

Africa Southeast Local Pages

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Establishing Zion in the Africa Southeast Area

By Elder Ulisses Soares of the Seventy

In the year preceding the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith was instructed, through several revelations, to prepare all the things necessary for the establishment of Zion on the earth.

As we compare sections 6, 11 and 14 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we see a similarity, especially in verse six of each of these sections. The Lord says: “Keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion”. We read in the Guide to the Scriptures that the definition of *Zion* is “The pure in heart (D&C 97:21). *Zion* also means a place where the pure in heart live”. I have always been impressed when I have considered this perspective of living in *Zion*. To live in that condition, with a pure heart, should be our main goal in this life.

The Lord told Enoch what the conditions are to live in *Zion*: “And the Lord called his people *Zion*, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). As described in this scripture, the first of these conditions is to become of “one heart and one mind”. This means to become one in thought, desire and purpose, first with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, and then with His other Saints.

When our Heavenly Father developed the plan of salvation—that was executed by His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ—He had in mind our return to His presence. Our mortal experience

prepares us for a more glorified return to our Heavenly Father. We have the capacity to surpass the level we attained before coming to earth. Even knowing the unique characteristics of each one of His children, He established a possible way for us to go back.

For that to happen, we will have to become one in thought, desire, heart and will. This unity will permit us to work together so that we will be able to—all of us—overcome the obstacles of this life and go back to His presence.

Alma taught this principle to the people while he established the Church in his day: “And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21). That is the only way we will obtain unity.

Contention, arguments, and disputes do not promote *Zion* and therefore should be avoided among family members and among the members of the Church. This principle is so important that the Lord Himself revealed to Joseph Smith the commandment that is recorded in D&C 136:23: “Cease to contend one with another.” As we endeavor to live this condition, we promote *Zion* among us.



Elder Ulisses Soares

The second condition mentioned by the Lord to Enoch was that the people “dwelt in righteousness”. Righteousness includes the qualities of “being just, holy, virtuous, [and] upright; acting in obedience to God’s commands; [and] avoiding sin (See Guide to the Scriptures). When we live righteously, the enemy has no power over the hearts of the people.

We will be tempted, for this is part of our mortal experience; but we will not succumb to temptations, for we will be living with holiness, righteousness, and integrity. These qualities intertwine, for they mean honorability, sincerity, good thoughts, spiritual and moral perfection, purity of heart and of purpose, among other things. Jesus Christ possesses all the attributes that promote righteousness, for He Himself was the greatest example because He lived with and demonstrated these attributes during His mortal experience.

As we endeavor to live righteously, we will be ridding ourselves of sin, becoming clean, pure and holy. This process requires that we turn our hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement, and that we exercise our faith, repenting of our sins with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

As recorded in the scriptures, we will have our garments whitened by the blood of the Lamb and will become Saints, for our minds, our desires and our actions will be centered in God.

The third condition mentioned as a characteristic of Zion is that “there were no poor among them”. The Lord reveals through His prophets—especially in these last times—the importance of becoming self-reliant, the need to learn to support ourselves and our families and to help the poor in the Lord’s way (see “Leadership

Purposes,” *Handbook 2, Administering the Church*, [2010], 3.4).

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recently explained what the Lord’s way is that is mentioned in “Leadership Purposes.” He said: “Priesthood-based welfare principles are both temporal and spiritual. They are also eternal and apply in every circumstance. Whether we are rich or poor, they are for us” (“Basic Principles of Welfare and Self-Reliance,” p. 1). In his teachings, he emphasizes some principles that should direct our actions. These include:

- Provident living
- Payment of tithes and offerings
- Our preparation for the future (budgeting, education and spiritual preparation)

Elder Hales added: “To be self-sufficient means to be responsible for our own spiritual and temporal well-being and for the well-being of those Heavenly Father trusted us to care for. Only when we are self-sufficient can we truly emulate the Savior, serving and blessing our neighbor”. It is important to understand that our ability to serve in God’s kingdom increases or decreases as we become self-reliant.

