

ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Being a Disciple of Christ

By Elder Randy D. Funk

Asia Area President

During the month of December, Christians throughout the world celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Even in the predominantly non-Christian countries of Asia, we see displays of lights and hear “Merry Christmas” greetings. Many, however, have little knowledge of the significance of the birth, life, and ministry of the Savior of the world, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

Those of us who have come unto Christ and received the ordinance of

baptism have made a covenant “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in” (Mosiah 18:9). During this Christmas season and throughout the year, I invite you to consider your own discipleship and how you can become a better witness of our Heavenly Father and His Son.

Strive to Become More Like Christ

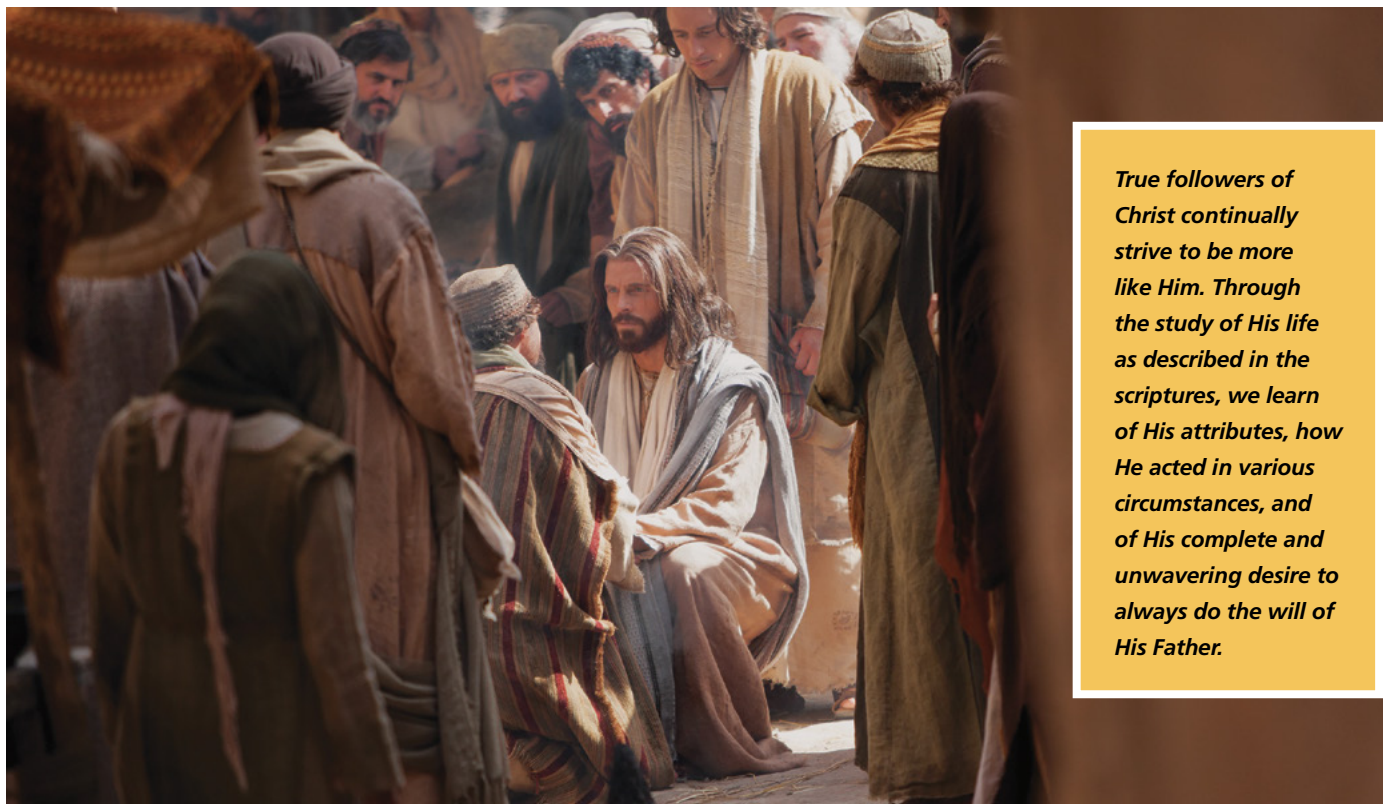
True followers of Christ continually strive to be more like Him. Through

the study of His life as described in the scriptures, we learn of His attributes, how He acted in various circumstances, and of His complete and unwavering desire to always do the will of His Father.

