

## 2017 Africa West Area Plan Broadcast by the Area Presidency

Presented February 26, 2017

*The following is the transcript of the video presentation by the Area Presidency of the Area Plan for 2017. President Terence M. Vinson, Elder Marcus B. Nash, and Elder Vern P. Stanfill spoke in turns throughout.*

*Terence M. Vinson:*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we are grateful that we can visit with you and have prayed that our time together will bless you and the future of the Church in West Africa. Today we will discuss our Africa West Area Plan, but before we do, let's consider our Heavenly Father's Plan of Salvation.

Each of us is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.<sup>[i]</sup> Even before this world was created, our Heavenly Father instituted His plan whereby we could receive the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life.<sup>[ii]</sup> Eternal life is God's life, and to receive eternal life is to become like Him and to live the kind of life God lives.<sup>[iii]</sup> In order to receive this greatest of all gifts, we needed to come to earth and live in mortality where we would have the opportunity to grow and progress by obtaining a physical body, gaining experience, living by faith, and learning to choose good over evil. Our Heavenly Father knew that we would sin and make mistakes while on earth. Because everyone (except children under eight years of age) would be made impure by sin, none of us could dwell in the presence of God without a Redeemer to save us from death and the effects of sin. So, our Heavenly Father anointed Jesus, his firstborn Son, to be our Savior. The Lord suffered for our sins so that justice could be satisfied and mercy could be given to those who exercise their faith unto repentance.<sup>[iv]</sup> As part of the Plan of Salvation, when our mortal life ends, we will be judged of our works. If we have done what is necessary to receive the blessings made available to us by the Savior's Atonement, we will be found spotless, guiltless, joyous, and pure at the time of judgment and receive eternal life.<sup>[v]</sup> The only way to receive these blessings available through the Savior's Atonement is to put the Doctrine of Christ into practice in our lives: we must exercise faith in Christ unto repentance, be baptized, receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end in receiving all essential priesthood ordinances and keeping the associated covenants.<sup>[vi]</sup>

*Marcus B. Nash:*

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was restored so that Heavenly Father's children—living and dead—would have the opportunity to receive all essential priesthood ordinances. The ordinances are important because it is only through the ordinances performed by the authority of the priesthood that the power of godliness is manifest in people's lives.<sup>[vii]</sup> This power to make men and women godly (and thus fulfill the purpose of Heavenly Father's Plan of Salvation for us to become like Him) comes only to those individuals and families who exercise faith unto repentance, receive all essential priesthood ordinances, and keep the associated covenants. It is not enough to just receive the ordinances, we must also keep the covenants associated with the ordinances. This is because the covenants give life to the ordinances, just like a motor gives life to a motorcycle. So, the Lord established His Church—not only to give His children the opportunity to receive all essential priesthood ordinances—but to also help them endure to the end in keeping the associated covenants. For this reason, the Lord's Church is commanded to record the name of every person who has received the ordinances so that he or she may be remembered, nourished by the good word of God, and be kept in the right way.<sup>[viii]</sup> In short, the Church exists to help God's children help each other receive all essential priesthood ordinances, keep the associated covenants, and qualify for exaltation and eternal life.<sup>[ix]</sup> As we join together in this effort, we become one with God as His covenant people.

*Vern P. Stanfill:*

Our Africa West Area Plan is designed to help us as individuals, families, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to do what the Church is here to accomplish: encourage each member and

non-member to receive all essential priesthood ordinances, keep the associated covenants, and qualify for exaltation and eternal life.

There are three points of emphasis in the Africa West Area plan: (1) increase our faith in Christ; (2) participate in priesthood ordinances and keep the associated covenants; and (3) strengthen the rising generation. These are important because exercising faith in Christ gives us the power to do God's will; receiving essential priesthood ordinances and keeping the associated covenants brings us the power to become like God; and strengthening the rising generation brings hope—the expectation of good things to come—to them, the Church, and the world.

*Terence M. Vinson:*

We have specific invitations we hope you accept for each of these points of emphasis:

- (1) Build Faith in Christ: Faith in Christ is built up by hearing and reading the word of God and applying it to our lives. So, we invite every member of the Church to do two things: (a) personally pray daily and read daily from the Book of Mormon, with the goal of having it read by the end of the year; and (b) we ask that each family pray together and read together from the Book of Mormon every day. If any member of the Church has difficulty reading, we have a gospel literacy course that is being developed, and we hope that it will be of assistance to you sometime this year. Until then, find someone to read with you!

