

Temple Teens in Aberdeen



For the youth of the Aberdeen Scotland Stake, an annual visit to the temple is a life-changing experience.

BY PAUL VANDENBERGHE
Church Magazines



Iwould not miss it for the world,” says Bethany Gilmour, 17, of the Bridge of Don Ward. “That one week at the temple strengthens my testimony more than anything. And it keeps me wanting to come back

every year. There are things I’ve learned on these temple trips that will stay with me for the rest of my life—things that will help me make the right choices in my life.”

This is just the kind of statement Aberdeen Scotland Stake president Christopher Payne said to expect if you asked the youth of his stake about their annual visit to the Preston England Temple. He wasn’t exaggerating.

Every summer the 60 to 70 young men and young women of the Aberdeen stake, along with their adult leaders and some young single adults from the stake, make the 6½-hour drive to Preston, England. There they spend 6 days at the temple. Every morning they’re in the baptistry for baptisms and confirmations; afternoons they’re busy with activities and service projects; evenings they’re gathering for firesides and scripture study. Their temple week ends with a testimony meeting that usually lasts about four hours. But the truly remarkable thing about these 6 days at the temple is how they affect the other 359 days of the year.



When these youth got together to discuss their annual visit to the temple, one after another agreed that things in life just seem to line up better for them when they are doing their best to keep the Lord’s commandments. There’s something special about these teens, and you can see it in their faces.



Temple Worthy All Year

The changes the temple brings in the lives of these youth are not short-term; they're a long-term transformation. Melanie Bews, 17, of the Aberdeen Ward says it this way: "The day you leave the temple you're preparing to go on the next trip. Throughout the whole year you're being worthy for something. You're striving to be worthy to go to the temple again." Melanie talks about a presentation from the stake youth leaders that included a poster with eight steps to help prepare them for the temple. "I used it as a checklist to make sure I was doing as much as I could to prepare. There were some things on the list I hadn't been doing which I started to do, like keeping a separate journal for spiritual experiences. That is one thing I've continued doing still."

Nathan Cumming, 18, of the Elgin Branch says, "My temple preparation really goes hand in hand with my mission preparation." He explains that his daily prayers and scripture study are more meaningful because he is focused on his goal of



being worthy. "Before this last temple trip, I was praying a lot more," he says. "I struggle sometimes with confidence and shyness. So to prepare for this temple trip, I was praying for confidence to socialize more with people because I've never been very good at that." He's now confident these experiences will help him be a more effective missionary.

Mylie Payne, 15, of the Aberdeen Ward explains how preparing for the temple has become more personal for her over the years: "In previous years we've done group fasts to prepare for the temple." Now Mylie takes the initiative on her own. "This year I fasted myself to get the most out of the trip and help strengthen my testimony." She also talks about the change in how she studies the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon: "I am trying to understand the scriptures in much more depth and detail. In particular, when I come to the parts about baptism, I really try to study and understand them."

Bethany Gilmour sums it up this way: "I take what I've learned from the temple trip with me every day. When I come home, I think about the next trip. I think about what I've learned from the previous one and what I can do throughout the year to keep those feelings I felt at the temple with me throughout the year until the next one."



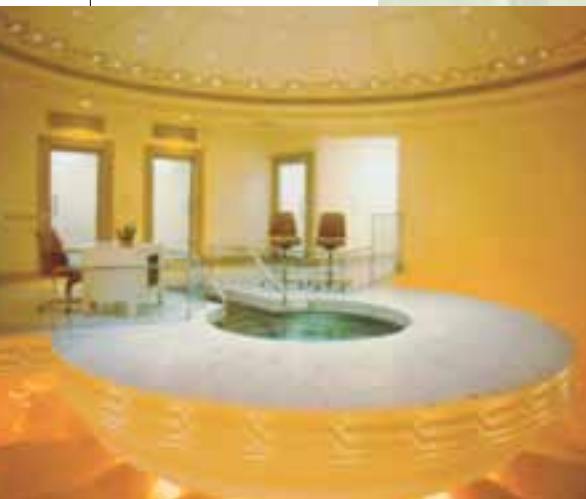
Highlights of the Highlight

“The temple trip is the highlight of the year,” says Hope Fraser, 18, of the Bridge of Don Ward. “Everyone looks forward to it.” But within that highlight of the year are highlights for each youth who attends. What stands out in Hope’s memory of this year’s visit to the temple was the special Laurel meeting. “It was amazing,” she says. “We were meant to be talking about dating and situations you’re not meant to get into. We ended up talking about the gratitude we felt towards each other.” It was an experience that even the Laurel advisers remember with fondness.



