

# AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Reflections

By Elder Terence M. Vinson  
Former President, Africa West Area



Terence M. Vinson

**B**lessings come in surprising ways. In February 2013, I had been serving for six years as an Area Seventy in the Pacific Area and had been asked to extend for a seventh. We had, however, been invited to the Office of the First Presidency, and my wife, Kay, and I were waiting to meet with then-President Dieter F. Uchtdorf in his office. The thought that he was about to call me as a General Authority had not entered my mind, and we were even more surprised when he told us that we would be living and serving in West Africa until we received a new assignment some years in the future.

We did not suspect that our hearts were about to be filled with love for the wonderful West African people. But they quickly were. Immediately we arrived in Accra and began to meet the members of the Church and others in the countries of Ghana, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo, Benin, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, The Gambia, and Burkina Faso. What incredible blessings we have received, and what wonderful eternal relationships have been forged.

"I think the Spirit of the Lord is brooding over Africa," said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve in the first of two videos

about the growth of the Church in Africa after years of political strife. "His hand is on the work. His Spirit is stirring the people," said Elder Holland.

This has been most evident to Kay and me in the incredible growth we have witnessed here. Just before our arrival, and earlier in July 2013, the 38th stake of the Africa West Area had been created by Elder Joseph Sitati in Warri, Nigeria. And then in June 2018, I was blessed to preside over the creation of the 100th stake in the Africa West Area in Lagos, Nigeria. These 62 additional stakes (29 in Nigeria, 13 in Ghana, 9 in Côte d'Ivoire, 4 in Sierra Leone, 4 in Liberia, 2 in Togo, and 1 in Benin) were created in less than five years!

And the 100th stake was formed just 30 years after the first ever West African stake. I have personally had the privilege of forming the first branches in Dakar, Senegal; Conakry, Guinea; and Bamako, Mali; and of witnessing the land of Senegal dedicated for the preaching of the gospel by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I have accompanied this same Apostle as he dedicated the new Ghana missionary training center, and I have been blessed with numerous other spiritual experiences.

The growth, however, has not simply, or even primarily, been in numbers. Kay and I, together with the other members of the Area Presidency, are witnesses almost daily to incredible faith in the face of adversity and



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temporal poverty. But there is no spiritual poverty in West Africa. The region is rich in those things most precious—the faithful sons and daughters of God. And the mandate of our Saviour for West Africa as so clearly stated in the following verses has been accepted: “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” (D&C 84:106, 108). In fact, it has been embraced as our united call for action in the phrase “one take one.”

This leads to a most important principle in the Lord’s way of doing His work. These five years have reinforced for me something that I had partly understood before and which is crucial to our time in mortality. That message is this: No matter what calling we have and whether our responsibility be for a family, a ward, a stake, or the Africa West Area, there is no difference, because our primary responsibility is to the “one.” We are called to minister to others—both those we are assigned and the many, many more placed in our daily path by the Lord Himself. Our task is to seek revelation and the companionship of the Holy Ghost as we focus on the “one” at any and every point in time.

My calling regularly involves my speaking to large congregations, but

I have been taught clearly that each time I do, what I am really doing is speaking to the “one” whose prayers the Lord is answering without my knowing. It is marvellous to know that Heavenly Father uses me (and you) as a conduit to send His messages to His individual children.

Many times people have approached me after I have spoken to tell me that what I said was just for them, an answer to prayer, or a needed spiritual insight. But each time I have known that it’s not what I have said but rather the words that our Father has put in my mouth, or the thoughts He has put in my head, or the personalised interpretation of my words by the Holy Ghost for individuals who are present and prepared to hear.

I have learned very clearly that my responsibility is simply to prepare myself spiritually prior to any assignment so that I can have the Holy Ghost with me when I deliver the message

which He chooses to give me. “For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1).

Then the Holy Ghost can work with those who are prepared to receive His message:

“And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

“If it be some other way it is not of God.

“Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

“Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.

“And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness” (D&C 50:19–23).

I love the “edifying” that comes to both the messenger and the recipient. And I love the “rejoicing” that follows as a consequence.

In fact, these are two of the three feelings that best describe what my sweetheart, Kay, and I have felt most strongly while living in West Africa. We have been “edified” and we have “rejoiced”! But the feeling that we have felt most strongly and most often (even continuously) is “love” for the people of West Africa. That

## MISSIONARY MOMENTS

love is impossible to uncouple with the love we feel for our Saviour and our Heavenly Father and our love for each other. These too have grown somehow even more powerful as a result of our living and serving in West Africa, as has our utter dependence on the Holy Ghost.

