

# NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

## AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

### Ride Their Bike

By Elder Carl Maurer

Area Seventy

Sometimes we want to help others but don't really understand what is happening in their lives enough to make a difference. When we care for, love and understand someone and are led by the Spirit, we can more successfully reach out and help with their individual needs.

What are some ways we can more effectively minister to people we care for?

President Russell M. Nelson teaches us that as we minister in the Saviour's way, "doors will open and people will be blessed. Hearts will be healed and burdens lifted."<sup>1</sup>

I remember an experience that a sister missionary shared in a letter she wrote to me. It has had an impact on me ever since.

This sister had served with her companion for four and a half months. Sister Madsen was a dedicated, obedient and enthusiastic sister missionary. She worked with energy and enjoyed riding her bike speedily to appointments.

Sister Madsen's companion was kind, laid back and came from a tiny island in the Pacific.

Before her mission, life was slow and more relaxed. So becoming companions with Sister Madsen, with their early mornings, busy missionary lives

and biking over large areas, took some getting used to.

One day while they were riding to an appointment, her companion was going slower than usual and Sister Madsen began to feel a little impatient. As she became more frustrated, she started singing as she rode—waiting for her companion to keep up. "I'm trying to be like Jesus; I'm following in His ways. I'm trying to love my companion, in all that I do and say."<sup>2</sup>

After hearing more complaining about riding, Sister Madsen thought to herself, "She just doesn't want to do the work my way." After they had gone almost a kilometre, her companion finally stopped and cried out, "Sister Madsen . . . I DIE!"

Sister Madsen turned around and with great frustration grumbled, "Okay, give me your bike, and ride mine for a while!" Almost instantly she was completely humbled. The back brake was locked onto her

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tyre and wouldn't loosen. "I couldn't even ride 100 meters on her bike!" she admitted. "And here I had dragged her almost a full kilometre. I am in awe that she made it as far as she had".

Sister Madsen recently reflected, "I haven't been perfect the last 10 years (since returning from the mission field), but ever since that moment I've tried to make it part of who I am to 'ride another person's bike' when I am looking to understand the needs of others".

What does this experience highlight for us and how can we minister in the Saviour's way?

- Look for ways to increase our Christlike care for others. This means knowing and understanding their needs both spiritually and temporally. As we pray for Christlike attributes and develop faith, diligence, patience and long-suffering (see Alma 32:41–43), we are more able to minister as the Saviour would.
- We can pray for inspiration. Strive to understand and see the needs of those to whom you minister. Pray for ways to bless His children to help them live the gospel and become more self-reliant. These promptings may not come all at



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once but will come as we continue to pray, ponder and follow the thoughts and ideas that come to us.

- We can ask, observe and listen. Caring enough to ask inspired questions, asking how they are feeling and stopping to watch, observe and listen might allow us to meet real needs earlier. We must be “willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9).
- Act to meet needs. As we minister, we “determine through

communication and inspiration the frequency and type of contact [we] have with those to whom [we] give care.”<sup>3</sup>

As we continue trying to be like our Saviour Jesus Christ in caring for each other, He will help us. He invites us to become as He is (see 3 Nephi 12:48). He provides constant watch-care over all His covenant children, often through us. The Atonement of Jesus Christ provides the power we need to bless us as we reach out to bless others. The Saviour wants us to know how to truly love one another.

I pray that we will do more to earnestly understand all of God’s children, to “ride their bike” as we minister to meet needs. As we do this we will see increased faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement, where individuals and families are strengthened through ordinances and covenants (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:47, 53).<sup>4</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, general conference leadership meeting, Mar. 2018.
2. See “I’m Trying to Be like Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 78–79.
3. “Frequently Asked Questions,” [ministering.lds.org](http://ministering.lds.org).
4. See also *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.1.1.

## LOCAL PAGES

## Fish and Chip Shop "Saves" Family

By Shilo Kino

The "Bishop's Burger" is a favourite on the menu among the locals in Gisborne.

Named after owner Neville Hales, who is the bishop of the Te Hapara Ward, the creamy steak-and-mushroom burgers sell at the rate of about 30 every night.

