



THE ROAD TO the Temple

*Although members have taken different paths,
Latter-day Saints in Ukraine are finding that all roads
of righteousness lead to the temple.*

By Chad E. Phares

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The predawn drive along Kiltseva Road in Kyiv, Ukraine, presents travelers with a relatively quiet path to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple. Only a few sets of headlights shine through the morning fog as vehicles weave around a smattering of small potholes.

The glow of the temple ahead serves as a beacon, providing a guiding light that shows those traveling to the temple exactly where they need to go.

While some have been blessed to follow this serene path to the temple since it was dedicated in August 2010, others can attest that their paths to the temple were not quite as tranquil.

As morning breaks and the sun peaks over the horizon, cars and buses pour onto Kiltseva Road. Now flooded with vehicles, the once-serene path becomes a noisy parking lot.

Knowing that the traffic is an expected part of the drive, many temple goers stay on the

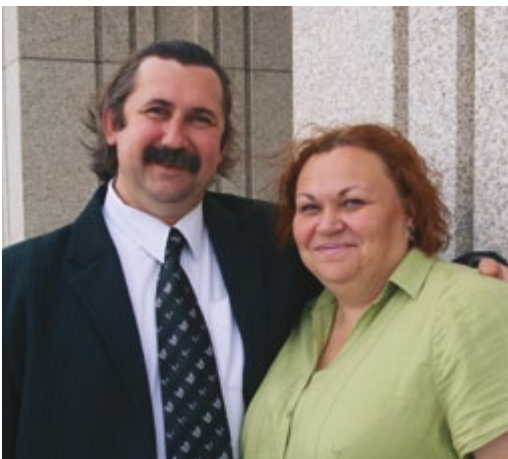
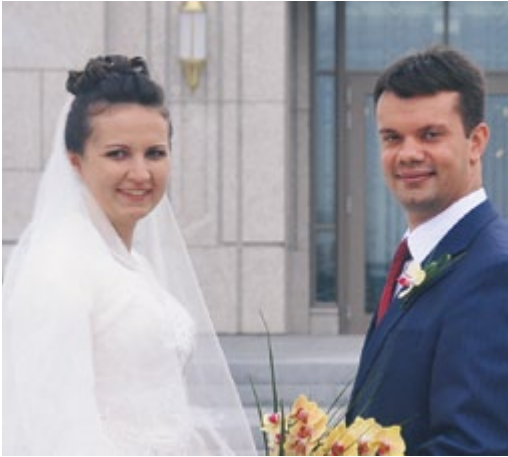
road, patiently moving a few feet at a time before rolling to another stop. The temple remains the destination, but the drive is slow.

Others choose different routes. Behind the temple is a collection of dirt roads and back streets. The way is not clearly marked, and drivers can easily get turned around. However, if the driver looks up, he or she can see the temple spire, once again serving as a guide, inviting all to come to the temple.

The spiritual paths members in Ukraine have taken to get to the Lord's house are not unlike the roads that surround the temple.

While some young members have been blessed to grow up in the Church and now are able to attend the Kyiv Ukraine Temple to do their own ordinance work, many others have driven their way through heavy spiritual traffic to get there.

The temple, announced in 1998 by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008),



From top: Asiya and Nikolai Chemezov were sealed in the Kyiv Ukraine Temple three days after it was dedicated. Petr and Adalina Mikhailenko are grateful their granddaughter, Masha, can look forward to attending the temple in her homeland. Andrei and Valentina Dudka visited the temple site often as the temple was being built.

was completed in 2010. During those 12 years, many Kyiv Ukraine Stake members stayed on the narrow—albeit seemingly slow—path, patiently waiting for the temple to be completed. Others took different paths, temporarily losing sight of their temple goals.

Although the spiritual paths members are taking to get to the temple differ, faithful members in Ukraine are finding that all roads of righteousness lead them back to the temple.

The Straight Path

Many young adult members in Eastern Europe were led to the gospel at a young age. This early gospel knowledge has allowed them not only to cultivate testimonies from their youth but also to build a strong resolve to be married in the temple.

Both Nikolai Chemezov and his wife, Asiya, of the Kharkivs'kyi Ward, were introduced to the gospel in their youth—Nikolai as an eight-year-old and Asiya as a teenager.

