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A BEACON *in*



*For youth in the Exeter
New Hampshire Stake,
being a light to others isn't
just a theme for youth con-
ference. It's a way of life.*

the Night



Imagine yourself as the keeper of a lighthouse. It is nighttime and the sky is black. The wind is cold and strong with the scent of rain. Waves crash against the shore.

You know that off in the distance there is one ship, maybe more, searching for the safety of your harbor. They need your bright light as they steer through treacherous waters. The beam from your beacon will guide them safely home.

Youth in the Exeter New Hampshire Stake, which also includes parts of Maine and Massachusetts, live in an area where many lighthouses stand along the shore. They know how lighthouses guide sailors through the waves in spite of darkness and storms. So when the time came to choose a theme for their youth conference, “A Beacon in the Night” held particular significance for them. Not only did it capture their coastal heritage, but it also symbolized the experience of many LDS youth here, who keep their own light bright so that others watching them can find hope.

Many of these LDS teens are the only Church members in their schools. When spirituality is scoffed at, they defend their faith. When others engage in shadowy indulgence, they let their standards shine. For them, being a beacon in the darkness is a way of life. And because they

are like a light shining in the darkness, others look to them to find their way.

Becoming Better Beacons

Because young Latter-day Saints here have such ample opportunity to share the gospel, the youth conference committee decided to focus on being able to do it better. Through service, activities, and workshops based on *Preach My Gospel*, the youth of the stake worked to become an even brighter source of light for those around them.

One portion of the conference was devoted to helping youth be better missionaries—both now and in the future. The committee, along with leaders, developed several workshops, or “modules,” about different aspects of missionary work. Many of the modules were based on chapters in *Preach My Gospel*. They addressed subjects such as studying the gospel, sharing the gospel with friends, and using the Book of Mormon as a missionary tool.

“I learned that it’s important to talk about the gospel in a simple way,” says Brian Clancy. “For example, for someone who isn’t familiar with religion, the term *Holy Ghost* might be an obscure concept. So when I think someone



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BEACON

"Although there have always been challenges in the world, many of those which you face are unique to this time. But you are some of our Heavenly Father's strongest children, and He has saved you to come to the earth 'for such a time as this' (Esther 4:14). With His help, you will have the courage to face whatever comes. Though the world may at times appear dark, you have the light of the gospel, which will be as a beacon to guide your way."

President Thomas S. Monson, "May You Have Courage," *Ensign*, May 2009, 127.

is feeling the Holy Ghost, it might be better to ask, 'How do you feel right now?' Usually they'll talk about feeling calm, peaceful, or relaxed. And then I can help them understand that what they're feeling is the Holy Ghost."

It's that kind of understanding based on *Preach My Gospel* that Jordan Bratt taught about at the conference. Jordan, who grew up in the Exeter Stake, recently returned from the Florida Jacksonville Mission, so he knew firsthand that *Preach My Gospel* is a powerful resource for full-time missionaries. But he wanted to help the youth realize that they could also benefit from using it now.

"A lot of people think, 'I'll look at it when I'm a missionary or when I'm in the MTC,'" Jordan says. "But it is not just a tool for full-time missionaries. Anyone can study it every day. It can help you *today*, right now."

Receiving the Light

Another highlight of the conference was hearing real-life conversion stories. This was particularly powerful for Anthony Diaz, who joined the Church in 2007.

"I loved Brother Jim Whitney's class on the Book of Mormon because of the experience he shared and the testimony he gave," Anthony says. "And I loved hearing from

others who haven't always been members of the Church. I didn't know that some of them were converts. It helped me remember my own experience of joining the Church and reminded me how important missionary work really is."

Anthony treasures his experience of *receiving* the gospel and was grateful to have a better idea of how to *share* it. Then at the end of his class, Brother Whitney encouraged each participant to share a copy of the Book of Mormon with someone they knew. "It's not as easy as I thought it would be," Anthony says. "I realized you have to anticipate the kinds of questions people might ask about the Church. You have to be able to answer them clearly and directly, and keep it short and simple. If you don't know the answer, don't be afraid to say so. Tell your friends that you'll find out or offer to introduce them to the full-time missionaries."

Making Beaches Bright

One morning during the conference, nearby Seabrook Beach was covered with wave after wave of teens in yellow shirts. They were youth conference participants dressed in Beacon-in-the-Night T-shirts who spent the morning collecting trash.

"People would approach us and ask if we



were at some sort of a summer camp,” says Alex Morales. “It was great to be able to tell them that we are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was cool to be with other youth from the Church, showing people that service is an important part of what we’re all about.”

“I remember looking down the beach and seeing all those yellow shirts,” says Bethany Klick. “We were excited to be there, and I noticed that our attitude rubbed off on other people, too. When they saw what we were doing, they smiled and seemed to enjoy the day just a little bit more.”

Following the cleanup, youth and leaders ended the day at the beach with a sandcastle building competition.

Keeping the Light Alive

After the three-day conference ended, youth of the stake came away with renewed dedication to share the light of the gospel. Ashley Ochaeta tells of a riddle she once heard: A man turned off a light before going to sleep, and as a result hundreds of people died. Who was the man? The keeper of a lighthouse.

“We can’t ever turn off our light,” Ashley says. “Maybe we’re the light in our families or to our friends at school. I’ve had friends tell

me that I’m their light, the one who keeps them moving straight and doing good things. Those kinds of comments make me realize how important it is to stay constant.”

Kelsie Belanger says the theme of being a beacon in the night reinforced an experience she had at young women’s camp. “We were identifying constellations,” she explains. “One of our leaders pointed out the North Star. I thought it would be brighter than it actually is. But she said the great thing about the North Star is that it is constant. It is always where it should be. That left an impression on me. I realized that even if you don’t feel your light is very bright, as long as you keep up your efforts, that makes a difference.”

“Being an example is a very real thing here,” says Brian Clancy. “We don’t have many Mormons, so those of us who are members of the Church have a responsibility to do the right things. I’ve noticed that even when the light isn’t on, a lighthouse is still noticeable from a distance. We can be like that here in New England. You don’t have to be constantly preaching to be seen. Our example of doing the right things can still be noticed and still give light to others.” **NE**

Yellow shirts dotted the beach, identifying teens from the Exeter New Hampshire Stake, who were determined to make their light shine through service. Then they dressed up for the final testimony meeting of the three-day youth conference.

