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Liberian Young Women Learn about Personal Progress

Young women in Liberia, Africa, taught each other about their divine nature and the Young Women Personal Progress program with a little help from young women on the other side of the world during a special district Young Women conference in August 2009.

Training and preparation began three months in advance for the young women, who live in the Monrovia Liberia Bushrod Island District of the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission. The theme for the conference was “Princess for a Day, Queen for Eternity.” Each branch in the district was responsible to present a workshop on a value and create a short skit teaching another value, emphasizing how a daughter of God would treat others and herself.

“These young women are the future of Africa, the pioneers of their country in this glorious gospel,” said Sister Belinda Wire, a full-time missionary who participated in the conference with her husband, Elder Bill Wire.

After the workshops, skits, and other activities, organizers presented the young women with letters sent by young women from a different country, sharing their testimonies of the gospel and Personal Progress.

“Hearts were united across the world,” Sister Wire said. “As these young sisters held the letters, they knew that those young women believe as they do, read the same books, follow the same programs, are guided by the same prophet, and are loved by the same God.” ■

Liberian young women and their leaders gather for a special district Young Women conference on Personal Progress.

Faith Rewarded in Galapagos

Though few in number, Saints in the Galapagos Islands, located off the coast of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean, are strong in faith. In September the members saw the completion of the islands’ first meetinghouse.

The rented building where the Galapagos Islands Branch previously held services, referred to as “el Castillo Blanco” by the members, wasn’t large enough to hold sacrament meeting in any single room, so members had to meet in three rooms at one time.

When Elder Floyd and Sister Susan Baum, the senior missionary couple assigned to the islands, first entered the new building, they were humbled to tears. “It is absolutely beautiful,” said Elder Baum. “The workmanship is of the highest order.”

Emma Bastidas remembered when she and her family had to travel to the mainland of Ecuador to be baptized in 1985. She and her family watched the branch form, and she cried when the first missionaries arrived in the islands.

“Now they have built a chapel close enough I can walk to it,” Sister Bastidas said.

Aside from providing a meetingplace for the little group of Saints, the new chapel has brought other blessings. Leonor Machua heard of the new meetinghouse just before leaving on a brief trip to Guayaquil, Ecuador. While in Ecuador she asked someone about the new building and the religion it represented. The stranger answered her questions and suggested she meet with missionaries once she returned home. A few days later she saw the missionaries on a street corner and accepted the invitation to be taught. Sister Machua was baptized immediately after the Saturday afternoon session of general conference in October 2009, the first person to be baptized in the new

meetinghouse's baptismal font.

The Church is relatively new in the islands. Before the formal organization of the branch, four families began meeting in the town of Puerto Ayora on the island of Santa Cruz. In 1998 Church leaders organized the branch within the Guayaquil Ecuador South Mission and the members began meeting on the island of San Cristobal before moving into el Castillo Blanco.

Now about 120 members attend every week in the new meetinghouse on the island of Santa Cruz.

Though the branch is small and far from the mainland, the Saints in the Galapagos Islands have been blessed, said Daniel Calapucha, branch president.

"I truly don't feel isolated because we have the guidance of our Father in Heaven," he said. ■

Colombian Children Visit the Temple

More than a dozen Primary children from the Fusagasuga Ward, Soacha Colombia Stake, spent a special day at the Bogotá Colombia Temple, learning about the temple's importance.

In November 2009 the ward Primary presidency accompanied 15 Primary children to the temple. There the children had the opportunity to meet the temple president, Jorge J. Escobar, and ask questions. The children learned why they had to wait until they were 12 to enter the temple to do temple work, why the figure of the angel Moroni on the temple spire holds a trumpet, and why he often faces east.

At the end of the activity, the children shared their feelings about the experience.

Maria Fernanda Sanchez, ward Primary secretary, said it was a spiritual experience. "It was a special, unforgettable day not only for them but for us as their Primary leaders," she said. ■

Annual Pageants Begin with Mesa

Each year the Church sponsors five pageants across the United States. Information about each pageant is included here.

Mesa Pageant

The Mesa Pageant, *Jesus the Christ*, retells the story of Jesus Christ's birth, ministry, selfless death, and miraculous Resurrection. The show runs March 24 to April 3. See www.easterpageant.org for more information.

Manti Pageant

Manti's *The Mormon Miracle Pageant* intertwines the stories of the Restoration of the gospel, the witness of the Book of Mormon, and the journey of the faithful pioneers to the Sanpete Valley. The show runs June 17 to 26. See www.mormonmiracle.org for more information.

Nauvoo Pageant

The Nauvoo Pageant, *A Tribute to Joseph Smith*, celebrates the restored gospel, the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith, and the legacy of early Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo. The show runs July 6 to July 31. See www.nauvoopageant.org for more information.

Hill Cumorah Pageant

The Hill Cumorah Pageant, *America's Witness for Christ*, retells the Book of Mormon story, including the trials of Lehi's family and his descendants, the climactic visit of Jesus Christ to the Americas, and Joseph Smith's discovery



PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM SMART, DESERET NEWS

of the plates. The show runs July 9 to 17. See www.hillcumorah.org for more information.

Castle Valley Pageant

The Castle Valley Pageant is an elaborate outdoor historical drama that portrays the settling of a pioneer village in Castle Dale, Utah. The show runs July 29 to August 7. For more information call 1-435-687-2403. The Castle Valley Pageant alternates every other year with the Clarkston Pageant, *Martin Harris: The Man Who Knew*, in Clarkston, Utah. ■