

NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

How Great Shall Be Your Joy with Him

By Elder Benjamin Sinjoux

Area Seventy

Our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, have an infinite love for each one of us. Jesus Christ taught us the following:

“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

“How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

“And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

“Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:11–14).

The ordination of the holy calling of a Seventy includes the sacred duty revealed by the Lord: “The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews” (D&C 107:34).

I recently traveled to the island of Manihi for a district conference with a mission counselor, President Nauta. As we met and discussed with the branch president, we felt the deep distress

he was going through due to some disunity in the branch.

“I am almost at the bottom of despair . . . my father and all of my brothers and sisters are not coming to church anymore since I have been called as the branch president,” he expressed.

We felt impressed to give him a priesthood blessing before we biked to his home. As we met his wife, we assured them they were not alone in their struggles and that our Saviour is near them.

It was obvious that we had a lot of rescue visits to perform and to meet and to bless the people.

The words of the Lord resounded in our minds: “Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak,

lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (D&C 81:5).

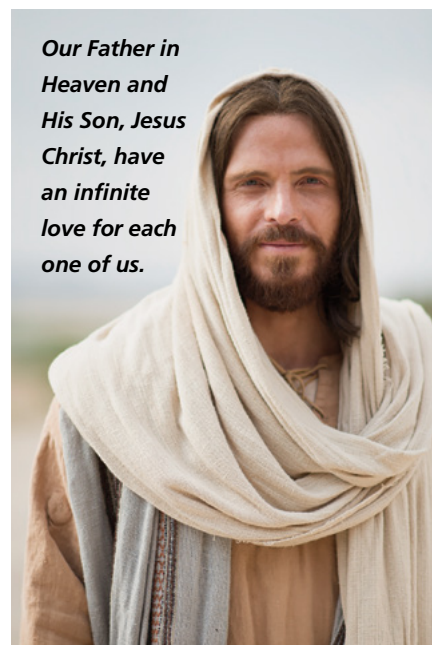
That Friday afternoon we formed two groups, and I visited a family who lived just a few metres away from the chapel. He had been sealed to his family and had three beautiful children, one of which was born in the covenant, but they all fell into inactivity for a number of years now. We taught them of the love of our Heavenly Father and testified of the power of the Atonement in their life if they put their faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ and forsook their wrongdoings. We expressed our love for them and gave them a priesthood blessing and invited them to come unto the Saviour and to attend the conference sessions. “Yes, we will,” they both expressed.

The next day we continued to visit a few families, and amongst them was John, the brother of the branch president, and his family. They had not been to church for quite a number of years. He has seven children and more than 10 grandchildren: a total of 20 in his family alone. We expressed our love for them and the love of our Heavenly Father for them and quoted the following:

“Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?



Elder Benjamin
Sinjoux



Our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, have an infinite love for each one of us.

LOCAL PAGES

“Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are” (3 Nephi 9:13–15).

We testified of our Father in Heaven and our Saviour’s love for them and asked them, “Will you come unto our Saviour by preparing yourselves and your family to go to the temple?”

“Yes, we will,” they responded.

We asked if they would attend the conference sessions.

“Yes, we will,” they smiled.

On the Sunday session, there were 135 who attended, twice as many as on a normal Sunday. Several families came back, and John bore his testimony and he was sustained as the branch clerk at the conference. What a wonderful joy to see the sons of God return home and serve our Saviour. The branch president was overwhelmed and felt peace and joy as miracles were performed before his eyes.

I testify that our Lord Jesus Christ will attend to all priesthood holders around the world and bring the lost sheep back into the fold. I testify He will bring peace and joy as we invite Him into our life, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Samoan Convert Lands More Than Just His Dream Job

By Shilo Kino

Musician Elia Gaitau teaches music and plays piano in Tokyo, Japan.



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Life could have turned out very different for musician Elia Gaitau.

Eleven years ago, Elia was offered a job working on a boat cruise. He turned it down because it didn’t “feel right”. A few weeks later, he was asked to go to Japan to play piano at a hotel resort. His life has never been the same since, he said.

Elia is from Auckland, New Zealand, but is based in Tokyo, Japan, where

he teaches music and plays piano at restaurants, clubs, festivals and weddings. He also composes his own music and is currently working on an album.

It was in Japan where Elia, 44, met his wife, Naoko, and could pursue a career as a musician.

“I threw myself in the deep end by coming to Japan,” he said. “I’m blessed I can play piano and help people

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Elia Gaitau also met his wife, Naoko, in Japan.

feel the Spirit, but it's just a tool that Heavenly Father has blessed me with. Everyone has a talent—I'm just trying to use mine."

