

# AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Unity

By Elder Carl B. Cook

First Counsellor in the Area Presidency

I was in Beira, Mozambique, one morning and watched with interest as people fished the beautiful waters of the Indian Ocean. Men worked together using dugout canoes and fishing nets to harvest sardines. With great effort they hauled their filled nets out of the water and into their canoes, and then made their way back to shore. Other people waded into the water and met the heavy canoes, pushing them onto the beach and wedging them into the sand. Women and children immediately filled their pails with sardines, processed the fish, and spread them out on rocks to dry. A sense of purpose and peacefulness accompanied their work.

I was inspired by the unified effort of men, women, and children working together to obtain needed food and prepare it for market. Together they accomplished much more than any one person could do alone. There was a sense of community. I assumed many were working as families. I delighted in contemplating the relationships of trust and dependence these people developed from working together, no doubt resulting in

cherished bonds of love. As expressed in Psalms, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalms 133:1).

Nowhere is there a greater opportunity to develop unity and love than in families. Unity in families begins with husbands and wives and is most likely to occur when gospel principles are applied with concerted effort. Unity is achieved step by step and may take time.

President Thomas S. Monson and his wife, Frances, were married for nearly 65 years. They created a special unity throughout their marriage. Shortly after she passed away, President Monson stated: “Her loss has been profound. . . . She was the love of my life, my trusted confidant, and my closest friend. To say that I miss her does not begin to convey the depth of my feelings. . . . We were sealed in the house of God by one having authority to bind on earth and in heaven. I know that we will be reunited one day and will never again be separated. This is the knowledge that sustains me” (Thomas S. Monson, “I Will Not Fail Thee, nor Forsake Thee,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 85).



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

**President Thomas S. and Sister Monson**

#### Unity Between Husbands and Wives

Husbands and wives are most likely to be unified if:

- Both are keeping the commandments, including the law of chastity.
- Both are equal partners, committed to each other and to God, as described in *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* and in *Handbook 2*, section 1.3.1.
- There is open communication and sharing of feelings.
- They listen to each other with a spirit of understanding. Elder David A. Bednar stated, “Listening is not a skill; it is an attribute of God based on love” (Africa Southeast Area Review meeting, Nov. 2013).
- Each is working to develop Christlike attributes.
- Principles as taught by Paul in Ephesians 4 are practiced in their relationship.
- They are working together to serve God and do His work (See Moses 1:39).



## Unity in Branch, Ward, District, and Stake Councils

Unity in councils is most likely to occur when:

- The central purpose of the council is to receive inspiration to help others and further the Lord's work. "Councils provide a means for leaders to come together in unity and faith to collectively seek the Lord's will" (*Handbook 2*, section 2.4.4).
- Each member of the council comes prepared, spiritually and otherwise. "Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence" (D&C 107:99).
- The unit leader continually invites and receives input and counsels with all participants. "Effective priesthood leaders preside in love and kindness. . . . They counsel with others and try to come to a consensus through revelation" (*Handbook 2*, section 2.4.3).
- Both men and women speak honestly and all participants feel that their comments are valued.
- Spiritual confirmation is sought on decisions.
- Once a decision is made, there is a spirit of unity and harmony.

(See *Handbook 2*, sections 2.4.3, 2.4.4, 2.4.5, sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3 and sections 4.1, 4.4. and 4.6.1.)



### Ntinda Branch

President and Sister Monson exemplify the joy that can be realized in a unified marriage. I suggest an adaptation of the scripture in Psalms 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for [husbands and wives] to dwell together in unity!"

Sister Cook and I shared a special experience with the Lono family from the Kimbanseke Stake

in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. We travelled with them from Kinshasa to Johannesburg, South Africa, prior to their sealing in the Johannesburg Temple. Each member of the family was dressed in their Sunday best, and there was a spirit of excitement as they anticipated arriving at the temple.

The next day we witnessed this beautiful family all dressed in white, kneeling around the altar of the temple. We heard marvellous blessings pronounced upon them as they were united together as a family for eternity by one holding the sealing power of God. Pure joy emanated from their faces as they experienced the fulfilment of a dream they had anticipated for years. My experience with the Lono family inspires an additional variation on Psalms 133:1: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for [families] to dwell together in unity!"

I witnessed another remarkable example of unity a few months ago. I read a report that showed significant growth in the Ntinda Branch in the Kampala Uganda Stake. Sacrament meeting attendance had grown from 40 to well over 100 in just over a year. Intrigued, I spoke with the branch president and members of the branch council, the stake president, the mission president, and the full-time missionaries to discover what was contributing to their success in baptisms, retention, and activation.

