

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Faith, Repentance, and Redemption

By Elder Vern P. Stanfill

Second Counselor in the Africa West Area Presidency



Elder Vern P. Stanfill

One of the wonderful events that occurred in the Book of Mormon took place at the waters of Mormon. I often visualize the beautiful place that this must have been. It was a sacred place. I recently visited Nsit-Ubium, the place of some of the first baptisms in West Africa. It is a secluded place, separated from the rest of the world. It is quiet and peaceful as it rests in the heart of the Nigerian jungle. During our visit, I thought that perhaps this was a little like the waters of Mormon, and I started to imagine that beautiful place and sacred time where 400 Saints were taught and received the gospel. At significant peril to their mortal lives, they received the saving ordinance of baptism and made sacred covenants. I also can imagine Alma's concern for

these humble people as he contemplated what he must teach during this sacred ministry. We read part of the account in the book of Mosiah:

“And it came to pass after many days there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. Yea, all were gathered together that believed on his word, to hear him. And he did teach them, and did preach unto them repentance, and redemption, and faith on the Lord” (Mosiah 18:7).

Later Alma instructs the newly baptized members of the Church:

“And he commanded them that they should teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets.

“Yea, even he commanded them that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith on the Lord, who had redeemed his people” (Mosiah 18:20).

I recently wrote articles for the *Liahona* about faith and repentance. I would like to concentrate on redemption for this article, representing an important trilogy in the lives of those who come unto Christ through the waters of baptism. I believe it is important to understand and recognize that today, holy prophets, seers, and revelators teach faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and redemption through the power of Christ. They teach of the sacred ordinances that will lead us back to our Father in Heaven. They continue to teach us exactly what Alma taught at the waters of Mormon. There is consistency in the message. The prophets of old and those of our day continue to teach the doctrine of Christ in its pure form. It is so important for all of God's children to understand that what brings us to repentance is hope and faith in the Savior and in His power to save us through His Atonement for our sins. Repentance is an expression of our love for the Savior, our acceptance of His gift of redemption, and our



commitment to seek sanctification throughout our lives. Sanctification is a process that occurs as we strengthen our faith by obedience to the laws and commandments of the gospel and submit ourselves to God's will by persistent and continual repentance. Faith and repentance unlock the power of Christ's sacrifice in our lives. We become redeemed before the Father because of the atoning sacrifice of the Savior. The Bible Dictionary states that the word *redemption* is used throughout the New Testament to describe "the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ and our deliverance from sin."¹

By His power are we brought spotless before the Father.² This is the redemption of Christ. The redemption of Christ is what allows us to become pure. Without the sacrifice of the Savior, sanctification would not be possible. There could be no hope for us without the Atonement of Christ. We could never approach the throne of our Father solely upon our own merit. Yet the Savior's grace is sufficient for us as we apply the principles of His doctrine. This grace is manifest in His redeeming sacrifice for us. This is His doctrine: faith, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.³ Not one but all of these things will sanctify us and bring the power of Christ through His redemption to us, that we might be brought spotless before the judgment seat of God.

Though we often teach sanctification as a process, we must not confuse it with a series of events that must be checked off, boxes that must be ticked, but rather an ever-growing and expanding righteousness in our lives. We must constantly increase our faith, increase the intensity and frequency of our repentance, and seek more fervently the companionship of the Holy Ghost. In so doing, we change, become sanctified, and will ultimately be brought before God by the Savior, redeemed. As Nephi taught: "And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save" (2 Nephi 31:19). We must continue to rely wholly upon the merits of He who is mighty to save.

I would like to tell you how I feel about the sacrifice of the Savior for me. I fear, however, that words can never adequately express my feelings. The redemption of Christ is the greatest manifestation of love ever expressed both by a loving Father who sent His Only Begotten and by the Savior who freely, willingly, and completely gave everything, even His life, to free us from sin. As I think of a perfect being who was brought to the depths of spiritual despair by the corruption of the world,

I anguish to think of the pain that my sins caused Him. Perhaps Enos best expresses my feelings when he asked, "Lord, how is it done?" (Enos 1:7). What creates a love so grand as this? It is a love that is infinite, all-encompassing, and unconditional. It is extended to all equally and without exception. We choose whether we accept or not. I agree completely with Sister Linda S. Reeves, who was recently released as the Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, when she said in a recent conference address: "To me, the greatest miracles in life are not the parting of the Red Sea, the moving of mountains, or even the healing of the body. The greatest miracle happens when we humbly approach our Father in Heaven in prayer, fervently plead to be forgiven, and then are cleansed of those sins through the atoning sacrifice of our Savior."⁴

It is my prayer, brothers and sisters, that we will continue on a path that will bring us before God, sanctified and redeemed by the power of Christ. May we all seek this blessing. I bear strong testimony of Christ's power to save. It is through Him and only Him that we can receive eternal life. May all sincerely seek this blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Bible Dictionary, "Redemption."
2. See Alma 13:11–13, 3 Nephi 27:20.
3. See 2 Nephi 31:2–21.
4. Linda S. Reeves, "The Great Plan of Redemption," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 88.

