

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Faith in Jesus Christ the First Step on the Covenant Path

By Elder Vern P. Stanfill



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Heavenly Father has established for His children a covenant path that leads all who are faithful back to Him. This covenant path is described in His simple doctrine taught in the scriptures. The Savior proclaims: “And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; . . . and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God” (3 Nephi 11:32–33).

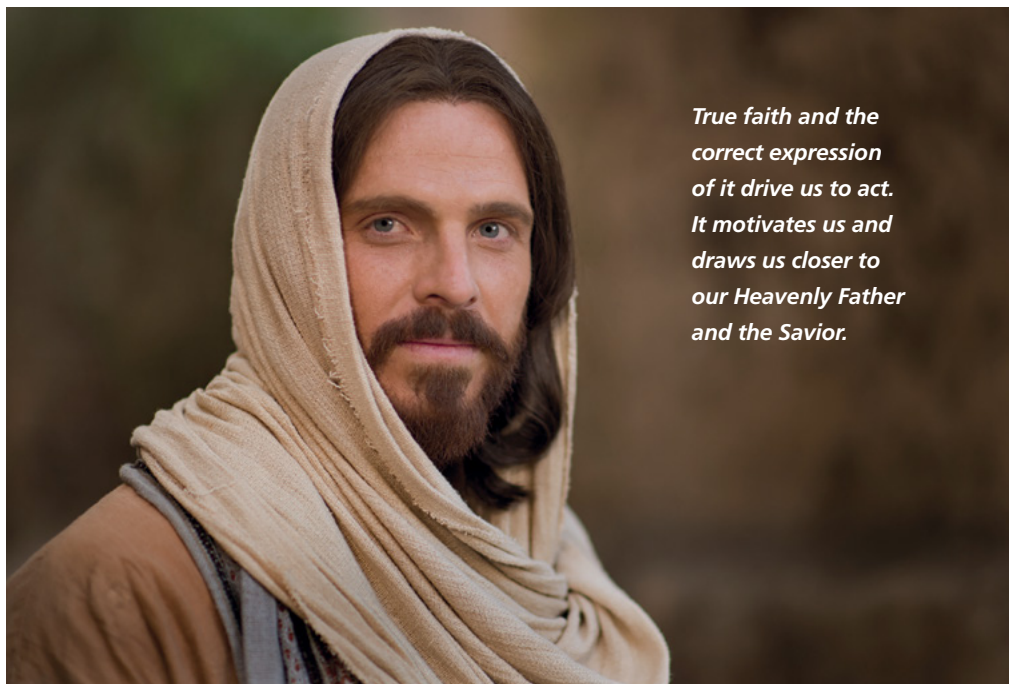
The Prophet Joseph Smith summarized the doctrine of Christ in the fourth article of faith: “We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The doctrine of Christ in all its simplicity provides for us a path back to our Heavenly Father.

The first step on this path is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith changes our hearts and leads us to

repentance. Paul defines faith in Hebrews 11:1 as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The prophet Alma further defines the principle by saying, “faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things: therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true” (Alma 32:21). If one ponders these scriptures much can be learned. Simply believing is not enough, for one can easily believe in things that are false, misleading, or deceptive.

In order to have faith, one must first know the truth, believe in it, and have faith in the principles and consequences thereof. True faith and the correct expression of it drive us to act. It motivates us and draws us closer to our Heavenly Father and the Savior. It humbles us and causes us to repent. It brings us to the waters of baptism and ultimately to the altars of the temple.

Faith feeds our desire to be closer to God because it brings about a definitive and permanent change within us as our very hearts and natures are



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changed in the realization that God lives and that His Son, Jesus Christ, died for us. Faith is a spiritual blessing that all should seek.

There is a process to develop faith in Christ. Our missionaries well know how to assist others in developing faith unto repentance. All that is necessary to start is a desire to believe. Remember the grieving father who brought his son, possessed of an evil and destructive spirit, to the Savior to be healed. The Savior queried him as to his belief and the man tearfully cried out, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” That intense desire to have adequate faith was enough for the Savior. The boy was healed and the evil spirit cast from him. (See Mark 9:20–27.)

