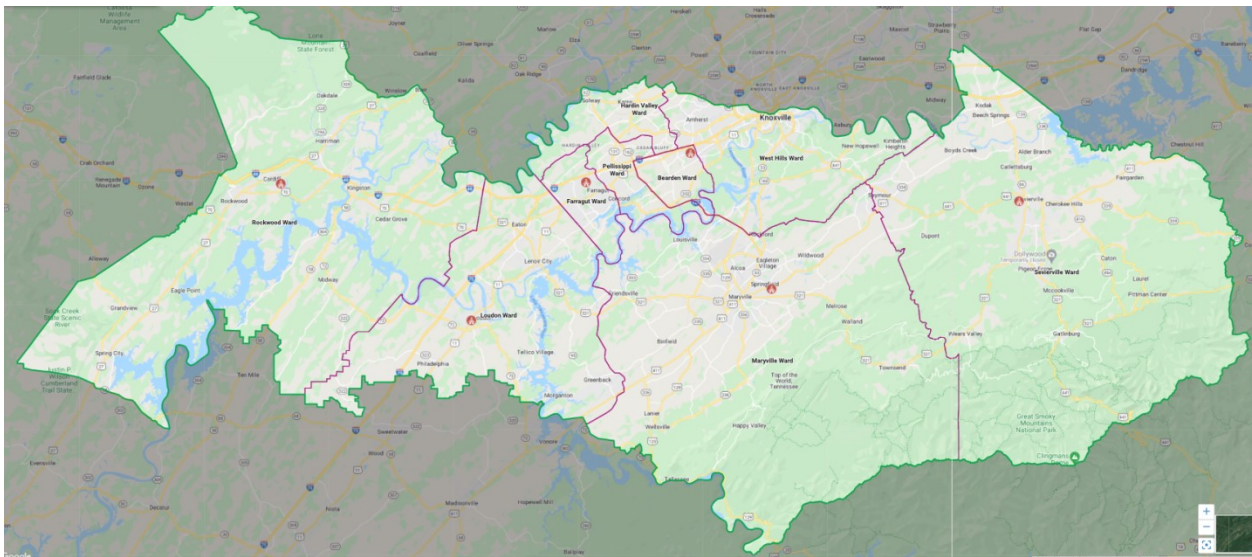


Knoxville Tennessee Stake and Ward Histories

The Second 25 Years
1996 to 2021



2021 Stake and Ward Boundaries

In Commemoration of the 50 year Golden Anniversary
of the
Knoxville Tennessee Stake

Compiled by Russ Barber with input from each unit in the stake
under the direction of President David Sexton

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Knoxville Tennessee Stake and Ward Histories

Knoxville Tennessee Stake

A first volume of the Knoxville Stake History entitled **FOOT STEPS OF FAITH** was issued July of 1997 and covered the history of the stake from the early days of the Church in East Tennessee until November of 1996 when the Knoxville Cumberland Stake was split off from the Knoxville Stake. The Foot Steps of Faith history included the following highlights of early church history in Tennessee:

- The gospel was first introduced into Tennessee by Elders David W. Patten and Warren Parrish in October 1834. These Elders and others who followed were met with much opposition and hardship. Throughout the 1800's, many were threatened and chased by angry mobs, some faced tar and feathers, and others sustained severe beatings. Despite these adversities, much progress was made between 1834 and 1850, and several small branches were organized. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote in his journal on Saturday, May 15, 1841, "Good news has recently reached us from Tennessee...The Elders are baptizing in all directions." In spite of whippings, tar and feathers, and outright murders, the missionary work of the Church was still carried on faithfully.
- Just before the Civil War broke out, missionaries and many other members left the South for Utah; and it was not until several years after the close of the war that the mission was reopened.
- After the turn of the century, an improved image of the Church in the South began. Through extensive traveling and defending the missionary effort in the courtroom, with political leaders, judges, and by using the mass media, the Mission Presidents won many friends and many converts and greatly improved the Church's image in the South.
- Mormon Missionaries came to Anderson, Claiborne, Cumberland, Knox, Loudon and Hamilton Counties, TN September 8, 1917 with excellent results reported from the Elders. In January of 1923, Elders in Knoxville TN received permission of the Chief of Police to preach in the main part of town three nights or three days a week. Knoxville was probably the last major city in the East Tennessee Conference to grant this privilege.
- By about 1926, reports of positive, friendly, tolerant reception far outweighed the negative reports. With an average of only 12 to 16 missionaries to cover all of East Tennessee, west almost to Nashville, it was impossible to fill all the requests for preaching services, member-family visits, etc. At this time there were only two or three organized branches and a few Sunday Schools in all of East Tennessee. But by 1957, the Tennessee East District covered many miles, from Bristol/Kingsport to Chattanooga and included about 15 branches.
- The middle and late 60's brought more and more "transplants" moving into the area as jobs were opened up to them. The University of Tennessee brought many folks here as well as the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The strength of these members brought much needed assistance to the courageous and brave East Tennessee Saints who had sacrificed so much to spread the gospel, not only with their testimonies, but with their examples when "anti-Mormonism" could have certainly discouraged even the most valiant of saints.

- In 1970, the name of the Tennessee East District was changed to the Knoxville Tennessee District. Until the stake was created in 1972, the mission had great influence upon the affairs of the area and was the governing body over the districts.
- **Formation of the Knoxville Tennessee Stake on June 25, 1972** from the Knoxville District of the Kentucky-Tennessee Mission under the direction of Mark E. Peterson of the Council of the Twelve with 2,341 members, five wards – Chattanooga, Chattanooga 2nd, Knoxville, Knoxville 2nd, and Oak Ridge, and three independent branches – Crossville, Jamestown, and Morristown.
- New independent branches were formed – Maryville in April 1975, LaFollette in July 1975, Rockwood in May 1977
- The Chattanooga Stake was split off in May of 1978 leaving the Knoxville Stake with three wards – Knoxville, Knoxville 2nd, Oak Ridge, and six independent branches – Crossville, Jamestown, Morristown, Maryville, LaFollette, and Rockwood.
- Additional wards and branches were formed making a total of 16 units, 10 wards and 6 branches, in the Knoxville Stake when the Knoxville Cumberland Stake was split off in November 1996.

This volume covers the history of the Knoxville Stake and its wards and branches from 1996, when the stake was split, to 2021. Many changes have occurred in the stake during those 25 years as summarized in this history. Before the stake was split, there were approximately 4600 members and 16 units in the Knoxville Tennessee Stake. Traveling time to some units was two hours one way. After the split, there were only eight units in the Knoxville Stake and the travel time from the stake center to the furthest unit was reduced to about one hour one way. The smaller stake made managing the stake much easier and the stake flourished and has continued to grow. The approximate population of the Knoxville Stake in November 1996 after the split was 2200 members consisting of five wards – Farragut, Pellissippi, West Hills, Maryville, and Crossville, and three branches – Sevierville, Loudon, and Rockwood. By the end each of the following years, the stake grew as follows: 2002 - 2680 members, 2006 - 3129 members, 2010 - 3602 members, 2014 - 3737 members, 2018 - 4026 members, and by the end of 2021 the stake had 4376 members consisting of nine wards – Bearden (340), Farragut (367), Hardin Valley (448), Loudon (309), Maryville (693), Pellissippi (390), Rockwood (331), Sevierville (725), and West Hills (587), and one branch – Knoxville YSA (186), with the Crossville Ward now a part of the Cookeville Stake.

As noted above, the stake has grown steadily, but not as fast as we would want. The West Knoxville area continues to be the center of growth in the stake. Most of the growth has come from members moving into the area, but missionary converts continue to be a blessing to the stake. It was interesting that during 2020 when the COVID pandemic significantly limited the amount of personal contact missionaries could have with nonmembers, the number of baptisms actually increased in the Knoxville Stake. The stake had 60 convert baptisms in 2020 compared to only 32 in 2019.

Major Stake Events

On March 15 and 16 of 1997, President Hinckley held a Regional Conference in Knoxville for members of the Knoxville, Knoxville Cumberland, Chattanooga, and Kingsport Stakes. We first held a working

luncheon on Saturday with the four Stake Presidents, the three General Authorities (President Gordon B Hinckley, Elder Joseph B Wirthlin, and Elder F. David Stanley), the Mission and Temple Presidents, and Lloyd Smith, the Area Authority and our former Stake President. We then attended an inspiring Leadership Meeting and received wonderful instruction from all three General Authorities followed by a great dinner served by the Relief Society. The Sunday general session was held at the Knoxville Civic Coliseum and was very well attended with over 6500 members from all four stakes and many visitors including Knoxville's Mayor Ashe and members of the City Council. We were again treated to inspired talks from our Prophet and his wife and the other General Authorities.

Another memorable stake event held shortly after the stake was split was the Bi-stake Sesquicentennial Celebration at the World's Fair site in downtown Knoxville held on July 26, 1997. To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the pioneers arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, each unit in the two stakes set up pioneer-themed booths at the fair site. The event included a pioneer parade on the streets near the World's Fair site with more than 400 participating which included a covered wagon and about 10 handcarts that members had made. That night a concert was held in the World's Fair Pavilion with over 800 in attendance. The whole event was a great success with over 2000 attending.

Youth Activities

We have been blessed with many great youth and youth leaders in the stake. Each year there have been great youth conferences, Girl's camps, and scout outings. A special Youth Conference which had been planned before the stake was split was held in July of 1997 after the stake was split when both the Knoxville and Knoxville Cumberland Stakes held a combined youth conference in Nauvoo Illinois. Approximately 208 youth and 47 adults from the two stakes traveled to Nauvoo in five buses and a few cars. Visiting the location where the Nauvoo Temple had stood and seeing the houses the saints abandoned when they were forced to flee west made a strong impression on everyone. They toured the restored Brigham Young home, gun shop, print shop, post office, blacksmith shop, John Taylor home, Joseph and Emma's homestead, red brick store, Smith family cemetery, Lucy Mack Smith home, Heber C Kimball home, Wilford Woodruff home, and the Mansion House. Our youth watched the performance of Nauvoo Adventure, performed by youth missionaries. They also attended a stake dance in Burlington, Iowa, which included youth from the Nauvoo Ward. There was a particularly strong spirit when the youth visited the Carthage Jail and reviewed the events regarding the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. At the close of the conference, the youth walked down Parley Street and gathered by the Mississippi River, where a huge bonfire was going. A very special testimony meeting was held which continued on until after dark. Many youth bore their testimonies and rededicated themselves in their efforts to follow Christ. The testimony meeting ended at about 10:30 PM when those five buses picked up the youth to drive them back to Knoxville. It was an unforgettable youth conference for all of us.

In June of 2002, the stake held a "new and improved" Wilderness Youth Conference. The stake had held previous Wilderness Youth Conferences that had been very successful but President Lehman wanted this conference tied more to the scriptures so President Lehman and President Boxx of the Stake Presidency and Russ Barber and Patsy Pehrson, the Stake YM/YW leaders, did lots of brain storming to come up with a revised format using information from the Wilderness Youth Conferences of the past

and filling in new events. The conference started with the night hike and life games including rappelling and the zip line and ended with a solo experience and testimony meeting as past conferences had, but a day and a half of new activities were added. Each day started with an hour of scripture study (definitely added by our Stake President/ Institute Director). Then one afternoon the youth were driven from their homes (tents) by a mob and had to flee into the wilderness with what they could carry. Heavily laden down, they walked about one and half miles to a new temporary camp site where they set up camp – only to be told (after dinner) they needed to go on to “Winter Quarters”. The next day they continued their journey to Zion, having to build a raft and cross a lake along the way. On both nights the youth witnessed excellent fireside programs including skits depicting Nephi being confronted by his brothers and the martyrdom of Joseph Smith. The martyrdom set was in the middle of the woods and included a door and windows, a sound tract, and real gun shots from three different guns. The mob shot Hyrum through the door before shooting Joseph as he jumped out the window. The Spirit was very strong during this reenactment and some youth were brought to tears as they witnessed the scene. It was something they would always remember. The conference concluded with a solo experience when each youth went off by themselves and read a letter from their parents and then meditated and prayed. President Lehman recorded that “at the end of the conference every testimony focused on the things of the Spirit and most of them mentioned Joseph Smith. It was the most spiritual youth conference I have ever attended.”

In July of 2003 and 2005 the Stake Young Men’s Presidency put on a Stake Duty to God activity at Big South Fork for the young men of the stake. The 2003 event started the night of July 24 and included two firesides themed around the pioneers. Several other outdoor activities were planned both years including an 18 mile hike for the Priests, a 10 mile hike for the Teachers, and a 6 mile hike for the Deacons. In addition to the hikes and other activities, the boys passed off several Duty to God requirements including memorizing Section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Another special youth conference was held in June of 2006 – a trip to Kirtland, the Sacred Grove, and Niagara Falls. The theme of the conference was “Know Your Roots”. The conference was planned while President Max Lehman served as Stake President and was then carried out by President Morgeneegg, Rick Barnes, and Glade Nelson after the Stake Presidency was changed in April of 2006. The conference was a great never-to-be forgotten experience. The youth were able to visit the Kirtland Temple and come to better understand the sacrifice made by the early saints to build the temple and of the special spiritual events that occurred in the temple and in the upstairs of the Whitney store where the School of the Prophets was held and where so many revelations were received. In Kirtland, we had a fireside with Karl Anderson who may be the Church’s leading authority on Kirtland. Another special event was dinner with the youth of the Community of Christ in their stake center-like building across the street from the Kirtland Temple. We were to have a dance with them as well, but the director of the Historic Kirtland Visitor Center called and said that we could have a private showing of the new (at that time) movie "Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration." We held our testimony meeting in the visitor center auditorium after the movie, which set a wonderful spirit for the meeting. However, without doubt the highlight of the conference was visiting the Sacred Grove in Palmyra where the youth and leaders felt the special witness of the Spirit that God the Father and Jesus did in fact appear to Joseph Smith. The

visit to the Niagara Falls provided a fun diversion for everyone and President Morgeneegg reported that all went great and all behaved well.

Other Stake Youth Conferences

Starting in 2010, the stake adopted a four-year repeating sequence of youth conferences - A multi-stake standard Youth Conference (YC), TREK, only our stake in a standard YC, and then Moroni's Quest. Each conference typically ran from Thursday through Saturday noon. A summary of each type of youth conference is summarized as follows:

- The two standard Youth Conference formats are similar to an EFY conference. These Youth Conferences typically start with check-in and a dance on Thursday; then workshops and activities on Friday and another dance in the evening; then a solo event on Saturday morning followed by a testimony meeting. There can be some variation on this format, but will generally follow this schedule.
- TREK typically starts with check in, pulling handcarts for four hours, dinner, a hoedown, and a devotional on Thursday; a devotional, YM service project while YW pull handcarts on their own, all pull handcarts for seven hours, a dinner, skits, and devotional on Friday; a solo experience and testimony meeting on Saturday morning.
- Moroni's Quest starts with check in, tribe meetings, a devotional, and Tree of Life activity on Thursday; a devotional, Book of Mormon activities all day including boat building, wars, trivia, and weapons followed by a burying weapons activity and Tree of Life activity on Friday; a solo experience and testimony meeting on Saturday morning.

We were fortunate to even have stake youth conferences during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 because the 2020 youth conference was held in February before everything shut down in March and in 2021 we were able to hold a "hybrid" Moroni's Quest in June during a lull in the pandemic. Youth Conference for 2022 is planned to be a Nauvoo trip. Future For Strength of Youth (FSY) conferences will be put on by the central Church leadership every two years starting in 2023, so the plans for future local stake youth conferences are uncertain.

A summary of each youth conference held between 2010 and 2021 was provided by Gene Borden who was involved in each conference as a member of the Stake High Council or as the Stake YM President.

2010 (July 15-17)

Theme: Be Strong and of a Good Courage

Format: Standard Youth Conference

Participants: Coordinating Council (4 stakes)

Venue: Maryville College

Number of youth attending: 343

Items of Note: Sister Elaine S Dalton, General YW President, attended the conference. She was the speaker for one of the seminars on Saturday. Winn Egan, member of the YM General Board, attended the conference. He was the speaker for one of the seminars on Saturday. Elder Cornish, area 70 authority, attended the conference.

2011 (June 9-11)

Theme: Faith in Every Footstep

Format: TREK (this was our stake's first TREK event)

Participants: Knoxville Stake only

Venue: Big South Fork recreation area

Number of youth attending: 84

Items of note: Only pulled the handcarts on day 1 and day 3. Day 2 was spent encamped with activities and workshops all day. Handcarts were borrowed from the Cumberland stake which has been the case for all our TREK events. Very successful! Decision made afterwards to do this event every 4 years.

2012 (July 19-21)

Theme: Arise and Shine Forth

Format: Standard Youth Conference

Participants: Knoxville Stake only

Venue: Maryville College

Number of youth attending: 99

Items of Note: Venue was Carson Newman until the governing board in Nashville said no. Local CN staff was devastated and very apologetic. This cancelation occurred very late. A miracle occurred and Maryville College was able to accommodate us at the last minute. Even they were amazed that it was possible.

2013 (June 6-8)

Theme: Moroni's Quest (our first Book of Mormon themed conference)

Format: Book of Mormon themed camping event

Participants: Knoxville Stake only

Venue: Camp Pellissippi

Number of youth attending: 107

Items of Note: Very successful! and a highly spiritual experience for all involved. Decision was made afterwards to do this event every four years. There was a video compilation made after the event from video taken during the event.

2014 (June 26-28)

Theme: Come Unto Christ

Format: Standard Youth Conference

Participants: Coordinating Council (5 stakes)

Venue: Maryville College

Number of youth attending: 485

Items of note: One person from each of the YM and YW General Boards attended the conference. Sister McConkie, of the YM General Presidency, attended the conference and spoke to the youth on Thursday night and Friday night. Elder Hymas, Area 70 Authority, attended the conference and spoke to the youth on Friday night. We exceeded the capacity of Maryville College. Most of the adults had to stay in hotels or at their homes and commute back and forth to the conference.

2015 (June 4-6)

Theme: Embark in the Service of God

Format: TREK

Participants: Knoxville Stake only

Venue: Camp Buck Toms

Number of youth attending: 89

Items of note: Another miracle occurred in obtaining this venue. Recent changes in rules about how outdoor parks/recreation areas could be used forced a late change in venue. Amazingly, Camp Buck Toms, our local BSA Boy Scout camp, was available and the Scout Council was extremely supportive and accommodating to us. It worked out perfectly. Our format changed from only pulling on day 1 and 3, to pulling on all three days. Much better and much more impacting!

2016 (April 15-16)

Theme: Press Forward (Life's Amazing Race)

Format: Abbreviated standard Youth Conference (Friday evening to Saturday evening)

Participants: Knoxville Stake only

Venue: John Knox Center, Ten Mile, TN

Number of youth attending: 118

Items of Note: Core of the Saturday activities was the "Amazing Race" activities, a series of 7 activities that youth rotated through over a 4-hour time period.

2017 (June 6-8)

Theme: Moroni's Quest

Format: Book of Mormon themed camping event

Participants: Knoxville Stake only

Venue: Camp Pellissippi

Number of youth attending: 119

Items of Note: Amazing as always!

2018 (June 7-9)

Theme: Learn, Listen, Walk, Peace (from the Youth Theme, D&C 19:23)

Format: Standard Youth Conference

Participants: Three stakes (Kingsport, Knoxville, Cumberland)

Venue: Maryville College

Number of youth attending: 288

Items of Note: Hank Smith attended and spoke to the youth on Saturday morning. The Nashville Tribute Band (an LDS band) came and performed on Friday night

2019 (May 30 – June 1)

Theme: Keep the Commandments

Format: TREK

Participants: Knoxville Stake only

Venue: Camp Buck Toms
Number of youth attending: 128
Items of Note: Best TREK yet!

2020 (Feb 14-15)

Theme: The Temple

Format: Abbreviated standard Youth Conference with heavy temple involvement (the youth did baptisms in the temple as an activity rotation)

Participants: Knoxville Stake only (+Franklin stake for the dance on Friday night)

Venue: Nashville (hotels and the Franklin stake center next to the temple, and the temple itself)

Number of youth attending: 141

Items of Note: Another inspired miracle. As we started planning for youth conference for 2020 (in the fall of 2019), someone suggested that we do a temple themed youth conference. The idea hit us all as perfect and we ran with it. The dates fell in Feb based on timing of the temple and the logistics involved. Little did we know that in March of 2020, we would be in lockdown from the pandemic. This inspiration meant that we had a most remarkable YC in 2020. The temple presidency and staff were so excited and were so accommodating to us. They still talk about it! We invited the Franklin Stake youth to join our Friday evening dance, which they did. As we were preparing to start the Saturday activities, we met David Archuleta, who was attending the temple that day, and invited him to come and speak to the youth, which he did! Traveled by buses to Nashville and back (tour buses) Very cool!

2021 (June 17-19)

Theme: Moroni's Quest

Format: Book of Mormon themed YC, hybrid approach - Check in, tribe meetings, King Benjamin's address, service projects, Tree of Life activity, and devotional on Thursday; Book of Mormon activities all day and a tribal devotional and testimony meeting on Friday; a slideshow of prior days activities, a devotional, and tribe presentations on Saturday. Everyone went to their homes overnight.

Activities on the 17th and 19th were at the stake center. Only June 18th was at Camp Pellissippi.

Participants: Knoxville Stake only

Venue: Knoxville stake center, Camp Pellissippi

Number of youth attending: 128

Items of Note: The hybrid approach allowed us to do a lot more events and a lot of different events from the usual Moroni's Quest.

Stake Girl's Camp

Girl's camp is an annual stake event. The following write-up about the Girl's camps held from 2011 to 2019 was provided by Lori Cruze who served as one of the adult leaders during those years and is typical of earlier camps.

Location. The Knoxville Stake Girl's Camp was held at Pickett State Park from 2011-2019, about a two-hour drive from the stake center. This was an ideal location because it had a great layout with a central mess hall building for meals and indoor activities, and enough cabins surrounding it to house all of the

young women and leaders for the week. (There was typically an average of 100-120 YW attending.) All attendees were grateful that the cabins and mess hall also had air conditioning. We were able to bring our own cooks and food for meals, and the girls enjoyed many favorite delicious meals.

Leadership. The Stake Young Women's presidents over this time period were Sandra Vaughn (Farragut), Kallee Twiner (Maryville), and Danielle McKellar (West Hills). Other women from all of the units in the Stake attended each year, with two leaders assigned to each year of campers (1st years, 2nd years, 3rd years, 4th years, and Youth Camp Leaders, or YCLs). There were also two craft leaders invited every year, 3-4 women on the kitchen crew, as well as two men who held the priesthood (every year Jim Dunn of the Bearden Ward has been one of the two priesthood-holders). In the early years, one or two adult Camp Directors were called from the stake to plan and execute camp. Once the Church started emphasizing the importance of youth taking leadership roles in planning and executing youth activities, that changed. The YCLs (pronounced "yuckles") became more involved in planning and preparation, guided by the two YCL adult leaders and a member of the Stake YW presidency.

Activities. Up until 2018, a big part of Girl's camp was certification. Each year had different tasks they were encouraged to complete, outlined in their camp booklet. In 2018 the guidelines were revised by the Young Women General Presidency, and certification was done away with. The young women traditionally went on hikes each year, with the 4th year girls going on an overnight backpacking hike. 4th years also got to do some repelling with Melvin Shafer of the Cumberland Stake. Many years we were able to use the canoes and Jon boats available at Pickett State Park's lake. Over the years other activities included games and competitions, team building activities, and swimming in the lake. We had Destiny Classes, where a guest was invited to come for the day and teach a class. Sometimes the classes were spiritual devotionals, sometimes they were practical information, and sometimes addressed challenges the young women might be facing. Each morning began with a flag ceremony, which included raising the flag, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, a scripture, song, and prayer. The young women also enjoyed free time, where they might participate in making crafts, playing games, Zumba classes, coloring pages, or taking naps. For a few of the years, the girls took a field trip over to a river where they could paddle kayaks together.

Traditions. While some favorite activities were enjoyed for a few years here or there, a few indispensable traditions have held on. Standing in a big circle and singing Sally Walker along with other favorite camp songs was always a high-energy start to the camp week. Perhaps the most notable tradition is Singing in the Trees. Each age group would choose a hymn with their YCLs and practice it throughout the week. On the designated evening, the girls would wait until after dark, then head out with their flashlights to a field with several large trees spread out. Each year of girls would choose a different tree, and stand around it in a circle. One group at a time, from youngest to oldest, would take turns turning on their flashlights and pointing them straight up at the tree. With their tree lit up, the group would sing their chosen hymn, and once they'd finished turned their lights off so the next group could have their turn. The week always ended with all of the Bishops and Branch Presidents coming for dinner on the last night, along with the Stake President. After dinner, the Stake President would share a message, which was followed by a testimony meeting.

The camp themes.

2011: Once Upon a Time/Disney Princesses

2012: Olympics/ Go for the Gold

2013: Rock Solid

2014: Wizard of Oz/There's No Place Like Home

2015: Embark: What's Your Destination

2016: Mountains to Climb

2017: Strong Women

2018: The Happiest Camp on Earth

2019: We Know the Way

Girl's Camp was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic. In 2021 it was back in business, but at a brand new location. It was the first year camp was held at Latimer Reservation, a BSA facility in Spencer Tennessee. Stake Young Women's President, Sister McKellar, said: *"It was absolutely a gorgeous camp where the girls had access to kayaking, mountain biking, hiking, repelling and star gazing. We stayed in beautiful wood cabins tucked in next to a breathtaking lake. We took our meals in a mess hall overlooking the water. We enjoyed spiritual devotionals, classes on personal improvement, activities designed to prompt introspection, a lip sync show, and an uplifting testimony meeting. Our theme was Ester 4:14 "For such a time as this." We shared with our young women the purpose of our Heavenly Father bringing them to the earth at this time for a specific and holy purpose. The week was filled with love, spiritual growth, and friendship"*.

President Clapp's memories about 2019 Youth Conference and Stake Camps *"Girl's camp was as usual great. Sister McKellar and the Stake YW Presidency did a wonderful job of giving the girls opportunities for spiritual experiences. We are thankful for all the sisters who gave of their time to minister to the girls of the stake. It was again a privilege to get to speak on the last evening to the girls. I wished I could say that the camp for the boys went as well, while the Aaronic priesthood had a good camp we did have an experience on the river where two youth and one leader found themselves in danger when their boat capsized. I am relieved to report that everyone was safe but it was a wakeup call. We reevaluated how we were conducting this camp. We revised safety procedures according to the Church's guidelines.*

Youth conference was TREK. The youth dove in and had a great experience. We are grateful for our relationship with the BSA. They allowed us to use the outer area of Camp Buck Toms to hold the conference. It was a true spiritual experience for all adult and youth alike. I am humbled with the opportunity of working with the Bishops and Presidents of this stake. They are a good group of priesthood leaders that worry about the youth and adults they have a stewardship with. I have had many heartfelt talks with them about individuals that they are praying how to help. They love the Lord and the members and want nothing more than to see them succeed."

Boy Scouts

For many years each ward and branch in the stake supported a Boy Scout troop. Each summer the boys would go to Camp Buck Toms in Rockwood for a week of concentrated scouting activities where they

were able to have a good time and earn merit badges. In addition, each troop would meet weekly and go on numerous camping outings during the year. The scouting program helped the boys learn many outdoor skills and encouraged them to be good citizens, give service, and develop leadership skills.

A ten-stake LDS Scout encampment was held July 11-18, 2009 during an exclusive week of scout camp at Camp Buck Toms in Rockwood, Tennessee. Participants included scouting youth and leaders from the Asheville, Chattanooga, Cumberland, Franklin, Hopkinsville, Kingsport, Knoxville, Madison, McMinnville, and Nashville Stakes, with approximately 600 LDS Scouters in attendance. The encampment included regular scouting programs for rank advancement, merit badges, and high adventure, and nightly firesides from Stake and General Young Men leaders, including Larry Gibson of the General Young Men presidency, and Gary Dollar, renowned LDS Scout woodcarver. The theme of the encampment was Eagle Today - Elder Tomorrow, highlighting a connection between the scouting program and one of the goals of the Young Men program.

In order to receive the Eagle Scout award, the scouts had to perform an Eagle Project which had to be approved by the local Scout Council. Part of the purpose of the project is to give service, but a major requirement in fulfilling the project is that the scout demonstrate leadership skills by planning the project and supervising a group of volunteers he recruits to help carry out the project. Once the project is completed, the required number of merit badges has been earned, and the scout passes the Eagle board of review, the scouts are then recognized at an Eagle Scout Court of Honor. Often federal and local representatives attend the Court of Honor and the scouts are sometimes presented with a flag that has flown over the capital. **Young men who received the Eagle Scout award are included for each ward and branch based on local records and information obtained from the Knoxville Scout Office.**

Completion of the requirements to become an Eagle Scout had to be completed before the scout's 18th birthday. With the Church announcing that it would no longer be sponsoring scout troops after 2019, there was a rush by many young men in the stake to qualify for the Eagle Scout award before that time. Therefore, there were 18 Eagle project completed in 2019 by scouts in our stake, all of which involved some form of community service and were recognized in various newspaper articles which were identified by the Knoxville Stake Public Affairs. The types of Eagle Scout projects done in 2019 are summarized below.

- Several different projects taking pictures of graves, uploading them, and transcribing them so they can become part of a searchable database—an electronic catalog
- Weeded, hedged, mulched, and planted flowers to beautify the outside of the club to improve the landscaping at the Boys and Girls Club of Powell.
- Built planter boxes for the residents at Pinnacle Assisted Living.
- A beautification project for Helen Ross McNabb that included weeding/mulching garden beds and painting a gazebo structure.
- Built screens in front of the air conditioning units, pressure washed the outside annex building, and weeded and mulched the walkways at the Ebenezer United Methodist Church.
- Built wheelchair-friendly raised planting beds for the Hardin Valley Elementary Learning Garden.
- Created a more welcoming appearance by clearing overgrowth from and painting a chain link fence for the Susannah House.

- Remodeled an indoor classroom space, including repairs of wallboard, replacing baseboards, and painting walls and trim for Wesley House in the Mechanicsville/Lonsdale/Beaumont region of Knoxville.
- Washed wheelchairs and built planters for DiversaCare Retirement Home in Oak Ridge.
- Collected over 2300 pounds of dog and cat food for Knox PAWS, a program that matches senior adults with senior pets.
- Built and placed benches, spread mulch and gravel to mark and protect trails, and painted an information board at the University of Tennessee Arboretum in Oak Ridge
- Collected personal items and assembled care kits for the Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking (CCAHT).
- Assembled and installed benches in different areas of Admiral Farragut Park.

Young Women's Program

In addition to the Church dropping involvement in scouting, the Young Women's program was also revised effective January 1, 2020. Among other things, the Young Women's Personal Progress Young Womanhood Recognition Award was discontinued. This award recognized the young women for their worthiness and for completing all the Personal Progress requirements and is the highest honor given in the Young Women's organization. A young woman could receive this honor by completing all the requirements outlined in the Personal Progress handbook. As a recipient of the award, they showed that they had established a pattern of progress in their life, were prepared to make and keep sacred temple covenants, were committed to keeping the commandments, developing and sharing their gifts and talents and would strive to strengthen the home and family, and serving others. The serving others requirement involved completing a service or value project for each of the eight young women values. **Young women who received the award are listed with each ward and branch if the information was available.** Typical projects performed included such things as planning and carrying out a youth dance, doing family history, making a quilt, helping plan and participate in a service project, and performing other services such as cleaning, babysitting, or making meals for a young mother.

While both the scouting and Young Women's Recognition programs had blessed the lives of the youth for many years, they were replaced by the Church's new "Children and Youth Program" to better meet the needs of youth world-wide. One significant change was how the young women's classes were organized. To foster unity, friendship and belonging, young women would now be organized according to a ward's specific needs, rather than three classes separated by ages 12–13, 14–15, and 16–18. Young women had been divided into three classes for over a century. The new structure may look different for each ward or branch. A ward or branch with a small number of young women might have only one class, while wards with larger groups might have four or five classes. A unit might now have a class of 10 young women ages 12–13 and a small class of young women ages 14–18. With this new class organization, class names such as Beehive, Mia Maid, and Laurel were retired and all young women would be referred to as "Young Women." For more than 60 years, the names of Beehive, Mia Maid, and Laurel have been used together to divide young women classes. Prior to the term Laurel, Junior Gleaner was used along with the names Beehive and Mia Maid from about 1950–1959. This change, which would help with translation in a global Church, was intended to promote unity.

Hoops for Hope

Hoops for Hope basketball program was an annual stake event held each year from 2008 to 2019 that was sponsored by the David Sexton family and provided an opportunity for Down Syndrome children to play basketball and interact with members of the University of Tennessee men and women's basketball teams. The event involved the UT men's and women's basketball teams spending a Saturday morning in August at a school gymnasium in West Knoxville where members of the UT basketball teams played with Down-syndrome children for two hours, instructing hotshot stations and playing five-on-five games. The children entered the gym through a line of volunteers and cheerleaders, before being introduced through a tunnel of Tennessee student-athletes. The children earned medals for their performances throughout the day. The event ended with the UT student-athletes signing autographs for everyone in attendance. Volunteers from several wards helped manage the event including handing out tee shirts to the children as they arrive, organizing the teams, taking pictures of the children with the UT players, and manning a snack booth for all in attendance. Trey Sexton founded Hoops for Hope as an Eagle Scout project as a 14-year-old, and due to its amazing reception, his father, David Sexton, continued organizing the program until 2019. Proceeds from the event benefit the Down Syndrome Awareness Group of East Tennessee.

Knoxville Stake Christmas Music Devotional

From 2010 to 2019, the stake has sponsored a Knoxville Stake Christmas Music Devotional featuring numbers from stake units and numbers from other Knoxville church choirs. The Knoxville Tennessee Stake is blessed to have an abundance of musically gifted members. Each December, faithful musicians gather together to remember the birth of our Savior in a stake wide devotional service.

2010-2012. Barney Cornaby was called to be in charge of the first Christmas devotional, which he did for three years until he was called to another position. The overall theme of each devotional was "You are invited to sing, to listen, and to feel sacred music to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ". Each program consisted of sacred hymns presented by local soloists, small groups and choirs, and singing Christ-oriented hymns by the congregation of worshipers.

The 2010 program was typical of all three years and consisted of a message of Christ by President Ben Morgenegg followed by a musical program consisting of vocal solos, duets, group musical numbers, instrumental numbers and congregational singing of Christmas hymns.

In His Own Words – Barney Cornaby

"As stated above I was called as the first organizer of the Stake Presidency Christmas Music Devotional. I add a few personal contributions. First, this calling was perfect for me. I had just been released as a High Councilor of more than 16 years. Travel among the stake members allowed me to know hundreds of members of the Church in our stake and, therefore, knew who had musical talents and who would like to contribute to the large music event. My inspiration was to involve and persuade persons in every unit to give one or more musical contributions. This brought wonderful and seemingly unknown talent to the

event from our far flung units and assured a large participation for the congregation. Months and weeks before the December event I knew the correct order of the songs and especially the first song. It was to be a single voice of a relatively simple song that began the exploration of the other wonderful Christmas songs. "With Wondering Awe" was the first marvelous song in 2010. In 2011 the soloist sang "Away in a Manger". In 2012, it was "O Little Town of Bethlehem". Each was sung by Barrett Burgin (accompanied by various persons) from West Hills. His voice and pitch were perfect for the opening number. And so every one of the hundreds of listeners heard and felt the powers of the singular opening number. Each number flowed and the anticipation and warmth of the music grew and grew. In the middle of the one and one-half hour presentation, Sharon Patterson from Rockwood gave a piano medley. She practiced hours prior to the event and sometimes practiced in the chapel and cultural hall where the devotional was given and found one musical transition to be very difficult. She prayed about this and received a clear answer to her prayer. She saw hands above the keyboard that showed her how to play the chords and, yes, with this spiritual solution the medley was a moving piece of inspiring music. This was typical. Presentation after presentation brought the Holy Ghost. One of the challenges involved large choirs and the potential for much travel to attend likely rehearsals. My inspiration was not to have heavy rehearsals and so Handel's Messiah got postponed to the second devotional and, then, with limited rehearsals by two choirs (Farragut and Pellissippi) only to protect the time of individuals and families in our far flung stake. Thus, the compromise came in the form of two choirs (not all the choirs) and participation by the congregation. The addition of a few other "demanding" pieces showed how beautiful a music festival can be, but for the most part the beauty of the Christmas Devotional came from ordinary talent with inspirational help and presenting divine Christmas music."

2013-2019. Sister Kristina Plaas was sustained as Stake Music Chairman in May 2013 and was given the task of carrying on the tradition established in 2010 under President Benjamin Morgenegg and continued under President Thomas Clapp. The first month after she was called she said she received a clear impression for changes to the devotional program, changes that would bring members from across the stake together in a new way. Instead of having individual ward choirs provide music, stake choirs were created, and children and youth were added to the program.

The theme of the Christmas Devotional in 2013 was "Oh Come Let Us Adore Him." After a brief welcome by President Clapp, the program opened with three songs by the first ever Stake Senior Primary Choir led by Robyn VanLeigh of the YSA Branch with Erin Huett (Pellissippi) on piano and Nancy Sigerson (Loudon) playing the bells. Christmas Bells truly rang that night. A Stake Youth Choir sang two numbers and there were three youth soloists-- Elise Pickett (piano), Emily Bass (soprano), and Morgan Dailey (Harp). Another first was the Stake String Ensemble performing Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." The evening ended with the Stake Choir's first performance of the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah. A cookie reception was introduced in 2013, providing an opportunity for mingling after the devotional.

The pattern established in 2013 continued through the devotional in 2019 with three stake choirs (adult, Primary, and youth), and a heavy emphasis on youth for solo and ensemble performances. Dolly Davis conducted the stake choir each year. Lynn Skovran, our gifted organist, accompanied the choir in the closing "Hallelujah Chorus" most years.

The Music Devotional in 2018 was particularly special. Mark Allmon and the Logan Temple Ensemble Choir were our guests. This choir brought a bright spirit, rooted in their African-American traditions, to the devotional. On that night we were all brothers and sisters in Christ, singing praises and remember His birth. It may have been the most memorable devotional ever held at Christmas in the Knoxville Stake. It featured a guest ensemble choir from Logan Temple A.M.E. Zion Church. There were approximately 300 people in attendance and both congregations expressed great love and gratitude for each other's talents. The Knoxville Stake Presidency presented the guest choir with a Christus Statue that was lovingly received and placed in a cabinet as you enter their sanctuary. Logan Temple A.M.E. Zion Church contacted the Knoxville Stake, and expressed a desire to partner with them in 2019. They also extended an invitation to the Knoxville Stake choir, soloists, and youth to come sing at their church for a similar type of event.

Family History and Temple Festival

On April 27, 2019 and February 22, 2020 the stake sponsored a bi-stake Family History and Temple Festivals at the West Hills building. The Chairpersons, Richard and Carlin Wilson, spent many hours planning the event and recruited over a dozen family history or temple specialists to provide classes on family history and temples. The Festival included instructors from both stakes and was attended by members of both stakes as well as non-member friends. The 2019 festival opened in with a guest speaker, Lloyd Smith, the previous Nashville Temple president, speaking on temple work and the 2020 festival was blessed by having Doug and Debra Lienen, the Area Temple and Family History Consultants, who instructed local Youth and Adult FH Consultants. They taught "Spiritual Blessing of Family History and Temple Work." Attendees at the festivals then chose to attend different classes related to Familysearch, searching census, military, and other historical records, blessings of temple work, journal keeping, and the Family History Library. Attendees filled out survey forms on the festival which gave a lot of positive feedback on the class instructors. Many of the instructors had decades of experience in Family History and offered in-depth classes. While the attendance was not as great as hoped for, the presentations were excellent and those who attended felt the spirit and were happy they were there.

Emergency Preparedness Fairs

The Knoxville Tennessee Stake began having Preparedness Fairs in September, 2010. President Ben Morgenegg asked each of the Ward Emergency Preparedness Specialists (lead by Tristi Ebbert, Stake Emergency Preparedness Specialist) to have some type of Emergency Preparedness activity in the month of September, which is National Preparedness month.

Cindy Peterson, the Farragut Ward specialist, planned a preparedness fair at the ward level. It was held in the Stake Center at Grigsby Chapel Road. Members of the ward provided informational booths. Organizations from the community, such as American Red Cross, Knoxville-Knox County Emergency Management Agency, and VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) also presented information at the fair.

In 2011 the Knoxville TN Stake planned to have another Preparedness Fair, but this time the fair would include the entire stake. At the time, Tristi Ebbert was serving as the East TN VOAD Vice Chair. East TN

VOAD includes American Red Cross, KEMA, TEMA (the local and state emergency management agencies), and disaster relief teams from the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches. She reached out to the other members of VOAD and invited them to participate in the preparedness fair with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They agreed and were excited to be a part of the fair. Sometime early in the planning process Tristi Ebbert met Jennifer Hughes, a Stake Public Affairs Specialist from the Cumberland Knoxville Stake. The two decided to Co-Chair the event and “PrepFair” was born. They worked closely under the direction of the two Stake Presidents and with each of the ward emergency preparedness specialists. The fair was held Saturday, September 24, 10am-4pm at the Bearden High School. There were many booths, classes, demonstrations, emergency response vehicles, and vendors. Estimated attendance was over 1500.

In 2012 the fair became the “East Tennessee VOAD Preparedness Fair” (PrepFair), with members of VOAD taking on larger committee roles. The fair was held on Saturday, September 22, 2012, 9am-2pm at Cokesbury United Methodist Church, North Campus. This year included new water safety classes for children, as well as active shooter classes for adults. There were also many booths and demonstrations presented by members of both stakes and agencies and businesses in the greater Knoxville area. Vendors were also on site to sell various preparedness items. Jennifer Hughes and Tristi Ebbert again served as Co-Chairs for the event.

The 2013 VOAD PrepFair was also held at Cokesbury United Methodist Church, North Campus on Saturday, September 21, 9am-2pm. Booths, classes, demonstrations, etc were largely the same as the previous year. Mary Beth Birge (American Red Cross) and Cynthia Meek (Knoxville Stake Emergency Preparedness Specialist) were the Co-Chairs for this fair.

2014 was an off year for the Preparedness Fair. The committee members wanted to make PrepFair larger and needed time for fundraising and planning.

2015 and 2016 PrepFairs were chaired by Katrina Tyler (Knox County Health Department). The 2015 fair was held on Saturday, September 26, 9am-2pm at the World’s Fair Park in downtown Knoxville. The 2016 fair was held on Saturday, August 27, 9am-2pm at the World’s Fair Park in downtown Knoxville.

In each preparedness fair, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints played a vital role. We provided a majority of the volunteers needed for set up, take down, presentation of booths, classes, and demonstrations. Many of the fairs also had a service component, with Eagle Scout projects being done to compile “comfort/hygiene” kits for American Red Cross to give to victims of disaster. Young women from both stakes worked closely with American Red Cross to teach their “Scrubby Bear” and water safety classes. Several Boy Scout troops associated with our Church also volunteered at the fairs.

Attendance at the 2011-2016 Preparedness Fairs was estimated at 1200-2000 each year.

The Preparedness Fairs were invaluable in establishing a network of cooperation within disaster response related agencies in the greater Knoxville area. Relationships with members of other churches were also formed. Leaders involved in these fairs felt they were “divinely orchestrated” and felt blessed to be a part of them.

Effect of COVID on Church Activities

Church activities were significantly affected by the COVID pandemic which affected the whole world and our stake. In March of 2020, there was a national call for everyone to make sure they were washing their hands thoroughly, to stop shaking hands, maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet, and to have two weeks' supply of food and other necessities. Shortly thereafter, we were directed by the government to not have any gatherings larger than 10 people which resulted in church meetings being cancelled and local schools being closed. On March 12, we received a letter from the First Presidency telling us that all church meetings worldwide would be canceled effective the next Sunday and would continue to be cancelled until further notice - not only church meetings on Sunday but all church gatherings. In addition, some temples were shut down and by March 25 all temples were indefinitely closed.

Sundays were very different as a result not having church meetings. Providently, the Church had initiated a home-centered, church-supported program over a year earlier so we were already somewhat prepared to do more things at home. Church members just continued to spend at least an hour going over the "*Come Follow Me*" lessons and then read or watched church videos of the Book of Mormon scriptures that tied in with the lesson.

April and October General Conferences were quite different in 2020 and 2021 in that no one attended in the Conference Center but everyone watched it on television or over the Internet. The 2020 meetings were broadcast from one of the smaller rooms in the Conference Center with only the meeting participants in the room and with the choir numbers from previously recorded conference sessions.

In mid-May of 2020, wards in our stake started participating in virtual worship services using Zoom. In some wards, the member of the Bishopric and the speakers were all at their own homes and in other units the speakers and the Bishopric were in a room at the church building and the rest of the members watched via the Internet. On May 19, we received an announcement from the First Presidency that worship services in church buildings could be scheduled based on local conditions and with approval of the Area Presidencies. However, the maximum in attendance could only be 100 and only if local governments allowed that many and many other precautions had to be taken before, during and after the meetings. Wards in our stake ended up not meeting in person until mid-July so in the meantime we continued with Zoom meetings. The biggest issue in starting to hold Sacrament Meetings was how to address the health risks associated with passing the Sacrament.

We enjoyed participating in the ward worship service via Zoom. It was great to at least have some contact with our church family during the months we couldn't meet personally due to the virus. In early June some wards also started holding virtual Elders Quorum and Relief Society meetings every other week. Members still looked forward to being able to meet together in person, but these virtual meetings, along with our in-home study of "*Come Follow Me*", improved Sabbath worship.

In early July, wards started holding their first in-person Sacrament Meeting since early March. Only one ward was allowed in the building on a given Sunday. Some wards scheduled two meetings since we were only allowed to have a maximum of 99 in the building at one time, with time in between to clean the building. Those over age 65 were encouraged to stay home due to the higher risk for older people.

Many precautions were taken to minimize the risk of anyone contracting the virus at the meeting. People were only allowed to be in the chapel and the restrooms plus the hallway to the restrooms. Members were only allowed in the building shortly before the meeting and left the building immediately after the meeting. Every other row was left empty and families were seated apart from other families, and the Sacrament was carefully prepared and passed with the broken bread placed in cups just like the water. Everyone except small children were asked to wear masks. There was usually only one speaker and hymns were played but no one sang out loud.

Finally in early November of 2020, wards in our stake held their first semi-normal Sacrament meeting when entire wards could meet together. The doors to the gym were opened so we could use the entire gym for seating and still be socially distanced and we all still wore masks and didn't sing. However, someone played the songs on the piano or organ while the congregation just listened. Except for during the Sacrament, the meeting was still broadcast on Zoom for those who didn't feel comfortable attending in person due to a new spike in COVID cases. Everyone was still being very careful to avoid being exposed to the virus.

Our Stake Conference was held on November 22 and we knew there would be a change in the Stake Presidency. Because of COVID, only the Area Seventy, Elder Gault, was actually at the Stake Center for the Saturday interviews of potential Stake Presidents and for the Sunday Conference session, with Elder Kearon, the General Authority, participating remotely and with most people watching the Conference via the internet.

Due to the surge in COVID cases in Tennessee, most wards didn't have any live church meetings in early January but were able to enjoy their worship services via Zoom. Live Sacrament meetings were started again later in January but many members didn't start attending live meetings until after getting their COVID vaccine shots sometime after February of 2021. As the year progressed and more people got vaccinated, some of the safety precautions were relaxed based on ward preferences. However, in August of 2021, there was an increase in COVID cases and some of the precautions were reinstated and continued to the end of the year.

Community Outreach Events

Over the years, the Knoxville Stake has been involved in many service and other outreach events. Some were activities in response to major disasters while others were small community support activities.

Major service events in the past include sending hundreds of volunteers to help with:

- cleanup after Hurricane Katrina in the New Orleans area in August 2005,
- cleanup after the flooding in Nashville area in May 2010, and
- cleanup after the tornado in the Cleveland Tennessee area in April 2011.

More recently, cleanup support was provided by stake members for the Sevierville fires in 2016 and the Knoxville flooding in 2019.

Sevierville Fire Support. The "Chimney Tops 2" fire was first reported Nov. 23, 2016 in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, according to the National Park Service. High winds ahead of a storm front whipped up wildfires burning in the Twins Creek and Chimney Tops areas of the Great Smoky Mountains

National Park Monday Nov. 28, sending massive walls of flames spreading down the mountains into Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge with shocking speed. Wind gusts topped 60 mph.

Officials confirmed that 14 people had died and 191 people were injured in the heartbreaking Sevier County wildfires. Two thousand four hundred and sixty (2,460) structures had been damaged or destroyed. 1,123 residential structures were destroyed in Sevier County, 981 in Gatlinburg, and 17 in Pigeon Forge. At a press conference on Tuesday, Mayor Waters told media outlets that the fires caused more than an estimated \$500 million in damages.

Members of the Knoxville Tennessee Stake began supporting relief efforts by first gathering to prepare over 750 Comfort Kits composed of sanitary items donated by local members and businesses. The Comfort Kits included items such as soap, tooth paste and tooth brushes, hair brushes, combs and other hygiene related needs. These items were delivered to the Sevier County Volunteer Relief Center along with 200 cases of water – provided by the local O’Charlie’s restaurant.

As a consequence of the fire, 15 member-families in the Sevierville and Gatlinburg area were displaced from their homes and 3 families had extensive damage to property (including vehicles, equipment, out buildings and other structures), although no primary residences were significantly damaged.

Members from throughout the stake pulled together to support these members and other local residents as well as emergency response teams. The Relief Society sisters from the Maryville, Farragut and Hardin Valley Wards each pitched in to provide lunch and dinner to the firefighters and clean-up crews who were engaged in fire relief efforts.

In support of the members who were impacted by this extreme fire, over 600 man-hours were spent in in late December clearing out debris and cutting down damaged trees on the affected property. The stake rented a wood splitter and a wood chipper to handle the many fallen and/or damaged trees and the resultant wood was provided to the affected families for firewood.

Knoxville Area Flood Cleanup. In February of 2019, heavy rains hit the Knoxville and Cumberland Stake area for days which lead to wide range flooding in the Knoxville area. The floodwaters caused an estimated \$43.5 million in damage, most of which was damage done to business and residential properties. The National Weather Service in Morristown reported the Knoxville area received 12.55 inches of rain in February, unofficially making it the wettest February on record. The entrance to the freeway at Campbell Station Road was completely flooded and many roads were flooded and not passable which resulted in many Sunday worship services being cancelled.

Knoxville Stake Leadership worked with the Church disaster relief to get equipment sent in and the Church planned a major cleanup day when hundreds of members from our stake and the Cumberland Stake and 100 members from the Cookeville Stake went to help those who were affected by the flooding. Support continued for weeks as members from both stakes worked with the Red Cross and in the community to help clean out homes and provide other needed support.

Other recent outreach events documented by the Stake Public Affairs committee are summarized below. Similar activities have been ongoing for many years.

Donations.

- In November 2016, the West Hills Ward Relief Society made quilts for refugees.
- In December of 2016, the Farragut Ward assembled 109 stockings with socks, chap stick, lotions, cards, candy and donated them to a nursing home in Florida.
- In March 2017, several wards participated in donations for Melissa Hearn's Nurse Humanitarian Medical Trip to Belize. Donated items included medicines, creams, female products, personal care items such as shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, etc.
- In February 2018, Knoxville 1st Ward members volunteered on a National Sew Day when quilt tops were sewed and made into three quilts which were presented to veterans who had been touched by war.
- In December 2018, Farragut Ward members assembled 52 food kits for the Love Kitchen. Each kit contained 3 cans of vegetables, 2 cans of fruit, 2-3 cans of soup, 3 Ramen noodle packs.
- In September 2019, the Knoxville and Cumberland Stakes partnered with Knox Area Rescue Ministries (KARM) and hosted a "Coats and Cans" donation drive. There were over 200 adult and children's coats, over 500 canned foods, and \$251 collected which went toward the purchase of children's coats.
- In December of 2019, the Farragut Relief Society sponsored a project to prepare and donate lunches to the local KARM charity. 300 lunches were prepared and canned food and fresh bakery items were donated.
- In December of 2019, the West Hills Ward, Knoxville 1st Ward, Farragut Ward, and YSA Branch tied approximately over 100 flannel blankets for which were distributed to refugees or homeless children.

Service.

- In early November of 2016, Knoxville 1st Ward members worked with Habitat for Humanity to build two houses for low income families.
- The Farragut Ward partnered with Knox Area Rescue Ministries to make and distribute 300 sack lunches to the homeless community. In December the Farragut Ward partnered with Lenoir City First Church of the Nazarene. 60 cookie treat boxes were assembled to give to truck drivers at the local truck stop on Watt Road.
- Members of the YSA Branch had a Christmas stocking drive for the Bridge Refugee organization and visited four local nursing homes and assisted living facilities before Christmas for a caroling activities.
- In March of 2017 the YSA Branch hosted a Coordinating Council YSA activity. YSA from five stakes gathered to plant trees for the Town of Farragut's storm water program. The tree-planting project was the final phase of a three-phase project developed by the town to restore and reclaim land adjacent to a large stream in the area.
- In June of 2018, the West Hills Relief Society did a vase drive and collected vases for *Random Acts of Flowers*, a charity that takes used, but in good condition flowers and vases, and repurposes them into floral arrangements to help improve the emotional health and well-being

of individuals in health care facilities. Also in June, the Knoxville Stake Young Women sewed quilt patches with the *Quilts of Valor* organization while at a Girl's camp service project.

- In October 2018, the Hardin Valley, Pellissippi, and Farragut Wards invited Project Linus to their church building and made blankets together. The Project Linus organization makes homemade blankets and donates them to those in need in our community. The Harden Valley Ward continued this service as an ongoing project for the sisters to participate in monthly.
- In December 2018, the Pellissippi Ward started the "Light the World" initiative with a Ward Christmas Project. The ward partnered with the Knoxville Dream Center to prepare teacher supply kits for those working in Knox County Title One schools. Typically, these teachers have very little parental support and spend significant amounts of their own money to supply their rooms with the needed supplies to get through the year.
- In December of 2018, joint family members of the Farragut, Pellissippi, and West Hills Wards blessed residents at Lenoir City Assisted Living facility with their very own poinsettia on Christmas Eve. Way to Light the World!
- In December 2018, Knoxville and Knoxville Cumberland Stakes single adults met at the West Hills building to make and sign Christmas cards for veterans. Over 170 cards were donated and signed. There were also homemade cards made and signed as well. More cards were donated and signed by the West Hills young women. The cards went to the Disabled American Veterans in time for their Christmas Party in Fountain City, and to other area veterans.
- In May of 2019, President and Sister Clapp of the West Hills Ward taught CPR and First Aid to 22 summer camp counselors at Carsen Newman University.
- In November of 2019 the young men and young women of the Hardin Valley Ward held a food drive for Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee.

Just Serve.

- Monthly during 2019, Public Affairs council met at the West Hills Chapel for a Just Serve Telethon from 9am-12pm. Everyone got on their phones and called local organizations to talk to them about Just Serve opportunities.
- In July 2019, the Harden Valley, Pellissippi, and West Hills Wards hosted a Just Serve Family History, Home Storage, and Missionary booth at the Karns Community Fair.
- In September of 2019 members of the Maryville Ward hosted a Just Serve booth at Alcoa's Community Day event. The event had about 30 other booths and hundreds of visitors. They visited the nonprofit booths and offered the Just Serve posting opportunity and were met with positive responses.
- In the fall of 2019, Knoxville Stake Public Affairs acquired two billboards on Chapman Highway for Just Serve advertisements.

Year-end Stake History Summaries

We were able to recover the following Stake History summaries from year-end reports submitted by the Stake Presidents to Church Headquarters. Below are selections from those histories.

2018. We started the new 2018 year with an NASE Area Stake Conference (via video broadcast) presided over by Elder Bednar, where we received instruction and council. The rest of the month of January we applied the principles learned from conference and combined them with our stake goals in preparation for Ward and Branch Conferences in February.

February opened with our annual Little Philmont, where our area council worked with the Church to provide scout training to our local area scout troops. This continues to be the single largest training day for the Greater Smoky Mountain Council. With the completion of our relation with BSA, 2019 will be our last Little Philmont.

February 11th-25th were the Knoxville Stake ward and branch conferences. We are still conducting them as suggested by Elder Soares in an area training meeting. We split the Stake Presidency, the High Council and the other stake leaders into three teams and conduct three conferences per weekend. This year's theme is "Be a Disciple of Christ". Throughout each conference these three areas were taught: "Share the Gospel", "Keep the Sabbath Day", and "Attend the Temple." By doing these simple things, we would be getting closer to being a Disciple of Christ.

In the 2018 year, we had eight missionaries go out on missions and we had three new bishops called David Harrison (Knoxville 1st), Jason Bohne (Pellissippi), and Delton Gerloff (Maryville). We also had changes to our Stake Young Women's presidency as well as members of the Stake High Council. I think our one area of disappointment was the overall effort in missionary work. The Loudon Branch excelled and carried the stake while the other units were just average when it came to the effort. This will be one of our points of improvements for the 2019 year.

2019. As a stake, our goals were to Keep the Sabbath Day Holy, Attend the Temple and Take Family Names, and Share the Gospel. I feel we made great improvement in keeping the Sabbath; I had opportunities to speak to members who shared they had changed the way they looked at Sundays. Ministering visits and home-centered church became a priority for families. The temple is an area we made the biggest improvement. In 2017 we had 7% of members submitting temple ordinances. As we reach the end of 2019, we currently have 12% of members submitting temple ordinances. I am pleased with that effort and look for continued improvement in 2020. The area we have struggled the most in is missionary work. This has been a very heavy load this year. I know we have good people who are trying and extending invitations to come learn about the Savior. As of December 22, we had 32 convert baptisms. I know we can do better in this area and this will be one of our main focus for 2020.

In December of 2018 Stake Conference was presided over by Kyle S. McKay. The Monday after that conference I received a letter from Church Headquarters informing me we would have Stake Conference again in 8 weeks. This would replace our usual April conference. Presiding at this conference was Elder Garrett Gong, Elder Vern Stanfill, and Elder Vincent. This was a great experience. They first held a meeting for Young Single Adults for several stakes. This was followed by a missionary meeting and a Sunday Stake Conference presided over by Elder Stanfill. Elder Gong was great in the meetings we had with him. He was kind and loving and you could feel the love he has for the youth and YSA's. It was a wonderful conference overall.

I am humbled with the opportunity of working with the Bishops and Presidents of this stake. They are a good group of priesthood leaders that worry about the youth and adults they have a stewardship with. I have had many heartfelt talks with them about individuals that they are praying how to help. They love the Lord and the members and want nothing more than to see them succeed.

For the past few months, the Bishops and Stake Leaders have been preparing for the changes to the youth program. During our Stake Conference in November, we held our leadership meeting and focused on this. To date, I believe the changes to leaders both in the wards and stake have been completed and things are moving forward for an exciting 2020 with our youth.

The stake has been focusing on fully implementing the Just Serve Program in the Knoxville area. The Stake PA council is getting up and running with specialists in this area.

November Stake Conference went well. We focused on the Family and Sunday Home Centered Church. Changes to youth programs; Home centered worship; Ministering; Priesthood keys; Joy of serving a mission; Home centered temple worship; Personal conversion; Faith: David and Goliath; Come Follow Me: a blessing to the my family; Applying the teachings of the temple in our lives; God of Miracles; Standing where you are; Reverence of the Sabbath; and Testimonies. I was pleased with attendance of 1178.

2020. As we entered 2020, we as a Presidency, felt it would be our last year as this was our 9th year of serving. Our goals continued to be getting the members of the Knoxville Stake to the temple both as patrons and as workers, to see our efforts in missionary work increase from the previous year and the overall spirituality of the stake increase. To get these messages out early in the year, we chose to hold our Ward and Branch Conferences in January and February. We were able to complete all ten unit conferences.

As we looked at how busy the summers have been, we decided to hold Youth Conference in February. Looking back this turned out to be a huge blessing for our youth. Youth conference was centered around the temple. We made arrangements to visit the Nashville Temple, on Friday, February 14th and Saturday the 15th. The Temple Presidency was such a great help, we took two busloads of youth, just over 100, to do baptism and confirmations. During the weeks leading up to the conference, each youth worked on family files so they would have the number of family names requested. While groups were in the temple, the other groups were in classes in the stake center next door with a seminary/institute type setting. We concluded with a testimony meeting and had a special testimony at the end. At the temple that Saturday was singer David Archuleta and the temple president (President Crawford) asked Brother Archuleta if he would bear his testimony. The youth really enjoyed that. This was one of the best youth conferences we have ever participated in.

As we completed the month of February with things going well and moving full speed into March, COVID-19 raised its ugly head. We were in the process of calling a new Bishop in Hardin Valley and considering how we could create a new ward to relieve some of the overcrowding in the HV ward. About this time in early March, things came to a crashing stop. In-person church meetings came to a stop. We had been preparing for Stake Conference in April and that continued until it was officially canceled. For the first few weeks, it was hard making sure families were holding church at home and

that the Sacrament was being taken to those who did not have priesthood in the home. In mid-March terrible storms, spinning off tornados, travelled through East Tennessee. Our neighboring stake, Cookeville, was hit. The Knoxville and Knox Cumberland Stakes spent a couple of weekends in the Cookeville area helping clean up and this too was affected by COVID-19. We still had over 150 people go down to help clean up.

April brought General conference and a very uplifting weekend from our leaders. I think this was such a spiritual weekend for everyone. We knew our Father in Heaven was hearing our cries for help. Testimonies were strengthened and opportunities to serve those around us both in and out of the Church helped everyone focus on someone other than themselves. Again, storms came to East Tennessee and while our stake was spared from a direct hit, the Chattanooga Stake was not. Once again, our stake was called on, in the middle of COVID-19, to help clean up. We responded with over 200 members going to Chattanooga to help in the cleanup. I personally think the devastation was much worse in Chattanooga than Cookeville. It was a blessing to the Knoxville Stake to get out of our homes and serve others in the difficult times.

