

AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

The Importance and Power of Holding a Temple Recommend

By Elder Keith P. Walker

I distinctly recall my first-ever temple recommend, and our first time attending the temple. We were married in 1980, and soon after I was taught the gospel and joined the Church.

In 1983 my wife and I were living in Adelaide. We had moved there to take up a new position with work, relocating from Perth.

Marilyn was expecting our first child when we went to see the bishop to receive our temple recommends. There were no temples in Australia at that time, and most families made great personal and financial sacrifices to travel to the closest temple in New Zealand.

We were a young married couple with a new baby on the way and no money. We did not know when or how we would ever be able to afford to travel to New Zealand to attend the temple. However, we both had the desire to be married in the house of the Lord for time and all eternity and have our children born in the new and everlasting marriage covenant.

As we exercised our faith by being worthy and prepared to

receive our temple recommends, a miracle took place in our lives. Soon after we received our recommends, my employment circumstances changed, and I was invited to travel to Sydney for a short-term assignment, which then resulted in my being offered a new position in Queensland.

Literally the windows of heaven were being opened. The new position offered me greater career opportunities, as well as further opportunities for Church service. As a result of our move interstate, we were able to travel to New Zealand to fulfil our dream.

What an unforgettable and amazing experience it was to see the lights of the temple for the first time. It was a cold, wet, and dark August night when we finally came around the bend travelling along the “Mormon mile” to see the temple lit up like a beacon in the dark night sky. We both stood silently and awestruck as we looked out at the temple from the balcony of our temple apartment, looking forward with anticipation as we prepared to enter the temple for the first time. We both



Elder
Keith P. Walker

went to sleep that night like two children on Christmas Eve, looking forward with excitement to the next morning for the gifts that were awaiting us.

We read in Mosiah chapter 2 that as King Benjamin addressed his people, “they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them” (Mosiah 2:6).

Our attendance and participation in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection

Marilyn and I knew that what we had learnt and were taught in the temple was important, but we did not fully appreciate and understand how both of us, and the new family we were starting, would be protected by the spiritual power associated with the temple

covenants we were entering into. As our family continued to grow, the blessings of holding a temple recommend, attending the temple whenever we could, and continuing to be worthy to attend the temple would literally become a protection and shield against the influence of the adversary and the trials we would have to ultimately face and endure.

President Boyd K. Packer stated:

“The house of the Lord, bathed in light, standing out in the darkness, becomes symbolic of the power and the inspiration of the gospel of Jesus Christ standing as a beacon in a world that sinks ever further into spiritual darkness. . . .

“No work is more of a protection to this Church than temple work and the family history research that supports it. No work is more spiritually refining. No work we do gives us more power. No work requires a higher standard of righteousness.

“Our labors in the temple cover us with a shield and a protection, both individually and as a people.

“So come to the temple—come and claim your blessings. It is a sacred work.”¹

The sealing power that binds on earth and in heaven

On a recent trip to the Holy Land, my wife and I were able to

literally stand in a place where the Saviour taught and prepared His Apostles to receive the keys and authority to bind on earth and in heaven, when He was to later depart from this life. Today there stands a brass statue of Peter on the coast of Galilee for all who visit this area to see him holding these keys symbolising the priesthood power and authority which he was given by Jesus Christ.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? . . .

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:13, 16–19).

Peter, who held that sealing power at the time, also had the authority and power to bind and seal on earth or loose on earth.

Today that power and authority belong to the President of the Church. No one can get it except from the prophet, seer, revelator, and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Temples are beacons and a source of spiritual power

The Hamilton New Zealand Temple was a beacon on that August night in 1983, when we were attending the temple for the first time. It has continued to become the centre of spiritual strength in both our lives. Despite the challenges, trials, and opposition we experience in our lives, the temple has been a source of resistance and great spiritual power to us.

At the cornerstone dedication for the Logan Temple, President George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency said: “Every foundation stone that is laid for a Temple, and every Temple completed according to the order the Lord has revealed for his holy Priesthood, lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness, moves the heavens in mighty power in our behalf, invokes and

calls down upon us the blessings of the Eternal Gods, and those who reside in their presence.”²

Whenever we have been faced with important decisions or we have become overwhelmed with things in our lives that have weighed us down, we have often found ourselves in the temple. It has become a place of refuge for us from the storms of life’s trials. Whenever we are safe within the walls of the temples, we know that we are “out of the world.”

Turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children and children to the fathers

The Prophet Joseph Smith received a vision in the Kirtland Temple in 1836, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16, where Elijah returns and commits the keys of this dispensation as promised by Malachi to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers.”

This vision foreshadowed the great work to be done in the temples of the Lord in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, for all the redemptive work of the dead through baptisms and other temple ordinances, and the sealing of the children to their parents and those of their posterity.



IMAGE COURTESY OF ELDER KETHIP. WALKER AND USED WITH PERMISSION

The Walker family enjoy the blessings of being sealed together through multiple generations.

