

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Now Is the Time for Members and Missionaries to Come Together

By Elder Kevin S. Hamilton

President of the Africa Southeast Area



Kevin S. Hamilton

The Lord has said that He “will hasten [His] work in its time” (D&C 88:73). As members of His Church, we have been asked to do all that we can do to move the work of salvation forward in our wards and stakes. In an address to all members of the Church in 2013, President Thomas S. Monson emphasized the importance of working together as members and missionaries when he said, “Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together . . . [and] labor in the Lord’s vineyard to bring souls unto Him. He has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work” (“Faith in the Work of Salvation” [worldwide leadership training meeting, June 23, 2013], [lds.org/broadcasts](https://www.lds.org/broadcasts)).

One of the ways that members and missionaries can “come together” is to be equally engaged in the work. When we are working together, the Lord can magnify our efforts. President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught this principle with a simple story about a visit to a country fair in the United States. Country fairs are opportunities for farmers to come together to

showcase the fruits of their labors and to demonstrate expertise with livestock. He told the story about a contest where pairs of oxen pulled enormous loads while coupled together with heavy wooden yokes. He observed that the oxen that could pull the heaviest loads were not always those that were the largest or strongest animals. Rather, those that won the contest were those oxen that, regardless of their size and strength, were “equally yoked.” This means that when the signal was given, they worked with, not against, each other. Their unity was the key to their success. (See Boyd K. Packer, “Equally Yoked Together,” address delivered at regional representatives’ seminar, Apr. 3, 1975; [lds.org/media-library](https://www.lds.org/media-library).)



Equally-yoked oxen pull together.

The same principle applies to missionary work as well, especially as members and missionaries come together and are “equally yoked” to the task at hand. When members and missionaries work together in harmony and unity, the Lord magnifies their efforts and helps them accomplish much more than they otherwise could.

How can we as members work more unitedly with the full-time missionaries? What can we do to “come together” to be more effective as we hasten the work of salvation? Here are a few practical suggestions that our family has found that will help us to work more effectively together:

1. **Pray for missionary experiences.** Don’t just pray for the missionaries, but pray instead as individuals and as a family for people to be placed in your path that can be taught by the full-time missionaries. Pray that the Lord will introduce you to those that have been prepared, those who will “hear [His] voice and harden not their hearts” (D&C 29:7).
2. **Invite the missionaries into your home.** Invite the full-time missionaries to come to your home—not just to visit and socialize but to

teach you the lessons like they would teach their investigators. This will give you the chance to see them in their true roles as teachers of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. They will bring the Spirit into your home in a powerful way and will fill you with a greater desire to work closely with them.

3. **Open your mouth.** Let others know that you are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Let them know that you feel that the Church has been a great blessing in your life. When they show interest, invite them to “come and see” like the Savior invited Andrew to come and see during His ministry (John 1:39). Let them see for themselves what the gospel can mean in the lives of those who accept it.

4. **Have faith.** This is His work; they are His children. He knows His sheep and they are numbered (see 3 Nephi 18:31). Let go and let the Savior “do [His] own work” (2 Nephi 27:21). We worry too much about what people will think or say. We can simply rely on the promises that He has made that if we “trust in [Him],” we “shall not be confounded” (D&C 84:116). He is the Lord of the harvest.

Some years ago when our children were younger, we felt a desire to be more engaged as a family in the work



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of bringing souls to God. My wife and I pondered and prayed to know how we could do this. How could we be more effective in our personal missionary efforts and how could we engage our children in the work as well? We felt impressed to invite the full-time missionaries to come to our home once a week to teach us the same lessons that they taught their investigators.

It was a simple and straightforward experience. Each week they came. They never stayed for more than 20 or 30 minutes. We began with a prayer. They taught us as they would teach a progressing investigator. We ended with a prayer. The miracle was that as we participated, there came into our

hearts and into our home a renewed spirit of missionary work. We began to think about it all the time. Our prayers began to change as we prayed for personal missionary experiences. Our confidence and trust in the missionaries increased as we felt the Spirit during the lessons. We became convinced that they would represent us well with our friends and acquaintances that we referred to them.

