



THE CHURCH OF Jesus Christ

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The New Year – 2010

By Brother Donald Ross

This is the time of year when the world at large begins to make “resolutions.” People will say “I will not do this, I will give up this;” whatever this means. It is most unfortunate that research shows that most of the resolutions never bear fruit.

There is only one way to bear real and true fruit in life. There is only one way to make the year different, meaningful and new – that is to make Jesus Christ your choice by rendering obedience to His commandments and by keeping His commandments. He must be our resolve! Then and only then do we bear fruit, that spiritual fruit that we read about in Galatians 5:22-23, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*” These are the “fruits” the world desperately needs today if people truly have a desire to change, and no doubt they do because there are many sincere and honest in heart. It is by these fruits that we, the creation of God, men, women and children everywhere, are “all one in Christ,” as we read in Galatians, 3:28, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor*

free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” When the Apostle Paul preached his sermon on Mars’ hill in Athens, he stated in Acts 17:26, “*And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.*” Imagine that, we are all of one blood! Given the state of mankind and the world today, you would never know it!

Men and women cannot change by themselves. We cannot change our nature. Only the Lord can change us. That is why Jesus Christ set up His Church; to change the behavior and nature of man. It is only by Him and through Him that we alter our behavior and nature.

The Scriptures tell us in a number of places that we must have faith, we must repent, we must be baptized, we must receive the Holy Ghost and we must endure to the end. When we follow these steps as outlined by our Saviour, His Apostles and Ministry, both past and present, we change. The Apostle Paul states that we become a new creature and we resurrect in the newness of life!

Those of us who have taken and follow these steps have the capacity, gifts, and power to make change, positive change in the world. We can and need to make the year of 2010 an

historic year for The Church of Jesus Christ. How you might ask? By exercising and putting more and more emphasis and focus on our responsibilities. Yes; our responsibilities are plural.

We have the responsibility of telling our families, friends, and neighbors about the Restored Gospel. We have the responsibility of bearing our testimony to all who are receptive and willing to listen. We have the responsibility of inviting people to The Church of Jesus Christ. We have the responsibility of supporting our branches and missions not only through attendance but by visiting the widow and widowers, the downtrodden, those that are low in spirit, those that are not well, and last but not least, financially. We have the responsibility to pray for those who lead The Church of Jesus Christ, to follow their instruction, admonition and counsel. We have the responsibility to pray for and support all the missionary efforts and works of The Church of Jesus Christ, both domestic and foreign. The Apostle James states in James 5:16, “*...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” He also states in James 1:27, “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*”

(Continued on Page 11)



The Power of a Testimony

By Brother Scott Griffith

Those of us who have met the Lord each have a personal testimony of His goodness towards us. Sometimes when we have the opportunity to speak to someone about God, we become intimidated thinking we are not prepared. We should be reminded we have one of the greatest tools for this—our testimony! The power of a testimony was made evident on our last two trips to our mission in Quito, Ecuador.

In September 2009, Brothers Tony Ricci, Daniel Mora, and Scott Griffith traveled to Ecuador to support and build on the foundation laid by many brothers before. They were privileged to visit with the saints as well as many friends and visitors and discuss the things of God. Many who hear of the Restored Gospel like what they hear and are intent to listen to the principles established by Christ. The teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ are taken as sound doctrine and respected by those who hear. In one of our meetings, a visitor began to question our belief in the blessing of children. The Spirit of God was present as the explanation was being given. The blessing was how the members of our mission voiced their testimonies of their beliefs in our Church and validity of our doctrine. The power of a testimony!

Brothers Ricci and Mora met a young woman, Maria, at the hotel where we stay when in country and began to tell her of our desire to see the Church established in Quito. She

felt prompted to ask them to visit with her family. The brothers obliged and they had a wonderful visit with her and her family. As they visited with the family, they were able to testify of God's goodness in their lives and provide counsel to a family who needed God. The entire family asked for prayer, including Maria's sister, Veronica, who was to undergo surgery that week to remove a tumor at the base of her brain. The family felt good in the fact that they heard and felt the power of God.

