

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

“One by One”

By Elder Terence M. Vinson

President, Africa West Area



Terence M. Vinson

We are now approaching the time of the year when it seems that everyone remembers the birth of the Savior. He is sometimes remembered at Christmas even by those whose devotion to His teachings leaves much to be desired. And so we should remember, but not just in December! God has taught that one of our responsibilities is to remember and acknowledge Him always. And one of the great ways that West Africans lead the world is in acknowledging God.

At this time of the year, we often hear members of the Church express their sincere sentiment of gratitude to God for the fact that they have lived

one more year on His earth. Many of us implore Him to protect us and to bless us, but sometimes we do not see and appreciate all the blessings He has already given.

His birth, life, and Atonement are the most wondrous of events. We focus on the blessings of His Atonement for our sins, our sufferings, and our challenges. Indeed, Jesus Christ, through the power of His Atonement, rescues us from sin, conditional on our repentance. Because of His Atonement, the Savior provides us with peace and comfort and with a lifting of the burdens associated with the disappointments and setbacks in

life. He provides us with grace, His great enabling power which allows us to receive strength beyond our own to face the most extreme of challenges.

But there is another aspect to the blessings He has given us. It is seen through the way He lived His life. We are His disciples. The word *disciple* implies that we learn from Him, that we follow His example, that we become like Him. Are we becoming like Him? Or are we drifting into a sense of complacency, one which has us believe that because we have accepted the gospel, received the ordinances, and attend church regularly, that all is done; that we can sit back and congratulate ourselves for our righteousness? I hope not, because we must continue to do the things that He did, and especially *in the way that He did them*.

One aspect of His teaching that is sometimes forgotten is the method He used to minister to people. He did not generally minister to crowds of people. Even when He was in a crowd, His method was to minister one-on-one. When the woman who had the issue of blood touched His cloak, He turned in the midst of the throng and touched her heart as He healed her affliction (see Mark 5:24–34). When He was traveling through a large crowd, He

The word disciple implies that we learn from Him, that we follow His example, that we become like Him. Are we becoming like Him?



stopped and called out to a small, extremely unpopular man in a sycamore tree: “Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:5).

His ministry amongst His Apostles was predominantly one-on-one. John the Beloved felt the power of that as he related the stories of the Savior’s calling him, Andrew, Peter, and Nathanael as recounted in John 1. And he noted it again as the risen Christ ministered to Mary Magdalene at the tomb (see John 20), and yet again in the following chapter as the Savior taught Peter in a very personal way that his days of searching the sea for fish had ended.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told us recently that he had for many years felt he held a song within him that he needed to get out, but he couldn’t find the exact words or the music. He then met a composer who said he would help. This man wrote the ideal music to accompany the words that Elder Bednar had long felt within his heart. The song was printed in the July 2016 issue of the *New Era* magazine and was sung for Elder Bednar by a wonderful group of missionaries in Kumasi as he visited there in August. The song is titled “One by One.”

A few of the lines of that hymn follow:

*“He suffered for us and victory won.
One by one, one by one. . . .*

*Multitudes gathered and saw Him
come. One by one, one by one.
Each heard a voice declare, ‘Behold
My Son.’*

*Jesus Christ came and stood in the
midst of them.*

*They fell to the earth in great
rev’rence for Him.*

*The Lord bid, ‘Arise, and come
forth unto me.’*

*With hands they did feel and with
eyes they did see.*

One by one, one by one.

*Each knew and bore record,
He is our Lord.”*

*The concluding words of the
song are:*

*“One by one, one by one. He inter-
cedes for each daughter and son.*

One by one, one by one.

*Strength from His grace gives us
pow’r to become, One by one.”*

This, then, is the model for us as members of His Church. He ministered one by one. We must “become”; we must do the same as He did, not just through organized programs but through our love for individuals and families. We must take action and avoid the “ease” which can lull us into a sense of having done enough. We must walk to the home of another and express both our love and the Lord’s love for them. We are to lift them and to help them. When we do these things, we are doing the work of the Savior. Your ability and willingness to do these things is

one of the most wonderful attributes of West Africans. You care for each other, and you help each other.

After all, that is the key to the change that must come about in us because of the gospel. The basic covenant we make at baptism is to do just this. We affirm that we “are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

Isn’t that exactly what the Savior did? He healed; He comforted; He absolutely bore our burdens; and by all of these things, as well as in other ways, He stood as a witness of God “at all times and in all things, and in all places.”

Therefore, if we are true disciples, we will do these things. We will not just attend church but we will also look for those who are not present and, without being assigned by a leader, we will reach out to them. We will watch and listen for signs of struggling within others, and we will go to them. These things really are the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and our charge is to go about doing them. “And the Lord called his

people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). This was the state not only of the people of Enoch but also of the people baptized by Alma after he had heard Abinadi teach the gospel. These people “impart[ed] of their substance of their own free will and good desires towards God” (Mosiah 18:28). Their “imparting” was not only temporal but also spiritual, as we read in verse 29: “they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually.”

