

Mission to South Africa

Senior Mission, Larry and Teri Richman, May 2022–November 2023

Teri and I served a mission to Johannesburg South Africa as executive secretaries to the Africa South Area Presidency from May 23, 2022, to November 5, 2023.

I retired as a Church employee on Friday, May 20, 2022, and Teri and I entered the MTC in Provo on Monday, May 23, 2022.



Preparation for the Mission

When you submit a recommendation to serve a senior mission, you can indicate a few preferences. That doesn't mean you will be called according to your preferences, but the Apostle who calls you will take that into consideration. Teri and I had wanted to serve as executive secretaries to an Area Presidency. I talked with Elder

Kopischke, who I worked with so well in the Priesthood and Family Department. At that time, he was a counselor in the Area Presidency in Frankfurt, Germany. That seemed to us to be an ideal assignment, but Elder Kopischke said they had just called an executive secretary. Teri and I then considered New Zealand, but the timing of that didn't work for us. We then considered South Africa, where David Frischknecht had worked at director for temporal affairs. We had some discussions with him and Nancy. Teri was a bit concerned about safety and violence in South Africa but agreed to do it. So, I wrote to Elder Golden, who was the Area President of the Africa South Area at that time. I had worked with Elder Golden for years in the Priesthood and Family Department.

On September 24, 2021, I emailed Elder Golden with this message:

I hope all is well with you and your family. All is well here in the Priesthood and Family Department. I sure enjoyed the times we worked together. You were a joy to work with.

I just wanted to let you know that I plan to retire in June 2022, and my wife and I plan to serve a mission. We would love to serve in an area office somewhere. I see that the area executive secretary position is open in Johannesburg beginning in June 2022. Do you think that would be a good fit for us?

He responded the same day with this email:

Beloved Larry,

Thank you for your most welcome email.

The replacement of Elder and Sister Elggren our current Area Executive Secretary had been on my mind for a while now.

Your suggestion that you and Teri serve a mission as the Africa South Area Executive Secretary is heartily welcomed by our Area Presidency.

Frankly, from my personal perspective, I cannot think of anyone more qualified and better equipped for this assignment in terms of innate disposition and capacity.

With your permission, we will take this up the line for support and ultimately to get the "wheels rolling."

Would this work for you?

As ever, thanks and very best wishes,

Chris.

February 15, 2022

Teri and I received our mission call to serve as executive secretaries in the Africa South Area office. The call indicated we would enter the MTC June 13 and arrive in South Africa May 30. The next day, in coordination with the Africa South Area and the Missionary Department, our mission start date was changed to allow a two-week overlap with Elder and Sister Elggren, the missionary couple that we replaced.

Final Weeks Before the Mission

Our tradition was to take each of our grandchildren on an outing on each birthday. Usually, we would take them to lunch and then take them shopping for a birthday gift. Before we left on our mission, we took all 16 grandchildren on outings in anticipation of their birthdays while we were gone. We took them out in groups to bowl, paint pictures, and play at amusement centers.

Missionary Training Center

Because we weren't proselyting missionaries, we only had a week of Preach My Gospel training at the Provo MTC—from May 23–27. Several of the people in our district were assigned to the Polynesian Cultural Center (retail and costuming) and one was assigned to document the construction of the temple in Ephraim, Utah. The Polynesian Cultural Center was just reopening after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MTC was a great experience.

Tuesday night was the General Authority devotional and President Steven J. Lund, General Young Men President, spoke. I was sitting in the front row because I was in a choir that sang at the devotional. After President Lund came in, he noticed me and came down off the stand to say "hi" and express greetings from the Priesthood and Family Department. He gave an amazing address about seeing things as they really are. In the middle of the talk, he mentioned me and said I was an integral part of the Priesthood and Family Department for many years that that my fingerprints were on many things, including the missionary materials that the missionaries were studying. It was rather embarrassing but humbling to think of the many things I was privileged to be involved in over the years.

One day while there, Hailee and Chance brought us something we had left at home, so we were able to visit with them for a few minutes. They commented that we seemed so happy—that there was a light in our eyes. That was the spirit of the MTC.

Notes I Took at the MTC

Getting to know people. (1) Ask open-ended questions, (2) listen sincerely, and (3) ask follow-up questions.

Extending invitations. (1) Bear testimony often, (2) ask direct, clear, and specific questions [“will you...?”], and (3) promise blessings.

Planning. Pray, identify needs, identify invitations, and study principles to teach.

Teaching. small talk, prayer, review, teach principles using resources, invitation, and prayer.

Personal study. Liken what you learn to yourself. Substitute your name in a verse of scripture.

Follow up. Ask follow-up questions. If people answer “yes,” celebrate it and identify blessings. If they answer “no,” acknowledge their concerns and resolve them. (Show disappointment that they missed out on blessings. Validate. Be positive. Let them come up with solution.) Then reinvite.

One day, they asked us to read our patriarchal blessing, and take notes about things we were impressed to do. Here is my list of phrases from my blessing and my thoughts about what I need to do:

- The Lord loves me. (Show that love to others.)
- Reserved me at this time to help prepare for the second coming. (Church employment and South Africa mission.)
- Vigor of body and mind. (Use my intellect.)
- Hunger and thirst after righteousness. (Study the gospel more.)
- Constant companionship of Holy Ghost. (Listen to the promptings.)
- Bear the priesthood. (Use it more.)
- Mission/Preach gospel. (Tell world of my love and testimony of Jesus Christ.)
- Marry in temple. (Rely more on my wife.)
- Listen to parents. (Remember the things they taught me.)
- Know power of repentance and forgiveness. (Daily repentance and improvement.)
- Be a leader. (Serve well.)
- Teach children. (Speak up more.)
- Children to follow me in service. (Share examples.)
- Have gifts of the Spirit. (Recognize and use them.)
- Heal the sick. (Give more blessings.)
- Children honor my name because of my righteousness. (Be more visible to them.)
- God has a special mission for me. (Be prepared.)

In the Mission Field

May 28, 2022

We flew from Salt Lake to Atlanta (four hours), and then a 15-hour flight to Johannesburg, arriving on May 29. A driver (“Lee Harvey Oswald”) picked us up from the airport and drove us to our apartment complex (Dukes Court) where we were met by several of the senior couples serving in the area office. They escorted us up to our apartment (called a “flat” in South Africa) where we met and greeted each other for a few minutes. They left and we did only what was necessary and went to bed. It was perfect timing because it was time for bed, and we didn’t need to wait to go to sleep.

June 5, 2022

We spent the week at the office in one-on-one training with Sister and Elder Elggren. They left the following Friday to go home, and we would be on our own. It was a little overwhelming with the number of things we would be responsible for, but Teri and I knew that, with the Lord's help, we would both be up for the challenge. He is in charge of His work and will help us rise to the occasion.

The following is a synopsis of our responsibilities. The area executive secretary provides administrative support to an Area Presidency. I manage agenda items for Area Presidency meetings and follow up on those issues. I am the one to field general questions from Area Seventies and stake and mission presidents. I process requests for new leaders and proposed changes in unit boundaries.

Teri is the assistant area executive secretary, and she reviews missionary recommendations from members in the area. She makes sure they have all the documents required (medical forms, passports, etc.) and identifies potential flags that the Area Presidency needs to review. When all is complete, she sends the recommendations to the Area Presidency for their review, and then submits the recommendations to headquarters.

We function as “chief of staff” of the office of the Area Presidency. Although we are not the human resources manager of the secretaries to the Area Presidency, we are responsible for training them and managing all the functions within the office of the Area Presidency.

Teri and I also function as zone leaders for the senior missionaries assigned to the area office. We are responsible to ensure they have meaningful assignments and successful experiences serving at the area office. We oversee the assignments of housing, vehicles, and a ward or branch to attend on Sundays where they can provide shadow leadership.

Although the secretaries to the Area Presidency plan the itineraries for routine travel of the members of the Area Presidency, we take the lead in planning visits from General Authorities and General Officers. We coordinate the efforts of the travel office (booking flights and accommodations, obtaining travel visas, and booking rented meeting facilities), the fleet office (for ground transportation between the airport, hotel, and meetings), security (area security manager and the security officers who travel from headquarters with the Apostles), meetinghouse facilities (to ready the meeting venues), caterers (for meals), and many others. We also draft the agendas for these meetings.

We spent most nights this week across the street at the Killarney Mall picking up things that we needed and grocery shopping. It was very convenient to have the mall across the street. They let you take their trollies (shopping carts) out of the store and up to our apartment to put away groceries. We just had to put the trolley downstairs in our lobby and they pick it up and return it to the store.

In South Africa, they drive on the left side of the road. It is harder than you think. With the steering wheel on the right side of the car, it presents a whole new mind set. The blinker and windshield wipers are reversed, and you can tell the new drivers because they mistakenly turn on their wipers a lot. The Kombis (taxis) rule the road. They often don't stop at red lights or stop signs. Pedestrians do not have the right of way, so you really need to watch when you cross the street. There are people standing at nearly every corner begging for money. For safety reasons, we are not allowed to give them money, but they recognize us and are very friendly. One man on the corner of Riviera and Oxford gives us elbow bumps and fist bumps through the window.

Today we went to church in Soweto. It stands for South Western Township. In the 45-minute drive, we went through some impoverished areas where people live in tin shacks. Most members walk to church because they don't have a car. The church we went to was very nice and the ward was impressive. The people bore strong testimonies and the Spirit was strong.

The area executive secretaries do not have an assigned ward or branch, because our Sunday responsibility is to rotate attending the branches with the senior missionaries. That way, we can get to know all the branches so we can make appropriate assignments. Riding with the senior missionaries to their branches also gives us an informal setting to have deep conversations with them about the branches they attend, as well as general conversations about their mission experiences and

assignments. It fulfills our responsibility to have regular interviews with the senior missionaries as their zone leaders.

June 6, 2022

Elder and Sister Elggren (the previous missionary couple who served as executive secretaries) left today, so now we are on our own. There is a lot to learn, but we feel confident we can do the work we have been called to do.

The work here moves at a rapid pace. The people of South Africa are ready to hear the gospel and it is a blessing to be a part of it. Many young people are submitting papers to go on missions, and Teri has the opportunity to review their recommendations and make sure everything is in order to submit it to headquarters where an Apostle will give them their mission assignment. Teri is learning everything that takes place behind the scenes for these to be processed.

June 16, 2022

Today was a national holiday, "Youth Day," and the office was closed, so we drove to the Rietvlei Nature Reserve. It's not one of the best around, but it was close enough for a half-day outing. We drove through in our car and saw African buffalos, white-tailed gnus, elands, hartebeests, zebras, and ostriches.

