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.

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.

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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. ■

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

CHURCH HISTORY COLUMN

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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 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
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.
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 ancietnly,” 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
MANY young single adults’ (YSA) lives are being blessed as 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

**Young Single Adult Events**

M episodically, the YSA events that have been held include training sessions, leadership meetings, and family home even...
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 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.
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!