

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Take Personal Responsibility to Work

By Elder Kevin S. Hamilton

Africa Southeast Area President



Kevin S. Hamilton

A key priority from the 2017 area plan is for members of the Church to “take personal responsibility to work to improve [their] lives.” This means that each of us is responsible to work hard and to be diligent as we seek to improve our situation in life.

It was in 1936, during the worldwide Great Depression, that the First Presidency spoke about “the evils of a dole” and asked that “work . . . be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership.”<sup>1</sup>

The principle of work is basic to the plan of our Heavenly Father for the salvation of His children. Throughout scripture, He has instructed us to take responsibility to work hard to be self-reliant and provide for ourselves. To Adam and Eve, He gave the commandment “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19).

The Book of Mormon has many examples of groups of people that learned how to work and were blessed by the Lord:

Nephi wrote that he “did cause [his] people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands” (2 Nephi 5:17; see also verse 15).

The people of Ammon “were industrious, and did labor exceedingly” (Mosiah 23:5).

The Jaredites “were exceedingly industrious, . . .

“And they did work in all manner of ore . . . and all manner of metals; . . .

“ . . . And they did work all manner of cloth, . . .

“And they did make all manner of tools to till the earth. . . .

“And never could be a people more blessed than were they, and more prospered by the hand of the Lord” (Ether 10:22–28).

Joseph Smith wrote that his family was “under the necessity of

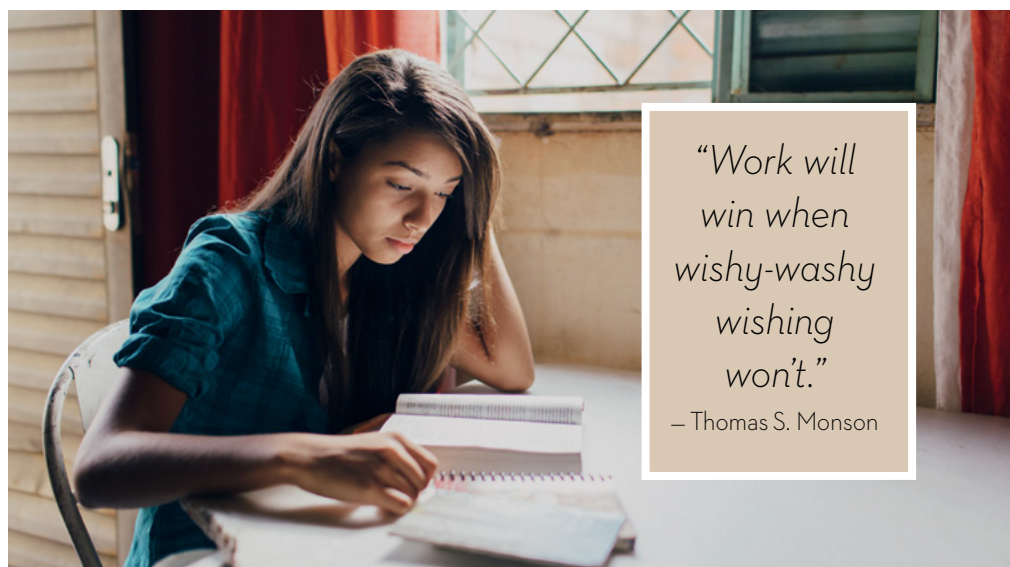
laboring with [their] hands” and that “by continuous labor [they] were enabled to get a comfortable maintenance” (Joseph Smith—History 1:55).

The Lord is very clear that we are to work to provide for our needs, for the “idle shall not eat the bread . . . of the laborer” (D&C 42:42).

President Thomas S. Monson has taught that work is a critical component of our mortal success. He has used his famous “Formula W” to help us understand the importance of work:

“Work Will Win When Wishy Washy Wishing Won’t.”<sup>2</sup>

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” clearly defines the roles of



“Work will win when wishy-washy wishing won’t.”

