

Australia Local Pages

The Value of a Returned Missionary

By **Elder Kevin W. Pearson**

First Counsellor in the Area Presidency

Over 56,000 strong, the missionaries are a force for good in the world. Through their efforts thousands of new converts come into the Church every year. Missionaries provide invaluable service to the Church and to people the world over.

But what is the value of a returned missionary to the Church? And why is it so important that the youth of the Church serve full-time missions? The answers to these questions provide a powerful case for parents, priesthood leaders and youth to significantly increase the number of young men and women serving full-time missions. Preparing more faithful missionaries is how real growth happens in the Church. It is evidenced not only by the number of new converts that result from their service, but also by the impact the mission experience makes on each missionary; it positively shapes the rest of his or her life.

To qualify for full-time missionary service, a young man or woman must prepare spiritually,

emotionally, physically and mentally. Faithfully serving a mission develops deeper personal understanding of the doctrines and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and provides a strong foundation for lasting conversion to the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Missionary service typically leads to temple marriage and the establishment of loving eternal family relationships. Couples sealed in the temple place greater importance on eternal families. They tend to have more children, and those children are more likely to become faithful adult members in the Church.

Consider this important point: a young man who faithfully serves a mission will likely marry in the temple and raise a righteous family. His children, and their children, will also likely grow up to be active, faithful members of the Church. In three generations that young returned missionary's posterity will probably account for over 18 active adult tithe-paying



Elder Kevin W. Pearson

members. By tragic contrast, a young man who does not serve a mission will likely not have the same opportunity to learn and embrace the gospel principles. He is more likely to become less-active; possibly may not receive the Melchizedek Priesthood or the blessings of temple marriage. Sadly, his family is less likely to be active in the Church, and if that occurs, in three generations his posterity will account for less than one active member. This is a sobering example of the value of a returned missionary.

However, preparing more faithful missionaries will do much to save the rising

generations of the Church.

Missionary work is much more than growing the Church through new convert baptisms. It is how we successfully prepare faithful, dedicated fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, and future Church leaders. Some 75 percent of all stake presidents and 66 percent of all bishops and elders quorum presidencies are returned missionaries. There is no better training ground for future Church leadership, at every level, than a full-time mission.

Faithful children mostly come from faithful parents striving to live the principles of the gospel in their home. The most important things parents can do is to make and keep sacred covenants and strive to raise their children in truth and righteousness.

However, there are many difficult challenges facing parents and families. Even faithful parents have children who struggle, notwithstanding their efforts. Extraordinary young men and women can come from homes and families struggling to live the gospel. Some will return and embrace the gospel later in life through the faith and prayers of parents and others. Still—the gospel of Jesus Christ blesses families.

All families experience challenges in raising righteous children and need the support of loving and caring priesthood and auxiliary leaders. The Church provides the organization and means for teaching the gospel. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders, including teachers, can assist individuals and families by teaching and testifying of the pure doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They strengthen individuals and families in their efforts to keep their sacred covenants and provide counsel, support and opportunities for service.

How can priesthood and auxiliary leaders support the efforts of parents in raising righteous sons and daughters who are worthy, prepared and willing to serve full-time missions?

- Have frequent interviews with priesthood leaders. A wise bishop will make sure this happens early, and often.
- Ordain every young man at the appropriate age. Active participation in the Aaronic Priesthood is the best way to prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood and missionary service.
- Encourage all young men and young women to complete their secondary education.

There is a clear relationship between education and missionary preparation. Education is a sacred duty; it prepares our youth for successful missionary service and to be self-reliant parents.

- Encourage every young man to achieve the Duty to God Award and every young woman to achieve the Personal Progress Award. This is how we establish testimony, personal growth, and service in our youth. They develop faith by doing.
- Encourage every young man and woman to attend and complete seminary. Seminary helps our youth learn to love the scriptures, understand the doctrines and become fully converted, and recognize the importance of the Holy Ghost in their lives.
- Encourage all young men and young women to attend Missionary Preparation classes—even if serving a mission is not a near-term goal, it will still greatly enhance their spiritual development.

As we instill within our young men and women, at an early age, a vision of the great privilege they have to serve, and the marvelous blessings which

result from missionary service, we help them chart the course for the most important decisions in their lives.

The words of the Lord to John and Peter Whitmer also apply to each of us, and especially to the young men and women of the Church: “And now, behold I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” (D&C 15:6; 16:6).

A mission experience will prove priceless to them, and to their future families. “The worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). Serving a mission is how we save our youth—and how they save their own souls. It is one of the many mighty miracles and tender mercies that evidence our Heavenly Father’s perfect plan of happiness. As we work and strive and pray to help each of our young men and women prepare to serve a full-time mission, we are truly growing the Church and preparing a righteous generation for service in the home and in the Church. The value of a returned missionary who is truly converted is priceless. ■



IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COWAN

Jean McDowall and her Relief Society counsellor Marion Jones.

