

WOULD MATTHEW RETURN?

We had a strong group of young men in our ward, but our son Matthew gravitated to a nonmember who shared his love for cars and anything mechanical. Unfortunately, this young man came from a family that did not value religion. His parents allowed drinking and smoking in their home and didn't believe that being morally clean was important.

Matthew had earned the top rank in Scouting, but he did not participate in the awards meeting because he had stopped living Scouting standards. I gathered all his Scouting awards and made a display case. Then I put it away, hoping that one day it would be of value to him. By the time he was 16, Matthew was smoking, drinking, and doing drugs. He dropped out of school and moved in with his girlfriend. For a couple of years, we rarely saw him.

We were devastated. We didn't

know if he would ever return to his family and faith, but we decided to follow Alma's example in dealing with his wayward son. Alma continued to love his son and prayed with faith that he would "be brought to the knowledge of the truth" (Mosiah 27:14).

We prayed constantly that the Lord would intervene in Matthew's life, and we took every opportunity to express by word and action how much we loved him. When he would come home, we did not say anything he might interpret as criticism or judgment. We simply expressed our joy at seeing him.

One day Matthew came home and said he wanted to talk. He said he had met a girl at a party who had questions about the Church. Before he could tell her that he no longer knew the answers, words started coming out of his mouth. He found himself answering

her questions as fast as she asked them. Matthew said he did not remember having learned the things he spoke, but he knew his words were true. He wondered why he was living as he was when he still believed the gospel.

After three days of soul-searching, he decided to leave behind the life he had been leading. He had come home to ask for help in starting over.

Matthew called a cousin in another state who had overcome similar difficulties and asked if he could stay with him. His cousin agreed, and Matthew began attending Church meetings with him and met with the bishop to get help with the repentance process. He felt love and support and became active in the Church.

In time he met a lovely, righteous young woman. They fell in love and were married in the temple.

When their first child was born,

I came for a visit and brought the display case I had made of his Scouting awards. He was thrilled and proudly hung it in a prominent place in his home.

An angel did not appear to our son, as had happened to Alma the Younger. But Matthew's return to the truth was just as miraculous. ■

Name withheld



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I WAS HOME

As part of a service project, I traveled to Rwanda along with a few other physicians to help with medical needs. After two weeks, near the end of my trip, homesickness crept in. I missed my family, my comfortable bed, and my home.

On my last Sunday in Africa, I was able to coordinate my schedule so that I could attend church. Though the Church was not yet formally recognized in Rwanda, I was able to find a meeting time and directions on the Church's website.

And what directions they were: "Walk down the cobblestone road across from the Ministry building. Look for an open gate. Then walk down the steps."

As I followed these directions, I began to hear the distinct refrain of a familiar hymn. I descended the steps, and the words of "How Firm a Foundation" (*Hymns*, no. 85) reached my ears. The steps ended at a small building, where dozens of smiling people were milling around the entrance. Despite the fact that I

was a stranger to the congregation, I felt immediate kinship. Dozens of Rwandan brothers and sisters stepped forward to shake my hand, and as they did, an oppressive load of loneliness lifted off my back—I was home!

Entering the building, I attended a typical three-hour meeting block that was no different from the one in my home ward in California. Holders of

