

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

The Power of Learning

By Elder Paul R. Coward

Area Seventy



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To hear by listening at church usually requires attendance and a good sound system, but to hear and understand requires preparation, desire, and action on our part. President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “Listening is not a passive activity. To actively listen to another person requires willpower, concentration, and great mental effort. Its rewards are many, because only then do we really learn to understand.”¹

A mother of an 18-year-old son exclaimed, “My boy is no longer active in the Church. He heard the gospel taught in a number of settings for many years, but I’ve since learnt he never really understood.” When Ammon visited the people of Limhi, the record states, “he . . . rehearsed unto them the last words which king Benjamin had taught them, and explained them to the people . . . so that they might understand” (Mosiah 8:3).

Clearly, the learning outcome from attending or ‘turning up’ may be different from that of preparing our hearts beforehand and attending with purpose.

A young single adult reported that after a Saturday night activity with a group of YSAs had concluded around 2am on the Sunday morning, she retired to bed, only to arise shortly after to attend church on the Sabbath. This YSA revealed that she will never do that

again because she got nothing out of sacrament meeting. Fortunately, she did make the effort to attend, but if seeking to come unto Christ was her desire, perhaps her activities the night before may have reflected that outcome and could have been a little different.

Merely attending and waiting for someone else to teach or train us, as compliant as that may be, may produce a “completed” outcome rather than any deep spiritual learning and a desire to act in faith, to go with power and to do. For example, think about attending sacrament meeting each week. If our unplanned motive is to “attend” or “turn up” or to “get there”, certainly this is a necessary starting point, but is it possible we may arrive at church a little late, sit at the back of the chapel out of sight or in the foyer, linger in the hallways, check our phone messages or our social media pages frequently, partake of the sacrament as an afterthought, look idly into space during the singing of hymns, all without making any connection with Deity? We might say within ourselves, “But, hey, didn’t I attend church today!” Tick! “I am all good!” Tick!

Conversely, if our planned motive is to “go to the house of prayer *and offer up [our] sacraments . . . and to pay [our] devotions* unto the Most High” (D&C 59:9–10; emphasis added), the learning outcomes can be significantly more rewarding and life changing. To go to church is essential. To go to church with purpose and pay, or give, to the Lord our devotion requires a little more effort beyond just attending church. What do we want to be taught by the Holy Spirit during sacrament meeting? What do we want to feel? What help do we need? Have we prepared for that sacred experience? The response, “That was boring,” may indeed be illustrating our own lack of preparation and love for the Lord.

We are counselled to seek learning, undoubtedly because learning brings knowledge, it informs, it stretches the



mind, it can touch the heart, it inspires confidence, it can be uplifting, it brings fulfilment, and it will increase our opportunities and our appreciation and refine our spirit and talent.

Seeking both spiritual and secular learning is essential, and we commend all who have and continue to study. When I was a pupil at high school in a small country town, of those completing their high school years, about two students went on to undertake university study. Sadly, those few students were called derogatory names by the majority, who, in their self-proclaimed “coolness,” felt that university study was for a strange group of nerdy people. Lulled into foolishness and ignorance, I was part of that majority for a brief moment. Fortunately today we live in times where ongoing education is available and strongly encouraged and supported.

In recent training meetings, members of the Seventy in the Pacific Area made presentations in all stakes emphasizing the doctrine, importance and value of seeking learning through education. This learning obviously impacts the rising generation and also includes post-high school education for adults by undertaking courses, obtaining trade certificates, diplomas, degrees and meaningful qualifications, and an ongoing “continuing education” plan, including on-the-job training, which will ultimately result in acquiring new knowledge and skill to strengthen our individual and family potential and

self-reliance. One simple example: a recently returned missionary started work at a factory, and his outlook, he says, was bleak. After hearing the teachings on education, he really felt inspired to further his education to learn new skills and obtain qualifications. He adjusted his priorities, went back to school, and gained a greater vision of his potential.

In the 2016 area goals, one objective is to increase spiritual and temporal self-reliance. No matter the age or ethnicity, we encourage all to evaluate their circumstances, change priorities and sacrifice a little more to create the personal environment to strengthen religious and temporal learning. Thirst for this learning, and the Lord will help you open doors. He will bestow spiritual gifts to enable you to achieve remarkable things. We are so blessed to have a profound power beyond our own—the enabling power of the Atonement of Christ in our lives.

Sister Lagi Sipili Sialeipata, whose first language is not English, is now 73 years of age and joined the Church in 1964. Sister Sialeipata has served in the Church as an early-morning seminary teacher for over 25 years. With this many years of teaching experience in the Church, Sister Sialeipata applied for teachers college to undertake a three-year teaching qualification. She was accepted! From there Sister Sialeipata went on to university and is currently studying for a master of educational leadership degree. Her

next educational goal, following her master’s, is to study for a PhD degree.

