

Mission Reports to the High Council January - May

**Elder Taylor Alston
Arizona Tucson
9th Ward**

The Tucson Mission covers a diverse area. There are many little farm towns with really humble people. The city of Tucson actually reminds me a lot of Salt Lake.

The Saturday before I left I went to the temple to watch the sealing of a family I taught in my second area. I was really close to the family so it was a very emotional experience. You could feel the spirit so strongly.

I know that the Atonement is real. I know the plan of salvation gives us hope, and I know the temple really is the literal house of the Lord.

**Elder Gregory Ballif
Uruguay Motevideo West
9th Ward**

My mission covered the western half of Uruguay, a small country about the size of Washington state. It is located in South America directly below Brazil. The most common language in Uruguay is Spanish but many people speak and understand Portuguese because of the shared border with Brazil. There is even a nickname given to the language that combines Spanish and Portuguese. It is called Portunol. There are many different cultures in Uruguay including Italian, French, Swiss, German and people of Spanish descent. The majority of the country is Christian, with a professed faith in the Catholic Church. The people are very open, and for the most part, friendly and kind.

One of the most spiritual experiences that I have had on my mission took place last Sunday in Uruguay. It was conference weekend and my companion and I had just left the stake center after the morning session to go do a few visits before the next session started. As we were walking down the street we walked past a young man seated on the curb. We said "Hello," but kept walking. As we reached the curb, I felt an impression to go back and talk to this young man. We went back, chatted for a few minutes and then I told him we had felt impressed to go back and ask him how he was doing. He then started to cry and gave us both hugs. He said that he had been experiencing some family problems. We were able to testify to him of a loving God. I know that we were led to comfort him.

I know that God lives and loves each one of us perfectly. I know that he knows us by name. I know that Christ lives today and that he is the Savior of the world. I know that his Atonement is real. I know that we can change through His grace and

Atoning sacrifice. I know the Book of Mormon is true and that it contains the complete truth. I know that Joseph Smith was the prophet that restored the true church to the earth. I know that the only way to find true joy is by living the gospel and following Christ.

Richard B. Cook
Mexico, Puebla South
9th Ward

I love the people of Mexico and even more so the people of Puebla. They are genuine, caring and some of the most loving people I have ever met. They will forever have a piece of my heart. Some of my best friends and loved ones are those I met on my mission. They taught me far more than I could ever teach them. I am eternally grateful to them. I loved my mission!

I was in my second area with a second companion having a really rough time. My companion was terrible. My Spanish was deplorable. I was really struggling. While looking through my things one night I found the program for Tyler Robinson's funeral. I remember reading Tyler's experience and thinking about what he went through and began to realize how blessed I was. My trials were nowhere near as bad as other people had suffered. I came to realize how truly blessed I was and came to know how much God loved me.

I know that this is the church of Jesus Christ. I know that it was restored to earth through revelations given to Joseph Smith. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and that he translated the Book of Mormon through the power of God. I know that the Book of Mormon is the most correct book on the face of the earth. It has helped me so much and changed my life. I know that Christ atoned for my sins and that he is the only true mediator.

Sister Haley Goaslind
Washington, Federal Way
4th Ward

Federal Way is a very small mission right in the middle of Seattle and Tacoma, Washington. There are very diverse cultures there and people from all over the world—it really helped put into perspective, “preaching the gospel to all the world.” As missionaries we were highly encouraged to focus on helping others and ourselves experience a “more lasting conversion” by making the doctrine of Christ the fabric of our lives. The people for the most part will say they are spiritual--not religious—but



there are many honest seekers there who are changed as they learn of Christ's restored church and gospel.

As we were helping a young mother prepare for baptism we learned that she had some serious sins from her past that she needed council about and would need to be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency rather than by another Elder. She was very worried about this and questioned if she would be able to even be baptized. Fully prompted by the spirit, we showed her the Mormon message, "None were with Him," by Elder Holland. Feelings took over the room as we and her four young children watched. I will never forget those feeling that came over all of us. She was baptized about a week later and bore her testimony at the service that she knew she had been cleansed and forgiven. Seeing her truly experience the power of the Atonement changed me as much as it did her.

I know that Christ's gospel is restored in its fullness to the earth today. I know that Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration and that the Book of Mormon is true scripture. I know that the ancient prophets kept their records on gold plates and that those teachings and examples were saved for our day. Most importantly, I know that Christ died for us; that the Atonement is a real tangible thing. I know that through Christ we can be given a remission of our sins, be endowed with power and receive eternal life. I know that Christ was resurrected and lives. We can become like Him as we do all we can to endure to the end and follow the example that Christ gave to us. I know that this restored gospel is the one and only way to eternal happiness and feel very blessed to have been able to help others find that way.

