

NEWS

LDS IN AFRICA: GROWING MEMBERSHIP SEES AMERICAN CHURCH WITH UNIQUE VISION

by Peggy Fletcher Stack
Salt Lake Tribune religion writer

This story originally appeared in the 4 April 1998 Salt Lake Tribune. Reprinted in its entirety by permission.

HARARE, Zimbabwe—Across sub-Saharan Africa, traditional Mormon hymns are sung in clipped British accents. LDS lesson manuals preach Family Home Evening and food storage to people who have no food for tomorrow, let alone a year. In some homes, Mormon inspirational posters and temple photos bedeck the walls.

Such is the power of the LDS church in Africa, where the Mormon ranks have swollen from a handful to more than one hundred thousand in the two decades since black men first were allowed to hold the priesthood in the faith's all-male clergy.

It is a testament that a religion born on United States soil 168 years ago can so transform lives halfway around the world. African Mormons give up their drums for organs, their dashikis for white shirts, beads for CTR (Choose the Right) rings, and their lively religious services for subdued reverence.

"We want to do it just right," said Ben Ntiamoah, a Mormon convert who works in the temporal affairs office of the Church in Accra, capital of the West African nation of Ghana.

Ntiamoah was among the thousands of Africans who in February got their first glimpse of a man they revere as their prophet, when President Gordon B. Hinckley visited Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

Hinckley was the first Church president to visit the African con-

tinents since the 1978 visit of the late President Spencer W. Kimball, whose announcement that year of a divine revelation ended the ban on blacks in the priesthood.

For many black African converts, the Mormon story of how LDS church founder Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ in a grove of trees when he was just fourteen years old seems natural, in light of their own visionary experiences.

Emmanuel Kissi of Accra said he was studying medicine in England when two LDS missionaries knocked on his door. His wife, Benedicta Elizabeth, was suffering from severe health problems.

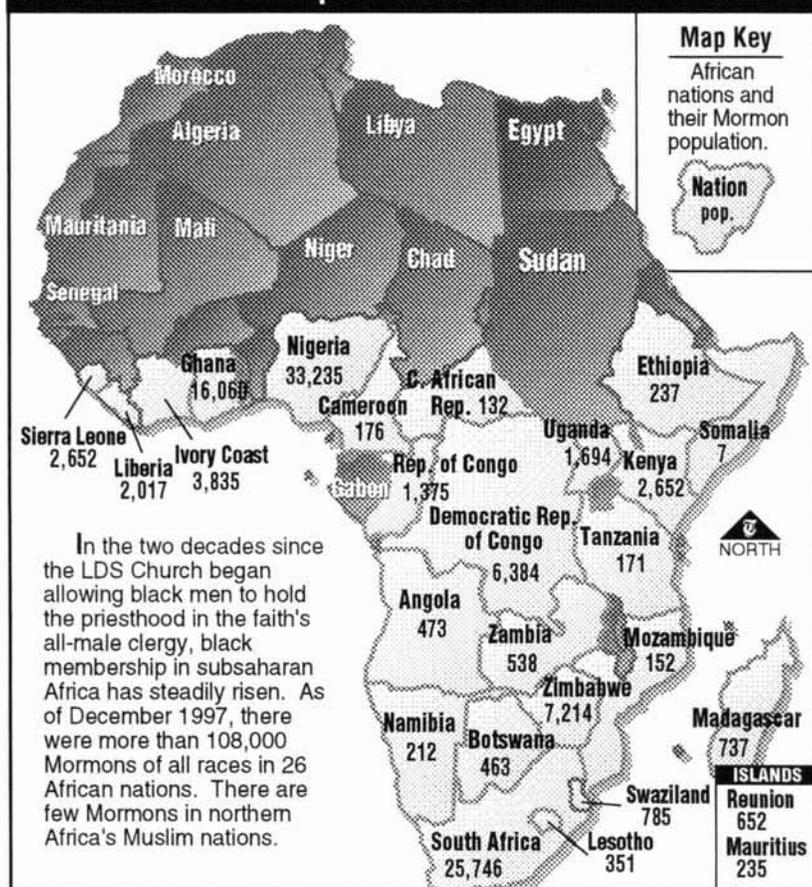
"She invited them in and they offered to give her a blessing," Kissi said. "She was cured instantly."

It took Kissi another year to join the Church, and he has been a staunch member ever since.

Smith's "vision was very good for me," Kissi said. "I put myself in his place and found myself enjoying every bit of his experience."

Africans are "intuitively and somehow inherently spiritual people, given to religion," said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in a recent interview with *The Salt Lake Tribune*. Holland, who traveled with Hinckley, oversees the LDS church in Africa.

Mormon Membership in Africa



A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

AFTER 1978, the LDS church sent waves of missionaries into sub-Saharan Africa. Often, when a village chief was converted, the whole village followed his lead. In many cases, missionaries baptized everyone at once.

While conversion rates climbed, Church leaders decided such rapid-fire baptisms were "ultimately counterproductive," Holland said.

"Every individual had to be taught, every individual had to make commitments. That is how we join this Church and how we experience this Church," he said.

So Church leaders moved the missionaries from villages into cities and consolidated operations to foster new congregations. Once such a nucleus is established, missionaries move out in concentric circles in a conscious, methodical approach to Church growth, Holland said.

