

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Sealed Safely in the Covenants of the Everlasting Priesthood

By Elder David J. Thomson

Area Seventy



Elder David J.
Thomson

The Pacific Area goals for 2016 invite us to increase our faith and trust in our Heavenly Father and in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. The blessings of the temple are a core part of how we can strengthen ourselves and our families in this way. The temple reminds us of God's great desire to have each of His children


return safely home to Him. President Boyd K. Packer spoke of this when he referred to families being "protected by the principles and laws of the gospel, sealed safely in the covenants of the everlasting priesthood."¹

The Area Presidency's invitation to all youth and adults to have a current temple recommend is consistent

with the teachings of President Howard W. Hunter, which we are studying in Relief Society and priesthood classes this year. He has said: "I . . . invite the members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would

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May each of us take the steps necessary to ensure that we gain and retain a current temple recommend and to attend the temple as often as our circumstances allow. May we also reach out with love to those who need love and support and help to do likewise.

be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.”²

When our children were quite small, we would often drive from our home out towards the temple. Every time, as we rounded the corner into Temple View and the temple came into sight, they would burst into song:

*I love to see the temple.
I'm going there someday
To feel the Holy Spirit,
To listen and to pray.*³

Our children grew up with a love of the holy temple.

One of the great blessings of my life occurred just over one year ago. On a quiet day in February 2015, my wife and I attended a sealing session in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple to complete ordinances for our ancestors. That day for the first time we were joined by all of our children. Why was this particular day so special to me? That day I felt as if eternity were all around me. Surely this is what heaven is—being surrounded by people we love who have kept their covenants and with whom we can share eternity. Being in the temple as a family opened my eyes more fully to the eternal blessings available to us all because of Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness and the Atonement of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Near the close of the Book of Mormon, Moroni includes in that sacred record a letter which he received from his father, Mormon. Although the letter speaks of the demise of the Nephite people, it also contains some priceless words from a father to his son. Mormon knows that the conduct of the Nephite armies is displeasing to the Lord; however, he is certain of his son’s righteousness:

“Behold, my son, I cannot recommend them unto God lest he should smite me.

“But behold, my son, *I recommend thee unto God*, and I trust in Christ that thou wilt be saved; and I pray unto God that he will spare thy life” (Moroni 9:21–22; emphasis added).

Each time I read these words I can imagine Mormon considering the

conduct of his son and the joy that reflection must have brought him.

I imagine also that our personal temple recommends have a similar purpose. Those who sign the recommend are recommending us to God—worthy to enter His holy house.

Each temple recommend interview is a private, reverent time for us to consider our conduct as members of the Church. Do I meet the standard the Lord has set to enter into His house? Recently I met with a member of the bishopric and then a counsellor to our stake president to renew my temple recommend. As I pondered the questions asked, I felt a deep reverence for the privilege of living to these standards the Lord has set. My spiritual integrity depends on my keeping the commandments, covenants and standards the Lord has established.

A few years ago, a temple matron spoke in a stake conference we were attending. She likened our temple recommend to an invitation from the Lord for us to visit His home. Sister Thomson and I have been blessed to serve in the temple and to greet wonderful youth, recent converts, and Saints returning to full activity as they have come to do work for their ancestors in the house of the Lord. Each carries with them a recommend signifying their worthiness and their desire to be in the Lord's house as invited and most welcome guests. It is a joy to serve there with these choice people.

May each of us take the steps necessary to ensure that we gain and retain a current temple recommend and to attend the temple as often as our circumstances allow. May we also reach out with love to those who need love and support and help to do likewise. I promise you in the name of the Lord that as you worthily carry a temple

recommend, you will always feel welcome in His house and your ancestors will share their joy with you as you help them receive sacred ordinances of salvation. ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, "And a Little Child Shall Lead Them," *Ensign*, May 2012, 8.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* (2015), 1.
3. "I Love to See the Temple," *Children's Songbook*, 95.

LOCAL PAGES

Elder Neil L. Andersen and Other Church Leaders Visit Cook Islands

Speaking at a conference in the Pacific nation of the Cook Islands in May, Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counselled Latter-day Saints to "not be afraid to be different."

"The gospel that we proclaim is bold," Elder Andersen said. "We cannot be afraid to be different, to be unique."

"We need your faith, your goodness and your kindness," he said.



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Elder Neil L. Andersen and Sister Kathy Andersen at a celebration of Cook Islands culture held in their honor in Rarotonga

Participants in a celebration of Cook Islands culture in honour of Elder Neil L. Andersen and his wife, Kathy Andersen, in Rarotonga



He invited the youth in attendance to follow the Saviour and try to be perfect like Him.

