

# AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Reflections on Africa

By Elder Vern P. Stanfill

Former Second Counselor in the Africa West Area Presidency

Recently, upon returning home for the April general conference, it was determined that Sister Stanfill and I would be reassigned to Church headquarters. It was a sudden and unexpected reassignment. We fully anticipated returning to Africa to continue our work and associations with people that we had come to love so dearly. Since general conference, we have had the opportunity to settle and spend time with our family. It has also given us time to reflect upon our remarkable time spent in Africa with the African Saints.

We have thought much about what we learned not only about Africa and its wonderful people but also about

the Savior's love for all of Heavenly Father's children. We watched as thousands across the area developed faith, repented, and were baptized into the Lord's Church.

We watched faithful missionaries seek out and teach those sincere in heart and mind. We watched families come to the temple to receive sacred ordinances of exaltation for themselves and for their kindred dead. One of my favorite sights from my office window overlooking the entrance of the temple was the families who, having completed their temple work, came out to have their photographs taken on their memorable day. They were so happy.



Vern P. Stanfill

We learned that Africa and its beautiful people, while unique in many ways, are just the same as faithful, sincere, people all over the world. I felt a strong kinship develop with the Saints and came to understand more than ever before the eternal nature of our relationships. Sister Stanfill and I felt at home with and loved by our African brothers and sisters. We love you and pray for you. We have felt your prayers and are grateful to you.

As we look forward, we encourage you to follow the direction of the Area Presidency to follow the admonition in Doctrine and Covenants 84:106. Seek out those who need help. Find someone to bring into the waters of baptism, find someone to take to church, find someone to bring to the temple.

The Lord promises us great joy as we become His partners in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of men. We never know what effect our efforts will have on generations to come. Entire families, villages, even cities may come to know the Savior because of a simple invitation that we extend to others. We can only be sure that if we do nothing, we will not receive the blessings and joy of being involved in this work.

I am quite sure that the Savior will find a way to have the work done.



## By Small and Simple Things

By Liz Liljenquist

Senior Missionary

*“Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6)*

### Part 1

Little did Diane Balch know that the day she pinned the small slips of paper with a message of love and her address to the quilts she had made for the people in Korea would be the first step in bringing hundreds of people the truth of the restored gospel in Africa. During the fall of 1997, the communities of Blanding and Monticello, Utah, USA, set a goal to make 1,000 quilts for the LDS Humanitarian Center to send to Korea, where there had been a severe famine for several years. Diane’s ward enthusiastically joined in the effort and made over 100 quilts to contribute. As she tells it, “As a last-minute idea before I turned the quilts over to the Church, I decided it might be fun to attach a label with my name and address to see if I would get a response, but [I didn’t really expect one]. My son-in-law served a mission in Korea, so I decided to attach a tag in English and Korean that read, ‘This quilt is made

*The Lord promises us great joy as we become His partners in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of men.*

The real question is, do we want to participate? The Savior makes it clear that He is willing to share His sacred title in this work with us. He makes it clear that He expects us to accept a role in the salvation of others. (See D&C 103:9–10.)

Exciting things are happening in the heart of Africa from Nigeria to Senegal; the Lord is opening the hearts and minds of people who are coming into the fold.

The Area Presidency is feeling and watching the hand of the Lord in this work. Countless times while meeting with these great inspired men, we would feel a oneness as it became apparent what the Lord wanted us to do. While the world seems to stumble around us, we must have faith that our Heavenly Father is pressing His work forward. For those whose faith continues to grow, the challenges that we face should be no surprise.

The adversary becomes enraged as he sees the Savior’s work progressing. He will do everything he can to stop the spread of the gospel across this continent. One should expect great evil and destruction in the hearts and

minds of men. Yet we also should take great joy in knowing the end of the story. Nothing can inhibit this great work.

I am reminded of the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he said: “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear; till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

We can look forward to that day when the work will be finished in Africa, America, Europe, India, and throughout the world. While Satan may rage upon the land, it is of no consequence to this work. His only power will be upon those who allow it.

