

# AFRICA WEST AREA LIAHONA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### This Shall Ye Always Observe to Do

By Elder LeGrand Curtis Jr.

Africa West Area President



LeGrand Curtis, Jr.

When the risen Christ visited the Nephites, He did what He had done with His Apostles at the Last Supper: He administered the sacrament to them, instructing them that this was done in remembrance of His body and of His blood (see 3 Nephi 18:5–11; see also Matthew 26:26–28). His body, of course, was tortured and killed as an essential part of His atoning sacrifice. His blood was shed as part of that same atoning sacrifice, first during His agony in Gethsemane, and then during the torture culminating in His Crucifixion on the cross at Calvary.

The sacrament ordinance which Jesus instituted among the Nephites was not to be a one-time occurrence. After blessing the bread, Christ said, “And this shall ye *always* observe to do” (3 Nephi 18:6; emphasis added). After blessing the wine, He said, “And this shall ye *always* do to those who repent and are baptized in my name” (3 Nephi 18:11; emphasis added). In the next verse Jesus said, “And if ye shall *always* do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock” (3 Nephi 18:12; emphasis added). Christ then demonstrated His desire that they partake of the sacrament frequently by partaking of it several times with them during the days that

He ministered to them (see 3 Nephi 20:3–9; 26:13). In describing Church practices after the Savior’s visit, Moroni said that the members “did meet together *oft* to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus” (Moroni 6:6; emphasis added).

The Lord has set up the same repeating pattern in our day. Just prior to the organization of the Church in 1830, the Lord said, “It is expedient that the church meet together *often* to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus” (D&C 20:75; emphasis added). The next year the Lord explained what “often” means. In Section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord gave this commandment:

- 9 “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;
- 10 “For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;
- 11 “Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;
- 12 “But remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord” (D&C 59:9–12).



Thus, the pattern was set by the Lord Himself that we meet each Sunday—the “Lord’s Day”—and partake of the sacrament.

The pattern set by this commandment is a great blessing to all who follow it. Every week we come to church and receive the blessing in the sacrament prayers that we may always have Christ’s Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77, 79). The receipt of that promise depends upon our keeping our parts of the covenant: (1) Taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ; (2) always remembering Him; and (3) keeping the commandments which He has given us (see D&C 20:77, 79). Thus, the life of a faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints includes coming each Sunday to sacrament meeting, devotedly making these three covenants, and then going forth with determination to keep those covenants during the week ahead. The faithful member then comes back the next week and makes the covenants again and tries to keep them during that week. The reward is the Lord’s Spirit always being with him or her, and all the blessings that flow from being a keeper of covenants with the Lord. The taking of the sacrament becomes the centerpiece of a sacred Sabbath day—in fact, it becomes a centerpiece of a covenant-keeping life.

I have seen members go to great lengths to keep the Lord’s commandment in Section 59 to partake of the

sacrament each week. Some travel great distances. Some come to sacrament meeting despite severe physical restrictions. Some come alone as the only members of their families. But all who come with broken hearts and contrite spirits, hungering to devotedly make these sacred covenants with the Lord, are richly blessed. Sister Cheryl A. Esplin, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, told about a faithful 96-year-old man who every week attended sacrament meeting. At one point his son asked him, “Dad, why do you go to church? You can’t see,

you can’t hear, it’s hard for you to get around. Why do you go to church?” The devoted father’s response was, “It’s the sacrament. I go to partake of the sacrament” (Cheryl A. Esplin, “The Sacrament—a Renewal for the Soul,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 14).

I testify of the blessing that it has been in my life to partake of the sacrament regularly. I testify of the peace, joy, and power to do God’s will that come from devotedly partaking of the sacrament each week. It is a key to living a saint-like life. This we must “always observe to do.” ■

#### OUR HERITAGE

## The Miracle of Change—Christopher and Florence Chukwurah

Adapted from an article by Jan U. Pinborough and Barbara J. Clarke

Joy shines radiantly from the face of Florence Chukwurah of Lagos, Nigeria. And so it should. In the things that really matter—her faith, her family, and her education—Sister Chukwurah is a woman supremely blessed. She is a competent and experienced nurse and the mother of faithful children. She worked ably with her husband, Christopher, while he presided over the Ghana Accra Mission. There she helped reduce sickness among the

missionaries by teaching them to boil and filter their water, eat well, and keep their surroundings clean. In 2003 Brother and Sister Chukwurah served as ordinance workers in the Salt Lake Temple. At that time Sister Chukwurah was also called to serve on the Relief Society general board. But life did not begin so promisingly for Florence Chukwurah, and the story of how she has become an accomplished and successful woman is the story of a miracle.

