

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Prophets and the Blessings of Following Their Counsel

Elder 'Aisake K. Tukuafu

Area Seventy



Elder 'Aisake K.
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A prophet is a man called of God and he speaks on behalf of God. His role is to reveal the will and true nature of God to all the children of men. But his divine role is to testify of Christ. Since the beginning of time, all prophets have repeatedly testified of Christ. The Lord also reveals His secrets to His prophets. Therefore, He builds His Church upon the foundation of apostles and prophets.

I always like to think about the story of the widow of Zarephath. When the prophet Elijah asked her for some water to drink, he also asked her to bring him a morsel of bread so he could eat. The widow made it known to Elijah she had only a handful of meal and a little oil left; it was all she had. It was only enough for a last meal for herself and her son and then they would die.

Elijah said she should make the cake with her last supplies as she had planned, but he asked her to feed him first and then cook for herself and her son.

Elijah then showed her the power of God; he left a miracle and a blessing when he said, “For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall

not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth” (1 Kings 17:14).

“And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah” (1 Kings 17:16).

This all came about because of the faith and obedience of the widow when she followed the words of Jehovah through Elijah. The Lord has commanded, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (Doctrine & Covenants 1:38).

One of the blessings of the Restoration in this last dispensation and in the fulness of times is that the Lord called Joseph Smith as the greatest prophet in this last dispensation. Since then, prophets continue to use the keys of the priesthood to guide The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) was the first prophet I met personally when he visited Tonga back in 1976. I was serving as a full-time missionary. That memory seems to me like it happened just yesterday. President Kimball looked at me straight

in the eye and slowly asked me with his hoarse voice, “Do you love your companion?” My heart beat fast and I was confused. When I finally replied I said, “Yes.”

My testimony was strengthened because I knew President Kimball was a prophet of the Lord.

We are grateful for our beloved living prophet, President Russell M. Nelson. He gave four invitations to the women of the Church in the October 2018 general conference. One was to read the Book of Mormon and to finish it before the end of the year (2018). Just as Jehovah spoke to the widow of Zarephath through Elijah, the Lord again spoke through President Nelson and said, “As you prayerfully study, I promise that the heavens will open for you. The Lord will bless you with increased inspiration and revelation.

“... And changes, even miracles, will begin to happen.”¹

I testify that as we follow the living prophet, the Lord will bless us. Jesus Christ is our Saviour and our Redeemer. ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 69–70.