LATTER-DAY VOICES

We Are All Shepherds

By Elder Jerat-Kennedy Chukwuemeka Igwe

Africa West Area Seventy

The *Collin's English Dictionary* defines *shepherd* as 1) a person employed to tend sheep, 2) a person, such as a clergyman, who watches over or guides a group of people, 3) to guide or watch over in the manner of a shepherd (“shepherd,” collinsdictionary.com)

The principal activities of a shepherd from these definitions are to watch over and to guide.

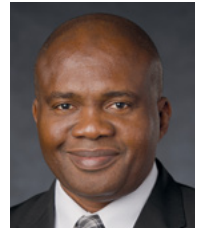
In the book of Ezekiel, chapter 3, verses 17–21, we learn that the Lord has called watchmen unto the house of Israel and that those watchmen are to receive words from the Lord’s mouth and warn the children of Israel. If the watchmen fulfill this assignment, they will receive the blessings of saving the lives of God’s children and saving our own souls. Not fulfilling this responsibility will lead to the death of the wicked and having the blood of the wicked required at the hands of the watchmen.

Every adult member of the Church is called by God to be a watchman. We are either home teachers or visiting teachers, and as such we are to receive the words of God from the First Presidency to deliver to the homes of those we have been appointed to watch over and guide. Our Area Presidency

has invited each of us to be a watchman: we are to make sure that one who is strong in the Spirit takes with him another who needs help, to receive the ordinances of the priesthood and keep the associated covenants. We are to remember the principle of “one take one,” and to decide in our councils “who will take whom?”

In Ezekiel 34:2–4, the Lord frowned at the shepherds of Israel who fed themselves and did not feed the flock. In verse 4, He chastised the shepherds who did not heal the sick among the flock, did not bind up that which was broken, did not bring again that which was driven away, and did not seek that which was lost.

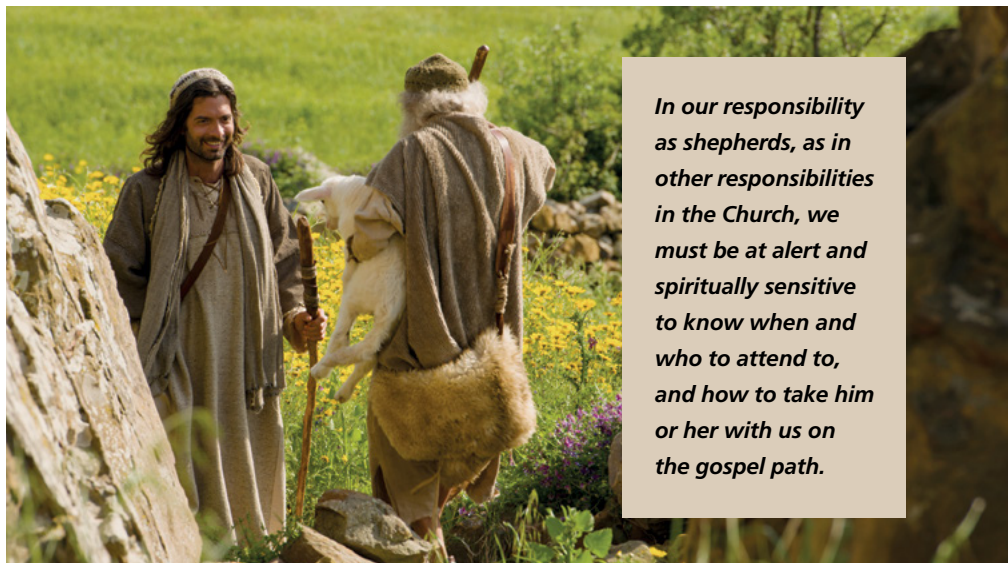
Elder Jerat-Kennedy
Chukwuemeka Igwe



When the Lord Jesus Christ talked to Peter by the seaside after His Resurrection (see John 21:15–18), He charged Peter to feed His lambs as a means of manifesting his love for the Savior. To emphasize the importance of this responsibility, He repeated this instruction three times.

