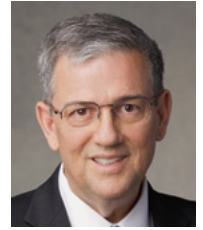


## ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

# Preparing to Serve a Mission

By Elder David F. Evans

First Counselor, Asia Area Presidency



Elder

David F. Evans

In every country in Asia, we need more, and better prepared, missionaries. With the growth of the Church throughout the world, especially in Asia, most of these missionaries need to come from each of the countries of Asia. They will come from the youth who are maturing in the gospel and from those who are already of missionary age: 18–25 years old. With the billions of people in Asia, the primary missionary force needs to transition from one that has been provided from North America and other countries outside of Asia to one that comes mostly from Asia. As prophets have foreseen, we all need to work toward the goal of being first truly self-sufficient in providing missionaries, and then contribute to the needs of other countries.

However, it is not just the number of missionaries from Asia that needs to increase. The Lord also needs better prepared missionaries. President Nelson has said, “President Monson declared ‘that every worthy, able young man should prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much.’ Again he explained that for young sisters, a mission is a welcome option but not a responsibility. . . .

“Preparation for a mission is important. A mission is a voluntary act of service to God and humankind. Missionaries support that privilege

with their personal savings. Parents, families, friends, and donors to the General Missionary Fund may also assist. All missionaries, younger and older, serve with the sole hope of making life better for other people.

“The decision to serve a mission will shape the spiritual destiny of the missionary, his or her spouse, and their posterity for generations to come. A desire to serve is a natural outcome of one’s conversion, worthiness, and preparation.”<sup>1</sup>

Conversion comes through living the gospel and seeking to receive a spiritual witness of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Alma asks those seeking such a spiritual witness to “experiment” upon the word, to not resist the Spirit of the Lord, and to begin to receive this witness of the truthfulness of the gospel (see Alma 32:26–43). Of course, the way that one “experiments” on the word is to live the gospel and keep the commandments. We “experiment” by attending sacrament meeting each week, keeping the word of wisdom, paying our tithing, repenting, worthily partaking of the sacrament, avoiding pornography and keeping the law of chastity, reading the Book of Mormon daily and praying to know that it is true, and by being kind to our family members and others. In addition to reading the Book of Mormon, one should begin to study the *Preach My Gospel*.

As we do these things, we become clean and worthy, receive a witness that the Book of Mormon is true, that the Church has been restored, and that we are led by a living prophet of God. Not only this, but our very desire to share the gospel increases, and this brings us great joy.

The best preparation for missionary service is to gain the testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and keep the commandments. In addition, one should work for and save some of the cost of a mission. Your bishop or branch president can help you know how much you need to save and what assistance can be provided by the General Missionary Fund. However, please know that after you have made a reasonable effort and sacrifice, there is financial help available and that the Lord and His prophet want you to serve.

Recently, the First Presidency provided a list of standard questions to be asked by your bishop or branch president prior to being recommended to serve. You should feel free to obtain a copy of those questions and to review them in advance of your interview. If there are areas where you need to repent or improve, please do that before serving.

The Asia Area Presidency invites all young men and young single adult men to talk with your bishop or branch president regarding serving a mission.

We want you to serve. If you are not now worthy, please repent and become worthy. The Lord needs you to serve. We extend a similar invitation to each young woman and young single adult woman who has a desire to serve to consider missionary service. We express our love to you and our hope that we will see you on your mission.

We witness that missionary service will bring you great joy and will “shape the spiritual destiny of the missionary, his or her spouse, and their posterity for generations to come.”<sup>2</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Ask the Missionaries! They Can Help You!” *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 18.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Ask the Missionaries! They Can Help You!”, 18.

families. That is the power of members and missionaries working together. Everyone does their part to build the kingdom of God. Thanks to Elder Kommalapati, Elder Tahiliani, Elder Tuscano, Elder Ramishetty, Elder Dass, Elder Richards, Elder Slater, Elder Vuppada, Elder Skidmore, Elder Berryhill, and Elder Gonder for all their missionary work to help build the branch, and special thanks to all the members and their help as well.

