

The Gospel News

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*He's the same
yesterday,
today, & forever*

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A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

It's now been about a year since the world changed dramatically. The past twelve months have been different than anything we've ever seen in our lifetimes. Many have been taken by surprise by some of the events that have occurred. But not our God. It would be hard to imagine the "everlasting to everlasting," "Alpha and Omega," omniscient God sitting on His throne, saying, "Wow, I didn't see that one coming!"

The scriptures tell us that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He's the same God today as He was a year ago or fifty years ago or 2,000 years ago. The world may change but God never changes. On His last night on earth, Jesus told His Apostles, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). As followers of Christ, we have the same ability to overcome the world today as His Apostles did at that time.

In the past year, perhaps some of us have experienced the feeling of fearing for our lives when gathering together. In John 20, the disciples also feared for their lives after the crucifixion of Jesus—the *doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews* (John 20:19). What happened next? Jesus appeared and said to them, "Peace be unto you." We have experienced the same peace when overcoming our fears to assemble together. Even **Thomas**, who initially doubted that any of this was true because he missed the meeting, later received the same peace from Christ when he met with the other disciples.

Regardless of how careful we've been, some people have gotten ill. Some may have even wondered whether the Lord even cares about what's happening. When the disciples were in a ship that was caught in a great storm, Jesus was asleep. The disciples woke Him up and demanded, "*Master, carest thou not that we perish?*" (Mark 4:38). Jesus then rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, "*Peace, be still.*" Yes, He cares! "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13). That single event—Jesus dying on the cross for us—is just as much a demonstration of God's love for us today as it has ever been. **John** referred to himself as "*the one who Jesus loves.*" We can do the same today—each of us is also the one who Jesus loves.

A few of our members have died from COVID in the past year. As sad as that is, it's no sadder than the deaths of our members who died of other causes this past year. Or those who died the year before, or the year before that. In Acts 12, Herod wanted to strike against the church so *he killed James the brother of John with the sword* (Acts 12:2). That was obviously a sad time for the disciples of Jesus too. As much as we mourn the passing of each of our brothers and sisters, we know that the specific cause of death is not what's important, but rather, that we die faithful, ready to go to the paradise of God. It's how it's always been and how it always will be.

(Continued on page 4)



And they cried
AHHH!!! We knew
the day would come!
Be blessed by the
hope of tomorrow and
Brother O's "Word Up"
on the next page.

100%

Speaking of
communication,
the Gospel News staff
thinks we have an
obligation to stay current,
hundo p?

If someone
30 years ago took
a time machine forward,
how many words we
use every day
would they not get?

**huh?
whaa?
eh?**

The pandemic has
caused many new
phrases that just
one year ago
we never used.

ONLINE
LINK
ZOOM



The word "virtually"
used to mean
"almost always".
Now it almost always
means
"on the computer."

**TIGHT
Set**

Counting
modern slang,
there are 64 definitions
of the English word
"tight" and 430
for the word "set".
HELP!

Genesis 9:13
"I do set my bow in the doud,
and it shall be for
a token of a covenant
between me and the earth."
Let's teach our kids that it
still means that today.



Let no corrupt
communication
proceed out of your mouth,
but that which is good
to the use of edifying,
that it may minister
grace unto the hearers.
Eph 4:29



BFTIP Blast From The Past

By Sister Kellie Speck

Thirty-nine years ago this month, on March 28, 1982, I was baptized in Imperial, Pennsylvania. In my early teens, many of my friends started taking drugs and drinking. For a while, I still tried to hang out with them as they had been my friends for so long. My mother had a dream where she saw my girlfriend and me, and her feet were coal black and mine were starting to pick up some dust. That dream pierced my heart like an arrow. When I didn't want to do those things my friends didn't want me around anymore, and I was very lonely for some time.

I was very shy and for several years I had been secretly reading the scriptures, which I had always loved, and praying. One day when I was sixteen, my Dad asked me if I wanted to go to Church in Imperial and then go to the airport to pick up my grandfather, who was flying home from Florida. I was so excited to see him, I said yes. That day in church, tongues came forth with the interpretation, "I will shine My face upon all who will come unto me." I wanted to be baptized, but I was afraid I was not strong enough to last. Brother Jim Moore Jr. told me,

"Jesus will help you," and I said I would. They had a big turkey dinner at the Buffingtons, and they skimmed the ice off of the pond next to the church. That evening my grandfather arrived in time to see me baptized by Brother Bob Buffington. As they were praying for me for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost, tongues came forth again that evening, "This is my child, this is my child."

When I went to bed that night, I felt as if I were floating and have never felt so loved.

The next day in school, my teachers and friends said that I looked different, and I told them that I decided to serve the Lord. Since then, Jesus has been with me through many things that I know I could not have come through without him.



Purpose Statement

- To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people.

Mission Statement

- The Church of Jesus Christ will teach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things commanded by Jesus Christ, while working to draw Israel to Christ through efforts focused on the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America



Vision Statement

- Living and worshipping in unity and righteousness will result in the fullness of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, culminating in continuous growth of the Church and fulfillment of Christ's promises concerning His Kingdom on Earth.

