

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 176th 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, September 30, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “Arise, O God, and Shine.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you to the first general session of the 176th 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 Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

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 parts of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Church’s official Internet site.

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

The choir opened this session by singing “Arise, O God, and Shine” and will now favor us with “We Ever Pray for Thee.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang “We Ever Pray for Thee.”

Elder Merrill J. Bateman offered the invocation.

President Monson

We shall now hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “Each Life That Touches Ours for Good.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Continued growth of the Church

My brothers and sisters, as we gather in another general conference, I am pleased to report that the Church continues to grow in strength and influence. In 1982, some 24 years ago, I noted this in

my journal: “There will be in place for the October general conference more than 300 downlinks in our satellite service. This means that we will have more than 300 stake centers where our people may gather across the nation and participate in the conference.”

I am now advised that there are 6,066 Church-owned satellite receiving sites in 83 countries. How grateful I am that with our growth in numbers there is also an increased ability to reach out and communicate with the Latter-day Saints throughout the world.

Now, we could wish for more baptisms in the United States and Canada, but that could be said of everywhere throughout the world. Nevertheless, the harvest is great, with members in some 160 nations. Where not long ago there were very few Latter-day Saints, today there are strong wards and stakes, with faithful and capable men and women in leadership.

Though there are limitations on our ability to travel where we might, there is compensation in the ability of the First Presidency, members of the Twelve, and the Seventy to speak by satellite to large numbers of stakes throughout the world.

Circumstances change, but our message does not change. We bear testimony to the world that the heavens have been opened, that God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, the risen Lord, have appeared and spoken. We offer our solemn witness that the priesthood has been restored with the keys and authority of eternal blessings.

New temples and other building projects

We recently dedicated the new Sacramento California Temple, the 7th in that state and the 123rd in the world. We also broke ground for another temple in the Salt Lake area.

We are pleased to announce that the renovation of the Salt Lake Tabernacle is proceeding on schedule and that this unique and wonderful facility will next spring again accommodate the Tabernacle Choir in its weekly broadcasts.

The Church is undertaking a huge development project in the interest of protecting the environment of Temple Square. While the costs will be great, it will not involve the expenditure of tithing funds.

However, the faithfulness of our people continues to be demonstrated in the payment of tithes and offerings.

Altogether, I can only report that the Lord is richly blessing His Church, and our duty is to do all we can to move it forward.

Now, brothers and sisters, after the singing of the choir, we shall hear the remarks of our brethren and sisters. And as we proceed with this great conference, may the Spirit of the Lord dictate all that is done and said, and may our hearts and minds be filled to overflowing is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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

President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elders Richard H. Winkel and Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy. Following their remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Redeemer of Israel."

At the conclusion of the singing, Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Presidency of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing "Love at Home."