By early June, we were working on ways we could get back to some in person meetings, but this was not easy. While we were watching what the Church would allow, we also had to deal with our state rules and the local county/city rules to open safely. Our stake covers many counties, Knox, Blount, Loudon, Sevier, Roane, so we also had to include their county requirements to get things open as well. On July 12, we were able to start back with limited attendance Sacrament meetings. Because some units shared buildings and because of the size of the units, some units were going every other week and the weeks they went it was multiple Sacrament meetings to accommodate the members with the limited attendance allowed. This continued until the 100 people limitation from the Church and the state eased back on attendance restrictions.

In August, we were finally able to make the change to the Hardin Valley Bishopric. Bishop Spenser Olmstead was released and Henry Taylor was called. We spent much of August and September working with the units on what they could do in person and what they could do via technology. We encouraged them to have their regular presidency meetings and council meetings via technology. This turned out to be an ongoing task of encouraging and follow up. Some units responded very well, while others struggled each day and week to help keep the members in touch with one another.

In September, I received the letter from Church Headquarters letting me know that the Stake Presidency would be reorganized in November at our Stake Conference and it would be a Sunday only virtual meeting. As a presidency, we spent the next two months trying to make sure things were in order. President Lee, President Orme and myself had opportunities to visit wards and thank the saints for their efforts to stay strong during these difficult times. It was a pleasure to work with the Bishops, Stake Council and the High Council to make sure the member's needs were being met.

On November 22, 2020 a new presidency was called - David Sexton, President; Scott Cruze, 1st counselor; and Dave Pickett, 2nd counselor. I know all three of these brothers well; they served as Bishops for me during my 9 years as Stake President and are all men of God. This stake will be in great hands for the next 9 years.

As I reflected on my time as Stake President, it was a blessing. While I pray I helped others, I think I grew as a person and a leader. I promised the Lord 33 years ago, when I was baptized, I would do whatever he asked of me. This calling was a great uplifting spiritual experience and pushed me outside my comfort zone. My testimony was strengthened and it was a true privilege to get to work with some great brothers and sisters in stake leadership. It was a blessing to see the Lord's hand at work as he helped people to repent and move forward in their life.

Stake Conferences

Knoxville Stake Conferences are held twice each year when the stake members are able to hear from their leaders and from General and Area Authorities. President Clapp maintained the following list of the General Authorities and other leaders who visited our stake during his nine years of service from November 2011 to November 2020. The names would change, but the pattern would be similar for the Stake Conference visitors we have been blessed to have over the years. **Details of some of these Stake Conferences are included in the year-end histories described above and later in Stake President Remembrances.**

- Paul E. Koelliker and Robert C. Gay - Stake Conference in November 2011 who called new Stake Presidency
- Anthony Burns - Stake Conference in April 2012
- Robert W. Hymas in September 2012 for a RS, YW, Primary Leadership Conference with the following sisters: Linda Reeves, Elaine S. Dalton, Cheryl A Esplin
- Dallin H. Oaks - Special Stake Conference in January 2013
- L. Tom Perry, W. Craig Zwick, Ronald Rasband, and Erich W. Kopischke - Special leadership meeting & conference in January 2014
- Stephen Thompson - Stake Conference in November 2014
- D. Todd Christofferson and Ulisses Soares - Special fireside and leadership meetings in February 2015
- W. Craig Zwick - Stake Conference in December 2015
- Brent H. Nelson - Stake Conference in December 2016
- Michael V. Beheshti and Michael A. Gillenwater in January 2017 for a special Women's Conference with the following sisters: Linda Reeves – RS, Neill F. Marriott – YW, Bonnie H. Cordon - Primary
- Michael V. Beheshti - Stake Conference in December 2017
- Kyle S McKay - Stake Conference in December 2018
- Garrett W. Gong, Vern P. Stanfill, and Terence M Vinson - Special Stake Conference/Missionary and YSA Meetings in February 2019
- Elder Patrick Kearon of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder M Andrew Gault, an Area Seventy – Stake Conference in November 2020 who called new Stake Presidency

All of the meetings with the General and Area Authorities who came to our stake were excellent. The Stake Conference meetings were looked forward to and well attended with the meetings broadcast to chapels throughout the stake as well as members attending in the stake center. Sister Sharlene Barber

recorded the following special memories in her journal related to two of the visits by General Authorities listed above.

In January of 2013: "Our regular Stake Conference wasn't until May of 2013, but Elder Oaks was going to be in the Nashville area for Priesthood training, so he said, "Which stake hasn't had a member of the 12 come out for their Stake Conference in the longest time," and we were that stake, so he said we could hold this special Stake Conference. Our chapel was full with chairs lining the center rows, plus the gym and several rooms were full, and it was also broadcast to four other church buildings! The last time we had a member of the 12 come was in 1998, so I guess we did deserve this treat. Since it wasn't a regular Stake Conference, Elder Oaks arrived at the stake center at 9 a.m. and he spent the next hour going through the chapel and cultural hall and side rooms shaking hands with every single person! We watched him go up and down the rows, and saw him shake hands with our grandchildren."

"In February of 2015, all of eastern Tennessee experienced a major ice/snow storm that made driving very dangerous. But Tuesday night there was a four-stake adult fireside scheduled with Elder and Sister Christofferson. We were sure it would be cancelled because of the icy roads, but it wasn't. To our surprise, the Stake Center was filled for the fireside in spite of the bad roads."

Summary of Ward and Branch Changes and Stake Leadership

There was always great excitement whenever changes in leadership occurred or when ward boundaries were changed and new units were created. A summary of ward and branch changes and of stake leadership are listed below.

Ward and Branch Changes since 1996

November 1997 - Sevierville Ward formed with William Nichols as Bishop

November 1998 - South Knoxville Branch formed drawing members from the West Hills and Maryville wards with Dan Gainer as Branch President

July 2008 - YSA Bi-Stake Branch formed with Darrell Talley of the Knoxville Cumberland Stake as Branch President

April 2009 - Knoxville 1st Ward formed from the South Knoxville Branch and part of the West Hills ward with John Smith as Bishop

April 2008 - Pigeon Forge Spanish-Speaking Branch formed from Spanish speaking members of the Sevierville Ward with Willman Henriquez as Branch President

June 2009 – Knoxville 3rd Spanish-Speaking Bi-Stake Branch formed with Eldon Cruze of the Knoxville Cumberland Stake as Branch President

March 2011 – Crossville Ward transferred to the McMinnville Stake

February 2012 - Pigeon Forge Spanish-Speaking Branch discontinued and recombined with Sevierville Ward

August 2013 – Knoxville 3rd Spanish-Speaking Bi-Stake Branch discontinued

January 2014 - Hardin Valley Ward formed drawing members from the Pellissippi and Farragut wards with Judd Rambo as Bishop

July 2015 - Rockwood Ward formed with J. Steve Parrott as Bishop

May 2021 - Bearden Ward formed drawing members from the West Hills Ward and Pellissippi Ward with Brent Dial as Bishop

May 2021 - Knoxville 1st Ward discontinued and combined with the West Hills Ward

May 2021 - Loudon Ward formed with Eric Stewart as Bishop

Knoxville Stake Presidents and Counselors

1972-1980 – Eugene H. Perkins. Counselors R. Lloyd Smith, Dennis Duran, Bent Miller

1980-1989 - R. Lloyd Smith. Counselors Gene Muggridge, Bruce Morgenegg, Russell Barber

1989-1998 – Russell Barber. Counselors William Jones, Darrell Talley, Leon Ebbert, Stuart Clark

1998-2006 – Max Lehman. Counselors Gene Boxx, William Nichols, and Ben Morgenegg

2006-2011 – Benjamin Morgenegg. Counselors Richard Barnes and Glade Nelson

2011-2020 – Thomas Clapp. Counselors David Lee and Brad Orme

2020- – David Sexton. Counselors Scott Cruze and David Pickett

Remembrances of the Stake Presidents

Remembrances of Knoxville Stake Presidents concerning events that occurred during their time of service since the stake was divided in 1996 are included below. It is interesting to note that three out of our last four Stake Presidents were converts to the Church when they were in their twenties, President Lehman joined the Church at age 29, President Clapp at age 24, and President Sexton at age 22.

Russell Barber - 1996 to 1998 (his last two years of service)

After the Knoxville Cumberland Stake was split off from the Knoxville Stake on November 16, 1996, President Russell Barber continued to serve as the Knoxville Stake President for another two years, with Leon Ebbert and Stuart Clark as his counselors. President Ebbert's responsibilities included oversight of Melchizedek Priesthood activities and President Clark had oversight of the youth programs. Both counselors were very capable and very supportive. They served together until the Stake Presidency was reorganized by Elder Robert D Hales in November 1998. President Barber summarized significant events occurring during those last two years of his nine years of service below.

In His Own Words

March of 1997 was filled with great anticipation for the Regional Conference when President Hinckley would be with us. Our stake was responsible for physical facilities, security, the Saturday evening meal, and other miscellaneous tasks. We invited several local dignitaries to attend the Sunday session including Mayor Ashe and members of the City Council. We first held a working luncheon on Saturday with the four Stake Presidents, the three General Authorities (President Gordon B Hinckley, Elder Joseph B Wirthlin, and Elder F. David Stanley), the Mission and Temple Presidents, and Lloyd Smith, the Area Authority and our former Stake President. In that meeting President Hinckley expressed concern over

retention of new converts and stressed the sacredness of wearing the temple garments. He also talked of his great concern over divorce and abuse among our members and of our members overextending themselves with high mortgage payments. During this time my wife Sharlene took Sister Hinckley and the other sisters to visit the Oak Ridge Science Museum and then served them a nice lunch at the mission home. We then attended an inspiring Leadership Meeting and received wonderful instruction from all three General Authorities followed by a great dinner served by the Relief Society. It was a never to be forgotten meal to sit across from the Prophet of the Lord and converse with him. The Sunday general session was held at the Knoxville Civic Coliseum and was very well attended with over 6500 members from all four stakes and many visitors. We were again treated to inspired talks from our Prophet and his wife and the other General Authorities.

We were saddened when Gary Purcell, our beloved Stake Patriarch, died on May 6, 1997. He was a very special man. He had been in poor health for some time, but still had enough strength to give beautiful blessings. However he was too sick to proofread and finalize the blessings so he was quite behind in getting them sent to the recipients. I had the privilege of helping him finalize about 40 blessings when I met with him for several days in the months before he died. This was a very special spiritual experience that I have always treasured. I remember two things about his funeral. First that he had a wheat sheath instead of flowers on his casket which somehow seemed appropriate. The other was a speaker at his funeral, Bruce Morgenegg, saying how Gary made everyone feel like they were his best friend which was so true. Hyrum Plaas was selected to replace Gary and I received approval to ordain him as the new Stake Patriarch in August of 1997.

Two great stake events occurred during July of 1997. The first was the youth conference held in Nauvoo. This was a huge bi-stake event held after many months of planning for the youth in both the Knoxville and the new Knoxville Cumberland Stake. It involved transporting over 200 youth and their leaders in five buses in addition to five vans. The buses drove all night and then the youth toured around restored Nauvoo and had a dance the first day and the next day visited the Nauvoo temple site and the Carthage Jail and had a very special testimony on the banks of the Mississippi River before driving back home that night. We all felt a very special spirit during the visit to the jail where Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered and during the testimony meeting. These were definitely life changing experiences for some of the youth.

The Nauvoo Youth Conference set the stage for our Sesquicentennial Celebration held at the Knoxville World's Fair site on July 26. This was another event that took much planning by many people and we were overwhelmed with how successful the day was. We had about 400 people dressed in pioneer garb participate in a parade with a real covered wagon and about 10 handcarts. People then enjoyed visiting booths set up and manned by ward members from both stakes, with pioneer food, games, and displays during the rest of the day and a great concert that evening with over 800 in attendance.

In April of 1997 I called William "Chip" Lyon to replace David Taylor as the Bishop of the Maryville Ward and in July of 1997 I called Roger Hyder to replace Harold Grieshop as the Crossville Bishop. Bishop Grieshop's health was not good and he and Sister Grieshop had expressed a desire to serve a mission

while he was still able. Shortly after his release, he and his wife, Carol, were called on a Family History Mission to Salt Lake City.

On November 11, 1997, I extended a call to Lynn Whipple to replace Gene Boxx as the Farragut Ward Bishop, which then took place on November 23. The month was capped off by making Sevierville a Ward on November 30 and ordaining Bill Nichols as their first Bishop. It was a special day for the Saints in Sevierville to achieve this milestone.

For our Stake Conference in May 1998, we were directed to use an expanded Stake Council meeting format for the Saturday Evening adult session. I didn't particularly like the new format because, in the past, the Saturday evening session always had such a special spirit, but we followed the direction and it turned out better than I had expected.

In July of 1998, we had our Stake Wilderness Youth Conference at Big South Fork. There were lots of physical activities including repelling and a zip line but the highlight of the conference was the solo experience followed by a testimony meeting. President Clark did a superior job with his pre-solo presentation and really set the stage for the youth to have a great experience. Each youth went someplace where they could be alone to pray and draw closer to the Spirit and then we gathered to hold a closing testimony meeting. I don't remember any of our youth testimony meetings being any better. I was grateful to be a part of the conference.

As a part of our ward conferences during 1998, we planned monthly temple trips with the two units who were having ward conference that month. We had encouraged each bishop to become qualified as a Restricted Temple Worker in the Atlanta temple so they could officiate the sessions for their ward and many accepted the challenge. Many members of the Stake Presidency and High Council and their wives also qualified as Restricted Temple Workers and were able to officiate during ward or stake temple trips. Our final stake temple trip was held in the Atlanta Temple in November where we arranged for our stake to do baptisms for the dead at 2:30 pm on Friday November 13, followed by initiatory and endowment sessions at 5:00, 5:30, 6:00, and 6:30 pm. This was followed by five sessions on Saturday with all sessions officiated by members of our stake including my wife Sharlene and I officiating one of the Saturday sessions. Everything went great. We had about 65 members in the temple on Friday and about 100 on Saturday with all the temple work being done using family file cards from members of our stake. We were thrilled with the participation of our stake members.

In February of 1998, I called Scott Butler to be the Branch President of the Rockwood Branch, replacing Web Gudmundson who had served faithfully since 1990. The branch had not seen much growth during that time as many families had come and gone due to work demands at TVA and Oak Ridge, but there were still some faithful families carrying on.

Then in the fall of 1998, we considered forming four wards out of three but the numbers just weren't there. Instead we decided to take a part of the West Hills Ward and a few families from the Maryville Ward and form the South Knoxville Branch. Even though we knew the change wouldn't happen until after the November Stake Conference, I felt a strong confirmation that it was the right thing to do and

we submitted the recommendation to Salt Lake to form the branch and to also submit the name for a new West Hills Ward Bishop. On Monday, November 16, I received a letter from the First Presidency authorizing me to form the branch and call Dan Gainer as the South Knoxville Branch President and Ben Morgenegg as the new West Hills Bishop, replacing Max Lehman, which I did later that week.

On Friday, November 20, I picked up Elder Robert D. Hales and Elder Paulo Amorin at the airport who had come to reorganize the Stake Presidency. We had known for several months that the change would take place. It had been exactly nine years since I was called as Stake President. That evening Elder Hales interviewed the current Stake Presidency, the Stake Clerk, and the Executive Secretary. He and Elder Amorin came back to our home to spend the night and then on Saturday morning he interviewed all the Bishops and High Councilors plus a couple of others who I recommended should be considered. In addition to other questions, each person was asked to recommend three people that they felt should be considered to be the new Stake President. After the interviews were completed, Elders Hales and Amorin counseled and prayed together and then pondered for some time about who should be called. Then Elder Hales asked me to call Max Lehman and his wife to come to the Stake Center to be interviewed and called to be the new Stake President. Brother Lehman recommended Gene Boxx and Bill Nichols to be his counselors and they were both called before the 4:00 leadership meeting.

After the Saturday night conference session, Elder Hales came to our home to spend the night with us. He spent a couple of hours telling our family stories about his experiences as a General Authority. What a privilege it was to have him and other General Authorities in our home. During the early years of my calling, Sharlene and I were very nervous about hosting one of the Brethren, but then we looked forward to the opportunity to have them in our home.

In the Sunday conference session when Elder Hales released the Stake Presidency and sustained the new Stake Presidency, I felt an overwhelming emotion. I had not expected to tear up when hearing my name being released, but I did. After a choir number, I gave a few remarks, basically thanking everyone and expressing thanks for all the support I had been given – in particular from my wonderful wife, Sharlene, and my counselors. Looking back, I was also grateful that I was able to serve for all 9 years. Several times my job in Oak Ridge looked very questionable and I thought we would have to move. But job opportunities in Oak Ridge somehow worked out and I was able to continue serving. What a special opportunity it had been to serve as the Knoxville Stake President.

Russell B. Barber

Max Lehman - 1998 to 2006

President Max Lehman was called to replace President Barber as the Knoxville Stake President at the November 1998 Stake Conference. He chose Gene Boxx and William Nichols as his counselors and later Ben Morgenegg replaced William Nichols. He was released in April of 2006. President Lehman had served previously as Bishop of the West Hills Ward, having been released just the week before Stake Conference. President Lehman was also the Knoxville Institute Director and that background was very evident as he spoke and served as our Stake President. He summarized significant memories and events that occurred during his years of service below.

In His Own Words

During the interview process for the calling of a new Stake President by Elder Robert D. Hales and a member of the Seventy, I was told that if I was invited to leave instead of remaining in the High Council Room that I was not being considered as Stake President. I was asked to leave, so I went home, changed into some work clothes, and started working in the yard. I was prompted several times to look at my answering machine but ignored the promptings until finally I responded to the promptings and listened to the messages. There were two from President Barber instructing me to return to the stake center with my wife. I then received the call to be the Stake President of the Knoxville Tennessee Stake. During the stake conference Elder Hales focused on fatherhood and family relations. Elder Hales counseled me to focus on one or two areas of focus during my presidency. One of my greatest concerns was home teaching. I was also very concerned about the number of prospective Elders and the struggles with missionary work. I recall at some point we divided the High Council into four sub-committees. One for the Aaronic Priesthood, one for temple work, one for missionary work, and one for home teaching. Each subcommittee had three members and were assigned challenges that we as a stake needed to address.

There were spiritual experiences with every visit made to the various wards and branches. Generally, we, as a presidency, split up and visited a different ward or branch each Sunday. I looked forward to being with the saints during the Sacrament meeting, observing the teaching in a Sunday School class and being in the priesthood meeting or Relief Society meeting. Often, we did temple recommend interviews after the meetings and I stayed to meet with the Bishop or Branch President to see how he was doing and help in any way that I could. I enjoyed the monthly bishop's interview and training. It was very special to the Bishop to have time alone to discuss what he wanted to discuss. Meeting with the High Council twice a month was for me a very special time especially when, after some changes were made, the High Council functioned as one. When one councilor spoke, the others listened. There was a great respect for each other and for each other's opinion regarding various matters.

The calling of a new Bishop or Branch President was humbling and quite spiritual. Revelation seemed to flow when considering who should be the new leader. There was never any doubt in the process. I recall the calling of Travis Parker as the Branch President of the South Knoxville Branch. When I presented his name to the High Council there was a concern about his age. I reminded them of the age of President Hinckley and the discussion ended. Many times I drove by the West Hills and South Knoxville building and saw President Parker's vehicle in the parking lot. He loved the saints and his goal was for the branch to become a ward.

One of the other special moments was a visit to Jim Hensley. At the time of my visit to him he was not attending church. I recall asking him whether or not he would accept a calling if it were extended to him. He said, "If you extend the call, I will accept it." Not too long after our meeting he was called to serve on the High Council. He served faithfully even when his health was failing. He sensed at one time that I was considering releasing him because of his health. He came to me and asked that he not be released. He loved the calling and he performed so well. I did not extend the release.

It was very special for me to set apart both Maria (my daughter) and David (my son) to serve missions in Spain and Argentina respectively. It was also very special to release them from their missions.

I remember the visits by Elder Jolly and Elder Tingey during stake conference. Elder Jolly's wife stayed with Jan (my wife) while meetings were being held. Sister Tingey wanted to watch a UT football game. Jan enjoyed the time they had together. Elder Tingey challenged my daughter, Maria, to serve a mission. Maria said she would never serve a mission. She served a mission to Spain.

The most memorable youth conference was a wilderness youth conference in Jamestown. We did a night hike of about three miles in some fairly dense woods. We crossed water on several occasions and were guided by reflective tacks embedded in trees along the trail. The youth built rafts to cross a small lake simulating Lehi's crossing to the promised land. We simulated the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The youth were driven from their camps simulating the expulsion of the saints in Missouri. At the end of the conference every testimony focused on the things of the spirit and most of them mentioned Joseph Smith. It was the most spiritual youth conference I have ever attended. The credit goes to President Barber, Gene Boxx, and their committees. They spent hundreds of hours preparing it and, in my opinion, it was a perfect conference.

I think the successes were individual and not collective. It was exciting to see those who were inactive accept the call to serve and for those who were normally in the background to step forward and lengthen their stride in building the kingdom.

One of the greatest challenges was how to motivate a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to magnify his calling as a home teacher. I met with them individually and spoke with them about covenants they had made and how those covenants related to home teaching. Unfortunately, it did not seem to make a difference.

During the years I was privileged to serve in the Knoxville Tennessee Stake I looked forward to being with the saints. I loved the teaching moments. I enjoyed the interviews, the training meetings, and watching the Lord perform miracles in the lives of those who were covenant-making and covenant-keeping saints.

Max Lehman

Ben Morgenegg - 2006 to 2011

Ben Morgenegg was called to replace President Lehman as the Knoxville Stake President in April of 2006. Elder Bruce D. Porter of the 70 and Elder John C Taggart an Area Authority presided at the conference and extended the call. President Morgenegg selected Rick Barnes and Glade Nelson as his counselors. He shared his special memories about the time he served as the Knoxville Stake President below.

In His Own Words

I served as Stake President for 5.5 years. I served from April 2006 to November 2011. Elder Bruce D Porter presided and set me apart assisted by Elder John Taggart, Area Authority. Rick Barnes and Glade Nelson were my counselors. Scott Cravens was Stake Clerk and Andy Hobbs was Executive Secretary. I

very much loved and appreciated serving with these brethren. President Godfrey, President Griffin and President Irion served as Mission Presidents while I served as Stake President. Elder Cornish was an Area Authority Seventy. Sister Terry Nieporte served as Stake Relief Society president. Chris Lunsford served as Stake YM President. Lisa Isom was called as Stake YW President in August 2006.

When President Lehman shared privately with us as a Stake Presidency around January 2006 that he would be transferred to Colorado in the Church CES program, I had a sinking feeling about succeeding him as Stake President. I was 1st Counselor at the time. He had hinted to me when I was first called as his counselor three years prior that he felt I had further leadership assignments ahead of me in the stake. I did have some feelings as the time came closer for the stake to be reorganized that I would possibly serve as the next Stake President. I felt very humbled. When the call actually came, it felt somewhat surreal. I couldn't believe it was actually happening, but I knew the call was coming from the Lord and that it was His will. I recall in my first couple of years in service my feelings of inadequacy. I think that partly came because I felt so young and inexperienced. I was 38 years old when I was called as Stake President. I was called only three years prior into the Stake Presidency and had never served in a stake calling before. I saw around me in the stake so many other men older, wiser and more experienced and capable than me. I never doubted the Lord had called me. I think I just doubted myself and felt my lack of confidence. I recall sharing my feeling with one of the first visiting General Authorities I hosted (Glen L. Pace of the Seventy) in November 2008. He shared that he had experienced similar feelings when he was called as a young Stake President. He said that as he thought and prayed about it, he felt impressed to change the question in his mind. Instead of asking, 'what does everyone in the stake think of me?' he started asking, 'how do I and the Savior feel about everyone in this stake.' That helped me gradually change my perspective. I learned to look outside of myself and focus on my love for others and my desire to serve the Lord the best I knew how. I felt the hand of the Lord guide me many times as I served and I look back and cherish those memories. I loved my association and felt a true brotherhood with my presidency and with the men of the High Council.

Some of the changes during our tenure included organizing the Young Single Adult Branch in conjunction with the Knoxville Cumberland Stake, the creation of the Knoxville First Ward out of the South Knox Branch and the creation of the Spanish branch (Pigeon Forge Branch) out of the Sevierville Ward. The Pigeon Forge Branch was later dissolved in the wake of the Recession that began in 2008 when so many of the Hispanic members moved away from the area and the local cabin construction industry went dormant. I could not tell you all the dates unfortunately. The West Hills Ward boundaries were realigned to include taking a small portion from the Pellissippi Ward.

I remember sitting on the stand during a Sacrament meeting in the small South Knox Branch and thinking how challenging it was for those members to staff a branch and for so many of those good saints to be holding multiple callings when, on the other hand, so many members in larger wards next door did not have a calling at all. I thought a solution could be to adjust unit boundaries to better distribute the burdens and responsibilities--along with the opportunities--to other members of the stake. Several weeks went by and I found myself on the stand again in a South Knox Branch Sacrament meeting. I recalled the thoughts I had had previously about a boundary change. The words then came to me clearly, 'I meant what I had said earlier about a boundary change'. It occurred to me that the Lord

had been speaking to me and I didn't even realize it. I saw them as my passing thoughts. We went to work immediately on all that was involved in adjusting boundaries involving three units to create the Knoxville 1st Ward out of the South Knox Branch and part of the West Hills Ward. As mentioned, we carved part of the Pellissippi Ward out to add to what was taken from the West Hills Ward.

We began what became a several year tradition of a Stake Christmas music presentation. It was a delight to see so much talent assemble from around the stake to perform. Barney Cornaby was in charge, so he would likely have more details as to the year it began, but I really enjoyed that. We held it the second Sunday in December, the week following the First Presidency Christmas devotional and called it the Knoxville Stake Presidency Christmas devotional.

Our very own Russ and Sharlene Barber, former Knoxville Stake President and his wife, came to me at one point with mission papers and a great desire to serve a full-time mission for the Church following his retirement. During this time I knew we needed another Stake Patriarch due to Hyrum Plaas' failing health. As I thought about it and counseled about it, I felt that we needed Brother Barber and his wife to remain in Knoxville for him to serve as our next Stake Patriarch. Instead of submitting mission papers for the Barbers, unbeknownst to them, I submitted an application to the office of the Quorum of the Twelve for Brother Barber to be a Patriarch. When the letter of approval finally arrived, I called the Barbers into my office. They had been asking me in the weeks prior how their mission papers were coming along. When I shared with them that I received a call for them in the mail, but not the call they were expecting, they were confused. I then extended a call to Brother Barber to be Stake Patriarch and for Sister Barber to assist. I know they were probably shocked and hardly knew what to think. That was a difficult task for me because I knew how much they looked forward to that mission and how Brother Barber promised his wife they would one day serve a mission together. They were gracious and obedient and served wonderfully well as Patriarch. They were later called to be temple president and matron of the Nashville Temple as well as Brother Barber being called as a sealer in the Nashville temple. We have been blessed in our stake to have two Nashville Temple presidents and matrons serve—Lloyd and Judy Smith and Russell and Sharlene Barber. Lloyd and Judy Smith also served as Mission President in Minnesota following Brother Smith's service as an Area Authority Seventy.

One of the most challenging and poignant times of my service was to spend the day at the side of Rolston and Amanda Deputy of the Maryville Ward on Tuesday, February 6, 2007 while we watched local firefighters extinguish the flames of their burning home in which only one of their five children survived. I still have a copy of a letter from the First Presidency addressed to the Deputy's expressing their deep sympathies for the loss of their four children (Mandolin (Mandy), Mason, Sinjin and J.T.) in that devastating house fire. Words cannot express the pall that hung over me for days. I did what I could to try to comfort and minister to them at that time and in the days and weeks following. Bishop Anderson of the Maryville Ward did an outstanding job of handling public relations, the press and comforting the Deputy's. The community came together and built a new house for the Deputy's, among many other kind acts of service.

On December 6, 2007 Judd Rambo and myself were guests on the Hallerin Hilton Hill radio show and ended up taking calls and discussing many of our church beliefs on the air for two hours. What an

experience! I was nervous, but Brother Rambo and I felt very blessed. This was all part of the national attention the Church was receiving due to Mitt Romney running for president. I was later contacted for a newspaper article interview.

We were released as a presidency on November 20, 2011 by Elder Paul Koelliker and Elder Robert Gay. I was released by inspiration, but probably out of expediency as well. I made a prayerfully considered, and what I felt as a divinely guided, career change from my prior thirteen years in sales and management with Aflac insurance company to go back to graduate school and pursue a new career in Physician Assistant studies. I had been Pre-med at BYU years earlier, so this was like coming back home for me. I began PA School at South College in Knoxville in July 2010, was released as Stake President in November 2011 and graduated from PA School in December 2013. I began employment with Knoxville Orthopedic Clinic in March 2014. I felt my life guided by the Lord through my three years as a counselor to President Max Lehman, my five and a half years as Stake President and on into my career change to the present. I feel so very grateful for His love and mercy. I have a firm testimony of the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days and how we are absolutely guided by modern day revelation through His chosen leaders on both the local and general levels.

Ben Morgenegg

Tom Clapp - 2011 to 2020

Tom Clapp was called to replace President Morgenegg as the Knoxville Stake President in November of 2011. Paul E. Koelliker and Robert C. Gay of the Seventy presided at the conference and extended the calls. President Clapp then selected David Lee and Brad Orem to be his counselors. President Clapp shared his special memories about his time serving as the Knoxville Stake President below.

In His Own Words

When I was called, it was a very overwhelming experience. Elder Koelliker and Elder Gay were very kind and loving as we went through the process. In a very personal note, Elder Koelliker told Debbie and I when they prayed about who the Lord was wanting called, he felt he knew who it was and wrote a name on a piece of paper and put it in his pocket. Then he and Elder Gay walked the stake center grounds and prayed again, he said he asked Elder Gay if he knew who was to be called, Elder Gay told Elder Koelliker he knew who it was not and though he knew who it was but asked to pray about it one more time. Elder Gay told Elder Koelliker he thought it was Brother Clapp. Elder Koelliker said he then reached in his pocket and pulled out the piece of paper with my name (Brother Clapp) on it. To hear Elder Koelliker relay this to Debbie and I left us both in tears. This was such a humbling experience. After accepting the call, I was asked to pray about who were to be counselors. I had about thirty minutes before I needed to give them the names. I did not know David Lee or Brad Orme very well but as I knelt in prayer their names kept coming to me so those are the Brethren I summited, and they served very faithfully the complete nine years.

After the completion of the conference and the setting apart, I remember Elder Koelliker telling me “You have my number, call me if you have any questions. But the first question I will ask you is, what does the

Handbook say.” I knew then I was on my own and I better be on my knees and know the handbook. In our first meeting, Brother Andy Hobbs was a great help. He had been the previous Presidency Exc. Secretary and was able to point us in a direction to start. Our first assignment was to call a new Bishop in the Farragut Ward to replace President Dave Lee, we all felt the Lord inspired us to call Kent Vaughn.

There were so many special and spiritual experiences during the complete nine years as well as some very difficult experiences where our hearts went out to those who struggled in life and with aspects of the gospel.

Our first conference with a GA was with Anthony Burns from Miami, he was very kind and very helpful to us as presidency in guiding us in the procedural aspect of our calling.

One of the biggest highlights from a personal note was when Elder Oaks came. When his secretary called me, I was at lunch with my brother and first thought someone was playing a joke on me. She wasn't. The next thing I knew she asked if I was President Clapp I said yes, and she asked if I could hold for Elder Oaks. The next thing, I knew he was on the phone and letting me know he would be coming to the Knoxville Stake for a special conference and asked if I would mind if he stayed with Debbie and I, I said sure, then had to call Debbie and let her know were going to have company. She thought I was kidding her. The visit was a very special experience, one that Debbie and I cherish.

Another special experience was when Elder Perry, Rasband, Zwick and Kopischke spoke in a special leadership meeting and conference in 2014. Why I say it was special was Elder Perry spoke about revelation and being in the Quorum of the 12 when the discussion was held, and the prayers sent up to our Father in Heaven for every worthy male should hold the priesthood. What a special and very uplifting experience.

I enjoyed the time with the youth, I always enjoyed seeing their faces and talking with them from Girl's camp to youth conference and Scout/Priesthood camps. When I had opportunities to speak with them, I tried to find ways to relate with a story from my youth or an experience where I made a mistake when I was their age then pull it back to the Savior and the gospel and how anything is possible with the Savior on your side. I had some very good visits with many youths and listening to their struggles and giving council to them. It was always icing on the cake to hear back from them that things were getting better and going well.

Some of the most spiritual experiences came during membership councils and I will leave that there. The other place was the calling, setting apart and release of missionaries. So many young men and women served and returned a changed man or woman. While they did the Lord's work it changed them too. I always felt the call they received to a particular mission was because the Lord had someone special for them to teach, he knew they would impact those lives as they were taught. Thirty-four years after my baptism, I stay connected with my missionary, and I am so grateful he served here, and the Lord sent him to teach me.

One of the most heartbreaking and greatest blessing was when one of our missionaries had to return home, this missionary worked so hard to get things right and after several months was able to return to the mission field and faithfully complete the mission they started. This was such an inspiring experience for those of us involved, it still brings tears to my eyes when I think of this missionary and all the hard work, they did just to reenter the mission field. Their Mission President called me just before they came home to tell me how much of an impact this missionary had in the mission field and the other missionaries, this dear missionary had gone back out and did everything they could to fulfill the call they had been asked to do.

A special experience was working with the Sevierville Bishopric and church facilities to get an addition to their building to accommodate their increasing attendance. During the addition work, they met in a theater across from the Titanic Museum. At noon after church ended the horn would blow at the museum.

I enjoyed working with the Bishops and Branch Presidents. These good men and their families give up so much of their personal time to serve the Lord and the congregations they serve. I had two of them pass away and these were especially hard. I was with both families as these dear brothers passed through the veil. President Scott Butler and Bishop Pat Sheets, both leaders did so much for those they served, they were true inspirations.

Many of these Bishops and Branch Presidents had family and personal medical issues and kept on serving. The brothers I speak of are, Scott Cruze, Dave Pickett, Todd Gilday, Johnny Smith, Norm McKellar, David Harrison, Darrell Talley, Mike Isom, Vince Bayles, Doug Cole, Pat Sheets, Jeremy Belnap, Richard Udy, Eric Olsen, Delton Gerloff, Heinrich Shifferer, Matt Pulver, Louis Terry, Eric Stewart, Scott Butler, Charles Watkins, Steven Parrott, Jerry Mioduski, Kent Vaughn, David Sexton, Peter Kah, Bradden Cannon, Jason Bohne, Judd Rambo, Spencer Olmstead, and Henry Taylor.

The Relief Society Presidents I had the blessing to work with were amazing women. Sisters Lynn Skovran, Lisa Isom and Desi Quayle, these women are spiritual giants, and the Knoxville Stake was blessed to have them work with and teach the RS of the stake. They were all so kind and loving to those they served with. I always tried to make sure the sisters were a priority, and their voices were heard. They bring such a spiritual insight to the meetings they attended and counseled with us in.

I also had the pleasure of working with Deanna Ivey and Joni Olsen as Stake Primary Presidents. I believe that the children of the Church are the future of the Church. I always felt confident that these sisters would see to it the children would have a solid spiritual foundation.

As our Presidency's time started to come to an end, we encountered several natural disasters that taxed our stake. We first have the fires of Sevierville followed by the floods in the Knoxville area. This was followed up by tornadoes in Crossville and Chattanooga. The last was COVID-19 which covered the last nine months of our Presidency. These events were all in the last three years of our Presidency, and the members of the stake responded each time they were called upon.

I will always consider it a true blessing to serve the Lord and the members of the Knoxville Stake from 2011-2020 as Stake President.

With Love and Respect,
Thomas E. Clapp, Jr.

David Sexton - 2020 -

Dwight David Sexton II was called as the Knoxville Stake President on November 22, 2020, at the Stake Conference by Elder Patrick Kearon of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder M Andrew Gault, an Area Seventy. Because of COVID, the Elder Kearon participated in the interviews and conference remotely and only the Sunday session of conference was held with most people watching the conference via the internet.

President Sexton's thoughts about his calling and significant events that have occurred during the first year of his service are summarized below.

In His Own Words

On November 22, 2020 the Knoxville, Tennessee Stake Presidency was reorganized. The day before, Elder Patrick Kearon of the Seventy, along with Elder Andrew Galt conducted interviews with many stake leaders. The interviews were generally conducted in alphabetical order so that meant I was second to the last to be interviewed. I got to the interview 10 minutes early. They were a little bit behind with two people in front of me (Rambo and Puckett) so I told President Clapp and Brother Isom I had a few things to do in my office (Farragut Bishop office) and walked over to it and shut the door. I made a quick call to a member that only took a few minutes. I pondered for a minute about all the time spent, lessons taught, interviews conducted, looked at all my notes on the whiteboard, the interview outlines in my desk, etc.... thinking to myself, "what if my time as Bishop is coming to a premature conclusion?" It was an emotional feeling.

While pondering this, President Clapp knocked on the door. He said they were ready for me. I walked in the HC room expecting to feel a bit nervous but there was a very calm feeling that came over me as I felt peace and comfort from the Holy Ghost. I was greeted warmly and sat down. Elder Kearan, the President of the Quorum of the 70, was on a large TV screen and Elder Galt, the Area Authority from Atlanta, sat on the other side of the table. Elder Galt asked the questions and occasionally Elder Kearan would jump in for a moment. I knew the interviews were only scheduled for 7 minutes each so I planned to be very quick with my answers. We had a wonderful discussion that was closed by the bearing of my testimony. As I stood up to leave, I realized that about 20 minutes had gone by and I hoped that I had not delayed them too much. I walked out and Eric Stewart walked in for his meeting. I visited with President Clapp and Brother Isom for 5 minutes or so and then Eric came out of his interview. We all four talked for maybe 3-4 minutes and then we heard the door to the High Council room open. Eric and I took that as our cue to leave and we walked out to the parking lot as President Clapp went in to visit with Elder Kearon and Galt. Shortly after reaching my car, my cell phone rang. I saw it was President

Clapp and I wondered if I had left my car keys in the HC room (I am prone to forgetfulness at times). Pres Clapp asked where I was. I laughed and said just getting into my car. He said that's great, how about if you run home and pick up Lisa and return to the Stake Center. I knew what this meant so I called Lisa and we discussed what was about to happen as I drove to pick her up. They met with Lisa first and then invited me to join them. The call to become the next President of the Knoxville TN Stake was extended and I accepted. It was a humbling experience to say the least.

I knew who my Counselors were to be in an instant, which was good because I was only given 3 or 4 minutes to identify them. Both Elder Kearon and Galt commented that President Cruze and Pickett were great men and they sustained their selection to fill out the presidency.

Stake Conference was eventful as there were technical difficulties with the zoom meeting and the start was delayed about 45 minutes. Eventually, these issues were resolved and the new Stake Presidency was sustained. We enjoyed training from Elder Kearon and Galt after the meetings and over the next several weeks we worked to call two new High Council Members, Paul Becker and Chris Yeager. I also had the unique privilege to release myself as Bishop of the Farragut Ward and call Matt Pulver, previously the 1st counselor in the Bishopric, as the new Bishop.

We spent the remainder of 2020 working to organize our plans for 2021 with establishing a vision for what we feel the Lord wants us to focus on for the new year and the training that will be necessary to help our leaders and members accomplish the goals that we have felt inspired to set for our stake.

One of the very first things we did when we met as a presidency, was to figure out what should be our vision for the stake. We all had the feeling that we wanted to invite people to come closer to Christ and brainstormed about how we could go about that. I remember thinking back to messages from church leaders about the importance of "Hearing Him" and I really liked that clear connection to Christ. It's simple but it could also have very broad application. There are lots of different ways we can improve our ability to hear Him and feel the Holy Ghost. As we were talking of things that are related to Christ, we decided to get back together in about a week to discuss it further. I came up with the thought of Remember Him, See Him, Share Him. I felt like all of these areas were important – the temple: See Him, missionary work: Share Him, and then Remember Him: the Sacrament. When we met again, we also recognized that many were out of contact with the Sacrament because of COVID and having the Sacrament was a challenge for a lot of people. Many people were either having the Sacrament at home, depending on other people to bring it to them, or not receiving it at all. We discussed how we all needed to remember and stay close to Him through that sacred ordinance. Whether that's at home or back at church, we wanted Church members to make it a really meaningful experience wherever they were. I am a beneficiary of member missionary work as a convert and I loved the idea of all of us striving to Share Jesus (Share Him) with others and the Temple being a place we can truly See Jesus as everything about the temple points to Him also seemed important.

The only thing we were a little nervous about was that our proposed vision was three focuses and not one. But we thought the things are so simple and so basic that we felt like it was okay. For example, Seeing Him at the temple can be very broad and there were a lot of things we could stress. But we thought that a lot of people's temple recommends had expired with COVID and temples not being as accessible. So with the first step of Seeing Him, let's focus on encouraging members to get a

recommend. Then we will take the next step after that. That should be really simple for a lot of people and, for others, it will give them something to work for that isn't quite as simple. We decided that our messages and our talks and in conference would be geared toward encouraging members to be at church to receive the Sacrament, to have current temple recommends, and to make an effort to share Christ with others – just share who you are and what you believe with other people.

As people started getting temple recommends again, I really became aware for the first time as to how few stake members we had serving in the temple. I realized that historically in the stake we had somewhere in the twenties or low 30 members of the stake serving in the temple. I just started thinking about what a blessing it would be if more members were able to serve in the temple. It would not only bless them, but it would bring the wonderful spirit of the temple back to the wards. I thought that would make a big difference in our wards and branches. In praying and thinking about it, I had the feeling to not only encourage recommends but to invite members to actually work at the temple. Certainly the thought of the temple in Knoxville was something that we as the presidency had been thinking and dreaming of and hoping for, although we didn't know for sure, we felt that it would be critical to have a good number of ordinance workers within a close radius of a potential "Knoxville Temple" to support the work. We thought serving in the temple would be great for the wards and branches and for the members and it would help us to be prepared for temple coming here. And if we prepared for it, maybe the Lord would bless us with it.

Having not been in the stake but in a ward calling for a while, I had really been out of tune with what was happening in other units. Thankfully both Scott and David had both been in stake callings so they had a better idea what was going on. Just looking at the numbers, we realized that Loudon was very close to meeting the requirements to become a ward. So we sat down with President Stewart and talked about it and said we think if we make this something that you focus on and talk about in the branch and encourage families to come or come back to Church, we're almost there and you can become a ward. He thought it was great and something the members would really to be excited about. For maybe only six months or so we just openly talked about the possibility and the members were excited about it. We needed 300 total members to qualify to be a ward and they were at 280 or so and I wanted to see at least 100 people attending Sacrament meeting regularly. Over the course of about six months, there were baptisms, several families who moved in, and a few families became more consistent with their church attendance and the branch grew and the branch met those targets and exceeded them. The branch was up to about 304 in attendance and Sacrament meeting was about 110 or 112 - they were doing awesome. So we submitted the paperwork and got the approval. That was a really neat experience to be able to reorganize the Loudon Branch into the Loudon Ward.

Forming the new Bearden Ward just kind of happened. Knox 1st Ward had challenging geographic boundaries. It was really large and the area had never taken off in terms of housing and people moving into the area during the 20 years or so since the ward was created. Other areas had a significant population increase but Knox 1st just really didn't and so it just never grew. It ended up in a situation where they had very few youth and very few active families overall. It was a lot of the same families taking turns in terms of leadership and it was just exhausting for a lot of those leaders and members. We just didn't see, as a presidency, anything that was going to cause that to change in the near future.

In looking at the overall situation, we realized that the West Hills Ward was really large and a little bigger even than what would be ideal for a ward. Pellissippi was in a similar situation and each of those units could lose some people and still be very strong and healthy and give its members more opportunities to serve as both of those units were struggling to find callings for everyone. So we prayed and thought about it and looked at about 20 different scenarios. Some involved Pellissippi and some didn't. We also thought about potential growth in the Farragut/Harden Valley/Pellissippi Wards in the future that might afford the creation of another unit. We wanted to make sure that whatever we did didn't negatively impact the future opportunity to have a fourth unit out of those three. Our main focus was on the youth and trying to make sure that we had a reasonable number of youth in each unit. That was a real struggle because, as we looked at the scenarios, youth were not evenly distributed over the entire area. There were pockets where there were large numbers of youth and there were areas where there were hardly any youth. So we came up with a scenario that ended up taking all of the Knox 1st Ward and pulling it into a new West Hills Ward and taking part of the old West Hills Ward south of the interstate and a little bit the Pellissippi and making a new Bearden Ward. Although the youth were not evenly distributed between the two wards, it was a much better situation for those who had been in the Knox 1st Ward and gave them many more youth than they previously had. We felt good about the boundaries and believed that it would not be a short-term fix but a long-term fix for those two units to help make them both healthy and strong.

We did not identify the Bishops and then work the boundary. We created the boundaries and then said "Okay we feel good about this." The West Hills Bishop was clearly going to be the same even though that required a release from the Knox 1st Bishop. The timing for that was appropriate. But for the Bearden Ward, it was going to be a new Bishop. There were several great brothers that were on the list we made who were in Bishoprics at the time or had been recently and had great leadership experience. And it was funny that as we worked through it, there were different times when we thought this person or that person would really work well. We were right, but then we prayed about it and pondered it and we would realize, "no that's not who the Lord wants right now." At the time, Bishop Dial, had just been released as the Elder's Quorum President in the Pellissippi Ward. He had served for four or five years as Elders Quorum President and had done a great job but was not someone that any of us knew very well. He was on the list and we realized that there were many people on this list that we didn't know very well so we thought, "let's do some interviews". Scott, Dave and I each had a person or two that we would interview just to get to know them better and to see if we could get some feeling about them. After about five minutes with Brent Dial and his wife, I just had this strong feeling that he was who the Lord wanted as the Bishop of the Bearden Ward. I got back with Scott and Dave and we talked and we prayed about it. We received confirmation. That was a really neat experience! After he was called, many individuals came up to us and said "when you announced the new Bishop we knew he was the one". They felt a confirmation in their hearts and they felt good about it. Bishop Dial has absolutely been the right person to be the Bishop of the Bearden Ward and is doing a great job. He has two very experienced counselors in Brother Alling and Brother Grose who have been instrumental in his success as well.

Working with the missionaries as they left and came home has been a great experience. For many of those young people, I interviewed them as their Bishop when they left on their missions from the Farragut Ward, and when they came home, as their Stake President, I had the chance to release

them. It was especially great to meet with those young men who were in my Priests Quorum who I had worked very closely with. That was really awesome. With my sons, Tanner and Connor, it was especially neat—just a very powerful spiritual experience to be able to sit down with them, review their mission, and extend their release to them. It was also great to do it with both of them together. They left on the mission together leaving for the MTC at the same time and on the same plane even, they opened their calls together, were able to come home on the plane together, and they wanted to be released literally with both of them in the room together. I gave my counsel and advice and extended a release to each of them. It was just a very special family experience—something I will always remember, something that was very, very meaningful to all of us. The experience of releasing a missionary is amazing every single time. It is such a testimony builder. They go out as wonderful young people, but when they come back even better. When they leave you think they can't be any better, but they are. They come back the best version of themselves as I see how much they love the Lord, and how much they loved serving, and, as excited as they are to be home and back with family, how emotional it is to know that their mission is complete and to be able to share that with them and to hear their experiences. The last thing I always have them do before I extend their release, and usually we have their family there, is give them one last opportunity to share their testimony as a full-time missionary. That is just a really special sacred experience to be present and get to hear that. I love that. I love sending them out and I love being there when they come home.

As a new Stake Presidency, we felt strongly that we needed to get out and connect with the members because, for me, I had lots of friends and I knew many in the stake, but I hadn't been around for a while. So we thought we've got to get out and meet the people and get to know them. We each agreed to create a schedule where we would all speak in each unit at least once before Stake Conference in April. It was great to get out and visit with people and renew friendships and meet new people. We were so well received and felt a lot of love from the members. We also worked really hard with our High Council. We had all served on the High Council so we knew that it could be a really demanding calling where you felt you were being stretched and that it could also be a calling that was really pretty easy depending on circumstances, what you were being asked to do, and what the expectations were. We realized that we needed a very strong High Council and that their focus needed be on ministering and making a difference in the lives of the saints and not just going to give it a talk once a month. So we trained and laid out the expectations of what we were looking for and what it meant to be on the High Council. It was wonderful to see how quickly the High Council members rose to the challenge and took whatever they were doing, which was a whole lot of good, and do even more and get the vision of how they could make a difference any time they visited a unit, even in the wards they weren't assigned to.

A couple more things relative to the temple. As a Bishop previously, I had feelings that the dream or thought of a temple in this area was something that was not unrealistic. It could happen. In the Farragut Ward, we had talked about that vision. Why not? Why can't it happen here? What do we need to do to prepare and be ready to receive a temple if the Lord sees fit to bless us with one? We just wanted to get that mindset more positive rather than that it will never happen here. As a Stake Presidency, we were having feelings that this is really something that can happen. But even though we were feeling like it could happen here, not wanting to go overboard with it because we don't know and we are certainly not part of that decision. So one of the things we tried to do was encourage people and lay the vision out that this is something we hope happens that we can pray for and can do our part to work toward. As

we are faithful, we think eventually that blessing will come when we will receive the blessing of having a temple in our area and maybe even in our stake. So we have worked very hard with members at all levels - when we speak in Stake and Ward Conferences, at a ward level when we are interacting with members, and even on an individual level when we do temple recommends - to help members catch the vision and be working toward it, praying for it, and hoping for it as well.

In a Coordinating Council, we were talking about the temple and about the prospect of having one in our area and especially in the Knoxville area. As we did so, we recognized that we did not have as many ordinance workers as we should have. President Crawford was there and we were talking during a break about the fact that it's a long distance to the temple and that we have lots of members who would love to work in the temple but have young children or have family or work situations and that it's hard to drive three hours, stay six or seven hours at the temple and even spend the night, and then drive back. We noted that lots of young people with young families at BYU who are able to be workers even though they have young kids, because the temple is right there and they can work that out. President Crawford said, "you know, that's a good point. I bet we can be more flexible. Let me think about that". He made a call to the temple department and to whoever else he needs to talk to. They looked at the logistics of it and there was an agreement made that as long as members could come at least once a month and work at least one shift, that that would be acceptable. They would love to have two shifts but if one was the best someone could do, that would be acceptable and they could be temple workers. Once we were able to share that with members, along with some general encouragement, we saw the number of temple workers skyrocket. And as a presidency, as we were in temple recommend interviews with individuals, not every time but when the Spirit prompted us to, we would talk to the members and ask them if they had any interest in being a temple worker and invite them to do so and testify to them of the blessings it would be to them. Many times I had members say to me, "you know I thought about that before but I just didn't think it would work for me". They would express whatever concern they had and we would talk about it and at the end of the conversation they would say "I'm so excited. I feel great about this and I would love to do this. I think I could do it". Many of those members are workers in the Nashville Temple and they just couldn't be happier. They're so thrilled about getting that chance to serve in the temple. David Sexton

A Special Tribute

One other leader from the Knoxville Stake who has contributed many hours of service over the years is Brother Lloyd Smith. Since shortly after completing his medical school and military service years and moving back to his hometown of Knoxville, Brother Smith has given countless hours of service to the Church. Special thanks to him and also to his wife Judy who supported him in all of his callings and who served with him as Mission Mother in the Minnesota Minneapolis Mission and as the Temple Matron in the Nashville Temple. Below is a summary of Lloyd's many years of church leadership service.

1975 to 1977 – Bishop of the Knoxville 1st Ward

1977 to 1980 – Counselor in Knoxville Stake Presidency

1980 to 1989 – Knoxville Stake President

1991 to 1997 – Regional Representative Over the Raleigh North Carolina Region

1997 to 2003 – Area Authority Seventy for the North America Southeast Area
2005 to 2008 – Minnesota Minneapolis Mission President
2010 to 2013 – Nashville Tennessee Temple President

Stake Relief Society

The women continued to play a critical role in the stake. The Stake Presidents relied heavily on the women, in particular on the Stake Relief Society Presidents. Sister Judy Smith was serving as the Stake Relief Society President when the stake was divided and, like the sisters who preceded her and those who followed her, provided valuable insights into the needs of the Stake. Those who have served as Knoxville Stake Relief Society Presidents are listed below.

Stake Relief Society Presidents

1972 – 1975 – Margret Fuqua
1975 – 1980 – Sonya Sasser
1980 – 1983 – Dorothy Barnes
1983 – 1985 – Cheri Lyon
1985 – 1989 – Sharlene Barber
1989 – 1994 – Freda Borden
1994 – 1996 – Donna Daly
1996 - 1999 – Judy Smith
1999 - 2001 - Ruth Cox
2001 – 2006 - Glenda Owens
2006 – 2011 - Terry Nix Nieporte
2011 – 2016 - Lynn Skovran
2016 – 2020 - Lisa Isom
2020 – 2021 - Desiree Quayle
2021 - Jennifer Fasching Handy

The Stake Relief Society Presidents were very important in providing leadership to the Ward Relief Society Presidents and also in helping the Stake President be aware of and address different issues in the stake. She would meet with the Stake President each month to review her stewardship and provide feedback concerning the needs of the sisters. She and/or her counselors would meet with and train all the Ward Relief Society Presidents, both when new presidents were called, during personal visits with each president, and at leadership meetings. She would also attend all ward conferences where she would provide instruction to the sisters during the Relief Society meeting and often she would also be assigned by the Stake President to speak in the Sacrament meeting. As the Stake Relief Society Presidents and their counselors traveled around to the wards and branches, they became very close to the sisters in those units. It was a special opportunity for them to become better acquainted with all the sisters in the stake.

There have been many changes in the organization of the Stake Relief Society over the years. Before about 1986, Stake Relief Society presidencies comprised a president, two counselors, a secretary and a

full board of about eight sisters. Leadership training meetings were held at the Stake Center four times a year as well as two stake socials. This was all in addition to the regular ward conferences and ward visits. In 1986 the Relief Society boards were eliminated and, over the years, leadership training meetings were significantly reduced. However, General Auxiliary Board members now come every few years to Knoxville to provide training for the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary leaders.

The sisters are always thrilled when members of the General Auxiliary Board come to Knoxville to provide special Women's Conferences and training to the Knoxville and Knoxville Cumberland Stake sisters. The most recent visits were by Sisters Linda Reeves of the Relief Society, Elaine S. Dalton of the Young Women, and Cheryl A Esplin of the Primary who met with the sisters in September 2012 and by Sisters Linda Reeves of the Relief Society, Neill F. Marriot of the Young Women, and Bonnie H Cordon of the Primary who met with the sisters in January of 2017. These sisters provided inspiration and wise instruction to the women auxiliary leaders of our stake. They were all excellent. Even though there had been a major snow storm in the Knoxville area at the time of the January 2017 conference, the chapel was filled with sisters from the two stakes who had braved the slick roads to hear these sisters from the General Auxiliary Boards.

Stake Patriarchs

Stake Patriarchs are called and ordained to give Patriarchal blessings to worthy members of their stake or their lineal descendants. The calling of Patriarch is a lifetime calling but he may be released as the Stake Patriarch if his health or other church callings requires a change. The call to be a Patriarch is a sacred and spiritual calling but it is also a very stressful calling as the Patriarch recognizes the importance of staying in tune with the Spirit so the words of the blessings truly come from the Lord. Those men who have served as Knoxville Stake Patriarchs and when they were called is listed below.

Stake Patriarchs

June 1972 – Leo J. Brady

August 1992 – Gary Purcell

May 1997 – Hyrum Plaas

December 2006 – Russell Barber

November 2013 – Eugene Boxx

Brother Purcell served as Stake Patriarch until his death which occurred in May of 1977, just a few months after the Knoxville Cumberland Stake was split off from the Knoxville Stake. He had been quite ill for several months prior to his death, but he still continued to give wonderful blessings to stake members but struggled to have enough strength to edit and finalize the blessings. When he died, there were several blessings that had not been finalized. President Barber received permission from the Quorum of the Twelve to finalize and issue the final 10 blessings that Brother Purcell had given but had not been able to finalize and issue. This was a very special and spiritual experience for President Barber and helped prepare him for the calling he received several years later when he was called to be the Knoxville Stake Patriarch.

Hyrum Plaas was called to replace Brother Purcell and he served faithfully until his health wouldn't allow him to continue and he was released as the Stake Patriarch in December 2006 and Russell Barber was called to replace him. Brother Barber was released as Stake Patriarch in November 2013 when he was called to be the Nashville Temple President and was replaced by Gene Boxx who continues to serve very faithfully.

Due to the restrictions that occurred during the Pandemic in 2020 and 2021, only a limited number of Patriarchal blessings could be given. This resulted in a significant backlog of those desiring to receive blessings from Brother Boxx once the restrictions were lifted. As a result, President Sexton requested and received approval from the President of the Quorum of the Twelve in October 2021 to reactivate Brother Barber as a second Stake Patriarch.

During the time Brother Barber initially served as Stake Patriarch, he felt the need to improve his Spanish so he could give blessings in that language. It had been over 50 years since he had served a mission in Argentina and over the years he had lost his ability to communicate in Spanish. In 1996, he translated his missionary journal from Spanish to English and spent several months studying Spanish so he could communicate somewhat when he visited Argentina with his wife after he retired. Then when serving as a sealer in the Nashville Temple, he continued to do things to improve his capabilities in Spanish so he could perform sealings for Spanish couples in their native language. In order to help prepare to give blessings in Spanish he would translate his English blessings into Spanish so he could become familiar with the vocabulary he typically used in the blessings. He also requested that Brother Marcelo Abregu be called to teach him how to say certain phrases in Spanish such as how to say "recognize the promptings of the Holy Ghost" which would be "reconocer los sussuros del Espiritu Santo" in Spanish. He also had Brother Abregu help him edit the blessings so the blessings were more clearly worded. As a result Brother Barber was able to give six blessings to Spanish speakers in their native tongue.

Brother Barber also related the following special experience he recorded in his journal regarding a blessing he gave to a Chinese brother in December of 2012.

"A brother who is a 28 year old recent convert and is attending the singles branch while he does research at ORNL as a part of his doctoral work in Nuclear Physics. He was born in Beijing China but has lived in the United States since he was about 12 years old. When I came to the part to declare his lineage, I had an absolute clear impression that I was to declare his lineage to be from one of the tribes of Israel other than Ephraim or Manasseh. When the name came to my mind, I hesitated because that had never happened before. But the Spirit absolutely prompted me that it was the correct lineage that I should declare. Afterwards, I was a little concerned because I wasn't sure the name I had declared was in fact one of the 12 tribes – but it was."

In 2013, Brother Barber gave a blessing to another student from China shortly before he was released as the Stake Patriarch and was prompted to declare that Chinese brother's lineage to be the same as the first Chinese brother.

Even though Brother Barber had been released as the Stake Patriarch in 2013, he was still an ordained Patriarch and as such was authorized to give blessings to his grandchildren which he has had the opportunity to do several times. In 2018, he gave a Patriarchal blessing to his granddaughter, Claire, who was born to Chinese parents and had been adopted by his daughter Julie and her husband Allen Langford. Brother Barber said he had assumed Claire would have the same lineage as the two young Chinese men he had previously given blessing to. Such was not the case. When he went to define Claire's lineage, a different name of the tribes of Israel came to him that he had never received before, so he declared that lineage.

An important assistant to most Patriarchs is the person who is called to be their scribe. The scribe listens to the recording of the blessing given by the Patriarch and types a draft of the blessing. Before the advent of recorders, the scribe would write the blessing by hand as it was given. After the draft is reviewed and finalized by the Patriarch, he then sends a copy to the recipient and a copy to Church Headquarters. Sister Pam Brady Ivy served as scribe for her father Leo Brady, Sister Kathy Roberts served as scribe for Brother Purcell, and Sister Johanna Plaas and Sister Sharlene Barber served as scribes for their husbands. Brother Boxx serves as his own scribe.

In December of 2019, the process of submitting copies of the blessings to the Historical Department in Church Headquarters changed. Instead of sending paper copies of the blessings to Salt Lake, the blessings are now transmitted electronically.

Knoxville Institute of Religion

The Knoxville Stake has been blessed to have an Institute of Religion available for college students and other young single adults since 1974. It has provided an opportunity for many of our youth to continue to receive religious instruction and a place to hang out in the Institute building near the campus of the University of Tennessee.

The director of the Institute of Religion is a full-time employee in the Church Education System. Its fourth director, Max Lehman, was serving as the Institute Director in 1998 when he was called to be the Knoxville Stake President and he continued the director throughout his time as Stake President. He was replaced by Brother Judd Rambo who continues to serve in that role. A listing of those who have served as Institute Directors is given below.

Institute Directors

1974-1975 – David Trainer

1975-1977 – Glen Seabury

1977-1990 – Robert Cloward

1990-2007 – Max Lehman

2007 - Judd Rambo

Tennessee Knoxville Mission

The Tennessee Knoxville Mission was created in 1993 with Richard Sager as the first Mission President. He served until 1996 and was followed by Randy Benson who was serving when the stake was split. The mission included the boundaries of the Knoxville, Knoxville Cumberland, Chattanooga, Kingsport, and Ashville Stakes until 2016 when the new Cookeville Stake was added to the Tennessee Knoxville Mission. A listing of the Mission Presidents and their counselors since the mission was established is shown below.

