

# Africa Southeast Area Local Pages

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Christmas Gift

By Elder Dale G. Renlund, Area President

**M**ost of us have Christmas traditions that are at the same time similar yet distinct. Those traditions usually reflect our ancestral heritage. My parents immigrated to the United States from Sweden. Because we lived in humble circumstances, the gifts we received at Christmas were simple, frequently hand-made, and personal.

In keeping with Swedish tradition, Santa Claus (Jultomtem) came on Christmas Eve bringing gifts for the children. My brother, two sisters and I were excited and anxious wondering what we would receive. But, before Jultomtem came, my father would read to us the Christmas story from Luke, chapter 2. Since he spoke in heavily accented English, the pronunciation was never perfect. Year after year he would read the story the same way, reading past the part of the birth of the Savior (verse 7), past the part about Mary pondering the events in her heart (verse 19), ending with the story of Simeon.

My father would read:

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; . . .

“And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he

should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

“And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus . . .

“Then took he [Simeon] him [Jesus] up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

“For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

“Which thou has prepared before the face of all people;

“A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:25–32).

Then he would pause and say, “I may not be able to hold the little baby Jesus in my arms, but I know, just as well as Simeon knew, that that baby was the Son of God, my Savior and Redeemer.”

#### **My Father’s Testimony—His Greatest Gift**

Of all the Christmas gifts I ever received, the gift I remember most was the gift of testimony my father gave me. I knew that he knew the reality of Christ’s birth. He knew who that babe in Bethlehem was and what He would accomplish. This gift was better than any gift that

Jultomten ever brought or could ever bring.

Gift-giving at Christmas is usually part of celebrating the season. These Christmas gifts help us remember the gift of gifts—the Father’s gift of His Son and of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The only true gift we have to give them is to use Their gifts as They intended. As the Savior said, “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift” (D&C 88:33).

#### **Gifts from Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ**

The gifts Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ gave us are not one-time gifts. Before the creation of the world, Heavenly Father established a plan that would enable all of His spirit children to progress, to come to earth, to obtain bodies, to resurrect, and to return to live with Him again. This plan required that an infinite and eternal atonement be made by someone who was without sin, someone who could break the



**Elder Dale G. Renlund**



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bands of mortal death, someone who could shoulder the pains, afflictions, temptations, sins, infirmities, illnesses, and transgressions of the whole human family. This would be someone who would experience the entire range of human emotions—"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . ." (Isaiah 53:3; see also Alma 7:11–12). As Isaiah prophesied, He would bear our griefs, carry our sorrows; He would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and He would be whipped so that with His stripes we could be healed.

That someone in the premortal realms said, "Here am I, send me" (Abraham 3:27). This was Jehovah, the firstborn spirit son of God. This was He who would be the Only Begotten Son of Heavenly Father in the flesh. His gift would be Himself. After His birth in mortality, He would be known as Jesus. His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He rose from the grave to break the bands of death. Resurrection would be an unconditional gift to all who had lived or would ever live on the earth (see "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, April 2000, 2–3). If we keep His commandments and endure to the end, we will have eternal life, to live forever in God's presence, the greatest of all the gifts of God

(see D&C 14:7; 132:19–20, 24, 55). Our Heavenly Father has so declared (see 2 Nephi 31:15).

### **Come unto Christ— Our Gift to Him**

But the gift, in part, is conditional on accepting our Heavenly Father's plan and accepting Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. Acceptance must develop into trust in order for the Savior's gift to be realized in our own lives. So it is that with faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost we accept the atoning sacrifice which the Savior made.

Nearly 2000 years ago, wise men followed a star in order to come to Christ. Wise men today still come unto Christ. Let us be wise. He does not ask gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. He desires that we come unto Him. Amaleki in the Book of Mormon states this plainly:

"And now my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved" (Omni 1:26).

His premortal godhood, His birth, His divine sonship and the Atonement are celebrated jointly at Christmas. Let us give gifts this Christmas that mirror Christ's

gift to us—love, testimony, and devotion to our Heavenly Father. Like my earthly father, I too know that "I may not be able to hold the little baby Jesus in my arms, but I know, just as well as Simeon knew, that that baby was the Son of God, my Savior and Redeemer." ■

## THE GIFT OF WORK

# The Brightest Morning Is Born of the Darkest Night

By Elder T. Jackson Mkhabela, Area Seventy

**W**e are taught that the gospel has the solution to all the problems of the world. President David O. McKay (1873–1970) said: "There are those in the world who say that jealousy, enmity, selfishness in men's hearts will always preclude the establishment of the ideal society known as the Kingdom of God. No matter what doubters and scoffers say, the mission of the Church of Christ is to eliminate sin and wickedness from the hearts of men, and so to transform society that peace and good-will will prevail on this earth."<sup>1</sup>

The scriptures confirm this statement: "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy."<sup>2</sup> We also read about some conditions of peace, joy and unbelievable happiness,<sup>3</sup> yet for many of us it is inconceivable that such conditions are possible in mortality.

