their future wives. Wives shouldn’t have to go to the kitchen every day—husbands need to show them that they can cook for them. The bishop said to the sisters, “Do not take advantage because your husband has cooked for you to say you have to cook always, as husbands and wives are here to support each other at all time.”

In conclusion, President Samche encouraged all the single adults that whatever they learn as singles in the Church, they should learn to grow and add to it. They should focus their relationship on eternal perspective. He ended his speech by saying, “There is beauty all around when there’s love at home.” ■

## MISSIONARY MOMENTS

# The Conversion of Joseph

By Elder Paul Leavitt

My companion, Elder Peterson, and I were both new to the Tema area where we served. We had spent some weeks contacting and finding, with little success. At one point we met a woman named Blessing. She showed a general interest in our message, particularly the Book of Mormon, but eventually she lost the desire to meet with us.

One hot afternoon, we found ourselves walking past Blessing’s home in the Lebanon Ward area.

As we passed, an elderly man walked out the door and called to us. “Why have you been neglecting my daughter?” he asked. We explained that she didn’t want to meet with us anymore and began to explain who we were. His annoyed expression turned to a smile when he calmly said, “Actually, I would like to meet with you sometime. I have been reading the book you gave her, and I want to know more.” We gladly set a time to meet with Joseph, as he introduced himself,

though I personally didn't expect anything to happen.

As we met with Joseph that Friday, I sensed something unique in his countenance. With all of our commitments, he readily accepted. "When I come to see the church," he said, "I will know if it is God's true church." Referring to the Book of Mormon, he told us, "If this book really is from God, I know He can tell me." His faith was an inspiration and strength to me at this time when no one else seemed interested.

Joseph visited the church and read and prayed about the Book of Mormon. He kept our visits busy with wonderful questions and insightful observations. One night he told us of an experience that had happened to him previous to our meeting him.

He told us how he had been dreaming one night that he was in his home village. He strolled off in the jungle, when several people from the village came running up to him. "There are two white men here to see you!" one of them said. Confused, Joseph replied, "I don't know any white people." "But they know you!" the people insisted. "They told us that they are looking for Joseph Agboada." Still confused, Joseph returned to the village to see these two strangers. At this point Joseph's voice became still.

Then he whispered, "Those two white men I saw in my dream were you and Elder Peterson."

After a month of learning, preparing, and repenting, Joseph entered the waters of baptism. Each time I see Joseph at church or in his home, I think of the Apostle Paul's explanation of how we become "new creatures"

when we are baptized (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

I know for myself that baptism into Jesus Christ's Church is necessary for our progression and happiness. I know Heavenly Father prepares people in multiple ways to accept His servants. This is my testimony as well as my privilege. ■

## PRIMARY

# Why I Love Christmas



**Susan I., Oshodi Ward,  
Lagos West Stake**

I love Christmas because it's a season that reminds me of the Savior's love and birth.

During Christmas I:

- Receive presents from my uncles and aunts.



- Sing Christmas carols and hymns.
- Assist in decorating my ward Christmas tree.
- Put on the Christmas dress my mum makes for me.
- Think about the Savior's birth.
- Try to choose the right.



**Maryilyn U. A., Oshodi Ward, Lagos West Stake**

Christmas is a day we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. I like it so much because I receive lots of gifts from my friends in Primary and also



from family members. I also have the opportunity to watch and listen to stories about the life of Jesus Christ. I feel a lot happier during Christmas, and I wish I had been born on Christmas day!



**Ashley B., Cocody Ward, Cocody Stake, Abidjan Ivory Coast**

I love Christmas because it is the day Jesus Christ was born. It is a day we give and receive a lot of gifts. We are happy. People are very happy. We sing Christmas songs and we watch Christmas cartoons. We wait to see our gifts and we open them after we receive them. At Christmas our parents take us to clothing stores to get new clothes. My favorite meal on Christmas is tomatoes pizza. ■



**Johanna B., Cocody Ward, Cocody Stake, Abidjan Ivory Coast**

I love Christmas because Jesus Christ was born on Christmas day. It is a month of celebrations. People are



really happy. I am very happy too. I think of Jesus Christ. I think about his love and atonement for us. My favourite meal is French Fries and Fried Chicken and Ketchup.



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Mormon Newsroom Ghana:  
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We invite you to write and submit faith-promoting or testimony-strengthening stories or events that will be of general interest to the Saints in West Africa that we can use in the *Liahona* inserts or on the Area websites.

Please email them to: **[africawestwebsite@ldschurch.org](mailto:africawestwebsite@ldschurch.org)**

Please include the following information:

- The name of the person who wrote the article
- Your contact information (telephone number and e-mail address)
- A high-resolution photo ■