James Bowcutt, 18, of the Elgin Branch says the highlight of his service in the temple was having the chance to be baptized for some of his ancestors. For some time before the trip

James carried with him the names of his earlier family members for whom he would be doing baptisms. “I could read the names and really get to know them. I actually felt that they belonged to me, and I was proud to have my family names in my hands,” he says. “I definitely felt a stronger connection with people beyond the veil.”



The days spent at the Preston England Temple are both full and fulfilling. Each morning the youth are in the baptistry; then they’re busy with service projects and firesides. And there is also time for fun activities such as football.



Mylie Payne talks excitedly about being able to serve at the temple, not only by performing ordinances inside but by cleaning and weeding outside. “I loved being able to serve on the grounds. There was something special about making the Lord’s house seem even more beautiful,” she says. “It was amazing.”

“My favorite part was spending time with friends but not going shopping,” says Melanie Bews. “It was so fun to spend time with my friends around the temple and to get to know them better and build memories that are not so worldly. The best was spending time with each other while building our testimonies.”

The highlight mentioned most often by the youth was the testimony meeting. Janine Gall, 17, of the Buchan Ward says, “Even though the testimony meeting was long, it wasn’t paining at all. It felt like it only lasted about 10 minutes.” She adds that “it was good to hear other people’s testimonies to strengthen yours and to come closer to each other as youth. Because we are such a small community of youth, we need to get to know each other better, and I think we do that very well at the temple.”

Unity and Support

Even though they *are* a small community of Latter-day Saint youth, the young men and women of the Aberdeen stake are strong. Simon Robertson, 18, of the Aberdeen Ward says that during the year “we are all spread apart, but when we’re at the temple, we feel like one family. We’re all so happy because we’re at the temple, and we feel the Spirit almost constantly. Personally, I feel so peaceful at the temple. It gives me a stronger resolve to not only live the gospel but to live it better. I see what we can achieve when we are together. I want to try to feel that all the time.”

Janine Gall explains that “the nearest young woman to me is about 45 minutes away. It’s nearly impossible to meet up for activities or seminary, and so it’s hard to stay spiritually strong all the time. So I really enjoy going to the temple because it’s like a spiritual top off. My friends can uplift me at the same time as I can uplift them.”

Whether it’s sitting together in white as they wait to be baptized and confirmed, reading the scriptures together under the statue of the angel Moroni high atop the temple’s spire, or pulling weeds together on the temple grounds, these youth pull *together*. Paige Payne, 13, of the Aberdeen Ward remembers one activity that not only brought them closer together but also got them all soaking wet: “We were pulling weeds. They were growing

around some sort of plant, and we had to clear all the weeds—and there were millions. It was pouring rain, so we got all muddy. And we were on a slope, so every time you tried to walk, you would slip. It was really fun. The temple workers couldn’t believe we kept working. Since we were all doing it together, it sort of strengthened us all.”

Ethan Fraser, 18, of the Bridge of Don Ward adds that having friends who are strong in the gospel makes a difference in his everyday life. “I like that I’ve got great friends in the Church,” he says. “I know that if I go through trials, there is someone there to support me.”

The Difference

President Payne tries to explain just what it is that makes the youth of the Aberdeen stake so special. They go to church and to activities; they attend seminary; they strive to live the gospel. It’s what the youth in every other stake he’s lived in are also doing.

“Then I moved to the Aberdeen stake, and I went on my first temple trip,” he says. “Now it’s something I plan my whole year around. And the reason I do is because I see what happens to our youth. I believe this temple trip is what keeps the Spirit in the lives of these youth. They talk all year long about the temple trip. We ask them, ‘Are you going on the temple trip?’ And they say, ‘I wouldn’t miss it for the world.’

“Going to the temple—standing in that holy place—changes them. Not just for that day or for that moment, not for that hour or that week. It changes them forever.” **NE**

