

Australia Local Pages

Hearken to the Voice of the Lord

Elder James J. Hamula

First Counsellor in the Area Presidency

The first word of the Lord's preface to His latter-day revelations to man is *hearken*.¹ *Hearken* means to listen carefully, to give due attention, to give strict heed. Indeed, the Lord makes this clear by enjoining all men—the “people of [His] church,” “people from afar,” and people “upon the islands of the sea”—to “listen together.”²

To what should we hearken? As the Apostle Paul observed, “There are . . . so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.”³ This reality of life weighed upon Joseph Smith. Referring to the many often conflicting voices of his day on the question of religion, Joseph observed: “In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?”⁴ Whether or not the question is one of religion, Joseph's questions apply to us all. To what, or to whom, should we give our ear and follow?

This question was answered when God our Father appeared to Joseph Smith. Pointing to His Son, our Father told Joseph—and through him all of us—“*This is my Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”⁵ Out of all of the many voices in this world, the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ is the one to which we must hearken. After the injunction to pray, there is probably no more frequent injunction in scripture than the injunction to hearken,⁶ listen,⁷ hear,⁸ or heed⁹ the voice of the Lord. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, set the pattern for all of us. After they found



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themselves in the lone and dreary world, they not only offered prayer unto the Lord, but they “heard the voice of the Lord” and obeyed His instructions.¹⁰

Hearkening to the voice of the Lord brings rich blessings. If we hearken to the voice of the Lord, He will be quick to answer our prayers.¹¹ We will be protected and magnified temporally.¹² We will have the mercy and compassion of the Lord.¹³ And we will be delivered from death and have our place in mortality and immortality made secure.¹⁴ Not hearkening to the voice of the Lord can only bring the opposite of such blessings.¹⁵

Where may we find the voice of the Lord so that we may follow His voice and be blessed? The Lord's voice can be found in the voice of his servants. The Lord told Joseph Smith: “This generation shall have my word through you.”¹⁶ Whether it is His voice, or the voice of His servants, “it is the same.”¹⁷ The Lord's voice may also be found in the scriptures. Referring to His revelations, the Lord has said:

“These words are not of men nor of man, but of me . . .

“For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another . . .

“Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words.”¹⁸

The Lord's voice can also be found in the spiritual impressions that come to our hearts and mind. Said He: “I speak unto you with my voice, even the voice of my Spirit,¹⁹ which is a still, small, whisper-like voice.”²⁰

I pray that all of us will earnestly strive to find more often, and follow more regularly, the voice of the Lord in our lives. Daily prayer, daily scripture study, and regular study of the words of the prophets and apostles will help us to hear His

voice. Quiet pondering and reflecting will also help us hear His voice. Following His voice will lead us through the trials and tribulations of life and into the peace and rest of eternal life.

As one who has sought and found the voice of the Lord amidst the din of the many other voices of this world, I know that there is no other voice as peaceful, and loving, and reassuring as His. I testify that the Lord's voice can be heard again and, when followed, will bring no greater blessing in this life or in the life to come. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:1.
3. 1 Corinthians 14:10.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:10.
5. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
6. Examples include Deuteronomy 28:1–2, 15; Doctrine and Covenants 1:1; 39:1, 10; 45:2; 133:16.
7. Examples include Doctrine and Covenants 27:1; 29:1; 35:1; 39:1; 45:6; 72:1.
8. Examples include Deuteronomy 4:33, 36; Isaiah 28:23; Matthew 17:5; Mosiah 26:21, 28; Doctrine and Covenants 1:11; 38:6, 22; 43:23.
9. Examples include Alma 12:9; 37:44; 3 Nephi 23:4; Doctrine and Covenants 6:2; 11:2; 12:2, 9; 14:2; 32:5; 84:43.
10. Moses 5:4; see also verses 5–6.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:7; Moses 6:52.
12. See Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 30:9–10.
13. See Deuteronomy 13:17–18.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:2; 124:45.
15. See Deuteronomy 28:15–68; Doctrine and Covenants 124:45–48.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 5:10.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; see also 68:3–4.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 18:34–36.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 97:1; see also 88:66.
20. See Helaman 5:30.

