

Grand Rapids Wards Church History

Having been established many years earlier, the church in Grand Rapids and surrounding areas has begun to have steady growth, albeit, slow. As of 1975 the Branch in Grand Rapids had become a ward and in time, two – The Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids 2nd Ward. Through a series of boundary changes and continuing growth, there were other units added, such as the Wyoming Ward and the Comstock Park Ward, the latter of which was changed to the Grand Valley Ward. Additionally, in an effort to serve emerging special interest groups, a Hearing Impaired and Spanish speaking units were formed.

It has been a period of much change and growth, and through it all there emerges a history, which has been difficult to chronicle without a great deal of personal records, and again, fading memories. As best as can be determined by the author, the following loosely represents the chronology of the wards and branches in the Grand Rapids area since the early 1960's.

Year	Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids II	Comstock Park to GrandValley	Wyoming	Grand River	Grandville
1960	K. Simons					
1961	"					
1962	W. Tinney					
1963	"					
1964	J. Hughes					
1965	"					
1966	"					
1967	"					
1968	D. Robinaugh					
1969	G. Felch		F. Perdue			
1970	D. Wadsworth		"			
1971	"		L. Sheneman			
1972	"		"			
1973	R. Briem		"			
1974	"		"			
1975	D. McMonigle	"				
1976	"					
1977	"					
1978	"					
1979	C.Hinckley			R. Figueira		
1980	"			"		
1981	"			J. Carey		
1982	"			"		
1983	D. Larkin		D. Harmon	"		
1984	"		"	K. Price		
1985	"		D. Wadsworth	"		
1986	"		"	D. Ploehn		
1987	"		C. Perry	"	HI - S. Bloomfield	
1988	D. Fegel		"	J. Eveland	"	
1989	"		"	"	"	
1990	C. Stoddard		J. Jensen		HI - G. Slater	
1991	"	"		HI - J. Lewis		
1992	"	"		"		
1993	"	"		"		
1994	D. Stevens	"		"		
1995	"	J. Carey		"		
1996	C. Lybbert	M. Anderson	D. Stevens	B. Skidmore		
1997	"	"	"	"		
1998	"	K. Jones	"	"	Span-Sr. Missionary?	
1999	B. Merrell	"	"	"	(G. Garrick)?	
2000	"	"	"	HI - P. Phillips	?	
2001	"	"	D. Pace	"	?	
2002	J. Lewis	"	"	"	M. Estrate?	
2003	"	D. Sugiyama	"	"?	"?	
2004	"	"	"		"?	
2005	"	"	"	?	?	
2006	"	"	G. Aamodt		?	
2007	"	"	"		?	
2008	G. Perras	M. Robinaugh	"		?	
2009	"	"	"		?	
2010	"	"	"		?	
2011	"	"	A. Smith		G.Duran?	
2012	"	"	"	"?	"?	
2013	M. Hunsaker	K. Richmond	"		R. Soliz	
2014	"	"	J. Openshaw			
2015	"	"	"		"	
2016	"	"	"		"	
2017	"	"	"			
2018	D. Wallace	R. Birkinsha	G. Smith			
2019	"	"				
2020						

With this posting comes an opportunity for the reader to contribute a part of this history as he or she may have lived some of it. While the Wyoming Ward and the Hearing Impaired and Spanish units will have a separate histories written, perhaps there will be those who may be able to read, reflect, recall and submit items to be considered in the recollections of the past here in the Grand Rapids wards (including Comstock Park and Grand Valley Ward). Hopefully those contributions will be able to verify the facts, and add to the faith promoting and human-interest stories that identify the roots of our experience here in these wards.

Bishop Robinaugh recalls the contribution of many pairs of shoes to the church through Ann Gerner's non-member husband who was an officer of Wolverine Worldwide. The shoes were stored in his Bishop's office for a few months until it was determined how they would benefit the church. The Church welfare department, he recalls, wasn't able to use them, so they were distributed locally to ward and stake members, and the community to those in need.

Also he called one (Lester Allen?) to develop a map of all the members in the area to determine a good course for a ward division. The decision was to divide the area contrary to what he was seeing by this exercise. But eventually the ward boundary was changed and complied with the view he had had.