Alma teaches us about the development of faith as he compares the word of God to a seed. “Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

“Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea; nevertheless it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge” (Alma 32:28–29).

The requirements are simple. The seed must be good and true. We must have a desire. And we cannot cast it out by rebelling against the spiritual promptings that the Lord gives us. We will know we are on the right path when the gospel begins to enlarge our souls, enlighten our understanding and become delicious to us. As we watch our friends and neighbors embrace the gospel, we can see this very change happening in their lives. They are brought to a path of repenting and making covenants through ordinances with our Heavenly Father. I love Alma’s observation in verse 35: “O then, is not

this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good.”

You will recognize such goodness in your own lives. Since coming to Africa I have heard such wonderful stories of faith from the members. Such goodness and strength is apparent everywhere. Many have acted and continue to act in faith as they proceed down the covenant path toward eternal life. What joy there is in finding and nurturing our faith. What comfort there is in knowing that our Heavenly Father loves us so much to provide a path that all can follow back to Him. I pray that we might continue to nurture our faith that it continues to draw us toward the Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### CHURCH HISTORY COLUMN

## The Doctrinal Foundation of Church History Work

By Charles and Mercy Sono-Koree

Area and Assistant Area Church History Advisers, Africa West Area

Church history work is based on a doctrinal foundation. It brings members closer to Christ by helping them remember what great things the Lord has done. As recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 47:3: “And again, I say unto you that it shall

be appointed unto him [the Church Historian] to keep the church record and history continually.” It explains that the Church historian of every unit, be it a stake, district, ward, branch, or mission, is to keep a record of the unit continually. The prophets and



*Charles and Mercy Sono-Koree*

apostles of old did a similar thing for the benefit of us, the rising generation. If events at that period were not recorded and documented, the scriptures would not exist for our use. We have been asked to continue in writing and making a history of all the important things concerning the Lord's Church, and the priesthood leaders of the Church have also been instructed to send forth their stewardship account (see D&C 69:3, 5).

D&C 85:1–2: "It is the duty of the Lord's clerk [historian], whom he has appointed, to keep a history and a general church record of all things that transpire in Zion . . . And also their manner of life, their faith, and works." This commandment specifies whom to document in these records and also what to document as a historian of the unit. The manner of life of individual members of the unit as well as their faith in Jesus Christ and their works are paramount and should be recorded.

Alma 37:6–8: "By small and simple things are great things brought to pass . . . And by very small means the Lord

doth confound the wise and bringeth about salvation of many souls.

"And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things [records] should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls."

Alma 37:14: "And now remember, my son, that God has entrusted you with these things [records], which are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations."

These scriptures teach us to understand how important it is to record and document all important things in Zion, even our manner of life, our faith and works, and submit it to the Church History Department through the local office for preservation and sharing. Father Lehi and his family were instructed to record and document all their events during their sojourn in the wilderness, hence the coming forth of the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 9:3, 5–6; 19:1). Beloved brothers and sisters, let us all stand to embrace this great work of the Lord and magnify it as such.

I testify of the sacredness of Church history work and hope and pray that all will give proper approach and attention to it. In the holy name of our Savior Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## LOCAL NEWS

# Apostle Visits Liberia

**Adapted from Mormon Newsroom**

Missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are returning to Liberia after no reported new cases of Ebola in that country since June. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Susan, recently traveled to the West African nation to show the country is safe for missionaries.

"The World Health Organization declared Liberia Ebola free," explained Elder Bednar. "We want people to know that we're here. . . . We would not be calling young men and young women to serve in Liberia if there was great danger or concern."

