

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Normal and Natural Ministering

By Elder Joseph W. Sitati

First Counselor, Africa Southeast Area Presidency



Elder Joseph W. Sitati

“The living prophets and apostles are calling upon you and me to care for our brothers and sisters in a higher and holier way through ministering.”

One Saturday afternoon in September 1985, our family was enjoying a restful afternoon under the shade of a tree after a late lunch at our new home in Gigiri, Nairobi. We had moved there earlier that year and found that the garden needed much work. We did not have the money to hire a professional landscaping contractor, so we made it a family project to do the work ourselves. As we had done on most Saturdays for several months, we spent much of the morning and early afternoon digging up the lawn to level it in preparation for planting new grass and flowers.

It was in this situation that, without prior appointment, two gentlemen walked in through the gate. One was an extended family member whom we knew well. He introduced his companion as an engineer who had recently returned from the U.S., where he had gone to study.

That engineer and his family became new family friends. We learned that he was a member of a church which was not yet established

in Kenya at that time. A short while later, Sister Sitati and I felt the desire to check on him after visiting a relative who lived in his neighborhood. Soon after we arrived at his home, the senior couple missionary—who later baptized us into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—walked in. After answering our curious questions, the couple invited us to attend church in their home the following Sunday. We accepted the invitation. The rest is history—we have attended church every Sunday since then.

Out of the normal and natural interactions of our lives, our family came to learn about and join the Church.

In many communities in Africa, it is normal for family and friends to visit each other unannounced. Although the commercialization of life has—to some extent—taken away the social time that people used to spend with each other, the culture of spontaneously dropping in at the home of a brother, or a sister and her family, or an uncle who is unwell, or a distant aunt who is having some challenges in her life, or a nephew who has passed the national exam, to check on them is still alive and well.

Such visits are always welcome because they are prompted by the desire of the visitor for the welfare



of those visited. The opportunity is taken to speak about each member of the family and how they are doing, whether present during the visit or not. The struggles and joys of life since the last visit are shared, and each one is strengthened in a genuine spirit of compassionate care one for another.

Speaking by way of illustration using the parable of the sheep and the goats, the Lord Jesus Christ taught us how we are to minister in His Church:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matthew 25:35–36).

This will sound familiar to many of you in congregations throughout the area, because you have grown up in a culture in which it is normal and natural to make the effort to be aware of the circumstances of extended family members and to do what you can to help alleviate their afflictions. And you have always done that of your own free will, because it was the right thing to do. To you, it was just normal and natural to be concerned and to help according to your ability when help was needed. Without being reminded, you hearkened to Alma’s counsel to those willing to be disciples of Christ to “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light” and to “mourn with

those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

Today, as members of the Church, you and I have come into the “fold of God” and are “called his people” (Mosiah 18:8). The living prophets and apostles are calling upon you and me to care for our brothers and sisters in a higher and holier way through ministering. In so doing, we will have the Spirit of the Lord help us to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death” (Mosiah 18:9). We have the blessing and opportunity of drawing from our common experience and culture of compassionate care for one another in our communities. We can apply that experience, which is a part of our second nature, in responding effectively to the invitation of our living prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, to help lift up our brothers and sisters in the gospel and build up the Lord’s Church. After doing our best, the Savior’s words of welcome, peace, and comfort await us:

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: . . .

. . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:34, 40).

I pray that we will continue to minister in normal and natural ways to our brothers and sisters in the fold of God

and to all God’s children within our influence, that we may always look forward earnestly to that day of rejoicing with the Savior. ■

Elder Joseph W. Sitati was sustained as a General Authority Seventy in April 2009. He is married to Gladys Nangoni; they are the parents of five children.

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADER MESSAGE

Compassionate Service

By **Elder Pungwe S. Kongolo**

Area Seventy



**Elder Pungwe S.
Kongolo**

“As we become members of the Lord’s Church, we should have love for one another, for if we have love, we will be called disciples of the Lord.”

In March 2013, I participated in a priesthood leadership training meeting during which President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then Second Counselor in the First Presidency, declared that if we want to come out of poverty, we must observe three things:

- Pay a full and honest tithe
- Pay a generous fast offering
- Render compassionate service

My dear brothers and sisters, my message concerns President Uchtdorf's third point: compassionate service.

Compassionate service is a service surrounded by sincere and profound love for others. As we become members of the Lord's Church, we should have love for one another; for if we have love, we will be called disciples of the Lord (see John 13:34–35). As disciples of the Lord, we have a compelling duty to pattern our lives after the Savior. Our lives have to be such that no one can deny that we love the Savior and strive to follow Him and apply His teachings. The Savior taught us selfless service when He said, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:13–15).

