

AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Spiritual Rebirth

By Elder Joni L. Koch

Second Counselor, Africa Southeast Area Presidency

In 2003 I was in Saint Petersburg, Russia, visiting some precious art collections from one of the great museums in that country. What impressed me the most, by its beauty and elegance, was the Fabergé eggs collection. At that time, I learned these eggs were carefully crafted under the supervision of the famous jeweler Peter Carl Fabergé as Easter gifts to the Tsar (imperial) family members. The one which especially captured my attention was the “Blue Enamel Ribbed,” for it is open with nothing inside which immediately reminded me of Christ’s empty tomb. After all,



this ancient tradition of giving decorated eggs was created to symbolize the actual Resurrection of Christ.

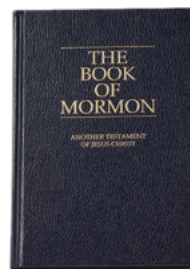
With the passing of time, this custom ended up being swallowed up by commercial interests, thus distorting the original idea. However, through the restored gospel we receive more powerful practices and symbols through which we can regularly experience this rebirth by coming unto Christ therefore being born again through His infinite sacrifice and Resurrection.

Book of Mormon

Daily we can have a new encounter with the Savior and His teachings and be renewed spiritually by studying the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ. This practice will expose us to His doctrines, ordinances, and teachings, thus strengthening our testimonies, answering our questions, and refreshing the soul. President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) said in the April 2017 general conference: “My dear associates in the work of the Lord, I implore each of us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day. As we do so, we will be in a position to hear the voice of the Spirit, to resist



Elder Joni L. Koch



temptation, to overcome doubt and fear, and to receive heaven’s help in our lives. I so testify with all my heart” (“The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Liahona*, May 2017, 87).

The Sacrament

Every week we can be “born again” through partaking worthily and attentively of the sacrament as if we are receiving our ordinances once more. We renew our covenants to take upon



Easter

By Elder Christophe Kawayo Bakajika
Africa South East Area Seventy



*Elder Christophe
Kawayo*

The spiritual significance of Easter is centered on the death, Atonement, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Formerly, it was intended to commemorate the passing over of the people of Israel from slavery to freedom. At that time, the feast of the Passover was solemnized through ceremony, the rituals of which were fulfilled with the death and the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Mormon, Amulek prophesied that “the whole meaning of the law [of Moses]” was to point the people of Israel to the ultimate, great, and last sacrifice of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane and at Golgotha (see Alma 34:12–15).

In fact, to allow the people of Israel to come out of Egypt, the Lord decreed the death of all the firstborn of men and all the firstborn of beasts (see Exodus 11:5). He commanded them to strike the blood of a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses wherein they

ourselves the name of Christ, always remembering Him and keeping His commandments. When we eat the bread that signifies His body and drink the water that represents His blood, we become unified with Him and receive the promise to always have with us the company of the Holy Ghost. Our thoughts during this ordinance must be directed to His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, His physical ordeal on the cross, and His glorious Resurrection.

The Temple

As we receive more elevated covenants in the temple and perform the same ordinances for the dead therein, we experience and provide for others an opportunity to go through a powerful change of heart, which, in itself, is a spiritual regeneration process

that helps us (and others) become new and better creatures. The temple experience, when fully appreciated, will always cause one’s heart and mind to receive revelation from heaven and approximate us to Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Many of us sometimes say: “I wish I could go back in time and do things differently.” Well, the good news is that because of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, we can be born again and again! Studying the Book of Mormon daily, partaking of the sacrament weekly, and worshipping in the temple frequently, will expose us to His power to heal and be sanctified.

May all of us, during this Easter season, ponder about these wonderful blessings and opportunities to gradually become new and better creatures. ■



were to eat it (see Exodus 12:5–7).

As we reflect on the Easter celebration, the power of the Holy Spirit can help us to understand the reason for the death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also, we can realize the impact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on all the inhabitants of the earth.

The first time Jesus Christ solemnized the ancient Passover, He manifested His divine power by multiplying the loaves and fishes (see Mark 6:30–43). It was especially during His second and last Passover that the Lord gave a fuller meaning to this feast by instituting the sacrament ordinance (see Luke 22:19–20).

A few hours after He instituted the sacrament ordinance, Jesus was arbitrarily arrested, crucified, and His body laid in a new sepulchre (see Matthew 27:58–60).

Many people testified of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The scriptures tell us that after His burial, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre. They found the stone of the tomb rolled to the side while the body of Jesus was no longer there. An angel of God told them that Jesus had risen as He had said. He recommended them to promptly go and inform His disciples. (See Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–12; John 20:11–18.) Also, before a great multitude of people in the land of Bountiful, the Lord Jesus

Christ showed Himself unto them and asked each one of them to thrust their hands into His side “that [they] may feel the prints of the nails in [His] hands and in [His] feet, that [they] may know that [He is] the God of Israel, . . . and [has] been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:14; see verses 1, 14–17; Alma 11:40–45).

