

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Hold Up Your Light That It May Shine

By Elder Marcus B. Nash

First Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency

Several years ago, my brother and I entered a cave with the help of a guide. We followed him down the path of a natural tunnel deep into the earth. The air grew cool, then cold, as we descended. We could hear no sound but our breathing and the echo of our footsteps on the cold stone floor of the cave. The tunnel led us down to a large cavern with a ceiling that arched high above us. After we marveled for a few minutes at this huge cavern deep in the earth, the guide warned us to stand still because he was going to turn out the lights. And then he turned out the lights.

The darkness was thick and complete. It was unlike anything I had experienced before. There was absolutely no light. As we stood in complete darkness, I heard the voice of the guide echo off the stone: “Can you even see your hands?” I held my hand up to my face, and even touched my nose, and I could see nothing. I told him so. He commented that complete darkness is the absence of any light—and that is not pleasant. He explained as we stood in that thick darkness that if we were to remain in the cavern without light, we would become

disoriented and lose all sense of direction. He added that as a result of such complete darkness, we would lose our sense of balance and find it hard to stand upright or even walk without stumbling and falling down. After waiting another moment, he turned on the light. I was more grateful for

light in that moment than I had ever been before!

I find it sad that through human history, civilization after civilization has moved from light to dark. Some moved into such complete darkness that they called good evil and evil good and ultimately disintegrated as



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a society. Today we see many people of the world who are disoriented by the growing, thick darkness of immorality, dishonesty, and selfishness. They are struggling, stumbling, falling because they do not know who they are, why they are here, and where they are going after this life. They need light!

The Savior is “the light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not” (D&C 39:2). Our great Light commands each of us: “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do. Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed.

“And ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world; and whosoever breaketh this commandment suffereth himself to be led into temptation” (3 Nephi 18:24–25).

Being a light is simple—not always easy—but it is simple: we are to do what He did, what He would do in our circumstance. Remember that we are invited to live the principle of “one take one.” Help one other person. Take someone with you to church. Take someone with you to

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read the Book of Mormon. Take someone with you to have a family home evening. Take a name with you to the temple. Take a friend with you to the temple. Look for someone in need and serve that person. Help someone get a job. Help someone keep a commandment of God. Lift the burdens of someone in need.

If we see someone who is without the gospel, invite them to come and to see and feel for themselves. Or give them a copy of the Book of Mormon and ask them to read it—or even read it with them. We can serve someone in spiritual or temporal need, bringing food or a welcoming hand and a smile. In this way we will be a light.

This is how President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) lived his life. Many years ago, I had an assignment with him. As part of the assignment, we were to be in a four-hour training meeting on a Saturday afternoon. However, he felt the prompting of the Holy Ghost to visit some people with great needs in order to lift their spirits and help them to be of good cheer.

So for the first two hours, while I and other brethren were in the meeting, he was out doing good to others, ministering as the Lord did in His mortal life. President Monson joined us for the final two hours of the training meeting and did a marvelous job of teaching and training.

After the meeting, I commented on how well he taught in the meeting and then thanked him for the most powerful teaching: his example of going out and ministering to individuals, one by one. He smiled and said: “One thing about me, I am never confused about my priorities.” I thought about what he had said and after taking him to the airport and bidding him goodbye, I headed for home. Then I changed direction and went to visit a sister who was ill and needed some cheering up. Since that time, I have tried to live in my very imperfect way to be a light to others as the Savior commanded us to be and to do so in word, action, and deed.

The Savior not only commands us to be a light, but He also instructs us that if we fail to keep this commandment to be a light, we will be led into temptation (see 3 Nephi 18:25). So if we find something that belongs to someone else, we should be a light and return the item to the one who lost it.

If we owe someone money, we should pay it back to them. If fast offering assistance is given, we should

LOCAL NEWS

Nigerian Communities Benefit from LDS Charities Medical Donation

Adapted from Mormon Newsroom

ANAMBRA

The Ugbene Health Center will provide improved health care for citizens of Awba, Ugbenu, and Ugbene. The center received basic medical equipment, enabling medical staff



work for it and work hard to become self-reliant. If someone offers or seeks money for special favors, we should not do it.