– Thomas S. Monson

husbands and wives and the principle that they both work as a team in providing for and nurturing their families:

“By divine design, *fathers . . . are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.* In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as **equal partners**.”<sup>3</sup>

We learn then that “work is the foundation upon which self-reliance and temporal well-being rest. Members should prepare for and carefully select a suitable occupation or self-employment that will provide for their own and their families’ needs. They should become skilled at their work, be diligent and trustworthy, and give honest work for the pay and benefits they receive.”<sup>4</sup>

In God’s plan for His children, work is a fundamental aspect of our mortal experience, and each of us must come to accept and magnify that call.

One of our faithful mission presidents recently shared a story with me of a young Brazilian returned missionary who joined the Church as a young adult. He had no education and no real direction in life, but he found the gospel and started to grow. He faithfully served a full-time mission where he learned to set goals, plan, work hard, and exercise faith. When he returned home, he was counseled by his bishop

to find a vocation. The bishop knew that refrigeration mechanics were in short supply and so the young returned missionary found a six-month training course that would provide the skills he needed. He used a PEF loan to pay for the course and graduated with a certificate of completion. He was hired by a company that specialized in refrigeration equipment and he excelled at his work. He ultimately started his own company and hired others to come and work. Along the way he met a faithful Latter-day Saint girl and was sealed in the temple. He and his wife had children and raised a family. He became a self-reliant father and husband and provided for his family. He was able to serve in his local ward and stake partly because he was self-reliant and had resources that he could consecrate to the work of the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

In this Church, we work. Men work to provide for their families. Women work to nurture their families. Missionaries work to preach the gospel. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders work to magnify their callings as “shepherds of the flock.” Home and visiting teachers work to “watch over the Church” and to “lift up the hands that hang down.” No man, if physically able, would ever allow his wife or children to go without, so long as he is capable of working to provide for his family.

Regardless of our background, we have all embraced the gospel culture. No matter what our own parents or grandparents may or may not have done to work to provide for themselves, our doctrine is absolutely clear—we have a responsibility to work to provide for ourselves and our families. Each of us will be blessed as we “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Every child of God will be blessed as they learn to work.

My personal witness is that work is a blessing and that each of us will be blessed by the Lord as we take personal responsibility to work to improve our lives. ■

#### NOTES

1. Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Seven Steps to Success with Aaronic Priesthood Youth,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1985, 25.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129; emphasis added.
4. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 6.1.1.
5. Shared by President Denelson Silva, Angola Luanda Mission.

#### EDITOR’S NOTE

The Africa Southeast Area has a website that publishes messages from the Area Presidency as well as inspirational stories from members in Africa. Please visit us at [africase.lds.org](http://africase.lds.org). ■

## New Area Presidency Member

The Africa Southeast Area of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints welcomes a new member to its presidency with the arrival this month of Elder Joni L. Koch as Second Counselor.

Elder Koch's arrival follows the departure of Elder Stanley G. Ellis, who was serving as First Counselor to Elder Kevin S. Hamilton, the area president. Elder S. Mark Palmer will now serve as First Counselor.

Joni Luiz Koch, born in Joinville, Santa Catarina, Brazil, on March 19, 1962, is one of three children. He married Liliane Michele Ludwig in April 1988 in the São Paulo Brazil Temple. They are the parents of two children.

Elder Koch received a bachelor of science degree in statistics from Brigham Young

University and an executive MBA in logistics from FGV/São Paulo.

Elder Koch's association with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints follows a decision that his parents made back in 1953 to receive lessons about the restored gospel from the missionaries and to then join the Church. Michele's grandparents joined with their 15 children in 1958. She was raised in the Church.

By following the example of their parents, leaders, and the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Koches have built strong testimonies.

He was employed by EMC from 1991–1995 as operations manager; as international logistics manager at Cargill from 1996–2006; as Brazil Inland Services CEO



**Elder Joni L. Koch**

at AP Mollar Maersk from 2006–2013; and as CEO of Conexao Maritima Ltd. from 2014–2015.

