

ASIA LOCAL PAGES

ASIA AREA LEADER MESSAGE

Spiritual Self-Reliance

By Elder Gerrit W. Gong

Asia Area President

Great blessings come to us and those around us when we become temporally and spiritually self-reliant—and able to serve others.

In the Church, “self-reliance” does not mean relying only on ourselves. Ultimately it means faith and reliance on the Lord. Self-reliance is a choice we make to come unto the Lord so He can help us help others.

During the October 2014 general conference General Authority training, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles invited the Area Presidency and director for temporal affairs in each area of the Church to begin preparing for long-term area self-reliance. The Area Presidencies and directors for temporal affairs were asked to begin with meetinghouse priorities. I will explain what we mean by meetinghouse priorities below.

As you may know, our Asia Area is populous, vast, diverse, and complex. Our Asia Area of the Church includes 22 countries and regions—from Mongolia in the north to Indonesia in the south, from Pakistan in the west to China in the east. Within our area, Church experience and maturity varies. We also have many different economic and societal situations.

As a Church area, we are now invited, in a gradual, long-term way, to help each other toward self-reliance.

Self-reliance means individuals and families who have “the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family. As members become self-reliant, they are also better able to serve and care for others.”¹

Long-term area self-reliance comes from self-reliant stakes and districts. Self-reliant stakes and districts are ultimately composed of self-reliant individuals and families. Area self-reliance also includes other spiritual and temporal elements. For example, the spirit of long-term area self-reliance includes self-reliance in local missionaries; local temple, mission, and other leadership; family file names for temple work; etc., while recognizing the Lord will call His people to serve where He will.

Long-term area self-reliance means constant focus on members. We continually ask, “How will this approach look in 10 years? 20 years?” “What would this decision mean in terms of member time, energy, and financial commitments to participate in the Church now?”

As a result of the new direction on self-reliance, the Area Presidency and the director for temporal affairs asked for a review of all meetinghouse projects. Each will be considered carefully. Some may change, be delayed or even cancelled because of new meetinghouse priorities.

Areas as Pioneer Companies

As part of General Authority training, we learned that areas of the Church are like pioneer companies. In the times when the pioneers were crossing the plains to the Salt Lake Valley, they were organized in groups called companies. Doctrine and Covenants 136:3 records, “Let the companies be organized with captains of



Elder Gerrit W. Gong

hundreds, captains of fifties, and captains of tens, with a president and his two counselors at their head, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles.”

Today, similarly, areas of the Church are led by three assigned General Authorities, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles. In the spirit of self-reliance, the pioneers provided for themselves and also provided a surplus to help others. Today, we are invited to do the same thing.

Guiding Principles

Some guiding principles can help us as pioneers in our area.

1. **Self-reliance**—As areas mature and grow, they should become more self-reliant.
2. **Providing for others**—Mature areas should continue to assist less-developed areas.
3. **Wise judgment**—Authority and accountability should be paired with wise judgment to effectively manage resources. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles teaches, “As the Saints work to become completely self-sufficient, something very special happens that goes far beyond decreasing costs. . . . Something special happens to an individual or to a Church unit when the people become more independent and self-reliant. They feel more confident, positive, and assured, and they reflect these feelings in their actions.”² These confident, positive, assured feelings, reflected in our actions, are what we hope for each member of the Asia Area of the Church.

Possible Meetinghouse Considerations

As we examine meetinghouse use, possible considerations may include the following:

A first step in long-term area self-reliance is to

examine use, locations, costs, and maintenance of each meetinghouse. Even early examination indicates that significant opportunities exist to reduce costs and better use our meetinghouses. This process of careful examination of meetinghouse use will require a multi-year, gradual, and sustained implementation period.

Meetinghouse Opportunities

1. Increase meetinghouse use to four Church branches or wards (instead of two or three branches or wards).
2. Begin design and construction of a meetinghouse only after three branches or wards are ready to occupy it.
3. Allow members to fill existing meetinghouses.
4. Rent long-term or buy already constructed space where it makes sense.
5. Adjust travel times to better use meetinghouses.

In each case, we want meetinghouses to be as close and as convenient to our members as possible. At the same time, we are aware of many places in the world, including developing countries in our Asia Area, where there are not yet places for our members to meet. Some sacrifice may be required for developed areas where there are already many Church meetinghouses, to help developing areas also have places for Church members to meet.