In the life of Florence, the miracle of change has been gloriously visible. She was born into a life of poverty in Onitsha, Nigeria. Her father, who worked at sea on a ship, was rarely at home. Florence's mother was not educated and worked hard to feed the family.

As she approached young womanhood, she began to realize just how poor her family was. By the time she was about 11 years old, a steadfast resolution had formed in her mind: She would escape from poverty. What made this more than a childish wish was that she also made several powerful commitments. These, she felt, would help her find a better life. First, she recalls, "I determined to break from poverty by seeking God earnestly." Besides this fundamental decision, she made three practical resolutions. "I decided to be obedient to my parents and to older people, be serious with my schoolwork, and work hard with my hands."

Hard work had long been a constant fact of Florence's life. She hauled water for the family from the public taps or from a stream. She fetched firewood and cut it up for cooking fuel. And she helped her mother with the laborious preparation of the cassava root—the family's staple food.

After school, there were younger children to tend and feed and schoolwork to do. On Saturdays, there was laundry to wash at the public taps.



**Chukwurah  
Family**

Even on holidays, Florence bought and sold vegetables to help pay her school fees.

All this Florence did with a willing heart. "I was happy doing these things as a way to demonstrate my love for my family and also to honor my father and mother," she explains.

As a young girl, Florence deepened her commitment to schoolwork when she noticed neighbors who were educated. The parents of several of her girlhood friends were teachers and headmasters.

Florence became interested in nursing partly because she liked the way nurses dressed. Taking care of her brothers and sisters had also developed her natural interest in helping others. Her father had borrowed money to pay for her secondary schooling, a debt Florence later repaid. She could not afford to attend a university or teacher's college; however, the government would subsidize her in nursing school. So at age 16,

she began her training as a nurse.

The year Florence graduated from her training at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, she was given the Florence Nightingale Award for best nurse of the year. She continued her education, finishing her training as a midwife five years later, in 1970.

Today Sister Chukwurah strongly encourages the young people she meets to break away from illiteracy with the help of classes offered by some stakes. "I tell them that they are the future of Africa." She encourages young people to appreciate what they have, but also work hard to improve on it.

Even deeper than her desire for education was young Florence's yearning to go to church with her family. In fact, she says this was her "greatest longing." She saw the people in her neighborhood who went to church as a family as especially blessed. And she admired a man called "Holy Nweje," a retired Anglican minister who went around the neighborhood

admonishing children to be of good behavior.

It was Florence's exemplary behavior that began the series of events that fulfilled her greatest longing. She was back in her hometown of Onitsha, Nigeria, practicing nursing. A woman in the neighborhood noticed that Florence came home after work, rather than going out with men. The woman suggested that her nephew contact Florence.

When Christopher Chukwurah met Florence, he told her immediately that he was looking for a wife. Based on his aunt's recommendation, he said, he would like to marry Florence. Florence promised to consider his proposal.

"I had been very close to the Lord all my life," recalls Sister Chukwurah. "Something kept telling me that I had to be close to the Lord." She had been consistently praying for a good husband—someone who would care for her and who would not drink alcohol. "I wanted a family that would really be anchored on the Savior," she explains.

When she prayed about Christopher, she had a warm feeling that this was a man who was spiritually inclined. When he returned for her answer, Florence accepted his proposal. They were married on March 3, 1972.

Florence found that Christopher shared her hunger for spiritual things. Together they investigated a number of churches, fasting and praying together regularly.

