

# AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### “ . . . And He Took Their Little Children, One by One, and Blessed Them . . . ”

By Larry S. Kacher

First Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency

“Dear brothers and sisters, we constantly seek direction from the Lord on how we can help our members keep the commandments of God, especially those two great commandments to love God and our neighbors.

“For months we have been seeking a better way to minister to the spiritual and temporal needs of our people in the Savior’s way.

“We have made the decision to retire home teaching and visiting teaching as we have known them. Instead, we will implement a newer, holier approach to caring for and ministering to others. We will refer to these efforts simply as

‘ministering’” (“Ministering,” *Liahona*, May 2018, 100).

In the last general conference, President Russell M. Nelson made this historic announcement. We are to change how we care for each other.

Many have said that ministering is what those in West Africa do naturally. It is part of their culture and their heritage—to care for and to watch over each other.

The following example illustrates how ministering is part of the soul of the African people. In June 1989 the government in Ghana decided that the LDS Church was a threat to the

Elder Larry S. Kacher



security of Ghana. They ordered the Church to be shut down. They confiscated our chapels and even arrested some of the leaders, one of whom was the president of the Koforidua Branch, Brother Richard Ahadjie.

Brother Ahadjie was arrested and put in jail for eight days. When released, he was required to report to the police station every day for a month.

During this period, Brother Ahadjie sought direction from the mission president as to how to take care of the branch members as they could no longer congregate as a church. The mission president instructed him to simply watch over, to minister, to the members.

Determined to follow the counsel of his leader and guided by the Spirit, Brother Ahadjie, with some of the branch leaders, devised a plan to take care of the members, to truly minister to them. Every Sunday for the next 17 months, they visited each member of their branch. Departing each Sunday morning at 4:00 a.m., they gathered at the home of a brother who lived on his farm in the bush. They administered the sacrament together and read from the Book of Mormon. They then paired themselves after the meeting



and moved out to visit every family and minister to them.

Each Sunday they conducted these ministering visits arriving home around midnight. For 17 months they repeated this pattern. For 17 months they ministered as the Savior would to the members of the Koforidua Branch. Finally, the ban was lifted. The government realized that the Church was not a threat to the security of Ghana. On the contrary, the Church was a blessing to its people.

Shortly after the ban was lifted, a sacrament meeting was held. It was a fast and testimony Sunday. What was done by Brother Ahadjie in his branch was done in various forms by other branch presidents. No doubt the mission president was concerned by how many members would have been lost during this period known as “The Freeze,” even though he was not in Ghana. To everyone’s delight, the attendance at the fast and testimony meeting was 120%. Not only did the members return, but many nonmembers came, wanting to understand what kind of church would be so dedicated to its members.

The Savior Himself set the pattern for this kind of ministering when He visited the Nephites. “And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them” (3 Nephi 17:21).

As the Savior ministered to the Nephites in this manner, one by one, motivated out of love for Heavenly Father and love for each other, hearts were changed. The Nephites were truly converted to the Savior and to His gospel. And a people were prepared to live in love and harmony for almost 200 years.

A key part of ministering is to love our neighbor—all our brothers and sisters. True love is shown by helping all to receive eternal life which is the desire of our Heavenly Father. How is eternal life obtained? All must receive the saving ordinances of the gospel, keep the associated covenants, and endure to the end. President Nelson has referred to this as the “covenant path” (see “As We For Forward Together,” *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7).

As spiritual eyes are opened, it will become clear how this can be done in our wards and branches. Following are some specific examples of what leaders and members have done to truly minister to their brothers and sisters:

A Relief Society presidency identified five sisters who had not yet received their temple endowment. They set a goal to help each one to receive these sacred blessings. How great was their joy to see these sisters as prepared to go to the temple.

A Laurel class president noticed a Laurel-age girl who had never been baptized and whose mother was a less-active member. She reached out

to her and invited her to girls’ camp. All the young women befriended her. How great was their joy when she was baptized.

A teachers quorum decided that to prepare for their missions, they would all learn the missionary lessons found in the missionary lessons in *Preach My Gospel*. Each month, as part of their class, they would practice teaching each other. But that wasn’t enough. They wanted to do more. They noticed an unbaptized young man whose mother was a member and another young man who had stopped coming to church. They decided to go teach the missionary lessons to these young men. How great was their joy when the nonmember boy was baptized and the less-active boy returned to activity and was ordained to the proper priesthood office.