A Lifetime of Service Continues

By David Cowan

Jean McDowall is an outstanding woman in the community who values the opportunity to serve. At 85 she has macular degeneration and is legally blind, but she faithfully serves as the Warrnambool Branch Relief Society president in South Western Victoria, and is ably assisted by her two counsellors—Marion Jones, who is herself over 70, and Valerie Dearden, who is a service missionary in Warrnambool.

The *Warrnambool News* recently reported on Sister McDowall’s Church service. She became a member of the Church in 1963, in Perth, and said it changed her life completely for the better. At the time she had friends from many different denominations, but she was seeking to know the truth. She found it in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. She said, “The teachings of the Church gave a heightened purpose and direction in my life, as well as giving me opportunities to develop new skills and share talents.”

Sister McDowall used to enjoy art and painted many pieces; she also wrote a book. One of her

cherished memories is of attending general conference in Salt Lake City.

In 1972 she was sealed in the New Zealand Temple to her first husband, Keith Jackson. They served six missions together within Australia and in the Philippines. One of those missions was to Ozamiz City, on the island of Mindanao, southern Philippines, where they provided leadership

training to the local members. “I learnt about another side of people . . . who are anxious to learn about Jesus Christ.” she said. While Brother and Sister Jackson were serving a temple mission in Sydney in 2000, Brother Jackson passed away.

Sister McDowall met and married Keith McDowall last year. Both continue to diligently serve the Lord to the best of their abilities. ■

Sculptor Inspired to Enter International Art Competition

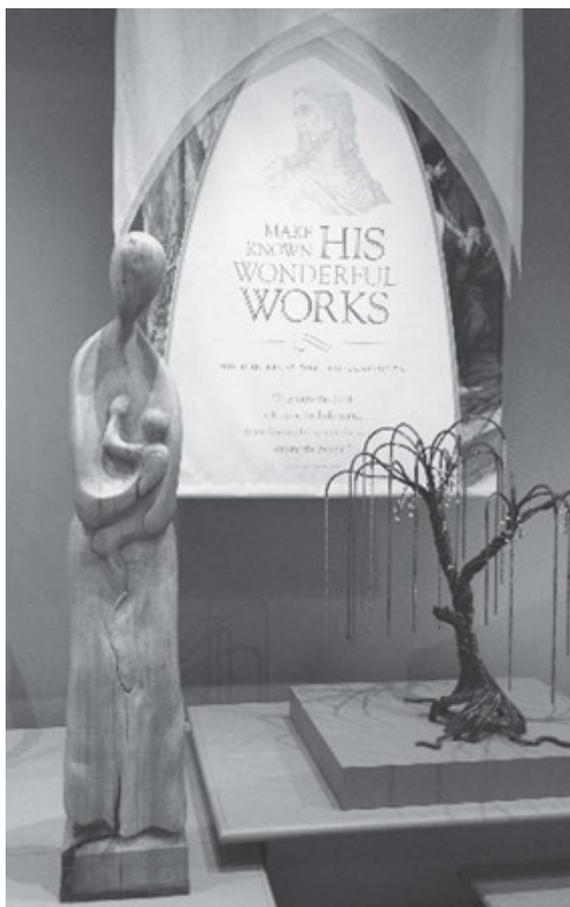


IMAGE COURTESY OF DAN POTTENBERGER

Jim Turner's sculpture is on display at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, at the Ninth International Art Competition of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A seven-foot-tall (2.1 m) wood sculpture of a mother with her child, weighing over 150 kgs (330 lbs.) and carved by Jim Turner from Penrith Australia Stake, was flown to the USA from Sydney in late December 2011. It was selected for inclusion in the Ninth International Art Competition of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The display, entitled “Make Known His Wonderful Works”, will remain at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah, until 14 October 2012. A total of 1,155 entries were received from Church members in 43 countries, and Brother Turner's entry was one of 198 pieces selected for the exhibit.

Brother Turner had not planned to enter the competition, but began preparations after waking from a sound sleep early in the morning on 6 June last year, having been prompted by the Spirit. He said of the vivid impression: “I was to create a sculpture of a mother with her back to the wind and her head bowed in prayer, shielding her child in her arms. It was to have a smooth finish, and be specifically for the competition.”

