



By Elder
Kent D. Watson
Of the Seventy

Our Senior Missionaries

*They are “as a dew from the Lord,
as the showers upon the grass.”*

As a member of the Asia Area Presidency, I have the special privilege to serve in an area of the world I learned to love as a young missionary over 45 years ago. Things have changed since then. What was then the Southern Far East Mission now comprises over 25 missions. A few members in a few branches have grown to 750,000 members. Chapels dot the landscape, and temple worship is available to our Asian members.

As the Church has grown in Asia, I have come to love and appreciate a group of people who seek no reward, no honor, and no other worldly emoluments. They seek only to glorify our Father in Heaven. They are our senior missionaries: wonderful, seasoned brothers and sisters who are quietly and diligently helping “to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness” (D&C 1:30).

Their experience, faith, testimony, and love enable them to perform

wonderful miracles in establishing and strengthening the Church in our part of the Lord’s vineyard—from Ulaanbaatar to New Delhi. They are those whom Micah described: “The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass” (Micah 5:7).

In many cases they were surprised at the locations to which they were called. Some of them, perhaps like the prophet Jonah, may have chosen Tarshish over Nineveh, as it were. But they did not “flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord” or reside “in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:3, 17). Rather, knowing their calls came from the Lord, “they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matthew 4:20).

Some of their numerous and diverse assignments include working in temples, teaching seminary and institute, serving in mission offices, administering the Perpetual Education Fund, serving in branches (teaching, training, activating, and sharing), mentoring



Senior missionaries serve in numerous and diverse assignments.



AN INDISPENSABLE INGREDIENT

“As welfare missionaries in South America, we had the privilege of working with members of the Church as well as those not of our faith. We worked with a variety of organizations that, together with the Church, implemented a number of humanitarian projects.

“We spent much of our time working with orphanages, hospitals, prisons, medical clinics, and foundations that help the disadvantaged, disabled, poor, and needy.

“Although we didn’t teach the gospel in lessons as do the young missionaries, we had many spiritual experiences as we saw changes take place in the lives of the needy as they received help and felt their faith increase as they recognized the real source of that help.

“Missionary couples add an indispensable ingredient to the missionary effort with their vast past experience. The Church needs more missionary couples than ever before, and the couples who could serve need the blessings that are waiting for them.”

Charles E. and Julia Cartmill, Idaho, USA



PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEVE BUNDERSON, HYUN GYU LEE, WELDEN C. ANDERSEN, CODY BELL, FARELL BARLOW, AND DAVID STOKER



WE NEED SENIOR COUPLES

Included in such a long list of dedicated servants of the Lord is an increasing number of senior couples who make an indispensable contribution to the work. How we love and need couples in virtually every mission of this Church!

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Abide in Me,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2004, 30.

and helping people upgrade job skills and enhance employment, working in their professional specialties (law, finance, engineering, education, health care), coordinating humanitarian services, and providing relief during floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. Some of them even get to participate in finding, teaching, and baptizing new members!

Elder Phil and Sister Brenda Frandsen are one such couple. They served in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. In addition to his other responsibilities, Elder Frandsen served as a counselor to the mission president. The following brief interview with the Frandsens illustrates the thoughts and feelings of many couples and may provide insight to those considering missionary service.

What were your thoughts as you contemplated serving a mission?

Sister Frandsen: “We had always talked about serving a mission after

our children were grown. When the time came, it was hard to agree on where we would go and what we would do. After much discussion, Elder Frandsen suggested that we leave the choice up to the Lord. When we received our mission call, it could not have been more exciting. We consider it a very special blessing!”

What were your feelings about returning to your original mission field?

Elder Frandsen: “Returning after a 44-year absence has been a most rewarding experience. In an area where there was once a tiny branch in a rented building, there now stands a beautiful stake center. An eight-year-old boy I knew then is a devoted stake president now. Progress in this part of the world has been truly marvelous. Every day there is a new spiritual experience as Sister Frandsen and I labor to help individuals gain or strengthen their testimonies.”

