

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, if I may make a few preliminary remarks. We welcome you wherever you may be throughout the world. With much of love we greet you. This is both a general conference and a world conference. One hundred sixty-seven years have passed since the Church was organized. From that day until this it has steadily and consistently grown until at the end of 1996, the membership reached nearly 9,700,000. We have become a great concourse of people. We should reach the 10 million mark by the end of this year.

In these opening remarks, I intend to briefly mention three or four matters that I hope will be of interest to each of you.

New assembly building

For those far afield, I may say that we are speaking from the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. We hope to break ground on July 24 for a new place of assembly which we have not yet named, where, at least for many years to come, all who desire to attend the general conference may do so. It will be constructed on the block directly north of Temple Square. It will seat up to four times as many as the Tabernacle.

It will be used for general conference and for other purposes that are in harmony with the reasons for which it is being built. The stage will be such that it can accommodate a large pageant. We may not fill it initially, but we are building for the long term.

This remarkable Tabernacle has served us well and will continue to do so. The Tabernacle Choir broadcasts will continue from here, and many meetings will be held here. This building has remarkable properties, different from other structures. It is unique and wonderful. However, there are today re-

gional conferences involving only six or seven stakes where we have many more people than the Tabernacle will accommodate.

New temples

Now as we speak of construction projects, we remind you that we are moving forward with the building of new temples. On June 1-5 the St. Louis Missouri Temple will be dedicated. This fall the temple in Vernal, Utah, will be dedicated.

Work is on schedule in Preston, England; Bogotá, Colombia; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Cochabamba, Bolivia; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Recife, Brazil; and Madrid, Spain. The approval process is moving forward in Boston, Massachusetts. While delayed, planning for a temple in Nashville, Tennessee, continues. Preliminary work is under way in Billings, Montana, and White Plains, New York, as well as Monterrey, Mexico. The search for a suitable property continues in Venezuela. We are pleased to announce today that ground has been acquired in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the construction of a temple and also in Campinas, Brazil, where the need is great. Other sites are under consideration. I hope to see temples so located that members of the Church can travel to one of these sacred houses within a reasonable distance of their homes.

Though I live with it, this matter of temple construction is a thing of awesome wonder to me. We are trying to build in such a way and in such places across the world that these houses of the Lord may stand and serve through the Millennium.

General Relief Society presidency

The next item: the general Relief Society presidency will be released at

this conference. These women have done a great and significant work. They have served for more than eight years, giving unselfishly of their time and their rich talents. They have given remarkable leadership to the women of the Church and also have participated on other boards and committees of which they have been members. We are deeply grateful to them. Formal action on this matter will be taken when President Monson presents the General Authorities and general officers of the Church immediately after my remarks.

New Quorums of Seventy

I come now to the Brethren of the Seventy. As you know, we have two Quorums of Seventy who serve as General Authorities with jurisdiction across the Church. The First is comprised of those who serve to age 70. We will sustain four Brethren in this quorum this morning. Additionally, we are calling a group of wise and mature men with long experience in the Church and with freedom to go wherever circumstances dictate as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. These Brethren will serve for periods of from three to five years. In every sense they will be General Authorities.

We also have a faithful cadre of Brethren serving as Area Authorities. These have been called wherever the Church is organized. They are faithful and devoted men. They are men who love the Church and who have served in many capacities. As we have traveled at home and abroad, we have worked with many of them and have been deeply impressed with their remarkable capacity.

The Lord made provision at a general level for a First Presidency, a Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. At a local level the revelations speak of stake presidents and bishops. We have had in between the general

and local authorities for a period of time the Regional Representatives—now more recently these Area Authorities. We have determined to present to the conference the names of these Area Authorities to be ordained Seventies. They will then have a quorum relationship presided over by the Presidents of the Seventy. They will be known as Area Authority Seventies, to serve for a period of years in a voluntary capacity in the area in which they reside. They are called by the First Presidency and will work under the general direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, the Presidents of the Seventy, and the Area Presidencies in that part of the world in which they live.

They will continue with their present employment, reside in their own homes, and serve on a Church-service basis. Those residing in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Pacific will become members of the Third Quorum of Seventy. Those in Mexico, Central America, and South America will become members of the Fourth Quorum. Those residing in the United States and Canada will become members of the Fifth Quorum.

They may be assigned to (a) preside at stake conferences and train stake presidencies, (b) create or reorganize stakes and set apart stake presidencies, (c) serve as counselors in Area Presidencies, (d) chair regional conference planning committees, (e) serve on area councils presided over by the Area Presidency, (f) tour missions and train mission presidents, and (g) complete other duties as assigned.

Consistent with their ordination as Seventies, they become officers of the Church with a specific and definite tie to a quorum. While there will be only limited opportunities for them to come together in quorum meetings, the Presidents of the Seventy will communicate with them, will instruct them, receive reports, and do other things of that kind. They will now have a sense of belonging

that they have not experienced up to this time. As Seventies they are called to preach the gospel and to be especial witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the revelations. Though all Seventies have equal scriptural authority, members of the First and Second Quorums are designated General Authorities, while members of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth are designated Area Authorities.

Although the ordination to the office of Seventy is without term, a Seventy is called to serve in a quorum for a designated period of years. At the conclusion of this service, he will return to activity in his respective ward and stake and will meet with his high priests group.

We welcome most warmly these Brethren into quorum membership and activity. They have our confidence, our love, and our esteem.

With these respective quorums in place, we have established a pattern under which the Church may grow to any size with an organization of Area Presidencies and Area Authority Seventies, chosen and working across the world according to need.

Now, the Lord is watching over His kingdom. He is inspiring its leadership to care for its ever growing membership. Immediately following my remarks, President Monson will present the Gen-

eral Authorities, the Area Authorities, and the general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote. I need not remind you that this is a very sacred and important matter.

A wonderful season of the Lord's work

We are living in a wonderful season of the work of the Lord. The work is growing ever stronger. It is expanding across the world. Each of us has an important part to play in this great undertaking. People in more than 160 nations, speaking a score of languages and more, worship our Father in Heaven and our Redeemer, His Beloved Son. This is their great work. It is their cause and their kingdom.

May I, in closing, repeat the words of Jacob: "But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart. Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause, and send down justice upon those who seek your destruction" (Jacob 3:1).

May we be faithful and true, doing our duty to move forward the eternal work of the Lord, blessing our Father's children wherever we can touch their lives, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authorities, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of