

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Johannesburg Temple 1985–2015 Blessings of the Temple

By President Carl B. Cook
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Carl B. Cook

Recently I heard a 15-year-old boy share his testimony of temple ordinances, as well as his commitment to live worthily. He expressed heartfelt gratitude for the privilege of being sealed for time and all eternity to his parents and family in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple. He pledged to be honest, to have faith in Jesus Christ, to obey the word of wisdom, to love others, and to keep the commandments of God. He expressed a desire to be obedient and to be part of the “N. E. O. Club,” which he said stands for “not even once.” I was inspired by his commitment to live a virtuous life and his understanding of temple covenants.

This young man expressed his desire to be worthy when he stands before God and Jesus Christ, and when he enters the temple. Participating in temple ordinances is motivating him to keep the commandments, as well as preparing him to return to live with his Father in Heaven. Worshipping in

the temple can motivate each of us in similar ways.

30-Year Anniversary

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the dedication of the Johannesburg South Africa Temple. Thousands of lives



have been blessed by preparing for and participating in saving ordinances in this wonderful temple. One of the lives blessed by the Johannesburg Temple is my own. When I look out my office window and see the spires of the temple and the majestic statue of the angel Moroni, it beckons me to improve my life and draw nearer to God and my loved ones. I have a similar feeling when I view beautiful

artwork that features temples. I see why our prophets encourage us to display pictures of temples in our homes.

I also receive great comfort and strength as I participate in temple ordinances. President Thomas S. Monson has invited all of us to attend the temple. He said, “If you have not yet been to the temple or if you *have* been but currently do not qualify for a recommend, there is no more important goal for you to work toward than being worthy to go to the temple.”

Along with other prophets, President Monson also encourages all members of the Church to obtain a temple recommend, even if circumstances prevent us from worshipping in the temple. He said, “Secure a temple recommend and regard it as a precious possession, for such it is. . . .

“ . . . The all-important and crowning blessings of membership in the Church are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God” (“The



Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,”
Ensign or Liahona, May 2011, 93).

Dedicatory Prayer

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) dedicated the Johannesburg South Africa Temple on August 24, 1985. He petitioned our Heavenly Father for special blessings for those who worship in the temple. Following are a few excerpts from the dedicatory prayer:

“Wilt thou whisper peace to thy people by the power of thy Spirit when they come here with burdened hearts to seek direction in their perplexities. Wilt thou comfort and sustain them when they come in times of sorrow. Wilt thou give them courage, direction, and faith, when they gather, as to a refuge, from the turmoil of the world. Wilt Thou reassure

them of thy reality and divinity, and of the reality and divinity of thy resurrected Son. Wilt thou endow them with love in their hearts for their ancestors who have gone before and with a great desire to labor in behalf of these their forebears. . . .

“Prosper thy faithful people as they contribute their tithes and offerings to the storehouse of the Lord. May they and the generations who follow them be preserved in peace and security by thine encircling arm, for so long as they worship thee in spirit and in truth. Shield them against the forces of evil which otherwise would overtake them. . . .

“. . . Shed knowledge and understanding upon thy saints that they may be guided to do those things which will preserve them from bondage and ensure freedom for themselves and their posterity. Bless the youth, the young men and the young women, that they may walk in virtue and yearn for truth” (*Church News*, “Dedicatory Prayer Asks for Peace in South Africa,” 1 Sept. 1985, 5).

I would like to repeat an invitation extended by President Hinckley in his dedicatory prayer. He said, “There is a temple in our midst. It is beautiful and much appreciated. May we visit it frequently” (“Dedicatory Prayer Asks for Peace in South Africa,” 5).

Blessings Await Us

The 30-year anniversary of the dedication of the Johannesburg Temple provides each of us as individuals an opportunity to consider our temple worthiness, our temple attendance, and the blessings that await each of us in the temple.

It is an opportunity for families to counsel together and consider ways to demonstrate gratitude for temple ordinances by preparing names for temple work, worshipping in the temple, or participating in other related activities. Stakes, districts, wards, and branches may also elect to celebrate the anniversary in similar ways.

