



## CHAPTER 7

# THE HOUSE OF THE LORD: THE TAIPEI TEMPLE AND CHURCH ADMINISTRATION BUILDING (1984–89)

A major event during the 1980s came when the Church complex in Taipei welcomed the Taipei Taiwan Temple and a new seven-story Church Administration Building on the same property as the first chapel built in Taiwan. The temple in particular was a tremendous blessing for the members of the Church in Taiwan. They were able to receive their own temple blessings and provide their deceased ancestors with the saving ordinances of the gospel. Moreover, the first regional representatives from Taiwan were called during this period, and the Church completed a significant project related to family records. Church membership during the 1980s more than doubled, growing from 8,367 to 17,239.

### **The Taipei Temple**

#### *Temple Worship Prior to the Taipei Temple*

Before there was a temple in Asia, only a few Chinese members had the opportunity to go to Utah or Hawaii to attend to their temple ordinances. After President Kimball visited Taiwan, he traveled to Japan

to dedicate the Tokyo Japan Temple on 27 October 1980.<sup>1</sup> Between 1980 and 1984, many members from Taiwan made the sacrifice to travel to the Tokyo Japan Temple for their temple ordinances.

Sister Mao Chang Mei-Yun (毛張美雲) noted that although it was not easy to obtain a visa to leave Taiwan during that time, some were able to travel to the Tokyo Japan Temple to be sealed as a family after it was dedicated.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Sister Chang Lai Hui-Pin (張賴慧嬪) said that before there was a temple in Taiwan, the members had to go to Japan for their temple blessings, but only some could afford to go to Japan.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, many were touched at the area conference with President Kimball and sought to go to Japan to receive their temple blessings.

For example, Brother Hsu Ming-Chuan (許明泉) was baptized in 1979 and recalled taking the bus from Pingtung to Taipei to attend the area conference with President Kimball in 1980. Hsu remembered learning about the new temple in Japan and recalled his experience of trying to go to Japan with his bride and two other couples. According to Hsu, “We decided to marry in the temple and to go to the Tokyo Japan Temple.” Hsu added, “Even though we didn’t understand it, we just knew we had to go to the temple as directed by our prophet.”<sup>4</sup>

Hsu reported that in 1981, with the financial help from their families, he and his bride were preparing to go to Japan with two other couples. A Brother Lee who was previously sealed in the United States led the group to Japan for their temple sealing. They applied for the required travel visas, but the day before their flight, everyone had received their visas except for Hsu. Hsu said, “The mission president told us he was praying for us, and I went to the airport without a visa.” But miraculously, just as they were ready to board the flight, his visa arrived and he was able to travel with his bride and others to receive their temple blessings in Japan. Hsu and his wife were sealed in the Tokyo Japan Temple on 2 April 1981. Hsu would serve as the first bishop of the Pingtung Taiwan Ward and later as the first district president of the Pingtung Taiwan District. He and his wife visited

the Tokyo Japan Temple twice before the Taipei Taiwan Temple was dedicated in 1984.<sup>5</sup>

Sister Chang Chen Yu-Ying (張陳玉英) also recalled attending the 1975 and 1980 area conference with President Kimball and learning about the Tokyo Temple during the latter conference. She said, “My husband and I were teachers, so we took the next summer off to visit my brother in Japan and were sealed together on July 9, 1981 in the Tokyo Temple.” She added, “It was a great feeling when we went [to the temple] during the day. . . . We felt so close to the temple.” She also noted that during that time, the Taiwanese government had strict rules and it was hard for men to leave the country, so it was a blessing when they were able to go to Japan for a week for their temple sealing. Besides the sealing of couples, Chang also recalled that the Church encouraged families with children to be sealed together. So on 29 March 1986, they took two of their children to the Taipei temple to be sealed as a family.<sup>6</sup>

### *Announcement*

When President Kimball announced during his visit to Taiwan in 1975 that the Church would build a temple in Japan, , he said to the members of the Church in Taiwan, “You too can have a temple.” On 31 March 1982, just prior to the April 1982 general conference, the Church announced it would build this promised temple in Taiwan.<sup>7</sup> The mission home that stood on the Church-owned property since the early 1970s would be razed, and a temple would be built in its place next to the Chin Hua Street chapel.<sup>8</sup> Wang Lu Pao (王綠寶) remembered that because of the differences in time zones, this announcement was received on 1 April in Taiwan. Local leaders had to confirm it was not an April Fools’ joke! When Church members learned the announcement was real, they were overjoyed.<sup>9</sup>

Local members sacrificed extensively to help fund the building of the new temple. Chen Ting Hui (陳定輝), then a branch president in Nantou, remembered the effort required of the members in Taiwan.

Chen said that on top of raising 20 percent of the cost of building their chapel in Nantou, members were asked to donate an additional 2 percent to the temple building fund. Although the sacrifice was not easy, Chen remembered President Kimball's promise during his visit in 1980 that "the Lord will bless this place."<sup>10</sup> Sister Chen Li Mei-Chen (陳李美娟), from Nantou, recalled how Relief Society sisters sold homemade food and other things to raise funds for the construction.<sup>11</sup> Elder Marion D. Hanks, then the area executive administrator, worked to identify potential sites for the new temple. Although other sites were proposed and considered, the decision was made to build the new temple on Chin Hua Street, at the location occupied by the mission home.<sup>12</sup>