This Church, which is the Lord's only Church, is perfectly organized such that every man, woman, and child may have an opportunity to do something good for somebody else. It is the obligation of every disciple of the Lord to serve and do God's will. Our love for the Lord should translate into Christlike service.

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) said, "We are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or

strangers. We are the Lord's hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us" ("What Have I Done for Someone Today?" *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 86). We should do it without seeking glory or to receive the reward from our Lord Jesus Christ. The people in the Africa Southeast Area are truly in need of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we know that the Church, which is the kingdom of God on earth, has a mission to all nations, as the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). By following this exhortation, if we, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, apply the counsels of our prophet, I am convinced that our service to the inhabitants of this land

will change their way of life, for ministering is the best way to care for and serve others.

To do so, we should seek love. It will be necessary that each of us diligently seeks this pure love of Christ. As Moroni put it so well in the Book of Mormon, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him" (Moroni 7:46–47). This is why we are called to love our loved ones, our neighbors, those around us—everyone, whether they be members of the Church or not. Who knows but that through our selfless service, they will someday become members.



Years ago I was a supervising physician in a Lubumbashi hospital. One day during consultation, I met a young couple. The husband escorted his pregnant wife in to see me. After consulting with her and reviewing laboratory tests, I diagnosed her with severe anemia. The normal course of treatment would be to perform a blood transfusion, but she refused as her faith—Jehovah’s Witness—forbade such a procedure. Instead, I recommended a treatment with medicine. They confessed that they had no money to pay for the consultation or treatment.

Knowing their financial situation, I went to the pharmacy and purchased all the needed medications. Then, I went to the cashier and paid for the laboratory tests and other related costs. When I came back to the office and told her what I had done, there were tears in her eyes. I told her I knew intimately that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ would sustain her and give her this child—and that I would pray that it be so. One year later, in downtown Lubumbashi, I saw a couple carrying a child coming toward me. They stopped, and the woman said, “Doctor, here is the child you helped us have, and we will never forget what you did. Thank you so much.” With tears in my eyes, I took the child into my arms and silently thanked the Lord.

Our love for the Savior urges us to serve our fellowmen regardless of their religious affiliation. We should know

that they are children of God and that we have the honor to serve them.

My wife, Séraphine, is an amazing person. When she received her patriarchal blessing, the Lord told her through the Patriarch, “You are a teacher, a noble calling. In order for you to serve everyone, your Father has given you this teacher calling for you to serve Him. Serve Him by helping everyone, whether it be members of your own immediate family, or extended family, whether it be on your husband’s family side, or on the Church side, feed them all and support everyone so that the work of God, our Father, may go forward.”

From the time she received this blessing, she has been serving and feeding everyone. No one can enter our home and leave without eating—even something small. I see my wife fulfilling her calling and really trying to keep it that way. If we all do our best to serve others, the work of our

Father will go forward and the world will be better because members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are serving one another and their neighbors.

I know with all my heart that President Russell M. Nelson is truly God’s prophet. For many years, he has been prepared to be where he is today. I also know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth and that the Lord directs it through His prophet. It is the only Church on earth where the priesthood is held by every worthy man. It is the only Church where a husband, holding the priesthood of the Lord, can lay his hands upon the head of his wife or children to give priesthood blessings. ■

Elder Pungwe S. Kongolo was named an Area Seventy in April 2018. Since 2011 he has worked as an assistant director for the general hospital and ministry of health. He is married to Séraphine Mugo Ngwezuya; they are the parents of two children.

LOCAL PAGES

There Are Great and Hidden Blessings in Serving Others

By **Sónia Naidoo**

I am grateful for the moments in my life when I can hear the voice of the Spirit opening my senses—especially my eyes and ears to see and hear what

God, my Father in Heaven, has done for me and for His children around me.

I recently had the opportunity to visit my home town, Maputo, where I



received the gospel of Jesus Christ as a single adult in 2000. My first calling in the Church after a month of being a member was Primary president. At the time, I could not comprehend why I got that calling. Besides the fact that it was to look after the children during church hours, I knew nothing about Primary and the way that was supposed to be run. I was totally unsure what I was to do in this organization. I thought that the branch presidency was mistaken on their choice.

As I think about it today, it was not a choice of the branch president—it was a calling from Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. In my human understanding, there were many sisters in the branch that I could point out as more prepared and capable of fulfilling that calling, sisters who were mothers and probably more experienced in dealing with children of different ages. Despite my feelings of inadequacy, I accepted the calling and learned line upon line and precept upon precept.