Mission Presidents and Counselors

1993 – 1996 – Richard Sager. Counselors Terry Glaze, David Fagerburg, Gordon Rich
1996 – 1999 – Randy Benson. Counselors David Fagerburg, Gordon Rich, Stuart Clark
1999 – 2002 – Ernie Smith. Counselors Gary Mayfield, Stanley Trent, Darrell Talley, Stuart Clark
2002 – 2005 – Wayne Hilbig. Counselors Gary Mayfield, Stanley Trent, Darrell Talley, Stuart Clark
2005 – 2008 – Ronald Godfrey. Counselors Gary Mayfield, Russell Barber, John Griffey, Leon Ebbert
2008 – 2011 – James Griffin. Counselors John Griffey, Charles Porter
2011 – 2014 – Richard Irion. Counselors Charles Porter, Brian Brodniak
2014 – 2017 – Steven Griffin. Counselors Glade Nelson, Clint Hurley
2017 – 2020 – David Pickett. Counselors Mark Mendenhall, Kent Vaughn
2020 – Brett Graham. Counselors Kent Vaughn, Sean McMurray

The Mission Presidents and their wives are called to serve for a period of three years. It is a great honor to receive this call but it also requires significant sacrifice on the part of those called. Some are retired when they are called, but many if not most of the those called leave their employment and their grandchildren and other loved ones in order to serve for those three years. Presidents Benson, Godfrey, Steven Griffin, Pickett, and Graham brought minor children with them. The children then attended school in Knoxville and attend the Farragut Ward where the mission home is located. One of President Benson's daughters, Becca, met her future husband, Rees Smith, while her parents were serving here in Knoxville.

Each Mission President and his wife brought a unique talent to the mission. A major part of the Mission President's time is spent interviewing each missionary every six weeks and when they arrive and leave the mission, training the missionaries at Zone Conferences, prayerfully deciding on missionary assignments and transfers, visiting and speaking in Sacrament meeting in wards and branches almost every week, attending and speaking in each Stake Conference in the mission, and addressing and resolving missionary issues when they arise. He also generally tours the mission with a visiting General Authority once during his three years of service and meets twice a year with the Knoxville Coordinating Counsel to receive guidance from the Area Authority and coordinate with the Stake Presidents and Temple President in the mission district.

Counselors are called by each Mission President from experienced priesthood brethren from stakes in the mission. This is a part-time calling which may last for a short time or for several years depending on their availability and the needs of the president. The counselors mainly provide oversight and support

to specific stakes assigned by the Mission President and often speak in Sacrament meetings in those stakes, encouraging members to become more involved in missionary work. Most Mission Presidents only had two counselors, with some turnover of counselors during their calling. However, President Ernie Smith had four counselors, all of whom carried over to serve for a time with President Hilbig.

The number of missionaries assigned to the mission varied significantly over the years, with a major increase for a few years after 2012 when President Monson announced that the age for service for young men was reduced to 18 and the age for sister missionaries was reduced to 19. Another significant increase occurred in 2020 when so many missionaries were sent back to the United States from foreign missions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and temporarily assigned to state-side missions. The effects of COVID-19 on the mission is included below from the mission history for the year 2020 in the last letter by President David Pickett as he finished his mission and the first letter from President Brett Graham as he started his mission.

History of Mission 2020 (January to June) by President David J. Pickett

From the beginning, as a Mission President I felt my main responsibility was to help missionaries discover their identity. For some this was rather easy, for others it took the course of their entire mission. Guiding my thoughts was the word of the Lord found in D&C 50:24-25. “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light growth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.” As missionaries recognized and embraced the divine within them the light began to grow. I could literally observe this happening. Then it became easier for the missionaries to overcome bad habits, avoid temptation, and be obedient. The Lord continues in verse 25, “And again, verily I say unto you, and I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you.” My ministry was to work with each missionary, individually to help them understand these principles.

The individual and collective spirit evolution of missionaries brought me the greatest joy of the mission. Our mission became “brighter and brighter”. There were zone conferences where Sister Pickett and I leaned to each other and smiled! It was almost the “perfect day”! As each missionary discovered this, the entire mission rose in power and purpose. Key indicators rose to higher levels. Member support increased. More people were joining the Church and being retained. Interestingly, enough of indicators were improving substantially, there were fewer missionary related accidents, fewer in-field problems, fewer personal transgressions among missionaries, a substantially reduced need for mental and emotional counseling. Missionaries were “chasing darkness from among them”!

Then in March of 2020 the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic began to hit our mission. Governments began to require lock downs. How we found and taught was altered dramatically. A part of me wondered how our missionaries would fare in a situation of uncertainty and isolation. Yet overall, Sister Pickett and I were unusually calm, even optimistic.

We felt like our missionaries were prepared! Our mission goal of 450 baptisms remained the same. Our mission plan to reach that goal stayed the same. That plan included five components; 1) Find for a minimum of 20 hours each week, 2) Live the daily schedule, 3) Make 5 member contacts each week, 4)

Have a personal goal to baptize in each area, and 5) Become, Know, Feel, Do missionaries. The first four components of the mission were pretty straight forward and measurable, but to become a Know, Feel, Do missionary was a process and challenging. Like Enos, a missionary would yearn to know who they really are and to understand their relationship to God. With this knowledge they would develop a feeling of responsibility and duty to God and their brothers and sisters. This would lead them to act (Do) and be faithful in their responsibilities.

During this time change occurred daily. You could see revelation in action. Our witness of living prophets and apostles was certain! We were also impressed with the leadership of our Area Presidency and the missionary department. A spirit of optimism emanated from them. I could also feel the power of the priesthood keys in my own ministry. The Spirit and direction of the Lord is not subtle in the mission field! As I look back on our mission experience my heart is filled with great gratitude. Gratitude to the Lord for his love, direction, and support. Love to my priesthood leaders for their strength, goodness, and worthiness to serve. Gratitude to the members in our mission for their support and love of the work and the missionaries. Gratitude to our little band of senior missionaries whose capacity and goodness rose to incredible heights and they were so essential to the work. Gratitude for our little band of missionaries who really became what the Father wanted them to become! And gratitude for Sister Pickett who was a real hero and role model to all our missionaries. This work is true! This work is divine! This work is His! This I know! I testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ – Amen!

History of Mission 2020 (July to December) by President W. Brett Graham

We arrived in the Tennessee Knoxville Mission on Monday June 29, 2020. We were immediately amazed by the incredible beauty of the area – the green trees, rolling hills, and sparkling water around every corner. We soon discovered however, that the missionaries and saints were the very best part of this beautiful place.

Upon our arrival one third of the approximately 190 missionaries were assigned from other countries around the world. Most of the reassigned missionaries had been in the mission just a few weeks at this point. The missionaries originally assigned to the Tennessee Knoxville Mission were doing a wonderful job of welcoming the new missionaries and building a new mission culture to include everyone.

We have been continually impressed with the resilience of the missionaries. Without exception, each missionary is serving a mission that looks much different than what they anticipated. Obviously, many are serving in a completely different country than they expected. But even those who were originally assigned to the TKM are serving in a very different way than they expected. Street contacting and door knocking has been eliminated altogether. Facebook and digital finding is the new way to contact people. Fortunately, the missionaries here are remarkable and have used the wonderful skills of hard work and dedication learned from the Picketts and their other Mission Presidents around the world and applied that to the new way of finding. We are in awe of their adaptability, especially under such difficult and tenuous circumstances.

President Graham called two wonderful men as counselors in the Tennessee Knoxville Mission. Kent Vaughn (Farragut Ward, Knoxville Stake) serves as First Counselor and Sean McMurray (Abington Ward,

Kingsport Stake) serves as the Second Counselor. Both men are remarkable individuals with a wealth of experience in the gospel. Their wives are equally capable and wonderful. President Graham has felt blessed and lifted by their counsel, help, and wisdom.

We quickly felt impressed to assign more missionaries as Social Media Specialists. With a companionship of Elders and a companionship of sisters dedicating a portion of their time to training, developing, and helping missionaries with social media, we witnessed miracles. Missionaries developed quality content and found ways to advertise and spread the good news of the gospel. The missionaries were incredibly adept at finding new ways to find over Facebook and area book and teach over Zoom and in person (socially distanced, of course).

With the drastic increase in the number of missionaries, we created three new zones, for a total of nine zones: Kingsport, Cumberland, Lakeway, Knoxville, Rocky Top, Cookeville, Hiwassee, and Chattanooga. Many missionaries were asked to serve in positions that really stretched them because of their relative “newness” in the mission. The missionaries greeted the transition and growth opportunities with faith and dedication.

We felt impressed to adjust the Standards of Excellence for the mission. The Missionary Department encouraged us to help missionaries set realistic, achievable goals. In coordination with the Mission Leadership Council we set a new mission vision: Every companionship baptizes ever month. We also set new standards of excellence as: 3 people found, 2 people at church, 1 person on date for baptism per week.

COVID-19 rates in Tennessee and the surrounding states increased significantly in the Fall and Winter months. The missionaries persevered through it all. Up until the week of Christmas 2020, we only had one positive Covid-19 test in the mission. Many had been quarantined due to exposure, but only one missionary had tested positive. The week of Christmas, we had ten missionaries test positive. The outbreak was contained to three apartments fortunately. We feel that the missionaries were extremely blessed with regards to health throughout the darkest days of the pandemic. They were very compliant with mask orders and social distancing guidelines and Heavenly Father blessed us greatly.

Miraculously, the work of the Lord continued undaunted. In all key indicators, the Tennessee Knoxville Mission increased in numbers from 2019 to 2020. We attribute this to the wonderful legacy and all the incredible missionaries here in the Tennessee Knoxville Mission. They are faithful, obedient, and strive constantly to be better disciples of Jesus Christ. It has been a great privilege to serve here among them.

President and Sister Graham

Nashville Temple

The Knoxville Stake has been in the Nashville Temple district since the Nashville Temple was dedicated in May of 2000. Before the Washington DC Temple was built in 1974, saints who lived in the Knoxville area had to travel to one of the temples in the west to receive their temple ordinances. The Washington DC temple was the only temple west of the Mississippi River for many years, and the Knoxville Stake

members would charter buses and make the trip to the temple once or twice a year. They would leave Knoxville Thursday evening and ride all night to Washington DC. They would then attend temple sessions all day on Friday, then stay in hotels Friday night, and then get up early Saturday morning to do additional sessions in the temple Saturday morning before riding on the bus back to Knoxville Saturday night, arriving home in time to attend their Sunday meetings.

We were all thrilled when the Atlanta Temple was dedicated in 1993 and became our assigned temple until the Nashville Temple was dedicated. We rejoiced that the Atlanta Temple was only about a three hour drive instead of a 9 to 10 hour drive we made when attending the Washington DC temple. This made it possible for a significant increase in the amount of temple work the Knoxville saints could perform since we could now drive to the temple, perform ordinances, and return home the same day. A few even served as Ordinance Workers or Restricted Ordinance Workers in the Atlanta Temple. This helped prepare our members to later serve in the Nashville Temple.

While the Knoxville Stake is in the Nashville Temple district, many members also attend the Atlanta Temple which is about the same distant from Knoxville as Nashville. One of the reasons is that there is also a distribution center in Atlanta which is especially important for those going to the temple for the first time. However, most members attend the Nashville Temple. It is a significant sacrifice for many to make the approximate three hour drive each way to attend the temple but many go regularly. However, we prayed that at some time in the near future we would qualify to have a temple here in Knoxville.

The Nashville Temple was one of the smaller temples announced by President Gordon B Hinckley. It took about the same time to drive to the Nashville as it was to drive to the Atlanta Temple, but we were thrilled because it was our Tennessee temple and many members from Knoxville were called to serve in the temple as President and Matron as well as Sealers and Ordinance Workers.

The Presidents and Matrons who have served in the Nashville Temple are listed below. The calling of Matron is a separate calling and has not always been the wife of the temple president. This was made very clear by the member of the First Presidency when the callings were extended to each Matron.

	<u>President</u>	<u>Matron</u>
2000 to 2004	Buryl G. McClurg	Diane McClurg
2004 to 2007	Billy J. Eaves	Marianne Eaves
2007 to 2010	Richard K. Sager	Lois Sager
2010 to 2013	R. Lloyd Smith	Judy Smith
2013 to 2016	Russell B. Barber	Sharlene Barber
2016 to 2019	Thomas Allen	Kris Allen
2019 to 2022	Cordell Crawford	Miriam Crawford

The length of time the president and matron of the Nashville Temple would serve was not specific when President and Sister McClurg were called as the first President and Matron of the temple, but the service time has since been set to be three years. The calling to be a sealer in the temple is a life-time calling,

but a sealer may be put on inactive status if his health or other circumstances make it necessary to be released as an active sealer in a given temple.

All of Nashville Temple Presidents lived within the Nashville temple district when called to serve except Richard Sager. However, Brother Sager had previously served as the Tennessee Knoxville Mission President and knew the saints in the Knoxville area very well. Some people were surprised that someone from outside the area was called and Brother Sager often said he was also surprised and had no idea why he was called, but he and Sister Sager did a great work and grew to be loved by all. And as a result of his personal friendships with the Knoxville saints, he was very influential in encouraging many more members from the Knoxville area to serve as Ordinance Workers in the Nashville Temple. This was no small sacrifice for those who accepted the call because of the 3 to 4 hour drive to and from the temple and the requirement that Ordinance Workers work at least two shifts each month which resulted in most workers staying overnight.

The calling of the Temple Presidents, Matrons, and Sealers must be approved by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and by the First Presidency. The calling and setting apart of the Temple President and Matron is then done by an Apostle or Seventy and the Sealers are set apart by Apostle or the Temple President after receiving approval from the First Presidency. Two of the seven Presidents and Matrons who have served in the Nashville Temple live in the Knoxville Stake – the Smiths and Barbers. Brothers Smith and Barber continue to serve as Sealers in the Nashville Temple. Brother Barber was set apart as a Sealer in 2007 by Nashville Temple President Richard Sager and Brother Smith was set apart as a Sealer in 2010 by Elder Russell M Nelson when he was also set apart as the Nashville Temple President.

Sister Sharlene Barber shared the following about her experience serving as a Matron in the Nashville Temple.

In Her Own Words – Sharlene Barber

“When Brother Barber and I were called to be the Nashville Temple President and Matron, we received some training in Salt Lake City. During that training, we were told that this calling would be our “Crowning Calling.” We learned during the next three years that truly it was our “crowning callings.” It was an amazing opportunity to spend so much time inside the temple. We lived in Nashville during those three years and were inside the temple almost every day of the week. Besides getting to know a whole new group of friends – all the ordinance workers, office workers, and volunteers, we also were able to get acquainted with members of the Church from all nine stakes that fed into our temple. We attended stake conferences from these stakes, as well as greeted members from these stakes as we welcomed them to the temple, week after week, month after month.

Besides the very spiritual learning experience we had in this calling, the temple also became a refuge for us in times of hardship and trials. We were so grateful to take our heavy hearts to the temple as often as we needed to.

We also had many special spiritual experiences inside the temple and saw miracles happen there. One example occurred on February 14, 2014, when Brother Barber had a special opportunity to perform a

marriage for a couple from the Knoxville YSA Branch. The girl was from Argentina but spoke excellent English. The groom had served his mission in Argentina, so he spoke excellent Spanish. They had planned to be married in the Atlanta Temple but because of the snow storms in the Atlanta area, that temple was closed so they switched to Nashville at the last minute. The only guests were their Bishop and the bride's parents who had come from Argentina to attend the wedding. Since the bride's parents spoke no English and the groom's parents were not present, Brother Barber decided to perform the marriage in Spanish. I think it was a tender mercy that he happened to be the member of the temple presidency serving that morning so he could do this. There was a special spirit during the ceremony and I'm sure the parents appreciated having the whole ceremony in their language. I sat in to witness the sealing and didn't understand the words spoken in Spanish, but I never felt the Spirit stronger than that day in the temple. After the marriage, I sat in the foyer and visited with this new bride as she waited for her groom. She told me that when she was a little girl she and her sister used to sing the song, "*I Love to See the Temple*," and now she was here – really in the temple. The spirit was so strong, we both had tears of joy in our eyes."

Those called to be Ordinance Workers, Office Workers, Laundry Workers, or Baptistry Coordinators are called to serve for two years but many continue to serve for much longer than that. Those from the Knoxville Stake who have served for an extended time since the temple was dedicated are listed below (our apologies if we missed someone). Those who continue to serve are shown in bold letters.

Farragut Ward – **Russell and Sharlene Barber, Gene Boxx, Leon Ebbert**, Vickie Ebbert, **David Lee**, Paul and Patsy Pehrson, David and Mariaelena Wallace, Jim and Lynn Skovran, Barney and Linda Cornaby, Glade and Marie Nelson, Rob Ivey, Bill and Ruth Cox

Pellissippi Ward – **Jim Moss**, Linda Moss, **Corbet Curfman**, Cindy Curfman, Pearl Lyons, Garth and Pattie Iorg

Harden Valley Ward – **Lloyd and Judy Smith**, Richard and Dee Barnes, Andy and Sue Hobbs,

Knoxville 1st/West Hills Ward – Carolyn Purcell, Mike Ziegler, Jeremy and Katheryne Nix

Sevierville Ward – Pat Sheets, David and Ammie Minton, Douglas and Dawn Cole

Maryville Ward – **Tom and Dixie Noel, Wade and Sanya Weyerman**, Jamie and Eva Pinzon

Rockwood Ward – **Michael Reano**, Pat Thompson, William Puckett,

Loudon Branch – Lee and Betty Rose (Atlanta Temple), Anthony and Carrie Webber

YSA Branch – Michael Vaughan, Maggie Pierce, Kristen Ford

President Sexton set a goal to have many more members from the stake serve in the temple and has extended that challenge to many. In order to facilitate more being able to serve, President Sexton convinced President Crawford to let temple workers from the Knoxville area have the option of serving only one shift during each month.

Approximately 70 stake members answered the call and started serving in the Nashville Temple in 2021 or by the end of April 2022 including the following:

Farragut Ward - Karen Lee, Raina Boxx, Kirk and Shairee Bass, Tom and Katy Cook, Doug Hathaway, David and Lisa Sexton, Eric and Tristi Ebbert

Pellissippi Ward – Lisa Gillis, Jesse Ellsworth, Don Mueller, Keith and Pilar Puckett, Jacob Wade

Harden Valley Ward – Brian and Liz Christiansen, Bruce and Cynthia Meek, Lou and Vonnie Sleighter, Dixie Cravens

West Hills Ward – Chris Articavitch, Glenda Flores-Williams, Polly Long, Madelyn McKellar, Margaret Whitehead, Dean and Diane Bundy, Tom and Debbie Clapp, Norman and Danielle McKellar, Jay and Barbara Price, Felipe Freitas

Bearden Ward – Jeff and Glenda Beeler, Jerrold Herrick, Monica Irvine, Ben and Beth Morgeneegg, Pete and Lynn Paullus, Michael and Anna Jorgensen

Sevierville Ward – Linda Sheets, Sharon Strickland, Brett Thompson, James and Terri Kennedy

Maryville Ward – Kris and Beth Raisor, Christian and Shauna Reher, Misty Crawford, Betty Vance, Sheila Webb

Rockwood Ward – Tom and Briann Perkes, Teri Heinecke, Eric and Christal Lazenby, Mary Sowerby

Loudon Ward – David and Ginger Cooper, Jennilyn Crews, Kelly Gesullo, Lora Stewart, LaRoy and Donna Van Dyke, Susan Cammerer, Jerry and Teri Garrett, Shanna Jones, Cheryl Neuberger

Knoxville Bishop's Storehouse

The Knoxville Bishop's Storehouse was opened in June of 1983 and has continued to provide commodities for welfare recipients from the Knoxville, Chattanooga, Asheville, and Kingsport stakes. Originally the storehouse building also housed a wet-pack cannery which was used to can green beans once a year. The storehouse later had equipment for members to can dry-pack storage items before it was replaced by pre-packaged dry-pack food that is now available. A significant addition was made to the storehouse in about 2015 when large refrigeration and freezer rooms were added to the back of the storehouse. Today the storehouse building continues to house the Bishop's Storehouse which provides commodities for welfare recipients at no cost and the separate Home Storage operation that has dry-pack food available for sale.

Bishop's Storehouse Operations

The names of the Storehouse Managers and their assistants and the approximate years they served are listed below.

Knoxville Storehouse Managers and Assistants

1983 – 1985 – Keith and Wilma Honaker

1986 – 1987 – Wendell and Ila O'Bryant

1987 – 1989 – Rupert and Etta McGuire

1989 – 1990 – James and Mary Foutch

1990 – 1994 – John and Peggy Norton

1994 – 1996 – Ronald and Donna Staley

1996 – 1997 – David and Helen Dickey

1997 – 1998 – Carl Coatney. Assistants John and Peggy Norton

1998 – 2001 – John and Peggy Norton

2002 – 2003 – Wayne and Mary England

2004 – 2005 – Melvin and Pat Schill. Assistants Basil & Judith Massey

2005 – 2007 – Richard and Tena Udy, Assistants William & Sue Spears
2008 – 2009 – Lee and Betty Rose. Assistants Paul and Linda Qualls
2009 – 2011 - John and Sue Urbach, Assistants Ben & Jan May
2012 – 2013 – Ed and Pam Dosch. Assistants Joe & Rita Spillman
2013 – 2014 – Frank and Dolly Davis. Assistants Several Welfare Missionary couples
2014 – 2015 – Forrest and Joyce Schwengels. Assistants Several Welfare Missionary couples
2015 – 2017 - John and Sue Urbach. Assistants Jeff & Glenda Beeler
2017 – 2020 - Russ and Sharlene Barber. Assistants Darrell & Linda Talley, Bill & Pamela Gwin
2020 - Bill and Pamela Gwin. Assistants Doug & Janice Hamilton

Many others also served in the Bishop's Storehouse as welfare missionaries and volunteers during those years. The welfare missionaries and long term volunteers served for two years and most continued to serve beyond that as volunteers. The names of members of the Knoxville Stake who served as formally called welfare missionaries or long term volunteers in the storehouse since 2012 are listed below (forgive us if we missed anyone). Many other members of the stake served as volunteers in the storehouse during that same time.

Knoxville Stake Welfare Missionaries and Long Term Volunteers

Sevierville - James and Rayna Dahle, Roger and Linda Christensen, Joshua Johnson, Patrice Johnson, Sharon Strickland

Farragut - Linda Cornaby, Bill Cox, Jim and Sharon Fritz, Dwight and Jane Sexton

West Hills/Bearden - Aldis Gordon, Barbara Puster, David Willis, Cynthia Schober

Maryville – John and Ella Harding, James and Constance Mann

Pellissippi – James Moss, Jack Tobler, Louisa Helm

Harden Valley - Gordon and Debbie Russell

John and Peggy Norton, who served as the Storehouse Managers twice, summarized some of the changes at the storehouse when they wrote the following in December of 2001.

In Their Own Words – John and Peggy Norton

“This is our 2nd time around as Managers. We were asked to help out Carl Coatney in 1998 and then called as managers. The storehouse opened in 1983 with a paid staff, but has since then been converted to serve as a mission!

There have been many changes since we first started in 1990. The cannery now has managers instead of storehouse managers being responsible for both the storehouse and cannery. The managers for the cannery were Logan Van Leigh, Mike and Elaine Mills, and in December 2001 Michael and Carla Boyles. The ‘wet-pack’ canning has been removed and now only ‘dry-pack’ is available. In 1999 a tremendous surge on dry-pack was done – mostly by non-members.

There have been many new items added to the inventory – hot cocoa, corn meal, tortillas, grits, cake mixes, puddings, jelly in glass jars, and Huggies, no more cloth diapers, just to name a few.

For a while the Stake Employment office was housed in the offices here. In 1997, they opened their offices here but due to the volume of works in the storehouse office, serving 5 stakes, truck deliveries each week plus all the walk-in pick up orders, all the office space was needed for storehouse business. They moved out in mid-1999. The volume of orders has been increasing: 1990 - 686; 1995 – 466; 1997 – 632; 1998 – 1222.

This has been a wonderful mission for us. We have met so many special people, from venders to volunteers and people who just felt the promptings of the Spirit to come and work. We appreciate them all, but special recognition goes to Dolly Rogers, Jim Mitchel (driver), Mitch and Freda Borden. Without their help, things could not have run as smoothly as it did. In 2001 the responsibility for the storehouse was turned over the Knox-Cumberland stake and the managers will be Wayne and Mary England.

We are thankful for this great opportunity to serve a mission and hope that those that we have had contact with, have felt our Spirit of love for them, our calling, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Dec 19, 2001, John and Peggy Norton.”

Melvin and Pat Shill added the following observations as they finished their service as Storehouse Managers in 2005. “For the past four years the storehouse has averaged a little over 2000 orders each year. These orders are filled by faithful volunteer who come to the storehouse and work each week. In 2002 and 2003 the workers were supplied by 8 to 10 workers from each ward. Each ward would supply workers for one month at a time. In 2004 and 2005 there were only two workers from each ward for two weeks each. There were many volunteers that either had a stake calling, a ward calling, or just came because of personal desire.”

Operation of the Bishop’s Storehouse has continued to change somewhat over the years as each manager tried to implement improvements. A major change took place in 2017 when the Church automated the ordering system used by the Bishops. No longer were paper copies of the welfare orders faxed into the storehouse, but the Relief Society Presidents input the orders into electronic forms that would then be reviewed and approved by the Bishops or Branch President and stored "in the clouds". Then early each Monday morning, the storehouse managers or their assistants would pull down the orders and determine what produce, dairy, and bread needed to be ordered to meet that week’s needs. On Tuesday these items would be delivered or picked up at local stores ready to be pulled along with the dry goods. Truck orders would be printed on Monday and walk-in patron orders printed once they came to pick up their orders or when it was confirmed they were coming to the storehouse. Volunteers would help the managers on Tuesday and Wednesday to bag the produce, replenish the shelves, and pull the truck and walk-in orders. This automation of orders greatly simplified the whole operation.

Each month the storehouse and home storage managers would determine what commodities needed to be resupplied from the Atlanta regional storehouse and a truck from Atlanta would deliver those commodities. It was always a welcome site to see the Atlanta truck pull into the storehouse, but for Sharlene Barber it had special meaning as she wrote in the storehouse scrapbook. *“Every time I see the truck from Atlanta arrive, I literally get tears in my eyes. My heart is filled with so much gratitude for the*

food that is coming to bless the Saints of East TN. My ancestors were in the Martin Handcart Company. My great, great grandmother Briggs was just 19 years old. She lost her father and younger sister (age 7) and younger brother (age 13) while crossing the plains. They were starving to death among other things. I think of the joy they felt when the rescue wagons arrived. I think of them and their rescue when I see our Atlanta truck arrive."

For many years truck orders have been delivered from the Knoxville storehouse to the Asheville, Kingsport, and Chattanooga stakes with patrons from the Knoxville and Knox Cumberland stakes coming to the storehouse for their orders. Some members from units in the Lexington and McMinnville/Cookeville stakes would also come as walk-in patrons. Then in about 2017 a truck run was established to go to Corbin Kentucky and Cookeville to provide commodities for units in the southern part of the Lexington Stake and the eastern part of the Cookeville Stake.

The operation of the storehouse was significantly affected when COVID-19 hit our area in March of 2020, however the service continued. Volunteers preparing the welfare orders and truck drivers delivering commodities had to follow very stringent health guidelines and walk-in patrons were not allowed inside the storehouse but had their orders brought to their cars. Operations of the storehouse were also streamlined to minimize the time volunteers needed to be serving. But throughout the pandemic, the storehouse continued to operate and serve those in need in our area.

Cannery/Home Storage Operations

The names of the Cannery/Home Storage Managers and the approximate years they served are listed below.

Cannery/Home Storage Managers

1995 – 1996 – Mark Andrus

1996 – 2000 – Logan Van Leigh

2000 – 2001 – Mike and Arlene Mills

2001 – 2005 – Mike and Carla Boyles

2005 – 2006 – Mike Boyles

2006 – 2007 – Frank Adkins. Assistant Richard Cooper

2007 – 2011 - Frank and Arleen Erbele. Assistant Richard Cooper

2011 – 2012 - Paul and Linda Qualls, Assistants Jesse and Levada Fowler

2012 – 2013 – Jesse and Levada Fowler. Assistants Richard and Tena Udy

2013 – 2018 - Richard and Tena Udy. Assistants Gene and Ann Buckner, Dee Barnes

2018 - 2018 – Mark and Erin Petterle. Assistant Dee Barnes

2018 – 2019 - Jim and Jennifer Zimmer. Assistant Dee Barnes

2019 - 2020 - John and Sue Urbach

2020 - Greg and Ronna Turner

The Cannery/Home Storage operation has also changed over the years. It started out as a wet-pack cannery – canning green beans once a year. The wet-pack canning operation was stopped in the late 1980s about the time the Church phased out the local unit welfare projects and consolidated the

growing and canning of produce to larger, more efficient operations. There were no canning operations in the storehouse for several years and the cookers were eventually removed. Then in late 1995, a dry-pack operation was started where members could purchase wheat and other items and use the dry-pack equipment at the storehouse to dry-pack the items in cans such that they had a shelf life of up to 30 years.

Initially the Storehouse Managers were also responsible for the cannery operation. This changed after the wet-canning operation was terminated and dry-pack canning became a year-round operation which required separate Cannery/Home Storage Managers to be called. Dry-pack canning was phased out in 2014 and replaced by pre-packaged canned and bulk items that could be purchased and were prepared in Salt Lake and shipped to our storehouse from the Atlanta regional storehouse each month. Interestingly, many of the patrons to the Home Storage facility were not members of the Church and some patrons came from out of state.

The demand for dry-pack commodities has varied over the years. Right before the year 2000 there was a major run on dry-pack goods when many were concerned about the effect on the economy at the turn of the century when clocks associated with automation may not function properly. There was also a significant increase in demand in 2008 when the economy was bad and in 2020 when the country was hit by the COVID pandemic. During those times, the Home Storage shelves would almost be empty before the next truck came from Atlanta.

Unfortunately, two of the Home Storage Managers died while serving as home storage managers. Brother Richard Udy died in January of 2018 after serving with his wife as managers for about 5 years. Their replacements, the Petterles, only served a short time before moving out of state. Jim and Jennifer Zimmer were then called as Home Storage Managers, but Jim was in poor health and died in March of 2019. It was very sad to have two of “our own” service missionaries die while serving. In all three cases there was some delay before replacements could be called but Home Storage continued to function thanks to the Assistant Manager, Sister Dee Barnes, who kept the operation going.

Missionary Service

Full-Time Missionary Service

The Knoxville Stake has increased the number of missionaries being sent out over the last 10 years which has been a great blessing to the stake and families of the missionaries. In developing this history, we were able to obtain a listing of missionaries serving from the Knoxville Stake from the History Department of the Church. We found that the listing lacked a few missionaries but gave us the names of many who would have been missed if we relied on our local records. According to the information received from Church headquarters, the Knoxville Stake sent out 106 missionaries in the 24 years from when it was established in 1972 until November 1996 when Knoxville Cumberland Stake was split off. Since then, in the 24 years from 1997 to 2020, the Knoxville Stake has sent out 238 full-time missionaries, which is a little over twice as many as were sent during the previous 24 years. Part of the reason for this increase is the change in the missionary age for young women who could serve which was reduced from 21 years of age to 19 years of age in the October 2012 General Conference. This lowering of age when women could be called to serve missions resulted in many more young women

serving missions. However, part of the reason for the increase has also been related to the strong leadership and youth programs in the stake. **The names of the full-time missionaries we were able to identify who have served from our stake are included with the write up for each ward and branch of the stake.** Some Sister Missionaries may be listed by their married name based on church HQ records.

Stay-At-Home Church-Service Missionary Service

There are many members who are also taking advantage of giving missionary service while staying at home. **A large number have served as managers or long term volunteers in the Bishop's Storehouse or Home Storage facility as listed in the Bishop's Storehouse Section of this history.** Available records go back to 2012 and include others have also served in the Pathway, Addiction Recovery, Employment, and Family History Programs as well as serving in the Mission Office. We have listed those we are aware of below and apologize to any we may have missed.

The Pathway Program was originally set up through BYU-Idaho to bring interactive online courses to select Institute buildings. Its goal was to provide a pathway to educational opportunities to young adults regardless of where they live or where they may ultimately receive their degree. BYU-Pathway Worldwide continues to be strategically focused, like the initial BYU-Idaho Pathway program, on providing educational opportunities for thousands of church members throughout the world who have, for a variety of reasons, not had a chance to complete their education. Those from our stake who have served as **Church-service missionaries to help facilitate the Pathway Program are:**

Harden Valley Ward - Lloyd and Judy Smith

Pellissippi Ward - Nancy Smith

West Hills/Bearden Wards - Peter and Lynn Paullus, Pamela Dosch, Pat Bryson, Susan Nixon

The Addiction Recovery program was set up to assist anyone struggling with an addiction or compulsive behavior. Support group meetings use an adapted version of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous that teaches addiction recovery principles from a gospel perspective. Those struggling with addiction or compulsive behaviors can attend a recovery support group to receive support, help, and fellowship from others in similar circumstances as well as from volunteer Church-service missionaries and facilitators. Members of the Knoxville Stake who have served or are serving as **Church-service missionaries to facilitate the Addition Recovery program are:**

Pellissippi Ward - Leon and Vickie Ebbert, Nathan and Cynthia Catchpole

Farragut Ward - Robert and Denise Markli.

Harden Valley Ward – C J and Leilani Branner

Others from our stake who have served stay-at-home Church-service missions to serve in the following areas include:

Employment – Bill and Ruth Cox

Family History- Denise Fuller, James Harley, Nancy Smith, Helen Marler, Ginger Cooper, Terry Willard, Barbara Puster

Mission Office – Sharon Strickland, Pat and Kim House

A Look to the Future

In July of 2022, the Stake Presidency is planning a 50th year Golden Anniversary Celebration commemorating that it has been 50 years since the Knoxville Stake was organized. The World's Fair site in downtown Knoxville has been reserved for the event. The Knoxville Cumberland Stake has also been invited to participate in the celebration. Activities are being planned for all ages and there will be a short program when all past Stake Presidents will be recognized.

As we looked to the future, we also hoped for the realization of the dream to have a temple in Knoxville. Many people had responded to the challenge given by President Sexton to serve in the Nashville Temple such that we would have a group of brothers and sisters who were already trained as Ordinance, Baptistry, and Office workers who could serve in our Knoxville Temple. Many of the entries in this history update mention the hope of having a temple in Knoxville. That dream was realized on April 3, 2022 in the final session of General Conference **when President Russell M. Nelson announced plans to build 17 new temples throughout the world including one in Knoxville Tennessee.**

With the announcement that our dream of a Knoxville Temple will be realized within the next few years (possibly as soon as two years from now since we expect it will be one of the modular temples), we are focused on preparing for the opening of the temple. We desire that the temple will not only be a blessing for the members of the Church but for everyone in the Knoxville area. In support of this, we are working hard to share with our friends and neighbors the importance of temples and how temple ordinances can unite families for eternity.

Crossville Ward (Now part of Cookeville Stake)

As recorded in the earlier history, Harold Grieshop was called to serve as Bishop of the Crossville Ward in July of 1995. During Bishop Grieshop's years as Bishop, a pavilion was built behind the Church. Many dinners and fun activities have taken place there over the years. On July 13, 1997 Bishop Grieshop was released and Roger Hyder was ordained as the next Bishop of the Crossville Ward. Shortly after Bishop Grieshop's release, he and his wife, Carol, were called on a Family History Mission to Salt Lake City.

During the time Bishop Hyder served as Bishop of the Crossville Ward, many members of the ward and several from the community spent many hours in the family history center searching information about their ancestors. The center had been dedicated in June of 1997 with Sister Betty Dean Hamby Cooper as its director (earlier history incorrectly identified her as Barbara Cooper). Much of this work was in anticipation of the opening of the Nashville Temple which was scheduled to be completed in 2000. Between May 9th and 13th, several members of the ward attended the Nashville Temple open house. Temple preparation classes were started and many were ready to attend the temple to perform ordinances for their ancestors when it opened on May 4, 2000.

One of the ward's service projects was to clean seven miles of trail in the Cumberland County State Park. A picnic celebration was held to honor those who helped with the cleanup on August 11, 2000.

On September 30, 2000 Bishop Hyder was released and David DeVos was called as Crossville's next Bishop.

A Cub Scout group was organized by the Primary President, Angela McCoy, in August 2001. There were seven boys that age. Suzanne Banegas was the committee chairman with Mike McCoy Cub Scout leader. Because Suzanne's boys were in cubs and scouts at the school, several boys left that group and joined ours. Our cubs entered a float in the Christmas Parade and won 2nd place. A few months later a Boy Scout group was organized with Ken Banegas as Scout Master and Suzanne Banegas as committee chairman. Six of our seven original cubs got their Eagle award.

November 25, 2001 plans were posted at church to add the third phase to our two phase church building. We had to be out of our building by December 16, 2001. Bishop DeVos had been in a few plays at the Cumberland County Play House, so he made arrangement for our ward to have Sunday church meetings there and also to meet Wednesday evening for our activities. We moved into our newly remodeled and expanded building in January 2003. There was an open house on February 7, 2003.

On March 1, 2004, Bishop DeVos was released and Freddie Conley was called to be Crossville's new Bishop.

December 4, 2004 a court of honor was held. There were 55 merit badges given to the fourteen scouts and there were six rank advancements.

In 2006 our ward boundaries were expanded to include parts of Bledsoe County.

On November 15, 2009, Bishop Conley was released and Jerry Hassler was called for the second time to be Bishop of the Crossville Ward.

On March 27, 2011, President Ben Morgeneegg from the Knoxville Stake and President Cordell Crawford from the McMinnville Stake visited our ward Sacramento meeting. During the meeting, a proposal was presented and accepted that the stake boundaries were to be changed which resulted in Crossville and Jamestown becoming part of the McMinnville Stake and later part of the Cookeville Stake when it was formed in June of 2016.

Bishop Hassler shared what led up to Crossville becoming part of the McMinnville Stake.

In His Own Words – Jerry Hassler

President Ben Morgeneegg called me and said he and President Cordell Crawford had been talking about the Crossville Ward becoming part of the McMinnville Stake and asked me what I thought about it. Prior to this, myself and two previous Bishops before me were asked and we all agree it wasn't the right time. The road to McMinnville was a two lane road and dangerous in the winter time, and we struggled to get our priesthood to go to their leadership meetings when it was a straight shot to Knoxville. President Morgeneegg asked me to call President Crawford and just talk with him. So I called President Crawford and after talking with him the Spirit was so strong, I knew it was time. President Crawford came the next Sunday and shared a vision he had 25 years earlier - How we would become part of the McMinnville Stake and eventually the Cookeville Stake would be formed and we would become part of that stake. Everyone in that Correlation Council felt the Spirit, it was so strong. We knew it was the right thing to do. We miss our friends in Knoxville and in McMinnville and we are now a part of the Cookeville TN Stake. This is a testament to me how the Lord moves his work forward.

Jerry Hassler

South Knoxville Branch/ Knoxville 1st Ward

South Knoxville Branch

The South Knoxville Branch was formed in November 1998. Dan Gainer was called to be its first Branch President on November 18, 1998, the week before Stake Conference. Those who served as Branch Presidents of the South Knoxville Branch and their counselors are listed below.

Nov 1998 – Dan Gainer. Counselors Jimmy Stewart, Delton Gerloff, Robert Nieporte, Jim Rodgers, Sean Duce, Travis Parker

Sep 2002 – Travis Parker. Counselors Tom Willis, Robert Nieporte

Sep 2007 – Johnny Smith. Counselors Tom Willis, Dan Parker, Eric Puster

President Barber recorded in his journal that Dan Gainer seemed more surprised than his wife when he was extended the call. He had never served in a Branch Presidency before so was a little nervous, but very positive. Dan worked with the Stake President to organize the leadership prior to the branch's first meeting which was held on November 29, 1998. President Gainer shared the following memories of the time he served.

In His Own Words – Dan Gainer

I can think of two special spiritual experiences. The first was working with Pres. Barber to form the branch leadership. He knew many of the names on our membership rolls and I did not. Meditating and praying about individuals you feel prompted by the Holy Ghost to call to these positions was intimidating and very rewarding spiritually. I learned a lot about promptings of the Spirit before our new branch ever had its first Sacrament meeting.

The second experience I recall clearly was this one. We fasted as a branch, and held a special weeknight fast and testimony meeting, to ask the Lord to send us people who were ready for the gospel message. The next Sunday, a young man by the name of Patrick Eastman walked through the church doors and asked me if he could learn about "our" church. Patrick was baptized a few weeks later, received the priesthood and one year later received his endowments in the temple. About a year after that he got married and he and his wife were sealed in the temple.

Our young men and young women loved camping and "high adventure" activities. Every summer we held fun and challenging camps.

Starting a new branch and keeping it functioning was a major challenge. The church building was 15 to 20 miles away from most of our members. Also, South Knox County was, and still is, "blue collar" and/or low wage earners. Missionary work and reactivation was a major emphasis during my service. We had a large number of inactive members in South Knox County. Getting rides for folks to attend church was an ongoing challenge. I simply credit our members for holding that small young branch together so it could survive as a major accomplishment. Our first Sunday we had 38 in attendance. When I was released we averaged around 75 in Sacrament meeting.

Daniel Gainer

President Gainer served until September of 2002 when he was replaced by Travis Parker. Brother Parker was 85 when called as the second South Knoxville Branch President. It was reported that he and Sister Parker had not wanted to attend the branch when it first started because they loved the West Hills so much. But they finally decided to start attending the South Knoxville Branch and he was later called to be its Branch President.

When President Parker was serving, he was thought to be the oldest Branch President serving in the Church. He was retired so had lots of time to serve and did a great job. He had a good rapport with the young people as he had volunteered for many years at a local public school.

Sister Parker remembers: *“The branch had a picnic on the 4th of July at Charter Doyle Park every year. It got so hot that they put it off until fall and eventually stopped. We always had a Christmas program and dinner. We used to watch Conference at the church and fix lunch so the missionaries would have food. Eventually almost everyone could get it on their computers but they still had the broadcast at the church for those who wanted to come.”*

For being such a small branch, the South Knoxville Branch did an amazing job of sending out missionaries. During the time President Parker served as Branch President, he sent eight missionaries out. In September 1999 President Gainer sent out Myles Anthony Rodgers as a full-time missionary to the Arizona Tempe Mission.

Holly Garrigan was called on a mission to Munich Germany in April of 2003. Her sister Nora Gainer related that Holly told her that she had received a very strong directive from the Lord that she should serve the day they went to watch the dedication of the Nauvoo temple in 2002 which was broadcast to the stake centers. She said the impression was so strong that she thought that our son had whispered to her. Holly had to come home early from her mission in May of 2004 because she was diagnosed with cancer. She felt it was a miracle that she was then declared cancer-free the day her mission medical coverage ended as she didn't have any health insurance prior to her mission.

Jesse Gainer also served a mission to the Trinidad Port of Spain Mission from April 2005 to April 2007. He mostly served in Trinidad. He and his companion opened the island of Dominica for missionary work for the first time. When he was a Zone Leader they had to fly to different islands for meetings and for transfers.

Three of the Nix children were also called on missions during the time President Parker served as Branch President – Jeremy Nix served in the Russia St. Petersburg mission from February 2000 to March of 2002, Brian Nix served in the Switzerland Geneva mission from April 2002 to April 2004, and Jessica Nix served in the Adriatic South Mission from October 2005 to April 2007. What a contribution the Nix family made to missionary service.

Two other missionaries were also called to the mission field by President Parker - Cori Ann Harris was called to serve in the California Sacramento Mission from September 2005 to December 2006 and Stephen Cocke was called to serve in the Idaho Boise Mission from April 2006 to March 2008. What an example this small branch set in calling so many missionaries.

Brother Parker served faithfully until his release in September of 2007 when Johnny Smith was called as the third South Knoxville Branch President.

Knoxville 1st Ward

Johnny Smith served as Branch President until April of 2009 when he was called as the Bishop of the newly formed Knoxville 1st Ward. It was formed by President Ben Morgeneegg from the old South Knoxville Branch plus members pulled from the West Hills Ward.

Missionary Service

In addition to those named above who served as full-time missionaries from the South Knoxville Branch, the following individuals were called as full-time missionaries from the Knoxville 1st Ward,

Names, Missions, and Start Date of Missionaries from the Knoxville 1st Ward

Locklear, William Thomas, Jr	Italy Milan Mission	12-Sep-12
Rodney, Ellen Eugena	California Carlsbad Mission	27-Mar-13
Dosch, Edmond William	Republic of Georgia Welfare Mission	22-Jul-13
Dosch, Pamela Lauretta	Republic of Georgia Welfare Mission	22-Jul-13
Smith, Sterling Kirk	Ecuador Guayaquil South Mission	10-Sep-14
Gull, Ali	California San Bernardino Mission	16-Dec-15
Gull, Preston	Colorado Denver South Mission	1-Jan-17

Youth Activities

The South Knoxville Branch/Knoxville 1st Ward had a relatively small number of youth but still participated in a full youth program. In addition to weekly youth activities, the young people of the ward participated in the stake sponsored youth conferences and Girl's camp. They also joined with the West Hills Ward youth for many combined activities.

Skyler McKellar, one of our young women, gave the following account of one year's YW activities: *"Throughout 2018, the young women of the Knox 1st Ward were able to participate in many service opportunities. We had the opportunity to volunteer at the animal shelter, make Christmas gifts for missionaries, clean the Ronald McDonald house, and more. Aside from service, the young women also had the opportunity to raise money for and attend Girl's camp. Girl's camp was a spiritually strengthening and bonding experience. At camp they learned many songs, stargazed, memorized scripture, hiked, and bore testimonies. 2018 was a full year of service opportunities and bonding experiences."*

The Knoxville 1st Ward sponsored Boy Scout 557 and many of the young men participated in camp outs and other scouting activities. While most of the young men enjoyed these and other YM activities and service opportunities, only had one young man achieve the rank of Eagle Scout – Sterling K Smith received his Eagle award in June of 2017.

The Young Women Personal Progress program was the equivalent to the scouting program for the young women and is the highest honor given in the Young Women organization. Below are the young women we could identify and the approximate year they received the award while living in the South Knoxville Branch or Knoxville 1st Ward.

Young Womanhood Recognition Recipients

Maya Spencer – February 2004

Leah Smith – May 2008

Leslie Smith – May 2008

Phoebe Webster – August 2014

Madelyn McKellar – July 2016

Natasha Webster – July 2016

Skylar McKellar – August 2016

Gabriella Harrison – December 2019

Ward Activities

Typical ward activities were captured in the following input extracted from the 2013 and 2018 Knoxville 1st Ward histories.

2013. We saw several important events in 2013 in the Knoxville 1st Ward. Johnny Smith was released as our Bishop and Norman McKellar was called and sustained on January 20, 2013. Dan Parker was honored as the Tennessee Assistant Principle of the year in Washington DC hosted by the National Association of School Principles. Ellen Rodney and Ed and Pamela Dosch all went on missions, and we had a few baptisms to add to our numbers.

The ward picnic was held on August 2, 2013 at Gary Underwood Park in South Knoxville. Many attended and had a good time and partook of the refreshments. In October the Relief Society held an extravaganza that was a lot of fun. Sister Belnap planned and directed the 72 hour emergency kit presentation. Then came the delicious food prepared by Kebra Wolfe and Nora Wagner. It consisted of creamy pasta soup, chili, and steamed brown bread. For dessert, Sister Florence Stafford made crock pot candy.

In December we had a live Nativity scene held at our building which was put together by multiple wards. Many participated and watched and it was a wonderful event. Visitors walked through each area and saw the actors dressed up and in character. There was a market, an inn, and a stable where Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus lay along with the wise men.

2018. 2018 was an eventful year for the Knoxville 1st Ward. The first big change was on February 4, when Bishop Norm McKellar was released from his calling as Bishop along with his counselor's. He was replaced by David Harrison with Ray Wolfe and Dean Bundy as counselors and Evan Thompson as Executive Secretary. Later in the year, Mark Quale was released as YM President and Norm McKellar was called to replace him.

Another change came on February 11, when Hailey Harrison and her counselors were released from the Ward Relief Society Presidency. Barbara Price was called as the new Relief Society President with Natalie Smith and Allison Harris as her counselors. President Price has given the following account of memorable activities from 2018: *“It has been almost a year since I was called as Relief Society President. It has been a very rewarding experience for me and my counselors. Not too long ago I asked my counselors about a specific activity or class that was memorable during the first year together. We all agreed that the first Relief Society activity we had after we were called was one to remember.*

Sister Smith and I had been serving in the Primary and we wanted to know more about our sisters and Allison Harris suggested we do a “speed dating” activity. We had two rows of sisters facing each other and taking turns asking questions about our lives and interests; every two minutes we switched sisters giving us the opportunity to see a different sister every time. We had a big turnout! We had fun and at the end there was a feeling of love and friendship among us. Many of them suggested we have the activity again, not just because we had so much fun, but because we wanted to spend more time getting to know each other. After that, our activities took off; they have been well attended and everybody looks forward to them. One positive thing about our activities, besides giving us the opportunity to socialize, is having less-active sisters coming every now and then to our activities. These less-active sisters have felt love and integration into our Relief Society; one of them in particular comes every time we have an activity because she knows we love her and she is a part of our Relief Society.”

On February 18 the Young Women’s Presidency was reorganized and President Bethany Strub and her counselors were released. Brenda Hauline was called as Young Women’s President with Marissa Wood and Lacey West as her counselors.

On April 8, President Aurora Dickamore and her counselors were released and Liz Eddie was called as the new Primary President with Trista Mortensen and Mindy Moore as her counselors. The primary gave the following account of 2018: “Emphasis: the theme for Primary this year was “I am a child of God.” Lessons were developed to teach and explain the structure of the Church and what it means to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a child of our Heavenly Father. Notable lessons included discussions of the children’s relationship with God, lessons about the opportunities to follow God’s plan for us, and how we can serve others.

On March 25, the Primary held an Easter activity and ward members were invited to come participate in an Easter egg hunt. Our Primary also help plan participate in the Ward Christmas party on December 1 where they were part of the Nativity. On October 28, we had the Primary program. They sang many songs focusing on the year’s theme. The children shared their testimonies on particular gospel topics, and explained the doctrine they had learned that year.

In April General Conference, the prophet, President Russell M Nelson, announced that Elders quorums at High Priests would now meet under one Elders Quorum President and a single quorum. With this change both the Elders Quorum Presidency and High Priest Group leadership was released. Craig Atkins was then called to serve in the capacity of Elders Quorum President with Brother Sean Webster and Brother James Rogers as his counselors.

President Atkins and his counselors gave the following account of 2018: “A lot of services were rendered by the priesthood brethren during the year, in organized projects (mostly helping move

members move into and out of the ward) and in individual service given quietly so I will highlight only two. In May, Brother J Price led the organization of a community service project to clean up neglected areas of his neighborhood in an effort to encourage revitalization of the area. About 30 brothers and sisters participated in the cleanup effort for about 46 hours, followed by a picnic meal at an open shelter on the property of the local Baptist Church. A lot of work was completed and it was a productive and enjoyable experience for everyone, not to mention the delicious food we enjoyed afterwards. In June, one of the members of the quorum, Jared Smith, was deployed overseas for one year by his military unit. He had to leave behind his wife (Nicole) and two small children. The Smith's ministering brother checked frequently with Sister Smith to see if she needed anything and a fall cleanup project was organized at their home in October and about six brothers participated in the project along with the full-time missionaries. All of the leaves and tree limbs were removed from the yard, the grass was mowed, shrubs trimmed, walkways cleaned, and all of the security lights around the house were replaced. The neighbor next door saw all the brothers working and made pancakes and brought them over. Overall it was a great year for the Elders quorum. There were many inspiring discussions in priesthood meetings and countless priesthood blessings given to various ward members struggling with both physical and emotional or spiritual challenges and a lot of meaningful service was rendered, both spiritually and spiritually."

In 2018 the ward had many members move in as well as many members of the ward move away. Notably the ward saw one convert baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. Sister Laura Moore was baptized September 15th and confirmed the next day in Sacrament meeting, Here is her account of her conversion: *"When I was three years old, I knew that God was real and felt His presence. My family went to a Presbyterian church when I was young, and after an event, I realized that they were judgmental and unforgiving. Then I was raised in an Episcopal church. I've always searched for what was the true church. I tried an Evangelical church, and again found the church to be unforgiving of others. I went to some others. Some had a strong background in 12 step programs which were based on spiritual principal. However spiritual was not enough. In Silver City, New Mexico, I had a friend who had joined the Latter Day Saints Church and encouraged me to visit. I never did in Silver City because we moved to Knoxville. I needed help moving some furniture. My friend encouraged me to ask the Church for help and we did. The missionaries visited me and I liked what I heard. I was sure loving church so I got baptized and joined because I thought that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the true church. And I am thankful! God bless everyone!"*

Ward Leadership

There were three Bishops who served in the Knoxville 1st Ward from April of 2009 until December of 2020 when boundaries were adjusted and it became part of the West Hills Ward. During that time three Bishops served as shown below.

April 2009 – Johnny Smith. Counselors Jay Price, Delton Gerloff, Ray Wolfe, Roberto Riveria, Jay Tucker,
Jan 2013 – Norman McKellar. Counselors Ray Wolfe, Dan Gainer, Jay Tucker, Mark Quayle
Jan 2018 to May 2021 – David Harrison. Counselors Ray Wolfe, Chris Wyman, Dean Bundy

Bishops who served in the Knoxville 1st Ward and Brother Ray Wolfe who served as a counselor to each Bishop have provided special memories of their times of service.

In His Own Words – Johnny Smith

I was ordained a Bishop on 26 April 2009 and served about four more years, however I served as Branch President for about 1 1/2 years before being called as Bishop. I replaced Travis Parker, who replaced Dan Gainer who was made Branch President when the branch was formed. I was replaced by Norman McKellar, who was replaced by David Harrison. I had excellent counselors over the years - Tom Willis, Dan Parker, Eric Puster, Jay Price, Delton Gerloff, Ray Wolfe, and Roberto Riveria.

When I was called as Bishop, I was also assigned as transient Bishop and chairman of the Bishop's Welfare Committee. This automatically led me to focus on sacred fast offering funds and how I could help relieve the strain on the church. We taught everyone in the ward how to grow a garden as President Kimball taught in July 1976, and we had almost everyone growing a vegetable plant of some kind.

With the Bishop being solely responsible for the youth, it was important that I focus on this and spend time with them away from the church building - ballgames, recitals, plays, etc. It was always humbling to see a former youth go on a mission, marry in the temple, or develop their own personal relationship with the Savior. One specific youth whose father had been completely inactive and who would not allow any Bishop in his home, finally softened his heart and not only allowed me to visit him but requested that we have youth activities in his home, which we did.

Another story comes to mind. When I was first called my family and I had planned a trip to Florida, anxiously awaiting our departure date, we began to plan. When the day arrived to leave, we left very early in the morning hours. We had traveled six hours from home and the whole time I was being impressed upon not to go. It wasn't until my wife spoke up and said, John I've had a strange feeling ever since we left home. At this point and time I spoke up and said I have had that feeling for six hours. We decided to turn around and go home. In the meantime I had called an employee of mine to go by and check the house and to stay in my driveway until I returned, which he did with pay of course. After arriving home at about 4 am, we put the kids to bed and I retreated to my personal sacred grove. I knelt down and asked Heavenly Father the meaning of all this. Almost immediately the thought came to my mind, I wanted to know if my servant could feel and here my voice. Upon repenting for not acting and speaking up earlier I retired to bed and upon the dawning of the new day, I asked Heavenly Father if it was ok to once again leave for Florida, which it was.

Another story was when our ward organized a temple trip. We planned and planned our trip and we had 78 people from our small ward on the trip. We had to do shifts we had so many. We had reserved the stake center as a babysitting hub and as our lunch counter. Everyone pulled together and made it a huge success. I'm not sure how the temple staff felt but they were more than understanding. But the highlight to me was, I had been working with a couple who were planning a divorce but after many

sessions of counseling with me, it sure was good to see them both in the temple together and they both said thank you Bishop. Johnny Smith

In His Own Words – Norman McKellar

I was honored to serve as Bishop of the Knoxville First Ward for 5 years. I was blessed with great counselors, Jay Tucker, Ray Wolfe, Dan Gainer, and Mark Quayle. I was also fortunate to have a great ward council. While I won't name every person who contributed to the ward council, our ward was particularly blessed by strong female leadership, including Hailey Harrison, Sharon Smith, and Mary Orgera.

While serving as Bishop, I was mostly focused on the Primary and youth. Again, we were blessed with great teachers and leaders in Primary. As for the youth, I was thrilled to see several of our youth serve (and complete) missions. Those who served are previously referenced in this Ward History. I was particularly proud of being able to serve as Bishop as my oldest child, Sterling Smith, served a mission in Ecuador, and my in-laws, Ed and Pam Dosch, served a mission in the Republic of Georgia.

Norman McKellar

In His Own Words – Ray Wolfe

I remember the day that President Clapp, President of the Knoxville Tennessee Stake, and I met in the Knoxville 1st Ward Bishop's office. I knew that Bishop Norman McKellar had been released, and I expected to be released as the 1st Counselor to Bishop McKellar. I had been serving in the Bishopric for almost eighteen years with four different Bishops including the times I served as a counselor in the West Hills Ward. My time with each of the others in the Bishoprics had been one of respect for the manner which each of them conducted themselves and the manner in which they treated their counselors. The cooperation and hard work with each of them brought to their callings were very admirable.

As I was sitting across the desk from President Clapp, I was torn between excitement and sorrow. I had spent many hours in service to the Savior, the members of each Bishopric, as well as the members of each ward. I knew being released would allow me to sit in the congregation with my wife each Sunday. I was also certain that I would receive a new calling in the ward.

President Clapp complimented me on my service and extended an honorable release from my calling. He also had some other words to say that I barely heard. I expected to be released, but I was startled when he said Brother Wolfe I am here to extend an honorable release as the 1st Counselor in the Knoxville 1st Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but he continued, saying Bishop David Harrison has asked that you be called as his 1st Counselor. I went from a feeling of relief to one of excitement. I had never sought a calling in the Church, but had never turned down the opportunity to serve.

I am not certain of my words of acceptance. The next clear thought I can remember was President Clapp extending his hand and saying I appreciate your service.

The first meeting of the new Bishopric, Bishop David Harrison, Brother Chris Wyman, and I, was held in the Bishop's office with President Clapp and his 1st Counselor. They were there to provide the new Bishopric some information and guidance on dealing with the situations we would be faced with. Their guidance was similar to that which I had heard from prior Stake Presidents in the past. The one statement which President Clapp made was, "If ten percent of the members are not upset with you at any given time, you need to review decisions you have made."

Marshall Raymond Wolfe Jr.

Pigeon Forge Spanish-Speaking Branch

The Pigeon Forge Spanish-speaking Branch was created in April of 2008. For a period of time there was a fairly large contingent of Spanish-speaking members living in the Sevierville area. Initially these members had a separate Sunday School in the Sevierville Ward led by Brother Alan Azpurua who was a counselor in the Bishopric which later led to an independent branch being formed. The Spanish speaking members in the branch originated from many Latin American countries including Argentina, Mexico, Honduras, Columbia, Peru, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Chile. Many times the branch also had Spanish-speaking members from other wards attend their meeting and also members who had been on Spanish-speaking missions sometimes attended the branch to practice their Spanish.

The branch had many social activities. Getting together for branch dinners occurred at least once a month. And the members gathered for celebrations of special days like Christmas, 4th of July, Thanksgiving, and Valentine's Day. But Brother Marcelo Abregu remembered that the most important event was a branch trip to the Atlanta temple when they rented a big van so they could all go together. He said the reason they chose the Atlanta temple was because many of them needed temple clothes, scriptures, and manuals for branch teachers which they could get at the distribution center in Atlanta. Many of the youth activities were still combined with the Sevierville Ward, but the branch met separately for several years.

However with the downturn in the economy, jobs became more scarce and many of the Spanish-speaking members returned to their native countries or moved to other areas where they could find employment such that there were not enough members for a branch to operate. So the Pigeon Forge Branch was disbanded in February of 2012 and the Spanish-speaking members who remained in the area returned to the Sevierville Ward.

The Pigeon Forge Branch Presidencies who served in the branch during its existence are shown below. No one could remember the exact dates when each Branch President was called. Marcelo Abregu only served as Branch President for about three months before the branch was disbanded with members returning to the Sevierville Ward where Brother Abregu later served as a counselor in the Sevierville Bishopric.

Pigeon Forge Branch Presidencies

Branch President - Willman Henriquez. Counselor Heber Matute

Branch President - Omar Flores. Counselors Marcelo Abregu, Jorge Zapate

Branch President – Marcelo Abregu

Knoxville 3rd Spanish-Speaking Bi-Stake Branch

The Knoxville 3rd Spanish-Speaking Bi-Stake Branch was created in June of 2009 and consisted of Spanish speaking members from both the Knoxville and Knoxville Cumberland Stakes and met in the Institute, Grove Park, and Farragut buildings. Eldon Cruze of the Knoxville Cumberland Stake served as its Branch President with Albert Angola and Lee Copeland as his counselors. Martin Ferrucho also served as a counselor at one point, until he moved from the branch. Carlos Nicho served as his Executive Secretary. They were all returned missionaries who spoke fluent Spanish.

Even though there were quite a few Spanish speaking members in the two stakes, attendance at the branch was never very high due primarily to the long distance from the homes of the members to the various buildings where meetings were held. However, there was a good spirit in the meetings, and those attending appreciated being able to attend church meetings held in their native language.

The Branch Presidency would invite other members of the stake (usually Spanish speakers) to speak in Sacrament meeting whenever possible. If the guest speakers did not speak Spanish a member of the Branch Presidency would translate the entire address.