True, each one of us is engaged in a continuous struggle to satisfy needs; although the physiological needs are prepotent, most of our needs are satisfied in relationships. I have come to learn that the deepest pain that we carry, the greatest sorrow that besets us—heartaches, grief and sorrow—is prolonged by our inability to solve problems. I have also come to understand that principles of

the gospel are tools at our disposal to resolve almost all the challenges of life.

### Consider This . . .

Let us consider this hypothetical situation: you are a young man or woman growing up in the poverty-stricken streets of Mamelodi in Pretoria, South Africa, or the forgotten corner of Modjadji village in Limpopo, South Africa, or Chyulu in Kenya. The only subsistence means of support is the grant your parents receive from the government; there is no chance for you to proceed to university when you complete grade 12. You can never achieve the highest quality of life without a college or university degree. You are stuck—you know it, your parents know it and your peers know it. How can the gospel help solve this problem? The question that I would ask is which gospel principle I can apply to solve this problem.

Let us consider these life-changing verses:

“Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

“Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.”<sup>4</sup>

These verses in no uncertain terms tell us that our Father in Heaven has decreed that in mortality we will face hardship and that the principle of work will bring peace and contentment in our lives.

As a young man or woman if you work harder, focus your energy and the entire faculties that you have been blessed with on your studies, attend seminary and institute and obtain the highest grades possible in your final examination, you increase your chances to receive scholarships from government and many companies that are ready to provide corporate responsibilities such as scholarships.

### The Gospel of Work

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) put it very well: “I believe in the gospel of work. Work is a miracle by which talent is brought to the

surface and dreams become reality. There is no substitute under heaven for productive labor. It is the process by which idle visions become dynamic achievements. I suppose that we are all inherently lazy. We would rather play than work. A little playing and a little loafing are good. But it is work that spells the difference in the life of a man or woman or a boy or a girl.”<sup>5</sup>

The same principle applies to sorrow or sadness that is brought about by broken relationships, unfulfilled expectations and dashed hopes. Consider this superlative advice taken from a talk by J. Richard Clarke:

“Work is honorable. It is good therapy for most problems. It is the antidote for worry. It is the equalizer for deficiency of native endowment. Work makes it possible for the average to approach genius. What we may lack in aptitude, we can make up for in performance. As recommended by Korsaren: ‘If you are poor, work. . . . If you are happy, work. Idleness gives room for doubts and fears. If disappointments come, keep right on working. If sorrow overwhelms you, . . . work. . . . When faith falters and reason fails, just work. When dreams are shattered and hope seems dead, work. Work as if your life were in peril. It really is. No matter what ails you, work. Work faithfully. . . . Work is the greatest remedy available for both mental and physical afflictions.’”<sup>6</sup>

### Gospel Principles Can Help Us Find Success

Gospel principles—be it work, faith, hope or devotion or any that we can pick from the teachings of prophets, seers and revelators—can help us find success and fulfillment in this world. With effort in application of gospel principles we can rise above those negative elements in our lives that constantly pull us down. There can be no obstacle too great and no challenge too difficult.

The darkest night will surely turn to a beautiful morning. Hardship is a prerequisite for character



**Elder T. Jackson  
Mkhabela**

refinement, a building block for emotional intelligence and solid maturity. The strongest testimony and enduring faith are born of trials and tribulation; only those who see opportunities in hardship and growth in trials attain the status of peace and stability in mortal life and are able to lead others to that fountain of joy.

I bear witness of this truth and testify that God lives; he is the supreme governor of the universe and the father of mankind. He is intensely

interested in our welfare and involved in our lives. Jesus is the anointed one, the author and finisher of our faith; the Holy Ghost will testify to each one of us the truth of all things. In Jesus Christ's name, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, April 1941, 109.
2. 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. See 4 Nephi 1:15–16.
4. Genesis 3:17–19.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something*, (2000), 80.
6. J. Richard Clarke, "The Value of Work," *Ensign*, May 1982, 77.

## THE GIFT OF MISSIONARY SERVICE

# Five Missionaries from Swaziland Enter Missionary Training Centre

By Sister Tina Murdock, South Africa Durban Mission

**F**ive new missionaries bring the total of full-time missionaries from the Swaziland District to 13! All four branches and one group comprising the district are currently contributing full-time missionaries.

"This is a really big effort from such a small country," said South Africa Durban Mission president James C. Von Stetten. "Seldom do you ever have five [missionaries] in one district at the same time, let alone five

elders coming from the smallest country in the Southern Hemisphere." Swaziland District is part of the Durban Mission.