It was a great and humbling journey of learning and service. I remember many Sundays when I was the only teacher for the whole Primary. On those Sundays I had to teach music, run sharing time, and teach Primary lessons. The best thing was that we always had a senior missionary sister who would play piano for our sharing time. I grew to love Primary music time where I could teach the gospel to the children through music. Almost every Sunday, we sang the Primary songs “I Hope They Call Me on a Mission” and “Follow the Prophet” from the *Children’s Songbook* at the request of the Primary children. These were our favourite Primary songs. During my service in Primary, I learned the most basic and valuable principles that helped me grow and understand the fulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. I grew to love my Primary children. My Primary class varied from 5 to 20 and sometimes even more children on some Sundays. But I strived to know each child by name.

It felt overwhelming at times—trying to coordinate Sunday activities, music, lesson, assigning children for the following Sunday. But as I reflect upon the experience, it was a time that Heavenly Father helped me establish deep roots in the gospel. I often felt loved and needed by the children. It was a hectic yet very rewarding calling.

I loved seeing them having the desire to come to Primary, and my favourite part was the big hugs that

I would get from the children at the end of our time together. I often never knew how I was doing as a teacher until I would hear from a parent or two that their child or children speak about me at home. Thinking back, I realize that this was the most rewarding calling in the Church—there were great needs and a huge opportunity for service.

In 2003, I married and moved to South Africa, where I have lived for the past 15 years. I often visit extended family in Maputo once or twice a year. While there I like to visit different wards to worship on a Sunday. As a pioneer member in Maputo, Mozambique, I love seeing the growth of the Church in my home country. I love visiting old friends—brothers and sisters in the gospel—and meeting new members. I get tremendous satisfaction from seeing that my friends are still actively engaged in this work of salvation—the gospel of Jesus Christ—standing still and immovable in faith.

I was recently in Maputo and attended Polana and Sommershield Wards. I was able to catch half of the sacrament meeting from Polana and then attended other meetings in Sommershield. While sitting in the congregation, I was very pleased to see one of my Primary children, Vinícius, now a married young adult. He was sitting on the stand, conducting the sacrament meeting. As our eyes met, we smiled at each other, and as I gazed around the congregation I saw other familiar faces—one of whom was Vinícius'

brother. My eyes were filled with tears of joy to see my former Primary children, 18 years later still active in the Church. After the intermediate hymn, Vinícius stood up to announce the rest of the sacrament program from the pulpit to the congregation. Vinícius served his mission in Brazil and married in the temple not long ago. He is currently studying at university and serving as the second counsellor in the bishopric of the Polana Ward. With tears rolling down my face, my thoughts went back to those Primary years when Vinícius and his brother were part of the Primary children that I served. I could picture in my mind the things that he used to do and say to me then.

I felt the Holy Ghost whispering to me, “Your service in Primary has made a difference to someone. . . . Look at the fruit.” I had the sweetest feeling contemplating that moment. I was reminded of the scripture found in Mosiah 2:17 that says, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.” My heart felt full, and I was glad to be able to witness Heavenly Father’s plan for each of His children. I was grateful that I accepted the calling to serve in Primary and that I strived to learn how best to serve Heavenly Father’s children during my calling. I know of many more Primary children like Vinícius, who are faithful followers of the Saviour. Many have served full-time missions and are currently receiving an education to prepare for their

future careers and in future leadership callings in the Church.

I have a testimony that each of us has a mission here on earth. The Lord has a purpose for us to fulfill in this dispensation where the gospel has been restored in its fulness. We can help Heavenly Father’s children to reach their potential and get back to Him safely. Keep magnifying your calling in the Church to the best of your ability. Be a good example! You might be the only light in some of Heavenly Father’s children’s lives. ■

CHOOSE A MEANINGFUL SABBATH

A Perfect Sabbath: Three Stories

By Susan Gregory

“A conscious effort to make the day important in our week requires preparation and thought. It requires more than simply waking up to a new day, glancing at the calendar, and realizing that it is Sunday.”

The commandment given to Moses in Exodus 20:8 to keep the Sabbath day holy was reiterated in the latter days when the Lord told Joseph Smith in 1831: “And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy”

(Doctrine and Covenants 68:29). In the April 2015 general conference, President Russell M. Nelson said: “The question for each of us is: because of what I have heard and felt during this conference, how will I change? Whatever your answer might be, may I invite you also to examine your feelings about, and your behavior on, the Sabbath day” (“The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Liahona*, May 2015, 129).

Most recently, our leaders in the Africa Southeast Area have encouraged us to “**Improve Sabbath Day observance in the home and at church**” as part of the Area Plan.

So, what constitutes a “perfect Sabbath day,” and how can we achieve it?

A perfect Sabbath day means different things to different people. . . .

The mother of small children may dream of peace and quiet—of nap time, for herself *and* the children.

A lonely single member may hope for the opportunity to have a little company—someone to talk to, perhaps even a lunch invitation.

A single mom working long hours may eagerly anticipate the time to spend with her children—a break from the everyday rush to survive!