President Monson has said, “Those who understand the eternal blessings which come from the temple know that no sacrifice is too great, no price

too heavy, no struggle too difficult in order to receive those blessings. There are never too many miles to travel, too many obstacles to overcome, or too much discomfort to endure. They understand that the saving ordinances received in the temple that permit us to someday return to our Heavenly Father in an eternal family relationship and to be endowed with blessings and power from on high are worth every sacrifice and every effort” (“The Holy Temple,” 92).

May each of us consider how we might demonstrate our appreciation for the temple and the many blessings available to us because of temple ordinances, and may we do all in our power to have a temple recommend and worship in the temple as frequently as possible, for blessings await us. ■



PHOTO HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION

Two Years and 35 Days

A timeline of the temple construction can be found at africase.lds.org/temple-construction-timeline.

Groundbreaking: November 27, 1982

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–1994) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles presided at the groundbreaking ceremony.



Construction: July 5, 1982

This was the first temple in the world to have brick as the outside layer. All the brickwork was completed by August 1984.

The font arrived in August 1984 and was lowered into the font area. However, it was determined that the design was inadequate. The font would have to be removed and replaced. By the time the new font arrived, the roof had been put into place. In order to get the font into the temple, windows in the chapel area had to be widened.

At the suggestion of President Hinckley, they decided to use Red Verona Marble from Italy to surround the font instead



brought in from Salt Lake City, who taught local masons how to work this stone. The tools needed to cut the stones had to be imported. They became blunt very quickly and had to be specially tempered.



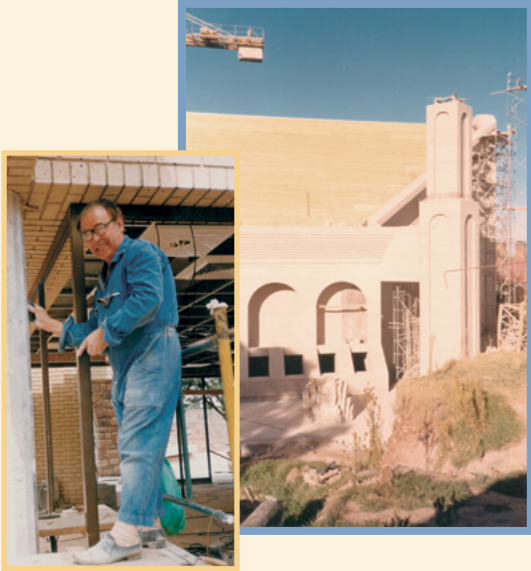
One of the original stones from the Nauvoo Temple was donated and placed in the temple gate.¹

The Angel Moroni

The statue is 2.94 meters high (9 ft. 7 in.) and covered in 23 ct. gold.

The spire with the statue on top is about 33 meters (108.9 ft.) high.

The statue was set facing east, but the architect asked that it be changed to face south, looking over Johannesburg. Since the statue had already been glued in place, the temple engineer had to crawl inside the steeple and loosen the bolts holding the statue down. The crane then lifted both Moroni and the steeple and turned them 90 degrees. The steeple was then lowered and rebolted in place.



of the fiberglass ring that was in the plans. The architect redesigned the front bridge to show nine of the twelve oxen.

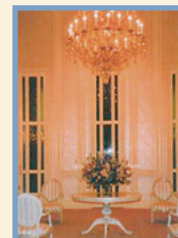
When the oxen were brought into the building, one of them managed to put a horn through a wall.

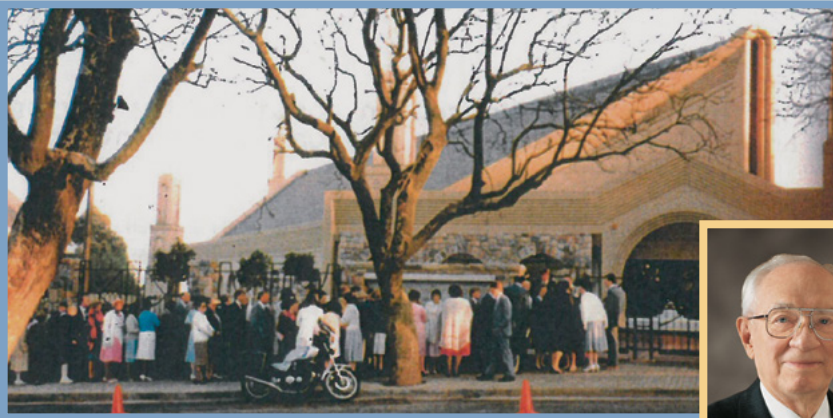
The stone used in the arches was natural quartzite, which was very hard and difficult to cut. A master stonecutter was



