

# AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Be with and Strengthen Others: An Example of a Ministering Visit

By Elder Joseph W. Sitati

First Counselor, Africa Southeast Area Presidency



*“We wondered in what ways ministering would be the same or different from home teaching and decided that we could learn from a mock ministering visit.”*

Several months ago, Sister Sitati and I were in the home of a member family. The topic of ministering, just announced by President Russell M. Nelson, came up. The father wondered in what ways ministering would be the same or different from home teaching.

As the discussion progressed, Sister Sitati suggested that we do a mock ministering visit and learn from it. The suggestion was accepted, and so Sister Sitati and I became a ministering companionship and the family of six—comprising (not their real names) father Jack, mother Cindy, twenty-year-old son Amos, sixteen-year-old daughter Winnie, thirteen-year-old son Paul, and nine-year-old daughter Charity—became our assigned family for the purpose of the mock ministering visit.

The conversation went something like this:

**Elder Sitati:** Jack, Cindy, and children, Sister Sitati and I are thrilled to be assigned as your ministering brother and sister. Thank you everyone for making the time to meet with us in your home today.

**Sister Sitati:** After praying about it, we felt that on this first ministering visit, we want to explore together with you where you feel you currently stand temporally and spiritually as a family and individually and where you want to be.

**Cindy:** I think temporally, the Lord has blessed us, and we are very grateful. Quite frankly, we are all in different places in our spiritual progress, and so each one of us will likely have a different answer to where they are.

**Elder Sitati:** Let us begin with family prayer. How do you feel about how that is going?

**Jack:** Our schedules are crazy. For most of the week, because of

the different activities in which we are involved, some of us are coming—while others are going—and it is difficult to find time to be together for family prayer.

**Sister Sitati:** How do you feel about continuing that way?

**Jack:** Clearly, we can do better. We want to do better. Today for example, we were able to coordinate our schedules so we could all be here at this time for your visit. So, we will try and coordinate better, to be together more often.

**Elder Sitati:** How can we help you to be better coordinated as a family?

**Cindy:** I would love it if Sister Sitati could call from time to time and just ask how we are doing with praying together.

**Sister Sitati:** What about reading the Book of Mormon daily?

**Cindy:** I think the same approach we use for prayer will work.

**Elder Sitati:** Are there any other aspects of your discipleship that you wish to improve as a family?

**Jack:** Cindy is quite diligent with temple attendance, and the girls often go with her to do proxy baptisms. I have been a bit careless and have been without a current temple recommend for the last few months.

**Elder Sitati:** How can we help?



**Jack:** Your question is enough! I will repent and go and see the bishop next week.

**Sister Sitati:** What if we could plan to go to the temple together with your family?

**Winnie:** I would love that!

**Cindy:** Jack, would you like us to look at some possible dates?

**Jack:** Yes, of course. We can coordinate that over the phone. But the first week of next month looks like a good possibility. I will have renewed my temple recommend by then.

**Elder Sitati:** Amos, you have been quiet. How are things going with you?

**Amos:** Well, I don't know. I don't seem to feel much of anything these days.

**Sister Sitati:** What are the things that capture your interest, in which you find that you are usually fully engaged?

**Amos:** I like biking, especially going up and down mountain trails.

**Elder Sitati:** One of our sons likes mountain biking as a hobby. He is a member of a national internet biking community that you may be interested in. We would be happy to connect you with him.

**Sister Sitati:** Amos, the bishop mentioned that you have been thinking about going on mission lately.

**Amos:** Yes, but I am not sure. I don't want to go just because of the bishop or my parents!

**Sister Sitati:** You don't have to. Have you considered the covenant you made with the Lord when you received

the priesthood? What did you promise you would do for the blessings the Lord offers you as a priesthood holder?

**Amos:** To serve Him.

**Elder Sitati:** And from Moroni 7:13 and 7:17, you can learn why you are not sure about serving, and then do something about it. Would you like to read it and let me know what you find out?

**Amos:** Sure. I can text you?

**Elder Sitati:** Yes, sure. Here is my cell phone number.

**Sister Sitati:** What about you Winnie, Paul, and Charity? Are you working on any personal spiritual goals?

**Winnie:** I am working on some goals in Personal Progress. Mum is helping me.

**Sister Sitati:** Excellent! (Looking at Paul.)

**Paul:** Boys don't do Personal Progress!

**Elder Sitati:** You are right Paul. They do something else.

**Paul:** Last year, one of the teachers talked about Duty to God. When I looked at the book, the stuff in there was boring!