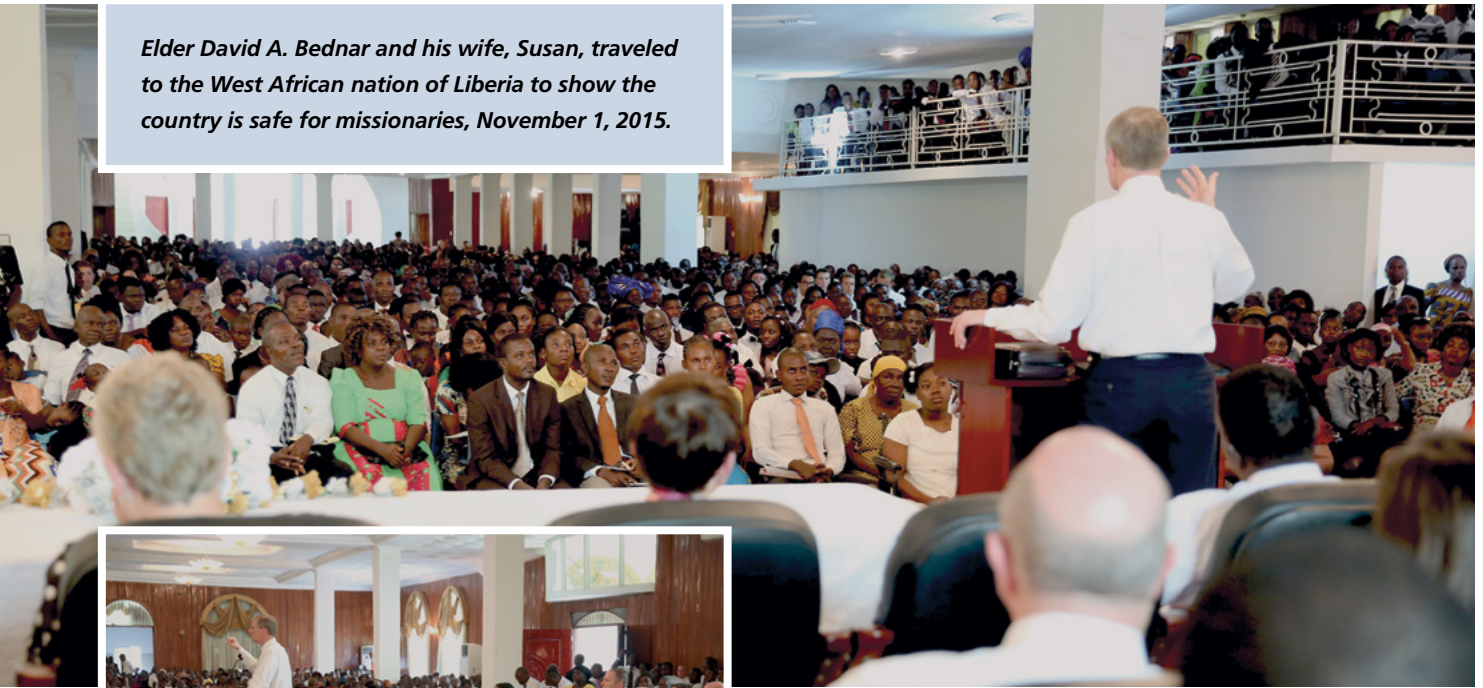
Mormon missionaries serving in Liberia and Sierra Leone were



*A large crowd gathers in Liberia to hear Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles speak during a recent visit, November 1, 2015.*



*Elder David A. Bednar and his wife, Susan, traveled to the West African nation of Liberia to show the country is safe for missionaries, November 1, 2015.*



transferred out of those countries and reassigned to other missions by the Church as a precaution in August 2014 following an outbreak of the Ebola virus. The first cases were reported in Liberia in March 2014. The World Health Organization declared Liberia free of Ebola virus transmission September 3. Young full-time missionaries began returning in early September.

There are currently 53 young missionaries and four seniors serving in Liberia. About half of those missionaries are from Africa, and the other half are from outside the continent. The Church Missionary Department hopes up to 100 young missionaries will be serving in Liberia once the buildup is complete, in addition to 12 senior missionaries. Prior to the Ebola outbreak, there were 80 young missionaries serving in that country, along with six seniors.

