

KEEPING THE

Faith IN Isolation

By Ryan W. Saltzgeber
Church History Department

Most Latter-day Saints today worship in wards and branches, where they can “meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls” (Moroni 6:5). But Moroni, the prophet who wrote those words, did some of his most lasting work when he alone remained as a disciple after the destruction of his people.

Throughout Church history, many Latter-day Saints have kept the faith alone when circumstances left them isolated. Some, like Moroni, have lived out their days as witnesses and examples for future generations. Others have lived to see a day when they were again able to share their faith.

Praying for Years for This Day

Františka Brodilová could hardly have foreseen the role she would play in Church history when a missionary knocked on her

When war, disease, or other circumstances left these Church members alone in their countries, here's how they stayed faithful.

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door in Vienna in 1913. The year after her conversion, World War I engulfed the Austro-Hungarian Empire, missionaries returned home, and many male members were called into military service, leaving Františka and a few other sisters to meet on their own.

It was the most contact Františka would have with Church members for many years. After the war, Františka's husband, František, was promised a post in the new government of Czechoslovakia. After they moved to Prague, Františka was the only member of the Church in the country. František passed away a few months later, and Františka was left with two young daughters—Frances and Jane—to provide for.

On her own, Františka taught her daughters the gospel. "I was raised in the Church," Frances recalled. "The church was our home!"¹ Františka also wrote to Church leaders in Austria asking that



Františka Brodilová joined the Church in Vienna in 1913—a year before the start of World War I—and didn't have contact with other Church members until 1929.

Františka was present when Elder John A. Widtsoe (both in the middle row) dedicated Czechoslovakia for the preaching of the gospel in 1929.



missionaries be assigned to Czechoslovakia. Church leaders were reluctant because the last missionary in Prague, some 40

years earlier, had been jailed for preaching and then banished from the city. Despite the new government, Church leaders feared that little had changed.

Undeterred, Františka continued writing letters and praying for a mission to be established. In 1928, after Františka had been on her own for a decade, 83-year-old Thomas Biesinger—the same missionary who had preached in Prague years before—returned. It seemed that the family's isolation had come to an end. A short time later, however, Elder Biesinger's declining health forced him to leave the country.

Františka was discouraged but decided to keep writing letters to members and Church leaders abroad. Her perseverance was rewarded: on July 24, 1929, Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles arrived in Prague with a group of missionaries. That evening, Františka and the group climbed a hill near Karlštejn Castle, where Elder Widtsoe dedicated Czechoslovakia for the preaching of the gospel and formally organized a mission. "Few people can realize the joy we experienced," Františka later wrote. "We [had] been praying for years for this day."²

For nearly six months, the branch met in Františka's home. Františka eventually assisted her daughters in translating the Book of Mormon into Czech and laid a foundation for the Church in what is now the Czech Republic.

Like Františka, many Latter-day Saints have endured isolation. The following accounts describe the efforts of valiant men and women who were among the first to share the gospel and lay the foundation of the Church in their homelands.



After her husband died, Františka raised their two daughters alone.

Like Františka, many Latter-day Saints have endured isolation. These men and women nurtured the fire of their faith, shared the gospel, and built the Church in their homelands.

As the presiding elder, Fujiya Nara (in the dark suit) took responsibility for keeping in contact with members after the Japan Mission closed in 1924.



The Constant Gift of True Faith

When the Japan Mission was closed in 1924, many members felt lost and abandoned. Leadership for the approximately 160 members in Japan fell to Fujiya Nara, the presiding elder in the country, whose employment with the railroad allowed him to visit scattered members. When he was unable to visit, Fujiya maintained contact by publishing a magazine titled *Shuro (Palm Leaf)* in which he shared gospel messages and encouraged the remaining Saints through the turbulent years that followed.

After Fujiya's employment transferred him to Manchuria and his replacement as presiding elder died suddenly in 1937, contact with members in Japan was soon lost. "Even though we had no correspondence with Salt Lake City," Fujiya said, ". . . we had conviction the Church would reopen [here]."³

During World War II, Fujiya

returned to Tokyo, where he preached to his neighbors and organized weekly Sunday School meetings. After the war, Fujiya found a notice placed by Edward L. Clissold—a Latter-day Saint serving in the American military—inviting

Church members in the country to contact him. Fujiya immediately visited Edward in his hotel room. When Edward attended the Latter-day Saint meetings in Tokyo, he was surprised to find nearly 100 people attending.

"Through it all," Fujiya said later, "the greatest gift, and a constant gift, has been to know and embrace the true faith—that means to know Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost."⁴

Building the Church in Hawaii

Jonathan H. Napela was a well-respected judge on the island of Maui before he and his wife, Kiti, were baptized in 1851. After Jonathan was forced to resign his judgeship for joining the Church, he devoted his energy to building up the Church among Hawaiian speakers. Jonathan tutored missionary George Q. Cannon in the language, helped translate the Book of Mormon, and developed the first program for training missionaries in any foreign language.