The branch president explained that he is young in the Church and therefore depends upon the Lord and his entire branch council when setting goals, making plans, and serving members of the branch. Each member of the council contributes and feels needed. The stake president and mission president are unified in missionary work and express appreciation for each other. One of the full-time sister missionaries summed up the situation

## Unity in Families

In addition to the principles listed in other sections of this article, family unity will be enhanced when:

- Each family member is striving for family unity.
- There is equality, and each person feels important and valued by other family members (See 1 Corinthians 12:12–27).
- All participate in personal and family worship activities such as prayer, scripture study, and sacrament meeting attendance.
- All participate in family home evenings and family councils. We are counselled that “Parents should often plan times to have the entire family do things together. . . . A family that enjoys activities together will feel greater love and harmony. Children will be more willing to listen to their parents and follow their advice when they feel close to them. Parents will be able to teach the gospel more effectively” (*Family Guidebook*, p. 11; see also *Handbook 2*, section 1.4.2).

when she said with heartfelt emotion, “We are a family.” Hence, I suggest a third variation on Psalms 133:1: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for [members] to dwell together in unity!”

There is much each of us can do to enjoy unity in our relationships. By following the laws governing unity, we can experience its blessings. We learn in D&C 132:5, “For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world.”

I invite each of us to review the accompanying list of principles related to unity and prayerfully evaluate if there are things we can apply in our lives. Developing unity will likely require faith, humility, and patience. We may need to change the way we do things and improve our interactions with others in order to increase unity.

If we commit to change and do our part, I know God can bless us and magnify our efforts. As we receive the additional strength we need to make changes in our own lives through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can become a catalyst for change in others. Our hearts can truly be “knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21).

We will then be better prepared to be unified with God, for as He has said, “I say unto you, be

one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). I know that Heavenly Father is pleased when we dwell together in unity. ■

## LOCAL NEWS

# Gabon Country Dedication in Ancient Forest

By Sean E.R. Donnelly

On 5 November 2013, eleven days after the Church received full legal status in the Central African country of Gabon, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles performed a powerful and significant country dedicatory prayer in a forest clearing at the base of a tall tree. He was accompanied by his wife, Susan K. Bednar, and local leaders: Elder Carl B. Cook of the Africa Southeast Area Presidency and his wife, Sister Lynette H. Cook;

President W. Bryce Cook, president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission, and his wife, Sister Karol Cook; and President Armand Mpandou, president of the Libreville Gabon Branch.

Gabon is situated right on the equator on the west coast of Central Africa. It is a country known for tropical rain forests. The dedication site chosen, in keeping with the natural context, was the magnificent Cenarest Arboretum in



SEAN E.R. DONNELLY

*The group walks to the dedication led by Elder and Sister Bednar*



SEAN E.R. DONNELLY

*Elder and Sister Bednar gather with members and friends after devotional in Libreville*

Sibang, Libreville—the country’s capital city.

It was a cloudy, humid and hot afternoon. The group walked reverently deep into the forest. A damp scented trail led to the forest’s tallest tree. A giant tree, a Ceiba Pentadra, was the backdrop for the dedication. According to the Arboretum’s botanist, the tree was planted in the early 1800s and has been standing since the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Now it

towered above the forest canopy providing shade for the group, and a suitable symbolic ancient ‘witness’ of what was about to take place.

Elder Carl B. Cook remarked, “It was like retiring to a sacred grove, reminiscent of Joseph Smith’s first prayer in 1820.” As the group gathered in a circle at the base of the tree, calmness descended after the singing of “I Need Thee Every Hour.” Then Elder David A. Bednar dedicated

the country for the preaching of the gospel.

He blessed the nation, the people, and the future missionaries. He turned the keys to open the door for the living and the dead, and for the work of salvation to go forth unabated. He said that very specific people will be prepared and sent to Gabon to assist in the work, that there would be peace in the hearts of the people through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, that the members there would be righteous and strong.

Following the sacred event, Elder Bednar commented that it was a remarkable experience, not merely a ceremony, but that all the keys of priesthood on the earth today were acting under the direction of the First Presidency to bless the people and the land. He said that dedicatory prayers change the history of nations. Several times Elder Bednar said that it was the dawning of a bright new day, that the future is brighter than we can imagine. As in fulfillment of that prophetic statement, the weather made a significant change. The 80-strong congregation of members, friends, and visitors witnessed light shining brightly all around as cloudy skies were replaced with clear,



crisp sunshine and blue skies; the heavens were speaking. “These are historic days, days never to be forgotten,” said Elder Carl B Cook.