Sister Sialeipata has explained, “Deep within myself I want to be an inspiration to the youth and YSAs, that there is nothing impossible to the Lord if they humble themselves, pray, and do what is right. I also believe that education is an ongoing process which you can take back to our Heavenly Father when He calls us back.”

“Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). Sister Sialeipata is a remarkable example to all ages.

The Church has many resources, inspired of the Lord—for example, *My Foundation: Principles, Skills, Habits*²—to assist anyone willing to improve their lives. President Gordon B. Hinckley firmly stated: “There can be no doubt, none whatever, that education pays. Do not short-circuit your lives. If you do so, you will pay for it over and over and over again.”³

May the Lord help us to be serious about seeking spiritual and temporal learning. President Russell M. Nelson has stated:

“Leaders of this church have repeatedly emphasized the importance of education. It is a vital component of wisdom. . . .

“Because of our sacred regard for each human intellect, we consider the obtaining of an education to be a religious responsibility.”⁴

“Seek, and ye shall find,” the Saviour taught (Matthew 7:7). As we seek guidance on how to live this counsel and

obtain a more complete education for ourselves and our family, remember the words of the Lord: “Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich” (D&C 6:7).

President Henry B. Eyring taught, “The Lord and His Church have always encouraged education to increase our ability to serve Him and our Heavenly Father’s children.”⁵

Let us encourage and support each other, particularly our rising generation and all who listen to counsel and yearn to follow it. I bear testimony of these teachings in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Building Bridges,” *New Era*, Nov. 1985, 66.
2. See *My Foundation: Principles, Skills, Habits* (self-reliance booklet, 2015).
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 7.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Where Is Wisdom?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 6.
5. Henry B. Eyring, “Education for Real Life,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 17.

where he became “one of the most important figures in Fortescue’s recent history by driving the expansion project that has allowed [Australian] iron exports to more than triple over the past five years.”¹

Elder Meurs served in many important assignments in the Church in Australia, including bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy. His wife, Sister Maxine Meurs, also devoted her talents to Church service while raising their four children. The couple shared fond memories of their lives in Melbourne and the amazing journey that eventually brought them to Perth.

Sister Meurs showed video highlights of many stage plays she helped produce while the couple lived Perth, including Church training videos and community theatre productions which gave participants an opportunity to develop talents, forge friendships, and become more united as a community.

In his farewell remarks, Elder Meurs spoke about how he used lessons learned on his mission to overcome challenges in his working career. In conclusion, he shared a scripture, which he urged all present to aim to live by in all aspects of their lives: “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41). ■

NOTE

1. Peter Ker, “Fortescue Metals Group Loses Peter Meurs to the Mormons,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, Apr. 18, 2016, smh.com.au.

LOCAL PAGES

Peter and Maxine Meurs Honoured at Farewell Gathering in Perth

By Mormon Newsroom

Business colleagues, Church associates, and friends from the community gathered at the Warwick Chapel of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Sunday, 3 July, to honour and farewell Peter and Maxine Meurs prior to their departure to the United States, where he will serve the Church as a General Authority Seventy.

Peter Meurs is well known throughout Australia as an oil, gas, and mining executive.

Elder Meurs began his career as an engineer for Esso Australia, where he participated in the development of oil and gas production fields.

He left Esso 28 years ago and moved from Melbourne to Perth to become a founding partner of Worley Parsons, an international engineering services and project management company. After 22 years at Worley Parsons, he joined Fortescue Metals,



IMAGE COURTESY OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS LIBRARY

20,000 Facebook Fans Follow Pacific Mormon Newsroom

By Mormon Newsroom

IMAGE COURTESY OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS LIBRARY



Sister Cheri Loveless, Sister Susan Preator, Elder Barry Preator, Elder Jeff Champlin, Sister Linda Champlin, and Richard Hunter celebrate the milestone of having 20,000 followers on the Pacific Mormon Newsroom page.



#ShareGoodness

The Pacific Mormon Newsroom editorial team celebrated reaching 20,000 Facebook friends on 28 July.

“We’re very grateful for everyone who follows Pacific Mormon Newsroom and shares our content with others,” said Richard Hunter, Pacific Area director of public affairs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“In the last 18 months we’ve grown from 3,000 Facebook friends to 20,000. Our next goal is to reach 30,000 followers by Christmas,” he said.

Brother Hunter said Pacific Mormon Newsroom is one of around 70 similar Mormon Newsroom sites around the world, including sites for Australia, Papua New Guinea and a French-language site for the Pacific.

The aim of Mormon Newsroom is to provide news and other resources related to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members for the information and use of news media, opinion leaders and the public.

