

## AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

### Stand in Holy Places

By Elder Keith P. Walker

Area Seventy

We are living in perilous times, as prophesied by the Apostle Paul.<sup>1</sup> This is evidenced by a decline in mainstream religious observance and an increase in secularism.

One of the objectives to achieving the vision of the Pacific Area Presidency is to honour the Sabbath day at home and at church, with a specific goal being to increase sacrament meeting attendance.

It is important for us to be found standing in holy places—in our homes, meetinghouses, and the temple—in order for us to receive the direction God has for us. Will you consider some of the following ways that may assist in achieving this goal?

#### Turn our hearts and minds to God

“The Savior warned that in the last days even those of the covenant, the very elect, could be deceived by the enemy of truth.”<sup>2</sup> As we partake of the sacrament, we take on His name and become His people, and in so doing His name is written upon our hearts. With willing, humble, and broken hearts, we will be able to make the changes necessary for us to be receptive to the teachings that lead us to believe in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. King Benjamin’s people described the conversion experience

as a “mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>3</sup>

#### Reflect on the importance of our baptismal covenants

When entering the waters of baptism, we made a covenant with Heavenly Father to always remember Him and to be witnesses to Him and take upon us the name of His Son and keep His commandments.

Alma explained that we must want to be called the people of God. We must be willing to help and comfort

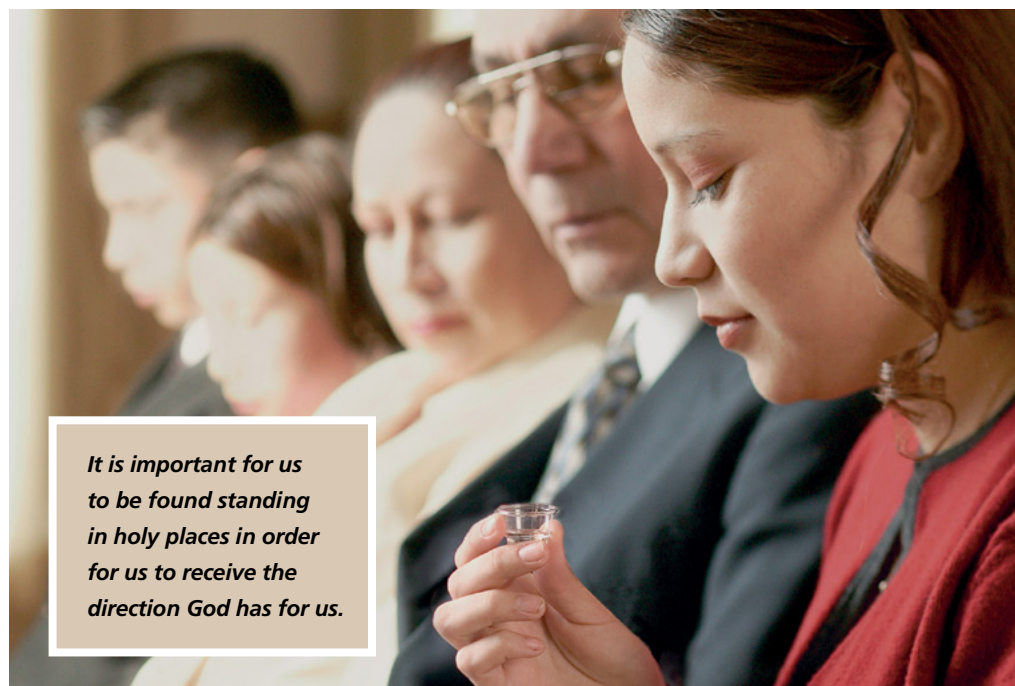
each other. We must stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places. “And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people . . . that ye have entered into a covenant with him.”<sup>4</sup>

#### Focus on the significance of the sacred emblems of the sacrament

“With torn and broken bread, we signify that we remember the physical body of Jesus Christ—a body that was buffeted with pains, afflictions, and temptations of every kind, a body that bore a burden of anguish sufficient



Elder Keith P. Walker



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to bleed at every pore, a body whose flesh was torn and whose heart was broken in crucifixion. . . .

