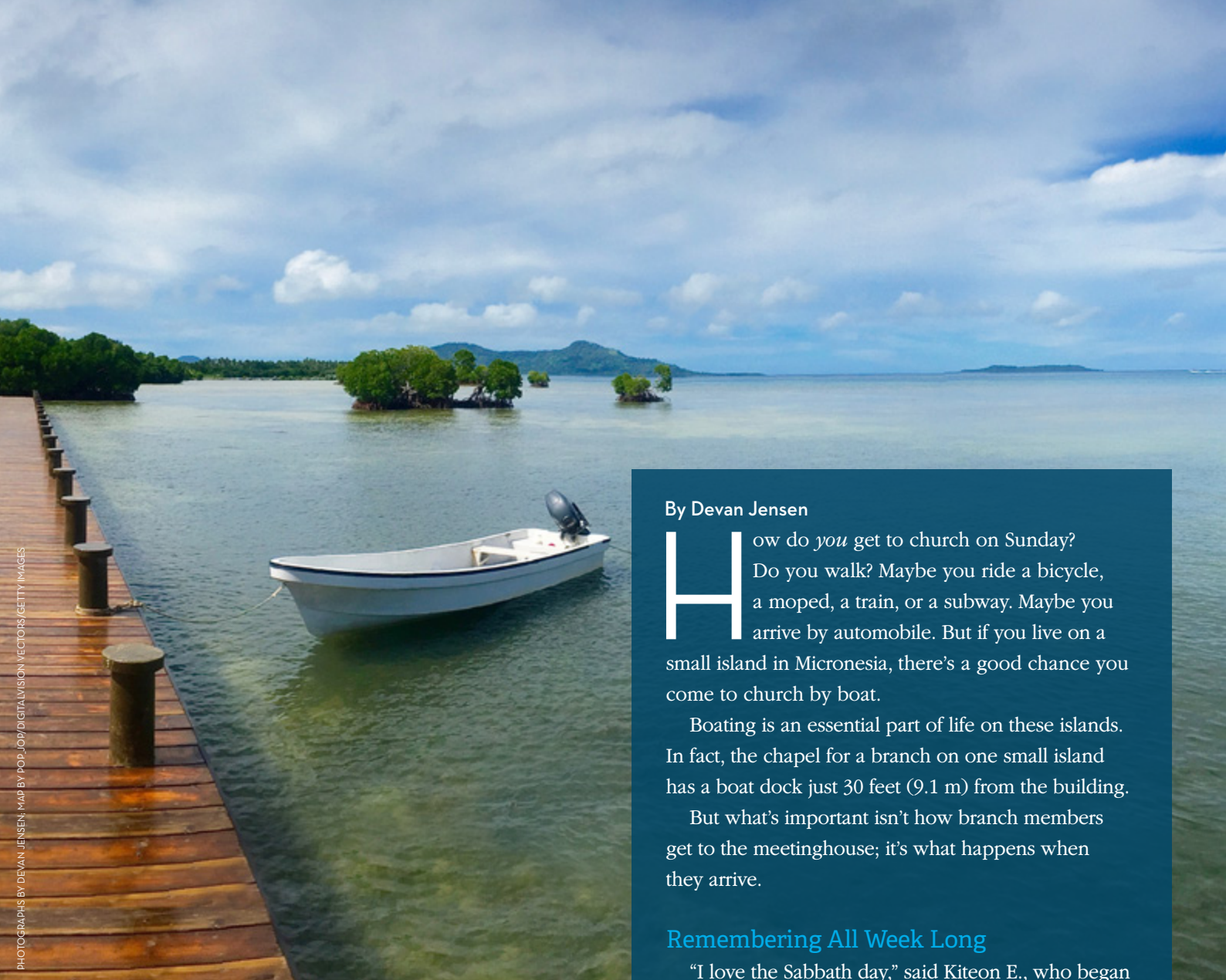




VANESSA W. 16 AND EMALYN W. 16

Keeping Faith



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEVAN JENSEN. MAP BY POP_JOB/DIGITALVISION. VECTORS/GETTY IMAGES

Latter-day Saint youth in Micronesia keep the Sabbath day holy by remembering the Savior all week long.

