

AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Are You Honest?

**Elder Carl B. Cook, Second Counsellor
in the Area Presidency**

I was 19 years old and received my mission call to serve in Hamburg, Germany. The bishop interviewed me to help me prepare to enter the temple prior to serving my mission. One of the questions he asked was, “Are you honest in your dealings with your fellow man?” I paused for a moment, evaluated my honesty from my point of view, and thoughtfully responded, “Yes.”

I went to the temple and then to Germany to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others. As I studied the scriptures, taught the gospel, and served God, the influence of the Holy Ghost increased in my life. My thoughts and attitudes began to change. I had an increased understanding of God’s expectations of me. As *Preach My Gospel* describes it, I began forming a “fresh view” of God, myself, and the world (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, 62).

The Importance of Being Completely Honest

One evening my companion and I were teaching a lesson on honesty, and an experience came to my mind that occurred before my mission. As a 16-year-old young man I had fixed up an old farm truck to drive to school and work, but it was an ongoing challenge to keep it running. My friend and I were driving along a country road and noticed a truck similar to mine, discarded in a field next to some old equipment. The old truck was partially dismantled and rusting away. We noticed it had a part that was missing on my truck. Since the truck in the field appeared to be abandoned, I rationalized that surely no one would miss the part. My friend encouraged me, and we removed

the part from the abandoned truck and put it on my truck. I justified my action by reasoning that the owner didn’t really need the part, and I did.

In the mission field I was teaching investigators that stealing is taking something that does not belong to you. My experience of taking that once-insignificant rusty truck part was brought forcefully back to my memory. Suddenly I was pained by my action of taking the part. I knew it was wrong. The Spirit helped me understand that from God’s point of view I had not been honest. I began repenting and asking God for forgiveness. I realized that to be a true servant of the Lord, to teach gospel principles and testify with power, I must be living those principles.

I returned home after completing my mission and wanted to make full restitution—to right my wrong and give closure to my repentance. My first week home I went to the county records office to see who owned the farm where I had taken the truck part. I found the owner’s name and address and travelled to his home in a neighbouring community to make things right. An older gentleman greeted me at the door and I explained what I had done five years earlier. He seemed surprised at my confession and quickly commented, “Oh, that’s OK.” He minimized the situation and assured me that it was not a problem. I paused and said to him, “Well it is a problem to me. I took something that did not belong to me. I would like to make things right. Would you please take this money to allow me to pay the debt I need to pay?” He graciously took the money and I departed.



**Elder Carl B.
Cook**

THE CHURCH OF GOD

The people of Ammon who were numbered among the Church of God were “distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end” (Alma 27:27).

Assess Honesty from God’s Point of View

I learned a valuable lesson from that experience. There is only one way to assess our honesty, and that is from God’s point of view. We cannot accurately determine the honesty of our actions from our own view, our friend’s view, or the views of people in our community.

God is honest and just in all things, and He requires the same of us. As Alma said, “He cannot walk in crooked paths; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from

the right to the left, or from that which is right to that which is wrong; therefore, his course is one eternal round” (Alma 7:20).

If we desire to live in God’s presence, we must change and become as He is. We cannot rationalize or justify any of our behaviour that is in opposition to God. We must view ourselves and our actions as He views them.

Our *Gospel Principles* manual helps us evaluate the honesty of our actions from God’s view:

To Lie Is Dishonest

“Lying is intentionally deceiving others. Bearing false witness is one form of lying. The Lord gave this commandment to the children of Israel: ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour’ (Exodus 20:16). Jesus also taught this when He was on earth (see Matthew 19:18). There are many other forms of lying. When we speak untruths, we are guilty of lying. We can also intentionally deceive others by a gesture or a look, by silence, or by telling only part of the truth. Whenever we lead people in any way to believe something that is not true, we are not being honest.”

To Steal Is Dishonest

“Jesus taught ‘Thou shalt not steal’ (Matthew 19:18). Stealing is taking something that does not

belong to us. When we take what belongs to someone else or to a store or to the community without permission, we are stealing. Taking merchandise or supplies from an employer is stealing. Copying music, movies, pictures, or written text without the permission of the copyright owners is dishonest and is a form of theft. Accepting more change or goods than one should is dishonest. Taking more than our share of anything is stealing.”

To Cheat Is Dishonest

“We cheat when we give less than we owe, or when we get something we do not deserve. Some employees cheat their employers by not working their full time; yet they accept full pay. Some employers are not fair to their employees; they pay them less than they should. Satan says, ‘Take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbour’ (2 Nephi 28:8). Taking unfair advantage is a form of dishonesty. Providing inferior service or merchandise is cheating.”

We Must Not Excuse Our Dishonesty

“People use many excuses for being dishonest. People lie to protect themselves and to have others think well of them. Some excuse themselves for stealing, thinking they deserve what they took, intend to return it, or need it more than the owner. Some cheat to get better grades in school or because ‘everyone else does it’ or to get even.

