

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Easter Awakening

By Elder S. Gifford Nielsen

Second Counselor, Pacific Area Presidency

Easter is a time of awakening. That first Easter morning, Jesus Christ became “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). His infinite Atonement changed everything!

My dear friends, has it changed you and me? Are we awake and alive in Christ? Have we received His image in our countenances? Have we experienced a mighty change in our hearts? Do we truly exercise faith in the Saviour’s atoning sacrifice and look forward with confidence to our own judgment day? How can we know that we are wide awake to such important considerations? May I offer two possibilities? If we were fully awake to Jesus Christ and His Atonement, we would

love to learn all we could about Him and His mission. We also would seek to serve Him and all of God’s children every day.

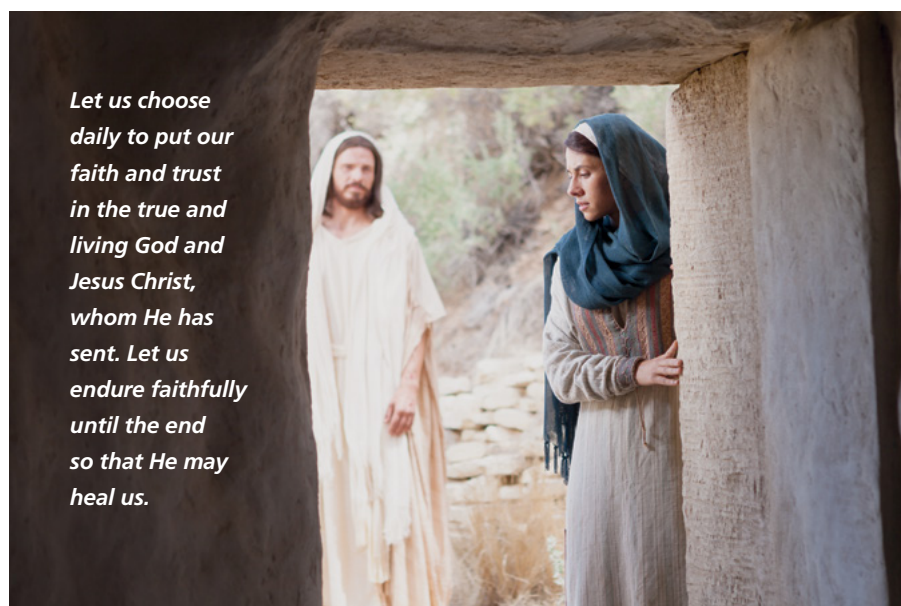
The Atonement of Jesus Christ offers both redemptive and enabling power. It includes Christ’s perfect life of service and obedience; His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane to take upon Himself every single sin, shortcoming, and stress of each of our lives; His Crucifixion, including mockery, abandonment, and excruciating pain; and His glorious Resurrection, that consisted of emptying a tomb and filling a world with hope. As we open our eyes to all that our Saviour’s Atonement

provides, our desire to learn of Him will increase. Do we hunger and thirst after this knowledge, feasting upon the scriptures and all the words of modern prophets? Are our prayers meaningful as we humbly connect with our beloved Father in Heaven through His perfect Son? Do we thoughtfully prepare ourselves to partake of the sacrament each Sunday, pondering His transcendent gifts to us and renewing all of our covenants to love and serve Him?

As we come to know the Lord even more deeply through constant and joyful study of His life, His works and His mission, we will desire to serve Him and His children with all our heart, might, mind and strength. We will receive inspiration and ability to help those who need our love, our faith and our testimony of truth. We will seek out our kindred dead through family history work and regular temple attendance. The Sabbath will become even more delightful as we magnify our callings in the Church to lift, teach, and edify one another. As agents who act and are not acted upon, we are free to choose what we do, how we speak and even how we feel. Let us choose daily to put our faith and trust in the true and living God and Jesus Christ, whom He has



Elder S. Gifford
Nielsen



Let us choose daily to put our faith and trust in the true and living God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Let us endure faithfully until the end so that He may heal us.

LOCAL PAGES

sent. Let us endure faithfully until the end so that He may heal us. I pray that we become fully awake to the things of crucial importance and that we never let influences of the world lull us into spiritual slumber.