An elders quorum presidency decided that to truly bless the lives of the quorum members, active and less-active alike, they needed to know which saving ordinances were missing in the lives of their quorum members. They then shared this sensitive but important information with the ministering brothers for their ministering families. With this information, the assigned ministering brothers were able to help many to prepare to receive these missing saving ordinances. How great was their joy to see their brothers return to and follow the “covenant path.”

## CHURCH HISTORY COLUMN

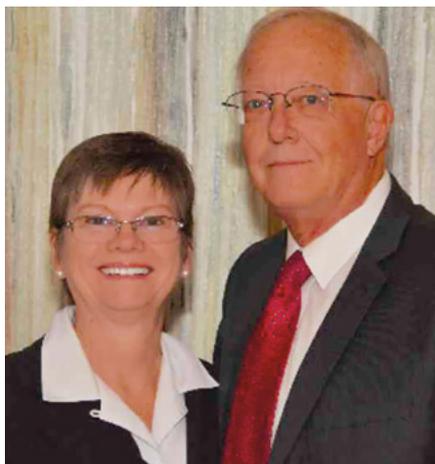
A mission president, working closely with the stake president and bishops, trained his missionaries to work closely with the bishop and ward council members, earning their trust through love, obedience, and hard work. With this trust and under the direction of their bishop and ward leaders, they invited less-active members to meet with the bishop to prepare to receive missing saving ordinances. How great was their joy as less-active members returned, family members were baptized, and wards grew in numbers and in spiritual strength.

All leaders in the Church, as they see as the Lord sees, with spiritual eyes, will be inspired to know how to minister to those for whom they are responsible. Every ministering brother and sister can be an instrument in the hands of the Lord by helping Heavenly Father's children receive the fulness of the gospel by helping all to find firm footing on the covenant path.

As hearts are purified and testimonies strengthened, we will feel what the converted sons of Mosiah felt as they departed on their mission to the Lamanites, "Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble" (Mosiah 28:3).

May we be so motivated to follow the counsel of our beloved prophet. ■

## New Church History Couple in Africa West Area: Elder McCullough and Sister Christensen



The Africa West Area now has a full-time senior couple working as Church history missionaries. This is the first time missionaries have served in this capacity in this area. Just a little background on this couple: Elder Robert McCullough and Sister Laura Christensen. Elder McCullough is a native of Salt Lake City, Utah, has traveled extensively as a U.S. government employee, and retired from full-time employment in June 2017. Sister Christensen is a native of North Carolina, but lived in Atlanta, Georgia, most of her adult life. She was a stay-at-home mother. In June 2014, Elder McCullough and Sister Christensen (following the death of their first spouses) were married.

Their combined family consists of 9 children and 27 grandchildren (with another grandchild on the way). Elder McCullough served as a young Elder in the Canada Halifax Mission and Sister Christensen served in the Salt Lake Family & Church History Mission in 2011. The couple arrived in Accra, Ghana, in May 2018 to begin their 18-month mission. They will assist Kwame Twum Ampaw, the area Church history advisor.

### Just what is Church history, not to be confused with family history?

As recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord commanded that the Church keep a record and a history continually of all important things that transpire in Zion, including the manner of life, faith, and works of the Latter-day Saints (see Doctrine and Covenants 47:3; 69:3; 85:1–2). Since 1830, the Church has worked to collect, preserve, and share its history.

Church history work brings members closer to Christ by helping them remember "what great things the Lord hath done" (title page of the Book of Mormon). Hope and confidence are increased as a result of learning about others who have faced challenges

and, with the Lord's help, overcome them. Learning from history helps us avoid repeating mistakes and provides a sense of identity and heritage. In this way, Church history blesses current and future generations.

This work is under the direction of the Area Presidency. An area Church history advisor, Kwame Twum Ampaw, works with country and regional advisors. There are several parts to this work:

**First**, collecting annual Church histories from the many units in the area.

**Second**, conducting oral interviews to gather important history of the Church in West Africa to be preserved for future generations.

