

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Love Will Help Us Find “the One”

By Elder Joni L. Koch

Second Counselor in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency



Elder Joni L. Koch

In Luke 15:4 the Savior teaches by posing a question: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”

Aligned with this charge received from the Lord, one of our area plan priorities is to “reach out to other members of the Church, one by one, rescuing those that are less active.”

Ours, then, is the responsibility to learn who and where are the ones we must personally go after to invite them to come unto Christ, and then help them come back to the fold. However, having so many that are lost, one could legitimately ask: Where and after whom should I go first?

President Thomas S. Monson, our dear prophet, has taught, “We can’t do everything for everyone everywhere, but we can do something for someone somewhere” (“The Bridge Builder,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 69; see also *Richard Evans’ Quote Book* [1971], 51).

We’ll most likely be able to prioritize where to go and who to look for by paying special attention to:

- Those to whom we’re assigned to visit as home or visiting teachers. Possibly in that group there will

be some who are not as strong as they could be, and if we’re constantly visiting and nurturing them with the messages from the living prophets, some will feel the desire to come back to living the gospel and attending church.

- The promptings of the Spirit. If we truly desire to help and rescue the Lord’s lost sheep, the Spirit will tell us where to look and who to look for.

I remember when I was about 10 years old, living in Joinville, Brazil, my good friend Edson (age 11) and I felt a strong desire to visit the house of two of our Primary friends, Marcos and Sandro



Santos, who had not come to church for quite a while. We missed them and wanted to invite them and their whole family to come back to church.

On the date set, we put on our father’s ties, went to their home and knocked at their door. One family member came to the door half smiling to see two children with ties and invited us to come in. When we requested to talk to Brother and Sister Santos and all their children in their living room, their curiosity became even greater, so they all came. It was a numerous family. We looked at Brother and Sister Santos and sincerely asked, “Is there anything we could do for you so that you will come back to church and be there on Sundays? We miss you all, especially our friends Marcos and Sandro!! Could you consider coming back next Sunday?” The Spirit was strong and there was a moment of solemn silence. Brother Santos then said with determination, “We’ll be there!”

The next Sunday morning, my friend Edson and I were at the front gate waiting for them. When we saw, from a distance, that precious family walking together towards the Church meetinghouse, we greatly rejoiced. With continued help from the ward members and leaders, the Santos family was fully reactivated and eventually

sealed in the temple. Four of their sons served missions and years later, Sandro, the youngest son, became bishop of the ward.

As I ponder on what caused us, as children, to have the capacity to help the Lord rescue that family, it wasn't special knowledge of the doctrine or ability to persuade but the most important ingredient that never fails: Love. They felt our sincere love that day, and most importantly, they felt the Lord's love for them.

There's an old African proverb that says "The cabin of a loved one is never too far away."

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

Rescue

By Elder Walter Chatora

Area Seventy

Our dear beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has been so consistent with his rescue message. His love and care for the one has been an epitome of his sterling service. He has shown us by example how we can walk the path of discipleship and become true shepherds.

During the April 2001 priesthood session of general conference, he taught:

"Brethren, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady,

I testify that when we love those we must rescue, we'll never find excuses to leave them out in the dark. Instead, we'll feel extreme joy and pleasure as we do so. Perhaps the words of Moroni will help us ignite that needed love inside our hearts: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love" (Moroni 7:48).

May we all be full of love, obey the Savior's command to go after the lost sheep, and follow the plan—rescuing one by one. As we do so, we'll experience supernal happiness. ■



Elder Walter Chatora

hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service" ("To the Rescue," *Ensign*, May 2001, 48).

The Savior taught powerfully on caring for the one. His teachings using the parables in Luke chapter 15—the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son—all pointed in essence to His deep concern and real love for the one.

We have many among us who have strayed. Heavenly Father has appointed us to help save His children. We are indeed His ambassadors and thus mandated to rescue. We cannot be spectators but must be active participants as we fulfill our rescue obligations.

Two years ago, I was assigned to a stake conference in one of the neighboring countries. Prior to the conference, the stake president accompanied me to visit a less-active family. When we arrived at their home, we were welcomed by the mother and daughter. The father was out running some errands. We shared some scriptures, testified, and prayed with the mother and daughter. They said that they had been offended at church but were keen to come back. As much as they wanted to come, they could not commit because they wanted the father to be involved in that decision. As we made our way out, we unexpectedly met the father by the door. It was a big surprise as he was only expected back later that afternoon. He said he felt something telling him to go back home. We went back inside and had a wonderful time sharing truths about the restored gospel. We prayed with the whole family again. They were so touched and felt the Spirit strongly that they decided to come back to church immediately. That very night they were due to attend a service with a different church that they had decided to join. We felt that the Lord had sent us into their home right at the ideal time to save them. None of these