LOCAL NEWS

Julie Beck and Mary Cook Visit Pacific Area

By Christine Roberts

On 15 October 2010, to overflowing chapels of eager sisters, priesthood leaders and young women from around Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president of the Church, and Mary N. Cook, first counsellor in the Young Women general presidency, gave inspired counsel regarding the sisters and young women of the Church.

“Zion shall increase in beauty and holiness and must arise and put on her beautiful garments,” said Sister Cook as she stressed the importance of helping young women to be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants in the temples of the Lord. She instructed those present to

lead the youth by example and emphasised the importance of righteous role models to the youth. “We, as their leaders, must stress that obedience

brings blessings,” said Sister Cook.

Sister Beck noted that “the Lord’s mission statement, to bring to pass the immortality



Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, and Mary N. Cook, first counsellor in the Young Women general presidency, visited the Pacific Area in October 2010.

and eternal life of man, is a big work and . . . the Lord is dependent on us to participate in that work.” She encouraged the strong to take one who is weak to sacrament meetings and towards the temple and emphasised, “It is within all of us to do.”

Elder Callister reiterated the Area goals to “Rescue the One.” “It is hard to rescue from behind the pulpit or in the front of the classroom,” he said, and he encouraged all to leave the pulpit and the classroom and rescue the one as the prophet would have them do.

In certain areas the sisters were able to divide for more specific instruction in the Relief Society and Young Women programmes. Spiritual preparedness, councils of the Church, ministering to the one and teaching the gospel effectively all were topics of discussion.

Sister Beck and Sister Cook gave energetic and loving presentations that inspired all who listened. One sister said after the meeting, “I am so inspired and motivated! I just want to wrap them [Sister Beck and Sister Cook] up and take them back to our ward!”

It is hoped that all those who were present will take the messages back to their areas and implement the principles that were so eloquently taught that night. ■

Adelaide’s Homeless “Wrapped in Hope”

A group of South Australian Relief Society sisters recently donated 472 quilts to the Salvation Army, hoping to bring some warmth and comfort to the estimated 700 individuals who sleep outdoors or in shelters in Adelaide each night, in a project dubbed *Wrapped in Hope*.

“We wanted to reach out and comfort members of our community facing the stress and anxiety of not having a home,” said Gail Granger from Marion. “The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us to comfort those who stand in need of comfort.”

Groups of women from seven congregations, from Murray Bridge and Mount Barker in the east down to Mount Gambier and even Kangaroo Island, held workshops in their areas. These activities brought together women to knit, edge, cut and sew the quilts.

The final workshop took place



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on Saturday, 3 July 2010, where the finishing touches were given to the dozens of quilts.

Margaret Davies, Network Director for Community Support Services for the Salvation Army of South Australia, accepted the quilts on behalf of the Salvation Army. She remarked, “Some of these quilts will be a new beginning for some women who have experienced domestic violence and were forced to leave everything familiar behind. The blankets will provide hope as the women realise that other women had cared enough about them to work hard and lovingly on each quilt.” ■

South Australian Relief Society sisters made 472 quilts and donated them to the Salvation Army during their *Wrapped in Hope* project.

Volunteers Benefit Ecuador Orphanages

By Christopher Cooper

Kay MacDonald, Christine Takahashi and her daughter Brenna from Nambour Ward in Queensland recently returned from Ecuador, where they spent three weeks in Quito providing humanitarian help to Orphanage Support Services Organisation (OSSO).

“We went over as short term volunteers and spent most of our time working at the St. Vincent de Paul Orphanage in Quito,” said Sister Takahashi. “The orphanage provides care to approximately 100 children who are there for many different reasons. During our stay, three more



Kay MacDonald helps orphaned children in Ecuador.

babies were brought into the orphanage. One baby was only 15 hours old, and all had been left at various locations around the city for the police to find”.

This organisation, while not affiliated with the Church, was founded by a Church member, and 95 percent of its volunteers are Latter-day Saints. The organisation has houses in Quito and Cuenca and provides volunteers to orphanages in those areas.

Sister Takahashi further explained, “The Catholic nuns do a good job of taking care of the children’s physical needs, but what they can’t provide is the one-on-one nurturing, and that’s where OSSO helps by organising volunteers to go in daily and help out.”

