

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### The Lord's Day

By **Kevin W. Pearson**  
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**Elder Kevin W. Pearson**

As Christmastime approaches, there are signs everywhere reminding us that it's that time of the year again. These signs remind us of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all mankind. The Saviour's life and teachings and Atonement are a sign of Heavenly Father's love for each of us. "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" (John 3:16).

The scriptures teach us that after completing the Creation of the heavens and the earth, "on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested . . . from all his work which he had made . . . God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:2-3). This was a sign that the earth was prepared for man.

From the very beginning, we have been taught that the Sabbath day is the Lord's day and commanded to keep it holy. This commandment has been renewed in every dispensation of the gospel.

To Moses the Lord said, "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth



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sanctify you” (Exodus 31:13). He said, “It is holy unto you” (Exodus 31:14) and called it “a perpetual covenant” throughout the generations (see Exodus 31:16).

The Lord identified Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath. He has repeatedly commanded us to honour Him on His day. The first and great commandment is to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37). How can we honour the Lord and His holy day?

Today, the Sabbath day is anything but holy for most people. It has become a play day for man rather than a day of worship. The Sabbath day is a holiday, not a holy day.

Keeping the Sabbath day holy is more than just attending church for three hours; it is about who we are and what we do all day long. It is about keeping the entire day holy.

We can begin preparing for the Sabbath day (completing tasks, responsibilities and shopping) on Saturday, so that we are prepared to focus on making the Sabbath day a day of worship—a day focused on being our very best for one another and offering our deepest devotion to the Father and the Son. We can deepen our understanding of what we are doing when we partake of the sacrament. The sacrament

is a remembrance of His infinite Atonement. When we take the sacrament, we are doing three things:

1. We are offering a broken heart and a contrite spirit to Heavenly Father and asking Him to forgive and sanctify us as we remember the Saviour’s atoning sacrifice and partake of the bread and water. In so doing we are asking Heavenly Father to forgive and sanctify us.
2. We are witnessing unto Heavenly Father that we will take upon us the name of Christ and always remember

Him and stand as living witnesses of Him in all places, at all times and in all things (see Mosiah 18:9).

3. We are making a new covenant to keep all of His commandments. The sacrament is not merely a renewal of an old covenant made at baptism; it is a new covenant made each and every week.

In making this covenant, we are exercising our agency, showing personal obedience, exercising faith, repenting of any mistakes, forgiving others so we can receive forgiveness, and committing anew to be like the Son.

As we do, Heavenly Father promises to forgive us and promises that we might always have His Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to be with us.

We can be forgiven and clean each and every Sunday during the sacrament. We can leave with the promise of forgiveness and the companionship of the Holy Ghost each week. The sacrament is the most sacred thing we do each and every week. It is a powerful reminder of who we are and of the power and reality of the Saviour’s infinite Atonement. The sacrament is a sacred symbol of Heavenly Father’s love for us and a sign of His willingness to always bless and help us.

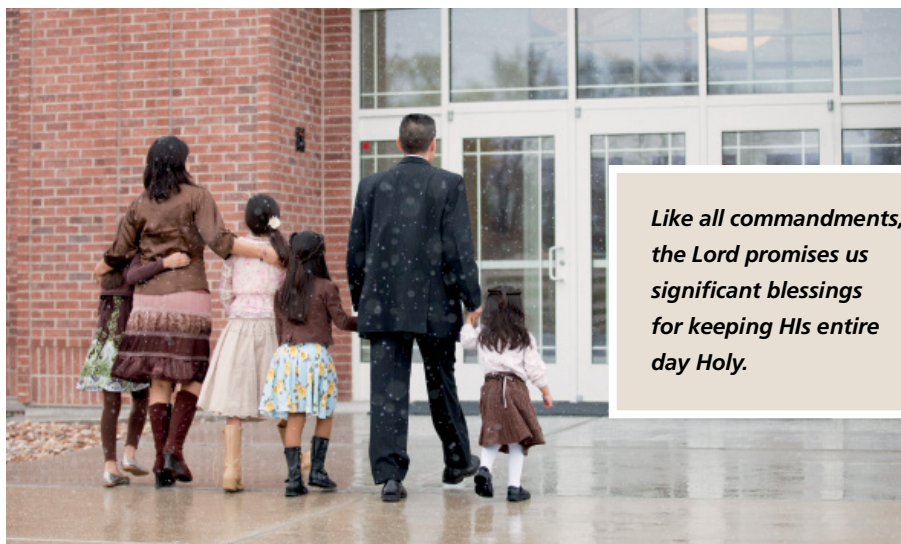
But keeping the Sabbath day holy is more than just attending church. As with all commandments, the Lord