Guest Spanish Speakers

Scott Cruze
Justin Shepherd
Jon Clark
Pedro Sepulveda
Clint Hurley
Melvin Shafer
Shane Cruze
Kim Cardall
Julio Valdez
Emmy Eddy
Familia Pinson
Russ Barber

Guest English Speakers

Russ Figueira
Aaron Peacock
Gene Muggridge

The branch was discontinued in August of 2013. President Cruze has provided below some special memories of his time serving as Branch President of the Knoxville 3rd Branch.

In His Own Words – Eldon Cruze

Serving in the Spanish branch was a very special experience. Lee, Albert, Carlos, Martin, and I all felt a special kinship with the members of the branch that had carried over from our missions. On our missions we had experienced the special love, kindness, camaraderie, and generally beautiful cultures of the Hispanic and Latino people we served. Working in the branch was no different than being

missionaries in that regard. In context of the callings we held in the branch however, the work was both challenging and rewarding in different ways. Among the challenges I remember:

Numbers, lack of tenure, and transient membership. In the early days of the branch we sometimes had as many as 40 or 50 in attendance. However, throughout most of the existence of the branch, average attendance was between 20 and 30. During the last year or so, attendance had dwindled to around 10 individuals.

Among the members of the branch, the vast majority were recent converts to the Church. Many did not know what it meant to serve as an Elders Quorum president or a Relief Society president, etc.

Additionally, many of the members of the branch had moved to the area to find work. Once that work had dried up those individuals moved on to the next place to find more work, which led to a continuously rotating and diminishing roster.

The combination of these factors made it difficult to form a fully functioning support structure for the members of the branch in terms of auxiliaries. Fortunately, we received a lot of support from the stake. Cumberland Stake High Council members Melvin Shafer, Clint Hurley, and Aaron Peacock successively took on assignments as regular liaisons to the branch and were instrumental in providing guidance to the presidency. They interacted regularly with the members and always made sure they knew that the stake was conscious of them and expressed their love and concern for them. They also allowed us great latitude and flexibility in the ways that we implemented church programs so that we could tailor them to the unique needs of the branch.

I would also mention that Elder Devin Cornish of the 2nd Quorum of the Seventy provided instruction and support on branch organization matters to the Stake Presidency. He also held a special session on one occasion to speak to the branch, which the members loved and appreciated greatly.

We also received much love and support from members and leaders of the Knoxville Stake. President Ben Morgenegg, Bishop Dave Lee and Bishop Paul Pehrson and their counselors were always kind and welcoming to the branch members. Russ Barber gave patriarchal blessings in Spanish, and Judd Rambo collaborated with us to facilitate the branch meeting in the Institute building downtown.

Immigration problems. Many members of the branch were not legal residents of the U.S. Due to this fact there were several scenarios and complications that arose for them during routine traffic stops or other interactions with law enforcement agencies. These incidents would usually result in them being detained, incarcerated, deported, or caught up in court proceedings.

Those members who were affected were often very distraught and suffered through a great amount of despair during those times. It was hard to see them struggle. As the Branch President, I often felt like a father watching his child struggle, and it made me sad.

Although we could not intervene in the legal proceedings, we tried to offer as much support and comfort as we could, both as brothers and as clergy. As a small branch we were very much a family, and times like those brought us very close together.

The challenges were great, but they were nothing compared to the joy we experienced. Among some of my favorite recollections, the following experiences stand out:

The conversions and baptisms of Juan and Israel Baez. Juan and Israel were brothers, and they were being taught by the missionaries. Despite them proclaiming at first that they were staunch Catholics and not interested in joining the Church, they were both eventually baptized, received the Priesthood and held callings. I was also privileged later on to be able to perform the marriage ceremonies for both of them when they married their fiancées.

Our first temple trip as a branch. The group was small, but among the group we had a couple of members who we had watched make their way from newly baptized member all the way to temple recommend holder, and it was very sweet to watch them enter the temple for the first time and experience the joy therein.

Numerous branch activities and dinners. We loved to get together and have food, music, and games. We were all close, like a family and enjoyed each other's company immensely.

The excitement of a new family or member moving into the branch. Throughout the history of the branch, members would either relocate to our area or longtime members who preferred to participate in church services in their native language would discover the existence of the branch and begin attending with us. It was always a wonderful boost of energy to walk into church and see a new family sitting on the bench, eager to join the branch, and the spirit they brought with them was invigorating for the members. Some of the families I remember moving in are:

- La familia Landeros
- Hermano Claudio
- Hermana Angeles
- Hermana Aceituno
- La Familia Rodriguez

Sister Jane Turvaille. We never had any members of the branch who could play the piano, so in the early days we played an instrumental recording of hymns to accompany branch members while singing opening, closing, and Sacrament hymns. Sister Turvaille from the Pleasant Ridge Ward was called to serve as the branch pianist, and the spirit she infused into our meetings was immeasurable. She didn't speak or understand any Spanish, but she was as much a member of the branch as anyone else. She was truly loved and appreciated for helping all of us to feel the Spirit more strongly during our meetings.

Farragut Ward

The Farragut Ward was originally named the Knoxville 1st Ward when the Knoxville Stake was formed in 1972. But with the completion of the new Stake Center in April of 1988, the ward moved from the chapel behind the West Town Mall to the new Stake Center in the town of Farragut and was renamed the Farragut Ward. The history of the Knoxville 1st/Farragut Ward from 1972 to when the Knoxville Stake was split in 1996 is covered in the earlier history “Foot Steps of Faith”. This history covers the history of the Farragut Ward since that time.

Growth and New Members

Over the years the Farragut Ward has grown significantly. Several factors contributed to the growth – increase development in West Knoxville, good schools in the Farragut area, and increasingly strong youth programs in the Farragut Ward. This resulted in the ward being split in September of 1992 to form the Pellissippi Ward and the Loudon Branch being formed in July of 1995. By 2013 the ward had grown to have a membership of over 480 before having its membership reduced to around 300 when the Harden Valley Ward was formed in January of 2014 by revising the boundaries of the Farragut and Pellissippi wards. And with the Loudon Branch being made a ward in May of 2021, there were now four wards originating from the original Farragut Ward. By the end of 2021 the ward had grown to a membership of 367.

The Farragut Ward has had limited success in the number of convert baptisms that have occurred since 1996. However we have had some great members join the Church in our ward including those listed below with the approximate date they were baptized. **We recognize that the list is not complete and we apologize to those we may have missed.**

- 2001 – Ron and Laura Brodeur, Donnie McClendon
- 2002 - Debbie Delaney, Grady and Kathy Riggins and their sons Spencer, Josh, and Matt
- 2003 - Bonnie Southard
- 2004 - Teresa Thomas
- 2006 – John Martin, Kathy Drevik, Cindy Flordeliza and her daughter Casi
- 2007 - Isabel DeLorie, Jade Morales, Todd and Chanda Cureton
- 2008 - Warren Palmer
- 2010 - Heather Verholek
- 2012 - Louisa Basile (Helm)
- 2013 - Robert Branson, Dwight and Jane Sexton, Michael and Julie Powers and their son Jackson, Katrina Milcan, Steve Marshall
- 2014 - Duane Gidley, Loretta Stevens and her son Sam Dobric
- 2015 - Maria Ward
- 2017 - Charles Werre
- 2018 - Molly Hays, Ruby Wright, Chloe Wagner
- 2019 - Sharon Fritz
- 2020 – Brian and De’Andre Gant

- 2021 - Crystal Parsons

Temple Activity

While the Farragut Ward is located about a three-hour drive from the Nashville Temple, members were encouraged to attend as often as possible and several members of the ward also served as ordinance workers in the temple. For years the ward scheduled at least one major ward trip to the Nashville Temple each fall with a significant portion of the ward attending. The ward often reserved the Franklin Stake Center adjacent to the Nashville Temple where they gathered for a short devotional before doing ordinances in the temple. The chapel in the stake center was always filled for the event. Adult leaders generally attended an endowment session on the night before and then participated with the youth baptisms or provided activities for the children and unendowed members while the other endowed adults performed endowments, sealings, or initiatory ordinances in the temple. Those attending would then share a brief lunch and head back home.

Over the years, the Farragut Ward has had numerous Ordinance Workers serve in the Nashville Temple. **Those who served and are serving are listed in the Nashville Temple section of the stake history.**

Missionary Service

The Farragut Ward has been blessed to have the Mission Home located in our ward boundaries. As a result, the Mission President and his family, which often included teen-age children, have been members of our ward. While the Mission President would not attend our ward regularly as he would visit and speak most weeks in wards throughout the mission, for those Mission Presidents who brought children with them, his wife and teenagers would regularly attend our ward and have always had a positive influence on the youth in our ward.

The Farragut Ward Bishops have focused major attention on helping the youth prepare to serve missions which resulted in a significant increase in those serving from the ward since about 2010. Since the Knoxville Stake was formed in 1972 there have been approximately 115 missionaries called from the Farragut Ward (previously named the Knoxville 1st Ward). There has been a significant increase in number of missionaries serving from the ward in the last 10 years. The breakdown of the number of missionaries and the names and missions of those called from the Farragut Ward are summarized as follows:

Number of missionaries serving

- 1972 to 1980 - 11
- 1981 to 1990 - 19
- 1991 to 2000 - 25
- 2001 to 2010 - 18
- 2011 to 2021 - 41

Names, Missions, and Start Date of Missionaries who have served from the Knoxville 1st/Farragut Ward

Cruze, Douglas Shane	Washington Mission	30-Sep-72
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Ayres, Dallas Stephen	California South Mission	20-Feb-73
Casteel, Clifton Phillip	Colombia Mission	6-Jun-73
Bohne, Douglas Blackhurst	Peru Lima South Mission	5-Aug-75
O'Bryant, Rickey Ray	Korea Seoul Mission	6-Nov-75
Burris, Richard Alan	Nevada Las Vegas Mission	8-Jul-78
Borden, Eugene Owen	Canada Calgary Mission	30-Nov-78
Snow, Edgar Cleveland, Jr	Switzerland Zurich Mission	2-Aug-79
Plaas, William Paul	Nevada Las Vegas Mission	6-Dec-79
Jeffery, Johan Marcus	Canada Winnipeg Mission	8-May-80
Garrett, Brett Christopher	Utah Salt Lake City South Mission	20-Aug-80
Jeffery, Allan Paul	Peru Lima North Mission	21-May-81
Zitting, Brent Reed	Nevada Las Vegas Mission	8-Dec-83
Schmidt, Kirk Edward	California Arcadia Mission	7-Jun-84
Jeffery, Steve Kai	Washington Seattle Mission	13-Sep-84
Swanson, James Richard	Missionary Services	27-Sep-84
Borden, Robert Bayard	California San Bernardino Mission	17-Jan-85
Davis, Nephi David	Spain Madrid Mission	17-Oct-85
Ebbert, Lee Eric	Italy Milan Mission	3-Sep-86
Barber, Troy Russell	Italy Catania Mission	27-May-87
Borden, Bennett Bernard	Michigan Lansing Mission	6-Jul-88
White, Jeffrey Charles	Illinois Peoria Mission	31-Aug-88
Plaas, Julia Louise	Japan Fukuoka Mission	16-Nov-88
Noblit, Christopher Kelly	South Dakota Rapid City Mission	7-Dec-88
Smith, Stephanie	Japan Tokyo North Mission	11-Jan-89
Jones, Robert William	Oklahoma Oklahoma City Mission	18-Jan-89
Rupp, Jason William	California San Diego Mission	14-Jun-89
White, David Bradley	California Riverside Mission	16-Aug-89
Davis, Robina Elaine	Japan Fukuoka Mission	9-May-90
Ebbert, Jon Aaron	Portugal Lisbon North Mission	11-Jul-90
Clark, Jonathan David	Argentina Mendoza Mission	16-Jan-01
Gripentog, Bernice Naomi	Philippines Baguio Mission	23-Oct-91
Smith, Robert Grant	Washington Tacoma Mission	8-Jul-92
Drake, Helen Marie	Texas McAllen Mission	24-May-93
Drake, James Anthony	Texas McAllen Mission	24-May-93
Davis, Elwin Nelson	Italy Padova Mission	16-Jun-93
Boxx, Brian Chester	California Sacramento Mission	21-Jul-93
Cornaby, Autumn Lin	North Carolina Charlotte Mission	20-Oct-93
Davis, Lavinia I-Shuan	Korea Daejeon Mission	10-Nov-93
Duke, Jonathan Lindsay	Pennsylvania Harrisburg Mission	1-Jun-94
Cornaby, Aaron Albert	Washington Spokane Mission	20-Jul-94
Pearson, Ray Leon	Utah SLC Family & Church Hist Miss	1-Aug-95
Pearson, Leah	Utah SLC Family & Church Hist Miss	1-Aug-95
Grose, Heather Anne	Italy Milan Mission	16-Aug-95

Duce, Nathan Wright	Brazil Londrina Mission	6-Mar-96
Duke, Jennilyn Kay	Taiwan Taichung Mission	13-Mar-96
Barber, Brad Andrew	Brazil Sao Paulo South Mission	10-Jul-96
Watts, Bradley Paul	Washington Seattle Mission	28-Jul-96
Boxx, Jarom Andrew	Washington Spokane Mission	14-Aug-96
Cornaby, Tyler Smith	Argentina Mendoza Mission	21-Aug-96
Wallace, Bradford David	Czech Prague Mission	13-Aug-97
Jones, Johnathan William	California San Diego Mission	24-Sep-97
Johnson, Anthony Wendell	Germany Berlin Mission	14-Jan-98
Duke, James Michael	Russia St Petersburg Mission	29-Apr-98
Burns, Robert Biesinger	Australia Sydney South Mission	12-Jan-00
Massengill, Matthew Thomas	Missionary Services Mission	3-May-00
Baker, Keri Linn	Germany Munich/Austria Mission	12-Jun-02
Johnson, Amber Marie	China Hong Kong Mission	22-Jan-03
Isom, Bradley Michael	Denmark Copenhagen Mission	9-Jun-04
Price, Joshua Paul	Ukraine Kyiv Mission	8-Sep-04
Baker, Aubrey Leanne	Romania/Moldova Mission	17-Aug-05
Stewart, David Scott	Nicaragua Managua South Mission	19-Oct-05
Hale, David Joseph	Washington Seattle Mission	25-Jan-06
Kodra, Anton Paul	Brazil Manaus Mission	1-Feb-06
Vandygriff, Orson David	Korea Seoul West Mission	12-Apr-06
Vaughan, Michael David	India Bangalore Mission	28-Jun-06
Lee, Jeffrey Scott	Greece Athens Mission	2-Aug-06
Ziegler, Zachary Collin	Florida Jacksonville Mission	8-Nov-06
Lee, Christopher David	Scotland/Ireland Mission	10-Oct-07
Phillips, Benjamin Ephraim	Marshall Islands Majuro Mission	19-Nov-08
Skovran, Steven Arthur	California Ventura Mission	27-May-09
Isom, Brian Matthews	Finland Helsinki Mission	23-Jun-10
Gibson, Jacob Andrew	New Mexico Albuquerque Mission	14-Jul-10
Orme, Rachel Anne	Canada Vancouver Mission	22-Sep-10
Lee, Kevin Boyd	Nevada Las Vegas Mission	22-Jun-11
Rainey, Tyler Sheldon	England Birmingham Mission	15-Jul-11
Vaughn, Kimball Kenton	Utah Salt Lake City Mission	24-Aug-11
Farmer, Landon Van Buren	Nevada Reno Mission	28-Sep-11
Beauchamp, Grayson David Monroe	Washington Vancouver Mission	18-Jan-12
Pesci, Nello-John, III	Nevada Las Vegas Mission	27-Jun-12
Sexton, Dwight David, III	Australia Adelaide Mission	5-Jul-12
Rainey, Dustin Rae	Micronesia Guam Mission	5-Sep-12
Stewart, Katie Marie	Salt Lake City South Mission	23-Oct-13
Marshall, James Hunter	Washington Everett Mission	10-Apr-13
Bryner, Cole Conrad	California Fresno Mission	6-Nov-13
Matheson, Conner Robert	Brazil Fortaleza East Mission	27-Dec-13
Wade, Joshua David	California San Jose Mission	8-Jan-14

Wade, Jacob Lehi	Philippines Bacolod Mission	2-Jul-14
Vaughn, Hunter Stockman	Australia Sydney North Mission	9-Jul-14
Price, Kaitlin Rose	Alaska Anchorage Mission	3-Sep-14
Becker, Hannah Lee	New Jersey Morristown Mission	17-Sep-14
Ray, Savannah Erin	Idaho Boise Mission	14-Jan-15
Phillips, Bryan Justin	California Sacramento Mission	11-Feb-15
Pesci, Olivia Barbara	California Bakersfield Mission	27-May-15
Ebbert, Ashlee Elizabeth	California Anaheim Mission	3-Jun-15
Joyner, Kacey Samuel	California San Jose Mission	8-Jul-15
Giacalone, Noah Matthew	Fiji Suva Mission	4-Nov-15
Pesci, Cristian Russell	Italy Rome Mission	1-Jun-16
Bryner, Austin Wayne	Canada Montreal Mission	8-Jun-16
Ebbert, Landon Eric	Armenia/Georgia Mission	15-Jun-16
Lee, Justin Keith	Canada Vancouver Mission	22-Jun-16
Giacalone, Hannah Dean	Cape Verde Praia Mission	1-Mar-17
Bass, Emily Marin	Colorado Colorado Springs Mission	31-May-17
Marshall, Bryce Watson	California San Diego Mission	30-Aug-17
Cornaby, Ashton Cole	Nevada Reno Mission	3-Jan-18
Wade, Joseph Brigham	California Newport Beach Mission	8-May-18
Bass, James Dallin	Italy Milan Mission	31-Oct-18
Ebbert, Madelin Ruth	Nevada Reno Mission	11-Jun-19
Becker, Jacob Paul	Washington Kennewick Mission	18-Jun-19
Sexton, Connor Russell	California Riverside Mission	31-Jul-19
Sexton, Tanner Moore	Washington Tacoma Mission	31-Jul-19
Matheson, Devin Harold	Nevada Reno Mission	11-Mar-20
Ebbert, Joshua Leon	Kentucky Louisville Mission	24-Jun-20
Wade, Caroline Irene	Idaho Pocatello Mission	2-Sep-20
Ray, Sara Angel	Argentina Santa Fe Mission	16-Jun-21
Kersten, Madeline Ann	Bolivia Santa Cruz Mission	31-Jan-22
Becker, Charles Rees	Germany Berlin Mission	6-Jun-22

Youth Activities

With the increased numbers in the ward came ever larger and stronger youth programs, with the Farragut Ward having one of the largest youth groups in the stake. The stake provided outstanding youth conferences, Girl's camp, and other activities which greatly strengthened the youth. Youth ward temple trips to do baptisms were scheduled each quarter and, because of the large numbers of youth, back-to-back sessions had to be scheduled to accommodate the large number of youth attending from the ward. **Additional details of youth activities are included in the ward activities and Bishop's 'In His Own Words' write-ups later in the ward history.**

The Farragut Ward sponsored Boy Scout Troop 140 until the Pellissippi Ward was formed in 1992 at which time the Pellissippi Ward sponsored Troop 140 and the Farragut Ward sponsored Troop 14. This

continued until the Church discontinued scouting at the end of 2019. Over the years the troop has been very active with regular camping trips and yearly attendance at Camp Buck Toms which resulted in many young men achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. Below is a listing of those who have achieved this rank based on records from the local Boy Scout office.

Eagle Scouts from Troop 140

Eagle Scouts from Troop 14

William	Barron	1967	Lael	Davis	1993	Cristian	Pesci	2013
Douglas	Cruze	1967	Bradford	Wallace	1994	Joshua	Wade	2013
Eugene	Borden	1973	Jonathan	Benson	1998	Carter	Langford	2013
Edgar	Snow	1975	David	Stewart	2000	Jake	Wood	2013
Darryl	Borden	1976	Austin	Anderson	2003	Alec	Apostoaiei	2013
William	Plaas	1978	Zachary	Ziegler	2004	Landon	Ebbert	2013
Ronald	Phillips	1978	Jordan	Bryner	2004	Konnor	Kah	2013
Gilbert	Barron	1978	Steven	Stewart	2005	Jacob	Wade	2014
Allan	Jeffrey	1978	Ory	Vandygriff	2005	Justin	Lee	2014
Johan	Jeffrey	1978	Justin	Gibson	2005	Austin	Bryner	2014
David	Werner	1978	Christopher	Lee	2005	Noah	Giacalone	2014
Richard	Borden	1979	Aaron	Kodra	2005	Bryce	Marshall	2016
Robert	Borden	1982	Jacob	Kodra	2005	Joseph	Wade	2016
Reino	jeffery	1983	Kevin	Lee	2008	Devin	Matheson	2017
Andy	Barnett	1984	Jacob	Gibson	2008	Connor	Sexton	2017
Tyler	Brinkmon	1984	Dwight	Sexton	2008	Jacob	Becker	2017
Robert	Jones	1987	Kimball	Vaughn	2008	James	Bass	2018
Joel	Barber	1987	Tyler	Rainey	2008	Tanner	Sexton	2018
Ronald	Purcell	1987	Connor	Vandygriff	2008	Hudson	Ray	2018
Elwin	Davis	1989	Daniel	Vandygriff	2008	Charles	Becker	2020
Brian	Boxx	1990	Hunter	Vaughn	2010	Hayden	Ashby	2020
Brad	Barber	1990	Conner	Matheson	2011	Joshua	Ebbert	2020
Jeffry	Clements	1991	Dustin	Rainey	2011			
Robert	Smith	1991	Cole	Bryner	2011			

The Young Women Personal Progress program was the equivalent to the scouting program for the young women and is the highest honor given in the Young Women organization. There were no records available to identify those who received this award, but listed below are the young women we could identify and the approximate year they received the award while living in the Farragut Ward.

Young Womanhood Recognition Recipients

Kami Isom - 2003

Cortney Barnwell - 2004

Brittney Barnwell – 2004

Lauren Bryce - 2005

Lindsey Baker – 2005

Elyse Vaughn - 2005

Katie Stuart - 2005

Cortney Isom - 2008

Allie Sexton – 2009

Janelle Graves - 2009

Rachel Graves - 2009

Sara Matheson – 2009

Natalie Orme – 2010

Savannah Ray – 2010

Hannah Becker - 2011
Anna Gruszkiewicz - 2011
Kelsey Kah – 2011
Amanda Ray – 2012
Hannah Giacalone – 2012
Elizabeth Barnwell - 2013
Emily Bass - 2014
Ashlee Ebbert – 2014
Kendria Price – 2014
Katy Becker - 2014
Alyssa Matheson – 2014
Kinsley Price – 2015
Ellie Giacalone - 2016
Nicole Lee – 2016

Sydney Sexton – 2016
Aley Wade – 2016
Cara Wade – 2016
Kate Bass – 2016
Isabella Cornaby - 2016
Breanna Bass – 2018
Macie Giacalone - 2018
Alice Dupree – 2018
Madelin Ebbert – 2018
Melissa Ludington – 2018
Sara Ray - 2018
Jessica Matheson – 2019
Kylee Mori - 2020

Ward Activities

In addition to participating in the stake-sponsored youth activities and ward temple trips, the ward held weekly youth and monthly Relief Society activities and generally sponsored other events each year including the annual Christmas party and dinner, Halloween trunk or treat which often included a chili cook-off, a summer picnic, and sometimes a Memorial Day breakfast and a 24th of July celebration. Due to COVID restrictions, many activities could not be held in 2020 but the ward did have a very successful Nativity drive through with stations set up in the parking lot representing the star, the angels, the shepherds, the three wise men, and the nativity scene.

Specific information about Farragut Ward activities during past years was retrieved from the following ward historical reports.

2013. The ward is led by Bishop Kent Vaughn and most of the year with Matt Giacalone and Kent Joiner as counselors.

Although many great missionary efforts were made throughout the year, possibly the greatest and most faith promoting was the baptism of the Powers, Sextons, Brother Marshall, and Katrina Milcan. These members are welcome blessings to the ward and have helped us all see how powerful the spirit is and how it can affect people in their own social circles.

The ward once again held a ward family temple day which was very well attended and allowed some members may have not been able to attend the temple to do so. With family oriented activities and, most importantly a dedicated crew of members that supported younger children as their parents served in the temple, the event was a great success and will continue to be an annual event. The spiritual highlight of the year was the 40-day fast that helped to build faith and missionary work for the ward members. The same process was followed this year as last and it was a tremendous success. Many great experiences and testimonies were strengthened for this event

There are regular activities throughout the year which are well attended. The highlight event was the Christmas Nativity event which will be held annually. The event spanned two days and included numerous live versions of the nativity scene as well as youth staffed outdoor nativity activities with the

full-size manger (amongst blistering cold rain and chilling winds, the youth begged to go out and be a part of the Christmas spirit). These events were supported by a walk-through art gallery depicting the life of Christ as well as children craft rooms with the main focus on the large collection on the nativity scenes that were loaned by nearly 100 local members. The event was open to the public and was a great success on all levels. The event required a special planning committee that involved dozens of members at many levels of service.

These events, along with numerous faith promoting self-esteem meetings, youth Wednesday activities, campouts, casual pie night activities, and many other ward activities have brought the ward closer together and have increased the faith of the members.

The general assumption that the ward would be split had become commonplace the last few months of the year and it was assumed to be a matter of weeks before it was implemented. With the ward being so large and with some members having not been able to serve due to limited opportunities, this is a welcome part of the growth of the church in the Knoxville area.

2014. The big event of 2014 was the ward split in January. The split made a big change in the size of the ward and while many great members are now in the Pellissippi Ward, there is still a great number of brotherhood and sisterhood within the ward. Most Sacrament meetings average attendance is about 196 weekly. Members still associate with one another in the halls between meetings. Three wards now meet in the building

Even with the ward split, the bulk of the youth in the stake are in the Farragut Ward which makes for a fantastic youth program, with great leaders and great activities. Jeff Lee continues to lead the young men and Carrie Giacalone leads the young women

Many great missionary efforts were made throughout the year as Brother Miller (who succeeded Brother Nelson) was very effective with the challenge to invite friends into our homes for a meal or other casual gatherings. This simple challenge has allowed members to realize how easy missionary work is and how being a friend should come first.

It was a great blessing to see Sister Loretta Stevens (family to the Powers), Sam Dobric (her nine-year-old son) and Duane Gidley (long time and actively engaged husband of Linda Gidley) be baptized and continue to be loved and welcomed by the ward. The genuine and friendly spirits are a welcome sight each week.

There are regular activities throughout the year but the main event was again the Christmas Nativity led by Sister Marshall along with dozens of dedicated members. The Christmas nativity followed the same format as last year and was very successful. Other popular events were the late October trunk or treat activity which drew well over 200 people and was a fun evening for kids, youth, and parents alike. Weather was good and the event was a success.

The ward also held the 40-day fast which has occurred in the last several years. Many great experiences and testimonies were strengthened from this event. The ward held a ward family temple day in August which was very well attended.

2016. In November the Farragut Ward got a new bishopric. After serving nearly 5 years, Bishop Kenton Vaughn, first counselor, Kent Joyner and second counselor Thane Price were released. The new bishop is David Sexton with Matt Pulver and Clint Mori as counselors.

Relief Society Report: Amy Mori was released in August and a new RS presidency was put in: President- Tristi Ebbert, 1st counselor Shannon Zierden, 2nd counselor Troba Mangum, and secretary Sherri Price.

They reported we hit the ground running, helping with award temple trip that next weekend and then the preparedness fair a few weeks later. We gathered food for 300 sack lunches for a KARM service activity. In November we had a "Thrilling Thursday" like a super Saturday but on a weeknight. The Laurels were invited and we had a light dinner and had a choice of three crafts to make - a perpetual journal, a lighted block, and a chicken wire frame for hanging cards. In December we were in charge of our ward Christmas breakfast and also had our annual cookie exchange at Mary-Anne Pesci's home. The presidency makes soup and everyone brings four dozen cookies to trade and give to the truckers driving through during Christmas. We burned 75 Christmas CDs for our Christmas gift this year. During the year we also helped with many sign up lists for missionary zone conference luncheons, feeding the missionaries, Eagle Scout projects, refugees, nursing homes, cleaning the church, Bishop's Storehouse, cookies for the firemen and fire relief for Gatlinburg.

High Priests: Reported by Barney Cornaby, High Priest Group Leader. In the last 6 months, we carried out one successful temple trip in August. We also participated in a number of service projects including moving persons and giving out 10 fruit baskets. We also helped to restore order after the fires in Gatlinburg by going there and giving hours of work, organizing things, and sending money. Also, we elected to gather cash (more than 1,500 dollars) to help a needy family in our group.

Primary: Reported by Sandy Wade, Primary President. Activities for 2016 included a Primary teacher in-service Valentine Party and a March Easter Party, a May Priesthood preview and Eight is Great, an August Ward Temple trip with special activities for Primary Children and a September Primary Teacher Appreciation luncheon, and an October Children's Primary Sacrament Meeting Presentation and a December Nativity performed by Primary.

Young Men: Reported by Kirk Bass, YM President. In May, a Farragut Father and Son Outing was held at Elkmont Campground commemorated the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. The Young Men participated in 2016 Camp Teancum, a high adventure camp, most of the Teachers and Priest went to the stake's high adventure trip in Chilhowie, and the stake TREK youth conference. They also participated in several service projects including helping a needy nonmember, Jackie Shields, with a major yard clean up and splitting logs from a fallen tree in Bill Cox's backyard. The Priests went over to the Cox's with axes, wedges and sledgehammers and split up all the logs so that they could be used in a fireplace. This was probably one of their favorite activities. They love swinging the axe and watching the logs fly apart. They also worked many hours helping fellow scouter complete their Eagle Scout projects.

Young Women: Reported by Kari Giacalone, YW President. We have had some changes in the Presidency this past 6 months. Julie Powers was called to serve as the First Counselor and Amy Mori was called to serve as the Second Counselor. YW activities during the year included:

- Isabella Cornaby, Cara Wade, Sydney Sexton, Aley Wade, Ellie Giacalone, Kate Bass, and Nicole completed the personal progress program and earned their Young Womanhood medallion.
- Farragut Ward Young Women "Miss Excellence" Young Women in Excellence was on September 27. The theme was "Miss Excellence"...an Olympic theme. We had a talent show in which many of the girls took part. It was a wonderful evening to celebrate the gifts and talents of all the young women.

- In November, Kylee Mori, Jessica Matheson, and Kate Bass worked with Amy Mori to organize a service project to collect donations from ward members to assemble Christmas gifts for 109 residents of a nursing home in Florida. In December, the young women worked together to write Christmas messages on 109 cards and then assemble all 109 gifts for the residents.
- We had our annual Christmas caroling activity with the young men to the Park West Hospital.

2018. The Farragut Ward focus for 2018 was presented to the ward in a combined meeting on Dec 30, 2017. Sister Tina Manion shared thoughts on how service brings us closer to Christ; Brother Bill Gwin shared his thoughts about how receiving service brings us closer to Christ, and Sister Hannah Becker spoke about how sharing the gospel brings us closer to Christ. Bishop Sexton then introduced the focus for the ward teaching the importance of Ministering to the One or the individual and sharing the motto, “Every Member a Minister.” Ward members were asked to focus on going beyond callings and seeking to raise the bar of personal discipleship by striving to minister to someone every day.

As outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants and pursuant to their duty as members of the Priest Quorum, the Young Men of the Priest Quorum completed their goal to visit the homes of all the members of the Ward and encourage them to “pray vocally and in secret.” This undertaking started in 2017 and required a great effort on the part of the Priests. It was a great testimony builder for the young men and connected them to the families of the ward. Over 80 families were visited and the PQ committed to continue this effort as new families moved into the ward.

The young men also had the opportunity on several occasions to teach the gospel to non-members. Appointments were arranged for young men in groups of two to visit the homes of non-members and have dinner with and then teach these families. These meetings were a great success and about half of the non-member families actually ended up attending a Sacrament meeting as a result of these meetings.

The young men and young women had many great activities. A few of note were bubble soccer, which was a hit, literally. Also, a missionary activity was held where youth were called on missions, given companions, and had a short training session with a Mission President and his wife (Isom, Aten, and Bass couples filled these roles), who trained them briefly on teaching door approaches. The youth then had the chance to knock on doors of different classrooms and meet members (many of whom were from other wards, such as the Brother and Sister Grose, Langford, Meek, and Cruze) who played the roles of non-members. These door approaches were great experiences and led to some very tender moments as well as some very entertaining moments. Youth also taught members who posed as investigators and share the message of the restoration with them. These activities helped prepare the young men and young women to prepare for their missions. During 2018, Ashton Cornaby, Brigham Wade, and Dallin Bass left to serve full-time missions.

The Primary organized an Easter Egg Hunt for the primary children. It was very well attended. The Primary ran very smoothly and the activity rate for the children was over 90%. Teachers and leaders did a wonderful job.

A summer cookout was held at Anchor Park. Brother Isom, Moody, and Ebbert prepared some incredible BBQ and everyone had a great time. A huge game of kick ball was played with the Bishopric and other youth leaders playing alongside many youth and primary children. The ages ranged from 3 to early 50's and even included the sister missionaries.

During Sacrament meetings and 5th Sundays many members had the opportunity to share their conversion experiences. Brother Brad Isom, Brother Robert Markli, Sister Stephanie Becker, Chloe Wagner, and many others shared their experiences. Also, during 2018 there were two convert baptisms, Sister Molly Hayes and Sister Ruby Wright were baptized in 2018.

The Church announced the combining of High Priest Groups into the Elder Quorum and the Farragut Ward reorganized the Elder's Quorum Presidency with Barney Cornaby being called as the President, along with Bryce Moody and Quentin Aten as his counselors and Bill Gwin as the secretary.

The ward temple trip was a great success with well over 100 members of the ward attending the temple. Primary children had a great time at the Stake Center with members of the Bishopric and other ward members engaging them in activities that included a temple grounds tour with Russell Barber, a ward member and the former Nashville Temple President.

The Relief Society organized and held numerous monthly activities that were well attended and also organized the annual Ward Christmas Party. Moe's Mexican Grill catered the event and ward members and friends had a wonderful time. Sister Ebbert and her counselors were wonderful ministers and worked extremely hard to ensure that the needs of the sisters were met.

Accomplishments during 2018 were the following: Members who were endowed with a Temple Recommend increased by 6% and sacrament meeting attendance increased by 9%. Total members were 303.

2019. The ward focus for 2019 was presented to the ward in a combined meeting and emphasized on 5th Sundays. The focus was on the temple and for the ward to have a vision of What the Future Can Be. Sister Kelly Martin shared her recent experience of receiving her endowment and shared powerful testimony of the joy she felt in the temple. Brother Leon Ebbert taught the members and bore testimony of the importance of serving in the temple by regular attendance and where possible, as ordinance workers or volunteers. Sister Kate Bass, a young woman, shared her experiences with Family Baptism Days and talked about the spiritual experiences her family has enjoyed. Bishop Sexton commented on the above topics and then introduced a photo shop rendering of a temple identical to the Nashville Temple placed on the Knoxville Stake Center site. This was presented to the ward as a possibility in the future. He then shared the following goals:

- Every member find a name each quarter to take to the temple
- Each member ponder and pray about how much time they can spend at the temple, and if possible, become a Temple Worker
- Each family try to go at least one time to the temple in 2019 for a Family Baptism Day

Overall temple attendance improved. Also the percentage of endowed members holding a temple recommend was 79%. Also, in the month of July, all ward members were invited to try and attend the temple. This was tracked by individuals using anonymous slips of paper, which were marked and dropped in a box, to document temple attendance in July. Over 150 temple experiences were recorded.

The young men continued to visit the homes of members who moved into the ward and share faith promoting messages. The YM continued their efforts to be strong ministers in the ward and in addition to visiting families they often administered the Sacrament to those who could not attend church. Connor Sexton served as 1st Assistant and Tanner Sexton as 2nd Assistant. Families that moved into the ward in 2019 included the following: Boggs, Black, Cook, Biedermann, and Skinner.

The Bishopric and the YW Presidency trained and organized the young women for visits and gospel messages to the homes of various members following the model that has been used for the YM previously. The young women were assigned companions and were trained by YW leaders with Sister Becker leading this effort. Dinner appointments were arranged and after dinner messages of faith were shared. Testimonies were strengthened and stronger friendships were forged. The YW had great experiences. It is hoped that this will encourage many of them to strongly consider serving missions.

(NOTE: Since that time, as of 2022, the following YW: Emma Pickett, Cara Wade, Maddie Kersten, Sarah Ray, and Madelin Ebbert and YM: Jacob Becker, Connor Sexton, Tanner Sexton, Devin Matheson, and Joshua Ebbert have served or are serving full-time missions.)

The young men and young women had many great activities including a river-rafting trip down the Ocoee River and many service opportunities. Several youth had special accomplishments. Tanner Sexton, Connor Sexton, Devin Matheson, Dallin Bass, Hudson Ray, and Jacob Becker earned his Eagle Scout. Joshua Ebbert had an outstanding track and cross country season earning all KIL and making it to State. Charlie Becker, Emily Martin, and Quinn Morrison were important parts of the FHS production of the Sound of Music and Devon Pulver won the YM Ping-Pong tournament although he could not beat Bishop Sexton. Other youth participated on various sports teams at both the club and school level.

The Primary organized the annual Easter Egg Hunt for the Primary children. In addition, in December a new Primary Presidency was called. Sister Mindy McClurkin was called as the new President with Sister Hlebasko and Sister Skinner as counselors and Sister Kersten as the Secretary.

Brother Peter Kersten was called as the Ward Mission Leader. For a few years Farragut had worked with Sister Missionaries but in about August the ward received Elders. There was only one convert baptism in 2019 but it was a long awaited one. Sister Sharon Fritz was baptized!

A summer cookout was once again held at Anchor Park. About 100 people attending and enjoyed great food and fellowship. Several Primary Activity Day boys and youth leaders including, Bishop Sexton, Brother Pulver, Brother McClurkin, Brother Justin Hamilton, Brother Sachs, and many youth enjoyed a flag football game.

The ward temple trip was a great success with about 105 members of the ward attending the temple. Primary children had a great time at the Stake Center.

The Relief Society organized and held numerous monthly activities that were well attended and also organized the annual Ward Christmas Party, which was a breakfast.

Overall the ward had 308 total members with 76% sacrament meeting attendance. Ministering Interviews for EQ and RS were 74% and 76% respectively. Activity rates for youth and primary were all 93%.

2020. The Farragut Ward focus for 2020 was presented to the ward through a new document called the Ward Ministering Plan. The plan focused on ministering efforts to 3 groups of people: Members, non-members, and our kindred dead. Members were asked to pray for and seek to have a daily ministering experience with a member or non-member; to invite a friend to church each month; and to have a quarterly temple experience of some kind. EQ and RS were asked to follow up on individual and family efforts in their interviews each month.

Sacrament talks had a special focus on ministering and special effort was made to teach, preach, and testify of Christ in every Sacrament meeting. In March COVID-19 rocked the world and for a few months there were no church meetings at all.

In order to ensure that ministering continued, the Bishopric lead the effort for the EQ and RS to ensure that ministering brothers and sisters had weekly contact with their families and that all were physically, spiritual, and temporally healthy and safe. The Bishopric assisted in this effort. Although visits in the homes of members were not possible, Bishop Sexton instituted front porch visits in April and May and was able to connect with most of the ward members. Also, Zoom worship services were organized virtually. These meetings were broadcast from the YW room. The Bishopric spoke at the first meeting with Bishop Sexton sharing thoughts on the theme “stand holy in all places” and Brother Mori conducting. For future meetings, the Bishopric, two assigned speakers and their families were in attendance. The program including an opening song which families could follow along with at home, an opening prayer offered by a member, 2 talks, and a closing prayer. Brother Mori and Brother Pulver expertly organized and handled the technology. This provided members a chance to gather virtually which at the time was completely new to all of us. Many members expressed great joy in feeling more closely connected to leaders and each other through gathering together virtually. Soon 2nd hour meetings were included virtually. Overall this went quite smoothly. All organizations rose to the challenge. For example, Primary went to great effort to have a Primary Program that was prerecorded. Sister McClurkin, her counselors, and the music leader (Sister Pulver) spent many hours individually recording the children giving talks and singing. President Aten (EQ President) organized the footage into a final program. It was wonderful and inspiring.

Many ward members served as full time missionaries during this time. For much of 2020 they were very limited in what they could do; however, they continued to work hard. Many who were in foreign

countries returned home until they could be reassigned. For example, Elder Jacob Becker returned from Argentina and was reassigned to Washington State.

Ultimately Sacrament meetings returned to in-person and eventually 2nd hour meetings did as well. Strict cleaning requirements were instituted and ward schedules for units that shared buildings were changed to ensure that only one ward was in the building at a time for church meetings, including youth activities.

Sister Christina Sachs was called as the YW President as Sister Becker was released in July. Also, Sister Melissa Biedermann was called as the RS President as Sister Ebbert was released in November. Both Sister Becker and Sister Ebbert along with all who worked with them performed admirably for several years. Also in November the Stake Presidency was reorganized and Bishop Sexton was called to be the Stake President. For a few months he served as both Bishop and Stake President. He released himself and Matt Pulver (former 1st counselor in the Bishopric) was called as the new Bishop of the Farragut Ward in December.

Ward Leadership

The Farragut Ward has been blessed to have had strong dedicated leaders. The Bishopric and Ward Council meet regularly each month and together make decisions and provide leadership for the ward. The Bishop carries a very heavy load as he provides the guidance and makes the final decisions concerning ward goals, callings, and needs as he seeks spiritual guidance for helping the ward progress. He relies heavily on his counselors and the Relief Society president and other Priesthood leaders.

The Bishops and their counselors who have served since 1996 are listed below.

September 1992 – Gene Boxx. Counselors Bill Cox, Jim Skovran, Elwin Davis, Lynn Whipple, Steve Burns, Ken Duke

November 1997 – Lynn Whipple. Counselors Rand Watson, Todd Johnson, Lynn Giles, Kent Erickson, Lee Bryner

September 2001 – Lee Bryner. Counselors Allen Langford, Rob Ivey, Kent Vaughn, Allen Openshaw

June 2005 – Rob Ivey. Counselors David Sexton, Allen Openshaw, Jim Stratton, David Jackson, David Wallace

October 2009 – David Lee. Counselors Kent Vaughn, Mike Gibson

November 2011 – Kent Vaughn. Counselors David Jackson, Matt Giacalone, Kent Joiner, Thane Price

November 2016 – David Sexton. Counselors Matthew Pulver, Clint Mori

November 2020 – Matthew Pulver. Counselors Roy Schmardebeck, Jacob Hlebasko

The Relief Society Presidents provide the Bishop with insight and feedback concerning the needs and progress of the members of the ward, in particular of the sisters. Next to the Bishop, the Ward Relief Society President spends the most time serving the members of the ward. The following are the Farragut Ward Relief Society Presidents who have served since 1996 - Marilyn Whipple, Ruth Cox, Sandy

Grose, Valerie Price, Lynn Skovran, Lynn Willis, Kari Giacalone, Mary-Anne Pesci, Amy Mori, Tristi Ebbert, Melissa Biedermann.

Several of the Bishops who served in the Farragut Ward since 1996 have provided special memories of their time of service.

In His Own Words – Lynn Whipple

The years in which I served as Bishop of the Farragut Ward of the Knoxville Tennessee Stake are among the most cherished of my life. They are cherished, not because of the easiness of the service nor the absence of sadness. They are cherished because of the relationship with fellow members of the Church equally striving, through life's hardships, to learn and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My life was forever changed through youth interviews, Ward Council meetings, funerals, weddings, baptisms, unexpected pregnancies, temple recommend interviews, repentance discussions, accidents, meetings and more meetings. In reviewing my journals, notes and weekly leadership guides for this assignment my heart has been deeply touched, again, by the love I feel for my "family" in Farragut.

I had no idea I would be called although I was aware that Bishop Boxx would soon be released. I can remember the feeling of my breath being taken out of my body at the time President Russell Barber called me the evening of November 11, 1997. I was sustained in a session of Stake Conference November 23, 1997. My parents had come from Utah for the sustaining and setting apart. I believe I was in a state of blessed "anesthesia" the entire time. When set apart I felt a mantle or cloak being placed upon my shoulders – which I felt lift from me just as effortlessly and quickly when released years later. With this mantle came added gifts. I have a testimony that God cares about all His children and that He whispers, sometimes with non-stop repetition to the mind of the Bishop, about whom he should be seeking to help. Names and faces would come into my mind. Impressions or feelings would be impressed on my heart. Things to remember; things to do; people to visit.

During my years of service I had the blessing of serving with six different counselors. Maybe I was hard on counselors, or maybe they were needed in other places, but each one of them was a great blessing in their time of service. I was also highly blessed to work with three different Relief Society Presidents, without whom the ward could not have functioned.

When called I had a scripture from the Book of Mormon impressed upon my mind as a theme for what we should focus upon as a Bishopric. Alma 37:33-34 – *"Preach unto them repentance, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; Teach them to humble themselves and to be meek and lowly in heart; Teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart; for such shall find rest to their souls."* I developed a handout for my personal leadership book so I could look at it often. Throughout my service I tried to recall these important outcomes. I felt this was particularly helpful for me as much of my talent or capability seemed to focus on teaching. Many of our meetings were teaching meetings.

As I have looked back and tried to recall those precious experiences, prompted as mentioned by a review of my notes and journals the following experiences linger.

I recall the funerals of dearly loved elderly members such as Johnny Ward and Sandra Sue Perham Moore among others. I recall the anguish of funerals for those too young to die such as Sammy Moore and the stillborn child of Heather and Ryan Grose.

There were also the joyful weddings of Ryan and Heather Grose, Joshua and Heather (Burns), along with the weekly activities with the Priest's Quorum, cooking breakfast for the kids at Seminary, child of record baptisms and all the youth interviews. One very important memory was that of a Girl's camp.

The weather forecasts prior to our departure indicated there might be storms but we felt it was okay to go. This particular camp involved hiking into a location in the mountains. As we hiked the weather became more and more worrisome, with dark clouds and increasing winds. I was particularly concerned because I knew the plan was that we would sleep under the stars – no tents. We came to a stopping spot and all the girls found places to bed down for the evening, as did I. Laying in my sleeping bag, looking up at the sky I became very worried. The winds were becoming very strong. The trees were whipping back and forth. I felt the elements were beginning to combine. At that time I closed my eyes in the prayer of a priesthood blessing – invoking a blessing that none would be hurt or harmed. Then, unexpectedly, I slept calmly. When I awoke in the morning I could see a very defined circle around our encampment. Inside the circle there was no damage. Outside of the circle trees had been blown over, plants uprooted, etc. It was for me a testimony of priesthood power and of the care Heavenly Father has for His young women.

There are many more sacred experiences too personal for sharing in a general history. My mind relives the repeated interviews with a few people whose life choices were not leading to happiness. I can see each of my Priests and recall my pleadings that they would find their own testimonies. I remember the questions of the young women and their searching for personal answers regarding chastity, clothing styles, etc. I feel the sadness of people making poor choices but also feel the joy of the beautiful Primary children and the devotion of so many ward members – each in their own calling and sphere. The years our family spent in Tennessee brought the most growth, challenge and happiness of our family history. I am humbled, deeply grateful that the Lord, through his authorized servants, called me to be a Bishop.

With love and appreciation, Lynn A Whipple

In His Own Words – Lee Bryner

I was very humbled with the call to serve as Bishop of the Farragut ward. There were many capable brethren who could have been called. I was as surprised as well as others with the call to serve. I served from September 2001 to June 2005.

I felt successful as a Bishop due to support I had from wonderful counselors. Brother Rob Ivey served as a counselor the whole time I was Bishop. For putting up with me for about four years, he was called as the next Bishop. Brothers Allen Langford, Kent Vaughan and Alan Openshaw also served as counselors. Good counselors, effective Elders Quorum presidents and High Priest group leaders along with loving Relief Society presidents allowed me the opportunity to spend time with the youth. From scout camps at Buck Toms (playing The Game) to biking 50 miles on the Virginia Creeper trail with young men to rafting the Nantahala River and chasing bandit raccoons with young women...those experiences-built

memories of faith, brotherhood and sisterhood. Early morning Seminary breakfast cooked by the Bishopric was a treat as well.

I wanted the youth and Primary children to be comfortable in the Bishop's office. If they would quote an article of faith or a scripture, they could have a piece of candy. I am sure "Jesus Wept" and "And my father dwelt in a tent" were recited frequently. It was heartwarming to see the effort of the children and youth memorize gospel truths. Red Hots were a favorite candy for some of the youth.

One thing I will always remember about serving as Bishop was warmth, kindness and loving nature of the ward members. A great example of this was in September 2002. The ward was at church Sunday morning when news broke that a freight train derailed within the ward boundaries. A tanker car containing fuming sulfuric acid broke open resulting in evacuation of homes in the area. Ward members in the area were not allowed to return to their homes. Displaced ward members were able to stay in the homes of other ward member families. Some chose to stay with family in the area or hotels but the outreach and immediate welcoming of those in need was a special demonstration of caring and love.

The Farragut Ward began a tradition of attending the Nashville temple after its dedication in 2000. Three ward temple trips a year were scheduled. Two were specifically for the youth. Youth, parents and youth leaders would leave early on a Saturday morning to get to the Nashville temple in time for 8:00 or 10:00 sessions. It was very special to be in the temple serving the Lord.

The other ward temple trip was for all ward members. Youth would go to the baptistry, and parents would attend endowment sessions. Parents with Primary age child were able to attend sessions while youth and other leaders had activities for the children in the stake center next to the temple. A member of the Temple Presidency would join with us as we began the event with a prayer meeting in the chapel. The spirit was always so strong. It was a great blessing in the lives of our ward members. A lot of planning and preparation made these annual trips to the temple memorable for all.

Ward members loved the Lord Jesus Christ. They accepted callings to serve and did amazing work serving one another. I was continually in awe of all they did and will never forget the feelings of love and acceptance.

Lee Bryner

In His Own Words – Rob Ivey

Most of my memories center around the youth. During those years, the number of youth that were actively involved in the Farragut Ward significantly increased. A number of strong families were relocating to the Farragut area, primarily because of the good schools in the area, it did not hurt that we had some very strong youth leaders at the time, notably Allen Langford\Paul Becker as YM President and Marianne Graves\Sandra Vaughn as YW President as well as a number of good councilors and teachers.

Some of the highlights to me were the two ward youth conferences that were held. The first ward youth conference held in 2007 was loosely based upon a TV realty show called Treasure Hunters, a show that was something like the Amazing Race. The premise was of the conference was that the youth were

organized into teams. Teams were given directions to find different locations in the Knoxville area, when they arrived at the location there was an experience or a speaker at that location. When they were finished at each location they were given a clue that would help them solve a puzzle at the final location. At the final location the teams had to solve the puzzle, when the puzzle was solved, their families who were waiting for them would then appear. The conference as I remember was meant to help the youth realize what would need to do and the joy it would be reunited with their families. David Sexton and Allen Langford took on the responsibility for organizing the conference.

The second ward youth conference was held in conjunction with the West Hills Ward, the conference was held at an outdoor facility near Chattanooga. We did some team building events and service project. The service project was at a memorial for Joseph Standing, a missionary that lost his life while serving his mission in the Chattanooga area. The memorial stood in a park where Elder Standing had lost his life. We spent time cleaning and working at the park where the memorial stood. Afterwards we held a testimony meeting, and there was a strong spiritual feeling during that testimony meeting.

The time spent in the Bishopric in the Farragut Ward proved to be most helpful in my calling to serve in the Branch Presidency of YSA Branch. A number of the youth from Farragut Ward ended up attending the YSA Branch, having known them from the ward it was advantageous to know a little about them so that we could find ways best help them take their next step in life.

Temple trips to with the youth were always special time. Because of a number of youth had grown, the temple had allotted two sessions for us so that we could go as a group. Each month we held a Sunday Evening Discussion with the youth, these firesides were organized by the YM, YW leaders and the Bishopric. These firesides were held at the church, they were a little more formal than a Wednesday night activity but less structured than the regular Sunday meetings.

We were also blessed with a strong Relief Society President in Lynn Skovran. She worked very diligently with the sisters but also worked at putting together several service activities that were directed outside the ward boundaries.

Missionary work was a struggle during that time, but we did have some success, one of which was Isabel Delorie. She had moved into the ward with her husband Joe Delorie and was not a member at the time. She started meeting with the Elders but it took some time and visits from various members of the ward. During some of those meetings and visits she eventually felt the Spirit telling her that the things that were being taught were true and she joined the Church. Her conversion was the result of a collective effort of the ward family.

During the period we tried to hold some firesides for the ward, topics included missionary work, ward goals, and self-reliance. These were the first firesides to be held for the adults of the Farragut Ward in some time.

I was very blessed to serve with so many good members who would later become leaders in the Stake. My councilors for that period of time were David Sexton 1st Councilor, Alan Openshaw, James Stratton,

Dave Jackson and Dave Wallace serving as 2nd Counselor. Ward clerks included Rand Watson, David Vandygriff and Scott Rainey. Executive Secretary included Doug Hathaway.

Missionaries that went out included Zach Ziegler, Orson Vandygriff, David Hale, Michael Vaughn, Andy Kodra, Scott Kodra, David Stewart, Jeff Lee, Chris Lee, Steven Skovran, and Brian Isom. I feel like I may be missing someone or there may be some overlap. Some of those that went from the ward would have been called by their college wards. Rob Ivey

In His Own Words – David Lee

I was honored to serve as a Bishop in the Farragut Ward in the Knoxville Tennessee Stake for two years just prior to being called into the Stake Presidency. I was set apart by President Ben Morgenegg and served with Kent Vaughn (1st Counselor) and Mike Gibson (2nd Counselor). I wish to share with you two pivotal experiences that I had while serving the Farragut Ward.

The Ward Temple Experience. Karen and I have five children and I served as Scout Master when we first moved into the ward in 2004. I was participating in a ward temple excursion in Nashville and had an assignment to work in the Baptistry with our youth that were doing baptisms for the dead. I remember distinctly one of my dear friends who was working to return to full fellowship in the Church. As we orderly left the stake center (that adjoins the Nashville Temple), he stayed behind to watch the Primary aged children. He and a few adults were asked to stay in the stake center and watch over the young ones so that their parents could go into the temple and participate in endowments, sealings, and initiatories. The expression on this good brother's face was something that I shall never forget. I could see that he longed to go into the temple. I could feel his pain, anguish, and sorrow as a result of not being able to go into the temple with his children. I shall never forget the look in his eyes and still see it in my mind this day.

As a Bishopric we were planning for our ward assignment at the Nashville Temple in a few months. I recounted to my two counselors what I felt several years prior as I saw the pain and sorrow in this good brother's eyes as he was left behind in the stake center. We felt prompted to make this ward temple excursion very different from any that we had done before. Our desire was to create an event that no individual attending would be left out. The emphasis would be all who attended, whether inside or outside, would feel the special spirit that is unmistakably found at the temple.

We obtained permission from the local Stake President to utilize the entire Franklin Stake Center that is next door to the temple. We promised them that they would find their building cleaned (including the bathrooms) and ready for Sunday Worship Services. I will confirm that we left their building in immaculate condition.

We organized rotating temple-themed activities for the Primary children. We had the adults helping with these activities rotate so they too had an opportunity to go into the temple. If you have ever served in Primary you know that you can easily feel excluded from your contemporaries and we were motivated to ensure those helping with the children would not feel that way.

At that time we had the largest number of young women and young men in the stake so we had to do the Baptistry work in shifts. We organized activities and rotating classes for the youth while they awaited their time to enter the temple. We also had the youth helping with the Primary aged children.

There is a very distinct and real feeling being **AROUND** the temple. Because of this we felt strongly that recent converts and those being taught by the full time missionaries should be individually invited to attend. We had classes and even had tours for them around the periphery of the temple. Later we received feedback that those individuals really loved being **AT** the temple. The temple became real to them and helped them secure a desire to one day go **INTO** the temple.

Although it was a very long day, it was an amazing day. Our goal was accomplished that no one would be or feel excluded. We received great feedback over the next several months. We feel grateful that even the current temple presidency was impressed with what we had done and made suggestions to other stakes of what they could do to be more inclusive for their members as they fulfilled their assignments at the temple.

The Rescue. I was born of godly parents who served the Lord without reservation. I have four other siblings but one never really embraced the gospel completely and fell away. It was very hard on my dear mother. Although four of her children were faithful, honorably served full time missions, have been sealed to their spouses in the temple, and are holding tightly to the "iron rod", Mom regularly expressed remorse for her "lost" son. She would say how sad it was going to be to have an "empty chair" in the Celestial Kingdom if he did not return. That comment seared into my heart and I still regularly see in my mind an empty chair. Having children of my own I now know the reality of that pain. Sister Lee and I have a son who has distanced himself from the gospel.

While serving as Bishop I was reading about the rescue of the Willie/Martin Handcart Companies that was stranded in a snow storm on the plains. President Brigham Young marshaled a rescue party during General Conference and requested that men assemble teams of horses and wagons and take supplies out to the stranded party and "rescue them".

That event combined with the mental image of empty seats in the Celestial Kingdom impress upon my mind the need for our ward to leave and go out and rescue our fellow members stranded on the "plains of inactivity." I received authorization from President Morgenegg and on a Sunday in February I got up and recounted the story of the Willie/Martin Handcart Companies Rescue.

I asked the ward members in attendance to look to their left, then to their right, in front and behind them and take note of who they had ministering responsibilities for who was not in attendance. I then asked them to ponder the following: which of those that are not here are they comfortable with having an empty seat in the Celestial Kingdom?

I then (with prior Stake Presidency approval) told them that at the conclusion of Sacrament meeting we would cancel the 2nd and 3rd hours of our block meeting schedule. I asked them to go to their homes

and on bended knee ask for heavenly guidance of what they needed to do to reach out and connect with those “stranded on the plains.” I pleaded with them not to squander this opportunity to receive inspiration and guidance. I asked them to literally go and search for the stranded, to find them and invite them back.

I will say not all but many followed my admonition and members who had distanced themselves returned. It simply took courage and faith of individuals to leave their comfort zone and reach out to someone “stranded on the plains of inactivity.”

David Lee

In His Own Words – Kent Vaughn

About a month before I was called to be the Bishop of the Farragut ward I was participating in a combined youth activity and I had a powerful feeling of how much Heavenly Father loved those youth! I felt this way before when I was in sustaining a new class presidency in the Mia Maids class (14 and 15 year old girls) and when I was substituting for Bishop Lee to speak to our girls at Girl’s Camp. In both instances I could see with my spiritual eyes how truly amazing all of those girls were. It was as if for a moment the veil was slightly parted and I could see their true selves and knew they had been reserved for the very last days to help usher in the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior. During those three experiences I was serving as the 1st Counselor to Bishop Dave Lee at the time.

When I was called to be the Bishop we had 76 youth in the Farragut Ward. I knew that an essential part of my ministry was to get those youth to the Temple, on Missions and back to the Temple to be sealed for time and all eternity.

As a Bishopric, under Bishop Lee, we set a goal to have at least 10 youth on a mission at one time. He was called into the Stake Presidency after two short years and we continued that focus for the 5 years I served with wonderful counselors and excellent YW and YM leaders. For many years we had 10 or more missionaries serving from our ward at any given time.

Our youth had wonderful parents and diligent leaders who helped us get the youth to the Nashville Temple three times per year. Initially the temple was concerned with us bringing 35 – 45 youth to the temple each time. The major concern was reverence, but our youth didn’t fail on this in any way. We spoke a lot to them about the sacred opportunity they had to be saviors on Mount Zion by doing ordinances for people who could not do it for themselves. They understood and rose to the occasion every time.

On one occasion I distinctly remember asking Emily Bass in the Temple if she would be baptized for one of my wife’s great Aunts. As I handed Emily the slip of paper (with the Aunt’s name) she looked like I was giving her a sacred treasure. I was thankful for her wonderful attitude. An attitude that was pervasive with these amazing young people.

Soon after that experience it really hit us that the way to take the temple experience to the next level was to get the youth to start taking their own family names. We began a big push to have every youth take at least one family name to the temple with them every time they went. This had a powerful impact on the youth as they searched out their ancestors and did their work for them in the temple.

The Farragut Ward has always struggled with missionary work and after serving for just a few months I was trying to figure out what we could do differently. It was in the spring of 2012 and my son Kimball wrote from his mission about a new book his ward mission leader was reading entitled “The Power of Every Day Missionaries” by Clayton Christensen.

I immediately ordered five copies for the Bishopric (including the Clerk and Executive Secretary) and asked everyone to read it over the next two weeks. All of us were impressed with the book. It gives practical tips about how to be an effective member missionary and forewarns of the rejection you’ll have and how to overcome it.

We immediately ordered 40 additional copies of the book and asked the Ward Council to read it with their presidencies within the next two weeks. We also asked each of those individuals to sign the book and pass it on to another individual to read within two weeks and pass it on again.

We introduced the book to the ward on a 5th Sunday and reminded them that our job as members is to prayerfully invite others. Ours is not to convert or even to teach. We have consecrated full-time teaching missionaries who are called and set apart to teach and the spirit converts. We just need to be friend, love our neighbor and invite them. I remember telling the members that I believed one day we would have the Farragut Stake and even a temple. The Lord was helping us envision a wonderful future for His gospel in East Tennessee.

One of the issues we had was having something to invite our friends to (other than church) which can be a bit ominous. Therefore, we created the idea of monthly “Pie-Night.” We had ward activities but they were not all that frequent (typically for the holidays). The idea was that every month, on the same Friday night, we had a very simple ward activity. We asked the members to do two things: Bring a favorite dessert and invite someone to participate.