Part of that nucleus is created by Africans who joined the LDS church while living abroad and then returned to their homes.

Edward Opare is the stake president in Accra. His wife, Monica, joined the Church nineteen years ago while living with a Mormon family as an exchange student in New York state.



African saints at a meeting where President Hinckley spoke.
Church leaders moved missionaries from villages into cities; once a nucleus is established, then missionaries move

When Monica Opare returned to Ghana in 1977, there was no Mormon presence. Then Opare saw a newspaper advertisement for a "Meet the Mormons" evening and told his wife, "There are your people."

Opare joined the church a short time later in a scenario seen often throughout the Mormon missionary effort—women lead the way.

One Mormon group in a village about 350 kilometers outside of Johannesburg has only women members. They receive the sacrament, or communion, just once a month when a male missionary or leader comes to bless the bread and water.

At the same time, the percentage of black African male converts who advance in the priesthood is higher than anywhere else in the world, Holland said. Again, he credits their cul-

tural and religious traditions.

PRE-1978

KIMBALL'S REVELATION, which many hoped would erase the stigma of racism from Mormonism, was heralded by some African whites as a great step forward. But while Holland said he knew of no negative reaction in Africa, members in South Africa and

Zimbabwe report that some Mormons left the Church or moved to whiter neighborhoods or even countries.

Reg Neald, a white Mormon in Zimbabwe since the 1950s, said the pre-1978 prohibition was "hard for us. We had met people who were worthy of the priesthood."

After 1978, Neald became the first president of a black branch, or small congregation, in what

then was called Rhodesia. In 1980, the white government was overturned by black nationals who won independence and changed the nation's name to Zimbabwe.

"We went into the war zone to hold church, but never felt threatened," Neald recalled. But many white members were "scared of the unknown . . . [and] frightened to treat blacks as equals."

The former prohibition also caused trouble for African missionaries seeking converts.

"People thought it was racist," said Peter Chaya, the first black missionary in Zimbabwe. He served from 1981 to 1983. "I got big opposition. But I managed to overcome it with my testimony. They could not take that away from me."

THE NEED TO READ

IF OPPOSITION has diminished, the Church still faces internal challenges, the most difficult of which is literacy.

Though many Africans speak

"colonial" languages—English, French, and Portuguese—others speak primarily tribal languages.

"We did not know that when we first went in," Holland said. "We thought we could do everything in the colonial languages, because that's what the missionaries could handle the best."

What the Church discovered, however, is that the colonial languages worked best for men in the workplace. Women tended to use tribal languages.

That was one reason the Mormon women's organization, Relief Society, took on its worldwide literacy project in 1992. "They have had some wonderful success stories from Africa, particularly among women," Holland said.

In addition, the Church has approved the translation of scriptures into a few of the largest tribal languages, such as Twi in Ghana and Shona in Zimbabwe.

But what of those people who join the LDS church without being able to read any of the faith's scriptures?

"Well, they are responding to

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MISSIONARIES IN AFRICA GROW AS THEY SEEK NEW CONVERTS

by Peggy Fletcher Stack
Salt Lake Tribune religion writer

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ACCRA, Ghana—There are some things that African Mormon missionaries find difficult to understand—like Utah weather.

“How many of you have had malaria?” Mormon Mission President Larry Bodhaine asked the eager young men and women gathered at an Accra chapel in February.

Almost all of the hands shot up.

“You know how you get the chills, shivering all over? Well, that’s what it’s like to be in Salt Lake City during a snowstorm,” Bodhaine explained.

But for these missionaries to work effectively in their African lands, knowledge of airborne diseases is much more essential.

Of the eighty-seven missionaries in the Accra, Ghana mission, all but thirteen are Africans. They come mostly from Ghana and its West African neighbors, Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

For some, a mission is their first trip outside of their country or even their village. In a continent long plagued by tribal and national conflicts, they often are paired with companions from other tribes and countries.

“It requires of them a new meaning of tolerance,” Bodhaine said.

Elder Ahmed Kailondo Banya of Sierra Leone joined the LDS church in 1993 after coming across the word “Mormon” in an encyclopedia while studying at Njala University in Sierra Leone.

He contacted missionaries in

Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, and presented himself for baptism. Two years later, after finishing his degree in agriculture, Banya, twenty-eight, left for his own mission.

His two-year mission would have ended in January, but it was extended when war broke out in Sierra Leone and kept him from going home. Banya credits his mission with enlarging his character.

“Before my mission, I could not compromise. Now I have learned to live with a companion,” Banya said. “What I used to mock at when I came, I would never mock at now.”

The African missionaries attend a missionary training course in Accra. But unlike most other missionaries, they have not taken temple vows because the nearest one is in Johannesburg, South Africa, and it is too expensive to travel there, Bodhaine said.

“We expect them to do everything they can to support themselves on a mission,” he said. “But sometimes all they can afford is their own passports.”

The rest of the cost of the two-year mission is picked up by the Church’s General Missionary Fund.

Most of the missionaries have been through public schools, but they see their mission experiences as equally beneficial. They are coached through Mormon and biblical scripture and learn skills such as public speaking that will help them in future careers, Bodhaine said.

All are grateful for their new faith.

