

# AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### “The Words of a Prophet”

By Elder Terence M. Vinson

First Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency



Terence M. Vinson

Have you ever thought how wonderful it would have been to have listened to Peter teaching on the day of Pentecost or to Alma and Amulek preaching in Ammonihah as recorded in Alma 9 to 11? How I would have loved to hear Paul teaching with such power on his journeys through Turkey and Greece!

But why should we envy those days when we have access today to their teachings and to much more? Added to that, we are living in a time to be envied by those in the future because we are blessed to hear the words of today's living prophets.

Twice each year, we can hear and read the prophetic teachings of President Thomas S. Monson and

of those other men who have been chosen and called by God Himself as prophets and apostles for our time. I wonder whether we truly value their teachings, as others will in future days.

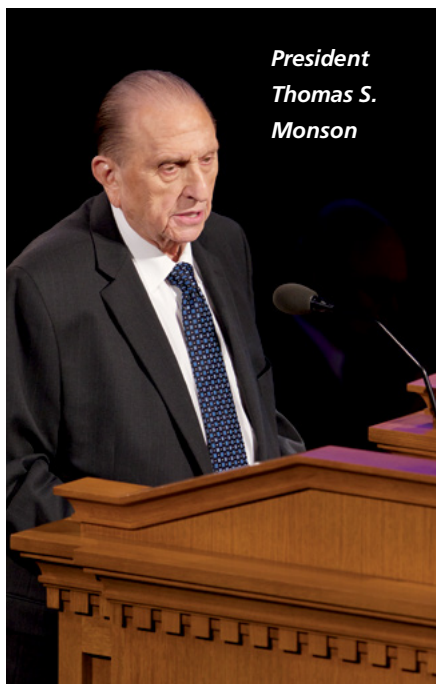
Each April and October, all those men who have been ordained as Apostles speak to members of the Church in general conference. As October is here, we now have the chance to learn from their prophetic words and inspired testimonies once again. Only the First Presidency, the Apostles, and other General Authorities and General Officers of the Church speak at general conference. No topics are assigned for these conferences. Each speaker is expected to prayerfully seek revelation as to the subject on which he or she should choose to speak and exactly what he or she should say.

As we approach general conference with eagerness and seek for the personal revelation that can come to us as we listen or read, or do both, we can be taught directly by the Spirit. An example of an individual being personally taught during general conference was illustrated to me in a letter I received. I had spoken at general conference in October 2013, and during my talk I had the most

unusual and possibly unique experience for a general conference of being harassed by a pesky fly. This fly immediately became somewhat infamous as the “LDS Conference Fly” or “LDS ConFly” with many humorous comments and memes appearing after this conference. Those who watched the conference session live saw the fly buzzing around my head and landing on me several times as I delivered my talk. For those who did not see it live, the video of my talk was edited so that only long distance camera feeds were used for the portion of my talk where the fly was visible so as not to distract those watching in subsequent rebroadcasts. But it was a little distracting for many watching live, and for me in delivering the talk.

However, a couple of days later, I received a letter from a Church member who had watched the conference session live that taught me again how someone who was prepared could learn a valuable lesson from what she saw and heard at general conference. Part of that letter follows:

“Yesterday, I was watching general conference with my family when Elder Vinson got up to speak. He started out by saying that God should be the center of our universe. . . . Or is there



President  
Thomas S.  
Monson

something else? As he spoke, not only were his words profound, so was his example; a fly came buzzing around him; it landed a few times on his head, then on the microphone, then on his nose. It was quite a nuisance and pest. As I watched him not be moved in what the Lord required of him, and not even flinch at the distraction, the Spirit whispered to me ‘this is what a fly represents—it is a distraction.’ And sometimes there are a lot of them. Elder Vinson did not move; he did not flinch; he did not get frustrated; and he did not let it stop him from delivering one of the important talks of the day, one that I needed to hear. He knew the fly was there and yet gave it no heed.”