**Third**, collecting records from individuals of importance to Church history.

**Fourth**, sharing this history that has been collected.

Africa West is a very large area with a rich Church heritage. It takes

many people joining together to accomplish this important work of collecting, preserving and sharing our history. The Church History Department is always looking for contributions to their collection. If you have any documents pertaining to the Church history in our area (journals, photographs, letters, etc.) that could be donated or digitally scanned and returned, please contact the area office: [bobmack@ldschurch.org](mailto:bobmack@ldschurch.org) ■

## MISSIONARY MOMENTS

# God Is Found in the Book of Mormon!

By Ebi Jean Bedel Koffi

Aerocité Ward, Grand Bassam Stake, Abidjan, Ivory Coast



I had a difficult childhood; my parents separated when I was still a teenager. This separation was a big blow to me and my three siblings, I being the eldest. Despite my mother's meager resources, she did her best to provide for our needs. During this challenging situation, we learned to live with little, wake up early, appreciate life and people, and to think seriously about life and the existence of God: Does God really exist? If so, why did He allow us to live such experiences? We wondered what we did to deserve that. These questions went unanswered until I met the missionaries.

I brilliantly passed my baccalaureate exams in 2010 and gained admission to the faculty of psychology at a university in Abidjan. Despite our poverty, I had decided to take a chance with this as I could not accept the fact that my brilliant school career was going to stop due to lack of financial means. I contacted one of my uncles living in Abidjan, asking him to take me in to further my education. He was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; I had never heard of it before. What impressed me from the first moments in this home was the love and joy filled there. I had no difficulty fitting in. I grew up in a Christian sect; however, I had begun to lose interest because of everything that had happened to me. I found it unjust and I began to question the very existence



of God. It was just at this moment of desperation that my host family asked me if I was ready to receive the missionaries. In fact, it did not interest me anymore, this matter of religion, but for the respect that I had for my uncle, I accepted.

After several unsuccessful visits and discussions with the missionaries, I came to recognize the fact that the Church was true, but I had a problem: The Book of Mormon. I did not accept the idea that there was another scripture besides the Bible that would testify of Christ. I had

a keen interest in reading and my supposed broad knowledge of the Bible and other philosophical books did not facilitate my discussions with missionaries.

Finally, I began to read the Book of Mormon. At first, I read it just out of curiosity, but once I started, I could not find the strength to stop. After a full reading in a month, I began to feel something deep inside me, a warm feeling in my heart, a light in my mind, a transformation, a voice.

At night, I could not close my eyes because my mind was

revealed about the sacredness of the Book of Mormon. I was baptized in February 2010. As a result, I served a full-time mission and married Prisca Ebi, a lovely daughter of our Heavenly Father!

I am grateful to the Lord for using the Akoi family in making me an instrument in His hands to do a lot of good for His children.

I testify that God is hiding in the Book of Mormon, and I invite everyone who wants to discover it to make it their personal experience to gain their own testimony. ■



Elder Shun

## The Wake-up Call

By Elder Eshun

Nigeria Lagos Mission

On a Sunday in August 2014, as I sat in the compound of our residence reading a book, I noticed a group of people my age being led by someone older in white shirt and ties approaching me. There were about seven of them, and I felt uneasy. I soon realized that the men who stood in front of me were the young men of my ward, being led by the quorum president.

All I wondered was what they were doing there. They were very happy to see me. They told me they had missed me and that the Lord needed

me in His fellowship. They spoke to me about passing the sacrament and other youth activities. They then encouraged me to come to church.

I had not been active in the Church for about two years since my baptism in 2011, and I felt I had lost my path in the things of the Lord. Throughout all those times, I felt there was nowhere to look for help, nor anyone to extend a hand of assistance and that there was no turning back for me. I always had the desire to return to the Lord but often felt it was too late. When I arrived at church for sacrament meeting the following Sunday, I felt both shy and ashamed, but everyone greeted me lovingly with smiles. It was then I realized that the Lord had just used the selfless hearts of my fellow young men in a reactivation effort as a wake-up call to return one of His lost sheep to His fold.

I am filled with gratitude for the noble and selfless men out there, like the young men who visited me on that day, who are also putting in all their efforts to call upon other members who have fallen away from the faith. Indeed, He remembers His children, wherever they may be. Today I am at the point of completing my mission, having been used as an instrument in the Lord's hands to bring many to the light of the gospel. It has been such a wonderful experience for me and I am grateful I heeded the call to return to church. ■

## Latter-Day Voices from Bo, Sierra Leone

As a bishop of Sewa Road Ward, my prayer is to serve God with a real intent.