He remembers Friday evenings where a square dance caller came in and the ward enjoyed a social occasion, something of which he hasn't seen as much of in the church in recent times. There were also craft bazaars that the Relief Society conducted to raise funds for their budget. Since then the church has required all organizations of the ward to operate from the allocated ward budget.

Bishop Felch, at work as a city manager in Ionia, was released when he took another job in Colorado, after a year in the area here.

When Bishop Wadsworth was called, he didn't begin functioning for a couple of weeks due to an appendix surgery. His counselors, Harold Streeter and Charles Sherd, carried the ball until he was able to be up and about. His was an older ward membership, so at 29 and being married for only one year, he felt a little overwhelmed with the responsibilities of serving such a more mature membership. They probably felt similarly about his ability to serve – but as we know, the Lord makes up the difference, and we survived. His wife often observed that he was a “marrying and burying Bishop” as he performed many civil ceremonies and presided at a lot of funerals. Other reflections are posted in the latter paragraphs of the “Brief Early History of the Church in West Michigan.”

Bishop Sheneman remembers: Creating the Grand Rapids 2nd Ward was a very exciting event in the history of the Church in this area. The members had struggled for so many years to build up the priesthood body to allow the creation of this new unit. The new building was now a reality and was large enough to accommodate two wards. The first bishop called to serve in the new ward was Fred Perdue. This

was his second calling to serve as a bishop. He lived in the Hastings area. He really lived in the Battle Creek Ward but the stake president, Sylvan Wittwer, allowed him to serve in this new ward. That was good to have an experienced priesthood holder as the leader in our ward.

As with any units that have to share a building, that was a continual challenge especially true on Sunday. This was before the "block" schedule. We worked hard to make it work and it did.

In November of 1972 a new bishop was called, brother Larry Sheneman. He was a convert to the Church having been baptized in Feb 1963. He also was quite young at age, 27, but President Whitwer had said at one time that was one calling where he knew it was from the Lord. Brother Dale Emery and brother Roger Barry were called as his counselors. All the bishopric were local brethren. That was a first in the ward. The theme for the new bishopric was "110." They wanted everyone who held callings to give 110% in their service to the Lord and to the ward. The Bishopric had a very positive attitude and wanted to get things done. An example of that was that they had past welfare assessments of over \$6,000.00. Each year, another yearly assessment was given and it just kept adding up. The members were really stretched in that they had tithing, fast offering, budget fund, missionary fund and welfare to help contribute to. The Lord really blessed us in that we found an opportunity to raise funds so that they had money for all these areas. They did inventories for large stores, Yankee Stores, where members would go work from 10:00PM to 3 or 4:00AM doing the inventory and they raised enough to fund all the needs of the ward, plus they paid off the large accumulation welfare debt. What a grand spiritual experience for the whole ward.

Another experience the ward had where the bishopric felt inspired was when they planned a "Bishops Surprise Party." All were invited to the party. The ward needed to come up with \$1300.00 for some purpose. Instead of napkins placed on the tables next to the plates, they placed contribution slips and envelopes. Had a program and then the bishop explained the need. The members gave that evening \$1409.00. What a grand experience.

The ward continued to experience good growth as those moving to the Grand Rapids area tended to move to the southeast area of the city, which was within the ward boundaries. At this time the bishopric, with permission from the stake, started a dependent Sunday School and later a dependent branch, in the Hastings area just south of Grand Rapids. It wasn't long before they became a branch of the Church with Kent Gibson serving as the branch president and Bob Buckner and Bob Acheson as his counselors. That again was a spiritual experience for the members of the 2nd Ward.

Time came for another very exciting event in the growth of the Church in this area, the creation of the Grand Rapids Michigan Stake. Wow, no more trips to Lansing for stake meetings. What a blessing! From our ward, Glenn Goodwin was called as the new stake president. His calling was an example of another great blessing where

the Lord was so involved in the development of the Church here in the Grand Rapids area. That is probably covered in the creation of the stake chapter.

Time came for the release of Bishop Sheneman and brother David McMonigle was called as the new Bishop. With the creation of the Grand Rapids Michigan Stake, the priesthood was too thin to have enough leadership for the two wards and the stake in Grand Rapids so the decision was made to combine the two wards. Bishop McMonigle served as the Bishop of the larger Grand Rapids Ward. With the creation of the new stake and the demand on worthy priesthood holders to serve, the 2nd Ward was merged back into the Grand Rapids Ward.

