

AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

“Come, Let Us Adore Him!”— All Year Long

Elder Joni L. Koch

Second Counselor in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency

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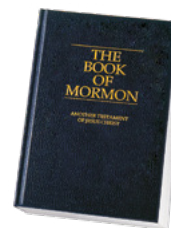
My childhood is full joyful memories from Christmas activities in the community, at church, and with my family at home. The colors, music, and decorated trees—with presents beneath—fascinated me and made me desire that Christmas would last all year long!

But what really caught my undivided attention above all (and still does) were the nativities—the little sets of Christmas figurines displayed in various homes and public places. The humble miniature stables with calm animals, adoring shepherds—along with wisemen offering precious gifts. And at the center, Joseph and Mary contemplating the little infant lying on a manger.

That representation of baby Jesus somehow always brought me a

sensation of the possibility of rebirth from sadness to joy through Him and the love that His image irradiates.

Through the years I have realized that it is possible, by developing some habits related to our Area Plan, to maintain those feelings throughout the year and to experience a rebirth of that joy constantly. Let me share them with you:



Read and ponder the Book of Mormon daily: This volume of scripture exists to bear witness of Christ and

of His divinity and power through His Atonement. “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26). As we daily search the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, we will always feel a rebirth of hope, of testimony and of the Saviour’s love for us. That will be the source of extreme happiness.



Improve sabbath day observance:

Every time we are in church and



Elder Joni L. Koch

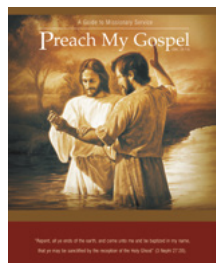


worthily partake of the sacrament, we are promised that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. (See D&C 20:77). Repenting daily and weekly renewing our baptismal covenants is like being “born again” (John 3:3)—feeling clean and accepted by God.



Participate in temple work: Inside these holy houses our understanding

of Christ, His mission, doctrine, covenants and sacrifice will expand, and we will feel his love and presence. Therein we gradually receive His image in our countenances, experience a powerful change of heart and we are spiritually born of God again. (See Alma 5:14.)



Share the gospel with those not of our faith: If we constantly mention Christ and His gospel

in our normal and natural conversations, and invite people we meet to “come and see, come and help, and come and stay” we will become instruments to bring many to be born again through baptism in His restored Church. “How great will be your joy” (D&C 18:16), says the Lord.

I testify that it is indeed possible to feel like Christmas season all year

long when we consistently read and ponder the Book of Mormon, worthily participate in the sacrament, participate in temple work and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we do these things, we will experience, through

Christ and His Atonement, a rebirth of faith, hope, peace and joy—in every moment of our lives. ■

Joni L. Koch was sustained as a General Authority Seventy in April 2017. He is married to Liliane Michele Ludwig; they are the parents of two children.

LOCAL LEADER MESSAGE

Christmas, a Time of Peace

By Elder Eustache Ilunga
Area Seventy



Elder Eustache Ilunga

“Like my grandmother and I did years ago, we can prepare our hearts and decorate them with positive feelings that come from obedience and repentance—so that we can fully receive the spirit of the Savior.”

The Christmas season often reminds me of my childhood and the feelings of beauty, joy and peace during this special time of the year. My grandmother, a devoted Catholic, taught me to enjoy this wonderful season of the year. Usually every Saturday I would go with her to the local Catholic church, where we would clean the building and then decorate the stand with natural flowers in preparation for the Sunday worship service.

I remember we once had to decorate the chapel for a Christmas Eve celebration. We picked flowers and entered the church, but before we started decorating, she softly and

convincingly told me, “Today’s decoration is special because tomorrow, we celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus, the Son of God.” I had a special feeling. I had just learned from my family that Jesus is our Savior.