*Marcus B. Nash:*

- (2) Receive and participate in essential priesthood ordinances, and keep the associated covenants: As we have explained, it through the ordinances of the gospel that the power of godliness is manifest. So, we invite every member to participate personally in each possible ordinance and keep the associated covenants—which means that you will help one other person do the same. For example, we invite every brother to be ordained to the priesthood office appropriate for his age, from Deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood to Elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood. We invite every married couple and every family that has not been sealed in the temple to prepare and come to the temple to be sealed. We invite every member to prepare for, and receive, the ordinances of the temple. We invite each of you to research your family history and bring one name to the temple and perform vicarious ordinances for him or her. We invite every member to attend sacrament meeting and partake of the sacrament worthily. Lastly—because each of us covenanted at baptism to help another come unto Christ, we invite you to bring one other person or family (member or non-member) with you to sacrament meeting—and then to the temple.

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*Vern P. Stanfill:*

The center of strength for the Church is in the family. The outcome we seek is a family sealed in the temple so that the power of godliness is manifest there. Each family should be a place where the gospel is taught and lived. The family should be a place where father and mother love each other and love their children. It must be a place where children are taught to understand the doctrine of faith, repentance, baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost. The culture of our Heavenly Father is to have that kind of family, and that is what we must accomplish and how we will best strengthen our children and youth and prepare them to exert powerful spiritual leadership in the days to come.

- (3) Strengthen the rising generation: We invite our young men to be worthy to be ordained to the appropriate priesthood office, receive the Melchizedek Priesthood at the appropriate age, receive the ordinances of the temple, serve a fulltime mission, and prepared to be a righteous husband and father after their missionary service. We invite our young women to be worthy of receiving sacred ordinances, keeping the associated covenants, serve a fulltime mission if they desire, and prepared to be a righteous wife and mother at the appropriate time. And, importantly, we invite parents, bishops, and ward councils to unite in making this happen for our youth.

*Terence M. Vinson:*

Now, let's discuss how we can work together to make these things happen. Remember, a big reason why we have the Church is so that we help each other to make these things happen.

There are two very important tools the Lord has given us. If we use these tools under the direction of the Holy Ghost, we will experience great success, so much so that we will be astonished at what the Lord can do! These important tools are: (1) the principle of "one take one;" and (2) councils.

- (1) The Lord gave us a fundamental principle on how to build up His Church when He commanded: "And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak that he may edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also."<sup>[x]</sup> The Lord expects a person who is strong in the Spirit to take another person with him on the straight and narrow path. So, our invitation is that you take another person with you to receive essential priesthood ordinances and help them to keep the associated covenants. For example, bring another person to the waters of baptism if they are not yet a member. Or, take another member, or a non-member, with you to sacrament meeting. Or, take someone with you to participate in the ordinances of the temple. Or, take the name of one of your kindred dead to the temple to perform vicarious ordinances for him or her. If we apply the principle of "one take one," we will grow stronger and stronger as a Church and people. The highest priority person you can bring with you on the straight and narrow path is a family member.

*Marcus B. Nash:*

- (2) In the Church we have councils:<sup>[xi]</sup> the family council, the ward council, the class or quorum presidency council, the bishopric, the High Council, the stake presidency—all of these are councils. Our councils are where we coordinate our efforts as a Church to receive the revelation we need to facilitate that one who is strong in the Spirit takes with him him that is weak, so that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also. So, we invite each Church council to prayerfully consider the following question together: "Who (somebody who is strong in the Spirit) will take who (somebody who is weak)?" Once you have identified the names of those who are strong in the Spirit and those who need help, focus the question on a point of emphasis in the Area plan. For example: "Who will take who to read the Book of Mormon?" Or, "Who will take who to sacrament meeting?" Or, "who will take who to be baptized?" Or, "Who will take who to participate in the ordinances of the temple?" Or, "Who will take who to research family names and bring them to the temple?" Or, "Who will take who to be prepared and worthy to serve a fulltime mission?" Once we ask and answer these questions in our Church councils with reference to the names that are recorded (either as members or investigators), we will have someone in place to be a friend to help one other person to receive or participate in all essential priesthood ordinances and keep the associated covenants. This will please God. After all, we are commanded to remember the members of the Church, nurture them with the word of God, and help keep them in the right way! We invite you to do this in every council of the Church. In this way we will work together, lifting one another: "I lift thee, and thee lift me, and we shall ascend together!"

Please remember that any program of the Church exists to facilitate this process. We do not organize Relief Society, Priesthood quorums, Primary, Sunday School, Young Women, Young Men, or other activities of the Church just to run a good organization. Rather, we use these programs to facilitate that one who is strong in the Spirit takes another with him so that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also. And then, the one who has become strong in the Spirit will take another with him. In this way the Church will grow mighty and powerful, one person, one family at a time.