Sister MacDonald enjoyed being able to help wash, dress and feed the children before spending some quality play time with them during the day. She expressed how in awe she was of the long-term volunteers who were all aged between 18 and 30 years of age.

“Long term volunteers stay for three and four months at a time,” she said. “Most take time off from University studies. Up until this year, all of the volunteers were from North America, but this year they have had some from France and Holland, and we were the first from the Asia Pacific region.”

The three helpers also did work with special needs teens who lived in residential homes and were being taken care of by a “mother”. They were able to help by taking the teens out for afternoon activities such as a play in the park, a walk, and often a picnic. Their time was also spent doing simple therapy with the teens by just talking with them. These outings also give the “mothers” a much-needed break.

Brenna described how they also went to a local government-run orphanage that experienced even greater challenges due to even less financial support and fewer helpers. “The children were always happy to see us volunteers, and they enjoyed the crafts and games we brought along for them,” she said.

Brenna, who is 15 years old, has already decided to go back and help again one day. “I found the trip very rewarding and humbling. The children don’t have much, but they are happy and cheerful because of OSSO, the nuns and the workers. They are children of God, and they are loved,” she said. ■

Testimonies Borne on *Why I Believe*

By Christopher Cooper

The *Why I Believe* Mormon video series found on YouTube features several Australians sharing their thoughts and feelings as to why they believe in the principles taught by the Church.

Torah Bright, known for her gold medal win in the 2010 Winter Olympics half-pipe competition, shares why she believes by saying, “It’s very simple—it’s the feelings I get when I pray, when I read, when I go to church, when I take the sacrament. . . . And when I go to other places around the world, it’s the same exact feeling I get there, whether it’s in another language or not.”

Performer Patrice Tipoki Arkins is currently playing a lead role in the play *Wicked* in Sydney. On the stage since a young girl, Patrice makes family life a priority over her career. Also found in the Australian Web site video series, Patrice explains how she feels concerning her faith: “It gives me hope, it gives me a direction, and it gives me priorities that my family and I know are so important.”

Another segment ([LDSYouthTasmania.mov](#)) features Hannah McGowan, aged 17, from Tasmania, who introduces her audience to her life, family and friends. “The youth in Tasmania are amazing—their testimonies are so strong,” Hannah says before



Patrice Arkins shares why she believes on YouTube.

inviting some of her friends to share their feelings on camera.

These testimonies are added to dozens of others from Australians shared on the www.Mormon.org Web site under the Our People—Meet Mormons tabs. To share your own story on this Web site as to why you believe, simply visit the **Add/Edit Profile** section and follow the prompts. The new Mormon.org site is designed to help visitors learn more about the Church and its members. ■



Australians share their testimonies on Mormon.org.

PHOTOGRAPH IS A SCREEN CAPTURE TAKEN FROM THE WEB SITES BY CHRIS COOPER

MEMBERS SERVE

Backyard Blitz

By Michael Foran

Over 70 youth and young single adults from the Eight Mile Plains Stake in Brisbane volunteered their time and hard work recently to undertake a service project at the Bornhoffen Police-Citizens Youth Club's youth development centre in the Gold Coast hinterland.

The main work completed was the complete demolition and relandscaping of the main courtyard area. This part of the facilities had not received a significant facelift since it was constructed and officially opened in the 1980s.

In one weekend, they totally transformed the 500-square-metre area with the construction of new paved paths, a new feature landscaped creek to improve drainage, the planting of native plants and the construction of new timber bridges and decking.

Other work done during the weekend included breaking up and removing old concrete slabs and paths, removal of rubbish, preparation for painting and gravelling of bushwalking tracks.

Mick Foran, Bornhoffen PCYC Co-Manager, said, "All of the staff at Bornhoffen PCYC have been mightily impressed by the positive attitudes, the organisational skills, the work ethic and the 'on-the-ground' results achieved by all of the young people and adult supporters involved.

"From the very start, it has been a pleasure working with the young people representing the Church as they conceived the idea, started the planning, visited the site, approached businesses, sourced the materials, organised the hundreds of small details and got the participants together for the weekend itself. The sounds of hard physical work being done and laughter rang out throughout the weekend.

