

# Africa Southeast Area Local Pages

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### A Clearer View, a Better Perspective

By Elder Jackson Mkhabela

Recently I had the opportunity to be part of a group photograph, and due to my nature of preferring to be inconspicuous, I went and stood at the back of the entire group as the photograph was taken. The next day the photographer showed me the photograph on his computer and I was amazed to see how prominently I appeared even though I had positioned myself far at the back, where I thought I would be obscured by those in the front and middle of the group.

I came to realize that the reason the photograph gave such a clear view was because the photographer was standing on the first floor of the building, nearly six meters above the group. Due to this elevation the camera lens was positioned in such a way that it could capture all of the participants.

A few years ago a dear friend of mine invited me to go hiking with him. I had never hiked before, but at the end of this wonderful experience I decided I would like to continue hiking. On my third hiking expedition we scaled a moderately high mountain, and when I reached the top I looked down on the valley. The view was exhilarating and electrifying. I could see the details of every shrub and tree below me, the smooth flow of the river and its soothing sound, and the gentle breeze swaying the branches of the trees from where I was standing to the valley below.

The wonder of it was that I could see so clearly, and the peace I experienced as a result was indescribable. These feelings were short-lived, as the track took us down to the valley where the mountains on both sides of the track seemed to swallow

us and one could only see as far as the track was not hidden by shrubs and bends. Now and then I experienced some kind of phobia, shadows became threats, and the only source of comfort was the company of the group. Although the area is safe, I could not help but think, “What if a wild animal should spring from the dense vegetation?” I would not be able to defend myself because I could not see clearly.

We cannot always walk on mountain peaks. Life’s journey demands that we walk most of the time in the valleys, where our views are obscured. There are rivers to cross—some are deep and treacherous, others are cruel and challenging to human endurance. Some rivers and valleys would have us lose our way, and some mountain peaks would have us bask in self-sufficiency. In the end, all of this makes up the vicissitudes of daily life—hardship, heartaches, distress, and frustrations.

Throughout all the dispensations the Lord in His mercy and love for the children of men has placed on earth His servants to alleviate the burden of walking through the valleys of uncertainty, doubt, fears, and distress that rob us of joy, peace and happiness in our daily walk of life. These are they whom the Lord has chosen to lift us from valleys to higher grounds where we can see clearly.

It will be very difficult—if not impossible—to learn and understand God’s mind and will without prophets, seers and revelators. Consider the following verses:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet



*Elder Jackson  
Mkhabela*

before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”<sup>1</sup>

Try to interpret these verses without referring to the interpretation given to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Now read Doctrine and Covenants 128:17–18 and see if your interpretation and understanding is close to the revelation given in those verses.

No truer words were ever said than what Ammon declared:

“A seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have . . .

“But a seer can know of things which are past, and also things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed . . .

“ . . . therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.”<sup>2</sup>

I think of the dispensation of Enoch. Enoch taught and lead the people. He continued his preaching in righteousness. Those who hearkened and followed this prophet built a city, called a city of holiness, and the Lord came and dwelt with His people, and they dwelt in righteousness. The Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart and mind, and dwelt in righteousness and there was no poor among them. We trace these ideal conditions for these people to the teachings of a prophet and the obedience of the people to the prophet’s teachings.<sup>3</sup>

Again I think of the dispensation of President Thomas S. Monson. Consistently in the past three general conferences and in his closing remarks he said the following words:

“Remember that the messages we have heard during this conference will be printed in the May issue of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. I urge you to study the messages, to ponder their teachings, and then to apply them in your life.”<sup>4</sup>

“I hope that we will take the time to read the

conference talks, which will be reprinted in the November issue of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines, for they are deserving of our careful study.”<sup>5</sup>

“I express my appreciation and that of members of the Church everywhere to each one who has participated, including those who have offered prayers. May we long remember the messages we have heard. As we receive the issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines which contain these messages in written form, may we read and study them.”<sup>6</sup>

May I illustrate the importance of following the prophet’s teachings through a personal experience? My wife and I planned to attend the temple one Friday afternoon in May 2011. The events of the day were promising neither heartache nor stress; however, an hour before we left for the temple I received several calls that affected my peaceful state of mind. In the process of changing and getting ready to go to the temple I breathed deeply several times until my wife asked whether the matter I was considering was that serious. I mentioned in an editorial form some of the issues I was dealing with.