Elder Andersen was accompanied on his visit to the Cook Islands by his wife, Sister Kathy Andersen, their son Derek, and daughter-in-law Erica.

Elder Kevin W. Pearson, Pacific Area President, and Sister June Pearson also travelled with Elder and Sister Andersen to the Cook Islands.

Others visiting the Cook Islands included President Fredrick Balli and Sister Robyn Balli of the New Zealand

Auckland Mission, which includes the Cook Islands.

During his remarks, Elder Andersen also said, “Apostles are ordinary men who are given an extraordinary blessing to be close to the Saviour and teach of Him.”

He said that for the Saviour to return to the earth, there needs to be a righteous people in every nation.

Elder Andersen told the Cook Islands Latter-day Saints that they will grow and be strengthened as they reach out in faith and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

“Let us open our arms,” he said. “This is a special place. Let everyone come. If you approach this challenge with faith and courage, it will happen.

“We need strong members, people who love the Lord, who are willing to make covenants with the Lord.”

He also said the Church needs young people who love education.

The previous day, Saturday, 21 May, the Andersens made a short trip to Mangaia, the most southern island in the Cook Islands group—where Derek once served as a missionary.

“The Saints in Rarotonga and Mangaia were very excited to see and meet a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and welcome his son Derek back to the Cook Islands,” said Elder Pearson.

“There were Church members and others who knew him then and flocked to meet him again as he arrived.”

Speaking in a meeting with Church members in Mangaia, Elder Andersen said: “From very simple things we learn the eternal truths of God. The truths are the same no matter where you live in the world.”



Elder Neil L. Andersen and Sister Kathy Andersen with the Queen's Representative to the Cook Islands, Tom Marsters, and his wife, Tuaine Marsters

He said that his son learned and loved the principles that were taught to him by the people in Mangaia while he served among them.

Referring to the Church in Mangaia, he said, “The future of the Church lies in the youth. We need to strengthen them.”

“Share your faith with the younger ones,” he counselled. “Sit them down and read the scriptures with them.

Talk to them about the Saviour. Teach them.”

That evening, back in Rarotonga, Elder Andersen and his family members attended a dinner and celebration of Cook Islands culture.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has five congregations in the Cook Islands and over 1,800 members. The first convert of the Church was baptized in 1942. ■

Preparing to Serve a Mission

By Brigham Riwai-Couch, Christchurch New Zealand Stake

When I was seven years old, I really, really wanted a PlayStation. Our family had a few rules about computer games—well, actually just one, which was that I wasn't allowed them. It seemed like all my friends had PlayStations, and I didn't. So I thought I would do some solid negotiating with my mother. Knowing that we would often talk about me serving a mission, I offered her what I thought would be a good deal.

I asked her to sit down and gave her my best pitch, saying, “Mum, if I

serve a mission—can you get me a PlayStation when I come back?” Mum listened and then, smiling, said, “Okay, Son, and I will even get you two games to go with it”.

It wasn't until I was about 11 that I realised the PlayStations they had when I was 7 would probably be antiques by the time I came home from my mission. But my mum still says a deal is a deal, and she will keep her end of the bargain as long as I keep mine. Even though the PlayStation is no longer my motivation to serve a

mission, it was good while it lasted, and mum still laughs about it.

So when it comes to preparing to serve a mission, I thought I would share with you five points from a young man's perspective that I think might help.

Talk about when, not if.

Mum and Dad have always talked about *when* I serve a mission. It has never been *if* I serve. That way we know you believe in us, and we start to believe in ourselves as well.

Talking about it this way has just made it so. And now, I really want to serve a mission.

Talk about it, and share the dream. That way people outside of your family can be supportive too.

When I was about ten I bore my testimony at church. I said that I wanted to be a missionary and that I was going to serve in Canada. Everyone laughed. Mum and Dad explained to me that the prophet chooses where you go on a mission but said Canada wouldn't be out of the question. The next week, though, a lady from our ward gave me a jigsaw puzzle that was a map of Canada—and secretly I still think I will go there.

Know that it's good for you and it's okay to be excited about the blessings.

There was a Tongan missionary who recently served in our ward



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Brigham is a 15-year-old teacher from the Cashmere Ward and attends Christchurch Boys' High School.

and who struggled to speak English at the start of his mission, but over the weeks he improved immensely. This made me feel really proud of him—for the effort he put in and the improvements he made—and also proud that our Church gives opportunities for our missionaries to learn other languages and cultures. My dad always talks about his mission, even

though he has been home from his mission in Perth, Australia, for more than 20 years. These two examples highlight how I think that a mission is like an investment in life, just like going to university is for education. I think serving a mission will be a blessing, a blessing that will help me to experience a different country and also help me to be a better man and a better father, just like my dad.