Sister Bassey Inyon of Nigeria joined the LDS church with her family when she was eleven. She said the conversion transformed her father.

“Before we joined the Church, I was always afraid of my father because he was so strict and rigid,” she said. “After we joined, he treated us like children of God.” ☐

AFRICAN CULTURE PRESENTS CHALLENGES FOR MORMON CONVERTS

by Peggy Fletcher Stack
Salt Lake Tribune religion writer

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CAPE TOWN, South Africa—After the exhilaration of conversion comes the wake-up call of real life in local LDS congregations.

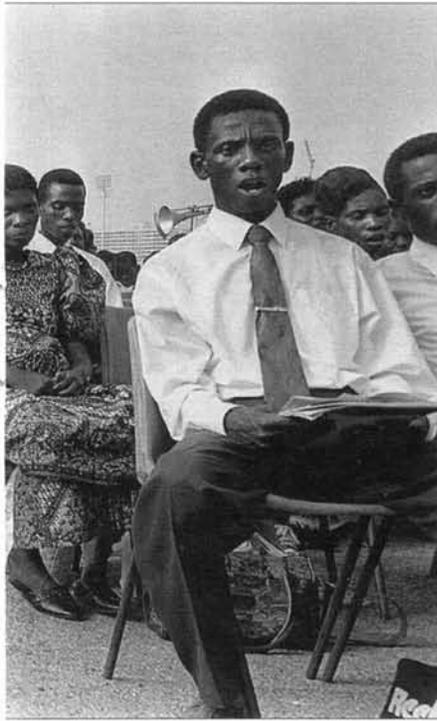
Just ask Nigel Giddey, who heads the Guguletu Branch, a small LDS congregation in a black township outside Cape Town.

“Too few shepherds for too many sheep,” said an overwhelmed Giddey, from his makeshift office in the courtyard between buildings.

The story is in the statistics.

Of twenty-three people baptized into Guguletu Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during 1997, only three were men age eighteen or older. Of these three, only one remains active in the Church. The branch has 253 members on the rolls, but an average weekly attendance of about sixty-five. Seldom are there more than two married couples. Five married men attend regularly, four have jobs.

“My ideal convert would be a married man with a job who can



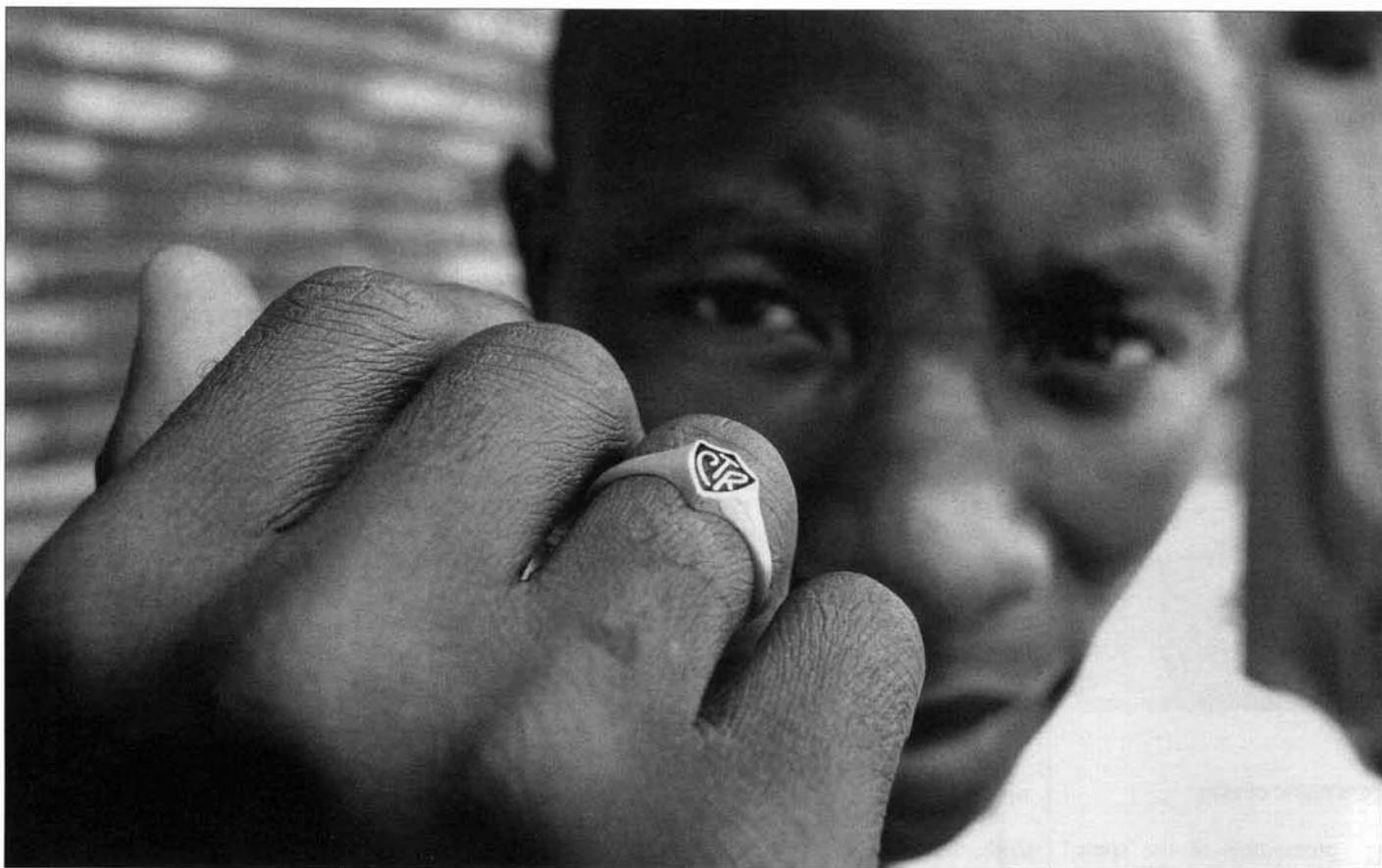
out in concentric circles.

