

## Becoming a Most Welcoming and Friendly Ward or Branch

By Elder Peter F. Meurs

First Counselor, Asia Area Presidency



Elder Peter F. Meurs

Many years ago, while serving as a bishop, I asked our ward council, “How could we become the most welcoming and friendly ward?” We counselled together on what it would be like to come to our ward for the first time. Who would greet us? Would someone sit with us? What would happen if we weren’t dressed correctly or were clearly struggling with an addiction to smoking? We talked about the Savior’s love and how we could ensure that those visiting our ward felt of that love. As we continued to counsel together, each member of the ward council considered and talked about the contribution they could make to help our ward become more welcoming and friendly. Together, we developed some ideas and as a ward council committed ourselves in the coming weeks to try to:

1. Personally shake hands with new members and investigators and help them feel welcome and comfortable.
2. Discuss ways of becoming a most welcoming and friendly ward in each auxiliary and quorum meeting.
3. Invite young men to be in the parking area before meetings to greet everyone and to provide assistance to anyone that needs help.
4. Invite young women to be greeters in the foyer and help all entering the building feel the Savior’s love.
5. Introduce new members and investigators to a member of the bishopric.
6. Welcome and recognise new members and investigators at classes, auxiliary, and priesthood meetings.
7. Avoid making any judgement of, or suggestions to, new investigators or returning members who are not dressed in normal church attire.
8. Make recommendations for callings and assignments to new members that will bless their lives and help them feel needed and learn and grow.
9. Assign ministering brothers and ministering sisters to care for new members.
10. Work shoulder-to-shoulder with full-time missionaries so that their investigators are connected and have ward member friends who love them as soon as they start attending church.

As the ward council continued to implement their ideas and to review progress, we quickly became a happier ward. As we learned together how to be welcoming and friendly, we all felt more loved and united. Church became

a joyful experience, and people attending the ward for the first time felt like they were home.

In a letter to all stake and ward council members immediately following the last general conference, the First Presidency wrote: “The Savior’s ministry exemplifies the two great commandments: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind’ and ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Matthew 22:37, 39). In that spirit, Jesus also taught, ‘Ye are they whom I have chosen to minister unto this people’ (3 Nephi 13:25).”

During general conference, President Russell M. Nelson invited us to minister to each other in a higher and holier way. Ministering is not limited to our priesthood or Relief Society ministering assignments. As we fully understand the invitation to love God and love our neighbours, we will find opportunities to minister in almost every situation.

In the Book of Mormon, there are many wonderful examples of ministering. During the mission of the four sons of Mosiah, thousands of Lamanites were converted unto the Lord. The new converts took upon them the name Anti-Nephi-Lehi. As part of their repentance and change

of heart, they buried their weapons deep in the earth as a testimony to God that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood.<sup>1</sup> These wonderful new Church members were attacked by the remaining Lamanites on at least two occasions, and many were slain. Nevertheless, they remained true to their covenants. In a great act of ministering and sacrifice, the people of Zarahemla took them in, saying, "Behold, we will give up the land of Jershon . . . unto our brethren for an inheritance" (Alma 27:22). The Nephites also set their armies around the land of Jershon and provided protection to these new members.<sup>2</sup>

Later, Alma and Amulek led a mission to the Zoramites. Many of the poor amongst them joined the Church and were expelled by their proud and wealthy brothers. The new converts travelled to the people of Ammon, who in a great act of love and ministering "did receive all the poor of the Zoramites that came over unto them; and they did nourish them, and did clothe them, and did give unto them lands for their inheritance; and they did administer unto them according to their wants" (Alma 35:9).

As we follow these examples of ministering, it is my prayer that we will welcome, love, care for, and minister to all new members and investigators who attend our wards and branches. I hope that we will reach out in friendship, that we will help

them learn and grow, and that we will invite them to participate through meaningful callings and assignments.

I know that as we do this, we will experience great joy and they will

feel the Savior's great love for them through us. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Alma 24:18.
2. See Alma 28:1-3.

#### LOCAL PAGES

## Finding Happiness in Establishing a Happy Eternal Family

By **Deepa Renald**

Coimbatore Branch 2

"Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ." These lines are engraved in my heart as the missionaries invited our family to read "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Indeed, it is true, but as a first generation Latter-day Saints living amidst family members of different faith and standards, it is not an easy task.

When we knelt at the temple for our family to be sealed, we understood it was the beginning of our eternal life as a family. Most of the time, our family home evenings have not been perfect. We squeeze time to do family scripture study. But as a father never punishes his stumbling child, my Father in Heaven knows that we are moving forward each time we stumble. We realise the true joy when we share our testimonies to strengthen ourselves. We find joy when our children prepare for the

Sabbath. The vision of our eternal life also includes forgiving others and also allowing the Atonement of Jesus Christ to perfect ourselves. As we set a pattern by following the Lord's way, our families can have eternal growth and perfection.

I am grateful for the restored gospel which allows us to live as families for eternity. I know as we strive to live the Lord's words each day, we can be as He wants us to be, in Jesus's name, amen. ■

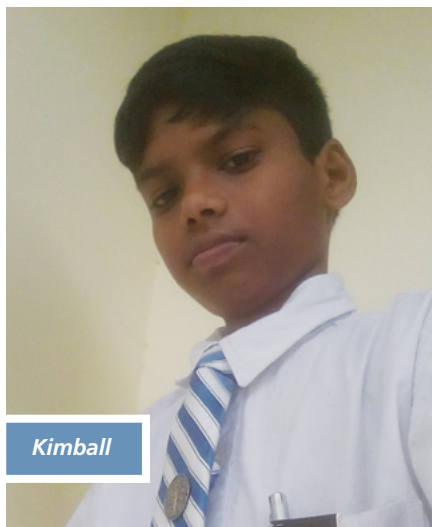


**Deepa Renald and family**

# For the Strength of Youth

By Kimball [last initial?]

