

AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Teaching the Gospel in the Savior's Way

By Elder James J. Hamula, Area President

When Jesus was on the earth, he “went about all the cities and villages, *teaching* in their synagogues, and *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35; emphasis added). We would do well to see the connection between the Lord’s teaching, preaching and healing of the people (see Jacob 2:8; James 1:21).

As Jesus looked upon the multitudes, “he was moved with compassion on them, because they *fainted*, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36; emphasis added). Jesus then said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37–38).

As in the Lord’s time, there are many in our time who are “fainting” and need the nurture of the Lord and His servants. Many “faint” because they are “wander[ing] in the wilderness”, being “hungry and thirsty” and having “no city to dwell in” (Psalm 107:4–5). Speaking of our day, Amos saw “a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.” Said Amos, “they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11–12).

Sadly, the greatest victims of this famine appear to be among the rising generation. “In that

day,” concluded Amos, “shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst” (Amos 8:13). Because of their inherent dependence on the old, the young’s hunger and thirst can only be ascribed to the failure of the old—their parents, leaders and teachers—to impart the bread and water of life to the young.

In the Church today, we rightly claim that the word of the Lord has been imparted to us. But can we—the parents, leaders and teachers in the Church—rightly claim that we are imparting the word of the Lord to our youth in a manner that moves them to understand, embrace and live by the word of the Lord? Failure to impart the word of the Lord to our youth in a manner that allows them to understand, embrace and live by the word of the Lord results in their fainting for hunger and thirst (see Judges 2:10–13; 1 Nephi 2:12; Mosiah 26:1–4) and wandering away into strange roads and forbidden paths (see 1 Nephi 8:28, 32).

It is contrary to the Lord’s desire that his people go away with “nothing to eat” (Matthew 15:32; see also Mark 8:3). In His absence, it is incumbent on us—we who are the parents, leaders and teachers in the Lord’s Church today—to teach and preach the word of the Lord, as it has been given to us, in a manner that the young among us may be nourished and healed unto everlasting salvation by that same word.

The Church’s new youth curriculum, announced by the First Presidency of the Church at October general conference and available to all parents, teachers, advisers and leaders of youth in the Church, calls on all of us to impart the word of the Lord to the youth of the Church in a different way than we have in the past. It calls on us to



**Elder James J.
Hamula**

abandon the “stand-and-deliver” model of teaching, by which the teacher talks at the student and the student simply notes what the teacher says. Instead, the new youth curriculum calls on us to “mentor” students through a self-learning process that invites them to act for themselves on the truth that is imparted.

For a model on how to mentor in this way, we may look to the Savior for His way of teaching the gospel. As we consider how the Lord taught the gospel, you will envision the following hallmarks of His manner of teaching and desire to do the same:

- He loved those he taught;
- He knew who they were and what they could become;
- He prepared Himself through fasting and praying;
- He used the scriptures to teach and testify;
- He shared simple stories, parables and real-life examples that related gospel principles to those he taught;
- He asked questions that caused them to think and feel;
- He inspired their confidence to share their thoughts and feelings, and was sincerely interested in their answers;
- He invited them to testify;
- He trusted them;
- He invited them to act in faith;
- He was their example and mentor.

The Lord’s call for more labourers in the harvest is a call to join Him in teaching the gospel His way. It is my prayer that we may let go of our way of teaching the gospel, and learn to teach the gospel the Savior’s way, and thereby heal and nourish our students such that they will “never . . . fall away” (Alma 23:6). ■

Latter-day Samaritans

By Sandra McLennan

Ninety members from the Gold Coast Stake took part in the Marianne Thrush Appeal Fun Run/Walk at Varsity College Oval, Varsity Lakes, in October 2012.

The Marianne Thrush Appeal was set up as a one-off event this year by Sandra McLennan, Ralph Hannant, and Shannon Stockman of the Burleigh Ward, Gold Coast Stake, to raise money to assist with accommodation expenses for Camp Hill Ward YSA member Marianne Thrush, who is currently in Melbourne waiting for a multiple organ transplant donor to become available. Individual members of the Camp Hill Ward, Brisbane, also became involved by holding an auction to contribute to the appeal.

Sandra McLennan met Marianne Thrush when they were in the same ward at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane for nine months, from June 2011 to February 2012. Sandra was finally discharged after 11 months in hospital, while Marianne’s most recent hospitalisation was for more than two and a half years.

“Many patients who came

into our hospital ward were on transplant waiting lists. Some had been waiting for a number of years. Sadly, some of them would not survive long enough to receive a donor organ,” Sandra said.