Wordup



"And They Cry, Ahhh!"

By Elder Doug Obradovich

"Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full." (John 16:24)

These are words born of both great relief and great release, and encapsulate emotions that follow the endurance of immense pain(s) or tremendous endeavor. This might involve a battle of faith vs. fear, hope vs. hopelessness, or simply an overwhelming exhaustion from some conflict, regardless of the specifics. However, it's in the detailed back stories of such endurance that genuine appreciation is experienced by those who witness the joy of the "Ahhh!"

A sports story may involve recovery from injury, but aspects of rehabilitation provide understanding of the "Ahhh!" News of a birth brings celebration, but when months or even years of tumult and questions leading up to it are explained, the emotion of the "Ahhh!" is illuminated. Even the Word of God can be undervalued without such specificity. Paul writes, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice" (2 Corinthians 12:8). What was "this thing," and was "thrice" a reference to 3 prayers in an hour, 3 days in prayer, 3 months of fasting and prayer,

or 3 years imploring God for His intercession? Paul condensed his endurance into a brief overview.

David's life included much suffering; obvious by his insight in Psalms 30:5, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." When the morning follows great struggles, the joy is full and robust. However, "Ahhh!" is not necessarily the emotion one anticipates when anguishing through the night. In fact, when surrounded by darkness, one may not even find the courage to consider such sentiment, let alone expect it. It is difficult to contemplate joy when standing in the midst of misery.

Interactions with one another often frame attitudes, which can affect relationships, even with God. Because of this, it is wise to lower expectations with people and raise beliefs with God, as there is risk in permitting the disappointments created by one another to lessen the confidence placed in God. One need not simply hope God might, nor believe God

can. Faith challenges to know God will!

Peter discovered he could walk on water only when he stepped out of the boat (Matthew 14:29). Elijah found when facing 450 prophets of Baal that numbers against God simply don't add up (1 Kings 18:21-39). John witnessed his fellow apostle confidently extend the power to heal a man crippled from birth instead of a financial offering, authorized by God (Acts 3:6). Each of these individuals were rewarded with a moment to rejoice.

But all of these pale in comparison to the single greatest "Ahhh!" moment gifted to mankind when the resurrected Savior walked upright and whole from the depths of the tomb. And all who believed cried, "Ahhh!"

Are you enduring something right now? Is it dark in your life, without an end in sight? Jesus promised you, "[A]sk, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). The Savior is promising you morning is coming, it is within sight. And with it, your moment to cry, "Ahhh!"

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

Continued from cover

In the past year, we witnessed considerable protesting and rioting for various “causes.” There have always been these types of causes, and probably always will be. Some of these result in meaningful change, whereas others just come and go. The one cause that has been around for the past 2,000 years (in fact, even since creation) is the cause of Christ. It’s the cause that we each stood up for on the day of our baptism, and it’s just as valid a cause for each of us today. **Simon Zelotes** (the zealot) was a man who involved himself in various causes of his day. However, when he met Jesus, he traded them all in and became a zealot for the cause of Christ—we can do the same today.

Many “leaders” emerged in the past year—in the political arena, in the medical field, among news reporters, and even in the entertainment industry. Who of these should be our new leaders? None of them! Jesus Christ continues to be the only leader we should look to—the only other people we should consider following are those who are following Christ. At the time of John the Baptist, many were seeking the Messiah, wondering who it would be so they could follow Him. John told his followers how to recognize Him: *“Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon him... this is the Son of God”* (John 1:33-34). **Andrew**, who was one of John’s followers at the time, witnessed the Spirit upon Jesus after His baptism—he spent time with Jesus and became convinced that He was the one to follow. The same Spirit will witness to us today how to recognize and follow Christ—we just need to listen to it.

In Matthew 16, Jesus explains that God reveals to individuals that Jesus is the Christ—it’s not something that we are able to figure out for ourselves. **Peter** made the statement that Jesus was *“the Christ, the Son of the living God”* and Jesus immediately pointed out that *“flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 16:16-17). The Church of Jesus Christ has always relied on revelations from God to direct us—not only that Jesus is the Christ but also for the restoration of the gospel and many other things that God has revealed throughout the history of the Church. The revelation process did not halt in the past year—God shared valuable information with us regarding the sanctity of the Lord’s Supper and becoming more united as the people of God.

Jesus said there would be division between people—He actually said that He came *to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother*, etc. (Matthew 10:35). However the division is not supposed to be between followers of Christ, but rather between us and the unbelievers. Those who stand for Christ should be on one side of the divide while everyone else (commonly referred to as “the world”) is on the other side of the divide. One of the Apostles, **Judas (not Iscariot)**, asked Jesus a question about what separates believers from unbelievers: *Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”* (John 14:22). Jesus

explained that the Holy Ghost would be given to the believers, thereby enabling them to have Christ with them while unbelievers do not. The best approach to dealing with all of the division we’ve seen in the past year is for all who have the Holy Ghost to follow Its direction—this won’t unite the world or the country, but it will unite the Church as followers of Christ, which is what God has always desired.