His Church service includes a full-time mission in the Brazil São Paulo North Mission and service as an institute teacher, bishop, stake mission president, stake president, and Area Seventy. This past April, he was serving as president of the Mozambique Maputo Mission when he was called as a General Authority Seventy. ■

## LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

### Agency and Self-Reliance

By Elder Jaques A. Van Reenen  
Area Seventy

What in life is really free? We often talk of a free gift or an item that we do not have to pay for. But the question must be asked, "Is it really free?"

Let us take a closer look at this question.

When we purchase an item at a price, the seller sometimes gives another free item that comes with the purchase. In simple economic terms the free item came at no extra charge to the buyer, but in reality, the free item did come at a cost. The expense of

the free item was not realized by the receiver, because the cost was covered by the giver. In order for the purchaser to receive the free item, there had to be a purchase made which indicated an intention to buy, and so a transaction took place.



**Elder Jaques A.  
Van Reenen**

AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA  
2017 **AREA PLAN**

**Vision**

Establish the gospel in the hearts of the members and establish the Church on a sure foundation.



Durban Temple



Johannesburg Temple



Kinshasa Temple

**AREA PRIORITIES**

**Increase Faith in Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ and His Atonement**

<b>Improve worship in sacrament meetings and Sabbath day observance in the home.</b>	<i>"Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you" (Exodus 31:13).</i>
<b>All members worthily hold a current temple recommend and participate in temple work.</b>	<i>"No sacrifice is too great, no price too heavy, no struggle too difficult in order to receive [the] blessings [of the temple]" (Thomas S. Monson, Liahona, May 2011).</i>
<b>Read the Book of Mormon daily.</b>	<i>"If ye shall press forward, feasting upon the words of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).</i>

**Love and Serve One Another**

<b>Reach out to other members of the Church, one by one, rescuing those that are less active.</b>	<i>"For unto such shall ye continue to minister...and I shall heal them" (3 Nephi 18:32).</i>
<b>Share the gospel with those not of our faith.</b>	<i>"And if it so be that you should bring save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy" (D&amp;C 18:15).</i>

**Build Spiritual and Temporal Self-Reliance**

<b>Increase faith through the payment of tithes and offerings.</b>	<i>"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not open you the windows of heaven" (Malachi 3:10).</i>
<b>Take personal responsibility to work to improve our lives.</b>	<i>"Re-enthroned work as the ruling principle in the lives of Church members" (Conference Report, Oct. 1936, p.3).</i>
<b>Prepare for and serve full-time missions.</b>	<i>"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).</i>

**MEASURING PROGRESS**

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The nine key indicators of conversion and real growth from the quarterly report should be used by stakes and wards to ensure progress towards our goals. Families should use their own indicators to measure progress.

Another example is when the giver offers a free item to the receiver, like a free product or some novel item. In this case, there is still a cost, but now also with an expectation. The expectation, or hope, from the giver is that the receiver would return and enjoy more of what the giver has to offer, so an exchange has taken place.

In the gospel of Jesus Christ, we speak of agency, which refers to the freedom of choice, or the right to

choose. We are sometimes misled to believe that this gift of agency is free in every sense of the word, but in reality, this came at a very dear cost to the givers, our Father in Heaven and the Savior, Jesus Christ.

We also discover that the receivers had to make bold decisions to claim this gift. We do not remember what transpired in life before earth, but modern-day revelation helps us piece things together as we look to the scriptures for our answers. In

Revelation chapter 12 and Abraham chapter 3, we read that there was a war in heaven, that there was a plan, and that we had to keep our first estate in order to come to earth to experience mortality. Many did not keep their first estate and were cast down with Satan. On closer inspection, we can see that there were massive decisions and sacrifices made to enjoy the blessings of mortality, the blessings of salvation, and potentially the blessings of eternal life.