### *Groundbreaking and Construction*

On 26 August 1982, President Gordon B. Hinckley, then second counselor in the First Presidency, visited Taiwan to preside over and conduct the groundbreaking ceremonies. He was accompanied by Elder Marion D. Hanks.<sup>13</sup> Approximately 1,500 people attended the ceremony.<sup>14</sup> Sister Mao Chang Mei-Yun (毛張美雲) was a local missionary who attended the groundbreaking ceremony in 1982 and said, "I was so grateful, so very grateful, that a small place like Taiwan could have a temple."<sup>15</sup> Brother Tsai Fu-An (Steve) (蔡福安) was baptized in 1981 and remembered wearing his Scout uniform and holding the shovels for President Hinckley and other local leaders at the ceremony.<sup>16</sup>

Paul Hyer arrived to preside over the Taipei Mission in 1982, just a week or two before the groundbreaking ceremony. Between the groundbreaking in 1982 and the dedication in 1984, Hyer would play a critical role to help with the construction of the temple. He shared the following about the ceremony: "It was a great historical event—this would be the first temple ever to be built in the Chinese realm." Hyer would be closely involved with the building of the Taipei temple because "President Kimball had given [him] the Church seals used to legitimize contracts and . . . [Hyer] was head of the LDS Church Corporation in . . . Taiwan

for all [Church] properties.” He would later describe some of the challenges and oppositions faced, as well as the marvelous blessing of watching the first temple rise in the Chinese realm.<sup>17</sup> Hyer recorded:

The building supervisor, Harold Smith, had served in the University of Utah physical facilities operation and was very competent. But

he had never been in a Chinese environment, did not know the language or culture, and there were many matters with the government, or other institutions that we had to manage. So I was inescapably involved in the temple project. . . .

Inviting bids on our temple contracts from Chinese construction companies was an interesting process. As head of the Church corporation in [Taiwan] . . . I sat in on the meeting with the contractors in the Relief Society room of our Stake Center. Many companies wanted the lucrative contract to build our magnificent edifice. But, our concern was that certain aspects [of] the temple construction were different from anything the contractors had ever experienced.<sup>18</sup>

We depended heavily on James Hsu Wei-yang, our local Presiding Bishop Office man who had construction experience and in whom we had confidence.<sup>19</sup>



*Paul Hyer and family circa mid-1980s. Hyer served as president of the Taipei Mission from 1982 to 1985, and as president of the Taipei Taiwan Temple from 1988 to 1990. Courtesy of Liang Shih-Wei (Carl).*

After a stringent prequalification process, five competent and reputable construction companies in Taiwan were invited to submit bids. In order to help each company understand and appreciate the high level of workmanship expected in temple construction, the Church welcomed each of their representatives to visit the recently completed Tokyo Japan Temple. The I. Cheng Construction and Development Corporation (ICC) was awarded the contract. The ICC was founded in 1950 and completed many unique and complex construction projects. Among their projects was the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall in 1972, a major national landmark in Taipei for which they received the Builders Silver Medal award by the International Federation of Asian and Western Pacific Contractors Association.<sup>20</sup>

Construction of the Taipei Taiwan Temple would not commence until early 1983, after the original mission home was razed to make room for the temple.<sup>21</sup> Although the construction of the temple moved slowly, President Hyer reported that it was “tremendously exhilarating for members.” The temple exterior included a beautiful white tile on the exterior walls and a blue-tiled roof for the temple. The adjacent stake center had its wall painted white and reroofed with matching blue tile.<sup>22</sup> The Taipei Taiwan Temple has a baptistry, a celestial room, four ordinance rooms, and three sealing rooms. The total floor area is 9,945 square feet, and its dimensions are 178 feet by 72 feet. It has six spires, with a statue of the angel Moroni on one rising to a height of 126 feet.<sup>23</sup>

President Hyer also acknowledged that “wherever the Church builds a temple, there is inevitably opposition and problems—the perverse work of the Adversary.” He added that during a visit to the temple construction site, Presiding Bishop Harold Brown said that “the Church is building 3 chapels every 2 days but . . . there are more problems in building one temple than in building 400 chapels.” Hyer noted that this was an obvious exaggeration, but it illustrated the opposition faced to build a temple.<sup>24</sup> Hyer was constantly called upon to help resolve major and minor challenges during the construction of the temple.

One such challenge came with submitting the building permit for the temple. The Church's legal counsel delivered the application for the permit. Unfortunately, it inadvertently offended city officials who then "put our application on the bottom of a pile and left it there." A city official said, "Do they think we are criminals over here to send lawyers to us with that paper?" It took some work and many prayers, but eventually the permit was acquired and construction began.<sup>25</sup> But it wasn't long before Harold Smith, the building supervisor, would repeat a familiar call to Hyer: "Paul! We have a problem over here." In this case, Rome's Vatican Nuncio in Taipei was located across the street from the temple lot, but their guard station was located by the construction site and had to be relocated to allow heavy equipment to access the temple lot.<sup>26</sup>

Another trouble came during the excavation of the foundation. Hyer explained that the local police stopped the construction project because "our temple site was in a fine location among government buildings and two in-town branches of two universities." As such, the construction crew was allowed to use their heavy equipment only between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. This created another problem when a neighbor began to complain about the noise during the night. Hyer learned that "the Catholic Nuncio, Monsignor Giglio, had complained to the police that the noise of the construction was disturbing their sleep."<sup>27</sup> Hyer recorded the following:

I invited Monsignor Giglio over and took him up on the top of our administration building where he could get a good view of our project. I explained what we were doing and the limitations placed on us—I said that with a little patience we would complete the excavation and cease to be a bother. This satisfied him and the excavation resumed. He [be]came one of our most ardent fans watching the construction. He would even come out on his second story balcony in the rainy season with an umbrella to watch with fascination the progress of the

building. My office was on the fourth floor of our new administration building overlooking the temple construction and I also took pleasure watching the progress of the temple project.<sup>28</sup>