the promptings of the spirit,” President Hinckley said in an interview in Zimbabwe. “They are growing in the faith, being helped by those in a position to help them. People can talk to them.”

And in many places, missionaries and members offer free literacy classes as a way of reaching out to the community. In the past decade, the LDS church has become immersed in such humanitarian service projects in Africa. It has provided money and workers to dig wells in Kenya, distributed clothing to war victims in Uganda, sent textbooks for schoolchildren in Ghana, and gave food staples to Somalian refugees.

Technology, training, economic aid and better management will be enormously helpful to Africans, said Elder Alexander Morrison of the LDS Quorum of the Seventy in a recent speech.

But for the peoples of Africa to reach their divine potential, Morrison said, “only the gospel of Christ, in my view, will suffice.” ☐



TREVIN NELSON

Victor Kpah, an African Saint, displays a familiar icon of his faith.
LDS practices often conflict with African cultures—in the Xhosa tribe, for example, nineteen-year-old boys are initiated into manhood in a three-week ceremony of revelry and circumcision.

read [English] comfortably," Giddey said, adding that many members struggle with LDS lessons and scripture.

Giddey also questions how well missionaries prepare candidates for baptism.

"I do not think that the missionaries read much beyond a few key scriptures to the potential converts or possibly a few pages of the Book of Mormon," he said.

Getting potential converts to ask questions is another hurdle. In the Xhosa [pronounced CAUSE-A] tribe, people are expected to agree with leaders and often are uncomfortable saying they do not understand.

Mormon practices also conflict with the local culture, said Phila Jordan, Giddey's second counselor.

At nineteen, Xhosa men are initiated into manhood in a

three-week ceremony that includes circumcision. Although the LDS church permits circumcision, (most LDS men are circumcised as babies), the accompanying revelry can include drinking, smoking, swearing and "carousing" with women.

During Jordan's initiation, he was isolated in a hut because he eschewed some of the activities.

"It created tension between me and my family, especially my uncles," Jordan said. "But they respected my beliefs even though they were not happy."

Many promising young men drop out of the LDS church after the experience, he said. "It's hard for some people to have courage to stand against the clan elders."

Another Xhosa tradition is that between death and burial, a period of about ten days, all local

ministers are expected to preach to surviving family members.

"If you don't come and visit every night, the other churches will get up and say, 'Look, the Mormons don't care,'" Giddey said.

On the day of the funeral, the family must feed everyone who attends—which might number five hundred or more—and the cost is enormous.

Some impoverished LDS members have asked Giddey to help pay for the funeral. He cannot, and that has antagonized some converts.

But for all the headaches, there have also been joyous moments and important advances.

For example, last month thirteen-year-old Nyameka Ntshoko became the first person to play the piano for the branch. She is the daughter of Relief Society President Linda Ntshoko, who

has been a member for nearly thirteen years. Ntshoko's ex-husband, Victor, took off with another woman and was excommunicated. But Ntshoko and her two children, Rosemary and Nyameka, have remained faithful.

During Giddey's three-year tenure, the branch has sent its first two young men on missions, produced its first temple marriage, found a place to build Guguletu's first chapel, established the branch's auxiliaries (Young Women, Relief Society and Primary), and updated membership records.

And he has felt God's hand on his shoulder.

Giddey, who is white, spends endless hours and many nights in the black township. On at least three occasions, he felt endangered, and each time, something or someone intervened.

UPDATE

MORMONS WILL PROVE TO BE
INVALUABLE VOLUNTEERS

Governor Mike Leavitt

UTAH'S MORMON Governor Mike Leavitt recently expressed a belief that Mormons would provide valuable assistance during the Olympic Winter Games of 2002 in Salt Lake City. During an interview while attending the 1998 winter Olympics in Hakuba, Japan, the governor told the *Salt Lake Tribune* that Mormons "have the ability to motivate people to participate. If you need . . . Japanese-speaking volunteers, they can find them. If you need people who speak Russian, they'll get them." According to Leavitt,

the LDS church's returned missionaries will provide a volunteer pool from which Olympic organizers may draw workers. These volunteers are expected to assist people at information booths, venues, and press centers, utilizing a variety of languages. John Fowler, state Olympic

coordinator, said, "There's no language we don't have resources for." Leavitt's off-the-cuff comments disturbed the beehive back home as individuals of other faith traditions said they had a volunteer spirit, too, and complained that they were being left out of the Olympic plans.