Realizing that I had the privilege to prepare to celebrate His coming gave me a special feeling that I have not forgotten. That Christmas had a deeper meaning for me. The Christmas song we sang that day—“Faraway, I hear angels of heaven singing glory to God in heaven and peace on earth to men of good will”—still echoes in my mind. Looking at the Nativity scene, I felt like I was part of the event of the birth of Christ. The Nativity scene was often decorated with candles that illuminated our eyes and our hearts. It was not adorned with decorations that we have today, but its simplicity and natural beauty gave true meaning

to Christmas. I felt that someone special had been born—He was my friend, my Savior and the Light of the World. I felt an unusual peace in my heart and, being a child, I could not quite yet understand where that feeling came from, nor could I explain it. I am grateful today for my grandmother, Geneviève Nkulu Yohari, who understood and put into practice the Savior's call, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

The greatest memory I have of the Christmas season is, of course, the feeling of peace, for Christmas is a time when we celebrate the coming of the Prince of Peace. I love the description of the blessings brought by the Prince of Peace, as President Russell M. Nelson said at the 2013 First Presidency Christmas Devotional. He said that the Prince of Peace can bring peace to those whose lives have been ravaged by war. Peace can come to those who are not feeling well physically or spiritually. Peace can come to one who suffers in sorrow. Peace can come to those whose labors are heavy. Peace can come to those who mourn, to all who earnestly seek the Prince of Peace. Peace can come to all who choose to walk in the ways of the Master.¹

At this time when the world is troubled by wars and calamities, families broken by divisions and many people feeling alone and left



behind—at a time when trials of life are troubling human minds—Christmas is a season when we should try to find and create peace for ourselves and for our fellow brothers and sisters. We may miss the ornaments to decorate our homes, new clothes for our children, or a special Christmas meal—but nothing can prevent us from receiving the peace that comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christmas is a great opportunity to reconsider our personal relationship with the Savior and benefit from His promise of peace. Like my grandmother and I did years ago, we can prepare our hearts and decorate them with positive feelings that come from obedience and repentance—so that we can fully receive the spirit of the Savior. Christmas is an ideal time to start a new life as the birth of a child heralds the beginning of a new life, a time to start a new way of loving and serving God and our neighbor.

During Christmas, our children love the moment when we decorate our home. This is a moment of fun and it strengthens our family bonds. Our little Christmas tree is a few years

old, yet still it brings a new decor to our house every time we put it in a corner in our living room. It is also a symbol of unity as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ which adds to the things we do together as a family—such as prayer, family home evening, and scripture study—all of which we do to invite the Savior's spirit into our hearts.

In his 2018 First Presidency Christmas Eve message, President Russell M. Nelson reflected on four gifts that Jesus Christ offers to anyone willing to receive them. He said that "Jesus Christ gave you and me the capacity to love. That includes the capacity to love the unlovable and those who not only do not love you but presently persecute and despitefully use you." He offers you and me the ability to forgive, the gift of repentance and a promise of life everlasting. All these gifts are a source of peace for us and for our neighbors.²

Jesus Christ is truly the Prince of Peace. May we, during this Christmas season, seek and find the true peace that only He and His gospel can give. ■

Eustache Ilunga was named an Area Seventy in April 2018. He and his wife, Mamie, are the parents of four children. Elder and Sister Ilunga live in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Jesus the Christ—Our Prince of Peace," [First Presidency Christmas devotional, Dec. 8, 2013], broadcasts.lds.org.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, "Four Gifts that Jesus Christ Offers to You," [First Presidency Christmas devotional, Dec. 2, 2018], broadcasts.lds.org.

LightTheWorld!

Giving of one's time, talents, and love during Christmastime can bring deeper purpose and meaning to a season in which we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We can all follow His example and make the world a better place by uplifting those around us.

Each day leading up to Christmas Day is an opportunity to serve others — **one by one**.