Madinaguda First Ward, Hyderabad  
India Stake



Kimball

I'm Kimball. I recently turned 14. This is the first time I ever attended any conference for youth and I started off with a blast by attending For Strength of Youth (FSY), a week-long program for youth. It was one of the best opportunities for me to begin. I enjoyed all the wonderful things taught during FSY. One thing that touched me so much was the workshop conducted by Sister Lynda on bullying. I thought I would share a few things from my notes.

## What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone is being hurt either by words or actions on purpose, usually more than once, feels bad because of it, and has a hard time stopping what is happening to them. Bullying can be either in an emotional way or in physical way.

1. **Physical:** Hitting, pushing and shoving, fighting, tripping, yelling at someone, making rude gestures, and taking or breaking another person's things
2. **Emotional:** Name calling, making fun of someone, laughing at someone, leaving someone out on purpose, starting rumors or telling lies about someone, and trying to

make someone feel bad about who they are

### 3. **Another most important form of bullying is cyber bullying:**

Cyber bullying is using technology such as internet, email, cell phones, social media, pictures—to hurt or harm someone else. It includes sending mean text messages, posting statements online that are unkind or not true, sending or posting pictures that are not yours to share, making negative comments online about someone, agreeing with someone who posts something hurtful

In scriptures it says: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). That means when we do good to others we are doing it unto God, if we are bullying others, we are doing it to God.

### **Overcoming bullying with true friendship and love**

In 1 Timothy 4:12, it says "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

As we become examples of believers of Jesus Christ by controlling our words and actions and by showing love to others, we will become true disciples of Christ. We receive the blessings in our lives and we will be able to bless others' lives as well.

The *For The Strength of The Youth* booklet says: "Everyone needs good and true friends. They will be a great strength and blessing to you. They will influence how you think and act, and even help determine the person you will become. They will help you be a better person and will make it easier for you to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Choose friends who share your values, so you can strengthen and encourage each other in living high standards.

"To have good friends, be a good friend. Show genuine interest in others; smile and let them know you care about them. Treat everyone with kindness and respect, and refrain from judging and criticizing those around you. **Do not participate in any form of bullying.** Make a special effort to be a friend to those who are shy or lonely, have special needs, or do not feel included" (page 16; emphasis added).

The best way to avoid bullying is by being good friends to others. No one EVER deserves to be bullied.

FSY had given all of us a platform to be good friends with other youth from different states in India.

I share this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## The Mission Has Strengthened Us: Bidding Adieu to Wonderful India

**Elder Smith:** I did not know about India before we landed here. It is really amazing to know that all people, irrespective of they being Church members or not, do love this country. This is really a colorful country. Everything happening seems to be family-oriented. Old people are being taken good care of. The announcement of a temple for India is an amazing thing. The leaders in the Church care for all the members, and all members have special love for the Savior and the Book of Mormon. One thing if we are to take home, that would be your love, care, and appreciation.

**Sister Smith:** I love being a mother of 6 children and 24 grandchildren. As I leave India, I pray for the people in India to be unified. It is beautiful that your prayers for temple have been answered. ■



**Sister and Elder Smith**

## Vedurupaka Family Temple Testimony

I have two reasons as to why I visited the temple for the second time.

In the year 2015, the institute teacher Brother Suresh Natrajan asked the class, “How many went to temple?” As I had visited the temple in 2014, I raised my hand proudly. Then immediately he asked another question, “Do you remember how many covenants you have made in the temple?”

### Temple Covenants

The first time I visited the temple in 2014, I had focused only on some things. After all these years, I recognized that I have forgotten the covenants that I made in the temple. At that very moment, I took a decision to go to temple for the second time, and this time to pay attention to and remember the covenants and other things that are essential for my salvation.

Time passed. I was facing terrible trials in my life. I was in institute class. This time the lesson was on prophet Jonah. Jonah didn’t do what the Lord has commanded him to do. One of the verses that caught my attention was Jonah 2:4: “Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.”

This scripture touched my heart, and I prayed to Heavenly Father to give us another chance to visit the temple.

Now, in 2018, after four years, Heavenly Father blessed us to enter His house, this time it was Taipei Taiwan Temple.

I was doing the temple work for my uncle who had died of cancer. When



I was doing the baptism for him, I was listening to the blessings which he would receive through this temple ordinance. I was so happy and I recognized what the temple president told me in 2014.

I asked the temple president “President, may I know what I am doing and what all is happening here more clearly?” As this was the first time I had come to the temple, I was a little bit confused.

Then the temple president said, “Brother, you may not know what you are doing right now, but a day will come when you will feel you have done great things here.”

I got my answer. It has taken me four years to understand by visiting the temple for the second time.

I know and I felt that temple work is real and we can’t replace it with any sacrifice to attend the temple and do Heavenly Father’s work for souls who are on the other side of the veil.

I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true Church on the face of the earth, and I know that Jesus Christ has died for my sins and that only through Him I can go back to my Heavenly Father who is waiting for us. I bear my testimony in the name of whom I serve, love, and worship, even the lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■