Progress on the temple continued at a steady pace. Following the excavation, the concrete was poured and the foundation and walls completed. After the roofs and spires were completed, a statue of the angel Moroni was set in place. Harold Smith worked closely with the local construction company to ensure that the highest quality of workmanship, worthy of the Lord's house, was maintained. Hyer reported that Smith's "standards required some construction to be torn out and rebuilt to a higher standard."<sup>29</sup>

The work on the temple continued, and as it was nearing completion, preparations were made for the Chinese words "House of the Lord" and "Holiness to the Lord" to be placed on the tower. When Harold Smith showed Paul Hyer the Chinese characters being prepared to be cast, it read "Ye-ho-hua de Dian" or "the House of Jehovah." This was taken from the Old Testament, but Hyer did not feel the Chinese wording was correct. Hyer checked with Hu Wei-I and Hsieh Fan; the former was the translator of the Chinese Book of Mormon, and the latter was another capable translator and would later serve as a temple president. According to Hyer, "Both brethren confirmed my feeling that the wording should be 'Ju de dian' (House of the Lord), 'Ju' being the term for 'Lord' used in reference to Jesus Christ in the Bible. One more problem of many was resolved."<sup>30</sup> Hyer explained that a more difficult issue occurred on the eve of the dedication:

The technicians from Church headquarters had arrived to install the special projection equipment for the endowment ceremony. The problem was that the equipment had come into Keelung harbor but was being held up from entry into the country because some of it was Sony electrical or



projection components on which there was an embargo against importation into Taiwan. Time was critical and if we ever needed divine help it was then. Needless to say all these various problems involved daily prayers and special occasion prayers. Meanwhile, the Church technical people returned to Salt Lake while we ironed out the problem. . . .<sup>31</sup>

I explained to the government official that while the equipment contained some Sony components it was unique, tailor made equipment for educational purposes, that it was for a special use and would not be resold. This seemed reasonable to them and they would consider our appeal. We were instructed to bring the schematics of the assembly to their specialists to examine. These were procured from Salt Lake headquarters and the matter was resolved but it was another time consuming, “scary” incident on the eve of the dedication that could have caused untold problems.<sup>32</sup>

At last the temple was completed and ready for the dedication. The temple would later be nominated for outstanding building of the year, but it was not awarded because it was not open to the public. Nevertheless, Hyer explained the purpose of the temple was not for open tours; rather, the “special function of the Taiwan temple is to endow, to prepare, and to empower a covenant people who will take the gospel to all of China.” Hyer added that “each day in the prayer circle of the temple, I hear the prayers of the Chinese saints entreating the Lord to open the way for the gospel to be taken to their ‘compatriots’ [tongbao] in all of China.”<sup>33</sup> Some members would later note that although Hyer initially came to Taipei as a mission president in 1982, he was actually sent to build the temple for the Saints in Taiwan. Hyer said that toward the end of his time as a mission president he learned that President Hinckley had asked Hyer’s stake president back home, Richard Cracroft, “Can Paul Hyer build a temple?”<sup>34</sup>

### *Temple Open House*

On 30 October 1984, the Church held a twelve-day open house of the new Taipei Taiwan Temple.<sup>35</sup> The first day of the open house welcomed key Taiwan government leaders, college presidents, newspaper representatives, government dignitaries, and military leaders. There were about 200 VIPs on the first day. Thereafter, about 16,000 visitors or an average of about 1,500 people per day, attended the temple open house, mostly nonmembers.<sup>36</sup> Hyer reported, “A successful pre-dedication open house was prepared and attended by . . . thousands of people,” mostly people from the community that were not members of the Church.<sup>37</sup> Hyer stated the following of the open house:

The two Taipei stakes and the mission played a major part of preparing for the dedication such as setting schedules, inviting officials to a special, exclusive tour of the temple and preparing an extensive, excellent exhibit for visitors to learn something of the Church, such things as the First Vision, the Restoration, the Book of Mormon, the Plan of Salvation, Family History and Genealogy. This was held in the cultural hall of the Stake Center neighboring the temple. We were very pleased with the large public attendance to the open house and the response of government officials for whom we arranged a special time so they did not have to hassle with the masses.<sup>38</sup>

Sister Wang Li-Fang (王麗芳) was a missionary at the time and helped to put up displays in the chapel to introduce the temple. There were so many people who came to the open house.<sup>39</sup> Sister Hsu Hsiu-Ying (徐秀瑛) was among those who helped with the tours and was assigned to explain the various rooms in the temple to those visiting the temple during the open house.<sup>40</sup> Many members sacrificed time and money to attend the open house and dedication. However, other types of personal sacrifice were also given as reported in the *Church News*:

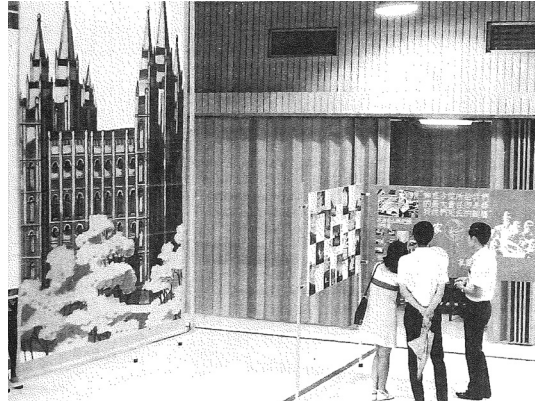
Some gave other kinds of sacrifice, such as Yang Tsung Ting, who supervised ushers during the open house and the dedication. His father had died Oct. 11 while the open house was in progress. The funeral was held weeks later, in accordance with Chinese tradition, in this case on Nov. 16, the day before the dedication.

Brother [Yang Tsung] Ting attended the funeral, but wasn't able to be with his family during the following days, which, according to Chinese tradition, is important. "I had to make a choice. I decided to come to the temple and serve as I had been asked to do."