Jesus said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (John 14:21). Our discipleship and love for Jesus are manifest through our faithfulness in keeping His commandments. As we strive to be more like the Savior, the



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As we strive to be more like the Savior, the natural result will be a greater love for Him and a desire to do the will of the Father in all things.

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Be an Example of the Believers

When I served in India as a mission president, Sister Funk and I noticed a wonderful tradition. During the month of December, many Christians put an illuminated

star in the window of their homes or on the front of their house. It was a way of showing others during that time of the year that they were followers of Christ. It seemed to indicate that they, like the shepherds of old, had followed the star and found Jesus. In some countries and cultures in the Asia Area, it may not be appropriate to put a star in the window of our home. Wherever we live, however, the light of our faith, as reflected in our countenance and our example of goodness, can be a standard that others will be drawn to as they see us.

In latter-day scripture, we who are members of the Church are directed by the Lord: “Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations” (D&C 115:5). Our kindness, our integrity, our service will cause others to be drawn to the source of our goodness. “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

Find Joy and Feel Gratitude for the Plan of Happiness

A former senior missionary in our area seemed to always feel grateful and happy. He had some challenges with his health, but he served very well. Whenever I asked how he was doing, he responded in a way that reflected his joy. One time his response helped me understand why he was always so

happy. He said, with sincerity, “I think I must be Heavenly Father’s favorite child. He just keeps giving me more and more blessings. I don’t know why He loves me so much.”

Each of us is loved by our Heavenly Father more than we can comprehend. In our premortal life, we knew Him and loved Him. We trusted in the plan He provided for us, the central part of which is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. When Adam and Eve learned of this plan they felt great joy and taught the plan to their sons and daughters (see Moses 5:10–12). Today, we feel this same joy as we understand the plan and follow the Savior. As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, recently testified, “Those who make this world a better place, one caring and loving act at a time, and who strive to live the blessed, satisfying, and peaceable life of a disciple of Jesus Christ are those who will eventually find joy” (“A Disciple’s Life,” *Liahona*, Aug. 2017, 5).

During this Christmas season and throughout the year, may we more fully and completely give the Savior the gift He would most desire—our willingness to follow Him. As we do so, we will be a light to others, and even in times of difficulty or affliction, we will feel the peace and joy that comes from our knowledge of and trust in the great plan of happiness. ■

LOCAL PAGES

Sharing the Joys of Christmas

Convent Road Ward, Bengaluru Stake, Primary and Young Men share their experiences.

Tanya

**Christmas**

Christmas is a festival of joy and happiness. During Christmas I remember the birth of Jesus Christ and what He did for us. During this time of Christmas, we should share our things and God's words to those who don't know Him. *(Tanya S., age 7)*

Rachel

**Christmas Joy**

We celebrate Christmas on December 25th to remember the birth of Jesus Christ. We get gifts on Christmas. I love receiving gifts. We make sweets and cake. We enjoy the Christmas day and week with our family, friends, neighbors, and relatives. We decorate our house with cribs, a Christmas tree, etc.

Christmas brings joy and happiness. The main reason for Christmas joy is the birth of Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and Redeemer.

