

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Pioneers—Anchored by Hope Part Two

By Elder Marcus B. Nash

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Marcus B. Nash

In the first part of this article published in last month's issue of the *Liahona*, I shared some wonderful, simple stories about pioneers in the early days of the Church and some who still live among us. After sharing those stories, I wrote that I have three suggestions for how those pioneers' faith and hope can help anchor us in today's tumultuous world. My first suggestion was to remember their stories and pass them along to others, especially the rising generation.

My second and third suggestions follow:

Remember their unity.

Second, we must remember that the pioneers in general were unified. Historians have observed that the western migration of the Latter-days Saints was different from any of the other migrations of the American West. Quoting Wallace Stegner:

"The Mormon migration . . . differed profoundly from [others]. . . . These were not groups of young and

reckless adventurers, nor were they isolated families or groups of families. They were literally villages on the march, villages of sobriety, solidarity, and discipline unheard of anywhere else on the western trails. . . . Few [other] emigrants gave a thought to people coming after them. . . . Not so the Mormons. The first thought of the pioneer company was to note good campgrounds, wood, water, grass, to measure distances and set up mile-posts. They and succeeding companies bent their backs to build bridges



MARY FIELDING AND JOSEPH F. SMITH CROSSING THE PLAINS, BY GLEN S. HOPKINSON

and dig down the steep approaches of fords. They made rafts and ferry boats and left them[, all] for the use of later companies. . . .”¹

The reason for this difference was that the members of the Church came to build up Zion, and in practical terms, Zion is “every man esteem[ing] his brother as himself, and practic[ing] virtue and holiness before [the Lord].”² Yes, Zion—a society with people of one heart and one mind, dwelling in righteousness, with no poor among them³—was and is to be the result of “every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.”⁴

This sense of community and mutually shared responsibility produced a unified effort to follow God’s prophet. That is a major reason they succeeded as they did and is an important part of the legacy they pass to us. They whisper that we too will prosper through the Lord’s power only to the degree we act as one with a sense of community and mutual responsibility in following the Lord’s prophet.

Pass on the same spirit.

Third, we are responsible to “instill in our children and grandchildren the same spirit that drove the footsteps of the pioneers.”⁵ A simple lesson of how this is done can be seen in the Muñoz family of Otavalo, Ecuador, in South America. In March of 2013, I met with Brother Juan José Muñoz Otavalo, his

wife Laura, and their son Juan Amado to learn about their lives in the Church. Brother Muñoz was one of the earliest converts to the Church in Otavalo.

When he was a boy between 10 and 13 years old, Brother Muñoz was given a copy of the Book of Mormon written in Spanish. He did not speak Spanish but felt a profound power and spirit when he held the book in his hand. He hid it in his home, for he knew that his brothers would destroy it. From time to time, he would take the book from its hiding place, just to hold and feel its power.

Enduring significant adversity and opposition from both family and his community, he joined the Church and became one of the first missionaries called from the village of Otavalo. He returned from his mission and married a returned sister missionary, and together they raised a faithful, gospel-centered family. He helped to translate the Book of Mormon into his native tongue, Quechua, and helped translate the temple ordinances into Quechua.

After listening to Brother Muñoz’s story, I turned to his son, who was weeping. Once he collected himself, he said:

“I have always appreciated the early pioneers who crossed the plains with their handcarts in North America. Their faith and devotion and dedication have inspired me and touched me deeply throughout my life. But until today, I

did not realize that there are also pioneers here in Otavalo, and they are my parents! This fills me with joy.”⁶

Here in Africa, Brother Kenneth K. Andam grew up Christian but was unable to find answers to his questions, especially about the nature of God. He met and married his wife, and although he started attending church with her, he did not continue because they did not teach truly about the nature of God. When his wife asked him why he stopped attending, he told her: “The day I find the true Church, I shall never turn back.” By 1983, his search for truth had intensified, and one of his co-workers gave him a copy of a book titled *Articles of Faith* by Elder James E. Talmage of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As he read the book, he recognized it was Christian and that it clarified most of his questions.