**Elder Sitati:** Most things are boring until we take an interest and really try them out. Then the Holy Ghost can help us. (Looking at Jack) I am sure your dad can help you.

**Jack:** Of course. I should have done that earlier, but my priorities were kind of upside down.

**Charity:** In Primary, we are memorizing the Articles of Faith. I can say them without reading up to number seven!

**Sister Sitati:** Excellent! (Gets up and hugs Charity.)

**Elder Sitati:** Well, that is the end of our short mock ministering home visit. What do you think? You all did so well!

A spirited discussion followed on the merits of the ministering approach versus message-based home teaching.

Each family or person to whom we minister is unique and has a specific set of needs. Our role as ministers is to—under influence of the Spirit—discover those needs, offer some solutions, and commit, as needed, to new behaviors. The mock visit above is but one way in which ministers can learn our duties and fulfill the sacred responsibilities with which we have been entrusted.

*Postscript: As I have reflected back on that true experience from time to time since arriving in the Africa South East Area, I have felt that our conversation with Jack, Cindy, and the family could have been greatly enriched if we had used a resource like the pocket size 2019 Area Plan card that has been provided to every member.*

*I commend this card with its three priorities and nine goals to everyone, for use in our personal discipleship, as well as in our ministering efforts. It is an excellent reminder and pattern of how we can deepen our own conversion and to be with and strengthen others. ■*

*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

# Increasing Faith by Studying the Book of Mormon

By Elder Walter Chatora

Area Seventy

*“We need to know for ourselves that the Book of Mormon is true and to develop a personal testimony.”*

We live in extremely trying and challenging moments in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. We all yearn for hope, peace, love, and the knowledge that our Heavenly Father is ever present to assist us over the hurdles we encounter on our earthly sojourn. There are temptations of every kind—so many dissenting voices—which can test our faith and make us lose our way.

On the introductory page of the Book of Mormon it is affirmed that the Book of Mormon tells us what to do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come.<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith testified, “The Book of Mormon [is] the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>2</sup>

We, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are truly blessed to have the most correct book on earth—this prized possession—which can transform our lives and change the face of the earth. What more do we need?

President Ezra Taft Benson taught that the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion in at least three ways:

1. Witness of Christ—It bears witness of His reality with power and clarity.
2. Fulness of Doctrine—In the Book of Mormon we find the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the doctrines required for our salvation and exaltation.
3. Foundation of Testimony—One cannot gain a testimony of the claims of the Restoration and all that accompanies it without knowing that the Book of Mormon is true.<sup>3</sup>

As witnesses of this profound book, we need to share it with our brothers and sisters—hence our task is to declare the gospel and to do it effectively. In the Doctrine and Covenants we are counseled: “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.”<sup>4</sup>

## Handling Objections

Our faith may be tried, and at times the faith of our fellow saints;



Elder Walter Chatora

and others who may not be of our faith will not believe everything in the gospel. President Ezra Taft Benson taught how the Book of Mormon can be the central resource in responding to such situations:

“We are to use the Book of Mormon in handling objections to the Church. . . .

“All objections, whether they be on abortion, plural marriage, seventh-day worship, etc., basically hinge on whether Joseph Smith and his successors were and are prophets of God receiving divine revelation. . . .

“ . . . The only problem the objector has to resolve for himself is whether the Book of Mormon is true. For if the Book of Mormon is true, then Jesus is the Christ, Joseph Smith was his



prophet, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and it is being led today by a prophet receiving revelation.”<sup>5</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the Book of Mormon is central to our faith, beliefs, and testimony. “Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion?” he asked. “We have none.”<sup>6</sup>

### Developing a Personal Testimony

We need to know for ourselves that the Book of Mormon is true and to develop a personal testimony. “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>7</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson, during the April 2017 general conference, implored each of us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day. As we do so, he promised that we will be in a position to hear the voice of the Spirit, to resist temptation, to overcome doubt and fear and to receive heaven’s help in our lives.<sup>8</sup>