SEX ABUSE LITIGATION
BLAMES LDS CHURCH

A RECENTLY filed Oregon lawsuit alleges that an eleven-year-old boy was sexually molested by an LDS Sunday School teacher and the Church was negligent in reporting the incident. The lawsuit claims that Church leaders and Bishop Gregory Lee Foster knew eighty-seven-year-old Franklin Richard Curtis had a history of sexually abusing children but failed to report the incidents to authorities or members of the Church. The lawsuit claims that Bishop Foster did not inform the boy's mother of Curtis's sexual misconduct when she told him of her intentions to house and care for the aged man. Curtis lived with the family for approximately one year, during which time he sexually abused the boy. After the boy's family moved out of state i

PEOPLE

AWARDS & HONORS

- **President Thomas S. Monson** of the First Presidency and his wife **Frances** were presented with the Continuum of Caring Humanitarian Award on 22 April 1998 by the Friends of St. Joseph Villa. The St. Joseph Villa, a health-care facility for the elderly, is owned and operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, a Catholic order. The Rev. George Niederauer, Catholic Bishop of the Salt Lake Diocese, said the Monsons are "the personification of human faces of concern and love and outreach to the entire community here in Salt Lake, here in Utah, and around the world."



Marjorie P. Hinckley

- **Marjorie P. Hinckley**, wife of Church President Gordon B. Hinckley, was presented with a Distinguished Service Award by the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists on 2 April 1998. Sister Hinckley's "service has been in the form of steady, unwavering, and continual expressions of care, interest and support for all her brothers and sisters in all areas of the world and at all levels of status," said association president Janet Scharman in presenting the award, according to the *Church News*.

DEATHS

- Sixties rebel and later Mormon **Eldridge Cleaver** died at age sixty-two on 1 May 1998. Cleaver was the famous Black Panther leader and a major force in the U.S. civil rights movement who was once involved in a shoot-out with Oakland, California, police and subsequently jumped bail, fleeing to Cuba, Algeria, and the Soviet Union. Throughout his life, Cleaver advocated such disparate causes



Eldridge Cleaver

as Black rights, environmentalism, overthrow of the U.S. government, and, later, Mormonism and Republicanism. Baptized into the LDS church in 1983, Cleaver became less active in the '90s but continued to support the Church.

- **Alma P. Burton**, LDS theologian, author, and educator, died 30 April 1998 at age eighty-five. Burton served as superintendent of the Alpine (Utah) School District, as dean of admissions at BYU, and, also at BYU, as a professor of Church history and doctrine. He was also assistant administrator of seminaries and institutes for the Church.

Burton authored and co-authored many books, his latest, *The Divine Mission of Jesus Christ*, being released in 1997.

ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED

- RLDS church **President Grant McMurray** recently visited the LDS church's East Lansing Michigan Institute of Religion at Michigan State University. The visit was an informal opportunity for the church leader to see the Student Living Center and institute program while having a "nuts and bolts" discussion with institute coordinator Steven Henrie.

- A copy of *Max Weber's Methodology*, Lowell Bennion's doctoral dissertation, was donated to the **Harold B. Lee Library** at Brigham Young University by the University of Utah's **Marriott Library**. Only twenty copies of Bennion's work—the first on Weber ever printed in English—are known to exist out of an original one hundred copies. Prior to the donation, which was originally suggested by the late Sterling M. McMurrin, the BYU library did not possess a copy of the work.

in 1993, the boy informed his mother of the abuse. She contacted Bishop Foster to warn him about Curtis's behaviour. The suit claims that Foster said he already knew about Curtis's abusive habits—from both Curtis himself and Church leaders. Curtis later died in a nursing home, but it was revealed that he had been excommunicated in Pennsylvania for sexual abuse and later re-baptized in Oregon. The lawsuit claims Church officials in Oregon were fully aware of the reasons for the excommunication, and Curtis allegedly molested five other children in a Portland ward following his rebaptism. Church spokesperson Don LeFevre called the allegations "preposterous," telling the *Salt Lake Tribune* that the LDS church does not have a history of keeping child sexual abuse committed by members secret from Church or government authorities. "The church deplors child abuse in all its forms," he said. "It was not involved in any way in the abuse, which occurred in the plaintiff's own home by a man the family invited to live with them."

ELDER BALLARD URGES LDS TO "BUILD BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING"



Elder M. Russell Ballard said Latter-day Saints should "peacefully coexist with others not of our faith."

IN A speech at the Logan Institute of Religion near the campus of Utah State University, Apostle M. Russell Ballard called for LDS church members to "build bridges of understanding among the peoples of the world," reported the *Deseret News*. Elder Ballard said the Church has been engaged in just such an activity for a couple of years, establishing contacts and meetings with media, business, and government leaders. He cited the CBS *60 Minutes* interview with Church President Gordon B. Hinckley as an example of this type of "bridge building." "We must remember that the Lord expects us to peacefully coexist with others not of

our faith," he said. "We can pleasantly agree to disagree with them on certain points of doctrine even while we unite with them in the great common denominators of faith in God and benevolent service to others." He went on to outline five areas of doctrine in which those of other faiths often accuse Mormons of not being Christian. "May I suggest that what we want most of all is for Christian and Non-Christian alike to understand that we love the Lord Jesus Christ," he said. "We revere his name. We count it a great honor and privilege to take upon ourselves the name of Christ as Christians and as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Further, he stated that Saints should respect the beliefs of others and expect the same in return.

