

NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Repentance—Accessible and Available to All

Elder Elder Mark Peteru

Area Seventy



Elder Mark Peteru

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.”¹

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.”²

Isaiah quotes the Lord: “I have spread out my hands *all the day* unto a rebellious people”³; 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”⁴. Jacob offers the same encouragement, that the Lord remembers His covenant people “and he stretches forth his hands unto them *all the day long*”⁵.

The prophets teach that the gift of repentance is available all day and every night, meaning, all the time. President Nelson teaches that “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.”⁶

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.

"In my mind, it wasn't a goal as much as it was an imperative," she said. "I want to live with God in the celestial kingdom and no other book will get me nearer to God than the Book of Mormon."

Though Ann has literally read the Book of Mormon every day, she said, "Sometimes it was no more than a line from a verse. The power of the Book of Mormon is not just in what we read and the wonderful doctrines and principles that will bless our lives, but it is also in the obedience required to read every day, even when it's hard.

"Those days where I could only manage one line were just as uplifting as the days where I could take the time to study more fully."

The benefits of this commitment were frequently manifest, but at one time of trial in Ann's life, the spiritual oil accumulated in her lamp of faith over the years of obedience, became soul saving.

LOCAL PAGES

Every Day for 30 Years

Ann McCallum

Dargaville Branch

One sister's determination to follow the counsel of the prophet to read the Book of Mormon every day.

In the October 1988 general conference, President Ezra Taft Benson gave a talk entitled "*Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon.*" In that talk he said, "We need to read daily from the pages of the book that will get a man 'nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.'"¹

Ann McCallum was a new member of the Church in the Dumbarton Ward of the Scotland Glasgow Stake. The prophet's plea to read the Book of Mormon every day was not taken lightly by Ann, and she decided, from that day on, to literally read the Book of Mormon every single day.

She has kept this commitment without exception for 30 years and is still going strong.



“My husband stopped coming to church for seven years,” she said. “The first day I went to church without him was hard. There were few Sundays where I did not cry.

“We can’t always see what is coming, which is why obedience to the counsel of the prophets is so important. Following President Benson’s counsel, I kept my lamp full of spiritual oil. When my time alone at church began, I was ready.”

During this trying time, a good friend of Ann’s expressed some surprise that the strain of her husband’s inactivity hadn’t pulled her away from the gospel too.

“For me the opposite was true,” Ann said. “My daily scripture study had been a priority for so long that even in my heartbreak I couldn’t let it go but rather, clung to it more.

“I knew that my husband and I were both better off if I kept going and stayed strong. I am not a spiritual giant, I’m just a poor wee soul clinging to the iron rod but I have seen the immense power a person can receive when you read the Book of Mormon every day.”

Ann will continue to read the Book of Mormon, every day, for the rest of her life.

“The Book of Mormon is my guiding light; I made a commitment to my Heavenly Father and I’m sticking to it.” ■

NOTE

1. Ezra Taft Benson, “Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 4.

Finding Purpose and Peace in the Refiner’s Fire

By Crystal Viljoen

“But that ye have patience, and bear with those afflictions, with a firm hope that ye shall one day rest from all your afflictions” (Alma 34:41).

Natasha Sadler—Avondale Ward, Auckland New Zealand Waterview stake

“It was the worst moment of my life,” Natasha said, speaking of the day she found her 23-year-old son, Memphis, dead. “I pulled into my driveway and saw my 12-year-old son weeping over his brother as he lay lifeless on the porch.”

Memphis was a “Mama’s boy.” He was kind and affectionate with his mother, and he didn’t care if his friends saw it. Losing Memphis marked the peak of what had been three continuous years of trial, heartache and loss.

“In 2016, I had a stroke,” said Natasha. “One year later Memphis died. Then in 2018, I had another stroke, which was so severe it put me in a wheelchair and took away the use of my left hand.”

Natasha, a mother of seven and a retired teacher, was an exceptionally gifted pianist. She started learning



Natasha

music at six years old, and by the age of eleven was the pianist in her stake. Her passion for music continued all through her adulthood until it was suddenly taken from her.

“In those three short years, I lost two of the most precious things in my life; my son and my music,” Natasha said. “But I cannot blame God. I agreed to come to this earth to be tried and tested. My Father in Heaven provides me with the very air I breathe, and it is through the

Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ, that I will overcome all my trials.”

Though nothing can fully prepare a person for this kind of loss and grief, Natasha is grateful for a loving seminary teacher who taught her, in her youth, to love the scriptures and a family who taught her to pray always.

“I was raised to fall on my knees and pray when times get tough. It’s a habit now. Even in the thickest moments of darkness when I might have felt anger, my instinct was to cry out to God for rescue and support. Thanks to my seminary teacher, finding strength in the scriptures is a habit too.”