An Unexpected Trial and a Timely Challenge

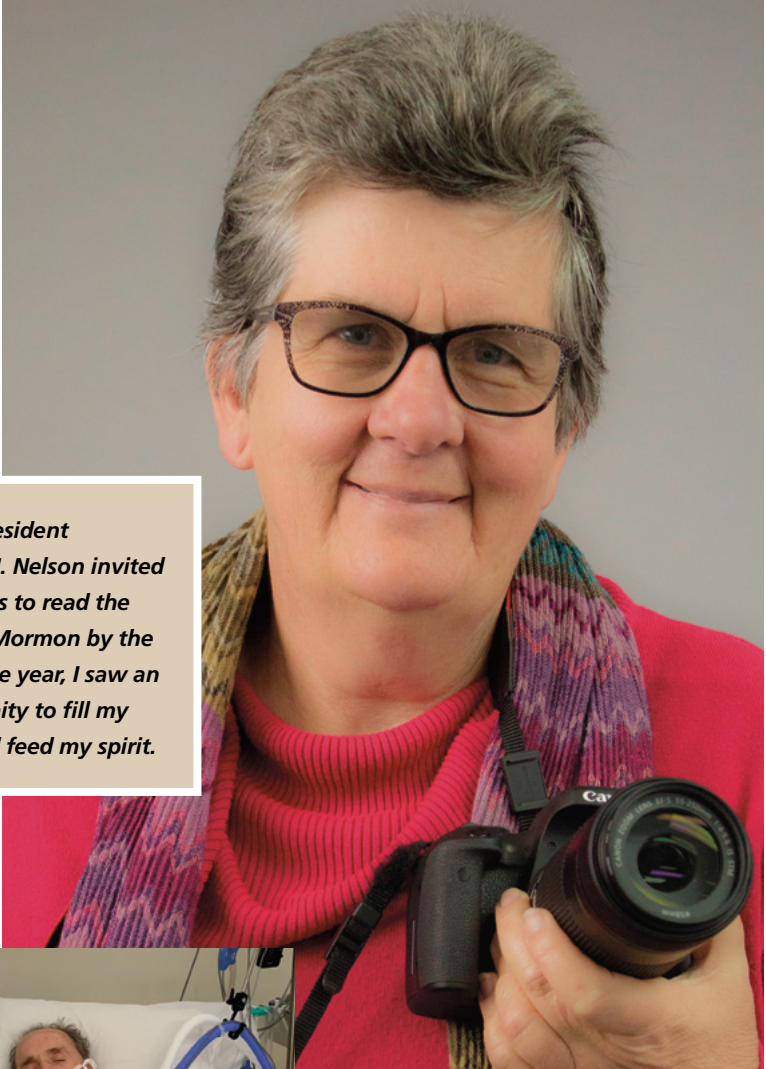
Jayne Crouch

Like most mothers, I have a very busy and hectic lifestyle. I have a husband, five children, two of whom are still at home, a son-in-law, and two grandchildren. I had become so busy with everyday life that the spiritual side of me was being neglected. My lamp of spiritual oil was running dry.

During the 2018 October General Conference, I made a concerted effort to watch all of it. From the moment the first speaker began his address, the message from the Spirit was clear: my spirit was starving for the want of spiritual food and I needed to make more of an effort to feed it.

When President Russell M. Nelson invited the sisters to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year, I saw an opportunity to fill my lamp and feed my spirit. I immediately began to read and mark the words that referred to the Saviour. I found the more I read, the more I looked forward to the evening when I would retreat into my room and read the scriptures. Answers to questions were coming more easily, and the promptings from the Spirit came more clearly and frequently throughout the

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The Crouch family ▶



day. I felt a sense of calm and peace. I couldn't have predicted how crucial this state of mind was about to be for me.

Soon after I began reading the Book of Mormon, my dear husband,

Daryl, said that his heart was feeling sore. Though he thought he might feel better tomorrow, I was prompted that all was not well and made him discuss the problem with the nurse online

service. They immediately called for an ambulance.

Over the next few weeks we found ourselves in an emotional and logistical chaos. We were told that not only had Daryl had another heart attack, but he was going to need a seven-way bypass.

Yes, they said seven!

Calling this major surgery was putting it lightly. The burden on us at the time was immense. I spent many hours at the hospital caring for him, as well as looking after our daughter who has Down syndrome and needs a lot of care, not to mention everything else I needed to juggle at home.

Daryl went on to have the surgery and only needed five bypasses, which was a blessing. Throughout this time, despite the chaos, I was determined to continue reading the Book of Mormon until it was finished. Whether by Daryl's bedside or early in the morning, I found that I craved the calm that it brought me.

I would read the Book of Mormon in the morning and often find a catch phrase or mantra to repeat during the day that would carry me through. Phrases like 'Find joy in the journey,' 'All things are for your good,' and 'Through small and simple things.'

The ordeal of a heart attack, surgery, rehab and recovery should have left us exhausted and depleted.

Instead I felt renewed and replenished. Though it was tiring at times, I never felt alone. My daily reading became such a comfort that I ended up finishing the Book of Mormon twice before the end of the year.

Daryl is home now and is doing remarkably well. When the occupational therapist came to our home to tell me what needed to be done for Daryl to come home, she was surprised to discover that I had already done most of it. He would need a chair to fit over the bath so that he could shower, a shower stool for shaving and many other things. I was being prompted, almost daily, to get these things long before the therapist came.