Bishop Hinckley's journals record:

"With over 850 members [the Grand Rapids Ward] may well be the largest ward in the Church. Attendance runs about 25%... It is anticipated that the ward will be divided... which will solve some of the statistical problems but create a burden on the few active people who must carry the load and work on bringing more actives in. As anticipated, the ward was divided the next spring. I was ordained (as Bishop of the Grand Rapids Ward) and set apart on 3 June 1979, the same day the ward was divided. I called Les Allen as 1st counselor and Dave Larsen as 2nd counselor. Dave moved from the area about a year later and Tim Mack replaced him as a counselor in the bishopric.

"On 4 October 1981, both Tim Mack and Les Allen were released and Dave Harmon and Reo Pratt were sustained as counselors. All of these men were wonderful counselors. These were wonderful years in the ward. Two years after the ward was divided our sacrament meeting attendance was about 240, higher than it had been before the division.

"Elders quorum presidents included Tom McNeilis and Dave Sugiyama, R.S. presidents included Roni Brown. Roni's husband, Jack, was not a member but attended sacrament meeting with his family. Years later I drove to his daughter's house in the Salt Lake valley to participate in ordaining Jack an elder so that he and Roni could be sealed! Dan Williams was the ward mission leader during most of my tenure, and he was the most effective ward mission leader I have known. When he was called, our ward was at the bottom of the mission in terms of convert baptisms, and within a couple of years we were one of the most productive wards in the mission. We had many wonderful new converts during those years. Perhaps the most memorable was Andra Robinson, whose wife had always been very active. We noticed that Andra would come to Church if one of his children was giving a talk, so his poor children began giving talks almost every week! Andra ultimately was baptized and remains very active.

"A young and enthusiastic bishop, I worked energetically to make Latter-day Saints of this wonderful flock. I taught the importance of learning one's duty. I held special leadership training workshops on how to set and achieve

goals, how to conduct a meeting, how a presidency works, how to delegate and follow-up. My youth and enthusiasm probably exceeded my wisdom and inspiration.

"Several months after being called as bishop we held a ward social. At the social we played a simple game. Each member was given a piece of paper with a grid dividing it into several cells. In each cell was a statement such as 'Has the most grandchildren.' You were to find the person that could sign their name in a particular cell attesting to the specific attribute. One of the cells read 'Has read the Book of Mormon at least 5 times.' I had not been at the party very long when it became apparent that I was perhaps the only one there that could sign in that cell.

"Slowly I began to realize that the real key to helping ward members become true Latter-day Saints was not teaching them how to conduct a meeting or how to delegate. What they really needed was faith deeply rooted in a knowledge of the gospel as taught in the scriptures, particularly in the Book of Mormon. And more than that, they needed the continuous spiritual polishing which comes from reading the Book of Mormon.

"As this realization gradually came to me, it became clear what we needed to do as a ward. We refocused our energy on reading the scriptures every day, teaching from the scriptures, and bringing our scriptures with us to Church. As ward members immersed themselves in the Book of Mormon, wonderful things began to happen. People were more willing to accept callings. They were more effective in their callings. Sunday lessons became better. Temple attendance increased. Missionary work increased. Families grew stronger.

"Elder Yoshihiku Kikuchi was our stake conference visitor in late 1982 and invited us to hold a special fast and to conclude that fast with a prayer dedicating the area."

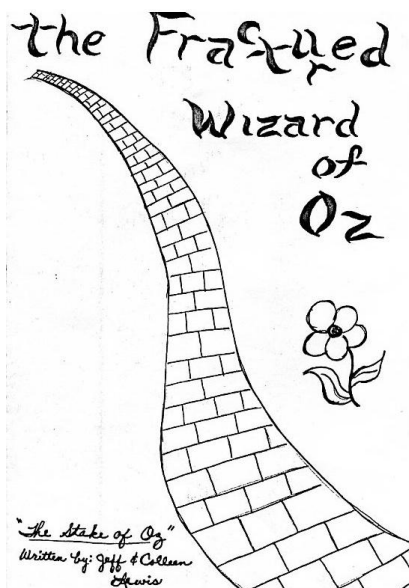
Included in the addendum to this chapter is a copy of the program of that special dedicatory meeting held on January 9, 1983, as well as a copy of the dedicatory prayer from the records of Bishop Hinckley.

