

By David A. Edwards

Church Magazines

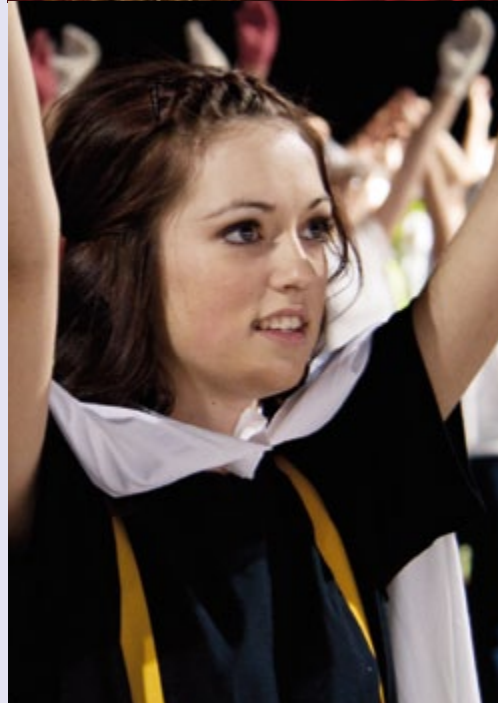
# CELEBRATING THE

*Youth from Arizona share their excitement at the dedication of a new temple.*

In April 2008 a mixture of excitement, shock, joy, and gratitude quickly spread among Church members in the Gila Valley, Arizona, when President Thomas S. Monson announced plans to build a temple there. The thing that had been longed for, prayed for, predicted, and prophesied was finally going to happen.

Youth of the Church in the area soon learned they would be participating in a cultural celebration that would accompany the temple dedication, and their excitement grew. For months they practiced for the production, titled “The Place Which God for Us Prepared.” Then on May 22, 2010, the day before the temple dedication, they performed.

The *New Era* was privileged to visit with some of these youth at that time to find out how these experiences affected them. Here are some of the feelings they expressed about the temple and the opportunity to perform for the President of the Church.



# Temple

## Why do you think the cultural celebration is held?



**Alexandria Alder, 16, Thatcher Arizona Stake:**

“Our leaders want all of the youth to be participating because they realize that this temple is going to be for our generation.”

**Camille Christensen, 15, Thatcher Arizona Stake:**

“We’re thankful that the temple is here, and we’re just showing everyone how happy we are to have a temple.”



**Mariah Mayberry, 17, St. David Arizona Stake:**

“We’re showing some things about the people the prophet sent to settle this area, who were my ancestors. So in this celebration I get to show what they were all about and what they did.”

## What was it like to perform in the celebration?

**Dallin Green, 16, Safford Arizona Stake:** “At the end, during ‘Come, Come, Ye Saints,’ the Spirit was so intensely strong; it was unlike anything else. And you know when it’s the Spirit; there’s no doubt in your mind. It’s a peaceful and happy feeling that cannot be mistaken for anything else. We’ll remember this for the rest of our lives.”



**Camille:** “For the finale I was right in front of the prophet. He was smiling at me, and I was smiling back. I

was waving my flag like I was supposed to, and then he said, 'Give me that flag.' I thought it was a joke, but then I thought, 'OK. I'll give it to you.' And so he got up and was waving it with the rest of us. It was really fun. I guess he wanted to be a part of it."



**Reese Jarvis, 16, Pima Arizona Stake:** "The Spirit was so strong. I was singing as loud as I could. It's just a really life-changing experience for me. On the last verse of 'Come, Come, Ye Saints' I started bawling. I thought, 'This isn't fair. I want to be tough.' But it didn't happen. I

just couldn't finish the song. You can't explain the feelings you had."

#### What does the temple mean to you and your family?



**Cassie Scott, 16, Safford Arizona Stake:** "My parents were married in the temple, so we get to be together as a family for time and all eternity and not just till death. The temple is something that I've always been taught about, but I also think that it has a special place in my

heart."

**Camille:** "My family is the most important thing to me, and because of the blessings of the temple, I can be with them for eternity. My grandpa passed away a few months ago. He was really close to us. It's been so hard on us, and it still really is. It's wonderful to know that through the blessings of the temple, I can see him again if I do what's right and endure to the end. I know that families are forever through the temple. That's the greatest gift ever."



**Shelby Peck, 14, Safford Arizona Stake:** "My family has pictures of the temple in every room in my house—to remind us of our goal. I've grown up knowing that's the only place I want to get married."

**Dallin:** "I know that since my parents were married and sealed in the temple, that I'm sealed to them. It's a great source of happiness to know that as long as each of us lives righteously, we can be an eternal family."

#### Allison Taylor, 18, Sierra Vista Arizona



**Stake:** "Since my dad's in the military, we move a lot. Every time we've moved, the first trip we take is always to the nearest temple, and we take pictures with our parents outside the temple. In our home, in each of our bedrooms, there's a picture of the temple or a picture of Christ so that we remember where we're trying to get to and that that should be the center of our life."

#### How does the temple influence your plans for the future?

**Allison:** "When selecting a college, I picked one that has a large LDS branch, a singles branch, so that I could possibly find somebody to take me to the temple so that I can start my own eternal family. And when I looked for a university, I tried to look for a university that was close to a temple."

**Alexandria:** "In the future I'll be going to The Gila Valley Arizona Temple someday—that's where I want to go and get married. That's my plan. I won't settle for anything less."

**Dallin:** "I know that I'll be going to the temple before my mission. If we're ready and worthy to go to the temple, then we're worthy to go on a mission. So that's my goal—to aim the highest I can so that I'll be ready for my mission and whatever life holds for me."

