



WHEN SENIOR MISSIONARIES Return Home

By Christy Monson
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My husband and I served as member and leader support missionaries in the Arkansas Little Rock Mission. We loved the Saints there and knew we were serving where the Lord wanted us to be.

When our mission ended, however, I was surprised at how disoriented I felt. I had expected to be overjoyed to be home again, but in truth my heart was heavy. We had been so busy in the mission field, and now, suddenly, I felt as if I had almost nothing to do. Plus, I missed the Saints in Memphis, Tennessee, where we had served. Was this normal? I wondered. Do all senior missionaries experience a letdown when they come home? I spoke with several returned senior couples to find out, and their advice on how to reenter “normal life” worked wonders.

1. Keep serving.

Find new ways to minister to others, serve at Church, or help in your community. As we serve, we focus on the needs of others rather than on our own worries, concerns, and disappointments. We look outward instead of inward. Our love and empathy for others grow, as does our circle of friends.

Jeff and Tracy Scussel served in the Wyoming Mormon Trail Mission. “We felt like we were constantly filled with light,” Jeff recalled. “As missionaries our lives were full of work and service, so when we returned home to Montana, we felt lost.”

New service opportunities at home helped the Scussels reacclimate to normal life. Both volunteered for community organizations—Sister Scussel with foster care for children and Brother Scussel with Scouting.



When our mission ended, my heart was heavy. I wondered, “Do other senior couples feel this way too?”

My husband and I also learned the value of post-mission service. Soon after coming home we were called to serve in the Ogden Utah Temple, where we had worked before our mission. We also started volunteering at a local hospital. Once our lives were busily engaged in service again, my feelings of displacement passed.

Susan Last served as a member and leader support missionary in the Illinois Chicago Mission. She loved the members she worked with, and she bonded with the missionaries too. “When I returned home to Utah,” she recalled, “I felt like a stranger. In my ward, there were a lot of new people that I didn’t know.” So, she immersed herself in service. She took soup to elderly people in her area. She volunteered for the American Cancer Society and continued to do missionary work in her ward. “I enjoy using social media to keep in touch with the people I grew to love on my mission,” she said. “I also go to lunch with

some of the missionaries who live in my area. We share mission experiences and talk about the Saints we love.”

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “Christ did not just speak about love; He showed it each day of His life. He did not remove Himself from the crowd. Being amidst the people, Jesus reached out to the one. He rescued the lost. He didn’t just teach a class about reaching out in love and then delegate the actual work to others. He not only taught but also showed us how to ‘succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees’ [Doctrine and Covenants 81:5].”¹

As we continue to seek ways to love and bless others, just as we did during our missions, we can be confident that we are engaged once again in the Lord’s work. As King Benjamin said, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).



2. Keep praying for help and guidance.

As a missionary, you no doubt felt an assurance that God leads the work of salvation and cares for all His children. You likely even felt Him leading and guiding you. His careful attention to your needs will continue at home as you reach out to Him in prayer. He can bless you with a feeling of peace and normalcy. He can even help you reengage in service if you ask for His help.

“Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48).

3. Keep sharing.

Your experiences in the mission field built your faith and testimony. As you share your experiences with others, those experiences will continue to sustain you and invite the Spirit. Speaking in sacrament meeting, before the high council, or at firesides are all wonderful opportunities. Even simple conversations with neighbors and friends give them a chance to rejoice with you in the blessings you have received.

And of course, there’s your family. Consider holding a family reunion. Bring all your children and grandchildren together. Or, if such a reunion isn’t feasible, consider visiting them each individually in their homes. The spirit of missionary work is catching. Spreading it will lift your family and possibly inspire them to pursue a full-time mission as well.

Milan and Leslie Kunz presided over the Nebraska Omaha Mission. For three years they served the Lord every hour of every day. It was a great experience but so intense that they were ready to come home to Pennsylvania when it was over. “It took us a while to reengage with normal life,” Elder Kunz, currently an Area Seventy, said.

They scheduled a large family reunion soon after their mission—anxious to see everyone again. The stake president asked them to serve in the Pathway program (now known as BYU-Pathway Worldwide), and soon they were asked to coordinate the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple open house and dedication. “We love being engaged in the work of the Lord,” Sister Kunz said. The two have been called to serve as president and matron of the temple beginning in November.



4. Spend time in the temple.

My husband and I found that spending as much time as possible in the temple helped us feel close to the Lord and His servants. Service in the temple and association with family history activities are actually additional forms of missionary work. I find a heavenly peace in the temple that comes to me in no other place.

5. Let music heal your soul.

President Russell M. Nelson said: “Music has power to provide spiritual nourishment. It has healing power. It has the power to facilitate worship, allowing us to contemplate the Atonement and the Restoration of the gospel, with its saving principles and exalting ordinances. It provides power for us to express prayerful thoughts and bear testimony of sacred truths.”²

Cecilia Turrado served as a family history consultant in the Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. She loved the fellowship she felt among the missionaries at the library. “Love,” she said, “is the best word to describe my mission.”

When she returned home to California, she surrounded herself with family and ward friends, but she missed the intense love she felt as a missionary. To cope, she said, “I immersed myself in the scriptures, and I listened to classical and Church music. That helped me feel better.”

6. Consider serving another mission.

Kuhn and Norma Marshall served as humanitarian missionaries in the Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission. They shed many tears as they left the mission field and returned to Oregon, USA. “If we had it to do over again,” Sister Marshall said, “we would have immediately served another away-from-home mission.”

The Church has made it easy for seniors to serve missions—either at home or away. Council with your spouse, your family, and your priesthood leaders to decide what’s best for you. Perhaps all the wonderful blessings you enjoyed on your first mission can be yours all over again. ■

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Are My Hands,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 70.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “The Power and Protection of Worthy Music,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2009, 16.