

AUSTRALIA LOCAL PAGES

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

How Great Shall Be Your Joy with Him

By Elder Benjamin Sinjoux

Area Seventy

Our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, have an infinite love for each one of us. Jesus Christ taught us the following:

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

"How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

"And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:11–14).

The ordination of the holy calling of a Seventy includes the sacred duty revealed by the Lord: "The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews" (D&C 107:34).

I recently traveled to the island of Manihi for a district conference with a mission counselor, President Nauta. As we met and discussed with the branch president, we felt the deep distress

he was going through due to some disunity in the branch.

"I am almost at the bottom of despair . . . my father and all of my brothers and sisters are not coming to church anymore since I have been called as the branch president," he expressed.

We felt impressed to give him a priesthood blessing before we biked to his home. As we met his wife, we assured them they were not alone in their struggles and that our Saviour is near them.

It was obvious that we had a lot of rescue visits to perform and to meet and to bless the people.

The words of the Lord resounded in our minds: "Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak,

**Elder Benjamin
Sinjoux**

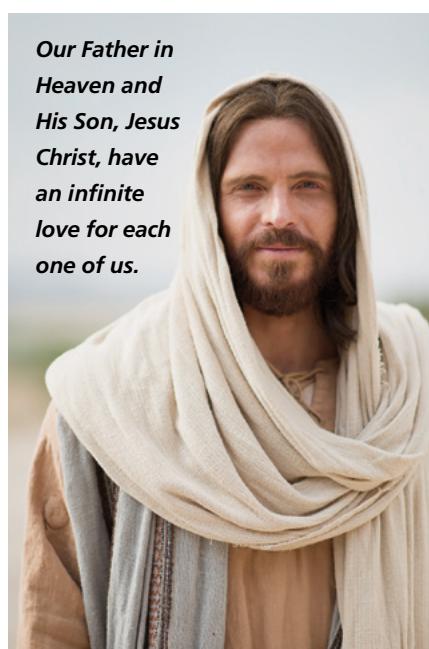


lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

That Friday afternoon we formed two groups, and I visited a family who lived just a few metres away from the chapel. He had been sealed to his family and had three beautiful children, one of which was born in the covenant, but they all fell into inactivity for a number of years now. We taught them of the love of our Heavenly Father and testified of the power of the Atonement in their life if they put their faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ and forsook their wrongdoings. We expressed our love for them and gave them a priesthood blessing and invited them to come unto the Saviour and to attend the conference sessions. "Yes, we will," they both expressed.

The next day we continued to visit a few families, and amongst them was John, the brother of the branch president, and his family. They had not been to church for quite a number of years. He has seven children and more than 10 grandchildren: a total of 20 in his family alone. We expressed our love for them and the love of our Heavenly Father for them and quoted the following:

"Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?"



"Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me."

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are" (3 Nephi 9:13–15).

We testified of our Father in Heaven and our Saviour's love for them and asked them, "Will you come unto our Saviour by preparing yourselves and your family to go to the temple?"

"Yes, we will," they responded.

We asked if they would attend the conference sessions.

"Yes, we will," they smiled.

On the Sunday session, there were 135 who attended, twice as many as on a normal Sunday. Several families came back, and John bore his testimony and he was sustained as the branch clerk at the conference. What a wonderful joy to see the sons of God return home and serve our Saviour. The branch president was overwhelmed and felt peace and joy as miracles were performed before his eyes.

I testify that our Lord Jesus Christ will attend to all priesthood holders around the world and bring the lost sheep back into the fold. I testify He will bring peace and joy as we invite Him into our life, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Filmmaker Lights the World

By Shilo Kino

Filming big projects is all part of the routine for cinematographer Benjamin King.

But filming the Australian "Light the World" Christmas campaign may have been one of his fondest projects yet.

The "Light the World" Christmas initiative, running for a second year, launched on the first of December 2017. It focused on celebrating and sharing the light of Jesus Christ.

"I'm extremely passionate about the creation of moving images," Ben said. "And being able to produce something that helps the Lord's work I feel is the greatest thing I could do with my professional talents. It brings me great joy. And working with the people we chose in the Australian 'Light the World' video who were already living these standards the Saviour taught of loving and reaching out to others exceeded my expectations in terms of their performance and really translated on camera. They were all so great."