June 18, 2022

On Saturdays, many of the senior missionary couples go on activities together. Today, we went to the Cullinan diamond mine. The mine started out as an open pit mine, but now it has shafts that descend below the depth of the open pit mine to access lower veins of diamonds. The mine has produced over 750 stones that are greater than 100 carats and more than a quarter of all the world's diamonds that are greater than 400 carats. In 1905, the mine produced the Cullinan Diamond—the largest rough diamond of gem quality ever found. It weighed 3,106 carats. It was cut into nine major stones and 96 smaller stones. The largest (530 carats) is called the Great Star of Africa and is now set in the royal scepter of the Queen of England. The second largest (317 carats) is called the Lesser Star of Africa and is in the crown of the Queen of England.

June 19, 2022

Every Sunday, we attend church at a different ward or branch in the townships, as we go with one of the other senior missionary couples who are assigned as members of these branches to provide support. The first two Sundays, we visited branches that had their own Church building. Today, we visited the Daveyton 3rd Branch that meets in a rented classroom of a school. There was a great spirit there. One of the three or four investigators who attended contributed the most in the Sunday School class.

June 26, 2022

We visited the Katehong Ward today with Elder and Sister Perkins. He told us about a recent fifth-Sunday lesson where a member of the bishopric taught about tithing and showed them how to fill out a donation slip. He pled with them to make donations online if they could. He related that when he deposits the donations in the bank, he takes a different route every time to avoid being robbed. One day, he was inspired to make the deposit earlier than usual, and later that day two men tried to rob him. When he told them he didn't have any money, they took him outside of town to an abandoned area with mining tailings. They zip tied his hands and feet and threatened him to hand over the money. When they realized he didn't have any money, one of the men said, "let's just kill him anyway." The other said, "let's just leave him here because he'll die anyway." The bishopric member was able to scoot on his stomach to a nearby road and get help. Robbers here are willing to be violent when it comes to money because their situation is so desperate.

July 9, 2022

The senior missionaries went on a sightseeing tour of the city on a hop-on-hop-off bus. It was good to get to know the city a little more. We spent a few hours at the Apartheid Museum. See more information about apartheid in the journal entry for January 14, 2023.

Today was our 40th wedding anniversary. Teri and I had a great day together on the sightseeing tour and went to dinner and a movie. Teri got a Southern Cross necklace for our anniversary at Cambanos & Son Diamonds the previous Saturday. The Southern Cross is a constellation in the southern sky that people use to identify south.

July 15-16, 2022

We took a weekend trip to the Thula Thula Game Reserve with Elder and Sister Watson, the infield missionary representative (IFR). The book *The Elephant Whisperer* chronicles how this reserve was established. We were able to get up close and personal with many different animals including cape buffalo, zebra, giraffe, rhino, impala, nyala, hyenas, and many more, with the most awe inspiring being the elephants. They came right up to the Land Rover we were in, and we could have reached out and touched them. They are very strong animals. We learned a lot about how they communicate and how intelligent they are.

While on the trip, we got a phone call on July 15 informing us that Dad had passed away. Shortly before that, he had fallen and broken his hip and he was in the hospital, and I knew that he would soon pass away.

July 19–26, 2022

We got permission from Elder Dube to fly home for the funeral. All the brothers and sisters were there, except Julie. I spoke at the funeral. Nothing is more important to me than family.

It was great to spend some good one-on-one time with Mom and help her go through Dad's papers. Everything was already in order, since I spent some time with Mom and Dad in Boise before I left on the mission to organize their papers and make sure that their affairs were in order. But, after Dad's passing, it was good to go through things with Mom again to be sure she understood everything and to take care of final details.

July 27, 2022

Today, we held a farewell for Elder Golden complete with a presentation of photos that we gathered from Sister Golden to review his years as a General Authority. As he drove away, employees lined the driveway with signs expressing their love for him. Elder Golden will be made emeritus at the October general conference.

August 4, 2022

We have been busy this week welcoming a new Area Presidency. Elder Dube, from Zimbabwe, was the first counselor but as of August 1st, will be the president. Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis is the first counselor and Elder Denelson Silva is the second counselor.

The Area Presidency held a devotional with the area staff and office missionaries on Tuesday to introduce themselves. We then held many meetings throughout the week to discuss the area vision and conduct other area business. The presidency discussed ways to simplify the work and focus on the most important priorities. They identified ways to connect more regularly with mission presidents, while reducing the burden of written reports. They also reduced the schedule of meetings in the office to provide more time to be among the members and leaders.



The new counselors arrive at the airport.

In response to sending a birthday message to Richard Heaton (my last managing director in the Priesthood and Family Department), he responded with the following message:

Thank you. In a rare move, I actually took the day off on my birthday and am still catching up on Tuesday's emails.

Your name is mentioned frequently. Yesterday, in Richard Romney's retirement event, Elder Ringwood said that "he has presided over the greatest talent drain in the history of the Priesthood and Family Department," and named Jeff Orr, Alan Loyborg, you, and Richard who have retired with over 40 years of service." He made it clear that no one else could retire until he was reassigned.

We actually talk about you often, as in: "Larry would know how to do this." We miss you but are so glad you can be doing this mission.

Stay safe and give the Area Presidency my best!

August 9-11, 2022

We held the new mission leadership seminar for the four sets of mission leaders who began their service July 1st: President and Sister Sykes (Angola Luanda Mission), President and Sister Walker (Botswana/Namibia Mission), President and Sister de Kock (South Africa Durban Mission), and President and Sister Moyo (Lusaka Zambia Mission). The two-day seminar ended with a session at the Johannesburg Temple.



New Mission Leader Orientation, August 10–11, 2022

One of our responsibilities as executive secretaries is to organize the agendas for the meetings, and make sure the logistics are taken care of—flights, visas, hotel arrangements, shuttles from the airport and hotel, meals, meeting room set-up, interpreters, agenda books, copies of handouts, arrangements for pianists and choristers, etc. I ran the meetings from my computer in the room, including showing the presentations and videos on various screens, connecting with people who attended virtually from Salt Lake via Zoom, taking minutes in the meeting, and so on. Teri gave a short presentation on what is needed when submitting missionary recommendations.

August 12–13, 2022

The area council meeting began with a dinner at the White House (the Endulini House where the Area Presidency lives) Friday night, then a meeting all day Saturday. The quarterly area council meetings are where the seven Area Seventies fly in from the other countries in the area and have a meeting. It was great to meet them.



Area Council Meeting, August 13, 2022. From left to right: Elders S. Ephraim Msane, Amândio A. Feijó, Duane D. Bell, Dunstan G. B. T. Chadambuka, Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Edward Dube, Denelson Silva, Ifano Rasolondraibe, Clement M. Matswagothata, Glenn M. Holmes

It has been rewarding getting to know our new Area Presidency better. They are remarkable men and truly called of God to serve at this time in this area. Elder Dube is now the president with Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis as first counselor and Elder Denelson Silva as second counselor. We have come to love them already and admire them for their knowledge and capabilities. They are driven and have vision. They bring a nice balance of spirit and laughter to the office. Their wives are exceptional as well. Sister Silva doesn't speak English very well but is learning. She has an English tutor five days a week. The Aidukaitises and the Silvas are both from Brazil and speak Portuguese which is a native language in two of the countries in the Africa South Area—Angola and Mozambique.

August 13, 2022

I was able to leave the area council meeting just in time to go with the other senior missionaries to a rugby game. Back in March before we started the mission, we were contacted by Elder and Sister Elggren (the couple we replaced) and asked if we wanted to buy tickets to a national rugby game. What a crazy experience it was. The South Africa Springboks played their rivals, the New Zealand All Blacks. Imagine a BYU-Utah game on steroids and where everyone is drunk! Our seats were four or five rows from the top of an enormous stadium. Twice, a jumbo jet did a fly-over just barely above the stadium where we were sitting. The noise from fireworks and people cheering was deafening. Getting out of the stadium was even more of a challenge. Imagine two dozen senior missionaries walking like kindergarten kids holding on to each other so we wouldn't get lost in the crowd.

August 19, 2022

The Area Presidency has completed the revision of the area vision, which is to “Invite all to come unto Christ, make and keep sacred covenants, and become His lifelong disciples.” The three principles objectives are:

1. I will make and keep temple covenants.
2. I will serve a mission. I will help others to serve.
3. I will assist in God's work by ministering and doing missionary work.

August 28, 2022

We attended the monthly senior missionary dinner. Our speaker was a man who works here at the area office. He told his story about how he and his wife escaped from Rwanda in the 1994 civil war between the two major tribes—the Tutsi and the Hutu. Over half a million people were slaughtered in 100 days. He told of how he and his family fled for their lives and lived as refugees until they could get on their feet. At one point, after leaving they realized that they would never be able to go back for two of their children. It was horrifying for them. The Lord has a hand in everything in our lives. They waited at the border every day for a week and through a series of miracles their two young children came across and they were reunited with them. He eventually studied in France because he got good grades throughout his years of school and was able to go to school for free. They joined the Church in 2003 and he is now a Church translator.

September 2-5, 2022

We took a weekend trip to Durban with Elder and Sister Watson to complete the trip we began in July but cut short because Dad passed away and we flew back home. We saw some of the sites in Durban, but mostly went to go to the temple there. We met President Baldwin, the new temple president as of August 31.

September 16, 2022

According to a report by Al Jazeera news, South Africa, Africa's most industrialized economy, is set for its worst year of electricity outages, despite President Cyril Ramaphosa pledging new moves to tackle the crisis in July. State-owned Eskom implemented extensive power cuts last week and is scheduled to do so again this week. Eskom's Chief Operating Officer said on Monday that despite plans to improve supply, "For the next 12 months or so, we may not see the required benefits." Midway through its financial year, Eskom has spent 7.7 billion rand (\$451,000,000) on diesel to run emergency generators, far in excess of the budgeted amount. Eskom, which generates more than 90 percent of the country's power, has struggled to meet electricity demands in South Africa for at least a decade, but the outages have not been this severe since December 2019. Eskom has also requested a 32% hike in tariffs.

September 17, 2022

Today, the Johannesburg Stake held a mission preparation workshop for the youth in the stake. Teri gave one of the workshops about the requirements for submitting a missionary recommendation. Other workshops were presented about what to expect

at the MTC (taught by the mission leaders of the MTC), and what everyday mission life is like. At the end, the stake president gave them a challenge to commit right then to go on a mission. He handed out a pledge sheet that they could sign and display at home. It was very inspirational and effective.

