

Three Priests in Pennsylvania

By Hillary Holbrook

These young men know their duty, and they're doing it well.

The organ plays a beautiful, touching sacrament hymn. Ward members open their hymnals and begin to sing along, reflecting on Christ and the Atonement. And three young men reverently break bread in preparation for the passing of the sacrament. The three priests, Randy Hulet, Reuben Kendall, and Ethan Kennedy, of the State College First Ward in State College, Pennsylvania, are busy fulfilling one of many Aaronic Priesthood duties.

"It's an honor to break the bread and bless the sacrament each Sunday," says Ethan, 18. "It's a big responsibility, and we, as priests, need to make sure that we're worthy so we can perform this service for the congregation."

Administering the Sacrament

Blessing the sacrament isn't something that came naturally to Reuben, who recently joined the priests quorum as a 16-year-old. "I was so nervous. I thought, 'This is going to be impossible. I'm going to mess up a lot.' But I said a little prayer that I wouldn't mess up, and I didn't," Reuben says.

Randy, 18, says that passing the sacrament as a deacon and helping to prepare it as a teacher gave him the confidence that he needed to administer the sacrament as a priest. He says that fulfilling his priesthood responsibilities earlier on made his duties as a priest seem "more real," and that he had the desire to "say the sacrament prayers in a way that would be pleasing to Heavenly Father."

Reuben says that every time he blesses the bread or water, he "feels the Spirit overwhelmingly." He adds, "Just like the sacrament prayers never change, the way that I feel when I say them never changes, either. The Spirit is always there, so long as I am worthy to feel it. It's a comfort. It's there to help me do well."

Not only do the three teens understand the importance of the ordinance, they also understand that wearing a white shirt and tie to church each Sunday is important because it shows respect for the ordinance and for Jesus Christ. "Despite the fact that I like colored shirts, I know that I should wear a white shirt when I help with the sacrament. White is a symbol of purity," Ethan says.

Aside from administering the sacrament, the three priests also work hard to fulfill their other priesthood responsibilities as they prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and serve missions, like teaching the gospel and assisting in missionary work.

Teaching the Gospel

These three young men have had home teaching assignments since they were 14, including Ethan who lived in Germany at that time. "My father and I would go home teaching to a woman who lived 45 minutes away. She was less active, so home teaching her was the only interaction she had with the Church each month," Ethan says.

Having that assignment when he was younger and fulfilling his current home teaching assignment has helped Ethan understand the importance of teaching. Furthermore, he says, it has prepared him to serve a mission in the near future. "When I go on a mission, I'll be able to teach people lessons and not have to worry about

it because of my experiences as a home teacher,” Ethan says. “It’s a testimony to me of how the Aaronic Priesthood is helping me to prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.”

Reuben says that home teaching is great preparation for a mission because “it gets you more comfortable teaching lessons to people and using the Spirit to help you teach, and then that will later help you prepare for the MTC when you learn how to teach and on your mission when you’re actually teaching.”

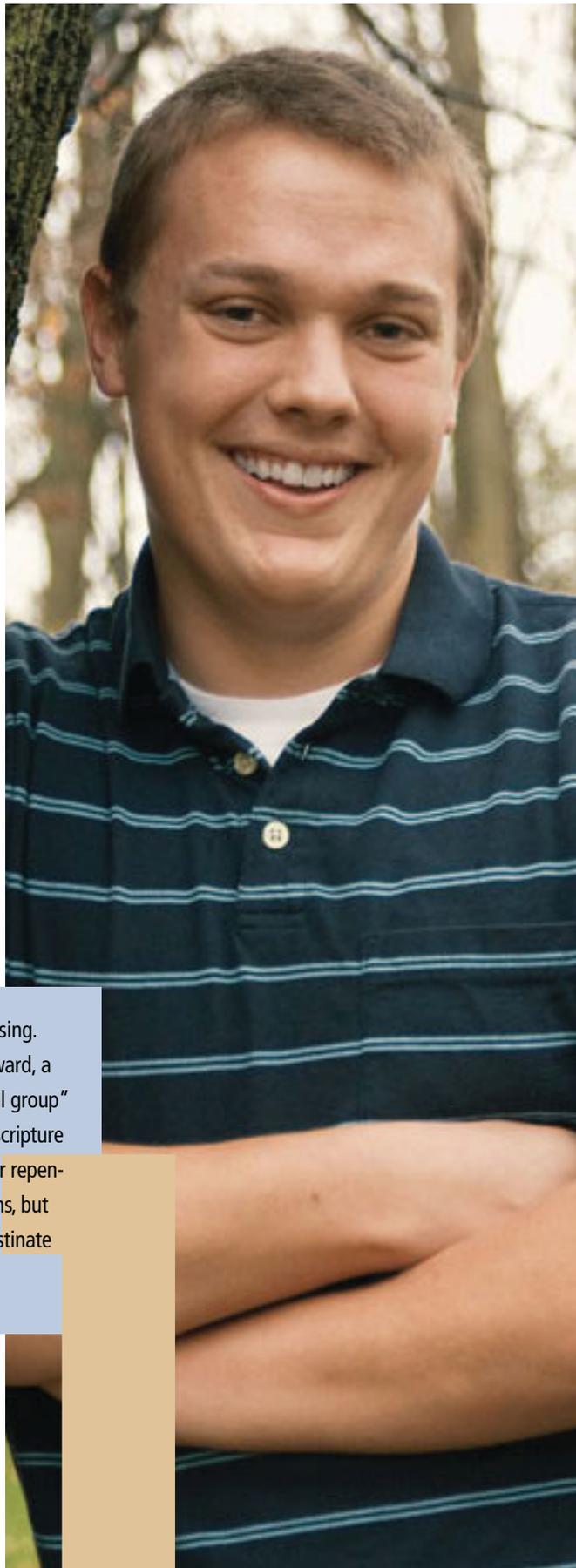
Reuben remembers his experience as a 14-year-old teacher and going home-teaching for the first time. “I was kind of nervous because I hadn’t done it before, but then after I read over the lesson, I thought, ‘I can do this.’ Having the Spirit with me helped because it helped me to say the things that the people we were visiting needed to hear, even though I hadn’t originally planned on saying certain things,” Reuben says. “I’ve learned that in order to have the Spirit help you, you first have to prepare and try to be ready. If you can do that, it can help you out a lot.”