“With a small cup of water, we signify that we remember the blood Jesus spilled and the spiritual suffering He endured for all mankind. We remember the agony that caused great drops of blood to fall in Gethsemane. . . . We remember the blood He spilled from His hands, feet, and side while at Calvary.”<sup>5</sup> “How sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Give the Sabbath to the Lord and make it holy by giving Him a sign**

“How do we *hallow* the Sabbath day? . . . When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, ‘What *sign* do I want to give to God?’ That question made my choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Go to the rescue and invite others to attend**

“And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”<sup>8</sup>

May we reach out to comfort and invite and teach others how to come out of the shadows of darkness and into the Light of Christ. As we renew

our spiritual lamps each week, the pathway becomes illuminated on our journey, and thus in turn we can help others to find their way.

It is my testimony and witness that as we apply some of these principles and increase our attendance at sacrament meetings, and see the sacrament table as being symbolic of the great sacrifice of the Atonement, many individuals and families will become

strengthened and increase their faith in Heavenly Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. 2 Timothy 3:1.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 88.
3. Mosiah 5:2.
4. Mosiah 18:8–10.
5. James J. Hamula, “The Sacrament and the Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 83, 84.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight” *Ensign*, May 2015, 130.
8. Luke 15:6.

#### **LOCAL PAGES**

## **#LIGHTtheWORLD**

The “Light the World” Christmas initiative throughout December was embraced by many members of the Church in the Pacific Area. Here are some of the activities that were shared in Australia.

### **“Jesus showed compassion and so can you.”**

Latter-day Saints in Sydney gathered rice to donate to new residents fleeing from war and terror. Donations were received by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Jesuit Refugee Service, and the House of Welcome, who offer support to families in the area.

“These generous, practical donations serve to demonstrate to the asylum seekers that come to our

centre that there are people in the local community who care about their well-being,” Asylum Seeker Resource Centre chief executive Frances Rush said.

Joanne Millington from House of Welcome said the organisation has so many families coming every week that their food bank is always running low.

“This donation makes a big impact for so many people in need,” she said.



### “Jesus honoured the Sabbath and so can you.”

Australian Latter-day Saint Mark Allen said, “I honoured the Sabbath by attending church and serving other members of my congregation. I felt the Holy Spirit as I was able to teach others about the birth of the Saviour.”

Latter-day Saint missionary Susan Preator said, “Though we are often traveling, we attend our church services, whether in a different city or foreign country. As we recently attended meetings in Samoa, we enjoyed worshipping through singing beloved hymns.”

She added, “We were grateful to renew sacred covenants through taking the sacrament; we were instructed in all three meetings and our testimonies were strengthened; we felt the love and the strong faith of the Saints there; and we honoured the Sabbath and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

### “Jesus helped people to walk and so can you.”

One Australian family gathered shoes from their cupboards—shoes that were still in good condition but no longer being used—and then donated them to a local charity. ■



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## New Education Initiative Aims to Help South Pacific Parents and Children Succeed

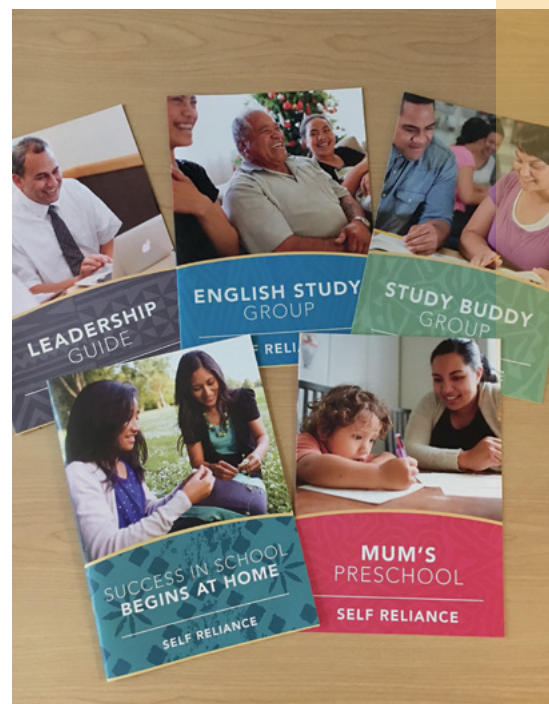
In congregations across the South Pacific, a new education initiative is being introduced to families in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Through a video distributed recently to the approximately 1,500 Latter-day Saint congregations across Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and the Pacific Islands, the Pacific Area Presidency introduced a family education initiative called *Success in Schools Begins at Home*.