"We are humbled by what the young people have set out to do and what they have achieved, all on a voluntary basis. Their ability to mobilise the support of so many businesses to donate materials to the project is a testament to their energy and enthusiasm. We're so proud of what they have achieved and thankful for the support of the Church and local businesses which made this project possible."

The work that the young people from the Church have done will benefit many thousands of other young people who take part in youth development programs at the centre each year—some whom may be going through tough times or might be in need of support. ■



Youth and young single adults "blitz" the main courtyard of Bornhoffen PCYC during a weekend service project.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF LANAI CARTER

LDS Rugby Players Shine in the Eye of the Media

By Christopher Cooper

Whether you know it as rugby or footie, you know that these sports are some of the most-loved sports in this country. For a sporting nation like Australia, these codes are as much about entertainment as they are about scandals, yet there is hardly a week that goes by now where the media does not highlight the positive examples of one of the several outstanding Latter-day Saint players. These great athletes are as renowned for their superb playing abilities as they are for their notably different conduct and lifestyle choices that stand in great contrast both on and off the field.

Latter-day Saint rugby players face increased scrutiny at times, with their fans and the media coming to expect greater standards from them because of their faith. These players also face additional challenges to their careers as they make difficult choices to do with missions, which typically occur during the peak times of their careers, team social celebrations, and whether to play sports on Sundays.

While the decision to serve a mission is often a difficult one for some, for 22-year-old Lagi Setu, when he felt the time was right to serve, the decision became quite easy, even though

the announcement to NRL teammates, fans and the media was a difficult one.

Lagi's decision and announcement fast became international sporting news as people marvelled at why the quick-stepping Brisbane back-rower with such a promising career would officially



Lagi Setu, a talented rugby player, has made the decision to leave the sport for a time to serve a mission.

quit the NRL at season's end to embark on a volunteer religious mission without pay. It was certain that Lagi's next two years of professional sports would earn him hundreds of thousands of dollars. Contracts and sponsorship deals were all on the table when Lagi announced that he would be signing his mission papers instead.

"My religion has been everything to me. Without it I would not be where I am," Lagi explained to the media. "I want to spread . . . my religion to other

places, so it can help others like it has me. I will put my sporting blessings on hold to honour my religion for two years."

The Bronco's top-grader follows his older brother Rota, who quit a career with the St. George Illawarra Dragons three years ago to embark on his two-year mission. Rota has since returned to Australia and now plays rugby union for Sunnybank.

Lagi's decision was made easier by examples such as former Titan's winger Jordan Rapana, who will soon end his two-year mission to England; Albert Hopoate, who returned to the Roosters after his mission saying, "The mission made me a better person"; Tevita Folau, who served in Hong Kong; and former Broncos utility Fraser Anderson, who served his mission in the Philippines and who is now playing rugby in Japan.

Albert Hopoate's older and more famous brother, John, said concerning his brother's mission: "For the past two years he's followed the Lord, and now that sacrifice is going to be rewarded. He has God on his side. My one regret in life is that I never served a mission. It's a major part of our religion and something I'll certainly be pushing my own sons to do."

Hopoate's son William recently had his own NRL debut playing fullback for Manly. His father was part of the pre-match guard of honour formed by the fathers of Manly players to welcome the players onto the ground. Hopoate senior stood out that day for two reasons—one being that he was peculiarly dressed in his Sunday suit, and the other being that he notably left before the game began to attend to his Sunday worship services at church.

Ben Hannant, who has played for the Brisbane Broncos and Sydney Bulldogs, as well as playing in State of Origin, is also held in great regard by fellow players and the media, who often seek out this grounded family man for his sound advice and media comment. He has had regular spots on Fox Sports and the Footy Show as well as giving regular commentary on the games for the media.

"It is great having other Church members not just in my team but in the NRL," Hannant said. "It's everything. My religion is everything to me! It makes me a better person, on the football field and in life. You can relate football and life. It's the same sort of thing. You strive to be the best person you can be and always strive to be better. It's helped my football career because I take the same attitude I would in life."