Our freedom to choose and to come to earth came at the cost of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us, and of our Heavenly Father, who offered His Only Begotten Son to die for us. As Latter-day Saints, we know the cost of the restored gospel, when Joseph Smith and many others paid with their lives for us to have this very precious gift.

The mission of the Savior is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). We could say that He already accomplished the first part of His mission because all people born on earth will be immortal; we will all be resurrected and receive new bodies. Of course, we know that this is only part of His mission, as He also wants us to enjoy eternal life.

We learn from Doctrine and Covenants 45:8–9 that the Savior gives eternal life and that He has



sent His everlasting covenant into the world to be a standard for all people. This doctrine will free sincere seekers of eternal life from the lies and falsehoods of the world, free them from the enslaving notion of entitlement, free from the devastating thinking that someone else is responsible to give them things when they should really work for it themselves. The Savior, the giver of eternal life, has a different way. He teaches that if we want eternal life, we should be self-reliant spiritually as well as temporally. We should work out our own salvation, be able to solve our own problems, work to move forward in life, educate ourselves, and learn of the perplexities of the nations (see D&C 88:78–79). We should reach out to others by “lift[ing] up the hands which hang down, and strengthen[ing] the feeble knees” (D&C 81:5), so they can also help themselves (see also Mosiah 18:8–10).

We should overcome the world and strive to become self-reliant, putting off the natural man and trusting in God. Our Heavenly Father wants us to return to Him, but we can only do so only when we are self-reliant.

When we consider the Savior’s mission, we learn that because self-reliance is one of the requirements for eternal life, just like having charity, we can also read the scripture in Moses 1:39 as bringing to pass the

immortality and [self-reliance] of man, or bringing to pass the immortality and [charity] of man. When we substitute the words *eternal life* in this passage of scripture with the commandments we are to keep, we begin to see how vital it is for each of us to

*Following the area plan  
will focus our efforts  
on the priorities that  
will bring everlasting  
happiness and free us  
from the bondage of the  
things of this world.*



AFRICASELDS.ORG/2017-AREA-PLAN

keep the commandments and honor our covenants if we want to inherit eternal life.

As a bishop, I remember some members struggling with self-reliance and the paying of tithes and offerings. They would often say that they cannot afford to pay tithing, and I would simply reply that they cannot afford not to pay tithing.

Our Heavenly Father is self-reliant and wants us to enjoy the same blessing. To return to His presence and enjoy all the blessings of eternal life, we need to become self-reliant. The Atonement of the Savior makes it possible for us to put off the old and take upon us the new, to come out of the world and into His fold, to become more like He is and take His yoke upon us, because His yoke is easy and His burden is light (see Matthew 11:29–30).

Brothers and sisters, as we follow the area plan, we follow a path that leads to happiness, helping us to return to our Heavenly Father.

Following the area plan will focus our efforts on the priorities that will bring everlasting happiness and free us from the bondage of the things of this world. I testify of the reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that He lives and that through His Atonement we can return to our Father in Heaven.

In the name of He who redeemed us, our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## Faith-filled Saints