They could invite a friend, a neighbor or even someone they ministered to (we called it Home and Visiting Teaching then). The first couple of times we had great fun and enjoyed dessert but realized we needed something more. This is when started asking the missionaries give a short spiritual thought at the end and invite all the participants to do something.

I also asked the Mission President if we could have a set of Sister Missionaries and a set of Elders serving in the ward simultaneously. With us typically baptizing 3 – 5 people per year we didn’t really justify two sets of missionaries but President Irion supported us and assigned amazing Sisters and Elders to our ward. We asked the members (including the older youth) to go out with the missionaries every week. Our goal was that at least 4 days per week we would have some of the members working with each set of missionaries. It was wonderful to see the excitement as women and young women (in particular) were having the opportunity to go out with the Sister Missionaries for the first time in years.

It was amazing to see what happened in the Farragut Ward. Every Fast and Testimony meeting members would share their experiences reading the book and inviting friends to do something. We had less active members who hadn’t been to church in years start coming to Pie Night and we had numerous friends of other faiths attending every month. What was the outcome from all of this activity? We had 11 individuals baptized that year (two of them lived just outside our ward boundaries in the Pellissippi Ward) so we could only officially count 9 baptisms. But, it was an amazing year in every way.

The spirituality and happiness in the Farragut ward seemed to grow exponentially as well. Since then we've had scores of youth (YW and YM) serve missions and temple attendance has continued to climb.

I've lived in the Farragut Ward for over 26 years and am continually blessed to see the faith and service of our members. I've been able to serve with some amazing people whose names I shall not mention for fear of leaving many out! The Lord knows you and loves you and so do I! Kent Vaughn

In His Own Words – David Sexton

I had been serving on the High Council for 4 or 5 years before I was called to be the Farragut Ward Bishop. During my time on the High Council, I had worked almost exclusively with the Rockwood Branch/Ward. I felt very out of the loop with regards to Farragut because I had only attended the ward occasionally.

We were with extended family playing games one Sunday night I received a phone call from Mike Isom asking if Lisa and I could come and meet with President Clapp on Thursday night. I told Lisa about this on our way home that evening and we discussed what this was all about. I thought maybe I would be released in preparation for a ward calling since I had been on the HC for several years but that was just a guess. We did wonder whether it could be to be called as some part of a new Bishopric because we knew that was going to take place sometime soon. Over the next few days I had feelings that this was connected to the change in a Bishopric but I tried not to dwell on it too much. When President Clapp asked my wife Lisa to come in a talk with him first, I was pretty sure I knew what the calling was. A few minutes later the call to serve as the Farragut Bishop was extended. I felt just a really strong confirmation of the Spirit but of course felt a little nervous about it. However, I felt confident that with the Lord's help I could do it.

I was really excited to be back in the ward and to be able to work with my kids and share the last couple of years of their youth experiences with them. With respect to counselors, the one thing President Clapp said to me was that I could have anyone I wanted as counselors except for Matt Pulver. Matt was on the High Council at the time and was in the middle of helping the Stake Presidency with some special projects. As a result, President Clapp didn't want him to leave the High Council at that moment, but he made it clear that anyone else was available.

On the way home Lisa asked me what I was feeling and I said, "Well I think I'm going to disappoint President Clapp in a few minutes" because I had immediately been thinking that I needed to have Matt Pulver as one of my counselors. The other name that came to my mind was Clint Mori, who I really didn't know that well, but in my interactions with him he had impressed me as a wonderful man of faith. He was serving as the Ward Executive Secretary. I went home and went through the names of all the brothers in the ward and there were many outstanding men who I knew would be great in a Bishopric. But the more I thought about it, I kept coming back to those two names: Matt as first counselor and Clint as second counselor. I prayed earnestly about it and the answer I continued to get was that those are the men who are to be part of this Bishopric. With a bit of trepidation, I called President Clapp and said "I am so sorry. I promise this is not the way it will be as we serve together in the future. I will listen to and follow counsel, but in this instance I just have to tell you my thoughts." I told him I would accept his final decision either way but I needed to tell him what I was feeling- that

Matt and Clint were the ones the Lord wanted in the Bishopric. President Clapp said he would have to pray about it and talk to his counselors and they would let me know if they agreed. A couple of days later President Clapp called me and said although they wished it were not so, they agreed with the decision.

I was so grateful to have Matt and Clint as my counselors the whole time I served as Bishop. They were just incredible. Often when I called them on the phone they would cheerfully answer by saying “hello Bishop, what can I do for you?” They were both tireless workers and I felt their love and support all four years we were together. I was also grateful to inherit Tristi Ebbert as our ward Relief Society President. I always felt Bishop Vaughn set me up for success by calling Sister Ebbert as RS President just a few months before I was called as Bishop. She was wonderful to work with and was an excellent leader. She made my life as a Bishop much easier for sure. We had other wonderful and supportive leaders, but having great counselors and RS President was a special blessing.

I was called in November so the first couple of months were just getting through tithing settlement and figuring out what was going on. Neither Matt nor I had been serving in the ward but fortunately Clint had been working in the ward so his input was indispensable. We got through the holidays and for the next year rolled out a focus on ministering and focusing on the one. We did a lot of talking and training with the Ward Council and we would report on our ministering efforts, not just in our callings, but also as Disciples of Christ. We expanded that emphasis out to the ward in March and kept that focus in Sacrament meetings, 5th Sundays, and other training meetings. Shortly after, the brethren changed the focus from home teaching to ministering. That was perfect and felt a bit validating for us, as we knew we were on the right track. We worked even harder to continue to build on this effort. In sum, the first couple of years we had a very heavy emphasis on ministering.

After that we shifted our focus to conversion. The thought was that we were all converts and had an ongoing conversion experience that we were a part of. That year we had lots of members share their conversion experiences, both on fifth Sundays and in Sacrament meeting talks. Some were life-long members and some were converts who joined the Church later in life. We appreciated all the experiences and stories that we shared. We challenged members to remember their experiences and deepen their own commitment and conversion to Christ and His gospel.

The next year we shifted to a temple focus. We had several different months when we talked about how many temple experiences ward members were having. We were careful to do it in a way that no one felt pressured. Some incredible things happened during that time. For example we set a ward goal to have 200 temple experiences in a particular month, I think it was June. Members who attended the temple would anonymously place a slip of paper in a nice box in the foyer that the RS created for this and we would count the number of those slips each week. We exceeded the goal! This led to talking about the possibility of having a temple in our area and a 5th Sunday where Will Brown helped me by taking a picture of the Nashville Temple and photo shopping it onto an aerial photo of the Stake Center to create a true representation of a potential Knoxville Temple. We then discussed what we need to do to prepare for a temple in our area.

With the youth, as a Bishopric we knew very early on that they were to be our main focus and that we could never let the youth be second. This was easy, because we all enjoyed working with the youth. We

had Bishopric youth discussions almost every month. We were always with the youth on Wednesday nights. We were never distracted and pulled other places. We started game night once a month, an idea I got from Scott Cruze when he was Bishop, where we would take a Friday night and all come to the church and just do all kinds of fun things. We would play games, have pizza, and they would bring their friends. We tried really hard to connect with the youth and build relationships with them. We ended up expanding game nights to also include hosting them occasionally for the young women. These were very popular but unfortunately, this all ended when COVID hit. More on COVID later.

We had a large Priest Quorum. Most were really active. We wanted to do something to help them become more prepared for a mission, to have more confidence in themselves, and to become great ministers. Something hit me when reading about the duties of a Priest in the Doctrine and Covenants. It said the Priests had the duty to visit the homes of every member and to encourage them to pray. While visiting with my first assistant, Jacob Becker, I asked him to read the duties of a Priest aloud. I asked him “how are we doing as a Priest Quorum in fulfilling these duties?” He said, “I think we are doing ok.” I said where could we do better? He said, “I don’t think we are visiting every member like it says.” So we discussed it further and talked about how we could visit the homes of all the members. We agreed this would be an amazing task but it was a worthy effort to undertake. I asked Jacob to present this to the whole Priest quorum - about how the Priests could visit all the members. Then I taught them what we might do. We all knew what a commitment this was but they embraced it and over the next two years our Priests visited 83 homes of members in the ward. They visited every single home that would allow them to come. They would go in twos and deliver a short message on prayer that they helped create and they fulfilled their duty as a Priest. This was amazing and really bonded our Priest to the families in our ward. It also set a great example for younger children, especially Primary boys who looked up to the Priests.

About halfway into having the Priests visit the homes, I had the thought of the guys going to the homes of non-members and sharing a gospel message. Not only sharing a message but having dinner with them and talking with them and then moving to the family room and sharing their message, inviting the family to “do something” and then ending with prayer – really having what would be a missionary experience with someone they didn’t know. Thankfully between me and a few other leaders we had enough nonmember friends that we trusted that we were able to call and ask them to let our boys come and have dinner with them and share a message. We developed a basic restoration type message and the PQ practiced it for a few weeks. Then we had the boys come over to my house on a Wednesday night. We did one final practice session and went over what they were going to do and then they left in teams of two. When they were done, they all came back to the house. I was really stressed while we waited for them to come back. When each group came back, they were on cloud nine. They had had a good experience and were really pumped up. Everyone had had a wonderful, powerful experience and had just enjoyed it to the max. They said things like, “I can do this and I loved doing it!” We talked about how that’s a mission. We did that several more times and I think that it was just another thing to add to their testimony bucket and it made them feel like they understood what a mission would be like and that they could do it and as a result were looking forward to it.

Sister Becker, who was the YW president, learned about these missionary-like visits from her sons who were part of it and said she wanted her girls to do that too. I gave her the template we had followed

and said, "I'm here to help you but you make it happen with the girls, however you think is the best" I helped along the way but she really ran the show and the young women also had great experiences. Many of those young women ended up serving missions, not necessarily because of that experience, but definitely this was one positive factor that helped them make the decision to serve.

Another Idea was to build on the things we were doing in a way that would allow the younger youth to have a missionary experience by talking about the gospel with someone they did not already know. We came up with the thought of having about a three-hour activity at church where the youth were called on a mission – they got a letter that they could open that gave them a "mission call". They reported to their mission by going to a specific area of the building where their Mission President and his wife were waiting for them. Four couples our youth knew well served as their Mission President and wife, and they were awesome. They were assigned a companion. They received some training from their Mission President. There were three things they would do. Knock on several doors in an effort to share the gospel, share a short gospel message to someone in a pre-arranged teaching setting, and finally bear their testimony. So basically one missionary group would go around the church and do door approaches. We had individuals and couples in each of the rooms all around the church. These were couples that were from other wards that for the most part our youth did not really know. Each set of missionaries would knock on five doors. Their goal was to be invited in and share a message. They had about 4 minutes and then the bell would ring and they would move on the next door. This allowed each companionship to knock about 5 or 6 doors and have different experiences each time. Those behind the door had specific roles they were playing so that the youth experienced a variety of circumstances from golden contacts, to someone who was sad because a family member had recently died, and even to someone who knew absolutely nothing about Jesus. While this was going on, another group would be in the gym teaching a short message about the gospel to a person (mostly members). Then the two groups would then switch places. The couples in the classrooms were especially amazing. Again, they each had a different story about their situations. When they talked to the youth missionaries, they would tell about their situation and the youth had to decide from what they said, how they would respond. The young people did great! At the end we had a short testimony meeting for the youth to share their experience. This helped them to gain confidence concerning the things they could do as missionaries.

In the beginning of COVID, we asked the priesthood and sister ministers to contact their families and give a status to the Bishopric. Sacrament and church at home were encouraged. But as leaders, we felt really disconnected from the members when we couldn't see them or talk to them. So I started calling a few people every day just to have some contact. Then we got the approval to do a virtual meeting on Zoom where we could have a speaker. We held our meeting in the YW room and would have a youth and adult give a talk and have music. After the first meeting I got many texts and calls from members saying how great it was to see their Bishopric again and to feel somewhat connected. This went well and the members did great. After a couple of months I felt the need to just get out and meet with some families. So I started having what I called "front-porch visits." I would have my Executive Secretary set up visits with 10 or 12 families 20 minutes apart. I would just visit about 15 minutes with them on their doorstep or in their garage where we could be sitting well apart from each other. It was a great way for me to get together with members and let them know they were loved and share a little message with

them. Over the course of a couple of months I was able to meet with many of our members – adults, youth, and kids.

I remember listening to the session of conference when they announced that the High Priests and Elders would be combined into one Elders Quorum in each unit. It immediately came to my mind of who the leadership of the new Elders Quorum should be. Barney Cornaby, who was the High Priest Group leader, would be the new Elders Quorum President. Our current Elders Quorum President would be released as he had served for several years and was due a break. Then Bryce Moody and Quinten Aten who were the current Elders Quorum counselors would be the new counselors, and the HP secretary, Bill Gwin, would be the secretary. I just knew this was the way it was supposed to be. As a Bishopric we prayed about the new EQ president and then I called Brother Cornaby. When I talked to Barney, he said he didn't know why it should be him but he would be happy to do it. I then asked him to decide on his counselors and secretary and I told him I had some thoughts about who that could be. He said, "don't tell me. I don't want to know. I'll think and pray about it and get back to you and let you know who I think it should be." I so hoped he wouldn't come back with someone different than I had felt should be called. A couple of days later Barney got back to me and said he had prayed and named the same people as counselors and secretary as I had felt it should be. I told him those were my thoughts exactly and he said, "well then we know its revelation so let's do this." That was a really cool experience. He didn't allow me to give him any of my thoughts before he got his own revelation and we matched up perfectly.

Working with potential missionaries was really great. I really knew the youth and the interviews with them were very sacred. There were sometimes setbacks that had to be resolved before they would be ready and worthy to serve a mission. I remember there were sometimes young people who wanted to serve a mission but their maturity was not what it needed to be to be successful. I remember with this one person that I felt there were some things this person needed to learn. I would ask why they wanted to serve a mission. And over the course of several meeting, the answer was always "I" based. After I had met with this person each week for about a month, the person said, "You know you keep asking me this question and I think I have figured it out." They went on to say that the reason they wanted to serve a mission was because of the love they had for the Savior and the love they had for other people. "It's not about me but about the Lord and those I can serve. So I want to serve a mission because I love others." And I said, "Yes." So I pushed the button and they got their mission call. There were just so many moments like that, which were just so neat to be a part of.

There are many highlights of my experience as serving as a Bishop but there is just one more thing I want to mention. I just loved going to the nursery. During the third hour I would always be with youth, but during the second hour I would visit Primary or SS classes and about twice a month, I would visit the nursery and spend 15 minutes with the little kids. I felt like I wanted those little ones to know their Bishop so I would just play with the children for a few minutes. That was always such a highlight of my Sunday.

I remember being called as Stake President and knowing that I had to recommend someone to replace me as Bishop. I thought getting approval might take a long time. We were not quite finished with tithing settlement and there was just a lot going on in the ward. We were just super busy. It took a few weeks to finalize who I should recommend as the new Bishop and get approval from Salt Lake to call

him. During that time I spent more time being the Bishop than being the Stake President. I initially thought I could handle both callings if it took two or three months. But after the first week I realized it was not fine, that I couldn't do it for that long. Fortunately the approval of the new Bishop came back really quickly. But it was neat to have those last few weeks with the members. I loved being the Bishop and being able to have conversations and interactions with the ward members during that time was special. And it was also kind of fun to have a new temple recommend that I could sign on all three lines.

David Sexton

In His Own Words – Matt Pulver

When I was called as Bishop in December of 2020 it was during the global pandemic known as COVID-19, and our ward had been meeting using a combination of in-person and online (Zoom) meetings. Previous to being called, I had been serving for almost five years as the first counselor in the Bishopric with David Sexton as the prior Bishop. David was called as our Stake President in late November, and after serving in both callings for a few weeks I was called as Bishop. During this time our ward had become somewhat divided by people's personal feelings toward the COVID pandemic and mandated restrictions.

Once my wife and I met with President Sexton and accepted the call, I knew I needed capable counselors that could lead in my absence and work well with the youth. Through prayer I was led to call Roy Schmardebeck and Jacob Hlebasko who had both been serving in the youth program as advisors. Both men possess a deep understanding of the handbook and a desire to follow its guidance, as well as natural leadership qualities that help our Bishopric function well.

As an initial goal, I wanted to build unity among the members who felt differently about COVID restrictions. This was first achieved through careful consideration of opposing viewpoints in Bishopric meetings and Ward Council, then later as the pandemic continued but restrictions changed by helping members understand that we are all doing our best through difficult circumstances, and we don't all have to agree on everything to work together.

Since being called I have had the opportunity to work with a couple of youth as they prepared to serve missions. For the most part, our youth that have decided to serve have done so while attending a church school or living away from home, so I have only been involved from afar, or when they are actually leaving, but helping each young man or woman as they finish their preparations has been a blessing to experience.

While the pandemic still continues, the threat of COVID has lessened significantly. This decline in the danger of COVID has naturally resulted in less fear of it, which has allowed our ward to reunite in normal activities again. While we still broadcast our in-person Sacrament meetings online, all other meetings have resumed fully in-person safely without restrictions. We are blessed to lead the stake in several areas of growth (including attendance) and look forward to our ward continuing to grow over the next several years.

Bishop Matthew Pulver

Harden Valley Ward

The Harden Valley Ward was split off from the Farragut and Pellissippi Wards in January of 2014. The Harden Valley Ward did not exist when the Knoxville Stake was split in 1996 but many of the members of the ward were either in the Pellissippi or Farragut Wards, whose histories are included in the earlier history “Foot Steps of Faith”. This history covers the history of the Harden Valley Ward since its inception.

Growth and New Members

Due to primarily to the increase in new subdivisions in the Harden Valley area over the last several years, the Harden Valley Ward has grown significantly since its formation in 2014. By the end of 2021 the ward had grown to a membership of 390.

In addition to many who have moved into the ward during the last several years, the ward has been blessed with the following new members who were baptized during 2021 – Karen Culp, Kiara Culp, Toni Culp, Matthew Densmore, John (JP) Humphrey, Kelson Peterson, and Cody Sanford.

Missionary Service

A listing of the missionaries and the names and missions of those called from the Harden Valley Ward are summarized as follows:

Names, Missions, and Start dates for missionaries from the Harden Valley Ward

Russell, Tanner Jacob Folden	Utah Salt Lake City West Mission	23-May-12
Guthrie, Ian Thomas	Poland Warsaw Mission	Nov-2013
Russell, Emma Whitney	California Anaheim Mission	1-Jan-14
Clapp, Randall Charles	Nevada Las Vegas West Mission	13-Aug-14
MEEK, Lauren Olivia	México Puebla North Mission	20-Aug-14
MEEK, Andrew Glenn	New Zealand Hamilton Mission	25-Sep-14
Cravens, Trenten Bay	Montana Billings Mission	29-Oct-14
Beattie, Rebecca Elise	Iowa Iowa City Mission	19-Nov-14
Nelson, James Evan	Colorado Fort Collins Mission	4-Feb-15
Cravens, Jayce Harding	Indonesia Jakarta Mission	22-Apr-15
Boekweg, Bailey Joe	Jamaica Kingston Mission	21-Oct-15
Cleghorn, Blake Martin	Tennessee Knoxville Mission	4-Jan-16
Cleghorn, Jannette	Tennessee Knoxville Mission	4-Jan-16
Burns, Garrett William	Idaho Idaho Falls Mission	8-Mar-17
Rambo, Austin Alan	California Carlsbad Mission	9-Aug-17
Cravens, Dallin Scott	Perú Piura Mission	18-Oct-17
Barnes, William Clayton	Iowa Iowa City Mission	5-Sep-18
Connor, Maia Faith	California Fresno Mission	8-Jan-19
Dailey, Morgan	California Riverside Mission	22-Jul-20

Sacco, Daniel Patrick	California Anaheim Mission	3-Feb-21
Meek, Sarah Ruth	Colorado Denver South Mission	26-May-21
Borden, Emily Ann	Salt Lake City Temple Square Mission	1-Oct-21
Christiansen, Rylee Elizabeth	Salt Lake City Mission	1-Nov-21
Boekweg, Emma Lucy	Colorado Fort Collins Mission	7-Feb-22

Youth Activities

The Hardin Valley Ward youth program is blessed with strong and talented youth. They strive to serve each other and those in our community. Their service in our community includes a project by the young women called "Days for Girls" in which the young women prepared kits for girls in Kenya who would otherwise miss school during menstruation. Another example of service is our youth's participation with Random Act of Flowers, where they made vases that can be used in health care facilities. In addition to their work in our community, our youth have served and supported each other, particularly during the pandemic when they needed to see each other. They enjoy supporting each other by attending one another's sporting events, theater, music and many other performances.

The Hardin Valley youth have had many opportunities to attend the temple. They always make an effort to bring their own family names which makes the experience meaningful for them. They have also grown spiritually by participating in a ward "blitz" where the members of our ward seek out those who may need a visit. The youth of our ward also serve as ward missionaries, have strong testimonies, and are not afraid to share the gospel with their friends.

Our ward youth enjoy participating in the many stake activities that are planned. These activities include stake basketball, youth conference, boys/girls camp, dances, firesides, and festivals. Through these many activities, our youth have developed friendships and grown in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the short time since the ward was formed in 2014 until the programs were discontinued, many young men became Eagle Scouts and young women received their Young Womanhood Recognition awards. The Harden Valley Ward sponsored Boy Scout 40. Below is a listing of those young men who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout based on records from the local Boy Scout office.

Eagle Scouts from Troop 40

Garrett	Burns	2015
Austin	Rambo	2016
Dallin	Cravens	2016
Micah	Cravens	2017
Eric	Branner	2018
Justin	Pehrson	2018
Max	Berry	2019
James	Kramer	2019
Seth	Cravens	2019
Andrew	Pehrson	2019

Ethan	Bailie	2020
Landon	Price	2020
Logan	Taylor	2020
Adam	Lunsford	2020
Leon	Nelson	2020
Logan	Nelson	2020

The Young Women Personal Progress program was the equivalent to the scouting program for the young women and is the highest honor given in the Young Women organization. Listed below are the young women and when they received the award while living in the Harden Valley Ward.

Young Womanhood Recognition Recipients

Amber Mathias – March 2014
 Rebecca Beattie – April 2014
 Morgan Dailey – May 2015
 Kimberly Beattie – November 2015
 Tara Borden – June 2016
 Emily Borden – October 2017
 Liz Nelson – February 2018
 Kate Rambo – May 2018
 Bree Pitt – February 2019
 Grace Anderson – June 2019
 Becca Dailey – August 2019
 Seirra Sacco – September 2019
 Nicole Dailey – October 2019
 Emma Boekweg – October 2019
 Olivia Olmstead – November 2019
 Sarah Meek – December 2019
 Anna Dailey – December 2019
 Ellie Rambo – December 2019
 Taylor Rambo – December 2019

Ward Activities

Each fall (with exception of the years we were dealing with the pandemic) the Hardin Valley ward holds a chili cook-off and trunk-or-treat at the church. Judges are chosen to sample the chilis and declare winners in various categories (hottest, most unique, best overall, etc). Children and many of the adults are dressed in costumes. After dinner, everyone goes out to the parking lot where children walk from car to car collecting treats and goodies. Many of the cars are elaborately decorated to welcome children as they come.

The Hardin Valley ward has had a tradition of having a Christmas dinner each December, usually consisting of sliced ham provided by the ward and potluck sides and desserts. Some years there have

been individual singing talents, performed mostly by the youth and Primary children, and some years there have been sing-along Christmas carols. The highlight of the evening is a nativity performed by the Primary children. Many costumes have been collected over the years and the children dress up as various animals, shepherds, wise men, a star, angels, and, of course, Mary and Joseph. Most years a doll is used to represent the Christ child, but on occasion there is a real baby in the ward who gets to play the role. In 2022, a giant frame was built to frame the entire stage and a wooden manger was made to make the Christ child as the central focal point.

During the pandemic, meeting together has been difficult. The RS opted to do a few outdoor activities where they could social distance and wear masks as needed. On one occasion, the RS presidency met at a park and had treats that people could drive by and pick up. They would wave and blow kisses as cars drove by. On another occasion, sisters brought camping chairs and sat socially distanced in the yard of a member's home where they could visit and reconnect after having been away from each other for an extended time due to church services only being on-line for a period of time. Nothing Bundt Cakes were handed out, as well as a packet for the upcoming General Conference.

The following ward memories were extracted from the 2014 Harden Valley Ward history that are somewhat typical of other years and was a part of the stake histories for that year.

2014. On January 5, 2014, the first Harden Valley Ward Bishopric was called and sustained. Members of the first Bishopric were: Bishop Judd Rambo, first counselor Brad Kramer, second counselor Spencer Olmsted, executive secretary Matt Beattie, ward clerk Mark Gray.

Ward activities during the year included the following:

In April, the young women held their annual fundraiser to raise funds for Girl's camp in 2014. It was held in the cultural hall at the stake center. The activity consisted of spaghetti dinner and included a silent auction for items donated for members of the ward. These items range from homemade desserts to flying lessons. Due to the hard work put forth by the young women and all who helped, the event was a big success. The daddy daughter dance was held in October and was sponsored by the High Priest Quorum. It was an ice cream social which consisted of good music and exceptionally good ice cream along with lots of fun times. The event lasted about an hour and was held at the stake center. The film festival was held in November and was put on by the young women's organization and included short films from members of the ward. The event was held at the stake center.

The Primary's pioneer breakfast extravaganza was held on July 26. The event consisted of fun games and breakfast with the Bishopric being responsible for cooking pancakes. There was also storytelling, a photo booth with prompts, and a "wheels up" parade (bike parade). Many people who came were in pioneer costumes and decorated their bikes for the parade. The event was held outside in the parking lot at the stake center. The weather was great and everyone have a good time.

There were three youth temple trips - in August, October, and December. These were well attended. Trips included the traditional stop at Cici's pizza afterwards.

The ward Christmas party was held on December 12. The Relief Society sponsored this event. They made a huge meal with the main course being ham and all the members brought side dishes or desserts.

Activities included a most festive Christmas sweater contest, special appearance from the Three Wise Men (not the Bishop and his counselors), bingo for adults, activities for the Primary and a Primary Nativity. Everyone enjoyed the party.

During the course of the year there were five convert baptisms – Autumn & Ember Howell, Connor Presley, Brandon Ledford, and Scott Sharp. We currently have a missionary plaque hanging on the wall outside the Bishop's office for all of the missionaries from our ward. We have more going out in 2015. We are almost at the point we may have to have the wall looked at from a structural standpoint to see if we can support all those Missionary Plaques!

Ward Leadership

The Bishops and their counselors who served in the Harden Valley Ward and when the Bishops were called are listed below. Bishop Rambo was the Bishop of the Pellissippi Ward when the Harden Valley Ward was formed and was then called to serve as the Bishop of the Harden Valley Ward.

Harden Valley Ward Bishops and Counselors

Jan 2014 – Judd Rambo. Counselors Brad Kramer, Spencer Olmstead

July 2015 – Spencer Olmstead. Counselors Henry Taylor, Pierce Copeland, Chris Lunsford, Mark Lyons

Aug 2020 – Henry Taylor. Counselors Kyle Barnes, Bruce Meek

Bishops who have served in the Harden Valley Ward since its inception in 2014 have provided comments concerning their memories of the ward during their time of service.

In His Own Words – Judd Rambo

I can honestly say that the Lord and the faith of the Hardin Valley Ward saved my life. These are my memories of the creation of the Hardin Valley Ward. I could share many other stories, but do not want to intrude on other's privacy.

Many of us in leadership positions knew that in 2013 or 2014 the Pellissippi Ward had to split. The ward Christmas party in 2013 saw well over 300 people in attendance. We were sad to contemplate a split, but the ward was too big. It was getting too easy to lose track of people needing care.

Earlier President Clapp let me know that he was planning to call me as the new Hardin Valley Bishop. Then we waited for an official word from Salt Lake about my calling and ward boundaries. In January of 2014 President called me with the news. The boundaries had been set and I was called as the Hardin Valley Bishop. The phone call came at a particularly difficult moment. I had just been diagnosed with stage 3 Papillary Thyroid cancer and we were planning extensive surgery to remove my thyroid and several tumors from my neck. I was about to call and schedule the procedure. The timing was not ideal. In consultation though, we were able to move my surgery back a week and move the ward split up a few weeks. It was planned for the week before my surgery.

We were up against the clock to create a new ward and fill all the callings in the week before my surgery. We were unsure of my condition after surgery, so we wanted to get everything running

beforehand. The new ward members were generous with their time. Everyone worked hard to create the new ward.

The Hardin Valley Ward was fully staffed and operational as the new Bishop was wheeled into surgery. Surgeons removed my thyroid and 22 tumors from my neck. The procedure went well except for some damage to my right vocal cord. I had a gravelly president Kimball-esque voice for a few months until the damage healed.

Thyroid cancer affects memory centers in the brain. Writing this 8 years later, I cannot recall many details. Some precious experiences have been stolen by cancer. The ones I have though, reflect the faith and kindness of the Hardin Valley Ward.

I returned to church the next week supported by my excellent counselors Brad Kramer and Spencer Olmstead. Because of the damage to my neck and throat swallowing was difficult. It took a lot of effort to swallow anything. I had a poignant experience taking the Sacrament that first Sunday after surgery. With my mind on other things, I took the Sacrament bread, put it into my mouth and tried to swallow. It did not work and I started to quietly choke. I could not breathe and I could not get the bread down. Just as I was about to alert my counselors, the blockage cleared, and I worked the bread down enough to breathe. When I took the water, I could breathe properly again. In my relief and catching my breath the Holy Ghost spoke to my mind. "You have been casually taking the Sacrament your whole life. It has been easy for you. But you never thought how hard it was for the Savior. He worked hard so that you could so easily take the Sacrament." For a long time, the Sacrament was hard to take. But the struggle reminded me of a much more important and eternal struggle. Christ worked and is working hard for me and each of us.

The surgery got most of the tumors, but not all. We discovered more in my neck. The Stake President instructed me to tell the ward and ask for prayers. I did. They responded by holding a fast. I particularly remember some Primary children telling me that they were fasting. These children though too young to pronounce the word bishop correctly nevertheless had faith to fast.

The Tuesday after the Primary fasted, my doctor and I met to run more diagnostic scans and plan the next surgery. The diagnostic results revealed that the tumors had gone dormant. Active last week, they were inert this week. He decided to forego the second surgery and see what happened. 8 years later those tumors are still dormant and slowly shrinking. I can honestly say that the Lord and the faith of the Hardin Valley Ward saved my life.

To my immense joy I was able to stand before the Primary on the following Sunday and relate the miracle that they had wrought. I owe them my life. Judd Rambo

In His Own Words – Spencer Olmstead

I was Bishop of the Hardin Valley Ward from July 2015 until August 2020. Our ward encountered a number of significant and historical changes and experiences during that time period. Among these significant experiences was the passing of President Thomas S. Monson and the opportunity to sustain a new Prophet and President of the Church, Russell M. Nelson. As a ward we united our hearts in

sustaining our new prophet and embracing the changes that would soon come as a function of modern revelation.

Some of the significant changes that occurred during this five-year span were the decreasing of the missionary age from 19 to 18 for young men and from 21 and 19 for young women. In addition, home and visiting teaching were retired and we were given the opportunity to implement ministering as a new way to care for our ward family members. We also experienced adjusting church blocks from three to two-hour time blocks, young men were able to receive the Aaronic Priesthood the year in which they turned 12 and young women were able to organize their classes in the manner that best meet the needs of the ward. The High Priest Group was combined with the Elders Quorum, and the youth were given more opportunities to take on roles in the temple, including serving as witnesses at the font, and Priests being able to carry out the baptismal ordinance for the dead. All of this was in preparation for one of the most historical experiences the Church and world encountered: the pandemic.

Among the greatest successes of our ward was the ability to adjust during the pandemic in early 2020. Prior to the pandemic, the ward organizations and in coordination with the Ward Council, had developed and implemented what we called the “Ward Blitz.” In this, young men and young women, missionaries, and priesthood and relief society members would gather, once a month, to go visit various ward members who were in need, or those whom we had not seen or heard from in some time. At this time, Karen Nelson, our Relief Society President, had partnered with a local restaurant, to take bread and other assorted goodies, to the homes of those we visited. It was a big success and helped prepare us to be familiar with ward members and needs prior to the pandemic hitting.

The Hardin Valley Ward is a ward family. We grew together in a number of important ways while we implemented the revelation received by our Prophet and the Lord’s Apostles and as we ministered to those in our ward family during the pandemic. Spencer Olmstead

In His Own Words – Henry Taylor

Since being called as Bishop in the Hardin Valley Ward, we have seen so many changes. I was sustained as Bishop in August of 2020, during the COVID Pandemic. At the time we were only meeting once a month at the building in two different groups to keep the numbers in the building within Knox County guidelines. We would then have a virtual meeting once a month as well. After being sustained and set apart we didn’t meet in person for another month. My first time to conduct our meeting as Bishop was a virtual meeting. From September 2020 we did not have the same manner of Sacrament meeting for over a year due to changes in what was permitted and trying to make sure everyone had a safe place to worship.

So many of the ward members have been so helpful and understanding during the constant changes in our services from month to month. The one constant that everyone could count on is that we were able to partake of the Sacrament. One of the biggest blessings of learning how to have a virtual Sacrament meeting is that we have had members that hadn’t been to church in years start to attend the virtual meetings. We have continued to offer our meetings virtually for those that haven’t been able to come out in public due to the pandemic and for those that are sick.

Missionary farewells/returns have been so wonderful to have; families and friends have been able to join our meetings from around the world. We have also been able to use this same technology during baptisms for those that can't be there. This has been very special because many families haven't been able to travel due to the pandemic but can still attend the baptism.

My testimony during the time as Bishop has grown much stronger and I know that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ. I know that we have a living prophet, Russell M Nelson, who has been called by God to lead The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I am so grateful for his service, knowledge, dedication... to lead us through such trying times that we are facing right now. Henry Taylor

Knoxville YSA Bi-Stake Branch

The Knoxville Stake previously had a YSA branch called the University Branch. It was formed in 1980 and existed for 6 years before being disbanded in 1986. Its history is included in the “Foot Steps of Faith” but missionaries sent from the branch are included below.

Names, Missions, and Start dates for missionaries from the Knoxville University Branch

Jeffery, Reino Dale	Thailand Bangkok Mission	25-Apr-85
Jordan, Mary Barbara	Peru Lima North Mission	18-Jul-85
Cravens, Jeffrey Kent	France Paris Mission	23-Jan-86

Formation of the Knoxville YSA Branch

The Knoxville YSA Bi-Stake Branch formed in July of 2008 with Darrell Talley of the Knoxville Cumberland Stake as its Branch President. Young Single Adults from both the Knoxville and Knoxville Cumberland Stake have the option of attending the YSA Branch or their home family ward. As a result there is a significant turnover in the branch.

Growth and New Members

There is considerable turnover in the YSA Branch as new young singles join the branch after high school graduation and many existing branch members leave as they either finish their college studies, get married, leave the area, or move to a family ward as they get older. As a result the branch has stayed at around 50 to 60 active members over the years but as high as about 100 at times.

Missionary Service

A listing of the missionaries and the names and missions of those called from the YSA Branch are summarized as follows:

Names, Missions, and Start dates for missionaries from the Knoxville YSA Branch

Avery, Joseph Barron	Utah Salt Lake City Mission	8-Jul-09
Stanford, Andrea Maria	California San Jose Mission	3-Apr-13
Twiner, Karlee Mackenzie	California Anaheim Mission	5-Sep-18

Branch Activities

The following ward memories were extracted from the 2014 YSA Branch history that are somewhat typical of other years and was a part of the stake histories from that year.

2014. The Knoxville YSA Branch participated in the following activities during 2014:

- In January a multistate YSA Winterfest was held at the Bristol Motor Speedway. YSA gathered together for daily devotional speakers, music, and ice-skating. We also had a baptism of Taylor Holdren.
- In February the branch held a non-talent talent show FHE in the West Hills building. YSAs reached out to those who are less active, and invited them to attend the “non-talent talent show” the following week.
- In April the branch held the pinewood derby. They also participated in a trip to the Virginia Creeper Trail where 14 YSAs took a shuttle up to White Top and road back 17 miles downhill to Damascus Virginia. The group stopped halfway through for lunch with President & Sister Isom and President Skinner.
- In June the YSA participated in a Regional YSA activity in North Carolina where they had tons of fun rafting and camping. About 20 members of the branch gathered together at the Cove in Knoxville for an open social barbecue. We had great food, opportunities to chat, a volleyball match, and some branch members and even took a canoe out on the lake.
- In July, about 25 members of the branch attended a Mormon night for Tennessee Smokey baseball game. About 15 members of our branch were able to participate in a trip to the Nashville Temple. We had a lot of rain that morning, but we were all able to make it there safely and enjoy a day at the temple. The branch gathered together for a bonfire to wish Cara a happy going away to Weber State. There was mingling, fun, yummy food, and songs. People brought their instruments and had a jam session.
- Knoxville YSA Branch was included in the 2014 multistate YSA conference in Chattanooga Tennessee held over three days. The conference was a great opportunity for Knoxville YSA to meet YSAs from the surrounding areas and to have a lot of fun. About 15 YSAs from our branch were able to attend. The itinerary was as follows: Friday night dinner and dance, Saturday morning workshops and keynote speaker and even a riverboat dance and ice cream social, and Sunday Sacrament meeting and lunch.
- We had a great turnout for our 90s throw-back dance. About 25 people were in attendance. We had a great playlist put together by Kayleigh Clyde and also treats organized by the committee. Everyone had a great time breaking it down on the dance floor.
- About 50 members were able to make it to Franklin for the branch temple trip in September. Our branch attended the Putt Putt’s annual free mini golf. We also held a young single social at the Barnes’ home. We had a great turnout for a pool party and barbecue. About 21 YSA were in attendance. We had yummy burgers and were able to enjoy time spent together. Thanks to the Barnes for letting us party at their house!
- In October we held a Meet the Mormons FHE at the Turkey Creek movie theater. About 16 YSAs got together to watch “Meet the Mormons”. Everyone enjoyed the movie and had a fun outing. A multistate YSA Halloween dance was held in Knoxville. About 50 YSA from the region gathered together for a spooky time. We had yummy treats and scary decorations. Our DJ was Kayleigh Clyde and her planner was Maggie Pierce. Visiting YSAs stayed at local homes and returned in the morning for activities. We intended to have a hike, but it was canceled due to heavy rains. YSA gathered at the ward building for devotional and breakfast.
- In November a rummage sale was held for Marsha Dotson. Members of the branch gathered together for a community sponsored rummage sale. The member of our branch, Marcia Dobson,

was diagnosed with a rare form of skin cancer, and she was without health insurance. In an effort to raise funds to assist her with her medical bills, members of the community gathered to host a rummage sale. Mike Isom led the efforts and was inspired in many ways as to how to organize the sale and delegate tasks. President Isom and the Barnes served as wonderful leaders and kept track of whatever we needed and what had to be done. The rummage sale consisted entirely of donations from the community. Advertising was done on the radio, news, flyers, online sources, and word-of-mouth. Many hands came together to make this sale a reality, and it was amazing to see the outcome. Tons of people from the community came and gave very generous donations to help Marsha. Tears were brought to many people's eyes seeing the generosity of the community. It was awesome to see so many YSA come together and help. In the end the rummage sale raised more than \$16,000 to assist with expenses.

- In December the branch held a Christmas party. About 25 members of the branch gathered together for Christmas dinner and program. We enjoyed delicious ham dinner prepared by Sister Isom and a spiritual thought provided by Ben Mahooty. We rounded out the evening with a white elephant gift exchange. We are grateful to Rebecca Varnon and Ben Mahooty for organizing the event and to Sister Isom for preparing the food.

Ward Leadership

The YSA Branch Presidents and their counselors who served in the YSA Branch and when the presidents were called are listed below.

July 2008 – Darrell Talley. Counselors Gene Box, Brent McGavin, Mike Moffatt

Nov 2011 – Mike Isom. Counselors Ben Steele, Mike Moffatt, Carl Minami, Dan Skinner, Rick Barnes, Jason Carling

June 2016 – Vince Bayles. Counselors Larry Morgan, Brent McGavin, Rob Ivey, Tim Ryan

May 2022 – Clint Mori, Matt Beattie, Rob Ivey

Branch Presidents who have served in the YSA Branch since its inception provided comments concerning their memories of the branch during their time of service.

In His Own Words – Darrell Talley

The Knoxville YSA Branch was organized June 8, 2008 by Ben Morgenegg (Knoxville Stake President) and Shane Cruze (Knoxville Cumberland Stake President) with Darrell Talley (Branch President), Gene Boxx (1st counselor), Brent McGavin (2nd counselor) and Mike Ziegler (Branch Clerk). Three years later Brent McGavin was called back into the Knox Cumberland Stake to serve as Bishop of the Poplar Creek Ward and Mike Moffatt was then called to serve as Brother McGavin's replacement.

The YSA Branch leaders were Michael Vaughn (Elders Quorum Pres), Jonathan Mears (Branch Mission Leader), Jacob Buchkovich (Executive Secretary to the Branch Presidency) and Holly Bryson (Branch Relief Society President). Each branch leader served one year in order to provide more young people the opportunity to have experience of leadership.

There were 85 YSA who attended the organization of the branch and soon increased our membership to approximately 100 young people. There was great enthusiasm in the branch as we called several members to serve as teachers in the Relief Society, Elder's Quorum and Sunday School.

Another way to involve the young people was to organize committees. The activity's committee seemed to create the most excitement in the branch. We had caving trips on the Cumberland Plateau, service events in the Knoxville area, but one they enjoyed most was doing white water rafting on the Nantahala white water river in NC. We would go each July and have a large picnic after the rafting events. It was used also to attract other YSA to the branch.

One important development in the branch was having 18 marriages, in which all were temple marriages with the exception of three. In addition to the marriages, we had temple trips for those who were endowed, baptisms for those not endowed. In addition to those, we had five who served as ordinance workers at the Nashville Temple. A few baptisms also took place in our branch, for we had several return missionaries, both young men and young women that were great assets, not only in missionary work, but in leadership development as well.

Our dear wives were a great blessing in the branch as they taught a family relations class and were also available to give counsel and advice to the young ladies (a mom away from home). They also gave great advice to the Branch Presidency in helping us recognize the needs of the young sisters.

We as leaders counted our time spent there, as a crowning jewel in our lives, along with the great friendships developed with the wonderful young people in the branch. Darrell Talley

In His Own Words – Mike Isom

My calling to serve as the Branch President in the YSA ward of the Knoxville Tennessee Stake came in a rather unusual way. It wasn't the recommended way of the Stake President inviting my wife and I to meet with him and extending the call. The call was extended to me while sitting in a High Council meeting one Sunday morning. The Stake President mentioned that they were making a change in the branch (which we know was coming because we had been asked earlier to submit recommendations to the Stake Presidency). He followed that by announcing that I was being called as the new Branch President. Several of the brethren asked me right there about if that was for real and I could say was that I guessed it was an official call. I responded, after a minute or two of gathering myself, that I would be happy to serve but wanted to speak with my wife before committing. Obviously, my wife was very supportive so I accepted the call.

I loved serving alongside my wife, who loved the YSAs as her own, in the YSA branch. I felt like I was working with young people that were so committed to living the gospel and strengthening each other. They are definitely an elect group that had to be strong. The challenges that those young people face as they live the gospel is hard to comprehend if you don't have a chance to see it for yourself. They were living in a time when living the gospel involved habits and commitments that were not popular in the

world and especially among their peers who are not of our faith. Throughout my time of service, I felt one of their biggest challenges was understanding and being able to distinguish between right and wrong even though they are adults and very smart individuals. This difficulty was simply the product of the world around them teaching them to be themselves. Don't worry about constraints. Live and let live. While this has often been the case over time, I don't believe it was ever as "in your face", as strong and bold as it was at this time. And therefore, it caused great confusion among our YSAs.

We were relatively small in numbers. On an average Sunday, we would have around 50 to 55 members in attendance. Those that did attend brought with them a wonderful spirit. I was always strengthened by the power of their testimonies. They came from very difficult backgrounds, including parents that weren't members, parents who had gone inactive and tried to pull them away from the Church and parents that were very active and supportive. All blended their unique backgrounds and experiences to strengthen one another and to strengthen me.

One summer our Stake President decided to make an extra effort to get the YSAs in the home units to attend the branch by giving instruction for all to attend. That summer our attendance increased to an average of around 80 YSAs. It was wonderful. What a blessing that was to our members to have many more of their gospel peers in attendance. We later heard experiences from some who would otherwise not have attended that it was a great blessing to be there. They had opportunities to teach, lead and participate that they would not have had staying in their home ward. Unfortunately, many of the parents were not happy that their YSAs were going to the branch rather than the home ward. There was so much flack shared with the Stake President that it never happened again. Very sad.

Missionary work was strong in the branch most of the time. We saw many young people learn of the gospel through their friends, gain a testimony and embrace the gospel through baptism. Joining the Church at that time meant all joined without having the blessing of their families being members of the Church and having that built in support system. Unfortunately, some fell into inactivity for various reasons. However, many remained active and are faithfully living the gospel of Jesus Christ today.

Since many of these young people were away from home and families, they periodically had a need for temporary housing. On these occasions, my wife and I were able to invite them into our home to stay while they were working out whatever their need was. We have a section of our house where there is a bedroom, bathroom and family room and that is where they would stay. We named it the YSA Wing. It was wonderful have them in our home and getting to know them on a different level. We considered this to be one of the many blessings that came with serving in the branch.

I have since lost touch with many of them but they have touched my life forever. There are some who I remain in touch with even today. It has been such a wonderful blessing to see so many of them marry, start families and continue on a path to eternal happiness.

My wife and I are so blessed because of our service to these wonderful young people. We were also very blessed by the wonderful brethren who served as my counselors over the years along with their wonderful wives. They were amazing and provided so much strength to us. I will conclude with my love for the wonderful members that we served and a great love for all who are YSAs. They are an amazing group of members within the Church. I have been so blessed!

Mike Isom

In His Own Words – Vince Bayles

On May 1, 2016, we were called as a new branch presidency of the Knoxville YSA Branch, with Vincent Bayles as President, Brent McGavin as 1st Councilor and Rob Ivey as 2nd Councilor. Dave Wallace and Zeyoung (Phillip) Wang were retained as the Branch Clerk and Executive Secretary. We were fortunate to have these brethren remain since we came into the branch knowing very few of the Young Single Adults (YSA) they provided much needed advice and background on the branch. Brent McGavin was released Dec 31, 2017, when he was called away by his work to go to Puerto Rico to assist in the Hurricane rebuild effort. On December 31, 2017, Larry Morgan Jr. was called as second Counselor to the Branch Presidency to replace Brother McGavin and Brother Rob Ivey was called as first Counselor. Brother Morgan served till February 4, 2018, when he was released due to traveling to take care of his multiple businesses. Timothy R Ryan joined our Presidency as second counselor July 8, 2018.

Also serving were Samuel Gerloff, Sean Young and Matthew Gerloff as Executive Secretaries, with Owen Hughes, and Eric Tobler as Branch Clerks. All these men along with my counselors are all great and spiritual men who love the Lord. They have been a great help to me as I have served as Branch President.

Our branch covers two stakes the Cumberland and the Knoxville Stake. I can say that both President Thomas Clapp and President David Sexton of the Knoxville Stake and President Tommy Dahl of the Cumberland Stake have been great advocates for the YSA. As a Branch Presidency we met with both Stake Presidencies and let them know of our plans and of our needs for the branch. High Councilors from both stakes were assigned to come each month to speak at our Sacrament meetings and some of them attend our activities. The YSA look to their leaders for guidance and what better way to do that than to attend the meetings and activities and show them by being part of their lives.

The YSA's are a very dynamic group, as they are frequently experiencing life changing events. This dynamic has presented both challenges and opportunities for the YSA Branch. Because of the constant turnover, we were constantly having to make changes in our organizations. This turnover allowed for several YSA's to serve in leadership roles where they would not normally have had the opportunity to serve if they were in a family ward. As Elders Quorum President, Zach Ziegler, Danny Vandygriff, Ian Guthrie, Jason Ashby, Kody Ulmer, and Samuel Gerloff had the opportunity to serve in that calling. As Relief Society President, Britney Barnes, Lexi Sterling, Natalie Maldonado, Jessica Morgan, Kelsey Kah, and Sara Matheson have had the opportunity to serve. We also had YSA's that served in leadership roles in Sunday School Presidency, Mission Leader, Activities Committees, Family Home Evenings, Communications, Music and Family History.

We felt it was important for the YSA's to lead the organizations that they were called in, with the Branch Presidency taking more of advisory role to the leadership of the various groups. By doing this we have had wonderful experiences to see the growth of these young leaders as they served in their callings.

Activities were and are an important part for the branch. Each January we would hold a planning session with the YSA leaders to map the activities for the year. Sister Bayles and I looked forward to cooking for

the YSA that attended which gave them a chance to have a home cooked meal. It gave us an opportunity to spend time with each one of them on a personal basis and to learn more about their life and their family. One dish that was always a favorite was a low country boil which was a first for some of those that attended.

The activities that were planned would include a variety of opportunities, with the idea that there would be something of interest for everyone. We always tried to plan activities that would give each person who attended an opportunity to learn about one another and to have a spiritual experience.

We felt that it was important to incorporate service as a part of our activities. We have had for the past few years an ongoing relationship with Remote Area Medical (RAM), where we came in as a group and helped them perform various tasks at their facility. Another service activity was a parent's night out for families in the adjoining wards, we provided a place where parents could bring their children on a Saturday night so that they could have the night to themselves, unfortunately this activity took place on the weekend where Knoxville had 10 inches of rain which limited our numbers because of the flooded roadways but the YSA had good time with the children and the parents were grateful to the YSA for this service.

We had an activity at an assisted living center where one of our YSA sisters worked as an RN. She told me that I would fit right in there and that she had a space set aside for me. Of course, she was kidding, but she and I had a good laugh. Each YSA spent time with them, played games, and had conversations with the residents. Those that attended not only learned about those they served but they learned about themselves and how rewarding it is when you serve others.

Some of the more popular annual activities included riding the Creeper Trail Ride, Boating and Water Activities, Tubing on the Little River in Townsend, Friendsgiving, Picnics at the Cove, and Ijams Nature Center. There were Talent Shows, tailgating at the Institute Building before UT Football games, and our annual Christmas Party.

The talent show was quite the experience as we learned of hidden talents of the YSA, some of the talents included were watermelon splitting using the forehead method (this was done by missionaries that were assigned to the branch), flute playing, renditions of Taylor Swift songs done on a Ukulele, magic acts, and some performed songs that they wrote. Brother Owen Hughes shared with us his talent for playing the guitar and the harmonica; he was the talented one in the Branch Presidency.

On one of our trips to the Creeper Trail we had one sister that had never ridden a bike before and yet she made it to the bottom of the trail with only one crash. What caught my attention were the two YSA sisters who rode alongside her and helped her on the way down the trail. They were truly their bothers (sisters) keeper!

Our annual tailgating party was held at the institute building where we were joined by non-members and members alike. At one of the events the missionaries and the YSAs had taken water bottles and removed the labels off the bottles and added their own labels which was in-scripted come join us at

institutes at the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS. I know of four nonmembers who attended institute because of that one activity. At another tailgating event, one newly baptized member, Patrick Bates, invited his non-members parents. This gave our branch members a chance to fellowship with Patrick's parents and a chance to show his parents the members of the Church were normal everyday people.

Included in our activities were frequent trips to the temple, in which YSAs participate in endowment and baptismal sessions (of course food was always involved afterwards). I was always grateful for those who attended and for those who brought with them their family files. One thing I would always tell each of them before they entered the water was to look at the name and the date for that individual that they were doing the work for and try to imagine that person and how grateful they are for them being in the temple that day allowing them to take the next step in their eternal progression. I had several YSA on different occasions tell me they felt their family members were there and they were grateful. Another memory is of a sister who came to me and asked if she could have her endowment. She was a young sister and had just been baptized over a year and a half. At first, I wasn't sure because of her age and the short time as a member. As we began our discussion about it, I had the strongest feeling that this sister was ready. We went through the process and arranged for her endowment. Three months after that we called her as our Relief Society president. She had truly prepared her life to serve and the Lord blessed her for her insight of the temple.

Throughout the year we would usually hold several Linger Longers. These were always looked forward to which gave the YSA a chance for socializing and food. There have been some interesting revelations that came out those gatherings. One occasion the Elders Quorum had been given the responsibility to bring the main course which was to prepare a turkey. The brother who was given that assignment didn't know that you must thaw out a turkey before cooking it. It was a humorous moment. But we each joined in and cooked the bird, and all went home full.

Besides the official activities there were numerous unofficial activities, which included watch parties for general conference and other broadcasts, camping trips, hiking, movie watching, game nights and other activities. These informal gatherings were important as they fortified the YSA and let them know others cared about them.

We were very mindful of the need to help YSAs along the covenant path and getting them to the next ordinance. Sometimes to get to the next ordinance a YSA needs to realize they need take the next step in their lives. We tried to give them a foundation for the next step in their lives by encouraging them to look for opportunities to improve themselves, whether in education, employment changes or self-reliance opportunities. As I worked close with the YSA I found those who were prepared and had a firm understanding of the gospel and ready to take the next step. Others however, and some who had been raised in the Church hadn't taken the time to read their scriptures or didn't have a testimony of some of the basic principles of the gospel. The beauty of the Lord's Church is that everyone has that opportunity to learn and progress and those who embraced that knowledge were always happy and dealt with their trials better than those who did not.

I remember one sister who had never bought a car in her life and was terrified of going through the process. She had saved her money and intended to pay cash for the purchase. As we talked about how we would help this sister in Branch Council and Branch Presidency meetings it was decided that the Elders Quorum would help her with this. I met with the sister and explained to her what our plan was, she was excited and grateful for the help. After a few weeks passed the process wasn't moving forward. After meeting with the Elders Quorum president, he told me that every car they found and showed to her, she felt it was the wrong car. I met with her once more and she said that the Elders were trying but she and they couldn't come to an agreement with their choices. After discussing this in Branch Presidency meeting, Brother Hughes said he knew a man who bought old cars and rebuilt them and made sure they were in good working order. Brother Hughes found a car and arranged to pick up the sister and took her to see the car. Next Sunday, I asked the sister how it went she took me outside to show me an old Crown Vic police Cruiser. Knowing this sister, I knew it was the right car. She was very happy and grateful to the brethren for the help.

To help YSAs with the next ordinance, we held several different classes one was the Marriage Relation classes, Missionary Prep Classes, and the Temple Preparation classes.

Every four months, there would be broadcast from Salt Lake for the young adults, we would gather at the Institute building have a dinner and then watch the broadcast.

During any given year there were three times in which the branch membership would go through a transition. These transitory times would correspond with the start or ending of the college term. In January, June, and September, we would have YSA leave for school or return for school, sometimes it would be a bit of challenge as we just had gotten to know a group then the transition period would hit, and we started over about leaning a new group.

We were always concern about the needs of the YSA. In Branch Council we would ask what they wanted or needed to hear from us on certain topics of concern. We would utilize the Fifth Sunday to address these concerns. These ranged from learning how to prepare and keep a budget, writhing checks, Emergency preparedness, dating, having a personal relationship with God, bullying, Same Sex attraction, and Family History just to name a few. On several occasions we brought in the experts to help us. We have had Dr. Juliann Krogel come and teach about Same Sex attraction and bullying. We had Sister Jessica Belnap come and speak on anxiety, and depression and dating. We had Sister Jenny Mckinney come in and teach us about family history and indexing. I noticed shortly after these meetings I would be approached by YSA's that were struggling with these issues or were excited that there were options out there for them and were afraid to come forward. They expressed to me that they were grateful for those lessons and that they helped them change their lives. I have always believed in having a clear and open dialogue about any and all subjects. I believe that this builds trust with those you serve and that this allows them to find the answers they need in whatever circumstance they may be in.

It is unfortunate and heart breaking when you see members of the Church who have chosen of their-own free will or under the influence of others or that of the world and are lead astray and choose not to attend church or partake of the convents they have made with the Lord. We talk about these individuals

in Branch Council in Branch Presidency meetings, we mentioned them in our prayers and their names are found on the prayer rolls of the temple. We work hard to help them find their way back.

I remember of one instance when our Sunday School President Devin Cupp along with the Branch Council decided to bake cookies on a Saturday morning then they broke up in small groups and took the cookies along with a note inviting these less active members to come to another activity that was scheduled in the coming weeks. Did this work? Think about it, who says no to cookies! This was a great service project. It not only helps the YSA, but it helped our wayward brothers and sisters who didn't want to come to church or an activity because we just made a visit. They felt our love and that of the Savior for them. Out of 15 people who were visited I know of 4 who came back into activity.

Every year there would be couples that would get married. We taught a marriage relations class. All the couples took part in the class, and it was a fun time for all. Each member of the Branch Presidency along with their wife would teach the class. This gave us an opportunity to share with these young couples the experiences we had through different phases in our marriage - the fun, the sad, and the spiritual. Some of the couples were married in the temple and others were civil marriages. We had four civil marriages during the COVID period due to the temples being closed. It was heart breaking for these couples because they had planned their entire lives for this moment to be sealed in the temple.

I had some warm and spiritual experiences as I met with these couples to talk about the new and everlasting covenant and the blessings that Eternal marriage brings. Through all the marriages I only know of one couple who to this day has not been sealed in the temple and this is mainly due to her being a nonmember. For those who had to wait due to COVID restrictions, they expressed to me they had a greater appreciation of the temple and the covenants they made there.

One of the marriages was my son, Colten, who was sealed to Nathalie Paul. They met in the YSA branch, dated for a year, then were married in the Atlanta Temple. Nathalie was a convert who was baptized when she was a senior in high school. Nathalie's family were devout Catholic but were very supportive of Nathalie and Colten when they decided to be sealed in the temple.

Missionary Work: When we were called into the Branch Presidency the Mission President assigned one set of Elders to our Branch. When we received a new Mission President, President Pickett met with me and asked if I would like to have a set of senior missionaries and pair of sister missionaries. I told him we would accept the challenge and so we ended up with 3 set of missionaries.

To this day we still have three sets of missionaries. I am grateful for the insight of these Mission Presidents and for to the Lord to allow us the opportunity to have these missionaries to complete his work. I knew it would be a challenge for us to keep these missionaries busy. But I also knew that the Lord would support us if we accepted the challenge. The YSAs have always been supported of the missionaries and in sharing the gospel with their friends and coworkers. There were many instances when the Spirit was felt during a baptism and during the missionary discussions. We would encourage each member of the branch to set in at least one discussion with the missionaries as they taught. This didn't always happen due to the members working on being in school, but it did happen often. I feel this

is one reason our branch was successful in the missionary effort. In 2021 we saw an increase in the number of YSA who were baptized. Our senior missionaries have been a great blessing in helping us seek out the lost sheep and in bringing them back to the fold. They are the grandparents of the branch, and they look out for the YSA. They teach our Temple Preparation class and inspire the YSA to be better people. Having sister missionaries has given the YSA sisters an opportunity to work with them and bring other sisters into the Church. Having the Elders in our branch has given us an opportunity to have YSA brethren who were planning on serving missions go and teach with the Elders and experience firsthand the blessing of sharing the gospel.

We were grateful that they looked to follow Christ and that we were able to be associate with them. One instance I can remember is of the baptism of Chase Via. He is a well-spoken young man and an avid genealogist. After he was baptized, he stood up in front of everyone and bore his testimony of Jesus Christ and of the Book of Mormon and family history.

Another convert sister testified that the gospel was a great blessing. This sister had lived a rough life. Her mother basically abandoned her and to this day they are not close. She has a hard time with depression and anxiety, but she is loved by everyone she meets for when you meet her you are her instant friend. This sister grabbed ahold of the gospel and the Lord's plan and has done her best to live by the doctrines and principles the Lord has laid down. We have seen these changes in this sister's life, her testimony has grown, and her growth is temporal and spiritual. She now has a good job, and her friends are ones who share her belief in God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

COVID: The suspension of YSA activities due to COVID had a detrimental effect on the YSAs. During this time, it was hard for all of them to be shut off from their friends and family and from all the activities and social events that was so much a part of their lives. Zoom meetings at first were a new and effective method to meet. But shortly the newness wore off and many did not attend.

Even with the priesthood brethren who took the Sacrament each week to the homes of those who did not have priesthood in them, became difficult for some because of the fear of catching COVID. President Clapp and I spoke of what could be done and he agreed to allow us to start meeting again with the approval of the Area President. We were the first in our stake to be allowed to go back to at least Sacrament meetings. This was a great blessing for us all. Unfortunately, a few YSA's did not return after the resumption of activities.

In 2022 we were looking to increase the number of activities for the branch to provide a safe place for YSAs to gather. We have double the number of activities we have each month, with one activity being a service activity. We have encouraged each member to be more active in missionary work and preparing themselves to go to the temple. We have asked the members to prepare family files to bring to the temple. And for all to prepare each week to partake of the Sacrament.

All in all, I can say that the YSA are valiant individuals ready to serve whenever they are asked to serve. They love their neighbors and are constantly looking to better themselves. They work hard and have a love for the Lord and the gospel. They desire to be married and to raise children. They are searching for

their place in this world. In my time in the branch, we have YSAs that are or becoming Doctors, Engineers, Veterinarians, Zookeepers, Physicist, Bankers, Mechanics, Aero Space Engineers, Librarians, Technical and Computer fields of work. We have students, missionaries and return missionaries, salesmen, Pest Control and Athletes. We have had two PHD's and one Chemical Engineer with a PHD. But most of all they are all children of God who love the Lord.

