

Tahiti Temple History

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Background:

LDS missionaries arrived in Tubuai in 1844. Members had never had the chance to go to the temple. In a conference address in April 1952, Apostle Cowley said “To you in Tahiti, who were the first in the isles of the sea to receive the gospel in this dispensation, my heart goes out. For more than a hundred years you have been listening to this message of regeneration. You have contributed of your tithes and your offerings, your widow's mite, and not one of you has yet come to a temple of God. You are worthy. God will reward you for your faithfulness and devotion.”

Hawaiian temple trip:

In 1959, as a consequence of many years of faithful membership in the Church, thirty Tahitian Saints made great sacrifices to set aside the money for a trip to Hawaii to receive temple blessings. They were to sail to Hawaii in the church-owned Paraita. President McKay had sent word to cancel the trip. Two days later Brother Tapu received a telephone call from the harbormaster, who said the boat was sinking.

First Trip to New Zealand Temple:

The New Zealand Temple was opened in April 1958. In September 1963 Thomas R Stone was called to be the Tahiti mission president. President McKay told Tom and Diane Stone that their first priority was to get the members prepared for the temple. The saints had savings account in the mission office. The first group of saints went to New Zealand in December 1963. The next temple trip was in July 1965. Several temple excursions were taken in the later 1960s and 1970s. It was very expensive and required great sacrifice for the Tahitians to go to New Zealand.

Temple for Tahiti Announced:

In 1978 a temple was announced for Pago Pago, American Samoa which was to serve Samoa, Fiji, Tahiti and Tonga. The plans were later changed and three smaller temples for Samoa, Tahiti and Tonga were announced in April 1980 general conference.

Finally a site was selected-the location of the church's elementary school in Titiro, Papeete. President Spencer W Kimball presided at the groundbreaking ceremony Feb 12-14, 1981. Former Tahitian missionary George Bonnet was chosen to be the temple

project manager in 1982. The first day of construction was April 10, 1982. Joseph Childers was chosen to be the first temple president in September 1982. He was a former Tahitian missionary and Tahitian Mission president from 1972 to 1975. The Angel Moroni was hoisted into place on January 18, 1983. President Childers and his wife arrived in Tahiti August 31, 1983. By October the temple was complete and the ten day open house was started October 12. The attendance was 16,551 about 7.5% of the population.

The temple was dedicated in 6 sessions by President Gordon B Hinckley counselor to President Kimball, who was ill. He said the 8000 members in Tahiti were blessed to have a temple because the Lord loved them.

President Childers chose as his counselors Fernand J. Caumet and Donald H. Hendricks. Victor Hapairai was the first temple recorder and Teave Temahuki was the first temple engineer. In May 1985 Elders Faust, Perry and Simpson visited the temple. (Cracks in the ceiling of ordinance room 1 and the sealing room were repaired in 1985.) Three couples were sealed in 1985. In 1986 Salle 1 was exclusively used for Tahitian sessions. Salle 2 could be used for Tahitian or French. In June of 1986 the celestial room was redecorated. Two Tahitian temple missionary couples were called in 1986. The first Tahiti temple presidency served together until September 1987.

On August 17, 1987 Fernand J Caumet was announced as the second temple president. He was set apart by President Monson on September 6, 1987. He chose as his counselors Robert M. Toriki and Donald H. Hendricks. In 1987 a new audio visual system was installed for multiple language capability. The temple was repainted in 1988. There was a French temple missionary couple called in 1988. In October of 1988 there were discussions of patron housing. A formal request was submitted in 1989. Ralph J Richards was set apart as 2nd counselor on October 13, 1989 replacing Donald H Hendricks who returned to the states after 6 years in Tahiti. Wayne McGrevy became the temple recorder in 1990. President Caumet was released on September 1, 1990.

Ralph J Richards, a former Tahitian missionary and Mission President from 1969 to 1971 was the next Temple President. He called Robert M. Toriki and Louis P. Arhan as his counselors. The patron housing units behind the temple were completed. They were dedicated on May 23, 1992 by James M. Paramore. A new digital audio system was installed in July 1992. President Richards had heart problems and returned to the Salt Lake City for treatment in the summer of 1992. He was released in July 1992. Ralph J Richards died in Salt Lake hospital on September 18, 1992. Robert Toriki was acting Temple president. They were released in October.