We got into the car and drove off to the temple, and my wife produced a conference report. She said to me, “I want to read this to you,” and she began to read a talk by Elder Paul V. Johnson titled “More Than Conquerors through Him That Loved Us.”

She began: “Earth life includes tests, trials, and tribulations, and some of the trials we face in life can be excruciating. Whether it be illness, betrayal, temptations, loss of a loved one, natural disasters, or some other ordeal, affliction is part of our mortal experience. Many have wondered why we must face difficult challenges. We know that one reason is to provide a trial of our faith to see if we will do all the Lord has commanded. Fortunately this earth life is the perfect setting to face—and pass—these tests.

“But these trials are not just to test us. They are vitally important to the process of putting on the divine nature. If we handle these afflictions properly, they will be consecrated for our gain.”

She continued to read, and I listened attentively to her. She took some time to explain some of her understanding of the message. For example, she repeated this phrase:

“The furnace of affliction helps purify even the very best of Saints by burning away the dross in their lives and leaving behind pure gold.”

I asked her to repeat some of the phrases, such as “A pattern in the scriptures and in life shows that many times the darkest, most dangerous tests immediately precede remarkable events and tremendous growth.”

The crowning moment came when she read Elder Johnson’s quote of Paul:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . .

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”<sup>7</sup>

By the time we arrived at the temple, I was as calm as a lamb and as peaceful as a dove. In the temple I was able to enjoy the full blessing that comes through temple worship because I was prepared from the moment I left home to the time when we entered the doors of the temple. My peace and contentment came as a result of one who took heed of the words of the prophet and read conference messages. And when the time came she was ready to administer comfort without searching, because she was prepared.

If we are to walk in the light and with a clear view of life, we need to develop a growing faith in the Lord’s servants and the courage to follow them. We have to build a firewall against contentment with modest gain. We are to lower our level of resistance to activities that will lead to and perpetuate spiritual regeneration.

Faith is the principle of righteous action; it will cause a person to do good works. Faith in Christ is increased by obedience to the word of God, and we receive such from the teachings of prophets, seers and revelators.

Courage is the capacity and ability to decide before anything else is decided, the determination to move forward joyously in our worthy pursuits. We need courage to learn from Church leaders and put into practice what we learn. We need courage to remain true and faithful, to show by our lifestyle day after day that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May we move forward affirming our commitment to personal integrity, refusing to succumb to the expedient. May we asset our commitment to revealed principles that will refine and establish for us peace in the Elysian fields of the hereafter. May we remain loyal to the values of truthfulness and honesty.

Irrespective of reason and logic to the contrary, I bear testimony of the things I have come to know to be true as the Spirit of God has borne witness in my heart of their truth and reality.

God lives. He is the supreme governor of the universe and the Father of mankind. His love is unconditional and eternal; He makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends the rain on the just and the unjust. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer. In the Garden of Gethsemane he bore our grief and carried our sorrows; He worked an eternal Atonement to benefit all mankind. On the hill of Golgotha He was wounded for our transgression and bruised for our iniquity; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.

Thomas S. Monson is the prophet of our dispensation; he speaks the mind and the will of the Lord. As we hearken to his voice we will be lifted to higher grounds, where our views may be clearer and our peace certain. ■

**NOTES:**

1. Malachi 4:5–6.
2. Mosiah 8:16–18.
3. See Moses 7.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “A Word at Closing,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 113.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “Till We Meet Again,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 111.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “At Parting,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 114.
7. Paul V. Johnson, “More Than Conquerors through Him That Loved Us,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 78; Romans 8:35, 37.

# Hearts Are Lifted As Balloons Soar

By Sister Susan Harms and Sister Nancy Warnick

**M**ore than 300 women lifted their eyes heavenward as they watched pink and white balloons rise upward, symbolizing “letting go” of whatever worries, troubles and pain that hold them back. Women of the Benoni South Africa Stake Relief Society and their guests celebrated South Africa’s National Women’s Day by coming together in a bond of sisterhood to gather strength from each other, hear inspiring musical numbers, and listen to motivational messages. The John Barrable Hall in Benoni was a buzz of activity as members of

*The hearts of the women in the Benoni Stake, South Africa, are lifted as balloons soar into the sky.*

the worldwide women’s organization, the Relief Society, came together bringing food for the hungry and seeking spiritual nourishment for their own souls. They were not disappointed.