At the encouragement of Elder Rasband (our first contact on the Quorum of the Twelve), the Area Presidency has really been focusing on reducing barriers that impeded prospective missionaries from submitting missionary recommendations. The Area Presidency issued a letter in August to local leaders to clarify the requirements for submitting missionary recommendations. There has also been a focused effort on resolving problems in getting visas for missionaries. Teams meet regularly and provide weekly reports to the Area Presidency.

September 23, 2022

The Area Presidency received a report from the Correlation Research Division on a study of South African youth over the past several years. The information provided good insights on issues and possible solutions. For example, it pointed out that some youth see returned missionaries struggling financially, and behind in school, and it is a demotivating factor for them to go on missions. The Area Presidency will focus more on helping returned missionaries find jobs and get education to support themselves and their families.

October 1, 2022

Elder Denelson Silva spoke in the Saturday evening session of general conference. As he was preparing for his talk, he asked me to edit it. Once it was final, he also asked me to record it in my Utah English accent so he could listen to it over and over and practice pronouncing the words. I was happy to help.

Teri and I are enjoying our time here in Johannesburg. We feel pretty settled in at this point and comfortable. We moved from Dukes Court to the apartment complex Oxford 51. We only have three couples left at Dukes Court and they are beginning to sell off the flats one by one.

We have had lots of loadshedding here recently – worse than it has ever been. Most of the past few weeks, the power has been out from midnight to 4:30 A.M., from 6:00–8:30 A.M., and from 4:00–8:30 P.M. – right during the times you need to get ready in the morning or in the evening when you want to have dinner. Here is a quote from an article in the Nation:

South Africa's electricity crisis has moved to its most severe stage yet, the national grid nearing total collapse and the power utility Eskom urging citizens, businesses, and municipalities to cut usage. Serial failures, even on recently commissioned power units, and planned outages for maintenance sometimes lead to several outages a day. Previous outages were estimated to cost the country over \$57 million daily. Stage 6 rolling blackouts were

declared Sunday morning as five more coal-fired power units failed overnight.

Elder Dube felt sorry for us staying at the office some nights until 8:30 P.M. or coming into the office before 6:00 A.M. because there was no power at home to cook food or run our computers, so he told Marius (the DTA) to purchase a generator for the Oxford flats. But all such equipment is on backorder and may not be available for several months. We are grateful for the consistent power we have back home.

South Africa is the most unequal country in the world, according to the World Bank, which in a recent report highlighted how the historically unequal distribution of land “undermines rural development and entrepreneurship” and leaves Black South Africans, women-headed households, and unemployed people with the highest rates of poverty and income inequality. ("[Choosing Between Bread and Phone Data](#)," Aljazeera)

October 7, 2022

While in Salt Lake for general conference, Elder Dube attended the International Law and Religion Symposium. Of the more than 40 countries represented, eight were from African nations—South Africa, Cape Verde, Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. The representatives also attended general conference.

“I was particularly touched by the conference on Sunday,” commented Emmanuel-Javier Luzolo Bambi Lessa, an advocate and former Minister of Justice for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as he opened his presentation at the symposium. “I have been a government leader, a university professor, a lawyer, and judge spanning 30 years, but never has my heart been so touched as it was last Sunday. The music and the messages seemed to penetrate my soul. I had to come 15,000 kilometers so that I could forget myself and renew my personal relationship with God. For this I am truly grateful.”

October 19-22, 2022

We held our semi-annual Mission Leadership Seminar where we brought in the 11 mission presidents and their wives, along with the president of the Johannesburg MTC and his wife for four days of training. It was held at the Houghton Hotel, not too far from the area office. We held it at a hotel to use their convention facilities, because the area office wasn't large enough to host that many people in a conference room nor does it have a dining room large enough. With staff and support people—including technical, lighting, sound, interpreters, and broadcast people to Zoom in presenters from Salt Lake—there were about 55 people there. As the area executive secretaries, we were responsible for planning the four-day event (with staff help), including travel to the event, transportation from the airport, accommodations, schedule of presentations, meals, and activities.

One afternoon, we took them to the Lion and Safari Park. We plan activities at these seminars because it about the only half-day break these mission leaders get all year! Being mission leaders really is a 24x7 job. It was very rewarding and a great way to spend four days. We were taught well.

During the conference, the mission president from Angola tested positive for COVID. He and his wife had to quarantine for five days until he tested negative. We put them in one of the vacant senior flats. We assigned one of the senior couples to stock their kitchen with food and look out for them. That was nice since we were very busy. They were able to return to Angola after a few days and no one else came down with COVID.

Saturday morning was a joint session with the seven Area Seventies from the area, who we flew in for the day. Saturday afternoon was the Area Council meeting with just the Area Seventies.

The events turned out well. They were a lot of work, but it was rewarding to see the good they did.



Mission leaders and the Area Presidency at the Mission Leadership Seminar

October 27 to November 9, 2022

Two General Officers of the Church visited our area:

- President Mark L. Pace, Sunday School General President, and his wife Sister Anne Marie Pace
- Brother Ahmad Corbitt, First Counselor, General Young Men Presidency and his wife Sister Jayne Corbitt

I had worked with both while an employee in the Priesthood and Family Department. They visited nine cities in our area. We planned their itineraries, including flights, ground transportation, accommodations, meals, and meetings. In

each of the cities, they held a variety of meetings, including leadership instruction meetings, member devotionals, youth devotionals, focus groups, ministering visits with members, missionary meetings, and teaching with missionaries. Mpumi Alla, the Area Presidency secretary assigned to the two counselors, and I put together a travel packet for each of them (since they visited different cities on different days) with an hour-by-hour schedule for every day, including hotels, meals, who would accompany them in each city, agendas for each meeting they would attend, and an appendix with hotel and flight confirmations. Each packet ended up over 75 pages. After the trip, we held a debriefing session with President Pace, Brother Corbitt, and the Area Presidency. In that meeting, Brother Corbitt mentioned that when he was in a meeting in the Pretoria 2nd Ward, he felt a level of faith that he doesn't feel very often. He said he could feel it.



Brother Corbitt speaking at a leadership instruction meeting.



The Corbitts at the MTC with President and Sister Foote and the missionaries.



Brother Pace speaking at a member devotional

October 29, 2022

The Beira Mozambique Stake held a service project at a hospital. After the event, three young men were playing on a beach where people are not allowed to swim because of its dangerous currents and waves. They were playing on a sand bar, and weren't paying attention that the tide was coming in. When they realized they were surrounded by water, they tried to swim to shore, but got caught in a current. One boy was rescued, but the other two boys drowned. This was a traumatic experience for the members in Beira. We were impressed with the compassionate way the stake president handled the whole situation.

October 30, 2022

Today, the Area Presidency was supposed to meet with Minister Lindiwe Zulu, Minister of Social Development of South Africa, and Brother Ahmad Corbitt. However, Minister Zulu had to cancel because she had to attend the coronation of the new Zulu king.

November 6, 2023

We took Elder and Sister Fox (a new senior missionary couple) to the YSA branch. He later commented, "Yesterday we attended the young adult branch, where over 100 exuberant, sharply dressed, and bright young adults sang boldly and loud, and bore sweet, thoughtful testimonies of the restored gospel and of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior."

They sang Christmas hymns at church today. Since they don't celebrate Thanksgiving here, they don't wait until the first of December to begin Christmas songs.

Elder Dube, Marius, and I had a discussion tonight with Elder Bell (an Area Seventy) about forming a YSA Group in Stellenbosch that would be close to the campus and

function as a group under the direction of the Somerset West Ward. This would be similar to our efforts with the YSA Branch near WITS in Johannesburg, which is now a robust branch with about 100 attending every Sunday, including some very smart future leaders of the Church. They meet in a leased building near campus. The building is open during the week for institute and self-reliance classes. The building has internet, a few computers, and game tables that draw the students to the center during the week for studying, socializing, and activities. The students bring their friends, and they have baptisms every few weeks.

November 12, 2022

Today, a group of senior missionaries toured the Nizamiye Mosque in Johannesburg. Our guide was a young man in his early twenties, who explained Islamic beliefs and practices. He recited part of the Quran, which I captured on video. I was very impressed with his sincerity and his dedication to his religion.

December 9-21, 2022

Krista Robertson (Teri's niece) visited us in South Africa. Africa has been a place she has always wanted to see, so she took the opportunity and came. We had a great time.

December 12-14, we went to the Madikwe Game Reserve on the South Africa border with Botswana. It had been raining hard for several days before we set off on the 4.5-hour drive to get to Madikwe. On Google Maps, it's not always easy to determine the good roads from the bad roads, and Google send us on a small dirt road for part of the trip. It was shorter than the paved highway, but because of the rains it was muddy and impassable—especially in our small Toyota Corolla. We turned back and went to the last gas station we passed to ask them about a better route to the Tau Lodge at Madikwe. None of the people we talked to had ever heard of Tau Lodge, but one man was headed to the main highway and offered to have us follow him. From there, we checked at one of the many gates to Madikwe. Each lodge has its own entrance into this 185,000-acre (300-square-mile) park.

When we arrived at the lodge, we found that we were the only guests there. All the other guests had cancelled their reservations because of the rain. It was a nice lodge with great food, and we were the only ones there! Because of the rain, we didn't get a game drive that day because all the roads around the lodge were washed out. Our guide, Silas, was awesome and he found a way to take us on a shorter drive. Behind our chalet-cabins there is a pond where animals come to drink. The lake comes right up to the balconies of the cabins. Crocodiles would swim right up to our balconies. There was a fence along the bank so they couldn't come into the camp.

The next morning, Silas got creative and took us out on the highway to another gate so we could go on a full game drive. On the side of the road, we saw a cheetah poking its head above the grass. The road was right on the border with Botswana.

On those drives, we saw the “Big Five” (named as such because they are the five most dangerous animals in South Africa to hunt)—elephants, African lions, leopards, rhinoceros, and Cape buffalo. We also saw giraffes and many other animals.

The most frightening thing that happened was being charged by a bull elephant who did not want to share the road with us. We were driving down the dirt road and came face-to-face with a bull elephant walking down the road toward us. As we got closer, the guide could tell the elephant was in musth (a period when the elephant has high levels of testosterone). Knowing that elephants in musth can be more aggressive, the guide stopped. As the elephant got closer, the guide started backing up. As he did so, the elephant began walking faster toward us, then running.

The guide started yelling and banging his hand on the side of the Land Rover. He quickly backed off the side of the road, but then became stuck in the mud. In the [video of it on our family YouTube channel](#), you can see as the elephant began to walk past us, he then turned and walked toward the Land Rover. He was within one meter of the vehicle and could have easily flipped it with his tusks.

