

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Family Traditions that Strengthen Us

Elder Eduardo Gavarret

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Elder Eduardo Gavarret

A few months after we got married, Norma and I went to live in Asunción, Paraguay. As young people full of energy and dreams, we moved forward starting from precarious conditions. We started living in a small room, until we got the resources to rent a small house for us and our first child. That little house had a large space in the back

and a garden in front. We felt like we owned the world.

We began to embellish the place by planting trees and making a family garden. We planted mango trees in the front of the house, we painted the sidewalk curb white, as well as the walls that surrounded it. We painted the trunks of the trees to avoid pests and we put stones around them also

painted white. There was no money to hire a painter to paint the house, so we both painted the house and took care of it even though it was not ours. The house was always clean and well organized. It was a refuge. A place of peace where our children spent the first years of their lives.

After we started painting the house and embellishing it, the neighbors



began to do the same; soon, the whole block had sidewalk curb painted white and the houses painted. The block had been transformed.

The Fiddler on the Roof tells the story of Anatevka, an imaginary village in Ukraine in which Jews and Russians lived in harmony. In that small town lives Tevye, the milkman, with his wife, Golde, and their daughters. Because society and traditions are changing, Tevye gathers his daughters and explains why they have traditions and tells them:

“In our little village of Anatevka, you might say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof, trying to scratch

out a pleasant, simple tune without breaking his neck. It isn’t easy.

You may ask, why do we stay up here if it’s so dangerous? We stay because Anatevka is our home. And how do we keep our balance? That I can tell you in one word—tradition!

“Because of our traditions, we’ve kept our balance for many, many years. . . . Because of our traditions, everyone knows who he is and what God expects him to do.”¹

As members of the Church we are different from the rest of the world because of our knowledge of what God expects of us.

That knowledge should inspire us to press forward.

The husband must provide for the home, he must be a worker since in Zion “he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer” (D&C 42:42).

We see that sometimes, according to the culture of the world, women work, and men rest or benefit from their work; that the man commands and the woman obeys and serves him. That is not the culture of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands” (2 Nephi 5:17).

The document “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”² is like a refreshing breeze on a summer





afternoon. Husband and wife work together to build a family for God.

Elder Tom L. Perry said:

“The practice of having traditions to keep us close to the great heritage which is ours to enjoy should be something every family should try to keep alive. . . .

“If we will build righteous traditions in our families, the light of the gospel can grow ever brighter in the lives of our children from generation to generation. We can look forward to that glorious day when we will all be united together as eternal family units to reap the everlasting joy promised by our Eternal Father for His righteous children.

Our family activities and traditions can be a beacon to the rest of the world as an example of how we

should live to merit His choice blessings and live in peace and harmony until the day that He returns to rule and reign over us.”³

Traditions, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, help us focus on what is of value and to discard other traditions that are foreign to the principles of the gospel.

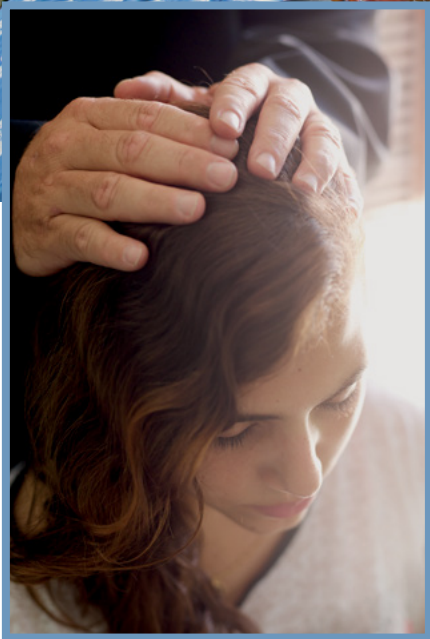
Some of these traditions are:

- Kneeling daily to do family prayer
- Studying the scriptures together
- Keeping the Sabbath, behaving correctly and having appropriate activities for the Lord’s Day

- Attending sacrament meetings and partaking of the sacraments
- Having family home evenings
- Fasting monthly and paying our tithes and offerings to the Lord
- Attending the temple and doing family history

Other traditions that will also help us stay away from the world and to strengthen our family and enrich our lives are:

- Having a family garden
- Keeping my house neat and clean, which has no nothing to do with purchasing power, but with work habits



- Receiving blessings from the father and from one's patriarchal blessing
- Missionary preparation
- Participating in seminary and institute courses

- Seeking excellence through the improvement of education

In establishing these traditions each family must include a family council, composed of all its members to teach the children basic responsibilities in family organization, since they can thusly learn how to make decisions and act accordingly.