He borrowed other books from his co-workers and read them all and was convinced this was God’s true Church. When he informed his wife, she told him that she had been baptized into the Church in 1978 when she was a girl but had fallen away. After taking the lessons from the missionaries, he was baptized, and his wife was rebaptized a year and a half later. They have taught the gospel to their four children, and all of them have continued to be faithful to the Lord and His Church.

THE MARTIN HANDCART COMPANY RESCUED BY VOLUNTEERS. BY CLARK KELLEY PRICE



Brother and Sister Muñoz and Brother and Sister Andam teach us that we pass along a pioneer legacy of faith by *being* a pioneer, that is, by opening, showing, living the gospel way for others to follow, including our children and family. When we consistently exercise our faith in the Lord and anchor our souls with hope in Him, we become, as Moroni said, “sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being lead to glorify God.”⁷ Then, like Reddick Allred (and Brother Acquah in jail), we will minister to those who are lost on the trail of life, and they—including those in future generations—will learn from us the power and peace of such a life.

Each of us can be such a pioneer. Elder M. Russell Ballard observed:

“Packing a few belongings into wagons or handcarts and walking 1,300 miles [2,090 km] isn’t the way most of us will be asked to demonstrate our faith and courage. We face different challenges today—different mountains to climb, different rivers to ford, different valleys to make blossom as the rose.⁸ . . . Our struggle is found in living in a world steeped in sin and spiritual indifference, where self-indulgence, dishonesty, and greed seem to be present everywhere. Today’s wilderness is one of confusion and conflicting messages. . . . We must . . . not become casual in keeping God’s

commandments. . . . Avoiding the temptations and evils of the world requires the faith and fortitude of a real modern-day pioneer.”⁹

President Thomas S. Monson, recently asked: “Can we somehow muster the courage and steadfastness of purpose that characterized the pioneers of a former generation? Can you and I, in actual fact, be pioneers? I know we can be. Oh, how the world needs pioneers today!”¹⁰

May each of us resolve to be a pioneer, to go before and open up the way for others who are buffeted by a world steeped in sin, confusion, and doubt. May we remember the pioneers and their stories, remember

that they came to build Zion in a united effort, and then accept the responsibility to instill such faith in all we meet—especially in the rising generation—and to do so through offering our own “living sacrifice”¹¹ of a life moved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and anchored by the hope of good things to come through Him. Remember, parents have the solemn obligation to teach their children to understand faith in the Lord, even before they are eight years old!¹²

To be a pioneer means that we “be not weary in well doing.”¹³ Weltha Hatch doubtless felt no special significance in starting a cooking fire while her husband, Ira, prepared and loaded their buggy. Nor did Ira Hatch think it heroic to wake up, stiff from a fitful sleep on the hard ground, and prepare for the day’s journey. Nor did Isaac Nash think it all that momentous to throw a chew of tobacco to the ground. And for Reddick Allred, it was a simple matter of doing what the Lord had said he should do. Brother Acquah probably did not think it heroic to visit his friend in jail, and Brother and Sister Andam may not have thought that their day-to-day teaching of the gospel to their children to be all that monumental. Brother Muñoz may not have sensed that holding the Book of Mormon would bring eternal blessings.

Yet from all of these small and simple things has come something

great! So let us remember that there are no small things in great endeavors.

I have visited the humble room where Joseph William Billy Johnson first held meetings connected to the Church in Ghana—and marveled that from that small beginning not so long ago we now have a temple. Our story as the Lord’s covenant people in West Africa has only begun! If we as a people live the gospel, follow the prophet, choose faith over doubt, and do the little things that grow faith and produce soul-anchoring hope, each of us will be a pioneer, preparing the way for our families and others around the world to follow.