We have formed relationships with so many people who are now family to us, and we have been taught about discipleship, caring and “ministering” by the most accomplished of possessors and practitioners of these divine attributes—the Saints of West Africa.

The Saints of West Africa are blessed now with a most wonderful Area President in Elder Marcus B. Nash, with his two talented and marvellous counsellors, Elder Larry S. Kacher and Elder Edward Dube, all of whom are good friends to me and to you. And the Lord has blessed me in my new assignment with responsibility to assist a member of the Twelve in guiding His work in three Areas of the world—North America Southeast, Africa Southeast and most happily, Africa West. We are excited to know that we will return from time to time to greet our dear friends and loved ones here.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts! We love you and we will miss you! But we have confidence that the true friendships formed in this life will continue as blessed associations throughout eternity. ■

## First Four Missionaries from Guinea Ready to Serve

By Samuel Agyei Amankwah



*From left: Elder Emile Junior Dore, Elder Pepe Aime Victor Dore (brothers), Sister Rachel Kpogomou, and Elder Charles-Alain Kpogomou (sister and brother)*

The first four missionaries in the history of the Church in Guinea to be called to serve full-time missions left their home branch of Conakry, Guinea, and arrived on April 26 at the Accra Ghana Missionary Training Center (MTC). Elders Pepe Aime Victor Dore and Emile Junior Dore (brothers), and Charles-Alain Kpogomou and Sister Rachel Kpogomou (brother and sister) will enter their assigned missions in Lagos, Nigeria; Benin City, Nigeria; and Kumasi, Ghana, upon completion of their training in the MTC.

These faithful Latter-day Saints served as a ward Young Men president, first counselor in the ward Sunday School presidency, branch mission leader, and branch music director before entering their service as full-time missionaries.

These siblings glowed with common faith and excitement as they entered the MTC. Elder Pepe Dore and his mother joined the Church in the Ivory Coast before moving to Guinea after the death of Elder Dore’s father in 2004. “We waited for 10 years



◆ *Elder Vinson with Emile (left) and Victor Dore (right)*

◆ *Elder Vinson with Charles and Rachel Kpogomou*



before we found other members of the Church to pray together in their home,” said Elder Dore. He shared the gospel with his other siblings, who became interested, such that

his younger brother (Elder Emile Dore) was baptized in 2006. “I never doubted when the Church was introduced to me. I knew it was true, I did not hesitate to accept the gospel

and be baptized,” Elder Emile Dore testified.

The Kpogomous hosted the group of members in their home, in Conakry, Guinea. The father of Elder and Sister Kpogomou was a professor and lecturer who joined the Church in Paris, France. Of their family of nine, four joined the Church and are active. Brother Kpogomou led the group in his home as activities were overseen by the Africa West Area Presidency as part the Africa West Area Branch, said Elder Vinson.

Their zeal for the gospel led Africa West Area President, Elder Vinson, to visit the group to assess their readiness to receive priesthood ordinations and establish a branch of the Church. Later, in his review of the Africa West Area with the Area Presidency in May 2017, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles met with Church leaders and members in Guinea. Upon his return to Salt Lake City, Utah, and after meeting with the Council of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles, Elder Bednar called Elder Vinson with the news that establishing an official presence of the Church in Conakry was approved. The Conakry Guinea Branch was created in June 2017 under the direction of Elder Vinson, and Brother Kpogomou was called as the branch president.

Elders Dore and Elder and Sister Kpogomou prepared spiritually to serve through daily scripture study

and attending missionary preparation class after Sunday service (taught by a returned missionary who hails from Liberia). They bore powerful testimonies about the Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ, the restored gospel, and their desire to serve the Lord as His missionaries.

Like all new missionaries, they were nervous about the future challenges and requirements of full-time missionaries, including working with companions, understanding new cultures, and discerning the needs of those they were called to teach and serve. They were reminded by those present with greater experience to take courage, love those they are called to teach, and to freely share their testimonies about exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. ■



*Elder Vinson meets with the new missionaries.*

## “I Can’t Go Back to My Church”

By Emmanuel Nimako

Akonfudi Ward, Assin Foso Stake

When I was a young boy, I took church attendance seriously and always said in my heart that I will go to a church that bears Christ’s name, so I was happy to attend a church that had “Christ” in its name. One day at school, one of my friends came to me and said: “Rich Boy, I want to invite you to my church on Sunday.” I asked

him why he wanted me to go to his church and he said: “I want you to gain salvation!”

