

**Mission Reports to the High Council
October – December**



**Elder Cole Thomas Bagley
North Carolina Charlotte Mission
4th Ward**

My mission was, bar none, the greatest decision I ever made and it saved my life. I was able to come to know who Jesus Christ really is and his role in our lives. Serving in North Carolina was such a blessing because so many good Christians live there and are willing to talk openly about their faith. It didn't always mean we'd get our foot in the door, but it gave us a better chance. I love the saints out in North Carolina because they love the missionaries and become family. They truly are my brothers and sisters and I have a couple of "Mission Moms" too. It was the hardest thing I ever did, but the most rewarding and incredible experience of my life that motivates me to continue to serve the Master the rest of my life.

The most sacred moment of my mission was when I received the most undeniable witness of Jesus the Christ while teaching a Chinese woman. She was the wife of a member and had never heard of Jesus Christ so we had to start from ground zero. I was on an exchange with a new missionary and we were teaching her about the Atonement and why Christ was so important. Reading from Alma 7:11-13, it finally clicked completely for me. That's when I knew, without a doubt, that Jesus was the Christ and I explained that to her. A few weeks later she was baptized and came to love Jesus Christ and the plan of Salvation.

I know that Jesus is the Christ and he suffered and died so that we could overcome sin and death. I am the perfect example of the Atonement changing somebody, and so I know that if anyone chooses to follow Christ, his doctrine and apply the Atonement, they can change. I know the Book of Mormon to be the word of God and there is a power behind that book that I cannot explain. It has helped teach me the

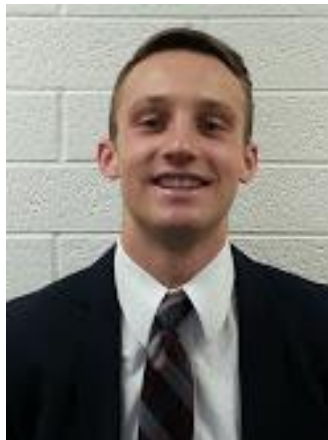
principles that I need to govern my life. It also helps me know that the church has been restored. Joseph Smith was the prophet of the restoration and I will stand by him for eternity. I know God loves us and that our trials mold us into who we need to become. I look forward to living the gospel for eternity and bearing witness to anyone I come across.

Elder Joseph Colson
Michigan District
3rd Ward

On my mission I worked with many different kinds of people as you might expect. There were three kinds of people I worked with: 1) Recent converts/less active members in need of guidance. 2) Members looking to learn about the gospel. 3) Those members and others in need of strength and comfort. This is the group I worked with the most. Everyone I met was very nice and came from some Christian background. The church in Michigan District is little and more diverse than it is here.

The experience that I want to share came at the very end of my mission. I was in my last area for 7 ½ months. One of the people I worked with most was a contact by the name of Shane who got baptized in January and was going through some difficult times. We would go and teach him every week. We tried to help him make it to the temple but he was delayed twice by some unforeseen challenges. One day I was invited by a leader to pray for someone and ask for help. Immediately Shane's name came to mind. He was scheduled to go to the temple in October so I began fasting and praying that this time he would make it. He went with a group on October 6th and got baptized for his grandpa and great grandpa.

I know that we have a Father in Heaven who loves and cares for us. I know that his son Jesus Christ is our Redeemer who atoned for our sins. Through that Atonement we can find peace, strength and healing despite our circumstance. I'm grateful for the scriptures and know that we can receive revelation and answers there. I know that the Holy Ghost is real. He guides and comforts us. I felt this often on my mission. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that we have a living prophet that guides us today.



Elder Grant Doty
Guatemala Quetzaltenango
4th Ward

I served in the mountains. It was surprisingly cold. We worked in villages and other areas, some of which had dominant languages such as Maw and K'iche (Mayan tongues.) The people are very humble and accepting and so willing to share and to give. They are very strongly rooted in their traditions and religions.

One sacred moment from my mission: I remember one day, after doing splits with another Elder, I came home to my trainer and was feeling somewhat down. As we were talking, a very powerful feeling of God's love came over me and I knew that he was very proud of me and of what I was doing.

I know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. I know that the restoration of his gospel and organization of the church came through the prophet, Joseph Smith. I know that because of temples we can have eternal families. I know that Thomas S. Monson is the living prophet of God in this day.