LOCAL PAGES

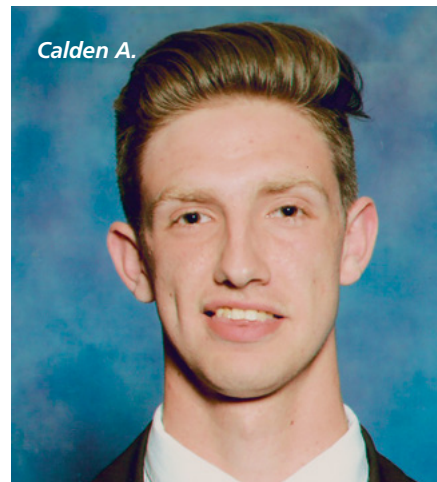
Elder Rasband Touches Members' Lives

In May 2017 Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited with priesthood leaders, members, and missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. As a special witness for Jesus Christ, he uplifted and inspired all with his love for the Savior and his testimony of the blessings that await members as they prepare themselves for the completion of the Durban South Africa Temple.

A young man, a young mother, and a great-grandmother shared their experiences:

“Shaking the hand of one of the Apostles of the Lord was one of the most spiritual things I have ever done, from the moment I touched his hand to the moment I let go, I felt the power of the priesthood. It was a special and rare experience I will never forget.”

—Calden A., age 16, Hillcrest Stake



Calden A.

occurrences happened by coincidence but by giving heed to the promptings of the Spirit and the Lord's design in play. We invited the family to join us for the conference. The following day, they attended the Sunday session of the stake conference and we were happy that the Lord sent us into their home before they joined another church.

There is so much joy in serving others and reaching out, especially to new members, less-active members, the lonely, and those who stand in need of comfort. As we do this, lives will be transformed. As we reach out, we need to:

1. Establish sincere friendships by acquainting ourselves with others.
2. Love them without judging them.
3. Watch over them and strengthen their faith “one by one” as the Savior did.

Sometimes a mere phone call can change someone's life. I remember several years ago while serving as a stake president, I visited a ward and discussed with the bishop one particular sister with great potential whose attendance had become erratic. When I arrived home that Sunday afternoon, I phoned her. I had never phoned her before and she was quite surprised as she wondered what the stake president wanted from her. I expressed our love for her and told her that I had attended her ward and that we missed her. Then she said something profound: “So you notice?” she asked. It was a big lesson

for me—people will feel loved and cared for if we “notice them.” She promised to never miss church again.

These small acts of service, coupled with effective home teaching and visiting teaching, will touch hearts, change lives, and save souls.

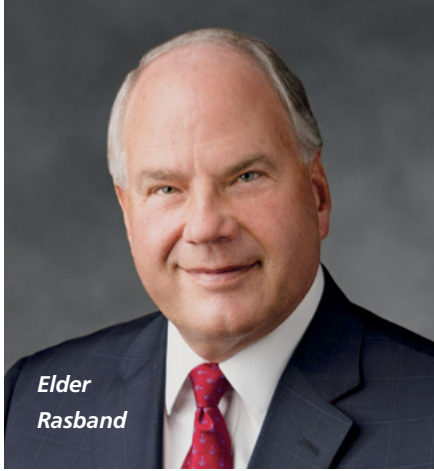
King Benjamin, in that wonderful sermon to his people, said, “And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

We express faith in practical ways by serving others, and service is one of the tests of true discipleship. The Savior taught: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34–35).

When we take upon us the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into a covenant to follow Him and always remember Him. Our Savior epitomizes charity, love, and compassion. His ultimate atoning sacrifice for each one of us is the greatest example of how both He and the Father showed love for all of us.

Let us be active participants in this great work of salvation and be genuine friends who love, care, listen, and reach out to those voices in despair. Remember that the worth of souls is great in the sight of God (see D&C 18:10). ■



Elder Rasband



Elder Rasband greets South Africa Durban Mission president, Kip G. Thompson, and his wife, Leesa Thompson.

“What a wonderful experience it was to hear an Apostle of the Lord and to be able to teach my 5-year-old daughter the importance of these great men and their testimonies of Christ. It was also such a wonderful reminder of the simplicity of the gospel. How incredible to feel the Spirit that comes with him and to feel his Christlike love for each and every one of us.

“The message Elder Rasband shared with us was about creating new gospel traditions:

1. Hold family and personal prayer
2. Hold family and personal scripture study

3. Hold family home evenings (will help show children how important family is to you)
4. Pay tithing (it is the one commandment where the Lord says “prove me now herewith” [Malachi 3:10])
5. Serve others (help others out of poverty)
6. Stand ye in holy places (i.e. go to the temple, make home a place where you can feel the Spirit)

“It was a lovely, inspiring message, but it was really the Spirit I could feel that made it such a special meeting.”