Over the course of his career, Ben has been a unit director of photography and editor on documentary feature films; a camera operator on Australian TV series and live news and cinematographer/director on Australian TV commercial campaigns. Most recently, he was a



Benjamin King was the filmmaker behind the Australian "Light the World" video for the 2017 Christmas initiative.

cinematographer on *Chasing Coral*—a documentary that won an award at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and is now showing on Netflix.

Ben was born in Wagga Wagga, the Riverina region of New South Wales. He is now based on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, with his wife Soledad and their three children.

Life changed for Ben, a convert to the Church, when he began to have questions about God and his purpose in life. "I wanted guidance," he said.

A colleague at work began to talk to Ben about the gospel. Ben was

soon baptised on his 19th birthday. Eight months later, he baptised his wife. They both went on to serve missions in Perth and Brisbane.

"It's been 21 years of goodness," he said. "My life has been blessed in every way. My family love the gospel. That's the greatest thing I could ask for."

"The guiding principle I've tried to live by after I joined the Church was to ask the Saviour what He wanted me to do and I've strived to follow that. I feel extremely blessed for the opportunities I have been given."

Ben's love for film began at a young age. He always had a passion for fine art but never considered film as a career until towards the end of his mission. Upon returning, he felt impressed to study video production.

While at university, Ben landed a job on *Sunrise*, an Australian breakfast television program broadcast on the Seven Network from Martin Place in Sydney.

Those were the first steps in what has been a successful career for Ben.

One of his most memorable experiences, he said, was filming the beloved prophet Gordon B. Hinckley in Chile.

"President Hinckley came to visit just after his 96th birthday to rededicate the Santiago temple. It was the most incredible experience," he said. "I had just finished my film degree and told my wife that if I don't get another job, that's okay. My life is

complete because of the sacred opportunity I had to film a prophet of God."

Ben runs his own production company called Oxigeno Film and Television. Currently, he is also a part-time lecturer at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

He enjoys teaching young people about film production and is grateful he can use his talents to hasten the work of salvation.

"Film is an art form and it's a way to communicate feelings and thoughts that sometimes cannot be expressed with words," he said.

"The work of salvation is influenced by media. When I see a scene from a film that moves me, I remember it and at times it leaves an enduring impression on me. I hope people who watch videos I produce for the Church will feel the Holy Ghost and that it might leave sacred impressions on them and help increase their faith in Jesus Christ."

And Ben is grateful for the message and purpose of the "Light the World" campaign. "At Christmas, we celebrate the Saviour's birth. What better way to show our love to the Saviour than by giving something to Him. And serving others is one of the greatest gifts we can give Him," he said.

"Even though I make videos with the aim to help other people, I'm the one that's being helped. I feel like I'm the one that's blessed." ■

Ballet Dancer Up for Top Award

By Mormon Newsroom

As a young boy, Jake Mangakahia had two dreams: to pursue a career in ballet and to serve a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

From dancing in the family's backyard at Christmas as a young child to being nominated for the Australian Ballet's most prestigious prize—the 2017 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award—Jake Mangakahia's dreams of one day becoming a great ballet dancer are coming true.

He began his dancing career by setting goals and reaching them. The quote "All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them" by Walt Disney is a favourite of Jake's.

After starting ballet classes at age five in Queensland, Jake successfully auditioned for the Australian Ballet School and moved to Melbourne at age ten. He completed the Advanced Diploma of Dance and was offered a full-time contract with the Australian Ballet Company. He trained with the National Ballet Schools of New York and Toronto after winning a scholarship.

In 2007 Jake received an Award of Excellence and a Travelling Scholarship for the Overseas Exchange Program. He was also the ballet school's first



As a young boy, Jake Mangakahia dreamed of pursuing a career in ballet.

school captain. Jake was given a position in the corps de ballet of the Australian Ballet in 2011.

Setting and reaching goals has helped Jake to receive many honours, such as the winner of the

People's Choice Award in 2012. One of his goals since his youth was to dance the lead role in the contemporary piece *Waramuk* by the Australian Ballet at the London Centre in New York. He accomplished this goal in 2012.

