

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Area Vision—Look to the Savior and to the Temple

By Elder Terence M. Vinson

First Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency

When I was a young boy, my parents taught me the importance of loving God. They explained my debt to Him. He had enabled us to be saved because of His great love for us. They taught me stories of Jesus Christ and I loved Him. As a result of our parents' dedication to their religion, all seven of their children shared the same devotion. Going to church on Sundays was just a natural thing for us to do. We were Catholics, and I am grateful that the Catholic Church taught me to be disciplined in my worship and regular in my religious duties.

Many of us here in West Africa have had a similar background. We don't think twice about going to church. This, thankfully, carries over to our membership in the Savior's true Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But when we discover His true gospel, we should do much more than simply "go to church." When we learn the truths that the missionaries teach us, we come to know much more about the Savior. We do more than just love Him; we come to really know Him. He becomes our personal Redeemer

and our Friend. We want to do the things that He wants us to do. We want to change our behavior. We no longer want to just go to church; we want to become true disciples.



Terence M. Vinson

In fact, we are taught in *Preach My Gospel* that "commitment is an essential part of repentance. It is the act of obligating oneself to a course of action and then diligently following through on that decision. When people are genuinely committed, they have real intent, meaning that they fully intend to do what they have committed to do. They make an unwavering and earnest decision to change. They become devoted to Christ and dedicate themselves to His gospel" (*Preach My Gospel* [2004], 195).

This devotion and dedication has brought me so much joy. It gives me a feeling of satisfaction when I am constantly trying to do what I can to show God that I am serious about the gospel. In Australia, we have a saying when someone is really committed or totally dedicated to something. We say that they are "fair dinkum." I love to see members of the Church who are fair dinkum about living the gospel, rather than just going to church. I see that often in the members of the Church in various parts of West Africa. Africans know what it means to be fair dinkum about things,

whether that be family or church or their need to care for one another or just walking from place to place with a baby wrapped on their back and a heavy load on their head. My wife and I love that!

This, then, is our desire as an Area Presidency—that the members of the Church here will all be fair dinkum about living the gospel.

That feeling was the catalyst for the Area Presidency’s spiritually seeking the Lord’s will in relation to His Church in West Africa. As an Area Presidency, we counseled together and with other leaders in our area council and in various meetings and in other interactions with members. We then sought spiritual direction before finally determining together our area vision. You should

all have received a copy of that area vision and have it hanging in a prominent place in your homes. It states:

“With faith, we will look to the Savior. We will love, trust, and know Him. This will lead us to seek for ourselves and our families all the blessings of the temple and eternal life.”

We hope that by now, many families will know this statement well enough that they do not need to read it. We want it to become an integral part of our lives. Faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement is the first principle of the gospel, and it is the first thing mentioned in this area vision.

As I indicated earlier, I loved the Savior as a Catholic without really knowing Him. Since joining the Church, I know His character and qualities so much better that I trust Him completely. I know He will allow and help me to meet the challenges in my life that He has customized for me so that I can learn and grow. And I know Him. I really know Him. We want all members here to do the same.

As a result of our relationship with Him, we naturally want to repent and to “commit,” which the quote from *Preach My Gospel* taught is an essential element in order to repent. This commitment will lead us to all of the ordinances that the Savior has taught are necessary for exaltation.



Aba Nigeria Temple



Accra Ghana Temple

Those ordinances are only available in the holy temple. We need them for ourselves, but we also need them for those of our loved ones who have passed from this life. They receive those ordinances only through our efforts and our service in the temple.

For these reasons, we have asked that you keep before you throughout this year these questions:

“What is my role in accomplishing this area plan?”

“Do I love, trust, and know the Savior, Jesus Christ, and do I constantly seek for the blessings of the temple?”

If we are fair dinkum about the gospel, then our answers to these questions will be as clear as they

are critically important. Our personal goals will be obvious, and our efforts to accomplish them will be unceasing.

We seek your help in continuing to teach this area vision in your wards and branches, but most importantly, in

your homes. Encourage each family member to memorize the area vision and to regularly examine what they are doing to accomplish it.