He said that the opening of the temple lessened the sorrow of his father's death. "Just think, one year from now (at the time of the dedication) I will be able to do his work in this temple. I know he will accept the gospel message now being taught [to] him on the other side of the veil."<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately, "one dark cloud" occurred during the open house when an anti-Mormon group came. Hyer recorded the following:

One day I was in my mission headquarters office on the fourth floor of our administration building with a window that looked out on the temple. Over the months I had looked out to "oversee" the construction of the temple. But on this day Harriet called down on the telephone and I could tell she was distressed and crying and



*A temple open house welcomes visitors in October 1984. Courtesy of Richard Stamps and Wendy Jyang.*

she asked if I had looked out of the window on the scene in front of the temple. As I looked out I saw several people parading in front of [the] temple fully clothed in temple robes and passing out anti-LDS literature.<sup>42</sup>

Hyer contacted the Brethren in Salt Lake City and spoke with Elder William Bradford, president of the Asia Area. Hyer explained, “We had friends in the police, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and that we could have the nuisance in front of our temple off of the scene in short order.” Elder Bradford consulted with President Hinckley, and Hyer spoke to legal counsel in Taipei.<sup>43</sup> Hyer stated:

[The] head of the Barker and McKenzie international law office in Taipei was Bill Atkins, a faithful member of the Church [later associate general legal counsel for the Church]. We asked him to come over to the temple and he brought [a] competent Chinese lawyer from his firm and we had a huddle on the matter. . . . We discussed aspects of the anti-Mormon demonstration at the gates of the temple and one conclusion noted by the Chinese attorney was that the demonstration by the antis clothed in temple robes was lost on the Chinese—they did not have a clue what it was all about. If anything it would bring us more visibility [to respond] and besides the Chinese admired our tolerance and forbearance.<sup>44</sup>

Following this counsel proved to be a wise course of action. The anti-Mormon group was mostly ignored by those visiting the temple open house. Sister Wang Li-Fang (王麗芳) said some of them were hired to come protest in temple robes and did not even understand what they were doing.<sup>45</sup> Sister Yang Peng Mei-Jyan (楊彭美堅) recalled seeing an anti-Mormon person dressed in temple clothes and noted that “nobody had been to the temple to receive their temple ordinances yet, so we didn’t think much of it. We just walked by thinking

what a strange thing it was to have people protesting.”<sup>46</sup> The protesters did not speak Chinese and were generally ignored by the Chinese people. And for the thousands who attended the temple open house, they came to better understand the Church and the importance it places on families and genealogy.

### *Temple Dedication*

From 17 to 18 November 1984, President Gordon B. Hinckley, then a counselor in the First Presidency, dedicated the Taipei Taiwan Temple.<sup>47</sup> Five dedicatory sessions were held to accommodate the 2,575 members (or about 500 per session) who participated. The weather was warm and pleasant on the first day of the dedication, but on the second day a typhoon was heading towards Taiwan and members stood in the rain while waiting to enter the temple.<sup>48</sup> President Hinckley and Elder Howard W. Hunter, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, conducted three and two sessions respectively. Four dedicatory sessions were held in Mandarin, and one was held in Cantonese for the 150 members from Hong Kong who attended.<sup>49</sup> President Hinckley asked Taipei Mission president Paul Hyer to offer a prayer during the cornerstone ceremony. Then President Hinckley proclaimed the temple dedication a “bridge to the Chinese realm.” The Taipei temple would be the third temple in Asia, but the first to serve primarily the Chinese members, serving about thirteen thousand members in Taiwan and another ten thousand in Hong Kong.<sup>50</sup>

During one of President Hinckley’s addresses, he mentioned his participation in the purchase of the temple lot, which was previously a prison and farm upon which the prisoners labored. President Hinckley also spoke, in one session, about the historic trip by then-Elder David O. McKay of the Council of the Twelve to China in 1921 to dedicate the land for the preaching of the gospel. He also spoke warmly about his long association with the Saints in Asia since he first visited twenty-four years ago.<sup>51</sup> Referring to the temple, he said, “This house,

built on what was once prison property, will open the prison doors of the veil of death.” In addition, President Hinckley noted that “there are only 500 [temple recommend holders] to do the work of millions. . . . There is so much to be done. The laborers are relatively few. There is no place where a temple has been built where so few are eligible to use it.” It would not be long until more would join the Church and qualify to enter the temple to receive their own temple ordinances and perform them on behalf of their deceased ancestors.<sup>52</sup> The *Church News* added the following: “In another session, [President Hinckley] spoke directly to children and youth attending the dedication. Looking directly at a young boy and girl sitting together with their parents in the celestial room, he told them, ‘This is your temple, too. It isn’t just for your parents. You can come here and be baptized for the dead.’”

He said he didn’t like the phrase “baptized for the dead.” He preferred “baptized for the living who have died.” He explained, “They are very much alive. They have ambitions, desires, the capacity to think and choose and act in certain spheres, but they are limited in what they can do.” After noting that the temple had been nominated for Taipei’s “most beautiful building contest,” President Hinckley said, “This is a beautiful building. . . . But it was not designed to stand as a monument—it’s to further the work of the Lord, to assist our Father in Heaven to accomplish his eternal purposes.” He also spoke to the members from Hong Kong who were attending the Taipei temple dedication.<sup>53</sup> The *Church News* reported the following:

To some 150 Hong Kong members attending the final session, President Hinckley spoke of the upcoming reverting of Hong Kong to China. He said he had been told by Chinese officials that had the Church been established on the mainland, it would have been permitted to remain. When Hong Kong reverts to China, stakes will be part of the Chinese realm. “Out of that will spring the great work as natural as rain to Hong Kong. . . . I

feel confident that God our Father is weaving His grand design according to His will and pattern for the blessing of His children in that part of the earth.”<sup>54</sup>

During the dedicatory prayer for the temple, President Hinckley made reference to then-Elder David O. McKay’s dedicatory prayer in China and said:

This is a long-awaited day. Our thoughts turn back more than 60 years when, as thou knowest, thine apostle, David O. McKay, standing on Chinese soil, offered a dedicatory prayer on the great Chinese realm and on thy work among the generations of the Chinese people.

