

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Pioneers—Anchored by Hope Part One

Elder Marcus B. Nash

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Marcus B. Nash

In 1832 Welthea Bradford Hatch (a direct ancestor of my wife, Shelley) lived with her husband, Ira Stearns Hatch, in the tiny town of Farmersville, New York, near Lake Seneca, about a hundred miles (160 km) southwest of Palmyra. When missionaries Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt called at the Hatch home, Welthea purchased a Book of Mormon and read it right away. Convinced of its truthfulness, she asked for baptism, but her husband cautioned her to wait until she gave birth to the baby she was carrying. Shortly after the delivery, Welthea was baptized—but only after they cut a hole in the ice on the river in which the ordinance was performed!¹

Ira was intrigued by the gospel message but wanted more information. He also felt impressed to make a contribution to the building of the Kirtland Temple. So he and Welthea

traveled by buggy to Kirtland, Ohio, to meet the Prophet Joseph Smith. Upon arriving, they were told that the Prophet could be found with a group of men cutting trees in a nearby grove. When they drove up to the grove, one of the men set his axe into a tree, strode over to them, and said, “Brother Hatch, I have been waiting for you for three days. The money you brought will be used to build the pulpit in the temple.” This man was Joseph Smith. Needless to say, Ira was baptized, and he and Welthea returned to their home, gathered their belongings, and joined the Saints in Kirtland.²

One of my own ancestors, Isaac Bartlett Nash, joined the Church in Wales and crossed the Atlantic and the plains before joining the Saints in Salt Lake City. After his arrival, he heard one of the presiding elders of the Church denounce the use of

tobacco with these words: “There are Elders in this assembly who now have tobacco in their mouths, though even a hog would not chew the vile weed.” Isaac, with a chaw of tobacco in his mouth, quietly slipped it out, dropped it to the ground, and said to it, “Now stay there until I come for you.” And he never did.³

One of the many pioneers here in Africa is Brother William E. Daniel Acquah. He joined the Church in the early 1980s after much studying and seeing the good example of his wife. They saw many blessings, both spiritual and temporal, because of the Church, helping them through many challenges, including the famine of 1983 in Ghana. Then, in 1989, the Church was shut down by the government. This period of time has become known as the “freeze.” Members of the Church could not gather together to attend church. So, they kept the Sabbath day holy in their own homes and families, and they visited one another to support each other in their spiritual and other needs. Brother Acquah says: “The government may have succeeded in closing the doors to our meetinghouses, but that only brought the Church into our homes. After Sunday devotional at home, we

From left to right: Ira Stearns Hatch, Isaac Bartlett Nash



would go round and visit other members and see to their welfare.”

On one of those Sundays, Brother Acquah went on a visit and saw others (Brother Gorman, Brother Myers, and Brother Ewudzie) standing nearby. They told him that one of their member friends, Brother Ato Ampiah and his wife, had been arrested for being members of the Church. When Brother Acquah and the others went to visit Brother and Sister Ampiah at jail that same day, they were asked if they were also members of the Church. Without hesitation, Brother Acquah replied, “Yes.” Because that was his answer, he and the others were thrown into a filthy jail cell, where they stayed—fasting and praying—for three days. While it was a shock at first, they felt peace and assurance as they fasted, prayed, and lifted the spirits of the other inmates—and as the members of the Church outside of the jail prayed for Brother Acquah and the others. After three days, they were miraculously released. They carried on with their lives as faithful Latter-day Saints, and then, on November 30, 1990, the announcement was made on the radio that the freeze on the activities of the Church had been lifted.

What drove Welthea to seek baptism in a frozen-over river rather than wait until summer? What motivated Ira to travel from New York to Ohio prepared to donate money for a temple to be built by a church of which he was not yet a member? What enabled Isaac to

abandon his homeland, sail the Atlantic Ocean, cross the plains, and then add chewing tobacco to the list of things he had given up? And what moved Brother Acquah and others to bring the Church into their homes during the freeze, be faithful when unjustly thrown into jail, and exercise the faith necessary to see the freeze come to an end?