The dedication concluded a 10-day visit to Africa for Elder David A. Bednar. He also met with priesthood leaders, missionaries, and members in Durban and Johannesburg, South Africa, and Lubumbashi and Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. In meetings, he left an apostolic blessing and special witness of Jesus Christ. The visit ended with Elder Bednar expressing his love for the people he had met and the places he had been. ■

***The Ceiba pentandra tree towers above the forest canopy***

## Church History Centre Opens in Johannesburg, South Africa

By Elder Tom and Sister Kathy Barnes

On the day the Church was organized, the Lord said, “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you . . .” (D&C 21:1). This record includes inspirational stories about the development of the Church and lives of its members. The Lord also requires a place to preserve and make these records available.

The Africa Southeast Area Church History Centre (CHC) is the first in Africa and one of the first to be developed in the Church. The Pacific Area has a CHC in New Zealand, which was the first in the Church. Having the CHC in Johannesburg allows Saints from all over the Africa Southeast

Area (ASEA) to visit the facility when they come to the temple. The CHC is located in the ASEA Office complex behind the Distribution Centre.

Members may visit the centre to learn about the history of the Church in the Africa Southeast Area. They can also learn to use the Church History Library catalogue, research historical documents for personal or family history purposes (at this point mostly for those who have pioneer ancestors of the Church in South Africa), and donate records about the history of the Church in their areas. The CHC is generally open Tuesday through Saturday.

### ***Church History Centre patron research station***





**Elder and Sister Barnes, senior missionaries at the Church History Centre**

Another part of the facility is the Records Preservations Centre (RPC). It is a repository for historical artefacts and documents which are in a secure location in the area office. Items in the RPC may be viewed under the supervision of the CHC staff.

The CHC was opened the last week of October 2013 after much planning and development by the Area Presidency, Elder Randy and Sister Barbara Knudsen, the Johannesburg Area Office support team, and the efforts of Matthew K. Heiss and his staff at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The CHC has two computers for patrons to use to research items in the Church's extensive library collection. Additional seating for four more patrons allows them to look at documents stored in the RPC or watch DVDs of faith-promoting stories compiled by the Church. All digitised records are available to view on these computers. In addition, the Records Preservation Centre in Johannesburg has received the Clive D. Nichols and the Kenneth Powrie collections, containing historical records since the beginning of the Church in South Africa.

There is a work station with two computers for the Church History missionaries to use.

At the present time Elder and Sister Barnes have replaced the Knudsens and are working full time, using this area in support of the Area Church History advisers, Warner and Melissa Molema. The Molemas have been recently called and have the responsibility for Church history in the Africa Southeast Area, under the direction of the Area Presidency.

A large part of the collection process is to obtain oral histories from members of the Church in the Africa Southeast Area. The Church has grown rapidly in Africa since the late 1970s. There are many valuable faith-promoting stories dealing with the life, faith, and works of converts to the Church. Many have remarkable stories of overcoming tremendous obstacles in order to join the Church. We want to collect such stories and we want to have these stories available to the members so their testimonies can be strengthened. These stories can enlighten us to know how to better deal with challenges in our own lives. You can contact Elder and Sister Barnes at [tbarnes@ldschurch.org](mailto:tbarnes@ldschurch.org) or [kbarnes@ldschurch.org](mailto:kbarnes@ldschurch.org) if you have faith-promoting stories. ■

## From Kenya to Mormon Tabernacle Choir

By Betterman S. Musasia

Amram Musungu from Kenya is one of the first Africans to sing in the world-famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. It is one of the oldest and largest choirs in the world.

Brother Musungu is a quiet man with great vision and endless ambition. He was baptized in Nairobi in 1992. He came from humble circumstances but desired to pursue his educational goals, even though at the time he had no financial resources. He went door-to-door trying to find a scholarship to study in Nairobi, but to no avail. He applied for scholarships to some LDS colleges in America—Ricks (now BYU-Idaho), LDS Business College, and Brigham Young University. LDS Business College offered him an opportunity. He travelled to Salt Lake City arriving with only \$50, scriptures, and a strong, burning testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. He fasted and prayed with faith and was given a cleaning job at the business college, which provided funds to pay for his tuition. He found a former missionary couple who had served in his country, and they let him live in their home until he found an apartment.