### The Influence of Good Leaders

Good leaders are essential in helping youth prepare for missions. The missionaries from Swazi had great examples of leadership by Young Men and Young Women leaders, missionaries serving in the area, and priesthood leaders. With leader support, senior missionary couples helped prepare the youth for missions and missionary preparation classes.

Two of the new missionaries are brothers—Elders Thulani and Ayanda Mabuza. After their mother's death, the boys became "parents" to their younger sisters. The brothers stayed home, providing for their family until their sisters were old enough to live with a relative and attend school. It was difficult to leave their sisters in someone else's care,

**Elder Muzi Dube, Elder Nkosikhona Sibandze, Elder Thulani Mabuza, Elder Ayanda Mabuza, and Elder Sizwe Shongwe in front of the South Africa Missionary Training Centre in Johannesburg. The two Elders Mabuza are brothers.**



PHOTOGRAPH BY SISTER JANET REBER

but they knew the sacrifice would produce blessings for them.

The other three boys were also raised by extended family members, either because of death, separation, or parents being required to work far from home. Each worked hard to help support the family and maintained their efforts and faith in the gospel.

### Missionaries Are the Future Leaders in the Church

These young missionaries are pioneering, first-generation members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the Mormons. They will learn, and their testimonies will grow through their mission experiences.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PRESIDENT JAMES C. VON STETTEN

**President James C. Von Stetten with five new missionaries from Swaziland.**

They will be prepared for the responsibility of leadership in the Church. They will be prepared to be Melchizedek Priesthood leaders in their own eternal families—a concept they did not know while growing up. “These young men and women will all come back, strengthen their branches, and help to further establish the Church in Swaziland,” said President Von Stetten.

What a blessing it will be to Swaziland when the missionaries return home with the strength they have acquired while serving the Lord. “The future looks bright for Swaziland,” said President Von Stetten. “Upon the return of these elders and sisters, they will add great strength to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to their communities, and to their families.” ■

## THE GIFT OF REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

# Mission President Meets with President of Central African Republic

By Brent Jameson, Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission President

**F**rançois Bozize, Central African Republic (CAR) president, hosted a meeting with President Brent Jameson in President Bozize’s office in the presidential palace in Bangui. Sister Lorraine Jameson accompanied her husband, who presides over the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Kinshasa Mission.

President Jameson said, “We explained that our purpose in being in this country was to

support the members of our congregation there. . . . We presented him with a copy of the Book of Mormon and briefly explained the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

“We also presented [President Bozize] with a copy of ‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World’ and mentioned that we shared with him the belief in the importance of the family in society. We gave him a copy of the Articles of Faith and read

the twelfth article with him, explaining our effort to teach our people to obey, honor, and sustain the laws of the land where they live.”

After the meeting President Jameson was interviewed briefly



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BRENT JAMESON

**(Left to right) Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Kinshasa Mission president Brent Jameson, Central African Republic (CAR) President Francois Bozize, Sister Lorraine Jameson, and CAR cabinet member Roger Langue.**

by a representative of the press. Portions of that interview were broadcast later on national radio and television.

The June 11, 2012, meeting was set up by President Bozize's trusted advisor and member of his cabinet, Roger Langué. Brother Langué is the president of the Bangui Branch of the Church. Bangui, capital city of Central African Republic, is located on the Ubangi River—boundary between Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo.

During his visit to Central African Republic, President Jameson also visited with leaders and members of the Church's Bangui Branch. ■

## THE GIFT OF SELF-RELIANCE AND MEETINGHOUSES

# "Providing Places of Worship in Developing Countries" Graduates Forty

By Georges Bonnet, Africa Southeast Area Director of Temporal Affairs

**F**orty recent graduates of the Providing Places of Worship in Developing Countries training program are certified in a variety of basic construction skills and building disciplines. The 12-week program provides classroom learning and hands-on practical experience at the Kasa Vubu Stake Centre, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Many of the



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGES BONNET



graduates are now employed or are soon to be employed in construction-related jobs.

### Training Teaches High Quality Skills and Standards

Trainees learn correct construction standards and the expectations of high quality and productivity required by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the sponsor of the training. Graduates are more employable because their skill standards are higher.

The course provides practical training in foundation layout and excavation, form work, concrete work, flat work, masonry and electricity. Trainees are provided a training manual developed by a team of instructional designers at Church headquarters.

Elder and Sister Billings, who have years of experience in vocational education, provide classroom and vocational instruction. The project is headed by Eric Van Hauvermat, project manager

*Trainees practice skills learned in the Providing Places of Worship in Developing Countries construction course.*

from France, who brings extensive experience in construction and project management.

Bishop H. David Burton, former Presiding Bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, championed the Providing Places of Worship in Developing Countries program following an Africa Southeast Area review in 2010.