Bishop Larkin recalls participating in Stake Welfare projects, both the apple orchard and the sugar beet project in Merrell, Michigan. He remembers falling out of an apple tree during work at the orchard. It knocked the breath out of him, but he wasn't hurt – in fact considered it fun to work at the orchard. Those pleasant fall days and the air filled with the aroma of fresh apples did make it enjoyable, though a lot of work. Work at the sugar beet farm was more daunting, especially looking down the mile long row of sugar beets that was one's assignment did overwhelm a bit. Some of those rows were pretty overgrown with weeds too.

Trips to the Chicago Temple for youth temple trips, was one of his favorite memories. He relates that on one such trip, "Brother Stoddard was driving my car

and we experienced a blowout as a result of hitting something on the freeway. The roads were very dark and sometimes, difficult to maneuver. We changed to the spare tire. Then something else was encountered on the road that destroyed the spare tire. We limped along for a while until we came to an interchange. We drove into a parking area – and lo and behold, there sat Darrell Hanson in a small Buick station wagon. We were driving an Olds Cutlass wagon – that just happened to have the exact same tires as the Buick. So that problem was solved. Heavenly Father apparently was looking out for us that evening.”

Then there was the “Fractured Wizard of Oz” production that he, and several others in two Grand Rapids Wards, participated in. It was a Relief Society social focusing on “visiting teaching,” and by association “home teaching,” that became quite a project. Jeff and Colleen Lewis, two very creative members, had just previous to this time moved into the area, wrote a play loosely based on “The Wizard of Oz,” which centered around a ward council and their efforts to reach out to certain members that presented significant challenges to their resources, so it seemed – except the Relief Society President confidently had the solution for all such problems, even the sister who, because of her seemingly “witchy” disposition, struck fear in the hearts of any who might be assigned to approach her. The Relief Society President (who became a “Dorothy” type) took all the assignments from her fellow ward council members and went forth to tackle them, even when a devastating storm wreaked havoc upon the chapel as she was leaving the building. Bishop Larkin was pleased to play the part of the “Scarecrow.” It was so well received that a matinee was performed the following day to an expanded group of invitees.



THE STAKE OF OZ
 "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link."
 Dorothy.....Pam Wadsworth
 Scarecrow.....Dennis Larkin
 Tin Man.....Robert Krieg
 Lion.....Larry Paulson
 Witch.....Tammy Tichelaar
 Glinda.....Nellie Wadsworth
 Bishop of Oz.....David Wadsworth
 Executive Secretary.....David Sugiyama
 PIANIST-David Flegel
 Dancers-Rena Petersen, Vicky Erspamer, Connie
 Thibodaux, Katie McGrath, Carolyn Blount,
 Rodney Rackham, Tammy Tichelaar, Nellie Wadsworth.
 Munchkins of R.S.-Joalyn Miller, Karen Root.
 Pistons-Randy Streeter, John Heredia.
 Script Writers Jeffrey & Colleen Lewis
 Song Writer Jeffrey Lewis
 Director Ronnie Brown
 Producer Colleen Lewis
 Production Mgr. Vicky Erspamer
 Coreography Rena Petersen
 Assistant Coreographers Colleen Lewis, Rodney
 Rackham, Craig Redding

Scenery & Props Chairman.....Scott Bloomfield
 Scenery Crew-Martin Molnar, Francine Molnar,
 Amy Southerlund, Rodney Rackham, Dave
 Sugiyama, Kevin Lewis, Vicky & Roger
 Erspamer.
 Lighting Chairman.....Kevin Lewis
 Lighting Crew-David Sugiyama, Bill Miller, Scott
 Bloomfield
 Sound Effects.....David McMonigle
 Sound Crew- Alan McMonigle, Bill Miller
 Costume Chairman.....Nellie Wadsworth
 Costume Crew- Joalyn Miller, Debby Sugiyama
 Kim Krieg
 Make-Up Chairman.....Betty Paulson
 Make-Up Specialist.....Susan Lewis
 Make-Up Crew- Nick Root
 Amplification thanks to Chuck & Jan Stoddard.