Blessings of Tithing Faithfulness

Our tithes are used to build and maintain the meetinghouses where we meet and worship together. We each receive blessings when we faithfully obey the law of tithes—when we are tithing faithful. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) expressed it this way: “The Church has the

means to construct buildings, but the people will not be blessed unless they observe the Lord's law of the tithing."³

Blessings of Fasting and Offerings

We are commanded to "look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer" (D&C 38:35). We are also told that "Blessings associated with the law of the fast include closeness to the Lord, increased spiritual strength, temporal well-being, greater compassion, and a stronger desire to serve."⁴

The Lord Himself tells us: "I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way . . . for the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare" (D&C 104:14–17).

The Lord has ordained for all His children opportunity to receive the restored gospel. He has also decreed to provide the necessary spiritual and temporal means to do so to "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (1 Nephi 19:17; see also D&C 90:11) in "[His] own way" (D&C 104:16).

Fundamental doctrine will not change. But the means and modes of establishing the gospel and administering the Church will adapt and adopt. Principles of self-reliance multiply spiritual resources by reducing dependence on constrained physical resources. Ongoing inspiration and revelation can maintain unity of doctrine and spiritual ministrations while program administration adapts as appropriate, beginning with meetinghouse priorities.

Long-term Asia Area self-reliance can reduce the cost structure of administering Church programs as

local adaptations occur. The gospel and the Church can come to all the Asia Area in hastening and sustainable ways. In the coming years, over time, we will find the spiritual and temporal resources needed to establish the gospel and the Church in the Asia Area are already here. The Lord has provided and will continue to provide.

We will be sharing more on long-term area self-reliance in the coming months and years. In the meantime, we want each member to know we love you. We admire you. We are grateful for you. And we are grateful we each have the opportunity and blessing to become temporally and spiritually self-reliant such that we can receive the blessings from the Lord and serve and bless each other as He would do. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 6.1.1.
2. M. Russell Ballard, "Sacrifice and Self-Sufficiency," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 78, 80, lds.org/ensign/1987/11/sacrifice-and-self-sufficiency.
3. Quoted in Presiding Bishopric Presentation, General Authority Training, October 7, 2014; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, "The State of the Church," *Ensign*, May 1991, 51–54, lds.org/ensign/1991/05/the-state-of-the-church.
4. *Handbook 2*, 6.1.2.

LOCAL NEWS

See, Hear, and Understand . . .

By Robert K. William

First counselor, India Bangalore Mission Presidency

During the Savior's mortal ministry, He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Some of the notable deeds that He performed were with people who were sick and afflicted both in body and in spirit.

The scriptures talk about the miracles that He performed. We read about Christ causing a blind man to receive his sight (see John 9:1–15), healing a deaf (see Mark 7:32–35), and opening His Apostles' understanding



President William

of His words. In speaking to His Apostles, He said, “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand” (Matthew 13:13).

This scripture made me ponder the challenge we have in seeing, hearing, and understanding. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said, “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). How can

this scripture help us to see?

We as mortal beings are subjected to seeing things as temporal and not eternal. Our life will become more meaningful if we take this counsel from Paul to our hearts. We will attend our sacrament, priesthood, and other meetings more diligently. We will show our zeal in attending all meetings irrespective of the presiding authority. We all need the healing touch of the Savior to open our eyes that are blind to the things of eternity. If we show our faith and seek His hands to touch our eyes, we will surely be able to receive sight and see the things which are not seen.

The opening words of this last dispensation to Joseph Smith were, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Following the counsel to hearken closely to the commandments and to the word of God will lead to eternal life and exaltation. Moses counsels Joshua and all of Israel to “be strong and of a good courage” (Deuteronomy 31:6). He said, “Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may **hear**, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and

observe to do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31:12; emphasis added). Listening, hearing, and pondering the word of God will bless us with increased understanding of the gospel and will help us learn His ways. The key is to prepare ourselves to be sensitive to the still small voice, so that by hearing we can still “hear.”

In conclusion I want to touch on the last point: Understanding. This usually is a final outcome if we see and hear properly. Paul, again in writing to the Corinthians, said, “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men” (1 Corinthians 14:20). Abinadi, in rebuking the priests of King Noah, said, “And now, did they **understand** the law? I say unto you, Nay, they did not all **understand** the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts; for they understood not that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God” (Mosiah 13:32; emphasis added). As we soften our hearts and learn to understand, we will be able to understand more and be edified. It is my prayer that we may do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

My Family—Saviors for our Ancestors

"Many of our Heavenly Father's children died without knowing the gospel. In His mercy and great love, the Lord has prepared a way for them to gain a testimony of the gospel and to receive the ordinances of priesthood. That missionary work happens in the spirit world, and many will accept the gospel then.

