

# AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

### Repentance—Accessible and Available to All

Elder Mark Peteru

Area Seventy

While interviewing an inmate to determine his progression to a minimum-security correctional centre, I asked him the routine question about plans for his pending return to his family and community after a lengthy period of incarceration. His reply surprised me and set forth the fruits of sincerely repenting and obtaining forgiveness. He said: “I look back and I’m sorry for what I’ve done, I just *want my old life* back.”

This man remembers what it was like when he was a good and clean person and wanted to start over; to continue his life and to become a decent and respectable citizen. With the support of friends and family, he has every chance of success.

Sincere repentance allows us to return to a point in our lives that we remember when we were clean before, and we can start anew! Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy taught “While we are grateful for second chances following mistakes, or failures of the mind, we stand all amazed at the Savior’s grace in giving us second chances in overcoming sin, or failures of the heart. . . .

“Repentance isn’t His backup plan in the event we might fail. Repentance

is His plan, knowing that we will.”<sup>1</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson asked and answered this question at the April general priesthood session: “Does *everyone* need to repent?” The answer is yes.”

President Nelson continued, “Too many people consider repentance as punishment—something to be avoided except in the most serious circumstances. But this feeling of being penalized is engendered by Satan. He tries to block us from looking to Jesus Christ, who stands with open arms, hoping and willing to heal, forgive, cleanse, strengthen, purify, and sanctify us.”<sup>2</sup>

Isaiah quotes the Lord: “I have spread out my hands *all the day* unto a rebellious people”<sup>3</sup>; with the Apostle Paul restating this to the Roman Saints: “*All day long* I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people”<sup>4</sup>. Jacob offers the same encouragement, that the Lord remembers His covenant people “and he stretches forth his hands unto them *all the day long*”<sup>5</sup>.

The prophets teach that the gift of repentance is available all day and every night, meaning, all the time. President Nelson teaches that



Elder Mark Peteru

“Whether you are diligently moving along the covenant path, have slipped or stepped from the covenant path, or can’t even see the path from where you are now, I plead with you to repent. Experience the strengthening power of daily repentance—of doing and being a little better each day.”<sup>6</sup>

Elder Brian K. Taylor of the Seventy offered the benediction at the recent general priesthood session. He expressed “our” sense of deep gratitude for the Saviour’s atoning sacrifice for each of us “that we might run unto Thee to repent of our sins.”

President Nelson quoted a stake president who recently taught the following in a stake leadership meeting: “If we really understood the doctrine of repentance, we would run to repent. We must teach our youth to run to repent, because if they run away from repentance, they are marooned!”

Repentance and forgiveness of sins through the Atonement of Jesus Christ is accessible and readily available to all.

Like the prodigal son, remember that we are children of a patient and loving Father in Heaven. Through His Son, the outstretched arms of mercy

reach out to us all the day long; anxious to forgive, heal and point the way on the path back to our Heavenly home.

I have a personal testimony of the cleansing and assuring power of the Saviour's Atonement in my life through daily and sincere repentance; line upon line. Through His infinite Atonement, the Saviour continues to invite us to follow Him. I know that

the promised joy and peace will come to all who seek repentance and follow the Lord on the covenant path. ■

#### NOTES

1. Lynn G. Robbins, "Until Seventy times Seven", *Ensign*, May 2018, 22.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "We Can Do Better and Be Better," *Ensign*, May 2019, 67.
3. Isaiah 65:2, emphasis added.
4. Romans 10:21, emphasis added.
5. Jacob 6:4, emphasis added.
6. Russell M. Nelson, "We Can Do Better and Be Better," 67.

#### LOCAL PAGES

## Prophet Blesses Australian Saints to Be a 'Light and Attraction' to Fellow Citizens

Newsroom

*President Nelson emphasizes the power of the Book of Mormon*



President Russell M. Nelson reminded a capacity crowd of 8,000 Latter-day Saints on Sunday, 19 June, 2019 at the International Convention Centre in Sydney of the power and importance of the Book of Mormon in their personal lives and in the growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Australia.

The prophet noted that Church growth in Australia has tripled since his call as an Apostle in 1984.

"Often I am asked, 'What's the reason for this growth?'" 94-year-old President Nelson said during the third stop in his nine-day Pacific tour to seven countries. "[I] answer, 'Because the Book of Mormon is true.' Think of its two purpose statements—one, for the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ and, two, that God will remember His covenant made with the House of Israel and that Israel will be gathered in these latter days. The instrument by which that gathering of Israel will take place is the Book of Mormon. Without the Book of Mormon, there would be no gathering of Israel."

