

# AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Listen!

By Elder Larry S. Kacher

Second Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency

I recently attended the funeral of a 39-year-old man. He passed away from cancer and left behind five young children and a beautiful wife. At his funeral both his wife and his parents spoke. Their words were filled with gratitude for a faithful, loving husband and son. Testimonies were shared of a sure knowledge that they would one day be together for all eternity. There were few tears shed. The whole service was filled with a sweet feeling of peace and comfort.

How could there be such a feeling of comfort and gratitude at a time of such deep loss? This family had an undeniable knowledge of Heavenly Father's plan for us. They knew that, despite the loss of their beloved husband and son, they were an eternal family. Sealed together by one holding

priesthood authority. Bound together forever. They understood that, according to God's plan of salvation, their time on earth would be temporary.

Where did this feeling come from? At the time of baptism, hands were laid on their heads, as they were on each of ours. Words were spoken, "Receive the Holy Ghost." And because of their faith and worthiness, the sacred gift of the Holy Ghost has been realized in their lives. The Holy Ghost, also known as the Comforter, brought peace to their lives, as it does for all who have been baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and who live worthy of His presence.

As part of God's plan for us, He promised that He would not leave us alone. In fact, He has sent the third member of the Godhead to lead all

who will heed His promptings. To all who will live worthy of His presence. To all who understand that there is more to our existence than our temporary sojourn on earth. We are each a son or daughter of a loving Father who desires nothing more than for us to return to His presence. For that reason, He has sent a special gift to us—a gift that will guide us safely back to live with Him again if we but listen to the gentle promptings of His special messenger.

The Lord has given us "directions" or commandments that, when followed, will be like a road map guiding us back to our eternal home. He has promised us that if we keep His commandments and always remember Him, and if we are willing to take His name upon us, then we will always have His Spirit to be with us (see Moroni 4:3). His Spirit, the Holy Ghost, has been sent because of God's love for us. Because He wants us to return to His presence. Because His "glory" is realized through our living worthy to receive eternal life (see Moses 1:39). Our worthiness happens as we receive the saving ordinances of the gospel and make and keep the associated covenants.



Elder Larry S. Kacher



Some questions one might ask are, “What would it be worth to live in God’s presence?” “What would I be willing to give?” We can, in a very real sense, always find ourselves in God’s presence as we live worthy of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is referred to as the third member of the Godhead. The scriptures teach that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one. One in purpose. One in desire. Completely unified to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. As we live worthy of the Spirit. As we follow His promptings. Then we are acting in accordance with God’s purpose and will. In a very real sense, we become one with God. We feel the daily presence of His Spirit in our lives. We, through the Holy Ghost, live in His presence. We may not see Him with our physical eyes, but as we learn, like Enoch, to see with our spiritual eyes, we will see, to the extent He allows us, to see what He sees (see Moses 6:35–36).

For us, the challenge is to learn to listen to what the Spirit is saying to us. President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught: “The voice of the Spirit is described in the scripture as being neither ‘loud’ nor ‘harsh.’ It is ‘not a voice of ‘thunder.’ . . . But rather, ‘a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper,’ and it can ‘pierce



*The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all.*

even to the very soul’ and cause [the heart] to ‘burn.’”

He goes on to say that “the Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all. . . .

“Occasionally it will press just firmly enough for us to pay heed. But most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come seeking and listening” (“The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).

The Lord taught Oliver Cowdery, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (D&C 8:2).

Our challenge is to live in such a way that the Holy Ghost can always be with us. We all want to have a feeling of unity with our Heavenly Father, but at times we fall short of realizing that. What can we do? The scriptures again give us direction.

We can repent. Moroni teaches us, “And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 8:26).

We can be humble. As the Savior testified, “And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:20).

We can ponder the scriptures. As President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) bore witness, “As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me” (D&C 138:11).

We can live virtuous lives. The Savior taught Joseph Smith: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter and

unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” (D&C 121:45).

We can act each time we feel His promptings. At times we may ask, as feelings come into our mind and heart, “Is this really from the Spirit? Or is it just my own thought?” Moroni provides an answer we can always depend on: “That which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve Him, is inspired of God” (Moroni 7:13). He goes on to say, “For every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:16).

As we live worthy of this sacred gift, as we act upon His promptings, we will come to recognize the voice of the Lord saying to us, “I love you. I sent my Son to break the bands of death that you may live with me someday. I have sent the Holy Ghost to guide you back to me.”

I testify that the Holy Ghost is real, sent by God, to direct us back to Him. I am a convert to the Church. Prior to my baptism, my life’s ambition was to ski. To that end I moved to Austria. After many months of living what I thought was my dream life, I felt something inside say to me, “Leave.” I didn’t

know where this feeling came from. It led me to a friend who was attending Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, USA. He was not a member of the Church.