I love the Lord and I love His people. I have felt His love for the

wonderful Latter-day Saints of West Africa, and I love to be with you. That each of us may be a pioneer for the thousands, even millions, who will follow is my prayer and great desire. ■

NOTES

1. Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion—The Story of the Mormon Trail* (1992), 11.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 38:24.
3. See Moses 7:18.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 82:19.
5. M. Russell Ballard, “Pioneer Faith and Fortitude—Then and Now”, *Ensign*, July 2013, 24; or *Liahona*, July 2013, 16.
6. Personal Journal, Marcus B. Nash.
7. Ether 12:4.
8. See Isaiah 35:1.
9. M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, July 2013, 24; or *Liahona*, July 2013, 16.
10. Thomas S. Monson, “The World Needs Pioneers Today”, *Ensign* or *Liahona*, July 2013, 5.
11. Romans 12:1.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–26.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

CHURCH HISTORY COLUMN

Inspirational Way of Collecting Records

By Charles and Mercy Sono-Koree

Area and Assistant Area Church History Adviser

On the day the Church was organized, April 6, 1830, the Lord commanded that a record should be kept (see D&C 21:1). In 1831, He indicated that the Church historian “may . . . obtain knowledge . . . [by] writing, copying, selecting, and obtaining all things which shall be

for the good of the Church, and for the rising generations” (D&C 69:7–8). Since that time, the Church has collected records from around the world, gathering and preserving information, testimonies, and memories that might otherwise be lost. Appropriately sharing this Church history helps bring



Charles and Mercy Sono-Koree

people closer to Christ, strengthens their resolve to live the gospel, and can provide them with patterns for overcoming adversity.

In the broadest sense, a record is information in a fixed form that documents a person's experiences or recounts the history of a given locality, Church unit, or event. Records can be physical items or electronic files.

Some records may contain sacred, confidential, or private information that is inappropriate to release to the

public. Such records, however, may still have historical value and are worth collecting and preserving.

We call upon every faithful member of the Church who has such records—be it a photograph, historic document, testimonies, faith-promoting story or stories, and journals—to donate to the Church for the benefit of the rising generation. If you are not capable of writing your stories, you can call or invite your Church history adviser to conduct an oral history interview with you.

A donation agreement form would be signed between you, the donor, and the Church to indicate that the Church would now have authority to use your record whenever it is needful.

We bear witness of the miracle that occurs in collecting records of the Church. We know the Lord has His hands in this project to collect records from members of the Church. We know it to be a commandment from the Lord. ■

Studying Church Literature Helps Me Understand the Gospel

An interview with Brother Etubom Eniang Essien

By Edem Edem

Public Affairs Director, Calabar Nigeria South Stake

Brother Etubom Eniang Essien, a 96-year-old member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a title holder in Efik land, has said that reading of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints literature has expanded his knowledge of the gospel. As he read and studied, he discovered the answers to questions and explanations of things he did not understand.

“The Church is very interesting; you rarely know everything about it. It is just like a school: you go from one step to the other; you advance from one level to the other, from one stage to the other. But after I have read the Church literature and scriptures, embedded myself in them, I came to realize the importance of baptism. . . . And then when we went to the temple, even there I did not

understand the covenant. I just went like that, you know. Now I am so conversant with the procedure and everything. However, I came to realization that it is not an easy thing.”

Calabar Nigeria South Stake President, President Ephraim Ebong and other members of the stake visited Brother Essien to give the sacrament in his home. He bore his testimony to them saying: “I was smoking seriously, and when I read Church literatures and scriptures, I realized that smoking was not good. I tried to stop, and you know, I stopped smoking for some time and afterwards, I started again. In one of the fast and testimony Sundays, I fasted and prayed, and it looks like it worked out well and I stopped smoking.”

Etubom Essien also bore testimony about paying tithing: “From my previous church, the issue of paying tithes had never been told. We were not educated about tithes payment. It is when I came into this Church, I started hearing about and paying tithes. I had never paid tithes in my former church, and I only put my offering on Sunday and left, but ever since I was told about payment of tithes, I had seen wonderful things happening in my life. At times, things are hard, but suddenly something comes in.”

Brother Essien is a living example of the increased knowledge and understanding that comes through dedicated study of the doctrine and the goodness it brings into our lives. ■



MISSIONARY MOMENTS

Overcoming Trials to Get to the MTC

By James and Carolyn Ritchie

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We discovered that each of their arrivals was not only a miracle but also that it was a piece of a foreordained plan to build the Kingdom of God in Africa.



My wife and I were delighted to preside over the missionary training center in Accra, Ghana, West Africa, from 2004 to 2006. Every three weeks a new group of missionaries arrived from various countries in Africa to begin their training. I wanted to share with you some interesting comments from one such group that was typical of the many groups that arrived to prepare for several weeks before departing for their various mission assignments.