Elder Bryce C. Jones
BYU-Hawaii Administration

**Hawaii Honolulu
4th Ward**

My wonderful companion and I enjoyed serving a two-year mission on the campus of BYU. I was an architect and planner for the university. I designed student dorms as well as developed concept plans for numerous academic and student life buildings. I also master planned the campus to support double the current student population. BYU Hawaii serves students from over 70 countries including any Pacific Rim Islands and Asia Countries including Japan, China, Korea and Mongolia as well as students from North and South America, Africa and Russia. One of the most culturally diverse campuses in the world, B.Y.U.H. students learn to live, work and study together.

Besides our work at the University, we also served as mentors to a Young Single Adult Ward on campus, which kept us very busy. Many students were from Third World countries working and going to school so that they could return to their home country and help improve their community. One such student that we became very close to was Nowah Koko Afangbedgi from Togo, a small country in West Africa. Nowah will graduate this spring and will be going on to medical school so that he can return home to Africa and help his family and country.

I have a testimony of God the Father and His son, Jesus Christ. I know that Jesus Christ atoned for our sins, and that He set the example of loving and serving others. We are his hands on the earth today. It is by obedience and serving others that we can become close to Him. The Book of Mormon is the word of God. We are led by a living prophet who guides and directs our church today.

**Sister Carole S. Jones
BYU Hawaii EIL Program
Hawaii Honolulu
4th Ward**

When thinking about my mission which is all the time, I realize the many ways I was taught to be more humble, learn, share, love, bless, be more prayerful and the list goes on and on. I served for two years in the EIL program in Laie, BYUH. (EIL meaning English the International Language.) All students had to speak fluent English within nine months or they were sent home. So I was there to tutor them and teach them English. I taught close to 200 students. It was one of the choicest calling I could ever have. Working with the students by just loving and helping them has been the real blessing of my mission.

A very special experience came to me. I noticed a young man always walking by me and giving some kind of compliment. He didn't need me to tutor him because he already had a Japanese tutor, however he seemed to keep track of me. One day he came and sat in front of me. I took both his hands and cheerfully said "Msaki, what

can I do for you today?” He asked if we could go to a quiet place. We moved around the corner and with tears in his eyes he asked me “Could you teach me to pray?” Tearfully we spent the next 1 ½ hours together. It was a time I will never forget. Masaki kept coming and just before we left to come home, we said a tearful goodbye—and yes this time he prayed.

My blessings have been un-measureable with student teaching me and leaving me a blessing. I believe in God the Eternal Father and in his son and we must follow him. I am grateful for the power of the priesthood. I love the temple and know the importance of going often. I’m thankful for the sacrament that we can renew our covenants weekly. I’m so thankful for an eternal companion and wonderful family. I know this church is true.

**Elder Peter Lambson
Sweden Stockholm
2nd Ward**

Swedes are the kindest most helpful people I’ve ever met. Most of them are atheists or agnostics but the work moves forward. Sweden is the size of California. They eat really good food. I miss it. Lots of Middle-Eastern immigrants live in Sweden.

The mission changed me. I love having the name of Jesus Christ on my heart every day. It was a constant reminder to me. I would ask myself, “Do I have the love of Christ in my heart and if I didn’t then I needed to pray. Over time this changed my heart. My attitude and my outlook on life is priceless.

I know the church is true and that Joseph Smith is a prophet. I know first and foremost that Jesus Christ lives. He loves us. He is my Savior. He is the way, the light and the truth. He is my way and my life.

**Elder Andrew Mosteller
California Long Beach
6th Ward**

The California Long Beach Mission is very diverse in culture, ethnicity, financial situation and religious belief. I taught Catholics, scientologists, Buddhists, Christians, Greek mythologist, Muslims, atheists, spiritualists, people who had invented their own philosophies and active participating unbaptized Mormons who had callings. I taught the gospel to people who considered a thick patch of bushes their home and people whose multi-million dollar beach house was a fun place for them to get away to for a couple of weeks each year. I realized that where a person came from was of little importance if when I preached them the gospel by the power of the spirit, they listened and obeyed, then their reward was rich in the kingdom of God. I love the people of my mission.