Jake's second dream was realised in 2014 when he exchanged his ballet shoes for a suit and tie to served a two-year mission in Toronto, Canada.

With only one hour for physical exercise set aside in a typical missionary day, Jake knew it would be challenging to return to the rigours of ballet training after completing his mission. However, with prayer and step-by-step focus, Jake reflects, "I was able to get back in shape and audition successfully to be readmitted

to my dream job—a dancer in the Australian Ballet."

He adds, "I feel that the experiences I had on my mission have made me a better artist. I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to share my artistic and spiritual side in my dancing again."

This year, six young dancers are nominated for the coveted Telstra Ballet Dancer Award because of their artistic quality, powerful stage presence and contribution to the Australian Ballet. Jake Mangakahia is one of these nominees.

If awarded this prestigious honour, Jake would use the prize monies to assist dancers in the Australian Ballet to create art as a vehicle to bring people and culture together. ■

Playing It Forward

By Mormon Newsroom

Playing it forward is something that professional soccer player Ashley Hatch is all about. Coming to Australia from a successful season as US National Women's Soccer League 2017 Rookie of the Year, and on loan from North Carolina Courage, Ashley plays forward for the Melbourne City Football Club W-League as its newest international member.

When recruited to play for the Melbourne team, she said, "Yes. Australia is awesome!"

Ashley Hatch, twenty-two years and a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, gravitated

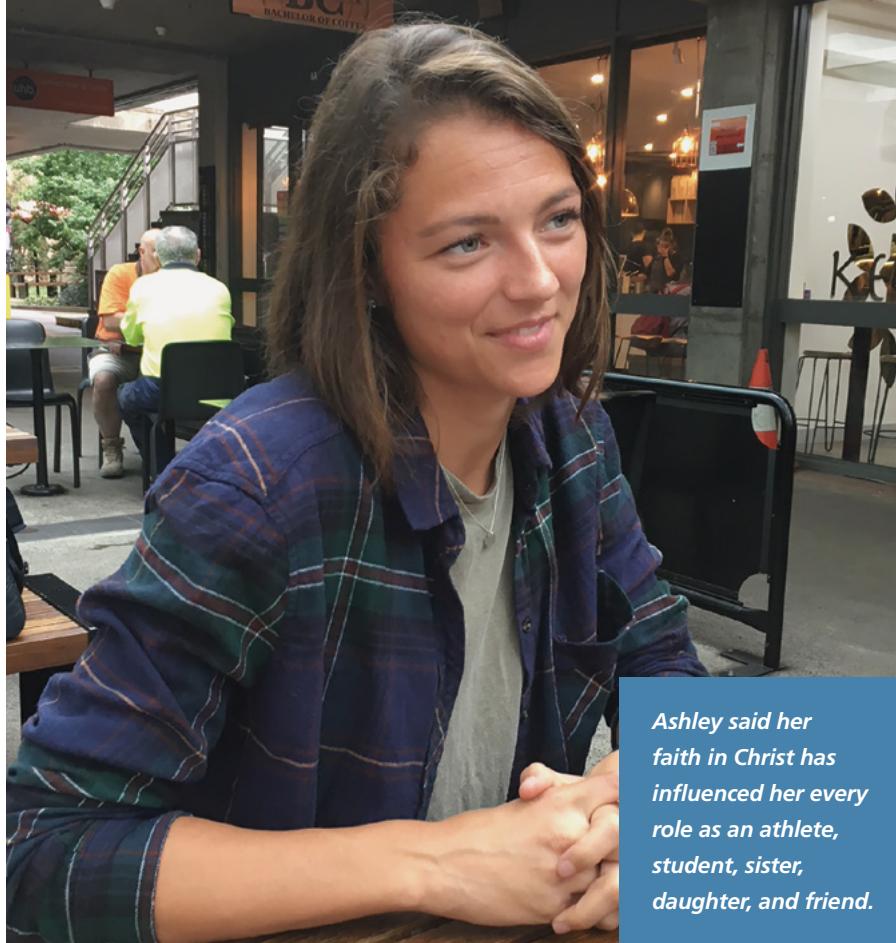
to soccer at an early age. She laughs, "I was too hyper for tennis and needed to do more running."

