

NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Increasing Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood Ordinations

By Elder Robert J. Dudfield

Area Seventy

Listed in the Area Plan under “Hastening the Work of Salvation” is the goal “Increase Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations.” The questions arise: Why is there such an emphasis to increase Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations? And how does this align with hastening the work?

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the *power* of godliness is manifest.

“And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the *power* of godliness in not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:20–21; emphasis added).

In my personal scriptures I have written under the word *power* the word *love*. Heavenly Father’s love is evidenced through the ordinances of the gospel, such as the priesthood.

The power of the priesthood is available to all. Elder Neil L. Andersen reminds us:

“The priesthood is the power and authority of God given for the salvation and blessing of all—men, women, and children.

“A man may open the drapes so the warm sunlight comes into the room, but the man does not own the sun or the light or the warmth it brings.”¹

On the Church website, LDS.org, we read:

“In the Church, an ordinance is a sacred, formal act performed by the authority of the priesthood. . . .

“Ordinances and covenants help us remember who we are. They remind us of our duty to God. The Lord has provided them to help us come unto Him and receive eternal life. When we honor them, He strengthens us spiritually.”²

Throughout the Pacific Area, leaders have aligned their vision to the Area Plan and with concerted effort have seen the fruits of their labours as they witness individuals and families blessed through ordinances and covenants, including an increase of young men being ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood at the correct age and more brethren receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood.



Elder Robert J.
Dudfield



IMAGE COURTESY OF ELDER ROBERT J. DUDFIELD AND USED WITH PERMISSION

Left to right, standing: Medema (daughter) carrying Yamila (great-granddaughter); seated: Melisa (granddaughter) with Rina (great-granddaughter); Abol Gulal with his wife, Tuba; pictured with Elder Dudfield during a visit to Abol’s home in Wali.



In order to provide more opportunities for our brothers and sisters to be recipients of His love, we need to expand both access to and distribution of priesthood authority with the associated ordinances.

I recently presided at the Madang Papua New Guinea District Conference. During the weekend I had the privilege of meeting Abol Gulal, a recent convert at the age of 84. Abol and his family live in Wali, which is a remote village in the mountain ranges of Madang Province.

After being introduced to the Church by a friend, Abol started attending Church meetings every week. To get to church he would have to walk at least two hours in the hot Papua New Guinea sun. He attended faithfully, even though he was not yet a member. Abol was touched by the gospel message of families being together forever, so he shared the gospel with all of his children and their spouses and invited them to attend church with him. As his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren started getting baptised, he knew it would only be a matter of time before he would join the Church with his wife, Tuba. Soon enough, he and his entire extended family in the village of Wali were baptised.

Due to health constraints, Tuba was unable to walk long distances

too often. Abol would therefore bring Tuba the sacrament when she was unable to attend church so she did not miss out on this sacred ordinance. It also provided him, his sons, and his young Aaronic Priesthood grandsons the opportunity to exercise the priesthood together.

During the Sunday session of the Madang district conference, I had the privilege of witnessing many brethren sustained to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Their stories and ages were wide and varied, from faithful Aaronic Priesthood holders who had turned 18 to new converts and others who had been reactivated. Among this group were nine brethren from Wali, including Abol and his sons. That meant that one-quarter of this small group in Wali now held the Melchizedek Priesthood! The Lord was hastening His work in this small village in the mountains of Papua New Guinea.

As a result of this growth, a new branch has been created in Wali, and Abol and his family are now preparing to go to the temple in Fiji to be sealed for time and all eternity. This is just

one example of the Lord hastening His work through the ordinances of the gospel.

Elder David A. Bednar declared, “Each successive ordinance elevates and enlarges our spiritual purpose, desire, and performance.”³

So back to the question, why is there such an emphasis to increase Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations in the Pacific Area? The answer is simple. Heavenly Father loves all of His children, and the Lord is hastening His work. Therefore, in order to provide more opportunities for our brothers and sisters to be recipients of His love, we need to expand both access to and distribution of priesthood authority with the associated ordinances.