“Had Heavenly Father decided to call me home in April 2011, after serious and extensive complications during surgery, then my family and I would have been happy to have been able to donate my organs and tissue to someone else that they might live. Due to the prayers of so many family and Church members, my life was spared. Six weeks after my initial surgery, I was transferred to Princess Alexandra Hospital where I met Marianne. I knew Heavenly Father had planned that I should survive and meet and become friends with Marianne and her family,” said Sandra.

Marianne, who celebrated her 23rd birthday in November 2012, was born with chronic idiopathic intestinal pseudo obstruction. She has a condition called hollow visceral myopathy in which her intestinal muscles no longer work to push the food through her body. After a lifetime of pain,



hospitalization, treatment and 15 surgeries, her only chance for survival rests on being able to find an organ donor, when she will make medical history becoming the first in Australia to undergo a full stomach transplant. She will also receive a new small intestine, pancreas and duodenum in the marathon operation at Austin Hospital in Heidelberg, Melbourne.

Like Marianne, many people have to wait for someone to die before a donor might be found. As members of the Church, we know that Heavenly Father will call us home at a time of His choosing—babies, children, youth and adults alike. We have no control over this, but Heavenly Father has given us free agency to decide what good we might be able to do

here on earth to help someone else.

We ask ourselves, “What would Jesus do?” Sometimes we feel that we are weak and lack the strength to rescue others, but the Lord reminds us, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). ■

Some of the Gold Coast Stake members who participated in the Fun Run.

Called to Serve

By Catherine Vaughan

The collective intake of breath in the conference centre, and at many venues around the world, was an indication of the momentous announcement when President Thomas S. Monson began his opening remarks in the October 2012 general conference. The age for missionaries serving was lowered to 18 years for young men and 19 years for young women. It was one of those moments when many members of the Church will remember where they were when they heard the news, as they recount the effect it had on them and their families.

In the surprising announcement, the prophet said, “I am pleased to announce that effective immediately all worthy and able young men . . . will have the option of being recommended for missionary service beginning at the age of 18, instead of age 19. . . . As we have prayerfully pondered the age at which young men may begin their missionary service, we have also given consideration to the age at which a young woman might serve. Today I am pleased to announce that able, worthy young women who have the desire to serve may be recommended for missionary service beginning at age 19, instead of age 21” (“Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 4–5).

Already the policy change has resulted in a vast increase in missionary applications from throughout the Pacific Area being submitted, and many young men and women are enthusiastically taking advantage of the option to serve a mission now, rather than later.

President Mark Pemberton from the Perth Australia Southern River Stake said, “It certainly is

an exciting announcement that will reverberate through the Church for some time. There is significant excitement amongst the young people in our stake. Bishops have had many young women ask to visit with them to discuss a mission. Our youth are exceptionally excited, and many young men and young women have indicated that they are keen to go as soon as they are of age. It is difficult to give a percentage of those who have indicated they will go earlier, but I would say amongst the women we will have about five times the number serving missions by the end of the year. This is a significant increase for us, and will have a huge impact on our stake as the blessings flow while they prepare, while they serve, and when they come home.”

President Pemberton concluded, “I am so excited to be a stake president at this time, and I am thrilled to see the Lord working through a vibrant prophet, who is truly the Lord’s mouthpiece on the Earth.”

Brisbane Australia Cleveland Stake president, Dale Maurer, has seen the same result within his stake since the announcement last year. He said, “President Monson’s announcement regarding the lowering of the minimum age for missionary service has been a great inspiration and motivation for the youth and YSA in our stake. The numbers attending mission preparation class lifted from 10–15 attending each week to 40–50 in the weeks following the announcement.

Soon after the announcement I had a number of 19- and 20-year-old sisters advise me that they would be putting in their missionary application papers. We have 18-year-old brethren who, upon hearing the announcement, had a strong feeling to defer their second year of university so they could submit their mission papers straight away.

In the initial few weeks after October conference I met with two sisters who are both under 21 years of age, who immediately submitted their applications.”

President Maurer continues, “When the announcement was made and since that time, I have seen the wisdom of the Lord and the trust that he places in young people. He is certainly hastening His work and calling upon parents, leaders and especially our youth to prepare early, and prepare well.”

Miracles are occurring around the world as the missionary age announcement is affecting the lives of future missionaries and their families in unexpected ways.