***We can be forgiven and clean each and every Sunday during the Sacrament. We can leave with the promise of forgiveness and the companionship of the Holy Ghost each week.***

promises us significant blessings for keeping His entire day holy. These promises are found in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 59. In this revelation the Lord mentions four specific and powerful blessings for keeping the Sabbath day holy:

1. We can be clean (verses 8–9).  
 “That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world.” When we are unspotted from the world, we have more confidence in approaching Heavenly Father in prayer. We feel better about ourselves. Our self-esteem increases.
2. We can have greater joy (verse 13).  
 “That thy joy may be full.” When we keep the Sabbath day holy, He promises us a greater fulness of joy—joy in our lives, our marriages, and our families.
3. We can receive greater temporal blessings (verse 16). “The fulness of the earth is yours.” He promises a greater fulness of the earth, of the things we need. These are temporal blessings. Our efforts to provide for ourselves and families will be magnified and multiplied. Heavenly Father wants His children to “prosper in the land”. He wants us to have a greater fulness of the earth.
4. We can have peace (verse 23).  
 “Peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.” We all want



*Like all commandments, the Lord promises us significant blessings for keeping His entire day Holy.*

greater peace in our lives and in our families. What greater blessing can He promise than eternal life!

These are the Lord’s blessings to those who keep His day holy. Spencer W. Kimball said that the most important word in the Book of Mormon is the word remember. The Lord gave us the Sabbath day to keep as a remembrance of the infinite Atonement. The Sabbath day since the days of Adam and Eve has been a covenant between God and His children to remind us of who we are and what we have covenanted to do and to be.

The prophet Ezekiel taught that the Sabbath day is a sign (Ezekiel 20:20), a sign of Heavenly Father’s love for us. It is also a sign of our love and

devotion to Him and to the Saviour. What sign are we giving Him each Sunday? What kind of sign does your Sabbath day observance represent?

I pray that as we come to understand the Sabbath day better, it will be a delight: a day we always look forward to, a day we give back to the Lord, a day of remembering, a day of witnessing, and a day of covenanting, a weekly sign between us and the Lord demonstrating our love and devotion, a perpetual covenant throughout the generations that we will honour the Father and His Only Begotten Son.

As we end the year and look to a new year, may we resolve anew to more fully follow the living Son of the living God. May our lives be a powerful sign of our discipleship. ■

# 10,000 People Follow Pacific Mormon Newsroom

By Mormon Newsroom Staff



Newsroom staff at the Pacific Area Office celebrate having 10,000 fans.

Thumbs-up for the Pacific Mormon Newsroom Facebook page for reaching 10,000 fans.

“At the beginning of the year we had around 3,000 Facebook fans. Today we have over 10,000,” said Elder Maurice Melligan, a public affairs social media specialist with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“Our goal is to share goodness and offer our fans a unique, uplifting newsfeed experience.”

Paula Fugal, a missionary currently serving as a public affairs specialist in the Church’s Pacific Area office in Auckland, says, “There is so much good that happens in the world that often goes unnoticed.

“I love the fact that we can provide a positive space for people to go for uplifting stories and information. I hope when people read our stories they feel inspired to do good things in their communities, churches and families.”

The Facebook page includes fans throughout the world, including Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Australia, Papua New Guinea and the United States.

Women make up 62 percent of the fans and men 38 percent, with the



largest representation coming from the 18–24 year age bracket.

Pacific Mormon Newsroom is one of around 70 national and regional Mormon Newsroom websites. There is also a global edition, published in Salt Lake City, United States.

The aim of the Mormon Newsroom sites is to provide accurate information

about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members to interested media professionals, opinion leaders and the public.

