

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Yielding Our Hearts to God

By Elder Carl B. Cook

Africa Southeast Area President

As a youth I developed a great love for horses, and over the years I have continued to enjoy them. I have learned much about life from observing and spending time with these wonderful animals.

I learned a significant lesson from my horse Stubby regarding the miracle of change. When we first acquired Stubby, he was part of a deal we made in order to acquire another horse. Stubby's owner had been looking for an opportunity to get rid of him. Stubby was a strong-willed, stubborn, obnoxious animal that consistently acted up and caused trouble with the other horses. Because of the limited number of horses we had, I usually ended up riding Stubby during our family horse rides. By default he became my horse. I decided to do all I could to help Stubby improve his behavior in spite of his resistance.

I gave Stubby consequences for bad behavior and rewarded him for good behavior. I rode him side by side our well-behaved horses. I rode him frequently and petted and rubbed him often. Over time, after many horse rides and somewhat to my surprise, Stubby began to soften. He submitted more readily to the saddle and bridle and was less determined to have his own way. He even seemed to enjoy our time together. He allowed me to control him without resisting.

As Stubby's disposition improved, he eventually became my horse of choice. He was energetic and had good stamina. He was not at all hesitant or fearful in challenging situations. He liked to lead out in a group of horses and he didn't need to be urged on. Over a period of 10 to 15 years, Stubby developed into an exceptional lead horse, and I was very grateful that I hadn't given up on him during those earlier challenging years. He made such a turnaround that we changed his name to Spinner.

Now when I go to the pasture, Spinner is quick to come to me. He recognizes me and desires to please me. He responds to the gentlest commands and actually sets an example for our other horses. I can ride him easily without a saddle or a bit in his mouth. We have spent many pleasurable hours together. He is very gentle and

he has become a favorite horse of our grandchildren.

Spinner underwent a major change or transformation, but it took time, patience, and a lot of work. Through this process of change, Spinner's life improved immensely, and so did mine! If scriptures applied to horses, I would say that there was a "mighty change [wrought] in [him] . . . that [he had] no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2).

In a much more meaningful way, we are admonished to change, to submit ourselves to God, our Master (see James 4:7). As we do, we are blessed. "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the



Elder Carl B. Cook



Photo of Elder Cook with his grandchildren and Spinner

Jesus submitted His will to His Father.



Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) described the blessings that come to us as we submit to God, “Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings,

increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life in the service of God will find eternal life” (“Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, 4).

It requires focused daily effort to align our desires with God’s desires. Our self-interests can distract us and lure us away from Him. Our personal pride can be a great stumbling block in our progression. It can be difficult to change and we may become discouraged when it takes longer than we would like, but as we submit our will to God, exercise faith in Him,

repent of our sins, and do all we can to change, we can be blessed through the power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement. We can change and progress. We can find peace, happiness, and success in life.

Jesus Christ was the perfect example of submitting His will to the Father’s. His only desire in life was to fulfill God’s plan. God’s will was His will. God’s work was His work. They were one. Even when faced with making the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus submitted His will to His Father saying, “not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

May we yield our hearts to God, love Him with all of our heart, soul, and mind, and receive the associated blessings. May we remember that changing our habits and our nature may take more time than we would like, but it can happen if we persevere and endure. With God’s help and through the power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, we can become all that He desires us to become. We can indeed change and progress (see Philippians 4:13). ■



President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said, “When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God

will endow us with power” (quoted in Donald L. Staheli, “Obedience—Life’s Great Challenge,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 82).



Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) taught, “The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we

have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we ‘give’ . . . are actually the things He has

already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!” (“Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 24).

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

We Are All Pioneers

By **President Eustache M. Ilunga**

Stake President in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

This year in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is celebrating 30 years of its existence in our country. It is impossible to celebrate this date without thinking of the many people who laid the foundation for the Church to be established and spread in our country, bringing the blessings of the gospel to many individuals and families. What is happening today is the fruit of the sacrifices of these brothers and sisters, living and dead, and the result of their faith in the Lord and love for future generations.

In a message entitled, “The World Needs Pioneers Today,” President Thomas S. Monson said: “A dictionary defines a pioneer as ‘one who goes before to prepare or open up the way for others to follow.’ Can we somehow muster the courage and steadfastness of purpose that characterized the pioneers of a former generation? Can you and I, in actual fact, be pioneers?”

