

History of the Spring Lake Ward
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Spring Lake, Michigan



Prior to having the Grand Haven Branch, we met with members from Holland in a couple of rooms rented in a Fire Station in West Olive. One of our Sunday School rooms was in a closet. After a while we bought an old school house in West Olive. There was one room that was full of old books from the floor all the way tight up to the ceiling. They were very moldy and smelly. For a few months we scrubbed, cleaned, and painted. We had our first meeting there on Dec 2, 1973. We met together there until Nov. 1, 1980. The stake decided we had enough members to form a Grand Haven Branch. We spent a lot of time looking around the area for a place to meet. Brother Bud Stoddard, from a ward in Bloomfield Hills (a brother of Chuck Stoddard in our stake), bought the former Hope Reformed Church for us. He paid \$63,000 for it. We were so thrilled to have a church to meet in. The church had beautiful stained glass windows and crosses on the end of the pews. Our missionaries (from Utah) said we could not have that. We called Salt Lake and they said, "DO NOT TOUCH THOSE WINDOWS OR THE PEWS, THEY ARE FINE." That sure made us happy. There was so much else to worry about, cleaning and painting. Brother Blackmer and Brother Dick White built a podium. Along with the Grand Haven members, we had members from the Coopersville area, also Fruitport, Muskegon, Holland, and Wyoming. Boundaries were changed. President Goodwin, our Stake President, issued a call to Brother Blackmer to serve as Branch President. Our first meeting was an organizational meeting held on Nov 23, 1980. 120 members attended. Quite a few stake members attended. There were lots of callings and sustainings. The Stoddard brothers had purchased an organ for us from the Michigan National Bank in Grand Rapids. They attended our first meeting. Brother Blackmer and Brother Port went to Grand Rapids and hauled it back. Quite a job for the two of them. Our first "normal" meeting was held on Nov. 30, 1980. Our last meeting in the Grand Haven Branch was in October 1988. We all went back to our old wards. A lot went back to Muskegon.

Prior to November 5, 1995, there was one large ward meeting in Muskegon, Michigan at 1725 W. Giles Road near North Muskegon. On that day the ward was split into two wards. The North Muskegon Ward boundaries were north of Apple Avenue in Muskegon. The Muskegon Ward boundary was south of Apple Avenue. The North Muskegon Ward met from 9:00AM to 12:00PM, and the Muskegon Ward met from 12:30PM to 3:30PM. Both wards met in the chapel on Giles Road. This arrangement remained until August 12, 2001 when the Muskegon ward became known as the Spring Lake ward.

The first order of business was to locate land on which to build a new chapel or to rent a building. Jane Gould was the Grand Rapids Stake Primary president and heard the news from President Charles Perry of the Stake Presidency. Her family was very excited as they were traveling 25 minutes one way to the chapel in North Muskegon. They had invited Bob, Maggie, and Marie Roll for dinner that day as Lori and Kerrie Roll were gone. Bob told them that he was responsible to lead a committee to find a site for the new chapel. Jane's husband, Charles, volunteered to be on the committee. It was all very exciting.

On March 6, 2005 Bishop Ken Otto was released as the bishop of the Muskegon Ward, and Robert Roll was called and sustained as the new bishop. Jane Gould was serving as the Ward Relief Society President at this time. She remembers driving by the site where the new chapel was to be built. It was about 5 minutes from their home in Grand Haven. After several offers were made on other sites, the one at 18975 168th Avenue, Spring Lake was chosen, but only after regulations regarding the wetland preserve located on the west side of the building were settled. Ground was broken on July 3, 2006, and pictures were taken of family groups with shovels in their hands to assist in breaking ground for the new chapel.

On November 16, 2005 a meeting was held at the Grand Rapids Stake center to decide on the color scheme for the inside of the building and to choose the furniture as well as the art work for the walls. Materials were also ordered for the kitchen and media center. Those in attendance were Bishop Robert and Sister Lori Roll, Jane Gould, and Sister Merilee Otto who was serving as the Grand Rapids Stake Relief Society President at the time.

On May 9, 2007 a walk-through of the new Spring Lake Ward building was held with Bishop Robert Roll, Brother Charles and Sister Jane Gould, Brother McIntyre, Sister Kristen Moran, and President Stanley Brown from the Stake Presidency. The interior decor was in hues of green and off white. Emotions were high at the time, and those who attended were full of gratitude to be able to worship in such a beautiful building.