Other Priesthood Duties

While administering the sacrament and teaching the gospel are duties that these three teens get to experience often, there are other priesthood duties that are fulfilled a little less frequently, like participating in a priesthood ordination or assisting in missionary work.

Randy Hulet, 18, is originally from Blacksburg, Virginia, and loves to sing. He participates in four different choirs—a seasonal youth quartet in his ward, a regular ward choir, a regular school choir, and “an elite 16-member choral group” at his high school. Randy is one of five siblings. He says that his favorite scripture is Alma 34:32–34, which is a warning to not procrastinate the day of your repentance. “We don’t know when Christ is going to come again. We have signs, but we always have to be ready for it. It helps me to remember to not procrastinate things,” Randy says.

When Ethan’s younger brother was ordained a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood a year and a half ago, Ethan was able to participate in the ordination and blessing. “I was able to stand there for him. It was really cool. I was very happy that I could do that for him and support him,” Ethan says.





Building a Testimony

Most LDS teens at some point in their young lives are given opportunities in the Church that enable them to have spiritual experiences and gain a testimony. Such has been the case with Reuben, who attended a testimony meeting during a week at a camp in Pennsylvania for LDS young men.

“Throughout my deacon and teacher years in the Aaronic Priesthood, I had a testimony, but that night at camp truly affirmed that testimony,” Reuben says. “During that testimony meeting, I felt the power of the Holy Ghost witnessing to me the truths of the gospel that Jesus Christ is the Savior and that through Joseph Smith the gospel was restored to the earth.”

Reading the scriptures also helps Reuben build his testimony because, Reuben says, he can receive personal revelation from the scriptures and “get something totally different out of the scriptures than what I thought I would going into that reading session.”

Receiving personal revelation is not a new concept to Randy, who says a turning point in his testimony came when he received his patriarchal blessing. “After I got my patriarchal blessing, I read it for the first time. I then realized that Heavenly Father cares about all of us and that the blessing comes from Him. Receiving that blessing just manifested to me that patriarchal blessings are personal scripture for us.”

Ethan has also felt the power of the Holy Ghost, which has strengthened his testimony. Ethan, who is the eldest of four siblings, tells of a time when his youngest sister was

Reuben Kendall, 16, doesn't mind a little grease under his fingernails. He loves cars and has taken many elective courses at his high school to learn about them. “Cars are a lot more technical and computer-driven now than they ever have been, so I love to take classes like auto-technology,” Reuben says. Aside from cars, Reuben is into computers and video games. Reuben, who was born and raised in State College, Pennsylvania, is the youngest of four boys in his family. His favorite scripture is 2 Nephi 13:18–26, which is a prophecy given by Isaiah. “I find these scriptures particularly interesting because it's a testimony of revelation,” Reuben says. “Isaiah saw all these problems way back then, and it applies today.”

