

Growth from Service

By Po Nien (Felipe) Chou and Petra Chou

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The Kaohsiung Seventh Branch at the Taipei Taiwan Temple in December 2001.

In 2000 we were called to serve as branch president and Primary president of the smallest unit in the Kaohsiung Taiwan Stake. We had about 20 people at sacrament meeting, including our young family, four active elders, and the missionaries. We later sent out two elders on missions, trusting that the Lord would replenish our branch.

As we worked with our branch, we remembered President Gordon B. Hinckley's (1910–2008) counsel that every convert needs “a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God.’”¹ We felt impressed that our new members should quickly be given callings so they could grow by serving. The missionaries introduced us to each investigator, and within two weeks of each of their baptisms, they received a calling. They developed friendships as they served with other members.

Within a month, every newly baptized brother received the Aaronic Priesthood,

and each blessed and passed the sacrament. We also prepared them to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood by the next stake conference.

New elders were taught how to perform ordinances, and then these elders taught the newer elders. We believed in learning by doing and in retaining learning by teaching. Branch members were responsible to model and mentor, teach and train, and sustain and support each other.

We used home and visiting teachers, family home evenings, ward activities, and potlucks to fellowship new converts. They were nurtured with the word of God through Sunday and weekday religious instructions. Institute grew from 2 to 25 students. To further nurture our small branch, we attended and served in the Taipei Taiwan Temple every month—a 10-hour round-trip by bus. Normally, our stake struggled to fill a second

temple bus. As our branch grew and families prepared for their temple blessings, we set a goal to fill our own bus. Twice that first year, while the rest of the stake filled one temple bus, our small branch filled a second one. Soon after, the stake asked each ward to fill one temple bus at least once a year.

By the second year, our convert retention increased from 30 percent to more than 90 percent, and our sacrament meetings grew to about 100 people, including 25 active elders. Our branch became a ward, and our old building was renovated into a new chapel.

The smallest branch had become the strongest ward in the stake because every convert had been blessed with friends, callings, and nurturing with the word of God. ■

The authors live in Utah, USA.

NOTE

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.