Marriages without children or those who live alone are not exempt from this task. The individual is a "family" and these traditions will help them stay focused on what is important and essential.

We must work for that to which we aspire. President Joseph F. Smith, who learned to do the work of an adult from an early age and passed on his work ethic to his children.

He would tell them: "People die in bed. And so does ambition."⁴ With that principle in mind, he and his wife tried to get the children up early in the morning and do their part to keep the house clean and tidy.

President Smith also helped with household chores. When he and his wife, Louie, were newlyweds, he worked in the construction of his first house and learned to do most of the domestic repairs. He would also help to cook, and to harvest ripe fruits and preserve them in jars.

May our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ be adorned by the practice of these traditions that are part of his gospel which will embellish our lives and provide the light that will illuminate our path to Him and thus not only at the end of the journey, but even as we walk along our path we can express: "And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27). ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), 2–3.
2. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. L. Tom Perry, "Family Traditions," *Ensign*, May 1990, 20.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* [2013], 288.

LOCAL PAGES

I Am A Miracle: Primary Children Minister in Song at Special Needs Fair

Church Newsroom Jamaica

The Nathan Ebanks Foundation (NEF) hosted its third annual Family Expo and Special Needs Resource Fair on the grounds of the Hope Botanical Gardens in Kingston, Jamaica on May 25, 2019. The event commenced at 11 am and continued

through 6 pm. It included presentations and expositions from various agencies, health screenings, a concert, games, races for persons with disabilities, and rides for the more than 1,000 participants of the expo including children with special needs.



Left to right: Sister Raia Richards-Pearl (National Public Affairs Director), Christine Staple-Ebanks (Event Organizer) and Latoya Williams (Asst. Public Affairs Director)

Entities partnering with the NEF include the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA); Ministry of Health and Wellness;



Church members at the Special Needs Resource Fair



The Primary children singing



Young participants sent off to race by Christine Staple-Ebanks.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Information; Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities; Jamaica Association for the Deaf; and the National Child Month Committee

Enable and Include Me.” The NEF expo represents the only such event on the local calendar meant to specifically reach children with special needs, and remains important in the overall

dissemination of information, which makes a difference especially when parenting a child with special needs according to Christine Stable-Ebanks, the organizer.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which was the sole local church represented at the family



Left to Right: R Sis. Richards-Peart (National Public Affairs Director, Jamaica), Nathan Ebanks (whom the foundation was named after), Christine Staple-Ebanks (the organizer) and Sis. Sonya Stewart-Vassell all posed for a picture after the T-shirts



A partner booth holder

expo, hosted an information booth and a member was invited to offer the prayer for the opening ceremony.

A presentation of T-shirts with the printed words, "I am A Miracle" was made by the director of national public affairs for the Church in Jamaica, Sis. Raia Richards-Peart to both

Nathan Ebanks and his mother, Mrs. Christine Staple-Ebanks. A choir of close to thirty primary children from the church's stake also performed later in the gospel concert. The songs were "I am a Miracle" consistent with the Church's theme for this year, and "A Child's Prayer".

The Church had a display booth with pamphlets, books and other material that focused specifically on children and the family. Attendees who visited the booth were able to begin consultations with volunteer family historians from the Church. ■

AREA WEBSITES

LOCAL ARTICLES

2019 Caribbean Area Plan
Minister to deepen conversion to Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ and strengthen faith in them.
November 9, 2018

Youth from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Barbados will participate in the 2019 SOY
Each year, youth prepare to participate in a week full of experiences that will help them strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ and establish friendships.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2019 Tabernacle Choir's Music for a Summer Evening: Pioneer Day Concert
July 19, 2019

Public Open House and Dedication Dates Announced for the Haiti Temple
September 1, 2019

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ChurchofJesusChrist.org** ■