Judas Iscariot is an example of what happens when believers and unbelievers are mixed together. Judas was chosen to be one of the Twelve but *Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him* (John 6:64). Jesus referred to Judas as “unclean” and “a devil”—clearly, he didn’t fit in with the other Apostles. Yet, the Twelve worked together as best they could for the time that Jesus was with them. Finally, the division became irreparable when Judas allowed Satan to enter into him (Luke 22:3) and he betrayed Christ. While there’s nothing wrong with having relationships and alliances with people who don’t share our belief in Christ, we have to understand that if we are true to our beliefs, the time may come when unbelievers will separate themselves from us, not desiring to be bound by the teachings of Christ that they don’t believe in. When that happens, compromising our beliefs is not the answer, but rather, we need to continue to be united in Christ.

When the year 2020 came to an end, many people were more than happy to bid farewell to a terrible, godforsaken year. But was it a godforsaken year? Souls were called to repentance and baptism in 2020. The lame walked, the sick were healed, the unemployed got jobs and people who gathered together to worship the Lord experienced God’s peace and protection. No, it was not a godforsaken year. God was at work in 2020 as in any other year—perhaps we just didn’t hear enough about it. When we look at the list of Apostles in the four gospels, we see the name of **James, the son of Alphaeus**. We don’t know much about this James as an individual, but by reading about what the Apostles did, we can easily assume that James was an active worker for the Lord as well. Some people may think that James wasn’t doing anything because we don’t hear about it. Let’s make sure that doesn’t happen with God—He is still active on His throne, and we need to share our testimonies to make sure everybody knows it.

When we see the evil that surrounds us today, it’s easy to get down on people and not want to have anything to do with anyone beyond our own family and circle of friends. However, if we reach that point, we severely limit our ability to spread the gospel and grow the kingdom of God (which we are still called to do as members and ministry of The Church of Jesus Christ). Before meeting Jesus, the Apostle **Matthew** earned his living as a tax collector, forcing people to pay more than what they were supposed to and then keeping the extra for himself. No disciple of Jesus would have sought to be a friend of Matthew but Jesus approached him and said, *“Follow me.”* Matthew then left behind his business and followed Jesus (Matthew 9:9). After that, Matthew hosted a feast at his house to allow his tax collector friends to meet Jesus and His disciples. Even people who think differently than we do need the

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The Rainbow Covenant

By Elder Duane Lovalvo

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In the days after the flood waters receded, Noah cast his gaze upwards and beheld a brilliant tapestry of colors, set in an arch, that stretched for miles upward into the sky. God's voice rang out, saying,

*And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the **everlasting covenant**, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.* —Genesis 9:14-16 (emphasis added)

The token of the rainbow as a promise to never again destroy the Earth with water was as clear in Noah's day, 4,400 years ago, as it is now. To this present time, after a rainstorm has passed and the sun emerges from behind the clouds, all of humanity can enjoy the majesty of the rainbow. Upon viewing this spectacular display, we might ask ourselves, "Is there something more to the rainbow covenant than meets the eye?"

Ezekiel compared the rainbow to the glory of God on his throne. "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness ... of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel 1:28). Clearly, the rainbow's brightness and majesty give us a glimpse of the beauty of the image of God.

On a personal note, in 2004, while on a flight at the beginning of a missionary trip to Venezuela, I witnessed a full rainbow that stretched from one horizon to the other. The bow perfectly straddled our aircraft, which was aloft thousands of feet in the air. I asked myself, "Is this a sign of God's protection on this trip?" This notion was confirmed when we returned to the U.S. A sister was given a dream in which she saw the planes of the missionaries flying out, each one encircled by a rainbow.

The implication of God's patience and longsuffering toward mankind was evident when the first rainbow appeared in the sky. In the rainbow, God was and still is announcing to the world that He is merciful; that He is holding back His wrath because of His great love for His children. This is where we may find a connection between the rainbow and God's love for man in the image of Jesus Christ. In Jesus we have been saved from the ultimate consequences of sin. In place of a condemnation to eternal torment, we have been given a new covenant of everlasting life.

Ezekiel aptly described this new everlasting covenant:

*...I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them... and David (Jesus) my servant shall be king over them; and they shall have one shepherd... and my servant David (Jesus) shall be their prince forever. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an **everlasting covenant** with them...* —Ezekiel 37:23-26 (emphasis added)

Thus, the rainbow can represent many things to those that dwell on the Earth: peace, mercy, longsuffering, the glory of God, protection, and grace. In the end, we can conclude most of all that through the amazing spectrum of the rainbow, God has given us a sign that He loves us and that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us from our sins.

...remember the everlasting covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh...

Missionary Trip to Ecuador

Written by a Sister to all Sisters

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Never forget that besides being individuals, we are also members of the body of Christ. You don't have to be an ordained deaconess, hold an office, or even play an instrument. Your voice is your instrument, and your testimony is the most powerful thing you can ever share.