As a result, more than 3,000 native Hawaiians joined the Church within three years. "It is very plain to us that this is the church of God," Jonathan wrote. "There are many upon these islands who have obtained strong faith by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ the Lord, that we might receive the Holy Ghost."⁵

In 1872, Kiti Napela contracted leprosy and was required to move

Right: One of the first converts in Hawaii, Jonathan Napela helped translate the Book of Mormon into Hawaiian. Below: Wilhelm Friedrichs (second from left) and Emil Hoppe (center, back row) attended the first baptisms in Argentina.



PORTRAIT OF JONATHAN NAPELA, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

to the leper colony on Moloka'i. Rather than staying among the Saints, Jonathan petitioned the colony to admit him as well. "During the brief time remaining," he wrote to the board of health, "I want to be with my wife."⁶ The petition was granted, and Jonathan became the branch president in Moloka'i. Jonathan worked closely with the local Catholic priest, Father Damien, to minister to all those afflicted with the disease. Jonathan eventually died of leprosy he contracted in the colony.

"I Rejoice in Being an Instrument in the Hands of God"

The Friedrichs and Hoppe families were the only Latter-day Saints in Argentina when they moved there from Germany in the early 1920s. Wilhelm Friedrichs and Emil Hoppe tried to share the gospel in their



new country, distributing pamphlets and inviting others to join their meetings. "I have full trust in my Heavenly Father that he will send sincere friends who will accept the Gospel," Wilhelm wrote, "for I rejoice in being an instrument in the hands of God."⁷

There were significant challenges, however. The families lived far apart and had to travel two hours to meet together. Because Emil was a deacon and Wilhelm a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, they were unable to administer ordinances such as the sacrament or give priesthood blessings.

In 1924, Hildegard Hoppe gave birth to a baby girl, who died two months later. As she mourned, Hildegard asked how the baby's name could be



Their persistence in laying the foundation of the Church allowed others to later share in the fellowship of the Saints.

For more information on these and other faithful Saints from around the world, visit Country Histories in the Church History section of the Gospel Library app or at history.lds.org.

When Phillipe and Annelies Assard (left) met Lucien and Agathe Affoué in Côte d'Ivoire, both couples rejoiced to know they were not alone in the Church there.



included in the records of the Church. As a result, Wilhelm began corresponding with Church leaders in Salt Lake City.

A year and a half later, Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1873–1939) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was sent with other missionaries to meet the growing group of converts in Buenos Aires. When they arrived in December 1925, Elder Ballard baptized several converts and organized a branch. On Christmas Day, Elder Ballard dedicated South America for missionary work and organized the first mission on the continent.

Bringing the Gospel Back to His People

Phillipe and Annelies Assard had built a comfortable life when the missionaries knocked on their door in Köln, Germany, in 1980. They quickly embraced the gospel and felt “overwhelmed with blessings.” Phillipe

soon felt a powerful desire to return to his native country of Côte d’Ivoire to share the restored gospel. “So in 1986, after many prayers and fasting with my wife,” Phillipe recalled, “I decided to return to Ivory Coast to give what I had received, to improve the lot of my family and my people.”⁸

Before leaving Germany, Phillipe consulted with Church leaders. Though there were no Church units in Côte d’Ivoire, there were a number of members there who had joined the Church while in other countries. The Assards were given a list of their names and for the next year diligently wrote to each one. Gradually, the Assards rekindled the spark of faith in others and were given permission to begin holding Sunday meetings in their home. Wards and branches followed, and in 1997 the first stake in Côte d’Ivoire was organized. ■

NOTES

1. Frances McOmbler, in Ruth McOmbler Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova,” unpublished manuscript (2009), 18.
2. Františka Brodilová, in Pratt, “Frantiska Vesela Brodilova,” 25.
3. Fujiya Nara, in Lee Benson, “Japanese Member Survives Adversity,” *Church News*, Feb. 17, 1979, 7.
4. Fujiya Nara, in Benson, “Japanese Member Survives Adversity,” 7.
5. Jonathan Napela, in “Foreign Correspondence: Sandwich Islands—Minutes of Conference, Makawao, April 1st, 1852,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 27, 1852, 4.
6. Jonathan Napela, in Fred E. Woods, “A Most Influential Mormon Islander: Jonathan Hawaii Napela,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 42 (2008), 148.
7. Wilhelm Friedrichs, letter, dated Mar. 5, 1924, Argentine Mission Correspondence, Church History Library.
8. Robert L. Mercer, “Pioneers in Ivory Coast,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1997, 27; *Liahona*, Mar. 1999, 19.