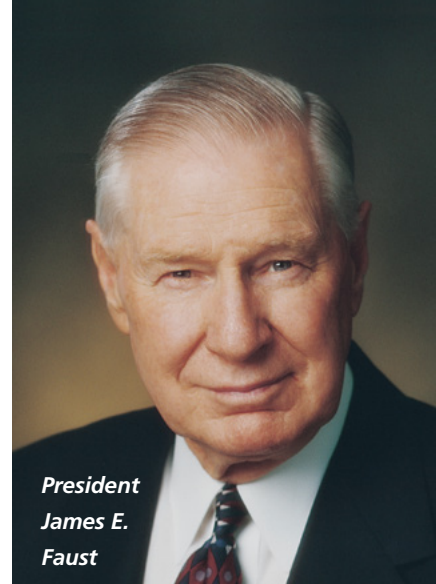
Distractions are one of Satan’s greatest tools to trip us up and to take us off course. In answer to the question “If God is not the center of our universe, then what is?” Well, it does not matter what is because anything else is a fly, a disease-carrying pest. Look at the word hidden in “flies”—“lies.” I know that our strength, our hope, our happiness is found in placing God in the center of our lives and not letting any distraction take His place.

This sister watched and listened, prepared to be taught. As she participated, she sought the Spirit to teach her. I was particularly impressed with her comment that “the Spirit whispered” to her as she describes how she was taught not by the words spoken by

the person giving the talk but by the Holy Ghost.

In our most recent general conference in April this year, President Thomas S. Monson spoke twice, as he usually does. But both talks were short, much shorter than he has previously given. Some members may have been disappointed by his brevity. But when you closely examine the messages he delivered, you see that they were powerful and timely and the messages as strong as they would have been had the talks been longer. He spoke of priesthood holders being worthy to exercise their priesthood (see “A Sacred Trust,” *Liahona*, May 2016, 85). This is one of the great doctrines of the kingdom of God and is explained in beautiful detail in Doctrine and Covenants 121, which describes how we come to understand and live the “doctrine of the priesthood” (verse 45). That message is crucial for all Church members to understand and apply.

His other message emphasized the importance of the choices we make. And how true and timely that message is. He linked our choices to our faith—the primary principle of the gospel. He said: “May we choose to build up within ourselves a great and powerful faith which will be our most effective defense against the designs of the adversary—a real faith, the kind of faith which will sustain us and will bolster our desire to choose the right” (“Choices,” *Liahona*, May 2016, 86).



President  
James E.  
Faust

The brevity of President Monson’s messages in April reminded me of a talk given by President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency at the time. He spoke at the end of a general conference training session for the Seventy and he was allotted about 20 minutes for his remarks. Although he only used a tiny portion of that time, his talk was most memorable and I will include the full text of it now. He stood and simply said, “Brethren, a talk does not have to be endless for its message to be eternal. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

I have heard many talks, over very many years. However, I do not think I have heard a clearer message ever given than that day by President Faust.

We can learn so much from approaching general conference with the appropriate spiritual preparation and attitude. When we come with pen and paper to write the things we feel and are taught by the Spirit, we receive personal revelation from God.

Over the years, one of the things I have learned is to look for patterns in the messages of each conference. What will God inspire His leaders to speak of most often this October? What are the current or imminent

dangers of which we should be most wary? His prophets will tell us those answers, as they always have since ancient days.

I wonder what He has specifically for me to learn from this general conference. I am anxious to find out. I hope you also listen for and both hear and feel His personal message for you. ■

## LOCAL NEWS

# Lagos West Stake Youth Camp

It had been the desire of the stake presidency of the Lagos Egbeda Stake and its leaders to sensitize its youth knowing sure well that the future of the Church and society at large lie in their young hands. This knowledge of being future leaders requires that there is unity amongst the youth, which thus promotes missionary work. The stake presidency has longed for a successful event like this.

The Egbeda Stake youth camp was held from Wednesday, March 23rd to Saturday, March 27th, 2016, at the Lagos Egbeda Stake Center.

A skills-acquisition program helped youth become aware of self-sustainability. This will generate the desired quality of life in this era of



economic turbulence where circular education and skills acquisition empowers all. It was an avenue in fostering interest in enrichment programs and the first of its kind since the creation of this new stake. It was an eye-opener to all members.

The event housed 108 youth, with four nonmembers. The nonmembers' remarkable comments reflected the oneness and love amongst the members. They said that they were not segregated and bore their testimonies of the truthfulness of the teachings of the Church.

