

NEW ZEALAND 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.”¹ 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.”² 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.³ 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.”⁴ Ezekiel was given the charge to be a “watchman unto the house of Israel . . . and give them warning from me.”⁵ Samuel the Lamanite prophesied “whatsoever things should come into his heart”⁶ and admonished the Nephites that “nothing can save this people save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁷ Joseph Smith was commanded to “preach naught but repentance.”⁸

We know that God “is the same yesterday, today, and forever”⁹ 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.”¹⁰

The invitation to change is extended with the first and second great commandments¹¹ 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.”¹²
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.”¹³
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.”¹⁴

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.”¹⁵ 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"¹⁶ 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.

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.

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

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 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

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.

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.

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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.

“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. ■



←
President Eyring greets the labour missionaries.



↑
President Eyring addresses the Hamilton Saints.

→
President Eyring addresses the labour missionaries.



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Family Occasion for Mum and Sisters

By Shilo Kino

It was a family occasion they won't forget anytime soon.

Sisters Yasmin Sadler and Ysatis Leafa and their mum, Soraya Barker, were among the 200 Hamilton Saints who performed at the cultural celebration on June 16 in Temple View, Hamilton.

The trio has spent 30 years of their life in Temple View and have performed on numerous occasions, including for weddings, funerals and even the closing of Church College.

But Friday night's performance might have just been their biggest yet, performing in front of 1,000 guests, including President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, and Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The video of the event has also been

viewed by thousands of people throughout the world.

"It was special because I was making history with my family," Yasmin, 26, said. "As well as to be in front of President Eyring. It was amazing; he was smiling hard out. . . . It just felt warm seeing him there. I felt so close to my Heavenly Father and my Saviour."

The cultural celebrations were held on the eve of the dedication and opening of four renovated buildings in Temple View, which includes the Matthew Cowley Pacific Church History Centre and Museum, and the completion of the new David O. McKay Stake and Cultural Events Centre.

"It was really emotional for me," Ysatis, 24, said. "We all went to Church College, and it brought back memories of our school. It was lovely



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Sisters Yasmin Sadler and Ysatis Leafa and their mum, Soraya Barker, were among the 200 Hamilton Saints who performed at the cultural celebration.

for President Eyring to be there. It made it even more emotional."

Bishop Dean M. Davies, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and the Pacific Area Presidency—Elders O. Vincent Haleck, S. Gifford Nielsen and Craig A. Cardon, General Authority Seventies—were also in attendance.

Music runs in the Barker family's genes. Dad Gary usually performs with



The Samoan, Tongan and Cook Island cultures were also on display.



President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, was a guest at the cultural celebrations in Hamilton.

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the family but was given babysitting duties for the night. Mum Soraya plays the piano and performs in a band. She also helped write the finale song for the event.

“The Korowai O Rawiri,” or “The Cloak of David,” was inspired by the prayer offered by President David O. McKay at the dedication of the temple in 1958.

Yasmin and Ysatis Leafa are proud to be Māori. They speak fluent te reo Māori and hope President Eyring was able to feel their love for their culture.

“I love performing with my mum and my sister,” Ysatis said. “For me, church always comes first, but I hope President Eyring was able to see how we fit our Māori culture into the gospel. And I hope everyone enjoyed it and felt the Spirit. I sure did.”

The Māori culture was not the only culture on display that night. There were also Samoan, Tongan, Hawaiian and Cook Island performances.

Elder Andersen spoke to the audience, on behalf of President Eyring. He said they would never forget being there.

“We are thankful for this most unique and special place upon this earth, and we leave our blessing upon you and upon this special place. The great spirit of the past—of the school and the labour missionaries and all the good that’s found before you—will bring to you and bring to those who live in this area a spirit of the holy house of the Lord.” ■

Dave’s giant painting of the Saviour in the Pacific is now on display at the Matthew Cowley Pacific Church History Centre and Museum.

