

AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA SEVENTY MESSAGE

Faith Centered on Jesus Christ and Respect for His Commandments Are Implicitly Bound by Divine Promise

By Elder L. Jean Claude Mabaya, Area Seventy

The first principle of the gospel is faith in Jesus Christ. Having faith in Christ is believing firmly that He is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the living God, and that He came to earth to give His life that we might be saved. It is absolutely true.

We must follow this teaching despite the teachings from the world and men's misconceptions. This principle is of vital importance and is essential to our salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us with His blood, hence the purpose of our faith in Him; He has given salvation at a condition . . . and that condition—that we must not forget—is that we keep His commandments and that we remember Him. If we do this, we have the divine promise to have happiness in this world and eternal life in the world to come.

Our happiness on earth and our eternal salvation require many decisions to be taken, among which some may appear to be difficult. We will not be able to grow in justice in this world if we are not careful about our choices. Every day, opportunities to exercise our agency arise before us; if our capacity to choose is combined with faith in Christ, it will enable us to always choose the right like “Jesus of Nazareth . . . who went about doing good.”¹ Some people prefer to accomplish many things by themselves in order to bless their lives in this world, but they forget the essential, even to associate that human capacity with faith in Jesus Christ to reach what has more everlasting value. A young man has particularly been surprised in his attitude.

Use All His Human Capacities

He was in his early twenties when the gospel was brought to him. He was selling some small items at the market and was living at his cousin's place, who was a member of the Church. His small business was running relatively well but took most of his time. Most of his appointments with missionaries failed due to his unavailability. His heart seemed to be more turned to the things of this world than to spiritual matters. Most of the time he would leave the house to avoid the missionaries and come back when they had left. He surely did not want to look like those young men in a white shirt, tie and name tag, who seemed to be desperate, he said. His goal in life was to use all his human capabilities to build his life and raise a family. After having tried to lead his life that way, he encountered many adversities that could compromise all his future. **President Ezra Taft Benson warned us: Pride is characterized by asking “What do I want from life?” rather than by “What does God want me to do with my life?” Pride turns us to our own will rather than to God's will. It is all about love for man before the love for God.**² All these adversities humbled this young man; he recognized his mistake and understood he made a wrong choice.

He finally accepted to have missionary lessons until he was baptized and given the Holy Ghost.



Elder L. Jean
Claude Mabaya

Some years later, he served an honorable full-time mission. He acquired good experiences that prepared him to become a mature and responsible man.

He applied for and received the Perpetual Educational Fund (PEF) to pursue his professional studies and created a small income-generating business at the same time. Months later, he married a young woman in the Church, and they were sealed for time and eternity at the Johannesburg Temple. They currently have two children, who are also sealed to them. After his mission he received many callings, among which the most recent are as a member of the bishopric and of the stake presidency. Today this young man is building his life, not according to his will, but according to the Lord's will, all because of his faith in Jesus Christ.

The Lord said: "Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome."³ When we are humble, we become teachable and receptive to the message of the gospel. Then progress, light and development can occur. Trust can develop and we can return back to our celestial home through faith.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ leads us to obedience to the commandments. Both are tied up by a covenant act performed during our baptism. A covenant is a solemn agreement, between a man and God, which commits them. On one hand, God promises to bless us, and on the other hand, we promise to obey Him. Covenants observance helps us qualify for all the blessings of eternal life. During his setting apart as President of the Church, Harold B. Lee declared that the safety of the Church lies in Church members' obedience to God's commandments. . . . When they obey the commandments, blessings will come.⁴

We will not otherwise be blessed than by respecting covenants entered into, which will influence our behavior, attitude, and choices of every moment, of every day and of our lifetime. We might

wrongfully believe that our lives are surrounded by restrictions which impose on us a tailored lifestyle, or that the joy of living in this world is reduced to the only respect of covenants, or more, that we will not have as much energy and spiritual strength as to face Satan's influence in our all life. It would be a mistake to think like this. God our Father wants to make each of us capable of enjoying all the blessings He enjoys. He loves us so much that He provided for us a wonderful plan and ways to obtain the fulness of joy. Having a personal belief that commandments truly come from God and that they help us live a happier life testifies of our love for Him. The scriptures declare: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."⁵

