

Architectural rendering by architects Hyrum Pope and Harold W. Burton. Right: One of the four friezes around the temple representing four dispensations of the gospel.



A decorative plate featuring the first eight temples of the Church. Laie is bottom center.

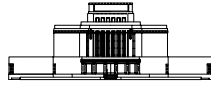


Middle: President Heber J. Grant in Laie for the temple dedication. Above: President Joseph F. Smith (far left) in Laie. He dedicated the site for the temple in June 1915.



Maternity frieze sculpted by Avard Fairbanks. Left: Members gather at the temple (1920).





The Laie Hawaii Temple

A CENTURY OF GATHERING

Dedicated 100 years ago,
the Laie Hawaii Temple
has allowed Saints to
gather to receive temple
blessings as the gospel
began to spread through-
out the world.

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One of the great missions of the Church of Jesus Christ in the latter days is to provide temple blessings to the people of the world, both the living and the dead. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “the object of gathering the . . . people of God in any age of the world . . . was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house.”¹

At the dawn of the 20th century, only four operating temples were found on the earth, all located in Utah. Thus, physical gathering to Utah was the primary means of receiving access to temple blessings. In 1919, that changed. On November 27, 1919, President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) dedicated the Laie Hawaii Temple. This marked a historic turning point in the Restoration as temple blessings became available to many nations.

In many respects, the Laie Hawaii Temple was the first international temple. It immediately served members from Hawaii, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga, Tahiti, Japan, and Australia. As the Church continued to grow throughout the Pacific and Asia, the number of countries blessed by this temple continued to increase.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of this important milestone in the gathering of Israel on both sides of the veil.

Gathering from Samoa

The islands of Samoa lie about 2,500 miles (4,023 km) from Hawaii. In 1919, John Q. Adams, the mission president in Samoa, said, “Upon the completion of the temple at Laie, our people seemed to be seized with an intense desire to accumulate enough of this world’s goods to go to the temple.” Aulelio Anae, for example, had served as a missionary without pay for 20 years. Because of his years of sacrifice, he didn’t have enough money to travel to Hawaii. So Brother Anae sold everything he owned and managed to scrape together U.S.\$600 or \$700.² Brother Anae and other

Samoans sacrificed all they could to move to Laie during the 1920s.

One family, the Leotas, arrived in Hawaii on New Year's Day 1923. Seven-year-old Vailine Leota remembered, "Our first [view] of the temple . . . was the most beautiful sight."³ Just two weeks later, Vailine's parents, Aivao and Matala, received their endowments and were sealed as a couple, and their children were sealed to them. The Leotas served faithfully in the house of the Lord for 50 years and were buried "near the temple they loved so much."⁴ Today, hundreds of their faithful descendants live throughout Hawaii.

An Impossible Task

While many members in the Pacific left their homelands and immigrated to Hawaii, many wards and branches from various nations organized group trips, called excursions, to the temple. This spiritual form of gathering provided a way for Church members to travel to receive temple ordinances and then return home to build the Church in their own nations.

At the dedication, President Grant prayed for the Lord to open the way for Saints in New Zealand and all the Pacific Islands and to secure their genealogies so they could come to the temple and become saviors to their ancestors.

Temple excursions began with a group of Maori Saints in New Zealand just six months after the dedication. Though 5,000 miles (8,045 km) away from Hawaii, these Saints rejoiced at the news of the dedication.

Waimate and Heeni Anaru yearned to be part of the first group to travel to the temple. Yet the task seemed impossible because of the family's poverty and the required cost of 1,200 New Zealand pounds for the trip—a hefty sum. They would need a miracle.

For years, the Anaru family followed the prophet's counsel and gathered their genealogical records. Those records then sat in stacks while the

Anarus waited for a miracle to occur. Their son, Wiwini, knew of his parents' faith: "Mother never ever despaired that she would [not] someday kneel with Father at a temple altar."

A miracle did occur. Waimate won a contract from the New Zealand government for a large land-development project. His income from this project provided sufficient cash paid in advance to cover the cost of the trip to Hawaii. Waimate and Heeni overcame their fear of ocean travel and journeyed to Hawaii with a group of 14 Saints in May 1920. They received their endowments and were sealed. The impossible had happened.