The course is designed to increase self-reliance in the members of the Church through lifelong educational aspiration, effort, and achievement.

In the video Elder S. Gifford Nielsen quotes from a Latter-day Saint instructional handbook when he says that self-reliance is “the ability, commitment, and effort to provide the spiritual and temporal necessities of life for self and family” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 6.1.1).

He continued: “During the last few months of 2015, members of the Area Presidency and Area Seventies gathered with leaders to discuss the important role of education in becoming self-reliant. We were challenged



to ‘massive action’ in raising the level of education among Church members. . . .

“We talked about the responsibilities of individuals, parents, and families in gaining an education. Parents have a divinely appointed responsibility to support and guide their children as they pursue education and training.”

The video quotes Elder Kim B. Clark, Church Commissioner of Education: “Whatever level of

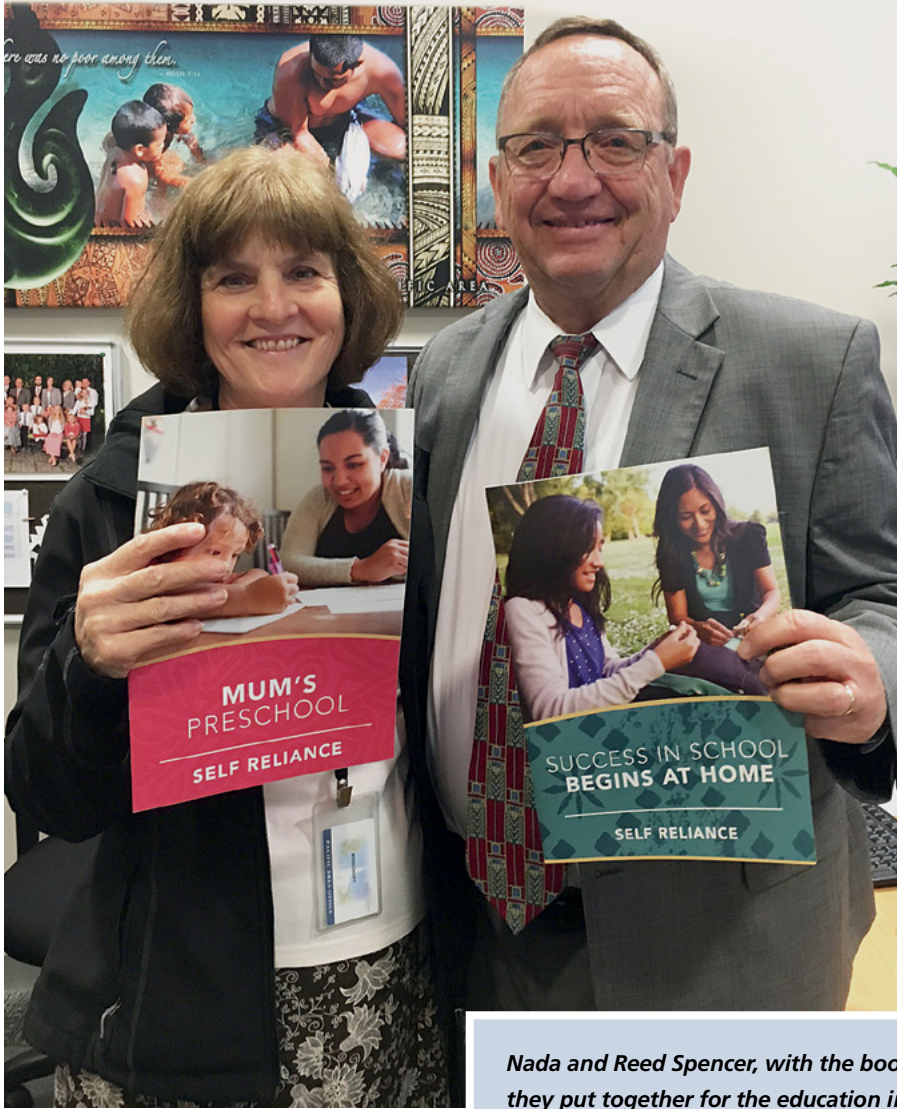


IMAGE COURTESY OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS LIBRARY

**Nada and Reed Spencer, with the booklets they put together for the education initiative**

spirituality we now enjoy in our lives; . . . whatever level of professional skill or ability we may have obtained, it will not be sufficient for the work that lies ahead.”