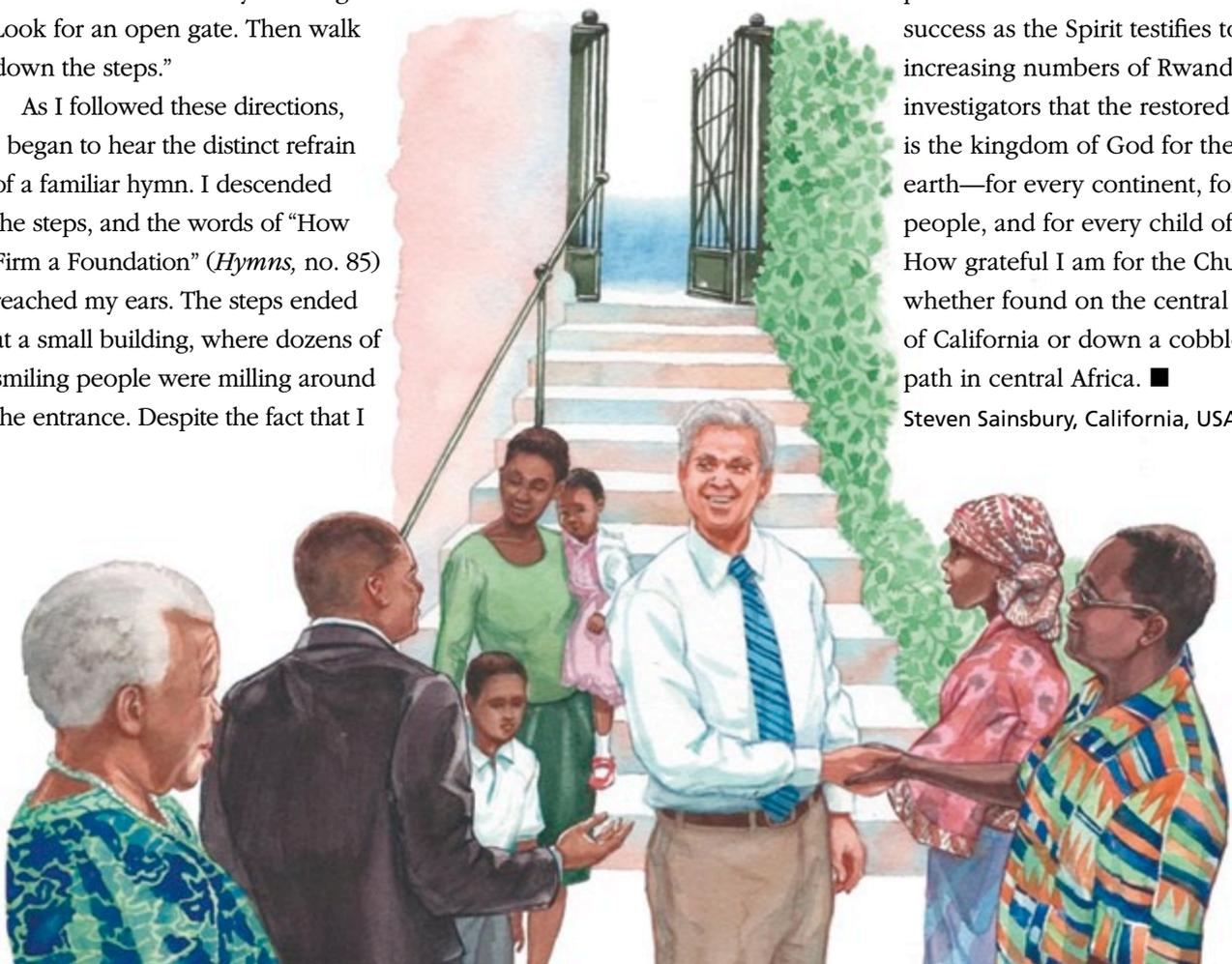
Despite the fact that I was a stranger to the congregation, I felt immediate kinship. Dozens of Rwandan brothers and sisters stepped forward to shake my hand.

the Aaronic Priesthood passed the sacrament, the talks centered on the Savior, and even the Sunday School lesson was the same one taught in my home ward that week.

Most important, the Spirit of the Lord permeated the services. Clearly, the Lord smiled favorably on these good people trying their best to serve Him. I learned that during the previous year, only a handful of Rwandans attended services here. Yet I counted more than 100 attendees, half of them smiling children.

