

**'We have been on a Long Journey  
but it was a Great Occasion'**

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During his recent trip to Asia and the the South Pacific June 8-19, President [Gordon B. Hinckley](#) visited six countries, dedicated four temples and addressed more than 8,850 Latter-day Saints in four member meetings. This was accomplished as he traveled 22,200 miles during 47 hours of flight.



President Hinckley greets members, including Srilaksana Suntarhut, left, who translated LDS scriptures in Thai.

"We have been on a long journey," he said during an interview with local reporters at the conclusion of his trip June 21. ". . . But it was a great occasion."

On the extended trip, President Hinckley dedicated the Fukuoka Japan Temple on Sunday, June 11, the [Adelaide Australia Temple](#) on Thursday, June 15, the [Melbourne Australia Temple](#) on Friday, June 16, and the Suva Fiji Temple on Sunday, June 18. (Please see the June 17 and June 24 *Church News* for coverage of the temple dedications.)

President Hinckley also met with 2,600 members in Bangkok, Thailand. He later addressed 250 members of the Church in Darwin, the capital of Australia's Northern Territory, and with some 1,000 members in the Pacific island nation of New Caledonia.

On the way home to Utah, President Hinckley visited the American Samoan capital of Pago Pago where he presided at a meeting of nearly 5,000 Church members which was held at the Veterans Stadium.

Accompanying President Hinckley during his tour were his wife, Marjorie, their daughter, Jane Dudley, and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve and his wife, Patricia Holland.

"It was a very gratifying experience to see President Hinckley bless the members of the Church in these distant areas of the world. He loves them and they surely love him," Elder Holland said. "We saw the Lord's hand upon him day after day as he gave so energetically and unstintingly to the people. He addressed and visited with many members who had no previous hope that they would ever see a prophet of God in person. The whole trip was a marvelous experience for these Latter-day Saints, including Elder and Sister Holland."

## BANGKOK, THAILAND

President Hinckley traveled here June 12, meeting with the Thailand Prime Minister Chuan Leepkai and Bangkok Governor Bhichit Rattakul. A "pre-birthday" celebration, hosted by Deputy Prime Minister Bhichai Rattakul, was held in President Hinckley's honor that evening.



Bhichit Rattakul, Governor of Bangkok, visits with, from left, President Gordon B. Hinckley; Thailand Bangkok Mission President Michael A. Goodman; Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Michael A. Goodman, president of the Bangkok Thailand Mission, said that government officials welcomed President Hinckley to Thailand amid expressions of "courtesy, respect and great honor."

President Goodman added that during a private visit June 13, the prime minister thanked President Hinckley for "all the work that LDS volunteers have done" for Thailand. The prime minister mentioned especially the service provided by 100 LDS volunteers who, during the past three years, have taught more than 300,000 English teachers and students in a program established by the governor.

Before leaving Bangkok, President Hinckley addressed an LDS member meeting June 13; more than 2,600 attended the meeting held in the Thailand Air Force Convention Center. Some Church members had traveled 18 hours by bus to attend the meeting, which marked the first visit of a Church president to Thailand.

During brief remarks, President Hinckley recounted his first visit to the country in 1961, a time when there were only a half dozen Church members there. "We went quietly in the morning into Lumpini Park, a small group of us, including Elder Marion D. Hanks of the Seventy, and there we lifted our voices in prayer. We prayed that the Lord would smile upon this land, that He would touch it by the power of His Holy Spirit, that the way would be opened for missionaries to come here, that the faithful would accept the truth, and that the Lord would do a great and good work here.

"I came back on three or four other occasions. Now it's been a long time since I was here and I have seen a miracle, a very real miracle."

President Hinckley said the Lord has opened the way for the Church in Thailand.

"To think that we were greeted here and welcomed here by the governor of this great city of 10 million people. To think that we had the privilege this morning of meeting the prime minister of this land. To think that last night we were given a wonderful party and many of you were there. Again, today, we met with many government officials. I can scarcely believe it. The Lord has heard our prayers. He has let us endure difficulties for a long season, but now heaven is smiling upon us. I thank Him from the bottom of my heart for this great blessing."

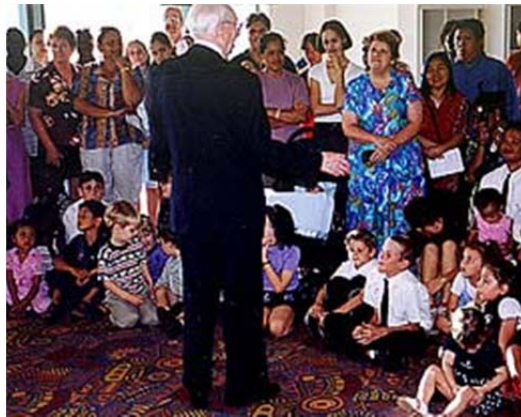
President Hinckley told the members that they are pioneers in carrying forward the work of the Lord in their country and promised that, if they were faithful, the time will come when a temple will be constructed in Thailand.

"The Lord expects so very, very much of you. He expects you to be the best people in all of Thailand, and you ought to be because you have a knowledge of His everlasting truth."

Elder Holland encouraged the young people to stay close to the Church, to prepare for missions and to plan to go to the temple. He asked the adults to be more helpful in the conversion and retention of new members, to befriend them and to assist them in learning about the Church.

After the meeting, as he was leaving the building, President Hinckley stopped to greet Srilaksana Suntarhut, a pioneer of the work in Thailand and the principle translator of the LDS standard works into the Thai language. Now 78, she was baptized in 1968, the year the mission was opened in Thailand.

## **DARWIN, AUSTRALIA**



President [Gordon B. Hinckley](#) addresses members gathered at the airport in Darwin, Australia.