On June 24, 2007 the first meetings were held in the new Spring Lake Ward building. It was an awesome sacrament meeting which was done by the young women about Girl's Camp that had taken place the previous week. The open house was scheduled on August 13, 2007. What a glorious day. President Kaplin Jones of the stake presidency officiated at the service. Bishop Otto spoke about how the building originated on a map of the ward with dots where the member families lived. They chose the center

of the ward as the location on which to place the building. He spoke of President Stoddard's enthusiasm to get this done. After Bishop Otto's remarks, Sisters Sheila Heidel and Jane Gould, accompanied by Sister Jill Thornock sang "The Lord is My Shepherd" as a special musical number. Bishop Robert Roll spoke next about the building construction, choosing the site, sacrifices, tithes, prayer, and fasting for our building. After Bishop Roll spoke, President Kaplin Jones spoke. He referenced something that President Fegel had said about how the Sacred Grove was not sacred until Joseph Smith's visit. Likewise, our building was just a building until it was dedicated to God. He referenced the word "dedication" from the Gettysburg Address, talking about what it meant. He gave a beautiful prayer, blessing the building from the top of the steeple down to the footings and the surrounding grounds. The Spirit was so strong! Following his prayer, we sang "The Spirit of God." All stood and sang with many tears being shed. The name of the building is "Kirtland," so it was even more fitting that we sang this as a closing hymn, as it was sung at the dedication of the Kirtland temple. Both Bishop Roll and President Jones thanked all who had been invited in the different aspects of the building. A dream became a reality that day.

Bishops:

Zachary Solberg

Roy Emmet

Kenneth Otto 1998-2005

Robert Roll 2005-2009

David Thornock 2009 - 2012

Kent Fisher 2012 - 2014

D. Brent Ensign 2014 -

Relief Society Presidents:

Gail Oom 2001-2004

Jane Gould 2004-2006

Kristen Moran 2006-2010

Lori Roll 2010-2012

Laura Finklea 2012-

Young Women's Presidents:

Lori Roll

Jill Thornock

Sue Swanson

Carol Lynn Evans

Merilee Otto

Leta Ensign
Catherine Otto

Primary Presidents:

Maggie Carlson
Sue Carlson
Jamie Lewandowski
Jill Thornock
Jeanne Lucas
Jackie Filber
Sue Swanson
Cindy Topliff
Merilee Otto

Bishop Summaries:

Bishop Ken Otto

I was Bishop from 1998 to 2005, Bro. Emmett was Bishop before me. The ward split in 1996. Initially we were the Muskegon Ward. During my time as Bishop, we discussed moving to a new location in the south to better accommodate the members in Grand Haven. President Stoddard was enthusiastic about the idea and suggested first changing the name to the Spring Lake Ward, as that was near the center of our population at the time. The name was changed long before we had a building. We initiated the search for a building site and spent a lot of time working on it, while I was Bishop, but was not finished until Bishop Roll was Bishop. We had a very active ward and almost had enough members attending sacrament meeting to qualify for a full size building, but ended up with a slightly smaller building. Attendance decreased a little just after that, mostly due to the economy in Michigan and people being transferred out. We had many great ward activities I can remember. I can recall some very nice Christmas parties, picnics, valentine's dances and dinners, square dancing, karaoke nights, game nights, scout spaghetti dinners, and especially the ward talent shows. We had a very active scout troop, and at one time had 12 active deacons in our ward, which was very unusual for a ward our size.

Bishop Bob Roll (by Charles Gould)

Counselors serving with Bishop Roll from March 6th, 2005 to July 19, 2009 were Dan Hike, Paul Swanson, Mike McIntyre, Charles Gould, and David Thornock. During this time, land was purchased and the Spring Lake Ward building was constructed and dedicated. Previously the members met with the Muskegon Ward. Bishop Roll is a people person. He loved members,

and they loved him. During this time, the Young Men were fully organized with a Varsity Team to complement the existing Troop and Crew. Service projects at the Blackmers began as an annual ward event in 2006 when Brother Blackmer's health began to decline. He loved to do yard work and was sad when he could no longer work in the yard. Service projects consisted primarily of yard work in the fall, but other projects have been done over the years. For example, in 2001 Mike McIntyre, Jack Brown, and Charles Gould installed a toilet and sink on the main floor so they would not have to go upstairs to use the bathroom.