I joined the Church in 2004 and had the blessing of serving a full-time mission. This has helped me to clearly know my path in the work of salvation to serve my fellow servants in the Lord's vineyard. I truly know that this is the kingdom of God the Eternal Father and that we ought to render service at all times in whatever capacity, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. —*Abraham Momoh Morigboi, Sewa Road Ward, Bo-Sierra Leone West Stake*



Abraham Momoh Morigboi



Josephus Salia Marveh

I became a member of the Church in 1997 through my elder brother, Francis Marveh, who received the gospel in Freetown through his friend. Through the callings I have had, I was motivated to serve a full-time mission. Though I thought it was to be a place of laxity and comfort, I realized it was entirely the opposite. I had a lot to learn and to experience, and I clearly understood what it was. I served diligently as a senior companion, trainer, district leader, and a zone leader. I am grateful to be a returned missionary, still serving in the Church as a leader in my ward. I am married and sealed to my beautiful and supportive wife, Isatu Fatima Marveh, and we are truly blessed. I know that perseverance strengthens our weaknesses if only we rely on our

Saviour and Redeemer of the world, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

—Josephus Salia Marveh, Njagboima Ward, Bo-Sierra Leone West Stake

I am grateful to Heavenly Father for my calling as a Primary president in my branch. This has helped me to cultivate love for children everywhere. I have grown a fondness for them and as much as they have for me and will call my attention anywhere they see me. It is a great experience as I have been strengthened and taught as a potential mother. I am learning how to raise children of my own. I know that children are special gifts from our Heavenly Father and that serving in Primary is an opportunity to nurture and love God's children. —Adama Kalifa, Simbaru Branch, Bo-Sierra Leone West Stake

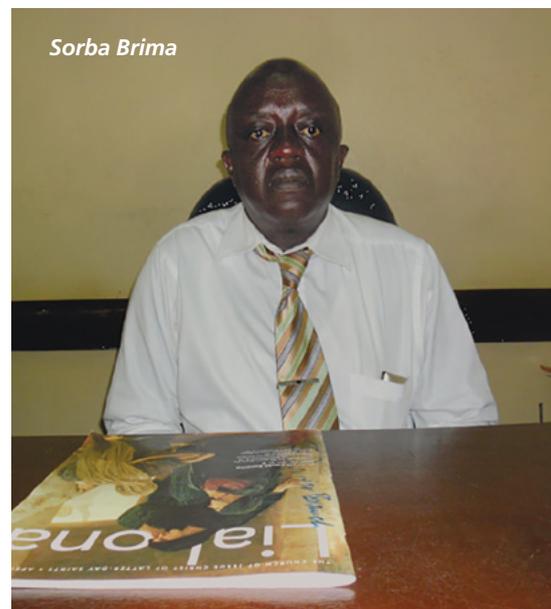
Since my family joined the Church in 2004, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has had a hold on us because of their priority for family. What the Church teaches us, and our children complement what we teach at home, that has helped to shape our children and given us a good image in our community.

Heavenly Father loves us, and He loves us as a family. We will continue to be part of this Church and to also help our neighbors who have not yet had the privilege of receiving this true gospel. Although we may have some challenges, we still strive to lean on God's word. I know that God lives, and

that Jesus is the Christ who atoned for our sins, amen. —Abibatu K. Mallah, Simbaru Branch, Bo-Sierra Leone West Stake

I am grateful to the Lord for my membership in His Church. My investigation of this Church was never through anyone but by the power of God. I and my family members had attended so many churches. Our membership would have been earlier, but rumors about the Book of Mormon scared us until I was pushed by God. I liked what the Church offered me in their classes. The lessons were according to my needs, which I extended to my family members and now, we are all members of the Church.

Before my membership, I had always returned home late, but now I have been able to overcome that so I have time to discuss with my family,



Sorba Brima

teach my children, and look over their work. My family is a peaceful one now and I am grateful to the Lord for that. I know that God lives and that this is His Church, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. —*Sorba Brima, Quarter Branch, Bo-Sierra Leone West Stake*

We have attended so many churches, but all those churches never gave to us what would convince us to stay with them until in 2017 when I joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This concluded our search for the truth and now we have

a place to stay where we are learning from the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the *Liahona*. This has improved our family life. Although challenges interrupt us sometimes which is inevitable, our lives are much better now than before. God has given us peace. We know that God lives and that this is His Church, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. —*Brother and Sister Micheal Abdul Kposowa, Kandeh Town Ward, Bo-Sierra Leone West Stake* ■

## CALL FOR ARTICLES

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so that it can address the needs and experiences of members where you live. The inclusion of the local pages in each issue depends on the availability of local content. We invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor:

AfricaWestWebsite@ldschurch.org ■

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