I have enjoyed these blessings as I read and ponder the Book of Mormon every day. I was privileged many years ago to have a meeting with one General Authority who, during our discussion, mentioned

that he reads the Book of Mormon daily. It struck me as he spoke, and my thoughts raced, “If this man, about 70 years old who grew up in the Church, reads this book every day, how much more do I need it as a novice and convert to the Church?” That meeting changed my life forever. I just love starting my day having the nourishment of the soothing words of the Book of Mormon. Much like Nephi, “my soul delighteth in the scriptures and my heart pondereth them.”<sup>9</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson promised that the “truths of the Book of Mormon have the *power* to heal, comfort, restore, succor, strengthen, console, and cheer our souls.”<sup>10</sup>

I witnessed firsthand how these blessings—as promised by our dear prophet—changed the life of Brother Joseph Tembo\* from the Copperbelt in Zambia. We visited this brother when I was assigned to preside over a district conference a few years ago. Upon entering his home, I noticed in his room a small table on the left with a pile of scriptures. I just marveled as I was informed that he had been inactive for the past seven years and had become somewhat disaffected. As we discussed with him, he said something profound, “I haven’t been going to Church for the past seven years because of some offense. I still know the gospel is true. Reading the Book of Mormon daily has kept me going.” The Book of Mormon had surely comforted, strengthened and consoled him during his greatest

time of need. It was therefore easy to help him find his way back to Church again.

This also strengthened my own testimony that scripture study should have a daily set time, not leftover time! And as President Harold B. Lee cautioned, “If we are not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner.”<sup>11</sup>

As we seek to increase our faith in Heavenly Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement, we need to “press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end.”<sup>12</sup> “The words of Christ will tell [us] all things what [we] should do.”<sup>13</sup> The Book of Mormon is for our profit and learning. It testifies of Jesus Christ and answers the questions of the soul. ■

*\*Name has been changed*

*Walter Chatora was named an Area Seventy in April 2014. He is married to Diana Tappumane; they are the parents of three children. Elder and Sister Chatora reside in Centurion, Pretoria, South Africa. ■*

### NOTES

1. Book of Mormon introductory page.
2. Book of Mormon introductory page.
3. See Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 5–6.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 11:21.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, as quoted in *Preach My Gospel*, [2004], 108–109.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 196.
7. Moroni 10:4.
8. See Thomas S. Monson, “The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Liahona*, May 2017, 86–87.
9. 2 Nephi 4:15.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 62. Emphasis in original.
11. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2011], 66.
12. 2 Nephi 31:20.
13. 2 Nephi 32:3.

## LOCAL PAGES

# “Brother, the Temple is Heaven!”

By Laurent Florent Nkounkou

*“Looking back, over the course of my Church service I came to a fervent reality of faith, and a grasp of an inner and personal understanding: The temple is literally the house of Heavenly Father here on earth.”*

In March 2012, three months after my conversion and baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I entered the bishop’s office to ask him questions about the Johannesburg Temple where he had recently visited. He calmly said, with real assurance and firm conviction: “Brother, the temple is heaven!” Now, seven years later, in 2019, my eternal companion and I have just completed 12 months of service as full-time temple workers in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple. Looking back, what seemed at the time to be an excessive zeal on the part of our bishop became—over the course of my Church service—my own fervent reality of faith, and a grasp of an inner and personal understanding: *The temple is literally the house of Heavenly Father here on earth.*

A few weeks after being confirmed as a member of the Church, I was called as a counselor in the Sunday School presidency of the Guynemer Ward in the Brazzaville Stake, the only stake in the Republic of Congo at the time. I remember one Sunday



Johannesburg Temple

trying to lead a discussion on family history and the need to be sealed to ancestors.

Because of my little knowledge about this doctrine, the bishop came to my rescue—explaining the work performed in the temple and the need for us to do family history and to bring the names of our ancestors to the temple for sacred ordinances to be done on their behalf. Because of the bishop’s inspired remarks, supported with appropriate scriptures, we all came to an understanding of the doctrine.

In 2013, I was successively called to serve as ward employment specialist, government relations specialist in the stake public affairs office, and then director of public affairs for the Brazzaville Stake. It was a breathtaking year—and spiritually mind-boggling—as I began to wonder about my callings in the Church, especially since this experience was not taking into account that I had no one at all in my family to join me in my spiritual journey.

Indeed, I remained very single with five children to take care of; and up to then, none of them were interested

in the new religion of their father. In fact, my beloved children were suspecting that their father—who they knew as Christian—at the twilight of his life had suddenly embraced a new religion, one which may have some malicious intentions.

But this scripture reproved me: “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (1 Timothy 3:5).