The results were slow to come at first, but steadily we began to have natural yet miraculous experiences. Our children gave the Book of Mormon to friends and teachers. My wife invited a door-to-door salesman to hear the missionary lessons. I became more aware of those that surrounded me every day and opened my mouth to let them know that I loved the gospel of Jesus Christ. This simple experience has changed our family forever. To this day, we continue to share the gospel. Our lives have been immeasurably blessed as we have teamed with the full-time missionaries to further the Lord’s work in whatever part of the kingdom that we have been living in at the time.

As we join together with the full-time missionaries, we will be magnified and blessed in a way that we will hardly be able to understand. We can come together at this time, as members and missionaries, according to the promise of our prophet, and the Lord will help us help Him do His work. ■

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

Sabbath Traditions

By Elder Mervyn C. Giddey

Of the Seventy

As a convert to the Church, I had grown up with Sabbath traditions very different from those I now embrace. On Sunday mornings my parents would be off to the tennis club, weather permitting, where they would spend the mornings playing tennis and the rest of the day socializing. As a young boy I would play with the other children there and we would find things to do around the club. Later, as a teenager, I grew to love surfing and would spend my Sundays at the beach. Everyone in our family had their own interests and each would go their separate ways on a Sunday. That's what weekends were for—days to be filled with fun.

I have always enjoyed technology and finding out how things work. Probably as a result of my love for technology, I became fascinated with F1® motor racing, and whenever I wasn't out surfing on a Sunday, I would watch the F1 Grand Prix.

My wife, Lilian, on the other hand, had grown up in the Church. Her family Sunday traditions, passed from one generation to the next, were very different from mine. Sundays were spent worshipping, serving and visiting family and others. And their Sabbath worship really started the day



Mervyn C. Giddey

before. The Primary song “Saturday is a special day. It’s the day we get ready for Sunday” was a reality in their home (“Saturday,” *Children’s Songbook*, #196).

Lilian and I met as teenagers and I was introduced to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Over a period of time, I came to learn for myself that the Book of Mormon was the word of God. I gained my own testimony that Joseph Smith had indeed seen the Father and the Son,

and that this was the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This knowledge necessitated a change in the pattern of my life, especially the pattern of my Sundays. The traditions of my family were not in harmony with the teachings I’d grown to accept. Surfing on the Sabbath was set aside.

We married and started our family, and while our gospel ideals were now similar, some of my old family traditions still tugged at me quite strongly. I had no desire to go surfing on Sundays, but I was still drawn to watching F1 Grand Prix racing! After lunch, after a morning at church, I would set myself up in the lounge in front of the TV where I would spend



“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High” (Doctrine & Covenants 59:10).



“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.” (Exodus 31:16)

a few hours watching, while my wife looked after our young family. I rationalized that I was not actually participating in sport on the Sabbath, only watching.

In Lilian’s family, as she was growing up, the tradition had been a Sabbath of devotion and service. In my family it had been sport. It soon became clear that our Sabbath day traditions were conflicting and that we needed to establish our own traditions.

I knew of the counsel in the 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants that, to more fully keep ourselves unspotted from the world, we needed

to go to church and offer up our sacraments on the Sabbath (see verse 9). I was also aware of the promises that the “fulness of the earth” would be ours if we did this (verse 16), but I’d overlooked the requirement of verse 13 that “on this day thou shalt do none other thing.”

As a family we counseled together and determined that there were some TV programs that we didn’t feel suitable for the Sabbath, one of them being the F1 Grand Prix! Technology came to the rescue for me, and a VCR provided the means for me to watch later in the week. My interest in F1 waned, though, as, despite my best

efforts to avoid hearing the results, I would find myself watching a race already knowing the outcome. Over time, our family stopped watching all TV programs on Sundays.

As a young family, we wanted, and desperately needed, the blessings of the gospel, and we realized that some of the things we were doing robbed us of the full measure of the Lord’s blessings. Change was necessary, sacrifice of old habits was required, and newer and brighter family traditions—traditions more closely centered around our Savior’s teachings—needed to be established.