I love the story of Abish in the Book of Mormon (Alma chapter 19), who had been converted for years on account of a remarkable vision of her father. I'll paraphrase: When she saw that King Lamoni, his wife, the queen, his servants, and Ammon had all fallen to the earth, she witnessed

trip had been postponed due to the violence there. We prayed about it anyway, went through the required steps for making a missionary trip, and finalized our plans. But the day before we left, I became really sick. I had to leave work early, and was anointed at home by my father. Praise God, I was healed instantly and was able to serve the entire week of our trip.

The scriptures forewarn us that there will always be opposition; however, God provides the means for us to accomplish His work. We're also reminded by the prophets and disciples of the sacrifices we have to make. Missionary



work is not glamorous; there are no luxuries, but it's truly a humbling experience and God will surely reward you.

The majority of the Church members in Ecuador are women. The needs of our sisters and the young girls are so great. I implore you to join any missionary efforts, because our sisters really need us. They need to know they are not alone, that we love and support them, and constantly pray for them. You don't have to travel to another country or speak Spanish; they're in your own backyard and speak English, too. The Seed of Joseph is all around us, and this is the Divine Commission of The Church of Jesus Christ. I would also encourage you to go a step further and give out the Songs of Zion. The Songs of Zion are a precious gift God gave to His Church to be shared throughout the world, to give us the hope of a brighter dawn and bring more souls to Him.

A beautiful experience was shared in Ecuador one evening during Church, while we were sharing testimonies and experiences around the table. The neighbor across the street said that

she had witnessed the same experience for the last three years. She said that a few days before the brothers would arrive at the mission for their visit, the birds in the trees and bushes right in front of the church building would begin to sing different songs every day. At first she thought she was the only one who noticed this, but then her children also remarked how they noticed that the birds were singing in front of the church early in the morning while they got ready for school. She expressed how they felt joy and anticipation waiting for the brothers' arrival, and enjoyed visiting with the saints. Because this was the third year it happened, she understood it to be a confirmation from God.

My mother and father, Sister Rocio and Brother Arturo Tostado, and I were very blessed to spend the week with Brothers Ken Lombardo and Noah Camacho, meeting new people and old friends everywhere we went, while learning all about the missionary work in Ecuador through the years. God allowed us to share His love with all of the taxi drivers and hotel personnel, and give out the Book of Mormon

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the power of God. But she didn't keep silent. Have you ever witnessed God's power? Did you stay silent? Abish took the opportunity to make it known unto the people by running from house to house, so that they would come and behold the scene, that it would cause them to believe in the power of God. And there came a multitude...through the action of one woman! And it came to pass that there were many that did believe in their words; and were baptized, became a righteous people, and they did establish a church among them. Sisters, let's go out there and help establish The Church of Jesus Christ among the people!

When my parents mentioned the plea that had gone out early in 2020 for another minister to go to Ecuador, I said, "yes, let's go!" I felt compelled to go because I had recently seen two videos online regarding the turmoil in that country, which brought me to tears. I was already praying for them, not knowing a planned missionary



Editorial Viewpoint

(March 2006) By Carl Huttenberger, Jr.



"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:10-13).

The Philippians had sent a message to Paul about how much they loved and missed him. Paul responded to them in this passage how much he rejoiced in their love for him, even though he had not heard from them in some time (due to slow means of communication in those days). He wanted them to know that their expression of love, though much appreciated, was not necessary for Paul to "feel good." He went on to teach them that he has learned, through very difficult circumstances in his life (imprisonment, starvation, etc.), that true inner joy comes from complete independence of man's praise, and complete dependence on God in order to "feel good." Paul had advanced his spiritual understanding to a point of no return. As he stated in another part of scripture, there is nothing that would separate him from the love of God. Therefore, he was able to do ALL things through Christ (not some things...he says ALL things which includes spiritual, natural...anything...because God can do all things!).

Today, as much as we say that we don't care about the praise of man, but would rather have the approval of God, I'm not sure this is truly the case when put to the test. Not many of us have been imprisoned, or are starving, or had to face many of the things Paul had to face in his life, yet when faced with our little afflictions or problems (little in comparison to Paul), we complain and become hopeless, and desperately seek the approval and support of others. While getting approval and support from others is nice (even Paul rejoiced in the Philippians' expressions of love), and we should be thankful for this, we should not be dependent on this. Rather, we should be dependent on our strength and joy coming from the living God. Only He can lift us up, carry us through, and truly make us "feel good."

I had a conversation with a sister from my branch the other day, whose testimony of overcoming hardship and hopeless situations by relying completely on God and not at all on man, was inspiring. In all situations, she mentioned the one thing that was consistent was that she, nor anyone else, did anything to solve the situation. Miraculously, it worked itself out on its own. This is the involvement of a true and living God in her life. Paul had learned this (though it took many years), and even in the most deplorable conditions, never complained or needed a shoulder to cry on. He cried on the shoulder of our heavenly Father and was never let down.

