

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

I Will Be Your Light

Elder O. Vincent Haleck

Area President



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The Lord has always been mindful of His servants and has made commitments to them. He has made these commitments through covenants.

To Joshua, the Lord declared, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

“Be strong and of a good courage” (Joshua 1:5–6).

To Lehi’s family as they journeyed to the promised land, the Lord declared, “I will also be your light in the wilderness . . . ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led” (1 Nephi 17:13).

Today in the Pacific Area we have modern day Lehis and Joshuas who have come to a remembrance of the Lord’s goodness and blessings in their lives. It is said that remembrance is a sign of gratitude. Throughout our Area we have invited senior couples to come and serve in those parts of the Pacific where the Church is still emerging. To those who have served and are serving, it is their way of giving back to others who are newly converted to the Church. The missionary couple’s own origins in the Church may have begun many years earlier, when missionaries from America came to teach their ancestors who accepted the gospel. Those early island converts, at first were unfamiliar with their new faith,

just like those who are recent members in the emerging Church. Now we call on our modern-day senior couples from the established Church to come and help strengthen their brothers and sisters in the emerging Church. Indeed, they are being “a light in the wilderness.” The Spirit of the Lord will testify through their example that it is by the influence of the Lord that they are being led. Our senior missionaries are helping and showing how to apply and live the principles of the gospel.

Senior missionary couples are making a difference as they apply their experience and teach members how to conduct the Church and how to apply the gospel in their daily lives. There is a cultural compatibility with the people in places like Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, the Marshall Islands and Kiribati. Our serving couples have come from Samoa and Tonga, as well as Samoans and Tongans who reside in the United States, New Zealand and



Brother Viiga and Sister Lupe Fuimaono



Brother Lamese and Sister Loreta Taala

Australia. We also had a couple from Papua New Guinea who served.

Consider the testimonies of couples who have served, or are serving:

“Our two-year mission to the Solomon Islands was one of the best experiences we have had in our lives

together, . . . which has helped us gain a firm testimony . . . to understand the love of our Father in Heaven and our Saviour for us, and all of His children. We have felt rejuvenated and strengthened and to “walk and not faint”. We witnessed miracles and the

hand of the Lord in our lives and the lives of the Saints in the progress of the work”. —*Brother Viiga and Sister Lupe Fuimaono, Pesega Samoa Stake*

“For many years, I served under the direction of various stake presidents as a stake clerk. The knowledge and experience I gained has prepared us to serve and assist the priesthood and auxiliary leaders in the Daru Papua New Guinea Stake. We consider this a blessing. Serving the Lord with my eternal companion, Sister Taala, is always a blessing”. —*Brother Lamese and Sister Loreta Taala, Pago Pago Samoa West Stake*

“Our service in Papua New Guinea has meant a great deal to us, especially for Brother Jackson, as a native of the country. Our service was a longed-for return to PNG to proclaim the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to our family and people. Wearing our missionary badges each day gave us extraordinary strength of faith and hope.” —*Brother Peter and Sister Serena Jackson, Eight Mile Plains Australia Stake*

“Thank you for getting these wonderful couples to serve here in PNG. They’re a tremendous help for the development of the Church and strengthening the members here. They serve as leaders, advisors, trainers and teachers in their branches and wards. They also help our full-time elders minister to both nonmembers and less-active members returning to full activity. As a result, I am seeing



Brother Peter and Sister Serena Jackson



President and Sister Hafoka

the increase in sacrament meeting attendance. The sisters are helping in Primary, Young Women and Relief Society to strengthen those auxiliaries”.
—President Finau Hafoka, Papua New Guinea Port Moresby Mission

In their service, our missionary couples are establishing the Church. They are the means through which

the Lord is bringing the light of His gospel to a people and to a country. Seeds are being planted in fertile hearts and minds. The Lord’s promise is evident, He “will be on [their] right and on [their] left, and [His] Spirit shall be in [their] hearts and [His] angels round about to bear [them] up” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:88). ■

in the gathering of Israel. Students are welcomed to the classes where they learn how to educate themselves in the Lord’s way—to prepare themselves for higher education, and to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Saviour.

If you are struggling with anything in life, Pathway Connect can help you become unstuck. It is a programme that gives you hope, shows you how to accomplish difficult things and helps you reach your potential.

Derek Liufau, Campbelltown 1st Ward, Sydney, Macarthur Australia Stake

I want to be an example to my children.

As a youth, I did not take my education as seriously as I should have. For eight months during 2018, my wife had to look after our four children on her own through the week, as well as be the main breadwinner, while I went to police college to become qualified. This was a very difficult time for my family and I realised then how important it is to get an education.

My children are my primary motivation. I want to further my education and set a better example for them. I want them to see that it is never too late to learn and that we have never learned enough. Regardless of how old we are, the more knowledge and education we have, the more opportunities will be opened to us.