May the words of this hymn inspire each of us to arouse our faculties and remember our Saviour more each day:

*The shade and gloom of life are fled
This Resurrection-day;
Henceforth in Christ are no more
dead,
The grave hath no more prey;
In Christ we live, in Christ we sleep,
In Christ we wake and rise;
And the sad tears death makes
us weep,
He wipes from all our eyes. . . .*

*Then wake, glad heart! awake!
awake!
And seek thy risen Lord,
Joy in His resurrection take,
And comfort in His word;
And let thy life, through all its ways,
One long thanksgiving be,
Its theme of joy, its song of praise,
"Christ died, and rose for me."¹*

May this beautiful Easter season awaken and enliven each of us as we celebrate the supernal gift given so lovingly by our Saviour, Jesus Christ. ■

NOTE

1. John S. B. Monsell, "Awake, Glad Soul! Awake! Awake!" in *Christ in Song: Hymns of Immanuel*, sel. Philip Schaff (1870), 231.

50 Years of Faith

By Anouck Van Dyck

There was much celebration last November as the Dianella meeting-house turned 50 years old.

The commemoration was aptly titled "50 Years of Faith," and the community was invited to join in the festivities, including a VIP morning tea for those volunteers and local businesses who helped construct the building, tours of the nearby Perth Australia Temple grounds, and a community BBQ with live entertainment.

This gave people time to fondly reflect on the time spent constructing

the building, which paved the way for thousands of memories related to events held in the building, couples joined in marriage, babies blessed, and missionaries who left and returned home, to serve in leadership callings in the area.

On Sunday the local Jewish community were invited for a special afternoon gathering to explore the areas of similarity between their faith and that of the Latter-day Saints. It was an opportunity to focus on the friendship the two groups have established and grown over the last 50 years, with the meetinghouse and synagogue within two kilometres of each other. The afternoon concluded



Members of the Jewish community are hosted for special devotional, temple tour and kosher afternoon tea.



Interfaith celebrations

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Nostra Aetate: Dianella Stake president Timothy Masson converses with the Most Reverend Timothy Costelloe (Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth), and Chief Rabbi Dovid Freilich.

with the temple president leading a guided tour of the temple grounds, followed by guests enjoying a kosher afternoon tea.

David Denver, President of the WA Jewish Council, observed, “Your kindness and consideration to us were greatly appreciated, and we were very interested to hear about the history and beliefs of the LDS Church. I regret to say that I was ignorant of this prior to yesterday, and surely this is what occasions such as yesterday’s are all about: to educate and dispel myths and misunderstandings, to enable friendly co-existence between faiths.”

A milestone event for Perth was held in the evening on Sunday as academics, politicians and religious leaders shared a pulpit to address the congregation on the topic of “Religious Freedom and Conscience in an Increasingly Secular World.” Dianella Stake president Timothy Masson opened the evening by reading the eleventh article of faith, which states, “We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience,

and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”

Many in attendance commented on the strength of each speaker’s conviction on this topic and the eagerness to work together to ensure Australia continues to be a country in which people enjoy the liberty to exercise their freedom without fear of persecution.

The following Wednesday saw the favour returned as members of the LDS community joined together at the Perth Hebrew Synagogue to celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. Both the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth, the Most Reverend Timothy Costelloe SDB, and Chief Rabbi Dovid Freilich spoke about unity and how the full synagogue was a show of love for God through humanity, harmony, love and peace.

In summing up the weekend’s activities, Steve Lieblich, the Director of Public Affairs for the Jewish Community Council of Western Australia, remarked, “Your friendship and hospitality reminds us that deep wellsprings of goodwill are to be found. It is very evident from the presentations that we heard on Sunday that the LDS community is one which studies and respects the Torah and thus we share a profound bond in our ethics and values, as well as in the symbolism we use in our teachings, observances, and rituals. Thank you for your kind and painstaking hospitality and, above all, for your friendship.” ■

Mormon Helping Hands Birthing Kit Project

By Mormon Newsroom

Brisbane, Australia

Over 150 youth and adults from the Brisbane North Stake recently assembled 1,000 birthing kits for their Mormon Helping Hands Day project.

Working in conjunction with the Birthing Kit Foundation Australia, participants donated their labour, and the stake provided the funds for the kits, which cost about \$3 each. Each birthing kit contains one plastic sheet,



Brisbane North Stake members assemble birthing kits for their Helping Hands project.

one pair of latex gloves, three cords, one sterile scalpel, five gauze pads, and a bar of soap.

The foundation assists women around the world who for reasons of isolation, cultural choice, or poor transport have little or no assistance during childbirth.