If someone (even if it is a family member or friend) wants you to participate in a tradition that is contrary to any of the commandments of God, be a light and do what Christ would do, trusting in Him, not in your family or friend who wants you to do something contrary to the commandments of God.

If we fail to be light in any of these or all other ways, then we move into darkness, which inhibits our ability to be the light the Lord commands us to be.

The blessing of being a light is that we will come to know God and receive the greatest of the gifts of God: eternal life. As the Lord taught, “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

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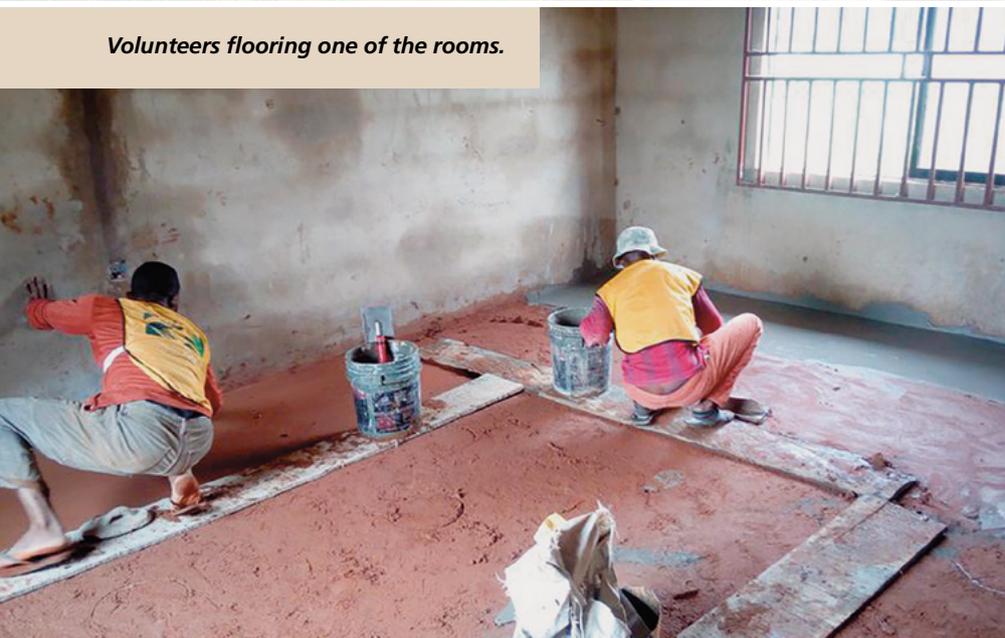
My dear brothers and sisters of West Africa, the Lord has gathered each of you to His Church and kingdom because He knew you would keep the commandment to be a light to the world. He knew that your decision to be a light would bless you and your family forever and bless all of those around you for eternity.

My invitation is for each of us is to be a light: do what the Savior would do. We cannot be a clear and bright light if we do not keep the commandments of God. Each of us must be honest, full of integrity. We must live the law of chastity. We must live the law of the tithe. We must reach out and take one other person with us to the Savior in the ways that I have mentioned in the article and that the Area Presidency mentions in the area plan broadcast. This is how we make it possible to be a clear and bright light to all around us.

I have great confidence in the future of the Church in West Africa, that the members here will become a great light to all members of the Church. Our Saints here will be a light to non-members of the Church. Many people will be constrained to exclaim over the miracle wrought by God in the lives of the people of West Africa, and it will be because the Latter-day Saints kept the commandment to be a light to the world in following the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. ■



Volunteers flooring one of the rooms.



to provide local maternity and health services.

Village chiefs and leaders from each community attended the event.

Lady Mgbankpulu Okolo said, “I never imagined I would be alive to witness my community getting a fitted health center like this one.

It is a miracle and gift from God. Many women deliver at home or sometimes on the road, because the hospital is very far from us. God has answered our prayer at last.”

Ozor Albert Ibe, president general of Ugbene community, recounted an incident where a young man cut his hand while working at the farm. Because the hospital was so far away, the youngster died while being transported to the distant facility.