Do you feel that you are effectively utilized?

Elder Frandsen: “We have been able to use our talents and experiences, and we have discovered talents that we didn’t know we had. I have been able to relearn much of my Chinese. Sister Frandsen can answer the phone in Chinese and is able to read names in order to forward the mail. We feel that learning new skills at our age is good for old brains!”

But what about your family?

Sister Frandsen: “I worried about being away from children and grandchildren. However, there are amazing technological advances in communication available to senior missionaries. In some respects, I hear from and see more of our family than we ever did when we were home. We will have at least four grandchildren born while we are here, which we count as one of the greatest blessings of all. Although I will miss holding the newborn babies, we will get to see pictures and videos as soon as each event happens. Rather than taking us away from family, in many ways our mission has brought us closer together.”

Elder Frandsen: “Actually, we feel that we have enlarged our family by going on a mission. We are ‘grandparents’ to the missionaries. Each day we are excited for young missionaries to share their missions with us. We love them—and they love us back! Don’t you enjoy hearing returned missionaries report their experiences of sharing the gospel? We get to hear those experiences every day while they are fresh and largely unedited. Watching the missionaries mature and grow into effective gospel teachers and leaders is priceless!”

Sister Frandsen: “While we have been gone, we have still been doing missionary work back in Arizona. Two of our best friends have invited the missionaries into their homes. Additionally, our daughter and her husband decided to share the gospel with someone. As a



result, one of their friends was recently baptized. The more we try to serve, the more blessings we receive. It is impossible to get ahead of the Lord.”

Is serving a mission fulfilling to you personally?

Elder Frandsen: “Missionary work is never boring! There are new challenges and new adventures every day. In addition to our office duties, we teach an English class on Saturday morning and a Gospel Doctrine class on Sunday morning. Twice a week we teach college-preparation English classes for returned missionaries. We are also involved in finding and teaching investigators. Every opportunity for service opens up new doors for teaching the gospel.”

Any advice for couples contemplating a mission?

Sister Frandsen: “Perhaps one of my biggest fears was health concerns; instead, we have experienced health blessings. Our missionary schedule is healthful. We get up early, retire early, exercise daily, and eat nutritious foods. The Lord blesses missionaries with strength to perform their labors. You need not be afraid!”

Elder Frandsen: “We sometimes smile when those back home think that we are making a sacrifice. The sacrifice is miniscule compared to the blessings, joy, and satisfaction that God gives us each day.”

The Frandsens’ experiences are typical of comments we hear from other senior missionaries serving throughout Asia. Recently, one senior couple became emotional when advised that they could finish their mission one month early so they could be home at Christmastime. We assumed that their tears were tears of joy for the opportunity of being reunited with their children and grandchildren at Christmas. Little did we understand that their tears were tears of sadness. Knowing that they might never have another opportunity to serve in this capacity again, they desired to spend one last Christmas in the mission field!

I honor our senior missionaries. They truly are given power in places where needed to lay the foundation of this Church and bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness. ■

To learn more about mission opportunities for seniors, visit www.lds.org/csm/index.html.

Above, from left: Elder and Sister Frandsen with missionaries in their district; Elder Frandsen prepares to go tracting with the younger elders; Sister Frandsen serves in the Primary; the Mexico City Mexico Temple, where Brother and Sister Ortiz served (see below); Elder and Sister Lopes were called to help collect and write the history of the Church in Brazil.

BLESSINGS OF SERVING

My wife and I were called to serve in the Mexico City Temple. We greatly enjoyed the holy character of the work. We talked often about the wonderful experiences we were having and wept because we could feel the Spirit. It was the happiest and most wonderful time of our lives. Our faith and testimonies increased because we were serving the Lord with love and faith in His great work.”

Pedro Córdoba Ortiz, Aguascalientes, Mexico