Elder Dale G. Renlund, Africa Southeast Area President, counseled the women of all ages to handle life’s disappointments by having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not comparing themselves to others, helping and supporting one another, and not judging or criticizing each other. Ruth Renlund, his wife, suggested that the sisters get connected to the powers of heaven

by praying, attending the temple, and sacrificing for others. Elder Carl B. Cook, Counsellor in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency, cited the example of his own mother and reminded the group that happiness is only obtained by focusing on loving others. Lynette Cook, his wife, reminded those present that God’s love is constant and unchanging. Susan Martineau, a Brigham Young University graduate in child development and family relations, mother of 10 children, and grandmother to 28, urged the women of all ages to always choose the positive over the negative.

Honored special guests were eight women who have



PHOTOGRAPH BY ELDER STEVEN HARMS

dedicated their lives to helping others. These compassionate women were Moira Simpson (founder) and Terri Heatlie from Kids' Haven; Linda Mvanana, Lorraine Hartman, and Wendy Tanner from (Anglican Church) Buyani House; and Carol Rennie, Major Diane Jones, and Helen Jones from the Salvation Army.

Lorraine Hartman said, "It's wonderful to be with a group that serves God. As a group we can reach out to help each other and those in need."

"Our goal was to organize a day that would be uplifting to women of all ages. We wanted them to be reminded that they are all daughters of our Heavenly Father, and that they can do this thing called 'life,'" stated Sandie Taylor, Stake Relief Society president in the Benoni South Africa Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Nokulunga Nkosi (25-year-old participant) loved the conference. She recalled, "The conference was well planned, and the speakers were motivating. When we let the balloons go I felt like Heavenly Father was taking all my troubles from me."

The Relief Society extends a special thanks to their sponsors for their donations to the "goodie bags" for each participant, and to those who helped with sound and with the posters, programs and flyers. ■



*Standing: Gary L. Packer, president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Lubumbashi Mission, and President Grégoire Mutshail. Seated: Counselor Aimable Burundi, President Kyubi Malabi, and counselor Minos Mabingo, of the Bujumbura First Branch.*

## First Branch Conference— First Branch Division

By Sister Phyllis Evanson

**O**n Sunday, June 12, 2011, six months after the organization of the Bujumbura Branch in Burundi, members of the branch met expecting to participate in their first branch conference. To their surprise and satisfaction, President Mutomb Grégoire Mutshail, counselor in the Democratic Republic of Congo Lubumbashi Mission, announced the division of the existing branch into the

Bujumbura First Branch and the Bujumbura Second Branch.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited the small African country of Burundi in October 2010. At that time he dedicated the land for the preaching of the gospel and the building up of the kingdom of God. The eight months following the dedication have seen continuous growth.

Beginning with a small nucleus of 10 baptized members, the Bujumbura membership increases weekly in fulfillment of the prayer offered in their behalf by an Apostle of the Lord.

President Kyubi Wa Kyubi Malabi was sustained as the president of the Bujumbura First Branch along with counselors Aimable Otis Burundi and Rajabu Minos Mabingo.

Johnson Hatungimana was sustained as president of the newly formed Bujumbura Second Branch, with Simon

Suguru and Thomas Ntibiyumwe serving as counselors.

Branch business included the sustaining of 16 brethren to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and 2 brethren to receive the Aaronic Priesthood.

The meeting was presided over by Gary L. Packer, president of the Democratic Republic of Congo Lubumbashi Mission, and was attended by approximately 130 members and friends of the Church.

Following brief testimonies of the newly sustained brethren, in

which they each expressed their humble acceptance and willingness to serve, the congregation was pleased to hear messages from President Packer and his wife, Paula Packer. President Packer reminded the members of the miracle that is taking place in Bujumbura and of the Savior's love for them. He encouraged them to continue building the kingdom of God in Burundi.