“His work is perfect”  
(Deuteronomy 32:4).

I love the Lord! I know with all my heart that this is the only true and living Church on the face of the whole earth! I know that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that Russell M. Nelson is a prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. —*Elder Richards*

### Testimony of President Nalli Kumar Rajeev, called as the new branch president

Dear brothers and sisters, today is a special day for me as once again God proved that He listens and answers our sincere prayers.

When my family moved from Chennai to Vijayawada in 2014, we were starving for spiritual food, as no branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was available in Vijayawada and we were not interested in attending other churches, despite their being available aplenty around our house. Monthly we used to travel about 200 km to attend church meetings in Rajahmundry, but for rest of the month we had no spiritual nourishment. As a family we used to pray for

#### LOCAL PAGES

## From Home Group to Branch

*“And blessed art thou because thou hast established a church among this people; and they shall be established, and they shall be my people” (Mosiah 26:17).*

It finally happened! On February 18, 2018, the Vijayawada Branch of the India Bangalore Mission was organized! It was a historic day for the Church in Vijayawada. There was a thrill of excitement in my heart the whole day. The new branch president is Nalli Kumar Rajeev, with Bhavani Prasad Annaladasu as first counselor, Jamandlamudi Kumar Madhu as second counselor, and Koyye Rakesh Babu as branch clerk. Rajesh Boni was called as the elders quorum president and Ravi Kumar Garikapati as the elders quorum first counselor. Sister Sumithra Rajeev Nalli was called as the Primary president and Sister Saraswathi Boni was called as the Young Women president.

They changed the church timing to be at 1:00 p.m. so the sustaining votes could happen simultaneously at the Rajahmundry First Ward. What a moment when President Mortensen said, “It is proposed that we create the Vijayawada Branch. All in favor, please

manifest it by the raise of the right hand.” WOW! There were 80 people in attendance: 45 members and 35 investigators, the highest we’ve ever had.

After the meeting we watched the eight leaders get set apart in a row in that little rental fifth-floor hotel room and it was so powerful to see how smooth, so simple, so natural, and peaceful of a transition it was. Missionaries have been in the Vijaywada home group since the end of May 2017. It went from a home group of five people to a branch in just nine months. Only 10 missionaries ever got to serve in the Vijayawada home group—that’s how fast it grew.

It was a perfect example of faith to cause things to happen, to create something that didn’t exist before. Nothing is more humbling than to watch the Lord hasten His work in its time. He does all the writing; we are just the pencils. So far, every baptism in the Vijayawada Branch has been from member referrals or part-member

a branch in Vijayawada, and God has answered our prayers. In November 2015, the mission president agreed to have a home group in Vijayawada at our house with seven members. We as a home group sincerely prayed for a branch in Vijayawada. Today is a great day for us, as we have a branch in Vijayawada with about 50 members.

God not only answered my prayers but also gave me an opportunity to serve Him as branch president. I'm very much grateful to Heavenly Father for listening and answering my prayers. I'm once again surrendering myself to Almighty God to utilize me as a useful vessel. What I shared is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### **Testimony of Sister Sumithra Rajeev Nalli, wife of the branch president, called as the branch Primary president**

Praise to the Lord. It's a pleasure and honor to get a calling as Primary president in our newly formed Vijayawada Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Basically, I love children; even my profession is teaching. Kids are like angels—we have to nourish them with the right spiritual food in their

childhood so that they can become great leaders when they grow up.

I have served as Primary teacher in the Hyderabad Madinaguda Branch from 2008–11 and also served as Primary president in the Chennai First Branch during 2012–14. I love to magnify this calling, as it helps me to learn a lot through children as I have to practice and prepare songs, lessons, and activities before teaching the kids. It has strengthened me spiritually, and it will continue to improve my faith in Jesus Christ.