Bishop Kent Fisher

Counselors serving with Bishop Fisher were Ike Collard and Charles Gould. The main emphasis of the bishopric was to increase reverence, promote service by all members, and afford the ward members every opportunity to increase their faith and strengthen their testimonies. The "Come Follow Me" youth Sunday School curriculum was implemented in early 2013, and provide both popular and successful activities. Members of the Relief Society began periodic visits to Muskegon's "Kids Food Basket, preparing meals for school children in the community who came to school without receiving proper nutrition at home. We were joined by Elder Bennie and Sister Rise Harris of Dobson, NC, who came to work their final 18 months of a 24-month senior mission after serving first in Ludington, MI. Their mission ended in June 2014, and the results of their effort will be evident here for many years to come. It was during this time that the ward was designated as a zone office. The ward planned and conducted a special Christmas musical, choral, and community relations event, "The Christmas Creche," in December 2013. Sister Helen Burmeister passed away in mid 2013. Brother Richard "Ted" Blackmer passed away after a lingering illness in September 2013.

Bishop Brent Ensign

As of December 2014, counselors serving in the bishopric were Curt Cardon and Austin Finklea. Mike Moran is executive secretary with Matt Praay as Ward clerk in the bishopric. Baptisms during 2014 were Dana Van Oort and Steven Casarez. The ward hosted a non-member wedding as well as Ashley and Matt Bunker in April 2014. Sister Darryl Port and Bishop Bob Roll both passed away in 2014. Such activities as a Memorial Day picnic at Pottawatomie Bayou, Brother Gill bringing his fire engine for the primary kids to play on, a Halloween Trunk-or-Treat, Labor Day Corn Boil (without corn!), Christmas party, as well as other fun events have been held. Currently Brother Jack DeHoag serves as High Priest Group Leader with Jerry Mabrito as Elders Quorum Present and counselors of Alan Otto and Brett Dehoag.

Mormon congregation starts up in Spring Lake

People attend from Ludington to Holland

BY GREG CHANDLER
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

SPRING LAKE — When Richard Mackmer was in, missionaries from the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints visited his parents at their Grand Haven home. "I had no interest in studying anything from any church," he said.

Mackmer said he was trying to fit up his car and one of the missionaries took an interest in what he was doing.

"He stuck his head under the hood and gave me a few pointers," he said of the visitor from what is now known as the Mormon church.

When Mormon missionaries again visited Mackmer's home 10 years later, he remembered the previous act of kindness and invited them in. After learning more about their faith, he became part of the church.

Nearly four decades later,

Mackmer and his wife, Rachel, are part of a new Mormon ward, or congregation, in Spring Lake. The church began holding services in June and held a dedication service last weekend.

The new congregation is the 15th Mormon ward in West Michigan, serving communities ranging from Ludington to Holland. The Spring Lake church grew out of a congregation in North Muskegon, which had grown large enough to split off.

"Generally, we like to have congregations in the neigh-

borhood of 150, 200 people that attend on Sunday," said Elaine Jones, ward president for the West Michigan LDS congregations. "If they get too big, there wouldn't be enough opportunities for everyone to participate."

The leadership structure is a latter-day Saints church is volunteer-based, starting with the bishop, who performs the pastoral functions in his spare time while holding a full-time job, Mackmer said.

Opportunities to serve in a congregation start early, as male members are usually or-

dained to do of 12, or who They also I what is call Priesthood, stage is wh about their; teaching, pres

Jones said I churches have Michigan in; though that p because of pe state for ev the Holland ample, under this that s about two ye

on starts up in Spring Lake

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

mer and his wife, Rachel, are part of a new Mormon ward, or congregation, in Spring Lake. The church began holding services in June and held a dedication service

last weekend. The new congregation is the 15th Mormon ward in Michigan, serving communities ranging from Ludington to Holland. The Spring Lake church grew out of a congregation in North Muskegon, which had grown large enough to split off.

"Generally, we like to have congregations in the neigh-

borhood of 150, 200 people that attend on Sunday," said Elaine Jones, ward president for the West Michigan LDS congregations. "If they get too big, there wouldn't be enough opportunities for everyone to participate."