At this point, the guide was standing on his seat with two bottles in his hands ready to throw at the elephant to get it to back off. Finally, the elephant backed off and walked away, stopping every few steps to make sure we were staying put. We called another Land Rover to come pull us out of the mud.

December 15-17, we flew to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. We went on an evening dinner cruise on the Zambezi River above the falls. We saw hippopotamus heads sticking out of the water. The next day, we walked along the paths to see the falls, which stretch more than a mile wide and are twice as tall as Niagara Falls. The waterflow was about 60% at that time of the year. No water was flowing over the Horseshoe Falls portion, but overall, the low water provided a better view of the falls because at high water, the mist is so thick you can't see much of the falls.

In Johannesburg, one night we went to the Melrose Arch center to see the Christmas lights and decorations. It was a bit hard to get in the Christmas spirit with 80-degree weather. Here is a picture from our balcony:



December 21, 2022

Below is an inspiring article that Lee Wright wrote about the recent FSY (For the Strength of Youth) conference that was held for youth in the Gauteng province.



FSY 2022—Trust in the Lord—A Modern Day River Crossing

Sunday afternoon, December 11, 2022, three busses pulled in to KONKA, the facility rented for FSY for youth coming from all around the Johannesburg South Africa Area. The morning of December 12, 530 young men and young women

would descend on the facility, but these first three busses carried the 70 faithful Young Single Adult men and women who had accepted the call to be coordinators, assistant coordinators, and counselors for FSY, dutifully arriving the night before to prepare, receive final training and set up for the exciting week to come. The buses had come from central gathering points in Soweto, Johannesburg, and Bedfordview, although the YSAs had congregated to these points from more outlying areas including Vaal, Mobopane, Springs, and other neighboring stakes and districts.

KONKA is located approximately two hours north of Johannesburg near Rustenburg. To reach the venue the busses had to travel rural single lane highways with the last few kilometers on dirt roads, then cross a river using a low-water bridge that is the final gateway to the facility and campus. Crossing the river is an exciting introduction to the facility, but is generally a non-event, as vehicles can roll through the 10 centimeters of water that typically flows over the bridge without concern.

That evening, following the training, the rain arrived. Rain was in the forecast for each day, but the intensity of the storm took all by surprise. It began dumping hard and did not stop. Flashes of lightening and thunder all night acted as a reminder that the rain was not letting up. With such a non-ending downpour, we knew we would have an issue in the morning. As dawn arrived, the rain continued, heavy and strong. We looked at the river and could see it had swelled to the point that nothing could cross the bridge. The roar of the water flowing over the low water bridge sounded like Victoria Falls, as the water and debris flowed fast and deep. We began praying that the rains would subside soon or there would be no accessing the facility when the youth were to begin arriving at 11 am. Yet the rains continued. That is when the calls of concern began to come in from leaders and parents. "Are you cancelling FSY? You should cancel FSY." "Should we send the busses in this weather or are you putting thing on hold?" "Perhaps you should delay the start of FSY until tomorrow and hope that the rains will slow down and the water level drop."

As we prayed to know what to do, the words of President Nelson kept coming to mind. "Seek and expect miracles." Yet as we prayed it seemed the rain was simply becoming more intense. We still had four hours until they were to arrive. Perhaps it would slow down enough by the time they got here that the water level would drop sufficiently, though it was appearing unlikely. "We are not cancelling. Just come. It will work out." As we spoke those words in faith, we knew it would take a miracle. We were hopeful in 4 hours we would not regret the decision to ask them to still come—we did not want to have to send them away.

We had some additional motivation not to cancel FSY. The year before at almost the same time in December 2021, the FSY had been planned for this same group,

everything organized and ready to go. On the morning FSY was to begin it had to be cancelled because the Omicron variant of COVID that originated in South Africa was spreading quickly. The youth had been unable to participate in any activities the years before due to Covid, and now at the last minute in 2021 the light at the end of the tunnel had been ripped away from them. Would we repeat this again in 2022? We wanted to avoid additional disappointment.

We spoke with the KONKA staff and asked, “has this ever happened to you before with large groups where you were not able to get across the bridge?” The answer was, “yes, only once.” Apparently, a few years ago a large group had rented the campus. When their time had come to an end, the rains had come on so intensely it had actually trapped the group at the facility for an extra night. After realizing they were not going to be able to wait out the storm any longer the next morning, KONKA staff set up ropes and the group had to wade across 30 meters of water that came up to their knees to reach a footbridge up the river from the low water bridge. Once through the water and on the footbridge they were able to walk across to busses that had come to take them home on the other side of the river. We walked down to inspect the footbridge to see if this was an option. As expected, most of the bridge straddled the river, but if we were to use it, the youth would still have to cross a portion of the river in at least knee-deep water that was running swiftly for the last 30 meters. We asked the KONKA staff to begin setting the ropes, emphasizing that we would not take any risks with the youth, many of whom do not swim at all. If it was clear we could cross the river safely, we would carry forward.

At 8:30 the schedule included the final planning meeting with the YSA's. The agenda was supposed to be full of check-in and assignment logistics with a brief spiritual thought from the Session Directing Couple. Instead, the group was awaiting the decision of whether we were going to proceed — yes, we will proceed but now we had unexpected logistics to address. As a Church our pioneers have crossed rivers in times of extreme difficulty before. As the YSAs sat listening I shared a significant story from our Pioneer heritage. “Let me tell you about the Sweetwater River in Wyoming and the story of the Martin and Willie Handcart Companies.” I recounted for them the events of November 4, 1856, where the members of the Martin handcart company could go no further and wept at the thought of crossing that river in the frigid cold to find shelter from the storm at Martin's Cove. I told them of three members of the rescue party from Salt Lake City, all young adults, who stepped forward and volunteered to carry the entire company across the frigid river at great personal cost. I then asked, “who is willing to carry on this tradition and carry our 530 youth across the river this morning so a different kind of rescue can continue today, right here?” The YSAs leapt to their feet volunteering in excitement to be a rescuer for the 2022 FSY and carry our youth across the river. They ran to their dorm rooms and

changed into suitable clothing, knowing they were about to get very wet and dirty in the river and mud.

At 10:45 we walked down to the water. The youth had already begun to arrive. The KONKA staff had fixed the ropes expertly to hold while crossing the water and were ready for the assistance of the YSAs. Several of us grabbed onto the ropes and went the other way, walking across the river and foot bridge to greet the youth and their parents and leaders as they arrived, to give them confidence and assurance that everything was safe, and we were moving forward. There was plenty of shock on the faces of the youth and leaders as we explained the situation and instructed the youth to remove their shoes and socks and pull up their pant legs as far as they could. An umbrella to protect them from the rain was all most had planned on. Now they were about to cross a river on foot. As they walked down to the footbridge, several slipped, a few even falling in the deep and slippery mud. We quickly ran another rope for the youth to hold on to from the parking area to the start of the footbridge. "Hang on to the rope" was the yell that echoed for the next three hours as group after group arrived. "If you hang on to the rope you won't slip and fall. If you don't, you probably will." Some parents were hesitant to let the youth go, while others pulled out their phones to record this unique start to an FSY experience.

The YSAs took every suitcase and all the bedding and carried it across the footbridge, while the youth walked themselves to where the bridge ended and the knee-deep water of the river that still had to be crossed began. Those youth that were nervous or fearful of water were carried on the backs of the YSAs who were aided by other YSAs and the stability of the ropes. Other youth chose to cross the water on their own, holding tight to the rope with one hand, and grasping the hands of the YSAs who were standing in the water in a chain with the other to help them stay stable and safe. When each group of youth were safely across, the chain of YSAs then passed all the bags and beddings over the water and up to bank to dry ground. During this three-hour water crossing experience, over 500 youth were shepherded across. Towards the end, the rain began to slow, and the current of the river lessen. We had made it, and the FSY experience could go forward.

That night at the Family Home Evening activity where we all sat on the floor of the main hall because the chairs we were supposed to sit on could not be brought across the river, we shared how there were calls to cancel or delay FSY. But it was clear this FSY was meant to happen, and nothing would stop us. Uniformly, the youth expressed thanks that FSY had not been cancelled and we had found a way forward. Several analogies to our river crossing followed during the week and, all relating back to the theme, "Trust in the Lord." The YSAs acting as counselors not only carried and guided the youth across a literal river, but then spent the week teaching and strengthening the youth in a way that has had a deep and

meaningful impact—teaching them and sharing tools for navigating an increasingly difficult world. Lives have been forever changed.

Elder Dube, our Area President, spent most of Thursday at FSY, interacting personally with the youth. He listened as they shared their experiences and heard their testimonies. In his devotional he talked about how these youth are our future leaders that the Lord trusts and loves and who in turn love and trust the Lord. “Where will you be in 50 years?” He asked. “You will be here. This Church needs you to lead.” He testified that our future leaders were here at FSY learning and growing and preparing for the important work they are to do. He invited all young men to stand and choose right there and right then that they would fulfill their priesthood duty to serve a mission. “YES!” they responded to his invitation with enthusiasm and power in the spirit-filled hall. He invited the young women to stand and choose right then and there to settle for nothing less than a temple marriage, blessed by the covenants of the Gospel. “Yes!” they responded with faith and determination. His personal interactions and care helped the youth to know the Lord loves and knows them personally.

As word of our unique FSY experience got back to The General Young Men’s and Young Women’s Presidency, Brother Ahmed Corbitt, First Counselor in the General Young Men’s Presidency asked if he could address the youth Friday morning at a special devotional. Elder Clement Matswagothata traveled down from Botswana to join us for this unique opportunity and to preside at the meeting. Brother Corbitt joined us via Zoom at 1 A.M. Salt Lake City time, and shared stories of faith and commitment. He then showed the youth the footage of our own river crossing earlier that week that had made its way back to him. He talked about the symbol of holding tight to the rope, trusting our leaders, working together hand in hand, and how marvelous things happen when we “Trust in the Lord.” In response to a question from one of the young women, “what do you hope we take home from FSY?”, he responded, “I hope you will be forever changed and take home a commitment to be permanent. And if you slip along the way, repent and STILL be permanent. The invitation was accepted with enthusiasm. Elder Matswagothata then concluded this special gathering by testifying that not only would the youth be blessed because of their participation in FSY and their desire to be forever changed, but that future generations would also be blessed because of what was happening at FSY.