Elder Craig A. Cardon said: “As an Area Presidency, we desire that every young man and woman in the Pacific Area successfully complete primary and secondary school, with a meaningful qualification, and every young adult in the Pacific Area pursue and complete vocational or tertiary schooling. . . .

“People gather together to learn in many places. We gather in schools, in

our chapels, and in our workplaces. Today we would like to emphasise that the most important educational gathering place is in the home.”

Elder Nielsen remarked: “Parents are a child’s most important teachers. It is in the home where attitudes towards education are shaped. It is in the home where children are taught to work hard and to do their best. To support parents in making their homes a place of learning, we are excited to announce the release of a manual entitled *Success in School Begins at Home.*”

Pacific Area self-reliance manager Paul Reid said: “The intent is not to say parents should homeschool or feel the need to provide classes of instruction for their children. The purpose of the manual is to be a guide for groups of parents to discuss how to help their children be as successful as possible in their schooling.”

The *Success in School Begins at Home* manual contains 12 lessons, with topics such as “Get All the Education You Can,” “Use Family Routines,” “Teach Children to Plan, Organise, and Prioritise,” “Be an Expert on Your Child’s Progress in School,” “Establish Good Homework Habits,” “Help Your Child Prepare for Tests,” and “Improve Reading and Writing Skills in English.”

The study guide is brief, is easy to use, and contains specific action items to help parents follow through after each lesson.

A senior missionary couple, Reed and Nada Spencer, spent the past two years researching, compiling, and publishing the educational manual. From the Pleasant View area near Ogden, Utah, in the USA, the Spencers have many years of experience that suited them for this important assignment.

Reed Spencer began his professional career as a primary teacher. He soon moved into administrative positions, ending his career at the

Utah State Office of Education directing literacy instruction for the 600,000 public school students there. In addition, he spent twenty years teaching graduate school, training teachers.

Nada Spencer spent those years raising five children, taking an active part in their education and schools, and teaching and leading Church youth groups. Since the home is the most important element for learning success, Sister Spencer gained valuable experience as she coached their children to become successful students.

With Elder Spencer's retirement, the couple volunteered to serve a mission for the Church and were called to serve in Samoa.

Arriving in 2012, they spent 18 months as International Teacher Education Program (ITEP) missionaries, teaching teacher certification courses through BYU-Hawaii.

At home just six months after their Samoa mission ended, they received a request to serve another mission, this time in Auckland, New Zealand, at the Pacific Area office. Their assignment was to raise the level of education in the families of the Church throughout the South Pacific.

They were the first couple called to be education coordinators. There was no manual for them to follow as they began to tackle the job.

Reed said, "We were, of course, quite prayerful. When we got here, we knew two things: one was that we didn't know what to do. We were sure of that. And the other was, we were pretty sure the Lord did know what to do.

"We learned that we needed to help parents understand that, by meeting in groups to discuss education principles, they can make a difference in the level of education among the people of their local congregations . . . that they can help 'bear one another's burdens' [Mosiah 18:8]."

They also learned that the education program needs to work in harmony with the Church's self-reliance

program already in place, so there wouldn't be "one more program" for leaders and members to organise.

"Our experience in Samoa helped us understand some of the needs," Sister Spencer said. "Because we'd lived with the people, we saw that many young children were coming to school totally unprepared. We saw that English was a struggle, because many of the children didn't read or write in English."

The Spencers developed some literacy initiatives in the Church schools in Samoa, providing them additional experience in preparation for producing the *Success in School* manual.

"We want parents and families to see that they do have the capability," Elder Spencer said. "For example, one of the key lessons in this package is

***"To support parents in making their homes a place of learning, we are excited to announce the release of a manual entitled Success in School Begins at Home," said Elder S. Gifford Nielsen.***



IMAGE COURTESY OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS LIBRARY



**These Niuean sisters in Auckland, New Zealand, are the first to graduate from the *Success in School Begins at Home* class.**

the research that clearly shows that you don't have to be an expert in math, science, or anything else to help your children achieve in math, science, and everything else. In fact, you don't have to know math; you don't have to know science.

“What the evidence shows is that you do have to be an expert—but you have to be an expert on your child. You have to be an expert in who your child is and how they're doing and whether they're engaged in the work, whether they're getting their homework done, whether they're doing OK at school. The evidence is real strong that parents just need to know that.”