“The role of an Apostle is to travel the earth bearing testimony of Jesus Christ,”

said Elder Bednar. “And so as a representative of the Lord, we’re delighted to be here to bear that witness and express our love to and our admiration for the people in Liberia.”

He added, “The missionaries here are anxiously engaged. This is an exciting time as the work is reinitiated in proclaiming the gospel among the people of Liberia . . . and there’s much work to do.”

“I think naturally, mothers have concerns when their sons serve missions and their daughters, wherever they go in the world,” said Sister Bednar. “So for us to be here is an important statement to let people know that this is a great place, that there’s wonderful work to be done here, and that a missionary can be happy and healthy and successful here.”

The Bednars expressed confidence in the Church’s mission leaders in

Liberia. They know what it’s like to have children on missions around the world, with sons who served.

“If one of our three sons were called to Liberia, there is no one I’d rather have be the mission president than President and Sister Carlson,” expressed Elder Bednar. Sister Bednar continued, “They are extraordinary. They are wonderful. And they will keep these missionaries safe.”

“The resources of the Church, and especially the operation of the mission, bless all of the members,” he said. “So the missionaries returning, the increase, and the number of missionaries, the strength that they bring to the members who are here is an indication that we are fellow citizens in the household of God. That’s a blessing to all of the Latter-day Saints in Liberia.”

Elder and Sister Bednar enjoyed meeting the people in Liberia, who they call modern-day pioneers. “The first thing I’ve noticed is the happiness of the children,” shared Elder Bednar. “Everywhere we drive, there



- *There are currently 53 young Mormon missionaries serving in Liberia.*
- *Women in Liberia during a visit by Elder and Sister Bednar, November 1, 2015.*

are children running, laughing, playing. This is a place where there's great challenge, but I love to see the happiness in the faces of the children."

"It was wonderful to see all the families," reflected Sister Bednar. "They seemed connected, and there are communities that seem to take care of each other."

Throughout the Ebola crisis, local Church leaders in Liberia teamed with international organizations to provide medical care. The Church continues to work through recognized relief organizations and on-the-ground partners to help communities in need. Many members have also volunteered their own time to help spread awareness of proper sanitation practices.

The Church provided short-term emergency resources purchased locally such as rice and oil for food and bleach and containers for cleaning. Members

in Ghana had a special fast and donated money to help those in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Latter-day Saints in the region also continued missionary work in the absence of full-time missionaries.

"The faith of these people strengthens my faith," said Elder

Bednar. "And the devotion of these Liberian Saints makes me want to be more devoted."

"To see their resiliency and their hope and their faith in God and in the Savior," said Sister Bednar. "What a wonderful time for us to be here." ■

#### MISSIONARY MOMENTS

## A Call to Rescue

By Elder Oweka Bob Patrick  
Ghana Accra West Mission

When I was a little boy, I spent a lot of my time with my grandparents. As a tradition in Uganda, if you want your grandparents to tell you their stories or help you with answers to your questions, you have

to collect firewood and kindle fire for them in the evening to warm themselves due to coldness at evening times. As we gathered together as a family warming ourselves one day, a question came into my mind that I should ask my grandfather, "Why do we have different churches with different names?" My father was a pastor, and my grandparents had their



own church too, so I wondered: “why couldn’t we just go to my father’s or theirs as one family?” This question made my grandfather ponder for a moment to have a small boy like me ask such a question, because I was only 11 years. My grandfather then replied, “Everybody has their own beliefs, but indeed there is truth out there—the truth that can answer all questions in life, the truth that can open our understanding about the Savior and His teachings, and the truth that can set us free, but for me as your grandfather I can’t tell you which one is true or not. I will advise you as time goes by to search for this truth you shall find it because the Savior taught us if we seek, we shall find. So my grandson, as time goes by, search for this truth. You shall find it.”

