

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Living Prophets and Apostles

By **S. Mark Palmer**

President, Africa Southeast Area



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Several years ago, I was in a sacrament meeting where a new member shared what led to his conversion. One day, he was working in his garden when two young missionaries walked up the path towards him. One of the missionaries then asked him this question: “How would you feel if you knew that there was a living prophet and twelve Apostles on the earth today?” The man had never considered such a thing, and although not religious, he immediately wanted to know more. The missionaries taught him the gospel and he gained a personal testimony. All because he learned that once again we have living prophets and apostles walking the earth.

In Amos 3:7 we read, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” And Jesus teaches us that when we receive His servants, we receive Him (see John 13:20). What an extraordinary privilege and blessing it is that you and I can live in a day when once again living prophets and apostles travel the earth proclaiming the Lord’s word.

A few months ago, our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, stood in front of over 4,000 Saints in Harare, Zimbabwe, and invited Elder Jeffery R.

Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to join him at the stand. It was an unforgettable moment as he then boldly declared to all present: “[You] are looking at two prophets tonight. You sustained 15 men at [last April general] conference time as prophets, seers, and revelators. Not only President Nelson, but his counselors and all twelve of the Apostles. We are prophets, seers, and revelators. . . . God has always taught His children upon the earth through prophets.”

Last April we participated in a sacred solemn assembly as, all around the globe, faithful members raised our hands in sustaining President Russell M. Nelson as President of the Church. Of this sacred occasion, President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “As we each sustained President Nelson by our uplifted hands, we stood as witnesses before God and acknowledged that he is President Monson’s rightful successor. With our raised hands, we promised to hearken unto his voice as he receives direction from the Lord.”¹

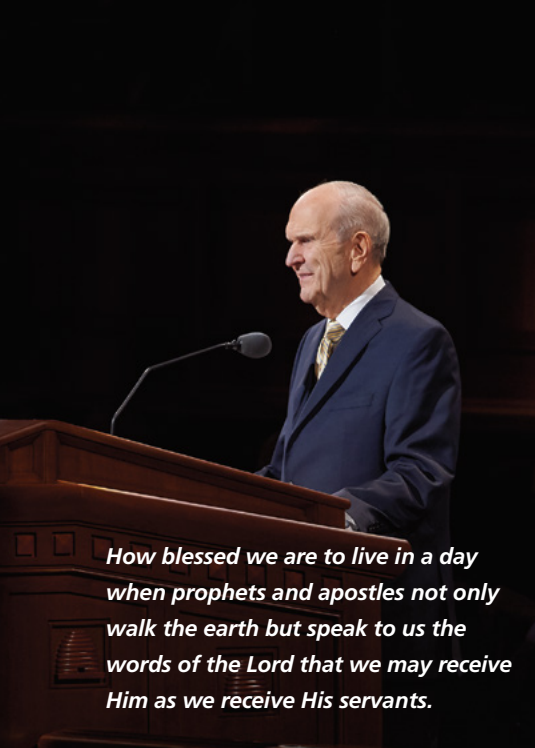
Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles added this statement about the newly sustained President of the Church: “He

has been profoundly prepared and specifically tutored by the Lord to lead us at this time. It is a great blessing to now have dear President Russell M. Nelson as our loving and devoted prophet—the 17th President of the Church in this final dispensation.

“President Nelson is truly a remarkable man.”²

Those who have known President Nelson throughout his life all attest to his remarkable personal qualities and tremendous intellect and spirituality. Over 40 years ago, before he became an Apostle, and while actively performing heart surgeries, he literally saved my father’s life (or as President Nelson later told me, “I gave your daddy another 15 years”). The following are several journal entries by my parents from that time in 1975. Although written many years ago, these entries give a very personal glimpse of his spiritual qualities already so apparent:

From my mother’s journal, describing her feelings during this very anxious time: “Over this period as I talked with Doctor Nelson, I gained the impression that he combined everything he did and said with the practical and spiritual intertwined and that he was a most remarkable man and servant of the Lord.” Several days following the



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surgery, she recorded: “Doctor Nelson is such a wonderful person first and doctor second. He’s so bright, and to me, the gospel shines from his face.”

And from my father’s journal: “I felt complete trust and confidence in Doctor Nelson, knowing that he is a choice servant of the Lord. I knew that whether I lived or died, I was in the hands of the Lord.”

I add my personal testimony that not only is President Nelson a great man but that he is also called by the Lord to be one of His chosen prophets. He is unfailingly kind and despite a remarkable intellect, teaches with simplicity, humility, and compassion. He also teaches as a prophet would—inspiring us to not only do better, but to be better disciples of Christ.