Sister Olivia Esplin
Lisbon, Portugal
4th Ward

Portugal is a very small country with a big history. Because of this we see people from around the world such as Cape Verde, Mozambique, Brazil and much of Europe. We taught many immigrants who were religious, but they felt they were not fulfilling their purpose, and we were happy to help them find it. Portugal is also a poor country, but they love to share and give. They will walk with you to anywhere if you stop and ask for directions. I served mostly in the far North and areas around Lisbon, so I feel I got to know the majority of the mission.

I arrived in the Far North of Portugal in the dead of winter. It was my first area, Christmas was nearing, and the area was struggling. As many new missionaries discover, the work is not like in the states. I was discouraged but we went out and worked. We were passing out cards in the main square of the city when we came across an old woman we both felt that we needed to stop. She was hunched over and her face was drawn. At first she waved us off, telling us she was not worth our time but we insisted and finally she broke down crying. She told us her story and we bore testimony. We had no way to contact her but we were touched and felt God's love for her.

I am so grateful for the opportunity I had to serve a mission in Portugal. I learned and grew so much. I grew to love my Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, and I felt, and still feel, the love they have for us. I know that this love was why they called Joseph Smith to be a prophet and brought forth the Book of Mormon. I know this church

is the only true church and I know Thomas S. Monson is a prophet of God. I am humbled and grateful for the sacred nature of this knowledge.



Elder William Tanner Hesterman
Mexico Tijuana Mission
3rd Ward

Tijuana is a very fascinating city. Being on the border with the United States you find a lot of interesting people. It's a very contaminated city, but has its own charm and appeal and now with the newly constructed temple there, it's a diamond in the rough. There are so many great and humble people that even though they basically don't have anything, they live happily and are willing to give the little they have to others. It's a very God related region and culture as well. I have come to love and treasure the people of Mexico and their culture.

One day my companion and I had just finished eating lunch. We hadn't been having a lot of success in our area for a while and we didn't know why. We had been working hard but weren't seeing much success from our labors. So we decided to start focusing a lot on our prayers. We prayed for things very specifically and with all the faith that we could muster. We started out of our house and walked to the street next to ours and just started walking in silence. We did not talk to one another. When we arrived at the last house on the street we decided to knock on the door. A boy of about 12 years answered and was about to tell us to leave when all of a sudden his mom came downstairs and said, "Hi elders, come on in!" It turned out that the mom had been a member since early childhood but had been inactive for fifteen years. Her son and husband weren't members of any religion. After a few more visits, the family committed themselves to go to

church, to pray and to read the Book of Mormon. The husband and son were soon baptized. The wife accepted a calling and spoke in stake conference. She plans to be sealed in the temple to her husband and son.

I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and saw God and his son Jesus Christ. I know that Thomas S. Monson is the prophet for our day. The Book of Mormon contains the fullness of the gospel and by following its principles we will be able to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. I know that the temple is the house of the Lord and that families can be eternal. I know that because of the atoning sacrifice of the Savior all can change and become like our Heavenly Father.



Elder Austin Thomas Lignell
Guayaquil Ecuador South Mission
3th Ward

The Ecuador Guayaquil South Mission covers almost all the southern half of Ecuador including Loja, Mahala, Santa Rosa, Cuenca, the Galapagos, and part of Guayaquil. The people there are kind, generous, and loving. For the most part they live in poverty, but none-the-less, are happy to share what small things they have with others. The people of Ecuador have a lot of faith; almost all of the people there believe in God. They know that

he exists and that we should obey his word. It was amazing to see so many people in Ecuador just waiting to receive the gospel in their lives, just as the scriptures say they were ready; they just did not know where to find the truth. It was such an amazing experience to be able to serve with those people. I hold them and their culture dear to my heart. They are the most wonderful people that I have ever met.

One sacred moment from my mission was when we had the chance to teach a nonmember mother who had two younger boys who had become members of the church. With the help of her older son, Carlos, we were able to help her accept baptism after almost a year of listening to the missionaries. Many other people were able to accept the challenge and be baptized as she had done, but her experience stood out in my mind. It changed me. After she accepted baptism I was truly able to understand what it meant to be an instrument in the hands of God. Was it me or my companion that were able to change her views? No it was God acting through us. That is what the great call of being a missionary is--an opportunity for God to act through his missionaries and perform miracles as he enabled our investigators to come unto Christ.