This remarkable reply from my grandfather has helped me to search for that truth that can answer all my questions, the truth that can set me free, bring light into my family, and most of all the truth that can bind us together as a family forever for eternity. With time, I decided to act upon what my grandfather had told me: if I search for the truth, I shall indeed find it.

One day a friend from primary school asked me to join them in going about showing a movie about the life of the Savior to win souls for Christ. At first it was interesting, but later I started to think about those who were touched by the movie and how we



could fellowship them to keep their faith strong in the Savior. I came to know that I had a zeal to serve God, but not according to their way of doing things, so I discontinued going for the cinema.

A few years later I lost my grandparents and my father as well, but still my grandfather’s words stuck with me and I knew that one day I would find the truth I was searching for.

One day my grandfather came to me in a dream. We were rearing cattle, and he fell in cow dung and started sinking and calling for my help. I wasn’t strong enough to lift him out as I was about also to sink with him. He asked me to leave him and call for my uncle so that both of us could lift him out, but I told him that my uncle was in the city. With a loud voice he said, “Go to the city and call for your uncle to come and help.”

I was so terrified when I woke up that I was drenched in sweat. The next morning I telephoned my uncle to ask if all was well. He replied in the affirmative and said he was about to call me because he had found a job for me, so I should come to the city.

A few weeks later I journeyed to the city. I told my uncle about the dream I had about my grandfather. He dismissed it, saying it was just a dream, but still the dream was in my mind.

The next morning I went to my uncle’s library to write an application for the job. As I sat down, I noticed two pamphlets: “The Gospel of Jesus Christ” and “The Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” At first, reading about the gospel of Jesus Christ wasn’t clear to me, but when I started reading about the Restoration, I came to find out the cause of division among the believers. I was so interested in the message of the Restoration, I yearned for more. I didn’t have my uncle’s support, but I pursued my plans for the search of happiness, and the Lord was able to guide me.

I met with the missionaries who taught me all I needed to know. Most importantly, I prayed about their message and I came to know that was the reason I came to the city. I shared my dream with them, and they told me my grandfather had found and accepted the gospel. I had work to do for my grandparents by being baptized on their behalf. A few months

later, I was baptized and confirmed on March 17, 2013, as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I served as branch clerk and seminary teacher in my branch. On April 18, 2014, I was called to labor in the Ghana Accra West Mission, serving with my awesome mission president, President Hill and Sister Hill, who have helped me to become an instrument in the hands of the Lord to bring His children back to His fold.

Before I came to the mission field, I was able to perform temple ordinance for my grandparents and my father. What joy and happiness I felt as I came out of the holy temple of our God! One day my grandfather

came again to me in a dream where we had gathered as a family happily sharing stories. Since then I can't stop feeling their love, knowing that they are happy waiting for the day of Resurrection.

I know missionary work is not just two years or 18 months. Just as Elder M. Russell Ballard points out, "‘RM’ doesn't mean ‘retired Mormon!’" ("The Greatest Generation of Young Adults," *Liahona*, May 2015, 69). I know when I complete my mission, I will be a returned soldier, having faced a lot of trials and challenges, which experience will give me courage to take the light of the truth to my families and friends who are perishing in unbelief,

as Lehi did with his family in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 8:12).

The Savior taught: "Of him unto whom much is given much is required" (D&C 82:3). I bear my witness that missionary work is divine, that this is what the Lord has prepared for us from the foundation of the world. What a blessing it is for us to labor under the supervision of the Holy Ghost! We are here for a reason—to rescue our brothers and sisters so they can enjoy the same blessings we have. Start preparing to serve a mission today. Remember, the field is white indeed ready for harvest, the Lord is waiting for you to labor in His vineyard. Tarry no more! ■

## CURRICULUM CORNER

### 2016 Mutual Theme Reminds Us to Press Forward Toward an Eternal Home

Adapted from Church News Article

The Young Men and Young Women general presidencies have announced 2 Nephi 31:20 as the Mutual theme for 2016. It is given to help us deepen our faith in Jesus Christ and our trust in His unending grace to take us home to the pure joy of Heavenly Father's presence. It gives us the pattern for receiving that life with our Heavenly Father.