LOCAL PAGES

The Pathway to a Life of Learning

Latter-day Saints from Sydney, Australia share their experiences with Pathway Connect.

Pathway Connect is an inspired programme created and run by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that makes higher education more attainable. From its inception in 2009, Pathway Connect enrolment has risen exponentially, from 50 students, to approximately

7,000 students in 2013, to more than 15,000 students in 2017.

This programme provides a wonderful opportunity for higher learning, both academically and spiritually, and it is for everyone.

A Pathway class is called a “gathering” as students are literally taking part

My wife encouraged me to join Pathway Connect with her and I'm so glad that she did. I was apprehensive at first because I hadn't studied in 10 years, but I could no longer progress in the job I was in, so together with my wife, we took a leap of faith and joined.

Through the Pathway programme I learned how to learn. I learned how to manage my time wisely and I gained a huge amount of confidence as I saw that with God nothing is impossible. I have one more year to finish my

associate degree in policing practice and I don't intend to stop there.

Our Father in Heaven is all knowing. If we are striving to become like Him, then our pursuit of knowledge and understanding should never end.

Lisa Roberts, Ingleburn 1st Ward, Sydney, Liverpool Australia Stake

I wanted to be a part of something extraordinary.

I was introduced to Pathway by a family member who had graduated from the first class held here in Sydney.

Seeing the amazing success of that first class I decided to join because I knew that this programme was extraordinary, and I wanted to be a part of it.

My experience with Pathway Connect has been amazing.

What some people might not understand is that most universities offer a pathway entry programme. What makes BYU Pathway Connect so special is that it is a gospel-centred learning experience. It seems strange to include math and English with the doctrines of the gospel, but all truth is from God.

I loved learning alongside like-minded people with the same principles and values. Some of my deepest spiritual experiences were shared with members of our gathering class. We shared our successes and failures, laughter and tears, all in a spiritual context, which is not so easy to do at other universities.

I tell anyone who will listen about Pathway and have encouraged many people, including my son who has just graduated himself, to join.

In addition to the spiritual and practical support, the cost is greatly reduced if you choose to matriculate and continue on to a degree with BYU; there really is no reason not to do it.

When I graduated from Pathway in 2017, I knew that this was only the beginning. I made the decision to seek a university degree and am currently in my second year as an



Derek Liufau with his family

online student majoring in business management.

I would not have had the confidence or resources to take the leap without Pathway; it has truly prepared me for an educational journey that will hopefully never end.

**May Nouata, Minto Ward,
Sydney, Liverpool Australia Stake**

Remember your worth, you are a daughter of God.

In 2016 my husband and I were having marriage counselling. I had stopped attending Church at that time and I wanted a divorce. Our marriage counsellor invited us to do Pathway Connect together. Because it was a gospel-centred learning programme, she felt that doing this together would help the doctrines of the gospel sink deep into our hearts.

My first thought was, “oh no, not another Church programme,” but I had always wanted to further my education so I said I would try it and see how it went.

We haven't looked back!

Pathway helped save my marriage, supported me on my road back to Church activity and set me on my way to lifelong learning.

Education has the power to break cycles. I grew up in one of the most socially disadvantaged suburbs in Sydney. I was surrounded by generations of poverty, hopelessness and everything that goes with that life.

Completing Pathway helped me see that it was my responsibility to pursue as much education as I could for the next generation.

I have just started my first semester at BYU-Idaho (online). I am currently studying for a bachelor's degree in applied management and my ultimate goal is to start and run a business together with my husband.

Pathway is truly for everyone! I had not studied formally for 20 years when I started, so of course I had many doubts to overcome but

I also felt the guiding hand of my Saviour, Jesus Christ, every step of the way.

While I was still studying with Pathway Connect, a role became available in my place of employment. It was a role I really wanted but when I found out that a university degree was required, I knew I had no chance. I brushed it off at first but was clearly prompted by the Holy Ghost to apply anyway. I felt embarrassed applying as I knew some of the other applicants and



May Nouata and her husband

how well-educated they were. I was surprised when I got an interview, but I still didn't think I had a chance. I was so nervous just before my interview that I decided to pray. As I did, a feeling of calm and love overwhelmed me, and I heard the Spirit say:

"Remember your worth, you are a daughter of God."

I did get the job in the end, but that blessing was secondary to the testimony I gained that day of the love of Jesus Christ and of His limitless power. ■

in that environment. Mum brought me to New Zealand, where we found The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a few years later. Though there was some contact with other family members for a little while, I never heard from my father again."

Growing up without his father's family was a tragedy, but the gospel of Jesus Christ and a loving mother helped Raymond know who he was.

"My mother was very careful to instill in me a strong sense of identity and pride in who I was. Even though I wasn't raised around my father's family and their culture, my mum made sure I was proud of my black heritage."