A great deal of my spiritual experiences came as a result of meaningful prayer and study. One that stands out to me came as a result of a sincere desire to know the truth. There was a young and recently married man that we first saw on the street. Then met him at a pool in our apartment complex at nighttime. He related his story of visiting many churches but did not feel any of them was the right one. This story set the stage for us to relate the divine journey and vision of Joseph Smith. I remember reciting Joseph Smith's vision to the man and as I did a strong spirit came and testified to my heart that what I was saying was true. This is when I knew Joseph Smith was a prophet.

I believe all things that I have learned through studying the restored gospel. I desire to believe all truth that has, that is, and that will yet be revealed. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I know that this church is the true and living church on the earth today. I know that God is my Father and that eternal life is my destiny. I know that Jesus is the anointed king of kings and that he has anointed me to become such.

**Elder Jacob Mortimer
Texas Houston South
3rd Ward**

My mission covered the southwest part of Houston which is the more densely populated part of Houston. It is amazingly diverse with every culture or race you could think of. The people as a whole were usually very respectful and nice, but they thought they had enough. They were passive-aggressive.

I think the most sacred moment I had on my mission was when I witnessed the gospel give hope to a person who had none, then saw how quickly he grasped onto the teachings with passion and fire. I saw purpose fill his life as well as the establishment of higher goals.

I testify of the truthfulness of this gospel. I testify that we don't have to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that these things are true to have a testimony. There are things I question and things that I have doubts about. But I know what I have felt and for that reason I believe and testify that Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God brought forth in these days to guide us in truth and righteousness.



**Sister Bonnie Helen Lach Oswald
Salt Lake South Mission
Ward**

We were called to a new pilot program mission and seeing it develop has been challenging. Things have changed and the number of mission meetings and paperwork has changed as we went month to month. We found that we had so many meetings that it was hard to fit in missionary work, but we have called on at least 100 nonmembers and inactives, and have been welcomed graciously everywhere. We get referrals every week from people in the stake. When we started there were about 17 couples and now there are about 50 with more being called all the time. This MLS program is spreading to many other areas in the Church, and we found it exciting to be in on the start of the program. We also appreciated that we didn't need to worry about transfers, and we have gotten along fine with our companion for 48 years. It has been interesting working with the young missionaries, and I have had the opportunity to do much mending for them. We have lived in this stake for 32 years and find we get lost when we are out making contacts.

We have worked with encouraging so many people who have fallen away from the Church for one reason or another (mostly trivial). We now see many of them returning to the church, and looking forward to going to the temple. We have been

able to go to the temple with several. I think that one of the most meaningful experiences was seeing the Ward Mission Leaders start to work as a team, and get more excited about their callings. There are several people that we have worked with that we will continue our friendships and hope to see them make progress. Several have expressed a desire to be baptized. Our Stake Presidency has been remarkable in encouraging the wards to work with us. We feel their support. We find that many of the MLS missionaries don't have this support, and it makes a huge difference.

I love my Savior and am overwhelmed with all he has done for me. I feel fortunate to be on the earth at the time when the gospel has been restored. I have had so many faith promoting experiences in my life that I could never doubt that it is true. I know that I have been saved to be on the earth at this time and have come to appreciate my husband even more as we have shared this experience.

Elder Stephen Comerford Oswald
Salt Lake South Mission
Ward

My mission covers the Willow Creek Stake and I was called as a "MLS" (Member Leader Support) missionary serving alongside my wife, Bonnie, for 18 months. This experience has been a tremendous blessing as we have become acquainted with all of the Stake Leaders, Ward Leaders, Ward Mission Leaders, and hundred of stake members, plus inactives and non-members, and especially the young elders and sisters. The people living in this stake are special. They are youth, old, and we have learned something from each of them. We have attended every ward, land ward councils, and enjoyed these meetings the most.

There have been many sacred moments. We all need to know our neighbors and get to let them know about us and our beliefs. This concept is crucial. If we are not befriending our neighbors they will not feel our love. It must be there before we can help them learn the gospel. We have been inspired by many in the stake who are working with their neighbors.

I know that the Gospel is true. The Priesthood is the power of God on earth. God loves us all and I love God and Jesus Christ. I know that Jesus Christ is the Atoning Savior for me, my family and for the whole world. We have a living prophet, true apostles and the most powerful men in the world at the helm of this Church.

Elder Mitchel Wallace
Washington Vancouver
1st Ward

The North West is a great place—it's very green. The people are nice, good people. Most of them are non-denominational Christians. In the Washington Vancouver

Mission we worked hard and were obedient. I learned a lot about many things including love. I love the people of the North West. They are good people who love the Lord.