Among its features, Mormon Newsroom includes news releases, topics and background information, notes on leadership and organisation, facts and statistics, and a blog. ■

“I prayed that the Lord would help me and carry me through this situation,” she said. “I remember so distinctly the many nights where my mind was going a million miles an hour and I would pray, and it was amazing. It literally felt like Christ was right beside me and I could feel Him next to me saying it would be okay. I felt so safe and I could just close my eyes and go to sleep. That was the biggest miracle for me at that time, and I knew He was there.”

“I needed to live my life the way He wanted me to, because I was so grateful for what He has done for me.”

Dedicated to her new decision to follow God, Pandita stopped drinking and committed herself to living

## Seek and Ye Shall Find

By Jordana De Valle

Several years after leaving a difficult relationship, Pandita Rezel now knows her Heavenly Father was leading and protecting her, even when she felt completely lost and alone.

After a series of small miracles, Pandita was able to find the courage to end her marriage. But without friends or family to support her, she soon found herself alone and fearful.

During this time, an inspired religious friend from another faith phoned Pandita and prayed for her over the phone, helping Pandita feel the love of God.

“She prayed for me in the most heartfelt and sincere manner I’d ever heard. The Spirit touched my soul in a way I’d never felt before,” Pandita said. “I felt so loved and protected, and I had an undeniable feeling that God exists.”

After this experience Pandita learned to pray from her heart and began to plead with God for help during her difficult circumstances.



*Pandita Rezel (centre) with friends on the day she was baptised.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF JORDANA DE VALLE

a virtuous life. She began looking for people to support her in her new lifestyle and started searching different religions on the Internet. After attending some local churches, Pandita still felt as if they weren't what she was looking for.

One afternoon she sat down at the computer and asked God, "What should I search?"

"This voice popped into my head and said The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," Pandita said. "The whole thing popped into my head. So I typed it in and up came mormon.org, and LDS.org.

"I was able to chat with an online missionary. He was the perfect missionary for me. I quizzed him on the Church's stance on abuse in relationships, and he answered all my questions openly and honestly. So I looked up my local meetinghouse and went along that Sunday.

"The members were really genuine. I could see they were striving to live the gospel, and that was what I wanted."

Soon after, Pandita was meeting with the missionaries, going to YSA conventions, and making friends at church. In addition to this, she had been reading and praying about the Book of Mormon but still had not received a confirmation that it was true.

One day she prayed before she met with the missionaries, so that she would know the truth of the Book of Mormon and whether she should get baptised.

"I prayed that if this was right and this was where I was supposed to be, to give me a real feeling of peace, let me know for sure," she said.

During the discussion one of the missionaries was inspired to say, "We know you'll be ready to be baptised on this date—we've prayed about it."

"As soon as he said it, I felt a massive wave of peace and I was just like, okay," Pandita said. "After I was baptised I felt as if a huge weight had been lifted off me, as if I'd been pinned under a truck and somebody had just lifted it off me. There was a massive rush of relief and I just wept."

Now Pandita has been a member of the Church for just over two years. Married to a beautiful and kind husband, and the mother of a new baby, she recognises that the blessings and changes in her life are undeniable.

"It's strange to look back on my life and think only a few years ago I was divorced and completely alone—I had nothing and no one," she says. "Now I've joined the Church, found God, found an amazing new husband, married, and had a perfect baby. I feel like I'm living the life of my dreams."

She credits these blessings to an open heart and the courage to seek and knock.

"I think the blessings started coming when I started looking and being open to the possibility of God," she said. "When I began building my relationship with God, I was able to understand what He wanted to give me and recognise that these blessings were coming from Him. And the more that I recognised they were coming through Him, the more blessings I received." ■

## Strength in opposition

By Jordana De Valle

Jen Fox was first introduced to the Church when her boyfriend, a less-active member, gave her a Book of Mormon to read.

"I was at a time in my life where I was quite lost; I'd run away from my family," Jen says.

Intrigued, Jen began reading the Book of Mormon. Although she faced opposition while she did, she persevered.

"I suppose it was a slow growth of realisation, that it sounded like somebody's personal diary and somebody

had actually written this. It was not just a made-up story," she says.