“These excuses and many more are given as reasons for dishonesty. To the Lord, there are no acceptable reasons. When we excuse ourselves, we cheat ourselves and the Spirit of God ceases to be with us” (*Gospel Principles* [2009], 179–182).

We cannot justify our dishonesty with the reasoning that others around us are dishonest. We cannot control what others do, but we must control what we do.

Elder Sheldon F. Child, then of the Seventy (now emeritus), summarized principles of honesty and integrity this way:

ELDER DAVID A. BEDNAR

People of integrity and honesty not only practice what they preach, they are what they preach. And the Saviour stands as the finest example" ("Be Honest," *New Era*, Oct. 2005, 7).

- "When we say we will do something, we do it.
 - When we make a commitment, we honor it.
 - When we are given a calling, we fulfill it.
 - When we borrow something, we return it.
 - When we have a financial obligation, we pay it.
 - When we enter into an agreement, we keep it."
- ("As Good As Our Bond", *Ensign*, May 1997, 29)

There are temporal blessings we may receive when we live with integrity, such as finding and keeping jobs. President Brigham Young encouraged the early Saints to increase in goodness, to be honest and reliable so that companies looking for employees would say, "Give us a Mormon" (*Teachings of President of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 24). As members of the Church we can all benefit from the cumulative effect of the honesty of other members of the Church.

Spiritual Blessings from Being Completely Honest

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) emphasized the spiritual blessings we can receive. "The rewards of integrity are immeasurable. One is the indescribable inner peace that comes from knowing we are doing what is right; another is an absence of the guilt and anxiety that accompany sin. Another reward of integrity is the confidence it can give us in approaching God. . . . The consummate reward of integrity is the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. . . . Let us live true to the trust the Lord has placed in us" (*Finding Peace in Our Lives* [1995], 193–94).

As we incorporate principles of honesty in our lives, the Lord can bless us with increased strength and commitment. I visited the Brigham Young University campus in Provo, Utah, USA, and read a statement pertaining to honesty made by Karl G. Maeser, a former president of BYU. He said, "Place me behind prison walls—walls of stone ever so high, ever so thick, reaching ever so far into the ground—there is a possibility that in some way or another I may be able to escape; but stand me on

the floor and draw a chalk line around me and have me give my word of honor never to cross it. Can I get out of that circle? No, never! I'd die first" (quoted in Alma P. Burton, *Karl G. Maeser: Mormon Educator* [1953], 71).

I invite each of us to evaluate our honesty. As we ask ourselves the question, "Am I honest in my dealings with my fellow man?" let us pray with a sincere heart to view ourselves and our actions as God views them. If we feel guilt and sorrow, let us repent and change.

I know if we truly repent we will receive the promises described in *Preach My Gospel*. We will feel God's forgiveness and His peace in our lives. Our guilt and sorrow will be swept away. We will feel the influence of the Spirit in greater abundance. And when we pass from this life, we will be more prepared to live with our Heavenly Father and His Son (*Preach My Gospel*, 62). I know these principles are true. ■

LOCAL NEWS

Church Achieves Provisional Recognition in Gabon—Lessons Learned

By Jeffrey N. Clayton, Africa Southeast Area Legal Counsel

After six years of concerted effort, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been granted provisional recognition in Gabon. Acting under the direction of the Spirit, Jeffrey Clayton (Area Legal Counsel, Africa Southeast Area) and

French-speaking Elder David Larsen (Associate Area Legal Counsel) were instrumental in gaining provisional recognition on 22 August 2012.

Provisional recognition allows the Church to organize branches, call priesthood leaders, baptize

new converts and conduct most of its usual activities. This is therefore a key step in the establishment of the Church in Gabon.

In his own words, Brother Clayton shared “Lessons Learned or Re-Learned While on the Lord’s Errand”:

A. LESSON ONE: We are engaged in the work of the Lord

“About a month ago I was studying the scriptures, and I read the following verse, Alma 26:37: ‘Now my brethren, we

see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth. Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever. Amen.’

“The Spirit bore witness to me that morning in a very powerful way that God is mindful of Africa. This is the time for Africa! Everyone one of us here in Africa is blessed to be part of the unfolding of the gospel . . . this is God’s work and we must never forget it.”

Elder David Larsen and Brother Jeff Clayton with a copy of the provisional registration agreement.

B. LESSON TWO: Do your homework first, as in Doctrine and Covenants, section 9

“We worried about and planned for this trip to Gabon for months. We pondered, we prayed, we tried to find out everything that had taken place in the past.