You could say "business is pumping" for the London Street fish shop run by Neville and Macsyna and their three children, Kzchian, Nikora, and Shane.

Two months ago, it was quite the different picture.

Neville was a tradesman, but "his feet had become so broken in his trade that if he carried on, he would

have to get artificial limbs or be in a wheelchair."

Macsyna was a chef at a restaurant, but she lost her job.

"On my last shift, I remember taking my uniform off, going into my room and crying my eyes out," Macsyna said. "My job was terminated and I was like, 'That's it!'"

"I poured my heart to God. I told Him I was sick of working hard for others and getting let down. I was spending 70 to 80 hours at work and hardly seeing my family. I was ready to start my own business. I asked Him, 'Can you help shape the way?'"

"A week later, an acquaintance from a different faith called me. I had only met her once, but she called me because my name kept popping up in her head.

"She told me, 'For some reason I felt you were the one I needed to ask to buy our fish and chip shop'.

"I told her we didn't have the money to buy her business, but she told me she would allow me to take over the business and pay her over time. I cried."

The Haleses' lives changed when they joined the Church five years ago.

Macsyna's brother is a member of the Church, and she remembers that he and his wife "didn't preach the gospel to us . . . they kind of just lived it. But there was always something different about them.



*The Haleses' lives changed when they joined the Church five years ago.*



“One day my husband I were, like, okay we tried life our way and heaps of other ways and it didn’t work. So we thought, maybe we should give it a go. We spoke to our son . . . and told him we are going to change our lives.

“I had addictions, failed relationships . . . both my husband and I had tough upbringings. But we can now see the clear contrast between our life before and our life now. We now have light and goodness.”

Neville said people are often surprised he is the bishop because he has tattoos on his arms from before he joined the Church.

“The gospel has blessed us immensely,” he said. “It’s a huge change for all of us as a family. We had no idea what was coming our way. We were just willing and our hearts were receptive to change. Our family has found something amazing . . . and now this business is drawing our family closer together.”

But running a business doesn’t come without its difficulties, Macsyna said. “I’ve run kitchens before, but I’m really learning how to communicate. Money, product services . . . they are not as important as looking out for others.”

In the last two months, Neville and Macsyna have employed young people who are saving for missions or just simply looking for a job.

“We have so many kids coming through, we try and mentor and help them . . . you don’t know the influence

you can have on people. We always have customers saying, ‘You guys are always smiling!’ They ask us our secret. We tell them, ‘You see those good folks with the badges on? They have the secret for you.’”

Macsyna hopes her story will help inspire those who are looking to become more self-reliant.

“If you’re afraid of going into business, you have to remind yourself Heavenly Father has faith in you. The scriptures talk about arousing our faculties. Use your skills and talents. To be honest, I didn’t think I would ever have my own fish and chips business. But you need to have faith and trust in the Lord. This business . . . it saved our lives.” ■

## Temple Marriage Worth the Sacrifice

By Shilo Kino

Some would call it a match made in heaven.

Tracey Fei and Zhang Li, both converts to the Church, met in the Chinese branch in Auckland, almost two years ago. Tracey was a new convert and Zhang Li was an investigator.

“I gave him rides to activities and we got to know each other more,” Tracey said. “I didn’t know I would marry him . . . but I knew he was reliable and a nice guy.”

The couple fell in love, but their journey towards a temple marriage has been anything but easy.

“When I went back to China in November last year for three months, I let my parents know I wanted to marry Zhang Li in the temple,” Tracey said. “My dad told me, ‘If you get married, you are no longer my daughter.’”

Tracey said her family repeatedly told her not to get married and that the Church was “not real”.

“Of course, I felt really sad,” she said, “because I know what I believe is true, but my family is also important to me. It was a huge conflict and mostly because my family just didn’t understand. I couldn’t explain eternal marriage to them. They couldn’t understand and weren’t interested in understanding. Every day I was in this fight.”

Five years ago, Tracey moved to New Zealand from Beijing, China, at the age of 16.