In that prayer he said, . . . “Grant, our Father, that these young men and women may, through upright virtuous lives, and prayerful study, be prepared and inclined to declare the message of salvation in their own tongue to their fellowmen. May their hearts and the hearts of this people be turned to their fathers that they may accept the opportunity offered them to bring salvation to the millions who have gone before.”

So spoke thine ordained servant long ago, and now we thank thee, Father, for thy response to that prophetic prayer. Missionaries have come here from afar to teach the everlasting gospel. Likewise, there have been many Chinese young men and women who have served faithfully and diligently as messengers of thine eternal truths, speaking to their own people in their own tongue. . . . We thank thee for the firm foundation on which thy Church is now established in this part of the earth. . . .

We pray for the government of this nation. . . . May peace and prosperity reign in the land. May Thy work spread from here to the vast numbers of thy Chinese

sons and daughters wherever they may be found. Touch the hearts of those who govern that they may open the doors of their nations to thy messengers of eternal truth. May thy work grow in beauty and strength in the great Chinese realm.

Now, as thy servants, acting in the authority of the Holy Priesthood which comes from thee, and in the name of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, we dedicate to thee and to Him this the Taipei Taiwan Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . May it be sacred to all who enter its portals and may they rejoice in the eternal ordinances to be performed herein.<sup>55</sup>

Sister Yang Peng Mei-Jyan (楊彭美堅), a missionary in the Taichung Taiwan Mission in 1983, received her ticket to the dedication and remembered the quiet reverence she felt in the temple when President Hinckley dedicated the sacred edifice. She also recalled that local missionaries had not been to the temple before their mission, but after the Taipei temple was dedicated in 1984, she said, "We went with our mission president to the temple [to receive our own temple ordinances] after the dedication."<sup>56</sup> In addition, Sister Hsu Hsiu-Ying (徐秀瑛) said, "The branch president gave us tickets and I was happy to attend the dedication." The following year, she received her own endowment and served a mission in Taiwan.<sup>57</sup>

Sister Mao Chang Mei-Yun (毛張美雲), who attended the temple dedication, felt a special spirit as she entered the temple and heard the choir sing. She was grateful that missionaries could now receive their endowment, and she "made a goal to marry in the temple." Years later, she recalled returning to perform sealing ordinances with her husband during their thirty-year wedding anniversary.<sup>58</sup> Sister Wang Li-Fang (王麗芳) remembered a strong spirit when President Hinckley spoke, and she had the feeling that maybe he would be the prophet in the future. About a decade later, Wang's feeling





*President Gordon B. Hinckley at the Taipei Taiwan Temple dedication in November 1984. Courtesy of Phil and Brenda Frandsen.*

was confirmed when she sustained him as the President of the Church.<sup>59</sup>

Sister Yang Liang Je-Yin (楊梁哲英), an early convert with her husband in the 1950s, recalled attending the temple dedication in 1984 and waving her white handkerchief during the Hosanna Shout. Her husband would become a temple sealer, and together they would serve twice a week at the temple for many years.<sup>60</sup>

Brother Weng Chen-Hua (翁振華), from Kaohsiung, received his own endowment in 1981 in Japan. He attended the Taipei temple dedication and said, “When President Gordon Hinckley began to wave his white handkerchief during the dedication, I just kept crying. The temple is the same wherever it is located, but we had a temple only 4–5 hours away now.”<sup>61</sup> Brother Tsai Fu-An (Steve) (蔡福安) said it will be hard to forget the strong spirit he felt when President Hinckley waved his white handkerchief and they sang “The Spirit of God.”<sup>62</sup> Sister Chang Chen Yu Ying (張陳玉英) remembers the reverent and sacred atmosphere and the joy she felt when they sang during the dedication.<sup>63</sup>

Sister Chang Lai Hui-Pin (張賴慧嬪) said that the temple dedication was special. She added, “There was a great spirit, and everyone was touched and grateful. The Spirit touched us and we were in tears to have a temple.” She was married at the Chin Hua Street chapel in October 1984, and after the dedication, she went to the temple on 1 January 1985 to be sealed to her husband. She recalled being nervous to go the temple and recalled that “the temple was a sacred place and



*The Taipei Taiwan Temple was dedicated by President Gordon B. Hinckley in November 1984.  
Courtesy of Intellectual Reserve, Inc.*

very different than the outside world. The sealing was performed in English so I didn't understand it. But although I didn't understand it, I knew it was good."<sup>64</sup> Her husband Chang Ting-Tsung (張定宗) added, "The temple gives us a feel of eternity, I could feel eternity." He added that besides their temple sealing as husband and wife, he was also sealed to his parents and siblings which was a wonderful blessing to them.<sup>65</sup>

### *Temple Presidents and Temple Work*

There were about twelve thousand members of the Church in Taiwan in 1984 when the Taipei temple was dedicated. John W. Clifford was called as the first temple president. Clifford had been "the director of Church service in the Church's Personnel Department . . . [and had] supervised all volunteer work in the Church Office Building since June 1983. . . . His wife, Coral, who [had] been his executive assistant in the volunteer program, [was] the temple matron."<sup>66</sup>