When we returned to Quito in November, we were able to meet with Maria's family again. She stated

that since the brothers had visited in September, great changes had taken place within their family. We were informed that when her sister went to the hospital that week after the brothers left, the tumor that they were going to operate on disappeared and she did not have to be operated on! Praise God! The power of a testimony!

In November 2009, Brothers Daniel Mora and Scott Griffith traveled to Quito to meet with Yassis Peraza, a friend of one of our members. This young man informed the brothers that he was looking for something different in his life. He migrated to Ecuador from Cuba to start a new life for his family. Yassis befriended one of our members, Sister Xiomara, she shared her testimony with him. After hearing the testimony of our sister, he wanted to know more. He was given much literature of our beliefs, and when we met with him he expressed a desire to give his life to Christ through baptism. He was baptized in The Church of Jesus Christ. This new brother has a desire as well to see this Gospel grow throughout Ecuador and is zealous to help spread it! The power of a testimony!

(Continued on Page 4)



Maria's family in Quito, Ecuador.

Israel's Advocate: Out in the Desert

Recently I received an e-mail regarding a Native American outreach effort by two sisters – mother and daughter. There were a couple of good points I gleaned from their testimony of attending a powwow, which often is not the most ideal location or event for sharing the message of The Church of Jesus Christ. Yet, sometimes they are. Here is one of those times. Keep in mind, the names are mentioned, not to lift up or promote someone, but for you to see the realism and truth of the testimony. The e-mail was from Sister Vanessa Tostado from the Yucaipa, California Branch. She and her mother, Sister Rocio Tostado, and Brother Ron Kepics from the San Diego Branch decided to attend the biggest powwow in the desert area of Riverside County. Besides the local tribes, there are visitors from all over the United States and Canada. The host was the Morongo Band of Mission Indians.

Prior to attending the powwow, the sisters prayed all week for God's guidance and blessing. Additionally, the sisters followed NAOC/Church protocol in their plans and actions. Before the main events began, Sister Rocio carefully walked up to the area where the people in charge were sitting on a platform, as they were surrounded by tribal security and police. She simply asked a security guard whether she could speak to the person in charge of the powwow. She was informed the woman in charge had gone to take care of some business, but he asked the assistant to speak to our sisters. Sister Rocio pulled out one of the flyers and gave it to the man and asked for permission to pass them out at the powwow. He read the flyer and stated he did not see anything wrong with it. They were approved to distribute them "as long as it didn't interfere with the powwow."

Our sisters went to the booths outside the main event (because of the noise and crowd inside) and

proceeded to hand out flyers. The first man they approached rejected the flyer right away, but Sister Rocio was undaunted and pushed on. It turned out all of the other flyers were accepted! While walking around the sisters noticed some of the dancers taking a break, so they decided to approach them. One of the men took it, said, "Thank you," and went back inside the tent. The other dancer accepted the flyer and began reading it. Sister Vanessa wrote, "He then began to ask us questions about our beliefs. He asked us whether we were Mexican and we said, "Yes, but we are all the Seed of Joseph." He stated he believes everyone born in the North, Central and South America are Native Americans; and he added, "Our people built the pyramids in the Americas." He also told us about his love of history and quest for uniting all the tribes.

Our sisters were amazed at how willing the dancer was to speak and share his beliefs. He explained he is from the Ho-Chunk Nation. According to the Nation, Ho Chunk means "People of the Big Voice," or "People of the Sacred Language." At one time they occupied lands in the area of Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, South Dakota and Minnesota. After our sisters shared the Church's beliefs with him, he stated it was a joy for him to find someone who wants to talk about our Creator. He then shared an interesting observation with our sisters – while pointing at all the people around about buying food and handmade crafts at the booths he said, "Look at them, they're asleep, their spirits are asleep, we have to wake them up. Which one of them is willing to talk, learn and share about our Creator? They're too busy, look at them."

Our sisters shared farewells with the dancer, who, as he was walking away said, "Thank you, I love you."

Forty flyers handed out and one very special contact made – a very good day in the desert.