Elia grew up in a Samoan church but joined the Church when he was 20 years old. He became curious after he met an LDS musician in high school who was "filled with light".

He's been playing piano since but was never formally taught.

"Playing piano has always been a way to express myself," he said. "I remember sitting by a piano on Sundays and just thinking about God. Then I would just start playing. For me, it's a way to communicate with God."

Elia is a big believer in being self-reliant both temporally and spiritually.

"Playing the piano has helped me provide for my wife and son, and I never thought it was something I could do," he said. "We are taught to be self-reliant in Church. For me, that is keeping the commandments, honouring my duties as a priesthood holder as well as doing prayers and scripture reading.

"Miracles come when we do the right thing."

Elia had a lot of role models growing up who inspired him to pursue music as a career. He encourages others to work on their talents but said it's not easy.

"It's about learning your craft, being respectful to others, practising, and becoming better. It's an ongoing pursuit of excellence."

He said the greatest blessing is being able to use his talent to serve and provide for his family.

"To have people cry and come up to you and tell you that you have somehow touched them through your music—that is the ultimate compliment you can have as a musician, that your music has touched someone." ■

Labour Missionaries Gather in Temple View

By Mormon Newsroom

New Zealand labour missionaries built the Hamilton New Zealand Temple, Church College of New Zealand and many other buildings in Temple View and other parts of the country in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. These men and women, and their families, sacrificed a great deal over extended periods of time as they worked together on a variety of construction sites.



Wendy Biesinger-Thacker at Labour Missionary Legacy Trust meeting in Temple View, 18 November.

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A group of labour missionaries and their descendants gathered in Temple View last November.

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Elder David J. Thomson, an Area Seventy, shared with the group a number of faith-promoting experiences resulting from service and how the spirit of service, so well exemplified by New Zealand's labour missionaries, has blessed his life.

"I am not a descendant of a labour missionary, but I am a beneficiary of their service, as are each one of us," Elder Thomson said.

Elder Thomson continued by encouraging those in attendance to follow the Saviour as recorded in John chapter 21. He counselled all "to cast

their nets of service on the side the Lord directs" and promised that as they do so, their efforts will be blessed with success.

Eddie Owen, the first baby born in the labour missionary camp, remembered the love of service instilled in him and his friends by their labour missionary parents.

Barry Williams spoke of his journey to become a labour missionary and how, after getting over the shock of earning only \$1 per week, he stayed on his mission and the right path because of the righteous influence of his labour missionary companions.

Wendy Biesinger-Thacker, the youngest daughter of George and

Audrey Biesinger and one of five Biesinger children born in Temple View, told of her parents' hearts filled with love for their work and how "they came, they served and they loved," and the labour missionaries loved them right back. Wendy's father, George R. Biesinger, supervised the Church's building programme throughout the South Pacific.

The event was organised by the newly formed Labour Missionary Legacy Trust and took place at the Kai Hall, Temple View.

One of the organisers, John Campbell, said the mission of the trust is to "honour our past and shape our future." ■

Meet the 94-Year-Old Who Is Quietly Serving

By Mormon Newsroom

Sitting quietly at her computer, Ina “Paddy” (Butler) Hearn has grown to love genealogy in all its different forms.

Despite the frustrations and sadness associated with working with family history records (like trying to read handwriting from early records that is indecipherable and transcribing death records of babies and young children), Paddy is quick to remind others that “you might not exist without your ancestors.”

Born in October 1923 in Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa, Paddy has indexed over 30,000 records and has arbitrated over 40,000 more.

When asked what her goal is for family history, she admits that it’s simply, “Get as much done as possible.”

In 1964 Ina and her husband, Winston, after enduring many government upheavals and frightening incidents, decided to leave Zambia and emigrate to New Zealand, where Ina’s brother and widowed father had already settled. Owing to many other homes also being vacated by the exodus of non-Africans, as they left they sold their home for less than 30 percent of its real value.

After settling in Auckland, New Zealand, Ina joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and

soon became interested in genealogy. She quickly began collecting names and information of her close relatives. Ina’s husband, Winston, joined the Church in 1965.

When the mining equipment company where Winston was employed shut down, he refused to “go on the dole”, resulting in the family returning to South Africa for him to become a mine manager near Naboomspruit, 132 miles from Johannesburg.