Sister Marissa Mansell
North Dakota Bismark Mission
2th Ward

My mission was huge and very diverse. Every area was completely different. North Dakota is where the oil is and so there were people from all over the world. It's also where refugee from Africa go. South Dakota had more of a hunting, small town feel. Chadren, Nebraska had small towns and lots of farmers. I absolutely loved the people in my mission. The members, investigators, the less-actives and my dear

companions. I just loved everybody I met on my mission but in particular these very special people:

1. Fajiah Kathanor was from Liberia. He is one of the Lord's elect and I promised I would find him.
2. Jimmy from China, contacted us and is planning on being baptized.
3. Scott Mitt, we prayed and were prompted to knock on his door. Today he's a solid recent convert.
4. Darion Hillmer, a twenty year old kicked out of the house for substance abuse. She changed her life and was baptized.
5. Haley Viscar, a fifteen year old who trusted in the Lord and got baptized.
6. Renea Odenhaugh, a recent convert preparing to go to the temple.

Some sacred moments on my mission include going to the temple for the last time and participating in the prayer circle; repenting and partaking of the sacrament, and the experience of casting out demons from Anne Field's home.

I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior. I know that he performed the Atonement so that we can return and live with our Heavenly Father. I know that we all can be more than we are. I know that the only way we can access the Atonement is to live the gospel. I have come to experience the Atonement through the gospel. I know that the gospel was once lost, but through Joseph Smith, the fullness of the gospel and the priesthood was restored. I know that the gospel is taught to us through the Book of Mormon and by our modern prophets. I know that ours is the only church with power and authority which allows us to make covenants with God. I am eternally grateful for my Savior. I know that Heavenly Father know us perfectly and answers our prayers. I know that the plan of salvation is God's plan and that families are forever.

**Sister Sarah Ann Stidham
Texas San Antonio Mission
6th Ward**

When I got my mission call, I wondered how I could ever love the people enough. However, when I got to Texas, I fell deeply in love with Texas and the people there. As missionaries, we talk about finding the elect and the prepared – that defines the people of Texas. I had the honor to work in so many wonderful wards and with amazing leaders. The different wards I served in helped me to see how to have an effective Ward Council and how to serve the ward. The members in Texas are dedicated to missionary work. They are always seeking ways to grow the church. I absolutely love the people there.

When I was in the MTC, we did an activity to help us gain a deep testimony of the Book of Mormon. Our teacher had us think of something that we've had a question about, pray, and then open the Book of Mormon. I had prayed about forgiveness and when I

opened the Book of Mormon I opened it up to Enos and read these words, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” I immediately felt the Atonement and the power of God’s love fill my soul. This testimony deepening activity changed my life.

Christ lives and has redeemed all of us. His grace and love have filled my life with joy and peace. Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. The way to know this is by reading the Book of Mormon. God has given us ways to know him and return to him. My testimony of the truthfulness of this gospel is firm and unshaken. I know this is the only true church and it is being led by Christ through President Monson. I know these things by the power and witness of the Holy Ghost.

Elder Nathan Samuel Vance
Japan, Fokaska Mission
4th Ward

My mission is the southern most mission in Japan. It spans from Hiroshima down to the some small Islands such as Okinawa. I was blessed to serve in five areas 1. Okinawa, Okinawa 2. Tsuboi, Kumamoto 3. Shimonoscki, Yamaguchi 4. Kobera, Okinawa and 5) Kagoshima, Kagoshima. In these areas I was blessed to work with many wonderful and amazing people. The Japanese people are so humble, kind, reserved and loving that it is hard to describe them. They are hard working, dedicated and loyal. When they set themselves to something they will accomplish it. They never let things or people get in their way.

I think that one really great experience was finding Brother Ishikawa. My companion and I were doing monthly planning when we prayed to know if any one in our area was ready for baptism. We were both impressed that there was a young Japanese boy who was ready. We worked hard that week to find him but were unable to do so. When we went to church on Sunday there he was. He was presented to us by a person who told us the young boy was ready for the gospel. He was baptized three months later. My companion performed the baptism. He had only been in the mission field for five weeks.

I know that the gospel is true, that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and contains the fullness of the gospel. I know that God knows us as individuals and has a plan for our lives. I know that he knows and loves us. He will never abandon us.