The decision to find his father's family came much later in life, after marrying a beautiful Nga Puhī girl, moving to Australia and raising seven children of his own.

By now the spirit of Elijah had set in and Raymond was gathering bits and pieces of information. He managed to collect about 300 PDFs, but Google would only get him so far!

"I knew there was a big family over there," he said, "I ended up tracking down the email of a first cousin from my father's side named Gail. I sent her an email that said, 'I think I might be your cousin.' Within a few hours another cousin responded, and it all started from there."

Raymond was still not interested in meeting his father, but over the next decade, the spirit of Elijah would

Father and Son, Reunited after 50 years

By Crystal Viljoen



Raymond with his father



Raymond with his mother

And he shall turn . . . the heart of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:6).

Set during the civil rights movement in 1960s Canada, it had all the makings of a great romance that was not meant to be. She was a young red-haired jazz singer from Scotland trying to make a career, he—a handsome African-Canadian jazz percussionist

who played in the band with her. They fell in love, and had their first and only child together, Raymond.

Raymond's family managed to stay together for two years before the social unrest in the area brought things to a head.

"Mum was a white woman raising a black child," Raymond said. "[My parents] both knew that we couldn't stay



Raymond met his father and his father's side of the family after several years.



not let him leave things alone and he corresponded with various cousins including a first cousin named Carrie.

“I was hesitant at first because my father had not been a part of my life,” he said. “I didn’t feel like meeting him now would add anything. There was no animosity toward him, I had a great life with my mum, I just had no desire at that time to meet him.”

With gentle persuasion from his wife and not so gentle persuasion from Carrie, Raymond finally decided to take that step. In October of 2015, more than 50 years after contact was severed, Raymond agreed to a phone call.

“It was a conference call between my father, Carrie and me.” He said. “He didn’t know I would be on the call. I remember sitting in a car park with my phone waiting to hear my

father’s voice for the first time. Yes, I was nervous.

“The conversation was cordial and easy—like family. We promised each other that we would meet and six months later I was in Toronto.”

With a video camera in hand, Raymond gathered all the family history information that he could. He interviewed those, including his 86-year-old father, who carried with them the treasured family stories, and took photos of photos, and Raymond shared with them all that he had found.

“I was apprehensive about meeting my father,” he said, “but just like the phone call, it felt really natural and easy. We both shed a few tears.”

After three short weeks in Canada, Raymond’s family had multiplied beyond what he had imagined both amongst those living and those who had passed on. He sought permission to take names to the temple and has since done the work for the first four generations on his father’s side.

“Reconnecting with my father after so many years was a wonderful experience.” He said. “I enjoyed listening

AREA WEBSITES

Australia Area Site: pacific.lds.org/au

New Zealand Area Site: pacific.lds.org/nz

Samoa Area Site: pacific.lds.org/ws

Tongan Area Site: pacific.lds.org/to

Fiji Area Site: pacific.lds.org/fj

Australia Newsroom:

www.mormonnewsroom.org.au

New Zealand Newsroom:

www.mormonnewsroom.org.nz

Papua New Guinea Newsroom:

www.mormonnewsroompg.org

to the stories he shared of growing up in a large family in Montreal. Dad was one of nine children.

“Even though I never met my aunts and uncles, I felt a closeness to them when I took their names to the temple.

I had the privilege of participating in the sealing of each of them to their parents, and during the session I felt their presence. I look forward to the day when I will finally be able to meet them and embrace each one of them.” ■

Religious Books Donated for World Book Day

Newsroom

To celebrate World Book Day, representatives from 11 faiths donated books to the Westall Library in Clayton, Victoria at an interfaith event on Tuesday 23 April 2019.

Organised by the Kingston Interfaith Network, the event was an opportunity for people of different faiths to get to know each other. Approximately 35 books were donated by faith groups including two Anglican

congregations, Al-Ehsan Centre of Melbourne, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Dejjiao, Noble Minds Society Taoism, Falun Dafa, The Salvation Army, Eckankar, Subud, and Sufi.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints donated copies of *The Book of Mormon* in various languages including English, Arabic, Italian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Greek as well as copies of *Jesus the*

Christ and Saints: The Standard of Truth.

Latter-day Saint Christanne Smith, currently the chairperson of Kingston Interfaith Network, presented the books to the Westall Library and spoke to the group about the importance of interactions between people of different beliefs and backgrounds.

“Recent events in Christchurch and Sri Lanka can leave us in no doubt as to the importance of people of good will everywhere contributing to open communication, fellowship and mutual respect,” said Sister Smith.

“It is in the fellowship with others not of our faith and those who practise no faith that misconceptions and stereotypes and misunderstandings are broken down and we recognise that even though we may believe differently, there are many things that unite us.” ■

