

AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Fasting and Fast Offerings: The Lord's Law of Finance is Available to Everyone

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One of the characteristics of the gospel in every dispensation of time has been the commandment to fast and pray. From the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, we read, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6).

In the time of the Savior, His disciples came to Him with concerns about their inability to heal certain sick people. Jesus Himself healed these sick and then, in response to questions from His disciples as to why they were unable to provide the healing blessings, the Savior gently taught, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

In the Book of Mormon, the sons of Mosiah and the son of Alma (also called Alma) had a joyful missionary reunion after some 17 years of missionary service. Alma was thrilled to see that his brethren were still faithful in the gospel. "But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit

of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation . . ." (Alma 17:3).

In our day, the Lord counseled the Saints through the Prophet Joseph Smith to "organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith . . ." (D&C 88:119).

Clearly, in every age and whenever the gospel has been on the earth, the Lord has asked His children to fast and pray for increased spiritual power and added blessings.

In the Church currently, the first Sabbath day of each month is set aside for the purpose of fasting. During this time, Church members go without food and water for 24 hours. They then contribute the money that they would have spent on food for those meals to the Church. This money is called a fast offering. The Church uses the fast offerings to assist the poor and needy.

The law of the fast is a commandment that is available to every member of the Church, regardless of financial circumstances. The humblest to the



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most prosperous Latter-day Saint can fast for two meals and then give a fast offering of the cost of those two meals to his bishop or branch president to help the poor and needy. For those who have been given much, much is expected, and they should pay a generous offering; perhaps many times the actual cost of the two meals. For those who have little, the principle still holds: they can give the cost of the two meals from which they abstained to the bishop or branch president to assist the poor and needy.

Individual and family self-reliance are built upon correct principles such as work, thrift, industry, and education. In addition, the Lord has made it abundantly clear that our faith will be made manifest as we act and pay our tithes and offerings. The faithful practice of fasting each month and then offering a fast



A proper fast begins and ends with prayer.

offering to the Lord through the bishop or branch president will do much to bless the lives of our members and to help them walk out of the shadow of poverty.

Many faithful members are able to join with us, the Area Presidency, in testifying to the power and truthfulness of this divine principle. We promise that the Lord will “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). We further promise that you “shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge . . .” (D&C 89:19) as the Lord blesses you and your family with an increased measure of His spirit.

The law of the fast is a blessing from a loving Heavenly Father to His children. It is accessible to every member and is a key that will help unlock the door to spiritual and temporal self-reliance. It is our deepest desire that all members of the Church in Africa may receive these great blessings through obedience to the law of the fast. May the Lord help us do so is our prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Putting Your Best Foot Forward: LDS Charities Address Unusual Foot Disease

By Elder Ray and Sister Susan Hansen

Walking barefoot is commonplace in Africa, but in many areas, the practice can be harmful. It can result in *podocoinosis*, or “dust in the feet.” This non-infectious elephantiasis is caused by long-term exposure of bare feet to the fertile volcanic soil of highland farmers. It affects people who cannot afford to wear shoes or socks, or to wash their feet with soap.

In 2010 the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) set up a pilot program to treat this disease in a clinic in Debre Markos, Ethiopia. In

September 2013 Latter-day Saint Charities (LDSC), financed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and under the direction of the Country Director, JayVar Campbell and his wife, Marcia, began assisting the IOCC by donating items needed for treatment: 3,300 bars of soap; 3,300 bottles of bleach; 1,100 wash basins; and 1,100 pairs each of shoes and socks. The shoes, made in Ethiopia, had to meet certain specifications.

The disease develops when silica particles from the soil are absorbed through the bare feet.

Special shoes made in Ethiopia are shaped to protect feet from contact with the silica that causes the condition.



PROVIDED BY ELDER JAYVAR AND SISTER MARCIA CAMPBELL, [FORMER] COUNTRY DIRECTORS

This eventually causes the legs to swell and gradually feel rubbery or wooden. The skin then becomes fibrous or nodular, and infections may result.

Because of the unsightly swelling of the legs and feet, those suffering from this condition are shunned from schools, community, restaurants, and even marriage. Sometimes the disease is associated with witchcraft, and those afflicted are hidden away from public scrutiny.

