

AN EMPTY FONT

How could we hold a baptism with no water for the font?

By Siosaia Naeata Jr.

It was 7:45 a.m. on a rainy August morning here in Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa. We (the full-time missionaries in the Freetown District) had planned a baptismal service and were determined to hold it, rain or shine. It was then I received a call from Brother Allieu, a member from our branch, but I could not totally understand what he was saying, as he was speaking rapidly in Krio, the local language. I told him to take a deep breath and speak slowly. He did so and said, “Elder Naeata, there is no water for the baptismal font. I am sorry. There is no water.”

I thanked him for the call and then announced the bad news to the other elders. Immediately we began to think of how we could still perform this sacred ordinance. It was then that Elder Agamah reminded us of the waterfall and pond up the mountain nearby in a place called Mellow. The elders all agreed we should try and hold the baptism there, so we obtained permission to do so.

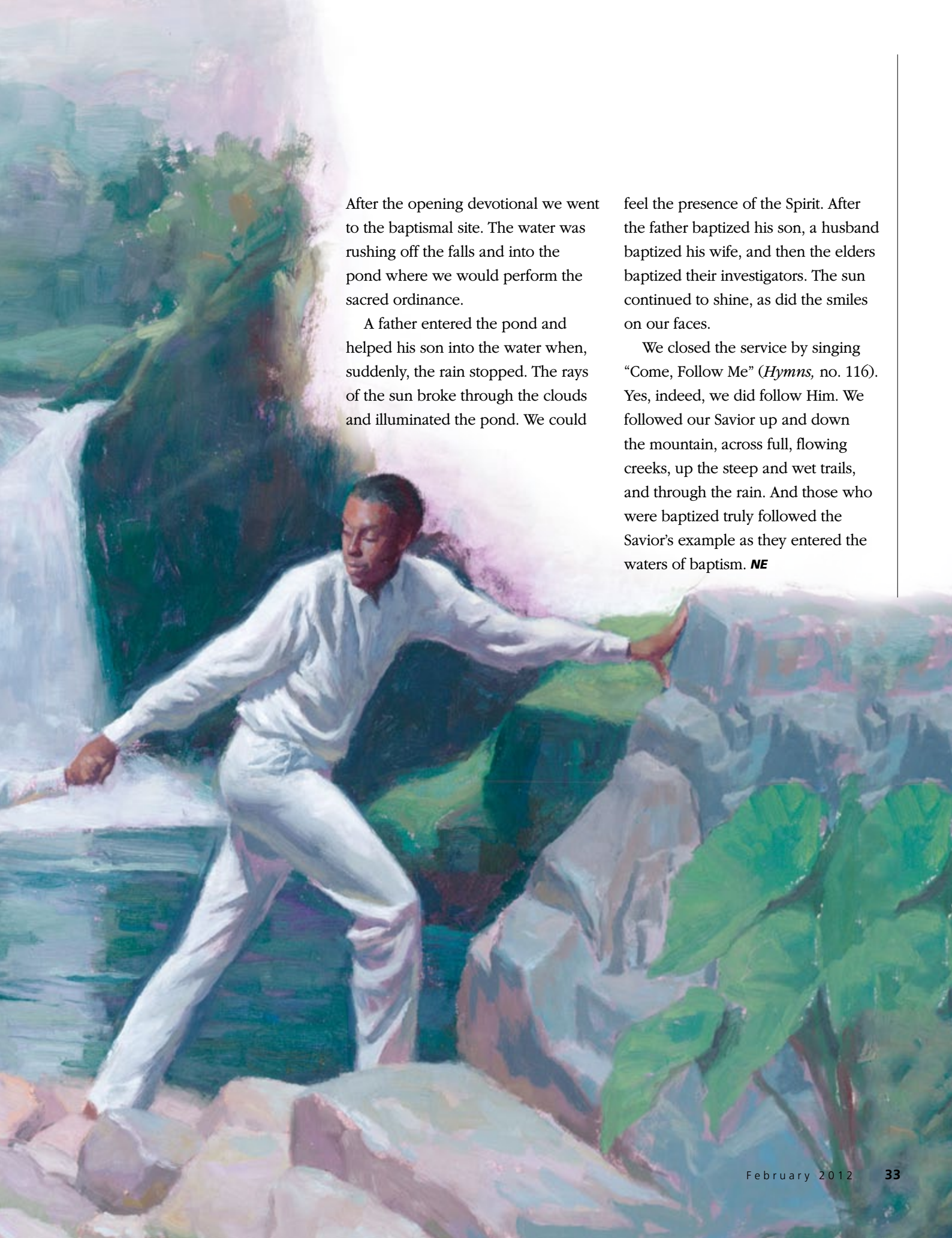
As everyone gathered later that morning at the bottom of the mountain, the group came to a stark realization of the formidable task looming ahead. However, the determined company had no sign of hesitation to press forward. Men and women and even children walked and talked happily up the wet and slippery trail. Gradually ascending, we took a short detour to cross the river.

As we hiked, the zeal of some in the party began to fade when the rain picked up, but we pressed forward with hope. Still, the rugged path seemed to have no end. Finally we arrived at our destination. Our hearts were happy, but the rain persisted to beat down upon us. As we prepared for the baptismal service, we took refuge from the rain under a large mango tree.

We opened by singing the hymn “The Spirit of God” (*Hymns*, no. 2).

ILLUSTRATION BY ALLAN GARNIS





After the opening devotional we went to the baptismal site. The water was rushing off the falls and into the pond where we would perform the sacred ordinance.

A father entered the pond and helped his son into the water when, suddenly, the rain stopped. The rays of the sun broke through the clouds and illuminated the pond. We could

feel the presence of the Spirit. After the father baptized his son, a husband baptized his wife, and then the elders baptized their investigators. The sun continued to shine, as did the smiles on our faces.

We closed the service by singing “Come, Follow Me” (*Hymns*, no. 116). Yes, indeed, we did follow Him. We followed our Savior up and down the mountain, across full, flowing creeks, up the steep and wet trails, and through the rain. And those who were baptized truly followed the Savior’s example as they entered the waters of baptism. **NE**