“I know we can be. Oh, how the world needs pioneers today!” (“The World Needs Pioneers Today,” *Liahona*, July 2013, 5).

A few years ago I lived with my grandparents, and with them I learned to enjoy working on the field. Whenever I had to go to the field, we would get up in the morning around

President
Eustache M. Ilunga



5:00 a.m. to enjoy the freshness of the morning breeze in order to have enough strength to travel the distance of one hour to one hour and a half to the field. Many times we happened to be the first to go down the path and I would notice my grandmother shaking



“... I lived with my grandparents, and with them I learned to enjoy working on the field.”



AFRICAN WOMAN WITH FRUIT AND TRIBAL VILLAGE BY MARGARET BLAKE

the grass that littered the footpath to drop the dew. We would get to the field wet with dew. When I asked her why she was doing it, she said to me: “This dew is troublesome because it wets you and can give you shivers. So I do it so that those who will pass on this path after me will feel comfortable and will be spared from this trouble.” What my grandmother did was a pioneering work; she prepared the way for others.

I am grateful to the many people who prepared the way for me. I think of my mother, Francisa Ngoy Banza, who, although not a member of the Church, taught me some principles that prepared me to easily accept and live the principles of the gospel. She is a pioneer. I also think of my paternal uncle, Polydor Mbuyu Ngoy, who was the first member of the Church in our family, and who invited me for the first time to church and prepared my heart and mind to understand and accept the teachings of the Church taught by the missionaries. My meeting with the district missionaries at the time was quick and easy because my uncle had prepared the way. Even though he had already died, I could easily hear his testimony echoing in my mind, “These things are true.” I followed his path.

In our country where the Church is still growing, many members are the first generation and are therefore pioneers. Their faith and commitment will serve as an example for future generations. So whether you are the first generation or not, everyone can be a pioneer when you show the way and be a light to those who follow you.

By studying the history of pioneers, whoever they are, and by observing their lives, I've noted some common characteristics that qualify us to answer the call of President Monson that the world needs pioneers today. These include:

- *Love for the Lord and His work*, which is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39). When we understand this, we do what is needed to help His work progress till it fills the whole earth.
- *Love for others* motivates us to open up the way for them. We become less selfish by focusing on the needs of others who will come after us.
- *The spirit of sacrifice* inspires us to give all that the Lord requires of us to prepare the way for future generations.
- *Obedying the prophets* and those whom the Lord has called to direct us and sometimes without knowing why. Like the early pioneers, we follow the path and the voice of our modern prophets even when it is not consistent with our reason, our traditions, or our cultures, knowing that “the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).
- *Courage to move forward* even when things get tough because being the first member of the Church requires courage to face misunderstanding, oppression, and sometimes mockery coming from others and even from close relatives like our family members.

- *Faith and hope*: It is believing in the things we do not see. I imagine that the pioneers of the early days could not imagine what would be the Church as we know it today. To faith we need to add hope that our faith and efforts will bring blessings to future generations.
- *The testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ*, which will sustain us in difficult times and when our faith will be put to the test.

These characteristics and many more characterized the faithful pioneers and will make us pioneers too. Every day, I meet with members of the Church who are driven out from their homes, who have lost their marriages, a job, or other privileges because of their membership in the Church. All these people are today's pioneers and I think the Lord referred to them when He said, “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundations of a great work” (D&C 64:33). ■

Kinshasa Temple Groundbreaking

By T. Ruth Randall

Four years after the announcement of the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple, Church leaders traveled to Kinshasa to conduct the much-anticipated groundbreaking of what is to become a sacred temple built in that land. Elder Jean-Claude Mabaya, a member of the Third Quorum of the Seventy who is from DRC, was tasked with overseeing the

event. He described the privilege it was to play a pivotal role in such a momentous event:

“By personally receiving the assignment of coordinating and organizing the groundbreaking ceremony for the Kinshasa Temple, my joy was so great because I was given the responsibility to lay the foundations of a base that would be a source of blessings





Ceremonial turning of the soil for the Kinshasa Temple



in the lives of many generations of people,” he said. Despite the blazing heat, Saints from all over the country joined civic leaders in participating in the ceremony and celebrating its significance.