These changes were not always easy—especially for me—and it took time and determination to give up the old and embrace the new. Today, some decades on from those early decisions, I look at how our Sabbath observance has become a sign for our family (see Exodus 31:13), how it’s become a delight for all of us (see Isaiah 58:13–14), and a covenant we choose to make with our Heavenly Father. I marvel at how our children have hallowed the Sabbath and chosen for themselves to set aside the things of the world. I thrill to see how our grandchildren are now being helped and encouraged by their parents to choose to make the Sabbath a special day, and I pray that it might be a “perpetual covenant” (Exodus 31:16) with God throughout the generations of our posterity. ■

LOCAL NEWS

Christine Namwinga: A Zambian Matriarch

By Susan Lowe

Eighty-four-year-old Christine Namwinga from Zambia was once the happily married mother of 10 children. But in 1992, she lost her beloved husband. And then almost unbearably, she suffered through the death of all 10 of her children. Five of them died when they were young, at the same time, being swept away in a flash flood as they took cover under a bridge in a heavy downpour. One son died of a heart attack on his wedding day, another daughter died giving birth to her first child, and the three remaining children died of malaria.

In January 2014, Christine became destitute and traveled from her village to ask the local priest for help, only to be turned away and told he couldn't help her. She wandered through town and noticed a white signboard: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was Saturday, so she spent the night waiting outside the building until she could attend church. She recognized a strong spirit drawing her there. And so began her conversion. Every Sunday she would get up at 3.00 a.m. and walk the nine hours it took to get to church. She was baptized on April 6, 2014, and duly confirmed a member of the Church.

A year later, Sister Namwinga was ready to visit the Johannesburg South

Africa Temple to receive the saving ordinances for herself and her family. It was her first ever trip out of town, her first ever trip on a big bus, and her first ever trip out of Zambia. The 38-hour long journey to the South African city was filled with nervousness and excitement.

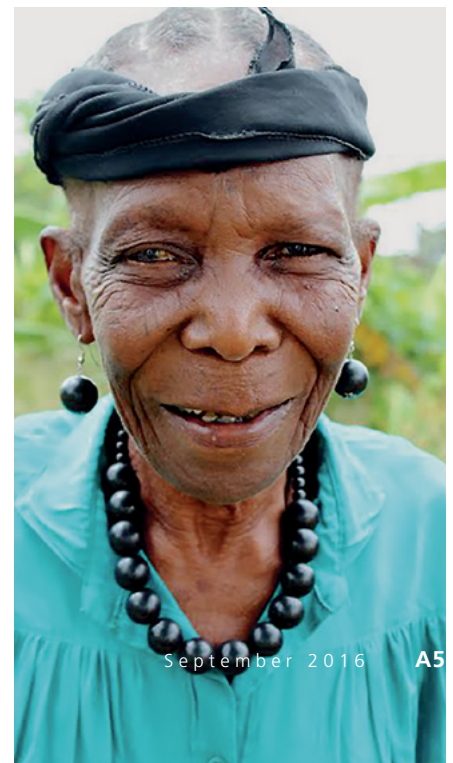
Sister Christine spent two days at the temple. During that time, she was sealed to all 10 of her children, her husband, and her parents.

"I know that my Heavenly Father loves me very much, in that He has made it possible for me to reach this age and special time to allow me to visit the temple," said Christine. "I am happy that I was sealed to my husband, children, and my parents, because this assures me that one day we will see each other and be together forever in the life to come. I know that if I continue following the commandments, I will truly be saved and live a better life here on earth," she went on. "I know that this Church is true and it is led by a prophet of God, Thomas S. Monson. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet from God. I promise that I will share what I know to be true in this Church to other people so that they can come to the knowledge of the restored gospel as well."



◆ **Christina Namwinga with Sister Susan Lowe, who helped to organize the temple trip where Sister Namwinga was sealed to all 10 children, her husband, and her parents**

◆ **Sister Christine Namwinga**





“As surely as there [is] now a sorrowful separation, there will someday be a glad reunion, for that marriage [that has] begun with a sealing for time and eternity in the house of the Lord, under the authority of the holy priesthood.”—Gordon B. Hinckley

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) has said, “As surely as there [is] now a sorrowful separation, there will someday be a glad reunion, for that marriage [that has] begun with a sealing for time and eternity in the house of the Lord, under the authority of the holy priesthood” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Marriage That Endures,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 23).