I could go on and on there are so many stories and spiritual experiences I have had in the 6 years of serving in this calling with the YSA. No one person can accomplish this work alone. I am grateful for my consolors and their wife's who have given so much in this great work. I am grateful for the leadership in both stakes, I am grateful for the Mission Presidents who have had faith in the YSA, of their great potential to become faithful missionaries and for all those who love the YSA. Most importantly I am grateful to the Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ who has supported us in these efforts. This is His Church and His plan. I am grateful to be a part of this great work.

Sincerely, President Vincent Bayles

Loudon Branch/Ward

The Loudon Branch was formed out of the Farragut Ward on July 2, 1995. It included all of Loudon County and, for the first few years, a small slice of Knox County. It initially met in the auditorium of the Loudon High School and then rented space in the old Loudon High School. Formation of the branch resulted in several members of the branch becoming more active and preparing to receive their temple endowments. Even though enthusiasm in the branch was high, growth was slow and attendance hovered at around 50 when the stake was spilt in November of 1996. Additional details about the formation and early experience of the Loudon Branch are included in the Stake history "Foot Steps of Faith" published in 1997.

Growth and New Members

Since the stake split, the growth of the branch has continued to be quite slow. There have been some baptisms and new members have moved in, but many members have also moved out. In anticipation of building a chapel for the branch, the Church purchased a building lot near the Tennessee River as a site for a future building. However, this lot was eventually sold and the branch continued to meet in the Old Loudon High School until 1999 when a small church building was constructed near the Loudon High School. This facility served the branch very well for many years.

In 2017 a gathering began with many more members moving into the branch from all over the country. This gathering included couples, families and individuals including many local converts joining the Church. The gathering represents approximately 30 members moving in each of the past 3 years. The amazing thing is that almost everyone's story is the same; they were told by the Lord that they needed to move to Loudon. During this same time approximately 20 to 30 members, each year, who we lost contact with were located and their records were moved to their new wards. We have been so blessed to have so many faithful members move in. In May of 2021 Loudon was made a ward.

Missionary Service

A listing of the missionaries and the names and missions of those called from the Loudon Branch/Ward are summarized as follows:

Names, Missions, and Start dates for missionaries from the Loudon Branch

Davis, Lael I-Kang	Hawaii Honolulu Mission	3-Jul-96
Sanchez, Mario	Arizona Mesa Mission	30-Nov-05
Johnson, Benjamin Cole	Utah Logan Mission	13-Jul-16
Sterner, Caden Andrew	California San Jose Mission	17-Jan-18
Tilton, Melissa Ann	Utah Salt Lake City Mission	3-Jul-19

Elizabeth Hall left for the Utah Salt Lake City South Mission in October of 2020 while her family lived in Indiana but then returned to the Loudon Branch in December of 2021 after her family had moved to Tennessee while she was on her mission.

Youth Activities

Prior to 2019 the youth joined with the wards meeting at the stake center for most of their weekly activities. In 2019 the youth went on a Super Saturday activity river rafting which was cold but very fun with everyone getting wet. The youth also enjoyed summer camps, TREK and other youth conferences in 2019 and 2021. In 2019 the branch youth were independent from other units in the stake as their numbers were enough to have a meaningful program. The youth went on many temple trips including one stake temple trip where more than 300 of the youth's own names were baptized and confirmed. More than enough to form a ward.

Because of the limited size of the Loudon building, we had to use members with larger homes in order to social distance. This has allowed the youth to go swimming, kayaking, fishing, potato gun shooting, cooking, movie night and lots of other fun activities. Other youth activities have included seminary, Halloween and Christmas parties, game nights, catapult building, bonfire missionary firesides, pinewood derbys, service projects, sand volley ball, decorating members doors with hearts, decorating vases for nursing homes residents, career nights, soccer nights

Brother Dan Newton, 1st counselor in the Bishopric recorded the following about the youth whitewater rafting experience. *"Grey skies greeted us the morning of Saturday, August 7, 2021; the day of our youth whitewater rafting trip. Well... we're going to get wet anyway, so does it really matter if it rains? Hmmm, I think it does. But regardless, we set off for the rafting center about an hour South of the church on the Ocoee river, just a few minutes from where we had held Young Men's Camp earlier in the summer. Everyone was in good spirits and laughed and played Giant Jenga while we waited for our group to be called. Then after a short orientation (on mostly how not to drown in the river as I recall,) we dawned life jackets, helmets and selected paddles for our grand adventure.*

After a about 30 minute winding bus ride up the river to the Middle Ocoee Put-in, our starting point; rubber rafts were pulled from the tops of the busses, and we carried them down below the dam to our entry point in the river. Smiles all around as we set off in our assigned rafts under beautiful, blue skies. If felt good to get out on an outdoor activity with the youth after many months of COVID-19 restrictions that had severely limited our gatherings and types of activities.

We hit the first set of rapids and all pretense for staying dry was abandoned. No worries about rain any more... we were drenched. But the warm summer sun dried us quickly until the next drenching, and then the next, and the next. You get the idea. Lather, rinse, and repeat. But the youth were having a ball. Those who had approached the activity with some trepidation abolished all fear as they happily engaged in paddling, splashing, and working to stay in the rafts while navigating some pretty decent sized rapids.

Swimming and playing in a slow moving section of the river about mid-point in our journey was the highlight for many I think; but then it was back in the rafts and the continuation of our adventure under the capable and experienced hands of our guides.

Our journey ended just above Lake Ocoee shortly after braving the infamous "Hell Hole Rapid." Then a

group of tired but happy water-logged young women and young men, along with parents and leaders, pulled the rafts from the river and loaded back onto busses for the now short ride back to the rafting center and dry clothing. I think all in all a great day... and we came back with everyone we started with. Always a good end to any activity."

The Loudon Branch sponsored Boy Scout 404. Below is a listing of those young men who have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout based on ward records and records from the local Boy Scout office.

Eagle Scouts from Troop 404

2013 – Hunter Hale

2019 – Jaden Beal

2019 – Cooper Cziep

2021 – John Terry (transferred to a local troop and completed his Eagle)

The Young Women Personal Progress program was the equivalent to the scouting program for the young women and is the highest honor given in the Young Women organization. Kaybri Jones received the Young Womanhood Recognition award in 2020.

Branch Activities

The Loudon Branch participating in the bicentennial celebration at the World's Fair site in 1997. Sister Betty Rose along with her husband Lee and daughter Kim, were among the stalwarts who helped hold the branch together during its early years. She remembered the branch participating in the stake's bicentennial celebration: *"We borrowed a Conestoga wagon and I made a cover for it. I also made dresses and bonnets to use on the pioneer trek. It was a lot of fun."* That wagon was a main attraction of the Pioneer parade along the streets near the World's Fair site that was a part of the celebration.

The following branch activities were extracted from the 2013 and 2014 Loudon histories that were somewhat typical of other year's branch activities.

2013. In February many from the Loudon Branch attended a special Stake Conference with Elder Oaks of the 12. In June our youth participated in a great Stake Youth Conference entitled Moroni's Quest. In June there was also a change in the Branch Presidency. Matt Pulver was released as Branch President along with his counselors, Fred Smith and David Cziep. The new Branch President called was Louis Terry and he retained the same counselors as previously - Brothers Smith and Cziep. In July, Hunter Hale's Eagle project at the elementary school was completed. In September the Relief Society had a temple retreat where they stayed overnight and five sisters attended. Also in September the branch operated a booth at the Emergency Water Resources at the annual Knoxville Emergency Preparedness Fair. In November, branch members assisted with the Good Samaritan Center's Thanksgiving basket drive. In December, the branch held its Christmas party with approximately sixty in attendance. During the year, we had seven convert baptisms - Jennifer Haskell in March, Beth Remy in April, Alan Shaneyfelt and Manford Meadow Senior and Junior and Amy Johnson in August, and Edith Babb in December.

2014. The Loudon Branch held a picnic on Pioneer Day, 24th of July with proximally 50 attended. We then participated in Loudon's Riverfest in August with 200 surveys completed and 100 pictures of Christ distributed. In October we participated in the Harvest Festival with proximally 60 attending. And finally in December, the branch had its Christmas party with approximately 55 attending.

More Recent years. Our Christmas and Halloween activities have been major productions with Bro. Newton and all the accessories he has from a manger, life size donkey, production lighting and sound systems. Halloween was equally as spooky and exciting.

In March of 2020 the COVID pandemic hit the world including Loudon, TN. Church was suspended for several months. We had ministering brothers going to members' homes, who did not have a priesthood holder in them, to provide the Sacrament. When we resumed Sacrament meeting only, our building was too small to hold all the members due to distancing requirements. During this time, we used Zoom technology to broadcast Sacrament meetings to member's homes. We also split the ward into a high-risk group known as "A" group, and a lower risk "B" group. Our attendance was higher during this time period than it was before COVID. We had 30 members moving in every year during this time and there was great spiritual revival even though activity and interaction was very restricted.

In 2021 we held our Pioneer Day breakfast at the new Lenoir City Park on Broadway St. We had a well-attended Halloween party at the building, which was so well attended many people stayed outside on the front lawn. Temple and Family History took off and many temple workers have been called. New converts received the priesthood, callings and have been to the temple as well.

Branch Leadership

The Loudon Branch Presidents and when they were called and their counselors are listed below.

July 1995 – Elwin Davis. Counselors Larry Collins, Frank Adkins

June 1999 – Jim Elkins. Counselors Fred Smith, Carlton Dilbon

June 2001 – William Cox. Counselors Fred Smith, Heinrick Schifferer, Roston Debuty, Mark Crews

June 2006 – Heinrick Schifferer. Counselors Fred Smith, Gary Andrews, Joe DeLorie

July 2012 – Matt Pulver. Counselors Fred Smith, David Cziep

July 2013 – Lewis Terry. Counselors Fred Smith, David Cziep

May 2019 – Eric Stewart. Counselors Don Newton, Ray Jones

Several of the Branch Presidents who have served in the Loudon Branch since its inception and Fred Smith who served a counselor to five Branch Presidents have provided comments concerning their memories of the branch during their time of service.

In His Own Words – Elwin Davis

This is an effort from my memory to record the early happenings in Loudon Branch history. I believe that the Loudon Branch of the Knoxville, TN, Knoxville Stake was organized in 1995 because my son Lael

I-Kang Davis was soon called on a mission for the Church in 1996. He continued to attend the Farragut Ward, from which the Loudon Branch was organized, instead of Loudon Branch.

The organization was established as follows:

Branch Presidency

Branch President:	Elwin K. Davis
First Counselor:	Frank Atkins
Second Counselor:	Larry Collins
Melchizedek Priesthood Group Leader:	Lee Rose
Relief Society President:	Betty Rose
Young Men Leader:	Bret Hilton
Young Women Leader:	Bonnie Hilton
Primary President:	Amy Collins

Originally, we met in an old school on a hill above downtown Loudon. We had more than ample room because each room was the size of a classroom. Unfortunately, every time it rained, every classroom flooded and sometimes caused a delay in the start of Sacrament meeting. Consequently, the stake requested that we build our own building. A lot was purchased on the main street on the south end of town and a small building was built. Frank Atkins was there daily to make sure everything proceeded smoothly. During this time attendance rose as some members had felt going to Farragut was too far.

When the branch was organized, we had an elderly sister with a terminal disease. The Relief Society stepped up to organize, having two ladies there at all times. The night that the sister passed away, the sister's daughter and a friend who were both non-members of the Church, were caring for her. They both claimed that they saw her spirit leave her body when she passed away. The branch organized a funeral service for the deceased sister at a local funeral home. The deceased daughter and another relative complained that we had not included their ministers in the service. We readily relented and put the two ministers on the program. They spoke first and second. I then spoke on the Plan of Salvation. Members and nonmembers all seemed to be happy with the outcome.

The Knoxville Mission President assigned two missionaries to begin proselyting in Loudon County. One day a pickup with some local young men drove by the missionaries and yelled at them. Unfortunately, one of the missionaries yelled back. The pickup turned around and came back to beat up the missionaries. The next day we had new missionaries, two football players from BYU. Their size was imposing, and we never had a problem with local harassment again.

One of activities for the YM/YW youth was to do public service. Brother Bret and Sister Bonnie Hilton found a family graveyard with several graves. The graveyard was covered with weeds and, at first, we had difficulty finding it. We cleaned up the weeds and leaves and straightened the tombstones.

Our primary goal was to find less active members and invite them to church. Gradually, we had additional members showing up for church. There was one sister that had not shown any response to our attempts to contact her. The Branch and Relief Society presidencies met to discuss the issue. We were told that she was married to someone whose extended family all lived in the same place and were

involved in drugs. They had previously threatened members of our council who had been out to visit the sister and had been warned not to come back.

In another case we were told about a young sister who had recently married a nonmember and was living within the boundaries of the branch. We visited and got as far as the front door; the father-in-law answered the door with a rifle in his hands. He said that she was not available and told us to leave. We told him that his son had married a member of our Church, and we therefore have a sense of responsibility for her wellbeing. We told him that since she was not available at that time, we would come back later. He did not tell us not to come back. We moved after that so I'm unaware of any follow-up.

I loved serving in the branch and love the people there. I'm so happy Loudon has now become a ward.

Elwin Davis

In His Own Words – William Cox

I was on the High Council and was in one of the meetings when the Stake presidency came into the High Council Room. Max Lehman was the Stake President and Gene Boxx was his first councilor and Bill Nicholas was his second councilor. When they sat at the head of the table Bill and Gene were looking at me like I had something wrong. After the meeting, Max asked me into his office and he said he would like to call me to be the Loudon Branch President for a month or two. I said that I would have to talk to Ruth about it. Max said that if I accepted the call, Ruth should be released as Stake Relief Society President. I went home Ruth said that she thought we should do it.

I called Ruth as the 2nd Counselor of Primary. (She had been the President of the Primary in the North Ogden 7th Ward when we were in Utah.) That way she could help the current Primary President be successful. Ruth remembers counting kids in Sacrament meeting to see if they were going to have Primary. They could have between zero and 20 children. I called Marlene Lewellyn as the RS President. She had to be released from her stake calling. I called Lee Rose as the EQ President. I called Bro Debuty as one of my councilors. Shortly after that, they moved back to Maryville.

Heinrich Schifferer (he replaced me as Branch President) was attending Loudon because as he was building a house in Loudon County. Therefore, I called him as my 1st Councilor. Most of the time I was there, Richard Cooper was the Branch Financial Clerk.

We usually had one of the Mission couples from the Mission Office assigned to the branch. One couple was from Idaho, the Moses. He was a rancher who wore the cowboy boots and belt buckle, etc. He joined some of the farm organizations/societies in Loudon County. He had a stack of pictures of his ranch and cattle which he used to show the other farmers etc. in Loudon County. Interspersed in the stack of pictures were "pass-along cards" which he used to bring up the Church during conversations with non-members.

Also we had two ladies assigned to the ward, Barbara Jensen and Marilyn Nielson. They lived in the Farragut Ward boundaries. They had moved to TN with Kimberly-Clark (KC) from Utah. They were born in the Church and returned to Utah when KC reassigned Barbara to Utah.

One thing that Max was telling people was that if the members of the branch did not change their ways, the branch would be dissolved, and the members would have to attend the Farragut Ward.

We had a couple Hispanic members who had many friends and families in Loudon County. One of the Hispanic members was Mario Sanchez. He had joined the Church in CA and had been at a party in CA which had been broken up by the police and therefore, he had an outstanding warrant. He had a very firm testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel. He was afraid of flying because of the warrant. Mario wanted to go on mission. I spoke to David Sexton and he called the DA in CA (who was a member of the Church) and got Mario's record cleared. Mario was the first person from the branch to go on a mission. The branch helped pay for the cost of the mission. Mario served in the Phoenix AZ mission.

In 2004 the film makers of "The Work and Glory" film came to Loudon County to film part of the movie. Branch members who were selected have parts in the film included Frank Atkins and Paul Qualls. Many of the professional film crew attended church at the branch while they were filming.

In 2005, the branch had 17 convert baptisms. Most of them were Hispanics. I got some hymnals in Spanish for the Hispanic members. One Sunday a member and his wife wanted to meet with me. They objected to the people in the row behind them in Sacrament meeting singing in Spanish?

One of the branch members was the manager of the U-Haul office in Farragut. He did not come until he got arrested. Then while he was waiting on the trial, he started coming. He was convicted and sent to Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary. He was moved to the Bledsoe Correction Complex. I visited him in both facilities. I have not heard of him since I left Loudon.

During some of the General Conferences, we showed it in the building and had lunch and picnic in one of the parks in Loudon. The families brought meals to share.

Max kept extending my time as Branch President until he just said that I would be there as long as he was Stake President. He was reassigned out west and Ben Morgenegg released me in June 2001. We enjoyed our years serving in the Loudon Branch and made many good friends there. Ruth and I were very happy to see them made a ward. Bill Cox

In His Own Words – Lewis Terry

After serving almost 6 years as Branch President in the Loudon Branch there are so many great memories, and I have seen the hand of the Lord in His work in this part of the vineyard many, many times. As such, I have been pondering what the Lord would like included in this Loudon Branch history that transpired while I was serving here. My years of service included much love and fellowship, as well as many successes, challenges, and spiritual experiences.

We relocated to the area in late 2012/early 2013 due to my employer closing the Florida office after an acquisition. Since moving would mean leaving so much family behind, it became a matter of serious prayer. We felt that the Lord wanted us to move to Tennessee. While we initially felt that Loudon was where we needed to be, the house that we had in mind was sold before the relocation offer was official, and it became hard to find a home that met our needs and price range. As such, we made an offer on a house in the Maryville Ward because we only had a very short time that my company was covering living arrangements. After that house fell through, the impressions came loud and clear that we were supposed to move to Loudon. From that point on, we only looked in Loudon, and it was a great blessing to be able to finally find something quickly. My wife and I had received some impressions that the Lord wanted me to serve as Branch President. However, once settling in, we thought it must be something in the future as the Loudon Branch already had a wonderful Branch President in Matthew Pulver, and he had not been serving long. We soon learned that Lord had other plans as President Pulver moved, and I was called to serve by mid-2013. We quickly fell in love with our branch family. While it was hard being hundreds of miles away from family, everyone made us feel welcomed, and we learned that the branch had many wonderful people with tremendous faith and talents.

Early on, I was moved by “The Work of Salvation: Worldwide Leadership Broadcast” on June 23, 2013. With this broadcast came the launch of the new website “Hastening the Work of Salvation – A Unified Effort in Conversion, Retention, and Activation”, which was a great resource that we used. From that point forward, as a Branch Council, we did our best to help members and missionaries serving in the area to be unified in their efforts to hasten the work of the Lord in this part of His vineyard. As part of this effort, I received many promptings to help members see the many addictions that can bind us down and distract us from this great work with eternal significance. Public affairs was another related area of focus that the Lord impressed on upon me was critical to His long-term plan for our area.

The efforts to hasten the work were met with challenges in 2013-2014. The biggest being people moving out. Our attendance went from 50-60’s down to 30-40’s, which meant a lot of sacrifices by the members still there to carry on with all the work entailed. To foster unity, we focused on teaching members to not judge one another, forgiving one another, and recognizing that each member as the body of Christ had an important role to play in the work. The response was great as many did things outside of their callings to help, love and serve one another. While there were prayers for new people to move in, there was also a great reactivation effort to “find the one” and bring them home as President Monson taught. In addition, there was a great emphasis on finding those who were ready to be taught the restored gospel. We spoke a lot about building trust with the Lord that we would help tend the flock if we found them. While the efforts did not have an immediate impact with attendance at services, with persistent effort the Lord blessed us greatly.

In 2015-2016, we began to see the fruits of our labors and the Lord’s hand clearly guiding the work. A trend began where attendance was up. Even more amazing was 1/4-1/3 of those at Sacrament meeting were less-active members returning, new members, or investigators, and we also had many attending other branch activities. We did our best to prepare the youth for missions as one had not been called from Loudon in many years. This changed in July 2016 when Ben Johnson left for his mission. Also in July 2016, Caden Sterner converted to the gospel.

Despite his young age, Caden Sterner embraced the gospel fully, and his excitement for sharing the gospel helped build on the momentum in 2017-2018 as he began to prepare to serve a mission as well. Caden was an instrument in the Lord's hand to bring many friends into the gospel, and his example was an inspiration to the members in the branch who remained very engaged in the work. These years I've seen some of the best overall member involvement in the work that I have seen. One - We often led the stake in baptisms or were one of the top two or three units. We were also excited when Caden left for his mission in Jan 2018. With all the baptisms and reactivations through these years, we had high hopes of becoming a ward soon. We had some Sacrament meetings and activities with 70-80 in attendance, even a few over 100. However, it seemed that we were in the export business because many of these members relocated not long afterwards, which prevented us from reaching the thresholds for a ward. Our efforts as a branch continued, the Lord continued to guide and bless us, and we trusted that one day Loudon would become a ward.

While there were many service projects within the branch, our efforts in public affairs also resulted in many great opportunities for people to serve. We've also seen many exciting things happen in this area such as meetings with mayors, commissioners, and involvement with the Loudon County Interagency group. LCI is a group of area leaders that meet monthly, which includes many area ministers. We were given two occasions to share an overview of the Church as the subject of the monthly meeting. We discussed the importance of temples, basic beliefs, our worldwide missionary effort, the Bishop's storehouse, employment center, food storage center, genealogy, the Relief Society organization, and our Just Serve initiative. The Loudon Branch also hosted a booth at the Loudon Riverfest each year that covered many of the same things. Some years the Riverfest generated more than 50 referrals, but mostly it helped to break down barriers and help others see how central Jesus Christ is to all we do. We also participated with a booth at several emergency preparedness fairs, and we joined with the Good Samaritan Center to help in the pantry and with Thanksgiving Day basket distribution. Other community highlights included, lunches provided for the Loudon High School football team, trips to nursing homes with gift bags and caroling, "New Borns in Need" service project, and an Eagle service project in Tellico Village by Noah Smith that was highlighted in the local paper, The Connection article.

There were also a couple of other events that helped us be recognized as part of the community. The first was when, a couple of Elders serving here (Luke Jones and Jake Sessions) and I were interviewed by the local News Herald. This resulted in printed articles that help people understand our core beliefs, namely that we are Christians with Jesus Christ "the central part" of all that we do. It also covered what our worship services are like as well as our world-wide missionary effort. The next one was the challenge brought about by historic flooding in 2019. It was the worst flooding in almost 150 years. We were blessed to be spared as members from the worst of it, but others in the area were not as fortunate. Branch members joined with others in the stake to serve throughout the community. The Helping Hands efforts were noticed by the News Herald again, which covered and reported on our efforts. In addition to the article in News Herald, the branch received a letter of appreciation from state Representative Lowell Russell who also commented on a post on the Loudon Branch Facebook page.

There were many great branch activities through the years, but the 20-year Branch Anniversary in 2015 was a highlight. It was a very well attended event that was held at the stake center for extra room. We

had many past and present members and leaders in attendance. The food was great and the fellowship even better. It gave all an opportunity to reminiscence, share stories of faith, and reconnect.

There were also many great youth and spiritual experiences. However, one of the best for me and those that attended was Camp Helaman in 2015. It was a wonderful experience for Josh and Ben Johnson. Much was learned by working on their “Big H” awards, which was memorizing scriptures and songs, giving service, and bearing testimony. There were also many great T.A.P.P.’s (Teaching Aaronic Priesthood Principles) sessions. However, the best part was the food on Friday night as all enjoyed succulent prime rib. Just kidding, the highlight was definitely the “Burden” and “Iron Rod” experiences. The “Burden” experience had them hiking along a trail with a burlap sack, and people would add some rocks to their sacks as they hiked along. The rocks represented sins and the burden that they can be. Needless to say, the Johnson boys were given extra since they are big and strong young men, and it needed to be somewhat of a challenge for them. On the last leg, as Branch President I helped them carry their sack of burdens to the feet of the Savior (6 foot tall picture), which was followed by a very spiritual Sacrament meeting. The “Iron Rod” experience had them traipsing through the forest up a hill while blind folded. They were given an egg that represented their “virtue” and were told not to lose their virtue as they held to the iron rod to guide them to the tree of life. The main rope (Iron Rod) had the same feel the whole way up, but there were side ropes to throw them off, as well as tempters to try and persuade them off them path. Luckily there were also Bishops and Branch Presidents to help them keep on the path. Both Johnson boys made it all the way through with their virtue intact, unlike some of the young men that night.

These years were some of the most challenging and rewarding of my life. I appreciate the Lord’s trust in me to serve in this capacity, and even more grateful of all the help the Lord gave me because I surely needed it. I will always treasure all the memories and bonds of friendship that were formed with those with whom I had the honor of serving. Lewis Terry

In His Own Words – Fred Smith

My name is Fred Smith and I am a member of the Loudon Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I have been fortunate enough to serve in the Presidencies of five Branch Presidents over the course of twenty plus years. Each of the Presidents I served with was unique in their approach to the task of ministering to a large and diverse congregation. I will attempt to briefly relay some of my remembrances of each President with whom I served. This is not meant to be all encompassing. These are just my recollections.

The first President I served with was Jim Elkins. I remember that President Davis had to leave his Presidency due to a change in his work location. There was much speculation about who would replace him. The congregation had just moved to our new building on Mulberry Street. The Stake Presidency came down to interview all Priesthood holders. The church was abuzz with speculation about who our next president would be. Not long after we found out that Jim Elkins had been chosen.

Because he was retired, President Elkins chose to keep regular business hours through the week at the church. He was a kind man and benevolent to a fault. Many times I have seen him give his own money

to needy who walked in from the street. He inspired you to want to do more, and many did do more following his example of what service meant. On one occasion, a gentleman walked in and asked for money for gas. President Elkins called me and asked if I had work that would allow the man to keep his dignity and earn \$20.00. I came and got the man. He mowed my yard and earned his gas money and I gained a new friend. President Elkins was a truly kind man and his relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ made all of us realize how fortunate we were to have him as our Branch President. President Elkins used to keep a small ceramic sheep on his desk to remind him that we were his charges and that he was to look after us. When he left the Presidency he gave me that sheep and told me to pass it on to the next Branch President.

I did pass that little sheep on to our next shepherd. President Cox was our next Branch President and I was fortunate enough to serve closely with him, as well. President Cox was one of the kindest man I have ever known and our branch got a bonus, because, along with President Cox came his lovely wife Ruth. President Cox made you feel so loved and accepted, especially the children. When you spoke with him he took time and you felt that there was nothing else he had to do that day except sit and talk with you. President Cox was your favorite Grandfather, your best friend, your councilor, coach, mentor and President all rolled into one. His Presidency lasted a little over 5 years and we were all sad to see his time at the branch come to an end, but to this day, when I see him at stake functions, he takes time to walk across the floor and shake my hand and I always give him a big hug.

Our next President was President Schifferer. President Schifferer was a man that had traveled the world. He was in Kuwait when Saddam Hussein set the oil fields on fire and told many stories of daring and courage. My fondest memories are of the fun that President Schifferer brought to our branch on special occasions. I remember his Holiday Program in December, and the way he used it to bring investigators and members together. One of the games that was most popular was a game that we played where the men stood behind a board and took off their shoe and sock. The wives walked along the other side of the board and tried to identify which foot belonged to their husband. Not everyone got it right. It was great fun. His seafood boil was famous and the church was always packed with people when we had one. The presentation was 100% Heinrich. He would line up long tables around the perimeter and down the middle of the chapel, cover them with butcher paper and bring in the drained and boiling hot dinner in from the covered portico and pour it out down the center of the tables in front of where you were sitting. You got to know which things your seatmates liked eating most of all pretty quick. I do have one more funny story to tell on myself. When we were on the podium during services, there came a time when, if I sat down and became still, I would fall asleep. When I was asleep I began to snore and President Schifferer would poke me in the ribs with his elbow and out of the side of his mouth he would say "Wake Up" under his breath. This lead to me seeing my doctor and being diagnosed with uncontrolled diabetes, which saved my life. President Schifferer was much beloved and is greatly missed. Our branch grew very close during his tenure.

President Pulver was our next Branch President. He brought his lovely family with him and we got to know a new sense vitality in our presidency. President Pulver was much younger than our previous presidents and he brought a different urgency to the branch. The branch got to know and love the Pulver family and our new president. Our meetings, our services, and our direction picked up the pace. You could not help but feel the buzz. It was as if we were riding the edge of a wave and being prepared

for something great about to come. Our renewed vigor started to produce results as the membership began to grow. Then, just as things were starting to happen, President Pulver was called away to a new job in Texas. The branch was happy for him and his family, but his presence and enthusiasm were greatly missed.

The final Branch President I served with was President Terry. I remember the first time I was aware of President Terry he was coming in the front door of the church on a Wednesday night wearing full Boy Scout uniform. This was so typical of President Terry. He was always willing to pitch in and help out wherever he was and the scouts were no exception. When President Terry became our President, he became laser focused on helping out the needy members of our branch and mentoring the new investigators. In the Branch Council meetings President Terry knew and asked questions about every new member, investigator, and member in need, and he did not just ask, he went out with the missionaries and helped out those mentioned in the meetings. He had countless dinners at his house to get to know and fellowship the missionaries and investigators.

President Terry was from Florida and supported the Florida Gators in sports. One of our members, Johnny Howard, was a big Kentucky fan. They had a friendly rivalry and would wear their team themed ties on Sundays when the two teams would meet to play football or basketball. President Terry always brought a lot of paperwork to the dais after the branch council meeting. This led to me usually holding the hymnal and keeping up with which song we were singing while sharing the book with President Terry. I remember a few occasions when he and I were singing loudly from the podium and President Terry was following my lead when I hear a whisper coming from the other side of President Terry. It was David Cziep, 2nd Councilor. He was desperately trying to get our attention. He was saying "Hey guys you are on the wrong verse". We quickly corrected and had a little chuckle at ourselves. President Terry was the President I served closest to and the one that taught me the most about what service meant. I miss serving with him to this day. Fred Smith

Formation of the Loudon Ward

From about 1998 to 2016, the Loudon Branch had many ups and downs in membership. In 2017 until the present time, approximately 30 active members a year moved into Loudon. This significant growth in numbers and leadership resulted in the branch becoming a ward. This occurred in May 2021 when the Stake Presidency met and announced the long-awaited change and formed the Loudon Ward. Eric Stewart was released as the Branch President and was called to be the first Bishop of the ward. Bishop Stewart retained Dan Newton and Ryan Williams as his counselors.

Sister Christie Hall shared her impressions about the formation of the Loudon Ward. "Our first Sunday attending church here was actually over Zoom as we were moving from Indiana to our new home in Loudon. That day that we moved in was the day Loudon Branch became Loudon Ward, and I remember being excited for the members but also a little apprehensive that this new ward was going to be too big to feel like the church home we imagined, after having been in a tiny branch (which we lovingly called a twig) for 29 years. We attended in person the next Sunday, and I was proven wrong. I fell in love with this new ward. People were so kind and gracious, and there was a feeling of "welcomeness" that overcame any apprehensions I had. It's been 9 months now, and I can't imagine being anywhere else. "

Bishop and Sister Stewart provided their thoughts below.

In His Own Words – Eric Stewart

How we came to live in Loudon. On a Saturday afternoon in July of 2017, my wife and I decided to look at condos to see if they would work as our next/retirement home. Our son David lived in the Loudon Ward. As we drove to his house, I had a very powerful impression that we needed to move into the branch as soon as possible. I had the impression that retirement would be busy in the branch but I would work out my salvation in Loudon.

Serving in the Loudon Branch/Ward has been a wonderful experience. I have experienced births, deaths, funerals, weddings, baptism of children and individuals from our community, advancements in the priesthood, saints returning to the temple and so many other wonderful things. The ward has been very accepting of members moving in and the new energy has invigorated long time members. Members are reaching out to those who have not attended in a long time and they are returning to activity. The youth are very close and love spending time together. There has been a powerful movement towards the temple in terms of temple service missionaries and ordinance workers being called to serve in the temple. We have been blessed by the efforts of those who came before us in keeping the branch alive. Bishop Eric Stewart

In Her Own Words – Lora Stewart

My husband Eric and I have lived in Loudon since April of 2018. I have found the members to be very helpful and welcoming. It very much feels like home.

Many members have moved into our area, which has changed the composition of the branch/ward. We have more young couples and children which adds a lot of energy. Hearing so many of these new families tell how they felt they were led by Heavenly Father to this area has been amazing and an answer to many years of prayer by those who have lived here a long time.

I have gone with the sister missionaries to teach many people. It has been a joy to watch people embrace the gospel. One of these people is Wayne Reeves. He had lots of questions and took some time but once he decided to commit to baptism, he rarely misses church and has loved attending the temple for baptisms. Lora Stewart

Maryville Ward

The Maryville Ward was formed in October of 1986 with its first Bishop being David Dickey. The history of the Maryville Ward from 1986 and when it functioned as the Maryville Branch is covered in the earlier history "Foot Steps of Faith". This history covers the history of the Maryville Ward since that time.

Growth and New Members

Beginning in 2020, the Maryville Ward saw significant growth in its membership. As of January 2022, there were 713 members in the ward, with close to 200 moving into the ward since 2020. It has been exciting to see all of the ward organizations increase in membership.

Missionary Service

Since the ward was formed in 1986 there have been 33 missionaries called from the Maryville Ward.

Names, Missions, and Start dates for missionaries from the Maryville Ward

Debuty, Jerry Roston, Jr	California Los Angeles Mission	27-May-87
Hensley, Jimmy Dale, Jr	Idaho Boise Mission	30-Dec-87
Cruze, James Preston	Ecuador Guayaquil South Mission	1-Jun-88
Smith, Glenn Ernest, Jr	Uruguay Montevideo Mission	24-Aug-88
Lyon, Jason Perry	Mexico Merida Mission	15-Apr-92
Gilmore, Robert Paul	Philippines San Pablo Mission	20-Oct-93
Harding, Larisa Elaine	Switzerland Zurich Mission	27-Jul-94
Lyon, Travis Scott	Spain Las Palmas Mission	26-Oct-94
Aisen, Aaron Jacob	Colorado Denver North Mission	10-Feb-99
Aisen, Joshua Abram	Bulgaria Sofia Mission	25-Oct-00
Everett, Joseph Earl	Canada Montreal Mission	21-Feb-01
Aisen, Jared Michael	Washington Tacoma Mission	2-Apr-03
Clemons, Jonathan Rudd	Japan Fukuoka Mission	12-Nov-03
Hutchens, Sarah Elizabeth	California Anaheim Mission	17-May-06
Anderson, James Levi	California Los Angeles Mission	25-Mar-09
Olsen, Jake Matthias	Uruguay Montevideo West Mission	24-Mar-11
Anderson, Joel Landon	Utah Salt Lake City Mission	3-Aug-11
Morgan, Devon Michael	Argentina Buenos Aires West Mission	19-Oct-11
Kerr, Christopher Shane, II	Japan Tokyo Mission	16-Nov-11
Bayles, Teasha Marie	France Lyon Mission	22-Aug-12
Glass, Emily Kristine	Utah Salt Lake City East Mission	5-Jun-13
Henriques, Ricardo Jose Gomes, Filho	New York New York North Mission	26-Jun-13
Pires, Maria Silvana	Brazil Belo Horizonte Mission	17-Jul-13
Bayles, Colten Ochoa	Utah Logan Mission	18-Sep-13
Henriques, Ana Carine Gomes	Utah Salt Lake City Mission	9-Oct-13
Kriese, Alexandra	Japan Fukuoka Mission	30-Oct-13

Ellsworth, Krislee Nicole	Dominican Republic Santiago Mission	10-Sep-14
Gerloff, Samuel Charles	Nevada Las Vegas Mission	24-Jun-15
Gerloff, Matthew August	Colorado Denver North Mission	1-Aug-17
Fuller, Denice Irene	Utah Salt Lake City Headquarters Mission	2-Apr-18
Jensen, Trevor Cody	California Anaheim Mission	5-Nov-19
Gerloff, Lucas Michael	California San Bernardino Mission	18-Nov-20
Prach, Grace Mae	Canada Vancouver Mission	1-Apr-22

Youth Activities

The Maryville youth participated in many stake and ward activities. Each year they enjoyed attending the Stake Youth Conferences, Scout Camp, and Girl’s Camp, and the ward youth leaders spent hours planning and carrying out weekly activities with the youth, including scouting, activities, and service.

Specific youth activities were reported in the 2014 ward history which were typical of other year’s youth activities. In 2014, the young women participated in the stake basketball tournament in February and March, went to young women’s camp in June, and participated in multi-stake youth conference in June. In 2014, the young men participated in priesthood preview in January, attended the stake merit badge college in January, had a scout activity related to Citizenship in the Community at the Maryville City Council in February, participated in young men’s basketball tournament in February and March, had the Cub Scout blue and gold banquet in March, had a scout camp out at Holder’s farm in March, scout service project at Community Creek cleanup in April, had the Pinewood Derby in April, Cub Scouts had a hike at Tremont in May, boys participated in scout camp at Camp Buck Toms in June, participated in the multistate youth conference in June, participated in the 11 to 13-year-old scout activity in September, had an Arrow of Light program in September, had an Eagle Scout activity for Elias Tennyson and Seth Tennyson in November, and an Eagle scout court of honor for them in December.

The ward has had some great youth – many of whom served faithful missions (as noted above) and many young men becoming Eagle Scouts. The Maryville Ward sponsored Boy Scout 282. Below is a listing of the young men who have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout based on records from the local Boy Scout office.

Eagle Scouts from Troop 282

Jerry	Debuty	1985
Jimmy	Hensley	1985
James	Cruze	1985
Glenn	Smith	1987
Jason	Lyon	1991
Travis	Lyon	1993
Aaron	Aisen	1994
James	Long	1994
Caleb	Taylor	1996
Johnathan	Harding	1997

Myles	Rodgers	1998
Myron	Long	1998
Samuel	Bentley	1998
Jared	Aisen	2001
Samuel	Gerloff	2013
Elias	Tennyson	2014
Seth	Tennyson	2014
Matthew	Gerloff	2016
Trent	Cooley	2017
Samuel	Schaper	2018
Daniel	Gerloff	2018
Adam	Gerloff	2019
Lucas	Gerloff	2019
Carter	Twiner	2019

Young Womanhood Recognition Recipients

A number of young women from the Maryville Ward received their YW Recognition awards, but we were not able to find a record of who had received it.

Ward Activities

The ward reported the following typical ward activities that have occurred since 2010.

Ward and Youth Temple trips – Each year except during COVID the ward and youth participated in several temple trips.

Valentine’s Day - Dinners were made special with linen tablecloths instead of plastic. Time and effort provided good meals like stuffed pork loin or chicken cordon bleu.

Easter - Fun and games are enjoyed by all and the Primary kids also enjoy an Easter Egg Hunt.

Priesthood Campouts – Each year priesthood holders and the sons of those who had them camped out, usually at Cades Cove. Dinner and breakfast were provided by the church. Dinner menus varied. Breakfast menus usually consisted of pancakes, bacon and eggs. One memorable priest campout in Cades Cove was provided by Brent Lund when he had smoked pulled pork BBQ and Ribs with all the trimmings ready for the hungry priest Friday evening. No BBQ sauce needed. The local “seasonal ranger” ate well that evening!

July 4th/Pioneer Day – Originally held July 4th at the Barn Pavilion in Everett Park, the day started with a softball game involving men, women, boys, and girls. This was followed by hamburgers, hot dogs, drinks, and pot luck sides/desserts at the pavilion. This continued until the Barn Pavilion was closed down. After that the date was changed to Pioneer Day and the location varied from year to year. The meal was changed from lunch to breakfast and the softball game was dropped. The breakfast consisted of pancakes, sausage/egg casserole (or bacon and sausage or egg casserole) and drinks.

Back to School – A variety of activities were held. One year attendees were encouraged to bring old year books and old school pictures.

Halloween – It starts off with a chili dinner often as a chili cook off with prizes for the best cooks. This was followed by a children’s activity while those participating in the Trunk or Treat set up their cars.

Thanksgiving – That morning a “Turkey Bowl” – a touch football game – was held for anyone who wished to attend.

Christmas – A dinner was provided. The meat was usually ham (provided by the ward) with sides and desserts provide by ward members. After dinner there was a reading of the Christmas story and the singing of carols. Following that the primary kids enjoyed sitting on Santa’s lap and receiving a bag of candy. After about 2017, Santa no longer was part of the program. In 2021 the ward held its first “Dessert Fest.” Ward members brought their favorite Christmas dessert to share. The meal, provided by the ward, consisted of spiral ham with green beans, potatoes/gravy, a salad and dinner rolls. We were fortunate that Jake’s Place restaurant provided the mashed potatoes, gravy and green beans.

Ward Campouts - Every spring and fall, the campers in the ward would get together for a camp out. These were held at Cades Cove Campground Group Camp or at the “Holder Farm” (30 acres owned by James and Linda Holder and his mother Marie Holder). The old fireplace in the cane sugar shack on their property makes a great headquarters for camping. Sometimes campers provided and cooked their own dinner and the ward provided breakfast. Other times an individual or two would prepare dinner and breakfast for all the campers.

Ward Leadership

The Maryville Ward Bishops and their counselors who served since 1996 are listed below.

May 1996 – David Taylor. Counselors Mike Lovstedt, Jorge Galvan, James Everett

Apr 1997 – William “Chip” Lyon. Counselors Roger Walters, Don Drake

Dec 1999 – Dale Hensley. Counselors Kent Huntley, Don Drake, Brad Greip, James Rogers, Jim Mitchel, Dwight Anderson

April 2005 – Dwight Anderson. Counselors Roy Payne, Tim Webb

April 2008 – Richard Udy. Counselors John Anderson, Joe Carver, Chris Quinn, Luke Bollschweiler, Chris Twiner, Josh Amburn

May 2013 – Eric Bruce Olsen. Counselors Delton Gerloff, Josh Amburn, Tom Noel

May 2018 – Delton Gerloff. Counselors Scott Stuart, Chris Twiner, Jordan Perkins

Several of the Bishops who have served in the Maryville Ward have provided comments concerning their memories of the ward during their time of service.

In His Own Words – Chip Lyon

I was called to be Bishop sometime between March 20, and April 20, 1997. I don’t remember and didn’t record exactly when the call was issued, because my wife, Cheri, and I had a 2 week vacation already scheduled before I could be sustained, ordained and set apart. That took place on April 20, 1997.

I’m pointing out the day of my call because I was totally set aback and dumbfounded when it occurred. Cheri, who was with me at the time, said I went pale and she thought I was about to pass out. The

reason for this was our current Bishop had been serving in that position for, I'm guessing here, less than a year. Certainly less than two years.

I had a similar experience that occurred when I was notified that I would be released as Bishop. This occurred just 2-1/2 years later. I was somewhat saddened at the time, but knew it was for the best. The bulk of my time was spent on a project at work that had me working 12 to sometime as many as 16 hours per day. The Stake Presidency actually came to my work site to inform me of the change that would take place. So my tenure as Bishop lasted from April 20, 1997, when I was set apart, until December 19, 1999, when I was released.

The day I was set apart, I made a home teaching visit to the outgoing Bishop. I was his home teacher and I wanted to see what he could tell me about the ward. This was the entry in my Journal that day. "I was shocked about how many problems there are. If nothing deteriorates from today (dreamer) I'll still have to interview about 40 members, just for starters. These are the types of interviews that can't be delegated. Well, Bishop, what are you going to do?"

Fortunately, I had two counselors, Roger Walters and Don Drake. Roger, my First Counselor had been a Bishop twice before and brought experience. Don, the Second Counselor, had the energy of youth. I was grateful that I had them to lean on.

The first crisis that I had to face was a dispute between two families in the ward. One was active, and the other was a part member family. I won't go into detail, but we did have a meeting of both groups in the Bishop's office. Roger was present and helped with advice. Neither family was happy with my recommendations but they accepted them. Fortunately, all worked out for the best in the end.

A very special experience occurred when I received a call from a Bishop in Alabama. He called to give me the name of a young woman who would be moving to our ward. I think she was in her mid or early 20's and her Bishop was concerned because she was moving to Maryville to be around a non-member man who lived there. First of all, I was impressed by the concern of this Bishop and his willingness to look after the needs of a member who was departing his ward. Secondly, this turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences I had during my tenure as Bishop. I got to know both parties and that was a wonderful experience in itself. Then the non-member joined the Church and they were married in the temple and invited Cheri and I to attend. We still hold them to be very dear friends, even though Cheri and I now live in Utah and they are still in Maryville.

One other occurrence came when I was asked to perform a civil marriage for an active young woman in our ward. Her intended was the son of a pastor of another faith. Although the young man showed no interest in the Church she insisted that she be married by an LDS bishop, and he agreed. The venue for the marriage was to be in a neutral setting - not our church and not his father's church. The crowd that was in attendance looked like a movie where friends were seated on one side of the chapel, while the "hostiles" sat on the other side. The marriage was performed and then I felt impressed to give some follow-up remarks. What I told them first of all was congratulations to those being married and that I was grateful to have been asked to perform the marriage ceremony. I must also point out that when

performing the marriage, I included the words “until death do you depart” and then went on and talked about Eternal Marriage. This was not well received by the groom’s side of the congregation. The interesting thing that occurred afterward was his father, the pastor, came up to me and said, “That was some interesting stuff. I think I may be able to use some of that in one of my sermons.” I don’t know if he ever did, but the groom eventually joined the Church and they were married in the temple.

Having spent most of my married life in the mission field, I fully expected that at some time I would probably have the opportunity to serve as a Bishop, having been a Bishop’s counselor 5 times before; but the suddenness of it happening was totally unexpected. However, I will always treasure the time spent, the friends made and those I was able to help. William (Chip) Lyon

In His Own Words – Dale Hensley

I served as Bishop of the Maryville Ward from December 19, 1999 to April 23, 2005. My counselors were Kent Huntley, Don Drake, Brad Greip, James Rogers, Jim Mitchel, and Dwight Anderson. The Lord had the ward focus on part-member families. This focus increased attendance in all meetings. Sacrament meeting doubled and the Lord blessed us with 60 baptisms in those 5 years. Thirty eight of those baptized were youth in part-member families. Parents of those youth got baptized and stayed active and invited their non-member neighbors to social activities. I remember 250 people came to the 2004 Christmas party at the church. I followed William Lyons as Bishop and Dwight Anderson followed me. I will forever be thankful to all who served in callings in Maryville during those 5 years. If I could name them all I would. They truly served in the Savior's way, with love! Dale Hensley

In the Words of his Counselors – Richard Udy

Richard was called to serve as Bishop of the Maryville Ward in April, 2005 when Dwight Anderson moved to California. This was his third calling as a Branch President or a Bishop in addition to serving in the District Presidency. His first set of counselors were “the boys” Joe Carver and Chris Quinn. He was here to serve and fulfill his service to God. He truly loved everyone, some coming easier than others. Nonetheless, he loved all. He was known for his visitation and caring for all ward members – active or not. He had the ability of requesting someone to do something for him in a manner that you could not say no. He was a great teacher. He always held the stance of a caring Bishop with a full understanding of the gospel and the needs of the ward.

In His Own Words – Eric Olsen

I was called to serve as Bishop of the Maryville Ward on May 19, 2013 and served for 5 years. During those 5 years it was filled with activities, something in the ward or the stake always going on, the faith of the members and the hand of the Lord at work. We were blessed with safety in the activities. Missionaries served faithfully in the ward from all parts of the world. The mission age changed and we saw record numbers of missionaries serving. We had many faithful missionaries serving from our ward in all parts of the world.

I served as a full-time missionary in the Tennessee Nashville Mission in Jan. 1986 to Feb. 1988. In June 1986 I was assigned to serve in the Maryville Branch. Never in a million years did I think I would ever be in Tennessee again or ever be in Maryville. Many members from those missionary days are still here, serving and living the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has been unreal now to serve as Bishop in this special place.

I served with very fine men who love the Lord and served and sacrificed during this time. Delton Gerloff served as my 1st counselor for about 4 years, he is a great man. Tom Noel replaced Delton and served the remaining time. Josh Amburn served as 2nd counselor for the entire time. These men are very dedicated and it was a pleasure to serve with them along with the many others who serve to allow a ward to operate. I am so thankful for so many who did anything that was asked

Youth activities and service projects are what I remember most about this time. One large service project I remember was replacing the roof of a couples' home. It took many man hours to rip the old roof off and replace. Many dedicated men and women served and did something on that project. No matter the task many would show up and help. What a great way to get to know your brothers and sisters.

I could go on and on about the willingness of members to show up and help each other and show up and help someone they don't even know. I have been changed forever, seeing the challenges we all face, seeing the faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ by all. Eric Olsen

In His Own Words – Delton Gerloff

I was called as Bishop on July 8, 2018. I was blessed to have such a caring ward of dedicated members. Significant changes have been made in church programs since 2018. One change was making Bishoprics the young men's presidency. While challenging, it was the Lord's way of emphasizing the importance of Bishoprics serving the young men and, along with the young women's presidency, serving the young women's programs also. Second change was changing the service from three hours to two hours. Thus Sunday school alternated weeks with Relief Society and Quorum meetings.

One of the most challenging aspects of serving as Bishop was the pandemic. Our buildings were closed for four months from March until July of 2020. What a blessing it was to have the Come Follow Me program already in place. It seemed we were continually changing the way we met, conducted Sacrament meetings, and kept in contact with each other. When we were able to start meeting again, we discovered that we had many new members who had moved in or who had been baptized since we last met. Through it all our members still served, magnified their callings, and welcomed new members.

As of January, 2022, vestiges of the pandemic are still presenting challenges. My testimony is that the gospel will continue to roll forth, as long as we worship and follow Jesus Christ and rely on the Holy Ghost for guidance. Delton Gerloff

Pellissippi Ward

The Pellissippi Ward was split off from the Farragut Ward in September of 1992. The history of the Pellissippi Ward from 1992 to when the Knoxville Stake was split in 1996 is covered in the earlier history “Foot Steps of Faith”. This history covers the history of the Pellissippi Ward since that time.

Growth and New Members

Since 1996, the population of Knoxville has more than doubled, and the growth of the Pellissippi Ward has exceeded that pace. Despite a significant portion of ward members being reassigned in January 2014 to the newly formed Hardin Valley Ward, the ward continued to grow. In May 2021, the ward was again reduced as roughly one-third of the ward was reassigned to the newly formed Bearden Ward. In 2022, the ward averages more than 200 faithful members attending Sacrament meeting each week and continues to see new families move in on a regular basis. The growth of the Church in the ward and in Knoxville is inspiring, and gives us all hope that someday soon a temple will be a reality.

Missionary Service

Since the Pellissippi Ward was formed in 1992 there have been 65 missionaries called from the Pellissippi Ward. Those who have served from the ward are listed below, including Lloyd and Judy Smith who served as Mission President and companion from 2005 to 2008.

Names, Missions, and Start dates for missionaries from the Pellissippi Ward

Noblit, Cameron Bonitz	Spain Madrid Mission	28-Jul-93
Smith, James Todd	China Hong Kong Mission	12-Oct-93
Eversole, Kimberly Dawn	Atlanta Georgia Temple Mission	25-May-94
Bryce, Bret Philip	California Oakland Mission	19-Jul-95
Roberts, Brian Russell	California San Jose Mission	4-Jun-97
Bobo, A J	Arizona Tucson Mission	1-Jul-97
Robinson, Shannan Maria	Brazil Belo Horizonte Mission	10-Sep-97
Clark, Michael Allen	Brazil Maceio Mission	18-Feb-98
Roberts, David Carlos	Texas McAllen Mission	10-Jun-98
Ebbert, April Dawn	Brazil Salvador South Mission	5-Aug-98
Pehrson, Preston Beau	Poland Warsaw Mission	2-Sep-98
Ebbert, Leo Ernest, II	Paraguay Asuncion Mission	16-Sep-98
Thomas, John	Argentina Salta Mission	1-Oct-98
Iorg, Isaac Robert	California Los Angeles Mission	14-Jul-99
Mugleston, Steven William	Ukraine Donetsk Mission	25-Aug-99
Thomas, Robert	Idaho Pocatello Mission	1-Jan-00
Clark, Allen Williams	Mexico Culiacan Mission	29-Mar-00
Smith, Rees Lloyd	California Los Angeles Mission	17-May-00
McCombs, Kenneth John	England Manchester Mission	12-Jul-00
Ebbert, Mark Tyler Wilkinson	Brazil Manaus Mission	8-Nov-00

Waggoner, Dennis Eugene	California San Diego Mission	15-Nov-00
Gray, Marjorie Lois	FCH Tennessee Knoxville Microfilming	1-Sep-01
Barnes, Travis Scott	Ecuador Guayaquil South Mission	15-May-02
Barnes, Brent Douglas	California Anaheim Mission	19-Jun-02
Iorg, Eli James	Argentina Mendoza Mission	26-Jun-02
Owens, Jennifer	Venezuela Caracas Mission	11-Dec-02
Quayle, Mark Paul	Arizona Phoenix Mission	12-Feb-03
Smith, R. Lloyd	Minnesota Minneapolis Mission	1-Jul-05
Smith, Judy	Minnesota Minneapolis Mission	1-Jul-05
Iorg, Garth Cale	Portugal Lisbon Mission	17-Aug-05
Clark, Anthony Ivins	Guatemala Quetzaltenango Mission	28-Sep-05
Roberts, Whitney Marie	Switzerland Zurich Mission	24-May-06
Barnes, Scott Douglas	Washington Spokane Mission	12-Jul-06
McCombs, William David	Taiwan Taipei Mission	23-Aug-06
Reynolds, Logan Paul	Chile Santiago North Mission	30-Aug-06
Davis, Dolly Ann	Manhattan New York S&I Programs	25-Sep-06
Davis, Frank White, Jr	Manhattan New York S&I Programs	25-Sep-06
Hobbs, Christopher Andrew	France Paris Mission	3-Jan-07
Levacy-Sabin, Steven	Florida Tallahassee Mission	Sep-07
Hobbs, Trevor Bjorn	Portugal Lisbon Mission	24-Oct-07
Meek, Christopher Bryce	Indonesia Jakarta Mission	1-Jul-09
Cravens, Forrest Workman	Germany Berlin Mission	10-Mar-10
Obray, Michael Clark	Argentina Bahía Blanca Mission	19-Jan-11
Russell, Brendan Thomas	Colorado Denver North Mission	9-Mar-11
Meek, Patrick Lloyd	El Salvador San Salvador West/Belize Mission	21-Sep-11
Barnes, Brittany Jenae	Russia Novosibirsk Mission	28-Mar-12
Arnell, Ellwood William	Military Relations Sr Missionary Coordination	1-Feb-13
Arnell, Shirley Jo	Military Relations Sr Missionary Coordination	1-Feb-13
Stewart, Katie Marie	Utah Salt Lake City South Mission	23-Oct-13
Puckett, John Edward	Chile Santiago West Mission	12-Feb-14
Kah, Kelsey Marie	Utah Logan Mission	20-Aug-14
Graves, Janelle Sara	Nicaragua Managua South Mission	7-Jan-15
Christiansen, Austin Niel	Utah Salt Lake City South Mission	7-Oct-15
Puckett, Brandon Keith	California Oakland/San Francisco Mission	4-Nov-15
Brown, Keirnan Lee	Russia St Petersburg Mission	12-Apr-17
Busch, Dallin Timothy	Tahiti Papeete Mission	14-Jun-17
Bohne, Carson James	Arizona Gilbert Mission	12-Jul-17
Langford, Carter Alexander	California Roseville Mission	13-Jun-18
Smith, Robert Jackson	Argentina Buenos Aires North Mission	9-Aug-18
Kah, Konnor Joseph	Massachusetts Boston Mission	12-Mar-19
Busch, Carley Lynn	France Paris Mission	11-Sep-19
Smith, Wyatt Cole	Chile Rancagua Mission	15-Jul-20
Lambert, Kyler Ross	Alaska Anchorage Mission	10-Feb-21

Curlee, Emily Susan	California Newport Beach Mission	28-Jun-21
Garrett, Lane Nelson	Salt Lake City West Mission	5-May-21
Curlee, Austin Casey	California Anaheim Mission	18-Apr-22

Youth Activities

The Pellissippi Ward has been blessed with a strong and vibrant youth program. Over the years there have been a countless number of notable service projects organized by young men and young women, benefiting ward members, community organizations, and local charities. The ward youth have a well-deserved reputation for turning out for service efforts in large numbers and providing the labor for landscaping, painting, cleaning, organizing, building, and revitalization projects.

In addition, the youth have been frequent visitors to the Nashville Temple for baptisms and to support ward temple trips by watching Primary children. It has been common for the ward to take 30-40 youth in a single trip, creating memories and spiritual experiences that will last a lifetime.

Our ward youth enjoy sports and have been active in stake basketball and three-on-three basketball tournaments, typically fielding very competitive teams that also display good sportsmanship. The youth have also been engaged in youth conferences, Girls' camps, Scout camps, and many other adventures. The tradition of a strong youth program is rooted in the tradition of strong and dedicated youth advisors, parents, and other adults. . **Additional details of youth activities are included in the Bishop's 'In His Own Words' write-ups later in the ward history.**

The Pellissippi Ward sponsored Boy Scout Troop 140 since its inception in 1992. Prior to that time Troop 140 was sponsored by the Farragut Ward. (The ward concluded its relationship as the charter organization for Troop 140 at the beginning of 2020.) Below is a listing of those young men who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout since 1992 based on records from the local Boy Scout office.

Eagle Scouts from Troop 140

Artie	Bobo	1995	Andrew	Meek	2013
Michael	Clark	1996	Jared	Langford	2014
Brent	Barnes	1996	Brandon	Puckett	2014
Jared	Cluff	1996	Jackson	Smith	2015
William	Bobo	1997	Dylan	Bohne	2016
Leo	Ebbert	1997	Jackson	Christiansen	2017
Rees	Smith	1998	Wyatt	Smith	2017
Robert	Thomas	1998	Kordell	Kah	2017
Kenneth	McCombs	1999	Lucas	Rainey	2019
Evan	Ticer	1999	Austin	Curlee	2019
Matthew	Francis	2001	Russell	Graves	2019
Travis	Barnes	2001	Jason	Puckett	2019
William	McCombs	2001	Levi	Bohne	2019
Ethan	Ticer	2003	Easton	Smith	2019

Anthony	Clark	2004	Tyson	Smith	2019
Christopher	Meek	2004	Christian	Graves	2019
Logan	Reynolds	2004	Tyson	Jackson	2019
Scott	Barnes	2005	Allen	Curlee	2020
Emory	Ticer	2008	Kyler	Lambert	2020
Forrest	Cravens	2008	Austin	Rainey	2020
Patrick	Meek	2009	Jayden	Beal	2020
Evan	Nelson	2013	Charles	Becker	2020
Trenten	Cravens	2013	Nathan	Jackson	2020
Randall	Clapp	2013	Jared	Mueller	2020

The Young Women Personal Progress program was the equivalent to the scouting program for the young women and is the highest honor given in the Young Women organization. Listed below are the young women we were able to identify and the year they received the award while living in the Pellissippi Ward.

Young Womanhood Recognition Recipients

Julie Graves - 2014

Emily Curlee - 2015

Claire Langford – 2015

Heily Groberg – 2018

Alli Lambert - 2019

Carley Busch – 2019

Sydney Theobald – 2019

Grace Finney – 2019

Emma Zimmerman - 2019

Ward Activities

Each fall the Pellissippi Ward holds a chili cook-off and trunk-or-treat at the church. The competition for the best chili is very competitive – winning is important in our ward. After dinner, everyone goes out to the parking lot where children walk from car to car collecting treats and goodies. Some of the cars are elaborately decorated – perhaps due to the competitive nature of our ward.

The Christmas gathering is also a special event for the ward and there is almost always some service activity included. In December 2018, the Pellissippi Ward started the “Light the World” initiative with a ward Christmas Project. The ward partnered with the Knoxville Dream Center to prepare teacher supply kits for those working in Knox County Title One schools. Typically, these teachers have very little parental support and spend significant amounts of their own money to supply their rooms with the needed supplies to get through the year.

There are also (with the exception of the COVID years) adult gatherings each year which feature “Newlywed Games” as well as other game nights and activities. Also the priesthood men and Relief

Society sisters are always involved in numerous service activities, not the least of which is helping people move or taking meals to different families.

Bishop Kah remembered that the ward was very service minded and performed many service activities during his time as the Pellissippi Bishop **as reported “In His Own Words, later in the ward history.**

But the premier ward event (at least for Bishop Bohne) is the annual BBQ cookout at the park or in the back parking lot at the church. This event is always well attended and looked forward to. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit our area in March of 2020, ward meetings of any kind were canceled for several months and, even after we were able to start meeting for church meetings again, no typical ward activities were held. Then in May of 2021, shortly before nearly a quarter of the Pellissippi Ward members would be moved to the new Bearden Ward, **Bishop Bohne reported “In His Own Words” about finally being able to hold a ward activity.**

Ward Leadership

The Bishops and their counselors who served in the Pellissippi Ward and when the Bishops were called are listed below. Bishop Ebbert was the Bishop of the Farragut Ward when the Pellissippi Ward was formed and was then called as the first Bishop of the Pellissippi Ward.

Sept 1992 – Leon Ebbert. Counselors Corbet Curfman, Jim Noblit, Mark Francis

April 1996 – Richard D. Barnes. Counselors Mark Francis, Jim Smith, Robert Blackburn, Robert Hall, Don Thomson

May 2001 – Kelly Owens. Counselors Don Thomson, Michael James, Jeff Cravens, Paul Pehrson

Jun 2006 – Paul Pehrson. Counselors Roland Roberts, Bruce Meek, Judd Rambo, Robert Smith

May 2011 – Judd Rambo. Counselors Robert Smith, Brad Kramer

Jan 2014 – Peter Kah. Counselors Robert Smith, Allen Langford

Jan 2017 – Bradden Cannon. Counselors Allen Langford, Jason Bohne, Rees Smith

Oct 2018 – Jason Bohne. Counselors Rees Smith, Jesse Ellsworth, Chad Talbot

Several of the Bishops who have served in the Pellissippi Ward have provided comments concerning their memories of the ward during their time of service.