As Saturday morning arrived the busses scheduled to take the youth home crossed the low water bridge easily. The dangerous waters of Monday had subsided, and all was back to normal. We asked several youth, “how are you doing this morning?” “Not good,” many responded. Concerned, we asked, “what is wrong?” “We don’t want to go home. This went too fast.” As the final bus departed across the low-water bridge and FSY came to an end, we all went

away forever changed, knowing we can trust in the Lord with all our hearts. He has and will forever direct our path if we will let Him.



December 25, 2022

It is easy to celebrate the birth of our Savior, but it is not easy to get the same warm, cozy feelings we are used to with the 80-degree weather in Johannesburg. The senior missionaries got together for a Christmas Eve breakfast in the courtyard of our apartment building.

January 8, 2023

Teri recently read a quote from President Russell M. Nelson in the book *Teachings of Russell M Nelson*. He was talking about fasting and paying fast offerings, but it applies to all the principles of the gospel. He said that he visited West Africa many years ago. The people came to church with bare feet. Yet they were dressed in clean clothing and were very reverent. He said that some of the people only eat two meals a day so they can pay their fast offerings to help the poor. They know that they will be taken care of if they need it. Sometimes they even have more fast offerings than they need to use, so it helps those who need it more than they do. It is humbling to be among these people. They look at life very differently than many of us do.

January 14, 2023

The senior missionaries organized a Saturday bus tour that took us to Soweto, a township about 30 minutes southwest of Johannesburg.

Apartheid

Apartheid is an Afrikaans word that means “separateness” or “apartness.” It was a system of white supremacy laws to segregate whites from nonwhites.

Apartheid began in 1948 by the all-white Afrikaner National Party (descendants of the Dutch and British settlers). Although whites were the minority, they dominated politically, socially, and economically. “Nonwhites” included blacks, coloreds, Asians, Indians, Pakistanis, Greeks, and other immigrants. According to this system of social stratification, white citizens had the highest status, followed by Indians and Coloureds, then black Africans. The law segregated public facilities, social events, housing, and employment opportunities by race.

Under apartheid, 3.5 million blacks (the majority of the population) were stripped of their property and forcibly moved to black townships. Indians and Coloureds likewise were moved to other townships. The townships served as a workforce for Johannesburg. Non-whites could enter the city if they had a work permit, which allowed them to enter during the day to work and then return home at night.

Contact between the two groups was limited. Nonwhites couldn’t vote, couldn’t marry whites, and needed permits to work. They had to use separate schools, buses, restrooms, shops, restaurants, drinking fountains, beaches, etc. In the apartment building we lived in when we first arrived on mission (Dukes Court), all the apartments had two entrances—a main door, and then a smaller door that opened into the kitchen where the servants would enter. Those doors aren’t used today, but the doors still exist as a reminder of what was in effect up until just 31 years ago.

Soweto is one of the black townships. Soweto is an abbreviation for **South Western Township**. It was created in the 1930s when the white government began moving non-whites from the city into “townships” outside the city. In 1976, high school students in Soweto took to the streets to protest the imposition of Afrikaans as the only language of instruction. (Afrikaans is the language of the whites in South Africa. It evolved from Dutch, brought to Africa by the Dutch settlers in the 18th century.) On 16 June, police opened fire on the protesting students and somewhere between 23 and 176 or more were killed. The Soweto uprising is marked as one of the events leading to the eventual overturn of Apartheid in 1994. In Soweto, you can see memorials where the students marched and where the shootings took place. You can also tour Nelson Mandela’s home in Soweto.

Nelson Mandela was a black South African who advocated for racial equality. He was imprisoned for 27 years for his anti-apartheid activism. After his release in 1990, he helped negotiate with the country’s president to draw up a new constitution for the Republic of South Africa. In 1991, most of the apartheid legislation was repealed.

I remember visiting South Africa in 1983 when I was a Church employee. Apartheid was still in effect. Public beaches, drinking fountains, and restrooms were segregated

with signs saying, “Whites Only” or “Blacks and Coloureds.” It is amazing to me that the apartheid laws were still in effect until 1994.

We then went to one of the "shanty towns," where people live in make-shift tin shacks. The government lets them live on small lots and charges them rent. They have running water to a few community spigots. They have open-pit community toilets, and a tank truck comes by occasionally to suck it out and haul it away. They connect wires onto the overhead lines to get electricity. Sometimes, the wires fall off and electrocute kids. Teri took a large bag of lollipops and handed them out to the kids. It was an eye-opener about how many people in the world live. It reminded me of many of the towns in Guatemala where I served a mission as a young man.

January 17, 2023

As one of the efforts to reduce the barriers to missionary work, the Area Presidency approved a calling of missionary recommendation specialist to be called in each coordinating council to assist young men and young women in submitting recommendations for full-time missionary service. They will help prospective missionaries with tasks such as the following: setting up a Church account, completing the recommendation forms, obtaining medical exams, and applying for a passport. The calling was later renamed missionary coordinator and the role expanded to include the following:

- Encourage young and senior members to serve missions.
- Assist members in submitting recommendations to serve young full-time missions, senior full-time missions, and senior service missions. Also provide training about the process to stake presidents and bishops, as requested.
- Identify opportunities for senior missionaries and senior service missionaries within the coordinating council and provide that information to the area executive secretaries.

January 27, 2023

We have been very busy these past weeks (and will be for many more weeks to come) in planning for the following visitors from headquarters over the next four months:

- February 18–26: PLC and CLC meetings with Elder Quentin L. Cook
- March 23–25: Visits by Family History personnel from headquarters
- March 29–30: Africa Area Quarterly Family History Review
- April 12–19: Visits to several countries by Elder Carlos A. Godoy, including a young adult devotional in Pretoria, Mabopane Stake Conference, a missionary devotional in Mozambique, and a young adult devotional in Angola.
- April 21: Area review with Elder Ronald A. Rasband and Elder Carlos A. Godoy

- April 21: Potential visit with the President of South Africa with Elder Ronald A. Rasband and Elder Carlos A. Godoy
- April 22: Annual Area Instruction Meeting and evening youth devotional
- April 23: Special stake conferences in Soweto (with Elder Ronald A. Rasband) and in Pretoria (with Elder Carlos A. Godoy)
- April 27–28: Mission leadership seminar with Elder José A. Teixeira
- April 29: Area council meeting with Elder José A. Teixeira
- May 20–28: Church history business with Elder Hugo E. Martinez

From November 1 to April 23, the visiting authorities will have held 46 meetings with members and leaders. The Area Presidency is anticipating additional visits from staff in Family History, as well as visits from General Officers in September. Those are a lot of meetings for which we will have to plan agendas and logistics.

February 14, 2023

In the area, many Church members, including leaders and returned missionaries, are struggling to find employment or are underemployed. Today, the Area Presidency approved a pilot of five stake resource centers to give access to computers and internet for members to participate in BYU Pathway, seek employment or self-employment, and receive self-reliance training. Each site will have four Chromebooks, one laptop, secure locking devices, an inexpensive cell phone, and a multi-function printer.

February 18, 2023

Teri and I took a day trip to the Elephant Sanctuary at Hartbeespoort Dam. It is a rescue sanctuary for a few elephants that otherwise probably would not survive. The elephants are accustomed to people, so they let you feed them and pet them under supervision from a trained worker. It was intimidating standing next to an elephant and looking into its mouth. They also had a pen of meerkats. These rodents burrow into the ground. They built a wall around their habitat, but they burrow under it even though they put cement under the dirt. They can also jump up on the wall and get out. But they always come back because the caretakers feed them.

February 18–26, 2023

Elder Quentin L. Cook and his wife visited the Africa South Area for two Priesthood Leadership Conferences (PLCs). I had worked with Elder Cook in the Priesthood and Family Executive Council for years. I didn't get to see Elder Cook on this trip because he didn't spend any time in Johannesburg.

The area executive secretary takes the lead in planning visits from General Authorities and General Officers, coordinating the efforts of the travel office (booking flights and accommodations, obtaining travel visas, and booking rented meeting facilities), the fleet office (for ground transportation between the airport,

hotel, and meetings), security (area security manager and the security officers who travel from headquarters with the Apostles), meetinghouse facilities (to ready the meeting venues), caterers (for meals), and many others. Two people from *Church News* (a journalist and videographer) also accompanied the party. people. Ryan Jensen was the journalist. Ryan and I had worked together for years in the Priesthood and Family Department when he was the editor of the youth magazines. He had since changed employment to be the Director of Audience and Product Development at *Church News*.

Elder Cook visited the following locations:

- Antananarivo, Madagascar for a Priesthood Leadership Conference (PLC), Coordinating Council Leadership Meeting (Council Leadership Conference), special stake conference, and a missionary conference.
- Lusaka, Zambia for a member devotional, missionary conference, and a meeting with the president of the country of Zambia.
- Maputo, Mozambique for a missionary conference, PLC, CLC, and special stake conference.

Below are links to news articles published by Church News, the Church's Newsroom, and the Africa South area about Elder Cook's visit.

- [In Madagascar, Elder Cook invites Latter-day Saints and their families to focus on the Savior](#)
- [Elder Cook, President of Madagascar Discuss Church's Growth on the Island Nation](#)
- [4 things the Savior 'wants us to do,' Elder Cook tells Saints in Zambia](#)