—Niki Higgs, Hillcrest Stake

“Hearing Elder Rasband speak was a wonderful, moving experience. I

felt the Spirit so strongly it brought tears to my eyes. I could feel his love for the Savior and for each one of us too.

“When he spoke about President Monson and his many years of service, it made me think: I need to do more. I may be getting old, but I can still do more. His words inspired me to do better. We have the fulness of the gospel . . . we can BE more!

“Elder Rasband testified of the living Christ and that His angels are watching over us, protecting us from the storms of life. What a wonderful feeling of peace and love.” ■

—Sister Mary Hattingh, Durban Stake



Elder Rasband visited the Durban Temple site with Church leaders.

A Prayer to Meet With an Apostle

By **Love Mkhombe**

Institute student, Pinetown Ward,
Hillcrest Stake

My heartfelt desire was to attend a special bi-stake conference of the Durban and Hillcrest Stakes, presided over by Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was not going to be able to attend the special conference because of a traditional event which was going to happen at home and had to be observed, for the whole week, by everyone in the family. I shared my concern with my fellow institute class, including my institute teacher, Bishop CB Magaqa.

My father had told me that I would not be able to go to church on the Sunday of that week and neither would I attend institute the following week. I had tried to explain to him what was going to happen at church on that Sunday, but it was in vain. He still insisted that I would not be able to go. My institute teacher, Bishop Magaqa, counseled me to fast, pray, and speak to my mother or another elderly person who I knew would listen to me and be kind enough to speak with my father on my behalf.

I decided to pray and fast from Wednesday morning through Thursday morning. My father had gone away



Sister Love Mkhombe

and would return on Friday. After the fast I texted him that I needed to have a family meeting on Friday when he came back.

When the day came we sat down in a meeting as a family—my father, my stepmother, and my elder brother. It was kind of a family home evening. I started off by telling them that in my Church we have living prophets and apostles and that one of the Apostles was going to be in our home ward in our stake and that I felt I truly needed

to attend to hear his message. I had downloaded a talk that spoke of the importance of prophets and apostles and another talk on the hardships of being the only member of the Church in the family. I went on pleading my case and explaining how much I respected his beliefs; but they were not mine. I asked him to respect and consider mine as well. He responded by saying that he would think about it.

That same evening, he came into my room and told me that he could see how much it meant to me to attend the special conference, and that he was no longer going to hold me back because this was bigger than both of us. He also assured me of the tremendous love he had for me and added that I was free to attend institute as well.

I conclude by testifying that for me this was indeed a miracle that happened through the powerful prayers offered by my fellow institute brothers and sisters. Through acting in faith, I saw the tender mercies of my benevolent Heavenly Father, and my testimony increased in strength. I testify that faith, sincere prayer, and fasting work and that in all that we do, we are truly never alone. Heavenly Father is always very aware of us and of our needs. I love Him and know for a fact that He loves me too. That knowledge of Him alone as the only true God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, increases faith in my heart and soul. I am truly grateful for the blessing I have of this knowledge. Let us all have faith in Him. ■

Answers to Questions, Even Those I Was Afraid to Ask

By Danai Tembo

When I was really young and living in Zimbabwe, my dad was studying in England and during the December holidays we would spend time with him. I was 3 or 4 years old the first time and my body didn't take too kindly to the cold. I had a massive asthma attack and spent Christmas in hospital. While there, two young guys came to sing in the children's ward. Sometime later, I was in the city with my mom and pointed out these two men to

her. I told her that they came to sing when I was in hospital. Later in the day, this happened again. I pointed them out to my mom and this time they saw me pointing and came to speak to us. They made an appointment to come and visit with us. My mom made the appointment for the day after we left England to return to Zimbabwe and she didn't tell my dad they were coming!

When they arrived, my dad had no idea who they were or what they were on about but was polite enough to let them in. He told them he was a retired Christian, but they still gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon and asked him to read it. He didn't, but as time went on, he continued with the discussions and eventually agreed to go to church. His first visit to church was a fast and testimony Sunday and he said he was so impressed by all the children going up and sharing their testimonies. He was subsequently baptized and the following year when we returned to England, my older sister and my mom were baptized. I was baptized when I turned 8.

The week preceding the last general conference (April 2017) was a tough one for me. I experienced a few blows and just felt that I was in a spiritual slump. Nonetheless, I did

what I needed to do to prepare; I listened to talks from the previous conference, pondered on the questions I needed answered and prayed that Heavenly Father would help me recognize the answers as I listened to the talks.

What a magnificent spiritual feast! I was so full. There was something I needed to hear in every talk. I received answers to the questions I had and even to questions I had not even vocalized. During my evening prayers on the Monday after conference, I expressed gratitude for the prophet and apostles and their teachings. I expressed how wonderful it is to know that those Brethren are so close to Heavenly Father and to the Savior and that they commune and counsel with Them on a regular basis and that They live!