“In Libreville [capital of Gabon] our first visit was with our lawyer to find out anything that could help us in understanding why things had not worked out in the past. She was most helpful in pointing us the right way.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ELDER RALPH HOWES

“Sister Larsen and public affairs put together a wonderful packet of information about the Church in French, which turned out to be a very important tool in touching the hearts of government officials.”

C. LESSON THREE: Listen to priesthood leaders

“Brent Jameson, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Kinshasa Mission president, recommended that we have Gaetan Kelounou, bishop of Talangai Ward, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, come with us. A native French speaker, Bishop Kelounou had many contacts with people in Gabon who turned out to be essential in our effort. He brought the Spirit and worked tirelessly, often late into the night, to help us do what we needed to do. If we had not followed the counsel of President Jameson to bring Bishop Kelounou, we would not have been successful in our efforts.”

D. LESSON FOUR: Go with courage and faith

“In contemplating our trip to Gabon, the Spirit clearly said to me, ‘Stay long enough to get the job done.’ So, when we left for Gabon, we had made reservations for a whole week, but we had only two appointments. We didn’t know who we were going to end up talking to; we didn’t have a clue what was going to

happen. But we went, trusting that the Lord would open the doors and something would happen.

“Because of a mix-up we did not obtain our visas for Gabon. Normally the airlines will not allow a person to fly from South Africa to Gabon without a visa. Our area government relations manager, Joseph Mokoena, came to the airport and literally talked our way onto the plane. He had made some calls to officials in Gabon so we could obtain our visas there. We had not yet received approval from the airlines authority to board the plan when we left for the gate. We did not know who we were to see when we got to Gabon to receive our visas. When our flight was called we hoped that they would let us on, and when we arrived we hoped would find out how to obtain our visas.”

E. LESSON FIVE: Follow the promptings of the Spirit

“As I worried and pondered about this trip, I felt a clear impression that to be successful we had to find the persons whom the Lord had prepared to help us with getting this job done. We did not know who those persons were. The other clear impression I had was that it would take a long time, so we scheduled a whole week in Libreville, even though we did not know how we would spend

all of that time. As it turned out, had we not stayed for the week, we would not have had success.

“Each day, including Sunday, the right person or persons emerged to affect the action necessary to continue moving forward. We were amazed as people were put in our path who ended up helping us.

“Each day brought impressions of where to be and what to do to be of the most influence. During the whole week we knew we were part of an unfolding miracle. We fasted one day to call upon the powers of heaven to touch the hearts of those who were looking at our application.”

Receiving Provisional Registration

“On Thursday, 23 August 2012, we received the provisional registration for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which had been signed the day before. You can imagine how we felt. For six years the Church had been unsuccessful in its attempts at registration. We were hoping when we left South Africa that we would make some progress. That was all we expected. We never thought it would have been possible to obtain provisional registration in a single trip. We were profoundly grateful that a loving Heavenly Father was willing to provide a way for us to be able to do what we did. God surely is in the work!” ■

Fulfilling the Words of a Prophet

“Bless all Thy servants who will labor in this land. Bless the missionaries. . . who will preach and teach of thy Son, Jesus Christ” (from the dedicatory prayer of the nation of Malawi, offered on October 25, 2011, by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles).

By Elder Bruce and Sister Vonda Louthan, Public Affairs, Zambia

“We have a problem here,” President Mikele Padovich heard Elder Stewart’s concerned voice report over the phone. “We can’t cross the border; they will not allow Elder Katomb from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to cross with the visa he has.”

Five elders, with papers prepared for the border crossing, had caught the bus from Zambia to Malawi at 5:00 a.m. It was now 5:00 p.m. President Padovich, Zambia, Lusaka Mission, instructed the missionaries to get off the bus and stay together. He would call them back before the bus was scheduled to leave in 15 minutes.

President Padovich tried unsuccessfully to make alternate arrangements for the elders. Then Elder Mantchichi called, “President, there is a man here who would like to speak to you.” The caller had an unforgettable, resonant voice. He said, “President, I am a friend. I will get your missionary his visa, and they will be able to go.” He said he would call back and hung up.

Shortly, Elder Stewart called again and said, “Here is the man

to speak to you again.” The man said, “Do not worry; your elder has his visa and he can cross the border now.” President Padovich, noting the time, asked, “But hasn’t the bus left already?” The kind stranger replied, “No, I’ve held the bus; the missionaries will be able to travel on.” President Padovich said, “That’s wonderful! May the Lord bless you!” The stranger answered confidently, “He does.”

On the way back to the bus, the elders asked the man why he was so kind. “I wasn’t supposed to be here, but my bus left me here and I didn’t know why,” he replied. “Then I saw you elders from the Church of the Latter-day Saints. I’ve always respected

members of your Church and when I saw you were in trouble, I could not hesitate to help. If you have any problems, just give me a call.”

This man so fortuitously present at a distant border crossing was “a high level political official with great influence.”