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) observed: “The power that moved our gospel forebears was the power of faith in God. It was the same power which made possible the exodus from Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the long journey through the wilderness, and the establishment of Israel in the Promised Land.”⁴

Faith is both a principle of action and of power.⁵ It “is not to have a perfect knowledge of things.” (Alma 32:21) It is an “assurance” of the Spirit (see Hebrews 11:1, footnote *b*) that moves us to act (see James 2:17–26; 2 Nephi 25:23; Alma 34:15–17; Ether 12:6), to follow the Savior, and to keep all of His commandments, even through times of sacrifice and trial (see Ether 12:4–6).⁶ As surely as the sun rises in the morning, faith produces hope—the expectation of good things to come (see Moroni 7:40–42)—and brings us the power of the Lord to sustain us.⁷

If faith was the power that moved our pioneer forebears, it was the hope produced by their faith that anchored them. The Book of Mormon prophet Moroni wrote:

“By faith all things are fulfilled—

“Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God” (Ether 12:3–4).

“The faithful pioneers of long ago, as well as those of our day such as Brother and Sister Acquah, were moved by faith and anchored by hope. Their bedrock faith in Christ moved them to act with the hope, the expectation, of better things to come—not only for themselves but also for their posterity—now and in eternity. Because of this hope, they were sure and steadfast, led to glorify God through any privation: hunger and thirst, heat and cold, monotony and loneliness, injury and sickness. And for those who were steadfastly faithful, the power of God was manifest in miraculous ways.

So how can those pioneers’ faith and hope help anchor us in today’s tumultuous world? I have three suggestions.

Remember the Pioneers

First, we must remember them. Remember their stories, and the sustaining, saving, delivering power of God that came as a result of their faith and hope. Our pioneer forebears help us know who we are as a covenant people and confirm that our God—with whom we have covenanted and who “changeth not” (Mormon

9:19)—will bless us in times of difficulty and trial, just as He did our pioneer fathers and mothers.

Just as Alma taught, God “will fulfill all his promises which he shall make unto [us], for he has fulfilled his promises which he has made unto our fathers” (Alma 37:17). Knowing this, we will be inspired by their stories to likewise act in faith and be anchored by hope. This is the anchor we seek in our morally, spiritually, and temporally tumultuous world: living, moving faith in Christ and the hope that anchors us in His ways.

The story of the Willie and Martin handcart companies has become symbolic of the faith and hope of the early pioneers. It is a miracle that only about 200 of approximately 1,000 company members died despite being on starvation rations, having no winter clothing, and suffering from illness and exposure.⁸ The faith and hope-filled effort of their rescuers in response to the call for action by President Brigham Young (1801–77), accompanied by divine assistance, saved the handcart companies.⁹

After leaving the Salt Lake Valley, the rescuers were hit by the same early, severe, and unrelenting winter storms that had engulfed the handcart companies. In the face of nature’s ferocity, some of the rescuers faltered in their faith, lost hope, and turned back. One of those who turned back was John Van Cott. Hosea Stout records:

“Van Cott justified himself for returning and abandoning the handcart

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— Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)

company as he could get no information of them and had concluded they had returned to the states, or stopped at Laramie [Wyoming], [or] been killed by the Indians . . . , and for him to have gone further was only to lose his team and starve to death himself and do no good after all.”¹⁰

Doubt and fear—as rational as they may have been—were (and always will be) the antitheses of faith.

