

AFRICA WEST AREA

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Returning to Church Activity by Responding to the Spirit

By Elder Terence M. Vinson

First Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency

Life is full of learning experiences. Many beautiful truths are discovered by using our spiritual senses rather than our physical senses. In fact, it seems that the most important things in life are things which are unseen through our physical eyes.

The apostle, Paul, taught this principle to the Corinthian saints. “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Love is not learned and felt primarily through the physical senses. Likewise, compassion and friendship are things of the Spirit.

Most of my life has been lived in the Pacific Area. This area of the Church is extremely diverse, with developed and sophisticated nations such as Australia and New Zealand. Other nations such as Tonga and Samoa, where Church members represent high proportions of the population, are primarily subsistence farming and fishing nations. Then there are developing nations, such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, where infrastructure is poor and significant challenges confront the people. This diversity provides opportunities to learn.

One such learning experience stands out. As an Area Seventy, I had been assigned to preside at a stake conference in New Zealand. Only a few months before, President Thomas S. Monson had delivered a most powerful address to all the Seventies of the world. It concerned rescuing those who had slipped away from the ordinances of the gospel. As a result of his address and the consequent challenge given to us, I felt an urgency to take every opportunity to visit and invite those not fully involved in the gospel to return to

the covenants and ordinances of salvation.

In the course of doing this, I had made it a regular practice to invite the stake president to take me with him during the stake conference weekend to visit some who were less active. Those visits, although often made during a day full of meetings when I was otherwise tired, were always wonderful. The people of the Pacific often have a profound understanding of the importance of the “unseen things” described by Paul, and many clearly prioritize the things of the Spirit over physical needs.

During this particular stake conference weekend, the stake president and I visited several families. One of these families consisted of a husband and wife who had been married for about ten years and had been sealed in the temple, but were now less active. We were welcomed warmly and had a spiritual visit. As the visit was ending, I felt prompted to say to the husband that I felt I should give him a blessing, and that we’d like him to then bless his wife. This was unusual for me to do as I’d been taught that as a guest in another’s home, I should take a subordinate role and that the head of the home should be the one who decides what is done and who will do it. He was, however, grateful for the offer of this blessing. The stake president and I duly blessed him together and when we finished he was visibly moved by the spiritual experience.

However, as he arose, he asked me whether I or the stake president would bless his wife instead of his doing it. I found myself responding, “No,



**Elder
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it is you who should bless your wife.” He told us that, despite being married for ten years, he had never given her a blessing and was uncomfortable to do so now. I said, “We will help you. We will explain what you need to do and give you whatever assistance you require, but you need to give the blessing.”

After our explaining what he should do, and having him rehearse what was necessary for him to say to begin and end the blessing, he proceeded to give his wife a most tender and wonderful blessing. When he finished, we all had moist eyes. Our invitation for them to return to the ordinances of the gospel was then accepted.

As a result of this tender experience, the stake president was inspired in his address to the members of his stake the next day, to challenge all those priesthood holders present to go home and bless their family members. As that Sunday session of the conference ended, I had a most unusual but compelling prompting to approach a young lady who was sitting on the side of the chapel about ten rows from the front, and ask whether she would like me to give her a blessing. I had never felt such a prompting before, nor have I since. I did not know the woman but the prompting was compelling and so I responded, feeling a little awkward. She was surprised and, being taken aback, said hesitantly, “No thank you.” I was somewhat grateful for her negative reply, feeling that I had done as the Lord had asked but not knowing why He had asked. I returned with the stake president to the front and continued greeting members. Then this same young woman came forward and asked me whether I was still willing to give her a blessing. Of course I agreed and suggested she go to the stake president’s office where we would join her shortly after finishing greeting those who were there.

After concluding the greetings, I asked the stake president who the young lady was and whether he could tell me something about her. As we made our way to his office he explained that she was

just starting to return to the Church after about ten years of total inactivity. She was living alone but had lived in a way totally unaligned to gospel standards for those ten years.

The stake president and I then spoke with the young lady who told us of her feelings of unworthiness and of her previous life where she had simply done what she wanted with no thought of spiritual matters. But she had experienced an awakening to the gospel and now realized that she had slipped so far behind in her spiritual development that she could see no hope of ever catching up.

We proceeded to teach her that the laborers who entered the vineyard later could still receive the same reward (see Matthew 20:1–10) and then gave her a priesthood blessing. As the voice of that blessing, I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of love from the Lord to her. It was a feeling more powerful than I’d felt before, one that made me aware that I was in the presence of a particularly noble spirit. As the blessing finished and she rose from the chair, there were two black lines running from beneath her eyes to under her chin. There was no mascara left where it had been applied. And the trails under my eyes, although not as clearly delineated, were similar in flow.