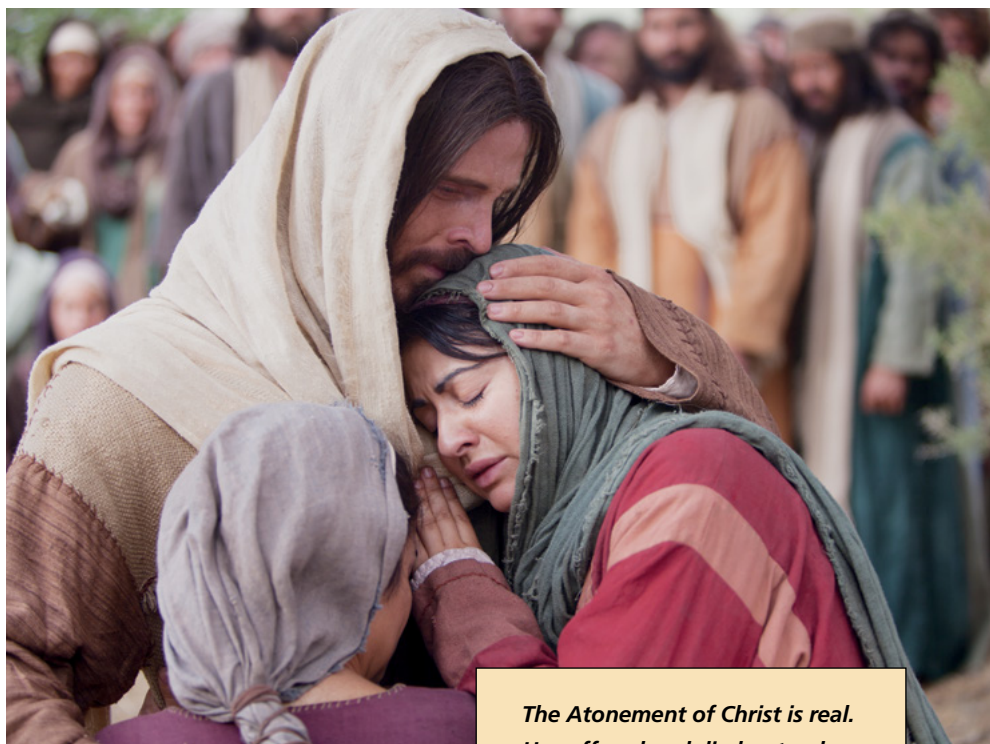
By Lerato Photo  
East London Stake

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in East London and Mdantsane have shared their deepest feelings about faith and the Savior’s Atonement.

When Heavenly Father chose His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins, He showed unwavering love for His children. We have all had the privilege of receiving the benefit of His sacrifice, and our faith in the Lord has kept us on the straight and narrow path even at the most difficult times.

The Mdantsane Second Ward bishop, Mhlangovuyo Makeleni, says that faith without works is dead and in order to have a testimony of the Savior, you need to apply His teachings in your life:

“I have so much faith in the Lord and I have seen His hand in my life. I have a testimony of the Savior. I have applied His teachings and have tasted the goodness of His teachings. This has motivated me to try and live according to His commandments. I realized that His atoning sacrifice isn’t only about repenting of our sins but also about being delivered from challenges and receiving strength to carry on living with them,” said Bishop Makeleni.



*The Atonement of Christ is real. He suffered and died not only for our sins but for the pains and afflictions of everyone.*

A Mdantsane Third Ward member, Kholeka Yosi, says that she knows that God has a plan for her and her family:

“I have so many challenges in my life, but I have so much faith in God and I know that He sent His Son to die on the cross for me and that I can lean on Them in times of stress, confusion, and fear. At times I do feel overwhelmed by life’s problems, but I know that Heavenly Father has a plan for all His children. Having faith in Jesus Christ is what drives me to kneel down and pray—that way, I can continue living with a renewed faith that all will be well. I love the Savior with all my heart, and I am striving to

be the best daughter I can be so that I can live with Him in the end,” said Sister Yosi.

Another Mdantsane Third Ward member, Fundiswa Ntshenyi, says that she finds solace in hymn number 85, where God gives assurance that He is with us at all times:

“Hymn number 85, ‘How Firm a Foundation,’ says, ‘Fear not, I am with thee.’ I know that Jesus Christ died for me and I know that He answers all of my prayers. I know that the challenges I face are for my

benefit and learning. I know that He lives and comforts me and I have felt His love and know that if I keep His commandments, He gives me a sure promise that He will bless me in ways I cannot imagine,” said Sister Ntsheyiya.