Trainees are prepared for employment in construction. They are prepared to be employed in the construction of Church buildings. There are currently two Church projects under construction in Kinshasa, and about 20 members are employed on each project. All employed members are required to participate in the training course.

Elder L. Jean Claude Mabaya, Africa Southeast Area Seventy, presided at the graduation, while bishops and stake presidencies attended in support of the graduates. Consultants and contractor representatives were in attendance along with the University of Kinshasa Dean of the School of Engineering. All were impressed with the training program and lauded its benefits and potential not only in and for the Church but for the country as a model worthy of emulation.

The purpose of the Providing Places of Worship in Developing Countries training is to help those seeking to become self-reliant and more employable. Two courses started in July to provide more training opportunities. Self-enterprise development courses will also be provided to assist those who wish to start their own business. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY SISTER SUSAN ROBERTS

countries offered prayers in different languages, including Kiswahili, Tswana, Bantu, Swahili, Xhosa, Shona, Lugandu, Lusoga, Malagasy, Sotho, IsZulu, Nyanja, Afrikaans, English, and German.

The prayers were recorded as part of the project “Prayer,” a community project supported by the city of Johannesburg and the Goethe Institute. The project was initiated to create an educative and representative study of the faiths that make up Johannesburg, South Africa.

***Eight of the missionaries who participated in the Prayer project.***

### **Missionary Prayers Convey Humble Spirit**

As the missionaries prayed, the Spirit conveyed their humble sincerity to those in attendance. Following the missionaries’ recordings, the author of the Prayer project, Mr. James Webb, said, “I felt something very different today as I listened to the missionaries pray. I felt a gentleness and a calmness in the room. Even though I could not understand the words they said, I felt a quiet confidence. I felt secure and connected to something important. It was a wonderful spiritual experience for me.”

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are blessed with the knowledge that each individual can communicate with Heavenly Father in prayer. He listens and answers those prayers. One person who witnessed the MTC recording of prayers said, “It was such a treat to be among these young men and women who had just arrived to serve in Africa. They had such a Spirit of Christ about them, and they will

## THE GIFT OF PRAYER

# Prayers for Africa

**By Sister Susan Roberts,  
Africa Southeast Area Public Affairs**

**O**n May 26, 2012, missionaries at the Missionary Training Centre (MTC) in Johannesburg, South Africa, joined together to record prayers for Africa. Eighteen elders and sisters from both African and non-African



*Patrons kneel or sit on the floor by the speakers to hear the prayers. Prayers were broadcast simultaneously through speakers located on the floor of the gallery.*

be a powerful force for good in the South African Mission.”

### “Prayer” Exhibit at Johannesburg Art Gallery

During the Prayer exhibit several prayers were broadcast simultaneously through speakers located on the floor of the gallery. Patrons knelt or sat on the floor by the speakers to hear the prayers. At the exhibit, one young African boy was heard to excitedly exclaim, “I just heard a prayer in my very own language.” ■

## THE GIFT OF THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

# 46 Men Sustained Elders in Kananga Stake Conference

**By Christophe Kawayá, President of Kananga Stake (Democratic Republic of Congo, Lubumbashi Mission)**

**T**remendous spiritual strength was added to the Kananga Democratic Republic of Congo Stake in May’s stake conference when 46 men were sustained to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood office of elder. Six other men were

sustained to be ordained to the office of high priest.

Many of the newly ordained elders are now or will be missionaries in the near future. Other men now preside over their families as Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

About 2,350 people—more than the entire membership of the stake—attended the conference. Many attendees were actively investigating the Church and meeting with missionaries.

### Spirit of Love Felt during Conference

Elder Ulisses Soares, First Counselor in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency, presided at the Kananga stake conference, which was held on 27 May 2012. He commented on the spirit of reverence and love which prevailed throughout the conference sessions.

Kananga stake president Christophe Kawayá described the meetings as “a true feast of the word of God.”

A nonmember guest testified, “The Spirit has touched my heart; I have never met in my life a Church that has the Seventy within its organization. I know this is the Church of Christ.”

### Messages of Encouragement

Messages of encouragement were delivered during conference sessions. President Christophe Kawayá reminded those attending that “the only secret by which we can be abundantly blessed and draw inestimable blessings is by obedience to God’s commandments.”

Newly called Area Seventy Elder L. Jean Claude Mabaya added, “The Church will never be stronger than families. If we want a strong Church, we must have strong families.”

Elder Soares concluded by saying, “All our life, we must namely take on this great lesson; we must endure to the end notwithstanding the adversities.”

The growth in the Melchizedek Priesthood, the spirit of love and unity, and the strong messages of encouragement will continue to influence the Kananga stake well into the future. ■