The Lord allowed me to see that this exceptional young lady was in the early stages of the process that we all must complete to achieve our potential here on earth.

As the apostle Paul taught the Galatians, this life is the time for the spirit to subdue the flesh. “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17).

Whether we reach our potential depends on whether our spirits govern our bodies, or whether, instead, the “natural man” (Mosiah 3:19) prevails. Many in the world seem to have no fight for this battle. The appetites of the flesh govern their lives and the flesh subdues the spirit.

This young woman was on a path that would enable her spirit to subdue the flesh. She had begun a contest which she was determined to win.

As I left that stake, I asked the stake president to provide me contact details for those I'd met that weekend so that I could encourage them to continue on the paths they'd set and to remember the commitments they'd made.

The young lady continued to progress, and to do so rapidly. She began, by her faith, to "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16, 25) and to "live in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). She kept in touch with me and confided in me about the significant challenges she had faced and has since faced. She has become a dear friend to our family. And we have seen the strength of her spirit as she has drawn so very close to the

Savior. She has now enjoyed the blessings of the temple, served as an ordinance worker and, always remaining absolutely faithful, radiates the spiritual gift of charity and goodness. As I write this she has just announced her engagement to a wonderful, worthy young man to whom she will shortly be sealed.

The spiritual has clearly overcome the temporal in this young lady. We have seen her heart become as pure as any, and she has no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually (see Mosiah 5:2). The Lord's knowledge of the unveiling nobility of her soul was the cause of the prompting I received that day. It has blessed me to see His power and His grace applied as this young daughter of our Heavenly Father lives and walks in the Spirit. We all can do the same. ■

LOCAL NEWS

Conferences in Ghana Focus on Young Single Adults

Hundreds of young members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ghana gathered at four separate young single adult (YSA) conferences in June, July, and August.

Based in Cape Coast, Kumasi, and Accra, the conferences were designed to boost faith and fellowship for 18- to 30-year-old single adults and include opportunities to take part in a variety of social, service, and gospel-learning activities.

"Young single adults in Ghana make up a significant portion of overall membership in The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints," said Cynthia Call, a senior missionary advising the YSA programs, who attended the conferences. "During this time in their lives, activities like these help singles gain confidence in making their most important life decisions, including marriage, education, career, friendships, Church activity, and their relationships with Heavenly Father and the Savior Jesus Christ."

Cape Coast

University of Cape Coast was the venue for over 700 members of the Church who participated at the event on June 27–28.

Along with workshops and guest speakers, several activities were offered during the two-day gathering, including a fun cultural

New friendships were made and old ones renewed at the Cape Coast Y.S.A. conference.





program where many of the young adults enthusiastically shared their talents.

“The stage performances were great,” said Jacob Ewudzie, director of the Cape Coast conference. “We witnessed a lot of talent, skills, and creativity that night.”

Ewudzie said one of the main objectives of the conference was to create “good interactions and associations” for this large group of young single adults.

“There was plenty of time to develop nice relationships and new friendships as the young adults took part in the planned activities,” he added.

Apple eating contest at the Cape Coast Y.S.A. conference.

Kumasi Y.S.A. conference.

Kumasi

Four hundred twenty-five participants at the Kumasi YSA conference came together at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology on July 24–26 to enjoy games, group competitions, entertainment, and educational workshops.

The theme for the event, “Learn Wisdom in Thy Youth,” was showcased in the topics chosen for the workshops, which included “Self-Management,” “Keeping Gospel Standards,” “Courtship and Eternal Marriage,” and “Preparing for Honorable Employment.” Elder Terence M. Vinson, senior leader of the Church in the area, also counseled the young single adults to pattern their lives after the Savior Jesus Christ and other pillars in the scriptures.

When asked to comment on the three-day conference in Kumasi, many participants described it as a memorable event,

and they hoped that more would follow in the future.

Accra

Because of the large number of members of the Church in the greater Accra area, two YSA conferences—Accra and Accra West—were planned to accommodate all who wanted to attend.

Emelia Amoah-Kpentey participated in the Accra conference held on July 17–19 at the University of Ghana, Legon. Over 600 young single adults attended that weekend, where everyone looked forward to spending time with each other in a friendly and relaxed environment.

“A beautiful aspect of the event was the fact that we had three days to mingle and make friends,” Amoah-Kpentey said. “Old friendship ties were reinforced and new friends were made.”

