

NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Making “Rescue” an Individual and Family Priority

By Elder 'Aisake K. Tukuafu

Area Seventy

One of the key priorities in the 2017 Pacific Area Plan is to “hasten the work of salvation by ministering as individuals and families to all.”

The Lord said:

“And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!”¹

In August 2015, my wife, Sister Tukuafu, and I attended a stake conference for the Neiafu Vava'u Tonga North Stake. Prior to our visit, I had informed the stake president to pray in faith for three families we could visit with a goal to rescue them and bring them back to the fold. One of the three families we visited was the family of Falemaka and Senitelela Fetuani and their three daughters.

Falemaka was a diligent member of his religion. Although his wife, Senitelela, and most of their children were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, some of his

family members chose to follow the head of their family and attend the same church as Falemaka. Despite Falemaka not being a member, his son was serving a mission in America and his daughter in England.

I asked Falemaka, “What made you accept the Lord’s call for your son and daughter, knowing they will be hungry at times, have to walk in the heat of the sun, experience the cold weather in the countries they will be in and be stranded in a foreign country two years for your son and 18 months for your daughter?”

Falemaka responded to my question with great confidence that his children have been blessed tremendously through participating in programmes of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I knew from



his answer that he was ready to be baptized, but I didn’t know what was stopping him.

Before leaving their home, I shared my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and extended an invitation to Falemaka.

“You have just heard the testimony of a special witness of Jesus Christ which He has ordained on this earth, and you will not be at ease until you accept the invitation to be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which will testify to you of Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and be of comfort to you,” I said.

Falemaka accepted my invitation to attend the Saturday and Sunday sessions of conference. A line from the hymn in Tongan, “Tukuaa hoo’o toloi taimi,” meaning “Stop delaying the time,” sunk deeply in his mind and heart.

We ate lunch together that Sunday, and Sister Tukuafu explained the importance of being baptized and of the happiness she and her family received because they chose to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

Falemaka then declared, “The eunuch is ready; where is the water, and what doth hinder me to be baptized today?”²



Elder 'Aisake K.
Tukuafu

The prayers, music and talks during the conference touched his heart and gave him a confirmation of his need to be baptized. With no delays to his request, he was baptized that evening. The following Sunday, he received the gift of the Holy Ghost and later was ordained to the priesthood. He was also able to receive his temple endowment and be sealed for time

and all eternity to his wife and seven kids, including two who have passed away. I know that our joy, faith and trust in our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will increase and strengthen as we focus on rescuing individuals and families. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16.
2. See Acts 8:36.

As a young missionary, Elder Cowley quickly developed a desire not only to learn the Māori language but also to immerse himself in the rich local culture. These efforts produced in him a deep and abiding love for Māori, whom he served tirelessly until five years later when he returned to his homeland in 1919.

Tauranga Deputy Mayor Kelvin Clout explained that when the City of Tauranga received the proposal to rename the park, it sought comment from the public. He said that widespread support was expressed by the Huria Marae and Church members, so the proposal to rename the park was approved.

The dedicatory event began at the Huria Marae, where a senior woman in the community, Maora Reed, welcomed guests onto the marae with a traditional powhiri. Visitors were led into the sacred Tamateapokaiwhenua area for the welcome ceremony.

LOCAL PAGES

Beloved Missionary Matthew Cowley Honoured

By Mormon Newsroom

Saints from all over the country gathered at Matiu Kauri Grove in Tauranga to witness the dedication of an historic marker.

Over a hundred years ago, Matthew Cowley, a 17-year-old American

missionary, often came to ponder, fast, pray and study the Māori language at the grove.

The grove has been named Matiu Kauri, which is the Māori name for Matthew Cowley.



Elder Haleck, President of the Pacific Area of the Church, dedicated the historic Matiu Kauri Grove.

A mixed choir of Church members and marae whanau set the tone of the reverent and respectful gathering.

Thomas Tata spoke for the elders of the marae, and Elder O. Vincent Haleck of the Seventy, President of the Pacific Area of the Church, responded and introduced Church leaders present for the event.

The historic marker, which gives a brief history of Elder Cowley's service in New Zealand, was dedicated by Elder Haleck.

"It was the peaceful surroundings of this grove that blessed and helped give voice to his Māori language and love for the Māori people. We are honoured that the City Council and leaders of this community have chosen to name this grove the Matiu Kauri Grove," he said.