Senior missionary couple Elder and Sister Jordan, serving in the Apia Samoa Mission, saw this occur in the life of their 17-year-old grandson, Andrew Jordan, who had a deep desire to serve in the United States Army. From the age of 11 Andrew set his sights on entering the United States Military Academy (or West Point, as it is more commonly known.) The acceptance process was extremely brutal and time-consuming. It required him to go through four or five different committees in order to be accepted. After this excruciating process he received an acceptance letter, with instructions to commence his training at the academy a few months later. To accommodate young LDS recruits who may want to enlist, the academy has a policy that once recruits have completed a full year of training, they can take two years time out to serve a mission. Andrew fully intended to serve his mission after his first year at West Point, and take advantage of that, once he was 19.

Then unexpectedly, he received a letter from the Department of Defence informing him that

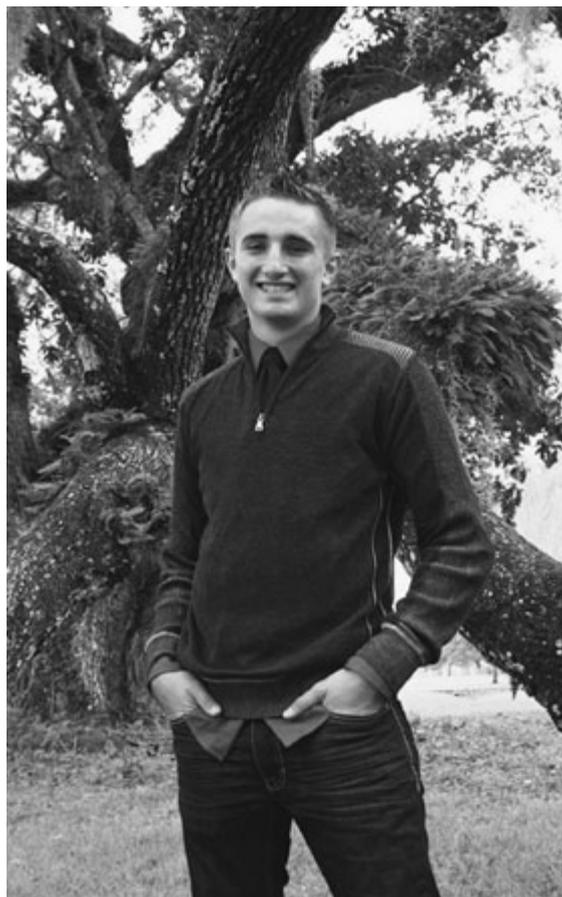


IMAGE COURTESY OF ANDREW JORDAN AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

Andrew Jordan

he had been disqualified on medical grounds. He appealed vigorously and his family enlisted the help of a senator, a congressman, and the army general in charge of West Point to apply for a special waiver. All efforts failed, and the congressman involved told them the reason it was just not meant to be was because God had a different plan for him.

Confused, Andrew started searching for what it was that he needed to be doing. He realized that he wanted to be on his mission, but he still had more than a year to wait. For several months he asked the Lord frequently for something to happen that would allow him to leave early.

Having turned 18 just two weeks before the October general conference, Andrew sat listening as President Monson began the announcement, and had a sense of what was about to be said. He unashamedly began to dance around the TV cheering with excitement. He immediately called his parents and his bishop, and started his mission application.

“As I sat and pondered the glory of the Lord and his gospel, I was struck by the realization that, had I been accepted at West Point, I would not have been allowed to leave for my mission for another year,” he said. “I am not naive enough to think the Lord made this announcement just for me, but I do firmly believe the Saviour has molded my life in such a way that I would be prepared for this point in time. Someone out there in the world needs me to be a tool of the Lord, and allow Him to use me to bring the gospel to them.”

Andrew has since been called to serve in the Russia Moscow Mission.

At a press conference in October last year following the announcement, Elder Russell M. Nelson

of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, chairman of the Church’s Missionary Executive Council, said the matter had been prayerfully studied for many months. “This is an option that will allow more young men and women to enjoy the blessings of missionary service,” he said.

“It will also be a great blessing to their families now and in the future. We hope that many will seize this opportunity. We hope that it will also allow our youth greater flexibility in planning for their schooling, careers, marriage and military obligations, when and if needed.”

Since the earliest days of the Church, more than one million missionaries have served worldwide, and with this change, many more missionaries will heed the call to serve the Lord. ■

Endure to the End

By Lauren Townsend

Each day we face our own trials and tribulations. Some pass quickly, and others have a profound effect on our lives and our futures.

Kris Carroll from Minchinbury Ward in Sydney suffered an accident on six years ago, resulting in the loss of his foot. He was walking around a forklift which was moving a press machine. “The press was top-heavy, and it began to topple,” explained

Kris. The machinery fell to the side, bouncing onto his right foot. Kris lay in shock near the roadside, his foot severely damaged.