Afloat

By Devan Jensen

How do *you* get to church on Sunday? Do you walk? Maybe you ride a bicycle, a moped, a train, or a subway. Maybe you arrive by automobile. But if you live on a small island in Micronesia, there’s a good chance you come to church by boat.

Boating is an essential part of life on these islands. In fact, the chapel for a branch on one small island has a boat dock just 30 feet (9.1 m) from the building.

But what’s important isn’t how branch members get to the meetinghouse; it’s what happens when they arrive.

Remembering All Week Long

“I love the Sabbath day,” said Kiteon E., who began attending seminary as soon as it started on his island two years ago and recently accepted a call to serve a full-time mission. “It all centers on the Savior. When we take the sacrament, we promise to always remember Him. We commit to living the gospel and try to do better each week than we did the week before. Sunday is a day to be completely dedicated to the Lord. If you honor the Sabbath, it becomes different from all other days. It becomes sacred.”

Kiteon said we continue to keep the Sabbath holy by living the gospel all week long. “There’s much more to being a disciple of Christ than just going to meetings,” he said. “We have to live each day according to what we promised to do when we took the sacrament. That means we try all week to do what Jesus would do.”

The Gospel in Action

That's one reason why you'll see Kiteon and other members using boats for religious activities not just on Sundays but also as they strive to live the gospel each day. For example, Kiteon uses his family's boat to go with missionaries to teach. Aaronic Priesthood holders use boats to go home teaching, and sisters use them to visit the sick. They also use boats to resupply missionaries living in outlying areas.

Spirit-Filled Seminary

Sometimes, however, boats aren't necessary. In one village on the island, for example, Sammyo L., Vanessa W., Desleen L., Carleen M., Emtalyn W., and Jemi A. simply walk to the meetinghouse, where Emtalyn's mother, Tasiana, teaches seminary. One topic that comes up often in class is the temple.



KITEON E., 18



Tasiana, Emtalyn, and their family of 12 are preparing to go to the temple to be sealed. Because their assigned temple is more than 2,100 miles (3,380 km) away in the Philippines and transportation is expensive, going there has been a lifelong goal. As they talk in seminary about their dream that's about to come true, the other students reflect on how they've made it their own goal to be sealed in the house of the Lord someday.

The seminary students love studying together. "We've been studying the new Chuukese translation of the Book of Mormon," Emtalyn explained. "When I read the Book of Mormon, I feel happy and I feel the Spirit. I learn more about my Savior and how I can return to live with my Heavenly Father. My testimony grows stronger, and I feel that studying the scriptures has helped me be a better student in school too."

Vanessa added, "You could say that as seminary students, we're learning how to navigate our way home to heaven."

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MANILA CITY PHILIPPINES TEMPLE





SAMMYO L., 16



CARLEEN M., 12

Sustaining Strength

Keeping the Spirit, felt so strongly on the Sabbath and again in seminary, with them all week long is important to these youth. It sustains and motivates them.

“I know that following the commandments and showing the love of Christ to my friends will help me achieve the righteous things I’m striving for,” Emtalyn said. “I want to help strengthen my current family and my future family.”

She said the Spirit helps her to know that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith is a prophet. “My experience in reading the scriptures has given me the desire to share the gospel,” she said. “I want to invite others to feel the same happiness I feel and to know how to be with their families forever.”

Centered on the Sabbath

On a late Saturday evening when I visited there, the dock near the branch meetinghouse was nearly deserted. A single skiff was moored there, bobbing up and down on the waves. One young girl walked by, and a few cars were in the parking lot.

But soon it would be Sunday, and the boats would arrive all over again. Another week of renewal, centered on the Sabbath, would begin. **NE**

The author lives in Utah, USA.