Christopher also shared her desire for education. He had a bachelor's degree in political science and information sciences, and shortly after he and Florence married, they left Nigeria for the United States. Christopher earned a master's degree in educational administration from Illinois State University. Florence studied psychology part-time and worked in several hospitals. They returned to Nigeria in 1977, still uncommitted to any one religion. By 1981, they were weary of moving from church to church.

Over the years, the Chukwurahs had developed a tradition of holding a special family fast on the last day of each year. On New Year's Eve, December 31, 1981, the purpose of their fast was to seek guidance in finding a church they could remain in throughout their lives.

Just nine days later, Florence was preparing a meal in the kitchen and Christopher was preparing a lecture for a college class when both received an impression in answer to their fasting and prayers. "I had this persistent feeling that we should visit a family friend of ours. When I told my husband, he said, 'I have the same feeling. Can we go right now?'"

When they arrived at the home of their friend, they were surprised when he offered them a soft drink instead of the usual beer. He explained that because he and his wife now belonged to The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints, they no longer drank alcohol or smoked. "My husband and I looked at each other," recalls Sister Chukwurah. "We love each other so dearly that we can speak with our eyes. After looking into each other's eyes, we immediately asked, 'How can we become members of this church?'" After receiving the missionary discussions, the Chukwurahs were baptized in February 1982.

Ten years after joining the Church, Christopher Chukwurah was called to preside over the Ghana Accra Mission. That calling opened the door for a crowning blessing when the Chukwurahs were sealed as a couple in the Salt Lake Temple. Their oldest son, Emeka, was able to be sealed to them also. Later they were sealed to their other two sons. Two sons have served missions and all three have been married in the temple. All three sons reside in the United States. The Chukwurahs also have two foster daughters.

Brother and Sister Chukwurah have learned to follow the promptings of the Spirit, both in regard to Church callings and in caring for their children. There was a time when their son Uchenna became very sick and Sister Chukwurah stayed home with him while her mission president husband traveled to Sierra Leone. Medication had been prescribed for nine-year-old Uchenna, but he kept getting sicker. He kept vomiting and losing strength until he finally collapsed. Florence checked

## MISSIONARY

his pulse and found it very weak. She was convinced he was dying.

Without a priesthood holder available to give her son a blessing, Sister Chukwurah knelt by her son's bed and held him while she prayed for help. During the prayer she got the distinct impression to stop giving him one of the medications. This was at 5:45 p.m.; she was scheduled to give him the medication at 6:00 p.m. She rose from her knees feeling a great relief. Knowing clearly what needed to be done, she changed his medication. Immediately Uchenna's pulse became normal, and the nausea lifted.

Florence Chukwurah names the miracles in her life gratefully. "I have never had to beg for food," she says. "I have been able to be self-reliant. I have succeeded in teaching my family how to prevent communicable diseases by practicing hygiene at home, and I have educated many others. I have a husband who holds the priesthood and who helps me raise our children in the fear and service of God."

The life of Florence Chukwurah has been transformed from one of uncertainty and want to one of peace and joy. "The Lord heard my prayers," she says. "He understood my struggles and my search for a bright and happy future. He crowned my efforts with blessings too many for me to express. Since I have joined the Church, I wake up with peace in my heart. I sing in my heart all the time." ■

## A Night of Flood and Fire

By Elder Bowring

The most life-changing event that I have ever experienced started on a regular Wednesday evening. My companion, Elder Vandehei (from Tennessee), and I were out at about 6:00 p.m. proselyting in Accra, Ghana, when it began to rain heavily. The storm forced us inside after 90 minutes. I later checked the gutter outside our apartment only to discover it was a raging rapid completely overtaking the curb and street. I couldn't believe it! Huge chunks of debris were quickly flowing by our door as they made their way down the street. A few minutes later we received a call from our bishop pleading for us to check on his family since he couldn't get to them.

We quickly left the safety of our apartment and headed into the storm. By the time we got to the end of our road we were treading water up to our waists. At the main road, a heavy current almost swept us away. I remember looking back at Elder Vandehei and thinking, "Are we really going to do this?" but I had a strong feeling that we needed to keep going.