SHILO KINO



The Artist Behind the Painting

By Shilo Kino

A picture speaks a thousand words. The giant painting of Jesus Christ now on display at the Matthew Cowley Pacific Church History Centre and Museum does just that.

Christ is depicted on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, surrounded by children who are Maori, Samoan, Tongan, Melanesian Cook Island and “Palagi”.

“I hope that when people see this painting, they will see what the Saviour is all about,” artist Dave Sotogi said. “No matter where you’re from, no matter what culture you are or your ethnic background, He is the Saviour of the world.”

New Zealander Dave Sotogi, who is half-Samoan, has been painting professionally for 15 years. He has artwork in galleries across the country and has painted for New Zealand celebrities, including Sir Graham Henry, Valerie Adams and Natasha Beddingfield.

The Christ painting is the first work he has done for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“When they told me the theme would be the Saviour in the Pacific, I saw the idea straightaway,” he said. “I wanted to have all the ancient vessels, such as the waka, the Vaka and the double-hulled ones that Hawaiians use, in the painting.

You see the vessels coming into the bay because they knew Jesus was there. But it is the kids who got there first.”

The painting took him around four months to finish. David’s father, Fiu, was also one of the labour missionaries who helped build the temple and chapels in Temple View.

Pacific Church history advisers Tina and Lindsay Dil said the painting symbolizes people coming unto Christ in the Pacific area.

“Although they are little children, symbolically, we are children of God and we are all coming unto Christ. It sums up the message of the Pacific Church history centre—missionaries and members coming unto Christ and establishing the Church,” Sister Dil said.

The official name of the exhibit in the museum is “Unto the Islands of the Sea: A Pacific Testimony”.

“It is a vibrant, South Pacific image of Christ as opposed to the more traditional kind of image,” Sister Dil said. “What I love about the final product is the vibrancy of colors and that it has a sort of Pacific intimacy that we can relate to as people in the Pacific.

“It has had a great public response. Everyone recognizes it as a Pacific work and people are getting photos taken in

front of it. I've seen how pleasing it is to the people."

Dave has always loved drawing and creating. He was a graphic designer for 10 years until his cousin suggested he should try painting.

"I gave it a go and just started painting more and more," he said. "Within three months, I was painting full time. It was kind of inevitable I would do this because I was always

drawing, creating and making things. It's a God-given talent."

He encourages others to pursue their dreams.

"If you love it, keep persevering. There has been ups and downs, but if that's what you want to do, keep persevering until you can produce a lot of good stuff. People from all over the world want me to paint for them and it still blows me away." ■

have gone before; the history of the land; and the way so many lives have been blessed here."

The area where the Temple View project is located is acknowledged as being part of the traditional rohe (territory) of Ngāti Māhanga. Originally known as Koromatua, this area, now called Temple View, was formally Koronga Matua nā Puhaanga—the sacred stone of Puhaanga. Puhaanga was the first Tainui child born in Aotearoa, and Māhanga was a direct descendant of Puhaanga, as are many of the Waikato tribes.

Latter-day Saint descendants of many of these neighbouring tribes over the centuries also feel a sacred connection to this Ngāti Māhanga rohe where the temple has stood since 1958.

Ngāti Māhanga left Koromatua after the Crown confiscation of lands in the 1860s and took up residence on their lands at Whatawhata, Waitetuna and other places.

The park has been built on a portion of land purchased from James Williamson and is located on the northwest corner of what was once known as Rukuhia swamp. In 1949 the Church purchased from Bert Meldrum a portion of the land originally owned by Williamson for construction of a coeducational secondary school and six years later purchased more adjacent land for the temple.

To remember and honour the contribution of the labour missionaries,

Temple View Park Honours Labour Missionaries

By Mormon Newsroom

Legacy Park provides a serene environment with trees, acres of open space, landscaped areas, lakes and walkways.

The park is one part of a larger development of the area surrounding the Church's Hamilton New Zealand Temple.

There are life-size structures (pavilions) representing the houses of the labour missionaries who constructed the temple and other buildings in the area.