My witness is that the priesthood is the authority of God on the earth today. We are led by prophets, seers, and revelators, who hold all priesthood keys. I know that our faith and trust is strengthened in Heavenly Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement as we focus on the area goals and objectives, including helping more of our brothers and sisters receive the blessings of ordinances, such as the priesthood. ■

NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, “Power in the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 92.
2. “Ordinances,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
3. David A. Bednar, “Always Retain a Remission of Your Sins,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 62.

LOCAL PAGES

Former Missionary Honoured as Business School Student of the Year

By Mormon Newsroom

Ana Saulala from Kelston, New Zealand, was recently selected as a Westpac Maori and Pacific Business Student of the Year 2016 at the University of Auckland.

Ana, who is Tongan, was one of three Pasifika finalists for the prestigious award. Each year there is one Maori student awardee, as well as a second with Pacific Island heritage.

Ana received a cash prize, a trophy and an invitation to attend the 2016 National Pacific Business Trust Awards at the Langham Hotel. Her name has been placed on a permanent shield of honour that is displayed at the University of Auckland Business School.

Ana's trip to top business student hasn't been easy. After completing some courses a few years ago, she left her university studies behind and served for 18 months as a full-time missionary. Upon her return, she was not excited about resuming her studies, but, she says, doing so was one of her best decisions in life.

"I am grateful I followed the spiritual prompting to come back because it has been the best experience," she said.

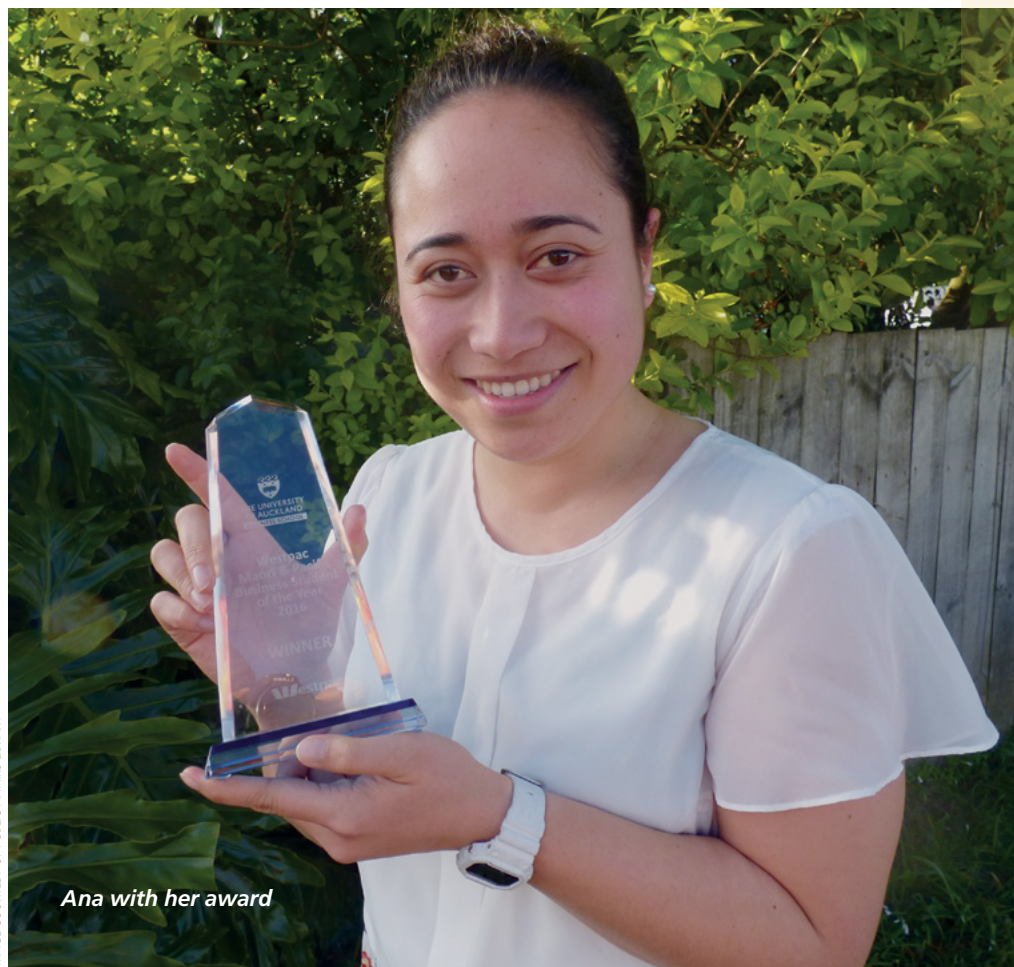
Although she struggled a little during her first year back, she discovered that business interested her.

