

AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

“For I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel of Christ”

By Elder Joni L. Koch

Second Counselor, Africa Southeast Area Presidency

“All of us are invited to serve, love, and minister by sharing the gospel—and we should courageously correct and clarify misunderstandings about the restored gospel and the Church.”

In our area plan, we have all received the charge to love, serve, and minister to one another by sharing the gospel with others not of our faith.

Engaging in conversations with people about the restored gospel—and providing referrals to missionaries—are very evident ways we can and should do missionary work. However, we are also expected to share the gospel by providing clarification to those who misunderstand, lovingly correcting false information from those who are misinformed, and even defending the

Church when under attack by those who would do us harm. In the words of Alma in Mosiah 18:9, we are to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”

For I Am Not Ashamed

Many years ago, one of my best friends was in his very first class in law school. The teacher was a renowned intellectual to whom the students were paying close attention. During that lecture, she started to expose her views on religion—portraying it negatively.



Elder Joni L. Koch

At a certain point, she even inferred that those “Mormon missionaries” you see in the streets were actually agents of a foreign government disguised as religious representatives. At that moment, my friend interrupted the lecture by raising his hand and saying, “Professor, I was one of those ‘agents’ in Portugal for two years.” He noticed that she was puzzled and confused. So he asked permission to explain, went to the blackboard, and started “sharing the gospel” with all present in that classroom.

He explained about the evidence of the existence of Heavenly Father, the creation of our spirits, the plans presented for us to come to this earth, the dispensations starting from Adam until Jesus Christ, and how His Church ended in apostasy. My friend taught about the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith and bore his testimony—and then the class time ended. As a result of his approach, he received an apology from the teacher and he earned the respect of all his classmates that day. In fact, he was chosen to act as the class representative in the student body government and was later named to be the keynote speaker at their graduation a few years later.



*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”
(Romans 1:16).*

His courage to clarify and correct false information—and then bear his testimony—exemplifies what the Apostle Paul was teaching to the Romans when he said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16). When we too act boldly and courageously to defend the Church and our beliefs, we are also sharing the gospel in a very powerful way!

Sharing the Gospel Correctly on Social Media

Nowadays, one of the main areas where our courage to share the gospel is necessary is when we use social media platforms. Proactively we can—without being preachy or self-righteous—share our beliefs—simply, lovingly, and with conviction. We can share our thoughts about the Savior at special occasions such as Christmas and Easter. We could post or tweet about the way particular general conference talks have influenced our thinking. We may also post short verses of the Book of Mormon and our feelings about them. All these might inspire and attract someone to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we navigate through our social media relationships, there will be times when we will need to defend the values encompassed by the restored gospel such as the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, our position on abortion, the doctrine on gender, and even the reality of the existence of a Heavenly Father and the

mission of His Son, Jesus Christ. While we certainly should not engage in debates around our beliefs, we should lovingly—but clearly—state our position as taught by the scriptures and especially through our living prophets. Positioning ourselves appropriately and spiritually in the social media crowd is a very effective way to share the gospel.

Conclusion

All of us are invited to serve, love, and minister by sharing the gospel.

We may do it proactively by talking to everyone who will listen to our message—but also by courageously correcting and clarifying misunderstandings about the restored gospel and the Church. As we do so, the Lord will direct us to those “who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it” (Doctrine and Covenants 123:12). ■

Elder Joni L. Koch was sustained as a General Authority Seventy in April 2017. He is married to Liliame Michele Ludwig; they are the parents of two children.

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADER MESSAGE

Tune into the Spirit

By Elder Duane D. Bell

Area Seventy



Elder Duane Bell

“There is one ‘true God, and Jesus Christ,’ whose doctrine, when followed with full purpose of heart, will give us peace in this life and eternal life in the life to come.”

In my profession, I am involved with selling—and at times installing—satellite dishes for homes to view various television channels from the broadcaster of their choice. This takes a little bit of knowledge of the industry and skill to install the equipment. Let me explain how this happens with a less technical explanation.

As we cannot physically see the satellite in orbit from earth with our naked eyes, aligning the dish perfectly with the satellite may seem impossible.

