

# AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

### “Whether by Mine Own Voice or by the Voice of My Servants, It Is the Same”

By Elder Paul Lekias

Area Seventy



Elder Paul Lekias

As early as I can recollect, I have always strived to live by the following formula: obedience plus hard work equals happiness. I have applied this way of life at work, in my studies and as a full-time missionary serving in Christchurch, New Zealand (1987–89). It has been particularly important to Sister Lekias and me as we have raised our four children in the gospel.

The Saviour came in the meridian of time to fulfill His Father’s will. He came “to seek and to save that which was lost.”<sup>1</sup> Following the Saviour’s Crucifixion, His voice was heard among the people on the American continent, inviting them to “offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit.”<sup>2</sup> Prophets and apostles help us offer such a sacrifice as they teach, testify and invite all to come unto Christ. As we obey their teachings and keep the Lord’s commandments, we will prosper in the land, as Lehi and others have clearly stated in the Book of Mormon.

Over the dispensations of time, Heavenly Father has always followed a pattern which continues today.<sup>3</sup> How grateful we are for this pattern, where prophets and apostles are called to lead and guide us in these latter days.

Their message is not new. As we review the Lord’s standard works, we find example after example of what the Lord’s “secrets” to His servants may consist of. Enoch was charged with the commission to “go to this people, and say unto them—Repent.”<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel was given the charge to be a “watchman unto the house of Israel . . . and give them warning from me.”<sup>5</sup> Samuel the Lamanite prophesied “whatsoever things should come into his heart”<sup>6</sup> and admonished the Nephites that “nothing can save this people save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus



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Christ.”<sup>7</sup> Joseph Smith was commanded to “preach naught but repentance.”<sup>8</sup>

We know that God “is the same yesterday, today, and forever”<sup>9</sup> and therefore can safely assume that prophets and apostles of our day are commanded to preach repentance to all the world. As we obey their counsel and direction, over time we experience a mighty change of heart, with the desired outcome being “that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>10</sup>

The invitation to change is extended with the first and second great commandments<sup>11</sup> in mind and a desire to accomplish the great work of our Heavenly Father. The love President Thomas S. Monson has for each of us is evidenced in all that he does. We only need look back at the last general conference to be reminded of how he and the Lord wish to bless our lives, if we would but obey.

1. Kindness: “Let us examine our lives and determine to follow the Savior’s example by being kind, loving, and charitable.”<sup>12</sup>
2. Read the Book of Mormon daily: “My dear associates in the work of the Lord, I implore each of us to

prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day.”<sup>13</sup>

3. As we sustain and follow our living prophet, President Monson, we too can be like Alma of old, who believed in the words of Abinadi, who was a holy prophet, “and according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart.”<sup>14</sup>

Our leaders can be likened to the Liahona found by Lehi and his family. The pointers of the Liahona (like a compass) “did work according to the faith and diligence [work] and heed which we did give unto them.”<sup>15</sup> As we consciously make an effort to follow and implement the direction and counsel given from our leaders, we (like Lehi’s family) will be directed to our “promised land,” even the celestial kingdom.

Like each of you, I love and sustain our prophets, seers and revelators. I

know that as we apply the scriptural mandate “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants [including our Area Presidency and local leaders], it is the same”<sup>16</sup> to our lives, the Lord’s promised blessings will be ours. We will find greater joy in our homes, in church attendance, at work, in our studies and in our journey through life. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Luke 19:10.
2. 3 Nephi 9:20.
3. See Amos 3:7.
4. Moses 7:10.
5. Ezekiel 3:17.
6. Helaman 13:3.
7. Helaman 13:6.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 19:21.
9. 1 Nephi 10:18.
10. Mosiah 5:2.
11. See Matthew 22:36–39.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “Kindness, Charity, and Love,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 67.
13. Thomas S. Monson, “The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 87.
14. Alma 5:11–12.
15. 1 Nephi 16:28.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.

facilities at Temple View, Hamilton.

He was joined by Apostle Neil L. Andersen and Bishop Dean M. Davies of the Presiding Bishopric.

“Temple View is a special, sacred place,” President Eyring said. “It really is. Every time I’m here, I have that feeling. I’ve been here with President Hinckley and President Monson before. I could feel the faith of the people then. There are great people here.”

President Eyring had a packed schedule on his visit to Temple View, touring the Wendell B. Mendenhall Library, including the Matthew Cowley Pacific Church History Centre and Museum.

“There is a reason we talk about our families,” he said. “We don’t just want to do good with our families; we want to do temple work so we can be sealed. People will come to the centre, particularly people who are from this area, and have wonderful spiritual experiences. I can imagine people in the spirit world cheering!”