Now that Rwanda has been opened to missionary work, I suspect the missionaries will find great success as the Spirit testifies to increasing numbers of Rwandan investigators that the restored Church is the kingdom of God for the entire earth—for every continent, for every people, and for every child of God. How grateful I am for the Church, whether found on the central coast of California or down a cobblestone path in central Africa. ■

Steven Sainsbury, California, USA



WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO REXBURG?

After decades of living where members of the Church are a minority, my husband and I moved into a neighborhood in Rexburg, Idaho, USA, that contained only two nonmember families. It was our good fortune to live next to one of them.

The father was mowing his lawn the first time we drove into our driveway. My husband and I crossed our lawn to get acquainted. As I put out my hand, I asked, “So what brought your family to Rexburg?”

He replied, “My job—and we searched specifically for a town that needed to be introduced to Christ.”

I felt as though a bucket of cold water had been thrown in my face, but

I smiled. I determined at that moment that no matter what our new neighbor said or did, we would become the *best* neighbors the family ever had. We would try to respond in every interaction with them in a kind, loving, and reasonable way, as the Savior would.

The following eight years brought many shared activities between our families. The mother was invited to and attended Relief Society activities. She invited me and many of our Latter-day Saint neighbors to a Christian women’s retreat sponsored by her church. My husband and I were invited to their children’s dance and piano recitals.

I determined that no matter what our new neighbor said or did, we would become the *best* neighbors the family ever had.

Their family was included in neighborhood cookouts and parties. And we received calls from their older children when they needed rides home from work and couldn’t reach their parents.

The parents worried that their children might begin to like Latter-day Saints too much, so they didn’t let their sons join our ward Scouting program. But our home was considered a safe place, where they let their children play when our grandchildren visited.

Every time our neighbors tried to help us see “the error of our ways,” we reminded them that we had the utmost respect for their beliefs and the way they lived and nurtured their children. We then added that we expected the same respect for our beliefs, which also centered on the Savior’s teachings.

When the mother tried to make our differences into a deep, uncrossable chasm by claiming that Latter-day Saints believed in a “different Jesus,” I reminded her that we both believed He is divine and the beloved Son of God. Eventually she and I enjoyed a warm and friendly relationship.

Their family moved without joining the Church. But if they can say, “We lived among Mormons; they are good and respectful people with sincere hearts,” then I feel we succeeded in being good neighbors and in helping them become more open and fair in their assessment of Latter-day Saints. ■

Sandra Rush, Idaho, USA



A BOX OF PICTURES

Several years ago my husband and I were dumping a load at the local landfill when I noticed one of the ladies who worked there picking up a box put into the incinerator. Suddenly the box broke open, and some photographs fell out.

As I watched, I had a strong impression to go and get that box of pictures. I jumped out of the car to help pick up the pictures. The lady and I both felt that the photographs had been thrown out by mistake, and I convinced her to let me take the pictures to try to find someone who would like to have them.

Sifting through the hundreds of photographs in the box, I found an envelope addressed to someone in Warburg, Alberta, Canada. Over the next several years, I wrote a few letters to people with the same last name, but I never got a reply.

After my family got access to the Internet, I discovered that there was a historical society in Warburg. I asked if anyone who worked there recognized the names I had found on the back of the pictures.

One month later we received a call from a man who had been contacted by the historical society. He said his sister lived close to us, and he asked if she could see the pictures. Of course we said yes.

The next day, Floyd and Beth Hawthorn, both Latter-day Saints, came to see the pictures. When I

opened the box, Brother Hawthorn said, "Well, there he is," pointing to the picture on top. It was a picture of Sister Hawthorn's grandfather.

As they picked up picture after picture, Brother and Sister Hawthorn told us stories about the people in each photograph. The Hawthorns doubted that they were related to the person who had discarded the pictures, and

they had no idea why the photographs had ended up at the landfill.

I feel strongly that Heavenly Father helped me return the photographs to the Hawthorn family. I testify that family history work is one of the most important works to be done. If we are willing to do the work, the Lord will help us do it. ■

Cindy Heggie, Alberta, Canada

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