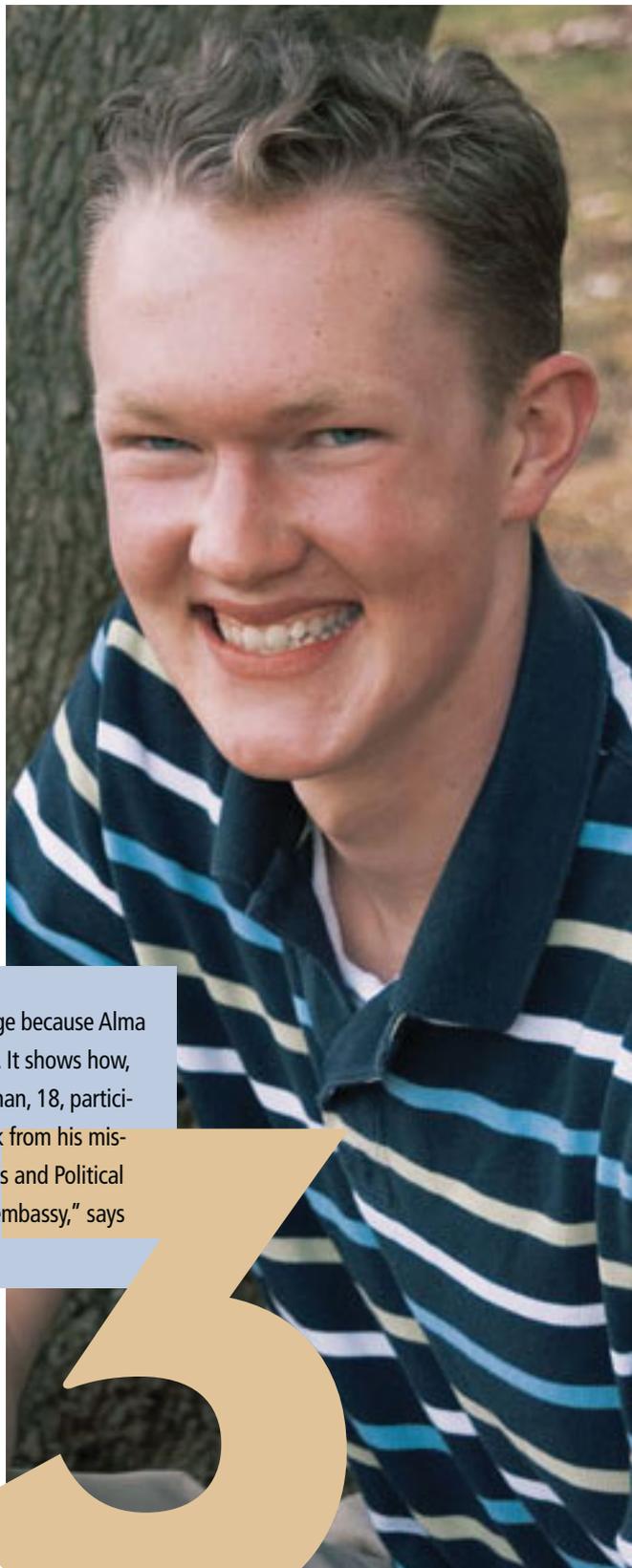
baptized. “We were living here in Pennsylvania when she was baptized, and we drove up to the Susquehanna River, where Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were baptized,” Ethan says. “My sister was baptized in that place. That experience reaffirmed what I knew—that baptism is the only way to return to Heavenly Father. It is the gate to eternal life.”

Assisting in Missionary Work

Priests who are 16 years old can also assist in missionary work, something that Reuben, Randy, and Ethan recently had the opportunity to do.

Ethan says that going out with the missionaries taught him the importance of being a hard worker. “We would be walking down the street, and the missionaries would talk to perfect strangers. They would say, ‘Hello,’ or, ‘Would you like to hear this message we have?’” Ethan says. “A lot of people would ignore the missionaries or say, ‘No, thank you,’ but the missionaries would keep on trying. It was a real lesson to me that I need to be persistent when I serve a mission.”

Helping with missionary work was also an eye-opener after visiting less-active members in the ward. “It’s nice to know that there are people who come to church every



Ethan Kennedy's favorite scripture is Alma 32:21. “I love this passage because Alma is teaching the Zoramites about faith and how their testimonies can grow. It shows how, as long as we have faith, our testimonies can be nourished and grow.” Ethan, 18, participates in all the same choirs with Randy and sings tenor. After he gets back from his mission, he wants to go to college and double major in International Relations and Political Science. “I want to do something with the foreign services or work in an embassy,” says Ethan, who is fluent in German after living in Germany for many years.

week, but there are many people who don’t come. And knowing they’re out there really makes me want to try to help them come back to church. It’s increased my awareness,” Ethan says.

The three young men are anxious for the day when they get to serve in the mission field. But for now, they’re busy doing what they always try to do best—fulfill their priesthood duties. **NE**