He then visited the Kai Hall and made sure to have an intimate meeting with around 50 former labour missionaries in the George R. Biesinger Hall.

Many of the labour missionaries in attendance played a huge role in building Church College, chapels and the temple in New Zealand.

Kahu Katene gave President Eyring, Elder Neil L. Andersen and Bishop Dean M. Davies and other visitors a special Maori welcome.

#### LOCAL PAGES

## President Eyring Leaves His Mark on New Zealand

By Shilo Kino

It’s not every day you get a visit from two Apostles.

But for the Saints in Temple View, Hamilton, it was an occasion they will never forget.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, was in New Zealand to dedicate the new David O. McKay Stake and Cultural Events Centre and other buildings and



**President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, was in New Zealand to dedicate the new David O. McKay Stake and Cultural Events Centre and other buildings and facilities at Temple View, Hamilton.**

President Eyring then thanked the missionaries. "You have been laboring in the Lord's service," he said. "He appreciates you. I express for Him and the Savior appreciation for you all."

Former labour missionary Sister Lillian Kershaw, 81, was at the service. Her late husband, Tom, served for nine years as a Brick layer, helping

build Church College and the temple in 1952. Sister Kershaw served as a secretary for a year and a half.

"To have him personally thank us, it was very inspiring," she said. "And to think he actually asked to have time to spend with us. He didn't have to come and say thank you. But he did. It was a beautiful experience. He was just lovely.

"I saw him coming in and I just started to sing 'Whakaaria Mai.' It wasn't planned. It led to the special spirit that I felt in the room. It was like having the Lord in our presence, an absolutely special privilege."

President Eyring then headed off to watch over 200 Saints perform in a cultural celebration held at the new David O. McKay Stake and Cultural Events Centre.

"It was a wonderful celebration," President Eyring said. "It was very unique to this place. Superbly done. I couldn't believe it. It had a great spirit."

On Saturday morning, Saints gathered at the new stake centre and all over the world via social media to witness President Eyring dedicate the Temple View facilities.



← **President Eyring greets the labour missionaries.**



↑ **President Eyring addresses the Hamilton Saints.**

→ **President Eyring addresses the labour missionaries.**



He told the Saints the dedication was “a grand beginning”.

He spoke about arriving in New Zealand 40 years ago, taking some time to be alone and climb a hill until he was almost level with the temple spire. He then sat on his luggage and painted a watercolor of his beautiful surroundings.

“I don’t know if it captured what I felt that day,” he said. “I had a feeling I was looking at sacred ground.”

He was quick to point out that the new buildings were the Lord’s work.

“The Lord did it—and the disciples who sacrificed and served each other and served Him for generations.”

Before he dedicated the facilities, he reminded everyone of the meaning:

“A dedication is an open prayer telling God the Father this is His. We are so grateful we have these buildings, and we will do what You have us to do with it. Most of all, we dedicate our hearts.”

He then offered the dedicatory prayer. ■

Church’s Pacific Area Presidency. He will continue to serve in leadership assignments at the Church’s headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Upon receiving the assignment to serve in the Pacific, the Niensens were very excited.

“When the words came out of President Eyring’s mouth that we were called to the Pacific Area, I had an overwhelming feeling of gratitude,” Elder Nielsen said. “Thinking about the diverse cultures and open-hearted people we would come to know and love was very exciting for me.”

Sister Nielsen was equally thrilled. “I felt like I had just won a prize! I was ecstatic to think about living in an area I had always dreamed of visiting.”

Three years later, the Niensens feel that their assignment in the Pacific has become more meaningful than they could have ever anticipated.

“I will be eternally grateful for the blessing of these three years living in paradise,” Sister Nielsen said. “It has been even more beautiful, uplifting and adventurous than I ever imagined. The best part is the hearts and souls of the loving and devoted people we have been privileged to know and love.”

Elder Craig A. Cardon of the Seventy, Second Counselor in the Pacific Area Presidency, expressed love and appreciation to the Niensens during their three-year ministry.

“They both lead with their hearts. Sister Nielsen is constantly looking for

## Elder and Sister Nielsen Say Farewell

By Mormon Newsroom

After three years of service, Elder S. Gifford Nielsen of the Seventy and his wife, Wendy Nielsen, bid farewell to the people of the Pacific.

The Niensens arrived in New Zealand in July 2014.

Elder Nielsen served for the last three years as a member of the



*After three years of service, Elder S. Gifford Nielsen of the Seventy and his wife, Wendy Nielsen, bid farewell to the people of the Pacific.*



*Celeste and George were married in the Sydney Australia Temple in December last year.*

the good in others and assisting those in need. Elder Nielsen is genuinely interested in others and loves to make lasting connections.”