Today, Easter is the annual reminder that through the Lord’s Atonement and Resurrection, we can be redeemed from spiritual bondage (see 2 Nephi 9:6–9; 2 Nephi 8; Mosiah 13:35; 15:20; Alma 33:22; 40:3). It’s an absolute truth.

Regarding the magnificence of the atoning sacrifice, which made possible the Resurrection, the prophet Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) gave the following testimony:

“The magnificent expression of His love came in His death when He gave His life as a sacrifice for all men. That Atonement, wrought in unspeakable pain, became the greatest event of history, an act of grace for which men gave nothing but which brought the assurance of the Resurrection to all who have or would walk the earth.” (“At the Summit of the Ages,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 87).

Through the spiritual testimony of President Gordon B. Hinckley, we can realize that:

- Easter is a symbol of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ therefore

becomes an irrefutable testimony of the immortality of the soul.

- By His act of charity, our Lord Jesus Christ opened the way of eternal life to all who obey His commandments. The Firstborn of God has already offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice for the sake of the whole humanity. It’s an absolute truth.
- Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we thus have hope that we will all return to the presence of God to be judged.
- By the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, no injustice in the mortal condition will be permanent because the demands of justice have already been satisfied unto us (see Alma 34:15–16).

Referring to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, President Russell M. Nelson stated that “It is the Savior who delivers us from physical and spiritual death. . . . [Jesus Christ is the source of our] succor, healing, forgiveness, or power” (“Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Liahona*, May 2017, 40). President Nelson’s statement denotes the importance of the Savior’s mission as emphasized by the Prophet Joseph Smith, who declared emphatically that “the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which

pertain to our religion are only appendages to it” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 54).

As we reflect on all that pertains to the Savior’s mission and His atoning

sacrifice, we realize that through the Lord’s Atonement and Resurrection, we can be redeemed from spiritual bondage and be prepared to follow the way of eternal life as family. ■

ticket office, I wondered how to spend the next few hours as I awaited the others. To my surprise, I soon heard steps behind me.

One of my friends appeared, smiling. “I didn’t like that movie either,” she said. Thirty seconds later, we heard a second pair of footsteps, and then a third. After a few minutes, a large group of us had formed.

I looked around me, incredulous. When I had decided to leave, there was no way I could have predicted that more than half of my group of friends were secretly hoping for a way to get out too.

Marianne Williamson said, “As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same.”

The same year, one of the friends in my circle decided to quit drinking alcohol. He didn’t tell anyone, but over the course of several months, he managed to successfully kick the habit. Later, he told me, “When things got tough, I would ask myself ‘what would you [Ruth Randall] do?’”

I was shocked by the amount of influence I had unknowingly had in his life.

The self-reliance blog tells us:

“Integrity is contagious. When we live according to its principles, others catch on—especially our families. One of the greatest blessings we can give them is to live a life of integrity and teach them to develop it too.”

Years later as a mother, I am trying to live by those principles. In some ways

LOCAL PAGES

Integrity: What Gives Others Permission to Be Their Best Selves

By T. Ruth Randall

Like many LDS teenagers in Africa, I was one of a handful of Church members in my high school. I became accustomed to sharing my beliefs with my friends, and I was known for having a certain set of standards. Fortunately for me, I don’t remember ever being ostracized for being different. If anything, I was respected and admired. My friends looked to me as a sort of anchor during an often difficult and confusing period of their lives.

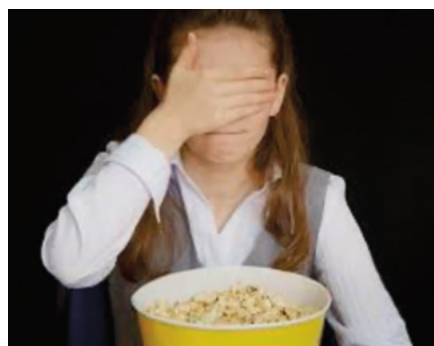
One day during the final year of high school, I joined a group of friends to watch a movie. As we bought our tickets, the movie poster did not give an indication of the movie rating. Somewhat naively, I decided to buy a ticket anyway in the hope that the movie would be aboveboard.

Two minutes into the movie, I realised my hopes were in vain. The opening scene was shockingly vulgar.

As I covered my eyes with my hands, I realised there was only one thing to do: leave. I was near the end of a long line of people, some of whom I was keen to make a favorable impression on. There was no way to make an inconspicuous exit. But there was also no way I could sit through that movie and be true to myself.

With a racing heart I leant over to a friend and whispered, “I’ll see you outside.”