Three workshops were also provided at the Accra conference to strengthen the young



Pioneer from Accra Ghana, Sister Juliana Anno

On Saturday, March 17, 2012, three ward Relief Societies in Accra, Ghana, joined together to celebrate the birthday of the Relief Society. The sisters from the Adenta First, Adenta Second, and Adenta West Wards boarded a bus and traveled to the Julianna and Emmanuel Frank Anno home in the Accra McCarthy Hill Stake. The sisters brought food they had prepared for a lovely lunch, which they served under the trees in the garden surrounding the Anno's home. Before lunch was served, sitting in garden chairs around many round tables, the sisters sang hymns and listened as Sister Faustina Botchway, president of the Adenta Second Ward Relief Society, talked about the early history of Relief Society.

Then everyone listened while Sister Anno, who is 85 years old and one of the first members of the Church in Accra, told about how she first heard the gospel and was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on May 30, 1981. On the next day, May 31, 1981, Sister Anno was confirmed a member of the Church. At this time there were not enough members for a branch in Accra, so Sister Anno met each Sunday with a small group of saints.

Several years earlier, Sister Anno had hosted three exchange students in her home. Two were girls from the United States and one was a boy from Britain. Sister Anno explained that in the late seventies, a social welfare exchange program was introduced in Accra. Because her family had already participated in an exchange program, Sister Anno was invited to join the program and visit a home in Vermont, USA.

The hostess in Vermont wanted to show Sister Anno the sites around the area. She told Sister Anno that the Mormons were in the area and they had a historical site nearby. Though the hostess did not



Three-legged race at the Accra West Y.S.A. conference.



Participants at the Accra West Y.S.A. conference.

adults. "Guest speakers gave excellent presentations on how to battle life's challenges, use agency wisely, and set correct priorities," she said.

On July 31–August 2, Methodist University College in Dansoman housed 450 young single adults attending the Accra West conference. An orientation assembly and get-acquainted games followed registration as people continued to arrive that first morning.

A rotation of workshops and activities kept participants busy at the conference. Morning

devotionals, a movie and dance, preparation and rehearsals for a talent show, and a closing devotional where those attending expressed their feelings about the events of the weekend all added up to a positive and uplifting experience.

Larry Kitson-Mills, director of the Accra West conference, commended the various committees for their dedication in ensuring that the program was a success. "The aim for this gathering was achieved and we hope to improve on subsequent events," he said. ■

believe in the Mormon religion, she was willing to take her guest to see the monument placed at the birthplace of Joseph Smith in Sharon, Vermont. The hostess did not want to go into the visitors' center at the historical site, so she stayed in the car.

Sister Anno was interested enough to go by herself. She was very impressed with the stone obelisk and the beautiful grounds surrounding the monument. But she was even more impressed when she went inside a building and saw a movie. The movie, called *Man's Search for Happiness*, answered the questions she had always had in her mind. "Where we came from, why we are here on earth, and where we are going when we die."

Sister Anno was so touched by the message and the explanation she heard that she gathered all the free pamphlets and a Book of Mormon to take home. However, when she packed her bags to return to Africa, she had too much weight so she had to leave the pamphlets and the Book of Mormon behind.

When she returned to Accra, she could not find anyone who knew about the Mormon church. But a few

years later, she needed to visit her two daughters who were living at a boarding school in Cape Coast. Her friend Pricilla was a teacher at the school, but she was not at the school when Sister Anno went to visit her daughters. She inquired at the school, and they said Pricilla was sick and at home.

Sister Anno went to visit her sick friend. On the table in her friend's home, she saw a Book of Mormon and some of the same pamphlets that she had collected in Sharon, Vermont. Immediately she asked where Pricilla had found these materials. Pricilla said that she had received them from some people when she was visiting in Switzerland. Pricilla told Sister Anno that she had heard that there were some foreigners in Accra who had an affiliation with the pamphlets. Sister Anno copied down the

address of the home in Accra where the "obronis" (foreigners) were supposed to be meeting.

When Sister Anno finally found the address in Accra, the gate to the home was locked and she was told that no one was there. The guard told her that the obronis had moved back to America. Disappointed, she returned home.

Some time later, Pricilla, who had now joined the Church in Cape Coast, was staying in Accra with family. She visited Sister Anno and told her that there was going to be a conference at the Ambassador Hotel in Accra. Sister Anno was glad to hear this news and she made plans to attend. She took her only son, Kweku, and his friend with her. She liked what she heard, and both she and her son, who had recently graduated from the university, met with the missionaries to receive the discussions. Both Sister Anno and her son completed the discussions and asked to be baptized. However, Sister Anno was told that she had to have written permission from her husband, as he was not a member. Her husband said that he did not object to her being baptized, but he did not want to sign any papers. So her son, Kweku, was able to be baptized before his mother.