By the time we got to our bishop's street, the current had gotten stronger and we had to move along the side of the street by the shops where the current was weaker. We slowly pushed



Elder  
Bowring

on until the water got so deep that we were forced to start swimming. We heard many people yelling at us from buildings along the street, "Where are you going?" "Turn around—it's not safe!" But we pushed forward. We eventually ran into our recent convert, Phillip, who was standing on a wall, completely terrified. I will never forget the look of terror on his face. Phillip said: "Elder Vandehei, let's pray!" So, as we waded in what was once a street corner, surrounded by the constant crash and flash of lightning and thunder, our recent convert prayed for us, begging our Father in Heaven to stop the rain.

I was scared about what we were going to find at our bishop's home. We bumped into a truck floating down the street, and other obstacles swept past us. When we arrived at



their home, we found the bishop's wife with their one-month-old daughter strapped to her back and his wife's mother holding their two-year-old son, both women standing at the highest point in their house under a small tin shelter with water past their knees and rising fast. Once there, my head went blank. We felt helpless.

Then I received a prompting that we needed to pray together. So there in the pouring rain, I offered the most sincere and heartfelt prayer I have ever given. I prayed with all my heart that Heavenly Father would show us what we needed to do and protect us, that we had done everything we had been asked to do and had been faithful in keeping His commandments, and that He was the only one who could help us.

After that prayer, miracles started to occur. Elder Vandehei spotted what looked like a bucket floating in the

water, so he went and retrieved it. It turned out to be a plastic trash can, with a lid on top. We decided that we needed to get the baby out of there quickly, since the flood was getting worse. The bishop's wife trusted us enough to place the baby in the bottom of the trash can and then to lightly put the lid on top and attempt to swim it out to safety.

We couldn't go back the way we had come because the current was just too strong, so we headed the other direction, where we knew an overpass (and hopefully dry ground) was located about 100 yards (91 m) away. Our original plan was to take the baby up to the overpass and then try to get to the church where we thought our bishop was. The last thing I remember as we set out with the baby floating in the garbage can was the bishop's wife pleading with us to keep her baby

safe. I was at the back of the garbage can, holding it up while kicking my legs to keep my head above the raging water. Elder Vandehei was leading the way. Fortunately, I knew the area so as we went along I tried my best to talk to Vandehei to guide him to where I thought some high ground was located.

Another miracle occurred as we were able to find a concrete wall I could hold onto with the bucket that had the baby, as Elder Vandehei would float about 10 feet (3 m) at a time to go and make sure that everything was safe ahead. We did that for about 50 yards (46 m), praying the entire time. We swam past a two-story building with some people up there yelling at us that it wasn't safe to go to the overpass. We had been ignoring people telling us those kinds of things all night, but this time we stopped and thought about it. We had told the bishop's wife that we were going to take the baby to the church, but now these people were telling us to bring the baby upstairs. We decided that the best thing to do would be to take the baby into the building.

As we led the baby inside, I realized that I hadn't heard its cry for a while. The worst thoughts raced through my mind about how I was going to cope if that baby hadn't made it through our incredible journey. I gently opened the top, stuck my hand inside and felt the baby. I can't express the relief I felt when I felt her

breathing. I knew she was still alive.

We got her inside through the stairwell; the residents took her, got some blankets, wrapped her up, and put her on a mattress. I was so happy to know that she was safe. We then realized that our missionary roommates had no idea what was going on. We had told them we were going to be back within 15 minutes when we left. Someone had a phone so we called them. They told us our apartment was also flooding and they had put our belongings on top of bunk beds and they were on the roof of our landlord's house. They also said that President Hill, our mission president, was worried sick about us, so we quickly gave him a call and swam back to our bishop's house. We told his wife that her baby was safe, and she was so happy, but we still had their family there and the water wasn't going down. Things looked like they were getting worse.

We all decided that it would be best for the bishop's wife to go and be with her baby, so we found a large wooden shelf that was floating in the compound



yard and put her on it as a homemade raft. She was pretty scared; not one of them knew how to swim and she was so nervous. We already knew the way and were able to get her to the building pretty quickly. Once inside, the people there gave her some dry clothes and she was able to be with her baby.

