

Media Alert

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Meet the Thordersons, Newly Called Mission Leaders for the Utah St. George Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

President Nels W. Thorderson and Sister Gina Thorderson have been called to serve as the new mission leaders for the Utah St. George Mission which encompasses from Parowan to the north to Mesquite, Nevada to the south, and over to Kanab, in Kane County. They and their two daughters are from Tupelo, Mississippi, which is the 7th most populist city in Mississippi (about 38,000 people) and is considered a commercial, industrial, and cultural hub of northern Mississippi. It's known as the birthplace of Elvis Presley, who is commemorated with numerous statues. Tupelo is located between Memphis, TN and Birmingham, AL on I-22.

The Thordersons started their service on July 1, 2025. They are succeeding President Kevin D. Staples and Sister Sonja G. Staples, who recently completed their three year mission assignment and relocated to Colorado.

Prior to the call as Utah St. George Mission leaders, President Thorderson was serving as a counselor in the Arkansas Little Rock Mission, as a Memphis Temple ordinance worker, and as an Institute teacher with Sister Thorderson. Sister Thorderson was serving as a youth Sunday school teacher, as a Stake Seminary & Institute supervisor, and Memphis Temple ordinance worker when they were called. There are lots of service opportunities in the south.

Their missionary purpose is to invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.

President Thorderson was born in Illinois and raised in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. Sister Thorderson was born and raised in Melbourne, Florida. They have 2 daughters ages 24 and 26, who were born in Michigan, but raised in Tupelo, Mississippi where the family has lived for 20 years.

Their oldest daughter Maren is currently living with them in St. George while applying to graduate school to become a physician assistant. She served a full-time mission in the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission. Their younger daughter lives in Boston and is studying to become a midwife.

If you have met President Thorderson, you'll realize quickly that he's very tall. President Thorderson stands 6' 4" tall, however, he is the shortest of five boys. He also has one sister. His three older brothers played college basketball on the same team at the same time. President Thorderson rebelled by attending BYU in Provo, Utah.

When the Thordersons began their training at the Mission Training Center in Provo, Utah they had some special company. President Thorderson's brother and sister-in-law were also there training to serve as mission leaders in the Mexico Merida Mission. According to Sister Thorderson, "We joke that he always needs family to keep an eye on him in the MTC because his older sister went into the MTC on the same day as him in 1989."

Soon after the Thordersons received their mission assignments, the President's oldest brother (and tallest of the brothers) and his wife were asked to serve as Directors of the Rome Italy Visitors' Center. They say it's really been a fun year sharing experiences every Sunday over Zoom.

Before the call as a mission leader, President Thorderson worked as an orthopaedic surgeon. He is fellowship trained in foot and ankle specialty within orthopaedics. His work life has helped prepare him for this current mission assignment by teaching him that it's people that matter most and everyone needs healing.

President Thorderson stated, "Our mission is to be in line with what God wants to happen here and to help all realize the importance of gathering Israel. Our missionaries are working with the local members to help them and their friends of other faiths come closer to Christ. We are focusing on joyfully gathering Israel one by one in Christ."

Missionaries serving in the Utah St. George Mission, are out among the people, serving them, learning to love them, and inviting them to take steps that will help them feel more joy. There are approximately 140 teaching missionaries and also approximately 140 service missionaries. According to Sister Thorderson, "Our service missionaries are so incredible and work so hard throughout the community."

According to the Thordersons there are several missionaries from Utah, Idaho, and Arizona, as well as other parts of the United States. There are international missionaries who come to us from Thailand, Brazil, Cambodia, Korea, Hungary, Germany, Spain, England, Bolivia, Honduras, Mexico, Samoa, Tonga, and Tahiti. Sister missionaries also serve in the St. George Visitors' Center. They come from around the world so they can give personalized tours of the Visitors' Center to people in their native languages.

The Thordersons have been witness to miracles (the hand of the Lord) in their lives before their mission and since arriving in St. George. President Thorderson has had back problems for years and which has been getting progressively worse. In 2024, he and Sister Thorderson prayerfully decided he would medically retire. Sister Thorderson was working as a therapist for Family Services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and decided to stop working at the same time so they could sync their schedules.

The local Tupelo Mississippi newspaper printed an article informing people that Dr. Thorderson would be retiring in December so if they needed anything taken care of they should get into the office quickly. Three days after the article was published, they received their first contact regarding a potential service assignment from Elder Jorg Klebingat, General Authority Seventy. Knowing that Church leaders in Salt Lake City, Utah probably aren't reading the local newspaper in Tupelo, Mississippi, we felt Heavenly Father truly knows us and is truly leading our lives.

Another miracle happened when they walked into their first St. George Mission Zone Conference with their missionaries. According to Sister Thorderson, "We felt an instant love for all of our missionaries and we had not shaken a single hand yet."

When asked what they would like to see accomplished in the three years they will be in St. George, serving as mission leaders, the Thordersons said, "The gathering of Israel is the most important work we can be involved in so that we can help bring all of God's children home to Him and prepare the earth for His second coming. We have loved meeting the people of the St. George area. The missionaries we work with are a true delight and bring happiness to us every day. They are so faithful and diligent. One of our biggest hopes is that we will help our missionaries become lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ, not just fulfilling a mission but following God for a lifetime."