Not long ago the First Presidency wrote a letter about the importance of emphasizing the principles of welfare in our families and in the Church councils: “The application of time-tested welfare principles and practices is essential to the well-being of Church members” (Letter from the First Presidency, March 27, 2009).

Dear brothers and sisters, may we all make every effort to establish Zion among us here in the beautiful Africa Southeast Area, from Mauritius on the east, Djibouti on the north, Cameroon on the west, and Cape Point on the

south, by living the principles taught by our modern prophets. We live in difficult times, but the Lord loves us so much that He did not leave us alone. We have the living prophets, the scriptures and the teachings of this true gospel that gives us safety and peace in the times of difficulties in which we are living.

May we remember what the Lord told Joseph Smith in section 68, verse six of the Doctrine and Covenants: “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come”. ■

LOCAL NEWS

Helping Hands Day: August 20, 2011

By Sister Susan Martineau

On August 20, 2011, yellow vests dotted the entire continent of Africa. The reason: Helping Hands Day, including not only the entire continent of Africa but Madagascar, Réunion, and Mauritius. The 2011 theme: “Strengthening Families—Building Communities”. Yellow-vested workers dug furrows in garden plots, painted exposed wood and concrete, planted trees, made blankets to warm cold bodies, scrubbed, washed, waxed, patched, repaired leaky faucets, and even stocked shelves with needed goods and supplies. One area held a career workshop earlier in the month to kick off the Helping Hands Day, and another had a special fast to



Members of Montamba Ward in DRC gather to make a difference.

especially ward off civil unrest. The following is just a glimpse of what took place that day in Africa.

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Montamba Ward in Democratic Republic of the

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

Congo gathered 50 Saints and a handful of visitors to make a difference in Kinshasa. They brought their tools and set to work—cleaning, sweeping and hauling away debris that cluttered their marketplace.

The Kasavuba Ward, also in Kinshasa, contacted a home for the aged, where they were able to lift the lives of many who live there. The group cleaned and scrubbed walls and floors, made the windows sparkle, and finished with a facelift on the grounds outside. Much-needed food was donated to stock their shelves. The local media was on hand to cover the event. Soeur Diantama from the Catholic faith attended and participated in the event.

Johannesburg, South Africa

At the Randburg building in Johannesburg, children tied blankets for children and then delivered them to families in need at a preschool in the township of Diepsloot. Warmth was not the only delivery that day.

Mamelodi, South Africa

In 2000, Nelson Mandela found Mama Joy serving and educating children in overcrowded conditions. On the



Blankets were made and donated in Johannesburg.

spot he gave her R100.000 and a plot of land in Mamelodi. Now, 11 years later, the money is spent, but she is still

serving and educating children. Members in the community came to serve—to wash, scrub, remove weeds, and to carry



Helping hands in Mabopane.



High school students bless lives at Care Center for Aged in Mabopane.



One hundred thirty children were blessed by service given at "Mama Joy Creche" in Mamelodi.

off a pile of rubbish that had bothered her for years. They did for her what she could not do on her own. One hundred and thirty children from infants to grade six will be the benefactors of service given to "Mama Joy Creche."

Mabopane, South Africa

When the local high school chooses to bus in students on a Saturday morning to a care facility for aging people, you will want to be there. Joined by others, members of the Church and people of other faiths, the faculty

and directors were filled with delight. Yellow-vested workers came with paint brushes in hand, gloves in their pockets and hearts that were ready to serve. The highlight of the day happened after the painting and sweeping. It happened after

the weeds were pulled and the windows sparkled. The workers broke into song. The aged patrons who sat out in front on that beautiful day stood if they could. They clapped if too feeble to stand, but all celebrated together. The day did not end there. Each helping hand filed through to touch and shake the hand of those they had served.

Soshanguve, South Africa

After six hours of service at a middle school in Soshanguve, these girls are still happy. Now windows shine, classrooms are clean, and fresh paint has brought newness to the walls of the classrooms. These girls now know that hands that help create hearts that yearn to serve again and again and again.