“We couldn’t do what we do without our wonderful volunteers here in Auckland: Jeff and Linda Champlin, Barry and Susan Preator and Cheri Loveless. They do a huge amount of finding, writing, photographing, editing and posting. They are always on the lookout for a good story to share with others. They epitomise the spirit of the Latter-day Saint hashtag #ShareGoodness.”

He added, “They and thousands of other retired couples are making a massive difference around the world as senior Latter-day Saint missionaries.

Some are involved in maintaining Mormon Newsroom websites; others are dentists, doctors, teachers, family history consultants, humanitarian coordinators and lawyers, among many other assignments.”

Brother Hunter also thanked the many Pacific Mormon Newsroom contributors from across New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea and the islands of the South Pacific.

“Latter-day Saints—often alongside our friends from other faiths and other groups—are doing some truly extraordinary things in terms of lifting lives, fortifying families and creating caring communities,” Brother Hunter said.

“We love hearing about these unsung heroes and sharing their stories with others, to inform and inspire.” ■

New Area Presidency Focuses on Strengthening Faith and Families across Pacific Region

By Mormon Newsroom

Members of the new Pacific Area Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints started their service together in August.

The Pacific Area Presidency comprises: Elder O. Vincent Haleck, President; Elder S. Gifford Nielsen, First Counsellor; and Elder Craig A. Cardon, Second Counsellor.

Elder Haleck is from American Samoa, Elder Nielsen from Texas, and Elder Cardon from Arizona. All three leaders are based in New Zealand, with their wives, Peggy

Haleck, Wendy Nielsen, and Deborah Cardon.

“We are delighted to welcome Elder and Sister Cardon to the Pacific Area,” Elder Haleck said. “They bring with them enthusiasm, wisdom, experience, and deep faith.”

Elder Haleck said the three members of the Area Presidency are looking forward to meeting with leaders, members, missionaries, and friends of the Church across New Zealand, Australia, and the South Pacific over the next year.

“Our focus continues to be to help strengthen individuals and families throughout the Pacific by increasing faith and trust in Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ and His Atonement,” Elder Haleck said.

“As individuals and families give their best efforts to honour the Sabbath day both at home and church; to increase spiritual and temporal self-reliance; to hasten the work of salvation; and to seek the blessings of the temple—miracles are occurring in the lives of our members.” ■



The new Pacific Area Presidency (left to right): Elder S. Gifford Nielsen, Elder O. Vincent Haleck, and Elder Craig A. Cardon

More Than 100 Years of Blessings

By Gillian Scandurra

As I sit across from Florence “Aunty Flo” Stammers, listening to her recount childhood memories and precious life experiences, I marvel that this sister, a member of the Sutherland Ward, is 105—the oldest member in the Sydney Australia Mortdale Stake. Although she’s wheelchair bound, clinically blind and living in an assisted-care residence, she is impeccably dressed, adorned with brightly coloured jewellery, and wearing a contagious smile. Flo is as quick as a whip, with a remarkable memory for names, dates and events.

Sister Stammers was born in March 1911 on the south coast of New South Wales, where she spent her childhood. Following her father’s return from World War I, the family, including two sisters, moved to Carlton, NSW, where her two younger brothers were born. She also spent a number of happy years living with her grandparents, due to being a self-proclaimed “precocious” child. Having left home at 18 years of age, Flo commenced a successful career in upholstery and dressmaking. “My mother taught me how to sew, and I excelled in upholstery in Grace Brothers until the Depression. It was the finest training you’d find anywhere”.

One of Flo’s employment highlights was working on a beautiful chaise

longue for Princess Elizabeth’s visit to Australia. However, due to the untimely death of her father, King George, Elizabeth returned to England and was crowned Queen, so the furniture was not used by her.

Following attendance at Mutual activities and family home evenings encouraged by her mother, Florence was baptized in 1946 in the then NSW District Australia Mission. At one particular Sunday School meeting, Flo recounted, “I felt something inside of me lift up out of my body and hover over me. I heard a voice like I’m speaking to you and the voice said, ‘This is where you belong.’”

Flo loved serving in the Church, most especially as a Primary teacher and eventually Primary president. She revelled in the challenge of teaching the

most “unruly” Primary classes, quickly turning the atmosphere around with her creative, personal, and hands-on teaching methods. “I had no idea how to go about teaching, no idea at all, but Heavenly Father said to me, ‘Do what I say, and I’ll help you’. Teaching gave me all the confidence I needed. My intelligence grew. I felt as if I could handle anything that came along, that Heavenly Father would help me out, if I so desired.”