Keith B. McMullin, formerly of the Presiding Bishopric, said: "As men, women, boys and girls do their duty to God, they feel impelled to fulfill their duties to one another, their family, church, nation and all things entrusted to their care. They are duty-bound to magnify their callings and to be law-abiding, good people. They become humble, submissive and easily entreated. Temperance conquers indulgence; obedience guides their diligence. Peace distills upon them. Citizens become honest, communities become benevolent, and neighbors become friends. Our Heavenly Father is satisfied, the earth is pacified and the world becomes a better place."⁶ When we love God with all our heart, barriers of enmity fall and there will be no envies, no discords, no uproar, no fornication, no lies, no murder, no lewdness, but we will love our neighbor as ourselves.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ Can Heal Us

Despite a long road ahead, we can draw strength from, or find comfort in, the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is reflected by the sufferings that He has endured in the Garden of Gethsemane and

His death on the cross. And that death ended with His Resurrection. It brought us two great gifts: The forgiveness for our sins and resurrection for everybody. The Atonement of Jesus Christ can heal us from our guilt if we feel weakened or crushed by the burden of our sins. This takes effect in the life of whoever has faith in Jesus Christ and repents of their sins. Life can become pleasant again after this; self-confidence is restored, the Holy Ghost becomes a guide, and perseverance becomes a purpose. Therefore “Faith in Christ; repentance; making, renewing, and keeping covenants; . . . becomes a pattern of living. Our actions in daily life are shaped and governed by these principles. Peace and joy come by following this way, and we gradually grow in Christlike attributes.”⁷

Eternal life is the greatest blessing promised to man if he follows God’s established way. The sacred books and teachings of living prophets are a light source at our feet, which enlightens the whole world and brings spiritual knowledge to humble men and women. Following the prophets helps us remain close to divinity. In Mosiah chapters 4 and 5, after his talk in front of the multitude, King Benjamin said that his people felt the Spirit of the Lord and were prompted to promise God that they would keep His commandments. In summary, his people committed to obey the following principles: to remember the greatness of God, to humble themselves, pray daily, do no evil to others, teach children to love one another, share with the needy, have pure thoughts, words and actions. As the people did that, they drew nearer to the Lord. The same prevails for us when we practice these same principles and consider Christ as our firm foundation, a sure foundation in which the devil’s forces will never have power over us.

The prophet Helaman said: “It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the

devil shall send forth his mighty winds . . . yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery . . . because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”⁸

Let us remember that Jesus Christ is the author and the consumer of our faith. We must respect the laws and commandments, ordinances and covenants given by God. It is promised to us that at the end, if we follow the path of obedience and “press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”⁹ ■

NOTES

1. Acts 10:38.
2. See Ezra Taft Benson, “Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” *Ensign*, May 1986.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 63:2.
4. Quoted in Bruce A. Carlson, “When the Lord Commands,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 38.
5. 1 John 5:3.
6. Keith B. McMullin, “Our Path of Duty,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 14.
7. *Preach My Gospel*, p. 67.
8. Helaman 5:12.
9. 2 Nephi 31:20.

LOCAL NEWS

First Missionaries Serve from Southern Sudan

By Sister Ann Andrus

“It’s a new country!” That’s what citizens of South Sudan—the youngest independent nation in the world—say enthusiastically about their country, created officially at midnight on July 9, 2011.

In March 2013, Juba Branch,

South Sudan marked a first of its own. Two young men, Jervase Makur Dhoul Ajok and Mark (Mike) Unwar Ukuch, received their calls to serve missions. They are the first to serve from the Juba Branch, Uganda Kampala



Mission, and perhaps the first to serve holding passports from this young country.

Due to displacements caused by 22 years of civil war in Sudan, both young men became members of the Church while living in foreign countries.

In 2000, Jervase (right in photo) fled his home of Ananatak in Southern Sudan at the age of 13 during a night attack on the village. His flight into the bush began a journey of almost 1,000 miles and severe hardships, including lack of water, food, and shelter as he travelled with people he did not know toward the Kenyan border. He stayed seven years in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, Nairobi, and came in contact with young missionaries on the streets.