I was suddenly overwhelmed by the truthfulness of what I was expressing. The Spirit was telling me it was true. There was even an answer to a prayer I was too afraid to utter.

Heavenly Father is so aware of me and I don't think I will ever fully comprehend that. I'm so grateful for my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the opportunity to hear the words of the Lord at general conference. ■



Danai Tembo

“This moment does not define the refugees, but our response will help define us”

By **Angela Moodley**

Johannesburg Stake, South Africa



The possibilities for us to lend a hand and be a friend are endless.

As I watched an excerpt from a video (“Refuge from the Storm”) from the October 2016 general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, my heart was touched. Elder Patrick Kearon of the Seventy speaks about our responsibility to reach out to refugees around us. The Church does so much to help throughout the world and this is a great example to all of us as individuals.

Each one of us can all reach out in the smallest of ways. My heart broke as I listened to the words spoken by various refugees from different places, because at any time that could be one of us. Our world is unstable and, as said in that video, these people didn’t ask to leave their homes, to be shot at or live under terrible conditions that

force them to leave everything they own and have worked for—but this will not define them for forever, it’s just a small space in time and with help and love they can go on to become great, and do great things. Would we not seek the same for ourselves and our children? I will start to look out for ways that I can help in these things so I can become more like my Savior.

Elder Patrick Kearon:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me . . .

“ . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” [Matthew 25:35–36, 40].

There are an estimated 60 million refugees in the world today, which means that “1 in every 122 humans . . . has been forced to flee their homes,” and half of these are children. . . .

As members of the Church, as a people, we don’t have to look back far in our history to reflect on times when we were refugees, violently driven from

homes and farms over and over again. . . . In speaking of refugees, Sister Linda K. Burton [former Relief Society General President] asked the women of the Church to consider, “What if *their* story were *my* story?” Their story is our story, not that many years ago. . . .

The Savior knows how it feels to be a refugee—He was one. As a young child, Jesus and His family fled to Egypt to escape the murderous swords of Herod. And at various points in His ministry, Jesus found Himself threatened and His life in danger, ultimately submitting to the designs of evil men who had plotted His death. Perhaps, then, it is all the more remarkable to us that He repeatedly taught us to love one another, to love as He loves, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Truly, “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” [James 1:27] and to “look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer” [D&C 38:35; see also D&C 81:5]. . . .

The possibilities for us to lend a hand and be a friend are endless. You might help resettled refugees learn their host country language, update their work skills, or practice



job interviewing. You could offer to mentor a family or a single mother as they transition to an unfamiliar culture, even with something as simple as accompanying them to the grocery store or the school. Some wards and stakes have existing trusted organizations to partner with. And, according to your circumstances, you can give to the Church's extraordinary humanitarian effort.

Additionally, each one of us can increase our awareness of the world events that drive these families from their homes. We must take a stand against intolerance and advocate respect and understanding across cultures and traditions. Meeting refugee families and hearing their stories with your own ears, and not from a screen or newspaper, will change you. Real friendships will develop and will foster compassion and successful integration.

The Lord has instructed us that the stakes of Zion are to be "a defense" and "a refuge from the storm" [D&C 115:6; see also Isaiah 4:5–6]. We have found refuge. Let us come out from our safe places and share with them, from our abundance, *hope* for a brighter future, *faith* in God and in our fellowman, and *love* that sees beyond cultural and ideological differences to the glorious truth that we are all children of our Heavenly Father. (Patrick Kearon, "Refuge from the Storm," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 111–14.) ■

The Institute of Religion is an Opportunity for Discovery

By Fidèle Nzambi Kapanga Munina

My parents were baptized as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when I was 2 years old and they raised me in the gospel. I was baptised at the age of 8. We studied the gospel as a family and I enjoyed learning in Primary and in Young Men's classes and activities. I have always read the scriptures, and as a Young Single Adult, I enrolled in the Institute of Religion.

I like to learn so I ask a lot of questions. In my first year in Institute, I discovered many truths that I did not know about the nature of God—Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22–23. "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.

Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us".

The Institute of Religion has helped me to study the scriptures instead of only reading them; to understand the teachings of the prophets as if they were speaking to me personally rather than just reading a general talk, and I received my own testimony of the gospel, the restored Church and the Book of Mormon. I began to understand the scriptures, not as stories told, but as answers to my questions.

I am preparing to serve a mission by working hard and magnifying my current callings as a 2nd counsellor in the Young Men's program and as a ward missionary. I am completing the recommendation form for missionary candidates and hope to be called as a full-time missionary soon. The Institute of Religion has strengthened my faith in Jesus Christ. ■

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