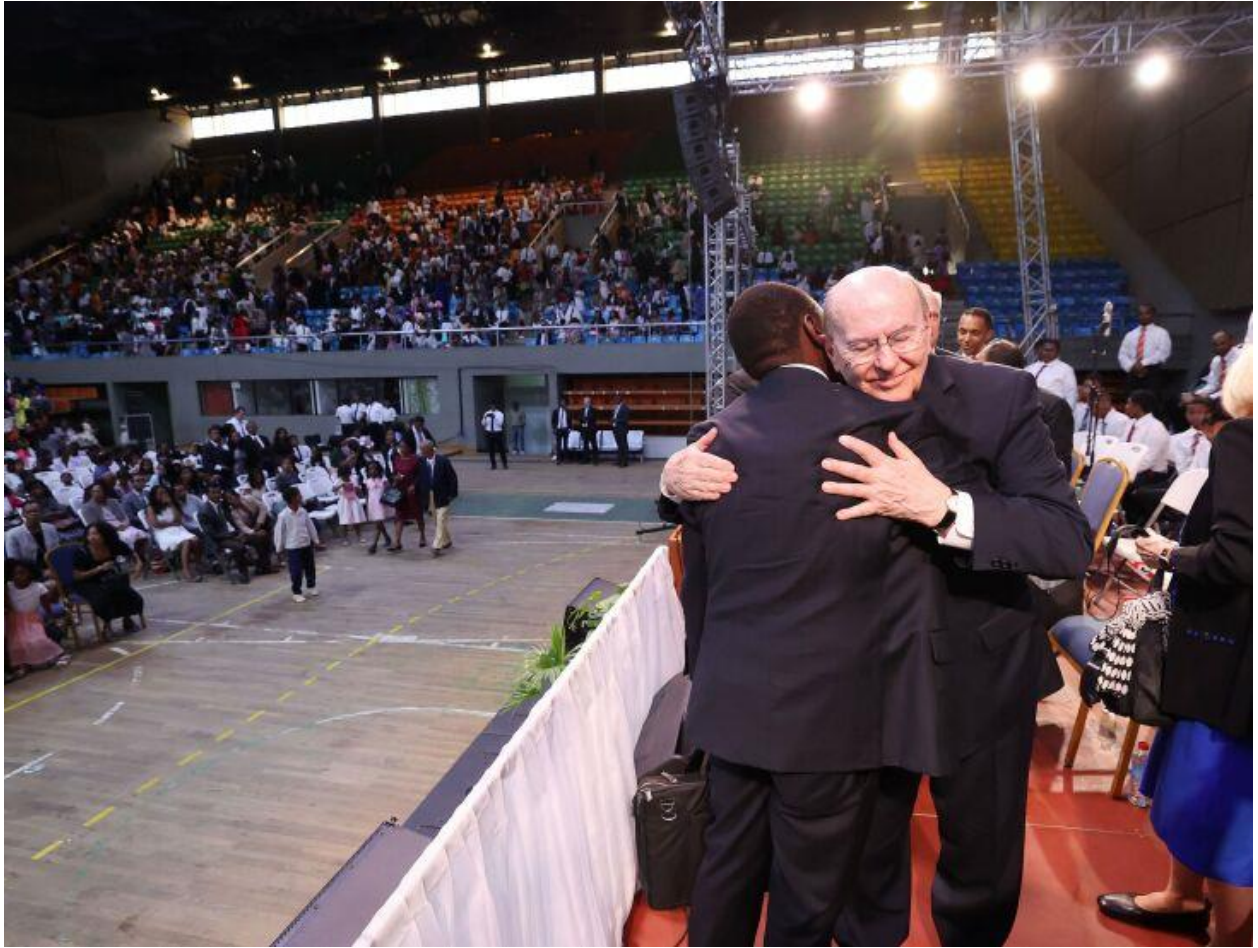
Elder Quentin L. Cook waves to attendees after a special stake conference at the Palais des Sports Mahamasina venue in Antananarivo, Madagascar on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023.



Elder Quentin L. Cook speaks during a special stake conference at the Palais des Sports Mahamasina venue in Antananarivo, Madagascar on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023.



Elder Quentin L. Cook greets members after a meeting in Antananarivo, Madagascar on Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023



Elder Quentin L. Cook hugs Elder Edward Dube after the special stake conference at the Palais des Sports Mahamasina venue in Antananarivo, Madagascar on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023.

After Elder Cook's visit with the President of Madagascar, the president [posted the following on Facebook](#):

 **Andry Rajoelina** ✓
9h · 🌐



"We ought to love God, and we ought to love and serve our fellow human beings." One of the topics we shared with...Elder [Quentin L. Cook](#) during our meeting.... It was a great pleasure for me to receive him with Mrs. Mary Cook her husband and the President of the African Region Edward Dube. They have always been partners who helped the government and the Malagasy people, especially at the time of the consecutive cyclones here. And his visit reaffirms the cooperation between the government and the Church in the welfare of the people. Thus, they offered financial aid to benefit the residents of the South and the education sector. Faced with the difficulties that the island may be going through, especially because of the typhoon that is going through here at the moment, I asked Elder Quentin L. Cook to sympathize and lead our country in prayer. And he accepted it with joy and sincerity."

We saw tender miracles as we struggled with how to get Elder Cook from Madagascar to Zambia. Ever since COVID, the only way to fly from Madagascar to the mainland was through Kenya or Ethiopia—both of which were bad options because it meant very long flights and overnight stays. We even researched chartering a plane, but that was extremely expensive. A few weeks before the trip, the airlines announced they would reinstate a direct flight from Antananarivo to Johannesburg beginning one week before Elder Cook needed to use that flight. And we were able to get the party booked on the flight we needed. The Lord is in the

details. Heavenly Father was aware of our needs and provided a way for us to accomplish what we needed to.

At the conclusion of the trip, Ryan Jensen from the *Church News* sent me the message below.

I'm sorry we didn't get to see each other while I was as close as I'll likely get to you while you serve down there. It was a great experience for me personally, professionally, and spiritually.

You have no idea how many times we sang your praises for the detailed itinerary. The work that had to go into that with Elder Cook's office, the area presidency, the local leaders, your travel team, Rob Milne's team, Sandile's team, and others was reflected in the best travel document I've seen in 20 years of business travel. Other than being yelled at from afar by airport police for taking a selfie while in line to board the plane on the tarmac in Mozambique, everything went smoothly. And that one was completely my fault.

Thank you for all you did to make that trip well organized for Elder Cook and those of us who accompanied him. If there is anything I can do for you from here, please let me know. I hope to see you again soon—wherever that may be.

All my best for continued success on your mission with Africa South.

Dawna McMillan was Elder Cook's assistant, and she sent me this email: "Your itinerary is one of the best I've ever seen. The detail was wonderful. In the future I am going to use it as an example.... Please thank all who are working on this assignment. I have been very impressed with all the work that has been accomplished so quickly and professionally. I keep telling Elder Cook what a remarkable job you are doing and he keeps reminding me that he is not surprised. He worked with you in PFEC for several years and he knows what an amazing individual you are." Then, later in an email to someone else, she said "Elder Larry Richman, Africa South Area Office, has probably created the most amazing itinerary you have ever seen, which I am attaching."

You may wonder why I post comments like the two above. It may seem like I'm trying to boast about the work I do. It's not that. I love to boast about the good work that God does through me. Everything I am is because of Him. He has given me every talent I have—and it is to do His work. Back in October, Jamie sent us an email with updates about her family. She referenced the song "[It's Not About You](#)" from the 2016 youth album. These lyrics explain how I feel.

1. You look into your father's eyes when he
takes his hands off your head
He whispers that he's proud of you

and he knows you'll do your best
You say you wonder if you can do it
and that's when he says

It's not about you
Mmh mmh
It's not about you
It's for the people who are blessed by what you do
It's not about you

2. Everybody's gathered 'round you
Eyes all aglow
You start to read that piece of paper
To see where you'll go
And you wonder if you're ready
But you already know

It's not about you
Mmh mmh
It's not about you
It's for those who are searching for the truth
It's not about you

3. You get home and you fall in love
But you're scared to death
'Cause you wonder if you're good enough
But then a thought goes through your head

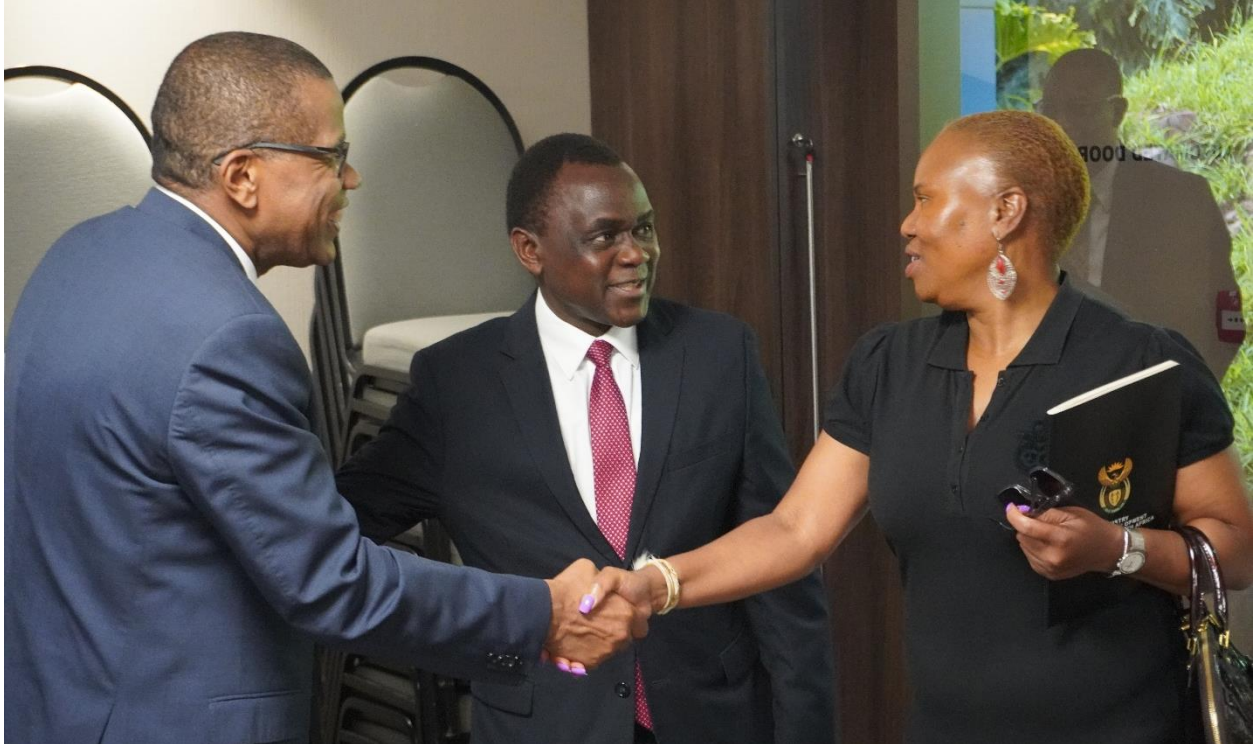
It's not about you
Mmh mmh
It's not about you
It's for your children and the world they're coming to
It's not about you

It's not about you
Mmh mmh
It's not about you
It's for the people who are blessed by what you do
It's not about you

4. Sure you've become much better
Because of what you've been through
But it's not about you
It's not about you

March 3, 2023

Ms. Lindiwe Zulu, Minister of the South African Department of Social Development, visited with the Area Presidency at the area office today to understand better how the Church could work in cooperation with the South African government and to arrange a meeting with President Ramaphosa and Elder Rasband.



Minister Zulu meets with Elder Dube and Elder Silva.



Left to right: Elder S. Ephraim Msane, Elder Edward Dube, Minister Zulu, and Elder Denelson Silva

March 6, 2023

From [ABC News](#):

South Africa's ever-worsening power crisis—in which homes and businesses go without electricity for up to 10 hours per day—is strangling Africa's most developed economy.