At this time the group of Saints in Accra, Ghana, was under the direction of the mission in Nigeria. After some time, Sister Anno received a letter from the mission president, informing her that since her husband had given verbal permission and she was of age, she could be baptized. This was a very happy day for her. On May 31, 1981 Sister Julianna Anno was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Since that day, Sister Anno has taught the gospel to her children and her grandchildren, and has taught and nurtured many other children in the gospel. In addition, she has fulfilled callings in the Relief Society and Sunday School. She taught seminary for many years and also shared her experience and knowledge when she served as the teacher development leader. Sister Anno particularly enjoyed serving as an ordinance worker in



Sister Anno

the Accra Ghana Temple. She has always enjoyed serving as a visiting teacher and even now serves in that capacity. By her faithful example and her willingness to share her unwavering testimony, Sister Anno has taught and strengthened not only her own family but also all those whose lives she has touched.

Recently one of Sister Anno's seminary students, Daniel Abeo, was sustained as the stake president of the Tesano Stake in the Greater Accra area of

Ghana. He said, "Sister Anno made me who I am. When I was a young struggling seminary student, she taught me how to study the gospel. She taught me how to prepare and gave me an opportunity to teach the seminary class when she needed to be away. Her encouragement and the confidence she placed in me motivated me to learn and to develop the ability to teach the gospel." On the day President Abeo was sustained, he said, "It is because of Sister Anno that I am here today." ■

YOUTH

Values to Improve for the Year 2015

Claude Z., age 17, Babré Branch, Gagnoa district



Claude

The virtue that I would like to improve upon for the year 2015 is obedience. I chose this virtue because of the teaching of Elder Vinson at the 2014 youth conference. He said, "when we obey even when we don't understand, it is not because we are blind. It is because of our aspiration for eternal life." Since then I strive to apply this attribute which helps me get closer to my Savior.

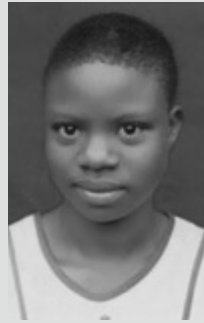
Queen U., Ikot Ebo Second Ward, Etinan Nigeria Stake

What I need to do to improve is, as a daughter of God, to stand

as a witness of God at all times and in all things and in all places I may find myself (see Mosiah 18:9).

The values I needed to work on are faith, divine nature, individual worth, knowledge, choice and accountability, good works, integrity, and virtue.

I will always strive to work on these values so that they may guide me throughout my life, and I will always put these values into practice and pray for God's guidance. I will always strengthen my home and family, and I will make and keep my sacred covenants and prepare to receive the ordinances of the temple and enjoy the blessings of exaltation and endure to the end. ■



Queen

MISSIONARY MOMENTS

The Things I Used to Do—I Do Them No More

By Elder Mark Saffa Nyuma

Missionary in the Egerton Third Ward, Calabar Nigeria Stake

Elder Nyuma from Sierra Leone, who is serving in Calabar, Nigeria, has baptized a fisherman of the sea.

Brother Monday is a fisherman who was baptized on May 24, 2014, into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

During the period of teaching before he was baptized, Brother Monday came to understand many things concerning the Church and the priesthood. He was happy to know about priesthood blessings.

He worried about his English and that he did not speak it well, but he wanted to become a member of the Church.

Brother Monday loved the Church and even shared the gospel with one of his friends. He had a drinking problem and the missionaries started teaching him. He agreed to follow the commandments, including the Word of Wisdom, and now he has been baptized.

He said those things he used to do, he would do them no more.

In our recent visit with him, he said that ever since he was baptized, he has put those things away. The gospel has blessed him so much and he is grateful for this experience.

He explained to the missionaries that he didn't ever have money, and when he got money from his fishing business, he would squander it on drinks.

All the things he did in the past are over. He is ready to be a worthy person, especially because he loves the priesthood so much and exercises his faith in the priesthood. The missionaries advise those they teach to believe in the priesthood power.

Men who understand the priesthood know its importance. The priesthood helped Brother Monday to know more about the gospel. It helped Brother Monday to be a changed man and remain worthy. ■



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africawest.lds.org

Mormon Newsroom Ghana:
www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh

Mormon Newsroom Nigeria:
www.mormonnewsroom.org.ng ■



PRIMARY

My Favorite Scripture



Happiness Sunday E., age 8, Ikot Ebo Second Ward, Etinan Nigeria Stake

My favourite scripture is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."



Enefiok Clement A., age 9, Ikot Ebo Second Ward, Etinan Nigeria Stake

My favourite scripture passage is 1 Nephi 3:7: "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them." ■

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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 ■