In contrast, Reddick Allred, another one of the rescuers, was assigned to man a rescue station to give sustenance and relief to the handcart companies as they made their way. He steadfastly manned the station for three weeks (while suffering from pleurisy, a painful and potentially fatal lung condition) in hazardous winter weather. The very John Van Cott who abandoned his duty passed through the station on his return to Salt Lake City. Together, Van Cott and another man tried to persuade Reddick Allred to join them in turning back. Brother Reddick refused. According to his journal:

“I declined the proposition, and . . . advised him to stay, for the lives of the company depended up[on] us. He

then . . . moved that as I was president of the station, they center their faith in me, that I should get the word of the Lord to know what we must do. To this I objected as [the Lord] already said what he would [have us] do.”¹¹

Such unwavering faith in times of trial—to hope for things not seen but true—creates steadfast men and women and gives sure, steady direction when potentially disorienting storms rage about us. One of the fruits of such faith is that those who possess it will be in a position to nurture, rescue, and bless others. Imagine the warmth Reddick Allred felt as he saw the handcart company come into his station and he was there to help! Imagine the joy the company felt when they saw him!

May each of us remember the pioneers, both ancient and modern, and pass their stories along. ■

The second part of this article will be published in next month's issue of the Liahona local pages. Please keep this issue on hand so that you can refer to it as you read the continuation of the article (PART TWO) in next month's issue.

NOTES

1. *History of Ira Stearns Hatch*, 202.
2. *History of Ira Stearns Hatch*, 202.
3. Isaac Bartlet Nash, *The Life-Story of Isaac B. Nash*, 2.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Faith of the Pioneers,” *Ensign*, July 1996, 5.
5. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 3; Hebrews 11:4–40; Jacob 4:6; Ether 12:7–22.
6. See also *Lectures on Faith*, 69.
7. See Bible Dictionary, “Faith”; see also Alma 57:19–27; 58:10–13; Mormon 9:8–21; Moroni 7:33–37; Doctrine and Covenants 27:17.
8. See Andrew D. Olsen, *The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie and Martin Handcart Pioneers* (2006), 470.
9. See Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 473–74.
10. In Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 389.
11. In Olsen, *The Price We Paid*, 160.

Record Keeping Is an Inspiration to Young Generation

By Samuel Agyei Amankwah

PSD Intern

The Accra Christiansborg Stake Center was filled with the Spirit on October 9, 2016, as members gathered to hear from Elder Steven E. Snow of the Seventy. Elder Snow succeeded Elder Marlin K. Jensen in 2012 as Church Historian and Recorder and also serves as the Executive Director of the Church History Department. A combined choir representing the Ofankor and Christiansborg Stakes provided an uplifting musical prelude. Elder Marcus B. Nash, First Counselor in the Africa West Area Presidency, in his welcome address, instructed the faithful Saints on the role of the Church Historian. He compared Elder Snow to John Whitmer in the Doctrine and Covenants.

“Nevertheless, let my servant John Whitmer (Elder Snow) travel many times from place to place, and from church to church, that he may the more easily obtain knowledge—

“Preaching and expounding, writing, copying, selecting, and obtaining all things which shall be for the good of the church, and for rising generation that shall grow up on the land of Zion, to possess it from generation to generation, forever and ever” (D&C 69:7–8).

Following Elder Nash, Brother Reid L. Neilson, assistant Church historian, told us that after seeing

the angel Moroni on top of the Accra Ghana Temple, the Holy Spirit had prompted him to focus his words on Moroni rather than deliver his intended remarks. Brother Neilson spoke of Moroni’s important role in the fulfillment of the Restoration of the gospel. In his many visits, Moroni

taught Joseph Smith about family history and record keeping (see Joseph Smith—History 1:33–35). He also underscored Moroni and Mormon’s admonitions in the Book of Mormon in Moroni 1–10 that teach about Christ, the priesthood, the sacrament, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and Mormon’s invitation to all to repent and come unto Christ.

Sister Phyllis Snow lauded the choir during her talk and described how she had felt the Spirit as they sang so well. She then humbly charged the Church members to write and share their personal stories and individual history for their children and grandchildren. She admonished parents to write about their school life, social life, and most especially their conversion stories, which would strengthen the children to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sister Snow recommended the words of Nephi to parents as encouragement whenever they feel reluctant to write personal stories for their generations:

“And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1).



Elder and Sister Snow speak to members of the Church in Accra.