While in Provo I was introduced to many members. I felt something different. Something that I saw in their lives that was missing in my own. Because of these feelings and the example of Church members, I decided to return to Provo. One day while visiting a friend, I met stake missionaries. They were teaching her about the restored Church. They invited me to be taught as well. That same feeling said, “Listen.” I did so and my life changed forever. I was baptized at age 19. I listened again. The Spirit said, “Serve a mission.” I did and again my life changed. After my mission the



Spirit said, “Find someone to marry.” But I asked, “Who?” That same Spirit guided me to my eternal companion. We were sealed in the Lord’s house for time and all eternity.

Throughout my life I have tried to listen to that still, small voice. When I have done so, my life has been blessed. There have been challenges. We know we are on earth to experience trials and challenges. But each time, when I have remembered to turn to the Lord and when I have been humble and patient, I have received either comfort and assurance or specific instruction. I have a firm witness that we are children of a Father in Heaven who loves us. I testify that He will guide us, through the Holy Ghost, back to His presence. But we must listen. May we always do so. ■

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# Elder Bednar Dedicates New Missionary Training Center in Ghana

*Remarkable Growth of the Church in West Africa*

**Adapted from Mormon Newsroom article**

**D**edication services were held on October 24, 2017, in Ghana at the new missionary training center (MTC) of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The new facility is located next to the Accra Ghana Temple.

Elder David A. Bednar and his wife, Susan Bednar, arrived for the dedication of the Ghana Missionary Training Center.

During his remarks at the new missionary training center, Elder David A.

Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles called attention to the 200 young men and women who have left behind their worldly lives to serve as full-time missionaries.

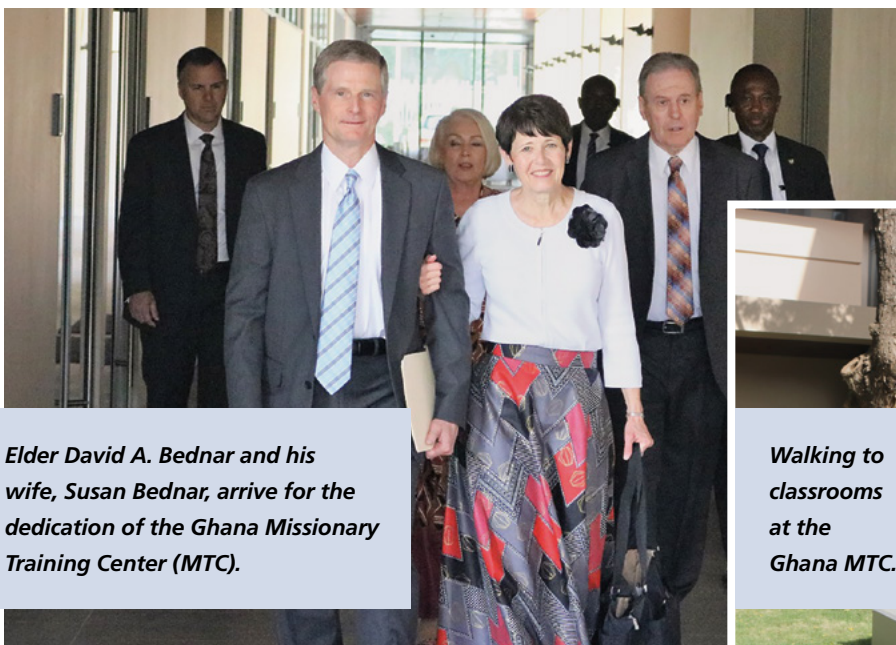
“To see them is a miracle,” said Elder Bednar. “You have heard these young people pray, and say things, and sing in a foreign language they did not know four weeks ago. That is a manifestation of heavenly help. It is a miracle, which is replicated at

15 missionary training centers around the world.”

The newly completed Ghana Missionary Training Center is comprised of four structures, including a five-story residence hall with 80 dormitory rooms, housing up to 320 young people at a time. There are 28 classrooms, 18 practice teaching rooms, and seven computer labs where missionaries receive training before they are sent to their assigned areas around the world.

The facility also has areas to provide for the daily needs of the missionaries such as a cafeteria, laundry facility, athletic fields, and large meeting rooms. The buildings feature extensive glass exteriors to maximize natural light and enhance the opportunity for personal study.

Also speaking at the dedication was Elder Terence M. Vinson, General Authority Seventy and Africa West Area President.



**Elder David A. Bednar and his wife, Susan Bednar, arrive for the dedication of the Ghana Missionary Training Center (MTC).**



**Walking to classrooms at the Ghana MTC.**



*Reverend Father George Arthur, Chaplain General of the Ghana Police, greets Elder Bednar.*



*Accra Mayor Mohammed Adjei Sowah speaks with Elder Bednar after the dedicatory prayer.*

“Four years ago, this site was a vacant lot. It was covered with trees and a path running through it. Now it is a ‘spiritual school,’ which is more than a beautiful edifice,” said Elder Vinson. “Its value does not lie in the bricks, the paneling, or the furnishings; the true

value is in the hearts of these missionaries who sacrifice much to pass through here.”