In traveling to other countries on missionary work, it is interesting to see how people who live in poverty are so happy and joyful. We expect them to be miserable and depressed and just the opposite is true. They don't know or understand any other life. They are content with different things than we might be. We can't gauge happiness and joy on natural things or on humankind. If we do, we will eventually be let down. We must rely on God for our contentment, for our answers, for that "good feeling," because we will never be disappointed. Every obstacle will be removed by Him, not by natural means. When we can learn this, as Paul did, we can actually live a life in constant joy and assurance, and never ever work to solve a problem on our own but truly rely on Him. We can then say assuredly like Paul and many other people who have overcome extreme odds that we too can do ALL things through Him!

Gospel News Facts 2000s Did you know...

1. The General Ladies' Uplift Circle celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2000.
2. In 2004, Brother Joe Perri and Brother Jim Crudup traveled to Kenya to visit with over 600 members of the Church.
3. The Gospel News started printing lyrics to the Songs of Zion Volume II in the 2000s.
4. In June 2005, the Atlanta Branch celebrated their 30th anniversary.

Attn young people: Connect with the GMBA! There is something for everyone!

It's wonderful to meet in person at GMBA events like campouts and conferences, but in between events, how can we stay connected? The GMBA has some great virtual avenues for infusing Christ-centered content into your daily lives and interacting with other young people. Below, we spotlight some of the GMBA platforms – check them out and

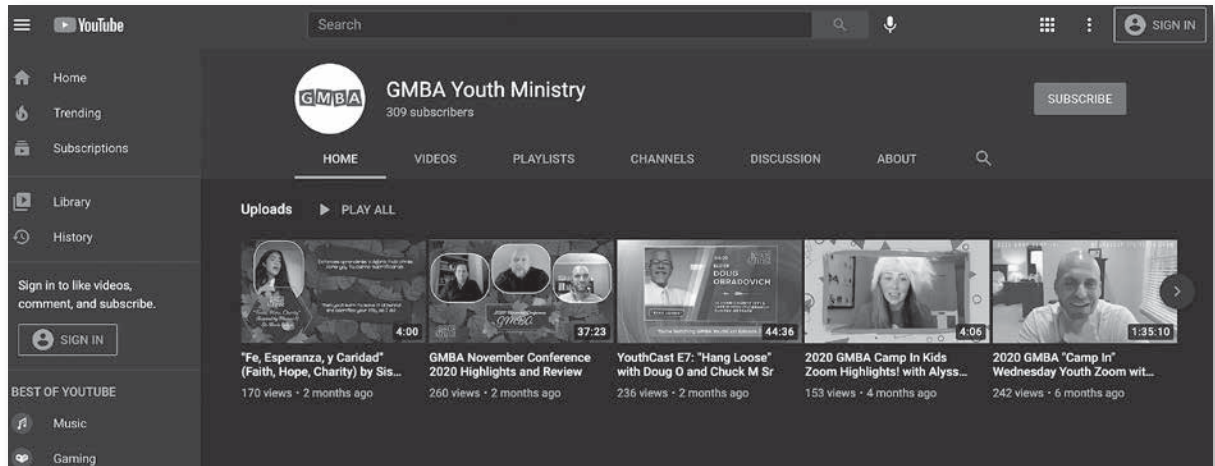
share them with your friends! Let's stay connected to one another and to Christ!

Also, if you have suggestions for future digital content, shoot us an email at gmba@thechurchofjesuschrist.org.



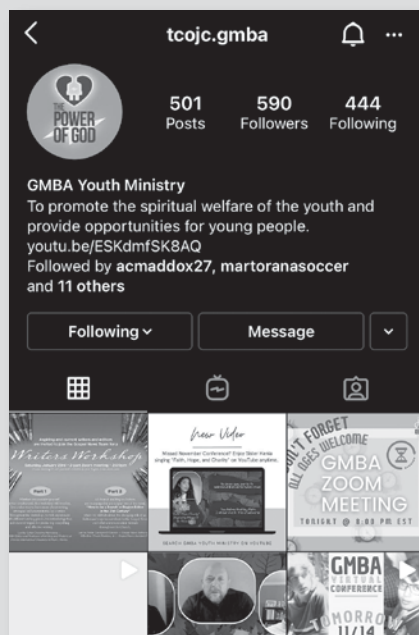
YouthCast by GMBA Youth Ministry

- **What:** The YouthCast is podcast that focuses on real, relevant, relatable conversations. Episodes include interviews, sermons, lessons, and more.
- **When:** The podcast is great to listen to when you're commuting to/from work or school, walking your dog, cleaning the house, and really anytime you want a little dose of positivity and encouragement in your ear!
- **How:** You can find the podcast by searching "YouthCast by GMBA Youth Ministry" on Apple, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, iHeartRadio, TuneIn+Alexa, and everywhere else you listen to podcasts!



Instagram

- **What:** The GMBA Instagram page features posts about upcoming events and updates when new content is posted on the GMBA podcast and YouTube channel.
- **When:** The Instagram page is great to check out on a regular basis so you can stay up-to-date on GMBA happenings.
- **How:** You can find the Instagram page by searching "tcojc.gmba" on Instagram.