 * A special thanks to ALL who had a hand in
 this special evening. Especially to the
 families of the actors and behind scene
 crews for their support all these weeks
 of practice and extra nights.
 * We also want to thank those who helped
 prepare food for the fine dinner tonight.
 Without your help this evening could not
 have been the success it was.



*The cast of *The Fractured Wizard of Oz**

Working with the early morning seminary was another fond memory of Bishop Larkin, particularly presenting a breakfast for them once a month. At first it was quite simple, like toast and orange juice, with which the youth weren't real impressed. They then went all out and prepared a very special breakfast which was much better received, in fact helped to endear the students to the Bishopric and provide some fun and laughs with the youth. There were times when they picked up the students and waited for them so that they then could get them to their respective schools following seminary.

Now, you the reader (and hopefully among those readers will be other Bishops and ward leaders who have also served), have an opportunity to greatly expand this record by submitting your entries, as the author is sadly lacking in resources beyond those noted here to date.

ADDENDUM

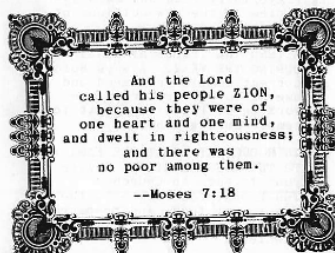
But no man is possessor
of all things except he
be purified and cleansed
from all sin.

And if ye are
purified and cleansed
from all sin, ye shall ask
whatsoever you will
in the name of Jesus
and it shall be done.

--D&C 50:28-29

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS

Grand Rapids Ward Priesthood Meeting January 9, 1983



50 YEARS
1933-1983
CELEBRATING
OUR JUBILEE YEAR

GRAND RAPIDS WARD GOALS FOR EACH MEMBER 1983

- 1** READ THE SCRIPTURES EVERY DAY. Prayerfully read and mark your copies of the new editions of the Standard Works.
- 2** ATTEND THE TEMPLE AT LEAST ONCE DURING THE YEAR. Always hold a current temple recommend and use it to perform ordinance work on at least one visit to a temple during 1983.
- 3** INTRODUCE AT LEAST ONE FAMILY TO THE MISSIONARIES. Invite your friends to Church functions, contribute to the missionary fund, and prepare you and your children to serve missions.

SPECIAL WARD PRIESTHOOD MEETING JANUARY 9, 1983 4:00 p.m.

PRESIDING & CONDUCTING.....Bishop Hinckley
WELCOME.....Bishop Hinckley
OPENING HYMN.....Congregation
#62 - "High on the Mountain Top"
INVOCATION.....By invitation
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.....Bishop Hinckley
SPEAKER.....Brother Pratt
"Missionary Work"
SPEAKER.....Brother Harmon
"Scripture Study"
HYMN.....Congregation
#139 - "O My Father"
REMARKS & DEDICATORY PRAYER....Bishop Hinckley
SACRAMENT HYMN.....Congregation
#201 - "There is a Green Hill Far Away"
SACRAMENT BLESSED AND PASSED
CLOSING REMARKS.....Bishop Hinckley
CLOSING HYMN.....Congregation
#213 - "The Spirit of God"
BENEDICTION.....By invitation

DEDICATORY PRAYER
Grand Rapids Ward
Special Priesthood Meeting
January 9, 1983
4:00 p.m.
Bishop Clark B. Hinckley

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Our most kind and gracious Heavenly Father, We come before thee in fasting and prayer this evening as a body of priesthood holders and members of the Grand Rapids Ward of the Grand Rapids Michigan Stake of Zion. We meet at the direction of Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi and President Glenn Goodwin for the purpose of re-dedicating this area and our lives for the building up of Zion.

We thank thee for the restoration of the gospel in these last days, and for the great blessing of living in these exciting times when the gospel is being preached one last time in preparation for the return of thy Son.

We pray that thou wilt forgive us of our sins and look upon us with favor as we strive to do thy will. Purify us and cleanse us from all sin, that whatsoever we ask in the name of thy Son shall be done, that we might be instruments in thy hands in bringing to pass many miracles.