Dear brothers and sisters, God be with you until we meet again. We love you. I bear a humble but bold testimony that God lives, that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. I know that we will gather at His feet one day. I anticipate and look forward to this great day with you. May God bless you! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

for you with our love.’ I then put my name and address on the paper and attached it with a small safety pin to the corner of each quilt.” After several weeks, the Relief Society sisters saw photos of President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, handing out the quilts in Korea.

About a year later, over 6,900 miles (11,000 km) away, in the town of Nkawkaw, Ghana, Jonathan Amankwah, age 14, was with his family sorting through some secondhand clothing a neighbor had brought for them to sell. Jonathan came across a piece of paper pinned to a lace scarf. Having had a longtime wish to have a pen pal in a foreign country, he was delighted to see a name and address from someone in the USA written on one side. On the other side, there were some Asian characters and the words “This quilt is made for you with our love.” Encouraged by his father, Augustine, a school headmaster and teacher, Jonathan went home and wrote to Diane Balch, who lived in a faraway place called Blanding, Utah. Thus began a long-distance friendship that would change not only Jonathan’s life, but also the lives of his family and many, many others.

When Sister Balch received the letter from Jonathan, she couldn’t imagine how one of her quilts had found its way to the town of Nkawkaw, Ghana. She had seen photos of the



*Diane and Calvin Balch*



*Letters from Diane Balch*

quilts being delivered in Korea by Elder Nelson—so how had her note ended up in Africa? And how had the note she had pinned to a quilt become attached to a lace scarf? Sister Balch quickly responded to Jonathan’s letter and asked him if he was familiar with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Jonathan, who lived with his parents and three of his seven brothers and sisters, had never heard of the Church. They continued corresponding. She told him about her life and sent his family a Book of Mormon.

Diane wrote, “Jonathan was very interested in learning about our

Church, so I would tell him about our Church and bear my testimony in every letter I sent. I told him how our Church came to be organized, about Joseph Smith, eternal marriage, organizations within our Church, about our latter-day prophet, etc. Occasionally there would be an article in the *Ensign* or *Church News* about Ghana, and I would send him a copy of the article.”

She tried everything she could think of to arrange for missionaries to visit the Amankwah family, including contacting the missionary department, but she never received





*The first baptism of Nkawkaw Saints in October 16 2004—left to right: Samuel, Frederick, Gina Amankwah, Elder Ange, Mormon Owusu, Sandra Koufie, Augustine Amankwah, Jennifer and Mercy Owusu, Doris Boakye, an investigator, Mercy, Grace, and Jonathan Amankwah.*

a response. The years went by. The relationship between Diane and Calvin (her husband) and the Amankwah family grew. Through their correspondence, Brother and Sister Balch came to know and love each member of the Amankwah family and learned much about their life in Ghana. Diane and Calvin occasionally sent small, thoughtful gifts that touched the Amankwahs deeply.

Augustine later related that he was amazed by the Balches' kindness. "Why is it that these people, who don't even know us, love us so? I didn't know that people like this are still on this earth. So, I thought, let's enquire—which church was it that they attended?"

In 2003, the new Accra Ghana Temple was completed. Diane hoped that attending the open house held in

the weeks previous to the dedication would be the perfect opportunity for the Amankwah family to finally contact the Church. Unfortunately, they didn't receive the letter encouraging them to attend until after the open house had ended and the dedication completed. ■

*The second part of this article will be published in the December issue of the Liahona local pages.*

## LOCAL NEWS

## Church Continues Steady Growth in West Africa

Adapted from Mormon Newsroom, Ghana

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently organized the Kissy Sierra Leone Stake. This was the 79th stake created in West Africa since the Church was first introduced in 1978.

Hundreds of Latter-day Saints and their leaders gathered on June 18, 2017, to participate in the organization of the new stake. This historic meeting was presided over by Elder Marcus B. Nash, First Counselor in the Africa West Area Presidency. He was accompanied by Elder Idyo Raymond Egbo, an Area Seventy newly appointed to that office on April 1, 2017.