In the April 2018 general conference, he urged us and pled with us to “increase [our] spiritual capacity to receive revelation.”³ He continues to show us how, as he has shared with us what the Lord has revealed to him to teach us, that we might live a higher and holier way.

As we participate and reflect on yet another historic general conference this October, I invite you to receive your own personal witness of the divine call of Russell M. Nelson as the Lord’s prophet in our day. I also invite you to prayerfully seek answers to the uniquely personal questions of your soul as you listen to or read the words of the prophets from this general conference. And finally, I invite each of us to follow the prophet’s fervent plea from last April for us to increase in our spiritual capacity to receive personal revelation. We can do this as we ask the Lord to help us hear and know, from the messages of His servants, what we need to do and become to be true disciples of Christ.

AREA SEVENTY MESSAGE

General Conference: A Unique Phenomenon

By **Eustache Ilunga**
Area Seventy

A distinctive tradition of the Church, and one which is anchored in the lives of Latter-day Saints, is the great gathering called general conference where each of the inspired speakers gives a message—a message that touches members individually.

In the months that follow, we will eagerly read and study the words of living prophets and apostles found in the November general conference edition of the *Liahona*. How blessed we are to live in a day when prophets and apostles not only walk the earth but also speak to us the words of the Lord that we may receive Him as we receive His servants. ■

Elder S. Mark Palmer was called as a General Authority Seventy in April 2016. He is married to Jacqueline Ann Wood; they are the parents of six children.

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Precious Gifts from God,” *Liahona*, May 2018, 9.
2. Gary E. Stevenson, “The Heart of a Prophet,” *Liahona*, May 2018, 19.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Liahona*, May 2018, 96.



**Eustache
Ilunga**

As the concluding speaker in the April 2011 general conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, “As our conference comes to a close, I ask you to reflect in the days ahead not only on the messages you have heard but also on the *unique phenomenon* that general conference itself is—what

we as Latter-day Saints believe such conferences to be and what we invite the world to hear and observe about them.”¹

Since my baptism 25 years ago, I started the habit of reading general conference talks published in the *Liahona* magazine. In addition to my reading of the Book of Mormon, reading these general conference inspired messages has helped me to better understand the doctrines of the gospel and has strengthened my testimony of the reality and truthfulness of the messages of the living prophets. It is for me an additional witness of continuous revelation. We were receiving the *Liahona* a few weeks or even months after the conference had taken place, but the messages still had a current impact on me.

For several years, the Africa Southeast Area was recording general conference on compact discs that we would watch two to three weeks after the conference sessions occurred. Today, the Church has made available satellite receivers which allow us to watch some sessions live and others afterward, but within an average interval of one week after general conference. What a blessing!

For us as members, general conference has a special spirit. When I reflect on it, two main points come to mind: firstly, it is a sacred responsibility for those who are chosen to speak to the members of the Church



“My personal experience with general conference is not just listening to the words but also feeling what the Spirit of the Lord would want me to learn.”

and to the entire world, and secondly, it is a special responsibility for those of us who listen to the messages that are given.

Those who are assigned to speak have the huge responsibility to find words which will touch the hearts of millions of people and to ensure that the same message given by a single person penetrates the heart of everyone and yet meets individual needs.

Elder Holland taught, “Perhaps you already know (but if you don’t you should) that with rare exception, no man or woman who speaks here is assigned a topic.”²

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve said: “When and how does the inspiration for general conference talks come?”

“With no topics assigned, we see heaven beautifully coordinating the subjects and themes of eternal truth each and every conference.

“One of my Brethren told me that his subject for this conference was given to him immediately after his talk last April. Another mentioned three

weeks ago that he was still praying and waiting upon the Lord. Another, when asked how long it had taken to compose an especially sensitive talk, responded, “Twenty-five years.”³

Those who listen have the responsibility to prepare their hearts to be taught. My personal experience with general conference is not just listening to the words but also feeling what the Spirit of the Lord would want me to learn. I listen to general conference messages always with a willingness to learn what is important for me. On one occasion, the speaker was relating a story that I had already heard before and on a topic about which I felt satisfied regarding its application in my life. Immediately I felt an impression and heard something telling me, “Eustache, instead of telling yourself that you know what it is all about and that you are already doing it well, rather ask yourself why the Lord would want you to hear it and learn it again.” By listening to the talk, I learned something new that I would never have learned otherwise.