GMBA Youth Ministry YouTube channel

- **What:** The GMBA YouTube channel includes video accompaniments to the GMBA podcast episodes along with additional videos such as the 2020 GMBA "Camp In" videos.
- **When:** The videos are great to watch when you're tired of scrolling through Netflix and want to watch something encouraging and meaningful, when you're at your computer and need a break from studying, when you want to watch some great sermons, and really anytime you want to feel like you're sitting in a GMBA Camp seminar or meeting.
- **How:** You can find the YouTube channel by searching "GMBA Youth Ministry" on YouTube.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

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Lord, so let's continue to be open to sharing the gospel with others to grow the kingdom.

The Apostle **Philip** did something similar after meeting Jesus. He immediately went and found his friend Nathanael and said, "We have found him! The one who Moses and the prophets wrote about—Jesus of Nazareth!" When Nathanael was not immediately receptive, Philip realized that words would not be enough to convince his friend so he finally just said, "Come and see," and Nathanael was then introduced to Jesus (John 1:45-51). For a few months this past year, the entire Church was limited to virtual meetings in which we were only able to use words and computer images to convey the gospel. Although this was certainly better than nothing during a nationwide lockdown, we quickly realized that this could not become the "new normal," but that we needed to return to the traditional in-person meetings in which we could offer the Lord's Supper and anointing of the sick as well

as being able to invite others to "come and see" and experience the Spirit of God and the love of God among the people of God.

When Nathanael (also known as **Bartholomew**) met Jesus, he was surprised that Jesus recognized him as the man standing under a fig tree earlier in the day so he immediately acknowledged that Jesus must be the Son of God. We can envision Jesus perhaps smiling at this man's simple, innocent faith and then replying, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these" (John 1:50). As much as a pandemic created by one virus has dominated the world's focus for the past year, God's mission today has not shifted to be the eradication of COVID. We'll be happy when the virus is gone, but even if it miraculously disappeared tomorrow, that would be minor compared to what God will be doing in the future. We look forward to seeing much greater things than that!

So, looking at the big picture, nothing has really changed. We are still the representatives of Jesus Christ, bringing His gospel to the world and taking on the opposition of the enemy. No different than at the time of the original Twelve Apostles or any other time in the history of the Church. The playing field may have changed a little and the enemy may have a few new weapons in his arsenal, but "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Fear not! Ultimate victory is assured, so keep moving forward in the army of the true and living God!

May God bless you as you live for the Lord in this dispensation of time.

In the love of God,

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

James Crudup, Joel Gehly, John Griffith, Paul Liberto, Thomas M. Liberto, Leonard A. Lovalvo, Frank Natoli, Paul A. Palmieri, Peter Scolaro, Jerry Valenti



Ladies' Uplift Circle News

Simple Yet Perfect *By Sister LuAnn Carson*

All, or at least most of us, celebrated the birth of Jesus at Christmastime. Jesus Christ is the Savior promised to Israel, a fulfillment of prophecy. So if Jesus is the King sent to Israel, why do we who are not descendants of Israel celebrate His birth? The answer lies in the words of Simeon, who "was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel." God had "revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." When Simeon took up the baby Jesus to bless Him, he was inspired with the following: "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:25-32).

God's plan includes all people. His plan came about through men's 'mistakes,' blindness, and stubbornness. But in reality His plan is simple, yet perfect. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The angels sang, the shepherds rejoiced. A king was born, not to bring physical, territorial freedom to

Israel. Christ was born because "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). We praise God that His great plan encompasses all the world, not just Israel.

How do we become a part of His simple yet perfect plan? Galatians 3:26-29 reads, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." If we follow the words of Christ, through faith, repentance, and baptism,

we are a part of God's plan. And therefore we celebrate the events surrounding Christ's birth as well as His death and resurrection. We celebrate daily, hourly, because we, whether Israel or Gentile, are a part of this simple yet perfect plan.

"For unto US a child is born, unto US a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6).





What Do We Do When People Are Mean?

So I did. And a couple of weeks later she came knocking on the door. "Well? Did you read my note?" she demanded in her bossy voice.

In the Bible days when a good Jewish person left a city full of non-believers, he'd shake the dust off his shoes as a way of showing he had no part with that place. If a city refused to hear

"No, I didn't. I tore it up and threw it in the wastebasket." I said as I smiled at her shocked face.

That was the last time she ever did that. In the scriptures we are taught by Jesus to be forgiving and kind.

But God's people are strong and He loves us all. God does not want us to be hurt by others on purpose. If someone is really mean like that, get away from them. Avoid being near them. Choose other friends and don't spend time with them unless they change. Talk to a smart older person. Pray about what to do and how to act. Even make plans to grow up and get away from them!

"God's people are strong and He loves us all."

the words of the Apostles, Jesus told them "Whosoever will not receive (welcome) you, nor hear your words, when you leave that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet". (See Matthew 10:13-15.)

Remember, it's not good for us to let someone practice

being mean to us. It's not good for them, either. Be brave and strong and trust in God to deliver you from mean people and protect you.