One must have a basic knowledge that there is a satellite parked in orbit at a specific location, have the correct satellite dish, and have the correct installation tools in order to properly install the equipment. All these are necessary to receive the correct signal from the correct satellite.

As there are literally hundreds of satellites in orbit, aiming the dish at the correct satellite takes knowledge and skill. The satellite dish has to be perfectly aligned with the satellite in

orbit so as to receive maximum signal strength and quality. Otherwise, the viewer will not be able to receive the desired television channels which the broadcaster uplinks to the satellite. This takes some precise movement of the dish from left to right and from up to down. To make this process more effective and accurate, we use a device called a satellite field strength meter.

This instrument when used correctly, and while adjusting the satellite dish toward the desired satellite, will indicate whether our signal strength is increasing or decreasing. The more we align the dish correctly to the satellite, the more our signal strength and quality increases until we get what is called “the sweet spot.” This means we have achieved the maximum signal quality and strength that the satellite transponder has to offer.

When signal strength is strong, it prevents signal loss during bad weather. But when a satellite dish is not aligned correctly—and heavy rains and storms come—signal strength decreases and we lose our signal from the satellite in orbit.

Sometimes the satellite dish may be flawlessly installed—with perfect signal strength and quality—but the installer may fail to secure it tightly. Then, when strong winds blow, the dish may shift a few degrees from the “sweet spot” and again, the signal is lost.

This process can be likened to our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Because we cannot see them



In a spiritual sense, gaining an increase in signal strength on a field strength meter is like us increasing our faith in Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

with our natural eyes unless “quickened by the Spirit” (Doctrine and Covenants 67:11), there are many who, like Korihor in the Book of Mormon, claim that man cannot know of things they cannot see. Hence, faith is the key principle of our gaining a knowledge of their existence. Alma teaches that “if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true” (Alma 32:21).

Though there are hundreds of satellites in orbit, only one will give us the signal we require to watch the correct television channels we seek. Similarly, there is one “true God, and Jesus Christ” (John 17:3), whose doctrine, when followed with full purpose of heart, will give us peace in this life and eternal life in the life to come.

In a spiritual sense, gaining an increase in signal strength on a field strength meter is like us increasing our faith in Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Gaining a firmer knowledge of Their existence requires a study of the scriptures, with focus on the Book of Mormon. When done sincerely and earnestly, we can then

receive a witness as spoken of by Moroni when he exhorted all “to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles *have written*, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, *and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them*, may be and abide in you forever” (Ether 12:41; emphasis added).

Once we receive this witness from the Holy Ghost, we constantly need to nourish that testimony in order to increase our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Just as signal strength and quality are vital when installing a satellite dish, when we align ourselves to the will of the Father and Jesus Christ and apply true doctrine in our lives, our spiritual strength and faith increase.

Like adjusting the satellite dish from left to right and up and down to find the “sweet spot,” we need to “adjust” our lives to experience this increase of faith. This means learning to put off the natural man by laying “aside every sin, which easily doth beset you” (Alma 7:15) and allowing the Atonement of Christ to take effect in our lives. The more we apply this, the more our faith will increase.

When our focus is not applied in this, we can become like a satellite dish that—when not secured properly—can easily shift its alignment in bad weather and lose signal. Or in the spiritual sense, lose our faith. Or, we can secure ourselves by constantly increasing our faith and through applying the counsel Helaman gave to his sons Nephi and Lehi, “that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

What a wonderful opportunity we have had with one of the 2018 area plan goals to “Increase Faith in Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ and His Atonement” by doing the following:

1. Improve Sabbath day observance in the home and at church.
2. All members worthily have a temple recommend and participate in temple work.
3. Read the Book of Mormon daily.

I testify that as we align ourselves to these goals with full purpose of heart, we will experience this increased faith.

Our lives will be filled with the joy the gospel has to offer. We will be able to bear with patience our afflictions and endure our trials knowing that the Lord is on our side. As I have applied those goals more earnestly in my life in 2018, I have felt an increase of the Spirit and a greater determination to remember and to keep the covenants I have made. I have felt that I have drawn closer to Heavenly Father and the Savior and have been blessed

temporally and spiritually because of this.