“Back home [growing up], people told me there was no God,” she said. “So, when I first met the missionaries on the street, I was scared because I didn’t know anything about religion. I wanted to run away from them.”

**Converts Tracey Fei and Zhang Li were sealed in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple.**



Incredibly, Tracey kept bumping into missionaries wherever she went.

“One day I was walking, and I remember suddenly having this feeling. I’ve heard people talk about a ‘Father’ before, and I thought, ‘No one can understand me . . . maybe I could talk to this “Father”’. At the time, I didn’t know about Heavenly Father, but I wanted to try.

“I had a bit of faith and thought, ‘What would happen if I just joined?’”

Tracey embraced the gospel and was baptised in November 2015.

She says that before, when she had difficulties, she would think, “Why me?” But “now there is always hope to [help] conquer difficulties.”

Zhang Li met the missionaries on his first day in New Zealand as he was checking into his hotel.

“Back then, I didn’t know if there was a God, but I had watched sci-fi movies and I had wondered if something [had] created us, and why. I also thought, ‘If there is a Creator, why would He leave me alone?’

“Many people in China seem to chase fame and fortune. They want a big house and money. But after they get all those things, they still feel empty. I didn’t know what I wanted—but I knew I didn’t care about those things.”

Zhang Li was baptised a year after Tracey, in November 2016.

“It’s like I was reborn,” Zhang said. “Knowing who God is makes

me feel confident. I’m not worried [about challenges] because I know I’m doing the right thing. I just know everything will work out and now I know I’m not alone,” he said.

He knew a temple marriage was their only option.

“Temple marriage is what I promised Heavenly Father when I was baptised, and I want to fulfil my covenants,” Zhang Li said. “Without the blessings of the temple, we cannot have an eternal family.”

Tracy believes it’s important for members to have temple marriage as one of their goals.

“You are bound for eternity when you are married in the temple, and that is something I’ve always wanted since I heard about it,” she said. “It’s all part of the work of God. You can’t believe in prayer and then not believe in the temple. You need to believe in the whole plan.”

Through persistent prayer and scripture reading, the couple experienced their biggest miracle yet.

The Book of Mormon was banned in Tracey’s home in China, so she had

to “hide the scriptures from my family because they thought the scriptures were useless and a waste of time.”

“The scriptures saved me,” she said. “I couldn’t believe how much they helped me during those three months [in China]. I prayed every night that the Lord would soften hearts . . . and I saw my family slowly started to change.”

When Tracey was about to fly back to New Zealand, her parents sat her down and gave her their blessing.

“It was a miracle, because I can look back and see how much my parents’ hearts changed. I feel so grateful,” she said.

“I’ve never once doubted, because I’ve seen God in my life. All these things I have experienced are a witness. I have no reason to doubt.

“Alma 32 talks about using God’s word as an experiment, but you have to act. It’s all about faith. If you don’t try to believe it, it won’t work. I know the Church is true. I know we have everything in the gospel that can, and will, bless every aspect of our lives.”

The couple were married on July 13, 2018. ■

# Young Swimmer Wins Six Gold Medals

By Mormon Newsroom

**T**ama Satrioni Tapusoa Solouata is only 15 years old and he's already a gold medalist.

The young swimmer entered nine para events in the 2018 Aon NZ Open Championships and walked away with six gold medals, a silver and a bronze. Held by Swimming New Zealand, this event is the pinnacle of open swimming competition.

When he was just eight years old, Tama began swimming to help with his ADHD. He wasn't sleeping at night, and swimming was part of his therapy.

