

Responding to the Call for More Missionaries: Fostering a Missionary Mindset at Home and in Church

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

Bishop Victor Nogales of the Parque Chacabuco Ward, Buenos Aires Argentina Congreso Stake, sits in front of a bulletin board covered with pictures of the 37 young men and women in his ward. When one of them leaves for a mission, he puts a note by the picture.

“My young people get very excited when they come into my office and see the pictures and notes,” he said. “It motivates them to prepare for their own missions.”

This ward in Buenos Aires exemplifies the spirit of missionary work. In the first six months of 2012, 19 youth—14 of them converts—left their homes to serve full-time missions in eight countries. More than 80 percent of the eligible youth have committed to serve missions.

In recent years Church leaders have made several requests that more young people serve missions.

During April 2005 general conference, soon after the Church released *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled families and leaders to foster a missionary spirit and prepare more young men and young

women to serve honorably by helping them understand who they are and by teaching them doctrine (“One More,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 69).

President Thomas S. Monson’s announcement during the October 2012 general conference that missionary age limits would be lowered served as another reminder that the Lord is hastening His work.

Today many families and Church leaders are taking these messages to

heart and establishing a rich tradition of missionary service in their areas.

Helping Youth Understand Who They Are

In answer to the question, “How have you been able to prepare so many of your youth to be willing to serve?” Bishop Nogales responded, “When I was called as bishop, my first concern was the young people of my ward, and I made it clear to other

Bishop Victor Nogales stands at the bulletin board that shows all the youth of his ward, including those who are currently serving missions.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL L. GARVIN

ward leaders that we needed to be part of their lives.”

For example, all of the Chacabuco missionaries held callings in the ward prior to their departure. Often new converts and less-active members were invited to serve as teachers, which helped them prepare to teach the gospel.

Bishop Nogales also arranged for youth to prepare spiritually for a mission by working with the local full-time missionaries.

As local Church leaders and members have committed themselves to the youth of the ward, they have been rewarded with seeing the missionary spirit grow immensely.

A Missionary-Minded Family

Garth and Eloise Andrus of Draper, Utah, USA, know what it means to have a missionary-minded family. They have 17 grandsons who have served missions, and they have served six missions themselves.

Fostering a spirit of missionary service in your family is something that begins from the time children are young, Brother Andrus said.

Sister Andrus agreed. “You don’t leave serving a mission as a silent expectation, but you talk to your kids and grandkids about it like it’s not a question—*when* you go on your mission, not *if*,” she said.

Teaching youth who they are by setting an example of missionary service is also important. Brother and

Sister Andrus accepted their first call in 1980, just as their youngest son was leaving on his mission.

One grandson wrote them after receiving a gift they sent to help him prepare for his mission. “He thanked us [for the gift], but said, ‘Far more important is to thank you for the example that you have set,’” Sister Andrus said.

Teaching the Doctrine

“Our youth have a right to expect that their parents and Church leaders and teachers will see that they know and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ,” Elder Ballard said. “The Holy Ghost will confirm the truth to their hearts and will ignite the Light of Christ in their souls. And then you will have *one more* fully prepared missionary” (“One More,” 71).

Some 6,000 miles (9,600 km) away from Buenos Aires, the rural Horseshoe Bend Branch near Boise, Idaho, USA, has also seen a dramatic increase in missionary service as families and leaders have reinforced efforts to teach the gospel to their youth.

From a small branch of 75 members, nine young people are serving missions.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the reasons for and benefits of serving. “All missionaries . . . serve with the sole hope of making life better for other people,” he said. “The decision to serve a mission will shape the spiritual destiny of the missionary,

his or her spouse, and their posterity for generations to come. A desire to serve is the natural outcome of one’s conversion, worthiness, and preparation” (“Ask the Missionaries! They Can Help You!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 18).

Martin Walker, president of the Emmett Idaho Stake, agreed. “Serving a mission places a young person on a course that will affect generations,” he said. “As a stake, we do everything we can to prepare young people for missionary service.”

Part of that preparation includes teaching the youth the doctrine. Youth in the Horseshoe Bend Branch have access to a weekly missionary preparation class taught by a former mission president—training that supplements missionary training provided by the stake’s monthly youth missionary preparation meeting and its annual Aaronic Priesthood camp.

LaRene Adam—one of Brother and Sister Andrus’s six children—served alongside her husband, Jim, in the Copenhagen Denmark Mission from 2007 to 2009. She testified of the importance of teaching children the gospel in the home.

“One of the greatest things you can do to help your children build a testimony of missionary work is to hold your family home evenings and family scripture study,” she said. “If you give them that strong basis of gospel study and gospel knowledge, they are so much better prepared and know so much more about the gospel.” ■