Tips of the Trade

Learning Experiences and Tips for Future Outreach

Recently we spent a week in Oklahoma, visiting 14 different Native American nations and having meaningful discussions with nine different tribal leaders, besides other individual and religious leaders (See September issue of the *Gospel News*). As with all missionary efforts, we learned some valuable lessons that we were encouraged to share with the Church. We understand that you may already be familiar with these tips, so this may be simply a refresher course. For those who may not be familiar with them, we hope that you find them helpful. We also understand that these tips may not necessarily be applicable to everyone or in every circumstance. So here they are:

- Always prepare with your local ministry and RMOC. Spend time in fasting and prayer.
- *The Native American Outreach Handbook* is a very useful document which is available on the Church website.
- Gather resources for handing out to those you meet and key locations. Be prepared with Church literature, such as Books of Mormon, NAOC flyers, *American Indian Moses* books, *First Voices Journals*, and have church business cards with phone numbers and addresses of branches and websites (both the General Church and www.FirstVoices.org).
- Prepare a contact list wherever possible. It's good to have a familiar point of reference, better to have someone who recommends you, and best to have someone go with you to introduce. Obtain further contacts and referrals from those you meet.
- When traveling, have both maps with directions and a GPS unit – both will come in handy, especially if the former is unreadable and the latter one fails to operate
- Always be friendly to everyone.

(Continued on Page 4)

The Power of a Testimony

Continued from Page 2

As you can see, it does not take eloquent words or elaborate presentations to deliver the message of Christ. The simple, sincere testimony in our own words of how God changed our lives can be such an impact that it can be the tool God uses to touch others. Let us never be ashamed of our testimonies and continue to pray these testimonies increase in the country of Ecuador!



From left, Brothers Daniel Mora, Yassis Peraza, and Scott Griffith

Tips of the Trade

Continued from Page 3

- There are a couple of reasons for this tip. First, we are a happy people, so let our joy be seen. Second, you never know who you are speaking to, they could be either an angel (see Hebrew 13:2) or the very person you want to meet and share the good news with. More often than not, the people you meet are related to those on your contact list.
- Always show respect. This tip is for the same reasons as above, but also for the fact that we are visitors in their land, territory, office, or home. The Scriptures teach that we should honor all men (1 Peter 2:17 and Romans 13:7).
 - Be prepared to listen (“be swift to hear,” James 1:19) as they may have some interest, comment or even concern they want to express – listen carefully because the opening you need may be in what they are telling you. And when speaking, consider Alma 38:12 – be bold but not “overbearing.” Don’t come across as condescending but on their level.
 - Use Jesus Christ as the starting point. Know the key points of the Plan of Redemption. It was for us; it is for them. If they are believers then it’s a great common point of

interest. If not, the rest of the message will fall flat. Also, try to note you are not starting a church or trying to pull them out of theirs. God will do both of those things in His due time.

- Know and understand promises to Israel; know and understand lineage of Abraham to Native American. Can you deliver the message or explain the lineage in 60 seconds? That may be all you have. Practice, practice, practice.
- As always, your testimony of what Jesus has done for you is more impressive initially than presenting many verses of scripture.
- Ask if we could visit again as a future follow-up. A small, simple question, but it provides a sense of your reception and their interest.
- Be patient and be willing to wait. They have lives too, maybe even busier than yours. They may also want to see how patient you are. Schedule time with slack or flextime in case of extended discussions. If traveling to a location, keep in mind that although you may have put quite a bit of time into travel and want to be as efficient as possible, the purpose is to meet and discuss and share. That takes time.
- Discretely gather information, such as names and addresses where possible. Explain the purpose of the

information – to send additional materials and to stay in contact, and that we do not sell that information or share it with other people.