The Anarus' story is just one among thousands about Latter-day Saints who traveled to the Laie Hawaii Temple to receive ordinances and claim the promises offered by the Lord in His house. This required great sacrifice, but it produced stronger Saints who returned to their homelands prepared to lead the Church.⁵

Spiritual Gathering from Asia

Following the Second World War and the reestablishment of the Church in Japan, Saints there organized the first Asian temple excursion. In 1965 a plane full of 165 devoted Saints traveled from Tokyo to Hawaii to receive temple ordinances. This trip produced incredible strength

1850

1850: Missionaries arrive in the Kingdom of Hawaii to preach the restored gospel.

1855: Joseph F. Smith serves his first mission in Hawaii.

1875



1865: The Church purchases land in Laie where a meetinghouse is built. This building is moved in 1916 to make way for the temple.

1900

1915: Laie Hawaii Temple announced by President Joseph F. Smith.



November 27, 1919: Temple is dedicated by President Heber J. Grant (seen above, in center).

1920: Waimate Anaru travels to the temple from New Zealand.

1925

1923: The Leota family (below) moves to Laie from Samoa.



for the Church in Japan. Ninety-five percent of these members remained active in the Church. Five later became temple presidents in their homeland, including Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi, the first General Authority from Japan.⁶

In 1970 a group of Korean members traveled to Laie. Choi Wook Whan, a branch president, said, “We went to the temple and it opened our minds and awakened to us how we can receive salvation. The eternal plan became real; our testimonies have been strengthened so much it is hard to explain. What a great blessing it is for the people of Korea to have the opportunity of attending the temple.”⁷

Gathering Our Kindred Dead

When temple ordinances become available to a nation, they bring the Lord’s blessings not only to those living in that country but also to those from that nation now on the other side of the veil. This blessing has been felt by members in Asian countries, where their culture has meticulously recorded genealogy for centuries.

Kwai Shoon Lung’s parents migrated from China to Hawaii. He was born in Kauai in 1894 and baptized in 1944 on his 50th birthday. Brother Lung taught family history at church and told his class, “I had a vision one night in which I

saw many of my dead kindred beckoning me to work for them.” Three days later he received his genealogy from his aunt in China: 22 pages in Chinese script revealing his ancestry back to AD 1221. Together with his son Glenn and daughter-in-law Julina, they have completed thousands of ordinances in the temple for their family. Glenn and Julina Lung later served faithfully as president and matron of the Laie Temple from 2001 to 2004.⁸

The Gathering Continues

Situated in the crossroads of the Pacific between the Americas and Asia, the Laie Hawaii Temple has opened the door of temple blessings to many nations. Thus, the gathering of Israel became primarily a spiritual gathering as members are able to receive temple blessings and then return to build the Church in their native lands. This opportunity has aided the expansion of the restored gospel to many cultures and peoples on both sides of the veil.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Laie Hawaii Temple, we are privileged to witness a milestone in the Restoration and a fulfillment of the prophecy of the prophet Jacob in the Book of Mormon: “Great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea” (2 Nephi 10:21). ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 416.
2. See James Adams Argyle, comp., “The Writings of John Q. Adams,” 14, FamilySearch.org.
3. Vailine Leota Niko, in Clinton D. Christensen, comp. *Stories of the Temple in Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i* (2019), 70–71.
4. Aivao Frank Leota (1878–1966), FamilySearch.org.
5. See Christensen, *Stories of the Temple in Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i*, 64–65.
6. See Christensen, *Stories of the Temple in Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i*, 114–17.
7. Choi Wook Whan, in “Going to the Temple Is Greatest Blessing,” *Church News*, Apr. 17, 1971, 10.
8. See Christensen, *Stories of the Temple in Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i*, 166.

1950



1965: For the first Asian temple excursion, 165 Japanese Saints arrive in Hawaii.

1970: Saints from Korea join Japanese Saints on a temple excursion.

1975



June 13, 1978: President Spencer W. Kimball rededicates the temple after significant expansion. He and President N. Eldon Tanner (above) also visit the Polynesian Cultural Center.

2000

November 21, 2010: Following seismic upgrades and remodeling, President Thomas S. Monson rededicates the temple.



2015