We are eternally grateful for our temple endowments and the covenants we have received that have been the greatest blessing and investment of our eternal potential. As we reflect on kneeling at the holy altar in the temple to be sealed as husband and wife for all eternity, this has become a reality for us, as an eternal family with our children and grandchildren.

Through sacrifice, hard work, and devotion, raising our children and supporting them in raising their children, we see the impact it is having on their lives over three short generations spanning 35 years.

As our decisions and the saving temple ordinances

have allowed us to become an important link in the lives of our ancestors who have gone before us, this is also the same link that binds those of our posterity who follow after us. We and our posterity are joined forever, thereby having the hearts of the fathers turned to the children.

At this time of the hastening of the work of salvation, our living prophet has directed us through revelation to go to the house of the Lord to receive our covenants. There will be no blessings withheld for those who are faithful and endure to the end. ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “The Holy Temple,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 32, 35.
2. George Q. Cannon, in “The Logan Temple,” *Millennial Star*, Nov. 12, 1877, 743.

60-Day Family History Challenge Unites Members of the Gold Coast Australia Stake

By Stephan Hall

In recent years, prophets and apostles have taught of blessings that come from participating in temple and family history work.

In the October 2012 general conference, Elder Richard G. Scott taught: “Do you young people want a sure way to eliminate the influence of the adversary in your life? Immerse yourself in searching for your ancestors, prepare their names for the sacred vicarious ordinances available in the temple, and then go to the temple to stand as proxy for them” (“The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 94).

Realising the great blessings that come from following prophets, leaders in the Gold Coast Australia Stake issued a 60-day challenge to help youth and adults claim these blessings.

Over a 60-day period in July and August 2014, members were encouraged to:

- Fill out the *My Family* booklet;
- Individually register online with FamilySearch;
- Enter this information in FamilySearch; and
- Take a family name to the temple.

Hundreds of members took up the challenge, with the youth in particular working with great vigour. During the challenge, a stake youth activity was held, where youth used their laptops and tablets to register accounts and get underway.

Youth, their parents and members throughout the stake began researching their family history and preparing names for the temple, anxiously waiting



James, Joseph, Chelsea, Miki, and Terry Wong at the Brisbane Temple

to attend the temple for their deceased ancestors.

At specially organized temple days, the youth and adults arrived prepared with family names and performed the ordinances for their own family and those of their fellow ward members' families.

Amanda Goldberg, a Mia Maid from the Tallai ward, wrote of her experience in the temple:

"I was baptized for some ancestors, including my grandma's half sister. One of the young men was baptized for my male ancestors. Other ancestors I did were my great-great-grandfather, my poppy's mother, and my great-grandmother's sister and family. . . . When I was baptized for my grandma's half sister, I could feel the Spirit strongly, and her presence.

"Before I did the 60-day challenge with the youth, I thought that family history work was for old people, but once I did the challenge I realized that our generation knows a lot already about developing technology. So we need to do more family history because we have a head start!"



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL NATHAN AND USED WITH PERMISSION

A young man wrote:

"After spending an hour with our family history consultants, I knew what I needed to do. In fact, I knew more within 20 minutes of being on the computer than I think the family history consultants knew. As youth today we have been blessed to know how to use computers really well. Once I got onto FamilySearch, I found my way around it,

Mason and Cameron Evans at the Brisbane Temple



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL NATHAN AND USED WITH PERMISSION

Youth and leaders from Isle of Capri Ward at the Brisbane Temple

and then within no time I had 16 names to take to the temple.

“When I was baptized for my great-great-great-grandfather on Dad’s side, and my great-grandfather on Mum’s side, I had a deeply spiritual experience, as I felt they were both there showing gratitude for the work that I had done. It was so great.”

In speaking of the impact the 60-day challenge

had on stake members, stake president Daniel Shine said: “This challenge unified and blessed all who participated in it. The spirit of Elijah has sparked a desire in all of us to continue in this sacred work of blessing our deceased ancestors.”

A video highlighting experiences from this challenge is available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN_IhaG1jJc ■

Rescue Visits Change Lives

By Asa Smibert

Some time ago I had the blessing of joining with Elder Keith P. Walker (Area Seventy) and President Luke Hillier (an elders quorum president) to visit with two beautiful young people. They had recently moved into the Kuraby Ward and were slowly making steps to be fully active in the gospel. It was a crucial time in their spiritual progression, and it was clear that the Lord was aware of them and knew their needs. He was watching out for them through a loving bishop.

In the scriptures we are taught that the Good Shepherd knows His sheep (see John 10:14). Such is true of Bishop Tony Phillips of the Kuraby Ward. When asked who needed a visit, the bishop knew that the Lord was mindful of Manuel Toa and Kirstine Umata and their little baby. At

the arranged time, we entered their home, and we knew that the Lord had prepared the way. After just a couple of simple questions, they were reminded of spiritual experiences that had occurred throughout their lives. They spoke of their desire to follow those promptings and take the steps to come back to church and be married. Love was expressed, testimonies shared, and commitments made. Motivated by the remembrance of their past spiritual experiences, this couple determined to meet their bishop and take the steps that would lead them back to church and ultimately the temple. Accepting an invitation to change can be the start of the journey that leads us back to our Heavenly Father.