- Handouts; never leave anyone empty handed — give them a flyer, brochure, business card or books. You will know from their interest what to give them, but always leave them something, some small token of your interest in them.
 - Leave material with interested people or those you could not see. We used a “Sorry we missed you” letter, explaining succinctly why we were there and what our message was. It was attached to church literature.
 - Leave materials on tables with other periodicals where possible. Often you will be meeting them in public places where a coffee table or such may be visible. If there are other magazines or newsletters lying there, leave some of ours.
 - Consider public institutions such as libraries that are always looking for books (such as the Book of Mormon or *American Indian Moses*).
- These are just a few of the tips we considered, some we learned as we were performing our outreach. Do you have some to share with us? We would like to read them. E-mail your tipstomeat: talking.stick@firstvoices.org.

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Editorial Viewpoint . . .

We recently had a big snowstorm here in New Jersey dumping up to two feet of snow. When I finally decided to venture outside after the storm, my two sons, aged eight and five followed me. We were trying to climb a hill behind our backyard to go sledding. My boots would plunge deep into the snow creating giant footsteps. When I looked behind me, though, my sons could not walk through the deep snow, but were stuck after only taking one footstep, practically buried up to their waist in snow. I turned back, pulled them out of the snow, and instinctively told them to follow in the footsteps I had made with my boots. Instantly, the Lord spoke to me and told me that this is how He helps His little children through life.

Jesus told His disciples to follow Him. He told the rich young ruler to give up all that he had and to follow Him. He tells men and women everywhere, in all ages of time to put their steps in the footsteps He has already made for us, so that we can journey successfully through life, and not become "stuck" or "sink" in the things of the world. When we try to take on the world on our own, we cannot progress. But Jesus made a way for all of mankind to walk easily through life, but only if we put our feet in the footprints He made for us. Even Paul in the scripture said that we should follow him AS HE FOLLOWED CHRIST.

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home in my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:57-62).

We follow Jesus Christ by following His example and commandments. However, there are certain things we may have to give up in order to do this. The first person in this scripture needed to know that following Jesus based on emotion is not the right motive. He would not be popular in the eyes of the world for following Christ. Jesus had nowhere to lay His head, or call home. This world is not a home or friend to followers of Christ. The second person wanted to bury his father. He was too busy worrying about the affairs of life to follow Christ, saying he had to bury his father. Jesus tells him that the dead are dead. There is nothing he could do for his father's dead body. Instead, go out and preach the Gospel, or "follow in Christ's footsteps." The third man wanted to go back to his friends of the world and say goodbye, but Jesus knew his heart was still in the world. Once we make a commitment to serve the Lord, looking back makes us unfit for the kingdom of God. His heart was not fully converted. All of these are examples of normal duties of life that were "excuses" that these men made, most likely because they really weren't interested in following the Lord in the first place. Likewise, we too must put the normal affairs of life secondary to our service to the Lord.

My boys HAD to follow in my footsteps in order to get to the top of the hill to go sledding. There was no other way. If they tried to walk a different way, they would not make it. The same is true when we follow Christ. There is no other way to run this race and complete it. We cannot try another way, or have different motives. If we do, we will never reach our destination. But following in His footsteps makes it so much easier to trudge through this world successfully and in the end, reach the glorious goal we all want to reach. Let's start 2010 by looking where the footprints of Jesus are, and putting our feet firmly in His, and push our way forward to the mark of eternal perfection.

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The Children's Corner

By Sister Jan Bork

Tools for Change

Dear Boys and Girls,

When a new year starts, many people in this world decide to try and change. They become determined to be a better person, or do a better job at something. Thousands of them make a list of things they really want to do. They usually try to do these things on their own. Many of them are successful for awhile then give up, get discouraged and quit. But in The Church of Jesus Christ, we have powerful tools to help us change, to break old habits, be forgiven and start over to be better. Some of these tools are reading scriptures to learn God's advice and promises, praying to the Lord, asking for prayers from the Elders, listening to inspired preaching, and sharing our money with others.

Our first tool for learning about God's power to change is studying the scriptures. We have two precious books, the Bible and The Book of Mormon that show us the way. They contain the words of Jesus, God's only begotten son, who came down to earth to love and help us each. He was human like us. He really understands the things that we go through. The scriptures teach us ways to change, show love and forgiveness and become happier, more useful, better people. We learn to love and forgive others instead of hating or fearing them. We learn what we have to do to go to heaven when our bodies die.