Grabbing my popcorn, I picked my way in the inky darkness past the long row of friends. Back in the light of the



#LIGHTTHEWORLD

it's become much harder to be a perfect example of integrity, because my audience (my kids) watch me constantly, every moment of every day. They're not only sensitive to my actions, but my attitudes, moods, and even my motivation. My "integrity" needs to reach further than what I do as an example. It needs to become what I am.

The blog teaches that integrity is the key to personal improvement.

"We worship weekly and renew our covenants when we partake of the sacrament, repenting of any sins we have committed during the week. But if we aren't carefully examining our lives and making steps to improve, then we repeat the same mistakes over and over. It takes personal integrity in order to progress."

Helaman 3:35 provides me with a personal tool kit for applying principles of integrity and self-improvement.

The Nephites, at this point a righteous group of people, "did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God."

As I yield my heart unto God, I find that not only can I better be true to myself, but that my "self" also becomes more and more like the God I am heeding. ■

As we celebrate the Saviour's birth, His life, Atonement, death and glorious Resurrection, we have the opportunity to obey His call to "Come, follow me." In December, the Saints in Africa embraced the #LightTheWorld campaign. The following are stories about some their experiences.

Lending a Helping Hand

Lerato Pholo

The Light the World initiative encourages members to serve those around them and to share the light of the Saviour wherever they are. Being an example and a disciple of Christ comes with being able to emulate the Saviour.

Sister Bulelwa Cotyi, Mdantsane Ward 3, says that #LightTheWorld has helped her realize the importance of helping the elderly in her neighbourhood.

"I saw the importance of lending a helping hand to all those who are in need—especially the elderly. This initiative has made me realize that we have a responsibility to serve and offer a helping hand to all those who can't help themselves. The advent calendar made doing these tasks fun," said Cotyi.

Sister Nomawethu Dingaana from Mdantsane Ward 3 expressed her gratitude for the initiative because it helped her invite a friend to church, and she was later baptized.

"I shared [with her] the Book of Mormon story of how faithful Nephi was, and today she is a member of the Church. She has a calling and next year she is going to the temple.

I am really grateful for the pass along cards and scriptures that I got to share with her," said Dingaana.

Sister Somila Mhini from Mdantsane Ward 2 says that when the video came out, she shared it on Facebook and shared it with friends as well.

"When I shared the video, people were asking questions about what we believe in and what we do. Questions about the campaign came up as well and people were interested in coming to church. I also found that people got enlightened about our practices and they also saw that we all believe in one God and we could have conversations about God and the Saviour," said Mhini.

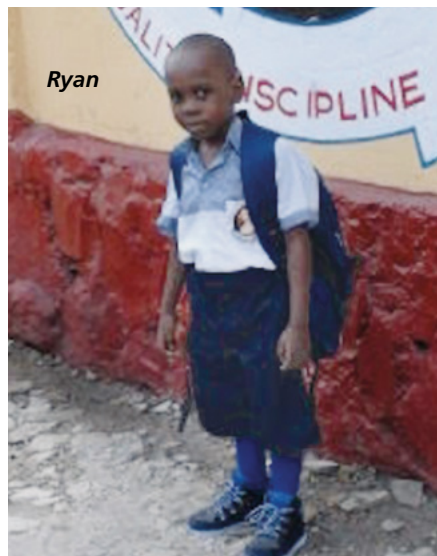
Brother Uviwe Malgas served a mission in Uganda, and he participated in the campaign. He felt very close to the Saviour and the experience helped him grow.

"I enjoyed using the advent calendar and using the activities relevant for mission standards. I enjoyed participating because this helped me grow closer to God; I enjoyed helping those in need," said Malgas. ■

Not a Mere Coincidence

By Jolie Charlotte Botendi
Apalamonganzi

During the 2016 Christmas season, Africa Southeast Area leaders encouraged members and friends



of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to participate in the “Light the World in 25 Ways in 25 Days” initiative. We had decided to follow the program in our family. We prayerfully strove to adapt the ideas of the proposed activities to our situation and environment.

During the same period, many in Kinshasa began to feel pessimistic and fearful because the impending December 19th election deadline was expected to be violent. In contrast to the alarm felt in the neighborhood, we remained positive and confident in our Heavenly Father. A few days before that fateful date, my 6-year-old son Ryan and his nanny escaped an attempted abduction during their return from school while I was testifying about peace to my neighbors. The week before, my husband gave a talk in church about the Savior calming the storm (see Mark 4:36–41).

We knew that this “Light the World” theme for December 19th—“Jesus calmed the storm, you can do the same”—was not a mere coincidence. The Lord had offered to calm the political storm in Kinshasa, and He had done so.