*Vern P. Stanfill:*

When Christ showed himself unto the people of Nephi, He invited them to come forth and touch the prints of the nails in his hands and feet that so that they could know for themselves that he is "the God of the whole earth and was slain for the sins of the world."<sup>[xii]</sup> Imagine their wonder: one by one, each went forth and "did

see with [his] eyes and did feel with [her] hands, and did know of a surety that it was he..."<sup>[xiii]</sup> When the people "had witnessed for themselves" that there stood the Savior of the world, "they did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna!"<sup>[xiv]</sup> meaning: "Save now!"<sup>[xv]</sup> In that wondrous day of perfect clarity, the people realized that their mortal experience, the Church, the gospel, and the Father's plan are all about Salvation. Nothing else really mattered to them then—or ever after! There stood before them the Son of God, He who "has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance!"<sup>[xvi]</sup> Small wonder they cried "Hosanna!"

In response to their cry for salvation, the Lord called forth Nephi, who arose and approached the Savior, bowed, and kissed his feet.<sup>[xvii]</sup> The Savior bade him arise, and said: "I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven."<sup>[xviii]</sup> Why was this the Savior's immediate response to the expressed desire of all present to be saved? It was because He knew what we have discussed today: that the only way for them to fully access the saving, cleansing, blessing, healing, redeeming power of His Atonement that each of them so profoundly desired is through the ordinances of the priesthood, by which "the power of godliness is manifest" and without which "the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh."<sup>[xix]</sup>

*Marcus B. Nash:*

So, He invites you and me to take one person to Him (by taking them to His ordinances of salvation)—just as he did that wondrous day in the land of Bountiful. As that day drew to a close, the Savior announced that He was about to depart. The people looked upon him steadfastly in tears, for they wanted to experience his healing touch. Said He: "Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither." Please note that he did not ask them to go and invite another to come; nor did he ask them to go and visit and then report on the visit. No, the clear wording of his gentle, sweet command was to "Bring them hither."<sup>[xx]</sup> He continued: "Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them...and it came to pass that...all the multitude...did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him. And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him..."<sup>[xxi]</sup> A great truth is subtly taught here: both the whole and the once-infirm together ended up at the Savior's feet!

*Vern P. Stanfill:*

When one takes one other to the Savior through the ordinances and covenants, *both* of them, friend and befriended, draw close to the Savior and his redeeming, healing power. This is what will happen to each one of you who accepts and diligently acts on the invitations we have extended to you today: you and the one you take with you to receive ordinances and keep the associated covenants will draw closer to the Savior through the process. You and the one you bring will come to better know the Savior.

*Terence M. Vinson:*

So, with faith, we will look to the Savior. We will love, trust, and know Him. This will lead us to seek for ourselves and our families all the blessings of the temple and eternal life.

We promise as an Area Presidency that as we unite and willingly do what the Lord requires in carrying out this simple plan, we will see the power of godliness manifest in the lives of our people. We will learn patience and godliness. We will see miracles. We will have our hearts knit together in unity and love. We will set aside any tradition, culture, or way of doing things that is contrary to the Father's Plan of Salvation. We will become the salt of the earth and give savor to the nations in which we live.<sup>[xxii]</sup> We will be happy and filled with joy. The Lord will cause us to "bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit."<sup>[xxiii]</sup>

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- [i] The Family: A Proclamation to the World
- [ii] Doctrine and Covenants 14:7
- [iii] See Harold B. Lee, "Eternal Life," *Instructor*, 101, no. 10 (October 1966): 378; see also Bruce R. McConkie, CR, April 1970, 26.
- [iv] See Alma 34:11-17
- [v] See 3 Nephi 27:13-22
- [vi] See 2 Nephi 31:5-21
- [vii] See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-22
- [viii] See Moroni 6:4
- [ix] See Handbook 2, sec. 3.4
- [x] Doctrine and Covenants 84:106 (see verses 106-108)
- [xi] See Handbook 2, section 3.4; see chapters 3 and 4
- [xii] 3 Nephi 11:14
- [xiii] 3 Nephi 11:15
- [xiv] 3 Nephi 11:16-17
- [xv] Bible Dictionary, *Hosanna*
- [xvi] Alma 12:15
- [xvii] 3 Nephi 11:18-19
- [xviii] 3 Nephi 11:21
- [xix] Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-21
- [xx] 3 Nephi 17:7
- [xxi] 3 Nephi 17:7-10 (1-10)
- [xxii] See 3 Nephi 12:13 and Doctrine and Covenants 101:39-40
- [xxiii] Doctrine and Covenants 97:9 (see verses 8-9)