President Cyril Ramaphosa hopes that his new Electricity Minister Kgositso Ramokgopa will help his government to curb the rampant corruption and mismanagement that have put the country in the dark. Ramaphosa made the appointment in a long-awaited Cabinet reshuffle late Monday.

The new minister will focus solely on dealing with the crippling power cuts, Ramaphosa said in his State of the Nation address last month, when he declared a state of disaster to deal with the electricity shortages affecting the country's 60 million people.

South Africa's state-owned power utility Eskom has implemented rolling power cuts across the nation for years but 2022 was the worst and 2023 has started with even longer outages and no solution in sight.

Eskom, which marks its 100th anniversary this month, is struggling with the frequent breakdowns of many of its aging coal-fired power stations. The biggest problem is corruption in which at least four gangs are draining the company of \$50 million per month, Eskom CEO Andre de Ruyter said recently. His scathing indictment in a television interview of the government's inability to curb the corruption led to his immediate resignation.

The power cuts are the biggest threat to South Africa's economy, said Mark Swilling, co-director of the Centre for Sustainability Transitions at Stellenbosch University.

March 7, 2023

From 10:00 P.M. last night until 8:41 P.M. tonight (almost 23 hours), we had power for only 2.5 hours. It miraculously came back on at 8:41 P.M., which we enjoyed until 9:07 P.M. We must be up and showered with hair dried before 6:00 A.M. just in case the power comes on, which they currently say will be from 12:30 A.M. until 6:00 A.M.

March 10, 2023

To support one of the objectives of the area vision, "I will make and keep temple covenants," Elder Dube invited the eight stake presidents and their wives from the Johannesburg Temple district to attend a temple session together with him and his wife. After the session, we attended a dinner meeting at the area office to discuss ways to encourage more temple attendance. The Area Seventy responsible for temple work, Elder Glenn M. Holmes, led the discussion, which included action items to help wards and individuals plan for temple attendance. The temple president, Michael Wrench, and his wife, also spoke at the dinner meeting.



Stake presidents, Elder Dube, and wives after a special temple session on 10 March 2023

March 17–18, 2023

Teri and I took a weekend trip to Pilanesberg National Park, a 2.5-hour drive from Johannesburg. We stayed at the Kingdom Resort, just outside the entrance to the park. We took two game drives—one Friday night and the other Saturday morning and saw lots of animals. Pilanesberg was a great trip for a quick weekend.

The generator at the senior missionary apartment complex is installed, and they ran it one night until the neighbors complained about the noise and exhaust fumes. A group of neighbors showed up the next day and threatened to take legal action — there are lawyers in the group of neighbors — or sabotage it. So, we told our security guards to never let the neighbors in the gate. The Church hired a contractor to change the exhaust system and try to dampen the noise. Maybe it will be done in three weeks. (It was finally done in mid-May, but only ran occasionally because after the first day of running, a part in the auto-start system broke. So, they trained the security guards how to start it manually. The Church donated the generator on the condition that the body corporate (the homeowners' association) would keep it maintained and filled with diesel fuel. It took until early June for the body corporate to set up a contract for regular refueling.)

April 12–19, 2023

Elder Carlos A. Godoy of the Presidency of the Seventy visited several countries in our area as he met with potential future leaders and held a young adult devotional in Centurion; a stake conference in Mabopane, South Africa; a missionary devotional for the Mozambique Maputo Mission; and a young adult devotional in Luanda, Angola.

April 16, 2023

We had a great experience today to witness the baptism of Leah Khumalo in the Buhle Park group of the Germiston Ward. We had been to this group only a few times before. When Teri first saw Leah, she felt an immediate connection to her and felt that she knew her from somewhere. But Leah has never been outside of South Africa, and Teri has never been to South Africa until this mission. So, they had never met in this life. Teri didn't even know her last name until the day of her baptism. Leah is disabled because she lost a leg in an accident a few years ago. She is in a wheelchair and has been coming to church for several years. The missionaries told her she couldn't get baptized until she had a consistent ride to church. But the new missionaries assigned to the group were determined to find a way to allow her to be baptized.

To witness Leah's baptism was one of the greatest blessings we have enjoyed since being here. Leah had to sit on the steps of the baptismal font and pull herself up the three steps and then inch down the three steps into the water. She was able to get herself to the edge of the water but then actually getting into the water was a challenge. It was freezing cold, and she was afraid of water. (Many black Africans are afraid of water.) Everyone around the font voiced their opinion about how it should be done. Finally, she decided to sit on the bottom of the font with the water up to her shoulders. The elder who baptized her, Trevin Toone, handled the situation amazingly well. In the midst of chaos, he simply knelt beside her and reassured her that he would keep her safe. As soon as he knelt, everyone stopped

talking and it was silent. The Spirit came and he baptized her perfectly. She started to cry and hugged him. Teri gave her a framed picture of Jesus.

April 21, 2023

Elder Ronald A. Rasband and Elder Carlos A. Godoy held an Area Review with the Area Presidency. The review consisted of several meetings over the past few weeks and culminated in meetings today. They gave us helpful direction for the area. It was great to see Elder Rasband again. I worked with him for several years in the Priesthood and Family Executive Council (PFEC).

April 22, 2023

Saturday morning was an Annual Area Instruction Meeting with the Area Seventies and the stake, mission, district, and temple presidents from the area. We flew them to Johannesburg to meet with Elder Rasband and Elder Godoy.

In the afternoon, Elder Rasband met with the Deputy President of South Africa, Paul Mashatile. This was the first time that a Church leader has met with a government official of this seniority in South Africa. The Deputy President is second in command to the President of South Africa.

In the meeting, they discussed ways the Church has helped relieve human suffering and empower the people of South Africa, amounting to R240 million (over \$13 million) in assistance since 2018. Donations have ranged from disaster relief to support for youth employment initiatives, subsistence farming programs, and interventions to gender-based violence. Elder Rasband said, "We do this to follow the Lord's two great commandments—to love God and love our fellow men. And you, in this case, are our fellow men. We want to be wonderfully connected with you."

Elder Rasband pledged a further R10 million (about \$600,000) in further contributions to support government efforts in increasing self-employment for youth and women.

As a symbol of that friendship, Elder Rasband gave him a personalized copy of the Book of Mormon. Elder Rasband said, "The most precious thing that I could give you is this book, which I love. It brings me to Jesus Christ" Elder Rasband added, "This book will help you love your Lord even better."



From left to right: Minister of Social Development, Lindiwe Zulu; Deputy President Paul Mashatile; Elder Ronald A. Rasband; Lesego Makhebula; Elder Edward Dube at a courtesy visit in Johannesburg, South Africa (April 22, 2023).

Saturday evening was a youth devotional with Elder Rasband. Youth were invited to attend in person from the Johannesburg North, Johannesburg South, Bedfordview, Springs, and Centurion stakes at the Sandton meetinghouse. Over 1,300 youth participated in the devotional—650 in person, 2,400 views on Facebook Live, and

about 600 who gathered in meetinghouses across the area where the devotional was broadcast. From then until May 31, the devotional was watched 30,100 times, with 28,800 reactions, comments, and shares.

The meeting was a question-and-answer format, some of which are summarized below:

- *How to keep gospel standards when you are the only member of the Church at school and in the neighborhood.* Elder and Sister Godoy provided counsel about choosing good friends who respect what you believe. Daily seminary also helps.
- *Ear piercings for boys or multiple ear piercings for girls.* Elder and Sister Dube explained that our bodies are the temple of God, and we should respect our bodies. The Church discourages piercings and tattoos. They referred to the counsel in the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*.
- *Balancing church life with social life.* Elder and Sister Aidukaitis counseled the youth to use social life to mingle with other members and to balance all areas of your life.
- *Pornography.* Elder and Sister Silva counseled that our bodies are sacred, and that we must not let bad thoughts into our minds. They provided suggestions for replacing bad thoughts with a scripture, hymn, or positive thought. The solution is the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.
- *Missionary preparation.* Elder Aidukaitis suggested preparing our bodies and studying the scriptures. The requirements to serve a mission are in Doctrine and Covenants 4. Missions are hard work. Missions will require the best of you—mentally, spiritually, and physically. Elder Rasband invited every young man to serve a mission, and sisters if they so desire.
- *Depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.* A young woman named Brittany stood and asked how she could deal with her depression and anxiety. Elder Rasband's response was touching. He asked her to come stand by him at the pulpit. He expressed that he loved her, and that Heavenly Father loved her. He quoted 3 Nephi 17:7, where Christ invited the Nephites to bring to Him any who were sick or afflicted in any manner and he would heal them because He had compassion on them. He said that Christ can heal us. He then asked her stake president in the audience to get with her later and give her a blessing. He said that the youth of the Church are like exploding fireworks, whose sparks fall everywhere and their light influences others. Our joy and happiness should not depend on the circumstances of our lives. Jesus Christ has provided us a way—the covenant path—to return to him. We should have joy in that. Pray for help to be joyful in life. Christ knows us individually. We should never feel alone.

In Elder Rasband's concluding remarks, he shared a formula to know our Savior better—study Him in the scriptures chronologically or topically. The more you know

Him, the more you will love Him. The more you love Him, the more you will have a desire to serve Him. Elder Rasband prayed that Heavenly Father will bless the youth. He blessed them to know how to get help—through people we know and professionals. We should all help each other. He conveyed greetings from President Russell M. Nelson: “we love you; we thank you; and we need you.”

April 23, 2023

Special stake conferences were held in the Soweto South Africa Stake with Elder Ronald A. Rasband and in the Pretoria South Africa Stake with Elder Carlos A. Godoy. 736 attended the stake conference in Soweto. Teri was asked to organize a luncheon for Elder and Sister Rasband and the stake presidency and their wives. It was quite a chore to get the food cooked at home, transported 35 minutes to the Pimville chapel, and served hot. Afterwards, Elder Rasband wrote a personal letter to Teri to thank her for it.

April 27–28, 2023

We attended the mission leadership seminar with Elder José A. Teixeira as a visiting General Authority. It was held in Durban, South Africa at the Zimbali Lodge.