“Ever since I was baptized, I knew that Heavenly Father’s plan was the path of exaltation,” Brother Chemezov says. “The Church’s teachings on the divine mission of the family have always been important to me.”

Sister Chemezova also realized the importance of eternal families at a young age. “When I attended church as a young woman, I was taught how important it is to enter into sacred temple covenants,” she says. “I always dreamed of a temple marriage, and I always tried to be worthy of being able to be married in the temple.”

The couple began dating in 2009. As love blossomed and conversations began to turn toward marriage, the two already knew what would be their next step. “When they announced that the Kyiv Temple would be dedicated in August 2010, we decided we would be sealed there,” Sister Chemezova says.

“It’s good we didn’t have to wait too long,” Brother Chemezov adds.

The couple was sealed in marriage on September 1, 2010.

“It was the most wonderful day of my life,” Brother Chemezov says. “I felt blessed to take the hand of my dear Asiya and take her to the house of the Lord. It is safe to say that on that day my dream came true—the dream of creating an eternal family.”

The Long Way

Although the path to eternal marriage has been just as straight for Vynohradars'kyi Ward members Petr and Adalina Mikhailenko, the road has been much longer. The Mikhailenkos were among the first families

to join the Church in Ukraine, having been baptized in 1993—just two years after the first branch was established in Kyiv.

Despite this, distance from a temple and other factors kept the couple from being sealed for many years. Undeterred, they remained committed to each other and to their dream of an eternal marriage.

“I waited patiently for the temple,” Brother Mikhailenko says. “There was never a thought to leave the Church. The path has always been clear.”

After President Thomas S. Monson dedicated the temple in August 2010, the couple’s eagerness to be sealed couldn’t be contained. “We came so early on the day we were to be sealed that the temple was not open yet,” Sister Mikhailenko says.

The couple wasn’t alone. Many fellow ward members came to the temple that day as well, excited to share in the Mikhailenkos’ joy.

“The sealing was wonderful,” Sister Mikhailenko says. “There was a feeling like you never really loved your spouse like you love him at that moment.”

The feeling of love has persisted since that day. “There is an absolute difference in our relationship,” Brother Mikhailenko says. “We have been married for a long time, but there is now a different feeling. We want to do more for each other, and we do it with more love.”

Back on the Path

Andrei and Valentina Dudka of the Vynohradars’kyi Ward were introduced to the gospel by neighbors in 2003. After meeting for several weeks with missionaries, the couple decided to join the Church.

Although the Dudkas were excited to learn gospel truths such as the need for latter-day temples and the potential of having an eternal family, they gradually slipped into inactivity. “We just found reasons not to go to church,” Sister Dudka says. “We let things come up—like we were just too tired or there was

The Kyiv Ukraine Temple, the Church’s 134th operating temple, serves members in nine countries.

a show on TV we wanted to watch.”

The Dudkas’ lack of activity adversely affected their happiness. “We started to see a real difference between Church life and worldly life after we left the Church,” Brother Dudka says. “We weren’t happy.”

After about four months of not attending church, Sister Dudka reached her breaking point. “A certain Sunday came, and I said, ‘If I don’t go today, I might not survive,’” she says. “I was like a person who had gone days without water. I needed that water.”

After returning to activity, Sister Dudka patiently prayed for and encouraged her husband to come back to church with her. About half a year after she returned to church, so did her husband.

“My wife’s prayers affected me,” Brother Dudka says. “I realized that as a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, I had the responsibility to be an active member. I recognized that without God, I could not do anything.”

After the Dudkas returned to the Church, their thoughts returned to the saving ordinances of the temple. The couple joined with other Ukrainian Latter-day Saints in rejoicing in the temple groundbreaking in 2007.

“After they started building the temple, we would often come by and just look at the work being done,” Brother Dudka says.

“I jumped so high when I saw them lay the first stone,” Sister Dudka adds.

When the angel Moroni figure was placed on top of the temple, there was a lot of hugging and tears among the Saints and particularly among the Dudkas.

“When they finally finished building the temple, there was such relief that we knew we were worthy to enter,” Brother Dudka says.

The Dudkas say being sealed in the temple has built in them a stronger eternal perspective on life. “You understand that your family is no longer just you and your husband—now the Lord is part of it too,” Sister Dudka says. “We now look at each other with eternal eyes.” ■