The leadership structure in a Latter-day Saints church is volunteer-based, starting with the bishop, who performs the pastoral functions in his spare time while holding a full-time job, Mackmer said.

Opportunities to serve in a congregation start early, as male members are usually or-

dained as deacons at the age of 12, or when they convert. They also become part of what is called the Atonic Priesthood, a preparatory stage in which they learn about their faith through teaching, prayer and service.

Jones said Latter-day Saints churches have grown in West Michigan in recent years, although that pace has slowed because of people leaving the state for economic reasons. The Holland church, for example, underwent an expansion that was completed about two years ago, he said.



Richard and Rachel Mackmer

New wife Richard and Rachel Mackmer stand outside their church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Spring Lake.



TODAY
IN THE

Tri-Cities

City-States Today Page A2 844.932.131 e-mail: news@gostandard.com

New church gives Tri-Cities Mormons a place to call home

■ Open house set for July 13-14 at St. Trip, church for 100,000 members

After more than 100 years of traveling to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in North Washington, Mormons living in the Tri-Cities finally have a church of their own.

After 104 weeks of the service in Spring Lake, the church is holding an open house on Friday, July 11, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday, July 12, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The open house will feature four informational DVDs to help you learn and display programs the church offers, and members Bishop Blackburn and other leaders will be available to answer your questions.

The church is also holding an open house on Sunday, July 13, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Monday, July 14, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The open house will feature four informational DVDs to help you learn and display programs the church offers, and members Bishop Blackburn and other leaders will be available to answer your questions.

Ball, who is responsible for the Spring Lake ward, the church had to have a certain number of participants in the ward to be able to hold a church in the Tri-Cities. Bishop Blackburn said that the church had to have a certain number of participants in the ward to be able to hold a church in the Tri-Cities. Bishop Blackburn said that the church had to have a certain number of participants in the ward to be able to hold a church in the Tri-Cities.

Construction of the new 100,000-sq-ft building was held in July 2007, with construction completed last month.

The church serves about 100 members in an area that stretches from Light Avenue in the north to 20th in the south, and from 10th Avenue in the east to the Interstate in the west. In addition to Bishop Ball, ward members include Elder Paul Blackburn, Bishop Blackburn, and other leaders.

"We're all excited to see that there is a new church in the Tri-Cities," said Bishop Blackburn. "We're all excited to see that there is a new church in the Tri-Cities."

Ball already is happy of the new money and that there was nothing better.

According to Blackburn, the church had 100 members in the ward before the new church was built. Blackburn said that the church had 100 members in the ward before the new church was built.

Blackburn said the church had 100 members in the ward before the new church was built. Blackburn said that the church had 100 members in the ward before the new church was built.

"We wanted our young people to have the benefit of all of the church programs," Blackburn said.

The Spring Lake ward offers all church programs, including youth, young women and men. The church also offers a variety of other programs, including a library and a computer center. The church also offers a variety of other programs, including a library and a computer center.



Members Bishop Blackburn (left) and Elder Paul Blackburn (right) stand outside the newly opened Spring Lake ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, located at 1000 Light Ave. in Spring Lake Township. Church is held on-site in the church building and first service held July 13-14 at 9 a.m. at the church building.

of working in the church.

Church ward programs such as the Ball's July 13-14 will be scheduled at 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. The church also offers a variety of other programs, including a library and a computer center.

News

"We hope you thoroughly enjoyed your time here," he said. "We hope you enjoyed your time here. We hope you enjoyed your time here. We hope you enjoyed your time here."



RELIGION BRIEFS



Courtesy photo

Pictured from left to right are Manny Brown, first contractor in the Grand Rapids Metro area to build the Spring Lake congregation; Bill Gault, Bishop Robert Bell, and William Pillay, Spring Lake Village President.

Church ground-breaking ceremony held

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints held a ground-breaking ceremony July 2 at the site of the future building on Harvey Street in Spring Lake Township. About 100 members and guests were in attendance to hear an address by Spring Lake Village President William Pillay.

Bishop Kenneth Oles, the former ecclesiastical leader of the 200-member congrega-

tion, spoke on the eternal joy and great history of the effort to bring to fruition the construction of the new building.

Bishop Robert Bell, the current ecclesiastical leader of the congregation, exhorted those gathered to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ in all the areas of their lives. The congregation expects to be in the new building by the spring of 2007.