And she's been running ever since. She competed in track events and played forward for her high school

Soccer player Ashley plays forward for the Melbourne City Football Club W-League as its newest international member.



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Ashley said her faith in Christ has influenced her every role as an athlete, student, sister, daughter, and friend.

state championship soccer team in Gilbert, Arizona, before joining women's soccer at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. She finished her senior year at BYU on the 2016 All-American team before being chosen as the No. 2 overall draft pick of the National Women's Soccer League with the North Carolina Courage.

To play professional soccer is something Ashley has always wanted, but it wasn't easy, and in her words, "I've had my share of ups and downs."

She remembers some people, when learning of her goals, responding, "Oh, that's so cute, like OK—good luck with that."

Now as a professional, Ashley wants to "pay it forward by playing it forward." She feels that one of the greatest rewards of playing at this

level is interacting with younger girls who also have dreams.

"To see the excitement in their eyes that what you're doing is a possibility for them in the future is probably the greatest reward and responsibility—to influence them for the better," says Ashley. "I tell them that how you think of yourself is critical. Having confidence and belief in your unique talents is what's most important. Don't compare. Focus on your own strengths and dream big."

Looking back on the years of hard work, practice, and dedication, she credits her family and her faith in Christ for influencing her to become her best self.

"My family is a huge part of my life. They are my support system and have always believed in me," says Ashley. "We are very close. When I

was younger, our weekends as a family were always filled with sporting events and Church events.

"Growing up there was always a big issue of playing on Sundays, and it's nice to say that before I went professional, I never played sports on Sunday."

Ashley continues: "Looking back, I can say that my parents were right. The Sabbath day is important not only for your spirit and to be close to your family—it gives your mind and body a chance to recover. As an athlete, it's a huge relief."

She also acknowledges how her faith in Christ has influenced her every role as an athlete, student, sister, daughter, and friend. "My faith in Christ has made me the person I am today and has given me the confidence needed to go out and try to live the life God wants me to live."

That life is now on loan with the Melbourne City Football Club W-League, and Ashley is loving every minute. Coming to Australia gives professional athletes opportunity to work year-round on skill development and game fitness.

Ashley Hatch loves playing soccer, but she also loves meeting new people, making memories and challenging herself in new ways. Mary Lou Retton, an Olympic gymnast, says, "Trophies carry dust. Memories last forever." With Ashley's "playing it forward" dedication and commitment, she's sure to have both! ■

Saints and Buddhist Members Unite

By Mormon Newsroom

Saints from the Brisbane Australia Stake have joined forces with members of the Buddhist community to take part in a service project at the Buddhist temple in Priestdale as part

of the Annual Community Outreach Weekend.

More than 120 members of the Brisbane Australia Stake gathered at the Chung Tian Buddhist Temple to



▲ *Saints from the Brisbane Australia Stake took part in a service project at the Buddhist temple in Priestdale as part of the Annual Community Outreach Weekend.*

▼ *Participants cleaned the wishing ponds and pathways surrounding the temple and other facilities of the temple, including the Tai Chi area.*



undertake maintenance of the buildings and gardens. Volunteers spent their Saturday morning seeing to maintenance of the gardens surrounding the temple. The grounds are important to the peaceful atmosphere experienced at the temple.

During the event, participants cleaned the wishing ponds and pathways surrounding the temple with high-pressure water cleaners, cleared rubbish from the temple grounds and cleaned various other facilities of the temple, including the Tai Chi area.

Buddha's Light International Association use and take care of this particular temple.

"It was an immense help, and we greatly appreciate the time and effort from the Church," said Stephen Chang, president of the association.

Toward the end of the activity, volunteers from the Church participated in tours of the temple, learning more about the Buddhist faith. Worshippers at the Buddhist temple were also given the opportunity to learn more about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Gifts were also exchanged, including important religious texts, further providing an opportunity to increase understanding of each other's faiths.

Brisbane stake president Esben Strodl stated: "An important part of our teachings is to serve others and to be good friends and neighbours within the community. This was a wonderful

opportunity to serve our Buddhist friends while helping our members learn a little more about the faith and practices of this wonderful community. It was particularly pleasing to see so many of our children, youth and young adults here serving our Buddhist friends. It is really important to us that

our young people learn the principles of community service and being friends with all faiths and beliefs.”