While there, President Gary Judd of the Zimbabwe Harare Mission related that recently, he was flying home from a meeting with several of the stake and district presidents from Zimbabwe. In the airport, a man (in the blue shirt in the attached photo) and his son approached him, read his name tag, and introduced himself. His name was Roger Anderson, and he had served a mission in Zimbabwe in 1969, back when the country was named Rhodesia and the mission included South Africa. There were only a handful of missionaries in the entire country and the work was very difficult. Roger had wondered if his missionary service had ever really made a difference. President Judd turned and introduced Roger to the leaders standing with him in line at the airport. They represented only a part of the strong priesthood leadership in Zimbabwe—every one of which had been baptized by a young missionary who may have wondered if they ever did any good. Roger wept. It was a tender mercy for Roger who sometimes wondered about his impact. It was also a tender mercy for his son who got to witness the event.



April 29, 2023

The last day of the mission leadership seminar, we flew in the Area Seventies and had a joint meeting with the mission leaders and then continued in the afternoon with an area council meeting.

May 13–14, 2023

Elder Aidukaitis presided over the division of the Beira Mozambique stake and the calling of two new stake presidents. 145 men were ordained elders at that conference.

June 2, 2023

I have had two missionary experiences in the past two days. Yesterday, I was at a McDonalds for lunch when a man noticed my missionary name tag and approached me saying he was baptized years ago but hasn't been active since. He wanted religion back in his life and wondered if missionaries could come teach him. I forwarded the referral to the young missionaries, and they set an appointment for the next day.

Today, I was at KFC—no, I don't always have lunch at fast-food restaurants—when a member also saw my name tag and approached me asking for some help about the BYU Pathway program. He was having trouble logging in to the site and I helped him log in.

June 8, 2023

Today, I read an article that made some thought-provoking points about the growth in population and in religious activity in Africa.

- African birth rates are not dropping like they are in most of the rest of the world. In 1900, there were three Europeans for every African. By 2050, there should be three Africans for every European.
- By 2050, six of the world's 20 most populous nations will be on the African continent.
- By 2100, Africans could make up 40% of the world population.

June 18, 2023

I received a Father's Day card from Hailee that said the following: "Everything I have, everything I've accomplished, and every experience I've had is because of you. I am so incredibly lucky to have you as my dad. In every parenting situation I find myself in, I think 'what would my dad do?' I am so grateful I have your example to guide me through life. I love you, Dad, and I hope you know how special I think you are!" I was touched. I sure love my family!

June 29, 2023

On June 13, I had a phone call with Jeff Bateson, who is the area executive secretary for the North America Southwest Area. His Area Presidency received approval to have two area executive secretaries, and he wanted to know if I was interested in him recommending me for the position. The next day, I had a conversation with Sheldon Martin in the Priesthood and Family Department about a possible service mission with the department. After much thought and prayer, I decided that the mission with the Priesthood and Family Department would be the better option. Tonight, I submitted my recommendation to the Church to be a "Policy and General Support" Church service missionary in the Priesthood and Family Department, beginning January 1, 2024.

July 3–14, 2023

It was great to have Jamie and Paityn, Hailee and Chance, and Chance's sister Danie and her husband Braden visit us in South Africa. On Thursday, we drove to Madikwe, a game reserve about five hours away. We stayed at Tau Lodge Thursday and Friday nights and enjoyed seeing lots of wild animals. We did three game drives in a Land Rover with Silas as our guide. He was the same guide we had when we visited Madikwe with Krista last December. (You may remember he is the skilled guide who saved our lives when we were charged by a bull elephant.) In addition to the drives, it was fun to sit on the patio for meals—or sit on the balconies of our individual cabins—and watch the animals come to the watering hole next to the lodge to drink.

On Sunday, we attended Church at Buhle Park. We had hoped to see Leah Khumalo, but she was sick that day. Leah is the lady that Teri feels a special connection with. (See the entry for April 16, 2023.)

We had waffles for lunch at the Windmill Restaurant at Hartbeespoort Dam, which is in a white Afrikaans area. We went to the Elephant Sanctuary where you can get close to rescued elephants. We fed them and got to touch them and learn about them. Some of our group also walked through the Monkey Sanctuary which is a 17-acre enclosure with several species of monkeys. The monkeys sat on our shoulders or heads as we fed them.

On Monday, we flew to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. We had lunch at the Lookout Cafe, overlooking the gorge with the Zambezi River, then toured the falls. Tuesday, we took a trip to Chobe, Botswana, where we took a boat on the Chobe River to see the animals. We then took a Land Rover drive into the bush to see more animals. There were tons of impalas, crocodiles, hippos, and kudus. We stayed at the A'zambezi River Lodge. Wednesday morning, we saw a 1,200-year-old baobab tree and flew back to Johannesburg that afternoon.

Thursday was a shopping day, and the kids flew back home Thursday night. It was so good to spend time with some of our family. It's hard to believe that we only have three and a half months left on the mission. We'll be home before we know it. We have about seven more weeks of regular work. During that time, Teri will be training other senior missionaries how to process missionary recommendations. Our replacements will come in early September, and we will spend several weeks training them. Then we will have four weeks to work on special projects for the Area Presidency. Then one week of mission leadership seminar at Victoria Falls.

We will leave South Africa on November 5 and arrive home on November 6. We will speak in a sacrament meeting on November 12. We are looking forward to seeing everyone and spending time with the family.

August 4, 2023

The Area Presidency has called missionary coordinators in each coordinating council to encourage young and senior members to serve missions and to help them submit recommendations to serve young full-time missions, senior full-time missions, and senior service missions. They also provide training about the process to stake presidents and bishops, as requested. Teri and I have provided four training sessions with these coordinators via Zoom. The Area Presidency just decided to fly them all into Johannesburg for a full-day training meeting on October 14.

Below are the current numbers and status of missionary recommendations.

- 638 candidates are completing their forms.
- 60 recommendations are with the bishop.
- 95 recommendations are with the stake president.

- 81 recommendations are being processed at the area office.
- 33 recommendations are at headquarters to be assigned.
- 907 total

Those are a lot of missionary recommendations to work through. Teri has assigned two other sisters to assist with reviewing the recommendations so she can spend more time troubleshooting and following up with the recommendations that are with the bishops and stake presidents.

August 13, 2023

Last week, they held a youth conference in Zimbabwe with 400+ youth attending. The theme was "Called to Serve." They are gearing up for an impressive missionary force among the Zimbabwean youth.

It has been quiet around the area office the past several weeks as the Area Presidency had their home leave to be with their families. They staggered their leave this year so that one of them was always in the office. This week, the last one returned to Johannesburg, so things will return to their regular routines.

August 15–17, 2023

This week was the New Mission Leadership Seminar for the leaders who began their service July 1. This consisted of five couples, plus the leaders of the MTC who began in January. It began with a temple session Tuesday night, then two days of meetings on Wednesday and Thursday.

August 26, 2023

The Area Presidency held an area council meeting, bringing the Area Seventies to Johannesburg for a Saturday meeting.

The Area Presidency is helping the local leaders focus on preparing for eight or nine new stake creations in 2023. Two have been organized, four are at headquarters for approval, and three more are still getting ready.

September 1–11, 2023

Sister Kristin M. Yee, second counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, and Sister Tamara W. Runia, first counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, visited the Africa South Area. Sister Yee visited South Africa (Johannesburg) and Mozambique (Maputo, Beira, Nampula). Sister Runia visited Angola (Luanda), South Africa (Durban, Gqeberha/Port Elizabeth), and Zambia (Kitwe/Ndola). The planning team spent hundreds of hours planning every detail of their trips. I personally spent about 100 hours.

On September 5, Elder Neil and Sister Laura Harper arrived. They will be the new area executive secretaries. They previously served as mission leaders in the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission. Elder Harper also served as a young missionary in South

Africa. We provided training for about two weeks, then Teri and I transitioned to special projects for the Area Presidency, such as efforts to increase the number of missionaries from the area and streamline the missionary recommendation process.

September 19, 2023

Sister Sharon Eubank reported to the Area Presidency on her week-long visit to the area as director of Humanitarian Services. She visited several countries to review the effectiveness of humanitarian services in the area.

September 30, 2023

In the month of September, we processed 99 new missionary recommendations. That was the highest number in a month since we began our mission—and likely the highest number ever in the Africa South Area.

October 6–9, 2023

Teri and I took a weekend trip to Cape Town. Les Powrie is a member of the Church who lives in Cape Town and is a professional tour guide. He went with us on Saturday as we drove down to Cape Point—the promontory at the southeast corner of the Cape Peninsula. We took pictures at the Cape of Good Hope, the most southwestern point of the African continent, where the currents of the Atlantic and Indian oceans meet. We stopped at Kalk Bay to see the seals and at Boulders Beach near Simon’s Town to see the penguins. We walked through the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and enjoyed time at the V&A Waterfront. We took the cable car up to the top of Table Mountain to overlook the cape.

October 13–14, 2023

The Area Presidency invited the missionary coordinators in each coordinating council to fly into Johannesburg for a training meeting on October 14. It began Friday evening with a dinner, then instruction on Saturday. It was great to see the enthusiasm of these coordinators to help prospective missionaries get on mission.

The most exceptional missionary coordinator is Sister Reeve Nield in Harare, Zimbabwe. The calling of missionary coordinator was modeled after what she has been doing on her own initiative for years. She gathers youth together, helps them get their medical exams, and regularly encourages them using a WhatsApp group where hundreds of youth participate. She capitalizes on the momentum of peer group encouragement. She organized a non-profit organization Eyes for Zimbabwe that provides eyeglasses, cataract surgeries, and other help to needy people in Zimbabwe. The organization also provides scriptures, clothing, and luggage to needy prospective missionaries. To receive the goods, she requires the prospective missionaries to provide five hours of daily community service.

Reeve’s father was Reginald Nield, who was a Latter-day Saint pioneer in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Read a [news article about Reg Nield](#). He played a key

role in the transition from the essentially all-white Church in pre-1980 Rhodesia to the predominately black Church in Zimbabwe today. He provided humanitarian service through large scale initiatives to hundreds of thousands over a period of nearly forty years. He helped organize and teach HIV-AIDS prevention to an estimated 114,000 Zimbabwean school children. He served in many leadership positions in the Church. At the time of his passing, he was serving as the patriarch in the Harare Stake.

I met Reg in 1983 when I was a Church employee and traveled to Zimbabwe. He took me to his rose farm where he harvested acres of roses and shipped them all over the world. I likely met his daughter Reeve on that trip.

October 25-28, 2023

We attended the mission leadership seminar at Victoria Falls. The seminar was held at the David Livingstone Safari Lodge in Livingstone, Zambia. Earlier in our mission, we visited Victoria Falls from the Zimbabwe side—once with Krista in December 2022, and again with Hailee, Chance, Jamie, and Paityn in July 2023. This time, we saw the falls from the Zambia side. (I also visited the falls on my trip to Zimbabwe in 1983.)