Prior to the handover ceremony, 132 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints congregations joined with other members of the community to clean the health center and prepare the building for new medical equipment.

The building had been abandoned many years ago. During the four-month renovation project, skilled laborers volunteered their time to the project. Electricians, carpenters, bricklayers, aluminum fabricators, painters, plumbers, and masons all served to ensure the completion of the project. The community youth participated by clearing debris and cutting the grass.

The coordinator of the project, Clement Okoye, was excited that months of hard work and sacrifice had come to fruition. “The community has been needing a functional

health Center for a very long time,” said Okoye. “This is a dream come true. The mortality rate here is very high due to lack of medical amenities. Daily life is a risk where we live. We are grateful that LDS Charities came to our rescue.”

Ezeigwe Peter, president of the Onitsha Nigeria Stake, stated that he was overwhelmed by the support and appreciation shown by the community and was impressed by the commitment of individuals. He charged them to maintain the facility and ensure they use the donated equipment judiciously. ■



Village Chiefs and leaders from each community attended the event.

Queen Mother Thanks Latter-day Saints

Adapted from Mormon Newsroom

Kibi, Ghana

Nana Adutwumwaa Dokua, Eastern Region Queen Mother's Association President, welcomed leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to World Diabetes Day 2017 at Kibi Community Center in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

“You are welcome!” she said, using the traditional Ghanaian greeting. We are pleased to greet people of faith who have an interest in our children.”

Elder Anthony Quaisie, Area Seventy in the Africa West Area said, “We do not provide aid for the benefit of the Church. Our tenants teach [that] we should follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, that is—we should go about doing good for our fellowmen. We thank you for the opportunity to serve.”

Since 2015, the Church has collaborated with Ghana Ministries of Health and Education, as well as the National Diabetes Association, in an ongoing project to screen high

school students in Ghana's second-cycle schools for diabetes.

Mrs. Elizabeth Esi Denyoh, President of National Diabetes Association – Ghana reported “more than 170,000 students throughout Ghana have been screened for this debilitating disease.” Mrs. Denyoh thanked the Church for their continued support reporting that screenings have occurred in second-cycle schools in the Western, Central, Eastern, and Greater Accra regions of Ghana.

Isaac Nii Ayi Kwei Martey Conversion Story

By Jarom Akwesi Gyimah-Amponsah

While growing up, Isaac Nii Ayi Kwei Martey was introduced to the Hindu religion by his father. He came in contact with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints while he was staying with his uncle in Cape Coast. He met LDS missionaries as they were rescheduling an appointment with a neighbor. He approached them and consented to listen to the restored gospel. Isaac had in mind to thwart the message of the restored gospel. When the missionaries visited with him, they gave him the Book of Mormon and he loved the teachings he found there. He genuinely wanted to learn more.

He decided to take the challenge of praying about the Book of Mormon. He persistently prayed to know if it was true and he got his confirmation three weeks later. After the witness of the Holy Ghost, he was faced with a new challenge.

He informed his mother about his desire to get baptized and join the LDS Church, but she threatened to disown him if he ever did. All his relatives were against the idea of him joining the Church. Isaac had been



Screening teams are composed of nurses from Ghana Health Service, as well as trained volunteers from stakes and districts of the Church. Teams conduct free screening, education, and counselling in

selected second cycle schools.

The goal of this project is to identify youth with diabetes, teach them to manage their disease, as well as reduce future risk by educating students and families. ■



admitted to study for his bachelor's degree at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Isaac told the Cape Coast missionaries of his plan to attend church at Kumasi without the knowledge of his family. Isaac had studied with them for a little over a year without getting the opportunity to attend church. While in Kumasi, he looked for the LDS Church but could not find it. A student colleague directed him to the LDS Church about a month later. Isaac again met with the Kumasi missionaries. They were impressed with his knowledge of the

restored gospel, but this was no surprise, as he had been taught much by missionaries while in Cape Coast.