A passing motorist saw that Kris was injured and stopped to help him. The man was a recent convert to the Church, and held the priesthood keys. Kris could sense comfort coming from the stranger who was helping him. He had one of his Father’s servants by his side, and it was obvious that Heavenly Father was taking care of him.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of

the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “From the beginning down through the dispensations, God has used angels . . . in conveying love and concern for His children. . . . Seen or unseen they are always near”.¹

After four days in hospital it was clear that the foot was dying and could not be saved. Kris made the grim decision to amputate his foot 30cm below the knee. Kris returned to work on crutches seven weeks later. He was adamant that he would never use a wheelchair. He was fitted with a new prosthetic

IMAGE COURTESY OF LAUREN TOWNSEND AND USED WITH PERMISSION.



Kris Carroll with his wife, Alyssa, and children Ashton, Zara, Savannah, and Makaylah.

leg within two months of the amputation.

Currently serving as the Young Men president of the Minchinbury Ward, Kris shares

his favourite joke: "I know that there is life after death, and I already have one foot in heaven holding the door open for me."

.....
Shortly before Kenneth Tafai found the gospel and was baptized, his mother died of cancer. Kenneth, who is deaf, is in the Epsom Ward, in Auckland, New Zealand. When he received the news that his mother, who was living in Australia, was dying, he went to his room

and cried. He felt no comfort, and didn't know what to do. When his mother returned home to New Zealand to be with her family, he gave up work to look after her.

One morning Kenneth heard his mother calling out to him. When he went to help her, she

IMAGE COURTESY OF KEETHAN SUNDAR AND USED WITH PERMISSION.



told him that he needed to stay out of trouble, and he would find the right church. When he did, she would be proud of the decisions he made. Then she passed away.

After the passing of his mother, Kenneth sought comfort with alcohol, but the emptiness and pain wouldn't go away. Eventually, circumstances led him to witness some priesthood blessings being given, and he realized that he had a warm feeling, and felt at peace. After learning more about the Saviour and gospel principles, he felt that he was in the right church, and asked the

Kenneth Tafai congratulates fellow Church member Andrew Pelasio after competing in a New Zealand/Australia Deaf Rugby tournament.

missionaries to baptise him.

With Kenneth's baptism came the confirmation of the Holy Ghost. It was a very special moment. Being deaf, he required someone to interpret for him in sign language so he could understand what was being said at the blessing. Afterward, the interpreting

brother told Kenneth that he himself felt the presence of Kenneth's mother. This added to Kenneth's testimony that the Church was true, and he knew that his mother was happy with his choice. Kenneth is now preparing to become a missionary. He looks forward to serving his Father.

.....
President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counsellor in the First Presidency, spoke about the infinite power of hope at a conference in October 2008: "Hope . . . is like the beam of sunlight rising up and above the horizon of our present circumstances.

.....
It pierces the darkness with a brilliant dawn. It encourages and inspires us to place our trust in the loving care of an eternal Heavenly Father, who has prepared a way for those who seek eternal truth in a world of relativism, confusion and of fear."²

.....
Sonya Reid from Claremont Meadows Ward in Sydney, who is a nutritarian mother of five children, has a testimony of the doctrine relating to the Word of Wisdom. She has experienced miscarriages in the past. "In 2010, when I was about 20 weeks pregnant, my baby [Dastan] died. There was a lot of emotional pain," she said.

.....
the health issues building up, Sonya felt inspired to pray and study the Word of Wisdom. She eventually found that quotes from the leaders of the Church, including Brigham Young and Joseph Smith, related to their situation. "It was about listening to the Spirit, learning about the body and how the food and herbs affect the body, and healing the family. It's called self-reliance . . . it's my responsibility to look after my family," she said.

Medical tests showed no obvious reason for the miscarriage. Shortly after, Sonya's husband, Thomas, was diagnosed with cancer in the lymph gland. With

Sonya believes that applying the Word of Wisdom to her life



IMAGE COURTESY OF LAUREN TOWNSEND AND USED WITH PERMISSION

Sonya Reid

had many benefits. She and her husband lost 30kg, and they both saw other improvements in their health. "All the promises are in the Word of Wisdom," Sonya said.

Like Joseph Smith, who sought for comfort and understanding as to why he had to face such difficulty while being a prisoner in Liberty Jail, Sonya finds comfort in the words of Doctrine and Covenants 122:7, which says "Know thou . . . that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good." ■

NOTES

- 1. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Ministry of Angels," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 29.
- 2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Infinite Power of Hope," *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 22.