Elder Holland stated, “If we teach by the Spirit and you listen by the Spirit, some one of us will touch on your circumstance, sending a personal prophetic epistle just to you.”⁴ It is also important to note that some topics often addressed are the same but their messages are different at every moment—if we listen with the purpose of learning. It is obvious that for the same topic, the Lord teaches us “line upon line”⁵ on each occasion that we hear another message on the same topic.

When we discuss in our families the messages given in general conference, we realize that often we have been touched by the same talks or speakers, but at times we have different understanding and feelings. For the same message heard at the same time, my wife will have a different inspiration from mine. This is proof that the Spirit of the Lord inspires each one of us and speaks to us according to our individual needs.

I have often been touched by the way in which the Spirit of the Lord speaks to us—whether I have had the opportunity to watch the conference live or to do so later from a recording, every time my mind receives spiritual instruction. Whether it is heard in English, the language in which the speakers speak or when there is translation, the Spirit teaches everyone in their language what the Lord would want us to learn.

I have often heard members of the Church say that a particular message has touched them, and they have the impression that it was meant for them personally. This is the result of a personal preparation and of a desire to abide by the things of the Spirit. May we continue to view every general conference as a new opportunity to be taught in a unique manner by those who the Lord has chosen to speak to us and guide us on the straight and narrow path. ■

Elder Eustache Ilunga was called as an Area Seventy in April 2018. He and his wife, Mamie, are the parents of four children. Elder and Sister Ilunga live in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “An Ensign to the Nations,” *Liahona*, May 2011, 111; emphasis added.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “An Ensign to the Nations,” 111.
3. Neil L. Anderson, “The Voice of the Lord,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 123.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “An Ensign to the Nations,” 113.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 98:12; 128:21.

LOCAL PAGES

Perseverance

By T. Ruth Randall

When President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, spoke in the priesthood session of the April 2005 general conference, he prepared a special message to counsel the men and boys of the Church. And while

there was a long list of things he could have spoken about, the topic he chose to discuss that day was perseverance.

Some might say it was an unusual subject for a general conference address. But as we read the scriptures and study the lives of the prophets, we find that perseverance is a common theme among those who are closest to the Lord. It is an eternal principle—one which is vital to our temporal and physical success.

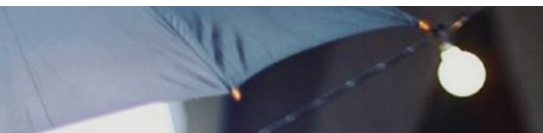
“Perseverance is demonstrated by those who keep going when the going gets tough, who don’t give up even when others say, ‘It can’t be done,’” said President Faust (“Perseverance,” *Liahona*, May 2005, 51).

There are few examples in the scriptures that illustrate perseverance more vividly than that of Nephi, son of Lehi. We see his willingness to return to Jerusalem not once, not twice, but three times in order to secure the brass plates, braving the skepticism of Laman and Lemuel, his older siblings, and the life-threatening wrath of Laban, who was the keeper of the records. We see his willingness to persevere in the wilderness as his struggling family grows tired and despondent, and even his faithful father begins to complain. We see him carry out the seemingly impossible task of building a ship, with no instruction manual other than the whisperings of the Spirit. And we see the fruits of his labour: that he became “highly favoured of the Lord” (1 Nephi

1:1) and a mighty leader and prophet in his community.

Following in Nephi's example, "perseverance" has also been identified by the Church as one of the 12 principles of self-reliance.

Realeboha Lesia, a young single adult from Bloemfontein, South Africa, has recently implemented this principle in her own life. While working a full-time job to support herself, she also started her own business or "side hustle" as she refers to it, in which she hopes to one day replace her income by following her creative interests and passions.



"Perseverance is demonstrated by those who keep going when the going gets tough, who don't give up even when others say, 'It can't be done.'" —President James E. Faust



"Coming back home after work, I would be so tired, having worked all day in my job and then working after hours to get my business going," she says. It meant pushing through fatigue and fighting the desire just to take one night off. It also meant sacrificing some things she enjoyed: "It often meant not going out and doing fun things," says Rea. "I was staying at home, doing research and meeting people to find out how they started their business and how they made things work."

For Rea, part of perseverance has meant being flexible and realising that plans and reality often don't coincide. It's "seeing that with time, plans change," she says. But contrary to what we might expect, this change is often for the better. And with every effort, she finds that the process itself helps her progress. "You learn things, you make contacts, you meet mentors, and learn better ways of doing things," Rea explains.