RUSSIAN OFFICIAL RECANTS CRITICISM OF LDS CHURCH

ALEXANDER LEBED told a rally in 1996 that "[a]ll these Mormons are mold and filth which have come to destroy the state. The state should outlaw them. They should not exist on our soil." In 1996, Lebed was Russia's national security director but is now no longer with Boris Yeltsin's administration. At a National Press Club roundtable in Washington, D.C., Lebed spoke through an interpreter when he responded to a question about his earlier remarks. "I have taken

back my words. I have said that I am wrong. And I am not going to explain that the rest of my life," reported the Restoration Press News Service. Lebed then criticized a new Russian law, enacted by those who mistrust foreign-based religions, that restricts permission and recognition granted toward organizations engaged in missionary work. He called the law "short-sighted" and said that he, personally, has "become more flexible, more loyal to other religions."

RLDS CHURCH APPOINTS FIRST FEMALE APOSTLES



Gail Mengel and her sister in the faith . . .

THE RLDS CHURCH, headquartered in Independence, Missouri, named two women to its Council of Twelve Apostles on 30 March 1998. Linda Booth and Gail Mengel are the first women to hold positions on the council since a 1984 vote allowed female priesthood holders in the church. Both women were sustained to the council at the church's biannual World Conference, at which "less than a handful" of the twenty-eight hundred delegates voted against the women's appointment, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*. In a statement given prior to the vote, Booth said, "I began a one-year argument with God. I had a

long list of arguments why I could not be an apostle. And every time I had an argument that I thought was particularly strong, God would dispel it," reported the *Deseret News*. Booth and Mengel replace retiring apostles Phillip Caswell and Joe Serig. Before the vote, Caswell stated, "I am grateful personally and ministerially that my change in responsibility enables the church to take another step in this direction. And I would respectfully remind us [RLDS church] that we have a long way to go." The 250-thousand member church also considered a name change, to the World Church of Jesus Christ, in an effort to draw a clearer distinction between it and the LDS church, but the resolution was defeated.



. . . Linda Booth are the first women apostles in the RLDS church.

WASHINGTON STATE LDS WARDS URGED TO OPPOSE SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

THE LDS church in Washington issued a letter on 25 January 1998, urging its members to exert influence in passing the Washington State Defense of Marriage Act. The letter was read during priesthood and Relief Society meetings on 28 January. The letter reads:

Dear Brethren:

On January 24, 1997, we wrote to you concerning the Washington State Defense of Marriage Act—legislation pending before the Washington State legislature that defined marriage as between a male and a female, and refused to recognize same-gender marriages.

The leaders and members of the Church in Washington responded promptly in great numbers from nearly every com-

munity across the state. As you will recall, the measure passed by a wide margin in both the state Senate and House of Representatives, but was vetoed by governor Gary Locke. Subsequent efforts to pass the measure as a referendum to the voters of the state were defeated in the final days of the 1997 session.

We are informed that the sponsors of the bill will reintroduce this as a referendum in the 1998 legislature. We again encourage members to write and to call your legislators to urge passage of this legislation. Brother Perrin Walker of Tacoma has been asked by the Area Presidency to coordinate efforts on this issue. He may be reached at (253) 591-8561 or in the evenings at (253) 654-8852.

We pray for the blessings of the Lord to be with each of you as you exercise your influence concerning this worthy cause.

Sincerely, North American Northwest Area Presidency
Glenn Pace, Melvin Hammond, Scott Grow.

LDS THEOLOGIANS DEFEND CHURCH'S CHRISTIANITY

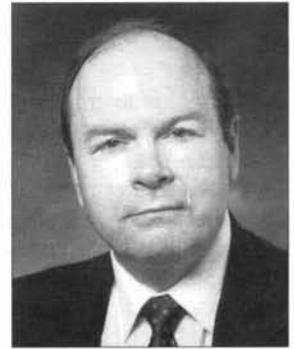
JUNE 1998 will bring more than warm weather to Salt Lake City. Thousands of Southern Baptists will converge on Utah's capital for the faith's annual convention, one of whose activities will include door-to-door tracting to Mormons. The prospect of all that "witnessing," according to the Baptists, may create an atmosphere conducive to either sharing or shouting.

BYU Dean of Religious Education Robert Millet has made it his mission to dispel the misinformation concerning LDS theology that seems to circulate among other faiths, particularly the Baptists. Millet believes the vast differences between the LDS church and traditional

Christianity will remain, but he hopes to create an open forum for discussion between the Latter-day Saints and the Baptists. Millet and BYU professor of ancient scripture Stephen Robinson met in spring 1997 with Tal Davis and Mark Coppinger, two Baptist representatives, to clarify LDS theology and discuss doctrinal differences. "[P]eople are saved by grace and not at all by works," Coppinger told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "We do not enhance our access to the highest heaven by being wed in the temple or by tithing or what have you."



Elder Boyd K. Packer
asked Saints to avoid using
the term "Mormon Church."



Robert Millet is on a mission
to dispel misinformation
about Mormonsim.