"However, they cannot receive any ordinances for themselves because they are dead and do not have physical bodies. So in

the holy temples we have the privilege to receive ordinances on their behalf. Ordinances like baptism, confirmation, priesthood ordinations, endowment, and sealings can be performed for them.

"If we do this work, we become saviors for them as they cannot do it for themselves."

When I heard this topic in sacrament meeting, I had a desire in my heart to go to the temple. Because all my family members were of different faiths, they did

not get the opportunity to hear about this true gospel and this great work of the Lord. I wanted to give them the opportunity to accept the ordinances, especially my deceased mother and father, and all my brothers and sisters. Hence I started to work diligently on my family history and started getting in contact with many of my relatives who live in our hometown. It was a struggle collecting all the information. Sometimes I got mocked, and they wondered why I was collecting everything now. But I worked hard for two months

**Penumuru
family at the
Hong Kong
Temple**



and collected all the information I could. I worked with our family history consultant, Peter Bushi, every single day and submitted all the information I collected. I had collected information for about 30 deceased members of my family that I was able to register for ordinances.

We as a family—my wife, sons, daughters, sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law—together decided to go to the temple. We wanted to get sealed as a family and also do all the vicarious ordinances for our ancestors. We had the privilege of entering into Hong Kong China Temple on 2 June 2014. We received our own endowments and got sealed as a family on the same

day. The happiness we felt in the sealing room cannot be described. Then we proceeded to perform the ordinances for our ancestors. We wanted to give them the same joy that we were feeling in the temple. We were excited for this great work of the Lord.

We entered into the baptismal font to perform baptisms. My daughter volunteered to be a proxy for all the baptisms for all the female ancestors, while my son-in-law performed the baptisms. My sons and daughter-in-law performed the confirmations for these ancestors. We all witnessed this great work for our ancestors and joy filled our hearts for them. We continued

to perform other ordinances for all of them over the next six days in the temple. We were able to complete all of them by the end of our temple trip.

I know that the Lord is mindful of each and every one of us, including our ancestors. The plan of salvation, temple work, and all the ordinances are once again restored to the earth at present time. I am so grateful that the priesthood power has been restored once again upon the earth as in times of old. What a wonderful time we live in. I testify of the power of the temples. They are indeed the house of the Lord. I do so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Krishnaiah Penumuru, Hyderabad Stake

Our Blessed Journey in Primary

Primary Presidencies of the Coimbatore District

“Belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” was the theme for the children’s sacrament meeting presentation for the year 2003. My journey with Primary began when I joined the Church on 1 December 2002. A few weeks after my baptism, my branch president called me to serve as a nursery teacher. With this calling, my joy was full. While investigating the Church, I always thought of what wonderful examples the Primary children were and asked myself many times questions such as “Can I bear testimony like

these children?” “Can I recite scriptures valiantly like them?”

Every year the Primary auxiliary is assigned a yearly theme for sharing time. The outline contains instructions on new songs, scriptures, and lessons that the children will be taught during Primary meetings by the Primary presidency and teachers. The branch Primary president at that time, Sister Pramila Dangwal of the New Delhi Second Branch, included me to actively participate and assist in the children’s preparation for the yearly children’s sacrament meeting presentation and other activities. As I served in the Primary and worked with those little children, my testimony



Sister Sonia Kilbert with Primary Presidents of Coimbatore 1st, 2nd & 3rd branches. (Left to Right: Sister Sonia Kilbert, Sister Vinitha Appusamy, Sister Anita Roses Brigith & Sister Mahalakshmi Jayakaran)

began to grow, as prophet Alma described in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 32:27–43).

Serving in the Primary has helped me to learn what I had missed learning in my childhood and to know the importance of gospel learning in the early years of our lives. It also taught me what to teach my future children so they grow in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Currently, I am serving as the district Primary president in the Coimbatore India District, where I have the wonderful opportunity to work with Primary children and Primary leaders in various branches in the district. I know that Primary in each branch, ward, or home group prepares little children spiritually be strong, but it also brings miracles in the lives of the Primary leaders, teachers, and parents who work with them.