During the meeting, Idrissa Turay was named as president of the Kissy Sierra Leone Stake. The other members of the new stake presidency include James E. Diawo as First Counselor and Augustine Moseray as Second Counselor.

President Turay shared his personal feelings about the gospel of Jesus Christ with firmness. He also told members of the new stake, “My dear brothers and sisters, we are not called only to be leaders of this stake, we are called to be your servants. We are here to serve each of you with love, devotion, and faith.”

During his remarks, Elder Nash elaborated on the calling (or assigning) of leaders in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He drew an example

from the holy scriptures of how Samuel was called as a leader from among the people (see 1 Samuel 3). Elder Nash emphasized the message that spiritual leaders are called of God.

“I want you all to know that we followed the exact protocol that was

used anciently,” said Elder Nash. “Elder Egbo and I prayed and asked God to know who among all those that have been interviewed was to be chosen to serve now. I testify that God has called these brothers to serve you.” ■



▲ *Elder Egbo (far left) and Elder Nash (center) with the newly called Kissy Stake Presidency.*

▼ *Members of the Kissy Choir*







**Would-Be Members**  
Through reading the Book of Mormon, Raphael Abiam Frank Mensah was converted. He shared his conversion with others including Joseph William Billy Johnson. Together they continued to share the message and created congregations of would-be members.

**1960's**  
**Revelation on the Priesthood**  
On 8 June 1978, Spencer W. Kimball, president of the Church announced, [The Lord] has heard our prayers and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood... without regard for race or color.

**1969**  
**Registration of the Church**  
Although not authorized from the headquarters of the Church, local leaders, A.F.K. Mensah, J.W.B. Johnson, C. Oskwe, E.G. Eiegbah and E.F.K. Hughton, applied for and received registration on 2 July 1969.

**1978**  
**First Baptisms**  
On 9 December 1978 Abraham Frank Mensah was the first of 125 people to be baptized into the Church. Within a week, the membership had grown to 249 people.

**1978**  
**First Branch**  
On the day following the first baptisms, the first branch was created in Cape Coast with Joseph William Billy Johnson as branch president.

**1978**  
**First Official Visit**  
In August 1978, Merrill J. Bateman and Edmund Q. Cannon arrived in Ghana on a fact-finding trip.

**1978**  
**Dedication of Ghana**  
David B. Haight, of the Quorum of the Twelve, the first apostle to visit Ghana, dedicated and blessed the land on 4 June 1983.

**1978**  
**First Mission**  
The Africa West Mission, including Ghana and Nigeria, was organized on 1 July 1980, with Bryan Espenschel as president.

**1980**  
**Early Ghanaian Missionaries**  
Missionaries, Samuel Bainson and Crosby Sampson-Devis, called to serve in the England Manchester Mission. Pictured with Spencer W. Kimball, Church President.

**1981**  
**First Meetinghouse Dedicated in Ghana**  
Neal A. Maxwell, of the Quorum of the Twelve, dedicated the first meetinghouse in Ota, Cape Coast, Ghana.

**1985**  
**Ghana Accra Mission Created**  
On 1 July 1985, the Ghana Accra Mission was organized from the Africa West Mission. The first president was Miles H. Cunningham.

**1985**  
**First Stake**  
On 21 April 1991, two stakes were formed: Boyd K. Packard, of the Quorum of the Twelve, created the Accra Ghana Stake, with Emmanuel Ohene-Opare as president. James E. Faust, also of the Quorum of the Twelve, created the Cape Coast Ghana Stake, with Kwaku Prah Charley as the president.

**1989-1990**  
**The Freeze**  
The government forbade all Church operations from June 1989. Members met in their homes in groups of two or three families in accordance with the law. In November 1990, the ban was lifted after the government was satisfied that the Church taught obedience to government laws and racial harmony.

**1983**  
**Prophet Visits and Selects Temple Site**  
Church President Gordon B. Hinckley selected a site for the temple during his visit to the country. The same day, to a gathering of 6,700 members, Hinckley announced the first temple in West Africa would be built in Ghana.