The steadfastness and faith of this matriarch are surely a blessing to the many family members who await her arrival on the other side of the veil. Because of her worthiness to participate in temple ordinances, the sorrow of earthly partings will one day be replaced by the sweetest heavenly reunion with those she loves. ■

Excerpted by Taunia Lombardi from the 2015 Zambia Mission Annual History

Sarodroa: A Special Place, a Lesson of Self-Reliance

By Ted Nielsen

Africa Southeast Area Meetinghouse Facilities Department Trainer

On a hillside, amongst a small numbers of homes, three hours from the capital city of Antananarivo, Madagascar, stands a small wooden chapel called the Sarodroa Meetinghouse. To reach the chapel, you travel on a paved, windy two-lane road. From the highway you can choose to walk, or if you have a four-wheel drive, you can drive almost to the chapel, although some walking is still required. No one in this community has a vehicle. The dirt road is challenging, with deep ruts created by teams of zebu pulling high, two-wheeled wagons.

Several years ago, one of the families who lived in Sarodroa moved away. In their new community, they were approached by the missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and several members of the family were baptized. In 2009, they moved back to Sarodroa. The nearest LDS church was many kilometers away and there were no other members nearby. Because the mode of transportation was either by walking or riding in a wood wagon drawn by a zebu team, they decided to meet together in a home. The number of members started to increase,

and in 2011, it officially became a branch.

The Saints wanted to have a church closer to them because they soon outgrew the home where they were meeting. These members were willing to build their own facility if the Church could provide them with the building materials. In 2013, the small wooden church was built. It had small vented windows, a dirt floor, and a tin roof that kept them dry from the storms. This facility offered them peace and security since there is no organized village, just scattered farmhouses with no running water or electricity.

The members loved their little wooden church and were willing to give of their time and talents as they shared their testimonies of Christ. The Church did not remain small for long. The membership has grown from just one family to 120 members with over 100 attending every week.

In October 2015, there was a new chapel of concrete and brick built by the members. The old wooden chapel is now divided into classrooms and a bishop’s office. Again, all the building materials were hauled by truck then carried up the hill by wagon and zebu. There is a river nearby where baptisms



The little wooden church built by the local members. Some Saints gathered with Brother Ted Nielsen (in the middle) during a facilities management visit in 2015.



are performed. The closest electricity is 50 kilometers away, so a solar panel was installed to power a few lights and the organ. The chapel is clean, neat, and organized. The members love and respect their house of worship.

“A wonderful spirit exists around this small but needed place. Members

are practicing temporal and spiritual self-reliance by providing for themselves,” commented Brother Ted Nielsen, who visited their finished building. He believes that their faith, hard work, money management, and service to others demonstrates these principles. They have learned how to

work, make bricks, grow vegetables, and plant rice gardens. They take care of their temporal needs as well as their social, emotional, and spiritual needs. He continued, “There is a very spiritual feeling when you visit this area because the members are truly examples of the gospel in action.” ■



The exterior of the new brick chapel constructed by the local members and the interior of this building where they now hold their sacrament meetings.

My Graduation “Gift” from Seminary

By David Muanda

Kananga First Ward, Kananga Stake in Central Kasai, Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]

A brother from the Democratic Republic of Congo shares how choosing to stay in the seminary program helped him finish top of his class.

Seminary remains one of the most important and spiritually edifying educational programs in the Church. But for many young men and women, the sacrifices needed to attend this four-year long program can sometimes be difficult and a little overwhelming.

This is a challenge all too familiar to David Muanda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and hundreds of others like him. But an experience in David’s final year of college changed his feelings toward the program. He explains what happened:

“Throughout college, I was always top of my class. So as I entered my final year, I thought to abandon seminary,

which I had attended in previous years, so that I could achieve my goal. One day, my way of thinking changed. I looked around my room and saw a pile of books next to my scriptures, seminary manual, and notebook. In my heart, I asked: ‘What matters most?’

“I found the answer in Matthew 6:33: ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’ It was not an easy decision, especially since I had to juggle my final year studies with helping my family, attending school, spending time with friends, and participating in seminary. Since my teacher had taken the time to call me every day to remind me

of my duty to attend seminary, I decided to faithfully attend and find other ways to balance my time, in order to complete my studies.

“By the end of the year, I had not only been recognized as the top achiever in my college class and received my college diploma, but I also obtained a certificate of course completion and my diploma in seminary.

“This year, I enrolled in the institute of religion, where I have learned great truths. I have found that seminary has qualified me for many Church callings and has trained and prepared me to serve a full-time mission in the near future. Aged 18 years old, I am now serving as stake Young Men secretary.

“It is at seminary where I have come to find my testimony that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Just as many apostles and prophets have taught before: make seminary and institute a priority and you will never regret having attended.” ■



David Muanda



David's Seminary Graduation Certificate