The great prophet Moroni described what members of the Church do. “And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.

“And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls” (Moroni 6:4–5).

Do these statements describe us? Christmas is a time to examine our devotion to Him who gave us all we have and who has taught us not only

what we must become but also how we can do so, by closely following His example and abiding by His mandate to heal, visit, minister to, and lift, one by one.

This Christmas season, wouldn't it be wonderful if we all accepted the advice of the Savior Himself, as found in verses 106 and 108 of section 84 of

the Doctrine and Covenants, as the motto for our lives: “And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also. . . . Behold, this is the way that mine apostles, in ancient days, built up my church unto me.” ■

LOCAL NEWS

Elder David A. Bednar Meets with the Young Single Adults and Youth of the Africa West Area

On the evening of August 10, 2016, an Apostle of the Lord, Elder David A. Bednar, arrived in Accra, Ghana, to begin a five-day visit to the Africa West Area. In addition to meeting with leaders, Elder Bednar held two devotional services at the Christiansborg Stake Center in Accra.

The first of these was held on Thursday, August 11, 2016, to which the young single adults of the area were invited. Also in attendance were Africa West Area President Terrence M. Vinson, and his counselors, Marcus B. Nash and Vern P. Stanfill and their wives, and several of our Area Seventies.

The stake center was filled to capacity and the service was broadcast by satellite to stake centers throughout the Africa West Area enabling thousands to participate in this wonderful opportunity.

Elder Bednar began the evening by saying that he wasn't going to give a speech, rather he wanted to hear directly from the young adults and learn what they wanted to know. He told them that they would not remember the words that were spoken but that he hoped they would remember what they felt by the power of the Holy Ghost. He invited them to raise their hands and ask questions, reminding them that while all questions are good,

These two marvelous events of being taught by an Apostle of the Lord will long be remembered in the Africa West Area.



some are much better than others and all should be appropriate to the person, place, and time. He also asked that they not ask questions they had prepared in advance but instead ask about those things that came into their heart while they were there. He promised that if they did this and listened with a pure heart, even those who didn't have the opportunity to voice their question would receive answers. In addition to responding to questions from those at the stake center, questions were gathered by text from other locations throughout the area.

As the questions were asked, Elder Bednar would sometimes answer the questions himself, but he would also ask others in the Area Presidency and their wives to respond. A young woman was the first to raise her hand

and asked how women in the Church should choose between being a wife and mother and still pursuing her education and dreams of a career. Elder Bednar asked Sister Bednar to answer this. She stated that while young women should get as much education as possible, she should be willing to put it on hold so that she would not miss the opportunity to experience the greatest joy in life, the joy of family. She stated that there is nothing more Christlike than a mother's love for her child.

Another question asked is on the minds of most single young adults: how can we prepare for a temple marriage? Elder Bednar responded that it was very simple—you must become yourself the type of person you want your companion to be. If

you make a list, it should be a list for yourself, not for the other person. He emphasized that you do not find a happy marriage; you create it by honoring gospel covenants, practicing unselfishness, and making Christ the center of your life.

A significant subject was raised when a young brother asked how we could overcome feelings of doubt and entitlement as we strive to live the gospel. Elder Bednar taught that the Savior told us to “doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36) and that doubt stops forward movement, which creates fear. Fear equals inaction, which is the opposite of faith, which equals action. We should exercise faith by looking to the Book of Mormon for guidance.

Among other topics addressed that evening were:

- **Sabbath-day observance:** The Sabbath day and the temple are similar in that they are both meant to be a time we dedicate to God so that we may be elevated and enlightened by Him. How we use this time is a sign to God of our regard for Him.
- **Making important decisions:** The Lord gives us agency and we shouldn't rely on Him for all answers. Answers come little by little over time. We should act and then we will know when we are on the wrong track.
- **Choosing between mission and study:** "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).
- **Refraining from pornography:** If you are a member with the gift of the Holy Ghost, you will be warned that you shouldn't go there. If you already have, stop and replace it with other good things, such as family history indexing or other Church activities. You must replace darkness with light. Do not wait. Repent now and seek the Lord's help. Living the gospel is not hard; NOT living the gospel is hard.

Elder Bednar concluded the evening by recommending that each young single adult get an inexpensive copy of the Book of Mormon and go through it and mark every reference

that refers to the Lord strengthening, strength in the Lord, coming to Christ, or in the strength of the Lord. He taught that the Atonement of Christ is not just for cleansing; it is for strengthening and empowering us. He told us that it is his singular responsibility to bear witness that the Father and the Son are real, that we are sons and daughters of God, that Christ died and was resurrected, that the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith, and that Thomas S. Monson is a prophet of God.