When we do His will, He blesses us with assurance, comfort, and peace. I know this. ■

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so that it can address the needs and experiences of members where you live. The inclusion of the local pages in each issue depends on the availability of local content. We invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor:

AfricaWestWebsite@ldschurch.org ■

Oral History—A Valuable Tool for Capturing and Preserving Information and Memories

By Charles and Mercy Sono-Koree

An effective way to collect Church history is to conduct oral history interviews. Oral history is a valuable tool for obtaining and preserving information about historical events, major developments in Church units, lives of individual members, testimonies, and memories that may otherwise be lost. Oral histories also allow for in-depth analysis of a topic or

event. Allowing people to use their own words can move them to share aspects of their faith, testimonies, and experiences that may not be recorded in writing.

In November 1831, the Lord commanded John Whitmer to make “a history of all the important things which he shall observe and know concerning my church.” The Lord further stated

that this history would “be for the good of the church, and for the rising generations” (D&C 69:3, 8).

Church history advisers are responsible in this great work. They prayerfully search for present and past Church leaders, pioneers, and other members with inspiring experiences. It is our prayer that members avail themselves when invited by the Church history advisers. Everyone has a story to share. There are many possibilities for using oral histories to document Church history.

These interviews, when recorded and processed, are submitted to the Church History Department for preservation. ■



Charles and Mercy Sono-Koree

LOCAL NEWS

Relief Society Join Hands with Prisons Service Ladies to Celebrate Anniversary

Adapted from Mormon newsroom, Ghana

Sisters from the Accra Ghana Tesano and Ofankor Stakes celebrated the Relief Society's 174th Anniversary with the Ghana Prisons Ladies Association (PRILAS).

The celebration included a health walk and health lecture on March 19. In addition to celebrating the anniversary, the walk's objective was to create unity among the women and promote the habit of exercising.

The walk started at Pig Farm, through Dzorwulu (suburbs of Accra), and ended in a Church meetinghouse at Achimota. Once at the meetinghouse, they were joined by sisters from the Ofankor Stake who had also embarked on a health walk on a different route. Homoeopathist Emmanuel Arthur taught preventive measures and treatment for diseases that affect women. They also had a stint of aerobic exercises and dance.

The Relief Society is for women above 18 years. Its purpose is to provide support for the temporal and spiritual needs of all women in the Church, as well as others who are in need. The Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of the largest women's organizations in the world.



Health Walk participants from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Relief Society and the Ghana Prison Ladies Association

Alice Brobbey, counselor to the Ofankor Stake Relief Society president and a member of Kwabenya

Ward, said she was happy about the health walk. "It was a moment when women united for a common goal,



PHOTOS © 2016 BY INTELLECTUAL RESERVE, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Participants from the Ghana Prison Ladies Association and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Relief Society Join in exercises

which was to glorify and serve the Lord by serving one another.”

She also stated, “I’ve lived in different places, but anytime I go to a new branch or ward there is a bond which makes me always feel at home.”

The Tesano and Ofankor Stake Relief Society presidents, Alice Dey and Linda Amoako, were excited with the turnout of sisters and the achievement of the purpose for

which they embarked on the exercise. It was a fun and faith-promoting activity.

ACO Dorcas Bonnah, a member of the PRILAS, said, “I didn’t know anything about the Church, although I have been hearing its name. Today, I now know what the Church is about. This activity will help strengthen the youth to acquire knowledge.” She expressed their interest in subsequent Church activities. ■



Missionary and Member Testimonies—Temple

I am so glad for the time spent in the temple, which is the house of God. I'm very grateful to my Heavenly Father for giving me this time as a full-time missionary to worship in the temple. I really like being in the temple. There, I feel protected and close to my Heavenly Father, my Creator. I received my testimony on the temple last Tuesday and today too what I felt was so strong that I can't explain it.

The temple is truly the house of the Lord.