A King William’s Town member, Thembisa Mbatani, says that when she reflects on her life, she has seen the hand of the Lord in her life. She joined the Church at a young age and has had the privilege of serving a mission in Zambia, Lusaka:

“Growing up in Port Elizabeth with my sister, I noticed a building being constructed a few blocks from our home. Once the building was completed, we were very excited to go in and see what was going on, so we gathered all of our childhood friends and went to investigate. There was just something about the way the people there carried themselves; they had a glow in their eyes and they were all so kind and loving. Fast forward to 21 years later, and the acts of faithful missionaries over the years have opened doors for us as a family. The Lord has been kind to us and He knows us so well. I know that through faith, centered on Jesus Christ, we can experience miracles.

“The Atonement of Christ is real. He suffered and died not only for our sins but also for the pains and afflictions of everyone,” said Sister Mbatani. ■

## I Will Go and Do the Things Which the Lord Hath Commanded

By Gina Randall

Johannesburg Stake

*“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).*

Recently I asked two friends what Rimpact these lines from the Book of Mormon had made on them. Did they have any “go and do” moments in their lives?

“For sure!” answered the brother. “I attended one year of institute. It had just been introduced in South Africa. In the reading was a statement by President Spencer W. Kimball about the obligations of Church members. He said that ‘a mission . . . is not an alternative program’ (*Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* [Church Educational System manual (2001)], 86). That statement made a huge impact on me. I was not excited about it, but I felt I had no alternative!”



Realizing that he needed to make money to leave on a mission, he resigned from his job as he had heard that selling property had the possibility of high returns. “While I was working my resignation period, I was offered a position in Johannesburg with the same group of companies, but at double the salary!”

Within six months he had earned the money he needed, and off he went on mission!

The second person I spoke to was a sister who had been inactive for 16 years. “I had this continuous yearning for some spiritual element in my life,” she said. “I looked for an easier option than the Church, but nothing satisfied me.”

*“I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).*





Finally, she turned to the Lord in prayer, asking if what she had to do was return to the Church. She asked Him for positive confirmation of this. “Please tell me boldly!” she said to the Lord. “I don’t do subtle!”

That Sunday, after a very unsatisfactory visit to another church, she returned home, feeling despondent. “I turned on the TV, and the programme *Touched by an Angel* was on. Suddenly, the story featured the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. I was shaken but not convinced.”

The next day, road works forced her to take another route to work, and for the first time she saw the spires of the temple on the skyline. “I was doing training for Mike’s Kitchen in Parktown, and my office was upstairs, above the restaurant. I had a meeting scheduled with a signage guy, but before going to the meeting I had to

go downstairs into the restaurant. The place was thronging with senior missionaries, all sporting their badges!” She rushed out of the room and went upstairs to her meeting, where she was handed a folder with the company’s catch line emblazoned on the top: “How many signs do you need?” To the consternation of the man from the signage company and to her great embarrassment, she burst into tears and had to leave to compose herself.

“I went into action. I looked up the telephone number of the Sandton Chapel, and fortuitously the bishop, Warner Molema, was there.” He answered her queries, gave her the details, and on Sunday she was at church. On Tuesday, he and his counselor visited her in her home, and by Thursday, the home teachers arrived.

She decided that she needed a friend, so she called the ward Sunday

School teacher and invited her to have lunch with her that week.

She did not leave it at that. “I had decided that I would throw myself into absolutely everything the Church was offering. I attended whatever was going on. I went to institute, every fire-side that was advertised, every Relief Society meeting that was held, and a year later I went to the temple and received my endowment.

“Looking back, I realized I was not the only one who heeded the ‘go and do’ injunction. My bishop put all those things in place. And my Sunday School teacher is still my friend today. Of course, most importantly, my Heavenly Father answered my prayers in a way that could not be questioned. I am so grateful to be a part of this great work.” ■

#### CALL FOR ARTICLES

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so as to address the needs and experiences of members where you live. We would like to share YOUR story and invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor through the Africa Southeast Area website [africase.lds.org](http://africase.lds.org) or by email [africasecommunications@gmail.com](mailto:africasecommunications@gmail.com). ■