With much love, your friend, *Sister Jan*

Dear Friends,

Things happen in life all the time that take courage for us to face. God can give us courage. My mother used to tell me, "Trust in God and use your own common sense too!"

Those words helped me so many, many times when I was growing up and trying to figure out what to do with a problem or person. They still help me.

Let's say someone who you thought was your friend acts very mean and hurts you. What can you do? Well, get help! Find someone to talk to who is older and smarter because they may have handled these kinds of problems. Get their advice and pray and ask God what to do. And be safe!

We are taught by Jesus to pray for people who hate us and treat us mean, and to forgive them. But that does not mean you have to trust them again or go by them either.

I used to have a best friend who got very mad when I didn't want to do everything her way. (This is very tiring.) She'd even sneak over to my house and leave a hate note on the door with my name on it.

I'd feel so sad and worried when we argued. Sometimes I'd just give in to her so she wouldn't get mad. And that was very boring and annoying for me. Finally, after another hate note was left in our door and I dreaded opening it, my Mother said, "Don't read it. Just rip it up and throw it in the trash!" I was shocked!

"But she'll be really mad at me then!" I wailed.

"Go and play and be with other friends. You don't deserve to be treated so mean."

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Missionary Trip

Continued from page 6

and Songs of Zion CDs, too. A highlight of our trip was an amazing encounter we had with a couple Brother. Ken had met years ago in the Atlanta airport. We were having lunch in a café in Quito, and Brother Ken had just finished telling us about how he had met this particular couple by what he felt to be the hand of God. Suddenly, Brother Noah leaped from our table and ran across the courtyard, having seen that couple walk into the café that very moment; in the middle of this capital city of nearly 3 million people of all places! This meeting, truly arranged by God, led to a follow-up visit in their home a couple of days later. During the visit, we shared our testimonies and expounded on the Book of Mormon. In the end, they expressed a need regarding their granddaughter and a handkerchief was anointed, demonstrating what is written in scripture. This was a miraculous encounter, and God knows everyone's needs. The work there continues to grow and we were blessed to be part of it.

Sisters, even if you only go on one missionary trip, you can still continue the work by staying connected with those you meet in that mission. With today's technology, you can keep an open line of communication and maintain mentoring relationships. It can be through social media, connecting them with a larger part of the body of Christ, so they are encouraged and don't feel so isolated. You can share emails as well, such as the Gospel Blog articles, the Gospel News, Humanitarian Foundation Fund Newsletter articles, experiences from the Church History volumes 1 & 2, etc. Whatever you feel called to do, may it all be for the Honor and Glory of God. May God richly bless you!

Love in Christ, *Sister Vanessa Tostado*

P.S. There were other experiences during this trip. If you would like to know more or have any questions, please feel free to contact me at vantos99@hotmail.com or you can find me as Van Tos on FaceBook.

Answers from last month:

"Every time I get to GMBA or SAMBA camp, I feel the love of God. The love we have for each other in this Church is something special and unique."

– *Brother Chuck Maddox, Jr., Lake Worth, FL Branch*

"When each of my children were born." – *Sister Dianne Maddox, Lake Worth, FL Branch*

"A time when I feel the love of God is when the congregation is singing at Church. It is very comforting not only because His love is passing through everyone, but also bringing us happiness and joy." – *Bianca Staley, Farmington Hills, MI Branch*

"Walking toward the shore right after my baptism. It was at Detroit Branch 1 that I asked and word got around to the other branches, so many from the region gathered at the river that afternoon. When my eyes fell on that crowd I felt God's love in a way that I never had before." – *Brother Anthony Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch*

"During one of my trips to Kenya, I cut my finger and I knew it would become infected and make me sick. The brothers anointed me and prayed. I felt immediate relief. As we were about to leave the hotel for the airport, the brothers anointed me again, as I would be traveling alone for a major leg of the journey. They broke their hearts before God, so much that I felt their tears fall on my head. I was fully healed and had no problems. I truly felt the love of God when their tears fell on me." – *Brother Mark Kovacic, North Georgia Mission*

"I was at a point in life where I needed to make a new start in a different location where I had no family, and a family from the local branch in that area opened up their home to me to live with them until I could find a job and get settled. They treated me like a son, and I know it was the Love of God that welcomed me into their home." – *Brother Tim Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch*

"I feel God's presence and love constantly. Last Friday, I was 40 miles from home feeling very nervous and seeing a new surgeon in a huge hospital complex. It was a grey, snowy Michigan day. I couldn't find his private office building and was calling them to ask for information and tell them I'd be a few minutes late. I pulled over at the edge of a driveway. I was praying and looking closer at my phone when a huge hospital delivery truck pulled beside me to ask if he could help me. I was saying "Yes! I hope so," when a smaller hospital security van pulled up beside the truck, also asking what was going on. Big truck explained; Security van said to follow

him, and I was so relieved! I zoomed through hundreds of parked cars around to the far side of the hospital and found my office! And I was not late! And I had another great check-up. God is so good to me! He loves His children!" – *Sister Jan Bork, Farmington Hills, MI Branch.*