Tama has an intellectual disability, and in January 2015 he received his national classification S14 for para

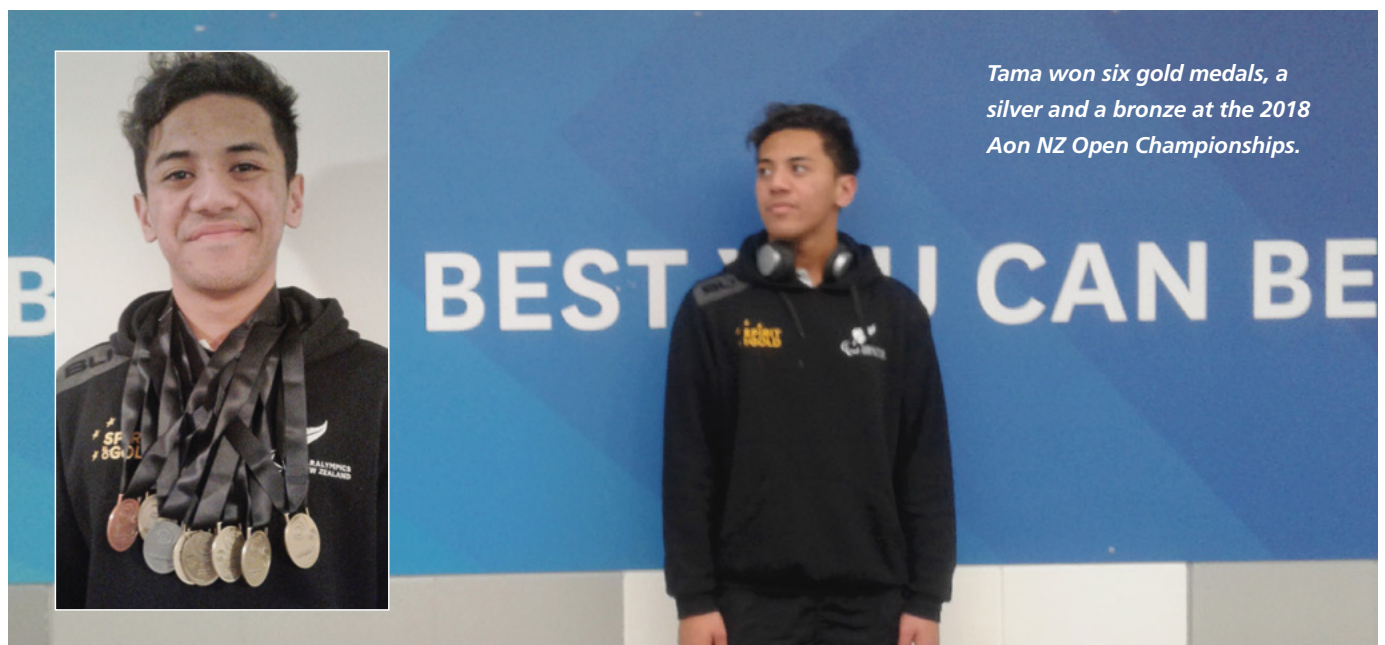
swimming. Upon receiving that classification, he set a goal to win gold at the Paralympics and soon swam in his first NZ open championships, where he was noticed by the coach of the NZ National Para-Athlete Development Programme, Gary Francis.

Later that year, Tama swam at his first NZ short course championships, breaking six national records for the S14 classification. Tama is currently in year 11 at Rangitoto College, where he is allowed time off in the mornings to train. He trains nine sessions a week, either from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. or from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Tama is a person of deep faith. Because he believes in keeping the Sabbath day holy, he does not train or compete on Sunday. Paralympics NZ and Swim NZ are both aware of Tama's deeply held beliefs and have always granted him an exemption from Sunday activities.

Tama's mum, Miliama (Millie), says of her son, "During the week of his competition I listened to Tama pray for strength to do all that he could in the water, specifically asking the Lord to bless his physical body and to help him do what he had trained for. Not only did he pray for himself, but I heard him pray for all the other swimmers too. The Lord did truly bless him and he had a great week."

Tama's championship titles and associated gold medals came in six



para men's multi-class events: 100 metre backstroke, 50 and 100 metre breaststroke, and 50, 100 and 200 metre freestyle. He also earned a silver medal in the 50 metre backstroke and a bronze in the 50 metre butterfly. Wrapping up at the end of day 5 of the meet, Swimming New Zealand's *Freestyler* newsletter proclaimed: "Tama Solouota of Howick Pakuranga, has had a stand out meet."