We ask a blessing upon thy prophet, Spencer W. Kimball, that he will have the strength carry on and be preserved by thee according to thy will. Bless us to be diligent in studying his teachings that in some measure we might use these months of his illness to implement in our life the instructions and challenges which he has given us. Bless his counselors, the Quorum of the Twelve, the Seventies, and the other General Authorities. Bless us with a willingness and desire to sustain them through study and action.

We are grateful for the leaders of this stake and ask thy blessings upon them and their families. Strengthen and support them during these troubled times that they might be equal to their challenges and enjoy the sweet peace of thy Holy Spirit. Bless the leaders of this ward, their families and associates. Guide them and direct them, bless them with health and strength, with wisdom and love, with success in all their

righteous undertakings. Be mindful of the sick and afflicted among us, the poor and meek, those troubled in body or spirit. Answer their prayers and give them comfort and direction.

We are grateful for this building which serves as a meetinghouse for thy saints. Grant "that all those who shall worship here may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books," and more particularly the marvelous revelations which have been brought forth in this last dispensation, "that they may seek learning even by study and also by faith, as thou hast said." [D&C 109:14] Expand our capacity to love and to serve, that we might not weary in well doing, that we "may grow up in thee, and receive a fullness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing." [D&C 109:15]

"That no weapon formed against" thy saints "shall prosper, that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself; that no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people" who have taken upon themselves the name of thy Son. [D&C 109:29-30]

"We ask thee, Holy Father, to confound, and astonish, and to bring to shame and confusion, all those who have spread lying reports abroad . . . against thy servants, if they will not repent, when the everlasting gospel shall be proclaimed in their ears; and that all their works may be brought to naught." [D&C 109:29-30]

We remember the prophecies of thine ancient servant Nephi, that in these last days there would be many churches built up but not unto thee, which "shall teach with their learning and deny the Holy Ghost," teaching that the day of miracles is past and that in the end all mankind will be saved without regard to their works. [2 Nephi 28:3-9] We remember that Nephi taught that when thy "words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth," even the Book of Mormon, that many would say: "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible." But thou hast said, "Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. . . . Know ye not that there are more nations than one . . . and that I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea even

upon all the nations of the earth? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also." [2 Nephi 29:2-3,6-8]

Now Father, we pray that thou wilt soften the hearts of those who seek to destroy thy work and who speak out against it, teaching all manner of lies and falsehoods, preaching for commandments the doctrines of men, that they might hedge up the way and get gain unto themselves. Sustain thy servants who labor as missionaries and each of us who have accepted the restored gospel, that we may have the opportunity and power to warn our neighbors "that the hour of judgement approaches and that thou hast offered, through the Gospel, a means of escape from the calamities that shall come upon all flesh, unless they repent." [MJB]

"We pray that we," and the missionaries who labor with us, "may have the opportunity to present to the people, the" great message of this age, "namely: that angels, sent by thee, have visited the earth in this dispensation, bringing to man again the everlasting gospel; that John the Baptist did visit the Prophet Joseph Smith, upon whom he conferred the authority to baptize; that Peter, James and John did ordain him an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ and endow him with the keys of the Holy Priesthood with authority to baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost; and to organize the Church of Jesus Christ again on the earth; and that Moroni, thine ancient Prophet of the Americas, did visit Joseph Smith, and deliver into his hands the plates containing a history of the early inhabitants of this land; and that by thy power, Joseph Smith did translate the characters on the plates, from which he obtained the Book the Mormon; and that he was visited by Thee; and thy beloved Son, who committed into Joseph's hands a great and new Gospel dispensation, for all flesh." [MJB]

"O Father, let thy spirit work upon" the inhabitants of this area "and manifest the truth of these things unto them as we and thy servants . . . bear witness" of these glad tidings. [MJB]

Help us to repent and exercise faith, to bring forth good works and pray continually, that it might be given unto us "to bring

thousands of souls to repentance," even as thine ancient servant Ammon promised. [Alma 26:22]

Father, we ask a special blessing at this time upon all those who have a hand in the building of thy temple in the Chicago area. Stay the hand of those who seek to delay and frustrate this great work, that thy house might be built speedily. Bless us to keep ourselves worthy that we might labor in thy house upon its completion. Grant each of us the opportunity of entering one of thy temples during this year and there engaging in this great redemptive work as we also build our own spirituality and understanding of priesthood principles.