The missionaries fixed a baptismal interview date with Isaac. He agreed and got baptized on October 16, 2010. However, he kept all this from his family. Isaac had the privilege of performing a proxy baptism in the temple when he came to Accra for Christmas vacation. He shared his experience in the temple: "When I got to the temple, I felt so much about being different and I remember reading a talk in the waiting

room by President Monson. 'Dare to be a Mormon; Dare to stand alone. Dare to have a purpose firm; Dare to make it known' ("Dare to Stand Alone," *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 61)." This impression compelled him to inform his mother about his new-found Church membership and the blessings he had acquired. Breaking the news, his mother was furious initially, but subsequently, she began to understand and accept his decision to be a Latter-day Saint. However, his extended family was unforgiving of his decision.

Isaac's faith in the gospel began to enlarge, even to extent of desiring to serve a full-time mission. He decided to save some money toward such ecclesiastical ambition. His mother pleaded with him against it while his other relatives warned him to rescind his decision when he told them about his desire to serve the Lord for two years. Isaac stood firm and proceeded to work toward his mission goal rather than heeding to whims and caprices of family members.

He submitted his missionary forms and received the call to serve in Nigeria Port Harcourt Mission. Seven days after arriving at the missionary training center, he was informed that his mother had passed away. Having already lost his dad as a 15-year-old, his mother's death made him an orphan. It was a really difficult time for him, and he was faced with the choice to either return home or continue with his mission. He prayed concerning this and sought counsel from his leaders. He finally decided on continuing his mission. He informed his family about his decision, and as expected, it was not well received. An uncle told him that if he went ahead with his mission, he should not consider himself as family to him. Even though he had the option to return home for his mother's burial, he resolved to keep serving the Lord after he had read few passages in the scriptures:

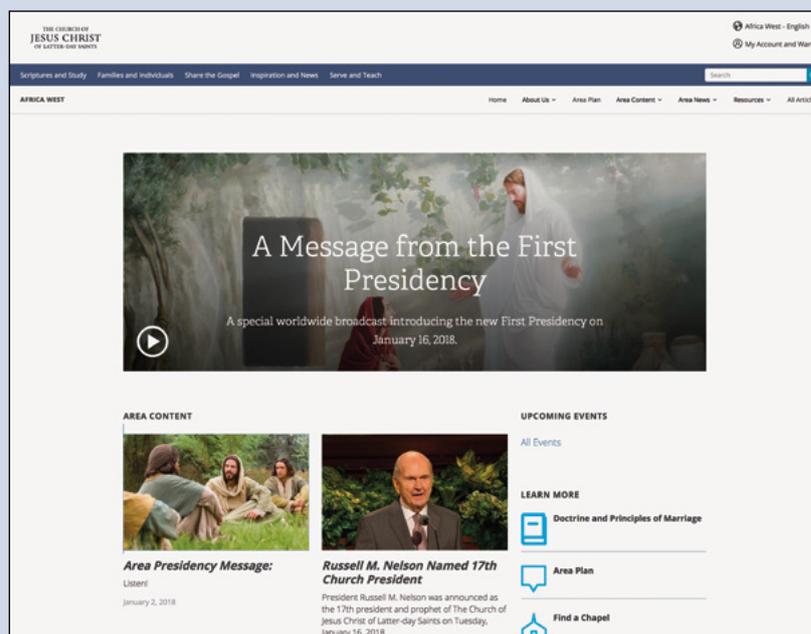
“And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:61–62).

He served his mission faithfully and extended for a few more weeks before returning. Even though he hasn't been accepted by his extended family, Isaac

firmly believes that the Lord is mindful of the little things we do on this earth and the unending blessings we gain as we obey His commandments. “We all have different challenges, and the Lord has prepared our backs to these challenges that we face. . . . All He requires from us is a broken heart and a contrite spirit,” he says. Even though he is unsure of what lies ahead for him, he knows that if he relies on the Savior, he will be able to achieve all things. ■

VISIT AREA WEBSITES!



Africa West Area Websites:
 English: africawest.lds.org
 French: afriqueedelouest.lds.org

Mormon Newsroom Ghana:
www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh
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