Jervase visited the Church for the first time in October 2007 and

***Jervase Makur
Dhoul Ajok
(right) and
Mark (Mike)
Unwar Ukuch.***

was warmly received by Bishop Justus Suchi and members of the Kasarani Ward, Nairobi. He was baptized seven months later, having received a testimony of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon as ancient scripture, and an increase in his knowledge of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Desiring to serve a mission, but having only refugee status in Kenya and no passport, Jervase boarded a bus to return to his homeland, now the sovereign nation of South Sudan. He has been able to communicate with his mother recently, after 12 years of separation, and he has received his passport. This young man, who has faced many challenges in his short life, looks forward to his service as a full-time missionary in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission. Jervase will report

to the Ghana Missionary Training Center on Friday, June 28, 2013.

Mark (Mike) Unwar Ukuch (left in photo) was fatherless from birth due to the death of his father during the Sudanese civil war. His uncle supported Mike's family, providing for Mike's education at a boarding school in Uganda. Mike's cousin Alum joined the Church in 2009 and began to share with him what she had learned. After meeting with several sets of missionaries from the Uganda Kampala Mission over a period of one year, Mike was baptized on December 19, 2010.

After completing his secondary education in Uganda, Mike returned to Juba, South Sudan, and began attending the Juba Branch, where he was ordained an elder in preparation for his call as a missionary. Mike bears witness of the great influence full-time missionaries have in sharing the gospel message and looks forward to the day when missionaries will serve in his country of South Sudan. For now, Mike will be one of the first two missionaries from the Juba Branch; he will proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Ghana Accra Mission. He will report to the Ghana Missionary Training Center on Friday, June 14, 2013.

With this status comes the opportunity for many "firsts" for the new nation. ■



Kathy Duncan (right) and Launi Rassmussen (left) visit from Idaho.

Open House Held in Kasane Meetinghouse

By Cornelia Rautenbach

On March 9, 2013, members held their first open house in the Kasane meetinghouse, Botswana. Church members and couple missionaries gathered that Saturday morning to help prepare for the event.

The meetinghouse had been freshly painted, carpentry work

Members and investigators at the Kasane meetinghouse.

had been done, and there was a lot of cleaning and tidying up to be done.

The open house started at around 2:00 p.m., and about 50 people attended. Investigators were taught short lessons on basic principles of the Church in each of the rooms. A short movie about the plan of salvation and a short message about the Book of Mormon were played for the guests.

The priesthood leaders set up

a table outside the chapel with pamphlets for investigators as they came inside.

A woman and her children from a few houses down the road came to the open house, and they loved the lessons. The woman's sister is a member, and when I was able to attend the lesson she was in, I shared with her my testimony of the Book of Mormon and of its truthfulness, and she smiled.

A man driving past selling watermelon and sugar canes stopped, and asked if we would like to buy. I told him that I would trade with him if he would come in with his friend and listen to the messages that we had for them. He was a bit concerned about the safety of his car and goods, but he agreed to park it in front of the building where the priesthood holders were standing. During the lesson the man shared with the missionaries that he was from Francistown and that he and his fiancée were actually looking for a church to attend and to be married in.

On Sunday morning we all gathered for church, and when we walked in the chapel looked very beautiful with a picture of Christ at the end of the passage. As we started the service, more people came in, and there were only four empty chairs left in sacrament meeting. ■



My “90-Day Tithing Challenge” Testimony

By **Johannah (Gwen) Molepo**

As a recent convert to the Church, I was concerned with perfecting myself and preparing to go to the temple. I was doing part-time catering work, which brought in very little money, and as a result I did not pay my tithing.

Elder and Sister Robison, senior missionaries in the Seshego Group, came and read to me the 90-day tithing challenge from Elder Cook, *Prove the Lord*, which was issued in the September 2012 *Liahona*. I had a catering job following their visit, and I paid my tithing. I was left with very little money to buy petrol and food for my next catering job. Somehow my car never ran out of petrol. I thanked the Lord and knew He was blessing me because I paid my tithing.

