

BEHIND THE SCENES

Vance and Diane Hendricks—Assistant Temple Recorder and Tour Guide Coordinators

We responded with joy and gratitude when we heard the announcement of the Rexburg Temple, and like many, we hoped and prayed for an opportunity to serve when the temple opened. Reflecting on those first weeks of service in the temple, as tour guide coordinators for the open house and as an assistant recorder at the temple, we see miracles surrounding the dedication and opening of this House of the Lord.

In June 2007, we were called to train tour guides for the temple open house. Then we waited for the tour guides to be called and approved, as every tour guide had to be approved in Salt Lake before being called. In December 2007, training began. Training meetings were held in the stake center adjacent the temple, with only one walk-through of the temple prior to the open house.

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The temple is an interesting blend of personal fulfillment and service: personal ordinances, peace and meditation, inspiration, and prayers. These are personal acts and manifestations that come to those who attend the temple. However, the temple's focal point is service, as patrons provide essential ordinances for the dead. Even before patrons began participating in these ordinances, many acts of service were fulfilled in the Rexburg Temple. For example, just think of the effort required to guide more than 205,000 people through the temple during the open house. And this service continues in many ways. For example, ordinance workers and volunteers drive from Driggs (often on winter roads) to serve on the early morning shift, which begins at 5:00 a.m.

We expect miracles in the temple, and there were many miracles in those first weeks that (we hope) temple patrons did not notice. We saw miracles as volunteers remained calm and served so carefully with the little training they had. Training for ordinance work could not take place until after the temple was dedicated, and the first ordinance sessions began February 11, the day after the dedication. Additionally, there are three shifts a day, five days each week, requiring volunteers and workers, with nearly half completely new to their callings. Every shift change in those early days witnessed that the Lord answered many prayers.

Think of what was required for those called as temple ordinance workers to start on the first day the temple was open, when they had just been newly called. Volunteer workers serve in many positions: working at the recommend desks, baptistery, laundry, and clothing issue. There are about 750 ordinance workers and about 350 volunteers. Can you imagine the challenge of training this many people at the same time?

Many had previous experience in other temples. Yet coming together in this temple, ready to offer ordinances with less than a day's training, was still a daunting task. It was a joy to be a part of the interview process in calling the volunteers. Their positive responses were humbling to witness, and it was a privilege to see their desire to serve.

In size, the Rexburg Temple is a three-quarters size temple. One sealing room is one of the largest of any temple, able to seat 60 people, and we have a laundry, unlike small temples. However, the temple operates on a small temple model. We have only seven full-time, paid employees, whereas a large temple usually has 40 to 60 full-time employees. Therefore, much of the work of the temple is done by volunteers, something that was questioned in the original temple design. President Christensen told us that during the planning phase some members of the Temple Department worried we could not run a temple with such a small number of full-time employees. With a twinkle in his eye, President Hinckley said, "You don't know the people of Rexburg." We are working hard to justify the faith that President Hinckley had in us.

For retired faculty from Ricks College/BYU-Idaho, serving in the temple often feels like a reunion. We loved working with these colleagues on campus, and now it is a pleasure to serve with them again. Even though we refer to this temple as the Rexburg Temple, the faith President Hinckley showed in his comment refers to the entire temple district. We have temple workers from Island Park, Driggs, and all communities within the district. Volunteers and ordinance workers are flexible, willing to learn, and willing to accept new ways of fulfilling callings. One danger of aging is a tendency toward rigidity, but that has not been a challenge here. It is also thrilling to see the students' response to the temple and their desire to serve as volunteers. It is a good feeling to watch the next generation prepare for leadership roles in the Church. As we all serve together, we feel that the temple is new and beautiful and *ours*, which is a fulfillment of prophecy and gives an assurance that maybe we are living our lives in a good way.

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When Vance was called to be an assistant recorder for the Rexburg Temple, we did not have much of a response because we did not know much about being a recorder. We felt the honor of the call, but we knew there would be much to learn. Here is what we have learned in the subsequent months.

Brother Richard Marshall is the full-time recorder at the Rexburg Temple. He comes with a wealth of experience, with service in the Temple Department in the Church Office Building, the Jordon River Temple, and the Portland Temple. To assist Brother Marshall are three assistant

recorders: Clair Thueson, Charles Frost, and Vance Hendricks. Their wives serve closely with them as each works in his assignment.

The primary responsibility of the recorder is to see that temple ordinances are performed correctly and that they are recorded properly. The Doctrine and Covenants establishes the recorder's office: "Let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms; let him hear with his ears, that he may testify of a truth" (Doctrine and Covenants 127:6). This section emphasizes the importance of record keeping and proper witnesses to the ordinances of the Lord: "Let all the records be had in order, that they may be put in the archives of my holy temple, to be held in remembrance from generation to generation, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Doctrine and Covenants 127: 9, also verses 5-12).

The scriptures give the recorder the charge to be an eye-witness to all ordinances of the temple. However, at any given time, sealings, endowments, and baptisms are being performed on three different floors of the temple. It is impossible for the recorder personally to witness all these ordinances. Therefore he enlists the help of temple ordinance workers and volunteer workers. Through their eyes he is assured that the work is done properly, fulfilling the commandments given in Doctrine and Covenants 127.

When the temple is open, there is always a member of the temple presidency in attendance and a recorder or assistant recorder on duty. As recorder, Brother Marshall serves during a typical workday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. An assistant recorder opens the temple, usually about 4:30 a.m., and another closes the temple each night, approximately 10:30 p.m. In the morning we distribute supplies for the day and audit names that have been completed. Names are audited just like balancing accounts when depositing money in the bank. It is a sweet time to be in the temple when it is quiet, but we have to work steadily to be ready for the coming day. In the evening we prepare and distribute schedules for the following day and week. Also, we send a report to Salt Lake, showing the work that has been completed for the day. In every shift, we do a lot of counting (with the help of the computer) and verifying. Training is also ongoing because new callings are continually issued.

It is sometimes said that the recorder manages the physical tasks of the temple and the presidency perform the spiritual assignments. Yet, as we know, there is an overlap between the temporal and spiritual. A few responsibilities for the recorder and assistant recorders include working with individuals who have forgotten their temple recommends, answering procedural questions about sealings and ordinances, and checking family group sheets to ensure previous ordinances have been completed correctly so the next ordinance can proceed. We have learned that these are not, and can never be, considered mere clerical duties. Each decision impacts

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ordinances necessary for salvation, experiences that families share in the temple, or progress in the Lord's work.

Opening a new temple is very different from being called to a fully functioning temple. But we have seen the hand of the Lord in the Rexburg Temple, helping all to fulfill their callings. We all have been strengthened and guided. We are blessed as a people to know that our Father in Heaven and his son, Jesus Christ, are so close to us and so interested in us and so willing to strengthen us. ☺

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