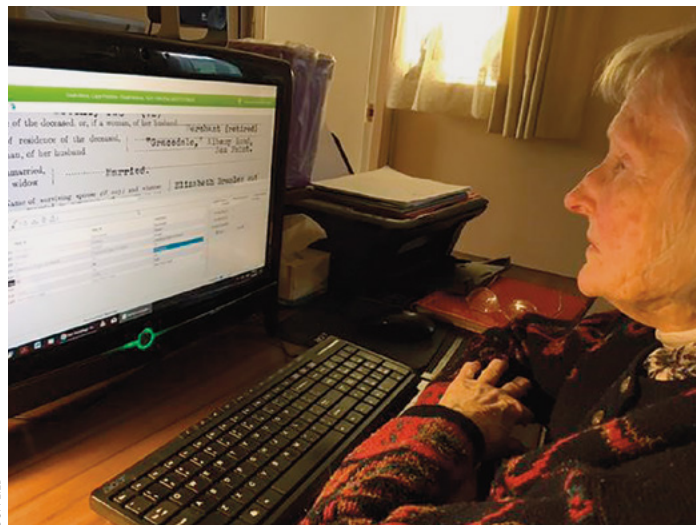
Many holidays were spent traveling mostly to the Cape and Transvaal Provinces, researching sources for ancestral data. This included visiting churches, cemeteries, museums, libraries and newspaper offices. She also traveled to genealogy departments at Rhodes University in Grahamstown,

the Cape, and Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg. Continued research was performed at Union Buildings and genealogy and history societies in Pretoria.

Copies of ancestral wills back to the 1500’s were received from England, in Latin and old English, which Ina was able to translate.

After more unrest in South African rule was predicted, the Hearnsees once again returned to New Zealand, settling in Christchurch, where their eldest daughter and her husband had obtained employment.

As members of the Church’s Christchurch stake, their Church leader asked them to inaugurate and establish family history programmes in their area. They accepted the



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challenge and were soon teaching others.

Ina is meticulous in her work and makes certain she has obtained authentic sources for her records.

In 1988 Ina and Winston moved to Hamilton, where they were able to work in the Hamilton family history library. They also assisted with the Universal Data Entry programme while continuing research for their own ancestors.

After becoming a widow in 2001, Ina moved to Auckland to be closer to her relatives. In spite of losing her companion, she continued her family history efforts. In January 2007 she

became an indexing project volunteer and has worked at that ever since. (Indexing is transcribing information from a document into a digital format.)

She first indexed 22 batches of United States census enumerations.

When asked what types of records are her favourites, she says, "I have no preference, but complete transcriptions of birth, marriage and death records are the most important."

In response to the question "Why do you do indexing?" she replied, "I want to support the Church's request for volunteers. It also means helping others to gain information in their own family history research."

Being able to transcribe a large number of African records has proved difficult but rewarding. Ina has not yet indexed any slave information but is planning to do so, as she has always felt compassion for them and their struggles.

On a typical day, after completing her usual chores, Ina begins with arbitration, then family history research. (Arbitration is the process of experienced indexers checking indexed information to ensure its accuracy.)

She has found that if she starts with family history, there is usually not enough time left for arbitrating in the three to eight hours she devotes daily to this work. But she intends to continue working at her computer—quietly serving. ■

MISSIONARY MOMENTS

Blessed for Her Service

By Simone Lee

People always assured me my family would be blessed while I served faithfully as a full-time missionary. I believed every word. However, little did I know that one of the greatest tests of faith lay just ahead.

I was converted and baptised into the Church when I was 18 years old. A few years later, I felt a strong desire to serve a mission. I prayed, and as a result I received an undeniable confirmation that this was right—that this was what Heavenly Father wanted me to do. Three long years later, I was finally on my way.

I had been out for almost a year, having recently been transferred to an outer island. After months of battling depression, I felt ready for a change, for a fresh start and a new adventure. I felt that after my battle with depression I would now enter a season of peace. The new scenery gave me renewed vibrancy for the work, higher hopes and increased faith.

One Monday, I decided to email my mum. I hadn't heard from her in a while, and I wanted to see how she was doing. She replied almost immediately, for which I was excited. However, my excitement quickly

turned into despair. My world had turned upside down within seconds.

My mum was a recovering alcoholic and had been sober for almost three years. This was a great accomplishment, and I was so proud of her. I knew in my mind that there would always be the possibility of her relapsing and had even started dreaming that she had done so. However, pushing those thoughts

aside, I chose to believe that it would never happen as I was engaged in the Lord's service as a full-time missionary.