Interior

The Brethren asked for gold leafing in the celestial, ordinance, and sealing rooms. Brother Henning Andersen, an artist from Salt Lake City who had worked on many temples, applied gold leaf to the ceiling and moldings of the rooms and to 80 chairs that were placed in the sealing and ordinance rooms.





Open House and Dedication

From July 30 to August 10, the first temple on the African continent temple was open for the public to visit.

The temple was dedicated Saturday and Sunday, August 24 and 25 in five

dedicatory services in which President Gordon B. Hinckley presided. People present noted that President Hinckley and other general authorities had tears in their eyes.



An abridged version of the dedicatory prayer can be found at africase.lds.org/dedicatory-prayer.

Opening

Although temples usually have a month or two between the dedicatory services and the commencement of actual temple work, ordinance work started at 6:00 a.m. on Monday, August 26, to accommodate those members who had traveled long distances for the dedication and needed to receive their endowments and sealings while they were in Johannesburg. Forty missionaries also received their endowments in those first few days.

On the first day of ordinance work, there were 80 children being cared for in the gatehouse, waiting to be sealed to their parents. “The children came from all quarters and were of all colors and languages. To see the wide-eyed wonder as they first saw the temple and the workers all dressed in white was to be seen to be believed.”² Some of the children refused to change from their white temple clothes back into their street clothes. ■

NOTES

1. Taken from the Africa Southeast Area Church history office, Clive Nicholls Collection, vols. 70 and 72.
2. Barbara Chater, in “Johannesburg South Africa Temple 1985–1995,” Africa Southeast Area Church history office, Clive Nicholls Collection, vol. 72, 17.



Johannesburg Temple Dedicatory Prayer

(excerpt)

Dedicated 24–25 August 1985

by **Gordon B. Hinckley**

Almighty and Eternal Father in Heaven whom we love and worship, on this day of dedication we come unto Thee in the name of Thy Son Jesus Christ.

We are assembled in this holy house which we present unto Thee. It has been built through the consecrations of Thy faithful sons and daughters. They have given generously of their means to rear it unto Thee as an expression of their love for Thee and of their faith in the eternal ordinances which Thou hast revealed for the salvation and blessing of Thy children. We pray that Thou wilt accept our offering and that Thou wilt honor this house with Thy holy presence. Let Thy Spirit constantly abide here and touch the hearts of all who shall enter.

Beloved Father, our hearts are filled with gratitude on this historic day in the chronicles of Thy work in this nation. We are mindful of the first missionaries who arrived at Cape Town in 1853, and of all who have labored here in the many years that have followed. We thank Thee for their faith and devotion, and for their trust in Thee in their labors. We thank Thee for all who have accepted their testimony of Thee and of Thy Son, and their witness of the restoration of Thy work and Thy priesthood in this the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Thou didst come with Thy Son, the resurrected Lord, to usher in this most glorious season of Thy work. “Angels from heaven and truth from earth” followed that most awesome manifestation to restore the fullness of the everlasting gospel through Thy servant Joseph Smith.

We thank Thee for the strength and stature of Thy Church across the earth, and that it is growing ever stronger. We pray that Thou wilt remove every obstacle from before those who have been sent to bear witness and testimony of the restoration of Thy kingdom.

We thank Thee for the dimensions of Thy Church in this nation of South Africa. We thank Thee for men and women of great strength who constitute its membership, for the goodness of their lives, for the manner in which Thou hast enlightened their minds and quickened their understanding of Thy ways and Thy purposes. Many of them, dear Father, sacrificed much in years past to travel afar to partake of those blessings which are available only in the Lord’s house.

Now there is a temple in our midst. It is beautiful and much appreciated. May we visit it frequently, and as we serve in this house may we be reminded of the serious and binding covenants we here make with Thee. ■