"I realised that the business world was the real world, so I was determined to stick with it.

"It's all about attitude, being willing to participate—take action and *stick with it!*"

She says the award increases her motivation to go and do a lot of good, to pursue her dreams with more ambition, and never give up.

She also feels it is essential to help others be successful, to become self-reliant through education and effort. "The Lord reassures us there



Ana with her award

IMAGE COURTESY OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS LIBRARY



Ana plays the organ for her ward.

Disability Doesn't Stop Auckland Paralympian in Swimming or Life

By Cheri Loveless

She's called Tupou. Tupou Neiufi. She is a Paralympian. And like other Paralympians, she has lived with a disability and moved beyond it.

The 29th para-athlete selected for Rio's 2016 Paralympic Games (over 4,300 eventually received an invitation), she participated in one of the 152 medal events that took place in swimming. There she became part of the New Zealand tradition for sending teams that have won medals in para-swimming at every Summer Paralympic Games since New Zealand began competing in 1968.

Yet, who is Tupou Neiufi?

Her earliest memory of swimming is of a wonderful feeling of freedom. When she was in the water, she didn't have to wear her leg splint or hand splint. At two and a half years old, she had started life over again after being badly injured by a speeding car that hit her and kept going.

Tupou recalls, "When I woke up from a coma, I couldn't move my legs, arms, or head. I couldn't even sit up

is enough for everyone on this earth.

"Receiving the award gives me greater confidence to believe in myself. I want to inspire people. I want to inspire my family and friends to make great things happen in their own lives."

In addition to her schoolwork, Ana is actively involved on campus. She joined the Velocity team as the education lead. "Velocity is the university's entrepreneur program aimed to educate students in the entrepreneurial mind-set and help teach them basic skills," she said.

Although she is focusing on academics, her future business goals and volunteering to help other business students, Ana is not all business. She was one of three finalists for the Arts Student of the Year for service to Maori and Pacific students.

And she continues her calling at church, where she plays the organ and piano at meetings.

Ana will finish her commerce degree later this year. She wants to get involved in projects to create a supply chain between the Pacific Island countries and New Zealand. ■

IMAGES COURTESY OF NEUIFI FAMILY



Tupou with her parents, Fineasi and Lose

on the bed or walk. I was like a newborn baby, and the doctors told my parents they were not sure if I'd be able to walk again."

During the accident she had sustained a severe head injury that included "deep cuts and bruises to the brain and left-sided hemiplegia, which means," she explains, "the whole left-hand side of my body is smaller and weaker than my right side."

Tupou began swimming as part of rehab to force her to use her left side. "If not, I'll sink," she remarks.

"My swimming instructor had picked up quickly how competitive I was against the able-bodied kids and suggested to my parents that I should take up competitive swimming and mentioned the Paralympics, and my journey started there."

Who else is Tupou? A member of the Howick Pakuranga Swim Club. In September 2016, the club posted the following:

"Tupou Neiuifi has done herself, family, club, supporters and NZ proud this morning. The youngest NZ Paralympian at the Rio 2016 games, finishing 7th in her first Paralympic Final with a new personal best of 1:14.94, and an unofficial new New Zealand Record. Congratulations Tupou. Enjoy the moment, and see you at training on Friday!"

Tupou had been a reserve for the New Zealand team. At the last minute, she was selected to take the place of Bryall McPherson, who withdrew from the team due to illness and injury.

During her first actual Paralympic heat, she admits, "while I was in marshalling, waiting to be called up for my race, I felt really nervous. But once I was on the block, the nerves had gone, and I was just focusing and thinking about my race plan."

Her goal for the Games was "to inspire people to give things a go because, like my mum always says, 'You'll never know unless you try.'"

She fully enjoyed the entire Paralympic experience. "Rio is a beautiful place," she says. "The people are friendly, and the crowd was amazing. The cheering, singing, and dancing really pumped us swimmers up for our races."

