

He has the missionary spirit and will find good use for his Spanish, which he has kept polished from his missionary days. We also were very, very pleased at his call.

What my son and his wife are doing with their little children transcends anything they could do in the Church or out. No service could be more important to the Lord than the devotion they give to one another and to their little children. And so it is with all our other children. The ultimate end of all activity in the Church centers in the home and the family.

Ordinary members carry the Church

As General Authorities of the Church, we are just the same as you are, and you are just the same as we are. You have the same access to the powers of revelation for your families and for your work and for your callings as we do.

It is also true that there is an order to things in the Church. When you are called to an office, you then receive revelation that belongs to that office that would not be given to others.

No member of the Church is esteemed by the Lord as more or less than any other. It just does not work that way! Remember, He is a father—our Father. The Lord is “no respecter of persons.”

We are not worth more to the onrolling of the Lord’s work than were Brother and Sister Toutai Paletu’a in Nuku’alofa, Tonga; or Brother and Sister Carlos Cifuentes in Santiago, Chile; or Brother and Sister Peter Dalebout in the Netherlands; or Brother and Sister Tatsui Sato of Japan; or hundreds of others I have met while traveling about the world. It just does not work that way.

And so the Church moves on. It is carried upon the shoulders of worthy members living ordinary lives among ordinary families, guided by the Holy Ghost and the Light of Christ, which is in them.

I bear witness that the gospel is true and that the worth of souls is great in the sight of God—every soul—and that we are blessed to be members of the Church. I have the witness that would qualify me for the calling I have. I’ve had it since I met the First Presidency those many years ago. I bear it to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

Ward members serve accident victims

A couple of years ago a humor columnist for a local newspaper wrote on a serious and thought-provoking subject. I quote from this article: “Being a go-to-church Mormon in Utah means living so close to fellow ward members that not much happens that the entire congregation doesn’t know about in five minutes tops.”

He continues: “This kind of cheek-to-jowl living can be intrusive. . . . It also happens to be one of our greatest strengths.”

The author goes on to say: “At work on Tuesday, I caught the noon news broadcast on television. A van had been obliterated in a traffic crash. A young mother and two small children were being rushed to emergency rooms by helicopter and ambulance. . . . Hours later I learned that the van belonged to the young couple living across the street from me in Herriman, Eric and Jeana Quigley.

“Not only do I see the Quigleys in church, . . . we ate dinner with them at a neighborhood party the night before the

crash. Our grandkids played with daughters Bianca and Miranda. . . .

“Fourteen-month-old Miranda suffered serious head injuries and died three days later at Primary Children’s Hospital.

“Here’s where all that nosiness . . . pays off.

“Although the accident occurred several miles from home, the dust literally had not settled before someone from the ward stopped and was pulling through the wreckage. The rest of the ward knew about it before the cops and paramedics showed up.

“Ward members went to all three hospitals, contacted Eric at work and organized into labor squads. People who didn’t get in on the immediate-need level were frantic for some way to help.

“In 48 hours, the Quigley yard was mowed, home cleaned, laundry done, refrigerator stocked, relatives fed and a trust fund set up at a local bank. We would have given their dog a bath if they had one.”

The author concludes with this insightful comment: “There is a positive side to the congregational microscope my ward lives under. . . . What happens to a few happens to all” (Robert Kirby, “Well-Being of Others Is Our Business,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 30, 2005, p. C1).

Wards are organized to minister

The compassion and service rendered by caring ward members as a result of this tragic accident are not unique to this particular incident. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma explained to prospective followers of Christ: “As ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort”—then, as Alma explained, they were prepared for baptism (see Mosiah

18:8–10). This scripture lays the foundation for ministering and caring in a most compassionate way.

The ward is organized to minister to the needs of those who face even the most difficult and heartbreaking trials. The bishop, often considered the “father” of the ward, is there to provide counsel and resources. But also close at hand are Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood leaders, the Relief Society presidency, home teachers, visiting teachers, and the ward members—always the ward members. All are there to administer comfort and show compassion in times of need.

Outpouring of love in times of tragedy

In my own immediate neighborhood we have had our share of heart-wrenching tragedies. In October 1998, 19-year-old Zac Newton, who lived only three houses east of us, was killed in a tragic automobile accident.

Less than two years later, in July, 19-year-old Andrea Richards, who lived directly across from the Newtons, was killed in an automobile accident.

One Saturday afternoon in July 2006, Travis Bastian, a 28-year-old returned missionary, and his 15-year-old sister, Desiree, who lived across the street and two houses north of us, were killed in a terrible automobile accident.

One month later, in August 2006, 32-year-old Eric Gold, who grew up in the house next door to us, suffered a premature death. And others in this neighborhood have also suffered heart-wrenching experiences privately endured and known only to themselves and God.

With the loss of five young people, one might assume that this is an unusual number of trials for one small neighborhood. I choose to think the number only seems large because of a close, caring ward, whose members know when there is a pressing need. It is a ward with members who are following the admonition

of Alma and the Savior—members who care and love and bear one another’s burdens, members who are willing to mourn with those that mourn, members who are willing to comfort those in need of comfort, members who endure together.

In each of these instances we saw an outpouring of love, service, and compassion that was inspirational to all. Bishops arrived, home and visiting teachers went into action, and Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies organized to take care of both spiritual and temporal needs. Refrigerators were stocked, houses cleaned, lawns mowed, shrubs trimmed, fences painted, blessings given, and soft shoulders were available for crying on. Members were everywhere.

Lessons learned from enduring together

In every one of these instances, the families who lost a loved one expressed increased faith, increased love for the Savior, increased gratitude for the Atonement, and heartfelt thankfulness for an organization that responds to the deepest emotional and spiritual needs of its members. These families now speak about how they got to know the Lord through their adversity. They relate many sweet experiences that grew out of their pain. They testify that blessings can emerge from heartbreak. They give praise to the Lord and would echo the words of Job: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

From bearing one another’s burdens as ward members, we have learned several lessons:

1. The Lord’s organization is fully adequate to *know* and *care for* those with even the most dire emotional and spiritual needs.

2. Adversity *can* bring us closer to God, with a renewed and enlightened appreciation for prayer and the Atonement, which covers pain and suffering in all their manifestations.

3. Members who suffer tragedy firsthand often experience increased capacity for love, compassion, and understanding. They become the first, last, and often the most effective responders in giving comfort and showing compassion to others.

4. A ward, as well as a family, draws closer together as it endures together—what happens to one happens to all.

5. And perhaps most important, we can each be more compassionate and caring because we have each had our own personal trials and experiences to draw from. We can endure together.

I rejoice in belonging to such a loving and caring organization. No one knows better how to bear one another’s burdens, mourn with those who mourn, and comfort those who stand in need of comfort. I choose to call it “enduring together.” What happens to one happens to all. We endure together.

May we be an instrument in lightening the burden of others, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Mary N. Cook

Youth should strengthen home and family

Each Sunday, from Mongolia to Manchester to Mississippi, the young women of the Church repeat these inspired words: “We will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred cov-

enants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation” (“Young Women Theme,” *Young Women Personal Progress* [booklet, 2001], 5).

While this is the Young Women theme, it applies to all youth in the Church. I hope I can help you, my young