We read in John 14:23–26: “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

“He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.



In our responsibility as shepherds, as in other responsibilities in the Church, we must be at alert and spiritually sensitive to know when and who to attend to, and how to take him or her with us on the gospel path.

“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

In our responsibility as shepherds, as in other responsibilities in the Church, the role and help of the Holy Ghost is vital. We must be at alert and spiritually sensitive to know when and who to attend to, and how to take him or her with us on the gospel path. It is not enough to make the once a month visit. The Spirit will direct us on whom to reach out to if only we prepare ourselves enough to be receptive to His promptings.

I have always enjoyed teaching in the institute of religion. I was actively teaching in the institute of religion when I was serving as a bishop in Aba and as a stake president in Port Harcourt. These opportunities helped me to assist the young single adults in both stakes in a critical period of their lives when vital decisions that would shape their lives were taken. I became their coach and mentor and was greatly assisted in my responsibilities as a shepherd. Because of my close association with them, I became their friend, not just their bishop or stake president.

One day I had an impression to call a particular brother who was a student

in a distant university and who actively participated in my class each time he was home. I wanted to know how he was doing. We had a good discussion and I wished him well and reminded him of a few things I'd been teaching them. He thanked me and hung up.

After some months, he came home for a vacation and visited me. He asked what prompted that call. I told him that I had an impression to call him. He confided in me that my call came in the middle of a situation and saved him from doing something that could have affected his membership in the Church.

He said he felt like I was seeing him and called at the right time to warn him. He thanked me immensely for being an angel to him on that day.

This situation humbled me and strengthened my resolve to always be prepared and willing to hearken to the still small voice.

I know that the Holy Ghost will assist us in our responsibility to watch over and guide one another, especially those that the Lord has entrusted to our care. My prayer is that we will always be prepared to hear His voice and act upon His promptings. ■

MEMBER'S VOICE

Exercising Faith in the Lord to Obey His Commandments

By Akou Badjo Chantale, Kobri

Stake Relief Society president, Santé Ward, Abidjan Toit Rouge Stake

I am Sister Kobri Badjo Chantale of Santé Ward, the Relief Society president of the of Abidjan Toit Rouge Stake, Côte d'Ivoire. I was living in Alepe, a small town a little way from Abidjan. At first I was paying my tithes correctly. I had a box in which I put my tithing at the end of each month. I was teaching in a private school there. So every time that I had the opportunity to come to Abidjan, I deposited my tithe, without any problem, for all of the months that

had passed. Meanwhile, despite my small salary, I managed to save at least 10,000 francs every month.

One day, I decided to borrow the tithe money that I was keeping to solve a problem. This was the biggest mistake of my life. Since that day, I couldn't pay my tithing again, nor was I able to pay back the loan to the Lord. This was the beginning of all my misfortunes. I even have had two surgical operations in two consecutive years. I still had debts;



**Akou Badjo
Chantale**

I could no more save money. I was sick all the time. Then, I realized that everything was related to my non-obedience to the law of tithing.

I made a decision. One day, I decided to make this promise to Heavenly Father, to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and always pay my tithe, no matter what challenges or needs came along. I told Him, "But please Father, I beg Thee to save me from this difficult situation that I have been going through for some time."

Then I kept the faith and without any resistance, I began to pay a complete tithe. Since then, I have had no more difficulty in paying a regular and full tithe. My problems have also come to an end. I do not say that I am now wealthy, but I have good health and peace in my heart. I no longer have any debt, and whatever the situation in which I find myself, there is always a solution.

I testify that if we show enough faith in Jesus Christ and obey the commandments, we will always have the support of our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

LATTER-DAY EVENTS

Multi-Stake Sports Festival to Mark 20th Anniversary

By Samuel Agyei Amankwah

Publishing Services Department Intern

Over 2,500 members from the stakes of the Greater Accra area converged at the El-Wak Sports Stadium on April 8th to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the division of the Accra Ghana Stake in 1997.

As the membership of the Accra Ghana Stake increased, Church leaders decided to split it to form the Lartebiokorshie and Christiansborg Stakes. These two stakes begat eight additional stakes, making 10 in the Greater Accra region, with soon-to-be-created Teshie Stake on April 23, 2017.

