

# *Israel's Advocate: New Region assignments, comments by an Apostle*

By Brother Peter Benyola

The importance of the *Divine Commission* of The Church of Jesus Christ, which is to share the Lord's Gospel with the Native Americans, was reinforced at General Church Conference. Brother Paul Palmieri, the General Church President, encouraged the Church, at all levels, to take a more active part in Native American outreach.

The Native American Outreach Committee and all interested members met at the World Conference Center early on April 25, 2008 to discuss the role of the Regions in performing Native American outreach. During the meeting, Apostle Paul Palmieri, General Church President, also resolved that the Regions will report by October Conference the progress they are making. In the evening, during an executive committee meeting, NAOC materials were prepared and distributed for the Region Presidents, which included a plan to share information about Native American organizations and locations with the Regions and require their Missionary Operating Committees to develop plans to geographically assign teams. The Region Missionary Operating Committees have until summertime to prepare their plans and submit them to the NAOC and then until October to start reporting their activity.

"The general NAOC has been established to encourage missionary works among the Native American," said Brother John Griffith, Quorum of Twelve Liaison to the NAOC. "Of course, we look to the priesthood and membership to carry this responsibility given us. The task of spreading the seed is something we all have to look at as our job. It's almost like, if you want the pay, you have to do the work. During these latter-day times, we anticipate and look forward to greater blessings as we involve ourselves in our missionary endeavors, especially with Joseph (Native Americans)."

"Because of the extreme importance of this work, the Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve wish to monitor, in particular, the importance of the work of the NAOC. This is a reflection of our many discussions on the subject ... We pray that everyone will find their place in that missionary endeavor. Joseph is the key to the restoration of the entire world and will serve as a blessing to the Church in its missionary endeavors throughout the world ... every soul is important to the Lord. It has always been preached by apostles of old that the work among Joseph is necessary for our success ... There always seems to be an added blessing or a particular blessing given when we see Joseph receiving the Gospel. It's all for the fulfilling of God's will."

The Quorum's great support of the Native American Outreach, a domestic effort, should not be interpreted as *disinterest* in the Church's foreign missionary endeavors. Rather, it is an *acknowledgment* of its place as part of a broader process, which process has been explained in the Scriptures. By detailing the sequence of events in God's plan, the Book of Mormon gives valuable structure and shape to the Great Commission assigned by Jesus Christ.

"I think in fairness to all missionary works, we wouldn't suggest that one soul is more important (than) another," Brother John said. "Scriptures indicate clearly that the original apostles were told to take the Gospel to all kindred, tongues and nations, and we hope to do that as a Church. With the advent of the Book of Mormon coming onto the scene ... as was prophesied, it has brought to light and has redefined God's love for His covenant people, Israel — not forgetting His original promise to Abraham, that through his seed, all nations would be blessed. We have seen that unfold through the birth of Christ and the highlighting of the re-gathering of Israel to the fold of Christ. In addition to that, the Book of Mormon defines God's plan for salvation that Israel might come back, or be reclaimed. The first step is through the Seed of Joseph, or the Native American, as we know them today. With the allowance of the inheritance given the Gentiles of the Gospel, we see that all rights and privileges given Israel are equally rewarded to all of mankind who accept Christ. In other words, they are adopted in. The Church, being primarily Gentile, has been given the responsibility as pronounced through the Book of Mormon, that the Gospel must go back to Israel, beginning with Joseph."

Many members have a yearning or drive to get involved with some kind of missionary work, and have prayed that the Lord would guide them to a particular area. In lieu of a precise answer through experience, a saint of God with this desire is Scripturally directed — by default — to what we call the *Divine Commission*. To this point, Brother John said, "It's definitely a wonderful start. Through His plan, He has ensured that all will come to Him — but He does have a plan, and we should respect that ... we have had numerous experiences given to the Church relative to the work among Joseph, just as we have had experiences to go in foreign fields. It's hard to evaluate the Lord's plan. We're not following our priorities, we're following God's priorities."

Passages from the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and Church history that thoroughly verify Brother John Griffith's respective points are as follows: Psalm 128; Jacob 5:75, 6:2,3; James 5:7; Isaiah 49:5,6; Romans 11:11- 15; Isaiah 42:6-7; Alma 29:1-2; Jacob 5:18; Matthew 28:16-20; The Book of Mormon Title Page; Genesis 22:15-18; Acts 3:25; Matthew 10:5,6; II Nephi 3:5, 11-13; Zechariah 2:10-12; 8:23; III Nephi 21:22-24; Jacob 5:61-63, 74; Romans 14:11; *Religious Experiences and Expectations*, Wm. Cadman, pages 22-24; *A History of the Church of Jesus Christ*, W.H. Cadman, page 32; *The Church's Divine Commission*, Bob Watson, pages 4, 7, 17, 36.