

RESPONDING

Senior missionaries around the world speak of great rewards in overcoming obstacles to serving missions.



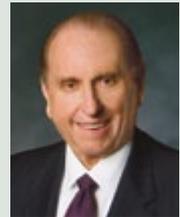
By Kendra Crandall Williamson

Chanta and Sounthara Luangrath sat in their home in California, USA, wondering what they should do. They had prepared their four children to serve missions, and now they knew it was their turn. The decision was bigger than they'd expected: they would miss their grandchildren so much! They were also concerned

about a few health issues. And what would they do with their home and belongings while they were gone?

The Luangraths' concerns about serving a mission are not unique to them. In fact, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles identified four categories of obstacles to senior missionary work: fear, family concerns, finding the right mission opportunity, and finances.¹

TO THE PROPHET'S CALL



"We need many, many more senior couples. . . . Make yourselves available to leave home and give full-time missionary service. There are few times in your lives when you will enjoy the sweet spirit and satisfaction that come from giving full-time service together in the work of the Master."

President Thomas S. Monson, "As We Meet Together Again," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 6.



Chanta and Sounthara Luangrath, who moved to California, USA, point to Laos—the land where they were born and raised and are now serving as missionaries.

Overcoming these obstacles requires great faith, a trait the Luangraths demonstrated when they heard President Thomas S. Monson's call for more missionaries in the October 2010 general conference. "We felt the Spirit so strong," they reflect. "We wanted to follow the prophet, so we turned in our mission application."

The Luangraths were called to serve as humanitarian missionaries in Laos, the land where they were born, raised, and married. Their worries

Above left: Senior missionaries serving in Salt Lake City, Utah, help refugees from various countries transition to their new homes. The Ntabwoba family (center) of Rwanda was recently sealed in the temple.

TOP: PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY



Sondra Jones served among the women of the Marshall Islands (left, with husband, Neldon).

faded as they prepared to serve: their family supported them, they resolved their health issues, and they made their home available for lease. They felt confident as they did what the Savior commanded: “Go thy way, . . . take up the cross, and follow me” (Mark 10:21).

Seniors can serve missions in many ways and in many places. As the following stories illustrate, whether serving full- or part-time, as

Martha Marin (far right) served full-time in the employment resource center in Puebla, Mexico.



a couple or single, in their own country or a foreign land, senior adults can faithfully overcome the obstacles that stand in their way.

Facing Fear

“Fear of the unknown or fear that we don’t have the scriptural skills or language required can cause reluctance to serve. But the Lord has said, ‘If ye are prepared ye shall not fear’ (D&C 38:30). Your life is your preparation. . . . Just go and be yourselves.”²

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Fear can frustrate missionary work. Some people fear they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to serve. Others worry about living in a different area of the world or working with people they don’t know.

Sister Martha Marin of Veracruz, Mexico, confronted some of her fears as she served full-time in the employment resource center in Puebla, Mexico. She was uncomfortable using computers, an important part of the employment center. But with the help and support of her companion and the others she worked with, she learned the necessary skills. “This obstacle has turned into a blessing,” she says. “I know that I am not alone in this work.”

Sister Sondra Jones of Utah, USA, was called to serve in the Marshall Islands with her husband, Neldon. “I was scared to death about what I was getting into. I have never felt comfortable trying to teach the gospel,” she says. After initially feeling that she had nothing to contribute, she decided to focus on her talents and skills. She learned to love the Marshallese people and served them by cutting hair and teaching them to sew.

After 18 months she estimated having done around 700 haircuts. Eagerly sharing her talents allowed her to serve and build

relationships with hundreds of people, including members of the Church, investigators, and other members of the community.

Resolving Family Concerns

“What greater gift could grandparents give their posterity than to say by deed as well as word, ‘In this family we serve missions!’”³

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The thought of leaving struggling children or growing grandchildren seems unbearable for many people. Still, missionaries find that their service strengthens their families in ways they could not have expected.

Raymond and Gwen Petersen of Wyoming, USA, have served four missions. Their leaving on their second mission—to Samoa for the second time—was initially a challenge for their children, who didn’t understand why their parents needed to serve *another* mission.

The family quickly realized what great blessings came from their service. “They had all prospered!” says Sister Petersen. “One couple who had been unable to have children were blessed with a baby boy, another had a miraculous healing from cancer, another with a struggling child saw great progress, and others had their best year in business.”

Their hard work has left a trail of faith through their family line. “We have four grandsons on missions right now who tell us we were their inspiration to go,” says Sister Petersen. “What could be more rewarding than that?”