In his welcome address, the match commissioner, President Charles Sono-Kore, outlined the procession of the activities and admonished participants to follow the rules of the various sporting disciplines

and refrain from abuse and dishonesty of any kind.

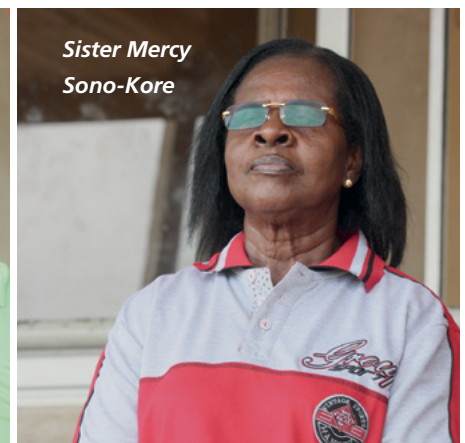
He implored, "This day was set for us to come together and have fun. I plead that you will adhere to the rules of this activity so we can enjoy a peaceful atmosphere till the end."

Kaneshie Stake president Flint Mensah presided, acting on behalf of Elder Atta Koranteng, who was away on a special assignment. Sister Mercy Sono-Kore was assisted by President Mensah to officially open the activity by kicking a football.

Participating in the events were members from the Christiansborg, Tema, Lartebiokorshie, Adenta, Ofankor, and Tesano Stakes, and the Kasoa, Ashaiman, Kaneshie, and Koforidua Districts.



**Kaneshie Stake
president Flint
Mensah**



**Sister Mercy
Sono-Kore**

Various disciplines of participation included soccer, track events, volleyball, and basketball. There were also indoor games such as draughts, Ludo, and Oware.

The participants in turn fiercely contested in their assigned games with much excitement and anxiety to clock a medal or even lift the trophy, which was the ultimate prize for the winning stake.

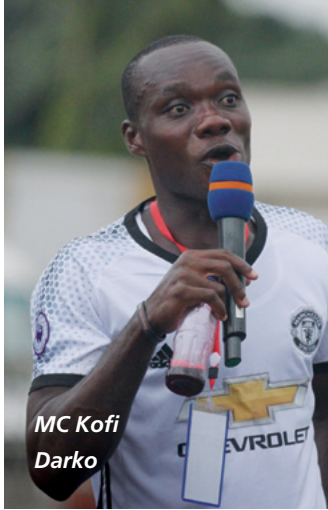
The Tesano and Ofankor Stake soccer teams survived the gala competition and locked horns at the grand finale. The Tesano football team dictated pace in the first half but couldn't score a goal. The table turned in the second half as the Ofankor team mounted incessant pressure on their opponent but all their efforts proved futile.

The game ended in penalty shoot-out which led Tesano to triumph over Ofankor with a 3-0 goal line score.

"We came this far through courage, faith, resilience, and prayer. I knew we would win because we were honest and united as a team," said President Mac Gohi of the Tesano Stake, following the match.

President Flint Mensah closed the event by extending appreciation and gratitude to the stake leaders for making the activity successful. He then admonished the gathered members to remain focused and faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ and wished them traveling mercy as they returned to their homes. ■





MC Kofi Darko



UPCOMING EVENT

Face 2 Face with Elder and Sister Renlund

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Ruth Lybbert Renlund, will address youth in Africa during a live Face to Face event on Saturday, August 5, 2017.

The Face to Face event for youth (ages 12–18) originating from Accra, Ghana, will be at 10:00 a.m. (GMT) in English, Portuguese and Malagasy, and 1:00 p.m. (GMT) in French. This will be transmitted live on Church satellite receivers throughout Africa. There will be multiple remote locations participating during each broadcast in Lagos-Nigeria, Lomo-Togo, Kenya/Zimbabwe and DR Congo.

How to participate

Youth are invited to consider what questions they would like to ask and share them on **WhatsApp** number: +1 385 489 9669 OR **face2face.lds.org** OR **Face2face@ldschurch.org**.

Join the live event at 10:00 a.m. On the home page of **africawest.lds.org** or the **LDS Youth YouTube channel**, or view it later at **face2face.lds.org**.

A recording of the broadcast will be archived for later viewing. Recordings of all Face to Face events can be viewed at **face2face.lds.org** and are appropriate for a variety of personal, family, and Church settings. ■



Elder and Sister Renlund



CALL FOR ARTICLES

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so that it can address the needs and experiences of members where you live. The inclusion of the local pages in each issue depends on the availability of local content. We invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor:

AfricaWestWebsite@ldschurch.org ■