All in attendance were inspired and uplifted by the wisdom Elder Bednar and other leaders shared that evening. It was an extraordinary privilege to participate in this singular event.

The second of these events was held on Sunday, August 14, 2016, also at the Christiansborg Stake Center. Elder Stanfill, who conducted the meeting, complimented the youth on their reverence preceding the meeting and the respectful way in which they entered.

The first speaker was Sister Susan K. Bednar, who shared a little about the personal side of Elder Bednar, describing how he has always loved to work out, and when he was the president at Brigham Young University–Idaho he would run the stadium steps, taking them two at a time. Students would ask to join him but could rarely keep up. She said that she quickly learned after they were married that whenever

his father (who was not a member of the Church) phoned them, Elder Bednar would always greet him with, "Dad, when are you going to be baptized?" He always lived his life trying to be the best example possible so his father would see the value of gospel. He never gave up and eventually his father was baptized.

When Elder Bednar spoke, he used the same format he had with the young single adults, saying that he wanted to respond to questions from the youth rather than give a speech, and then he taught them how to ask them properly. As before, questions were also received from youth in other stake centers throughout the area.

First to stand was a young man who asked, "In Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 it states that God 'has a body of flesh and bones,' but in the New Testament, John 4:24, we read that 'God is a Spirit.' How can we reconcile these two scriptures?"

Elder Bednar responded that it is important for us to read from the scriptures in their totality. This is why we needed the Restoration—we needed more scriptures for clarification. Joseph Smith was the greatest revealer of Christ because the Bible was incomplete. Yes, God is spirit, but He is also more. We have a more complete picture with both the Bible and modern-day scripture.

Some other questions:

- **How do I know the Holy Spirit is with me?** Stop worrying about it. Be a good boy. You have been taught to pray and study the scriptures. All good comes from God, so when you have a thought to do something good, it is simply the Holy Ghost reminding you. Don't worry—do what you know to be right.
- **From Nigeria: Now that I am a member, I feel persecuted at school and in my neighborhood—what should I do?** Remember that you are in good company. Go through the scriptures to see how the prophets and Jesus Christ dealt with persecution. Be a good example and try doing kind things for those who do unkind things to you.
- **From Sierra Leone: How can we, as young men and young women, be effective in our callings?** You should be agents and act, not be acted upon. Pray, study the scriptures, rise up, and do what you know you should. Don't wait until you are told, do it on your own. In Moroni we read the nothing evil comes from God and nothing good comes from Satan (see Moroni 7). Don't sit and wait. Go and do good.

In conclusion, Elder Bednar said that they had many more questions than they had time to answer, but he told the youth that it is important to ask and then act in faith. He promised that all those throughout West Africa

who had been praying for an answer would receive answers even though it was not addressed that night. His wish for the youth is that they would learn to love living the gospel, that they would learn this both through good and bad experiences, but they would always be grateful for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

These two marvelous events of being taught by an Apostle of the Lord will long be remembered in the Africa West Area. Our heartfelt thanks are extended to Elder and Sister Bednar for their sacrifice and service, and to our Father in Heaven for sending such fine leaders to teach us how to live the gospel and return to Him someday. ■

LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN ACTION

Bernice, the Bag Lady—bringing hope to young women of Ghana, one by one

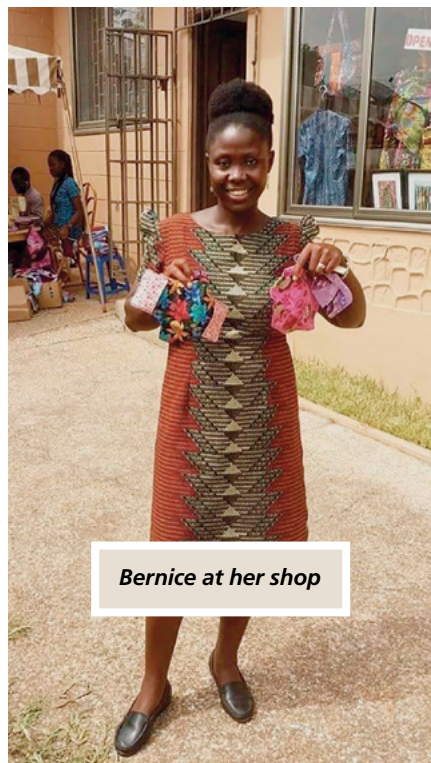
By Louise Peine

Bernice Frimpong Ankrah is the dressmaker all local sister missionaries know: a designer of bags and

placemats, dresses and banana skirts. She employs others who sit in the shade and sew for her small business. She's married to a wonderful man named Prince and is the mother of four children. They work together to take care of what matters most: their family and others in need.