Each year, we are invited to “Light the World.” If we follow the suggested calendar of scriptures with prayer, our light will shine and miracles will continue to take place (see 3 Nephi 18:15). ■

Sharing Food and the Saviour’s Love in Uganda

By Apondi Suzan Mwangi

Ntinda Ward, Uganda Kampala North Stake Uganda

The culture of Santa Claus is very uncommon or rather unheard of in our African society—we only get to see this in movies. We sat as friends and decided to participate in the Church’s 2017 Christmas initiative. We then each contributed a little money and got donations of food items from friends and family. We bought food and made 100 packs. These included sugar, flour, soap, salt, candy, and many other items, and then drove to a nearby village which had people who really needed food.





One of us dressed like Santa, and we surprised the villagers with these Christmas gifts. The expression they had on their faces was unbelievable—they were very happy and thankful. But we were the ones who really benefited the most! We felt joy that at least we had fed the hungry just as the Saviour did. We left the village with our hearts filled with joy, and we are grateful for the experience! We are hoping to do the same thing again this year and so touch the lives of the people around us. ■



When Life Gives You Scraps—Make a Quilt

By **Sister Lillywhite**

Senior Missionary, Public Relations

A quilt suggests that many and varied pieces can successfully be assembled and stitched together to create a beautiful and functional whole without any of the pieces losing their unique characteristics. This refers to life, you and me, families, neighbors, and the world.

Someone once said, that as we were planning our life like squares for a quilt in many piles—an angel sat before us sewing our quilt—creating a tapestry that becomes our life. In quilting we take whole pieces of fabric or sometimes unused clothing and cut them up into pieces, only to sew the pieces together again in a new way. And when finished, we end up with something more beautiful than when we started.

An activity at the Christmas devotional and social for volunteers and workers at the service center in the Upper Hill, Nairobi, Kenya, meeting-house, included this quilt metaphor. Participants were asked to produce a “quilt block” on paper using the #LightTheWorld advent calendar and

illustrate what one of the “25 ways” meant to them.

At the end of 15 minutes, the paper blocks were assembled into a quilt on the bulletin board and a non-biased judge gave the groups a number to pick a reward of a little trinket wrapped in red and tied with ribbon.

The trinket, perhaps a packet of needles and spool of thread, or tinned tuna or a local artist’s Christmas card, could be used in some way to fulfill the 25 ways over 25 days to celebrate the life of Jesus Christ by following His teachings, by letting His light shine—in our lives and in the lives of others.

This is what the people are looking for, something different from what the world has to offer. The world doesn’t need to see hypocrisy. They don’t want to hear our mouths say one thing but see our actions “say” another. #LightTheWorld encourages us to show genuine faith in our Savior who has the power to heal broken lives, to change us from the inside out, and to recreate our life pieces into something beautiful. ■



Making Cookies

By **Sister Lillywhite**

Senior Missionary, Public Relations

Sister Baddoo, a substitute teacher in the Langata Branch (Kenya) Relief Society, began her lesson. She held up the “Light the World” poster and explained how it was easy last year to do something each day and it would also be easy this year. For day one, the scripture was “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). She explained what fun her family had making cookies—sugar and chocolate chip cookies.

The two youngest enjoyed rolling the dough in little balls and smashing them flat on the baking pans. All four children were involved in the baking process. The family took them to neighbors to surprise them and make them smile. The following day Sister Baddoo smiled because her children helped her pull weeds in the garden without being asked. The family discovered that making others smile is not only fun but contagious. ■



Blessed Are the Merciful

By **Sister Lillywhite**

Senior Missionary, Public Relations

On December 17, 2017, Bishop Victor Ochieng of the Riruta Ward in the Nairobi West Stake addressed his congregation about the Light the World Christmas initiative. He mentioned that if you do something nice to someone who knows you, who knows about the 25 ways in 25 days #LightTheWorld program, you will get a thank-you. But if you do something for someone who doesn’t know about the program—then your good deed will be perceived as a spiritual act.

Bishop Ochieng and his wife had a friend who moved away from their neighborhood, but his wife knew where she now lived. The Ochiengs decided to “do something merciful” and visit her and also see how she was doing. They found her in a predicament with rent due and only KSh40 for the whole week. They gave her a little. She wept and the Ochiengs wept with her, because she didn’t know they were doing the 25 ways in 25 days program.

Bishop Ochieng said, “We must show our love for Christ by sharing His gospel every chance we get, and the best thank-you is ‘doing.’ We must seek Christ daily, especially as we honor His birthday celebration—with Christmas.” ■

• **WANTED** •

A LATTER-DAY SAINT
WHO:

**SEEKS
TRUTH**

Share your story and send us your picture on Facebook
@LDSAfrica or Twitter #LDSmostwanted or
email it to africasecommunications@gmail.com.