In these difficult economic times we pray that thou wilt grant unto us opportunity to labor for our needs. Bless the members of this ward that they might be faithful in the payment of their tithes and offerings, that they might qualify for great blessings, including the blessings of the temple. Bless them with wisdom in their financial affairs, help them to exercise good judgement and prayerful study in all their decisions. Bless us with humility, that thou might lead us by thy hand and give us answers to our prayers. [D&C 112:10]

"Remember in mercy the Hope of Israel, the youth of thy Church, who are to bear the responsibilities of the future, that they may keep themselves clean and undefiled from the sins of the world; that they may be found worthy of their inheritance, and come to their glorious destiny. Bless those who are their shepherds, the watchmen upon the towers of Zion, that they may guard well the flock and be able to feed, with the bread of life the sheep and the lambs." [MJB]

Now, Father, by the power and authority of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood and the keys given unto us, we re-dedicate the area within the boundaries of this ward for the preaching of the gospel and building up of Zion, that where "there are now hundreds there will be thousands" as thy prophet has said. [SWE] We invoke a blessing upon all the inhabitants of this area, that thou wilt look favorably upon them, bless them in their labors, that their basket and store might be full, that they might be disposed to do good, and that many will be receptive to the message of the restoration. Bless

the leaders of this community that they might act wisely in directing both the temporal and spiritual affairs of this area, and that they might move upon to support and aid thy work. We invoke a blessing upon this meetinghouse which has been previously dedicated unto Thee, that it may be a house of worship, a house of learning, a house of reverence, a house of beauty. Bless those with responsibility for maintaining and renovating this building, that they will accomplish their assignments and magnify their calling. Bless all who meet here with a sense of responsibility to beautify and improve this edifice and grounds. We pray that all that which is taught here might be taught by thy spirit, that the doctrines will be correct and the instruction uplifting. Open our minds and hearts to the scriptures as we teach one another here, and bless us that we might strengthen each other in all our conversations, in all our prayers, in all our exhortations, and in all our doings as we meet together. [D&C 108:7]

We pray earnestly that we might "build up this latter-day Zion, that the Kingdom of God may go forth, so that the Kingdom of Heaven may come." [SWK] "That," as thy Prophet Joseph prayed, "thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;

"And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens, and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted, the rough places made smooth; that thy glory may fill the earth;

"That when the trump shall sound for the dead, we shall be caught up in the cloud to meet thee, that we may ever be with the Lord;

"That our garments may be pure, that we may be clothed upon with robes of righteousness, with palms in our hands, and crowns of glory upon our heads, and reap eternal joy for all our sufferings.

"O Lord God Almighty, hear us in these our petitions," [D&C 109:73-77] we humbly pray, in the name of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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NOTES:

MJB refers to the dedicatory prayer offered by Elder Melvin J. Ballard of the Council of the Twelve when he dedicated the land of South America for the preaching of the gospel. This prayer was offered in a meeting held at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, December 25, 1925, in a natural grove of weeping willow trees near the bank of the Rio de la Plata river in a Park known as Trece de Febrero, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Elders Ray L. Pratt and Rulon S. Wells also participated in the service.

SWK refers to the dedicatory prayer offered by President Spencer W. Kimball at the dedication of the Fayette, New York chapel on April 6, 1980. This dedication was part of the Sesquicentennial General Conference held simultaneously in Salt Lake City and Fayette, and included the dedication of the reconstructed Whitmer cabin where the Church was officially organized on April 6, 1830.

D&C 109 is the dedicatory prayer offered by Joseph Smith at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the first temple built in this dispensation. It was given to the Prophet by revelation and has been the basis for virtually all dedicatory prayers since then.

Elder Marion G. Romney dedicated the country of Spain for the preaching of the restored gospel on May 20, 1969, and his prayer was used as a resource. Dedicatory services in Spain were held at 7:00 a.m. on a Tuesday morning on a hill overlooking Madrid in the Casa de Campo park west of of the river. Thirty four people were in attendance.