We gathered together as a mission to hear Elder Holland speak. He spoke to us for three and a half hours. Near the conclusion of the meeting he gave us each a blessing. A feeling of the spirit more potent and powerful than I have ever felt came upon me. It strengthened my testimony of the Restoration and priesthood authority. Many miracles soon after presented themselves.

I know that God lives and I know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. I have a testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Doctrine of Christ has the power to change lives, mine included. I know that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God and that Thomas S. Monson has all the keys. I know that the Book of Mormon is true and that abiding by its precepts will bless our lives.

**Elder Zach Wootton
France Paris
3rd Ward**

The mission was good. The people were very strong in the gospel. France has been turning more and more away from God but there are still those that are searching for something more in their lives. I had two really amazing mission presidents; both were native French speakers.

One of my favorite moments was when I was able to find a lady that my Dad baptized on his mission, but sadly he lost contact with her. However, I was able to find and reconnect with her.

I know that God is there for us and that we are truly his children. I know and understand how important Jesus Christ is to the plan of salvation and his love for us.

**Elder Ryan Worth
Mexico, Guadalajara
Ward 4th**

I served in the Guadalajara East Mission which covers a large geographical area in Mexico including the states of Jalisco, Michoacan, Guervero and Guanajuato. I served many different people. It had a profound impact on me to see the love that the Mexican Saints have towards God and his Gospel and their willingness to sacrifice for the Gospel. They are great and humble people and I love them.

I had the opportunity to teach a man named Julio. He had been listening to the missionaries for over nine months when I arrived in that area and got to know him. He had many difficulties in his life including drugs and alcohol. We worked very

hard with him to prepare him for baptism. After fasting with him for two weeks in a row he was able to finally quit several habits that had been keeping him from being baptized for nine months. Through the Atonement we can all change and start anew.

I know that God lives and that he loves each and every one of us. I know that he has provided a way for us to return to his presence and live with him again and have happiness in this life. It is through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, his Son, that we can be cleansed and return to him. I'm grateful for the plan that he has for us and I love him. There is no greater joy in this life than to keep the commandments and serve God and your fellow men.

Elder Alex Rawle
Ohio Cleveland
9th Ward

I loved my mission. It was hard because everyone is pretty much comfortable with their own religion. Some were aware of anti-Mormon literature. The people there are really nice. The members are strong and full of love. They especially love missionaries. I learned a lot from my mission. I learned the principle of prayer, scripture study and most importantly how to live like Christ lived. I also learned how important the gospel is.

One experience I can think of was when I was in a lesson with an investigator. Her name was Diane. We were talking about the Book of Mormon and how she could know that it was true using Moroni's promise. She said she had a warm and fuzzy feeling when we were with her but she wasn't sure what that feeling meant. We told her that the spirit was testifying to her that the things we were sharing were true. From then on she knew how to recognize the spirit whenever it was present with a couple of reminders from us now and then.

I know that this is the restored church on the earth today and that Joseph Smith is a prophet. I know Jesus Christ stands at the head of this church and that he provides constant divine guidance. I have faith in the Savior and Heavenly Father. They lead and direct me. I love them.

Elder Jordan Zabriski
Tennessee Nashville
1st Ward

My mission was the greatest adventure of my life. The Southern people are so nice, humble loving and fun. They will do anything for you. They understand the principle of charity. They all love the Savior. I spent most of my time out in the country. I lived in a trailer for half my mission in a new place and among new people who spoke a new language. I love it there and I love those people.

About halfway through my mission I realized one of the biggest reasons. I was called to serve in the Tennessee Nashville mission. I met a kid named Grant who was against the church but we were able to teach him. He became one of my greatest friends. Three weeks before I returned home he was baptized and received the Holy Ghost and the Priesthood. He told me if he hadn't met me he would have never accepted the gospel. I know that the Lord has a purpose and a plan for all of us.

I know that God lives and that he is my Father. He sent Jesus the Christ to live and die for me. I know that the Atonement is real and through it we are able to change who we are to become who God knows we can be. The Book of Mormon is sacred scripture that is to be treasured. Joseph Smith was and is a chosen prophet of God who obediently followed the Lord in all things and completed the work the Father gave him. I know that families are eternal and that all of us have an equal chance to live with Heavenly Father, Christ and our families forever. This is Christ's church and gospel.