Placards located in these pavilions tell the story of the land on which the park is located, the purpose of the park and the stories of some of the labour missionaries.

One placard says, "This Legacy Park further adds to feelings of serenity (associated with the adjacent Hamilton Temple) and protects the

sacredness and beauty of the temple surroundings."

It continues: "This park preserves the area's cultural and spiritual heritage and inspires quiet recreation and reverent contemplation. It encourages gratitude and respect for those who

Legacy Park pays tribute to the labour missionaries who constructed the temple and other buildings in the area.



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some of their memories are inscribed on the placards.

Hemi offered this memory: “When I was 17, my grandmother sent me to the project with my brothers and cousins. We arrived as boys—learned

skills that would set us on career and gospel paths, and left two years later not just as men, but men of God. To come to know our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ through sacrifice and service was the most precious and

valuable learning in our entire labour missionary experience.”

Joe Apiti recalled, “I spent five years on a labour mission and I still remember this as the most joyous time of my life.” ■

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 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 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. ■

SHILO KING



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.

MISSIONARY MOMENTS

A Modern-Day Miracle

By Kelly Huh

The Banbury high street was bustling with activity on Tuesday morning. Lanky students with their IDs swinging around their necks pounded the cobblestone roads whilst elderly couples grumbled about cyclists that weren't supposed to be riding through town. In amongst this were two sister missionaries, Sister Nelson and I, who were trying to talk to people about Jesus Christ.

We had had about half an hour of awkward conversations. Everyone seemed disinterested and most were in town to find food, not find Christ.

Wanting a change of scenery, we decided to walk towards the park when we caught the eye of a short, tanned woman. Her eyes were round, her expression worried. "Who is she?" I thought briefly, feeling the Spirit tell me that we needed to talk to her. Instead, we started to walk away.

"Hey!" a voice called out.

We turned around to face the short woman. I silently thanked God for the second chance.

She pointed at our name tags and explained who she was in broken English mixed with a heavy Spanish accent.

Her name was Glenys and she had been baptised in Tenerife earlier that year. She moved to England in the hope to find a better life, but her



Left to right: Sister Nelson, Sister Huh and Glenys. Sister Huh served in the England Birmingham Mission.

SUPPLIED BY KELLY HUH

current living situation was unsafe. Glenys turned to God in prayer, asking if He would make it possible for her to leave her current flat. She decided to walk through town that morning and trusted that God would provide. And that was when she recognised our badges.

Her round eyes filled with tears. She asked us if we could find a place for her to stay for two nights.

We reluctantly agreed. We couldn't deny the Spirit telling us that we needed to help her and trusted that God would find us a way.

However, our faith started to dwindle after we had called every single contact we had. There was no confirmation that she would have a place to stay and she needed it *tonight*. How would we break it to her?

Suddenly the words came out of our mouths before we could stop them.

"Glenys, go home and pack. We'll meet you here at 6pm, and we'll find you a place to stay."

What! A part of me wanted to ask for my words back and swallow them whole! We parted ways, with Glenys crying and me horrified. We headed home and decided that we would just have to call all of our contacts again.

An hour passed. Sister Nelson and I lay on our carpet floor exasperated, with only a little time left before 6pm. We were trusting God . . . where was He?

Just as these thoughts started to appear, we received a miraculous phone call from a member that quashed our fears.

"Yeah, I'm going through Banbury anyway. We can pick her up in town. No problem."

We then received a text from an investigator who also said she could take her in.

Not one but *two* people had offered their homes. It was a real-life, modern-day miracle.

We went to meet Glenys in town and there she was beaming. And crying. She proudly held her baptismal certificate protected by a loose-leaf clear file, and in the other hand her Libro de Mormón. Suitcases were behind her.

The sun started to set, the Banbury sky now a hazy pink. The high street was almost silent, apart from three sisters chatting away while they waited for their heroes. ■

Kelly Huh served in the England Birmingham Mission from June 2015 to December 2016. She is currently studying at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.