May we constantly strive to increase our faith and to become true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ by applying true doctrine. By doing so, we will establish the gospel of Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our homes. ■

Elder Duane D. Bell was named an Area Seventy at the April 2018 general conference. He is married to Jocelyn Lee Scott; they are the parents of four children. Elder and Sister Bell reside in East London, South Africa.

“CHOOSE A MEANINGFUL SABBATH” SERIES

Sabbath Blessings

By Elder Carl B. Cook

President, Africa Southeast Area Presidency (2014–16)

Elder
Carl B.
Cook



“Ever since I accepted the invitation to improve my Sabbath day observance, my faith has increased and I feel closer to my Father in Heaven. The Sabbath truly has been a delight. I am also benefitting from the efforts of others who are striving to improve, particularly during Church meetings.”

Editor’s Note: One of the goals in the Africa Southeast Area plan is for us to **“Improve Sabbath Day Observance in the Home and at Church.”** During 2019 we will direct attention to how to make the Sabbath more spiritual, more sacred, and more meaningful in our lives. We begin this 2019 series, **“Choose a Meaningful Sabbath,”** with a piece written by Elder Carl B. Cook in 2016, while he was serving as President of the Africa Southeast Area.

I mourn the loss of President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), former President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, but I rejoice in all that I learned from

him. Many lessons he taught are indelibly written in my mind and heart. He helped me understand that even small things influence the Spirit in our lives.

I was preparing for my first assignment to preside at a stake conference as a new Area Seventy when President Packer called me. He asked if it would be convenient if he attended the conference with me, and I readily accepted. When we arrived for the meetings, President Packer said to the stake president, “You are probably wondering why I am here.” He then pointed to me and said, “I am here to whip him into shape.” It wasn’t long before I realized that he meant what he said.

Reverence Invites Revelation

Following our planning meeting with the stake presidency, President Packer suggested we take our seats on the stand. It was 20 minutes before the leadership meeting was to begin. Nearly everyone was in their seats, and I leaned over to compliment the stake president. Suddenly I received an elbow in my side, and President Packer said firmly, “No talking.”

I was shocked to receive a reprimand from an Apostle, and it took me a moment to recover. As I glanced at him out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that he was writing some notes on a fresh notepad, including a few scriptures that he planned to share. I was filled with the Spirit as I realized that President Packer was receiving revelation for what the Lord would have him teach. President Packer’s previous general conference address came to mind, “Reverence Invites Revelation” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1991). It was imperative



I know as we appropriately observe the Sabbath, our faith can increase.

that I keep quiet so as not to interrupt the whisperings of the Spirit.

A few moments later, President Packer leaned over and asked me to have the stake president request that the organist play the prelude more reverently. She had been playing energetically and perhaps with some added fanfare. I prayed in my heart that she would not be hurt by the request, and I passed the word on. The stake president somewhat hesitatingly spoke to the sister and almost immediately the volume, tempo, and spirit of the music changed. As I listened to the prelude, I was reminded that reverent, worshipful music adds immeasurably to the spirit of a meeting.

As the congregation began singing the opening hymn, President Packer whispered to me, “Not everyone is singing. Please have the stake president stop the hymn and invite everyone to sing the hymn ‘thoughtfully’ as suggested in the hymn book. This hymn communicates an important message that we will be learning about today.” Once again I passed the message on to the stake president. The spirit of the meeting changed as the entire congregation participated in singing.

Our meetings that weekend were reverent. There was a spirit of worship. Many of us received personal revelation and communed with God. I learned that reverence truly does invite revelation. I also learned that sometimes the difference between a mediocre meeting and a powerful meeting is in the planning and in the details.

Sabbath Day Worship

We recently received similar counsel and instruction regarding reverence and Sabbath day worship from our current leaders. We are encouraged to apply these principles in our Church meetings (particularly sacrament meeting) and in our homes. As we follow their counsel, we can receive the promised blessings of spiritual and physical renewal, joy and rejoicing, increased love for God, and the blessings of the earth (see Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Liahona*, May 2015, 129–130).