President and Sister Hinckley were greeted at the airport here June 14 by 250 Latter-day Saints — many men dressed in white shirts and ties, many women in nice dresses. One sister had traveled 1,500 kilometers for the brief opportunity to meet the Church president.

"I had no idea we would have 250 of you here," said President Hinckley to the members of the Darwin Branch. "But you are here, and you've made the effort to be here. You do us great honor in your presence here in such numbers."

President Hinckley, who had visited Darwin once before many years ago, said he was glad to see the progress of the work and the strength of the branch.

"What a wonderful thing it is for you to have a branch here where you can work together and live together and be Saints together and enjoy the company of one another."

President Hinckley then expressed his appreciation for the members. "We do love you and want you to know that," he said. "We love you. We pray that the Lord will bless you, prosper you, look after you, care for your great happiness in the gospel.

"We leave you our testimony of the truth of this work. God does live; Jesus is the Christ; Joseph was a prophet; the Church is divine; and it will bless every man, woman and child who takes advantage of the opportunity of membership. I don't hesitate to promise that. I know it is true."

Elder Holland bore his testimony to the members and encouraged them to remain faithful, even in such distant locations from the heart of the Church. Then President Hinckley and Elder Holland shook hands with as many members as possible before reboarding the airplane.

## **NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA**

Addressing members gathered here June 17, President Hinckley spoke of his trip to Japan and the Pacific.

"It has been a very long journey," said President Hinckley, the first Church president to visit the island. "But it is worth it to look into your happy faces."



Location numbers show sequence of President Hinckley's

stops through Asia, South Pacific.

About 1,000 Church members crowded into the local meetinghouse to hear the Church leader; many more gathered outside in tents to which the meeting was sent via video feed.

"Here we are, a part of this great French nation that includes France, Tahiti, New Caledonia and other parts of the earth," President Hinckley said. "Thank you for being here tonight. Thank you for making the effort to come here. Thank you for warming our hearts with your cheerful countenances. We respect you. We admire you. We love you. You are part of this great Church family — [almost] 11 million strong — scattered over the earth."

During his address, President Hinckley recalled traveling to New Caledonia 30 years earlier, and promised that the Church will continue to grow in the area.

"We are the key to that growth," he said. "Everyone of you becomes the key to that growth. It is your example, it is the way you live, it will be what people see in you that will make the difference in the growth of the work in this part of the earth."

President Hinckley asked the members to live the gospel. "Get on your knees and say your prayers. Pour out your hearts to the Lord. Tell Him what you would like to accomplish, and He will bless you.

"You are a covenant people. You are a special people. When you were baptized into this Church you came under an obligation that will remain with you all of your lives to live as He would have you live. Every week you partake of the sacrament, the emblems of His sacrifice, of His suffering in your behalf, and a reminder of the covenant you make to take upon yourselves the name of Jesus Christ and keep His commandments. And He makes a covenant with you that He will bless you with His Spirit."

Elder Holland noted how gratifying it was to see President Hinckley received so warmly in Thailand after making his initial visit there nearly 40 years ago, at which time he dedicated the land for the preaching of the gospel with no native Thai members anywhere in the country. Elder Holland told the New Caledonia members that now, 39 years later, President Hinckley addressed in Bangkok a standing-room-only congregation of 2,600 members— virtually all Thai. Elder Holland commented that time is always on the side of truth, and that "out of small things proceedeth that which is great."

### **PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA**

On the last leg of a "long and wonderful journey" and after crossing the International Dateline, President Hinckley addressed 5,000 members here June 17 in Veterans Stadium — filled with the "happy, wonderful spirit of Samoa."



President Hinckley waves goodbye to members in Noumea, New Caledonia.

Before the meeting, President Hinckley's party was met by the governor, Tauese Sunia, his wife, and other legislative and judicial representatives. They were also greeted warmly by members, who draped them with beautiful leis.

"What a choice and delightful and wonderful people you are, my brothers and sisters," President Hinckley said. "You are so friendly. You are so kind. You are so gracious. You just can't do enough for other people. We are so very, very deeply grateful."

President Hinckley then directed his remarks to the young people in the congregation. "You young men and women, you wonderful boys and girls, you people who have been born with a great and precious birthright, how important it is that you live the gospel, that you follow the path that your parents have laid out for you, that you go forward and make something of your lives."

He counseled the youth to stay away from alcohol and drugs, to watch their language, to go to seminary, to get an education and to serve a mission.

"There will be another generation in American Samoa of Godly youth, of those who love the Lord and seek to do His will, who will be married in the temple that exists here [in the Samoan islands] and will bless the lives of another generation yet to come.

"Now that, my brothers and sisters, is my earnest plea to the young men and women who are with us tonight. I just can't help saying it strong enough because I feel it is so very, very, very important. Nothing is more important to you than the things of which I have spoken.

"Get on your knees, you boys and girls, every night and every morning, and don't let anything come into your lives which would take from you the desire to pray."

President Hinckley then reminded everyone in the congregation that they are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "That is no small thing," he said. "That is a very important thing. There

is nothing any more important in the world than the fact that we are members of the Church of Jesus Christ. We have taken upon ourselves His name."

Before leaving, he left his love with the Samoan Saints. "May I just say that we love you — oh, how much we love you. We love the governor and these government officials. They are always so kind to us. We love the people of this island. We love the people of this land."

Elder Holland also spoke to the members, offering encouragement and counsel. He then directed the congregation in both English and Samoan versions of "Happy Birthday," sung with love to President Hinckley in anticipation of his 90th birthday. He concluded with a testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, inasmuch as the "156th anniversary" of the Prophet's martyrdom would come four days after President Hinckley's birthday