It's an example of a "growth mindset," something which LDS.org highlights as a critical factor for developing perseverance: "When we think of ourselves as lifelong learners and accept that our abilities will grow with our consistent efforts, we are in the proper frame of mind to take on challenges," says the website, citing a study called *Promoting Grit, Tenacity, and Perseverance*, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education

("Self-Reliance Principle 9: Persevere," lds.org/topics/pef-self-reliance/live/persevere).

Rea has found that positive self-talk is extremely important too. "How you speak to yourself is vital," she says. "You must be careful what you say to yourself, because you are always listening. Tell yourself if you're positive, it will happen."

In order to stay motivated and keep going, Rea has identified unofficial mentors. "I chose people who are in the creative sector, I told them this is what I want to do and asked them for their insights." On a tough day or when things don't go as planned, she calls a friend and shares her frustrations. Afterwards she finds renewed energy and focus. She also relies on the example of others, such as someone who also started his own business and battled through a tough period before experiencing success.

"When things were going badly, I saw him keeping on going, he didn't give up and say let me quit and start on a 9 to 5 job or start another project," says Rea. "I have these people that can advise me and listen to me."

But most importantly, she's seeking direction and support from God. "Besides talking to these mentors, I'm also talking to my Heavenly Father," she says. "Always remembering that I'm not alone, and it would be far better to let Heavenly Father be my partner in my goals." ■



Elder and Sister Foote with Church members at the Johannesburg Temple.

The Temple Brings Us and Our Ancestors Joy

By Elder Gordon and Sister Susan Foote
Senior Missionary Couple

A few months ago, members of the Daveyton Third Branch, of the Benoni South Africa Stake, experienced firsthand the thrill of researching their own family histories and performing sacred ordinances for their ancestors in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple.

The project began in earnest last April as branch members became at first interested and then determined to discover the spirit of Elijah in their own lives and in the lives of their families. The Church’s family history tools—especially the new and easy-to-use Family Tree Lite website at lite.fs.org—enabled the branch members to research their ancestors’ names and key dates and then record those individuals as branches in their own family tree.

Branch members were aided by Elder Gordon and Sister Susan Foote, who are a senior missionary couple assigned to the Daveyton Third Branch. “We got behind this effort

and supported the goal of the branch president (Edward Mtshali) for branch members to find at least one of their own family names and then perform baptismal ordinances in the Johannesburg Temple,” Sister Foote explained.

Elder Foote began by helping more than 40 branch members register online and obtain individual FamilySearch accounts. Then an Africa Southeast Area senior missionary couple, Elder Dennis and Sister Merrily Bird, who are area family history specialists, traveled to the branch several weeks in a row, helping complete registrations, teaching key concepts, and assisting members with their questions. They also taught branch members how to enter family history information themselves through the Family Tree Lite website on their personal cell phones.

Once members had properly entered the names and information of their ancestors, they scheduled a

day trip for Saturday, April 21, 2018, to travel to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple to complete proxy baptism and confirmations. With the distance from Daveyton to the temple being about 50 kilometers—and with few members owning cars—transportation was a key issue. Branch members made and sold African greeting cards to pay for public transportation to and from the temple.

All their hard work and planning paid off and on that very special day, 25 branch members journeyed to the temple and completed baptisms and confirmation ordinances for 66 of their ancestors. The spirit of Elijah poured forth.

Back in Daveyton the next day, Sunday, April 22, 2018, President Mtshali invited all who desired to share their testimonies of the experience. Many in that meeting could not hold back tears as they listened to the testimonies that were shared about the preparation and research—but especially their experiences in the temple. Here are some of the comments:

- “I saw angels in the temple. I felt my ancestors’ presence.”
- “I told my mother of a dream I had the day before going to the temple, of being in the temple and seeing all the people in the temple, including my ancestors.”
- “If I had any doubts about the Church before, they all left after I went in the temple.”

- “During my confirmation, I felt my aunt and my sister-in-law were present.”
- “I felt a presence in the temple I never felt before.”
- “While going to the temple yesterday I felt a spirit and joy that was like I feel it will be like at His Second Coming.”
- “I was baptized by my husband for his mother. I express genuine gratitude to him and his honorable use of his priesthood.”
- “I had to be baptized seven times for one ancestor. She must have been troubled on the other side. It was worth it to know she has the gospel now. I was very scared to be baptized so many times, but now I am happy.”
- “Yesterday I was baptized for my great-grandmother. I know she loves me and when we meet on the other side she will thank me.”
- “I followed in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and used my priesthood to baptize and was baptized myself.”
- “Having my young priest-aged brother baptize me was frightening, but I did it and we both were so very happy.”
- “It was truly wonderful. I can’t even find words to express my joy.”
- “The temple brings us joy and our ancestors joy.” ■

family stood out. Little did they know in those early readings that they would be able to “liken” these chapters unto their family.

