

News of the Church

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Young Adult Centers Build the Rising Generation

By Stephanie Jean Johnson

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The Church's centers for young adults are not just protecting the rising generation from the temptations of the world—they are also preparing the Church's present and future leaders to change the world.

As extensions of the institute program, the centers for young adults—which exist primarily in Europe—offer religion classes as well as a place where young adults can gather for activities ranging from cooking dinner to doing homework to playing Ping-Pong to sharing the gospel.

Growing the Church through Young Adults

Toward the end of 2003, the initiative for centers for young adults began with four centers opening in Copenhagen, Denmark; and Berlin, Hamburg, and Leipzig, Germany. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles further encouraged the growth of the initiative when President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) called him to preside over the Europe Central Area in 2004.

According to Erik Psota, the current associate area director of seminaries and institutes in Europe, many of today's priesthood leaders in Europe were under the age of 30 at that time.

"The spiritual impression that came to Elder Perry that the growth of the Church in Europe would come through the 18- to 30-year-olds has had a deep impact on young adults and priesthood leaders at all levels in Europe," said Brother Psota. Elder Perry's impression is still relevant to young adults today, he continued, "because it helps them understand their responsibility for the growth of the Church."

Today, there are more than 140 centers in Europe, with an additional 30 in development. All

of them prepare the rising generation to spread the gospel to the world.

Building the Kingdom and Friendships in Norway

The young adult center in Oslo, Norway, is just one of many centers where young adults are learning how to build the kingdom. Take Mathilde Guillaumet, from France. Missionaries began teaching her at a center in Paris in 2009 after Sister Guillaumet's friend invited her to learn more about the gospel.

Sister Guillaumet was baptized in 2010 and then moved to Norway for a year, where the local center for young adults continued to play a role in her growing testimony.

"The center really was a home away from home. It was definitely more welcoming than my dorm room," said Sister Guillaumet. "The center's missionary couple became like parents—wonderful people to come to for comfort and advice. Both in Paris and in Oslo, I have been able to go to the missionary couple to talk about the gospel, which I couldn't do at home, considering I am the only member in my family."

Sam Basnet, baptized in 2009, is also the only member in his family. Doing missionary work at the Oslo center helped him to share the gospel with his relatives when he returned to visit them in Nepal. He told them about the priesthood and the Book of Mormon, having already helped the missionaries teach other people the same principles in Oslo.

"My family wanted to feel the way that I was feeling," said Brother Basnet. "They had seen the difference between 'Sam-before' and 'Sam-after.'"



Centers for young adults are a gathering place where the rising generation can prepare to influence the world with the gospel message.

Before, I had no hope. I was not positive. After my baptism, I used to come into the center and everything was higher than before.”

Brother Basnet is not the only one who has felt lifted and motivated by the Spirit in the center. Benjamin Kerr of Scotland has spent the past two summers working in Oslo and sees the center as a place where he remembers what really matters.

“The center is my refuge from the world,” said Brother Kerr. “I definitely feel a peace, a safety, when I am there. I think some of my most encouraging experiences have come from being able to sit in the center, especially at family home evening, and to talk about things that really concern us, things we find difficult. These experiences have reminded me of the importance of the simple principles of the gospel.”

Building Young Adults and Future Leaders

The centers for young adults are doing more than helping youth strengthen their friends and

family in the gospel. They are building leaders. Young single adults are called to serve on rotating leadership councils in the centers and plan different activities and classes.

Such an experience has given Barbara Matovu, originally from Uganda but now a citizen of Norway, “the opportunity to experience the love God has for all His children,” she said. “It has strengthened my testimony of the organization of the Church. It has also taught me that the kingdom of God cannot be built by one alone, but by many together, in unity.”

While young adults are receiving training to be able to serve in future Church callings, they are also gaining experience that will help them to become effective spouses and parents. They will be prepared to change the world not only in the public sphere but also in the home.

“The leadership principles learned in a young single adult council are the same principles that will serve young single adults well as parents—patience, communication, providing direction and allowing people to use their agency to accomplish a task, and following the promptings of the Spirit,” said Gerald Sorensen, who, with his wife, Nancy, served in the center in Trondheim, Norway.

The centers for young adults will continue to fight against the growing sin in the world by working to ensure that the Church’s future leaders are growing even more quickly.

“Young adults come to the centers to get to know the gospel not only in a theoretical way but also by applying the principles of sharing the gospel and serving their friends who are not of our faith,” said Brother Psota. “The centers help a new and well-prepared generation to serve the Lord with enthusiasm and with an eternal perspective.” ■