Amram worked hard and finished his education at LDS Business College, earning three degrees within two years. He then enrolled at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah, and obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting. At the graduation party in 2002, he met a lovely woman from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Noelle Nkoy. While dating Amram, Noelle asked for missionaries to teach her the gospel. Amram was able to perform her baptism, and they were later



COURTESY OF AMRAM MUSUNGU



DEBRA GEHRIS

***Amram Musungu sings with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir***

***Musungu family: Noelle, Mira Jane, Wesley Aaron, and Amram at the Conference Center in Salt Lake City***

married in the Salt Lake Temple on 15 April 2006. Noelle Musungu graduated from the University of Utah with a degree in biology. Amram taught Swahili at Brigham Young University in Provo. He is working on his PhD program in Public Policy and Administration with emphasis in Terrorism, Mediation, and Peace at Walden University. Amram and his family would love to return to Africa and continue to serve the African people.

Amram began his career by working in the Church finance department. While there, Craig Jessop, director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at that time, approached him and asked him to audition. Amram had grown up in a family that loved to sing. He did audition and was selected to be a member of the famous Choir. He has sung with it for ten years.

In 2009 a Swahili congregation, the first in the Salt Lake Valley, was organized. Many former missionaries from the Salt Lake area became involved in helping this branch. In 2009 Amram was called to be branch president of the Parleys Creek Swahili Branch located in the Sugar House Stake. At

present he is serving on the stake high council in the Sugar House Stake and is still singing with the Choir. Amram and Noelle love missionary work. They find great peace in sharing their testimony of the gospel with many of Heavenly Father's children. They are not shy about talking to strangers about the Church. Amram says, "No one will take you to court or file a lawsuit against you by sharing the restored gospel of Jesus Christ with them." The gospel of Jesus Christ makes imperfect men and women better when they embrace it and apply its principles in their daily living.

Amram and Noelle Musungu have been blessed with two wonderful children. Mira Jane Musungu, their daughter, is 4 ½ years old. Wesley Aaron Musungu, their son, is 18 months old. Amram and Noelle help support five of his late brother's children and their mother in Kenya as well. His brother was murdered in the city of Nairobi in 2010.

Amram gives this advice to his fellow Africans: "Think big. Rely on Heavenly Father. Strive to increase your talents. Never go a day without praying. Live the gospel." ■

# Krugersdorp Young Women Walk to the Temple

By Cherene Hall and Michele Human

On 14 September 2013 at 5 a.m., the Young Women and their leaders of Krugersdorp 2nd Ward met at the chapel to begin a 30km walk to the temple. It became more than just a walk or fundraising activity; it became a symbol of preparing to go to the temple.



*Young Women from Krugersdorp 2nd Ward walk to Johannesburg Temple*



*A welcome sight for the young women was the angel Moroni spire of the temple*

As the Young Women and leaders discussed how to raise funds for the Roodepoort Stake camp, an idea began to germinate. Why not combine a fundraising activity with an experience that the Young Women would never forget, one that would point them to the Lord? Why not walk from the Krugersdorp chapel to the Johannesburg Temple and raise funds for every kilometre walked? They became excited as they realized not only the difficulty of the task but also the symbolic nature of such a walk. It was like following in the footsteps of the pioneers who walked to the Salt Lake Valley.

As they rested at times, passers-by were perplexed by the spirited 30 people who briskly walked the pavements and seemed full of energy and enthusiasm. As the day wore on, they began to tire and have sore feet and joints. They decided not to give up but go forward and achieve the goal. Finally the spires of the temple came into view. Their spirits soared. The pace quickened and their resolve steeled until finally, with one last push, they reached their destination. As they stood together and

mingled in the precincts of the temple, they felt great joy and expressed an understanding of what it really means to go to the house of God:

Lara H. (17): “As soon as we reached our destination, we forgot about all the difficulties and were overwhelmed with joy. I know that this joy is but a fraction of what I will experience as I receive the temple ordinances one day.”

Kiera H. (15): “This walk was hard but worth it. It taught me perseverance, patience, and unity as my love and respect grew for those with me. We all helped each other. I learned that we may go through many trials, but if we focus on the temple we will reach exaltation.”

Cheryl P. (12): “The walk was amazing, hard, and fun. Having to work for our camp money was worth the effort. The walk taught me that if I put my mind to something, I can achieve it. Seeing the temple spires was a huge relief. We had achieved our goal!”

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. . . .” (2 Nephi 12:3). ■