"I tried to pray as instructed, to know if it was true," Jen said. "This was difficult for me to do, because I did not believe that prayer was a real thing. I couldn't understand the concept of praying with real intent; there was always a constant doubt crowding my mind. To kneel down and pray expecting an answer is the most difficult thing anybody can do, if they have never done it before."

Still unsure about the Book of Mormon, Jen went to visit the Melbourne Temple with her boyfriend. Sitting on the temple grounds, she was able to feel the Spirit and have the confirmation that the Church was true.

"I remember crying all the way home in the car," she says. "I realised there was something more to this life, and it was good."

"I knew this Church was true, and I knew that the Book of Mormon was true," she says. "I read it from cover to cover and had no doubts. I was happy to discover the meaning of life, so I prayed for patience so that one day I could get baptised and serve in the Church."

With this new testimony burning in her heart, Jen had the desire to change the way she was living. She knew she couldn't make these changes in her current circumstances. She wasn't in



*Jen Fox on her baptismal day with the sister missionaries who taught her.*

a place where she could do anything dramatic to change. Involved with substance abuse, she was not happy in her relationship. She felt she was slowly becoming an empty shell and didn't have agency.

Eventually, Jen made the decision to leave her relationship and try to clean up her life, but she soon found herself in another unhealthy relationship.

One day sister missionaries were prompted to knock on her door, and she was able to feel the Spirit again.

"It was the most humbling experience because I was finally able to realise how much I yearned to be a member of the Church," Jen said. "I told them how miserable I was in my circumstances and how much I longed for the joy they had. So they made another appointment and invited me to church."

Jen's partner was opposed to her seeing the missionaries, so she began attending church in secret. As she went to church she was able to pray for happiness and make the decision to leave the relationship. She was then free to see the missionaries whenever

she wanted. She was able to regularly attend Church meetings and firesides.

"It was amazing because for the very first time I was able to do something really good, and feel great about it."

After reading the Book of Mormon thirteen years ago, Jen was finally able to be baptised last year.

"I've known the Church is true for the last thirteen years," she says. "At no point in time did I doubt that. It just took a long journey to align myself with Heavenly Father's will and commandments so that I could take this step to be baptised, and it's the best decision I've ever made."

Jen was also blessed to have all her family attend her baptism and support her decision.

"I think it's a blessing that even through all the trials I had, I still knew that the Church was true. Whatever happens, I will always stand up and I say I believe in this Church; I will always have the confidence to do that. In the end it doesn't matter how opposed you are, if you know that it's true. It's such a joy, and you can always share that in a humble, joyful way." ■

## Obedience and Spiritual Self-Reliance are Essential Elements for Happiness

Joseph Smith taught, “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God.”<sup>1</sup> “When we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, to be

happy we need to learn and obey laws or commandments to receive the associated blessings.

“But we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know unless we comply with or keep those we have already received.”<sup>3</sup>

Not all laws will be taught from the pulpit, but obedience to the basic laws of the gospel allows us to learn additional laws which help us achieve happiness.

Joseph Smith added, “That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another.”<sup>4</sup> It is right to attend sacrament meeting. But if we have a contagious illness, the law of common decency and respect for others would require that

we miss sacrament meeting until we are well. Church leaders simply cannot make all these decisions for us. We must learn to “act” for ourselves and not be “acted upon” by the consequences of disobeying important laws or principles.<sup>5</sup>

Elder Holland taught: “General Authorities . . . are called to teach [God’s] general rules. You and we then lead specific lives and must seek the Lord’s guidance regarding specific circumstances.”<sup>6</sup> This principle is supported by much secular research associating the capacity to adapt to life circumstances with better health.<sup>7</sup>

We each have the responsibility to learn how to adapt to the many different life circumstances with which we are confronted. Learning to do this with the help of the Holy Spirit is the essence of spiritual self-reliance. ■

### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:134–35.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 130:21.
3. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:135.
4. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:135.
5. See 2 Nephi 2:13.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “General Patterns and Specific Lives,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 9, 2008, 3.
7. See Todd B. Kashdan and Jonathan Rottenberg, “Psychological Flexibility as a Fundamental Aspect of Health,” *Clinical Psychology Review*, vol. 30, no. 7 (Nov. 2010), 865–78.