I humbly request God to help me and guide me with the Holy Spirit to magnify my calling and prepare future leaders to bring many souls unto our

God's kingdom, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### **Testimony of Elder Skidmore**

I was so excited for Jamandlamudi Kumar Madhu to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be called as the second counselor in the branch presidency, since he was only baptized on December 16, 2017. It is every missionary's dream to see their converts grow in the Church. I never thought I would be so blessed as to see one of my converts hold a calling and the holy priesthood so soon. Heavenly Father truly has a plan for each of His children, and it is incredible to witness His hand. ■



*From Left to Right: President Robert May, counselor in the mission presidency; Bhavani Prasad, first counselor; Rajeev Kumar Nalli, branch president; Jamandlamudi Kumar Madhu, second counselor; Rakesh Babu, clerk; and President Mortensen of the India Bangalore Mission.*



## The Power of Members and Missionaries Working Together

What the scriptures say is true: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1). Members act as a third witness to the testimony of missionaries as they go out to reap the field that is white, ready to harvest.

I experienced the power of working with members on my mission between December 2013 and 2015. Members can help find, teach, and assist in the conversion process of many of the Lord’s children that the missionaries would otherwise be unable to or that would take them a long time to accomplish.

I remember a young man in my third area who was very passionate about serving the Lord and zealous in his effort and contribution to missionary work. He once tried to call a friend on phone but instead dialed a wrong number. The number belonged to a young lady who had been prepared to receive the gospel. They interacted for a few minutes and soon discovered they lived in the same area.

The meetinghouse was not too far from her home, and my young friend introduced himself and his faith and expressed interest in meeting her. The young lady’s name was Vivian. She was welcoming and friendly. She had a listening spirit. We acted promptly, and I soon met the strongest convert I will ever have on my mission.

What amazed me the most about Vivian was her readiness to act and keep commitments. She attended all Church meetings, usually arriving even earlier than the branch presidency on Sunday and earlier than everyone else on other meeting days within the week. She asked important questions that increased her

knowledge of the gospel deeply. I was moved by her profound character and was inspired by her love for the Lord and for missionary work.

After her baptism, her voice became a powerful third witness to my later converts in the area as she spoke the language of the heart and with not many, but a few words, communicated passion for Christ, His righteousness, and the restored gospel unlike any other. To this day, I remember fondly the lovely experiences we had with her while walking in the sun, teaching and testifying to all those who would listen. She became an inspiration to the young men and women, and she helped us teach. It was a difficult area to work in but Vivian, with her light, made the hardest times the most memorable.

Working with members in missionary work has a powerful effect on themselves and on those taught that may not always be readily seen. Members who in many cases want to share the gospel but don’t know where to start get to develop teaching skills and greater understanding of gospel principles as they go out with the missionaries and contribute in lessons. They get to share in the joys of seeing others make difficult but important changes in their lives to come unto Christ. They grow and are strengthened to overcome temptation by the very things they testify of.

Many are usually inspired and amazed by how much of their communication skills are developed. Stirred with more courage, fortitude and enlightenment, they feel the Spirit and a strong urge to live gospel standards more fully. Missionaries need to encourage, teach, and promote member-missionary work

and challenge members to engage in missionary work and reap promised blessings.

I struggled with learning a new language in my first area on mission, but one of the single adults, the branch mission leader at the time, was so instrumental in helping us bring the gospel to the doorstep of the townspeople. I won’t forget how he helped us with lesson translations and formed almost instant friendships with our investigators, helping them see and feel, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that they were taking the right step into the Lord’s Church.

Members have lived in the very areas missionaries serve far longer than the missionaries ever will and are very easily able to connect with those investigating the Church. They are a force to reckon with in teaching anyone, including their referrals or those from other members, more especially in cases of language barrier.

Francis, who had been baptized about a month before I was sent to be with my first companion in Abakrampa, was filled with energy and could not wait to talk about the peace he had found in the gospel. His mother testified of the change she could see in her son’s life. Thanks to the assistance and support of pioneer members in the area, Francis, after his conversion, and with his contributions and talks, helped lift and inspire many who needed strengthening.

In many ways missionaries may know more than members, but the convincing power of the Spirit and of a third witness cannot be underestimated. ■

*David W. Adjavon served in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission. He is now pursuing his computer science education in Coimbatore, India.*