Sister Nielsen has accompanied Elder Nielsen on many of his travels in the Pacific Area and has enjoyed speaking to members and friends of the Church across the region.

“I am changed forever because of the heavenly lessons I’ve learned from each individual I’ve met and loved here,” Sister Nielsen said.

The Niensens will always be remembered for their contagious smiles and loveable personalities.

“Through their love, we have been able to better feel and recognize the Lord’s love,” Elder Cardon said.

Elder Nielsen remarked that he will always remember the Pacific people’s caring hearts and willingness to do anything to brighten up another’s day.

He hopes the people of the Pacific will remember him as someone who deeply loves the Lord.

According to Elder Nielsen, the Church’s Pacific Area has seen significant improvements over the past three years as members have worked together to build up the kingdom of God.

“My hope is that every member will continue to pray to have someone put in their path each day that they can influence in a very positive way, ultimately being able to share their testimonies of the restored gospel with them,” Elder Nielsen said. ■

## A Story of Eternity

By Shilo Kino

Celeste and George were living the dream in the sunny paradise of Hawaii.

In between studying and working, the couple could be found at the beach. They never imagined what would happen next.

Celeste, a former Olympic swimmer, was diagnosed with Ewing’s sarcoma, a bone cancer commonly found in youth and adolescents.

“It all happened overnight,” she said. “I sat down with the doctors and they looked at me with a sad look. I just sat there for a bit, cried, and then called my husband. Within a few days, I was back at home scheduling doctors’ appointments and adjusting to the cold Sydney weather. It all felt surreal.”

Celeste has been married for less than a year to her sweetheart, George, who is from Laie, Hawaii. Their wedding last year in December was perfect, said Celeste.

“We were sealed in the Sydney Australia Temple and then spent the evening with close friends and family at our reception. Simple and special, just the way I like it.”

When George found out Celeste had cancer, his “heart dropped”.

“The only thing I knew or heard about cancer is people dying from it or their life being disabled, changed, and very painful. Initially I felt sad, mad, and scared all at the same time,” he said.

“I just gave her a hug as she cried on my shoulder.”

Celeste has almost finished her first cycle of treatment. She has 13 more to go and surgery to remove the cancer, which will happen after her sixth cycle.

And although living with cancer can take its toll, Celeste said it’s only brought the couple closer together. “He has reminded me each day why I chose to marry him,” she said. “He’s been an amazing strength to me by loving me, reassuring me and doing all he can to put a smile on my face. As a couple, we have grown so much together, and with our unique circumstances we live to cherish each day and do all we can to be happy.”

Still, it has been hard for George to watch his wife battle cancer.

“Watching my wife suffer day and night and unable to do even half the things she is used to has been the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do,” he said.

*Celeste has been diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma, a bone cancer commonly found in youth and adolescents.*



“She is the most unselfish, loving and kind person I know. I look at her every day and I still can’t believe she said yes. I love her because her goal every day is to make me happy, even when she is strapped to a bed and has tubes on tubes connected to her body. I thought I couldn’t love her any more than I did before, but somehow my love for her keeps growing and that’s why she is so special to me.”

“It’s really the unknown that is the hardest part,” Celeste said. “Cancer treatment is different for everyone, so for me I was anxious about how my body would react to my treatment cycles and how chemotherapy would feel.”

George and Celeste credit the gospel for being a source of light through this difficult trial.

“I’ve come to learn more fully that the Lord is in control, of everything and everyone,” George said. “I have found comfort in knowing that the Lord can take care of His daughter better than I can. He hears our thoughts, our prayers, and surrounds us as we weep in our hard times. Rather than turning my back to this challenge, we turn towards it with faith, knowing that Heavenly Father has great things in store for us.”

“My faith in Jesus Christ has helped me recognise why we face opposition at times in our lives,” Celeste said. “I trust that He loves me, that He knows me and wants to help me. Prayer and studying the scriptures have been powerful ways for me to more fully rely on God and remember how much He really loves His children.”

She is especially grateful for the support she has received from family and friends.

“The faith of so many people around the world who have been praying and fasting on behalf of George and I has helped so much. There truly is power in numbers, especially when that’s coupled with a loving Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ.”

Celeste and George plan to one day start their own family. Celeste hopes that her own experiences will help others who might be struggling.

“Remember, you aren’t alone, and you don’t need to get through it alone,” she said.