President Nelson spoke to the assembled Saints about the unique contribution of the Book of Mormon to the world's treasure chest of spiritual knowledge. He detailed what the book is, what the book is not, what the book affirms, what the book refutes and what the book clarifies.<sup>1</sup>



Noting the Book of Mormon teaching that men and women are free to choose their path in life, President Nelson said his experience from nearly 10 decades of life shows that “if you want to be happy, you choose the ways of the Lord. And if you want to be really miserable, choose the paths and the temptations of the adversary.”

He concluded his remarks with a blessing for all Australian Latter-day Saints to increase their love for Jesus Christ and to be good neighbors and citizens in their communities.

“I bless you to love the Lord Jesus Christ and to feast upon His words, particularly as they are divinely given to you in the Book of Mormon,” said President Nelson, who himself dedicated Australia for the preaching of the gospel in November 1993. “I bless you that you will apply those teachings into your lives so you can be a light and attraction to your friends and neighbors who are not yet with you in the Church.”

President Nelson flew from Samoa to Sydney on Sunday with his wife,

Wendy, and Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Susan.

In her remarks at the Sunday evening devotional, Sister Nelson shared deeply personal experiences with prayer and accepting the will of God in her life. She then asked and encouraged the audience, “Brothers and Sisters, what does the Lord want to have happen with your life? He knows what will be best for you and for me. Even though we know this, sometimes we have a hard time emulating the Savior’s prayer, ‘Thy will be

done.’ . . . The heavens will open when we pray, ‘Thy will be done’—and when we are so eager to know the mind and will of the Lord that we are willing to have him bring us something even better than our heart desires.”

Elder Gong shared several experiences from Latter-day Saints around the world who have been blessed through prayer with inspiration in their lives. “In each of our circumstances—I know that those circumstances are so varied across our Saints here in Australia—I pray that you will have faith in the continuing revelation that comes to the Church as the Church. And I pray that you will find and feel and be grateful for the revelation that will come to you in your lives, suited to your needs, in your joys and in your sorrows, when you are on your knees, when you’re waiting and expecting and living for the blessings of the Lord, which He will honor in His time and in His way.”

Sister Gong spoke of the value of learning from others and applying those lessons in the context of what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

“We live in a unique time,” Sister Gong said. “This is a time where many things that are precious and true are less understood and less valued—characteristics like courage, sacrifice, repentance, chastity, fidelity, integrity, meekness. These are not things unique to the gospel of Jesus Christ—we share them with other faith communities.

But they are increasingly rare in our society today. I believe it is by coming together and learning from one another that we are able to learn what these principles should mean in our lives. [We should] open our hearts to our brothers and sisters and their lived experience, especially in the gospel of Jesus Christ, that our testimonies may be deepened.”

Prior to the devotional, the Church leaders met and answered the questions of young adults.

President Nelson’s visits began May 17 in Kona, Hawaii, where he held a devotional meeting. From there he traveled on May 18 to Apia, Samoa, where he spoke to Latter-day Saints at an outdoor meeting. He also met with Samoan government and faith leaders.

### **Pacific Visit**

President Nelson’s tour of the Pacific ran from May 16–25, 2019. The senior Church leaders travelled to Wellington and Auckland, New Zealand. Other stops included Suva, Fiji; Nuku’alofa, Tonga; and Papeete, Tahiti, where the prophet attended a 175th anniversary cultural program celebrating the arrival of the first missionaries to French Polynesia.

### **Global Church**

The Church, headquartered in Salt Lake City, has more than 16.3 million members worldwide and more

than 200 temples either in operation, announced, under construction or being renovated around the world.

Nearly 154,000 Latter-day Saints reside in Australia. The country has five operating temples, located in the cities of Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

President Nelson was sustained as the 17th president of the Church in January 2018. Since that time, he has traveled to Europe, Africa, Asia, North America and South America to minister to Latter-day Saints and to meet with government and religious leaders, as well as the media. ■

#### **NOTE**

1. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 60-63.