I was confused at the invitation to be saved because I attended church regularly and as far as I was concerned, we all worshipped one God.

On Sunday morning, my friend called to tell me to get ready for

church because he was coming over to my house to pick me up. When I saw him approaching our compound, I quickly went to hide because I belonged to another church and didn’t know why I should visit my friend’s church.

After that, my friend would on occasion extend the invitation to come to his church again. One day, I decided that I would go with him to know the reason why he wanted me to accompany him. The first time I attended church with my friend,

I felt the Spirit. I heard about the Atonement of Jesus Christ and I was so impressed. When we came back from church, I told him that I can't go back to my church again. I wanted to attend The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The next Sunday, I was contacted by some missionaries who asked me if they could visit me at home during the week. I agreed and set an appointment with them. I requested that they bring a copy of the Book of Mormon to me when they came to my house. The missionaries arrived and told me amongst other things "Brother Nimako, do you know that God loves you? The gospel we teach can bless you and your family." I enjoyed their visit and scheduled another appointment.

I read my copy of the Book of Mormon and prayed. I pondered on the message the missionaries shared and what I was reading in the book of Mormon. I had a good feeling as I did this. I couldn't wait to be baptised!

After my baptism on 30 January 2009, I was so active in Church, even more active than my friend who invited me, so I started to visit him with missionaries. I asked the missionaries to visit my mother also. I wanted her to be blessed by the gospel I had received.

On July 4, 2014, my mother was also baptised, to my greatest joy. I went on to serve a full-time mission in the Nigeria Benin City Mission. I stood as a witness of the truth. I testify that

the gospel is true. I know that Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ, and he was a true prophet. I know with all my heart that if we read the Book of Mormon daily and ponder and pray about it, we will know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. ■

#### LATTER-DAY VOICES

## Pioneering the Church in Omoku, My Homeland

By Ikechukwu Felix Ake

I got to know of the Church in 1993 through a classmate while a law student at Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST) Port Harcourt Nigeria. I visited with him and saw the book *Jesus the Christ* by Elder James E. Talmage. I read a portion of the book titled "Christ's Tabernacle in the Flesh." I was touched by the gospel insights in the book and asked where I could get one. He then told me about the Church that he joined in 1987.

I asked Brother Amadi more about the Church. I was desirous to find answers to questions I had as a young man. I eventually arrived at the nearest meetinghouse, the Port Harcourt 3rd Ward, located close to

the university entrance which was also within walking distance from my hall of residence. I arrived late and sat at the Sunday School class, which was the first meeting of the day, as was the pattern then. A few moments later, I was invited to the Investigators class. The bishop later gave me a copy of the *Ensign* magazine, and specifically referred me to a talk by Elder Russell M. Nelson, attending the Parliament of the World's Religions. I read the story and it changed my attitude about marriage and family as he brought with him Primary children who sang "I Am a Child of God" in the meeting.

In the investigators' class, I was taught about the Prophet Joseph Smith and was asked if I had heard about him. The name seemed familiar, but I could not recollect where I had come across it. But now I know that it was the Spirit telling me about the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Bishop Kalu was a source of strength and inspiration and a great gospel teacher. I sincerely wanted to teach the restored gospel with a testimony like his. I eventually got baptized on December 26, 1993. The following Sunday, I was ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. And during sacrament meeting, I was asked to bless the sacrament.

The message of the restored gospel appealed to my heart, though born Anglican to humble parents and, as



Brother Ake

the tradition of the Anglican Church, was given infant baptism with my other siblings in 1973. The Book of Mormon changed all that as the copy I was given in the investigators class and with marked portions to read, I tried my best in reading it not with a desire to obtain a testimony but with my student legal mind. I was searching for faults because nothing

compares to my Holy Bible. I had been doing critical Bible study before coming to the Church. I finished the Book of Mormon in no time and diverted my love for secular books to love of scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon.

My bishop extended a call to me the Sunday after my ordination in the Aaronic Priesthood as a Sunday School teacher. I was also called as a seminary teacher, and I enrolled in an Institute of Religion class. While I taught the Old Testament in seminary, I studied the Book of Mormon in the institute class. This connection to the scriptures changed my life as that was the beginning of a lifelong love for the standard works of the Church and other writings that I have accumulated over the years a large library of Church literatures and scriptures. I even went on to teach institute classes for years even as a stake president.