At some point you have to step up and do things for yourself, not just because your parents say so. And when you do, it will be worth it.

I attend seminary as part of the Cashmere Ward. I want to go because what I am learning at seminary is what I will be teaching on my mission. I feel like I have a better understanding of the scriptures, and the bike ride to and from seminary gives me time to think about what I have been learning. Seminary is something I could probably get out of, if I didn't want to go. I have to bike there, even in winter, which in Christchurch means 6.00am bike rides in the dark, with a lot of snow and ice. Other than sport, seminary is the first thing that I have ever done where I have had to commit to myself. Attending has been my choice, and I am grateful that I have been able to learn so much more about the scriptures and have formed a relationship with my teacher and other students.

A little bit often is good preparation.

There are regular things we need to do to strengthen our individual faith and trust in Jesus Christ. These include scripture reading, prayers and family home evening. Each week we have family home evening. I would say that about 30 percent of our family home evenings are really good, 50 percent are okay, and the other 20 percent someone ends up crying or wanting to leave the room. I like discussing different topics and also planning for our week. I think FHE is helping me to prepare to serve a mission by having a regular commitment, teaching me that it isn't always perfect but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. The more prepared we are, the better the lesson will be, and every member of our family should have a chance to lead. I think it will help me become better at relating to people and sharing with others.

While I have used these examples to share my insights about preparing to serve a mission, these points equally relate to preparing for any opportunity in the Church, such as attending the temple, participating in ordinances, and serving in the Church. I hope others reading this may gain an insight into how to prepare themselves, or how to help their sons and daughters prepare to serve a mission, or how to provide encouragement for other youth to take the lead in their own preparation. ■

Auckland Latter-day Saint Women and New Zealand Red Cross Seek to Aid Refugees

By Mormon Newsroom

In an organized charitable effort, women from the Auckland New Zealand Penrose Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently joined hands to bless many refugees' lives.

In a short, two-hour time span, they were able to package 35 large boxes of men's, women's and children's clothing and shoes, including brand-new socks and underclothing for the benefit of those in need.

The effort was part of an international initiative to alleviate the stress and despair felt by refugees around the world. The women's auxiliary organization of the worldwide Church, the Relief Society, has invited its 6 million-plus members to engage in service projects under the theme of "I Was a Stranger."

The Penrose stake Relief Society presidency, led by Mrs. Rossina Kruger,

organised the clothing drive by inviting the sisters and others to donate pre-loved clothing for the benefit of refugees who are in great need.

"I'm totally amazed that people still want to come in and contribute, truly an awesome feeling of love and care for those in need," Mrs. Kruger said.

The effort was planned in response to a clarion call from worldwide Church leaders to help those in distress. This activity is the first of many projects planned for the Penrose sisters.

Sister Kruger stated that the clothing drive "is an opportunity to bless the lives of others who are not able to receive the blessings we have in living in this great country. I am so grateful that many of our sisters were able to donate." ■



Relief Society sisters from Penrose stake donate and pack clothing for refugees.

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TIP OF THE MONTH

Exercise Faith in Jesus Christ to Strengthen Temporal Self-Reliance

By LDS Family Services

Exercising faith in Jesus Christ is central to spiritual and temporal self-reliance.¹ We learn from the *Lectures on Faith* that “faith is . . . the principle of action in all intelligent beings.”² If we do not believe an action will lead to a desired outcome, we will not be motivated to act. Taking action and experiencing

confirming consequences reinforces the action and leads to strengthened belief.³ Jesus taught, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.”⁴


Points to Ponder

1. The Lord promises He will provide for us.⁵

2. Education and training are the keys to providing better for ourselves and our families.⁶
3. The Lord wants to help us increase our income to improve our quality of life and availability for service.⁷
4. Modern Church leaders provide us with resources to obtain better training and employment.⁸
5. The Lord knows our fears and inadequacies. He will help us if we turn to Him. “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.”⁹
6. If increasing income or furthering education are not the temporal needs we currently have, the Lord can help us with whatever we require in our specific circumstances.¹⁰ ■

NOTES

1. See *My Foundation: Principles, Skills, Habits* (self-reliance booklet, 2015).
2. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 1.
3. See Alma 32.
4. John 7:17.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 104:15.
6. See *Leadership Guide* (Pacific Area Presidency publication, 2015); Russell M. Nelson, “What Will You Choose?” *Ensign*, Jan. 2015, 30–35.
7. See Alma 34:25; Jacob 2:18–19.
8. See [lds.org/topics/pef-self-reliance?lang=eng&r=1](https://www.lds.org/topics/pef-self-reliance?lang=eng&r=1).
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 42.
10. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “General Patterns and Specific Lives,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb 9, 2008, 3.



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