President Padovich had felt strongly about transferring these five young elders to Lilongwe, Malawi, where many members speak little English. More Chichewa-speaking elders were needed there. Elder Mantchichi, a native Chichewa speaker from Malawi, had taught the language to his former companion, Elder Stewart, and to Elder Katomb.

Since the arrival of these elders in July, the Church has been growing rapidly in Lilongwe, Malawi. As stated in the dedicatory prayer of Malawi, the Lord honored His commitment to bless His servants, the missionaries, going to labor in Malawi. ■

Elders at the Malawi border crossing (left to right): Elder Tsunda, Elder Stewart, Elder Chikenge, Elder Katomb, Elder Mantchichi.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ELDER AND SISTER LOUTHAN

Church Members Assist in Zambia's Measles Immunization Campaign

By Elder Bruce and Sister Vonda Louthan

Over six million Zambian children were immunized against measles in a little over a week—a spectacular accomplishment. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints volunteered over 7,600 hours of time in immunization clinics during the measles campaign.

Approximately 90% of children between the ages of six months and 15 years were immunized during the week of September 15—just under half of Zambia's population. Branch President Liyalii said the effort was worth it “because measles scares us . . . it kills our children.”

One humorous episode in a clinic occurred when a 2-year-old boy cried after his vaccination. Sister Mary Harvey, a senior missionary, consoled him in her arms until he was comforted and settled down. After he finished sobbing, he looked up at Sister Harvey and realized with shock that she was not his mother! Then the little one cried even louder.

A parade and other festivities celebrated the launch of the immunization campaign. Estimated cost of the measles initiative was US \$10 million.

The Church assisted with the printing and distribution of over 100,000 fliers advertising the measles campaign. During six days 370 Church members volunteered 7,600 hours in the overburdened clinics. Branch presidents arranged for lunch to be distributed to people working in the clinics in their branch areas.

Planning for the huge measles campaign started in February under the direction of Zambia's Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health's Social Mobilization Team (SOC MOB



President Liyalii, Lilanda Branch, and Elder Bruce Louthan with a measles campaign banner.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SISTER VONDA LOUTHAN



A marching band and majorettes conclude the parade at the Measles Campaign Launch site.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SISTER VONDA LOUTHAN



Team), UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund), the Lions' Club, Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ), and WHO (World Health Organization). Several NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) participated as well as the Church and two government ministries. ■

A Helping Hands volunteer holds a child receiving the measles immunization.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELDER AND SISTER HARVEY

When Law and Faith Go Hand in Hand

By Mbidi Ilunga, Lubumbashi Mission Public Affairs Director, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Kadima Mutombo is a key decision-maker in Mbuji-Mayi—a city of 1,680,991 residents—where he serves the Lord as district president and is also the city’s notary.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a notary is a public officer who is involved in all areas of law. The notary has real public powers because he is appointed in behalf of the State by the Minister of Justice. Official decisions of a notary are made in behalf of and backed up by the State.

President Mutombo said, “It is difficult to do my job when you do not have the correct principles such as the ones the Church teaches us.”

Speaking of his work, President Mutombo said, “As a notary of the city I have the opportunity to sit with the key figures in the city of Mbuji-Mayi and give my point of view whenever necessary.”

Training of Judicial Police Officers

Then he added, “The Interdisciplinary Centre for Permanent Study (CIDEP), Open University asked me to train Judicial Police Officers (JPO) with general jurisdiction in the city of Mbuji-Mayi and its surroundings. During JPO training, I often have the opportunity to talk about the honesty of Latter-day Saints. It is a model for future JPO to be fair in the way they judge offenses that will come before them.”

Before the end of their training, JPO trainees receive a *Liahona*. Several have become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Many, including those who are not members of the Church, desire to emulate the example of President Mutombo’s commitment to high standards.

Church members going to the South Africa Johannesburg Temple must have marital or parental permission certified by the notary. With

President Mutombo as notary, it is easier to obtain that permission.

Kadima Mutombo is the father of 12 children who are all members of the Church. Four of his children have served honourable missions, and others are preparing to serve.

Story of President Mutombo’s Conversion to the Church

Speaking of his life before joining the Church, President Mutombo stated, “I attended several churches. . . . At some point my health was threatened. . . . This prompted me to think seriously about my religion, my profession and my future.

“I missed my family when I was away from them. I did not effectively play the role of a father when I was absent. One day, my children told me about their religion and invited me to church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The lessons and organization touched my heart. It was really the church that I was looking for!

“Now I have time for my family. Through family home evening, I can solve problems that arise without too much trouble. In fact most [problems] are prevented instead of solving them.” ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY EMMANUEL MBAYO

President Kadima Mutombo, far left, and Sister Mutombo, far right, stand in front of the church with eight of their children.



PHOTOGRAPH BY EMMANUEL MBAYO

President and Sister Mutombo in their home.