Members of the Brisbane Australia Stake look forward to continuing their relationship with the community of worshippers at the Priestdale Buddhist temple. ■

MISSIONARY MOMENTS

Blessed for Her Service

By Simone Lee

People always assured me my family would be blessed while I served faithfully as a full-time missionary. I believed every word. However, little did I know that one of the greatest tests of faith lay just ahead.

I was converted and baptised into the Church when I was 18 years old. A few years later, I felt a strong desire to serve a mission. I prayed, and as a result I received an undeniable confirmation that this was right—that this was what Heavenly Father wanted me to do. Three long years later, I was finally on my way.

I had been out for almost a year, having recently been transferred to an outer island. After months of battling depression, I felt ready for a change, for a fresh start and a new adventure. I felt that after my battle with depression I would now

enter a season of peace. The new scenery gave me renewed vibrancy for the work, higher hopes and increased faith.

One Monday, I decided to email my mum. I hadn't heard from her in a while, and I wanted to see how she was doing. She replied almost immediately, for which I was excited. However, my excitement quickly turned into despair. My world had turned upside down within seconds.

My mum was a recovering alcoholic and had been sober for almost three years. This was a great accomplishment, and I was so proud of her. I knew in my mind that there would always be the possibility of her relapsing and had even started dreaming that she had done so. However, pushing those thoughts aside, I chose to believe that it would never happen as

I was engaged in the Lord's service as a full-time missionary.

This all changed as I read my mum's email, discovering that she had in fact relapsed. I was in shock and sat at the computer screen crying silently. I couldn't believe it.

My worse fear had come true. A few days before, I had felt on top of the world, ready to give the few remaining months of my mission all that I had. And now, I felt like the world was on top of me and I was being crushed under its weight.

My feelings quickly turned into frustration. And it was aimed at God. I wasn't by any means a perfect missionary, but I felt that I was trying and I thought God would have blessed me for my efforts. I was trying my best. I wanted to cry out, shake my fists at the heavens and give up. I wanted to give up on being a missionary. I felt my efforts weren't enough and that's why this had happened. So why should I even keep going? What was the point?

That evening I sought a priesthood blessing. I expressed the deepest, most inner feelings of my heart to my companion and mission leaders. All my frustrations, my feelings of despair, my lack of hope came out as we sat cramped in their small kitchen/office. The blessing was given and the first words spoken were, “Heavenly Father does love you.”

It was exactly what I needed. I had felt abandoned and alone, and



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**Simone served in
the Kiribati mission.**

hearing those words brought me a deep reassurance that He was there and that He was aware of me. As I reflect on that experience, I know that there were more present than just us four in that room that night.

The next day, I read the words of the angel as he appeared to Alma: “Blessed art thou, Alma; therefore, lift up thy head and rejoice, for thou hast great cause to rejoice” (Alma 8:15). I felt that the Lord wanted me to lift up my head and rejoice, for I had great cause to rejoice! I was determined to be grateful.

I began writing a list of everything that I was grateful for. From small things to big things, writing this list

helped me to first recognise and then to appreciate the blessings that God was continually pouring out upon my head.

At the time, I wondered why God had done this to me. However, since then I have realised that not every trial or every sickness is a curse from God. It's the opposite. It's a blessing. Had I not received this opportunity for growth and learning, I would still be the same person I was. It was an opportunity to be refined in the furnace of affliction, and I had emerged changed—a little more grateful and a little more faithful.

I am grateful for so many things. I am grateful that God helped me endure faithfully to the end of my

mission and to enjoy it. I am grateful that He gave me many opportunities to grow and to learn and to be refined. I am grateful for friends and family at home, near and far, who lifted me when I was weak and who still do. I am grateful for my mum and for her strength in not giving up in her own personal journey towards sobriety. I am grateful for Christ. I am grateful that He carried me when I couldn't walk and that He gave me strength when I had none. I am grateful that God does live and that He is aware of us all. ■

Simone served in the Kiribati mission from November 2015 to May 2017. She is currently in the Auckland YSA First Ward in New Zealand.