"8/28/88 - The moment I asked for my baptism, I knew no matter what I go through in life that God would be with me and would protect me." – *Sister Kim Morle, Atlanta, GA Branch*

"Whenever I bring a prayer need to our mission, I know each person will bring it to the Lord. Not only is that the love of the Saints, but I believe that's the love of God. He hears each and everyone!" – *Sister Natalie Shawver, Cincinnati-Morrow, OH Branch*

"I feel God's love every time I fail or fall short. He forgives me and gives me the strength to pick myself up." – *Sister Cheryl Hester, Quincy, FL Branch*

"I was attending a General Church World Missionary Conference, and we were partaking of communion. The service was being conducted by the apostles of the Church. When one of the brothers handed me the bread, I looked into his eyes. This is something that I don't normally do; I normally keep my head down in a meditative way. It is very difficult to describe the eyes I saw. Those eyes were so very beautiful and I knew the love they transmitted was God's love for me." – *Sister Karen Progar, Aliquippa, PA Branch*

"When I was a newlywed and first moved to Maine, a childhood friend of mine, Tanya, was bitten by a poisonous snake in Maryland. She was in grave condition and not expected to live. The Saints in Maine rallied together in fasting and prayer in our home. While praying a Sister saw in a vision a bright light shine in the darkness. I was deeply humbled by the outpouring of Love shown for someone they didn't even know. Gods' love touched our hearts and touched Tanya's life and healed her completely. 'Love, Oh What Love!' – *Sister Cynthia Onorato, Brunswick, ME Branch*

"After I had my daughter and was home recovering, Sister Miriam Trelka and her daughter Dennison came over unexpectedly and brought us a tray full of food. It was such a blessing to have them come over and bring us something to eat. I didn't expect it and I was really blessed by their generosity and love." – *Sister Christine Martorana, Lake Worth, FL Branch*

Blessing Bits

BB I guess you could say 2020 started out pretty “normal” for most people before COVID, but I’d say mine began far from what I would consider to be normal. The year 2020 began very tumultuously for me. The path I had planned for my life completely changed; we lost a loved one, and my career suddenly came to a halt. Now looking back, I praise God because although this year started out pretty rough, the Lord has smoothed everything out for my life. He changed my path, moved me to a new location, healed my heart from the loss, and has allowed me to move forward with my career, and for that I am thankful. – *Sister Megan Vinsick, Modesto, CA Branch*

BB Shortly after Christmas, a dear friend of mine reached out to me requesting prayer for her mom, Donna, who was experiencing strange symptoms in her body and could barely walk. She was taken to the hospital for multiple tests and the doctors were uncertain what the issue was. I felt prompted to ask my friend if she and her mom would be open to my dad anointing a handkerchief and dropping

it off at the hospital—and they were! Given hospital visitor rules during COVID-19, my dad wasn’t allowed to visit her personally, but the handkerchief made its way to her regardless. Several days later, my friend let me know that the doctors had diagnosed her mom with Parkinson’s Disease, and she would require medication, therapy, and 24/7 care at home. We continued to pray, knowing that God was in the matter. After returning home from the hospital and rehab facility a few weeks later, we received word that despite the diagnosis, “something miraculous happened”... Donna was walking and no longer required round-the-clock care! She was exceeding all expectations of the doctors and her family. While her disease is still daunting, we know that the Lord will be with her each day. We are grateful for the power of prayer and our belief in the anointing of a handkerchief. God is still in the miracle business...even in the midst of a pandemic! – *Sister Natalie Shawver, Cincinnati, OH Mission*

BB Snippet from A History of the Church of Jesus Christ: In 1944, Brother Rocco Meo, an evangelist of The Church of Jesus Christ, left

Detroit, MI with California as his destination. “I fasted for many days before receiving a call from Sister Marietta Ruzzi who informed me that a messenger of God appeared to her and said, ‘Tell Rocco Meo that his prayers have been answered, and that he may go forth, for the Lord is with Him.’ After the messenger of the Lord left, she saw my wife packing my suitcase and saw me leaving for California. My joy was great, and my soul was full of the love of God!” – *Brother Rocco Meo, formerly the Los Angeles Mission, later Bell, CA*

Send us your Blessing Bits by contacting Sister Zarella Scolaro at zarellamosqueda@gmail.com [in approximately 150 words].
Answers to Question of the Month to gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org.



Question for this month: There are three questions about Easter this month: What does the resurrection mean to you personally? What traditions do/did you have with your family for Easter? What part of the resurrection story do you find most moving/interesting?



Answer from last month: February is a month full of love. Describe a time you felt the love of God in your life. “When I was a child we visited the Six Nations mission. When the young people were called up to sing, the song ‘For Those Tears I Died’ was chosen. As we sang, I was overcome with emotion and tears. It was at that moment I knew Jesus died for me, and I was overwhelmed by the love I felt.” – *Sister LuAnn Carson, Monongahela, PA Branch*

Turn back to page 11 for answers to this question.



...and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them. Isaiah 11:6