## Trust in His Process

### **Pare Tukiri**

*Sister Wendy Nelson empowers Sydney Saints to reach their potential with patience and faith.*

When I heard that the prophet was coming to Sydney, I was beyond excited. Just to know that he would be in the same country as myself was exciting but to have the opportunity to be in his presence and to hear his voice was a great blessing.

I am a single mother of four girls. Like most parents, my deepest hopes



*Pare and her daughters on the right*

are for my children to come unto Christ. Over the last few years, my girls have been through a variety of challenges and trials that have led some of them to fall away from activity in the gospel. I know that they love the Lord and believe in Him but the trials in their lives have pulled them away for a time and this has been a great source of worry for me.

I was determined to get them to the prophet's devotional. I knew that if they felt of his spirit and heard his message, they would feel their testimonies burn within them once again.

After many obstacles, like being unsure if we would get tickets, having moved wards right when they were being allocated, and our car breaking

down, we made it to the venue and took our seats.

From the moment the prophet walked into the room there was no denying that we were in the presence of the Lord's anointed. There was an atmosphere of love and peace that covered the arena like a blanket. The reverence from the packed venue, as everyone hung onto his every word, was very moving; even the children seemed to be unusually quiet.

As well as the words of the prophet, Sister Wendy Nelson's talk stood out to me. Her obedience to the will of the Lord as He prepared her for her destiny as the wife of the prophet of the Lord, was so inspiring. As she shared her experience, I realised that I

needed to be patient with my children and to allow the Lord to work with them in His perfect way and timing. I needed to trust in His process the way Sister Nelson had.

Being a single parent, I am always trying to 'fill the gaps' and I sometimes take counsel of my fears. Sister Nelson's example gave me the courage I needed to stay positive and to keep going.

My children also felt the spirit of the prophet and his wife. They couldn't get over how long Sister Nelson had waited upon the Lord. Hearing the challenges of her journey but at the same time seeing the result, as her husband gazed lovingly at her while she spoke, gave my daughters renewed courage and strength.

My eldest daughter, Storm, came to church the week after the prophet's visit; she had not been for many months. She almost didn't come in but as we stood in the doorway I whispered in her ear, "Storm:1 Satan:0", she knew exactly what I meant and continued into the chapel.

There has been a noticeable shift in our home. The girls are more proactive with their participation in family study and council. Previously my children relied on me to solve everything but now we counsel together with respect and love. Storm prepares all our Come Follow Me lessons, and everyone makes an effort to participate.

We love you President and Sister Nelson. ■

## Cupcakes for Cancer Research

### Newsroom

*Members of the community in Melbourne's South East recently gathered for a Biggest Morning Tea event at Living Learning Pakenham, raising funds for cancer research.*

Maureen Thomas and Barbara Lucky, from the Pakenham Ward of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, donated more than 150 cupcakes to the event, baked by members of the Relief Society and Young Women organisations.

Maureen said that Living Learning Pakenham staff were very appreciative of the donation.

"Barbara and I met CEO Miriam Cadwallader who spoke to us about the centre and all the classes and programs they run, as well as the VCAL students and their involvement in planning the event."

Liahona and Shem'el Watson, two of the young women, baked and iced 12 chocolate cupcakes for the occasion.

"It's nice to bake cakes and raise money for those in need," commented Shem'el.

According to the Cancer Council, one in two Australians are diagnosed with cancer before the age of 85.

Living Learning Pakenham, one of many organisations that support the Cancer Council's annual campaign, raised approximately \$1,000 at the morning tea.

This is the second year that members of Pakenham Ward have contributed home-baked goods to the centre. Maureen remarked, "We're definitely looking forward to helping out again next year." ■

## Fasting and Faith Discussed at Ramadan Event

### Newsroom

People from different faith backgrounds came together to celebrate Ramadan at a Melton community Iftar dinner last month.

Hosted by Melton Interfaith at the Melton Civic Centre, the dinner was attended by 180 people including Mayor of the City of Melton, Cr Bob Turner and other councillors, the principal of Al Iman College, Ali Zulfiquar, and local faith leaders including Gurpreet Verma, vice president of the Sri Durga Hindu Temple. This is the third year the Melton community has come together for the annual Iftar dinner.

With the aim of building links and understanding between people of faith, speakers shared their beliefs about fasting, which is practiced in many different religions. Speakers included students from Al Iman College who explained the purpose of Ramadan, and Elder Iroz, a missionary from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who shared a Christian perspective on fasting.