**1993**  
**General Authority Visits**  
In May 1993, Gordon B. Hinckley, of the First Presidency of the Church, visited. During one meeting, Hinckley asked the leaders to move some of the chairs to leave an empty space. During Hinckley's talk a heavy lamp from the chandelier dropped onto the spot.

**2001**  
**Temple Groundbreaking**  
On the 16th of November 2001, the groundbreaking was held with Russel M. Nelson, of the Quorum of the Twelve, presiding. Also in attendance was Ghana's vice president, the Honorable Ahaia Mahama.

**2002**  
**Ghana Accra West Mission Created**  
A fourth mission, the Ghana Accra West Mission, was created in July of 2013 from the Ghana Accra Mission with Norman C. Hill as the first president.

**2002**  
**Ghanaian MTC**  
Dedication services were held for the first African Missionary Training Centre in May 2002. It was dedicated by H. Bruce Stucki, president of the Africa West Area. The first president of the centre was Stephen M. Hadley.

**2005**  
**Ghana Cape Coast Mission Created**  
The Ghana Cape Coast Mission was organized 1 July 2005. It included part of Ghana as well as Benin, Togo, Cameroon and Central African Republic. At the same time the Ghana Accra Mission gained Liberia and Sierra Leone.

**2005**  
**Twi Translation of the Book of Mormon**

**2007-2008**  
**Missions Realigned**  
As new missions were created in the surrounding countries the missions in Ghana were realigned to fit within the boundaries of Ghana.

**2002**  
**President of Ghana Visits Church Headquarters**  
President John Kufor visited Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA and visited with the First Presidency where he expressed appreciation for the Church's contributions to his country.

**2004**  
**Church President Visits Ghana and Dedicates the New Temple**  
In January of 2004, Gordon B. Hinckley, president of the Church, visited Ghana and dedicated the temple. After the dedication Hinckley visited with Ghanaian President John Kufor and, at Kufor's request, offered a prayer.

**2005**  
**Ghanaian Temple President**  
The first native born Ghanaian temple president and matron were George Bondzo Aful and his wife, Victoria Beatrice Dampson Aful.

**2012**  
**Ghana Accra West Mission Created**  
A fourth mission, the Ghana Accra West Mission, was created in July of 2013 from the Ghana Accra Mission with Norman C. Hill as the first president.

**2013**  
**Twelve Translation of the Book of Mormon**

**2012**  
**Three Stakes on the Same Day**  
On the 22nd of April 2012, three stakes were created, the Accra Ghana Kaneshie Stake with Isaac Kobina Mensah as president, the Accra Ghana Kasoa Stake with Johnny Oman Badoo as president and the Accra Ghana Tesano Stake with Daniel Ankonu Aboe as president.

**2012**  
**Ghana Kumasi Mission Created**  
A third mission, the Ghana Kumasi Mission was created in July of 2012 from the Ghana Accra Mission with Leon A. Holmes as the first president.

**2016**  
**10th Annual All Africa Helping Hands Day**  
Members in Ghana donated over 40,000 hours of community service to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the All Africa Helping Hands service project on 20 August 2016.

**2016**  
**Membership Milestone**  
At the beginning of 2017 there were over 70,000 members in Ghana.

**2017**  
**LDS Charities Humanitarian Efforts**  
Nyagbo Falls now has clean water after a lot of hard work and some donations by LDS Charities. This was one of 18 boreholes dug in the Akatsi South District Assembly.

YOUNG SINGLE ADULT EVENTS

# Mpintsin and Takoradi Ghana Stake Leaders Meet for Area YSA Training

Many young single adults' (YSA) lives are being blessed as ward and branch YSA Sunday Schools and weekly family home evenings are being held in the Africa West Area. Recently the Mpintsin Stake presidency, bishoprics, and stake

YSA committee met for a Saturday midday training session to receive more direction and information for implementation. The Takoradi Stake presidency, bishoprics, and stake YSA committee met the next day after the block meetings for a similar

training meeting. The young single adults are very important to these two stakes. It was very apparent by how well each meeting was attended. The participation was also impressive with a renewed effort to focus both on the active and less-active YSAs. Details were given on how to hold a successful YSA Sunday School class as well as providing information on Monday night family home evenings that also provide a wonderful

opportunity to encourage “one take one” per the Africa West Area plan direction. A role-play was also provided by Elder and Sister Pierce, area YSA senior missionaries, on how to help YSAs feel welcome as they attend Sunday School, family home evening, and other YSA activities.