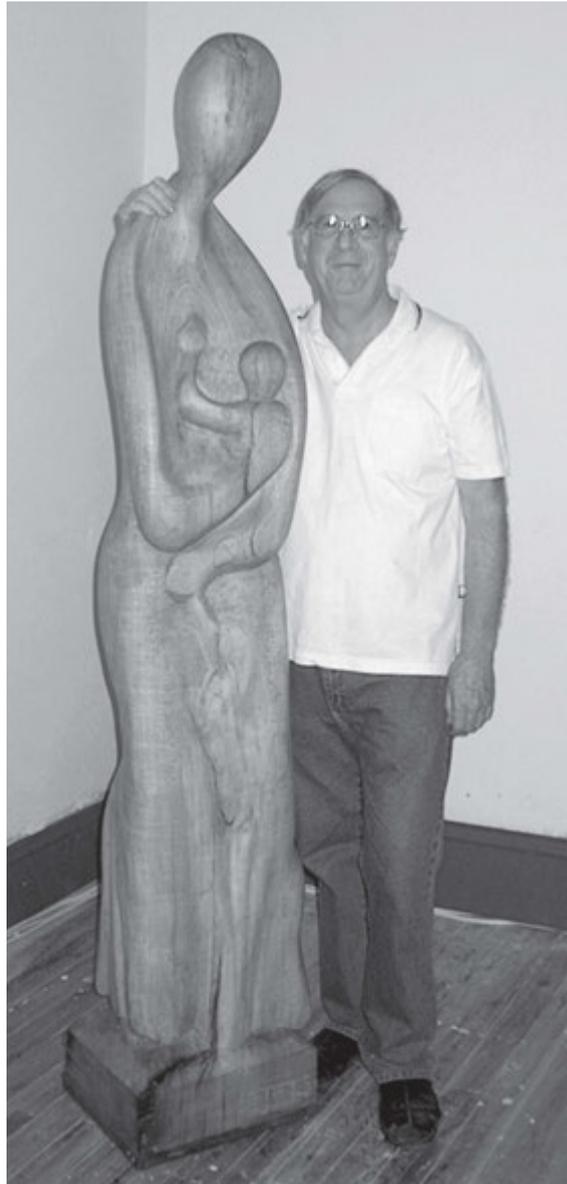
The sculpture was carved from a single piece of Southern Silky Oak. The only tools used were a one-inch flat chisel, a round wooden mallet, and sandpaper.



Jim Turner begins work on the sculpture.

“I started on August 22—the day the timber arrived,” said Brother Turner, “and finished just days before entries closed.”

For the first two weeks he could work on it only an hour or two a day. After that he worked 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week. He completed the project in just one month.



Jim Turner with his completed “Mother and Child” sculpture.

Guided by promptings of the Spirit, Brother Turner related, he was inspired to work on specific aspects of the project. He said, “The timber had a mind of its own. The sculpture was trapped inside, and I felt as though I was liberating it. A split down the front of the wood meant I had to cut

away a major part of one arm, which then created something special relating to the hands and the child. It just appeared in front of me as I carved, and it is far better than what I had felt to do.”

Once the top half was almost complete, Brother Turner felt inspired to work on the way the bottom of the dress should look. He was prompted to set up a dressmaker’s dummy, put a dress on it, and place a fan so it would blow onto the material. “I did exactly that”, he recalled, “and I could see things I had not thought of, especially about the wind blowing the bottom of the dress.”

Jim has not worked on any sculpture since 1980, and this is the first time he has entered an International Art Competition. However, he is an accomplished artist, and at his last show in 2004 he exhibited 840 watercolour paintings of Australian wildlife.

In 2011 three of his original songs won finalist status in an Australia-wide song-writing competition that attracted almost 2,500 entries. In October 2010 he was listed as a finalist in the poetry section of the Church’s 2010 Cultural Arts Submissions.

Brother Turner was born in New South Wales. He holds a Diploma in Art from Alexander Mackie CAE, which is now the University of New South Wales College of Fine Arts, as well as an Advanced Diploma in Music Industry Business with Distinction from Nirimba TAFE in NSW. He has numerous exhibition awards for his paintings, and has written and illustrated books and scientific papers. He currently serves as the Richmond Ward clerk and as a family history consultant.

He said, “I have a testimony that the Lord will provide the way and the means to accomplish whatever He asks us to do. I know I have been guided by the Spirit as I created this sculpture.” ■

Note: The Church’s next International Art Competition is themed “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus” and will culminate in 2015.

World Record Holder Overcomes Personal Challenges

By Arnold and Sue Cummins

At the age of eight, Todd Hodgetts was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome. Throughout his school years he was misunderstood and bullied mercilessly by both his schoolmates and teachers. Although he was found to have great athletic ability, Todd was unable to obtain a sports scholarship. Undeterred, he saved up for six years to pay his own way to the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra.

Now, at 24, he’s broken the F20 world shot put record and is well on the way to the

London Paralympics.

This Canberra-based sportsman has all but confirmed his place on Australia’s Paralympics team after achieving a world record for an F20 athlete during an international classification meet in Queensland at the beginning of the year. He threw 15.54 metres, which easily surpassed the previous world record of 15.16 metres.