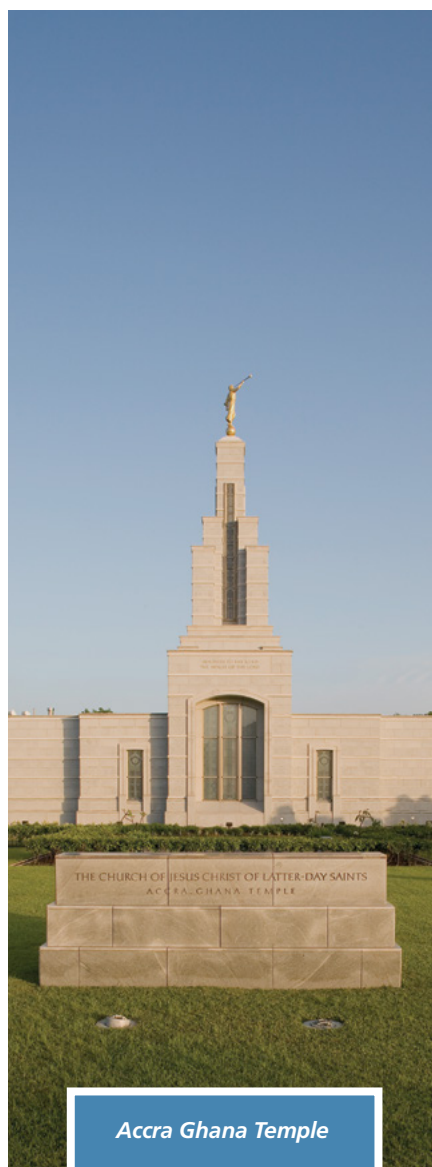
—*Sister Tsomafo, Abidjan West Mission*

I'm so grateful to the Lord for giving me the opportunity to enter His holy house. I know the temple is the house of God because the first time I entered, I was filled with compassion and love. I shed tears when I participated in some of the ordinances. I really felt the Spirit and was moved to tears. I felt at home in the celestial room. I felt at peace. I bear witness that God's presence is in His holy temple, and He loves us so much.

—*Sister Yapi, Abidjan West Mission*

I had a great experience meeting someone who speaks and understands my language in the house of the Lord.

I truly know that the temple is the holy house of God in which He communicates with us in our own language through prayers. I