Elder Haleck then offered the dedicatory prayer: "Heavenly Father, it is in the spirit of reverence, thanksgiving and remembrance that we come to Thee this morning and I now dedicate this marker with the name of the Matiu Kauri Grove inscribed upon it. May the Matiu Kauri Grove continue to be a place of peace and tranquility, that those who will visit here will feel of its special environment and find enjoyment in their visit. Bless the land of this grove and its trees and plants of all kinds; protect them from the forces of severe weather and storms. Bless the plants and trees to continue in their natural growth



- ▲ *Saints from all over the country, along with Church leaders, gathered in Tauranga for the dedication of the Matiu Kauri Grove.*
- ◀ *Matthew Cowley is said to have had a deep and abiding love for Māori, whom he served tirelessly for five years.*

cycles and continue to beautify and renew themselves season to season in the life cycles Thou hast given them. Let all those who visit here see of the beauty of this grove and feel of its special spirit, as Thy servant Matiu Kauri did. He was drawn here because its surroundings brought his spirit close to Thee. Preserve this grove for the enjoyment of Thy children who have come in generations past and those yet to come in the future. Let all who come find the peace and sweet spirit that Matiu

Kauri experienced. To this end I bless this grove now named the Matiu Kauri Grove, through the authority and power of Thy holy priesthood and in the name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, amen."

Many of the families of those who attended the dedicatory service on Saturday had been personally touched, and served, by Matthew Cowley. His influence in the spiritual progression of Latter-day Saints in the region is highly valued and acknowledged today. ■



The dedicatory event began at the Huria Marae, where visitors were led into the sacred Tamateapokaiwhenua area for the welcome ceremony.



Jumping out of a plane was at the top of Melanie's bucket list.

Young Mum Checks Off Bucket List Items in New Zealand

By Shilo Kino

The 39-year-old says she is not afraid to die—and jumping out of a plane is at the top of her bucket list.

Melanie Day is a former Brigham Young University women's basketball player who was in New Zealand competing at the World Masters Games.

Six out of the seven players on her team are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

But it was jumping out of a plane in Kumeu that thrilled her the most.

"It was surreal," she said.

"I put it on my bucket list, but I am deathly scared of heights and I am also extremely claustrophobic. But I am conquering fears. I'm no longer afraid of dying; I'm afraid of not living."

Day lives in Lehi, Utah, with her husband and three small children, who are all under the age of six. She was diagnosed with terminal cancer four years ago and was told she only has two to five years left to live.

"It really changed things for me," she said.

"I started to think about death and all the things I would miss out on with my children. I was going through depression just thinking about that."

Day initially started a blog detailing her journey with cancer so she could keep her friends and family in the loop. A bucket list was then born—things Day wants to do in the time she has left, such as skydiving and starting a nonprofit organization. People from all over the world are now following her journey.

"I would rather not have [cancer]," she says.

"But the lessons I've learnt are invaluable. It is now my mission to share with others the lessons I've learnt. I am trying to encourage others through my writing, speaking, and social media to live like they too had five years to live."

And one of the greatest lessons she has learnt is faith.

"To have someone tell you you only have a few years to live forces



◆ *Melanie, a former Brigham Young University women's basketball player, was in New Zealand competing at the World Masters Games.*

◆ *Melanie has faith that Heavenly Father will take care of her children.*



you to look at the plan of salvation. I asked myself, do I really believe it? Having cancer is a blessing because it teaches me about perspective.

"Leaving my children will be hard, but I know Heavenly Father will take care of them. I will see my kids and my husband again because of my faith in Christ. Cancer has given me an eternal perspective." ■

Go to fiveyearstolive.org/timeline to follow Melanie's journey.

Father Returns to Fiji Where His Late Son Served Mission

By Shilo Kino

It was an emotional time for father Koroniria Amai when his son Timothy Amai died in a tragic car accident earlier this year.

In an emotional tribute to his son, Koroniria visited the village in Fiji where Tim served for two years.

“It was highly emotional,” he said.

“I heard reports from Tim’s mission president and companions that Tim was an exceptional missionary, but it’s not until I went face to face with people he served amongst where I truly understood Tim’s influence. It was powerful and overwhelming.”

On his visit in Fiji, Koroniria met with many of the locals, who were devastated at the loss of Tim.