### **PIONEERING THE CHURCH IN OMOKU, MY HOMETOWN**

While I was in Lagos, Nigeria, where I did my National Youth Service, I received the strong feeling that I had a mission to establish the Church in my hometown. I felt inspired and decided to fulfill the mission. I began with my wife, who was not a member at the time. With her unique testimony, she joined the Church and I baptized her like I did our five children.

We went to church in Port Harcourt from Omoku, our hometown. It was about two hour drive. We did this every Sunday until sometime in 2001 when the Port Harcourt West Stake Presidency authorized me and family to stay back and worship in Omoku under the supervision of the Rumueme Ward. We reactivated some members of the Church who resided in our town and surrounding towns, two of whom were old schoolmates at the university. We started worshipping in my one-room apartment and later moved into a three-rooms flat in the city center where, on the 9th of January 2005, the Church was officially organized with me as the first branch president and my wife as first counsellor in the Relief Society. We had 36 members of our branch.

Missionaries who taught us the gospel of Restoration and eternal families inspired us tremendously and helped to inspire our infant children to love missionary work.

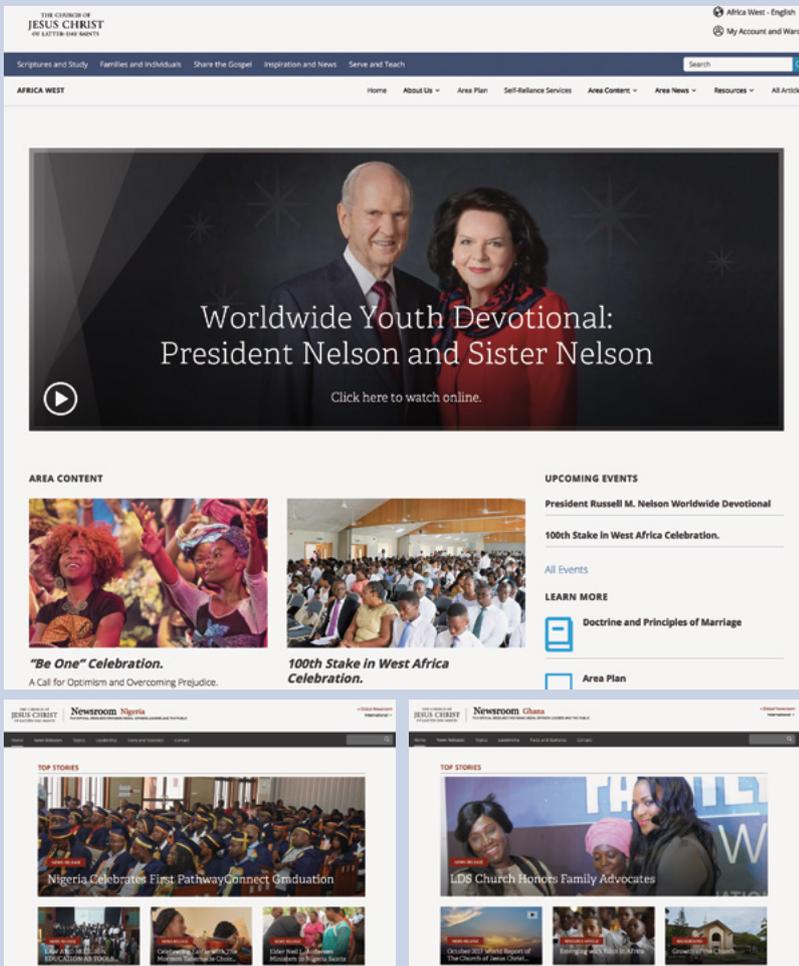
The gospel of Jesus Christ means everything to me and my family. The principles of the gospel are true and life-changing when we apply every word therein. As a branch president in a new place, it naturally imposed a new life on me. They must see the change in me to believe and follow. This is a religion with everlasting promise, hope, and blessings.

The Aba Nigeria Temple was dedicated on August 7, 2005, by President

Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008). Our family of five then—me, my wife, Justina, and our children (Joy, Daniel, and Gabriel)—were overjoyed. We got

sealed as a family on September 22, 2005. Our sons John and Joseph were born in the covenant. My life is about family, Church, and community. ■

**VISIT AREA WEBSITES!**



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

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[AfricaWestWebsite@ldschurch.org](mailto:AfricaWestWebsite@ldschurch.org) ■