Most of the kits are sent to Asia or Africa, where the need is greatest. The kits will save lives. Lifetime risk to a

woman of maternal death in these countries is as high as 1 in 15. The overall average is 1 in 27. By comparison, in Australia the average is less than 1 in 8,000.

For every woman who dies, another thirty experience infections or injuries, many of which are painful, disabling, embarrassing, and lifelong.

An estimated 385,000 women throughout the world die annually

in childbirth, many from preventable infections. With access to a clean birthing kit, mothers will have the resources to reduce infection.

After receiving instructions from foundation representatives, Mormon Helping Hands volunteers worked diligently together in small teams, until all 1,000 kits were done. Once the kits are distributed, the foundation will let the volunteers know where they end up. ■

350,000 Australian Genealogical Records Added to FamilySearch.org

Sydney, Australia

Over 350,000 genealogical records from New South Wales and Queensland have been added to FamilySearch.org for free public access.

The indexed records come from the New South Wales 1828 census and Queensland cemetery records (1802–1990).

FamilySearch is the largest genealogy organization in the world. Since 1894, FamilySearch and its predecessors have worked with archives, libraries, and churches in over 100 countries to facilitate economical access to records that help people find their ancestors.

Every month, over 3 million people use FamilySearch records, resources, and services to learn more about their family history. These records and services are available online at FamilySearch.org or through over 4,600 family history centers in 126 countries, including the renowned Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

FamilySearch is a service provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

FamilySearch's commitment to helping people connect with their ancestors is rooted in the Latter-day Saint belief that families are meant to be central to

our lives and that family relationships are intended to continue beyond this life. Because interest in family history is not limited by culture, ethnicity, or religious faith, FamilySearch's resources are available to everyone who wants to discover more about their family and their heritage, from church records in Europe to oral histories in Africa.

As a nonprofit organization, FamilySearch relies on the support of volunteers throughout the world. These volunteers help index records, provide personal assistance, and share their knowledge about genealogy research. ■

From Soccer Field to Mission Field

By Mormon Newsroom

Papua New Guinean national soccer player sets aside sporting opportunities for two years.

Hamilton, New Zealand

Kelvin Kansan decided to withdraw from the Papua New Guinean men's soccer team training squad in order to serve as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Now he is teaching people about Jesus Christ and serving communities in Hamilton, New Zealand.

He does not regret his decision, which meant that he missed playing for his country at the South Pacific Games last year.

Speaking from the mission field, Elder Kansan said, "I love it. It's fun being out on a mission. At first I was a bit nervous about coming to a new country and having to speak English a lot, which is a new thing for me. But I love doing the Lord's work."

He continued, "Back in PNG when you play soccer, you earned an income. So I played to earn an income to help me prepare for my mission."

"I was asked several times to be part of the national squad, and I am grateful to be recognised for my soccer skills, but I had a desire to serve a full-time mission, and I believe it is

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⬆️ **Elder Kelvin Kansan**

Elder Kelvin Kansan (left) put his soccer career on hold to serve a full-time mission in New Zealand.



one of the greatest decisions I have ever made."

Elder Kansan went on to explain, "I see me and my family as the fruits of missionary efforts, and I know that we also have brothers and sisters out there who also deserve the equal opportunity to receive the gospel. I have the desire to share the gospel with them, so I can help bless the lives of those I come into contact with." ■

Strengthening Others through Sharing Your Stories

By Catherine Vaughan

We are continually inspired and uplifted by the stories of service our members perform in their communities and the challenges so many overcome in their everyday lives. It's great to be able to share those wonderful stories because someone has taken the time to write them and send them through to us.

We are collecting stories of inspiration and growth, learning and understanding, of moments that have changed your lives. These personal stories may be included in the *Ensign* or *Liahona* insert pages and may also be added to the country websites and social media pages, if suitable. There is no deadline for these stories, as they are not time sensitive and can be added to the magazines at any time, as space permits.

These stories can be recent or from past experiences. They can be short, everyday moments where you have gained an insight into the gospel or longer, life-changing experiences.

We are mindful that some experiences may not be appropriate



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or are too personal to share, but know that there are many testimony-strengthening experiences that would be suitable and would uplift others to read of them.