Elder Mabaya said the Saints in the area have been preparing for this by increasing their family history efforts. “The Kinshasa Temple was announced by Prophet Thomas S. Monson in 2011,” said Elder Mabaya. “Since that time, the Saints in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire region have drawn the temple closer to them by actively participating in family history. They have

sent more names to the temple than they had done years before to show that they can ensure full operation of the Kinshasa Temple.”

One sister at the groundbreaking remarked, “From now on I will be happier in my life than I have been for the past 50 years because the temple will bring me more peace, spiritual security, and assurance in this life and in the one to follow.” Elder Mabaya echoed her sentiments. “As for me, the temple brings personal and family stability in the lives of those who attend it and keep the covenants,” he said. “The country will also be blessed as a result.”

During his remarks at the ground breaking, Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said the occasion would be a day long remembered in the country. “This holy house will also bless the country and people who surround it, whether or not they are members of the Church. It will be a light upon a hill, and the glory of the Lord will be upon it,” he said. He recognized the goodness of the people of Africa, stating: “They are a spiritual people. They trust in God and they pray to God. Our Heavenly Father loves His sons and daughters here and answers their prayers.” ■



Men's choir singing at the ceremony



Elder Neil L. Andersen and his wife, Kathy; Elder Mabaya; Elder and Sister Cook; and Elder and Sister Hamilton



Saints gathered for the groundbreaking

Durban Temple Groundbreaking: Keep It Simple and Sacred

By Desiree van Schalkwyk

On April 9, 2016, a few hundred people accompanied the Africa Southeast Area Presidency, Elder Carl B. Cook, Elder Stanley G. Ellis, and Elder Kevin S. Hamilton, along the path to the site of the Durban South Africa Temple to attend the groundbreaking ceremony. They were early to arrive, and Elder Cook recalls how he was struck that it wasn't just the place but also the people who, because of their preparation and faith, had brought with them the Spirit that had a settling influence on everyone.

Elder Hamilton, Second Counselor in the Area Presidency, recalls his impressions as he was seated, "It is a beautiful site. It was peaceful. The air was warm. There was quiet." The site sits upon a hill overlooking the northern KwaZulu-Natal Province, where nature abounds in all its glory.

Elder Ellis, First Counselor in the Area Presidency, said he was "equally impressed" with the location. "You know, the sites for temples are chosen by the prophet," he said. "And it's easy to see the wisdom of the Lord and His prophet in selecting that site. It will be a beautiful site. But also it will be a light on the hill to the people in Durban."

Said Elder Hamilton: "Heavenly Father is mindful of His children here in Africa. The announcement of the Zimbabwe Harare Temple, the [temple] groundbreaking in Kinshasa, and the groundbreaking for Durban, all [within] 30 days, indicates to me that our Heavenly Father loves His children and He knows His children in Africa."

When asked what counsel he would give the Saints to be prepared for the dedication of the temple, he said, "There are two counsels. One is practical—do your family history work. The other is spiritual—our hearts need to turn to the temple. We need to be creating a temple-worthy home, where the Spirit of the Lord can dwell."

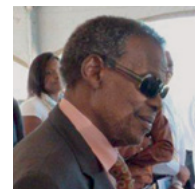
Former member of the Durban Stake presidency, Brother Colin Wilford, in his remarks at the groundbreaking, hearkened back to a prophecy given by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) 20 years ago that Church membership would continue to grow in Durban.

Mindful of Our Lives

Member of Parliament and founder of the Inkatha Freedom Party Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi attended the groundbreaking as an honored guest. In his speech, he remarked: "The presence of this temple will prompt those outside the Church to ask questions about their faith in what they believe. For those inside the Church, it will provide a place where marriages and families can be sealed, baptisms conducted, and knowledge expanded. It will be a reminder to all to be mindful of the kind of life we are leading."

He continued: "I wish you well as you build the Durban Temple, in the hope that the principles of moral living, commitment, and family values will deepen in South Africa."

Elder Cook, President of the Africa Southeast Area, said that he has great faith that the temple will act as a catalyst for members to grow in their commitment to the Lord. He is confident that they will become more



Honored guest, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi



Picture of the projected temple



Turning the soil together for the Durban Temple



self-reliant and provide sufficient ordinance workers even though currently there are only two stakes



President Carl B. Cook greeting the saints at the groundbreaking

in the area. He has seen members pledging to do more, to get their temple recommends, to serve in the temple, and to host members coming to the temple.