I enjoy Christmas. *(Rachel Ann M., age 10)*

Natalia

**Joyful Christmas**

We celebrate Christmas on December 25th. Christmas is the birthday of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We set our Christmas tree, crib, etc. We make delicious sweets and treats. We gift our families, relatives, and neighbors with Christmas love and treats. We feel the joy in us and share that joy with other people during Christmas. I believe that Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior. *(Natalia Brenda M., age 9)*

Yohan

**I Love Jesus Christ**

I love Jesus Christ. I love to celebrate His birthday on December 25th. I love Santa coming to my house to give me gift and treats. I also love to play with my friends and relatives during the Christmas holidays. *(Yohan K., age 9)*



Goutham

A Memorable Christmas

I enjoy Christmas. Last year I enjoyed being with my family. We had activities at the church. My brother, my sister, and my father and mother played games, and I enjoyed time with my friends. I went to my native place with my family members. *(Goutham G.)*



Natania

My Best Christmas

Christmas is my favorite festival because we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is celebrated on December 25th. I love the part when my family and me set the Christmas tree and crib. I also like it when we distribute cookies, cakes, and chocolates to our neighbors and relatives.

Christmas is wonderful. One of the greatest joys in the world is the birth of Jesus Christ. We enjoy a lot, laugh a lot, dance and sing a lot. We decorate our houses. I love Christmas. I hope you love it too. *(Natania Sandra M. age 11)*



Francis

My Most Memorable Christmas

My most memorable Christmas till now was in 2015. It was the first year when I went to sing

carols. I received a lot of gifts from my parents and blessing from God. I received answers to most of my questions. It was even the first year when I decorated the house on my own. And everyone liked the crib most. I had also helped the poor and needy by giving my old clothes and toys. I enjoyed Christmas with my family and friends. *(Francis Benjamin M.)* ■

Pioneer's Day Celebration

Chembukavu Hillary Paul
Chennai Third Branch

The Chennai Branch Pioneer's Day celebration was a grand one. The theme of this was "Come Follow Me." The theme had four subdivisions: "Jesus Christ is a pioneer," "Joseph Smith is a pioneer," "We are pioneers," and "Our ancestors are pioneers." There were fun activities and games conducted by Brother Praveen and Sister Divya Muthu.

The main highlight of this program was the pioneer dance, which was taught to us by Sister Ramya and Brother Alwyn. A mouthwatering treat of apples and coconut pies were served as refreshments. It was really wonderful to see all the members with their pioneer dresses, where the bonnets for the women were made by Sister Chelladurai, and the hats were made by Sister Muthu. ■



Attendees at the Pioneer Day celebration



The Atonement of Jesus Christ Can Heal Us and Help Us to Overcome Sin

By Elder Muthyam

India New Delhi Mission

“Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin” (3 Nephi 9:21).

When I read this scripture and was pondering in my heart, I understood why Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world.

As it says, He came to redeem us and to save us from sin. So when we really understand His Atonement and rely on His mercy and apply that in our lives, He will help us to go back to our Father’s kingdom.

When I was pondering about this, a question rose in my mind: “How

can I apply the healing power of the Savior’s Atonement in my life?”

As I was searching for an answer to this question, an instance from back home came into my mind.

One day back home I was using the computer. I found out that it was not working properly because it had been affected by a virus. Then I thought I should clear the virus with anti-virus software, so I plugged in my friend’s pen drive and started installing the

software. But the installation was really slow because there was not enough space for the anti-virus software. I checked the full system and found some unusual files, so I deleted them first. Then the installation was quick and I was able to clear the virus and the system was working well again.

As this experience came into my mind, I realized that as human beings we are all like the computer system and we are all having viruses from Satan due to sins. So we need a anti-virus to cleanse us, which is the Atonement, the only anti-virus that can help us. We need to install it [apply it] in our lives, but it will be hard if we don’t delete the unusual files in us such as gossiping, pride, selfishness, hatred, greed, and all kinds of unrighteous works, and put



off the natural man. Then the Savior's Atonement will be more easily and more fully applied in our lives, and we will be better prepared for the coming of Christ and overcome temptations and hard times in our lives. Then we can dwell in God's kingdom with our families and with other righteous people. As I learned this lesson on my mission, I am now able to feel that in my life and be able to love the people that I am serving. I was able to get answers to my question. And I realized that our true understanding of the Atonement comes not only by praying and reading scriptures but by doing missionary work. So my desire to share the gospel has increased and I can see the fruits of that desire.