I realized that I needed to help my own family come to an understanding of my commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While constantly praying—in secret and publicly—to ask the Lord’s help on this matter, the Church extended to me a new calling as national public affairs director for the Republic of Congo. Our first French-speaking, Central Africa regional public affairs directors conference of the Church took place in February 2014 in Kinshasa DRC. I was sensitive about my marital status, but I was comforted when I saw that only one of the five directors gathered had a wedding ring on his finger—the others were single.

But this was a temporary consolation, as the General Authority Seventy

presiding over the conference—as well as the area public affairs director—pointed out this issue of being single that prevailed among the gathered public affairs directors. We were exhorted to remain worthy and were encouraged to become married and receive temple ordinances with our spouses. The public affairs director had these concluding words, “The restored Church of Jesus Christ will continue to grow, with or without you; but if it is with you, it is for your good.” These were inspired and unforgettable words and boosted my desire to enter the holy temple and to experience the eternal reality of its sacred ordinances.

So over time, the Lord blessed me—and my desire to once again be joined in marriage was fulfilled. In December 2014, Parfaite Nkounkou and I were legally married at the city hall in Brazzaville. Six months later, we entered the Johannesburg Temple for the very first time, where we were sealed for time and for all eternity.

During the next few years, growing together as a couple, we set a spiritual goal to serve a full-time mission as a senior couple in 2018. In preparation, we committed ourselves to attend the weekly missionary preparation class organized by the Brazzaville Stake. Since Congo had no previously experienced full-time senior missionaries, we were combined with the prospective young missionary class. This training took place throughout the year until we completed our missionary

application forms and submitted them to our bishop and stake president.

It was while waiting for our mission call, that the hand of Heavenly Father intervened and opened the doors of the temple so that we could serve and learn. Instead of receiving a mission call, we were invited to live in Johannesburg for 12 months and serve as temple ordinance workers in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple.

Wendy W. Nelson, wife of President Russell M. Nelson, has said, “Everything

we do in the Church leads us to the holy temple.”<sup>1</sup> This has certainly been the case in my seven years of Church membership, as I have truly been led to the house of the Lord. There is no other place on earth where I feel peace as I do in that place—I know for myself that I have already lived in an atmosphere of glory. ■

**NOTE**

1. Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, “Open the Heavens through Temple and Family History Work,” *Liahona*, October 2017, 18.

**CHOOSE A MEANINGFUL SABBATH SERIES**

## Make the Sabbath a Personal Sign of our Love for Heavenly Father

By Susan Gregory

*“The change has been very good for us. The Come, Follow Me manual provides a study routine that we can work on together. We have always read our scriptures together, but this is more structured.”*

In his opening remarks at the October 2018 General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, our Prophet, President Russell M. Nelson said:

“The long-standing objective of the Church is to assist all members to increase their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, to assist them in making and keeping their

covenants with God, and to strengthen and seal their families. In this complex world today, this is not easy. The adversary is increasing his attacks on faith and upon us and our families at an exponential rate. To survive spiritually, we need counterstrategies and proactive plans. Accordingly, we now want to put in place organizational adjustments that will further fortify our members and their families.

“For many years, Church leaders have been working on an integrated curriculum to strengthen families and individuals through a *home-centered* and *Church-supported* plan to learn



doctrine, strengthen faith, and foster greater personal worship. Our efforts over these recent years to hallow the Sabbath—to make it a delight and a personal sign to God of our love for Him—will be augmented by the adjustments we will now introduce.”<sup>1</sup>

Elder Quentin L. Cook, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, then presented the new two-hour Sunday meeting schedule.

Most of the initial comments and reactions seemed to focus on the reduction from 3 hours to 2 hours spent in Sunday meetings—comments such as:

“More family time.”

“Less stress trying to keep the baby quiet in meetings.”

“Yay! Lunch at a civilised hour!” (where three wards shared the same meetinghouse)

“It’s easier to get friends to come to church for two hours than three!”

But, as we experienced this inspired change over the past months, most people have grown to understand that the spare hour is NOT the issue or main benefit.

A Johannesburg family shared their thoughts:

**Dad:** “The prophet’s words have made me more aware of the responsibility I have to teach my family. The onus is on us—not on the Church—to take our families back to Heaven Father. It is the same as with ministering, we need to look for opportunities, it is not about statistics. With this new awareness, I’m finding more ‘Sabbath’ to teach my children than the extra one hour could ever make.”