Bujumbura, Burundi

Latter-day Saints in the eastern Africa area of Bujumbura, Burundi, worked with a neighborhood association to clean a drainage ditch that had become overgrown with weeds. More than 30 yellow-vested members and missionaries worked side by side with the members of the community with *coup coups* (curved machetes) and rakes to clear the weeds and trash.



SISTER SUSAN MARTINEAU



"When we're helping, we're happy." (Soshanguve, South Africa)



ELDER DALE AND SISTER PHYLIS EVANSON

Burundi Saints participate in Helping Hands for the first time.

This was the first year for the Burundi Saints to participate in the annual Helping Hands event. It was a thrill for them to

join in this cause, because just 10 months earlier their land had finally been dedicated for the Lord's work.



Elder Dale and Sister Ruth Renlund present Reverend David Holdt with a King James Version of the Bible.



Members plant trees at Chief Luthuli Park in Springs, South Africa.

Springs, South Africa

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Seventy, President of the Africa Southeast Area, and his wife, Ruth Renlund, participated in a project planting trees in Springs, South Africa. It took place at Chief Luthuli Park and at the school where members of the Daveyton Ward cleaned, painted and cleaned the

grounds for the children.

Service was also rendered at the iTmemba Hope Crisis Pregnancy Center. Elder Dale Renlund and his wife, Ruth, presented Reverend David Holdt with a King James Version of the Bible, a coin that symbolizes the need to turn to God, and framed pictures of Jesus Christ to hang on the walls of their chapel.



Eight hospital wards were scrubbed until they shined.

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

At the Amana Municipal Hospital in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, manicured lawns greet all who come there on a daily basis. Eight wards were scrubbed until they shined. Today, even the roof gutters run free. Well over 100 members and non-members went home physically tired but spiritually

rejuvenated after several hours of service to their community. The following day they followed the TV coverage of the day's work.

Lilongwe, Malawi

Chief Kauma of Lilongwe, Malawi, was grateful for the service rendered in the center marketplace. He said, "People have been selling their products in a very dirty area, but with your coming, diseases will be reduced because everyone now will have taken your service and example to heart." A market matron added, "I have not seen any church with a program like this. It is really a very inspired one. Let other churches learn from what The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has done. This is what the Savior encourages us to do."

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 That is a glimpse into the work they did. Here is what their hearts were saying.

A principal from a boy's home in Malawi was heard to say, "It is a dream come true." She asked if the Church could visit and share the gospel with the children at the center.

Another participant remarked, "This is my third Mormon Helping Hands project.



Service is rendered in the center of the marketplace. Chief Kauma commented, "We will take your service and example to heart".

I always look forward to it. I feel good about myself, knowing that I helped." The quiet voice of a woman in need now has a new perspective on the purpose of life, and she has been given a reason to have hope even in this life.

Of a school project one man noted, "Many of us have attended classes at this school, therefore it is nice that we have offered our hands of service. This school will educate our children and our grandchildren, and as a result will strengthen our families and build better communities."

The voice of a community leader resounded with clarity. "Our job is to continue from where you have left. If all of us can be in this kind of service, how great will our community look."

Africa is unique in that it is the only continent in the world that has a designated Mormon

Helping Hands Day. Did we accomplish the theme for 2011—"Strengthen Families—Build Communities"? You decide. This is a Public Affairs Event and in the past has been easily disguised as a humanitarian service project. This day of service provides a perfect opportunity to contact government leaders and influential community voices and partner with interfaith groups. The media who are invited play an important part in publicizing the event and reporting on the outcome after. Our message is that we are Christians. We follow Christ. He served, therefore we will serve. After five years, Africa is changing and healing. We are learning that our Helping Hands are directly connected to our hearts. When the wearers of the yellow vests feel a lump in their throat and have to brush a tear from their cheek we ask, "Who served whom?" ■