Sister Stammers also served for many years as single adult representative, youth camp cook, visiting teaching companion, and temple worker. She remarked, “I love to organize. Heavenly Father wouldn’t give us the job if He couldn’t give us a way to do it. Church gives you confidence—if I couldn’t do it, I’d learn.” And at 105 she



Florence receiving a recognition award in 2009 for International Day of Older Persons from Scott Morrison, MP, Federal Member of Cook, current Federal Treasurer

IMAGES COURTESY OF FLORENCE STAMMERS AND USED WITH PERMISSION



Florence Stammers in 1945, shortly before she was baptised into the Church

is not stopping. Recently she organized the sister missionaries to attend and present short messages at a monthly religious class held at her care home. The sisters are now privately teaching a fellow resident, and Flo attends for member fellowship.

When asked if she is happy to keep going, she explained, “I have to be. I want to go, I want to go and be with

my parents and family, but the reason I’m still here is because the Lord wants me to do more work. He wouldn’t keep me in this health if He didn’t.”

Flo clearly lives what she preaches, recounting an experience she had with her visiting teaching companion. One visit found her in the home of a sick sister with an equally sick baby. Realising the difficult situation, they went straight to work, washing a load of nappies and then stringing rope between two trees in the backyard to hang them out. “You go in with a willing heart and show them you’re sincere. The whole crux of it is loving and serving each other. That’s all we can do at our age, at any age. As long as you find a need to help somebody, then you go ahead and you do it.”

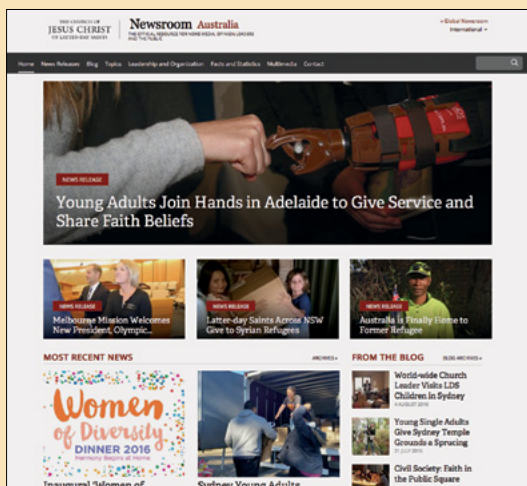
Sister Stammers raised two children, Valda and Tom, and is now the proud

grandmother of six children and great-grandmother of 13, all of whom reside in the USA.

She marvels at the tremendous changes seen over a century of time, particularly electronic gadgets and air travel; she has utilised the latter many times visiting her daughter in America. “In my first days they tried to build an aeroplane with refuse stuff, and as soon as it went up, it fell down. But now they’ve got the great jets, and they can get you to your destination in a couple of hours.” All of which Sister Stammers attributes to Heavenly Father’s miracles and the Lord’s way of quickening time. “He wants as much done as He can.”

It is a privilege to visit with Flo, to be inspired by her words of wisdom and experiences of a life continued to be lived in devoted faith and loving service. ■

LOCAL WEBSITES



www.mormonnewsroom.org.au



www.mormonnewsroom.org.nz

The Power of Obedience

By LDS Family Services

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught of the power of obedience to invite specific blessings into our lives:

“There is a law . . . upon which all blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.”¹

We may tend to think of obedience as a principle that only applies to spiritual matters, such as covenants, sin, repentance and worthiness. However, obedience is equally relevant to temporal matters, whether that be physical health, mental health, relationships, employment, study,

training, or budgeting, among other temporal goals.

The blessings we seek for our temporal lives are equally predicated upon obedience to laws and principles.

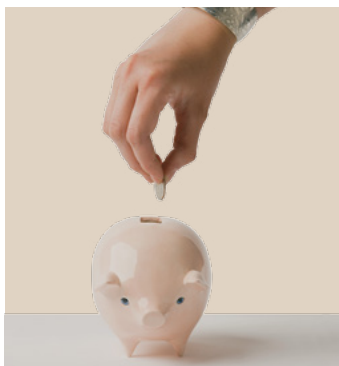
President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “We deal with many things which are thought to be not so spiritual; but all things are spiritual with the Lord, and he expects us to listen, and to obey, and to follow the commandments.”²

Gaining a knowledge and understanding of the laws that govern temporal blessings will help us to identify that which we need to obey in order to claim those blessings.

We cannot claim the blessings of health whilst not obediently observing the laws that govern a healthy body, as outlined in the Word of Wisdom.³ Similarly, we cannot disobey the principles that govern communication with a loved one and expect that the relationship will be strong. We cannot disobey the requirements of financial discipline and restraint and expect to have no debts. To achieve temporal blessings we must seek to know and then learn to obey the laws and principles that govern those blessings. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Lord Expects His Saints to Follow the Commandments,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 7.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 89.



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