Clifford was no stranger to Taiwan because he had lived there while working for the US government in the 1960s. During this time period he had served as the president of the Taichung District. The Cliffords served as the temple president and matron from 1984 until 1988. Paul V. Hyer, who previously served as the mission president for the Taiwan Taipei Mission from 1982 to 1985 (during the temple's construction), returned to Taiwan to serve as the temple president with his wife, Harriett Johns Hyer, from 1988 to 1990. Sister Yang Peng Mei-Jyan (楊彭美堅) said that Hyer "had served as a mission president before, and then returned as a temple president. The members in Taiwan were very happy and rejoiced to welcome the Hyers back. We knew them and we had a special feeling for them."<sup>67</sup>

Clifford said that many members traveled great distances to receive their temple blessings, including those in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. Those who came included the disabled or elderly. Clifford said, "One sister who was paralyzed from the waist down . . .

completed all her female family work including their baptisms. We had a strong brother, a member of her stake presidency, hold her like a child and let her down into the water.” He also recalled a family that came from Hong Kong with their elderly father who was in his nineties and said, “At the sealing his son helped the aged father from the wheelchair to the altar. The father’s tears made us all cry.”<sup>68</sup>

Hyer reported that the Chen family, which included the parents, their four children, and six nieces and nephews they were raising, came to the temple to celebrate their twentieth wedding anniversary. Hyer added that “the Chens planned a day of temple work for their family. . . . At the temple, all those in the family who were endowed went through a session together. Those who had not received their endowment took part in baptisms for the dead.” According to Brother Chen, “It was a fulfilling day.” Hyer concluded, “Great are the joys of those who serve in the temple.”<sup>69</sup>

Many faithful members of the Church also served as temple workers. One such example was Brother Masao Watabe and his wife, Sister Hisako Watabe. Brother Watabe was born in China to Japanese parents. He was baptized in 1949 and baptized his wife the following year. He served as the first patriarch in Japan and, together with his wife, served many missions. He was also a counselor in the presidency of the Taipei Taiwan Temple.<sup>70</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley, then the first counselor in the First Presidency, noted that the Watabes were on their fourth mission, serving as assistant to the matron and counselor in the temple presidency in Taiwan, and were great examples of faith and devotion.<sup>71</sup> Other members helped to prepare the names of their ancestors for the temple. Brother Hu Shao-Lu (胡弟兄) and his wife, Hu Chou Yeng-Ying (胡姐妹), were among those who wept for joy at the dedication. Sister Hu “provided 9,100 of the little more than 10,000 names cleared to begin work in the new temple. The names [were] from 37 generations in her family line.” She said, “I am overjoyed. . . . Truly overjoyed.”<sup>72</sup>

Elder Tai Kwok Yuen (戴國源), who would later serve as a mission president and a member of the Quorum of the Seventy, provided the first 150 names for ordinance work when the Taipei Taiwan Temple opened. Finding those names was challenging. After joining the Church, he began to search for his family history, and seeing his interest, an elderly aunt shared with him a family record going back twenty-three generations. Later, while waiting for transportation, he struck a conversation with a coworker whom he learned shared his same last name. After sharing their family information, they discovered they shared some common ancestors, adding another seventy-two generations to Tai's family pedigree, extending about five hundred years before Christ. He noted that miracles happen to those who open their mouth and diligently seek to find their ancestors.<sup>73</sup>

Like many converts in Taiwan, Chang Jui-Sheng (張瑞昇) and his wife went to their temple sealing by themselves because their families were not members and could not enter the temple. Nevertheless, Chang reported a great spirit in the temple and a witness that the sealer had the authority to seal and bless them together.<sup>74</sup>

Brother Chung Yin-Chang (鍾銀章) was among the first to be sealed in the new Taipei temple in 1984. He remembered a pair of American missionaries in the streets passing out pamphlets and inviting people to a tour of the Chin Hua Street chapel. After attending the tour of the chapel and meeting the missionaries, he was invited to buy a copy of the Book of Mormon, read it, and attend weekly discussion lessons. After two months, he was baptized in 1973 at the age of fifteen. Later, while serving as a branch president in Tanshue, he met his future wife at a singles activity, and they were married in 1983 while the Taipei temple was under construction. Chung said, "In 1984 we were sealed in the Taipei temple. We didn't understand much about the temple; we only knew we needed to go in to get sealed. We were sealed as husband and wife and then sealed to our baby." Chung recalled the great feeling and spirit he felt that day.<sup>75</sup>

Wang Ling-Xing (王令行) wondered about the purpose of life and where people went after death. After his wife met the missionaries, they began learning the missionary lessons. He investigated the Church for a couple of years. Although his questions had not yet been answered, he felt a voice tell him, “If you don’t get baptized, you will never have your question resolved.” He decided then he needed to be baptized. After Wang was baptized and confirmed, he was immediately ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood, and then he baptized his wife. Furthermore, he remembered preparing to go to the temple and being sealed to his wife and their three-year-old child. Wang said, “When our child entered the sealing room dressed in white, I felt the Spirit very strong. Then we were sealed together as a family and I was very happy. I don’t know how to describe that feeling.”<sup>76</sup> Wang later served in the mission presidency and as a stake president.

### **Church Administration Building**

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the Church’s administrative offices were housed in various locations. Sister Huang Chung-Shiu (Christie) (黃鍾秀) recalled that early office space was located at Hsin-Yi Road and Ho-Ping East Road.<sup>77</sup> Various Church departments, including the translation office and the finance office, were located on Hsin-Yi Road. At Ho-Ping East Road, the Church had a distribution center, which provided Church literature, missionary tracts, and many other supplies.<sup>78</sup> These were not located near the stake center or the temple site.