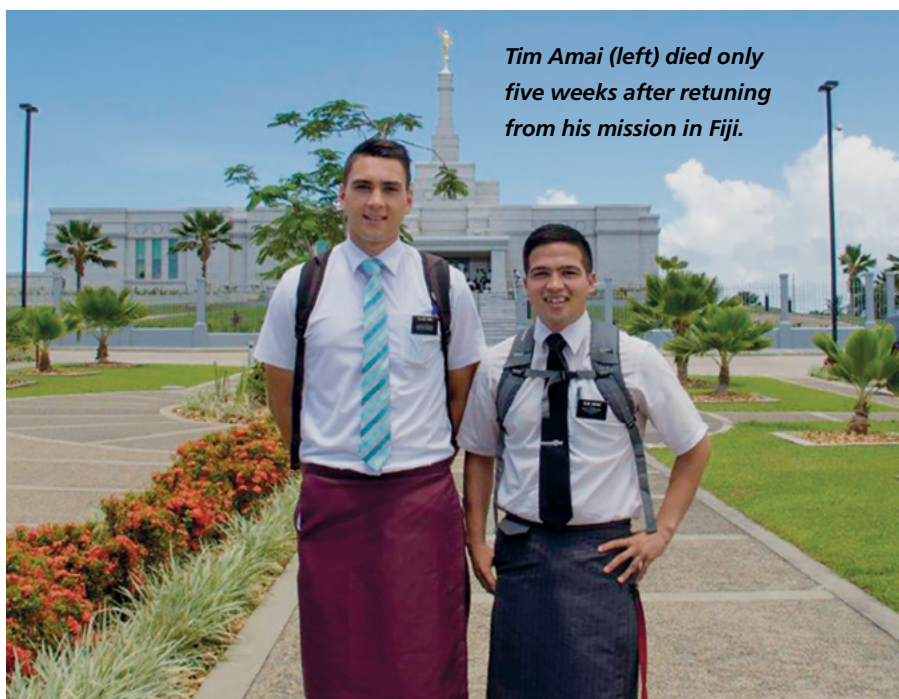
“They claimed Tim as their son too,” he said.

“A lot of people felt they lost their son. It was a huge blessing for me to see that.”

Koroniria hopes the video will help those who have experienced losing someone close to them.

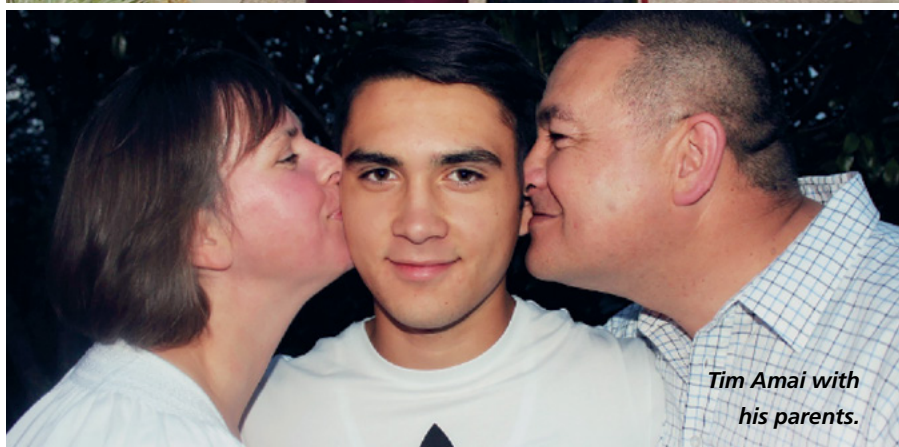
“My wife and I are just ordinary people,” he said.

“We chose not to be bitter but to use this experience as a positive. If my wife and I didn’t have the gospel in our lives, we wouldn’t be handling Tim’s death very well. It’s living the gospel; it’s understanding the plan of



Tim Amai (left) died only five weeks after returning from his mission in Fiji.

IDS.ORG



Tim Amai with his parents.

TESSA DEWSBURY

salvation and that physical death is part of the plan.

“We can celebrate the Atonement of Jesus Christ and that Jesus Christ

paved the way. This is what the gospel is all about.” ■

Go to pacific.lds.org to watch Koroniria’s visit to Fiji.

MISSIONARY MOMENTS

A Dying Mother's Last Words

By Melissa Te'o

The call to serve could not have come at a more inconvenient time.

In 2008, my dad passed away. Since my dad wasn't with me anymore, I felt numb and a bit lost. I needed a change of scenery, so I moved to Hamilton to study at Waikato University. I had dreams of becoming an occupational therapist because I saw how therapy helped my mum when she was sick.

However, after my first semester, my mum asked me to move back home. She had fallen pretty ill and needed

me. *Really? I have three brothers! Why can't they do it?* That made me so mad!

Months after moving back, I sat with Mum and told her I was preparing to serve a full-time mission. I could see myself in the field, working miracles and helping people. I was excited. She supported me and said, "Well, let's get to work."