The young single adult choir



As he began his address, Elder Snow commended the choir and described how he had been inspired as they sang. He then spoke on the importance of record-keeping and emphasized its relevance to generations yet unborn. He stated that recording history is meant to “promote faith and serve as an encouragement. It instills hope in children to overcome challenges, hard times, and to remain faithful in the Church as they learn from past mistakes of their parents and grandparents.” Elder Snow promised that record keeping would be a great treasure for children as they refer to stories about the trials, challenges, and temptations their parents and grandparents faced in their mortal journey and how they overcame such tribulations.

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ” (D&C 21:1). Elder Snow added, “indeed, record keeping serves as an inspiration to the young generation.”

Elder Terence M. Vinson, President of the Africa West Area, concluded

the devotional by inviting members to raise their hands if they were the first members of their family to have joined the Church. Upon seeing more

MISSIONARY MOMENTS

Open Your Mouth

By Elder Akindileni
Ghana Accra West Mission

When I think about it now, growing up in the Church was a fun experience. However, back then, I felt I was being “policed.” My immediate family and most of my mother’s siblings, with whom we spend most of our time, are members of the Church. As a result, it was very easy to get chastised for things such as being late to seminary, not reading assigned scriptures, not having personal scripture study, or even having an extreme haircut.

With such an upbringing, I still grew to love and keep the commandments, and I gained a strong desire to serve a mission. Over the years, one major objective I had was to serve a full-time

mission before doing anything else in life. I spent my time learning gospel principles and striving to rely on the Lord, but I didn’t spend much time sharing the gospel with others. My friends knew who I was and what I stood for, but I never talked about the gospel. In Nigeria, when people asked which church I attend, their first comment was that the name of the Church is too long, which made me reluctant to mention it again. On the other hand, whenever I was asked gospel questions, I responded easily but with a conscious effort not to invite or share anything about the Church—not even with my friends at school. Whenever the missionaries asked for referrals, I just told them that all my friends stayed far away. Later, when I was on my mission, I came to understand how this must have made them feel.

I graduated from high school in 2013 and started preparing for my mission. In the short time I had to stay at home, I was called as a ward missionary. It was not a surprise to me because it was normal in my ward. What surprised me was that my duty was not just to proselyte with the missionaries. We were also tasked to fellowship recent converts and refer people to the missionaries. I struggled with giving referrals not only because I didn't want to but also because I felt like I wasn't good at talking to people and did not want to embarrass myself. Whenever I was out proselyting with the missionaries and they decided to contact people, I stayed back and allowed them do all the talking. They never asked to me do much; I just followed them around. This continued till I left for the Ghana Missionary Training Center on the 13th of November 2014 to serve in the Ghana Accra West Mission.

I was trained by an American and this made things easy for me during my training because investigators came to us. We taught a lot of lessons without doing a lot of contacting. The first time my companion asked me to make a contact I was very discouraged. When I approached the young man I was about to contact, he wasn't interested and asked us to go somewhere else. I was heartbroken, and it took a while for me to forget what had happened. I felt I had overcome my weakness when asked by my companion to make a contact.



Elder
Akindileni

Some months into my mission, I was called as a senior companion and the real test started. I was serving with a branch missionary who didn't understand how the work is done full-time. The first week of that transfer was a rough one. We needed to find people to teach, but neither of us had the courage to contact. I kept telling myself that the reason I wasn't contacting was because I didn't know if the person I would speak to would understand English, but deep down, I knew that I still had this weakness. During my personal study, I read from *Preach My Gospel* that "nothing happens in missionary work until you find someone to teach" (156). That statement stuck to my mind as I realized that either I find people to teach or I wouldn't be magnifying my call as a missionary. I started to talk to everyone I met in town who could speak English, and I began learning to speak their language. By the time I was transferred, I knew most of the people in my area, had introduced the gospel to them, and had baptized few of them. I learned

in that area not just to teach people but also to love them enough to teach them the restored gospel. It was then that I felt the joy of doing missionary work. I wish I had learned this when I began serving, but I've decided not to focus on the difference I could have made, but the difference I *can* make.