What motivates us? Do we really know what the promise of eternal life

entails? 1 Corinthians 2:9 tells us, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." These godly, glorious "things" await us if we do our best to press forward, feast on the words of Christ, and remain faithful to the end.

God wants us, His children, back with Him, knowing that is where lasting happiness and eternal purpose is found.

Recognizing the priesthood power given to His Church, we can "press forward with . . . a perfect brightness of hope"—knowing that with Him we can do our earthly work and with Him we can stay the course, and with His grace we can someday run into the arms of our loving, Eternal Father—home again. ■

## Curriculum 2016

The following materials for use in Sunday quorums and classes are available online and in the Gospel Library mobile app. Where possible, members are to use digital versions of these materials.

### Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society:

*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter, Liahona magazine, Latter-Day Saints Woman, Daughters in My Kingdom, Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood.*

### Aaronic Priesthood, Young Women, Youth Sunday School:

*Come, Follow Me: Learning Resources for Youth*

### Primary:

Nursery Class (Ages 18 months–2 years): *Behold Your Little Ones: Nursery Manual*

Sharing Time (Ages 3–11): *2016 Outline for Sharing Time: I Know the Scriptures Are True*

Sunbeam Class (Age 3): *Primary 1: I Am a Child of God*

CTR Classes (Ages 4–7): *Primary 2: Choose the Right A*

Valiant Classes (Ages 8–11): *Primary 4: Book of Mormon*

### Adult Sunday School:

**Gospel Doctrine:** *Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual, Book of Mormon Class Member Study Guide*

**Gospel Principles:** *Gospel Principles*

### Optional Courses:

**Marriage and Family Relations:** *Marriage and Family Relations Instructor's Manual, Marriage and Family Relations Participant's Study Guide*

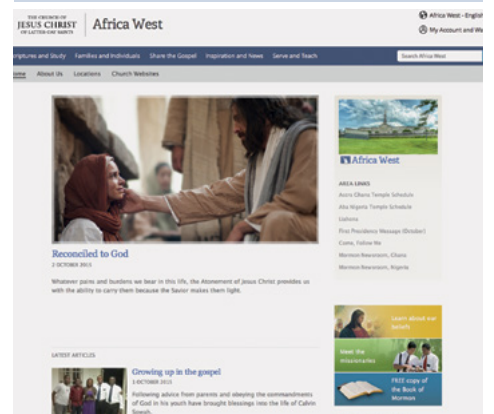
**Teaching the Gospel:** *Teaching, No Greater Call*

**Temple Preparation:** *Endowed from on High: Temple Preparation Seminar Teacher's Manual, Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple*

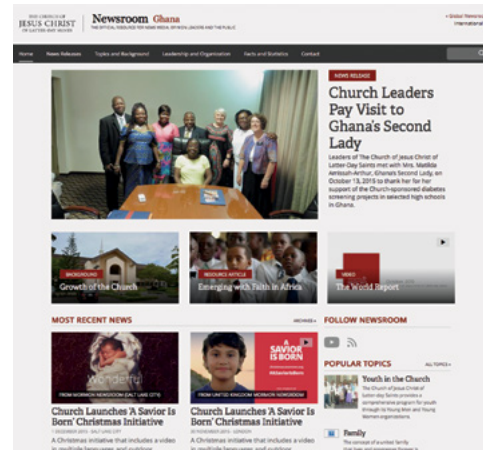
### Materials for Those with Disabilities:

You may also download or order accessible materials for those with disabilities. ■

## VISIT AREA WEBSITES!



Africa West Area Websites:  
English: [africawest.lds.org](http://africawest.lds.org)  
French: [afriquedelouest.lds.org](http://afriquedelouest.lds.org)



Mormon Newsroom Ghana:  
[www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh](http://www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh)

Mormon Newsroom Nigeria:  
[www.mormonnewsroom.org.ng](http://www.mormonnewsroom.org.ng) ■