Prayer is one of the strongest tools for a change that lasts. When you feel like you have so many problems you can't go on, much less change, Jesus tells us in Matthew



11:28, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." We learn to rest by praying and talking to Jesus about our worries and heartaches instead of gambling, drinking, overeating or taking drugs to escape. If we pray to the Lord and tell Him our troubles and ask Him into our lives and hearts to help us, we will find peace and solutions. We can also ask our ministers and church people to pray for us for help to change.

Knowledge is one of our most powerful tools for change. When you come to a meeting, you feel the Spirit of God when our Elders, or ministers, preach to us. Our Elders are different than leaders in most other churches. We follow the example taught by Jesus in the Bible and Book of Mormon. That means they are not paid money for their work. Jesus was a carpenter, Paul was a tentmaker, King Benjamin worked in his fields and Peter was a man who fished for a living. Since no one pays our Elders, they are not worried about being fired if they preach something that is unpopular. That means they can preach and teach us members however God inspires or directs them to.

Our Elders are also picked by the Lord through some experience or revelation just as they were in the Bible and Book of Mormon. They didn't just go to some Bible school or college, but they must have a special closeness to God and love for others. Sometimes, we as people make mistakes by accident or on purpose. Our Elders are a tool in God's hands to tell us when we are going the wrong way. Second, they preach through the inspiration and guidance of God. That means God can and will send us

directions of how to live the right way through listening to the words of our elders. We can change when we know the right thing to do.

Many people have money worries. If we are afraid about money, the scriptures tell us to learn to work (Romans 12:11), "[be] not slothful [lazy] in business." Then we must tithe, or give some of our money back to the Lord. God tells us in Malachi 3:10 to give the Lord (to the Church) part of your money. He said test me, and just see if I don't "open...the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Wouldn't you love to change and stop being scared about money? So if you are worried about money, pray for the Lord to help you find work, then share and give money back just like He tells us to.

(Continued on Page 11)

WORD SEARCH

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Our Mission: To Shine Our Light and Share the Gospel

By Sister Carolynn O'Connor

Our October Conference weekend in the Great Lakes Region was especially memorable as we began on Saturday with a visit from the General Church DOC, Domestic Operating Committee. On October 3rd, the members of the committee held a special meeting at Branch #2. During the day, the elders and teachers met with the committee to discuss ways to strengthen the Church on a local level. They broke into groups by branch and met specifically about the needs of each branch. The goal of this exercise was to develop ideas to increase and strengthen the membership at each branch and collectively as a Region.

Following dinner, the rest of the members were invited to a revival style evening meeting. We enjoyed singing with the accompaniment of many instruments as well as the performances of several beautiful musical selections. Brothers Pete Giannetti, Paul Aaron Palmieri, and Tony Ricci shared experiences and spoke to us about spreading the Gospel to those we come in contact with. Brother Pete opened by speaking about "putting on the garment." He spoke from John 19:23 where they took Jesus' robe and the soldiers cast lots for it. "He took off His robe of righteousness and laid it down that you and I may have the opportunity, through the great plan of salvation, at the foot of the cross of Calvary, that we might pick up that robe tonight and wear it. Oh, by the gift of God we wear that robe and He exchanges that robe for our sins." He spoke also of the parable Jesus told of the king who made a great wedding feast and prepared even the garments for those attending. He spoke of the man who did not wear the garment and was cast out. Brother Pete explained that the Lord pays our admission, provides the garment and all that we need to do is be there, put on the robe of Christ and enjoy the blessings of God. Brother Pete closed by stating, "Our focus, our

goal and our aim as a Church and as a people is that we would draw closer to Christ and never take off the robe of righteousness."

Brother Paul Aaron continued with the theme of the garment. "When the Lord makes the wedding garment He makes it perfect. The Church of Jesus Christ has a wedding garment. The price of the gown of The Church of Jesus Christ is infinite. The price cost the son of God His life, but He did it willingly because He distinctly loves each of you. He doesn't just love all of us, He loves **each** of us. That means He loves me, He loves you. It's personal. The wedding invitation is one on one." Brother Paul Aaron shared that the invitation to the feast is not just for us, it is for everyone, every friend, neighbor and person who will accept. He encouraged us to share our testimonies with all that we come in contact with.