Almost 6 months later, we were privileged to sit with this couple as again they said yes to an invitation. This time it was a yes to each other, before their bishop, as they were joined together in marriage.

For all involved this was a sacred experience. An invitation had been extended, the Spirit witnessed truth, faith was demonstrated, and lives were changed. The experience was a powerful testimony that the rescue is for all of us—not just those who have wandered or are lost. Parents, leaders, home and visiting teachers—all have a role to play in this redeeming work.

I am pleased to say that the story is not yet finished. Their determination is to be sealed together in the temple. They continue to press forward, eagerly waiting for this special day. ■

Returning to the Temple

By President Zeisel

Brother Pahira Fred Maraki is a convert to the Church, having been baptised in April 1999. His wife, Lucia Trass-Maraki, is a fifth-generation member. Fred became less active while living in New Zealand. Some years later, after moving to Australia in 2004, local ward leaders felt inspired to visit their home, and on one occasion visited the family with Elder Jeffery D. Cummings, Area Seventy.

Bishop Cameron Thayer continued to visit Fred and Lucy to support them through some challenges, and this act of kindness was very encouraging to them.

In early 2014, Bishop Thayer, responding to an invitation from his stake president, Robert N. Gilkes, prayerfully identified Fred and Lucy for President Gilkes to visit with Elder Keith P. Walker, Area Seventy. Bishop Thayer felt that Fred and Lucy could greatly benefit from having their stake president and an Area Seventy in their home.

During the visit Fred and Lucy shared some of the significant trials they had been experiencing. Kainga, their son, had recently been diagnosed with a serious brain tumour, and was still deciding whether to undergo intensive treatment. This was particularly hard for the Marakis, as they had previously lost their older son, Douglas, at 14 years old to cancer. Fred was also having difficulty finding work, and they were living off Lucy's part-time wages. They felt alone and therefore stopped doing the things that would draw them closer to their Heavenly Father.

Elder Walker and President Gilkes talked to the Marakis about their testimonies of the Saviour and how they felt about the Church. They spoke about

how at these difficult times, the place they could feel closest to their Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ was in the temple. Elder Walker spoke of the blessings of the temple and invited Fred and Lucy to work with Bishop Thayer to prepare to receive a temple recommend. Fred and Lucy said they did attend the temple regularly in New Zealand when they were active but now felt they were too "off course" and therefore unworthy to enter the temple again.

President Gilkes went through the requirements for a temple recommend with the Maraki family. They identified that apart from church attendance and becoming full-tithe payers, there was nothing else to prevent them from holding a temple recommend. Fred and Lucy accepted an invitation from Elder Walker to prepare to enter the temple. They started to attend church on a regular

The Maraki family



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE MARAKI FAMILY AND USED WITH PERMISSION

basis once again and began paying their tithing.

While they still have challenges in their lives, they are no longer facing them on their own. They now have current temple recommends, attend the temple regularly, and are serving in their ward.

Fred, Lucy, and Kainga also received the news that the life-threatening cancer was declared “all clear”. With gratitude, they feel it is all because of the love of Heavenly Father and local members in helping them return and partake of the blessings in making and keeping sacred covenants, both on Sunday and in the house of the Lord. ■

TIP OF THE MONTH

Facing Our Fears (“Giants”) from Within

In facing life’s fears we must draw upon our faith and skills to live. Biblical David, seemingly devoid of fear, faced the terrifying giant Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17). He had to overcome his fear first before he could defeat Goliath. It was his faith and preparation—a slingshot and stones—that overcame his fear and defeated Goliath.

Life is filled with fear-ridden experiences. Fears often appear gigantic and overwhelming. However, most fears are founded in unresolved worries about future events, worrying about career, education, who to marry, health challenges, employment, or dealing with a crisis, for example.

Are there Goliaths in your life waiting to be defeated?

David relied not only on his faith in God but also on his skills—with the slingshot—honed over

many years.

David’s sling was a curious choice of weapon, particularly against a giant. However, when combining his skill with faith, the weapon became lethal.

How can we face our giants today?

Develop power in faith through regular, sincere prayers and diligent scripture study. Then apply your learning through unselfish service.

Learn how your brain can work against you even when you are not particularly worried. When you’re anxious, the brain tries to address the anxiety. When left unchecked, the brain can create a sense of doom. We become over vigilant and try to figure out what’s wrong. The brain then scans for all possible things that could go wrong.

Learn to separate real worries from just normal thoughts and emotions. List your worries and separate them into two groups titled “productive” and “unproductive” worries. The productive worries you can deal with right away (e.g., “I’m going to be late”), while unproductive worries are the ones you can’t do anything about (e.g., getting old; learn to accept it). ■