One missionary wrote me the following: “I didn’t get to know my

dad as he died four days before I was born. I loved my mom; she brought us the gospel, but she died before we could prove to her how much we loved her for bringing us such a precious gift as the gospel. Two of my sisters and one brother are now returned missionaries and outstanding people in the Church. I was taught to change every difficult situation into a good one, but one of my more difficult moments came when my brother, who had just completed his mission, died from a car accident only two

weeks after he finished his mission. He was a very special person to me.”

Another elder wrote, “I don’t have either of my parents. I lost them both some years back. [I know] that one day, one time, I will meet each of them and enjoy having them again for my parents.”

Another told me: “I have no mother and no father; they are both dead. So I take Jesus Christ as everything in my life. There are no other members of the Church in my entire family. I am the only one. It is so hard.”

Another elder explained: “My parents are both dead, and my adoptive mother, whom I greatly love, also died. These losses led me to a preoccupation with the doctrine of baptism for the dead. The priests in my former church never could explain what it meant. My adoptive mother came to me repeatedly in many dreams insisting that I should be baptized for her. She told me that she had received the promise that I would do it for her salvation. She told me that I would shortly find the true Church where I could do it. While visiting my sister, I found the Church and recognized it by this one teaching of baptism for the dead. I knew it was true the moment that they taught me that one principle. I pray for my mother, my father, and my adoptive mother, and I know that they are all members of the Church in heaven, for I have had all their work done for them in the

temple. I have also brought several friends into the Church.”

I will share just one more inspiring example. It is about Elder Alaka of Nairobi. Shortly after arriving at the MTC, he gave his first four-minute talk in his first sacrament meeting in the MTC. He told the congregation that six years before, during the terrorist bombings of the U.S. Embassy in Kenya, Elder Alaka was then a young boy, age 14. He was holding his eight-year-old sister's hand and anxiously dialing a cell telephone number praying that it would answer. It did.

The cell phone that was ringing belonged to his father—a Kenyan accountant employed at the U.S. Embassy. He was a good man trying to raise his two young children after his wife had died just three years before. He had recently found the gospel and had many good friends in the Church who were anxious to help him with his two motherless children.

With great momentary relief, the cell phone was answered, but a strange voice responded. After he asked for his father, this stranger told this 14-year-old that he had heard the phone ringing and had taken it out the pocket of his father who had just been killed in the bombing at the embassy.

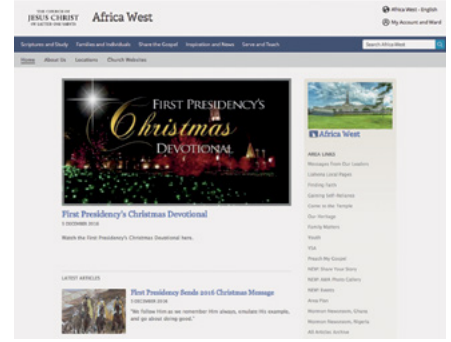
Stunned and heartbroken, Alaka looked down at his eight-year-old sister and wondered how he could tell her that her that mommy was gone

and now their daddy was not coming home either.

Six years later this 20-year-old missionary enrolled his now 14-year-old sister in a boarding school with the money he had received from some insurance provided by the U.S. government, gave her a big hug, and then boarded a plane for his flight across Africa, from Kenya to Accra, Ghana, where he began his mission. He is the first missionary from his newly converted family. He is convinced that his father and mother are very much aware of his mission and watching carefully how he represents them and his sister and the Church. I could tell he was going to be a great missionary. His mom and dad will be very proud of him.

This group of new missionaries and their trials and struggles to arrive in the MTC are representative of the hundreds of missionaries who came through the MTC during our tenure in that special and sacred place. Everyone came with an amazing story. It always seemed like a miracle to discover how they had found themselves at the missionary training center arriving from some village or hamlet from all over Africa preparing to change their lives forever and lots of others along the way. We discovered that each of their arrivals was not only a miracle but also that it was a piece of a foreordained plan to build the kingdom of God in Africa. ■

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