

Reader voices: Come join the ranks of LDS senior missionaries

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Family photo

Elder and Sister Johnsen enter the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, in October 2011.

It has been 40 years since I lugged my suitcases into the Missionary Training Center in downtown Salt Lake City to begin a Mormon mission to northern California, so obviously some things have changed. Now to begin our service as senior missionaries, my husband and I traveled from our home in Spring, Texas, to Provo, Utah. The thing that hasn't changed is the feeling in the MTC. It still has the most amazing spirit and energy of anyplace I've ever been in my life.

The senior couples and sisters entering the MTC with us are among the largest group that has come here to begin their missions for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There are 102 of us, most serving as senior missionaries for the first time. Some have always planned to serve, while others are responding to President Thomas S. Monson's request in the October 2010 Semiannual General Conference in which he expressed the LDS Church's need for [“many, many more senior couples.”](#)

Not only are our locations scattered across the globe, but our assignments are as varied as those listed in the Senior Missionary Opportunity Bulletin. We will be living in locations such as Albania, Tonga, India, England, Italy, Micronesia Guam, Russia, Fiji, California and Hawaii. We will be serving in mission offices, as Church Education System teachers and directors, as cultural specialist, in temples and providing member and leader support.

Whether I gaze at the MTC group as a whole or peer searchingly into the pure eyes of each missionary, I know that I am part of one of the most amazing and powerful groups on the face of the earth today. We are

sacrificing a large portion of our both young and older lives to go anywhere the Lord sends us to share the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, we are paying for the privilege, and what a privilege it is to be able to qualify to be part of this amazing army of God sweeping the earth with the message of the restoration of the Lord's church in these last days. As Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve promised us, "Your mission will be a sacred opportunity to bring others to Christ and help prepare for the Second Coming of the Savior."

[Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, of the Quorum of the Twelve, who spoke in the October 2011 Semiannual General Conference](#), has renewed the call to arms saying that "we need tens of thousands of more missionaries in the months and years that lie ahead" and "we need thousands of more couples serving in the missions of the church."

What an opportunity we have as members. The tangible feeling of the importance of the work begins the minute we enter the Missionary Training Center and will continue as we head to our assignment in the Micronesia Guam Mission. With Elder Holland I reiterate, "Come join the ranks!" ("[We Are All Enlisted](#)," Hymns, No. 250)

Gail H. Johnsen resides in Spring, Texas, and is a member of the Klein Texas Stake. She graduated from Brigham Young University and served a mission to northern California. She is a writer and lyricist. She is the mother of seven children.

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