I felt so happy that they were together and that we had all been protected thus far. We went outside on the balcony of the building to figure out what we were going to do next when we heard a huge explosion. I turned around and saw a huge cloud of black smoke and flames rising up. There were people on the overpass screaming and running. I felt like I was in a movie with rain, thunder, and flooding on both sides, and a huge fireball burning in front of me with people screaming and running away. I turned to Elder Vandehei and asked if this was the Second Coming. It turned out to be a gas station that had exploded only a half a mile (.8 m) away from us. We later learned that over 100 people had perished in the explosion. Throngs of people had been trying to stay out of the rain in the gas station canopy and in nearby stores that also went up in flames.

We looked down and gratefully saw the water had started to recede. That was probably one of the greatest feelings ever to see the water level drop. As we set off to the bishop's house again, the people at the top of the building

started shouting to us that they had relatives inside a room at the bottom of the building who needed help. We had to budge the door open—it was stuck, and it took both of us and all the strength we had to force open the door.

Honestly, I don't know how the people survived in that room with the height of the water. They had a 12-year-old daughter inside who was very traumatized. I put her on my back (the water was probably about waist deep now) and she held onto my neck so hard I almost choked. We were able to get her to safety as well. When we finally made our way to the bishop's house, I heard: "Elder Bowring, Elder Vandehei!" We got closer and realized it was our bishop. He took one look at us, gave me the biggest hug of my life, and said thank you. I can't describe how wonderful that felt.

He explained that he had been trying to get to his house ever since he had called us but he just couldn't. He said that we were the last phone call he had made before his phone died. At one point, he looked at the raging torrent on his street, bowed his head, and prayed that his family would be safe. We were a literal answer to his prayer. We went to his house and picked up his 2-year-old boy and then we went back to his wife.

I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude to our Heavenly Father. He was there with us every step of the way, and I could feel His presence

through it all. When we had the baby, He prompted us to know what to do and where to go, and He protected us. He helped us make the decision to take the baby to the building instead of the church because our bishop would not have been there.

I recall the promise that I received in my patriarchal blessing and my setting apart as a missionary that I would see dangers and be in scary situations but that if I was faithful to the gospel, then I could approach life with a sense of peace and direction and know that things would work out. I have seen that promise fulfilled so many times on my mission but never so much as I did that Wednesday night. The Lord was with us without a doubt, and we were protected. I am so grateful my testimony has grown so much. I know that God is always there and that He will always fulfill His promises as long as we do our part.

We finally arrived at the mission home after midnight in cutoff t-shirts, shoeless, and soaked from head to toe. I'm sure we were quite the sight for President Hill. Elders Forrest and Uzoho were already there. We were now homeless; we had to stay at the mission home for two nights, and now we are with the APs and the office elders. Most of my belongings are OK, but some got destroyed in the flood. All that stuff doesn't matter to me now, though; I am just happy that those we helped are safe. ■

PRIMARY

## My favorite quotes and lessons from Primary

### Claudia Patterson, age 7

I learned that when Jesus Christ was baptized, Heavenly Father was very happy. He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). I cannot wait to be baptized when I am eight years old. I know it will make me very happy.

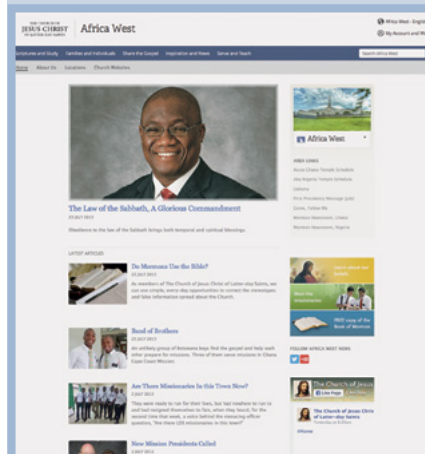
### Naomi L.omo, age 10

"By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). Anytime I have to do something hard, I have to ask the Holy Ghost to help me make the right choice. If I am quiet and listen, He will always be there to help me.

### Eric O.sanyongmor, age 11

"He spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began" (Luke 1:70). Heavenly Father always chooses prophets to lead us and help us know what He wants us to do. Our prophet today is Thomas S. Monson, and I know everything he tells us to do is the right thing. ■

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