In order to reduce my expenses, I went to my gym and asked to be released from my contract. The gym inquired why. I explained that I did not have a regular job and they answered, “You do now.” I was hired to advertise a new program to



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF JOHANNAH (GWEN) MOLEPO

Johannah (Gwen) Molepo

potential customers and was successful in signing many new clients for the program. The gym also gave me free membership and excused my debt to them. “Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord” (Malachi 3:10).

A month later my employer promoted me to Assistant Marketing Manager because of my successes and enthusiasm. I am grateful to the Lord for opening the windows of heaven. I know if I obey the Lord’s commandments and teach my children to do likewise, the Lord will continue to bless us. ■

Senior Missionaries Give Service

By **Sister Tina Murdock**

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo launched a project on July 15, 2010, to restore the KwaZulu-Natal Children’s Hospital [formerly the Addington Children’s Hospital] at the Durban beachfront.

The hospital was originally opened in 1931 and became the

first children’s hospital on the African continent. It was closed down during the apartheid era due to serving children of all races.

On March 30, 2013, Elder James C. Von Stetten (president of the South Africa Durban Mission) asked the senior missionary

couples serving in the Durban Mission to gather as part of their annual couples conference and give service at the hospital. The couples painted the badly weathered temporary fence surrounding the building. The fence will stand approximately two more years until the project of restoration is complete.

As the couples painted, many people who were passing by



Senior couple missionaries get ready to work.



Couples paint the badly weathered temporary fence.

“first” Health Precinct as part of a proposed inner city regeneration project that will address adult and child health and welfare issues.



Couple missionaries work together to paint the fence.

The project will address these needs by restoring and redeveloping this site in line with the needs of today’s infants, children and adolescents. It will cater to the needs of children and their caregivers, including HIV-affected children, children with mental health challenges, children who need special rehabilitative care and services, and children with nutritional challenges.

stopped to ask why the couples were out on a Saturday morning painting the old fence. This provided several opportunities to share information about the Church, including giving away the Book of Mormon and several pass-along-cards. Some asked where our church is located and said they would like

to visit our services. A woman stopped and asked if she could help paint for a while, and many people thanked the missionary couples for helping to make the beachfront a little more beautiful.

The vision for the project was to restore the Children’s Hospital and also create a provincial

There are 15 missionary couples that serve in the Durban Mission, and their age does not slow them down as they share joy in giving their time and energy to a good cause. Service is an important part of the Church, and the couples follow Jesus Christ, who was the greatest example of service. ■

Young Missionaries Give Hope in Khayelitsha Township

Elder Lon and Sister Susan Roberts

The Cape South Zone missionaries charitably volunteered to assist in building permanent houses for victims of a New Year's Day 2013 fire that destroyed 678 homes in the Khayelitsha Township.

The rally, led by Elders Dallin Horan and Michael Knight, took place during the week leading up to the greatest charitable act the world has ever known, the Crucifixion of the Savior Jesus Christ.

Twelve elder missionaries wanted to emulate Christ by “walking the walk” and serving as He did. Young strong bodies were the order of the day as the missionaries donned yellow Mormon Helping Hands vests. They dug through leftovers from the fire using shovels and picks, and used hammers and nails to prepare 6m x 3m solid foundations for 12 new houses for displaced, tragedy-stricken families.

The preparation of the foundation surfaces has been the object of long delays for homes being finished for recipients presently displaced and living in the O.R. Tambo Community Hall as well as other places in Khayelitsha. This volunteer effort of preparing the foundations will dramatically speed up the effort to restore normal family function for the displaced families.

After the project was finished on Thursday, 27 March 2013, the missionaries gathered at the OR Tambo Community Hall to have prayer with victims of the fire. The comments and prayers uttered were of thankfulness to our Savior Jesus Christ and for a brighter future and hope through hard work and supporting each other through community service and neighbourly love. ■

Missionaries prepare the foundations for new homes for fire victims.



One of the foundations prepared by the missionaries.



Missionaries pose for a photo with some of the children from the displaced families.