I know that following the counsel of the prophet filled my lamp with spiritual oil. When the hour arrived that I would need these reserves, it was there and ready. Feeling the promptings of the Spirit more clearly, I got my husband help when he wanted to stay home, and I was shown how to prepare the house for his recovery. Feeling the strength of the Spirit more fully I was able to juggle home life with hospital visits and recovery needs without burning out.

I am so grateful for the counsel of an inspired prophet. He knows what we need and if we follow his guidance, we can face any challenge with faith and hope. ■

Torn Apart in This Life, United for Eternity in the Next

Tracy Matenga

I was vacuuming the house on what began as a typical day. Without warning, a vision opened to me. I saw an Aboriginal woman standing in front of me. Three small children were clinging to her dress as they wept. The mother wept also as a man in a blue uniform came into view and began pulling the children away from her. The mother and her children were screaming and crying, and then suddenly, they disappeared. I began to cry uncontrollably at the scene that I had just beheld. I immediately told my husband what had happened, and he said, "Check your family history."

In the early 1900's, the Government's assimilation policy meant that thousands of indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families. With their sacred family ties completely severed, these children later became known as the "Stolen" or "Lost Generations." I researched my family history and found one of the children from the vision. She was now an elderly woman. I discovered that she had in fact been taken from her

mother, along with her brother and sister, as a result of the assimilation policy. My heart ached for her as it did for all my people who were “lost” in the spirit world.

I was born to a young Aboriginal girl, who lived in the dormitory system. Many indigenous children suffered terribly in the system, so my birth mother chose to give me to a young member family. This family eventually adopted me and instilled in me their love of the gospel and their passion for genealogy. The fact that I was placed in a family who were so passionate about family history and temple work was no accident. The vision I had that day was one of many similar spiritual experiences. Visions, dreams and undeniable impressions of my people have followed me my entire life as the Lord has prepared me for my sacred mission: to find the lost generations and take their names to the temple.

In 2002 I organized a workshop to help Aboriginal people find their families. One of the many tragic consequences of the assimilation policy is the fact that Aboriginal histories were passed down orally; once those family ties are severed, it is near impossible to connect them again.

I was expecting about 60 people at this workshop and was excited to help them in this difficult work. Only four turned up. This was a huge blow.

Doing this work was hard and at times it felt like no progress was being made. One of the keynote speakers was a woman named Mrs. Howell who had spent decades researching and recording indigenous family history. She shared my passion for the lost generations and would help indigenous Australians find their families at every opportunity. She could see how upset I was and came over to comfort me. She told me that she had a gift for me, her original list of approximately 3,000 indigenous families, and their records. This was the only list in Australia and she was giving it to me. She made me promise to do all I could to help my people



My entire life, the Lord has prepared me for my sacred mission: to find the “Lost Generations” and take their names to the temple.

with their genealogy. I spent the next 15 years actively keeping that promise and making use of that list and files that went with it. This miracle was one of countless miracles I encountered on my journey.

In 2016, after Mrs. Howell had passed away, I called her husband about the files as I was working with yet another Aboriginal family on their genealogy. I was shocked to discover that he had donated four trailer loads of the files to the local university, who had passed it on to the local library. I knew that neither organisation had any idea how sacred these files were and was terrified of what might become of them. I set out with my aunty to track them down. They were being kept in a dark basement in the library, as this was not a family history library and they didn’t have much use for the files.

My father, who was from Lismore, knew the landscape and the history of the area and warned me that flooding was imminent. The months that followed were filled with regular phone calls to the library, desperate warnings of flooding and a plea to remove the files from the basement and into the care of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Tropical Cyclone Debbie hit in March 2017. Parts of the town were submerged under 11.6 metres of murky floodwaters.

The basement and first floor of the Lismore Library were completely submerged under water.

As the flood waters rose, I waited, helpless. I prayed desperately for Heavenly Father to protect the files. It took three weeks for me to get through to the library.