**Reese:** "The temple helps my standards stay high so that I can be ready for callings and to return to my Father in Heaven. If I am worthy to go to the temple, then I am worthy to fulfill my callings and to lead the way I should."

#### What impressed you most at the temple dedication?

**Allison:** "At the dedication we got to sit together as a family. As we were sitting there, we could feel each other's love and how true the gospel is and how true the plan of salvation is and how we could all be there together."

**Dallin:** "We are not the only ones who are aware of this and are excited about this, but people in the spirit world there are excited for it, too. And the temple is for them and for us, to bind us to each other for eternity. The Spirit was so strong. And I think it's important that we write it down

*Around 1,600 youth danced and sang in the cultural celebration for The Gila Valley Arizona Temple, showcasing the area's history and culture and displaying their own dedication and faith.*





*The joy and excitement shone in the faces of the youth as they performed for President Monson and looked forward to the dedication of the temple that would be their very own.*

**NEmore**

For a video about the youth at the celebration for The Gila Valley Arizona Temple, go to [youth.lds.org](http://youth.lds.org).

in our journals and remember it in as much detail as we can.”

**Mariah:** “The prophet’s blessing on the youth makes me feel relieved to know that the President of the Church is praying for the youth, because he’s God’s servant, and I think that when he asks Heavenly Father to bless the youth, I’m pretty sure that the youth will be blessed. So it’s a relief to know that I’ve got a lot of support that I can’t even see.”

**Shelby:** “The blessing that President Monson gave the youth today at the dedication made me feel he cared for the youth and loved us and wanted us to know that he loved us. It just made me feel special.”

**Can you sum up your experience?**

**Alexandria:** “I just feel blessed that I’m a youth at this time. One of the main blessings was that my testimony has been strengthened so much.”

**Camille:** “My involvement in the temple cultural celebration has helped me realize how important the temple is in my life, and it strengthened my testimony about the prophet. And I learned that we can have fun in our Church.”

**Dallin:** “The blessings that the Lord has

poured out here are unique. Living here has been a really cool experience, and the temple is the greatest blessing we could have.”

**Mariah:** “I feel that I’ve been blessed in not just spiritual ways, which have been pouring all over me, but I was blessed with friendships that I wouldn’t have had otherwise.”

**Cassie:** “I’ve felt and heard and learned a lot. It came to my attention how powerful the Spirit is when you are doing what’s right and when the prophet’s around you.”

**Reese:** “I’ve had trials in my life, but they all just started going away as this celebration started kicking it up. They all straightened out, and I found the strength to get rid of them.”

**Shelby:** “I learned the importance of the temple and how much we center our religion around the temple. Having the prophet come down for the temple dedication, who is the mouthpiece for Christ, just helped me realize that the prophet is important and that he loves us.”

**Allison:** “I’ve gained a better understanding of the temple and how temples relate to us. This is part of our whole life. It’s something we need forever.” **NE**

# CELEBRATING TEMPLES AROUND THE WORLD

By Mindy Raye Holmes

Church Magazines

When a temple is dedicated, youth from the temple district have an opportunity to perform in a cultural celebration the night before. Here are some other recent cultural celebrations from around the world.



## Vancouver, British Columbia

In May 2010, over 1,200 youth from eight stakes in British Columbia and the Bellingham Washington Stake gathered in Vancouver for a temple celebration marking the completion of the Vancouver British Columbia Temple.

The celebration, titled “A Beacon to the World,” highlighted the land, history, and people of British Columbia. Part of the celebration included the youth’s guiding 172 of the area’s oldest Church members down to the floor for recognition. After dancing and performing music for the program, the youth closed the program by joining hands and circling around a replica of the temple.

Sabrina Blackmore, 17, of the Blackmore Ward in the Prince George British Columbia Stake, rode 15 hours on a bus to participate in the event. “This is the best experience ever,” she said.



## Cebu, Philippines

In June, youth gathered in the Philippines for a youth cultural celebration titled “A Celebration of Filipino Heritage,” which took place the night before the dedication of the Cebu Philippines Temple. Youth from around the temple district gathered

and became friends. The arena was the biggest in Cebu, but it was not big enough to hold all the performers who wanted to participate, so 2,000 youth performed there while another 2,000 performed for cameras and had their performance displayed at the celebration.

The celebration’s 12 numbers included costumes and dances from several eras of Filipino history. President Thomas S. Monson spoke to the youth, encouraging them

to write in their journals about the event. “Years from now, you will be telling your children and your grandchildren about the opportunity you had to participate in such a tremendous cultural celebration,” he said.

## Kyiv, Ukraine

In August, cheers were heard as youth and adults celebrated the dedication of the Kyiv Ukraine Temple. Youth and adults participated in the grand cultural celebration. Participants came from several countries and represented diverse cultures. Some practiced for months to get ready for the celebration, which included a choir, orchestra, and dances.

The youth enjoyed performing dances and wearing traditional costumes from their country. They were also delighted to be able to perform for President Thomas S. Monson.

“The best part was when I saw the prophet,” said Michael Minasyan, 14, from Armenia. “I was right in front of him, and he waved to us. I felt the spirit that I was waiting for.”

## Laie, Hawaii

To celebrate the rededication of the Laie Hawaii Temple, more than 2,000 youth gathered in November to present a program titled “The Gathering Place.” At the beginning of the event, the youth stood shoulder to shoulder in the Cannon Activity Center of the BYU–Hawaii Campus as they heard President Thomas S. Monson speak.

“Today will be a night you will never forget,” he said.

The participants danced, sang, and presented a visual display of island history and culture. It also celebrated Laie, Hawaii, as a “gathering place” for early Church members and others.

“It was the most amazing thing,” said Briana Garrido, 15, of Wahiawa, Hawaii. “I have never been so thankful.” **NE**  
*This story includes material from the Church News.*