Peter Kwofie, one of the Takoradi Stake YSA representatives, mentioned that they had been holding their monthly stake YSA activities. They are currently encouraging each ward to provide a list of their YSAs so they can encourage involvement, including reaching out to their less-active members. He said that one thing he learned from this training was how YSAs should relate with each other.

At the beginning of the stake YSA committee trainings, a fun “get-to-know-you” activity was enjoyed, which helped the stake committee to know each other much better. This type of activity helps a group work much closer together with greater unity. All involved feel much more included and realize that their contributions are important. They were challenged to use these ideas in their future activities to better welcome each young single adult.

Both President Oduro-Mensah, Takoradi Stake president, and President Dzikpe, Mpintsin Stake president, gave encouragement for implementation to the bishoprics as



*Members of the Mpintsin Stake YSA Committee*



*Members of the Takoradi Stake YSA Committee*

well as their counselors who were also in attendance. Elder Matthew Davis, Area Seventy, attended each of the training sessions and commended

each group for implementing both the YSA Sunday School classes and weekly FHEs to bless the lives of the YSAs. ■





Young single adults from the Cape Coast and Christiansborg

# Accra Ghana Christiansborg Stake and Ghana Cape Coast Stake YSA Activity

By Brenda Mc-Saawa

YSA Female Representative, Christiansborg Stake

It is that one label that could be a whole lot of fun—young single adult (YSA). But the search for Cinderella or Prince Charming can also be a daunting feat. That is where YSA activities come in to brew friendships and ultimately kick-start the journey to being sealed in the temple.

With a similar purpose, YSAs in the Christiansborg and Cape Coast Stakes came together on Friday, June 30, at the Christiansborg Stake Centre.

Starting out in the temple, where all YSAs fervently hope to be sealed for time and all eternity to that special person, YSAs partook in sacred ordinances. The Spirit was felt and hearts were renewed.

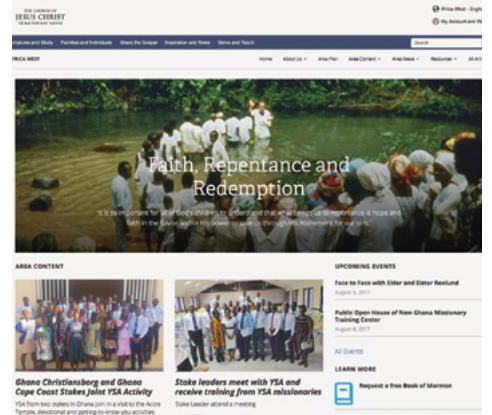
Proceeding to an afternoon devotional afterward, YSAs were

addressed by President Dennis Ocansey (Christiansborg Stake President) and Elder and Sister Pierce (the senior couple called to serve with the YSA). The importance of higher education, self-reliance, physical health, and temple marriage were reiterated. Our purpose and direction as YSAs has never been more apparent.

The date sealed off with an awesome dinner at the Christiansborg Ward later in the evening. With great food, lovely games, great dances, great people, we certainly knew the joy of having fun the Lord's way.

As to whether YSAs in the Christiansborg and Cape Coast Stakes will be dropping their YSA labels anytime soon because that wonderful person has been finally being found, we live to tell! ■

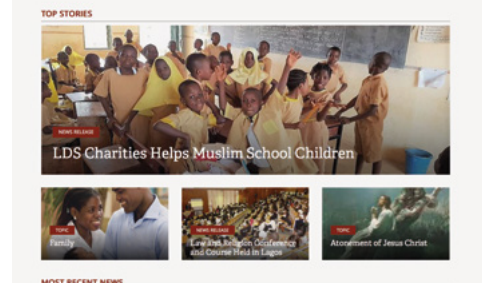
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