In His Own Words – Richard Barnes

I was called to be the second Bishop of the Pellissippi Ward, after Leon Ebbert, who had previously served as the Bishop of the Farragut Ward and then became the first Bishop of the Pellissippi Ward when the wards were divided.

Most of what I remember centers around the Primary children and the youth because they, for the most part, were our main interest. Many of the other aspects of running a ward – renewing temple recommends, calling Sacrament meeting speakers, planning ward activities, issuing callings for adults, working with members in regard to welfare, and so forth – were left to my counselors and the adult presidencies in the ward, inasmuch as it seemed appropriate to do so. We would meet in Bishopric meeting or Ward Council to discuss the various aspects of such in broad strokes, and then I would leave

them to run with it. That idyllic representation is how I remember it anyway – I’m sure it wasn’t always so. But I do know that the Bishopric in general and I in particular gave the youth the greatest portion of our attention and energy.

At this point, I only remember those things that we did on a regular, on-going basis. There were tender and powerful moments in individual interviews, during blessings, in quiet conversations, and so forth, but those are not the first things that I would remember now.

What I do remember is the Bishopric getting up extra early the last Friday of each month and going to the church so that we could cook breakfast for the seminary students. They would have a shortened lesson and by the time it was over we would have the gruel iced and ready to serve. On the odd occasion we might have served pancakes, biscuits and gravy, sausage and bacon, or omelets instead.

On every second and fourth Sundays one of the Primary classes would come visit the Bishop’s office after church. This was done over and over in a repeating rotation. The purpose of the visit was for the Primary children to meet and become comfortable with the bishop, so that neither the bishop nor his office would be scary to them when they became youth and started meeting with me regularly. I might have also passed out big candy bars to them. The sweetness of their spirits never failed to touch my heart when we met. Because I am quite big and they are quite small, I would often sit cross-legged on the floor with them. On occasion with the younger children, one or another would stand up, walk over, and sit on my lap. If that happened, then I would usually end up with the whole class sitting on my lap. I’m of a size where I can accommodate such a thing. This program might have been more of a blessing to me than to them.

I tried to be with the children and youth as often as possible, so during our three-hour block of church meetings I would spend one to two weeks each month with the Priests in their quorum meeting, one to two meetings each month with the Laurels, and one to two weeks with the children in Primary. The Young Women had a theme that they recited each week and which I learned. I would stand with them during their opening exercises and unabashedly avow “We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us and we love Him” I also loved singing with them in song practice.

The Bishopric would attend all of the weekly activity nights and make appearances at the Girl’s Camps and Scout Camps. Sometimes it would be more than an appearance at camp, as we were often called into service as priesthood representatives at one or the other. We always tried to split our time equally between the young men and the young women on activity night (not on a given night, but week to week). We were able to do that because we had a Young Men Presidency at that time who we could leave the young men with.

The young men all participated in Boy Scouts, which was the official activity program of the Church at that time. We had excellent leaders in charge of the troop, who made sure that there was a campout every month. I have reviewed my calendars from those years to confirm that actually happened – it’s amazing. I will admit that I didn’t attend too many of the monthly trips. I guess my love for the youth has some boundaries after all.

It was my joy to meet individually with each young man and young woman. The handbook at the time stated that the Bishop was to meet with each youth once per year for a birthday interview, and then one or another of the counselors could meet with each at about the six-month point. For whatever reason, I felt to do both the birthday interview and the mid-year interview for each youth. I don't know what they thought about that, but I loved meeting with them and getting to know them. I let my counselors do the recommend interviews for the youth temple trips that occurred twice each year. Although, I might have tried to do some of those also.

We had a fairly large and active youth group during those years and it was not unusual to have fifty youth on a temple trip. That would be difficult or impossible for a single shift at the Nashville Temple, but we were assigned to the Atlanta Temple* then, and it worked out very well. Youth temple trips require adult help from both brothers and sisters. There was always a big group of both willing and desirous to come with us on those trips. We would offer the slots first to the youth leaders, and that would often fill all the openings right there. But if there were some remaining opportunities we would open them to the parents, who would fill them instantly. I was always very gratified by the enthusiasm that the adults showed for the youth. On the way home we would stop for pizza at either the Pizza Hut in Acworth or the Mr. Gatti's, which were ordained before the foundation of the world for this very purpose. *[The Knoxville Stake was assigned to the Atlanta Temple from 1983 until 2000 when the Nashville Temple was dedicated]

We had some recurring youth activities each year, in which we invite one or another of the wards in the stake to participate. In the summer would have a big outdoor barbecue with games. In the winter we would have an etiquette dinner. All of the youth would dress up in their Sunday best – or formal attire if they had it. We would then pair them up in dates. The Stake has access to their very own Miss Manners, who would come and give us all instructions on how to be well-behaved and refined. We would then turn the youth loose for a fine-dining experience and a dance in the cultural hall. Each was responsible for their date having a good evening. Since these were not romantic dates in any way, the Deacons and Beehives attended with us so that they could benefit from the early instruction.

Each summer there would be a youth conference for those aged 14 through 17. Many years the youth conferences would be sponsored by the Stake. However, in later years a few of these conferences were left for the individual wards to plan. One year we went to Nauvoo, and another year we went to Palmyra for the Hill Cumorah Pageant. Our seats were along one of the major aisle-ways in the big grassy field in which the audience sat, and just before the pageant started the Prophet drove by us in a golf cart. One of the young men yelled "We love you, President Hinckley!" He yelled so loud that we almost jumped out of our skins – including President Hinckley. I feel certain that the Lord preserved the life of His Prophet that day.

It has been many years now since we have been released. Those who were children and youth at that time are now adults and have become wonderful men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. Most are stalwart in the Church and all are good people who strive to be the best they can. I am grateful for the gospel of Jesus Christ that lifts and ennobles everyone that it touches.

Rick Barnes

In His Own Words – Peter Kah

I had the privilege of being called to Bishop in 2014 when the Farragut and Pellissippi wards split and formed the Hardin Valley ward. We were a combination of members from the two previous wards and starting with all new leadership. I was blessed to know who my councilors would be immediately and they lifted the ward and myself up throughout my time as Bishop. I had only served as a counselor in the Farragut ward for a few months before the change and was learning everything as I went along. I have a strong testimony that the Lord qualifies who he calls and was privileged to feel that in my life.

The first thing I vividly remember are the long sessions where the Bishopric counseled about new callings. Several times we made lists and would mark people off only to return to a name again and again. Heavenly Father clearly had decided on the initial leaders of the ward and told us those names (sometimes multiple times before we would listen).

President Clapp directed the stake through inspiration and example. I remember several meetings where he would kindly lead me to answers, and more importantly, how to get those answers for myself in the future.

I was especially blessed with wonderful youth in the ward. They inspired us through their struggles and triumphs. I often shared and grew to love the scripture 1 Nephi 11:17. An Angel asks Nephi a question that he doesn't know the answer. "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" His reply was the theme for our youth and has been a great source of strength to me throughout the years. "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things." I hope if the youth heard nothing else, they heard that. Sometimes just knowing that God loves us no matter what is what it takes. I certainly have felt that love during some difficult times.

During my time I saw several youth receive graduation certificates, awards and accolades. We had several Eagle scouts (including a son of each of the Bishopric members) and mission calls. Multiple graduations and sports awards were given. Priesthood and young women advancements and leadership in classes and quorums grew. The most powerful experiences for me were always when the youth shared their testimonies. Whether at summer camp, in Sacrament meeting or interviews I was always moved and strengthened. I had the chance to marry a couple and speak at a funeral. Truly Heavenly Father's hand is present in all aspects of our mortal existence.

The ward was very service minded. There were innumerable acts of personal service (shoveling snow, taking a meal, tending a yard or even just making a call) and some big projects. I remember when we went to the Boys and Girls Club of Oak Ridge to landscape and restore their baseball field. I was amazed at the numbers that turned out for difficult work that took most of a couple of Saturdays. I was more amazed at the smiling faces and gratitude to be part of the project. We had several similar projects and always had the same result- multiple hardworking and grateful members.

In summary I remember the newly reformed Pellissippi ward as being a truly inspired group of saints. They were service minded, hardworking and loved the Lord. We had many struggles and mistakes. We grew by facing those struggles together and knowing that no matter what the Lord loves us. Peter Kah

In His Own Words – Jason Bohne

Serving as the Pellissippi Ward Bishop has been one of the most rewarding, humbling, and exceptional experiences of my life. My family has lived in this ward since we moved from Maryland in July 2014, several months after the ward boundaries were reconfigured (along with those of the Farragut Ward) to create the Hardin Valley Ward. We felt then, and continue to feel today, that the Lord guided us to the Pellissippi Ward. My wife, my children, and I have all been blessed immensely, and the positive impact of this ward on our lives will be treasured through the eternities.

In our first few years in the ward I was honored to serve with Bishop Peter Kah as a teacher's quorum advisor and Sunday School teacher, and then with Bishop Bradden Cannon as his second counselor. I greatly admire both of those men and their wives for their service and support.

I was sustained as Bishop on October 14, 2018, just one week after it was announced in General Conference that the Sunday meeting block would be reduced to two hours. Little did I know that many more changes would be implemented during the next year and a half, including adjustments to temple recommend interview questions and eligibility to witness certain ordinances. Some responsibilities held by Bishoprics were transferred to Elders Quorum and Relief Society presidents, and replaced by increased responsibilities as Young Men's presidencies. The youth age-group progression changed to a calendar year basis, and the Come Follow Me curriculum was adopted for youth to align with adults. The one-year waiting period for temple sealing after civil marriage was eliminated. Scouting was phased out, and the new Children and Youth program was rolled in. And there was more. (I remember one day a good brother in the ward told me, "Bishop, I like your style." When I asked what he meant by that, he said with a smirk, "They make you Bishop, so you eliminate an hour of church and change just about everything else.")

Throughout all this change, I grew to greatly appreciate our Ward Council and members of our ward for their dedicated efforts to implement guidance, adjust approaches, and maintain their focus on serving and supporting fellow ward members.

On the first weekend of March 2020, our ward conducted the stake's three-on-three YM/YW basketball tournament—a tradition we began just a couple years before. Little did we know then that by the second weekend of March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic would radically alter just about every aspect of our lives. Meeting in person was no longer possible—church was canceled, school was canceled, and for many their work was canceled or moved home.

I remember the confusion and discouragement of that time. No one knew what to do or where things would go, and it was scary. I was trying to take care of my family and do my job (I worked in the office throughout), while also determining how best to lead and serve the members of the ward, as they were grappling with many of the same feelings, emotions, and struggles.

My appreciation of the Ward Council and its divinely inspired role grew exponentially as the early response to pandemic evolved into a long-term trial of endurance. Meeting with the dedicated sisters and brothers of the Ward Council lifted my spirits and renewed my hope with each meeting as, together, we looked outside our own situations and challenges and sought to bless the lives of those we

were called to serve. My favorite part of some of those early meetings was when I would ask for status of ward members, running through list after list, and for each person I named someone on the council could answer with details of a recent contact by them or by ministering sisters and brothers reporting the interaction. It was amazing, and a testament to the character and dedication of our members. I also appreciated that as a council we determined our response to the pandemic and controls to protect our members through open discussion and reaching consensus. We remained unified throughout, and that helped the ward do the same.

During 2020, even as we struggled through the pandemic, our ward grew as 25 households of members moved into the ward boundaries—couples young and old, and families small and large. It was a priority to meet and welcome them each week, and visit them by phone or Zoom. Whatever it took, we got to know them and love them.

Then, in May of 2021, as the first wave of the pandemic was abating, we learned that a portion of our ward boundary would be re-drawn to help create the Bearden ward. While it was exciting to see the growth of the Church in this area, it also meant that nearly a quarter of our members would no longer be part of our ward. That was painful.

We needed one more opportunity to get together as a ward before the split, and for me the answer (which was no surprise to those who know me) was a ward barbecue. We only had a week to pull it off, but we did it. Five men from the ward smoked a great meal that would rival any quality BBQ joint, and we hosted more than 160 ward members in the stake center's back parking lot during our first ward activity in 518 days. The weather was perfect, and being together again, finally, was a welcome relief. If it wasn't a perfect day, it was close.

As Bishop, I love working with our youth. I have commented many times that our youth give me hope for the future. They face many complex and unrelenting challenges, but they are resilient. We have shared spiritual experiences during several temple trips that have always been well attended. With the change that Priests can perform proxy baptisms, it has been especially touching to see our Priest baptize their siblings and their peers—and each other. I will never forget the temple trip in January 2020, when we had a special day together before driving home in a terrible storm that caused widespread damage across Tennessee. All of our ten or so vehicles traveled home safely amidst the tempest as the Lord was clearly watching over us.

We initiated sunrise devotionals with the youth—we held them on the last weekend of daylight savings time, so sunrise was close to 8 a.m. I recall the devotional in October 2020, on a frigid morning along the banks of Ft. Loudon Lake. Because of the pandemic we were not singing in church, but that morning the youth sang “Love One Another” together outdoors in the dark chilly morning. Many of us tried to sing along, but it was difficult while choking back tears as the emotion of the day mixed with the spirit of the hymn was overwhelming.

Just as I have appreciated the Ward Council, I have loved working with our ward youth council. Our youth leaders, typically 13-18 years old, have been incredible. Supported by dedicated advisors and parents, our youth presidencies have ministered to their classes and quorums and planned fun, meaningful activities. Mostly, they have created an environment where they love being together.

Combined activities, campouts, temple trips, and other events have built camaraderie and encouraged participation. On one of our last activities before pandemic, the youth came up with the idea for a scavenger hunt at the mall to uncover clues and find members hiding in plain sight. Adults from our ward and from the stake YM/YW presidencies participated (some in fantastic disguises) to make it a memorable experience.

One of my favorite events was the ward youth campout in August 2020 at Cades Cove, which was attended by almost all of our youth. Having just our ward youth together in such a special setting was really meaningful, particularly during a late night devotional under the stars around the campfire. I love spending time with them in the outdoors, where there are fewer distractions and the spirit seems to be more tangible.

I can't say enough good things about the adults who interact with our youth—from YM/YW advisors and specialists to those who minister with them and connect with them through missionary, service, and temple and family history callings. We really are a ward family.

Along with our youth, I love spending time with the Primary children. Their spirits are so strong, and it's impossible not to be happy after a few minutes with them. From nursery to the 11 year olds preparing for YM/YW, I love getting to know their interests and personalities. Getting fist bumps and smiles in the hallway from our youth and children is a highlight for me every week. Our Primary presidency, teachers, and music leaders are such a blessing as they support the children. The annual Primary programs have been a joy as the children sing and share speaking parts they have written themselves. Recently I was invited to visit Primary so the children could sing "Love One Another" to the Bishopric. There are no words to describe how special that was for me.

I enjoy being a Bishop who is willing to think outside the box (but within the handbook) when different ideas are presented, and being in a ward that can get creative in its approach. We honored one member's wish to allow people to share memories on an open mic at his funeral—that's not usually done, but we did it and it was fantastic. We've held barbecues in parking lots; hosted virtual devotionals on Sundays when we couldn't go to church; had a departing missionary speak a few weeks after they passed out at the pulpit; reconnected with each other after church in a vehicle parade; virtually toured the Paris temple visitors center; organized a drive-by service project; and created a full "Light the Ward" effort to help connect and lift ward members during the holidays.

There are many more experiences I could share—and many others that I can't. Serving as Bishop provides a unique window into people's triumphs and trials, happiness and heartbreaks, and convictions and questions. I have shared in some members' highest highs, and in others' lowest lows. I have witnessed the power of the Atonement in people's lives as they have found comfort, peace, redemption, and joy. I have seen people be their own harshest judge and encouraged them to let it go. I have felt the Spirit testify of the truthfulness of the gospel and of God's love for each of us. Among my favorite memories are those times when I could help others—individually or in groups, adults or youth—recognize the Spirit speaking to them. I love my ward, and I am thankful every day for the opportunity to serve with them.

Jason Bohne

Rockwood Branch/Ward

The Rockwood Branch was formed in May of 1977 and a chapel was dedicated in May of 1983. In 1981, part of the branch was split off to form the Dayton Branch which became part of the Chattanooga Stake. The Rockwood Branch remained in the Knoxville Stake when it was divided in November of 1996. Additional details about the formation and early experience of the Rockwood Branch are included in the stake history "Foot Steps of Faith" published in 1997. This history covers the history of the Rockwood Branch and Ward (when it was formed in 2015) since that time.

Growth and New Members

About the time the branch was organized, there was an influx of members moving into the area, particularly in the Kingston area who worked at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, who added strength to the local members living in the area. Over the years since then, the branch grew very slowly. However in the 2014-2015 time-frame, stake and ward leaders made a concerted effort to reactivate members in order to qualify to be made a ward which occurred in July of 2015.

Missionary Service

Since the Rockwood Branch was formed there have been 21 missionaries called from the branch and ward. Those who have served are listed below.

Names, Missions, and Start dates for missionaries from the Rockwood Branch/Ward

Schill, Richard Allen	Argentina Bahia Blanca Mission	14-Jan-82
Schill, Scott	Venezuela Maracaibo Mission	1-Dec-82
Shirling, William "Bo"	California Santa Rosa Mission	12-Oct-88
Gudmundson, Gary W	Guatemala Guatemala City South Mission	31-Oct-90
Gudmundson, Nathan O	Argentina Buenos Aires West Mission	25-Sep-91
Gudmundson, Steven C	Colombia Bogota North Mission	24-Aug-94
Schill, April Renee	North Carolina Raleigh Mission	2-Nov-94
Gudmundson, Timothy J	Guatemala Guatemala City South Mission	9-Jul-97
Edwards, Sandra	Utah Salt Lake City Mission	1-Apr-02
Gudmundson, Brian G	California Anaheim Mission	19-Jun-02
Kennedy, Jonathan Pearce	Mexico Tijuana Mission	2-Apr-03
Bell, Brian Eugene	Utah Provo Mission	3-Sep-03
Halsey, Jeremiah Verle	Ecuador Guayaquil North Mission	10-Sep-03
Adams, Gordon	California Anaheim Mission	1-Jun-04
Willard, Matthew Dale	Brazil Porto Alegre South Mission	29-Sep-04
Miller, Rebekah Jody	Argentina Bahía Blanca Mission	21-Feb-07
Dennis, John Preston	Oregon Portland Mission	17-Oct-07
Willard, Andrew Terry	Utah Salt Lake City Mission	2-Nov-10
Woods, Carson Lee	Utah Provo Mission	21-Jan-15
Critchley, Brendan Michael	Utah Orem Mission	10-Feb-16

Youth Activities

The branch has generally not had a large youth program, but it has had some wonderful youth. The youth participated each year in the stake sponsored youth conference and Girl's camp and sporting activities. Because their numbers were small, the youth would invite non-member friends to join their basketball teams when they competed in the stake tournaments. This not only allowed them to be very competitive, but also to introduce their friends to the Church.

The young women would often deliver chocolate flowers or have other fundraiser to raise money for Girl's camp. They also enjoyed participating in New Beginnings each year and along with the young men, attend the temple to do baptisms for the dead.

The branch reported the following youth activities in 2015. With the move-ins we've had this year, our youth program has continued to grow. Our young women and young men leaders, working with youth, planned activities for the year and these have been well attended and have served to bring our youth closer to each other and to Christ. Our young men and young women have been involved in service projects at both the branch and quorum levels. Our young men have been going out to give the Sacrament to some of our members who aren't able, because of health reasons, to attend church. We are working on making this a more regular occurrence.

Tyson and Brendan Critchley, along with several nonmember friends, played in the stake youth basketball tournament earlier this year. Once again Rockwood won the championship. Other young men who plan to participate weren't able to due to illness. In January Brendan Critchley received his Eagle Scout award. In April Jaden Woods completed his Eagle Scout project building an arbor in the park in downtown Rockwood.

The Rockwood Branch/Ward sponsored Boy Scout 301. Below is a listing of those young men who have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout based on records from the local Boy Scout office.

Eagle Scouts from Troop 301

Guy	Thompson	1979
Craig	Thompson	1981
Gary	Gudmundson	1989
Brian	Gudmundson	2001
Brian	Bell	2002
Steffan	Dennis	2002
Matthew	Willard	2003
John	Dennis	2005
Andrew	Willard	2007
Carson	Woods	2014
Brendan	Critchley	2015

Jayden	Woods	2016
Aaron	Reano	2017
Edward	Reano	2017
Jacob	Reano	2020

The Young Women Personal Progress program was the equivalent to the scouting program for the young women and is the highest honor given in the Young Women organization. Listed below are the young women we could identify and the approximate year they received the award while living in the Rockwood Branch/Ward.

Young Womanhood Recognition Recipients

- Traci Thompson – 1986
- Julie Gudmundson – 1997
- Lynette Willard – 2000
- Madison Mioduski – 2016

Branch/Ward Activities

Highlights of branch activities gleaned from Yvonne Gudmundson’s journals and family letters.

Clair Webster Gudmundson (Web) served as President of the Rockwood, TN Branch for 7 ½ years, called in autumn, 1990 and released in 1998. During these years, branch Sacrament meeting attendance varied from about 65-90 or 95, with 100 always as our goal.

Early-morning seminary teachers during those years included Clayetta Hutson, Barbara Hopkins, Yvonne Gudmundson, and Pat Sheets. (Yvonne served for a total of 15 years, with some other callings in between.) Most classes were held in the teachers’ homes, but later, Yvonne taught at the Rockwood Branch building for a few years. It depended on where the most students lived at the time.) The following high schools fed into the Rockwood Branch: Roane County High in Kingston, Harriman High, Rockwood High, Midway High, Wartburg and perhaps even from Meigs County.

With a geographically large unit, we often had two sets of missionaries, and occasionally three sets. This kept members involved in going on splits with the Elders or Sisters. One missionary who stood out from the crowd as particularly hard-working and spiritual and enthusiastic was Elder Alan R. Walker, a native of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Rockwood Branch was blessed to have him stay in our service for six months, a rarity. Pres. Gudmundson’s family had the missionaries over for Sunday dinner two Sundays a month after church, and he would go on splits with one Elder and his teenage son, Steve, would go out teaching with the other Elder. When Elder Walker learned that our son who was at Ricks College, had sent in his mission paperwork, he began hoping that he would be called to Buenos Aires where his parents lived, and I thought, with all the missions in the world—slim chance. Elder Nathan Gudmundson was indeed called to Buenos Aires so we came full circle. We came to know and love Elder Walker, and 30 or more years later, none of us were surprised that “our Rockwood Branch missionary” was called to be a General authority Seventy! Our son Steve, who works as an IT manager at the Church Missionary

Training Center in Provo, UT, had been sent with a team from there and Salt Lake City when the Church was converting a Church high school campus to a Missionary Training Center in Mexico City. He noticed a familiar face on the billboard—Elder Allen Walker, then an area Authority, would be giving a fireside there that evening. Steve got permission to attend, and Elder Walker remembered him and our family and our branch well.

Community outreach and participation from the Rockwood Branch included a large lighted nativity with Tabernacle Choir Christmas hymns playing. This was on the hill below the building, facing Patton Lane, which drew traffic from next-door neighbor Roane State Community College. This tradition started when missionaries Ben and Annette Marler were serving and later living in the area. Annette was a native of Harriman, who had joined the Church and moved to Utah as a young adult.

With professionally made nativity costumes sewn by member Margie Whitenight, the branch had an entry in the local Christmas parade for a few years. Since our Cub Scout pack was not large enough to be self-sustaining, we banded with the local Scout troops for a while and recruited non-member boys to be part of our pack and part of our Boy Scout Troop. It was hard for a small branch to have a competitive basketball or softball team at the stake level, too, with a small number of youth, but for a few years, nonmember friends were invited to attend church and join the basketball team, and we had a few wins. We had a road cleanup project along Patton Lane, the road that runs past the church and Roane State Community College. Children and adults alike participated a few times a year in picking up litter along that route.

Pres. Gudmundson accompanied several youth and adult groups of 6-12 people to the temple in Atlanta, a three and half or four-hour drive a way. They sometimes went down and back in one long day, but sometimes would take in a Braves major league baseball game and spend the night.

In the past, our family, like many others, would drive to Knoxville, taking our picnic lunch, to listen to General Conference broadcasts on a Saturday and Sunday twice a year, thanks to the technology of satellite dishes. We were grateful when we had permission to install a dish outside our branch building, and more members were able to participate in General Conference sessions without the long drive.

Other branch activities were summarized from branch histories from 2013, 2014, and 2015

2013. On 16 January 2013 our Branch President, Scott Butler, passed away. President Butler was much loved and this was a difficult time for the branch. On January 28, the branch was reorganized as follows: Branch President Charles Watkins, first counselor Jonathan Kennedy, second counselor Kevin Blackburn. On September 1, Brother Blackburn was released and Kim Woods was called as second counselor.

As President Watkins wife, Sheri, was serving as Relief Society president, his call to the Branch Presidency necessitated reorganizing the Relief Society presidency. On February 17 the Relief Society was reorganized as follows: President Patricia Mier, first counselor, Denise Iroler second counselor, Sonya Weyerman. In August Sonia Weyerman was released and Holly Dennis was called a second counselor. In October Denise Iroler and Jeanette Kelly was called as first counselor.

We suffered other deaths in the branch including Bernice Shepard in April and Frank Hunter and Bill Thompson in June. While Brother Thompson wasn't a member, his wife Pat is a faithful member and Bill was in attendance in our Sacrament meetings every week and we counted him among our own. With each of these deaths, the members stepped up to provide comfort and service to the families who suffered losses.

We had 8 baptisms in 2013: Alaric and Damian Wiggins, George Fox, Catherine and Jeremiah Beyer, Christopher Agne, Kayla Gunter, and Robert Lane.

In May we had a family of seven, with nothing more than they could carry in their van, move into the branch. Although the members had not met this family yet, when asked they provided an entire household for this family including beds, living room and dining room furniture, pots pans dishes and microwave, washing machine, etc. This family has been active and regularly attends Church and other church activities.

In October 2013 the stake organized a High Priest group in the branch. Called to serve were: Group leader Wade Weyerman, first counselor Michael Mier, second counselor Paul Qualls. This necessitated reorganization of the Elders Quorum presidency. The following were called: President Burton Dennis, first counselor Kaipō Brede, second counselor Lee Sprague.

We have a branch dinner the second Wednesday of each month which is well attended by members and nonmembers. At times we have had so many in attendance that we have to set up tables and other rooms to accommodate them. We consider this to be a great problem to have. Recently the stake replaced our roundtables with rectangular tables, as we can fit more of them in the intercultural hall.

Because we know that fellowship is important, we started having additional activities in addition to the branch dinners. In September the Primary had a water activity after the branch dinner that was well received. We also had a family movie night, where with permission from classroom entertainment, we showed the Mobsters and Mormons. In October, in addition to the annual dinner/bonfire at Brother Urban's farm, we held a fall festival/Halloween party for the Primary, with the youth in charge of the games and trick-or-treating. In November, President and Sister Watkins hosted a dinner on Thanksgiving day at the branch for any members who might not otherwise have anywhere to go or the means to provide a Thanksgiving dinner for the family. We had 26 in attendance.

In December we invited all the members to come to the Christmas devotional. They were asked to come early and to bring cookies and stuffed animals. We serve cookies and milk and the members socialize before the broadcast. We took the rest of the cookies and made trays to take to the Roane County Sheriff's Department, the Rockwood, Herriman, and Kingston police departments, and other local fire and EMS departments in our area. On the trays we included pass along cards and the Joy to the World DVD. Several large bags of stuffed animals were given to the sheriff and police departments to hand out to children they encountered in their calls. It is our goal to have an additional activity each month in order to build fellowship and give the members activities to invite their friends and family to attend, and to give an opportunity to get to know any investigators better and to friendship them. We will also be looking for service project opportunities in the community within the branch boundaries. We set up an Angel tree to help make Christmas brighter for some of the less fortunate children in the Branch, and were able to take gifts to 17 children. With computers donated by members, we set up a

room as a "Family History Center" and called family history consultants develop members with genealogy.

We continue to encourage the members to support stake activities. In September we had 20 sisters attending dinner and women's broadcast at the stake. As we have never had more than two or three sisters attend any Stake Relief Society function, we considered this a huge success. Under the direction of the Elders Quorum President, branch members built a float and participated in the Christmas parades in Rockwood and Herriman. In addition at the Rockwood tree lighting ceremony, one of our members, Kaipō Brede, played Santa Claus. Missionaries serving in our area also participated as elves and reindeer. Chevonne Woods got us involved in the Rockwood 2000 celebration. She acted as hostess in one of the houses on the home tour and our sister missionaries help to decorate downtown Rockwood.

2014. The Rockwood Branch continues to reach higher goals in many areas of the Church by encouraging members to focus on what we achieved in 2014 by setting goals to increase success in everything we do in His holy name.

The Elders Quorum and High Priest group worked on scheduling monthly branch and youth temple trips to improve temple attendance and created several projects to show the importance of doing service for others. These projects presented the joy and pleasure of taking care of firewood for the winter to many families in need of heat. We also painted Sister Hill's home to prevent further damage from the weather.

The Young Women had a fundraiser sewing chocolate flower bouquets in February which was fun and we are looking forward to sewing them again in 2015. We had Cambria Coffey, Marissa Robertson, and Christine Sprague attend Girl's camp for the first time this year and it was a blessing to hear the stories and happiness they shared from the trip. We are hoping we can encourage at least five girls to join this adventure in 2015.

Relief Society members continue to support, love, and inspire each other and their loved ones by giving cards to express compassion and support in times of discouragement or acknowledgment when something is special to them. Providing care packages for the new births such as diapers and clothing and doing projects supporting the military through the Red Cross.

In September, we had a water activity that the children really enjoyed and had a family movie night at the church that has been received nicely with many wanting to continue having them. In November the Watkins family and the Reano family worked together and hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for 17 individuals who may not have had a meal otherwise.

In December we made cookie trays with pass-along cards for the Roane County Sheriff's Department and several other emergency services in the Rockwood, Herriman, and Kingston area. We also had several large bags of stuffed animals that we donated to the Sheriff's Department to hand out to the children they encounter during their calls. We also set up an Angel tree for the less fortunate and had 11 children have Christmas. Chevonne Woods continued to help the town with Rockwood 2000 project. She acted as a hostess and one of the houses and the home tour. Our missionaries helped decorate downtown Rockwood. Branch members provided cookies and candy and invited nonmembers to join in our cookie social and the Christmas devotional.

Other activities this year included monthly branch dinners, Institute taught by Pat Thompson during the school year, trick-or-treat, Primary and youth activities, and Pioneer Day celebration just to name a few. These activities helped introduce individuals to members and nonmembers, sharing, working together, and helping each other as the Rockwood Branch develop a stronger unity.

2015. In January we had a branch movie night where we showed (with permission from Halestorm Entertainment) "The Home Teachers." We have monthly branch dinners and branch temple trips, with 5 to 6 members usually in attendance each time we go to the temple. We have three family history consultants available to help members with their genealogy work, and encourage members (adult and youth) to do their genealogy and take or submit names to the temple for work to be done.

In February we had a Branch Day of Service at Camp Buck Toms. The night before, we had a priesthood campout. The following day, we assisted other volunteers with cleaning up, cutting a lot of trees that had fallen during the recent storm, and in general trying to help get ready for the new season. The Relief Society assisted by providing food for all of the volunteers. In addition to organize the day of service at Buck Toms, our Elders Quorum helped build a needed ramp to a member's home, helped with roof repairs, and provided a lot of firewood for members. Our Cub Scouts also had a food drive and donated over 600 items of food to the local food pantry.

We have signed an agreement with Family Promise of Roane County, to be a support church. This is a coalition of churches that either act as host or support churches for homeless families. We will assist the host church provide dinners for families staying in the church, as well as offering to help with their fundraising efforts, and whatever help we can at their daycare center. Family Promise of Roane County will work with these families, helping them to find employment and housing. We are excited about this opportunity to work with other churches and to help the needy in our area.

Already some of our sisters are collecting box tops to present to an elementary school in Rockwood in the fall to encourage good community relations. Several of our sisters participated in providing food and helping all the Kids Kafe, a community program that provides free meals to needy Rockwood children.

On March 7 our young women's organization held the New Beginnings program, with the theme "Anchored in Christ." In addition to the young women, families, branch leadership, and some of the young women leaders were in attendance. The fathers and grandfathers of our young women spoke about their daughters and granddaughters, and the young women and their families learned about the young women's program. It was a very spiritual evening and it made the young women feel special to have it centered on them.

At our branch conference in March, President Clapp announced that he was submitting paperwork for the Rockwood Branch to become a ward. The branch has worked hard to reach this level members are excited for this change. The Lord has blessed us with the move-ins of some great active families who are excited to be here to help us to move forward and continue to serve the Lord and bring others to Christ.

In May 2015 we started a branch choir, under the direction of her music German Mary Lou Madden. We continue to encourage our members to watch General Conference. On the evening of the women's session, our Relief Society holds a social prior to the broadcast to encourage fellowship and unity among our sisters. Our priesthood held the traditional hamburger dinner prior to the priesthood broadcast.

In May contractors begin remodeling our bathrooms, replacing all the tile, as well as turning the change installs into bathroom stalls, adding additional toilets to both the women's and men's restrooms.

In 2015, we had two convert baptisms - John Williams and Anthony Stockton, and three youth baptisms - Lola Pehrson and Elle and Travis Woods.

Branch Leadership

The Branch Presidents and their counselors that served since 1996 are listed below.

1990 to 1998 – Web Gudmundson. Counselors Rudy Robinette, Herb Ross, Paul Ely, Scott Butler

1998 to 2005 – Scott Butler. Counselors Paul Ely, Glen Urban, Jerry Mioduski

2005 to 2011 – Jerry Mioduski. Counselors Paul Ely, Glen Urban

2011 to 2013 – Scott Butler. Counselors Jonathan Kennedy, Chuck Watkins

2013 to 2015 – Chuck Watkins. Counselors Jonathan Kennedy, Kevin Blackburn, Mike Critchley, Kenneth Woods

Several of the Branch Presidents who have served in the Rockwood Branch have provided comments concerning their memories of the branch during their time of service.

In His Own Words – Web Gudmundson

Shortly before I became Rockwood Branch President, the second phase of construction was completed on our chapel, adding the chapel and four class rooms to the west side. At the time, we had a senior missionary couple, Ben Marler and his wife Annette, who had a special request for this mission to serve from Salt Lake City. (They knew President Thomas S. Monson, had known him for years. They asked for their assignment to be in the Rockwood, TN area. Annette had grown up in Harriman, TN, joined the Church as a teenager, and moved to Salt Lake City after high school graduation. She had long hoped to come and help build up the Church in her home area.) Later, she and Ben came back, bought a house in Harriman and lived there for a few years before retiring St. George, UT.

As missionaries, they worked hard with community leaders on various projects, including construction of a memorial plaque which was placed in front of the Roane County Courthouse in Kingston, with the names of fallen servicemen and women from the area. Annette has a long list of people, many prominent in the community whom she wanted to invite to the branch open house. She had musical talents and planned a musical program to be held in our new chapel, along with the traditional missionary display tables and refreshments. We had a tremendous turnout, with the whole chapel full, mostly nonmembers. Estimated 200. Most of them were already firmly implanted in their own churches, so regretfully, we had no new converts that I know of from that gathering, but we were happy to invite them to tour our building and at least learn that we truly worship Jesus Christ, as many of them do. We hope it helped break down some previous prejudice and misconceptions

In about 1977 or 1978, when the Church bought the property for the construction of the Rockwood Branch building, the Church only needed three acres, but the property owner was only willing to sell a

minimum of five acres. So the two extra acres were charged to the Rockwood Branch budget. We paid on that property for at least ten years, and finally paid it off. Shortly thereafter, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came up with a new budget allowance, and forgave all debts such as that! Just a little too late for us.

The small town of Kingston, and especially the outlying areas, became sort of a bedroom community for some of the plants at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, so when the government was hiring a lot of defense department workers, there was an influx of people moving in. In 1978, we moved from Maryland for me to start working at ORNL. We chose a house in a newer subdivision, Riverbend Estates, on the Clinch River, a few miles east of Kingston, near Gallaher Road where some of ORNL was located. There were five Latter-day Saint families in that neighborhood who had moved in that year. The Gudmundsons, the Dahls, the Browns, the Thurgoods, and the Mosers. Apparently, rumors spread and some minister became alarmed. He sent a committee to the home of Tom Dahl, I believe, to see if it was true that "The Mormons were colonizing the area." The Dahls had moved from Mississippi, the Browns from Colorado, the Thurgoods from Utah, and the Mosers from Washington. None of us met until we started attending church together. By the time we moved away nearly 30 years later, Latter-day Saint youth had made a good impression on teachers and administrators in the schools in the community. Many of our youth were top students who also excelled in various extracurricular events and had represented the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints well, being hard-working, honest and with high moral standards. May we all strive to live as true Christians and stand for Jesus Christ in all that we say and do, wherever we are.

Monthly potluck dinners at the church were a much anticipated event for many in the branch family. We always had friends and nonmember visitors, and it drew out the less-active members. For a few years, they were called dime-a-dip dinners and were fundraisers.

The church property was lovely, on a hill with a nice view of a small lake below. We always said we had the site for the Rockwood TN temple someday. The side yard was spacious enough for the youth to play baseball. And there were trees to climb.

The branch really did feel like a big extended family, and all were included in social events. In 2004, when our son Tim decided to marry a young woman from Knoxville and be sealed in the Nashville, TN Temple, members assumed they would be attending the "Gudmundson wedding." We were sad to learn that with the small capacity of the sealing room there, only our two large families would fit, so branch members were invited only to the reception.

Boy Scout Camp Buck Toms was outside of Rockwood, so our boys spent many summers camping there. Because of the heavy rains and flash flooding, the boys nicknamed it Camp Duck Toms. It was not just TN troops who used the camp. On many summer Sundays we would have a whole troop full of uniformed Boy Scouts and their leaders visit our Sunday meetings in route to Buck Toms. At least one troop was from Florida, and visited more than once.

There were Cub Scout and Boy Scout events held every year “next door” at Roane State Community College—merit badge conferences, pinewood derby races and other competitions. A local member, Tamsin Miller, was one of the ambitious events planners at Roane State who helped make this happen.

One big event that occurred on the branch’s lovely yard, near the row of flowering trees was the August wedding of local member Traci Thompson and her fiancé Jerry Mioduski, her high school sweetheart. Jerry came from a Catholic family but converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As Rockwood Branch President, I was asked to conduct. In order for Jerry’s family and Traci’s father to attend the wedding, they decided to hold it on church property, planning to be sealed a year later in the temple. Guests started arriving and were being ushered to their seats, but the chairs were hot and the sweltering heat and humidity were terrible. Someone made the decision to usher the guests into the chapel to sit and wait and then bring them back outside just before starting the ceremony. As we moved indoors, we heard sighs of relief and whispers of how glad the guests were that the wedding was moved indoors. What they did not know was that the family wanted wedding pictures of the ceremony, which could not be taken inside our sacred chapel, due to church regulations, so we were all relocated once more to the outside lawn. We were happy to see Jerry join our church family and for him and Traci to be united. They have reared lovely daughters and have been a great blessing to the branch, which is now a ward. Traci has used her many talents in various callings, and Jerry has served as both Branch President and, after Rockwood became a ward, as the Bishop.

Being in a small branch means that many of the same people are rotated around in the leadership positions. I served as a counselor to more than one Branch President before getting that calling myself. In our 29 years in Rockwood, Yvonne served two terms each as Relief Society president, Primary president, and Young Women’s president as well as the 15 years as seminary teacher and other callings. We were always thrilled to welcome new members into the branch, and sad when they moved away. It is sad we did not help more converts to prepare to serve in those positions.

Joseph Standing. We took several temple trips with the youth to do baptisms in the Atlanta, GA Temple. On one of the trips we stopped on the way home to visit the Joseph Standing Monument. This honored an early missionary who was killed in north Georgia by those who disliked the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. As we were getting ready to return home, I discovered that the car key was in a pocket of my coat in the locked trunk of my car. It looked like we were going to be stranded for a very long time. We were inspired to see what was behind the rear seat. We borrowed some tools from a local farmer down the road, took out the back seat, and opened a little hole into the trunk from which I grabbed and pulled out my coat with the key still in it.

Stake basketball. Being a small branch we usually didn’t fare very well in the stake ball tournaments. In about 1993, the girl’s team did win it all. The stake was going to award the trophy on the next stake dance night. They found out, though, that none of the girls on our team were old enough to attend the dance. Among them were Julie Gudmundson, Samantha Moser, and Ada Hearld. Two of them went on to later play high school basketball, so could no longer play church basketball. The deacons also won a stake deacons tournament about two years later, with Thomas Moser, Brian Gudmundson and Lee and Jim Burnett, Steffan Dennis and a couple of non-member friends.

Genealogy and temple work. Several of the members were really interested in family history research. We enjoyed discovering distant relationships with each other. Even more enjoyable was doing the temple work for our people that we found. Those interested in genealogy were me, Rudy and Rachel Robinette, Scott and Eddie Butler, and Barbara Hopkins. We went on long trips to the temple in carpools, with regulars being me, Jim Hall, Gene Hearld, Rachel Robinette. We stopped to eat at Shoneys on the way home. It was a great privilege to accompany a member to the temple on his or her first visit and to give them our support and share testimonies of the Lord's great work.

Boy Scout Troop. We had some great Scout leaders including Terry Willard and Herb Ross. Some boys earned the rank of Eagle. In the later 90s Itaska Ledgerwood Liddell moved back into the branch for a while and as a Scout committee member, helped light the fire for the boys who were already close to the mark, to get them to finish. Years before, a Scoutmaster who had moved from Utah and only stayed a year or so was requiring the boys to be in full uniform at their troop meetings. This put a great strain on some families whose boys were growing rapidly and outgrowing expensive uniforms quickly. Generous members donated to help keep the boys in uniforms. Web Gudmundson

In His Own Words – Chuck Watkins

I was called to be the Rockwood Branch President in February 2013 following the death of our Branch President, Scott Butler on January 16, 2013. My counselors were Jonathan Kennedy and Kevin Blackburn, my Executive Secretary was James Hall, Branch Clerk was Brandon Pehrson.

Along with some great missionaries we continued President Butler's home visits and were able to get some reactivations and convert baptisms. The Spring City area was one of the main areas we concentrated on. We also had some great families move into the branch to help build it up as well as strengthening the youth program.

I had great support from the Stake Presidency, President Tom Clapp, David Lee and Bradley Orme. Our High Counselors were also most helpful, especially Bro. David Sexton who spent a lot of time in Rockwood helping us to become a ward. Their support and friendship was greatly appreciated by myself and my wife Sheri.

Ken Woods and Mike Critchley became counselor in the Branch Presidency along with Donald Ball as Executive Secretary. The branch continued to steadily grow until we reached the requirements for becoming a ward. In July 2015 Rockwood became a ward and Steven Parrott was called to be the first Bishop of the Rockwood Ward.

My wife Sheri was my biggest supporter and regularly accompanied me with the missionaries on home visits and played a big part in the branch becoming a ward, we moved to Oak Ridge in 2016, but still visit Rockwood when we can to visit with the friends we made. The ward has continued to grow and Bishop Jerry Mioduski continues doing a great job. Chuck Watkins

Formation of the Rockwood Ward

For several years before the Rockwood Ward was formed, there was a concerted effort to reactivate members of the branch. Branch leaders and Brother David Sexton, the assigned High Counselor to the branch, met with numerous less active members and challenged them to participate and accept callings in the branch. These efforts resulted in the Rockwood Branch finally achieving sufficient activity to qualify to be made a ward. That occurred in July of 2015 when the Stake Presidency met and announced the long-awaited change and formed the Rockwood Ward.

Ward Leadership

The Bishops and counselors who have served in the Rockwood Ward are listed below. Unfortunately, Bishops Parrott and Woods moved from the area after only serving for short time.

July 2015 – J. Steve Parrott. Counselors Wade Weyerman, Quinn Mitchell

Oct 2015 – Kenneth Woods. Counselors Wade Weyerman, Quinn Mitchell, Don Ball

April 2017 – Jerry Mioduski. Counselors Don Ball, Quinn Mitchell, Don Moore, Michael Reano, Jordan Reed

Feb 2022 – Michael Reano. Counselors Tom Perkes, Taggert Williams

Jerry Mioduski provided memories below of his service as Branch President and later as the Bishop.

In His Own Words – Jerry Mioduski

When I was first called as Branch President, I was nervous because I didn't feel like I was prepared for that responsibility. Although President Butler did prepare me as I served as his counselor and I was so grateful for his mentorship and for all the other leaders who helped me. I also had good strong counselors who helped me grow into my calling. I felt better and more comfortable after a while, but at first I was a little nervous and it probably showed. When I was called as a Bishop, it didn't surprise me much so I wasn't really shocked. I was kind of expecting it, because there weren't many to choose from. Everybody was leaving and there were conditions that had to be met to be considered and we just didn't have a lot at that time who met the requirement. And I felt that I was better prepared and thought, "OK, I need to step up and serve again. I won't be as nervous this time." When I was released as Branch President, I was willing to serve longer. I had served for 6 years and thought I had one more year. I remember meeting with our Stake President Morgeneegg when he told me I was going to be released. I said you can wait a little long if you need to, but he said no. I was happy to serve and I had learned and grown from it.

When I was serving, my main goal was to see and meet each individual in the directory. I didn't succeed in that and wish I could have. There were just so many things to do. Another goal was to improve the attendance. We'd gone down before and we'd gone back up again – up and down a lot. Another goal was just keeping people here. That was a tough one. As a branch, we were praying and fasting for more membership. And saw the results as new members moved in. But I really hated not meeting every

person in the directory. That was one thing I would really have loved to have done. Some people don't make it easy though. Some don't want to see you or don't want people they don't know pressuring them to come to church. My goal was to make everybody feel welcome and not feel guilty at all.

One part of the calling that was a challenge for me was to do weddings and funerals. Growing up and not a member of the Church, I would go to these things and see that guy up there and think, "boy I would hate to be that guy up there." And then, boom, I had to do those things in my calling. When I was Branch President, I did a lot of weddings – I was shocked at how many weddings I had to do. Then as a Bishop, it was just the opposite. I only had one wedding and we had so many funerals. The first year I was Bishop, we had four or five funeral in one week and I think we lost like 17 members. There were just a lot of health issues and people who died of natural causes. The hardest funeral I had to do was a funeral for an infant baby. There were no members of the Church at this funeral. The member who lost the baby was inactive, so I was speaking to many people who weren't members. I did speak about the Plan of Salvation, but I just felt out of place speaking at that funeral. That was tough for me.

I always enjoyed camping out with the youth, especially with the boy scouts, even though I had never been a boy scout. When I was the Branch President I was also the scoutmaster and that was all so new to me. But I so enjoyed being out door with them and the experiences we had. I remember camping out one time at the Urban's farm. Because I was working during the day, I would come out at night and stay all night with them. One night I could hear this tttttt in my tent and I wondered what this strange noise was. The next night I heard the same ttttt inside my tent again. So I turned on my flashlight and looked all over my tent for what was causing the noise and I saw this massive spider. So I yelled at the kids, "does anyone like spiders?" They yelled "Ya, Ya." So I said "come in here and get rid of this spider that is in my tent." I think I hit it a few times with my shoe but it was not going to die. Later on that night, one of the kids said, "Oh Irish put that spider in there. He found it when we were out hiking during the day and said, "Let me catch that and put it in the president's tent." Those were fun days, going out with the youth camping like that. I remember another youth trip when we went out and had ice cream. One of the youth was sitting there eating it and he said "I don't know what this flavor is, but it's so good." I asked him what he got, and he said it was mocha something. And I said "that's coffee flavor. Let's go get you a different flavor." He kept licking it as much as he could before finally putting it in the garbage. I also had some good talks with the young women at their camps. I would go with them to their camp devotionals. I did that several years and had a good experience with them as I listened to their testimonies at the end of the night. I really miss the youth program and going camping with them.

The temple trips have really been picking up recently. I remember when Brother Ebbert, who scheduled the temple trips, asked us how often we wanted to go. I said maybe about once a quarter. And he said well some units go more often than that. I said I already get complaints about us going too much. But later I was talking to the youth in our youth council meeting and they said, we want to go every month. I thought, "what's the change all of a sudden?" So we started going pretty regularly, sometimes once or twice a month and they really seemed to enjoy the trips. We have a lot more youth now and we have new converts who are going along with us. We have 20 or 25 people going with us to do baptisms and confirmations. I think with the youth having more people rather than just a car load, they like the company and getting a big group together in a huge van.

Calling people to new callings was always hard for me. It seemed like so often we had to consider the same people who had already served a lot. I remember feeling good about Sister Pehrson, who we were considering as the new Relief Society President. We talked as a Branch Presidency and all felt good about her being the new Relief Society President. I then talked to the previous Relief Society President to see if she had any suggestions and the first name she came up with was Sister Pehrson. And I thought, that's good that she recommended the same person. So when I interviewed Sister Pehrson for the calling, she said "I knew it was me already. I've been getting these feelings to get ready; that I'm next." It was really nice to get that confirmation and she did a wonderful job.

Looking back, I feel we, as a Bishopric, did really well during the pandemic. We were able to keep things going with the Zoom meetings and let everyone know that we were trying to be as safe as possible until we could get back to church. As a Branch President, I think I was just happy to learn and grow and to be more comfortable with the calling. I was first in the Branch Presidency with President Butler and was in a Branch Presidency or Bishopric for a total of 16 years.

One thing that helped Rockwood to finally become a ward was the fellowshipping of the Branch Presidency during those years right before the ward was formed. Brother Weyerman was a counselor in the Branch Presidency and he was very influential in reactivating a lot of members. He was such a good fellow shipper. President Watkins was also very encouraging, but he was a quieter person. They just activated a lot of inactive members and we had a few new move-ins. But as soon as we became a ward, it seemed like they all moved away. The first Bishop was not even here a year and the second Bishop was only here about 18 months. We started calling it a curse to be called as Bishop. When I got called as Bishop, my company got sold and we thought we would also have to move. But it worked out that we could stay here and I was able to serve for 5 years. It was a great experience.

I'm going to miss going to stake meetings, whether it was Bishop training meetings or stake leadership meetings, and seeing and listening to the priesthood leadership. It's just so great being in a room with a bunch of priesthood leaders. I just loved sitting back listening rather than me saying something. And going to some of the meetings where a General Authority would speak just to the leadership. It was such an amazing feeling to just be in those rooms and I loved the opportunities to be there.

One of the scriptures I loved the most was Helaman 5:12. It's easy for me to remember this reference because 5/12 is my wife's birthday and when she lived on the BYU campus, she stayed in Helaman Hall. It talks about how you build your foundation and stay strong if you live the gospel and do what you are supposed to do. That's one thing I have a testimony of that if you are faithful and do all the things we learn here, your life will be blessed and you will have a better experience in life and be better prepared for hard times. I hold onto that. We've gone through some hard times and I feel like we've been blessed because we know how to get through them. We just stay strong and move on and hope and listen to the Spirit and the promptings we receive. I love this ward and I love the members in it.

Jerry Mioduski

Sevierville Ward

The Sevierville Branch was formed in September of 1981 and a chapel was dedicated in October of 1985 and a second phase added to the building in Dec 1992. The Sevierville Branch remained in the Knoxville Stake when it was divided in November of 1996. At the time the stake was split, William Nichols continued serving until he was called as the first Bishop of the Sevierville Ward. Additional details about the formation and early experience of the Sevierville Branch are included in the stake history "Foot Steps of Faith" published in 1997 and Sevierville was made a ward in November of 1997. This history covers the history of the Sevierville Ward since that time.

Growth and New Members

The population of the Sevierville Ward has fluctuated significantly over the years. Since the area contains several entertainment center including Dollywood and Gatlinburg, the number of members in the area changes significantly during the year as the demands of employment in the area changes. In particular, after our country suffered a housing crisis several years ago, many members were forced to move to other areas for employment. In addition, the frequent moving in and out of the area has resulted in records of the ward not being completely accurate which makes the current membership most likely something less than the current records show.

Due to the ward's location near the Gateway to the Smokies and other tourist attractions, the congregation also experiences new visitors each week. This ranges from one or two families per week to one or more family reunions during peak season.

The ward was blessed with a number of convert and youth baptisms over the last several years including the following.

2015 – Cheryl Gore, Joseph Kyle Ventimiglia, Corrine Maldonado, J T Hirst, Gavin Faust, Brandy Strickland, Dylan Smith, Shannon Lytle, and Russell Singletary.

2016 - John Cuthbertson Buck, Micah Garrison Binkley, Sierra Marie Azpurua, Tatiana Holt, Elektra Kennedy, Elijah Tackett, James Allen Solomon, Rayshanett Santamaria, Angeline Licona, Josue Matute, Ben-Giovanni Miller, and Daniel Farrar.

2018 - Grace Lynn Finch, Chelsey Henriquez, Cassie Alesha Tubbs, Brianna Patrice Burkett, Michael McKinney, Hansel Misael Martinez Salgado, Aubrey Rhodes, Allauna Rae Turner, and Peyton Callahan.

2020 - Bryan J. Gillispie, Tina Marie Gillispie, Hannah Nichole Clingan, Dominik Isaac Rios Escobar, Joseph Alejandro Henriquez Escobar, Rhett Louis Lea, Miles Fowler, and Boe David Sunderland.

2021 - Presley Finch, Weston McVey, Diego Fegueroa, Jason Bowes, Matthew Hopper, Landon Houser, and Mya Houser.

Missionary Service

Since the Sevierville Branch was formed there have been 28 missionaries called from the branch/ward. Those who have been called to serve full-time missions are listed below.

Names, Missions, and Start dates for missionaries from the Sevierville Branch/Ward

Taylor, Robert Arthur	Chicago Illinois Temple Mission	31-Oct-90
Taylor, Ella Lee	Chicago Illinois Temple Mission	31-Oct-90
Maier, Cristopher Scott	Arizona Tempe Mission	21-Aug-91
Haskins, Michael David	Idaho Pocatello Mission	7-Jul-93
Lohman, Rhett Kasey	Spain Las Palmas Mission	20-Sep-95
Raisor, Kristopher Charles	El Salvador San Salvador West/Belize	12-Nov-97
Kennedy, Travis Lipar	Philippines Quezon City Mission	9-Jan-02
Brown, Kyle Ray	Jamaica Kingston Mission	12-Feb-03
Barr, George Sturjinne	Missouri Independence Mission	2-Feb-05
Stephens, Jordan Michael	Idaho Pocatello Mission	22-Feb-06
Baker, Dellon Junior	Utah Provo Mission	19-Mar-07
Baker, Lenore Mae	Utah Provo Mission	19-Mar-07
Plant, Sarah Elizabeth	New Mexico Albuquerque Mission	28-May-08
Boeke, Alan Michael Sylverius	California Sacramento Mission	8-Dec-10
Azpuru, Alan Jesus, Jr	California Long Beach Mission	16-Nov-11
Stephens, Evan James	Idaho Pocatello Mission	1-Aug-12
Henriquez Alvarez, Alberto Jose	Tennessee Nashville Mission	11-Sep-13
Flores Henriquez, Erick Moroni	Utah Ogden Mission	16-Apr-14
Pittaway, Walter Anthony, IV	Washington Vancouver Mission	10-Jun-15
Stephens, Travis Sean	Denmark Copenhagen Mission	13-Jan-16
Pittaway, Brenan Alexander	Mozambique Maputo Mission	1-Mar-17
House, Kim Edward	Tennessee Knoxville Mission	22-May-17
House, Patricia Ann	Tennessee Knoxville Mission	22-May-17
Minton, Kathryn Elizabeth	Nevada Reno Mission	11-Oct-17
Johnson, Josiah	Knoxville Bishops Storehouse	1-Nov-17
Minton, Bradley Joseph	Utah Salt Lake City Mission	24-Oct-18
Matute Ortiz, Joel Alejandro	North Carolina Raleigh Mission	22-Jan-20
Matute Henriquez, Heber Jose	California Anaheim Mission	3-Feb-21

Youth Activities

There is a constant effort by leaders to encourage the youth to lead and to participate in youth activities. Some of the favorite young women activities have revolved around craft and service projects including making placemats for the food ministry at Thanksgiving which was their favorite, and prior to COVID, visiting sisters in the retirement and assisted living communities. The young men always enjoy a sports night and have multiple opportunities each year to assist members with cleaning up downed trees and splitting wood. Both groups are enjoying aspects of the new youth program introduced in 2020 allowing each individual to select activities based on their personal goals and interests.

The Sevierville Ward sponsored Boy Scout 34. Due to a cultural mix in the ward, scouting within Troop 34 received little participation during the final few years of the church's participation in the BSA

program. Below is a listing of those young men who have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout either in Troop 34 or other Sevierville troops based on ward records and records from the local Boy Scout office.

Eagle Scouts from Sevierville

Rhett Lohman – 1994
Jordan Stephens – 2002
Evan Stephens – 2009
Alan Azpurua – 2009
Travis Stephens – 2009
Bradley Minton – 2017
Jacob Minton – 2020

The Young Women Personal Progress program was the equivalent to the scouting program for the young women and is the highest honor given in the Young Women organization. Listed below are the young women and the year they received the award while living in the Sevierville Ward.

Young Womanhood Recognition Recipients

Corrine Brown – March 2002
Tara Stevens – September 2004
Sarah Johnson – September 2004
Megan Stevens – July 2007
Clara Whitfield – August 2010
Alex Bach – May 2012
Daniela Abregu – August 2012
Tiffany Toler – November 2014
Katie Minton – November 2014
Jama Kennedy – May 2017

Ward Activities

Each year the Sevierville Ward strives to hold meaningful activities around holidays including Valentine's Day dinners, Easter, the 4th of July/Pioneer Day celebrations, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas programs or parties. The ward also had luaus and picnics, open houses (either showcasing the various auxiliaries, missionary work or preparedness), sports competitions and dances. Relief Society, Primary, Elders Quorum, High Priests group and YM/YW held their own activities. Youth also took part in service projects of various kinds and sometimes going on outings for their weekly activities.

The ward has invited the police and fire departments to breakfast on the 4th of July celebrations. The greatest non-member attendance seems to be centered around Halloween. People seem to come out of the woodworks when they see a parking lot full of candy. Beginning in 2019, we stopped holding a Thanksgiving dinner and focused our efforts in taking prepared meals to shut-ins and those without family around. Christmas dinners continues to be the activity that brings in the most families who do not participate in church very often.

The following ward memories were extracted from the several Sevierville Ward histories.

2013. We were given a copy of the plans for the third addition to our building, with some stipulations and goals for us to strive for as members. Hopefully by this time in 2015 we'll be well on our way to having a more physical space and comfort to meet in. Many of our ward members have been blessed to see the ward grow from a small branch to our current ward and for a short time a Spanish Branch. After our country suffered through the housing crisis several years ago, most of the Spanish Saints were forced to move to other areas for employment and the ward and branch were once again combined. The goals of the Sevierville Ward is now set to do enough missionary work and hopefully new members moving in, to have two wards in our area in the near future.

2014. The year of 2014 has been both challenging and a challenging blessing for the saints in the Sevierville Ward. We were so excited when told we would be getting started on phase 3 of our building, then the tedious task of finding a place to meet began. We had our hopes up on several occasions that a temporary home was at least visible, but in the end it didn't work out. Finally, after what seemed like many months, a location was found. It was an empty theater in Pigeon Forge. The Church leaders decided to rent it for us to meet in. The long journey to a new and larger building began.

We enthusiastically moved into the theater. In our first meeting we discovered a few problems with the building. The sound system didn't work and the lights were only on in portions of the auditorium. Not a good beginning for what was anticipated to be a year as our meeting place. The faithful saints endured weeks of darkness and silence, especially for those who had hearing problems. Everyone voiced a complaint from time to time and finally they were able to get the sound working and the most important lights to function. The leadership of our ward worked very hard to make it as comfortable as it could be. We have a lot of visitors because of the location in the beautiful Smoky Mountains. Some of the visitors might have even thought they were going to see a new production in Pigeon Forge, because of the cars in the parking lot. Everyone was welcomed at the door by our faithful young missionaries.

Now that it is coming to an end and we get to meet in our beautiful new building next week, we can look back and realize how blessed we were to find a place so convenient for most of us and it has really comfortable seats! Most of our ward family will realize how blessed we were to be sitting in the new PADDED pews when we get move back home. It may not go down in history as a blessing, if no one ever knows the difference in sitting for three hours in hard stackable chairs versus soft pews. Having had that experience for many years leaves our family with a deep appreciation for what so many of our brothers and sisters, in places we may never see, have to worship in. Many worship in homes, while others have to walk many miles to attend church. We are blessed and very grateful to live and this country where we can worship how, when, and where we choose.

As we move into our new building, will we long remember how blessed we are to have such a nice place to meet and treat it with the respect it deserves. I once heard a church member complain to the Bishop that she didn't feel the spirit in our Sacrament meetings. The very wise Bishop answered her with the following statement – "We don't go to church meetings to feel the Spirit but rather we must BRING the Spirit with us and pray that we will be able to listen and learn to what the Lord has for us that day." How true his analysis was that day.

2015. Invitations to the open house for the new ward chapel were mailed to each member on record by February 14. Open house for the new chapel was held on February 21. We were excited and, at the same time, thankful to have this beautiful building in which to gather and worship. It is a gift from God that we will continue to savor for years to come. The first services were held in the new building on Sunday January 22nd 2015. The first ward social in the building was on June 26th. It was a combined spaghetti dinner and karaoke activity.