Finding the Right Mission Opportunity

“I am constantly amazed at how the Holy Ghost matches the characteristics and needs



Raymond and Gwen Petersen served two missions among the Samoan Latter-day Saints.

of each missionary and couple to the widely varying circumstances of missionary service throughout the world.”⁴

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Senior missionary service is needed in employment centers, mission offices, family history centers, temples, and visitors’ centers, among other places. Applicants can request where they would like to serve, but ultimately

George and Hine Chase served as humanitarian directors in Papua New Guinea.



CHANGES IN SENIOR MISSIONARY POLICIES

- Missionary couples may choose to serve for 6, 12, 18, or 23 months.
- Housing costs for senior couples will be capped at US\$1,400 per month.
- Senior missionaries may return home for critical family events (for up to 10 days) at their own expense.

For more detailed information, see <http://lds.org/church/news/changes-in-senior-missionary-rules>.

the call comes from the Lord, through His prophet. The Lord knows the right mission opportunity for each willing single sister or couple.

George and Hine Chase of New Zealand found that their mission call was just right for them; they were pleasantly surprised when so many of their vocational and family talents helped them do humanitarian work in Papua New Guinea.

Elder Chase had been a carpenter and could help assess and organize projects such as establishing water wells. Sister Chase had worked for 18 years in office management. “My administration and computer skills were invaluable,” she says. She and Elder Chase used their combined abilities to run a career workshop program, helping locals learn skills like time management, organization, leadership, hygiene, and communication.

Together the Chases used the experience they’d gained from their Church callings

and—most of all—from being parents. As the Chases worked to distribute school supplies and improve infant child care, their parenting experience helped them appreciate the difficulties local families and schools faced.

Addressing Finances

“Counsel with your extended family and your bishop or branch president. As the Lord’s servants understand your temporal situation, you will be able to receive the eternal blessing of full-time missionary service.”⁵

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Many couples fear that they don’t have enough money to serve a mission. They think of their living, medical, and housing expenses and wonder how to finance it all. Church leaders recognize these real concerns and have made policy changes to help relieve the burden (see sidebar at left). Still, addressing financial concerns requires faith, careful planning, and some sacrifice.

Leonard and Vera Chisango of Zimbabwe experienced challenges even with effective planning. They had prepared to serve missions their whole married life, and they knew their pensions and investments could sustain them for their first mission at the Johannesburg South Africa Temple. But while they were serving, the economy suddenly took a huge downturn, and their investments were greatly reduced.

With the help of their family, the Chisangos stayed on their mission. The blessings of that sacrifice were gratifying: their son’s business performed well, their daughter was promoted at work, and their children learned to work together in support of their parents.

Many senior missionaries testify that the blessings of service far outweigh the temporal

Peter and Kelly Sackley served in the Hong Kong area office.



cost. Elder Peter Sackley, a Canadian missionary serving with his wife, Kelly, in the Hong Kong area office, summarized the feelings of many: “I have gone from a paid job to a blessed job.”

Overcoming Obstacles by Building Faith

“Many humble Latter-day Saints fear that they are not qualified for missionary labors. But to such a prospective missionary, the Lord has given this assurance: ‘Faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.’”⁶

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

To counter the four obstacles to senior missionary service, Elder Hales suggested a simple remedy: “Have faith; the Lord knows where you are needed.”⁷ Faith conquers fear, strengthens families, helps a senior missionary find the right opportunity to serve, and helps provide financial comfort.

Many years ago, such faith was growing in a young Polish girl, Stanislaw Habel. Later in life, her faith led her to accept the restored gospel and then, as an adult, to serve as a family history missionary in Utah.

Sister Habel’s service has taught her a little-known secret: “Missions keep people younger.” She smiles and says, “When you forget about your obstacles, you learn to be grateful. You learn to become more like Christ through serving others, and this is preparation to live with Heavenly Father. A mission could change the life of a senior.”

Indeed, it does, as well as the lives of those they humbly serve. ■

Senior missionaries are serving in a variety of ways around the world. Visit liahona.lds.org to read more of their stories.



Leonard and Vera Chisango served at the Johannesburg South Africa Temple (right).



NOTES

1. See Robert D. Hales, “Couple Missionaries: A Time to Serve,” *Liahona*, July 2001, 28–31; *Ensign*, May 2001, 25–27.
2. Robert D. Hales, *Liahona*, July 2001, 29; *Ensign*, May 2001, 25.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “We Are All Enlisted,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 46.
4. Richard G. Scott, “Now Is the Time to Serve a Mission!” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 89.
5. Robert D. Hales, “Couple Missionaries: Blessings from Sacrifice and Service,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 40.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Senior Missionaries and the Gospel,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 81.
7. Robert D. Hales, *Liahona*, July 2001, 31; *Ensign*, May 2001, 27.

“There is probably no better way of expressing thanks to the Almighty than serving a full-time mission.”

Elder Leonard Chisango, Zimbabwe

Stanislaw Habel helps patrons at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