Some ideas and suggestions may be:

- An unexpected answer to a prayer
- A scripture that helped you understand a gospel principle more clearly

- Challenges you may be facing
- Periods of growth in your calling or personal life
- Developing good habits with scripture study
- A successful family home evening
- Gaining a testimony of tithing or any other gospel principle
- Catching the family history vision
- Watching your children or family or friends overcome

challenges and grow from the experience

- Overcoming bad habits
- Service you have received
- Visiting teaching or home teaching moments that have touched your heart
- Missionary work with colleagues or friends
- Stories about faith, sacrifice, or service

TIP OF THE MONTH

Stories do not need to be long, approx. **300–400 words**. They must be written in **English**, and we will help with editing as required.

This will be an ongoing project, so if you feel inspired to share a story from your life or the lives of those around you, we would love to be able to share it with the other members in the Pacific Area. There may be others who are experiencing similar things and whose hearts will be touched and strengthened by the words you share.

We also welcome news of local events and activities that are happening in your area, as well as any testimony-strengthening stories you would like to add to the database. We look forward to reading them all.

You can contact us at the following email addresses:

ensign-nz@ldschurch.org

for New Zealand contributors

ensign-australia@ldschurch.org

for Australian and PNG contributors

liahona-pacific@ldschurch.org

for contributors from all Pacific Islands

If you know of any other people who might be interested in writing the occasional article for the magazine inserts or websites, please pass on this contact information to them. ■

Mental Illness

During this era known as the dispensation of the fulness of times, the world has been blessed with additional light and knowledge that have propelled advances in almost every facet of life, including treatment for many illnesses and diseases. At the same time, the demands, pressures and consequences of modern life can generate their own impacts and risks to the mental health and well-being of individuals. Numerous studies consistently show that 45–50 percent of people will suffer a diagnosable mental illness at some point in their lifetime, and members of the Church are no less susceptible.¹

As members who have been blessed with the light and knowledge of the gospel, it is important that we do not hold or perpetuate ignorant and damaging attitudes towards those experiencing mental illness. Such attitudes can restrict our ability to seek effective help for ourselves or limit our ability to give the love and support necessary to appropriately assist those who deal with these challenges, often through no fault of their own. In the October 2013 general conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland made the point that “these afflictions are some of the realities of mortal life, and there should be no more shame in acknowledging them than in acknowledging a battle with

high blood pressure or the sudden appearance of a malignant tumor.”²

While many and varying factors contribute to the development of mental illness, it is important to understand that as with any other vital organ in the body, the brain is also subject to vulnerabilities and risks of malfunction. A respected scientist trained in pharmacology and nutrition, Elder Alexander B. Morrison, an emeritus member of the Seventy, taught: “We still do not know exactly how the brain works nor exactly how and why parts of it may malfunction. One thing is certain, however: no individual, family, or group is immune from the effects of mental illness. Furthermore, we are learning that many mental illnesses result from chemical disorders in the brain, just as diabetes results from a chemical disorder in the pancreas.”³

For those with a mental illness or who support a loved one with a mental illness, Elder Morrison urged that time and energy “be used to increase understanding of what actually is happening—to get a complete assessment and proper diagnosis of the illness involved, to understand the causes, to get proper medication and learn behavioral and cognitive techniques that are part of the healing process.”⁴ Similarly, Elder Holland offered advice, saying: “If things continue to be debilitating, seek the advice of reputable people

with certified training, professional skills, and good values. Be honest with them about your history and your struggles. Prayerfully and responsibly consider the counsel they give and the solutions they prescribe. If you had appendicitis, God would expect you to seek a priesthood blessing *and* get the best medical care available. So too with emotional disorders. Our Father in Heaven expects us to use *all* of the marvelous

gifts He has provided in this glorious dispensation.”⁵

Ultimately, the greatest of all gifts is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is in and through the Atonement that one day “loved ones whom we knew to have disabilities in mortality will stand before us glorified and grand, breathtakingly perfect in body and mind. . . . Until that hour when Christ’s consummate gift is evident to us all, may we live by faith, hold fast

to hope, and show ‘compassion one of another’ (1 Peter 3:8).”⁶ ■

NOTES

1. See various reports from the World Health Organisation and the US National Institute of Mental Health, as well as the 2009 Australian Government Department of Health study “The Mental Health of Australians 2: Prevalence of Mental Disorders in the Australian Population”.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40.
3. Alexander B. Morrison, “Myths about Mental Illness,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2005, 32.
4. Alexander B. Morrison, “Myths about Mental Illness,” 33.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” 41.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” 42.

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