More months passed and we sat down again. In the same lounge where I announced my desire to serve, she asked me to hold off on my plans

because she needed me home. She had just been diagnosed with terminal cancer. I cried—of course for my mum, but partially, and selfishly, I was angry at my circumstances. Why me? Why did I have to stay home? What about my brothers?

My mum got worse every day. Eventually, she couldn't move. I recall one rough day where she had an accident and, with a timid voice, asked me for help. "I'm sorry, Lisa," she said through her tears. In retrospect, I realize that feeling sorry for me wasn't the complete reason for her tears that day. Dignity. A woman who had devoted her God-given energy and time to looking



Despite losing both her parents, Melissa Te'o was determined to serve a mission.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY MELISSA TEO

after her children and husband was now unable to take care of herself—a chore we usually think of parents doing for their children, not the other way around. “You will be blessed”—Mum made sure I knew this before she left me.

After my mum passed away, I moved in and out of family homes, trying to find my new home. I began attending university again in 2010. I was in my second year of study when I felt the Lord calling me and bringing back into my heart and mind the thoughts and feelings of wanting to serve a mission.

I had many sleepless nights thinking about my mission. The biggest roadblock was finances, and my prayers became more desperate and I wondered where the Lord had gone. Though it didn’t miraculously rain money, another miracle occurred when the Fitisemanu family helped pay for my mission expenses. In 2015, I was called to serve in the Samoa Apia Mission, under the direction of President Arthur Hannemann and Sister Margaret Hannemann.

It was in Manu’a, an isolated island with about 500 people, where I met Leva’aia Levao. Leva’aia was deaf and partially blind. Because of diabetes, she had her right leg amputated.

We taught her the gospel of Jesus Christ, and her faith became strong. However, she faced persecution. People would mock her, rip up her study notes and tell her she was foolish to listen to



Before she died from cancer, Melissa’s mum (center) made sure to tell her daughter she would be blessed.

kids. But her desire to follow the Saviour, repent and be baptized into His Church never wavered. Leva’aia was baptized and was excited about the gospel. She would always say, “E moni le tusi! Ou te le iloa se isi tala e fai atu, e moni!”

Her example and radiating the light of the Saviour attracted many others to investigate and also follow Jesus Christ and be baptized, including her husband and three children.

As I look back on my mission, I can see the times when the Lord strengthened me, lifted and carried me. Each trial taught me over and over again, it’s not about me. I learned in many different ways that I was nothing, but through Him, I was blessed to witness many miracles.

What a beautiful cause to be a part of this work of the Saviour in helping His children. It’s never about us, and I

love that when I made it about others, the Lord molded me into someone my parents would have wanted me to become.

Honour. What a privilege and honour it was to serve my mum. I developed the traits Heavenly Father blesses women with—patience, tolerance, long-suffering, love and compassion—in bucketloads. Why me and not my brothers? Perhaps as women, we are taught to be more tender and gentle. But we need not wait for such an extreme event to show compassion.

“You will be blessed.” It was a promise my mum gave me before she passed way. She was right. I have been and continue to be blessed ten-fold and a millions times over. ■

Melissa Te’o served in the Samoa Apia Mission from July 2015 to February 2017. She is currently in the Ashlynn Avenue Ward in Papatoetoe, New Zealand.

Seeking Learning and Education

LDS Family Services

Learning is a lifelong process! And those who seek learning through both formal and informal education are more likely to experience joy and happiness in this life and the life to come.

Elder Robert D. Hales stated: “Education prepares you for better employment opportunities. It puts you in a better position to serve and to bless those around you. It will set you on a path of lifelong learning. It will strengthen you to fight against ignorance and error. As Joseph Smith taught: ‘Knowledge does away with darkness, suspense and doubt; for these cannot exist where knowledge is. . . . In knowledge there is power’ [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 265]. “To be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God’ [2 Nephi 9:29]. Education will prepare you for what is ahead, including marriage.”¹

Young people are well served when they make

specific goals around obtaining a quality education and training that will prepare them not only for a job but also for the challenges of life that may come their way. Adults are well served to also keep on pathways of personal, professional and spiritual learning. President Russell M. Nelson once said, “So my counsel . . . is to continue your education, wherever you are, whatever your interest and opportunity, however you determine you can best serve your family and society.”²

The dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple,

given to the Prophet Joseph Smith through revelation, provides clear direction that study and learning are essential to our progress: “And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study and also by faith” (D&C 109:7). Study, learning, and continuing education are sure to increase the opportunities that will result in blessing individuals, couples, families and even communities. ■

NOTES

1. Robert D. Hales, “Meeting the Challenges of Today’s World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 45.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Where Is Wisdom?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 6.

