

## ARCHIVES

# Ghana temple brings euphoria

'Dawning of a new day in West Africa' as new sacred edifice dedicated in Accra

By Gerry Avant, Church

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ACCRA, Ghana — A landmark in the era of the Church's temple building was reached Jan. 11 with the dedication of the Accra Ghana Temple, the first temple in West Africa, and the 117th worldwide.

Before the Accra temple was dedicated, members had to travel to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple or the London England Temple to receive temple blessings. Only about 415 members in the Accra temple district had been endowed prior to the new temple's dedication.

The Accra Ghana Temple District includes all of Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin and, until the Aba Nigeria Temple is dedicated, Nigeria. While English is the official language in Ghana, multiple languages are employed by members, including French, Twi and Ga, and dozens of other West African dialects.

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TopPosition = (screen.height) ? (screen.height-h)/2 : 0;

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'height='+h+',width='+w+',top='+TopPosition+',left='+LeftPosition+',scrollbars='+scroll+',resizable='+resize+'

win = window.open(mypage,myname,settings)

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In the dedicatory prayer, President Hinckley said, "We thank Thee for the brotherhood that exists among us, that neither color of skin nor land of birth can separate us as Thy sons and daughters who have taken upon us sacred and binding covenants."

President Hinckley presided over, conducted and addressed all three dedicatory sessions; the first session included a ceremony to place a sealed box of items of historic significance behind a coverstone in the temple's facade. Histories of the Church in Ghana, photographs, copies of the *Church News*, books and a medallion commemorating the building of the temple were among the items included.

The Accra Ghana Temple has been woven into the fabric of President Hinckley's thoughts, prayers and efforts ever since he announced in Accra on Feb. 16, 1998, plans to build a temple here.

In an interview with the *Church News* and KSL-TV, President Hinckley described the dedication of the temple as a culmination "representing the dreams, hopes and prayers of many people." He referred to the dedication of the temple as the dawning of a new day in West Africa.

He described some of the difficulties in acquiring a building permit, which caused a lapse of five years from the time of the application until the dedication.

"We've had a difficult time getting permission to construct this building, but it finally came and the building is completed," he said. "There's just a euphoria that has gone through our membership here in appreciation for this great and significant thing."

He said that the temple "gives them every privilege that any member of the Church anywhere in the world can have. They're put on a par with everybody else. That's a significant and wonderful thing."

He first came to Accra in 1993. "I looked around for temple sites," he said. "We were then building temples across the world and thought of a need for one here. We went all over this city, looking everywhere, but didn't find exactly what we wanted. We came again in 1998. At that time I met with Jerry Rawlings (then president of Ghana) and had a long and very interesting visit with him. At that time we made the announcement to the people at Independence Square that we would build a temple here. They just burst into applause.

"That began the long, long journey of getting a permit and getting the temple built. It's a miracle, really. This beautiful building is a miracle. I think it's the finest thing in West Africa. The construction, the woods inside are so beautiful, and the marble. Everything is beautiful; we're grateful to have it."

He described the first time he saw the completed temple, as the car in which he and his wife, Marjorie, were riding approached the temple grounds. It was night, and lights bathed the temple. "I said, 'It's here, it's finally here.' I felt that way because I've been living with all these delays, following the progress or lack of progress these years, the five years since we made the application and the completion of the temple. What has happened here is just wonderful."

As he concluded the dedicatory sessions, he said, "This is not the end." He said the construction is completed, but added, "This is the beginning for the saints in this area." He appealed to the members, "Put yourselves in a position to come to the temple." He told the youth that this is not a temple just for their mothers and fathers, but it also is their temple. He asked them to stay worthy and, upon reaching age 12, to come to the temple to do baptismal work. When they do that work, President Hinckley said, "you are unlocking the door, opening the gates for someone beyond the veil."

The "new day in West Africa" President Hinckley mentioned in the interview dawned with a haze over Accra. This is the dry season in Ghana, a time of "harmattan," the winds that bring a reddish dust from the Sahara Desert. No one seemed to pay any attention to the dust and regarded the wind as relief from equatorial heat. Attention was focused on the temple.

Members arrived early to queue up for admittance to the temple. On Monday, Jan. 12, the first day the temple was open for work, members arrived earlier still. Takoradi 2nd Ward Bishop Jones Aidoo and his wife, Doris Sakiua Aidoo, arrived at 6:15 a.m. At 9 a.m., they were sitting on a bench, looking toward the temple. They were scheduled to attend the second session, which began at 10 a.m.

"Why did you come so early?" they were asked. "We wanted to just sit and look at the temple," Sister Aidoo said. "We wanted to see the beautiful temple. We are so happy to be here."

*E-mail: [gerry@desnews.com](mailto:gerry@desnews.com)*

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