On the first day, campers were grouped by their commandants, with names from the scriptures to identify each group. Activities such as morning and night devotionals, sports, dance, and film shows were provided. The program was structured to carry both the spiritual and temporal aspects that could convey the mission of the camp. The stake Young Men president, Chris Odika, championed the sporting activities with a lot of humor.



President Sunday Oyedeji admonished the youth to learn and seize this opportunity as a stepping-stone in engaging their minds with worthwhile activities. Many facilitators spoke on different aspects of life, including health talks on causes of mental illnesses; time management; speedy calculation, etc. Other leaders, such as Solomon Aliche, spoke on financial management, while Brother Adebayo supported the youth with a professional artist in make-up/make-over art.

Sis Abigail Oku, the stake Young Women president, advised the youth to be self-motivated by listening and being obedient to the promptings of the Spirit. She highlighted the importance and benefits of hard work, which leads to prosperity. She added that "there is no food for a lazy man, that all hands must be on deck in



chasing idling in their lives because an idle mind is the devil's playground." The program was holistic in its instructions and very unique.

Presently, there were six wards, three of which have been vocationally registered, with each unit having two girls as representatives. The registration of wards and skills vary—the Egbeda Ward does bead-making; the Ayobo Ward specializes in garment-making or fashion design; and the Ejiḡbo Ward concentrates on cookery

and baking. The remaining three wards will choose from the remaining options of hair-dressing, cosmetology, and the production of household items. The module was to brand each ward in their area of specialization, thus increasing manpower development in the bishops' storehouse.

In return, the youth responded that they were grateful for the opportunity to participate in the program and looked forward to the next camp meeting, which will be themed "Train the Trainers." ■

## Multi-Faith Religious Symposium "The Role of the Family in God's Plan"

A multi-faith symposium sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to discuss "The Role of the Family in God's Plan" was held on Saturday, July 2, 2016, at the Christiansborg Stake Center with music provided by the Emvic Choral.

The symposium was presented by a panel consisting of five religious leaders in the community. Moderating the discussion was the Rt. Rev. Dr. Paul Kofi Fynn, president of the Lutheran Church of Ghana. He was joined by Rev. Dr. Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, General Secretary of the Asante Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana;

Nana Essi Nissin VII, Nyumfahemaa of Efukfi Traditional Area; Shiek H. Aremq' aw' Shaibu, spokesman for the Chief Iman of Ghana; and Elder Daniel Yirenya-Tawiah, member of the Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Rt. Rev. Fynn opened the discussion by thanking the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for hosting this event to address the problems that society is experiencing today around the disintegration of the family unit. He then asked each panel member to address the topic in turns.

The first to speak was Nana Essi Nissin. "Family life is a school which was founded by God Himself," she said. "It was initiated by God, established by God and hallowed by God." She reminded the listeners that it was God who first said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18) and that "a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matthew 19:5). She continued, "It doesn't matter if you initiated the marriage, it is instituted by God and as a school institution, you should abide by the laid-down rules and procedures of the school."

Nana Essi Nissin also said that "from the [perspective] of a woman, I just want to say and emphasize this, that as it says in the Bible that 'whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and

obtaineth favour of the Lord' (Proverbs 18:22). And so, women, if you become a wife and it is a favor, you are in God's institution and as such should live in the institution as it has been laid down by the founder, God Himself."

In conclusion, Nana Essi Nissin stated that the examples of Eve, Ruth, Esther, Hagar, Martha, and Mary have taught us how to live within the confines of God's institution and that we should follow their precedence laid down in the school to establish a faithful, fruitful, and mature family life.

Next to speak was Rev. Dr. Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, who decried the increasing violence in the world today. He emphasized that we

must pursue our common humanity before reducing each other to just a religion, gender, or ethnicity. He told us that family values must be nurtured in all religions and that we need religion to unite us.

Another idea he expressed was that God uses families as channels of blessings and that whenever God is going to bless us, He uses a well-nurtured instrument who has been prepared by good parents. Parents with sound morality must train up the child to be responsible, obedient, and respectful of others. Young people should be trained to work hard and have a good work ethic and not become the kind of the people who

"go into service and leave their values behind; education without moral values just creates intelligent criminals."