Sister Spencer said: “We've got to reach the mothers, to get them involved, to get them confident that they can help their children succeed in school. We're trying to teach them that one well-educated person will change a family for generations.”

In addition to compiling the *Success in School Begins at Home* manual, the Spencers produced four other guides relating to education: *Leadership Guide*, *Mum's Preschool*, *Study Buddy Group*, and *English Study Group*.

The leadership guide quotes Elder Russell M. Nelson, who said, “Gaining an education is not just a privilege; it is a religious responsibility” (page

12). The guide instructs Church leaders how to organise their members and help them raise their level of education.

The mother's preschool guide provides a pattern and lessons for mothers to teach children the important skills needed before entering primary school.

“Participating in a preschool organized and taught by mothers will help children learn to get along with others, understand how a classroom works, take direction from other adults, and learn the basic skills necessary for

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success in reading and math,” the booklet suggests.

“The first five years of a child’s life is a critical time of growth and learning. Unfortunately, a five-year-old child who has not learned certain skills can already be as much as two or three years behind other children when they start school! Our goal is for every child entering the first year of school to be prepared and ready” (*Mum’s Preschool*, 3).

The study buddy guide explains how small groups can help one another learn and gives examples of lessons and skills.

“The first purpose of this group,” the guide explains, “is to organize ward members to help each other be successful in school.

“The second purpose is to help anyone improve their skills in basic reading, writing, and math. Most people need extra teaching and practice on certain skills, and schools do not usually have the funding to provide that extra help. Private tutoring is very expensive, and not always effective. As members of the church, we can and should help each other—not just go to school, but be *successful* in school!” (*Study Buddy Group*, 3).

The English study group manual illustrates how becoming more proficient in English will help people provide for themselves and their families, serve and assist others, and realize their full potential.

“Becoming proficient in English will help children and youth be more successful in school. It will help members be more effective parents (for example, helping children with schoolwork or employment), contribute more to their community, and be more effective advocates for their nation and culture” (*English Study Group*, 3).

Many congregations have already organised groups and are working through the lessons and putting the instructions into practice. Richard and Mary Jarvis, self-reliance missionaries, have been actively assisting these groups get organised.

Elder Jarvis said, “I believe this group of Niuean women in the McKenzie Road congregation in Auckland, New Zealand, are the first class to graduate from *Success in School Begins at Home* in the world!”

“We see the home as a place that can nurture education—an environment that encourages children to succeed at school and continue to learn,” Paul Reid said. “The 12 lessons are not prescriptive. They are a catalyst, providing a forum for parents to get together and talk about the things that are working in their homes, helping each other know what they can do. Parents learn that the role they can play is critical; to be intimately involved in the education of their children can make such a difference.” ■



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## TIP OF THE MONTH



## Being One

By LDS Family Services

One of the foundation principles of a Zion society is that we become one.<sup>1</sup> This suggests that we are concerned about the well-being of those around us—family, friends, neighbours, as well as the poor and the needy.

Reaching out to others not only blesses those to whom we provide service but also lifts us spiritually and temporally, which in turn improves our mental health. For example, a study on volunteering (serving others) and health showed that volunteering

had favourable effects on depression, life satisfaction and well-being.<sup>2</sup>

We do, however, need to follow King Benjamin’s counsel to use “wisdom and order” in serving others and to not “run faster” or labour more than we have strength.<sup>3</sup>

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf made this observation: “Selfless acts of service and consecration refine our spirits, remove the scales from our spiritual eyes, and open the windows of heaven. By becoming the answer to someone’s prayer, we often find the answer to our own.”<sup>4</sup>

When we are feeling down, it is all too easy to become self-absorbed

and focus on what’s not right in our lives. By applying the Zion societal foundation of being “of one heart and one mind,”<sup>5</sup> not only may we improve our own well-being, but we will also be following the Saviour’s counsel to “be one.”<sup>6</sup> ■

### NOTES

1. See Moses 7:18.
2. See Caroline E. Jenkinson and others, “Is Volunteering a Public Health Intervention? A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Health and Survival of Volunteers,” *BMC Public Health* 2013, 13:773, [bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-13-773](http://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-13-773).
3. See Mosiah 4:27.
4. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 76.
5. Moses 7:18.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.