But Tupou is someone besides a Paralympian. She is, for instance,

a 15-year-old girl whose best friend is named Chance. "We've always hung out whenever possible due to my schedule. She's always been there for me like I have been for her. I wouldn't have asked for a better best friend."

She is also a teenager who is "sometimes . . . not allowed to do certain things that my siblings are allowed to do, because I might injure myself."

Before the Paralympics, she represented her high school at the 2015 NZ Secondary Schools Swimming Competition. It was the first time Otahuhu College had someone to represent them in over 20 years, and she brought back six gold medals and one silver.

She proudly notes, "That December at the school's sports award I was awarded the Junior Girls Athletics award, the swimming award, and the Best Individual Sporting Performance of the Year award. The sports coordinator told me, in the 20 years he's been at the school and, as far as he knows, in the school's history, this



Tupou with her siblings



Tupou with her family

is the first time ever that a junior has won the Best Individual Sporting Performance of the Year award, let alone someone with a disability.”

Tupou is also a member of a family, a family that belongs to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She is the first child of Fineasi and Lose Neiufo, and the oldest of four girls and three boys.

“Life in a large family in New Zealand is great,” she comments. “I don’t know what it’s like with other large families, but our parents have made a lot of sacrifices so that each of us are able to give different things a go and find what we’re good at and try and excel, whether it be in sports or academically.

“For example, my siblings and I all play sports on Saturdays. Mum takes the girls to netball and then one of my brothers to their rugby game, and

Dad takes me to Saturday morning training and then takes one brother to football and my other brother to his rugby game.

“We think we’re just like other families, except there’s more of us.”

She continues, “My siblings and I feel truly blessed to have wonderful parents. They are the greatest examples of love, sacrifice and support. . . . I know for sure that I wouldn’t have gotten this far if it wasn’t for them, and I’m forever grateful.”

Fineasi and Lose, referring to Tupou’s accident, say, “We never questioned why, why our daughter? We were told with the impact of the accident they don’t know how she survived, but we believed that it was because her mission here on earth wasn’t complete.

“We have seven children. Tupou’s story is just one, but we’ve made many

sacrifices for all our children to be able to let each child experience different opportunities, and it is always worth it. Heavenly Father has blessed us with these wonderful gifts, and it is our duty . . . to teach our children, give them opportunities to be able to excel and flourish. We enjoy watching each child grow, not only mentally and physically but most importantly spiritually.”

“My journey hasn’t been an easy journey to get to where I am now,” admits Tupou. “But prayer, having strong faith, and listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit have helped me overcome many obstacles and helped me continue to move forward and work hard.

“Have faith in Heavenly Father, for He has a plan for each of us. Believe in yourself. You must always believe in yourself, but most importantly, *be you!*” ■

Church Updates Official “Mormon and Gay” Website

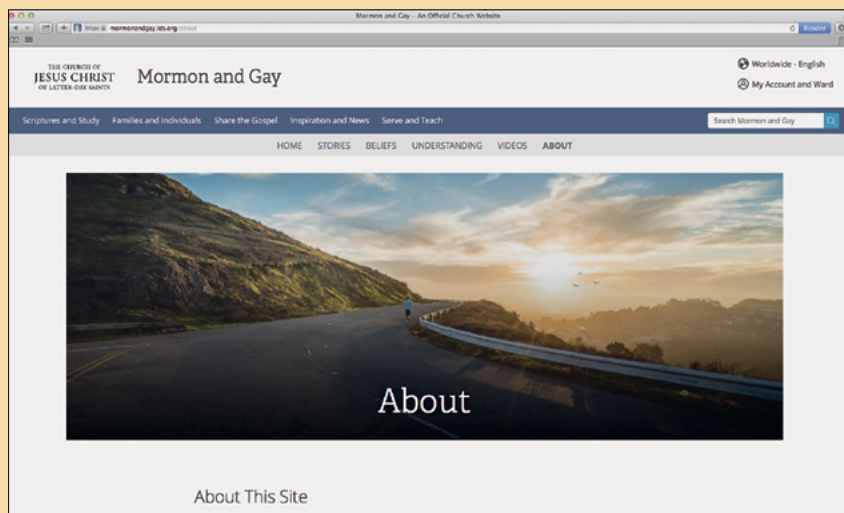
“Even though I still don’t understand everything, I know that I don’t have to. All I am asked to do is love as God would love.”

