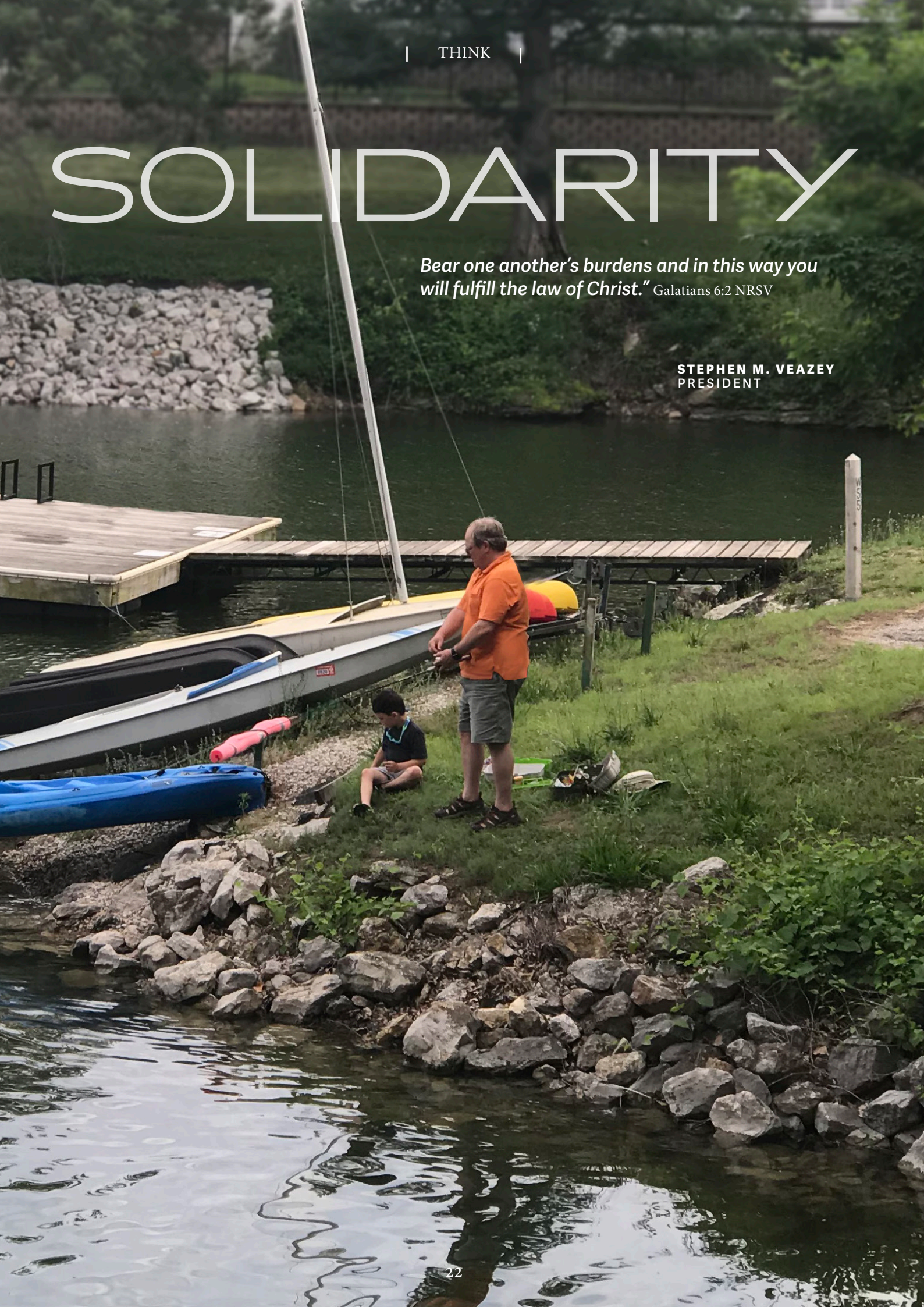


| THINK |

SOLIDARITY

Bear one another's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2 NRSV

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One day I hope to write a book about the funniest things that happened to me or that I saw or heard while serving as a minister. Some of you might remember the situations or even recognize yourselves in the stories, but I promise not to use real names or specific places—to protect everyone involved!

So, as a test of interest, I would like to tell you about a funny thing that happened to me one time when visiting a Central American nation as church president. I was sitting in a congregation of hundreds, waiting to speak. Everyone was on molded plastic chairs—the stackable kind—that had seen their share of use, hot sunlight, and subjection to other elements over the years.

I was listening as best I could to the speaker, who was talking in Spanish, when all of a sudden my chair—and this is the best way I know to describe it—exploded under me! One second I was listening intently, and the next I was flat on my back on the floor. The congregation gasped and then fell into an uneasy quiet. All eyes were on me, and no one was sure what to do.

I was embarrassed but also found it very humorous. I started laughing at my predicament. Just as I was beginning to sit up, there was a loud cracking sound. Another chair blew to pieces under a man several rows over and behind me. After another gasp and moment of silence, a quick-thinking brother thrust his arm and clenched fist into the air and shouted something in Spanish. Everyone laughed and cheered.

Curious, I asked a translator, “What did he say?” The translator, who was laughing, too, finally got the English words out. He said, “That brother who raised his fist in the air from his prone position shouted ‘Solidarity!’”

His action and expression of solidarity transformed a very awkward situation into a communal experience. It broke the tension regarding what had happened to me and made a point.

Since then, I have thought a lot about the concept of solidarity, which means mutual support within a group, between groups, and among individuals. It refers to relationships of common concern, purpose,

and love that tie a group, community, or society together with a sense of oneness.

In other words, solidarity is at the heart of genuine community. It includes the willingness to be with and stand up for the suffering and marginalized in the community and beyond. In this day, I think we need to expand our understanding of solidarity to include the Earth. Our planet is gasping for clean air, soil, and water to continue to support life as we know it.

The gospel, especially the concept of the body of Christ, calls us to relationships of solidarity. In this regard, I am reminded of the verse in Galatians 6:2 NRSV: “Bear one another’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

I also recall the spiritual prompting that I experienced which resulted in Doctrine and Covenants 165:3e: “...relating in Christlike love to the circumstances of others as if they were one’s own.”

Community of Christ is called to be in solidarity with those around the world whose backs are against the wall (or on the floor) who need to be seen, heard, and helped in ways that are the most helpful to liberate them from life-crushing conditions, whatever they might be. If we are going to walk with Jesus, the peaceful One, we must walk with those for whom Jesus showed particular concern and compassion.

And, as noted before, we need to expand our concept of solidarity to our environment, which is created to sustain all life.

Oh, by the way, news travels fast! Each place I went afterward on my ministerial trip, even in the most remote areas, they made sure I was sitting on two or three stacked chairs...just in case!

Solidarity forever! It is the way of Community in Christ!