**Mom:** “Maybe it’s psychological—but spending less time at church in the morning makes it easier to have a purposeful family home evening on a Sunday. With all the children’s sporting commitments just having supper together on a Monday was a nightmare! At first, I missed the extra classes and the opportunity to chat with people in between. But now I am aware of the need to fellowship more and to connect better with other members.”

**Teenage daughter:** “I love that we now have ‘church’ every day at home

instead of just once a week! It is also quite nice to have Young Women every two weeks—makes it more special to be together. I am definitely studying the scriptures a lot more than I did last year.”

Another family with two young single adults living at home meet on a Sunday to review and discuss the readings done individually during the week. Here are their thoughts:

“This is really working for our family. Our discussions are meaningful, and we all learn from each other. Each week we take an aspect or teaching that we want to develop in our lives, and we are seeing results. I am keeping a record of these so that we can review our progress on a quarterly basis.

“It is also lovely to chat with friends after church for a few minutes and catch up instead of all rushing off home as we used to.”

A retired couple reported:

“The change has been very good for us. The *Come, Follow Me* manual provides a study routine that we can

work on together. We have always read our scriptures together, but this is more structured. We also enjoy the extra time to spend with family. We serve as family history consultants in the ward, and we have seen an increase in families wanting help as they spend time searching their ancestors' records."

Here are some other reported experiences:

Sister Lerato Pholo spoke to members of the Mdantsane Stake who welcomed this revelation with open arms and are excited to spend more time as a family discussing the gospel.

Sandiswa Mahlangabeza says that she is happy because this programme now allows the family to have more time together and everyone has a role to play. "I sustain this revelation because now we get to have meaningful discussions during Sunday School. When we get home, we get to talk about what we learnt at church and we spend more time as a family."

Luvuyo Mafundityala says that this two-hour block has made it easier for him to carry out his ministering duties. "I totally sustain the prophet's revelation because now it is easier for me to catch up with my fellow brothers and sisters. I get to use the time to minister and check in with those that are sick and afflicted. Since we sometimes walk quite long distances home, we walk after church without fear of getting mugged because we get out of church an hour earlier. I cannot wait for the day when I have my own family and instill all the values

and principles I am learning from the *Come, Follow Me* manual."

Siphuxolo Slotile says that he was a bit worried when the First Presidency introduced the two-hour block because he felt like there would not be enough time to worship. "When President Nelson introduced the two-hour block, I was astonished because I did not see myself getting enough time to worship the Lord Jesus Christ and having enough time to learn of Him, even though I knew that the Brethren received this revelation. As time goes by, the two-hour Sabbath service is helping me to pay full attention to those that are assigned to address the congregation each and every Sabbath day. Even in the Sunday School class, I'm getting enough time to learn without feeling drowsy, because the lessons are not taking too much time; and that has made the teachers go straight to the point. I always look forward to Sundays and I get enough time to ponder about the Sunday School lessons."

The Yosi family sustains President Nelson's revelation because they get to visit with family, minister, and grow close as a family. "This revelation has come at the right time because we see Satan attacking the family unit, and our family has grown a lot from spending that extra hour together pondering and reflecting on what we learnt at church. We also get to use the time to minister and visit family and friends. This revelation was inspired, and the Lord wants us to grow as families and individuals."

And finally,

There is no handbook on what members of the Church should or shouldn't do on the Sabbath, but as we follow this Church-supported program to make our lives and homes Christ-centred, we can enjoy extraordinary blessings as mentioned by Elder Cook, when he said: "We are confident that members will be blessed in extraordinary ways. Sunday can be a day of gospel learning and teaching at church and in the home. As individuals and families engage in family councils, family history, ministering, service, personal worship, and joyful family time, the Sabbath day will truly be a delight."<sup>2</sup> ■

#### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Opening Remarks," *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7–8.
2. Quentin L. Cook, "Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 11.

**Editor's Note:** As you adapt your Sabbath day programme to the new two-hour Sunday meeting schedule and renewed individual study, family gatherings, and ministering to one another, we wish to learn how you, your family, and those around you are changing. Like many quoted in this article, we invite you to share your feelings and experiences for future publication. Those wishing to do so should email your comments to the Africa Southeast Office of Area Communications at [africasoutheast-communications@churchofjesuschrist.org](mailto:africasoutheast-communications@churchofjesuschrist.org).