Every day think of someone you can help. Minister as the Saviour would — *one by one.*

Send a good morning message to let someone know you're thinking about him or her today.	Think of someone who is an example of Christlike service. Highlight that good example on social media.	Donate items to a local second-hand store or a charity — or give to someone in need.	How well do you know your classmates or co-workers? Eat lunch with someone new at school or work.	Offer a prayer of gratitude for Jesus Christ and His mercy.	Feed a homeless person or a beggar.	Think of your family members or someone you know who is in need. Perform a silent act of service.
Share a scripture with a friend or a loved one who may need a boost today.	Invite a friend or family member to attend a Christmas activity with you at your church.	Cheer someone on! Make plans to attend an event to support someone you know.	Call your parents or other family members right now and tell them how much you love them.	Create art, a song, or a poem to express how you feel about Jesus Christ, and share it.	Write 'thank you' notes to your boss, teacher, leader, mentor, or friend and describe what he or she does well.	Plan a one-on-one activity with a friend, a child, or a loved one.
Invite someone to attend a Christmas worship service with you next Sunday.	Learn about one of your ancestors and share the story. Need help? Visit FamilySearch.org or lite.fs.org	Take a vow of positivity today. Greet someone you see with a smile.	Think of someone for whom you've had negative feelings lately. Try including that person in your prayers.	Call a mentor, teacher, or parent figure in your life and express appreciation for his or her example.	Share some Christmas Cheer! Visit an orphanage, old age home, or a hospital.	Invite a single parent's children to your home so the parent can have time for Christmas preparations or errands.
Ask God how you can be an answer to someone else's prayer today.	Think of a neighbour you don't know very well. Deliver some homemade goodies or a thoughtful gift.	Connect with a family member who lives farthest away. Send a message.	Merry Christmas! Share all the things our Saviour Jesus Christ has done for you with your loved ones — or write in your journal.	<p><i>Here are some examples of simple, daily acts of service that you might consider — or come up with your own.</i></p> <p>Learn more at LightTheWorld.africa</p>		

Heavy Suitcases in the Crowd

By Caiphus Mangenela

“Can I help you, Mama?” “Yes please,” the clearly relieved lady replied, handling over one suitcase and wiping beads of sweat from her face. She seemed close to tears and clearly overwhelmed.

Sister Patience Kaloobhai wanted the 2018 Light the World campaign to be different. She wanted to fully participate in the suggested service activities and to have the Spirit of Christmas abide with her and her family.

She felt inspired to share daily thoughts on her social media platforms. Almost immediately, a few friends began asking her about this “Light the World thing” that was constantly on her social media timeline. But she wanted to do more than just

share, and so she looked for opportunities to participate in the service activities herself. She had been teaching her seven-year-old son, William, that Christmas is not only about Christmas trees and presents and wanted her own service to be an example of that.

One morning on a quick errand, as she made her way across the bridge to the bus rank in Gaborone, she observed that there was an elderly lady with two children trying to get two big suitcases to the other side of the bridge. She was carrying the infant on her back and the two heavy suitcases on each hand while the toddler trudged behind—at times holding on to her dress. She would take a few

steps, then turn to be sure that the toddler was staying close to her amongst the fast-moving crowd. Whenever she stopped, she would relieve her hands from the heavy suitcases that she was carrying. This flustered lady and toddler would often get in the way of the oncoming crowd—people who were not at all pleased with this slow-moving elderly lady and her child. In the hot December Gaborone heat, this old lady kept her eyes to the ground as she would take three steps, rest and start all over again. As Sister Kaloobhai watched, she wondered if the woman would ever make it across to the other side of the bridge and the bus rank.

“Can I help you, Mama?” Sister Kaloobhai asked the elderly lady.

“Yes please,” the clearly relieved lady replied, handing Sister Kaloobhai one suitcase and wiping beads of sweat from her face. She seemed close to tears and clearly overwhelmed. Sister Kaloobhai smiled, took the suitcase and also held out her hand to the toddler who grasped it—and the two women walked over the bridge. As they walked to the bus rank, the elderly lady expressed gratitude that someone, a stranger, felt pity and was willing to help in a moment of need. She remarked that nowadays, it is rare to find someone who will go out of their way to assist—and especially in this case where Sister Kaloobhai had to deviate from her intended destination to assist. For some reason, Sister Kaloobhai felt that what she had



originally set out to do was not so important as helping this lady and her children. After all, she could finish her errands after this. As she helped the older lady, her luggage, and children

onto the bus, Sister Kaloobhai suddenly remembered that week's Light the World suggestion to light her faith by being the answer to someone's prayer. ■

MEMBER VOICES

My Unexpected Seven-Day Mission

By Ikaneng Kato

"She gently reminded me that I had become her companion and that we were to follow the prescribed missionary rules."