Treatment for this condition takes place in the clinic over a

period of two weeks. The patient is taught proper foot hygiene: the feet are soaked in bleach, and then a medicated salve and bandages are applied. The patient continues this treatment at home and is given shoes and socks to wear. The condition usually subsides in about three months.

Though this condition is not well-known, millions of people are affected in Eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Northern Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, East Congo, and Northeast Cameroon. In Ethiopia alone, over a million

people are affected. This disease is more common than HIV/AIDS and will cost an estimated \$16 million (U.S.) per year.

In the past three years, the IOCC clinic has successfully treated 5,500 patients and has 15,000 waiting for treatment. IOCC opened a clinic in October 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and LDSC has delivered supplies there, as well as assisted in providing treatment. Their unselfish contribution has been a blessing to the patients. Once treated, patients can go forth with their “best foot forward!” ■

Doctor's Orders: A Blessing

Excerpted by Sister Midge Nielsen
Senior Missionary

When Elder L.E. “Gus” Hoffman, MD, and his wife, Sister Becky Hoffman, RN, received their mission call to the Africa Southeast Area, they understood that they would be serving as medical advisors to missionaries. When they reported to Johannesburg in October of 2012, they again acknowledged it would be their primary responsibility. After all, they were a uniquely qualified husband-and-wife, doctor-and-nurse team, and were ready and willing to serve.

However, when Area leaders learned that Dr. Hoffman was also a patriarch who would be willing to give patriarchal blessings in the mission branches and districts, they moved quickly. President Renlund,

well aware that there were many leaders, missionaries, and members who had never received their patriarchal blessings, got things in motion. Permission was granted by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who oversees the work of the patriarchs in the Church.

Throughout the approval process, the Hoffmans continued to deal with missionary medical issues until January 26, 2013, when Elder Hoffman began giving patriarchal blessings. By the time the Hoffmans completed their mission in April of 2014, he had given 179 blessings. Elder Hoffman recalls, “Those blessings were given solely to members who generally did not have access to stake patriarchs. Our medical travel allowed us to have contact with members from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to the cities along the southern coast of South Africa to give [members] their blessings. Many other members, who came to the temple for their temple blessings, were able to receive their patriarchal blessings at the same time.”



Elder Gus Hoffman and Sister Becky Hoffman

Sister Hoffman remembers the event that changed the way they conducted the blessings. One day, Elder Hoffman was prepared to give a blessing to a man who had ridden his bike many kilometers to receive it. To his surprise, the member asked Elder Hoffman if he could delay the blessing a bit longer, because his wife was on her way and he wanted her to be present. While they

waited, Sister Hoffman started chatting with the man about his conversion to the gospel. His story was simply amazing. He had nine children, and when asked what he did for a living to support them, he replied, “I dig.” Puzzled, Sister Hoffman asked for more information. He explained that he went out every day with a pick and a shovel, and if somebody needed a hole dug, he offered his services.

Sister Hoffman then turned her iPad tablet on to some Mormon Tabernacle Choir music, to help pass the time and invite the Spirit.

This good brother cradled the tablet carefully in his hands, listening to the music with reverence. He asked Sister Hoffman, “Do you think I might ever hear this choir sing in person? That would be so wonderful.”

Then his wife arrived. She had paid for someone else to give her a ride on the back of a bike. Not only that, she had their eight-week-old baby with her. Sister Hoffman remarks, “Sometimes we forget the sacrifices people must make to simply get a blessing. We never wanted to forget these amazing people.”

Elder Hoffman points out that that from then on, their mission changed fundamentally, explaining, “We decided to record [the conversion stories of the members] and take a picture of them to record the information for the Church as well as for our own history.” He uses the terms “we” and “our” frequently, because it was absolutely a joint effort.

He continues, “We . . . found that although the members were . . . being blessed, we received blessings by hearing their stories and feeling of their spirits. Our incidence of spiritual experiences went from an occasional one monthly, to several experiences a week, to several a day. We cannot describe the experience of seeing members come with grave concerns . . . and then leave with a smile, a spring to their step, and tears on their cheeks from the spirit speaking personally to them. There are simply no words to describe these feelings.”

Both Elder and Sister Hoffman also recognize the contributions of the senior missionary couples who were “angels” whose mission was to assist and to guide. They were often included in the blessings as they frequently lived within the branches and had spent uncounted hours helping the members.