Brother Frank Natoli, Region President, painted a picture of the feast and the beautiful table waiting for us with our name written in the blood of Christ, in a spot prepared just for us. He shared a thought that everyone has a place setting at the feast. "The question is only if we desire to sit at that table. Then, once we decide that we want to be there, like Lehi, it is not complete. We then desire our family and then our friends to join us." He again encouraged us to invite those around us to the feast to sit at the spot that the Lord has prepared for them.

The young people came forward to sing and our meeting was closed with anticipation for the day to follow.

In the morning we gathered at Branch #1 for our Region Conference. The Spirit of God was present even from our opening hymn. The pulpit was filled with the brothers from our region as well as the visitors from the DOC, Brothers Joe Benyola, Tony Ricci, Joel Calabrese and Paul Aaron Palmieri, and Apostle Dick Christman.

After a few selections from our Region choir, Brother Joe Benyola opened our meeting.

Brother Joe started by saying he had never heard the singing so beautiful in his life. While we are a talented region, he knew that it was because of the Spirit of God. He spoke of the DOC and the work to grow the Church domestically. He convinced us through use of an analogy about the end of the earth, that the most important thing will be our families and our relationship with God.

He spoke from 1 Thessalonians 5:6, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Brother Joe spoke of being prepared and of the hope that we have as we walk through life that God has promised to help us. He spoke of the crucifixion and the sinner on the cross next to Christ and how Christ forgave him. "We should be prepared in every meeting wherever we go to say, 'Lord what do you have for me today.' The Spirit of God is always within us. We feel Him in our presence, in the music today which was so beautiful, in the songs, the preaching and the testimonies of our brothers and sisters. The most important gift that you have is your testimony to tell other people, because it is our mission to tell others so they can feel the same Spirit that you have."

Brother Tony Ricci followed with the theme "Are you ready?" He read from Ezra 7. "He [Ezra] was ready first of all because he knew the law – love God above all things and love your neighbor as yourself." The next step, Brother Tony said, was to live the law. He spoke of Helaman giving the same advice to Lehi and Nephi to remember the commandments of God and do them. He said in order to do the work of the DOC and grow the Church we need to follow this plan. We need to be the example. "Ezra was made ready because he knew the law, did the law, and then he taught the law." He encouraged us to follow this example and grow closer to God so that we can be ready to share.

Brother Joel Calabrese spoke

(Continued on Page 11)



Branch and Mission News

There is a Beacon Light Shining in Mt. Laurel, NJ

By Sister Lynda Sgro

These are the words that came to me sometime before our branch dedication: What does it mean to dedicate? The dictionary defines it, "to devote wholly and earnestly." In our endeavors to serve Him, the saints who reside in Mt. Laurel and the neighboring vicinity are transplants from various branches; namely, New Brunswick, Levittown, Edison, Freehold, Herndon, and Brooklyn. Through God's marvelous work, He set us here to build and dedicate a new house of worship for Him.

Initially the saints of Mt. Laurel met at Smithville School. One evening shortly before our Wednesday prayer service, one of our elders was passing by the property across the street from the school and the voice of the Lord spoke to him and said, "This is where you will build my Church." It was evening, he was in front of the school where we were meeting, and our brother thought, "I know, Lord, we meet here every Wednesday and Sunday." The Lord spoke to him again and said that "this was where we would build His Church." He let it go for the moment waiting on the Lord for the right time to share this experience.

During this same week, Brother Tony and Sister Lydia Micale were inspired to put a deposit on the same exact piece of property! This was directly across from the school. On this property sat a vacant cinderblock machine shop. The proposal to become a branch went to the Atlantic Conference for approval and was passed, including the purchase of the property confirming the aforementioned experience.