When visiting the site about three or four weeks prior to and in preparation for the groundbreaking ceremony, Elder Cook remembers the impressions he received to “keep it simple and keep it sacred.”

He added that he has heard the invitation of Church leaders and specifically Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, to keep things simple and to keep things pure. There is nothing more simple and pure than the ordinances of the temple. As we do the things our Heavenly Father wants us to do, we will be purified and sanctified as we visit the temple more frequently. There, we will be taught in simplicity and purity. We will be able to learn the Lord’s way.

In the words of Elder Cook, “Temples change everything. They change people’s lives, they change the Church, and they will change Durban and South Africa.” ■

A New Day for Zimbabwe

By Sibusiso Menzelwa

The hearts of Zimbabwean brothers and sisters have been warmed in a way that they cannot explain. This follows the announcement by President Thomas S. Monson in the recent April general conference that the very first Latter-day Saint temple in Zimbabwe will be built in its capital, Harare. The news has sparked huge anticipation amongst Zimbabwean members all around the globe.

Elder Walter Chatora, an Area Seventy from Zimbabwe, was in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City at the time of the announcement. “It’s not easy to explain the feelings—what joy! It was exhilarating to hear the prophet say, ‘Harare, Zimbabwe,’” he said. “As I sat there in the Conference Center, for a moment I failed to concentrate as I was overcome with great joy. I felt strongly that Zimbabwe will never be the same again.”

Soon after the announcement, Elder Chatora received a “flurry of messages” from the Saints in Zimbabwe. “One could feel the jubilation on the ground. It is a new day for Zimbabwe!” he said.

Courage Mlilo, a member from Harare, could not contain his excitement. “The people have been so patient



Elder Walter Chatora

for a long time through all the difficulties that the country has gone through, such as having a bad economy,” said Courage. “I am really grateful because now we are also going to experience the mercies of our Father in Heaven on a higher level. It is the biggest blessing we have received as a country.”

Loretta Kumire said that she felt blessed and humbled that Heavenly Father had blessed her country. “It has made me recognize how the Lord is continually watching over His children,” said Loretta. “This whole experience and announcement made me remember the scripture in 1 Corinthians 2:9 that reads, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.’” She also added that the news came sooner than expected. “I have always known that we would be blessed with a temple in Zimbabwe, but I didn’t know that it would be this soon.”

Translating Temple Ordinances into Shona

Dorothy Tembo, a Zimbabwean member who currently lives in South Africa, believes that preparation for this day began in 2010 when Zimbabwean members helped translate Church materials into their home language of Shona.

“I was one of the people who translated the Book of Mormon into Shona and helped with getting the material online so that it was accessible for many other people,” said Dorothy. In that same year, they also



Picture of President Monson from the April 2016 LDS Conference where he announced a new temple in Harare, Zimbabwe

translated the temple ordinances, even though there was no temple in the country. “Heavenly Father was testing our faith here because my team and I were asked to translate the temple ordinances into Shona.”

Changing the Lives of the Saints

Elder Chatora said that a new temple in Zimbabwe would mean that local members could attend the temple more frequently.

Nigel Blessings Ndlovu, who lives in Bulawayo, said: “I love the temple so much and I always make sure I visit the temple in Johannesburg at least once a year. Now this will be a thing of the past as a temple will now be close by. Instead of a 12-hour drive,

it will take only four hours to get to the temple, and that will mean instead of one trip to the temple a year, now I will be able to go to the temple even twice a month!” Nigel said he would prepare for the special event by continuing to worship in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple and remaining worthy to hold a current recommend.

According to Church history records, the Church was first recognized in Zimbabwe in 1950. However, missionaries and Church leaders started visiting the country as early as 1930. In the year 1987, the Church opened its first mission in the capital city and it served Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi. By mid-2012, the Zimbabwe Harare Mission became a stand-alone mission.

According to Elder Chatora, the Church in this land will continue to grow from strength to strength. “The Church is growing steadily, with the fourth stake in Harare on the horizon,” he said. “The Saints are resilient, humble, and faithful. This was the answer to many fervent prayers.” ■

EDITOR’S NOTE

The Africa Southeast Area has a website that publishes messages from the Area Presidency as well as inspirational stories from members in Africa. Please visit us at africase.lds.org. ■

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