As the scriptures tell that Lord came into this world to bring redemption unto this world [us], here is something I learned from a training by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to the missionaries. He said, "We can take the gospel unto the hearts of the people, but we can't take it into their hearts." So it is also same with the Atonement—the Lord brings redemption unto us, but it is our responsibility to invite it into our hearts and be saved. He is inviting all of us to come unto Him and feel His Atonement.

"Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands

and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world [you]" (3 Nephi 11:14).

As He is inviting all of us to come and feel His atoning power, let us all put off the natural man and go and feel that precious gift that Heavenly Father has given us.

I know that God and the Savior Jesus Christ live and that They love us, and I know that Jesus Christ died for all of us that we might use the Atonement and gain eternal life. I know the missionary work that I am doing is true, and I know these things are true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

The Joy of Missionary Service

By **Shilpa Padmakumar**

Chennai Third Branch

I was in India Bangalore Mission for 18 months to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. As I look back, I feel greatly blessed. I know that Heavenly Father loves all of His children. I know that Heavenly Father prepares the hearts of many families, brothers, and sisters to listen to the fulness of the gospel. Through faith in Jesus Christ, I could succeed on my mission.

I remember families who received happiness and a firm testimony all because of their receiving the restored gospel in their lives. I love the scriptures, for they give strength to accomplish sharing the gospel through love. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8 says, “And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care.”

Through the power of the Holy Ghost, I felt very confident in the Savior’s promise—those who follow Him shall be filled with light and there shall be no darkness in them. I realize that there were ups and downs, but they were really needed to become strong and to press forward. When I could feel His love for me, I felt so close to the Lord.

Through my personal prayers, I was able to receive true happiness

while serving my Heavenly Father. I enjoyed sharing the light with others; I know that when we read the scriptures with love, we can receive directions to find ways to share the gospel. I know that there is nothing more important than living the gospel. This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, amen. ■



Sister Padmakumar

Chennai District Open House

By **Zita Paul**

Chennai Third Branch

According to me, the word *open house* resonates the scripture verses in Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16: “And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!”

During the open house, that special morning filled the members’ hearts with enthusiasm to the extent that they started peeping outside the window looking out for people to enter in. This really added meaning to my life.

This open house was well organized and all the programs went in an orderly manner. I was given an assignment, along with Brother Nikhil and Sister Shyamala, to teach people about family history and temple work. God’s revelation given to the prophet, which applies to this open house, is even if one soul is converted to Christ as a result of this open house, it is really worth.



Zita Paul

I am so happy to know the gospel, to have enjoyed and feasted on this gospel. I yearn for many more souls to come unto God. People who have so much of trouble and feel lonely need this great happiness and blessing, hence how many more open houses are being organized. It's indeed worthwhile. ■

A8 Liahona

BYU-Pathway Worldwide

On February 7, 2017, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced the creation of a new organization within the Church Educational System (CES) called BYU-Pathway Worldwide, with the current PathwayConnect program (formerly called Pathway) being one of its core programs. The institution will also have responsibility for all online certificate and degree programs offered by the Church Educational System (CES).

PathwayConnect

PathwayConnect is a low-cost educational opportunity that combines online courses with local gatherings. Participants gain valuable skills that will serve them throughout their lives and in pursuing a college degree. As a program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, students will also receive the spiritual benefits of a gospel-incorporated education. Successful

completion of PathwayConnect allows students the opportunity to pursue a BYU-Idaho degree online.

PathwayConnect, India, had its first semester closing ceremony. Pathway started offering its courses to the Bengaluru Stake members in India. Pathway courses will be made available to other stakes and districts in India at a later time.

Bengaluru Stake president, president Sunderraj, pursued to get these courses started in Bengaluru. His efforts proved successful as Brother Joenee Briones, Pathway area manager for Asia, made open the Pathway Connect to members of the stake in June 2017. There were a total of about 40 who enrolled in the program. The winter semester will begin in January 2018.

PathwayConnect offers courses that will help students gain better employment, increase their earnings, or make advancements in their career. ■

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