Ever since I accepted the invitation to improve my Sabbath day observance, my faith has increased and I feel closer to my Father in Heaven. The Sabbath truly has been a delight. I am also benefitting from the efforts of others who are striving to improve,

particularly during Church meetings.

Recently, local priesthood leaders were encouraged to make the Sabbath and sacrament meeting a more spiritual experience by planning ahead for meetings and reducing administrative matters. They were also encouraged to hold sacrament meeting first in the Sabbath meeting schedule.

Shortly after this counsel was given, I attended sacrament meeting. Fifteen minutes before the meeting began, the chapel was nearly full. The organist was playing a beautiful prelude of hymns. Priesthood leaders were seated reverently on the stand. The sacrament was in place and ready. Members sat quietly, including the children. I felt the Spirit. I was filled with joy as I united with my brothers and sisters and enjoyed the fruits of following the counsel of our prophets. I felt unity with them and with God.

I invite you to consider how you might more fully keep the Sabbath day holy, both at home and at church, both personally and as a family, and reap the associated blessings. Following are a few suggestions:

- Prayerfully consider what you can do differently in your personal worship.
- Counsel together as a family regarding possible improvements to Sabbath observance.
- Organize and prepare food, clothing, and other necessities prior to Sunday.
- Leave digital devices at home or turned off at Church.

- Arrive early for meetings in a spirit of reverence.
- Assist children in the family to be reverent without toys or food that distracts.
- Counsel together as leaders in the Church. Seek inspiration and plan well in advance for meetings that will invite the Spirit.
- When participating in meetings, focus on the foundational doctrines of the gospel and bear pure testimony.

I know as we appropriately observe the Sabbath, our faith can increase. We can be strengthened to endure challenges. We can receive help in solving our problems. We can feel our Father in Heaven's love for us. We can draw closer to Him and receive His blessings. ■

Elder Carl B. Cook was sustained as a General Authority Seventy in April 2011. He was named a member of the Presidency of the Seventy in March 2018. Elder Cook served as President of the Africa Southeast Area Presidency from 2014 to 2016. He is married to Lynette Hansen; they are the parents of five children.

LOCAL NEWS

Africa Southeast Area Online Resources Now Available in English, French, and Portuguese

By Africa Southeast Area Communications

In Section 90 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord promises: “For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language” (verse 11). The fulfillment of this prophecy is not happening all at once, but gradually as the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ has moved across continents and around the world. Early missionaries carried that message in their hearts and minds—and in limited printed materials such as the Book

of Mormon, missionary tracts, and other publications. Those early works were translated into just a handful of languages, but today the words of the prophets are available in many different tongues and in a variety of mediums—such as audio and video—all delivered at the speed of light and at the touch of a finger.

In 2014, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expressed, “We are blessed to live, learn, and serve in this most remarkable dispensation. An important aspect



of the fulness that is available to us in this special season is a miraculous progression of innovations and inventions that have enabled and accelerated the work of salvation. All of these advancements are part of the Lord hastening His work in the latter days” (“Flood the Earth through Social Media,” *Liahona*, Aug. 2015, 49).

Here in the Africa Southeast Area, we are witnessing the gradual fulfillment of the Lord’s promises as new communication and media technologies roll out across the continent—and as the messages of the gospel of Jesus Christ become even more available in a person’s own tongue.

It is in this spirit of the Lord’s promise that the Africa Southeast Area Communications Council—under direction of the Area Presidency—has launched new online and social media channels in the French and Portuguese languages. These new websites and social media pages will provide members of the Church and our nonmember friends with access to the words of the prophets that previously have been available mostly in English.

Area Websites

The Africa Southeast Area websites are the Area Presidency’s official and primary digital communication channels—and are used alongside social media channels to inspire, strengthen, instruct, and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the main destination

for members and our nonmember friends across the area to obtain local information about the Church. These sites also serve as portals to all Church

online resources—both produced locally and at Church headquarters. Area websites are now available in English, French, and Portuguese.