Meeting again in December, Millet, Robinson, Coppinger, and Davis discussed the Baptist video, "The Mormon Puzzle." The video was created in an effort to explain LDS beliefs to Baptist churchgoers. "We asked for their [Mormons'] reactions to the video," Coppinger stated. In the six- or seven-hour meeting, the LDS representatives pointed out that the video incorrectly portrays the Mormon concept of grace. "To say that our understanding of grace is deficient or mistaken is one thing,"

TLC Church Leader Faces Lawsuit. The fiery, irreverent Jim Harmston, polygamist leader of the "True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days," is being sued by former followers who donated money to the church with expectations of having "Jesus Christ [delivered] in the flesh," according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Cindy Stewart, one of three plaintiffs suing Harmston for \$264,390, said "This is not about money. . . . [T]his is so not one more person gets sucked in." When Harmston first organized his church in Manti, Utah, he was welcomed into town by city leaders (see SUNSTONE JUNE 1996). Now, however, the Manti residents are becoming concerned as Harmston's rhetoric is turning virulent and violent against the LDS church. In a video-taped speech Harmston gave on 23 February 1998, Harmston refers to LDS leaders as "jackasses," and he says Apostle Boyd K. Packer's skin will be turned black as coal. "[H]ow do I know that? Because I am the one that's going to make it that way!"

LDS History Exhibited in Missouri Capitol. In a 24 April ribbon-cutting ceremony, Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan unveiled an exhibit featuring Mormon history in Missouri that will be on display for three months. Elder Pinnock of the Seventy and several other Church leaders also participated in the ceremony and presented the governor and his wife with copies of their genealogy. Elder Pinnock noted that in 1976, then-Missouri-Governor Christopher S. Bond issued an executive order officially rescinding Governor Lilburn Boggs's 1838 "extermination order." But Elder Pinnock also said the people of Missouri had "at least one hundred

years earlier" already rescinded the order by providing "a kind and wonderful climate" for "Mormonsy!"

NCAA Eliminates "BYU Rule." On 22 April 1998, the National Collegiate Athletic Association's board of directors voted to do away with the so-called "BYU rule" which prevented college sports championship events from being held on Sundays. "This decision will have no effect on BYU's policies against Sunday competition," BYU Athletic Director Rondo Fehlberg told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. While the decision will not affect BYU policies, it may effect BYU athletics. Non-revenue-generating sports such as golf are expected to begin holding championship events on Sundays for the sake of receiving television moneys. Athletes in such sports may start choosing not to attend BYU if they will have no possible opportunity to compete for a national championship.

Church to Shell-Out Five Million for Intersection Improvement in Kirtland. One of Kirtland, Ohio's most dangerous intersections will soon be redesigned and rebuilt, thanks to five million dollars from the LDS church, reported the Restoration Press News Service. The city of Kirtland has no available funds to pay for the reconstruction, and the LDS church has agreed to pay for the project. The intersection is part of a triangle of roads surrounding a general store that once housed Joseph Smith upstairs. The area is now listed as a National Historic Site and contains a museum that attracted thirty-two thousand visitors last year.

Millet said, "but to suggest that we have no notion of grace in our beliefs is a misrepresentation."

In response to criticism and such misrepresentation of the LDS church's doctrine, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles Boyd K. Packer reaffirmed the Church's Christianity before a large satellite audience at the monthly Church Educational System fire-side on Sunday, 1 February. He cited LDS hymns as an example of the Church's Christianity, reported the *Deseret News*. "These hymns certainly are not the voice of non-Christians," he said. "Instead they reveal a people of devotion and faith who love, indeed worship, our Saviour and our Redeemer." President Packer also urged Church members to avoid referring to the organization as the "Mormon Church," but rather, to use the full name of the Church to emphasize Christ's place in the doctrine and belief system. President Packer then went outlined several beliefs in Church doctrine that serve as focus points for contention and criticism, such as:

- The belief in the saving power of works in conjunction with Christ's sacrifice, rather than salvation by grace alone.
- The teaching that humans are literal "spirit children" of God and may themselves progress to Godhood.
- The doctrine of the trinity, maintaining that the Godhead consists of the three separate, individual components of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
- The belief in the concept of continuing, modern-day revelation through living prophets.
- The use of canonical scripture other than the Bible.
- The Doctrine and Covenants' passage that maintains the LDS church is "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth."
- The teaching of the eternal nature of marriages and families.

PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY ANNOUNCES CONSTRUCTION OF THIRTY NEW TEMPLES

DURING HIS closing remarks at the 168th annual General Conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced plans for the Church to expand its temple-building projects to include thirty new structures, reported the *Deseret News*. The announcement follows a 4 October 1997 plan to build smaller, less-expensive temples in areas without a large Church member population. The October announcement called for the smaller temples to be built in Anchorage, Alaska, northern Mexico, and Monticello, Utah. President Hinckley did not in his April conference address specify the locations of these thirty newest additions to the temple system but stated, "Stake Presidents will be advised as property is secured. I am confident the membership of the church will do a lot of speculating as to whether one of these will be in their cities."

In his 26 April remarks before 6,800 people in Columbus, Ohio, President Hinckley did say that one of the thirty new temples would be built near Columbus. The temple will be the first for the Church in Ohio since the 1830s' temple construction in Kirtland.