"If you dismantle the family, you hurt and dismantle society," Shiek H Aremq' aw' Shaibu told the audience. He approved of the topic "The Role of the Family in the Plan of God" because it reminded us that God has a plan and without it He would be a purposeless God. The existence of God is evident in His creations by the well-planned beauty and purpose we see in all things. The family is part of God's plan for man; family is society in microcosm.

Another point he made was that the excessive pursuit of material



**Members of the  
Emonic Choral**



**Panelists from  
the conference**

things in life erode the family. He related a time in his life when he was required to work late at night and was distressed when he would walk home and see children out on the streets. Because the family is part of God's plan, there is something of holiness in it and if you inculcate the fear of God in discipline, then your family will be enhanced. He concluded by telling us, "You are all shepherds to your family and each one of you stands accountable before God as to how you tend your flock."

The final speaker was Elder Daniel Yirenya-Tawiah, who began by stating that the family is the basic unit of society and provides a way for God's children to learn on earth. Twenty-one years ago, the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," which states the principles by which we should pattern our family. It emphasizes the need for mutual respect and the responsibility of parents to love one another and to work to create an environment in which children can be nurtured and taught morals and values. The family should

become a societal protective organization and when the family functions the way God has planned, society will be protected. Children will have a better understanding of who they are and how they should relate to others, and they have a better orientation as they make the choices they face on a daily basis.

Elder Yirenya-Tawiah gave three main points, which are the basis for the family in society. First, that we are all brothers and sisters, created by God before we came to earth. Second, we are all equal and each of us has come through a father and mother and are part of the basic unit of society—a family. Third, fathers and mothers should raise and teach children that they are children of God and that they have a purpose and can be protected through living the principles He has given us.

Following Elder Yirenya-Tawiah's remarks, members of the audience were invited to come forward and ask questions about issues they would like the panel members to discuss. These included such topics as inter-faith marriages, how should the decision

to marry be balanced with education and career, and traditions of marriage. Among the responses given were that there should be a balance between work, education, and the family, which can best be found by defining priorities and establishing values, and that single life is the best time to learn to know what, when, and why you do what you do. Rt. Rev. Dr. Paul Kofi Fynn addressed the marriage tradition question by stating that in his opinion, the idea that you "give" a bride away is a wrong concept, and that in marriage we should never think of a spouse as a possession. When his daughter was married, the only bride price he asked of her future husband was that he treat her with kindness and respect, and, with a chuckle, warned him that if he ever beat her, he would come and take her back.

He concluded the symposium with some core ideas. First, the family breakdown has come from a loss of mutual respect which we must regain. Second, we should not define each other only by our religion. We are people with many characteristics, and we should accept each other in all of our diversity. Third, education should be morally and spiritually based. And lastly, we need to reestablish our values that have been lost due to spiritual neglect.

The evening was well-received by the audience, and many expressed the hope for a second to be held. ■

## MISSIONARY MOMENTS

## “But this generation shall have my word through you”

By **Sister Viola Odida Anena**

Ghana Accra West Mission

Growing up in a loving, gospel-centered family with two loving earthly parents, nine siblings, and 10 nieces and nephews is one of the most precious gifts to me by my Heavenly Father. Family is forever, one of the most beautiful possessions we have. And if the gospel is at the center of it, it becomes a piece of heaven on earth.

Because I have been given much, I knew I had to do same. This formed a part of the desire that drove me to serve a full-time mission. As I started preparing for my mission, I prayed for different things I wanted to achieve and one of them was getting to baptize an entire family into the Church. Relying on our faith to act led my companion and me to the seven-member Amissah family, who were a referral by our district leader.

The same week we were to have our first teaching appointment with them, I fell terribly ill with malaria and my body was completely giving in, but I was not going to let it stop me from doing what I had always desired to do. The distance from our apartment to the Amissahs is an hour and half walk. They lived way up a hill in Ashongman Estates, Accra, Ghana. We went teaching on a hot afternoon with

our ward mission leader, but when we got to one point, my body was failing me. I had lost my breath, and the thought of going out teaching sick with malaria was such a worry to me that I came close to giving up and telling my companion that we needed to turn back. I could not do it anymore.