Elder Vinson reported that missionaries at the MTC have opportunities that help them in the mission

field, as well as throughout their lives. “They learn skills which will help them listen to the Spirit and support their companions as they teach those seeking the truths taught by the Savior.”

During the dedicatory prayer, Elder Bednar asked for a blessing upon “those who labor, who study, who live, and who serve at this center.”

“We dedicate every part, feature and function of this facility and consecrate them for the sacred purpose of helping to prepare Thy servants to proclaim Thy Beloved Son’s gospel so it will sound in every ear and touch every heart, of every people, in every country,” he said in the prayer.



*Elder Antwi from Ghana and his companion Elder Beaird from the USA share learning experiences in Africa.*

*Missionaries from around the world join in singing a hymn on their first morning at the Ghana MTC.*



The current group at the Ghana Missionary Training Center is made up of 201 missionaries representing 21 countries of the world. They will serve in 23 missions of the Church on the continent of Africa and in other parts of the world.

There are 148 missionaries who speak English and 53 French speakers. Seventy-eight young people are learning a foreign language and will spend up to six weeks in the center. Those not learning a language will be in the Ghana MTC only three

weeks before departing for their assigned area.

A public open house for the new MTC was held in August. The original MTC was built in 2002 in Tema, Ghana, and could accommodate only up to 95 missionaries. ■

# Cote d'Ivoire Celebrates 20th Anniversary of First Stake

By Villard Hérve Kpole

Thousands of members from all the stakes of the Ivory Coast converged to the Abidjan Cocody Stake center on September 2, 2017, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the creation of the first stake in Cote d'Ivoire.

The ceremony was presided by Elder Vinson, President of the Africa West Area, and conducted by President Niamke, President of the Abidjan Cocody Stake, who, in his opening remarks, welcomed the pioneers of the Church in Cote d'Ivoire particularly, the local Church leaders and members in general.

The evening began with an opening hymn performed by the Abidjan Niangon North Stake Choir. West Africa LDS pioneers Patriarch Affouè, Brother N'guessan Martin, and Sister Samade gave messages and shared testimonies that really touched members. They talked about how the gospel had transformed their lives and those of the members in Cote d'Ivoire. Patriarch Affouè spoke particularly to the rising generation, bearing testimony of the importance of the law of chastity. He challenged them to respect this very important law as a divine principle that will prepare them to become good

spouses in their homes and good parents to the children that our Heavenly Father will trust into their care. Then Brother Martin acknowledged and testified of a great missionary named Bidi André Zozo, one of the first missionaries in Cote d'Ivoire who passed away a month prior to this important event. He had helped plan the event with other Church leaders. All of them

spoke of Zozo because of his great influence in the growth of the Church in Cote d'Ivoire.

Elder Terence Vinson, before his speech said, "I prefer to listen to the songs in French." He then expressed his thanks to the members in Cote d'Ivoire especially for their faith, strength, and diligence in the work of the Lord since his arrival in West Africa four years ago. He also pointed out that the Saints here are a privileged and loving people of our Heavenly Father. He testified that thanks to the huge effort of Brother Affouè Yapi

*Various artists helped to celebrate the 20th anniversary.*





▲ **Stake Presidents**  
 Young representatives  
 ▼ **from different Stakes**



Lucien and President Philip Assard. There are now about 40,000 members in Cote d'Ivoire. In 20 years, we have gone from one stake to 11. Finally, he read a letter in French that he wrote about the progress of the work in Cote d'Ivoire and at the same time announced the death of his mother-in-law in Australia, which explained the absence of his wife.

After Elder Vinson spoke, the progress of the Church in Cote d'Ivoire was discussed and it was announced that the celebration would continue over two months in each of the 11 stakes. The apotheosis of the celebration was held at the Abidjan Toit Rouge stake center—Ivory Coast's first

stake building. In preparation for the event, cultural and sports activities, including football and athletics were organized in each stake, and a multi-stake football tournament culminating in the championship game was held on November 11.

There were performances by choirs, local singers, and members of the Church and a staged play recounting the history of the Church in Cote d'Ivoire. Brother Gballo Jonas, an artist, showed an exhibition of paintings on the history of the Church.

It was a marvelous and uplifting event, and there was joy on the faces of the brothers and sisters who attended. ■

**VISIT AREA WEBSITES!**

Africa West Area Websites:  
 English: [africawest.lds.org](http://africawest.lds.org)  
 French: [afriquedelouest.lds.org](http://afriquedelouest.lds.org)

Mormon Newsroom Ghana:  
[www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh](http://www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh)

Mormon Newsroom Nigeria:  
[www.mormonnewsroom.org.ng](http://www.mormonnewsroom.org.ng) ■