Natasha’s trials are not yet over. The numerous effects of the strokes continue to make life very difficult, and the loss of her son will stay with her forever, but Natasha is focused on the positives of her situation.

“I will never take simple things like standing and walking for granted again,” she said. “I live in the moment and enjoy the beauty of God’s creations that surround me.

“I know that God allows us to experience loss in order to prove us, but I also know that everything I have lost I will find again either in this life or the next; I will see my son again and I will play the piano again.”

Natasha still plays the piano for her ward sacrament meetings—now using only her right hand. Though the members of her ward used to love hearing her expert arrangements of the hymns as they sang, even more uplifting is the sight of her sitting at the piano, playing with her one useful hand, refusing to give up, and enjoying the privilege to serve the Lord.

“My hope and faith are in God,” she said. “Not everyone will lose a child or end up in a wheelchair like me. But regardless of our differences, we all need the Lord. Perhaps I am now more aware of my dependence on God, but I am just like everyone else in my need for Him every day in every way.”

Life is still very difficult, Natasha doesn’t have a modified shower in

her home and has to go to the local swimming pool every day to use their shower for the disabled, but with the support of loving ward members, Natasha has managed to keep her simple yet powerful goal to attend church every Sunday.

“On Sunday mornings one of the sisters comes over to take me to the pools for a shower, then brings me to church by 9:00 am.

“I make sure to do all I can to make it to church, because I know that God is real. He hears our prayers. This is His Church. This is where I will find rescue from my trials. I know that there is no other way to ease my burdens than to take upon me the yoke of Christ.” ■

The Pathway to a Life of Learning

Latter-day Saints 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.

Lisa Roberts—“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 something extraordinary.

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.

As well as 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 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 and her husband

May Purcell—“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 to 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 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 His limitless power. ■

Women of Faith Lead the Way in Panmure, New Zealand

Newsroom

New community group formed to build bridges

A women's interfaith leadership group, established by Leah Broughton-Couch, has started quarterly breakfast meetings to share, plan, and implement a wide range of interfaith activities.

At a recent event hosted by St. Pius X Catholic Church, Glen Innes, and led by their youth and young adults, much unity was found around shared values, challenges and aspirations.

"It was a successful evening," Leah said. "Our young adults were able to connect with the St. Pius youth. Father Felisi, who leads St. Pius, is keen for another gathering such as this at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

The young people discussed the possibility of participating together in a Christmas cantata sponsored by the

Panmure Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this coming December.

Other activities planned include a "Women's Walk of Faith" to be held along the newly built Glen Innes/Pt. England walkway. The purpose of this walk is to build meaningful relationships at an interfaith and community level for women of all ages.

A "Women of Faith" devotional, led by the St. Pius Church, is also being planned. Additionally, ways to share the Church's self-reliance resources are being explored. An interfaith family history workshop is also planned for September.

To keep everyone connected, Auckland City Councillor, Josephine Bartley, created a Facebook group called "Tamaki Women of Faith." ■



Matthew Cowley's Great-Granddaughter "Comes Home" with BYU-Hawaii Concert Choir

Newsroom

Tour to New Zealand is personal for one member of the choir



Anna Sheffield was visibly moved as the Hamilton New Zealand Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came into view on Tuesday June 4, as her van drove along Tuhikaramea Road.

Even shrouded in scaffolding during a three-year renovation period, she loved returning to a place that means so much to her and her family.

Anna is a student at Brigham Young University-Hawaii and is a member of the school's concert choir. She is in New Zealand with the choir as part of its "Voyages of Light" South Pacific tour.

She grew up in the state of Iowa in the United States. She is the adopted daughter of Val Sheffield, who is the son of Matthew Cowley's only daughter, Jewel Cowley Sheffield.

Anna has known about her famous ancestor for years but only recently has gained a strong appreciation for his major contribution to the growth of the Church in New Zealand.

She attended the dedication of the Matthew Cowley Pacific Church History Centre in 2017 and made many family connections there.

She said it is exciting to be back in New Zealand and very special to her. She said she wants to "live up to what Matthew Cowley did here."

She paused for a quick picture beside a bust of her great-grandfather, which is displayed at the museum.

She also met with family friends and relatives prior to the concert.

Anna previously served as a service missionary in Los Angeles California, both as a family history consultant and as a temple worker in the Los Angeles California Temple. ■

AREA WEBSITES

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

Australia Area Site:
pacific.lds.org/au

Samoa Area Site:
pacific.lds.org/ws

Tongan Area Site:
pacific.lds.org/to

Fiji Area Site:
pacific.lds.org/fj

New Zealand Newsroom:
www.mormonnewsroom.org.nz

Australia Newsroom:
www.mormonnewsroom.org.au

Papua New Guinea Newsroom:
www.mormonnewsroompg.org

CALL FOR ARTICLES

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

liahona-pacific@ChurchofJesusChrist.org