Bernice is not only a wife, mother, and businesswoman, but she also travels to as many as 33 villages, where, since 2014, she has taught and trained young girls through an international program called "Days for Girls." She opens their minds to the possibility of a better life.

She shows them a way to stay in school more days and how to avoid becoming a victim of assault or rape.



Bernice at her shop

She shows them how to take care of their bodies and teaches them principles of healthy reproduction and protection. Bernice gives them the knowledge that will help them retain their dignity as a daughter of God given a body that is a sacred gift from Him.

By giving love and knowledge to these girls, she is sharing God's love for them. She is a marvel of energy and compassion. She knows a better way because she is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Bernice regularly attends the temple and sews beautiful temple dresses for sisters to wear there. Because she humbly strives to keep her covenants, she has the strength to teach and lecture even when she is tired or ill, giving hope to each group of girls she teaches. As always, Prince is right there with her, giving her his full support.

In fact, she is so busy it is hard to find a time she is available to talk to about her story. From the chart on the wall in her office, it is easy to see her dressmaking schedule is backed up for weeks. Customers bring enough fabric for two or three dresses or jackets at a time. One afternoon at 3:00 I ask her how she is doing as we visit in her shop. She tilts her head to one side and says, "I'm tired Mum, but I have much to do." She had not yet had lunch, but she looks radiant and flashes me her bright smile. She and Prince make a



The Ankrah Family

brilliant team, a husband and wife who live the gospel daily—together.

Bernice's "Days for Girls" program has become a part of the Makola Market scene. She had seen many young women—runaways, unbathed and hungry—trying to survive the city. These precious young women are scrabbling out a life in the open, bedding down for the night unprotected, hoping no one will disturb their sleep with a violent awakening. Many have a baby wrapped on to their backs and are trying to feed themselves and their child by any means possible. They will not return to their villages—they feel they have a better chance in the city than they had where they came from.

When Bernice first approached, they were very hesitant. She tried to teach them and show them the kits this program provides for hygiene and monthly supplies that women need. She began to offer a bag of rice and oil and tomatoes to give incentive for

them to trust her. At first, the crowd almost ran her over in their desire to have some food! Twice she has come, twice she has promised to return and to teach them how to live and survive. Bernice desires to rescue the least of these, her sisters. She does not fail to show up, and they are beginning to trust her as she continues to see them through the Savior's eyes. **One by one**, these young women are beginning to experience hope, some for the first time in their young lives. They are seeing that Bernice has, through her faith, been given a Christlike heart: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

Because Bernice sees them as daughters of God, they will feel the love of their Father in Heaven through her, and many will come to know, as she does, that they *are* daughters of God. ■

Young Women of Egerton Ward Visit Motherless Baby's Home

By Brother Edem, Edem Umoh, Sr.

Stake Director, Public Affairs, Calabar Nigeria South Stake

The young women of the Egerton Ward of Calabar Nigeria South Stake, after having considered and analyzed the conditions and problems faced by motherless babies at Uwanse Motherless Baby's Home in Calabar South local government area in Cross River State, South Nigeria, decided to visit the children to present gifts, interact with them, clean their rooms and surroundings, and pray with them.

The young women, led by the ward Young Women president, Sister Nkoyo Victor Udobong, said that they considered the plight of the children in the home and the trauma the babies passed through due to the actions of their unknown mothers, and thus decided

to visit the babies. Sister Udobong said the young women, ranging from 12 to 17 years, visited the home and presented toiletries, beverages, detergents, diapers, and other items estimated at several thousands of Naira.

"The young women, besides presenting the gifts to the children, also cleaned the environment, played with them (most of whom are physically challenged), sang songs, and prayed for good health and God's protection. The young women were moved by their experience and promised to visit the children again with more gifts," Sister Udobong said.

"We are grateful to God and some non-governmental organizations as

well as the government of cross river state for taking adequate care of these children. Most of them were picked from the gutters and dustbins, some abandoned by their mothers while others, through no fault of their own, were born with deficiencies," one young woman said.

The Motherless Baby's Home houses more than 20 children, some of whom are as young as two months. The young women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were seen cleaning various rooms in the home, playing with them, as well as praying for them. One young woman explained, "We make them feel at home. We call on children in other churches to visit these babies and play as well as pray for them."

The counselor of the home led the young women on a tour of the facility. The visit lasted for over two hours. The Young Women organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides instruction, encouragement, and support in living the gospel of Jesus Christ for female Church members ages 12 through 17. Its purpose is to help young women build their faith in our Heavenly Father and in Jesus Christ. Through these acts of service, these young girls learn to take up leadership in their communities and most importantly, live what they learn at church. ■



Young Women with motherless children