

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 2, 2004. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you to this, the first general session of the 174th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this session.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We’re also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at lds.org.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” and will now favor us with “The Morning Breaks.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy.

The choir sang “The Morning Breaks.”

Elder Keith Crockett offered the invocation.

President Monson

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Two new members of the Twelve

As we open this great conference, we note the absence of Elders David B. Haight and Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Each of them served long and very effectively. We mourn their passing. We greatly miss them. We extend our love to their dear ones. We are confident that they are carrying on this great work on the other side of the veil.

We recognize that in the natural course of events there are recurring vacancies which make necessary filling these as they are created. After fasting and prayer, we have called Elder Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf and Elder David Allan Bednar to fill these vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We present their names to you this morning. You may not know them, but you will soon get acquainted

with them. Those of you who feel you can sustain them in this sacred calling will please signify by the uplifted hand. Any who may be opposed?

Their names will be included in the sustaining of all of the authorities later in the conference. Now we ask these Brethren to take their places on the stand with members of the Twelve. They will speak to us Sunday morning, and you will get to know them better.

Church continues to grow, to bless lives

Now in opening the conference I wish to comment briefly on the condition of the Church. It continues to grow. It is touching the lives of more and more people every year. It is spreading far and wide over the earth.

The building of temples and meetinghouses

To accommodate this growth we must, of necessity, continue to build houses of worship. We now have, at some stage, 451 meetinghouses of various sizes under construction in many parts of the earth. This tremendous building program is phenomenal. I know of nothing to equal it. Our structures are beautiful. They add to the ambience of any community in which they stand. They are well maintained. We have had long experience in constructing houses of worship, and out of that vast experience we are producing better buildings than have ever previously been constructed in the Church. They combine beauty with great utility. If they look much the same, it is because that is intended. By following tried and tested patterns we save millions of dollars while meeting the needs of our people.

We continue to build temples. We recently broke ground for a new temple in Sacramento, California, the seventh in that state, where we have the second largest membership of any state in the United States.

The temples in the Salt Lake City area are extremely busy and at times are overloaded. For this reason, we have determined to build a new temple in the Salt Lake Valley. The location of the site will be announced shortly. It may appear that we are unduly favoring this area. But temple attendance is such that we must accommodate those who wish to come. And if the present growth trends continue, we shall probably need yet another.

We are also pleased to announce that we will construct another temple in Idaho, where we have the third largest membership in the United States. Plans are going forward for one in Rexburg. Now we are also planning to build another in the city of Twin Falls. This temple will serve thousands of our members who live between Idaho Falls and Boise.

Temples are now under construction in Aba, Nigeria; Helsinki, Finland; Newport Beach and Sacramento, California; and San Antonio, Texas. We are replacing the temple which was destroyed by fire in Samoa.

When those which have thus far been announced are dedicated, we shall have 130 working temples. Others will be constructed as the Church continues to grow.

Construction on and around Temple Square

We are now working on a major undertaking in Salt Lake City. It is imperative that we preserve the environment around Temple Square. This makes necessary a very large construction project. Tithing funds will not be used for this construction. The income from Church businesses, rents on the property, and other such sources make this possible.

We must do extensive work on the Salt Lake Tabernacle to make it seismically safe. This marvelous structure has been used for 137 years this month. The time has come when we must do something to preserve it. It is one of the unique

architectural masterpieces in the entire world and a building of immense historical interest. Its historical qualities will be carefully preserved, while its utility, comfort, and safety will be increased. We are grateful that we have this Conference Center, where we can meet for such gatherings as this. I now ask myself, "What would we do without it?"

Educational and missionary programs

I am pleased to report that the Perpetual Education Fund continues to grow, as does the number of those who are the beneficiaries of this wonderful undertaking.

We are strengthening our missionary program. We are striving to bring a greater measure of spirituality into the work of our vast body of missionaries.

Our educational program continues to grow, extending its influence wherever the Church is established.

New publication of the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon was recently included as one of the 20 most influential books ever published in America. We are now joining hands with a commercial publisher to enlarge the distribution of this sacred volume, this second witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Greater faith and vitality than ever before

And so, brothers and sisters, I might continue. Suffice it to say that I believe the Church is in better condition than it has

been at any time in its entire history. I have been around now for nearly 95 years of that history, and I have seen much of it firsthand. I am satisfied that there is greater faith, there is a broader measure of service, and there is a more general measure of integrity among our youth. There is greater vitality in all aspects of the work than we have ever seen before. Let us glory in this wonderful season of the work of the Lord. Let us not be proud or arrogant. Let us be humbly grateful. And let us, each one, resolve within himself or herself that we will add to the luster of this magnificent work of the Almighty, that it may shine across the earth as a beacon of strength and goodness for all the world to look upon, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

President Monson

The choir just sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

We shall now hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder John H. Groberg of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Following the singing, we shall hear from Elder Dale E. Miller of the Seventy. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

An affection stronger than death

On behalf of my Brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, may I be the first to welcome Elders Dieter Uchtdorf

and David Bednar to their new callings and the sweet association that lies ahead of them. When the original Twelve were called in this dispensation, they were told