I'm currently serving in the Ofankor Stake. During the dedication of the stake center, an activity for the day was to organize the young men in the stake to proselyte with the missionaries and invite people to attend the dedication ceremony. There was not enough time to prepare the young men, but I remember telling them to rely on the Spirit and not be sad if people reject them but to go on to the next person. I was ecstatic to see these young men talk to people old enough to be their parents about the gospel and invite them to the dedication. They were learning to fulfill their missionary duty. I wished I had learned to talk to people about the gospel at their age.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

We don't have to wait for the perfect time to share the gospel, or in my case, till we go on a mission. We don't have to learn certain skills or be perfect at speaking before we share the gospel. We must start now. As we open our mouths, the Lord will fill them up with words to touch the hearts of His children. ■

2017 Curriculum Announced for Children, Youth, and Adults

The Church has announced the curriculum that Church members will be studying during 2017.

You can find the list of manuals for Melchizedek Priesthood, Relief Society, Primary, Sunday School, Young Men, and Young Women in “Instructions for Curriculum 2017” under “Manuals” on LDS.org.

Use digital manuals where possible

Students and teachers are encouraged to use digital manuals where possible.

Where possible, the Church is encouraging both students and teachers to use digital versions of 2017 curriculum materials, which can be found on LDS.org and in the LDS Gospel Library mobile app. If you haven’t tried the app, now is a good time to experience the ease of preparing, teaching, and learning from a library of gospel resources that fits in your pocket.

Teacher council meetings

Introduced in 2016, teacher council meetings provide a once-a-month opportunity to learn together with your fellow teachers how to be a better teacher. Learn more in *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* at teaching.lds.org.

Primary

The theme for Primary Sharing Time in 2017 is “Choose the Right.” Leaders can find the *2017 Outline for Sharing Time* and other helpful resources online.

Primary teachers and leaders will use the following manuals in 2017:

Nursery Class (ages 18 months–2 years): *Behold Your Little Ones: Nursery Manual*

Sunbeam Class (age 3 years):

Primary 1: I Am a Child of God

CTR 4, 5, 6, and 7 (ages 4–7 years):

Primary 3: Choose the Right B

Valiant 8, 9, 10, and 11 (ages 8–11

years): *Primary 5: Doctrine and Covenants and Church History*

Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women

In 2017, Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and Young Women instructors will teach from *Come, Follow Me: Learning Resources for Youth*.

The Mutual theme for 2017 is “If any of you lack wisdom, let him **ask of God**, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him **ask in faith**, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:5–6; emphasis added).

The theme may be used to enrich Mutual opening exercises, as a topic for sacrament meeting talks given by the youth, or to provide focus for youth activities—including camps, youth conferences, and devotionals.

Resources—including videos, music, and suggestions for using the theme throughout the year—will be available to leaders at youth.lds.org and in Church magazines at the end of 2016 and throughout 2017. An email will be sent to leaders later this year when these resources become available.

Other helpful sites include the Youth Activities, For the Strength of Youth, Personal Progress, and Duty to God.

Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society

The Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society will be studying the new *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* manual during second and third Sundays.

Sunday School

The adult Sunday School course of study for 2017 is the Doctrine and Covenants. Manuals are:

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Class Member Study Guide

Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

VISIT AREA WEBSITES!

Instructions for Curriculum 2017 under Manuals on LDS.org

New members, investigators, and members returning to activity will study from *Gospel Principles*.

Youth Sunday School classes will study from *Come, Follow Me*.

Materials for those with disabilities

Curriculum materials are available for those with disabilities. Either download them from disabilities.lds.org or order them from the online store.

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Order printed materials from the online store

Wards and branches should already have printed copies of most of these materials. To order additional print materials, visit store.lds.org and click on Unit Materials beginning August 10, 2016.

More information about manuals and instructions about the 2017 curriculum can be found online. ■

Africa West Area Websites:
English: africawest.lds.org
French: afriquedelouest.lds.org

Mormon Newsroom Ghana:
www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh

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