The smaller temples are able to perform all of the functions of



Thirty new, small temples—one to be built near Columbus, Ohio—will be constructed similar to this rendition.

their larger counterparts but may be erected at about the same costs as it takes to maintain a larger temple for one year. Smaller temples will lack such amenities as laundry facilities, cafeterias, and full-time staff. The construction of these new temples, to begin "immediately," according to President Hinckley, will provide services to those in rural or isolated areas. Currently, the Church's fifty-one temples are located near densely populated LDS regions, and those Church members who reside in central Africa, for example, must travel to either Johannesburg, South Africa, or Europe to perform temple work. President Hinckley expressed his hope that the additional temples would ease the travel and economic burdens placed on Latter-day Saints who must journey great distances to visit a temple.

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY PACKS NEW YORK'S MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

REVEALING his "great expectations" for LDS church members—that each Saint "carry in his or her heart a conviction that Jesus is the Christ" and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet—President Gordon B. Hinckley addressed twenty-four thousand Saints on 26 April 1998 in New York City's famed Madison Square Garden. The address was the first by a Mormon prophet to New York Saints since a 1975 address given by President Spencer W. Kimball and a first meeting of Latter-day Saints in the venerable New York arena.

Dave Checketts, a Mormon and CEO of the corporation that oversees the Madison Square Garden, arranged for the prophet's visit after witnessing there a memorial service in 1995 for slain Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin. Orthodox Jews filled the facility to capacity to honor their leader. Checketts immediately thought of Mormons filling the arena to listen to a leader of their own. Three years later, Checketts's dream was fulfilled.

Saints came to New York in droves to hear their prophet. One group chartered a train, and another group rented twenty-four buses. So many people attended the meeting that the square's luxury suites were opened to accommodate attendees, while others were able to get no closer to the prophet than the lobbies outside the arena. Some seven hundred missionaries from three New York and New Jersey missions also attended. At one point in President Hinckley's address,

the audience broke into applause, apparently startling the prophet who is unaccustomed to such a response in an LDS service, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

Before the "fireside," President Hinckley met with international dignitaries, corporate executives, and members of the press, including a *Time* correspondent and *60 Minutes*' reporter Mike Wallace, who has previously hosted the prophet on the CBS program.

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY ADDRESSES REGIONAL NAACP CONFERENCE

IN A first-ever address of an LDS church president before a meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, President Gordon B. Hinckley counseled that the father needs to be reinstated throughout the United States and the world as the head of the family. "[I]n far too many cases, families of all races have been denied leadership, the leadership of a good and devoted father who stands at the side of an able and kindly mother in quietly training, gently disciplining, and prayerfully helping the children for whom they both are responsible."

President Hinckley spoke to some 250 attendees at a 24 April 1998 Western Region 1 Leadership Conference of the NAACP, according to the *Church News*. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that the four-day conference in Salt Lake City drew people from as far as California, Alaska, and Korea.

President Hinckley was received very warmly, and his speech was interrupted by three ovations. Afterward, the prophet was presented



President Gordon B. Hinckley and Jeanetta Williams, Salt Lake NAACP president, converse during the conference in which an LDS leader for the first time addressed the African-American association.

with a Distinguished Service Award by Jeanetta Williams, who is the Salt Lake NAACP President, conference chair, and a national board member.

SUNSTONE CALENDAR

1998 Sunstone Symposium Announced. The summer symposium will be July 29–August 1 at Redwood Road campus of Salt Lake Community College. Individuals outside of the Intermountain West wanting a copy of the preliminary program should contact Sunstone, 343 N. Third West, Salt Lake City, UT 84103 (801/355-5926; fax 801/355-4043; <SunstoneUT@aol.com>).

1998 Washington, D.C., Symposium to Be Held in Fall. Contact Sunstone to be put on the mailing list.

1998 Chicago Symposium to Be Held in November. Contact Sunstone to be put on the mailing list.

1998 Northwest Sunstone Symposium date set. The conference will be held on 14 November in Seattle, Washington. Contact Molly Bennion for information (206/325-6868; <Bennion@Bennion-seanet.com>).

1999 Symposium West date set. The conference will be on 16–17 April at the San Francisco Airport Clarion. Contact Richard Rands (415/969-6567; email <RANDS7@aol.com>).

1999 Sunstone Symposium to be held at Salt Palace.

1999 marks the silver anniversary of the founding of the Sunstone Foundation, and the annual symposium will be held at the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City on 14–17 July 1999.

THE MORMON UNIVERSE

Latter-day Saint Museum Displays Jewish Library Collection. A collection of fifty-two rare library items—including a 1632 Holy Land map and rabbinic texts, lithographic prints, ritual liturgy, and books—is on display at the Museum of Church History and Art until 29 June. The exhibit, "Towards the Eternal Center: Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple," is on loan from the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Journal of Latter Day Saint History organized. A periodical covering the divergent paths of Latter Day Saints and/or other followers of the Joseph Smith tradition may be subscribed to for \$15 (U.S. funds) per year in the U.S. and Canada, \$25 overseas. For more information write to S. L. Shields, 6055 East Lake Mead Blvd. #A183, Las Vegas, Nevada, 89115-6909; or e-mail at <steveelseg@aol.com>.