“They deserve the blessings of heaven,” Elder Hoffman says firmly. “And lastly, please understand that these blessings, and the inspiration that attends them, come from Father in Heaven. [A patriarch] is simply a conduit for the light and inspiration which comes from above and nothing more.” ■

Excerpted from packet Giving Blessings in Africa by Elder L.E. and Sister Becky Hoffman as well as personal interview.

Little Child Lost

Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson

Eddy Mukuna grew up in an active Latter-day Saint family that had eight sons and six daughters.

One Sunday when Eddy was five years old, his large family was headed home from sacrament meeting on the bus, and Eddy was accidentally left at the bus station. There he stood with tears streaming down his face, not knowing what to do.

Many people came up to him to see why he was crying, and he told them that his family had left him alone at the station, and he was lost. People offered to take Eddy home, but he was so young that he didn't know where he lived or how to tell anyone the way to his home. After about 20 minutes, Eddy saw his father coming through the bus station and ran to him crying. His father hugged him and told him how sorry he was that Eddy had been left at the station and how much he loved him.

Eddy's story is not unusual. Many children remember well the time when they found themselves lost and alone. They can remember the kind people who offered to help, and the confusion they felt. Coincidentally, most parents remember the time they discovered their child had suddenly disappeared: "I thought he was with you" and the reply, "But I thought he was with you!" still produces emotion. Though the incident may be long past, everyone remembers the frantic search they conducted during that terrifying time and the blessed relief they felt when all were reunited. Nobody involved ever forgets it, either.

Indeed, many years after young Eddy was lost in the bus station, he and most of his brothers served full-time missions, searching for Heavenly Father's lost children here on earth, helping them to realize how much their Father loves them. Such a mission



A frightened, lost child

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF EDDY MUKUNA



Eddy Mukuna today

reflects the general conference admonition of Elder José L. Alonso of the Seventy: "Brothers and sisters, there may be many who, for some reason, are lost from our sight. . . . If we delay, we could lose them forever" ("Doing the Right Thing at the Right Time, without Delay," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 14).

Eddy's family made their reunion "forever" as well. In January of 2012 his family was sealed in the temple. He discovered then that the temple is the place where Heavenly Father binds families together so that there will be no lost children in the eternities. In Eddy's words, "I know that I can live with my family even after this life. The temple is a holy place . . . where Heavenly Father's children can receive blessings from their Father." ■

Excerpted from article submitted to the Africa Southeast Area Family History Center, May 29, 2012

Tsetse Fly Miracle

Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson

Kevin M., a young member of the Church from Zimbabwe, hadn't been feeling well for some time, but the doctors were unable to diagnose his problem. Then they discovered that he had been bitten by a tsetse fly while camping in the Zambezi Valley. It wasn't long before his condition became critical. He was bleeding from all over: his eyes, nose, ears, and even his fingernails.

Reginald Nield, a friend from the Church, was called to give Kevin a priesthood blessing. "Am I going to die?" Kevin asked. Brother Nield answered, "I don't know, my boy. That's up to the

Lord, but I will do everything in my power to help you." Then Brother Nield went to work. All of Kevin's blood had to be replaced and continue to be replaced as the doctors tried to stabilize him enough to endure the flight to a large hospital in South Africa that had specialized training. Brother Nield collected blood and commuted between the blood bank and the hospital, doing all he could to keep Kevin alive.

Once the boy was life-flighted to South Africa, Brother Nield sought advice from doctors all over the world. No hospital in the whole of Africa generally stocked the medication needed to treat Kevin for this particular bite. However, one lot of the required medications was

eventually located by word of mouth from many of Brother Nield's friends and colleagues.

Someone phoned a friend, who phoned a friend, until eventually a pharmaceutical representative remembered selling some of this exact medication to a little clinic somewhere in Cape Town, South Africa. A doctor sent in the prescription, and another friend-of-a-friend went to collect the medication and deliver it to the doctors at the hospital where Kevin was being treated. Brother Nield then discovered the second medication Kevin needed far away in Switzerland, but was able to have it packaged, shipped, and delivered to the hospital.