The Taipei temple was built on the lot that previously housed the mission home and office. The building of the new temple necessitated moving these facilities and building additional housing for the incoming temple president. Moreover, the Church was growing in Taiwan, and additional space for administrative offices would be needed. Hyer explained the background and context that necessitated procuring a new place for the mission headquarters and Church offices:



When I arrived in July 1982 the Taipei mission headquarters including the residence of the mission president were located where the temple [was to be built]. . . . When I first saw the neighborhood almost twenty years earlier in 1963; it was open fields, a large gardening area of a Chinese prison. The old stone wall of the prison is still there if a person knows where to look. The land was purchased for a chapel; what eventually became the first stake center. Later, Malan Jackson, first president of an independent Taiwan Mission, contracted in 1972 to build a mission office and a mission president's residence just south of the stake center. At first his office was downstairs in the basement of the building, and their residence was out in Tienmu.

By 1982 the decision had been made to demolish the mission complex and build the temple on the site. It was then imperative that I find a new location for the mission offices and a residence for the mission president's family—a daunting task as it turned out. Daunting because the area was now saturated with two in-town university branches—Tanjang University and Chengchi University, also with government offices and many businesses.<sup>79</sup>



*Over the years the Distribution Center in Taipei has provided an increased selection of church materials to support teaching and learning for individuals and families in Taiwan. Picture taken in 2016 of some materials provided by the Distribution Center. Courtesy of Chou Po Nien (Felipe).*

Hyer considered putting the mission complex in the outskirts of the city, like Shihlin or Tienmu. The missionaries serving at the mission office found some space on the sixth floor of a building by Hsin-Yi Road, but it was not approved by the leadership in Salt Lake. The Church owned property in Shihlin, but a chapel was more ideal for it.<sup>80</sup> Hyer records the following:

I was beginning to despair of finding a suitable place when one day I leaned back from my desk and looked sideways to my left out the back window of the office. There on "Alley" #183 coming off of Chin-hua street I noticed a seven story building going up. The location was ideal and I wondered what it was planned for and who owned it. Would it be possible to meet our needs? . . .

I remember asking one of our Presiding Bishopric Office (PBO) personnel, Stephen Wong, to enquire about the building and see if there was a possibility for us to obtain space there. He followed through and found that there was. This was a ray of hope. The pressure was on to move the mission headquarters and clear the way for the demolition of our mission buildings so the construction of the temple could proceed. It was urgent for us to make some critical decisions.

We learned that the building that had attracted my attention was being constructed by a family company as a combination of offices and family residence. The quality of the work on the structure was superior—it was not being built for speculation sale or investment. They were willing to lease us four floors of the building, furthermore, they were willing to consider giving us an option to buy the entire building. We informed the Brethren



in Salt Lake of what to us was an inspired situation, a heaven sent opportunity.<sup>81</sup>

The building, it appeared, would solve the problem Hyer faced by consolidating the mission complex and Church departments into one location. A lease agreement allowed the mission headquarters to immediately move into the fourth, fifth, and sixth floors of the building that was used for the mission office and mission home. But purchasing the building would take much more work—nothing shy of a miracle. Hyer enlisted the help of Marvin Jensen to assist in this endeavor.<sup>82</sup> Jensen, a construction specialist, was sent by the Church to supervise several planned chapels in Taiwan. He helped draw up the special proposal to buy the building, with details on the finances and space utilization.<sup>83</sup> Hyer and Jensen needed to persuade the Church to purchase the building, while also working with the owners to sell it.

A very complicating factor was that the owners of the building were hard bargainers. They frankly pointed out that the value of their building was considerably enhanced because of the fine LDS Church stake center just across the street and the new temple being constructed next door. Their asking price as I recall was near the cost of the temple. We had a series of dinner meetings with them to negotiate the matter but were not making much progress in lowering the price.

[Leaders in] Salt Lake said their price was excessively high. One problem was that estimates of the worth of the building were made by Taiwan bank appraisers who are very conservative and came up with excessively low appraisals. Thus when Church staff in Salt Lake saw the large gap between the high value the owners were

asking and the value the appraisers assigned the property, our problem was complicated.<sup>84</sup>

Jensen decided to get appraisals by engineers based on what it would cost to replace the building, which was more acceptable. However, the cost was still too high for the international Presiding Bishopric Office (PBO) in Salt Lake City. Hyer indicated that “negotiations were pretty much at a stalemate” and “dragged on for several months.” The owners became impatient and questioned the sincerity and seriousness of the Church’s interest in buying the building. Hyer called and spoke with Elder Simpson, then the Executive Administrator for Asia. He was told that an updated proposal could be sent, but that it had little chance of being approved because the PBO did not support it. Hyer then reports what happened when President Hinckley got involved,<sup>85</sup> relating the following experience:

President Hinckley was conducting the meeting of the appropriations committee that would make the final decision, the crucial hurdle. This committee, I understand, include[d] the First Presidency, the Twelve, the Presiding Bishopric and probably others. . . . I was informed of how the meeting went. . . .

President Hinckley asked how many of the committee favored “the purchase of that administration building in Taipei?”—not many hands went up. Reframing the question he asked how many present were opposed to the purchase of the building in Taipei. Again, not many hands went up.

At this point “Mr. Asia” miraculously saved the day. Gordon B. Hinckley for years has been the widest traveled and the best informed of the Brethren on Asia. He said, if there is not so much opposition to the purchase, then why don’t we buy it? The committee then fell into

line and we gained an important and wonderful administrative building.