Interfaith Officer for Melton City Council Tapuwa Bofu remarked on the attendance of people of all ages, making it a truly family event.



*From left to right: Judy, Maureen, Barbara, and Miriam.*



“I also enjoyed listening to members of other faiths who were given the opportunity to explain the importance of fasting in their own communities.”

Essan Dileri, intercultural development officer for Melton City Council commented on the spirit of empathy and harmony amongst attendees as they celebrated Ramadan together.

Yvette Barnes, director of public affairs of the Wyndham Stake of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was grateful to learn more about Islam and to enjoy respectful conversation.

“There was a natural and comfortable conversation around our table about people’s experience growing up with various faith traditions,” said Yvette.

“It was a wonderful experience to have half a dozen people of different

faiths openly sharing their ideas with no animosity or awkwardness. It felt totally respectful.”

Latter-day Saints observe fasting by refraining voluntarily from food and drink for two consecutive meals at least once a month. The purpose of the fast is to draw closer to God and request His blessings. They are also asked to contribute the money that they would have spent on food for those meals to the Church’s welfare system to assist the poor and needy. ■

## Local Schools Give to Disadvantaged Schools in Papua New Guinea

Newsroom



Two Belmore schools in Sydney, Australia have recently collaborated to make a significant donation of used school furniture destined for disadvantaged schools in Papua New Guinea.

St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School Belmore and Belmore South Primary School donated a total of 153 school desks, 178 chairs and other classroom equipment which was carefully packed into a large shipping container by school-aged youth volunteers from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elizabeth Russo, principal of St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School said of the initiative, “It was fabulous for the volunteers to move furniture from our school to ship to Papua New Guinea. I really appreciated working with Belmore South Primary

School and Pacific Assist to support other communities.”

Lisa Trewin, school administrative manager of Belmore South Primary School noted, “Our school has recently installed future-focused furniture in our classrooms, so when the opportunity arose to collaborate with the Pacific Assist team and our neighbours at St Joseph’s Primary School, we jumped at the opportunity. We are so happy that our loved classroom furniture will find a new home in Papua New Guinea.”

Donations will be going to several schools in the highlands that were severely hit by two earthquakes last year. One of these was a 7.2-magnitude quake that hit on Tuesday 27 February 2018 about 30 km north of the town of Bulolo, in the Morobe Province. The other large earthquake was in October.

When the shipment arrives in the port of Lae, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will unpack the deliveries and transport them up to the highlands to Hela Province where it will be distributed to Magarima High School, Tari High School and Kulanda community School in Tari.

The project was coordinated by Pacific Assist, an Australian and New Zealand based not-for-profit charity providing education, health and well-being, economic development, and humanitarian assistance to countries in the South Pacific. ■

## Elder and Sister Haleck Bid Farewell

### Newsroom

*After many years of service, the couple prepares to return home.*

**E**lder O. Vincent Haleck, president of the Pacific Area of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and his wife, Sister Peggy Haleck, bid farewell to employees and missionaries at the Pacific Area Administration office on 11 June.

During a special devotional in Auckland, the Halecks shared their feelings about their six years of service in the South Pacific.

Elder Ian S. Ardern, first counselor in the Pacific Area Presidency, spoke fondly of President Haleck.

He said Elder Haleck ministered to the people and was a student of the word of God.

Elder Ardern shared some of things Elder Haleck achieved while being a member of the Pacific Area Presidency.

With a strong focus on health, Elder Haleck found two surgeons to volunteer in the Pacific area and some twenty missionary couples who have served mainly in Papua New Guinea.

He also helped countries and communities prepare for natural disasters by arranging to have shipping containers filled with emergency supplies in places prone to cyclones.

He oversaw the moving of an unused saw mill from Vanuatu to Tonga where cyclone-damaged trees were used to build new homes.



“The Pacific Area is better because of President Haleck’s leadership,” Elder Ardern added.

Sister Haleck spoke about the power of gathering together to do good.

She recalled the recent Pacific tour by President Russell M. Nelson, worldwide leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Sister Haleck was impressed with President Nelson’s encouragement to prepare for the Saviour’s return.

Speaking of unity, Elder Haleck said: “In the Church we work together and we’re better when we do. We are all ministers.”

Of his travels with President Nelson, he said, “He has the voice of a prophet—gentle and quiet, a still small voice.”

The Halecks will complete their service in July and will return to their home in American Samoa. ■