Brother Nield's daughter Kelly-Ann reports: "What can only be described as a miracle is the Kevin I still see today, as playful and full of nonsense as ever. He has made a full recovery and has become a worldwide case study. I know that only with the Lord's intervention was Kevin's recovery possible, assisted by the faith, prayers, and diligence of my father and all the others who participated and contributed to Kevin's recovery." ■

Tiny fly with a terrible bite



Excerpted from David Merkley Mayfield, Reginald Joseph Nield: An Overview of His Life, Faith, and Works, 2011, 117-118.

The Revolving 200 Rand

Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson

Alan and Pauline Hogben were baptized in 1970 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Soon after their baptism, they began talking about going to London to be sealed in the temple, but they felt it was impossible to save enough money to make the expensive trip.

In April 1972 the Hogbens decided to get temple recommends, even though they would be unable to use them for a long time. They figured it would take them two and a half years to save enough money to get to London.

Brother Hogben said, “We were told that the only thing the Lord required of us was to make a commitment, and He would open the doors. So we set out with a very stringent budget that kept household expenses to a bare minimum.”

Then interesting things started to happen: “There would be a knock on the door, and someone would bring us a little cake. For months we found a parcel of food in the back seat of our car after Church.”

One evening after sacrament meeting, a member gave the Hogbens 200 rand, which was a lot of money in those days. When they asked him why, he said that a man had given his family a gallon of petrol once when they had run out. They had tried to pay him, but he had replied, “No, just give someone else a gallon when they need it.” The member was just passing on his “gallon of petrol” to someone who needed it.

In September of 1972, just five months after receiving their temple recommends, the Hogbens were sealed in the London England Temple. Nevertheless, the 200 rand just kept going and going. Brother Hogben states, “When we returned



Revolving 200-rand note

from the temple, we gave that 200 rand to another couple [to help them go], and they gave it to still another. At last count, that 200 rand had contributed to at least four more couples going to the temple. To this day, we don't know how far the 200 rand went.”

It is clear that when faith is involved, a few loaves and fishes can feed the 5,000, and 200 rand can keep blessing lives far into the future. ■

Excerpted from R. Val Johnson, “South Africa: Land of Good Hope,” Ensign, Feb. 1993, 32–40.

From Refugee to Temple Sealer

Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson

In the early 1990s Thomas Mogapi was in desperate straits. He had left his wife and three children in the care of his wife's parents and fled to Botswana as a refugee. He hoped to gain legal status so his family could join him.

As he went to the Botswana immigration office one day,

Thomas saw two white men in shirts and ties. He thought they might be American spies but still asked who they were. He had a positive conversation with them as they explained they were from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thomas even got directions to their church building

and made an appointment with them to visit it the following Sunday. The first speaker in sacrament meeting spoke on the Word of Wisdom, and Thomas knew he had found a good church. The church he had been raised in also pro-

hibited smoking and drinking, and he knew that the Word of Wisdom was true from his own experience.

After he began receiving the missionary lessons and reading the Book of Mormon, Thomas decided to pray to know if it was true. One Saturday, after being asleep for about a half

an hour, he sensed someone standing next to his bed and heard a voice say, “The Book of Mormon is a second testimony of Christ.”

“Surely,” he thought, “this must be a true book.” The next day, Thomas went to church

and asked to be baptized. There was no baptismal font at the chapel, so the missionaries used a large, stiff piece of plastic to make a dam that would form a pool for the baptism. It worked perfectly, and Thomas was baptized.

Finally, in 1994, Thomas was able to return home to

his family. He searched for the nearest chapel, took his family to the meetings, and eventually baptized his wife and daughter. Soon he was called to serve as branch president, but at the interview he hesitated to accept the calling. He had no formal education and felt unqualified to serve as a branch leader.

The stake president, however, reminded him that Joseph Smith had little education when he received the First Vision. “Devotion qualifies us for the work,” he said. “Read your handbook and the scriptures, and the Lord will teach you.”

Within a few years, President Mogapi became Bishop Mogapi and his ward was split. When he was released, he knew he had worked hard and done a good job. He and his wife began to serve in the Johannesburg Temple. He loved the temple and was working on his family history when the temple president asked him to bring his wife to an appointment. It turned out to be an interview with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who set Thomas apart as a temple sealer and the first black sealer in South Africa. Thomas Mogapi had the faith and personal testimony that the Lord qualifies those He calls. ■



Life in a refugee camp