Four years later, with much planning, gutting the existing building,

Mt. Laurel Township approvals, and the new construction, we have a beautiful stone-edged building with a lofty wood ceiling that echoes the praises we sing to His glory.

Our dedication weekend took place on June 27 and 28, 2009 in conjunction with the Quorum of Twelve, Finance Committee and General Church Trustee meetings in our region. Much thought, prayer and effort went into the planning of our dedication. We had a host of 200 plus, visiting brothers and sisters from various parts of the country.

On Saturday there was an Open House followed with a beautiful DVD presentation prepared by Brother Greg Perri that captured the history and testimonies that went into our new building. In addition to the DVD, there were the personal testimonies of branch elders: Apostle Paul Benyola, Evangelist Joseph Perri, Evangelist Jim Sgro, Evangelist and Region President Joe Benyola, Brother Sam Sgro, Brother Arthur Searcy and Trustee Chairman Brother Joe Bonaduce. Brother Tony and Sister Lydia Micale also shared their testimony.

Brother Joe Benyola, Region President and 1st Presiding Elder of Mt. Laurel, gave an historical account of the building of the branch and

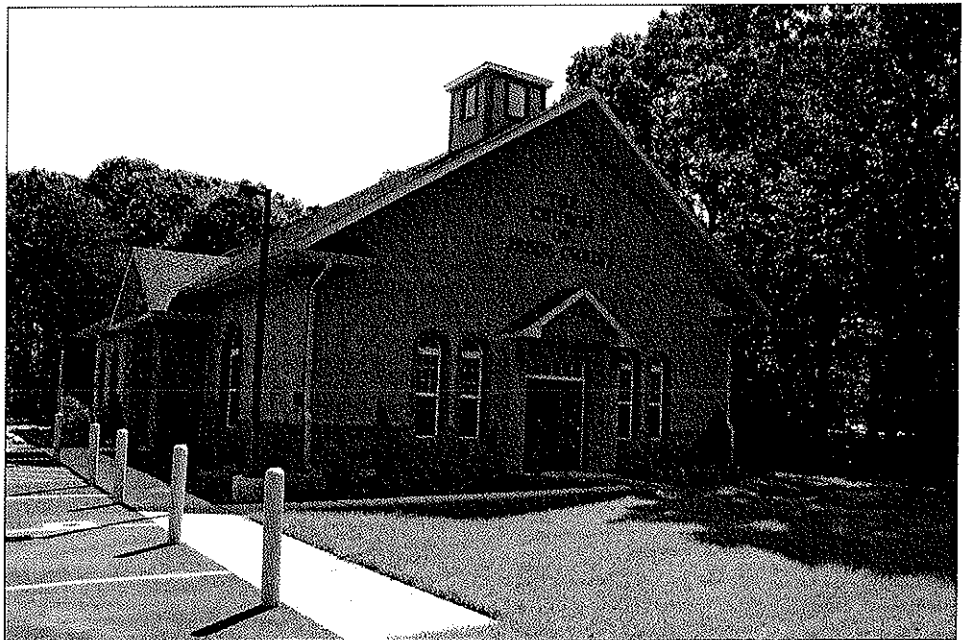
thanked all the wonderful efforts put forth by the congregation, region and General Church committees. Brother Joe presented a branch plaque, displayed on the outside of the building to Brother Arthur Searcy and Brother Sam Sgro. The plaque reads as follows:

The Church of Jesus Christ,
Organized 1862,
Dedicated June 28, 2009,
May all who pass through these doors
find peace and comfort.

A gift was given to the ladies of our branch for their support and efforts.

We then feasted on a delicious catered dinner and gathered for a singspiration.

Among our keynote speakers that evening were Apostles John Griffith and Isaac Smith. In his preaching, Brother John Griffith exhorted, "This building is no longer just mortar and stone. You can feel it's the House of God. It's becoming a home for the saints of God, where the Spirit comes to rest. We're not here dedicating a building, we're dedicating people. If you're not going to be dedicated, what's this work to us? Do you know the most important thing I see in here? It's you; you bring life to this structure.



The new Mt. Laurel church building.