At that point, I closed my eyes said one of the most humbling, heartfelt prayers I had ever said. I pleaded for strength to keep going. I did not want to be a failure, and my faith to act was being tested. I felt a sudden warm uplifting feeling and embrace I cannot possibly describe. I felt so light, I could breathe better, and I did not feel pain. We kept going to the top where they lived and stopped as we marveled at the breathtaking view of the seemingly miniature houses and vegetation below.

As we entered the house, the first person we saw was their youngest daughter, Jessica, welcoming us into their home with a big smile that melted our hearts. The thought that came to my mind was look at what you were going to miss if you turned back. The whole family was all smiles and very hospitable but, most importantly, they were receptive to the message we brought to their family. We

had a very humbling gospel conversation and taught them the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They asked inspiring questions and we were able to discern with the power of the Holy Ghost all through the lesson.

We got a return appointment. That felt so good. On our way down the hill, I felt a strong impression that we should stop by the home of a family of members of the Church, so I talked to my companion and off we went. When we got into their home, I sat directly across from a big portrait of the Second Coming of the Savior. I kept smiling at it and turned to my companion and asked her to imagine how it would feel seeing the Savior come back and stretching His



Sister Anena



**The Amissah Family with Sister Anena and Sister Djezoa**

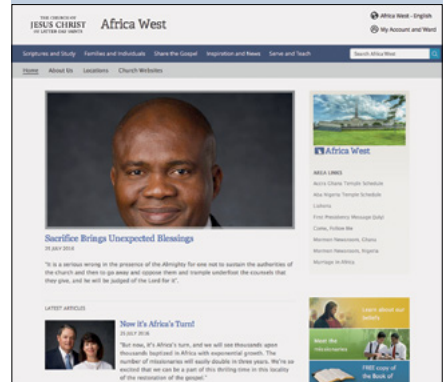
hands toward us. We decided to share some of our favorite scriptures and bear our testimonies with the family. We all took turns, and then it got to our ward mission leader. He opened to one of his favorite scriptures, found in the Doctrine and Covenants 5:10, “But this generation shall have my word through you.” In an instant I was in tears. I felt the Spirit so strong at that moment, and in my heart and mind I felt this scripture was meant for me, an answer to my prayer up the hill. I looked back at the portrait and kept saying this scripture by heart. I could not help but look at the Savior stretch His hands out, knowing He was trusting me to bring the Amissah family unto Him, and this generation will hear His word through me. I left that member’s home feeling so good. We continued teaching the Amissah family, and on a beautiful, cold Sabbath day, they were baptized as members of

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Kwabenya Ward of the Ofankor Ghana Stake.

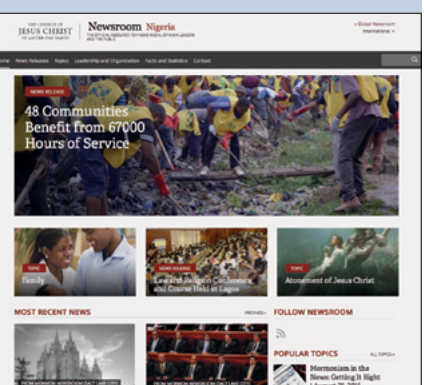
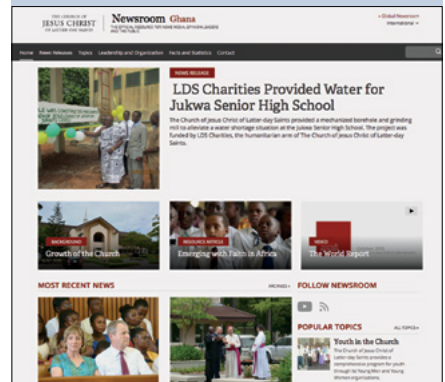
Seeing them go into the waters of baptism, I could only imagine the Savior stretching His hands out to this generation. I know with all my heart, just as Mormon declares in 3 Nephi 5:13, that “I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life.” I feel it each day as I rely on my Savior and have faith to act. I bear my humble testimony that this is the one of the most fulfilling callings and that we have a big role to hasten the Lord’s work. I have been deeply blessed by serving and I have become more fully converted to the gospel.

I know that the Savior lives and I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

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Africa West Area Websites:  
 English: [africawest.lds.org](http://africawest.lds.org)  
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