YOU CAN ACCESS AREA WEBSITES AT:

- *English:* africasoutheast.lds.org
- *French:* afriquedusudest.lds.org
- *Portuguese:* africasudeste.lds.org

Area Social Media Channels

Along with area websites, we operate area social media channels—as directed by the Area Presidency—to inspire, strengthen, instruct, and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are official messaging channels of the Church in the Africa Southeast Area and are not meant to operate as social communities in themselves. Rather, they are intended to provide high-quality content that you can share into your own social media circles

with family and friends. When you follow these social media channels—by clicking “Like”—you will automatically receive content into your own social media feed as it is regularly posted. Click “Share” to share these social media posts with those in your social media community.

Currently the official social media channels operate on the Facebook platform—including Facebook Free—and are now available in English, French, and Portuguese.

YOU CAN ACCESS AREA SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS AT:

- *English:* fb.com/ldsafricase
- *French:* fb.com/eglisedejesuschristafriquedusudest
- *Portuguese:* fb.com/igrejadejesuscristoafricasudeste

“He Will Yet Reveal . . .”

In 1966, Church President David O. McKay (1873–1970) prophesied scientific discoveries that would “stagger the imagination” and make possible the preaching of the gospel to every kindred, tongue, and people (Conference Report, Oct. 1966).

Then years later, in 1981, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught: “We are confident that as the work of the Lord expands, He will inspire men to develop the means whereby the membership of the Church, wherever they may be, can be counseled in an intimate and personal way by His chosen prophet. Communication is the sinew that binds the Church as one great family.” (“Faith: The Essence of True Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981).

These and other similar prophetic declarations were made well before the invention of the personal computer, the smartphone, and the internet. Decades later, we now benefit from these prophesied technologies, devices, and services—and who knows what the future holds? To partially quote the ninth Article of Faith, “we believe that [God] will yet reveal many great and important things.”

We encourage you to visit the area websites often and to follow the area social media channels. The essential information, uplifting content, and local instruction from our area leaders contained therein will greatly benefit you, your family, and your ward or branch. ■



Khumbulani Mdlletshe and Elder Siphon Khomo, two of the “Township Boys”

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA SERIES

History of the Church in Africa: Did You Know?

By the Africa Southeast Area Church History Department

Who was the first black member from South Africa to serve as a full-time missionary?

Two years after the 1978 revelation on priesthood was received and announced, a group of young Durban township boys were contacted and taught by missionaries. By the end of the year, this group had joined the Church, and in early 1981, they became members of the first organized branch of the Church in the township of KwaMashu (located north of Durban). In late 1984, Siphon Khomo—one of those township boys—was asked by his branch president if he would be willing to serve a full-time mission.

The decision was not an easy one for him to make. At the time he was baptized, black South Africans referred to the Church as “Isonto Labe Lungu,” meaning, “Church of the Whites”—not a flattering label at all—but reflected impressions that many held about the Church during the difficult apartheid years in South Africa. Rumors, false stories, and the social issues stemming from racial tension in the country all weighed heavily on Siphon as he considered the bishop’s invitation to serve.

But exercising great faith, and without fully knowing the impact his decision would have to himself and to many others, Siphon accepted a call in October 1984 to serve in the London England Mission—making him the first black

South African to serve as a full-time missionary.

During his mission and afterward, Siphon’s pioneering spirit motivated other African young men to accept mission calls and to serve the Lord. In fact, during one of Elder Khomo’s Christmas phone calls from England, the township boys all gathered with his family to hear of his missionary experiences. The enthusiasm from that telephone call was contagious, and shortly afterward, those same township boys submitted missionary paperwork and received calls from the prophet to serve in the mission field themselves.

In his own words, Brother Khomo said, “I am glad I went on my mission—it helped make me strong. I followed the counsel given in section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants and served the Lord with all my ‘heart, might, mind and strength’ so that I could ‘stand blameless before God at the last day’” (verse 2).

Brother Khomo still lives in KwaMashu, and he remains faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. His example influenced more than the township boys—and is felt even today as more than 1,000 full-time missionaries from the Africa Southeast Area currently serve in many countries around the world. ■

REFERENCES

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- Mark Solomons, *The Recorder*, Oct. 1984.