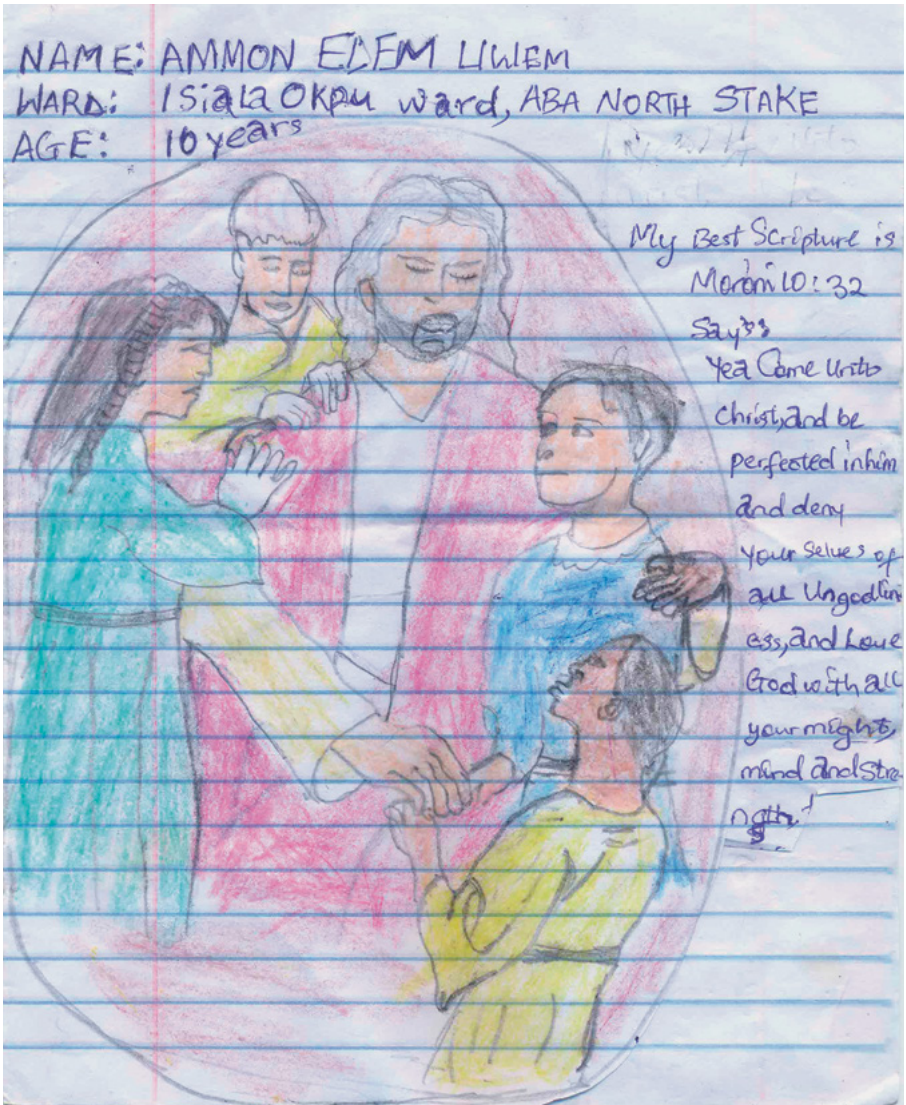


bear witness of the truthfulness of the Church and the holy scriptures, with a testimony that Jesus is God's Only Begotten Son, who lives and who sits at the right hand of the Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

—*Elder Tatahio, DR Congo Kinshasa Mission*

I'm so privileged to have known about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since the age of 16. I usually say it's because of the Church that I'm who I am today—a woman true to the faith with three beautiful children, with a kind and lovely husband. Since I received the restored gospel, I strive to apply it in my home and share it with people around me. I am grateful for the temple. Anytime I go in, I find myself closer and closer to my Savior. I bear witness that it's truly the house of God. I know that God lives and that He speaks with each of us individually in the temple. I'm also thankful for the announcement of a temple in the Ivory Coast through His living servant and revelator, President Thomas S. Monson. This is my testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

—*Toh Mabelle Flora, Plateaux Second Ward, Cocody Côte d'Ivoire Stake*

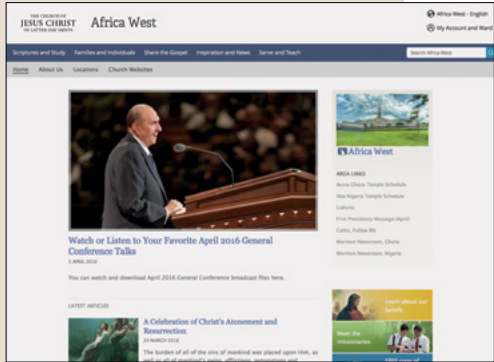


Children's Corner

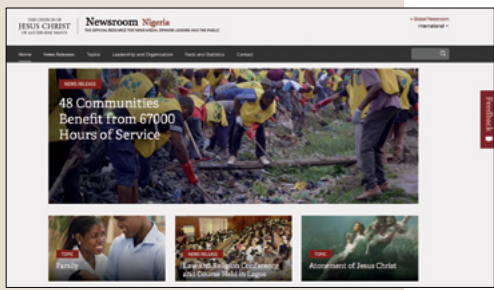
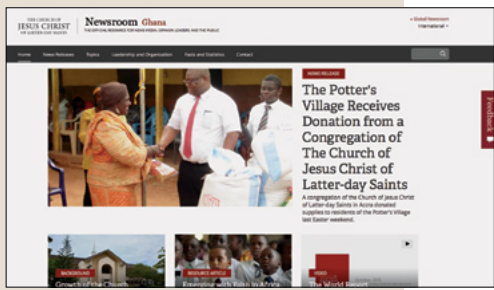
I love Nephi because he was an obedient boy. He loved God and kept His commandments, no matter the situation. He also loved his parents and obeyed them. I pray that Heavenly Father will help me be like Nephi. ■

John V., age 9, Isiala Okpu Ward, Aba North Stake

VISIT AREA WEBSITES!



Africa West Area Websites:
 English: africawest.lds.org
 French: afriquedelouest.lds.org



Mormon Newsroom Ghana:
www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh
 Mormon Newsroom Nigeria:
www.mormonnewsroom.org.ng ■