On August 2, 1992 C. Jay Larson was called as the new temple president. He was a former Tahitian Missionary and Tahitian Mission President from 1981 to 1984. He was set apart by President Monson on September 11, 1992. They arrived in Tahiti on October 8, 1992. He called Louis P. Arhan and Tiatia Teio as counselors. Four young couples were sealed in 1992. The first restricted temple workers were set apart in 1992. The first family history center was established in the annex in 1993. There was a general

refurbishment of the temple interior in 1993. The temple gardens were also replanted in 1993. In May of 1994 Elder Russell M. Nelson arrived in Tahiti for the 150th anniversary of the gospel arriving in French Polynesia. In addition to dedicating the islands for the preaching of the gospel and other ceremonies he set apart 2 sealers. Due to health problems Tiatia Teio was replaced by Jean Baptiste Bonnet as second counselor on November 15, 1994. Thirteen young couples were sealed in 1994. The Angel Moroni statue was regilded in July 1995. This presidency was released in August 1995.

On August 9th, 1995 John S. Morgan a former Tahitian missionary, was set apart by President Faust as the next temple president. He chose Hiro Mariterangi and Roger Tuairau as his counselors on August 28, 1995. The Cook Islands were assigned to the Tahiti Temple region in December 1995. Up until 1996 there were only 4 sessions per day at 7, 8 AM and 4:30 and 6:30 PM. In April 1996 hourly sessions became a reality. The new schedule was 7,8,9 AM and 4,5,6,7 PM. during the week and 6,7,8,9,10 AM on Saturday. Elder Scott set apart 3 sealers in May 1996. New lockers were installed in July 1996. In March 1997 the Tahiti temple had the highest per capita ordinance rate in the world. President Hinckley and Elder Wirthlin visited the temple in October 1997. (There were labor problems with temple employees in October 1997.) President Morgan spoke to stake leaders about the restricted ordinance worker program on November 1997. The number increased to over a hundred the next year. Teave Temahuki, the first temple engineer retired in April 1998. The drapes in the endowment rooms were replaced in July 1998. (There was a fire in one of the patron housing units due to an accident with a mosquito repellent coil in August 1998.) On August 17, 1998 a new handbook of temple worker and employee standards was issued. Philippe Aripeu became the new temple engineer on August 17, 1998. T. Amosa Hapairai was set apart as a sealer by Elder Holland in November 1998. This presidency served until November 1998.

On October 20, 1998 Don H. Hendricks was set apart as the next temple president by President Faust. On November 21, 1998 he set apart his counselors, Louis P. Arhan and Calixte F. Pai. (In December 1998 there was a serious mudslide behind the patron housing.) By May of 1999 President Hendricks was having severe health problems. He returned to Salt Lake for treatment. Four and a half months later he died of bone cancer on September 24, 1999.

On August 31, 1999 President Hinckley called acting temple president Louis P. Arhan to tell him he was called as the new temple president. He was set apart on October 11, 1999. He chose Hiro P. Mariterangi and Raymond R. Tauotoha as his counselors. The Leeteg painting of Christ was to be retired from the temple in 1999. The temple department decided to end the calling of Tahitian temple missionaries in 1999. They were all released by the end of the year. Local stakes were assigned a week at a time to provide restricted temple ordinance workers. In 2000 the number of restricted ordinance workers had increased to over 500. In August of 1999 temple training CDs were introduced. The new temple ordinance recording system ORS2 was implemented in 1999. In March of 2001 there was a proposal to update the temple in 2003. A Meeting with temple employees was held to discuss benefits in May 2001. In July of 2001 three sessions were added to the schedule at 5,6 and 7 pm on Saturday evening. The Leeteg painting of Christ

was moved to the area PBO office in December 2001. President Arhan served until November 2002.

Tekehu M. Munanui was chosen to be the next temple president. He is a native Tahitian who had served previously as Tahitian Mission President from 1996 to 1999. He chose Rudolphe E. Tua and Jean-Pierre Riemer as his counselors. On February 13, 2003 the temple department approved a plan to enlarge the temple. Adam Alders and Alan Rudolph and Jean Picart did an inspection to prepare for the remodeling originally planned for 2004. In September 2003 the stakes changed from a weekly schedule to a rotating single day schedule of providing restricted temple workers. On Mar 4, 2005 Alan Rudolph visited President Munanui and had authorization to proceed with the remodel starting in August 2005. The official letter from the temple department was dated May 9th 2005. The July maintenance closure was cancelled and extra sessions were held on Mondays prior to the closure. This presidency served until the end of July 2005 when the temple was closed for remodeling. President Munanui returned to Utah September 23, 2005.