This comment, and many others like it, is included in an updated version of “Mormon and Gay,” an official website from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The site reinforces the reality that, in the words of one Mormon scripture, God “loveth his children” (1 Nephi 11:17) and seeks to help everyone better understand same-sex attraction from a gospel perspective.

The first version of this website launched in December 2012 under the title “Mormons and Gays.” The new appellation, “Mormon and Gay,” reflects the reality that a person doesn’t need to choose between these two identities—one can, in fact, be gay and live faithful to the teachings of Christ.

Personal Accounts and Comments from Church Leaders

Mormonandgay.lds.org features five personal accounts from multiple perspectives—including those who experience same-sex attraction, as well as their families, friends and ecclesiastical leaders. Each story is unique and vulnerable and ultimately hopeful, reflecting the complex and uncertain reality that it is to experience same-sex attraction or know someone who does.



The website is “a place where the people whose lives are impacted by attraction to the same sex can find inspiration to work through difficult challenges while remaining faithful to Church teachings,” says Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The site “does not offer a comprehensive explanation of everything related to same-sex attraction,” he adds, “but it does reflect the feelings of Church leaders as to how we should treat each other as part of the human family.”

In addition to firsthand narratives, the new site includes encouraging comments from Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy. Speaking directly to Latter-day Saints who experience same-sex attraction or identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, Elder Clayton says, “We want you to know we love you. You are welcome. We want you to be part of our congregations. You have great talents and abilities to offer God’s kingdom on earth, and we recognize the many valuable contributions you make.”

What the Church Believes about Same-Sex Attraction

Visitors to the website can find outlines of official Mormon beliefs about same-sex attraction and key concepts, themes and vocabulary to

help Latter-day Saints engage in healthy conversations about this topic.

Key beliefs include the following:

- We should love everyone.
- Feelings of same-sex attraction are not a sin, and we can choose how to respond.
- People who live God’s law can fully participate in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The belief section also includes information about God’s plan, Christ’s infinite capacity to change hearts, and our eternal and core identity as God’s children.

Engaging in Healthy Conversations about Same-Sex Attraction

Other portions of the website include frequently asked questions, explanations of sexual orientation, tips for parents, guidance for responding to depression and suicide, and information about self-mastery and sexual expression.

One question addresses the use of “same-sex attraction” instead of “gay.” The site says, “Same-sex attraction is a technical term describing the experience without imposing a label. This website uses this term to be inclusive of people who are not comfortable using a label, not to deny the existence of gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity.” ■

TIP OF THE MONTH

Work—Take Responsibility

By LDS Family Services

A sign that appeared in a dental office serves as a reminder about the importance of work and responsibility. It said: “You don’t have to brush all of your teeth, only the ones you want to keep.”

Work and responsibility are eternal principles that teach us that success requires our best effort and being responsible for our actions.

From Genesis we learn about the importance of taking responsibility for our work. When God created the earth, He made sure everything was completed and done in order. The account says, “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”¹ Adam and Eve were commanded to work hard and take responsibility. “By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” Adam was told, and the couple was sent forth “to till the ground.”²

In this mortal journey, the challenges we face require that same effort and determination which leads to success.³

For example, overcoming compulsive pornography use will require both these qualities and will include the following actions:

- Recognize triggers and cravings as they occur.
- Establish specific actions to help withdraw from the temptation.



- Redirect thoughts and energy toward the Lord.
- Outline daily specific actions to fortify a personal commitment to live righteously.⁴

Points to Ponder

1. Work and responsibility are intertwined; write down how you will implement them as part of planning your daily work.
2. The Lord’s way consists of people helping themselves, but it must be done in His way (see D&C 104:15–16).

3. Be prayerful and record impressions about how you will take positive action.
4. We are more likely to succeed when we take personal responsibility for our own change and do not blame others or our situations.
5. Choose to learn from past mistakes. ■

NOTES

1. Genesis 1:31.
2. Moses 4:25, 29.
3. See *My Foundation: Principles, Skills, Habits* (self-reliance booklet, 2015), 2.
4. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Recovering from the Trap of Pornography,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2015, 36.