I felt sick as I asked the librarian about the files. She reassured me that all the files had been pulled from the basement and thrown onto the second floor just moments before the flood

waters had entered the basement. When I heard those words the relief in my heart was immense. Perhaps the intensity of my relief was because it was not only my relief that I was feeling, but the relief of thousands of individuals desperate to be found.

The indigenous family files have now been digitized and are currently in paper form and on memory sticks. Once the tribal elders have cleared any privacy concerns and given permission, the public will have access.

Australia's indigenous people on the other side wait with hope that hidden treasures of family history that were thought lost or forgotten, will be found, preserved, protected and shared with our people. We all need to act now and ask the elders of our culture to share their knowledge before it is too late. I have seen countless miracles on my journey into the past. This is God's work, he wants us to succeed and he *will* help us if we do all we can. Awaken the heritage within you. ■

Found on a Mission, Reunited on a Mission

President John Larkin of the Marshall Islands/Kiribati Mission

SUPPLIED



From left to right: President Larkin, Sister Larkin, Sister Bednar, and Elder Bednar.

In 1982 in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, Elders Laddie Stewart and Michael Bouy knocked on my door. Two of my friends—Steve Byrne and Chris Murphy—had recently joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, so I was somewhat familiar with it.

For over 10 years previous I had had an interest in religious thought and was 'searching' for truth. When my friends Steve and Chris joined the Church, I tried to convince them they had made a mistake.

Over the months that followed the arrival of those elders to my home,

Elders Stewart and Bouy taught me the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. On 26 March, 1983, I was baptised and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by my friends, Steve and Chris, at the Croydon chapel in Melbourne.

Since my baptism I have had the opportunity to serve in many callings, including bishop of the Lilydale Ward and stake president of the Canberra Australia Stake.

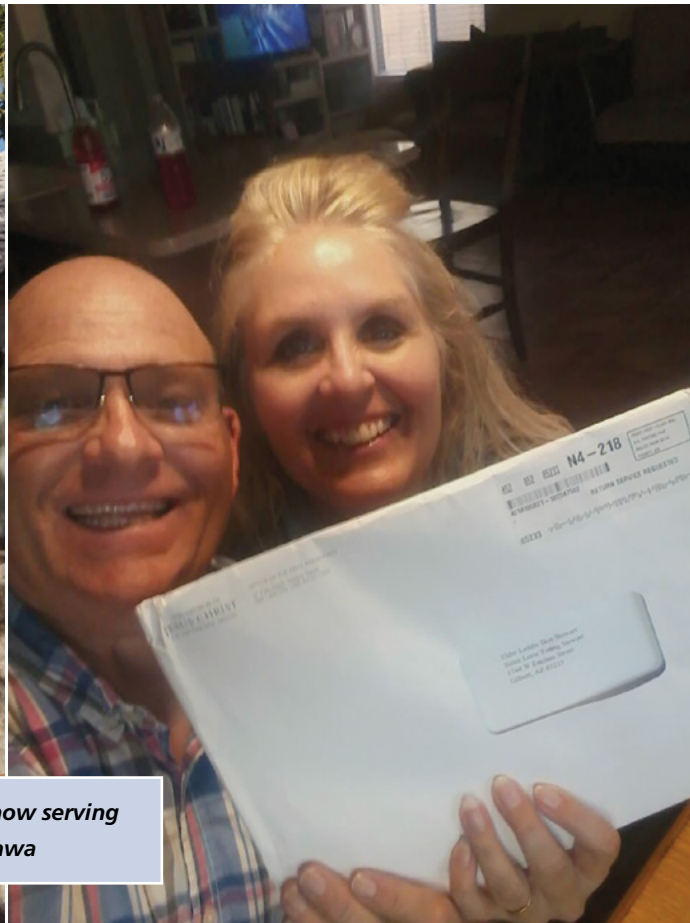
In 2016, 33 years after those young missionaries came into my life, I was called to serve as the mission president for the Marshall Islands/Kiribati Mission. It was such a privilege to be called to such a beautiful place to continue the work of salvation that for me, had started with my baptism more than three decades earlier.