When asked what would be the greatest blessing and benefit to having two branches, Brother Burundi, first counselor in the Bujumbura First Branch and former elders quorum president, was quick to respond, "This will give many more members in Bujumbura the opportunity to serve".

Bujumbura First Branch will continue meeting in their present location at Boulevard de la Liberte.

A building about 10 kilometers north of the present meetinghouse will serve as a second meetinghouse. This will be a wonderful blessing to the members in this very populated area and will contribute to continued growth of the Church.

Presently eight elders and two missionary couples are serving in Bujumbura, the capital city of Burundi. Burundi is part the Democratic Republic of Congo Lubumbashi Mission and is in the Africa Southeast Area. ■

***Standing: Gary L. Packer, president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Lubumbashi Mission, and President Grégoire Mutshail. Seated: Counselor Simon Suguru, President Johnson Hatungimana, and counselor Thomas Ntibiyumwe, of the Bujumbura Second Branch.***



# Jane's Story: The Journey of 3,400 km Begins with a Four-Hour Walk

By Sandy Fox

**O**n January 2, 2011, Jane Odimu Odera left her small house on a mountain near Mautuma, Kenya, for the 3,400-km trip to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple. Jane had never been more than 40 kilometres from her home, but her faith carried her through.

Jane met the missionaries in 2004, and they handed her a pamphlet. "I read it," Jane said. "The teachings were true. They were wonderful to me. The Holy Ghost guided me and told me it was true." Jane was baptized in 2004, but after a time her branch was closed. The next nearest branch was a four-hour walk in good weather. Still, Jane faithfully attended church every Sunday. She arrived early, often before the Saints who lived closer. "If you're not there at the beginning, you miss the spirit," Jane said.

For three years Jane traveled by foot to church. "My life changed," she said. "I am a single mother with children. The Church strengthened me. The Church became like my husband, like my father." The children could not walk the eight hours, so she went alone.

Jane has a tiny house built on a fraction of an



acre. She walks to the river for water. Her only income is odd jobs—digging in another person's *shamba* (farm) or teaching villagers about hygiene for a charitable organization. But she faithfully tithes on what she earns.

In 2009 the mission organized a dependent group closer to Jane's home—only a half-hour walk. "I am happy every day. I have never missed church," Jane said. "When the group was organized, President Kogo, [first counselor in the mission presidency] said, 'We have brought the group to Mautuma because of Jane.' Because I was faithful. When they brought the Church to Mautuma my children joined and are now faithful in coming."

**Jane's home near Mautuma, Kenya.**

PHOTOGRAPH BY SANDY FOX

Jane longed to go to the temple. “I was worthy and wanted to obey the commandment,” Jane said. “I felt to continue in faith, to obey, and receive my endowment and endure to the end.”

On January 2, 2011, Jane began her journey to the temple. Her branch president put her on a bus for the 10-hour ride to Nairobi. She arrived in Nairobi dazed, but determined and delighted. She joined with other Saints going to the temple, and the next day this brave, faithful sister encountered ticketing, baggage check-in, immigration and airplanes for the first time. She emerged with a brilliant smile as she saw the temple in Johannesburg, South Africa.

“I feel so much joy,” Jane said. “The temple is very beautiful. I feel I am in the celestial kingdom with my Heavenly Father.”

Elevators, electric cook stoves, lights, hot and cold running water, key cards, and computers—Jane joyfully embraced them all and mastered most. But the four days at the temple brought learning of a far greater value. Jane was able to do her own work and the saving ordinances for deceased relatives. “I feel happy in my heart because of the sacred ordinances,” she said. “We do this to show our love for Heavenly Father. I felt the Holy Spirit in the temple. Without faith, I could not reach here. I know Jesus Christ died for my sins. Through Him I have seen many blessings.”

As Jane headed back to her small house on the mountain, she spoke of her blessings, the changes in her life, and her commitment to be faithful to her covenants. “I’ll never forget the temple and the vision I have seen,” she said. “I never thought I could come to such a place in my life.” She gave a radiant smile. “This is everlasting life—the way I love my Heavenly father and He loves me.” ■

*Jane at the Johannesburg South Africa Temple.*



PHOTOGRAPH BY SANDY FOX