Coimbatore 1st Branch Primary



Sister Mahalakshmi Jayakaran, Primary president, Coimbatore First Branch, “I am happy to see that we are a little part in the Lord’s hand, preparing His children to rise in the Church. When I see them I feel very proud and very humbled in His service. As a woman and a sister, I feel the trust the Lord puts on us to do His will.

When I see the children fulfilling their assignments today on the stage and the smiles of the parents, what would I say except the Lord has a great trust in me in molding His children. Again I see the Lord’s love through them.

I remember the scripture that says, “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6), which is true. I am seeing that happening with our children. Heavenly Father’s children will be molded well by His teachings and parents partnering together to help their children become great leaders in the future.

I love my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is my Savior. I will serve Him with all my heart.”

Sister Vinitha Appusamy, Primary president, Coimbatore Second Branch, “My journey with the little glittering stars give me a new experience. Monday to Saturday, being in the world we face a lot of troubles and bits of happiness, but the full happiness comes only on Sunday in partaking of the sacrament and looking at the smiles on the faces of the children.

“To me, Primary is a place of happiness. I enjoy teaching them about the importance of families and also the Savior’s love for them. They follow the teachings and are sharing those teachings and love towards their families and also to us.

“Before, I used to ask the Lord to help free me from anger, but now God answered my prayer by calling me to serve in the Primary. Even if children



Coimbatore 2nd Branch Primary

make trouble, I ask myself, ‘Where is your anger?’

“I conclude my testimony that I know and I believe Savior loves us and that to show His love to the children, He called each one of us into this calling. Of these things I joyfully testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

Sister Roses Anitha Brighth, Primary president, Coimbatore Third Branch, “I have been serving as branch Primary president for three years. Through this calling, I have learned a lot of patience, which is also helpful in my family. I have learned to treat my children with love and patience because of my experience from the calling. I love to serve in the Primary. I know Heavenly Father has prepared me to receive this calling and to learn many things from this calling.” ■

Submitted by Sonia Kilbert, Coimbatore District Primary President

Coimbatore 3rd Branch Primary



The Canadian Chinooks

By President Peter E. Sackley

India New Delhi Mission



I was born and raised in southern Alberta, Canada. While typically a beautiful country in the summer months, the winters can be terrible. A terrible day in Calgary could include one meter of new snow on the ground, icy roads, and temperatures as low as -50 °C with a biting windchill. For all those who live in Mumbai or Chennai, I have little sympathy. Also for those of us living in New Delhi who often complain about our two months of cold winter, this is nothing compared to what we see in Canada. There are two other complications to Canadian weather which I wish to discuss today:

1. Extended periods of cold weather—I have seen snow fall during every month of the year, including the summer months.
2. Temperature changes—It is not uncommon to see the temperatures increase or decrease by 20 degrees in a matter of hours. This is often caused by what is called a “Chinook wind.” As seen in the attached pictures, a thick, dense cloud appears, a strong wind begins to blow, and up comes the temperature in a dramatic manner.

Anyone who has lived through these events will tell you that they are spectacular to watch and that the warm weather lifts everyone’s spirits. It becomes a welcome change.

As we begin a new year, I wonder if we need to create our own personal Chinook wind. We need to ask ourselves if we need to make a dramatic change in our lives that will, like the Chinook winds,

- Warm us from a cold deep freeze in our lives.
- Allow us to see a brighter day.
- Encourage us that a change is a welcome blessing.
- Teach us that change can really happen.

I have always been impressed with examples found in the Book of Mormon regarding change. For example, the story of Laban (see 1 Nephi 4) states that Nephi was asked to do something that he had never done before. He said, “never at any time . . .” and “I shrunk . . .” (1 Nephi 4:10). It was clear that he was being asked to do something he did not want to do.

We, like Nephi, are often asked to do things which require us to try something new or extend ourselves to do something that just doesn’t feel comfortable. If you read further in the chapter, you will learn of Zoram, who, when challenged to make an immediate change in his life, responds in the following way as recorded by Nephi: “Zoram did take courage at the words which I spake. . . . He promised that he would go down into the wilderness unto our father. Yea, he also made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth” (1 Nephi 4:35). Moving to the wilderness doesn’t sound like much fun in the beginning, but the act ultimately blessed the lives of all who were willing to respond to a call for change. Notice that Zoram made an oath or promise when he was asked to change. These sorts of commitments act as a strength in our lives as we respond to the call for change. ■