Dedication of the new chapel and a linger-longer was held on Sunday, July 12. The ward choir opened the meeting singing *Come, Come Ye Saints* and Victoria Azpuru offered the opening prayer. Bishop Cole and President Clapp spoke and then President Clapp offered the dedicatory prayer. This was followed by the choir and congregation singing *The Spirit of God* followed by the closing prayer by James Kennedy. It was a wonderful meeting filled with the Spirit.

The ward participated in several service projects during the year with "Live It", a group which carries out many worthwhile service projects to benefit others in the community. A ward service project with "Live It" was held on April 11. Our priesthood then had a joint ward service community project with "Live It" on August 8 and again on September 5.

Our ward Relief Society held numerous activities during the year called "Girl's Night Out". Each month focused on something different. The first lesson in June was on preparedness, food storage, and quilt making. Later we had a lesson on fermenting vegetables, two program on being slim healthy mama, and an activity on coupon sharing. A final Girl's Night Out was a lesson and cookie exchange in December.

Other ward activities during 2015 included four ward and youth temple trips, a Primary Easter activity, the annual Blue and Gold banquet in June, a Pioneer day celebration with a cookout, a ward family dance in August, an Emergency Preparedness linger-longer in September, a Fall festival including a chili cook off and trunk or treat, and the annual Christmas social.

2016. Our ward activities during 2016 included a four temple trips, a family fun day and Primary Priesthood Preview in May, young single adult fireside/family home evenings in June, August, and September at the Dahle home, a Pioneer day activity in July, a luau in September, a young single adult activity at the Sevierville Park in November, and a Christmas party themed "Christmas around the World" in December.

2018. We were grieved to learn of the death of our former Bishop, Pat Sheets, on February 23. He served twice as Bishop of the Sevierville Ward. He was survived by his wife and sweetheart of 50 years, Linda.

The Sevierville Ward Relief Society was very active in 2018. There were three funerals during the year for which the RS provided meals for the grieving families. Many other acts of service were provided for sisters and their families who experienced various challenges in their lives. Some of our sisters also volunteered their time and talents to assist various community organizations. One sister served 16 hours each month at the Sevierville Food Ministries. The Relief Society contributed to many ward activities throughout 2018. These included the Speed Friend Shipping activity, RS Birthday Celebration, members taking wildflower hike in the mountains, a clothing exchange activity, a RS game night, a

sewing project, a cookie decorating class, a Christmas cookie exchange, and organizing the annual Angel Tree donations and spearheading the Christmas dinner and program.

Other ward and youth activities during 2018 included a Valentine activity in February, Self-Reliance classes starting in March, Primary Mother's Day activity in May, a pasta benefit dinner for YM/YW camps in June, a Pioneer Day activity in July, a temple trip in July, a Primary Girls Activity Day in August, service projects in August and November, a talent show-potluck dinner in September, the Fall Festival/Chili cook off in October, and Primary and ward Christmas activities in December.

2020. We had scarcely stored the Christmas decorations away for another year when the news media began to speak of the highly contagious virus called COVID-19 that supposedly had begun in China. It affected everyone, from inconveniences of wearing masks and altered shopping habits, to loss of employment and some bellowed family members dying from it. Perhaps 2020 was the wake-up call when many of us realized we had been taking blessings for granted.

Church meetings were suspended by the First Presidency in early March due to the spread of the virus; Sacrament meeting resumed in our ward on July 12th for twice-monthly meeting. Weekly Sacrament meetings resumed on November 27th, but by year's end, our meetings were virtual due to a sharp increase in virus cases. Families with worthy Priesthood holders were encouraged to partake of the Sacrament at home when no Sacrament meeting was held in the ward.

Ward Leadership

The Bishops and their counselors who served since 1996 are listed below.

Nov 1997 – William Nichols. (Released when called to the Stake Presidency) Counselors Eric Johnson, Alan Azpurua, Gary Pickering

Dec 1998 – Tom Randles. Counselors James Kennedy, Jim Depievane, Alan Azpurua

Dec 2001 – James Brown. Counselors James Kennedy, Dennis Porter. Mark Woodland, Bill Easley

Aug 2006 – Pat Sheets. Counselors Alan Azpurua, Vicente Vassallo, Douglas Cole

Oct 2011 – Douglas Cole. Counselors James Kennedy, Marcelo Abregu James Steger

Dec 2016 – Pat Sheets. Counselors James Kennedy, James Steger, Jeramy Belnap

Oct 2017 – Jeramy Belnap. Counselors James Dahle, Victor Licon, David Matute, Ron Erickson, Michael Remy, Jimmie Stewart

Several of the Bishops who have served in the Sevierville Ward have provided comments concerning their memories of the Ward during their time of service.

In His Own Words – William Nichols

When I was called as the Branch President in Sevierville I told President Barber that my wife and I had planned to go on a mission to which he replied that I could serve a mission here as the Branch President. I then accepted the calling.

I had retired from my job at Chrysler Corp. and had spent a year traveling around the country in our RV visiting many of the temples in the states, and finally settled in Kodak, TN as I had family there and it was an ideal setting for me and my wife. We were not too far from our children in Michigan and it would only be an 8 or 9-hour drive to visit them or have them visit us.

I didn't know anyone very well and after accepting the calling I had to get counselors. Eric Johnson was a counselor in the previous Branch Presidency and I asked him to stay on until I could become more familiar with the people, which he did.

It seemed that the organizations were working separately instead of as one unit working for the growth of the whole Branch, but with a little coaching and lots of prayer we watched the members grow spiritually and they began to work together. We in the Branch Presidency could see this growth and gave them a free hand and encouraged them to seek guidance from the Lord in overseeing their organization. I saw them reach out to each other and work in unity. There was so much potential in these people and all we had to do was remind them of their capabilities.

We had a missionary couple in our branch but they mainly were reaching out to the less actives. I requested that we have some young missionaries sent to us. They were sent down and we started to grow through missionary work and eventually became a Ward. President Barber called me in and asked me to be the Bishop. I reminded him that my wife and I still planned to go on a mission and travel. He told me (with a little sparkle in his eye) that when he gets released I can be released and I had lots of time yet to travel.

Well, after a few years we heard a General Authority (Elder Hales) was coming to our Stake Conference. That Saturday I was called at home and told that Elder Hales wanted to meet with me and my wife, and naturally I thought I was going to be released as Bishop. We went to the meeting and I was called to be the 2nd Counselor in the Stake Presidency.

The next day I asked President Barber what had happened to my being released and traveling. He looked at me and smiled and said, "You will now be released as Bishop and you can now travel to any ward or branch in the stake". I guess that would be okay although I had hoped to travel a little bit further. (lol) I have learned much from President Barber while serving as Bishop, how to help the people, how to look for and see the potential in each and every one of them. Mainly to trust in them to seek guidance from Heavenly Father in their callings. I also think while serving as Bishop I might have helped to put a few grey hairs on President Barber's head. I look back on my time as the Bishop of the Sevierville Ward and have come to realize it was a calling to serve the people, but I learned so much in that calling. Each calling I have had has been a learning experience to receive and develop gifts and abilities I could use in my next calling.

Along with the calling I had as a Bishop of the Sevierville Ward, my testimony has grown and I can stand up and testify that Jesus is the Christ, Joseph Smith saw what he said he did and restored the gospel with all of its power and authority. All I want to do is help build Zion for the coming of my Savior in any way I can. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

William Nichols

In His Own Words – James Brown

I feel so blessed that I had the opportunity to serve as Bishop while still serving as the Seminary teacher. I was grateful for the whole support I felt from the Lord to be able to wear both hats and do a moderate job at each. What a blessing it was to spend each weekday morning with those kids, every Sunday and normally one or two Saturdays a month with them and feel their love for the Lord and their desire to do what He wanted them to do as they were becoming who Heavenly Father needs them to be. Because of being the Bishop, I was blessed to go with the youth on the Stake Youth Activity Church History tour to the Palmyra area and Kirtland. However because I was the Seminary teacher I was able to help prepare them for the trip and assist them in realizing just how special an opportunity that is. What a blessing. I was released shortly after that tour, I was released and that was OK.

Even though I don't hear from or see those youth anymore I feel a kinship with those I was able to rub shoulders with during the over 8 years of inter action. What a blessing. James Brown

In His Own Words – Douglas Cole

What a joy and blessing a Bishop's calling is. I have never felt the Spirit of the Lord closer than I have as a bishop. In the first few months it seemed overwhelming with duties and emotional ups and downs of the calling. But through the whispering of the Holy Ghost the tasks at hand became, not tasks but challenges the Lord had prepared for me to service his flock.

I could see His hand in all things more clearly; from finding a temporary home for our meetings while the addition was constructed to the words that I spoke as I counseled with others. He taught me how to truly love the people I serve. The Lord was with me every step of the way.

The addition to our building was another testament to my understanding of how the Lord has His hands in all things. The detail, time, and strength that went into this new edifice has shown me how every little thing that we do in His name will be rewarded.

I am so blessed and honored that I was called as a Bishop in the Sevierville Ward of the Knoxville Tennessee Stake of Zion. We are located in the midst of one of the most beautiful places in the United States. I am reminded of God's hand in all things by the beauty that surrounds this area. He's in the mountains and the streams, the sunsets and beautiful mornings. My time of service as a Bishop has strengthened my testimony. I know my prayers were heard. I know that God lives and His son Jesus Christ lives and is my Savior. And I know that we have a prophet today that leads this true Church the way the Lord wants it. I so testify in His name, Jesus Christ. Amen. Douglas Cole

In His Own Words – Jeramy Belnap

I was first called as a counselor to Bishop Sheets at the beginning of 2016. When Bishop Sheets was called, he was told that he would not serve a full 5 year term, but it was unknown how long he would be

called. Bishop Sheets included me in many counsels and sought my advice on several matters, which I have to come to understand was a way to prepare me for things to come. Bishop Sheets was a wonderful mentor and I was very lucky to have been mentored in this calling.

After Bishop Sheets passed, I was called to be Bishop. Personally, it was a very intense time in our life. Our daughter was having some problems with school, my wife was working a lot, and my job required many hours away from home. I felt impressed to leave my job at this time as well, which made Pres. Clapp a little concerned. Every month Pres. Clapp would ask how we were doing financially, but with my wife's jobs we were able to stay afloat. I believe this calling played a significant role in this aspect.

As a younger Bishop, I recognized very quickly that I had a different perspective regarding many of the issues that our younger generation is faced with. I believe it allowed me to speak more freely to other bishops, give suggestions, and work with the youth in a way that allowed many of them to work past concerns and issues that were overtaking their lives.

I have had several counselors in the Bishopric during my time as Bishop. Several Hispanic members were called to serve alongside me, and we were able to bless the Sacrament many times in Spanish because of this. I believe it helped the ward come together as one ward, and allowed the men blessing the Sacrament to really practice the words in order to make sure it was said correctly. Many of my counselors have had work/sickness/family concerns that have pulled them away, and at times, I was alone in my calling. This situation has confirmed to me the importance of a working presidency.

The reformation of roles between the Relief Society, Elders Quorum, and Bishop occurred during my tenure as Bishop and has also included the introduction of the Come Follow Me program and the new youth program. In March of 2020 we were sent home due to COVID-19. Each of the changes introduced were inspired and put in place to help us prepare for the absence of in-person meetings. The years of 2020 and 2021 have proved challenging for many as some have lost the priority of being actively involved in the Church while others have grown more firm in their faith.

Being at home due to COVID has created some difficulties with getting the youth to activities. It is and continues to be a discussion among leaders and families as we strive to help them see the roles these things play in developing friendships and strengthening testimonies. I have attended young women's camp, young men's camp, and youth conference every year that it was held and it was a huge blessing to grow with the youth.

I believe that each Bishop has a reason that they are called and a focus. It is easy to feel that we aren't doing enough, but I have learned to look at each individual, to work with them where they are at, and to pray for the balance between justice and mercy. Jeremy Belnap

West Hills Ward

At the time the stake was split in 1996, the West Hills Ward was named the Knoxville 2nd Ward. But with the completion of the new stake center in April of 1998, the ward was renamed the West Hills Ward and was left alone in the West Hills building when the Knoxville 1st Ward moved to the new stake center. The history of the Knoxville 2nd/West Hills Ward from 1972 to when the Knoxville Stake was split in 1996 is covered in the earlier stake history “Foot Steps of Faith”. This history covers the history of the West Hill Ward since that time, including May of 2021 when the boundaries of the ward were realigned to include what had been the Knoxville 1st Ward with part of the original West Hills Ward when the Bearden Ward was formed.

Growth and New Members

The membership of the West Hills Ward has tended to be fairly transient over the years, partly due to many of its ward members being young married couples attending the University of Tennessee and then leaving the area after graduation. While the ward grew over the years as a result of convert baptisms and move-ins to the area, the area covered by the ward didn't grow as quickly as West Knoxville where there were many new housing developments. Its membership was also affected when the South Knoxville Branch was created in 1998 and when the Knoxville 1st Ward was created in April of 2009 and its membership dropped from about 510 to about 390. In each case, formation of the new units drew a considerable number of members from the West Hills Ward but the 2009 boundary realignment also added members to the ward from the Farragut Ward. Before the recent boundary realignment when the Bearden Ward was formed, the West Hills Ward had about 580 members. After the boundary realignment, the new West Hills Ward, consisting of the old Knoxville 1st Ward and part of the old West Hills Ward, had a membership of 677 at the end of 2021.

Some of the recent baptisms in the ward are listed below.

- Jacob Scott Hawes - Baptism: February 11, 2022
Bro. Hawes was introduced to the gospel by a friend in Florida, and he came to church on his own accord. He was extremely prepared to receive the missionaries and progressed very quickly. He is a fantastic member and received the Aaronic priesthood on February 20, 2022.
- Julisa Cheyenne Hendrix - Baptism: January 23, 2022
Sis. Hendrix was taught by the missionaries and baptized shortly after. She has continued assisting the ward and accepted a calling as a Primary teacher.
- Jesse Lynn Linkes - Baptism: August 14, 2021
Bro. Linkes was baptized and confirmed in August. He quickly progressed and was ordained a Priest on August 22, 2021 by Bishop Gilday.
- Jessica, Vansin, Vernon, Veronica, and Victoria Smith - Baptism: July 24, 2021
Sister Jessica Smith and her children were baptized into the ward just before the ward boundaries were restructured. Her children have been very involved with the young men and women, and shortly before their baptisms, the young women attended Girl's camp. The family has continued active in the Church and attends Sacrament meeting most Sundays. The family's

father, Moses, is currently in Liberia, Africa, working on proper documentation to come to the United States to join his family.

- Aiden Michael and Liberty Idell - Baptism: June 26, 2021
Aiden and Liberty were baptized last summer. They have been extremely active, and Aiden was ordained a Priest on August 1, 2021. Aiden was sustained as an Aaronic priesthood specialist in September and has been very responsive in that calling. Liberty Collins was sustained as a Relief Society Activity Committee Member and Young Women Secretary.
- Becky Howard - Baptism: June 19, 2021
Becky was fellowshipped by several members in the ward, including the McKinney family. Becky has been extremely active and was sustained as a Ward Activity Committee Member on August 29, 2021. She has prayed in Sacrament meeting. Her husband is not interested in the Church, but he brings and picks her up each Sunday.
- Joshua Velez - Baptism: June 13, 2021
- Gina Mata - Baptism: March 20, 2021
- William Ray Beck - Baptism: November 20, 2020
- Matthew Christian Snyder - Baptism: December 25, 2020

Missionary Service

Since the Knoxville Stake was formed in 1972 there have been 75 missionaries called from the West Hills Ward (previously named the Knoxville 2nd Ward) up until the Bearden Ward was established in May of 2021. The breakdown of the number of missionaries who served from the West Hills Ward is summarized as follow:

1972 to 1980 - 10
 1981 to 1990 - 21
 1991 to 2000 – 11
 2001 to 2010 - 16
 2011 to 2021 – 17

Names, Missions, and Start Date of Missionaries who have served from the West Hills Ward

Werner, Duncan Eugene	Alberta Saskatchewan Mission	31-Oct-70
Armstrong, Jake Thomas, Jr	Idaho Pocatello Mission	7-Aug-74
Orgera, Michael Adam	Colorado Denver Mission	26-Oct-74
Avery, Fred	California Los Angeles Mission	1-Apr-76
Buchanan, James Henderson, Jr	Philippines Cebu City Mission	12-Nov-77
Rimshaw, Mary Monica	Costa Rica San Jose Mission	5-Jan-78
Crosby, Janice Louise	Mexico Hermosillo Mission	1-Mar-79
Allman, Johnny Whitcomb	Philippines Manila Mission	1-Nov-79
Pearson, Jennifer Lynn	Japan Kobe Mission	17-Jan-80
Fultz, James Lee	England Birmingham Mission	10-Jul-80
Pearson, David Lawrence Edgeley	Belgium Brussels Mission	30-Dec-82
Barron, Gilbert Keith	Colombia Bogota Mission	3-Feb-83
Sellers, Charles Vincent	California Arcadia Mission	27-Sep-84

Cravens, Scott Edward	California Oakland Mission	1-Aug-85
Cravens, Jeff	France Paris Mission	6-Jan-86
Sellers, Daniel Prescott	Ecuador Guayaquil South Mission	17-Oct-85
Purcell, Kay Margaret	California San Diego Mission	31-Oct-85
Purcell, Kristen Fern	California Ventura Mission	13-May-87
Morgenegg, Benjamin Todd	Pennsylvania Pittsburgh Mission	16-Sep-87
Poore, Jonathan Gary	California Oakland Mission	16-Sep-87
Reeves, Robert Roger, Jr	Utah Provo Mission	30-Dec-87
Barnes, Richard William	California Santa Rosa Mission	3-Feb-88
Barnes, Dorothy	California Santa Rosa Mission	3-Feb-88
Kenney, Michael Quinn	Florida Ft Lauderdale Mission	27-Jul-88
Murphy, Kathleen Mary	Chile Rancagua Mission	19-Jul-89
Sellers, Samuel Helaman	Utah Ogden Mission	30-Aug-89
Burgin, Theodore Hill	Norway Oslo Mission	25-Oct-89
Ward, Marian Angela	Spain Bilbao Mission	29-Nov-89
Purcell, Ronald Eldon	Philippines Davao Mission	11-Jul-90
Murphy, Mary	Chile Santiago Mission	6-Jan-91
Stafford, Brian Allen	Oklahoma Oklahoma City Mission	19-Sep-90
Ludwig, Yvonne	Atlanta Temple Mission	1-Feb-90
Barnes, Dorothy	England London Mission	1-Mar-92
Cardin, Pasha Plum	Paraguay Asuncion Mission	6-Feb-91
Sellers, Paul Doniphan	Portugal Lisbon Mission	26-May-93
Linden, Donald Wayne	Brazil Sao Paulo Interlagos Mission	29-Sep-93
Tucker, Robert Matthew	Alabama Birmingham Mission	30-Nov-94
Purcell, Benjamin Gary	Spain Las Palmas Mission	18-Oct-95
Tucker, Jared Lee	Russia Rostov-na-Donu Mission	27-Dec-95
Deitrick, Conrad	Germany Dusseldorf Mission	5-Jul-98
Lehman, David Lee	Argentina Cordoba Mission	16-Feb-00
Deitrick, Sean Soren	Japan Nagoya Mission	15-Nov-00
Puster, Eric Matthew	Utah Ogden Mission	7-Mar-01
Bryson, Holly Elizabeth	Iowa Des Moines Mission	6-Jun-01
Lehman, Maria Dawn	Spain Bilbao Mission	8-Aug-01
Nearing, Eric David	Bolivia Santa Cruz Mission	5-Dec-01
Clapp, Kase Aland	California Long Beach Mission	21-May-03
Puster, Brian William	California San Fernando Mission	8-Oct-03
Baggett, Brandon Shaw	Italy Rome Mission	17-Nov-04
Dosch, Edmond William	France Paris Mission	6-Mar-05
Dosch, Pamela Lauretta	France Paris Mission	6-Mar-05
Dosch, Jordan	France Paris Mission	6-Dec-05
Hale, David	Washington Seattle Mission	6-Jan-06
Clapp, Scott Michael	Texas Fort Worth Mission	11-Oct-06
Dosch, Edmond William	Canada Montréal Mission	1-Sep-08
Dosch, Pamela Lauretta	Canada Montréal Mission	1-Sep-08

Avery, Joseph	Utah Salt Lake City East Mission	6-Jul-09
Vandygriff, Danny	Fiji Suva Mission	6-Jun-12
Hale, Kathy	Utah Ogden Mission	6-Sep-12
Clapp, Ryan Kimball	Nevada Reno Mission	15-Sep-10
Bryce, Lauren Ashley	Arizona Tucson Mission	12-Jan-11
Cook, Carrie Rena'	New Mexico Albuquerque Mission	19-Oct-11
Vandygriff, Connor Michael	Russia Vladivostok Mission	6-Jun-12
Burgin, Theodore Barrett	Utah Salt Lake City West Mission	16-Jan-13
Orick, Dillon Ray	California Fresno Mission	19-Jan-13
Cook, Wesley Adam	Nevada Reno Mission	16-Oct-13
Avery, Michael Fredrick	Idaho Boise Mission	12-Feb-14
Hamby, Drake James	Utah Logan Mission	26-Nov-14
Irvine, Sawyer Blue	Idaho Boise Mission	14-Jan-15
McKinney, Tylan	Peru Iquitos Mission	6-Nov-15
Vandygriff, Alexandra Maria	Philippines Baguio Mission	4-Mar-15
Hale, Adam Benjamin	Russia Moscow Mission	20-Apr-16
Morgenegg, Caris Aileen	Missouri Independence Mission	29-Aug-18
Cruze, Emma	Idaho Boise Mission	29-May-19
Bissette, Megan Rose	Utah Orem Mission	18-Oct-21
Gilday, Emily	California San Bernardino Mission	22-Nov-21
Williamson, Michael James	Bangkok Thailand Mission	30-Nov-21

Youth Activities

The West Hills youth participated in many stake and ward activities. Each year they enjoyed attending the Stake Youth Conferences, Scout Camp, and Girl's Camp, and the ward youth leaders spent hours planning and carrying out weekly activities with the youth, including scouting, activities, and service. For many years, the ward didn't have a lot of teenage youth, but they had some great youth – many of whom served faithful missions (as noted above) and many young men becoming Eagle Scouts and young women receiving their Young Womanhood Recognition awards as listed below.

One particularly successful YM activity was recalled “In His Own Words” by Bishop Cruze later in the history concerning an idea Todd Gilday had when he was the young men's president.

The West Hills Ward sponsored Boy Scout 556. Below is a listing of those young men who have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout based on the ward plaque which was confirmed by records from the local Boy Scout office.

Eagle Scouts from Troop 556

Ben Morgenegg – August 1985

Ron Purcell – January 1989

Ben Purcell – April 1994

Eric Hughes – August 1995

Conrad Deitrick – December 1996
Sean Deitrick – July 1999
Eric Puster – October 1999
Jeremy Nix – December 1998
Kase Clapp – September 2001
Brian Puster – February 2003
Travis Musgrave – February 2003
Nick Avery – August 2003
Jordan Dosch – January 2005
Brandon “Chip” Baggett – September 2004
Scott Clapp – August 2005
Joseph Avery – December 2006
Ryan Clapp – June 2007
Barrett Burgin – July 2011
Michael Avery – July 2011
Adam Hale – September 2015
Sawyer Irving – September 2015
Bradley Pehrson – September 2015
Michael Williamson – August 2019
Addison Grose – October 2019

The Young Women Personal Progress program was the equivalent to the scouting program for the young women and is the highest honor given in the Young Women organization. Listed below are the young women and the year they received the award while living in the West Hills Ward.

Young Womanhood Recognition Recipients

Alex Vandygriff – December 2009
Jessica Stoner – June 2011
Lauren Stoner – October 2013
Emma Cruze – January 2014
Caris Morgenegg – August 2016
Brooke Stillson – August 2016
Emily Asper – September 2016
Elsie Pickett – October 2016
Emma Vandygriff – November 2016
Elizabeth Moncur – February 2018
Bonnie Vandygriff – February 2018
Bethany McKinney – December 2019

Ward Activities

The West Hills ward had a variety of activities over the years. A ward Christmas party was held each December. This typically included a dinner, presentation of the Nativity by the Primary children, a visit

from Santa Claus, and singing of Christmas carols. For many years the High Priests Quorum (before it was combined with the Elders Quorum) held a special Christmas party that included an always-competitive white elephant gift exchange. Many years the ward got together at the West Hills Park on Memorial Day or Labor Day or both for dinner and fellowship. Ward members would bring side dishes and dessert while the Bishopric provided and prepared hamburgers and hotdogs. One year a Valentine's Day dance was held just for the adults in the ward. Each Easter the Primary would host an Easter Egg Hunt for the nursery and Primary age children. This would usually include games and food indoors while the eggs were hidden outside on the lawn. Children were split into different age groups to hunt different areas around the church. The Wednesday evening before Halloween each year meant the Trunk-or-Treat combined with the Knoxville 1st ward. Each year was a little bit different—some years a chili cook-off was included, sometimes there was an elaborate haunted house inside the church building, sometimes there were games and activities set up outside, and many years there was some type of voting on all of the creative costumes—but dressing up and walking around the sidewalk to collect candy from cars backed in with their trunks open was always the main event for the kids. Every summer the ward held a Father/Son campout at various locations. **Bishop Clapp related a special memory he had concerning the 2003 ward party “In His Own Words” and Bishop Cruze recalled a special ward Christmas activity “In His Own Words” later in the history.**

No significant ward activities were during 2020 due to COVID. But in 2021, the ward had several activities. Because of COVID, the ward focused on more outdoor activities in order to decrease the risk of gathering together. These activities are listed below with brief descriptions.

New West Hills Ward Popsicle Linger-Longer. Following the ward boundary changes, the West Hills Ward planned a popsicle linger-longer for members from the old Knoxville 1st and West Hills Wards to get to know one another. The weather was great, and we had a table of otter pops. Everyone gathered in the back of the church parking lot and talked. This was a great opportunity for the two separate wards to start merging into one new ward.

Ward Barbeques. Because of COVID, our ward decided to hold two barbeques throughout the summer at West Hills Park. Specifically, we held one around Memorial Day in May, and another around Pioneer Day in July. The ward bought burgers and hotdogs, and ward members all brought condiments and side dishes. We played games like volleyball, horseshoes, and corn hole. Several non-member friends and family attended. Everyone had a fantastic time, and it was a great chance to socially connect during a time when getting together was uncommon.

Father and Son Kampout! During the summer, Trevor Hobbs and some other Elders planned a campout for all men, young men, and boys in the ward. Dane and Erica Olsen hosted the event in their massive backyard. Dinner consisted of burgers and hotdogs, and everyone played lawn games until it got dark. After dark, everyone gathered around the campfire for stories and songs. Everyone had a fantastic time. In fact, it was such a success that the young women and girls in the ward wanted a special night for them, too.

Family Kampfire. After the men, young men, and boys had their Kampout, the young women and girls in the ward also wanted a special event. Instead of having an overnight campout, they hosted a late night campfire with the young women, girls, and one of their parents. Like the campout, everyone played

lawn games and then had a campfire. These events were so successful, the ward is planning on doing them annually.

Ward Linger-Longer. The Ward Council noticed that COVID has really impacted the ability for ward members to get to know one another after the changed ward boundaries. Bishop Gilday asked Karol Paz and Becky Howard (a recent convert) to plan a linger-longer for the ward. They did a great job and the ward spent time after the Sunday services to eat potluck dishes and chat. Once the pandemic finishes, the ward hopes to have more of these events to increase ward unity.

Trunk or Treat. The West Hills Ward had its annual Trunk or Treat with the Bearden Ward. The event was a lot of fun, and many ward members had fantastic costumes, including the parents. Karol and Ronald Paz were Zorro and Elena. Chris Wyman dressed up as Thor, the Beorchia family dressed up as characters from Lucca. Evan Bollers was the deadbeat Spiderman. This was a fun event for both parents and kids alike.

Turkey Bowl. The ward had its annual Turkey Bowl on Thanksgiving morning. It was well attended, and made for some great Elders Quorum bonding.

Relief Society Activity. The Relief Society started having occasional activities again toward the end of the 2021. Again, the women are excited for the pandemic to end so they can have more frequent activities in a safe environment.

Ward Christmas Party. The ward Christmas party was a huge success. So many ward members attended, and it was a great chance to see some who visit less regularly. Many recent converts and investigators also attended the party.

Ward Leadership

The Bishops and their counselors who served in the West Hills Ward since 1996 are listed below.

June 1992 – Max Lehman. Counselors Lee Adams, John Smith, Robert Tucker, Tom Clapp

Nov 1998 – Ben Morgenegg. Counselors Tom Clapp, CJ Branner, Ray Wolfe

Nov 2003 – Tom Clapp. Counselors Scott Cruze, Ray Wolfe

Oct 2008 – Scott Cruze. Counselors Ken Kenny, Luiz Leal, Jim Dunn

Jan 2014 – David Pickett. Counselors CJ Branner, Brock Stoner, Ryan Grose, Todd Gilday, Neil Moncur

Jan 2019 – Todd Gilday. Counselors Ryan Grose, Evan Bollers, Christopher Wyman

Several of the Bishops who have served in the West Hills Ward have provided comments concerning their memories of the ward during their time of service.

In His Own Words – Ben Morgenegg

It would be impossible for me to recall the many names and events of the West Hills Ward from 1998 to 2003 to include in this history. Not that I do not recall them, but rather they are so numerous and so sacred, personal and confidential. I can, however, share some reflections of my time as I served. At the risk of being too personal, the following are some of the thoughts and feelings that rest with me as I recall my tenure as Bishop.

I did not see the call as West Hills Ward Bishop coming. In the autumn of 1998 I received a call for Beth and I to meet with the Stake President, Russ Barber. I was one of two Elders Quorum Presidents at the time in the ward. Jim Dunn was president of the other Elders Quorum in the ward. Looking back, I see now how having two quorums was part of preparing for a division of the South Knoxville Branch from the West Hills Ward. Dan Gainer would later be called as the first President of the South Knox Branch. President Barber was about to be released as Stake President and Max Lehman would succeed him in a few weeks. When President Barber extended the call to me and Beth in his office, we just looked at each other and sort of laughed. I think we did not know what to think, so maybe it was a nervous laughter.

We had been married about 18 months and Beth's son Barrett was almost four years old. I was trying to figure out what I was going to do professionally to support my new family while experiencing the newness of being both a husband and father at the same time. We lived in married student housing while Beth was attending her Master's program in Speech Pathology. I was beginning a new career in the insurance business and was working hard to try to get that going. We were being blessed and were excited about the future. I had never served in a Bishopric before nor had I ever worked in a youth calling besides a short stint as an assistant Scoutmaster. I had been an Elders Quorum president three times. Despite my youth and inexperience, the Lord prepares each of us differently and takes us as we are and uses us when, how and where He needs us.

I felt quite overwhelmed and humbled as I began my service. I was 31 years old. Beth and I loved the Lord and had firm testimonies of the Savior and the Restoration of His gospel. I remember a phrase President Max Lehman spoke when he set me apart. He promised that I would 'prosper exceedingly'. I thought, 'Great! My insurance business is going to take off and I'm going to be wealthy.' Looking back over the last twenty five years, that blessing has been fulfilled, but not in the way I initially thought. Who I, and my family, have become through our service during those five years, through our relationships with ward members and through the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ I truly have prospered exceedingly.

I very much enjoyed my association with the many ward auxiliary leaders and with the Ward Council in general. Tom Clapp served as my counselor for four of my five years. Other counselors included CJ Branner and Ray Wolfe. Angelina Borden and Leilani Branner were two of my Relief Society Presidents. I recall one point as a Bishopric we asked President Lehman what we could do to increase missionary work in our ward. He said he had a suggestion, but did not know if we would be willing to do it. I assured him we would. He challenged us to have an additional fast each month as a Bishopric (and I think we extended that to the Ward Council) specifically for missionary efforts in our ward. We did so and each month that year we had a baptism.

As new Bishops will attest, those first few days, weeks and months are filled with a host of opportunities to assist members with a variety of challenges. I recall as a new Bishop—newly married myself—listening to couples share the struggles of their relationship and trying to keep their marriage together. I prayed, listened and did the best I knew how to do. I learned that the Lord's chosen, ordained leaders are led by the Lord. I learned that some of the best council ward members received was not from me, but from them. As I listened and tried to ask inspired questions, I witnessed the Lord speak to many and answer

their questions through the Holy Ghost. I also experienced the reality that it is the Lord who bears our burdens. Often, after listening to the heavy concerns, sins and problems of so many, I recall going home and not feeling the weight of the ward members' problems on my shoulders, but realizing it was the Savior who had taken them and who bears them for us all if we choose to lay them at His feet.

Prior to this call, I was most accustomed to working with the adults and Elders Quorum members. I came to find such joy in working with the youth. We held Bishop's Youth Discussions at the church and in my home. We met together, counseled with each other, played games and enjoyed all kinds of activities on Wednesday nights and at Youth Conferences. Beth and I were a 'Ma and Pa' for one of the 'families' as part of a Wilderness Youth Conference held at Big South Fork. For years after that we stayed in touch with many of our 'kids' and enjoyed watching them grow and have families of their own during the following years.

Two of our children were born while I was Bishop—Caris (1999) and Audrey (2002). They, with my oldest son, Barrett, enjoyed interaction with the youth. One weekend I took my oldest son with me on a Scout camp out with the rest of the young men. He was only about six at the time. While we were enjoying breakfast the next morning around the campfire, I repeatedly warned Barrett about standing too close to the propane heating element Steve McCormick—our gourmet outdoor chef—had burning next to his cooking equipment. It was not long before I turned to check on him and saw him standing yet again with his back against Steve's warm propane heating element, enjoying his pancakes while flames were licking the back of his shirt! In a panic I dashed toward him. Steve McCormick witnessed the emergency first and grabbed him, threw him on the ground and ground his back into the dirt, extinguishing the fire. Barrett never realized he was on fire. Perhaps there is a lesson here about how we as youth leaders are continually watching over our children and youth and trying to keep them safe, all while they are just trying to enjoy their lives.

Other memories include the tender and humbling challenge of working very closely with a dear brother who passed away due to cancer, leaving a wife and five young daughters. I have kept in touch with that family through the years. I recently mourned with them again, this time at their mother's funeral.

I used to jog in my neighborhood with a couple of the young men. These two brothers would jog to my house, meet me at my door in the early hours of the morning and we would run through our neighborhood. I fondly remember jogging and us talking about all kinds of things including life, what was on their minds, their successes and challenges. I still keep in touch with them today.

Another young man whom I will never forget, posed a particular challenge for all of us and young men leaders. He came from a tough, dysfunctional home, but he and his siblings would all either walk, get rides or ride their bikes to church meetings and activities every week, without their parents. The oldest boy had quite the temper and got in more than one skirmish with the other boys or leaders. I confess there were times I wish he would go away for a while, but just as I thought he'd never come back after each of his blow ups or fits, he would come back the next week, on his own, by choice. With time, somehow he gradually changed. As Stake President years later, he asked me to perform his civil marriage ceremony to a beautiful young lady who was a member of the Church. A few years after that, I

was honored to be invited to their temple sealing in the Nashville Temple. To this day he remains a faithful and loving husband and father and my testimony of the Lord's power to change lives is strengthened.

Other memories:

- Leaving my lawn mower in my half-mowed backyard to speed to a ward member's home who was having a suicidal crisis.
- Coming home from a long day of church service and meetings on a particular Saturday to find that Carol Avery had come to my home and mowed my yard
- Showing up to church late one Saturday evening to prepare for the next day's meetings. A ward member was parked in his car in the church parking lot. He got out of his car, walked to me and asked what I was doing there. I told him and he told me he had come to the church to rig a hose to his exhaust pipe to take his own life that night via carbon monoxide poisoning. We spoke for some time and he went home.
- Attending the Nashville Temple dedication in May 2000
- Interviewing many ward members and signing temple dedication recommends for the Palmyra Temple dedication broadcast April 6, 2000 as well as for the Nauvoo Temple dedication broadcast June 27, 2002
- The chapel filled with very sobered ward members, friends and neighbors as we joined to participate in a nationwide prayer meeting lead by President Hinckley in the days following the tragedy on September 11, 2001

When I was released by President Lehman in the fall of 2003, I felt the mantle of leadership pass from me. It was noticeable and sudden and not without some sadness. I did not feel the mantle immediately fall upon me when I was first called. It took several weeks—even months—before I began to feel remotely oriented. Early in my service one faithful brother came into my office and sat down. I think he could see in my face that I was overwhelmed and looking for advice. I may have even asked him what council he had for me. He said, 'Bishop, don't worry about what to do. Just love the people.' That stuck with me and guided me throughout my service. Ben Morgenegg

In His Own Words – Tom Clapp

In November 2003, I was called as Bishop of the West Hills Ward. I had previously served as a counselor to Bishop Lehman in 1995 with Brother John Smith and from 1999 – 2003 as a counselor to Bishop Morgenegg with CJ Branner and Ray Wolfe. I learned a lot from Bishop Lehman and Bishop Morgenegg. You never know how much the Bishop does until called from a counselor to the Bishop. Max and Ben, both taught me so much as they served as Bishop both outstanding brothers and priesthood leaders that led the WHW and set the example for many of us and I always felt it was a true blessing to serve with these brothers.

President Max Lehman called me in November of 2003, I remember my wife meeting me in the church hallway and telling me the Stake Executive Secretary called and President Lehman wanted to speak with me. That Sunday, he extended the call to me to serve as Bishop, I prayed about counselors and asked to

have Ray Wolfe and Scott Cruze serve with me. These two brothers and I formed a great love for one another and together we served the Lord and the members of the ward.

I had only been Bishop a few weeks when the ward Christmas party that was scheduled came about, to this day the only turkey-less and ham-less party. We were so busy getting things together we forgot to make assignments to have turkeys and ham cooked so it was an all-veggie Christmas party. I still remember Sister Morgeneegg telling me she was glad I was Bishop and not Ben on this evening and I was wishing Ben was the Bishop and not me. But the Ward was great, we made the best of it and there was turkey the years following.

I enjoyed working with the youth; Ray and Scott were great with the youth and we had a lot of fun with them. One of my favorite memories was when we did seminary breakfast. The last Friday of each month, the three of us would go early before seminary and fix breakfast for the students then sit and have breakfast with them and see what was going on in school and life, it helped build relationships. My favorite Friday was one that was a little messed up. Ray could not be there, so it was Scott and me. I started and after about 20 minutes Scott still had not arrived and that was very unusual, I called his house and he had forgotten so we did not have all the fix-ins to make breakfast. So, I had been doing pancakes and I asked him to stop at McDonalds and get 15 sausage biscuits and he did. When he arrived, we unwrapped the biscuits and put them on a tray like we had cooked them and set them out with the rest of the breakfast. The youth tore into them but it was Joseph Avery who made the whole day when he said to Scott and me, "Bishop you and Brother Cruze are getting pretty good at this, your sausage and biscuits taste just like McDonalds, good job". Scott and I just smiled at each other, and yes, I did fess up and tell Joseph they were from McDonalds, but I think Scott and I smile every time this comes up. The time we spent with the youth on those mornings eating with them I think helped form the relationships I needed when difficult times came up with them.

When Charles Dahlquist (from the general YM Presidency) came for a visit, he challenged all the Bishoprics to earn their Wood Badge for BSA, this was basically an adult Eagle. I was not a huge scouter, but I did support the boys, so Scott, Ray and I all went to Wood Badge, and we all completed it, it took us months to do so but I do think it put us more in tune with what the boys were doing.

I was always amazed with the sisters and how they worked in the ward. I had the privilege of serving with three sisters who served as my Relief Society President. Sisters' Leilani Branner, Tiffany Harding and Jenny Christian. These sisters were so amazing and what they did behind the scenes to help other sisters and members of the ward was nothing short of inspirational. So many times, they stepped in to help people.

One of the things I felt blessed to do besides working with the youth was working with those who were struggling. I remember many times on my way home from meeting with someone, crying to the Lord asking how to help them. Many times, I wonder how someone was going to make it only to have a front row seat in seeing how the Lord works through others to help someone.

I personally grew while I served as Bishop, I was there to help others, but the Lord helped me and my family as well during those five years. My dear wife was very supportive during this time, and I appreciate the love she and my boys gave me.

It was a very humbling experience being called and to serve as Bishop. It was a great blessing to serve the members of the West Hills Ward.

Warmest Regards, Tom

In His Own Words – Scott Cruze

I served as a counselor to Tom Clapp from 2003 to 2008 and was then called as the Bishop when he was released in October of 2008. Serving with Tom greatly influenced my time serving as the Bishop. I learned the value of consistency and pacing in our service. I also learned how important the youth were and to focus on them.

President Ben Morgenegg extended the call to me and in between that call and my sustaining I pondered the calling, my responsibilities, and asked the Lord frequently what He would have me do. I had two distinct impressions and one thought that resonated with me and which I felt were from the Lord. I felt impressed to be with the youth often. I also felt a great desire for our ward to be unified through righteous action. Finally, when pondering how I could best help those whom I had been called to serve, I had the thought "take an interest" come to mind and I knew that the Lord wanted me to care about others. Those three impressions became guiding principles for me over the next 5 years.

While Todd Gilday was the young men's president he had the idea to have a "Game Night" with the young men. At the time the only active young men in the ward were Ryan Clapp, Joe Avery, and Weixin Huang. The three of them decided that one Friday each month they would get together at the church and play video games, have a short spiritual thought, and invite other less-active or non-member young men to come. It became a huge success as it continued all 5 years of my calling. Eventually, on occasion, we would have 25-30 boys who would come. We would order pizza, play dodgeball and dark tag, make movies, and at times have deep and spiritual gospel discussions. Barrett Burgin, felt a strong desire to create unity within the young men of the ward and he spearheaded game night for years. I credit his influence for several young men going on missions and marrying in the temple.

Brother Gilday and Ryan Clapp decided to reach out to the Locklear family who had moved into the ward but were not active. It was a father with his teenage son and older daughter. Ryan and Will Locklear quickly became friends and he and his father eventually started coming back to church and becoming righteous and wonderful examples for the ward. Will ended up graduating from West High School, going on a mission to Italy, and then graduating from BYU. He has since married in the temple and he and his wife Jessica have a daughter and he is attending UT in their law program. All from a decision by Brother Gilday and Ryan Clapp to reach out and become friends with a less-active family.

I felt strongly that our Ward Council should meet together weekly instead of once a month as the Church had described in the handbook. There seemed to be more power when we would include the sisters from Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary to think collectively about how to do the Lord's work together. We often would set a ward goal for a certain time period and then would work together to achieve it. Some of the more memorable goals were:

- Each ward member, youth and adult, doing the temple work for one ancestor over a 6 month period.
- Providing 52 consecutive weeks of service for an orphanage in Sevierville and the Knoxville National Guard
- Choosing a special Sunday and asking each member to invite a friend for that Sunday

Often the goals were difficult for us to achieve and required great diligence by the Ward Council to remind the ward and keep everyone on the same page. But with the great focus came real blessing of unity, friendship, and spiritual focus that blessed all of us.

One particularly memorable experience was the 2013 Nativity that the ward put on for the community. The stake had asked us in prior years to consider hosting a Nativity and making it something that would allow those in our community to know us better. As a Ward Council, we decided to go "all in" and so we called a committee in the summer that year. Brock Stoner was the committee chair and a member from each auxiliary presidency was on the committee. Brock's vision was unparalleled as he laid out for all of us, "A Walk Through Bethlehem". For months, the ward worked together spending significant amounts of time creating costumes, constructing models of what Bethlehem would be like, finding and securing different animals. The final presentation was a two night only production in the West Hills building. Guests would start in the front lawn where shepherds surrounded by animals would tell groups about seeing the new star and angels announcing the Christ-child's birth. From there they would enter the south foyer and be transported to a Bethlehem merchant's city entrance and would proceed down the hallway where shop owners would loudly invite them to make purchases. As the group proceeded they would meet others who talked about seeing the Child and then proceed to the Relief Society room where a reverent scene depicted Mary and Joseph with baby Jesus. Dallin and Allison Alldredge, a younger couple, played the part well. Finally each group would end up in the gym that had been elaborately decorated with Christmas trees and all other kinds of decorations. Light refreshments were provided at standing rounds all about the gym and some local bands had been invited to play tasteful Christmas songs and some hymns in the background. Over 500 people came each night and it was truly a weekend never to be forgotten.

The Knoxville 1st Ward was formed in the first year of my tenure. A little over a third of our active members joined with the South Knox Branch to create the new ward. It was a hard experience for many who had come to love the West Hills Ward. Sterling Smith and Will Locklear, in particular, went to the Knox 1st Ward and were the only young men in the new ward. This was very difficult for them. We continued to have some combined activities but it was still hard for them to be isolated. Each one of them went on to serve missions, attend BYU, and marry in the temple. I have often thought that the adversity they each faced helped them to grow spiritually and eventually gain greater blessings than they might have had otherwise.

I had one experience that touched me and has stayed with me. I had been counseling with a particular brother over many sessions over the course of months. One particular Sunday we spent 3 hours after church trying to work through his worthiness issues. I would make suggestions for how something different he could try, or would ask him questions about why he was doing such and such. Eventually we both were feeling pretty frustrated and tired and so we agreed to adjourn for the time and meet another time. I felt so frustrated and on the way home was thinking to myself "what more can I do?" I got home feeling frustrated and went to my room to change but knelt down first to express to the Lord my feelings and frustrations. As I was reviewing with the Lord the things I had been doing and offering my thoughts, the clearest voice came into my mind saying, "you are not the healer." Instantly, I knew that I had been trying to "fix" this dear brother and friend and that it wasn't my role to heal him. My role was to point him to the Lord, the true healer. It was a sweet rebuke but made me grateful for true inspiration from the Lord in His work. Scott Cruze

In His Own Words – David Pickett

When I was called to be Bishop, Erin and I had 3 kids, Elise, Carson and Brielle at the time and I had just started working at 34 yrs old finally out of school starting a partnership 6 months prior. I had been studying to take my written boards in Oral and Maxillofacial surgery of which 70% at the time passed. I took them 2 weeks after I was set apart as Bishop. I passed my written boards and then took my oral boards 1 year later with a pass rate of 60%. I have often heard the phrase "this isn't the way my life is supposed to be"... I think people think that if life is hard then they are doing something wrong, "The destinies of all people are in the hands of a just God, and He will do no injustice to any one; and this one thing is sure, that they who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution [see 2 Timothy 3:12]; and before their robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb, it is to be expected, according to John the Revelator, they will pass through great tribulation [see Revelation 7:13–14]." While serving as Bishop Erin and I had 2 more children Andersen and Fischer.

There were a lot of changes that occurred while I was Bishop and so I thought I would make a list of things that happened in the Church during my 5 years.

- LDS tools. NEW No longer needed to print directories, reports, stats, maps etc.
- Library app with digital conferences and standard works
- Welfare went digital as well so didn't have to physically fill out forms get 3 signatures and then fax to the office.
- The Church discontinued their relationship with Boy Scouts of America due to the scouts moving away from the principles of the Church.
- At the ward level, one Melchizedek Priesthood quorum. Members of Elders Quorums and High Priests groups are now combined into one quorum with one presidency. The quorum is designated the "Elders Quorum," and ward High Priests groups are discontinued.
- At the stake level, one High Priests Quorum. The Stake Presidency continues to serve as the presidency of the High Priests quorum. Members of that quorum are only those High Priests currently serving in the Stake Presidency, in Bishoprics, on the High Council, and as functioning Patriarchs.

- Ministering replaces home teaching and visiting teaching. The separate programs of home teaching and visiting teaching are now a coordinated effort referred to as "ministering," overseen by the Elders Quorum and Relief Society presidencies under the direction of the Bishop.
- Including youth in ministering. Ministering may include Laurels and Mia Maids as companions to Relief Society sisters, and Priests and Teachers continue as companions to Melchizedek Priesthood holders.
- Ages changed from when quorums and classes for progression instead of their birthday it was at the beginning of the year.
- Ward Councils gained steam away from PEC
- Family search and agreements with Ancestry.com, findmypast, and MyHeritage free for members
- Seminary changed to qualify as a 4 year course to teach the gospel abroad complete with mid-year and final exams
- Electronic submission of applications to the First Presidency instead of written by mail
- Perpetual Education Fund and Temple Patron Assistance fund were fully funded.
- Children and Youth program changed
- Hymn and songbook revisions submitted
- Updated Preach My Gospel
- Internet improved in meeting houses
- YM missionaries were now able to submit mission papers and go on a mission at 18 years of age instead of 19 and YW at the age of 19 instead of 21.
- Young women (ages 12-18) with a limited-use temple recommend may assist with baptistry assignments currently performed by sister temple ordinance workers and volunteers.
- All Priests in the Aaronic Priesthood with a limited-use temple recommend may officiate in baptisms for the dead, including serving as the baptizer and as a witness. Bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost continues to be solely a Melchizedek Priesthood function.
- The Primary's Priesthood Preview meeting will be modified to include both 11-year-old boys and girls and will be called the Temple and Priesthood Preparation meeting.
- A new Young Women Camp Guide was released.
- Elders Quorum presidents and Relief Society presidents were taking on a lot more responsibilities away from the Bishop.
- Come, Follow Me for individual and families, Primary, and Sunday School, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society
- Saints a new book series released by the Church History Department
- Paying tithing went digital and online no longer needing tithing slips
- Adjustments to missionaries' schedules
- Changes to temple and family history consultants callings
- All letters to leaders are now electronic and not sent by mail through the postal service.
- If a member goes to the temple and forgets their temple recommend Bishops are no longer contacted rather the temple can look it up.
- Technology to assist members who are hearing impaired
- Online Missionary recommendation system
- Updated guides and procedures to Seminary and Institute graduation

- Issuing limited-use temple recommends online.
- Updated missionary dress and grooming guidelines, ie more colorful clothes
- Leaders are now able to email a group of members in multiple categories
- Young Women camp certification changes
- Members have access to their online donation history
- Multiple online initiatives, ie Light the World and Because He Lives
- New Self-Reliance initiate and study manuals and groups
- General Women's Meetings age 8 and up will be held the Saturday prior to Conference
- More broadcasts of face to face were started.

I can't believe how many things have happened in the short 5 years I was Bishop.

I had multiple of counselors and started with CJ Branner as 1st Counselor and Brock Stoner as 2nd Counselor. Brock was a Bishop in a prior ward and really helped me in keeping and maintaining the ward as one that looks to the Savior. He served for 1.5 yrs. Brock recently passed. I then had Ryan Grose as 1st Counselor and Todd Gilday as 2nd Counselor for a period of 3 yrs and then Neil Moncur more replaced Brother Gilday as he was called to High Council prior to being called as the next Bishop.

My focus was the youth. From camps to trips to game nights to bishop discussions. In fact we watched the first face-to-face with youth in our home. The youth grew from 4 Priests to no Priest to 7 Priests when I was released all of which served missions and so far 4 are sealed in the temple. Young women did well also with nights of knitting that were anything but knitting! Several of them are sealed as well. Game nights were prevalent and we had 2 youth Book of Mormon read-throughs in 3 days organized by our youth and supported by adults.

I was able to participate in multiple funerals where messages of the great Plan of Salvation were shared. I had the opportunity to perform 6 marriages and three of the couples I married are still very active in the Church.

I was fortunate enough to be involved with a lot of missionaries and baptisms while Bishop. West Hills always seemed to get the best Elders and Sisters! And while every convert baptism as well as member baptism was special, one in particular touched my heart. Josh and Erica Fraser were a family that the missionaries found and Erica started to attend church on Sundays. In meeting with Josh he wanted her to find her own testimony independent of his but his testimony was very present. Every week they came to church with their kids, Ever and Liam. There was a high level of participation and members in the ward really connected with their family (it wasn't hard). It was an incredible opportunity to watch the Holy Ghost teach and help direct in their lives and the obstacles be overcome. Prior to baptism, I was able to interview Erica and it is one of the few times that I had a distinct impression that she would be a great leader in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and would be called as Relief Society President one day as she would learn line upon line precept upon precept. Josh baptized her and was able to confirm her as well as his other kids, Ever and Liam. She started off in the YW presidency and then YW president. Each time learning and growing. Erica is now serving as RS president. The vision and direction of that revelation was so clear with the Frasers that it was a testimony builder to me that our

Heavenly Father really does know us all and loves us. I also had the privilege of going to the temple when Erica received her endowment and when Josh and Erica were sealed to each other and their children for time and all eternity 1 year after their baptism.

Watching and helping ward members make and keep covenants is one of the greatest blessings one can have being a Bishop as well as one of the greatest sources of sadness and despair. How humbling it is to have ward members trust you to represent Jesus Christ as they come to you with things in their life they are trying to change. How marvelous the Plan of Happiness that allows us the freedom of choice to follow and serve our Savior Jesus Christ. What responsibility is held by the great Bishops of the Church in watching over and helping the youth find their own testimonies. While I never would have chosen to be Bishop, I learned so much and I feel through service our family was brought closer together. I have a testimony that revelation is strong and continuing and I am so excited for the Saints in Knoxville TN of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. David Pickett

In His Own Words – Todd Gilday

I was set apart to be Bishop of the West Hills Ward 12/30/2018. I remember it because the next week was the first time we implemented 2 hour church meetings. For the majority of people that change was wonderful, less church, but for Bishops I feel it was not as helpful. It only gives you 1 hour to meet with people and talk with them. Most people do not want to stay after church too long to wait on the Bishop. That was the first big change while I was in the calling.

I feel like the ward had a really good 2019. Unity and brotherhood were very high and I felt the ward was doing really well. Our Sacrament meeting attendance was as high as I had ever remembered it. We had between 215 and 245 each week. We had a lot of great ward activities and I felt our ward leadership was doing amazing things. As it always seems to happen, when things get going too well something always changes.

The next year was 2020 and COVID happened. In March everything shut down completely. Temples closed, church meetings cancelled. Everything came to a halt. COVID was tough on everyone, but particularly on Bishops. It was difficult to keep track of the flock when no one came to church. After a few months of no meetings, we started broadcasting fireside type messages that people could watch on zoom. We would invite a few people to go to the church and we would broadcast a message to the ward members watching on zoom. I would try to keep the numbers as low as possible, so we would typically have about eight people or so for the entire broadcast. I really felt this helped reunite our members and helped everyone feel like a ward again. All we could do is hope everyone had a home church experience that help them grow closer to Christ.

As leaders we would call and check in on people, but it was particularly difficult to know exactly how people were coping with our new normal. The youth and the singles seemed to struggle the most not being at church. After months of this we finally got permission, in about the middle of July, to start meeting again for just Sacrament meeting. We had about 40 people the first week if I remember right. The majority of those that braved the infection and came to church were the people who didn't have

family close. We tried to be as safe as possible in our meetings. We had meetings in person but also broadcast our meetings for those not attending in person.

Each week we got a few more people. We kept going like this for a while. Every now and then we would have a spike in cases and we would cancel meetings, but for the most part we were successful in our efforts. We started out with just Sacramento meeting, then added back in the second hour.

In May of 2021 the next big event happened. Our ward was split. The stake took half our ward and created a new Bearden Ward and the other half was joined with the Knoxville 1st Ward to create the new West Hills Ward. This was a huge challenge for many including myself as our previous ward was a very tight knit unit. Our youth program before the split was very large. We had about 50 active young men and young women. Our new ward had about 13, with many not active. We started with 2 Deacons, 0 Teachers and 3 Priests consistently attending the YM program.

Reestablishing our leadership and getting everyone a calling was pretty tough. I didn't know more than half my new ward. Brother Chris Wyman was called as a new counselor in my Bishopric and he was from the old Knoxville 1st Ward so he was able to help. It took a bit of time but we got it all put back together.

It was tough at first, but we did many ward activities. This was a great way to meet new people. We had several BBQs at the park, camp outs and campfire programs, to name a few, throughout the year. I feel like this really helped unite us. I really think this past year has allowed us to be united and to be a ward and not two different groups. It was hard, but I have seen the Lords hand in bringing us together.

I have only been in my calling for 3 years so I feel like I have at least a few more. I have no idea what the Lord has in store for this ward, but I trust in Him and know we will continue to thrive. I look forward to the future.

Bishop Todd Gilday

Bearden Ward

On May 2, 2021, the Bearden Ward was formed. It included a part of the old West Hills Ward and a small part of the Pellissippi Ward. Brent Dial was called to be the Bishop of the new ward with Ryan Grose and Seth Alling as his counselors. The following summarizes the key events of the new ward from its inception in May to the end of 2021.

Growth and New Members

At the time the ward was formed, there were approximately 327 members on the new ward's rolls, but only 3 members with callings: Bishop Brent Dial, 1st counselor Ryan Grose, and 2nd counselor Seth Alling. Besides the Bishopric, the first Ward Council was comprised of:

Executive Secretary: Dan Crossen

Ward Clerk: Jason Richards

EQ President: Ben Morgeneegg

RS President: Karen Gruszkiewicz

YW President: Kristina Jorgensen

Primary President: Annie Sickles

Young Men's Secretary: Kyle Taggart

Sunday School President: Jeff Beeler

Ward Mission Leader: Cameron Walker

Assigned High Councilor: Leon Ebbert

On July 11th - The ward reached 100 members called and sustained to callings.

While the ward didn't have any convert baptisms in 2021, we did have three youth baptisms. On May 30th - Blayke Theobald (age 8) was baptized as the newest member of the Bearden Ward. Then on August 7th - Hodges Councill (age 8) was baptized. On the morning of his baptism, the hot water was not working, so while the Spirit warmed the room, the water in the font was cold for Hodges and his dad, Clay Councill, who performed the baptism. Finally, on December 12, McCann Walker (age 8) was baptized.

Missionary Service

Missionaries who are serving from the Bearden Ward (Ben and Caden left from the West Hills Ward) are listed below.

Names, Missions, and Start Dates for Missionaries from the Bearden Ward

Cruze, Benjamin Grover	Arkansas Bentonville Mission	9-Sep-20
Yeager, Caden Christopher	Oregon Eugene Mission	3-Mar-21
Grose, Alan Addison	Alpine German Speaking Mission	12-Jul-21
Morgeneegg, Audrey R	Arizona Tucson Mission	9-Aug 21
Asper, Emily	Nevada Las Vegas Mission	6-Sep-21

On June 27th, the ward welcomed Ca de Neuberger who just returned from the Spain Barcelona Mission and gave his mission report in Sacrament meeting . He left on his mission from the Birmingham Alabama Stake and his family was only in the ward a short time before they moved to the Loudon Ward. The ward then enjoyed hearing three missionaries give their farewell mission talks before they left of their missions - July 11th, Addison Grose, August 8th – Audrey Morgenegg, and August 29th - Emily Asper.

Youth Activities

After the ward was established in May, the youth participated in the following activities:

- On June 3-5 - The Young Women organized a Book of Mormon read-a-thon in which they read the entire Book of Mormon in 3 days in preparation for Moroni’s Quest Youth Conference.
- On June 7-10 - The Bearden Deacons and Teachers participated in a camp at the Hiwassee Ocoee State Park. It was a very wet camp and many were unable to stay dry for long. The young men were resilient and persevered with good attitudes. The camp activities were geared toward teamwork and it was great to see many young men come together to help and encourage each other.
- On June 17 -19 - The Bearden Ward Youth attended Stake Youth Conference. On June 23 - 26 - The Bearden Priests attended Camp Helaman.
- On July 11 - 16 – The Bearden YW attended Girl’s Camp.
- On August 21st - 1st Youth Temple Trip to Nashville Temple.

Ward Activities

On June 24th - The first Relief Society activity was held with the theme, “We would love to get to know you s’more”. The sisters played a get-to-know-you game and then roasted marshmallows in terracotta pots filled with charcoal to make s’mores. It was a pleasant summer evening and the sisters enjoyed sitting outside and visiting with each other. This was followed on June 26th with the first Elders Quorum activity with the theme “Wing Fest”.

On July 24th - The ward held a Pioneer Day celebration (1st ward get together). We had a good time doing the Virginia Reel in the cultural hall, and had great participation. Erin Pickett did a great job teaching us how to do it, and leading us along. We ate delicious BBQ and Brother Jim Dunn shared a few pioneer stories. All those who wanted brought their bikes, trikes, skates, and wagons to decorate with streamers, and we finished the party with a Pioneer Day parade around the building. Brother Jeff Beeler made and donated a handcart that the children pushed and pulled around too. We looked official! It was a typical hot evening in July, but a good time was had and lasting friendships were started.

On December 11th - The ward had a Christmas party lunch. They had a great meal, a table set up to write cards to the missionaries serving from our ward, a visit from Santa Claus, the Primary kids sang some Christmas carols, and lots of time was spent socializing among the ward members.

Ward Leadership

As noted above, Brent Dial was called to be the first Bishop of the Bearden Ward, with Ryan Grose and Seth Alling as his counselors. Brother Grose had served in the Bishopric of the West Hills Ward before the formation of the Bearden Ward and was more familiar with the membership of the new Bearden Ward which was very helpful to Bishop Dial as they organized the new ward from scratch. Bishop Dial shared his feelings as the new Bishop below.

In His Own Words – Brent Dial

When my family was extended this opportunity, to be in the Bearden Ward and serve as Bishop, we felt completely overwhelmed but prepared. I personally felt heavy, but not in a bad way. I knew the Lord had prepared me and was preparing me to serve in this calling. I knew that I could do all things in Christ! And I knew I needed to rely on my counselors and their wives' experiences, advice and guidance. In the first couple of weeks, the Bishopric saw many tender mercies of the Lord and miracles. The amazing members of our new ward were inspired to carryout duties and responsibilities without being asked (which weren't on the Bishopric's radar). The first few Sundays wouldn't have been possible without the members' service to the ward in various capacities. And youth mid-week activities wouldn't have been possible without the West Hills Ward graciously offering to lead until we were organized. We truly saw the Lord's hand at work even during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and challenges that are inherent to creating a new ward.

Brent Dial