“I am delighted to have thrown so well in front of the international classification panel” said Brother Hodgetts. “To nail a big one when it mattered most

World shot put record holder Todd Hodgetts prepares to represent Australia at the Paralympics in London.



was very satisfying, and to get the world record in the process is a big bonus. It was the best day of my life so far.”

It’s been far from plain sailing for Brother Hodgetts . As a very tall youngster with a disability, his early life in Launceston, Tasmania, was made a total misery by his schoolmates, and often by teachers as well.

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he has found inspiration from his faith to keep going, despite almost unbearable personal pressures placed upon him.

“My faith has helped a great deal” said Brother Hodgetts. “I came to realise that, no matter what challenges I was faced with, I had divine potential which would allow me to overcome any obstacle people might throw at me.” Living the Word of Wisdom also greatly helped him to hone his fitness and keep himself healthy.

Brother Hodgetts is now coached by renowned Australian throwing coach John Minns, who said: “Todd has come a long way, but it’s not over yet. We still have a lot to work on between now and the London Games. He is doing well.”

The Paralympics opening ceremony is scheduled to take place on 29 August 2012. ■

Unity among the Pollie Pedal Riders

On 25 March this year, senior politicians and other enthusiastic cyclists, including the Hon. Tony Abbott (a founder of the Pollie Pedal Charity Ride in 1998) and four riders from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints set off in the 15th Pollie Pedal

event. This event was initially started by several Australian federal and state politicians as a charity fundraiser that also enabled smaller Australian communities to meet some members of Parliament as they passed through their towns.

Almost 100 participants took place in this year’s eight-day ride, which began in Geelong and trekked around 1,000 kms through Victoria and NSW and finished in Canberra at Parliament House on 1 April. The riders travelled about 100 kms a day through towns like Carrum Downs, Sale, Warragul, Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Bombala, and Cooma.

This year The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints



Justin Coulson, Grant Innis, Alex Gomez, Tony Abbott, and Leo Gomez.

was again one of the ride’s top sponsors and hosted a dinner on Sunday night in Braeside for all the riders and their support crews. The meal and hospitality offered by the local members became the unsurpassed benchmark for the week, and the Church received repeated glowing compliments from the participants over the following days.

When asked how he felt about the Pollie Pedal event 15 years on, Tony Abbott said, “There is a strong feeling of community and friendship about the ride now. Looking around, there are politicians,

IMAGE COURTESY OF MIKE AND TERI MILNER

IMAGE COURTESY OF TODD HODGETTS



Grant Innis, Alex Gomez, Leo Gomez, and Justin Coulson all agree they would like to participate in the Pollie Pedal again.

corporate managers, sponsors and other private enterprise representatives all coming together dedicated to supporting a worthy cause.”

Latter-day Saint riders Alex and Leo Gomez, Grant Innis, and Justin Coulson all shared the feelings of friendship they enjoyed as part of the group. “Although the hardest part for me is being away from my family and loved ones, it is the close friendships we make that make it easier”, said Justin.

While joking with each other and talking about the first day of the ride, Leo, gesturing to the others in the group, said, “This is what makes it worthwhile.” While much of the interaction is friendly banter, it was apparent by the number of questions

they received about the Church that the impression made that first evening was considerable. Many of the enquiries developed into significant gospel discussions, all of which were instigated by others in a spirit of genuine interest and an appreciation for Latter-day Saint beliefs.

The introduction this year of The Good Samaritan Award by the Church was also very well received. After dinner each night the tradition of entertaining one another by reviewing the events of the day and presenting humorous awards was enhanced by the inclusion of this new prize, designed to celebrate an act of selflessness and service by a rider or volunteer. Each night the LDS riders

were approached with numerous nominations, and sponsors provided generous prizes in support.

Leo said, “It’s always an honour to represent the Church, but I don’t think I’ve ever had as much fun doing so. Putting aside the self-indulgence of the almost 1,000 kms of cycling, albeit often over some arduous terrain, it is plainly evident to all involved that this event is much more about relationships than about the bike. Pollie Pedal is akin to an annual family reunion. It is as much a privilege as it is a pleasure to be a part of.”

When asked if they would be back next year, everyone nodded. “As long as they keep inviting me, I’ll be back” said Grant.

Since the Pollie Pedal began, over \$2 million has been raised for organizations such as the Royal Flying Doctors Service, Ronald McDonald House, the Paralympic Games, and for medical research into child leukemia, diabetes, breast cancer and prostate cancer. This year the ride supported two major charities: Carers Australia, the national body representing Australia’s 2.6 million carers; and Manly Women’s Shelter, a haven for homeless women. ■