First, in November 2016, Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles interviewed Thabo and Andronica about their worthiness to serve in some unspecified calling. They were told not to worry, that likely nothing would come of the interview. But in December 2016, they had an interview with President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency. Thabo was called to serve as a mission president. President Eyring made them feel comfortable, and they left the interview feeling that all was well. They were asked to not tell anyone of the call until mission assignments had been made and the calls were made public.

Once they were able to tell their family of this new call to serve, doubts started arising as family asked questions such as, “What will you do with your house?” “Are you moving your children to another school?” Anxiety hit. But Thabo and Andronica found that their recent reading of the Book of Mormon helped them to be strengthened. They remembered how Lehi was called by an angel to leave his home in Jerusalem and go to another place; that he was told to take his provisions and his family and leave. For their family, it would not be to an unknown place, but they knew they had been called of God as was Lehi, to leave

Blessings Come When We Liken the Book of Mormon unto Ourselves

By **Sister Cheryl Blake**

Africa Southeast Area Church History Missionary

Thabo and Andronica Lebethoa read the Book of Mormon daily in their family. This has been a blessing in their lives, but they believe special blessings occurred from this daily reading when Thabo was called as mission president of the South Africa Cape Town Mission in late 2016. In a recent missionary couple devotional, President and Sister Lebethoa shared their experiences:

Thabo told of how his family had completed the Book of Mormon in

their daily scripture reading in August 2016. The family decided they would start reading one of Thabo’s favorite volumes of scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants. This was soon to change.

During the October 2016 general conference, Thabo and Andronica felt impressed that they needed to read the Book of Mormon again as a family. They immediately started reading it again, but this time, in the early chapters, the journey of Lehi and Nephi’s

their home, friends, and extended family for three years. Just like Lehi and Sariah, they would take the provisions they were told to carry. They would take their children. They would find schools for them in Cape Town. Just as Nephi told his father, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7). The Lebethoas knew that the Lord had commanded them on a journey to serve in Cape Town and that He would make it possible for them to leave their home, find schools for their children, and do all that would be required of them.

Thabo and Andronica also wanted to help their children understand the implications of this new assignment on their family. In a February 2017 interview, Thabo relates, “As you know in the first chapters of the Book of Mormon, Lehi is instructed to take his family and move into the wilderness and to take nothing save it were the essentials. It is interesting that we were able to use the story of Lehi and his family to help explain to our children what the Lord was going to do here with our family. We were now connecting two families—Lehi’s and ours—together. We helped our children understand that this was becoming real in their lives, ‘Wow, you know that Nephi says we must use the scriptures

and liken them to ourselves and so we painted that picture for them.’”

Thabo bore his testimony that daily reading in the Book of Mormon has helped his family in the past and

as one of the goals set by the Africa Southeast Area Presidency, “Read the Book of Mormon daily” will help all of us as we “liken the scriptures unto ourselves.” ■

CHURCH HISTORY

Church History: Did You Know?

Church History Department

Who was the first African born person to serve as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the Africa continent?



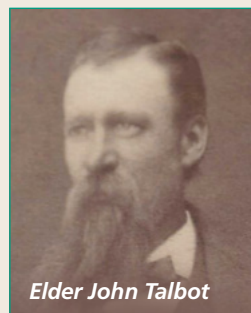
The first Africans to serve as full-time missionaries to their African homeland were Elder John Talbot and Elder Henry A. Dixon. Both men were born in Grahamstown, South Africa, and were returning to their native land. Elder Dixon was born on March 14, 1835, in Grahamstown. He was baptized in March of 1856. John Talbot was born on August 23, 1835, also in Grahamstown. He was baptized in July 1858. That same year both emigrated to America to join the Saints in Utah, USA.

These Elders were called and set apart in Salt Lake City on April 25, 1860, to labor in South Africa. They arrived at Table Bay on December 15, 1861. They soon began teaching and proselyting. Elder Dixon started holding meetings in the home of a Mr. Jones near Cape Town. Eight investigators attended that first night.

They both served for more than three years. Elder Talbot completed his mission and sailed from Port Elizabeth on April 5, 1864, on the barque *Echo* with 10 other Saints. Brother Dixon completed his mission and set sail for America on April 10, 1864, and sailed on the *Susan Pardeaux* with 18 other Church members who were emigrating to “Zion.” ■



Elder Henry A. Dixon



Elder John Talbot

Source: Evan P. Wright; *A History of South African Mission Period I, 1903–1944*