Belatedly, several Church leaders came to Taiwan, mainly in connection with the construction of the temple, and as they surveyed the situation, including the new building we had purchased, they were very pleased. They noted that we would never have to apologize for the purchase. It would have save[d] us much concern if they would have come earlier to see what we were proposing.<sup>86</sup>

Hyer recorded that with “the astronomical rise in the cost of real estate, the value of the building is now much greater than the price for which we purchased it.” He would continue by saying that “the saints in Taiwan . . . and I owe President Hinckley a great debt of gratitude” because “he has always been a champion of the Church in Asia.” Hyer would later say that finding and helping to purchase this building was “one of my more important accomplishments in the mission” along with his “involvement in building the Temple.”<sup>87</sup>

The new building, containing administrative offices, along with the temple and the stake center, formed what some members affectionately called the “Taipei Temple Square” complex. The office for the Seminaries and Institutes department and the genealogy center was located at the stake center. Upon completion, the newly purchased seven-story office building housed the Presiding Bishopric Administrative Office (PBAO), the mission office, the mission president’s apartment, and the temple president’s apartment. The mission office and family of the mission president moved to their new home in early 1983. The new office building provided space for the distribution center, translation, finance, membership, and construction offices. The temple, stake center, and multistory building provided “an efficient Church complex in a fine Taipei neighborhood.”<sup>88</sup>



*Church Administration Building in 2015; the building was purchased by the Church in 1983.  
Courtesy of Chou Po Nien (Felipe).*

## **Regional Representatives**

While in Taiwan for the dedication of the Taipei temple, President Gordon B. Hinckley, then second counselor in the First Presidency,

called Chang I-Ching (張漪清) to serve as the first native regional representative from Taiwan to the Council of the Twelve on 18 November 1984. On 15 February 1987, Chang was released, and Liu Ch'un Hua (劉春華) was called to serve as the new regional representative in Taiwan until he was released on 21 March 1992. "These regional representatives resided in their own homes, continued their employment, and served under the direction of the Twelve to train and strengthen stake leaders."<sup>89</sup> Likewise, Liang Shih-An (Kent) (梁世安) was first called as a regional representative on 21 March 1992 until all regional representatives of the Church were released and called as Area Authorities on 1 April 1995.

In 1995, writers for the *Ensign* interviewed Elders John Carmack, Tai Kwok Yuen, and John H. Groberg, then members of the Quorum of the Seventy and members of the Asia Area Presidency. They noted there were about twelve thousand members, three districts, four stakes, two missions, and one temple in Taiwan. In addition, they said the following about Liang, then the regional representative for Taiwan, and his family:<sup>90</sup>

Kent Liang, the regional representative for Taiwan, and his family are additional examples of solid second-generation Latter-day Saints. Brother Liang is a good example for his fellow Latter-day Saints and for his colleagues at a local university, where he serves as a department chairman. His brother, Carl Liang, is the country director of temporal affairs. Their father [who was the first branch president in Taiwan] serves as a temple worker.<sup>91</sup>

Various Church leaders traveled to Taiwan during the 1980s, often accompanied by the regional representative. Many members of the Quorum of the Twelve visited, beginning on 15–16 September 1984, when then-Elder Howard W. Hunter presided over a regional

conference in Taiwan. On 20–21 June 1987, Elder Boyd K. Packer toured Taiwan to reorganize the Taipei Taiwan West Stake presidency. In February 1988, Elder Dallin H. Oaks visited, and shortly after, on 16–17 April 1988, Elder M. Russell Ballard came to preside over a regional conference. Additionally, on 20 November 1989, Bishop Henry B. Eyring, then first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church, also visited Taiwan.<sup>92</sup> These Church leaders from Salt Lake provided local leaders and members in Taiwan with opportunities to be taught and trained.

### **Family Records Project**

In 1989, a joint project between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the University of Chinese Culture was completed. This was a ten-year project that helped to microfilm Chinese family records throughout Taiwan. In June of that year, a genealogical exhibition was held in Taipei at the new National Center Library, with about six thousand people attending the weeklong event.<sup>93</sup> This partnership preserved thousands of records on microfilm and helped to build bridges between members and nonmembers.

Sister Chyou Shu-Min (邱淑敏), called to help with family history in Taiwan over several years, noted that efforts were made in the 1970s to explore the possibility of gathering genealogy records in Taiwan. Brothers Ted Telford and Arthur Wolf sought the help of a Mr. Wang as they visited various genealogical groups in Taiwan. After Mr. Wang, others were enlisted in this effort to work with genealogical groups in Taiwan to gain permission to microfilm these records. The project was finished in the 1980s. In partnership with the Taiwan National Library, the Church also worked on microfilming genealogy records as the National Library indexed the records.<sup>94</sup>

Chyou shared one experience in which the Church tried many times to obtain permission to microfilm a two-hundred-year-old book from a genealogy group. After repeated requests, the Church

was finally given permission to microfilm the records in this book. Years later, this particular genealogical society attended one of the genealogy fairs sponsored by the Church and saw that their record was preserved in microfilm. They were so excited and requested a copy because insects had destroyed the original book. They were very grateful they had given permission to the Church to microfilm their genealogy records years earlier, and that the Church was able to preserve and then provide them with a copy of this priceless record.<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusion

The 1980s ushered in new milestones for the Church in Taiwan. The most significant was the blessings brought by a temple in Taiwan. The members of the Church in Taiwan were overwhelmingly grateful to have the Taipei Taiwan Temple dedicated in 1984 by President Hinckley. In addition, a new seven-story Church administration building was purchased, which along with the new temple and first chapel, composed the Church complex in Taiwan. The temple further helped the people of Taiwan to understand the LDS Church as one that had a focus of strengthening the family and honoring ancestors. Also during this time, the first Chinese regional representatives were called. Then, toward the end of the 1980s, the Church completed a family records project. Genealogy and family history work provided names of ancestors for the new temple and further emphasized the values that the Church shared with the people of Taiwan in regards to remembering and honoring ancestors.

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