The joy of spreading that gospel that had blessed my life for so many years was made even sweeter when

in 2017, I suggested to Laddie and his wife, Lorrie, that they consider serving a mission at the Moroni High School—a specific role within the mission where they would assist in training the school teachers.

Both Laddie and Lorrie had careers in education, which made them a perfect fit for the role at Moroni. I arranged for the Stewarts to speak with other senior couple missionaries serving at the school and subsequently the

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Laddie and Lorrie Stewart are now serving at the Moroni High School, Tarawa

Stewarts agreed to apply for the role.

In late August 2018, their call letter finally came. The Stewarts were officially assigned to serve their mission at Moroni High School, Tarawa, commencing in January 2019.

Elder Laddie Stewart had taught me when he was a 19-year-old missionary. Now, 35 years later, his investigator will serve as his mission president as Laddie serves yet again, this time with his wife.

This blessing from the Lord has touched me deeply. I am excited to have the opportunity to reunite with ‘my missionary’, especially as we will be working together in that same sacred work that brought us together in the first place. ■

Cairns ‘Lights the World’

Newsroom

Cairns shone brightly on Saturday, 1st December 2018, as branches of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hosted their first-ever Christmas music concert at Fogarty Park on the Cairns Esplanade.

The concert served as the launch pad to our month-long ‘Light the World’ service initiative for December



Special guest performer Patrice Tipoki was the highlight of the evening.



2018 and created a platform for locals to give back to the Cairns community for the festive Christmas season.

The concert hosted a plethora of local musical talent, including some well-known names such as Voices of AustraNesia, Nite Vision Youth Choir

and Cairns Young Voices, as well as solo artists, duets, members from the Cairns cast of *Wicked* (the musical) and other invited choirs of local Cairns churches.

Special guest performer Patrice Tipoki, who is a member of the Church, was the highlight of the evening with her renditions of “Joy to the World” and “Son of God,” as well as co-performing “He Sent His Son” and “Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful.” The concert’s stunning finale, “The Holy City,” sung by Patrice and a district choir of the Church, left the crowd mesmerized. Patrice comes from a rich history of music and culture and has



performed throughout Australia and internationally.

Another 'gift' of the evening was a spoken message toward the end of the program given by Elder Robert Dudfield, Area Seventy for the Church. His message of lighting the world, the community, our homes and our faith through service to those around us resonated in the hearts of those present.

It was the vision and hard work of Elder Kelly Maxfield, a senior missionary for the Church, with the support of President Mark McSwain of the Brisbane Australia Mission as well as many other individuals, that brought this event to fruition. After the event was over, Elder Maxfield said, "I knew this event would have far-reaching effects for good beyond what we could

imagine, when for one evening the Pacific Area of the Church was focused on remote Cairns, Australia, as many God-fearing people came together to 'Light the World' in commemoration of our Savior's birth and life."

Rubina Kimiia, event coordinator and musical director, shared, "The profile of the Church was raised in a very public and positive light using the vehicle of music, and we were able to build some very important relationships with local community leaders. There can be no doubt in the minds of those who attended that we worship Christ the Lord."

Nicole Ziegelbauer, director of public affairs for the Church in Cairns and one of the masters of ceremonies for the concert, said, "It was an

incredible sight, to stand up on the stage and look out into the crowd and see so many smiling faces. During the performances, everyone's eyes were glued to the stage. I was so proud to be a part of such a wonderful event."

Cairns district President James Gardner, who attended the event with his family, expressed, "It was a wonderful evening that brought the community together."

Despite the days leading up to the concert manifesting some of the region's hottest days ever recorded in Cairns, this did not stop the estimated crowd of some 2,000 people from attending and enjoying a beautifully uplifting evening. ■

CALL FOR ARTICLES

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

liahona-pacific@ldschurch.org ■