When asked if it is difficult

at times upholding his religious beliefs in life and on the field, Ben replied, "Back when I was younger I might have got a bit for it, but playing professional football now the boys accept you for who you are and they respect you for that. It's great! I've got to find out who I really am. I'm in a pretty tough team but all the boys are very accepting of who people are these days. There are people of all different religions in the game."

Israel Folau, who is arguably one of the most outstanding and watched players this year, said recently concerning his faith, "Sometimes you get tested a bit. I've been a Mormon all my life. At times it gets a bit hard, but I get a lot of support from my teammates; they support my background."

Israel's coach, Bronco's Ivan Henjak, also recently commented on Israel's faith and the influence that it has on his playing and character: "That aspect gives Izzy a really good balance in his life. He seems a really grounded guy. As good a player as Izzy is, we're really happy about the kind of person he is as well."

Krisnan Inu, a Parramatta Eels player who has just signed with the New Zealand Warriors for the 2011 NRL season, said that when he "puts the Church first, everything else seems to fall into place."

The Helensvale rugby union

team made international news a few years back when they took a stand against Sunday play, costing them the chance to compete in the local semifinals. Up to 13 Helensvale Hogs players decided not to play on Sunday, and such was the magnitude of this collective decision that the club even tried for three days, unsuccessfully, to have the first and second grade semifinals moved for these exemplary players.

The example set by Latter-day Saint rugby players has been so inspiring that it has even attracted a Hollywood movie (*Forever Strong*—2008), filmed in Salt Lake City. The film, based on Utah's Highland High School rugby team, tells the story of a former seminary teacher who coached the local high school rugby team to win 18 national championships by instilling in them important gospel-based principles including values of family, respect and honour.

While some may see more of a conflict between religion and rugby, others are starting to see how the faith of these young men is helping them to gain a competitive edge over other players who focus on the training of their bodies while neglecting the training of their souls. Israel Folau described to the media how he sees this relationship by saying, "Religion is the biggest part of my life, and that and football go together for me." ■

Australian Single Adults Find Joy in the Journey

By Rainer Korte

There is “joy in the journey,” according to Australian single adults who attended a convention of this same name in Adelaide on 11–14 June 2010. The convention was held at the Nunyara Convention Centre at Belair in the Adelaide Hills. Approximately 120 single adults, aged from 30 to 85, from throughout Australia participated.

The convention provided a programme of social, recreational, service and spiritual activities that allowed single adults to enjoy each other’s company, develop friendships and be strengthened spiritually.

Service activities included temple attendance, writing letters and preparing copies of the Book of Mormon to support the service of full-time missionaries. Convention activities included a “get to know you” family home evening, a tour of the Haighs Chocolate Factory, a visit to the Adelaide Zoo, ten-pin bowling and indoor rock climbing.

A social highlight was the Port River Cruise Dinner Dance, where young and old enjoyed socialising and singing while dancing the night away. Shirley Toker from Adelaide observed, “As a recent convert, I was impressed that 90 percent of the people were up and dancing with no alcohol in sight. It was so much fun.”

On one afternoon, participants rotated through workshops on “Finding Joy in the Journey,” “Cultivating an Attitude of

Gratitude,” and “Celebrating What’s Right in the World”.

Australia Area Seventy Terence Vinson spoke in Sunday’s sacrament meeting on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Matt Ward from South Australia commented, “The workshops helped me to reflect on my life and appreciate the positive things that relate to my current circumstances.”

Lisa Ward from Queensland said concerning the Sunday evening testimony meeting, “The Spirit was incredibly powerful. I was so touched by the wonderful, heartfelt testimonies that were borne; it was one of the very best testimony meetings I’ve ever attended.”

Margaret Martin from Victoria said of the overall convention experience, “As a busy single mum who works full time, I found this convention to be exactly what I needed to re-energise spiritually.”

Jared Young from Queensland said, “I am deeply grateful for the convention and all that was done to bring it about. While the activities and people who attended them were outstanding, the greatest joy I received was from finding my true self again. This convention reminded me that joy in the journey comes through the way we bless, touch and uplift the lives of those around us.” ■



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LDS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Single adults from around Australia attended a convention in Adelaide Hills in June 2010.