This all changed as I read my mum's email, discovering that she had in fact relapsed. I was in shock and sat at the computer screen crying silently. I couldn't believe it.

My worse fear had come true. A few days before, I had felt on

top of the world, ready to give the few remaining months of my mission all that I had. And now, I felt like the world was on top of me and I was being crushed under its weight.

My feelings quickly turned into frustration. And it was aimed at God. I wasn't by any means a perfect missionary, but I felt that I was trying and I thought God would have



Simone served her mission in Kiribati.

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blessed me for my efforts. I was trying my best. I wanted to cry out, shake my fists at the heavens and give up. I wanted to give up on being a missionary. I felt my efforts weren't enough and that's why this had happened. So why should I even keep going? What was the point?

That evening I sought a priesthood blessing. I expressed the deepest, most inner feelings of my heart to my companion and mission leaders. All my frustrations, my feelings of despair, my lack of hope came out as we sat cramped in their small kitchen/office. The blessing was given and the first words spoken were, "Heavenly Father does love you."

It was exactly what I needed. I had felt abandoned and alone, and hearing those words brought me a deep reassurance that He was there and that He was aware of me. As I reflect on that experience, I know that there were more present than just us four in that room that night.

The next day, I read the words of the angel as he appeared to Alma: "Blessed art thou, Alma; therefore, lift up thy head and rejoice, for thou hast great cause to rejoice" (Alma 8:15). I felt that the Lord wanted me to lift up my head and rejoice, for I had great cause to rejoice! I was determined to be grateful.

I began writing a list of everything that I was grateful for. From small

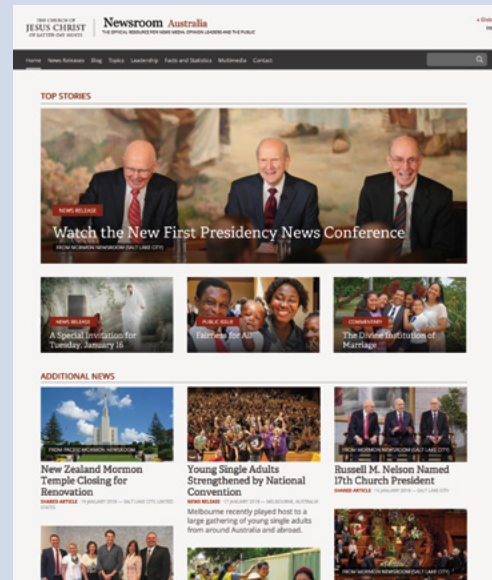
things to big things, writing this list helped me to first recognise and then to appreciate the blessings that God was continually pouring out upon my head.

At the time, I wondered why God had done this to me. However, since then I have realised that not every trial or every sickness is a curse from God. It's the opposite. It's a blessing. Had I not received this opportunity for growth and learning, I would still be the same person I was. It was an opportunity to be refined in the furnace of affliction, and I had emerged changed—a little more grateful and a little more faithful.

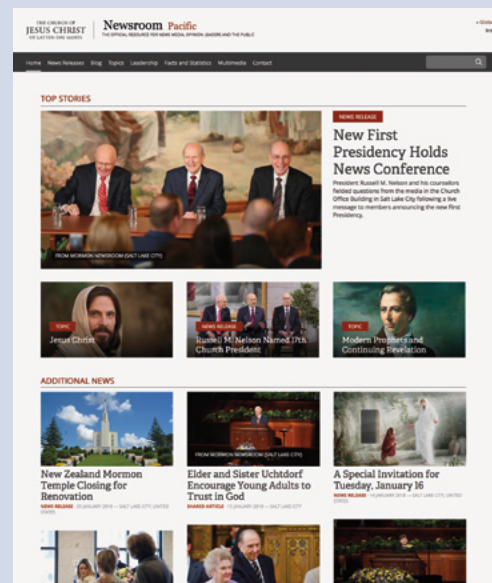
I am grateful for so many things. I am grateful that God helped me endure faithfully to the end of my mission and to enjoy it. I am grateful that He gave me many opportunities to grow and to learn and to be refined. I am grateful for friends and family at home, near and far, who lifted me when I was weak and who still do. I am grateful for my mum and for her strength in not giving up in her own personal journey towards sobriety. I am grateful for Christ. I am grateful that He carried me when I couldn't walk and that He gave me strength when I had none. I am grateful that God does live and that He is aware of us all. ■

Simone served her mission in Kiribati from November 2015 to May 2017. She is currently in the Auckland YSA First Ward in New Zealand.

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