The Tahiti temple was closed for remodeling in August 2005 (It was enlarged from 9,500 to 12,150 sq ft.) The remodeling began on August 1, 2005. The old temple furniture was auctioned off on August 11, 2005. Alan Rudolph was chosen to be the construction manager. It was completed in September 2006. The open house was held from October 14 to Nov 4, 2006. Over 35 thousand visitors toured the completed temple. This was over 15% of the local population.

On July 29, 2006 the next temple president Thomas R. Stone was announced. He was a former Tahitian missionary and Tahitian Mission president from 1963 to 1966. He later served as a regional representative. He was set apart by President Thomas S. Monson. He chose T. Amosa Hapairai and Guy M. Kato as his counselors. Sister Diane Stone was the matron with Leila Hapairai and Simone Kato as assistant matrons. The temple status was changed to a "small" temple. So there were no longer paid recorder and engineer positions. President Hapairai was the engineer and President Kato was the recorder.

The Papeete Tahiti Temple was rededicated by L. Tom Perry on Nov 12, 2006. There were two sessions carried by closed circuit to local stake houses and remote sites in Hawaii and Salt Lake City. Five former temple presidents and their spouses participated in the rededication. Endowment Sessions were held 2 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon and evening Tuesday thru Friday. Four sessions were held on Saturday morning. During the first two years, stakes had a fixed day to provide workers and patrons. The day rotated each year. In 2009 the stakes returned to the previous plan of rotating their attendance day. The permanent temple workers served in the various ordinance capacities, with restricted temple workers filling in as needed. There were several construction related problems that had to be resolved. Notably the temple roof had to be replaced, which was done in May and June 2008. In July 2008 the morning sessions were eliminated except on Saturdays. Beginning in 2009 there were two sessions held on Thursday mornings. The former recorder's house was renovated into a missionary triplex by August 2009. The land adjacent to the temple was finally vacated in March

2009. Previously a new parking area was made by the Temple annex. In June 2009 the new parking was enlarged and finished and the new temple gardens were started after 2 new septic tanks were installed. The temple landscaping was finished in December 2009.

On May 30, 2009 the next Temple President Michael F Moody was announced. He served with his wife Maria as matron. They began their service November 1, 2009 His counselors were Charles Liao, recorder and Rie Tihoti Mariteragi, engineer. The assistant matrons were Cina Liao and Hilda Mariteragi. A major change in the temple operation occurred when Anthony Reyelts was selected as the new recorder/engineer in 2011. This freed up the two counselors to more effectively carry out their temple responsibilities. The members from Rarotonga were changed again to belong to the New Zealand temple district around 2012. The temple patron housing was upgraded around 2012.

On April 17, 2012 Jean Tefan was announced as the new temple president. He had served as a young missionary in Tahiti and later as a mission president in Fiji. He had also served as the area seventy. Gisele Tefan became the new temple matron. The new counselors named were Errol Bennett and Beniamina Fareea. The new assistant matrons were Yolande Bennett and Therese Fareea. They began their service November 1, 2012.

On May 23, 2015 Marama Tarati was called as the new temple president. He had served as the Tahiti mission president and area seventy. His wife Christiane was the matron. The new counselors were First Counselor was Mose Mariteragi and Second Counselor was Jerome Rere. Desiree Mariteragi and Suzanne Rere were assistant matrons. They began their service November 1, 2015.

In 2017 Myrza Gourrat, Tahiti Temple clerical leader was selected to be the new Paris temple clerical leader. Her assistant Miri Malarde was chosen to replace her as the Papeete temple clerical leader. Raymonde Patiare was hired as a clerk to replace Miri.

In April 2018 Yves Perrin was announced as the new Tahiti temple president. He had served as a young missionary and later as the president of the Tahiti mission. His wife Kathleen Perrin will be the new temple matron. They began their service November 1, 2018. His counselors were Jean Pierre Tiakura and Paorai Iotefa. The assistant matrons were Denise Tiakura and Emilie Iotefa. Due to health problems Paorai Iotefa was released and Gabriel Peni was called as the new 2nd counselor in February 2019. His wife Erita Peni is the new assistant matron. Anthony Reyelts became an area manager for temple department in 2018 assigned to the Pacific area, and Johann Tchan became the Tahiti temple recorder on November 1st.