A part-member family may wrestle with keeping everyone happy while living the gospel and teaching children correct principles.

Whatever our circumstances, the Sabbath day conjures up feelings of peace, spiritual growth, calm, love,

rest, learning, service, helping, and reaching out to others.

In chatting with a few members, all told me that the secret to a meaningful Sabbath was planning, preparation, persistence, and prayer. Primary children know this already:

Saturday is a special day.

It's the day we get ready for Sunday:

We clean the house, and we shop at the store,

So we won't have to work until

Monday.

We brush our clothes, and we shine our shoes,

And we call it our get-the-work-done day.

Then we trim our nails, and we shampoo our hair,

So we can be ready for Sunday!

(“Saturday,” *Children's Songbook*, 196.)



Here are three stories from some of those with whom I chatted, three ways that the Sabbath day became more meaningful, three families where testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ were deepened.

Story One | A Convert:

“Moving from a lazy day starting with brunch and a trip to the shops, lounging around reading the newspapers, watching TV, or lying around the pool in summer . . . to spending three hours at church on a Sunday and trying to keep the Sabbath day holy was a big change for me. Cutting out shopping was easy—and actually saved me money—because I was so scared of running out of groceries that I started making lists and planning meals instead of aimlessly filling a shopping trolley.

“The mindless TV watching and pool time were more difficult! The first Sunday we got home from church and thought, ‘Well now what do we do?’ The day dragged on and by the time everyone went to bed, most dissatisfied after a long boring day, I knew I had to make a plan fast! We borrowed Church videos from members, and this was a starting point that led to gospel discussions. Today the Church website has enough content to fill a lifetime of Sundays!

“Watching Church videos still was not a long-term solution, so we had a home evening on ‘Sabbath day observance’ and asked our children what they would like to see us do. Each

suggestion was measured against the Sabbath standard, and the children's attitude changed from 'all the things we can't do anymore' to the long list of 'things we can do.'

"Simplifying our meals started a wonderful family tradition of having a healthy meal waiting for us when we got home from church, and then in the early evening we all made dessert together for our supper. All the children, boys and girls, learnt to cook and bake this way! (Waffles and pancakes became our regular favourites!)

"Looking back, most of our happy family memories come from the wonderful Sundays we spent together—playing board games, building our relationships, eating scrumptious favourites, and learning and growing in the gospel. Occasionally we would choose a family to invite over for lunch the next week. But through our planning we chose things suitable at their various ages—and we taught the children to care, plan, and show consideration."

Story Two | A Young Mom:

"Growing up in the Church, I thought wonderful, fulfilling Sabbaths just happened. Now I realise how my parents worked at it! As a young couple, it was also easy—but when we had children it all fell apart. We were always late for church. Afternoons were lost and evenings were filled with relief that the day was almost over and we could go to bed! What

happened to the wonderful uplifting Sundays?

"Well, I learnt to plan. And along the way I determined to:

- Check with the children each Sunday on the way home from church to see who had an assignment in Primary for the next week. Make a note and prepare that day.
- Find everyone's shoes on a Saturday night; sort out what clothes each one wants to wear and have them ready.
- Go over the talk/scripture assignment for Primary on Saturday, put a spare copy in my bag, and plan to be there in Primary with them.
- Plan and prepare lunch for Sunday—on Saturday—so that we come home after Church and have it ready. Starving, screaming children (and husbands!) can ruin a lovely day!

"On Saturday night and Sunday morning, I prayed specifically that my family would learn about and grow closer to the Saviour, that we could enjoy the Sabbath as a day set aside from the world, and focus on our divine heritage."

Story Three | A Retired Sister Living with Her Son Who Does Not Attend Church and Non-Member Daughter-In-Law:

"With my son and his wife working, I need to make time to spend with the family on Saturdays and also prepare

for the Sabbath—so I have to plan. I try to attend the earliest temple session on a Saturday morning. This gives me a good start, and I then spend the rest of Saturday with the family.

"On a fast Sunday, I detach from the family activities on the Saturday afternoon and spend time in my room listening to Church music, preparing for the next day's lessons, reading scriptures, and writing in my journal. I don't have to prepare a meal for Sunday, but I always choose the clothes I will wear the next day and make sure they are ironed and ready.

"It is really important for me to set a good example for my family and show them the joy I find in keeping the Sabbath day holy so that they will come to church with me one day."

Finally, Plan for a Meaningful Sabbath

The expression "Prior planning prevents poor performance" is particularly pertinent to our Sabbath day observance. A conscious effort to make the day important in our week requires preparation and thought. It requires more than simply waking up to a new day, glancing at the calendar, and realizing that it is Sunday.

And even when things may not work out as planned, we will still be better prepared to handle those challenges and benefit from the amazing lessons that result as the Spirit blesses us for our efforts. ■