In both 2017 and 2018, Tama won a place on the high performance "Pathway to Podium" programme, composed of only 172 athletes nationwide and only 13 para athletes. This programme has him working toward the 2020 and 2024 Paralympics. ■

## Acting on Blind Faith

By Shilo Kino

Every morning at 6:00 a.m., Sam gets up to light the fire.

Husband Jason prepares breakfast and gets their three sons washed and dressed for the day.

For most people, these are simple tasks. But for husband and wife Jason and Sam Tamatea, it's not that easy.

Jason and Sam are both blind. Sam lost her sight when she was two from contracting meningitis. She grew up in Auckland, and her young parents "did their best".

Jason was born with a condition where he can see colours but can't be outside in the sun for too long or it will strain his eyes.

Being visually impaired means Jason and Sam are unable to drive a car to places like the grocery store.

"I have to rely on my hearing," Sam said. "In my mind I can see my children in the next room. I know when they're climbing up the walls . . . but the biggest challenge is wasting half an hour looking for something that's right in front of me."

Life changed for the small family around five years ago when a "mystery man" named Tony parked his truck outside their house in the small coastal area of Gisborne. He was there to sell goods from the back of his business truck. But Jason and Sam had a feeling he was there for a different reason.

"We told him, 'Nah, not interested,'" Sam said. "But then he asked us if we believed in God and then invited us to church."

The couple only saw Tony once after that day. But that invitation from a kind stranger was the beginning of a new life.

Jason and Sam had been praying to find a church when they first moved to the small town.

Sam said that the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints "was the last church we would have chosen" because she was raised in a different

religion. "It was difficult to take that first step, but if God had sent this one person to invite me to church, we knew we couldn't ignore it."

The family wanted to attend church, but there was one problem—they couldn't drive.

"We relied on the support of members," Sam said.

For the next five years, members of the Manutuke Branch would pick up the Tamatea family and take them to church.

"The members strengthened my testimony and now inspire our family to serve," Sam said. "I'm so grateful for the members who would rally around us and bring what we need like food and wood. Different members will take our whole family to church every week."

But it was turning to their braille Book of Mormon after a power cut that helped convert Jason and Sam to the gospel.

"There was no electricity and we were going through a rough patch," Jason said. "We remember the missionaries gave us a Book of Mormon. They said just read it and pray about it. We read in 1 Nephi 20:21 where the Lord 'caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them.' We turned on our taps and they started working, even though our water usually comes from an electrical pump. We had quite a few of these miracles along the way that kept confirming and strengthening our testimony of the gospel."





The couple were baptised in October 2013, and a year later they were sealed in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple.

“There are times I’ll be walking alone, and I’ll be praying to God, ‘Which way should I go?’” Sam said. “He’s never let me down. I mean, I can even light a fire! Some people ask if I’m scared of being burnt, but I just say, ‘No, why would I be scared?’”

“There’s no way I would be this confident or ready to face challenges if it wasn’t for God in my life. It’s only faith that can give me that drive.”

Sam is currently studying social work. She’s hoping to make a difference in the Māori health sector.

Jason loves being a stay-at-home dad. And since joining the Church, he has baptised four of his family and friends.

“The blessings of the gospel are immeasurable,” Jason said. “There was happiness before joining the Church . . . but there is a huge difference between the happiness then and the joy we feel now. We are trying our best as a young family to raise our children in the gospel. We’ve had wonderful examples in our branch who show us the definition of marriage, families and raising our children.”

“I might not be able to serve exactly as they do,” Sam said, “but sometimes I might invite someone for lunch or take milk over for our neighbour. It’s all about listening to the Spirit.”

Manutuke Branch president Parekura Brown met the couple when he served a mission with his wife in 2013. He said the Tamateas are a great example to others. “We go to church with our problems and Sam and Jason are there, and we realise our little issues aren’t as big as what they go through. They’re both blind and they think the world is beautiful. They really count their blessings.

“The members tell me when they serve Jason and Sam, they receive more than they give. The blessings of serving others always seem greater to the giver.”

Jason and Sam are grateful to know that because of the gospel, one day they will “see again”. ■