“If there is one thing I know, we have both gained love, humility, gratitude and dependence on the Lord and many other wonderful lessons that have helped us progress spiritually,” said George. ■

## Melbourne Saints Do Their Part to Feed the Hungry

By Mormon Newsroom

Melbourne Saints gave generously from their pantries this past winter to support vulnerable families as part of the 2017 Feed Melbourne Appeal.

The Feed Melbourne Appeal provides food and financial grants to local charities that are struggling to meet demand. More than 600,000 people rely on food charities each month; however, due to high demand, many go hungry. Over 6,000 people are turned away from food charities each month due to a lack of resources, according to the Foodbank Hunger Report for 2016. More than a third of these are children.

Founded by Leader Community News and food charity FareShare, the appeal has raised over \$3.2 million and tonnes of food for 147 charities during the nine years since it began.

Susan Vinen, a member of the Moorabbin Ward, saw a newspaper article on the appeal and felt she needed to do something to help. After speaking to local Church leaders, efforts to support the initiative were coordinated through the local Relief Society.

The Feed Melbourne Appeal was asking for donations of rice and pasta, so members were invited to donate



*Melbourne Latter-day Saints Susan Vinen and Fiona Ward load the FareShare van to help support vulnerable families as part of the 2017 Feed Melbourne Appeal.*

## MISSIONARY MOMENTS

### The Final Test

By Sam Butler

I was on my mission for a year when I felt impressed to extend my service as a missionary. My original leave date was mid-December, and my service would be extended to early February. I realised that this would mean another Christmas without my family, but it was a small sacrifice that I felt I could make.

Three months before my original leave date I received news from my brother announcing that he would be receiving a new addition to his family: a beautiful baby girl. The due date was the 30th of December. Soon after I received this news I was asked to confirm my decision to extend. I assured my mission president that this was still what I wanted to do.

Four days before my original leave date, my companion and I received a phone call from the assistants to the mission president. I was told to pack my bags and told I would be going to Aachen (a small city in the corner of the mission), where I was to spend the last seven weeks of my mission. I was assigned to be the district leader over the four elders in that city.

It was only a few days after New Year's Day when I received an email from my mother: "Dear Elder Butler, your dad and I have been thinking a lot about whether we should tell you this. But I feel like it is something you

pasta, rice and pasta sauce. Within a few weeks, Church members from Mornington to Brighton collected hundreds of food items, which were picked up by a FareShare food van on June 14th in Moorabbin. Susan Vinen and local Relief Society leader Fiona Ward helped to load the van before it headed to the nearby Woolworths to collect more food donations.

"As Latter-day Saints we have a duty of care to our brothers and sisters," said Fiona. "Our contribution makes a

difference. We can all do our part to bear one another's burdens."

The Relief Society is the largest women's organisation in the world and is founded on faith, family and relief. Providing service to those in need in the community through projects such as the Feed Melbourne Appeal is just one of the ways that women in the Relief Society fulfill the organisation's motto, 'Charity never faileth'. ■

*Find out how you can support families in need at [feedmelbourne.org.au](http://feedmelbourne.org.au).*

should know. I have been diagnosed with breast cancer.”

At first I was sad, then I was afraid, and then that fear turned into anger. The prayer that followed is not one I am particularly proud of.

“How dare You!”

My prayer continued: “How could You do this to me. My entire mission I have strived to do my utmost. You have sent me into the flame more

than once, and I have worked hard to do Your will. I gave up another Christmas with my family, witnessing the birth of a new niece; I even came *here*—all on the trust that You would bless me and my family for my service. But no, now You send me this. Where are You?”

The reply came immediately. “Elder Butler, are you beginning to count the cost of your discipleship?”

A scripture then came to mind, John 6:67. In the preceding verses, the Saviour was essentially saying to the people that He was not going to be their Saviour in the way they had hoped, that He was not going to free the Jews from their temporal captivity, rather their spiritual captivity. This was something that many of His followers could not bear to hear. In this context, the words “Will ye also go away?” were particularly poignant.

Being a member of the restored Church of Jesus Christ does not mean that we will not face trials, hardships, heartache and sorrow. It does not mean that life will be “fair”. I do not pretend to understand in every instance why. But Simon Peter’s humble reply to this question took on new meaning that day when he said:

“To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

“And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:68–69).

I successfully finished my mission, with support from leaders, home and heaven. My mother responded well to treatment, the cancer had not spread and in the next few months this particular storm will be over. Through the trials of our lives, the Lord shapes us. I am eternally thankful to Him for what He has helped me become. ■

*Sam Butler served in the Germany Frankfurt Mission from January 2015 to February 2017. He is currently in the Murray Bridge Ward in Callington, South Australia.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF KELLY HUIH



**Sam Butler (left) with his companion Elder Uhlig in Frankfurt, Germany**