While serving in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple as a full-time temple ordinance worker, I had the opportunity to share my lodging with a young sister missionary. Sister Kassah was serving in the Madagascar mission when she experienced some health challenges. She was then brought to South Africa for medical observation and treatment.

I was staying in a flat that was meant to house three single sisters serving in the temple, but at that time I was staying there by myself.

Upon her arrival—on a Saturday—Sister Kassah was understandably tired from travelling and from her health condition. I immediately assumed the role of a hostess and mother, tending to all her needs as if a guest in my home. I made a bed for her and



*Ikaneng Kato
and Sister Kassah*

prepared a meal for the both of us.

Prior to her arrival I often walked to the nearby shopping mall on Saturdays to get my supplies for the following week. What amazement it was for me on that Saturday afternoon, for as I prepared to leave for shopping, I received an immediate lesson from my guest. She told me that for as long as she was in my home, I was not to go anywhere without her.

And thus, an immediate change of roles occurred as she gently reminded me that I had become her companion and that we were to follow the prescribed missionary rules.

In an instant, my guest had become my trainer—overseeing, as it were, my compliance to the missionary rules.

In an instant, I became an obedient missionary companion.

In an instant, I developed an appreciation for my new circumstances.

In an instant, I developed a love for my new companion.

Sister Kassah was of the age of my own children. Oh, how I would have loved to mother her and take the lead and instruct her on how things were going to be done in my home. But it soon became evident that this was not going to be the case—for personified for me was the following scripture, "and a little child shall lead them" (2 Nephi 21:6).

We counselled together and I was further apprised of our daily program in this our combined home, with special attention to our need as companions to pray together and to hold scripture study.

In my previous circumstance I did my scripture study as and when I was awake; but now I had to abide by mission rules to awake at a certain time and have scripture study with my companion at the appointed time.

I am truly able to say that I did enjoy these new circumstances as my "daughter" companion, and I shared lessons each day. An added measure of the Spirit of the Lord was brought into our home, and a great bond of love and friendship was formed. (Another memorable aspect of this time was being

able to enjoy sister Kassah’s cooking from West Africa!) And truly the seven days that we spent together came and passed by all too quickly.

As Sister Kassah departed, I held onto the promise found in Doctrine and Covenants 130:2, which says, “And that same sociality which exists among

us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy”.

The bond of love and the circle of friendship and sisterhood, plus the sociality spoken of, includes Sister Kassah and myself—and I now rejoice to call her a true mother, and also a friend.

I know that missionaries are truly servants of the Lord and are called to the work of the ministry. It was my privilege to be ministered by such a one.

I know that friendship is an eternal principle, and still rejoice in that choice time I was given to be a missionary companion for seven days. ■

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA SERIES



Harold Essoo, Rowen Narraido, Gerard Goder, Alain Kheeroo, Jayprakash Mohabeer, and Jocelyn Lenette became the first Mauritians baptized on the island. In the 1980s, the first branch was organized, the Church received official legal recognition, and the first missionaries from Mauritius were called.

In 1988 Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–1994) visited Mauritius to offer a dedicatory prayer. “We know this land is a link between Western and Eastern cultures,” he noted in the prayer, referring to the melting pot of African, Indian, Chinese, and European ancestry

and cultures in the country. “We dedicate this beautiful island . . . in accordance with thy present and future plans for not only the growth, but the prosperity and peace that the gospel can bring.” In 2017, with branches in Rose Hill, Phoenix, and Flacq, the first district in Mauritius was organized. ■

Church History: Mauritius

By Africa Southeast Area Church History Department

“What do you know about the Church in Mauritius?”

In 1856, George F. W. Kershaw preached in Mauritius, but no lasting Church presence was established at the time. The modern history of the Church in Mauritius began in the

1970s, when Mauritians who had joined the Church abroad felt a desire to “impart the word of God to their brethren [and sisters]” (Mosiah 28:1) and wrote to Church leaders, asking for missionaries to be sent to relatives living in Mauritius. In 1981, after the first missionaries were sent,