

## Chapter 1 - The Establishment of the Princeton Ward

The Princeton Branch was again formed<sup>2</sup> on July 28, 1963 as a division of the New Brunswick Ward. The first Branch President was Arthur Barlow. On August 22, 1965 Stake President George H. Mortimer discussed the proposal that Princeton become an independent branch and the 57 members present voted unanimously to accept the proposal. The branch became an independent branch on September 6, 1965 and was at this time responsible for financing and administering its own budget.

The branch first met in the Princeton YMCA. While there they purchased a piece of property on Mercer Street in Princeton for a new chapel, but not without some difficulty. This was a residential area and a special permit was required to build on this lot. There was also some strong opposition from neighbors. The Princeton Township Board of Adjustment deferred action, but it was determined a colonial type design would be required for the church house to be constructed. On Dec 16, 1965 a scale model of the building was presented to the board and the request to build was approved provided no further objections were made within 60 days of the publication of the hearing. The purchase was finalized on February 28, 1966. However, on June 16, 1968, a report was received that the site was in a floodplain and a variance would be required to fill the lot with earth. Continued opposition from neighbors and restrictions on filling and grading the land posed serious problems so the branch voted affirmatively and unanimously on a proposal to sell the Mercer building site.

On July 6, 1968 the branch stopped meeting at the YMCA and met for the first time at the Rosedale Presbyterian Chapel on 193 Carter RD, Princeton, NJ. The chapel was very satisfactory to the needs of the members. Members were permitted to use the building as long as it did not interfere with the Presbyterian worship service. To manage this they arranged an unconventional meeting schedule as seen below:

PRINCETON WARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Priesthood	7:45 a.m.	Sundays
Relief Society	7:45 a.m.	Sundays
Sunday School	9:00 a.m.	Sundays
Fast and Testimony	3:30 p.m.	1st Sunday
Sacrament	5:00 p.m.	Sundays
Choir Practice	6:30 p.m.	Sundays
Seminary	6:00 a.m.	School Days
Primary	4:45 p.m.	Tuesdays
M. I. A.	7:30 p.m.	Wednesdays
Relief Society	10:00 a.m.	Thursdays
Visiting Teachers	9:30 a.m.	1st Thursday
Family Home Evening		Thursdays

On October 27, 1968 at the New Jersey Central Stake Conference, Stake President Robert H. Daines proposed that the status of the Princeton Branch be changed to a Ward. The proposal was sustained by unanimous vote of the members of the Princeton Branch. Members of the Branch presidency were released and reappointed to the Ward Bishopric that day. The new Ward officers were Bishop Bruce Clifton Crowther, 1st Counselor Robert Milton Nicholas, 2nd Counselor Jay Frederick Bodine and Ward Clerk Lloyd Barker Macurdy.

The Ward met in the Rosedale chapel until it was sold (it is currently named the Carter Road Bible Chapel) and the final meeting was on Jan 14, 1973. Church meetings were then held at the Monmouth Junction Elementary School. The primary was the first organization to meet there on Jan 16, 1973. It was recorded that "In spite of the new environment, the children displayed a most reverent attitude." On January 17 the MIA held their 1st meeting at the Monmouth Junction

<sup>1</sup> Edited and Compiled by Kevin Moffitt with special thanks to Ronny Lee, Malissa Arnold, Paul Cuff, Thomas Draper, Irene Thompson, and Dierdra Meagher. The history was drawn in large part from the narratives provided by those listed above and records found in the clerk's office including newsletters, Bishopric messages, Sunday programs, sustaining lists, minutes of meetings, and talks from the chapel dedication in 1978. Those records run from about 1963-1986, though the records from the eighties are much sparser. After that time period it is the oral histories of current members of the ward that formed that basis of material for this document. Throughout this document many of these sources are paraphrased and quoted without further reference.

<sup>2</sup> In 1933, the members living in the Princeton area would have attended the newly organized New Brunswick Branch with Henry Eyring as Branch President and Robert H. Daines as First Counselor. On December 27, 1942 the New Brunswick Branch was split four ways because an acute gasoline shortage and the Princeton Branch was created. On June 4, 1944 the four branches were reunited as the Metuchen Branch and the Princeton Branch was dissolved.

Elementary School and the boys were especially glad to see a gym. The acoustics here were bad enough and the folding chairs were hard enough that the members were continually reminded of the need for a chapel of their own.

Members engaged in many activities to raise money for a new building which increased "friendship and brotherly love" among them because of the "duress of the required labor". In fact, since the organization of the branch, the members continuously planned and worked for the construction of their own building. The fundraising activities for the building project ranged in difficulty and diversity. Landscaping projects were a big part of the early efforts to raise funds. On May 6, 1966 priesthood members laid 14,000 square feet of sod at Queensgate Apartments in about six inches of mud. On October 8 of that same year at Morvin Village in Trenton, church members rolled out about 300,000 square feet of sod, renovated 15,000 square feet of ground, spread 4.5 tons of lime and 3 tons of fertilizer, and planted 300 trees. The estimated net profit was \$900 and the project was completed over several weekends. On November 19, 1967 a plan was proposed for church members to work with Princeton Turf Farms (the employer of Branch President Johnson) to lay approximately 400,000 square feet of sod per season. The branch would earn 4 cents per square foot which is more than they had been making on other sod projects.

Another project was completed with the Deseret Club of Princeton University which was selling reprints of the book "Joseph Smith the Prophet-Teacher" by B.H. Roberts for \$5 each to go toward the funding of the chapel. Sears Catalog deliveries also earned some money. One branch clerk noted on August 11, 1968: "During the past week approximately 2000 Sears catalogs were delivered for a total of about \$200. In the future we will select only the more densely populated areas for delivery."

Several members could not contribute time toward the weekend and evening fundraising projects for one reason or another. They were afforded other opportunities. Brother Ronny Lee recounts one such opportunity: "On Sunday, February 15, 1970, Bishop McBride, along with seven other ward members, each gave my father \$25.00 and he was told to use his 'talents' to multiply it for the building fund. My parents farmed and were too busy to help with many of the sod jobs, so from that time forward at Thanksgiving they would donate turkeys to the Ward which would be purchased by the members, and all the money would go toward the Princeton building fund.

In 1971 there were several food fund-raising events. January 7 there was a dinner at Dayton Grange Hall which netted a \$250 profit. On March 12 the MIA sponsored a steak dinner and netted \$200. There was a garage and bake sale in the backyard of W. Graham Snyder on May 22 for a \$223 profit. On September 18, a package brunch raised \$175.

The Easter egg project enlisted the entire ward's efforts. As the Easter holiday approached, the youth became sugar egg makers. At their homes, the youth would dampen sugar with water, mix it with food coloring, and press it into a 1/2 size plastic egg molds. The Relief Society would decorate the eggs with a sugar icing and then everyone would fill the eggs with some Easter grass and jelly beans. They were individually wrapped and sold for 60 cents each. Most of them were sold door to door by the Ward youth. This project occurred over multiple years. In one Easter season the Ward sold over 2000 eggs for revenue of over \$1200.

While the Ward was busily raising funds for its own building, it contributed thousands of dollars to the Washington D.C. Temple, the Temple's visitor's center, and the East Brunswick Stake Center.

Sometime before 1975, the church acquired the 630 Alexander Road lot for the construction of the Princeton chapel. Though not documented well, it is reported that Brother Fred Schluter was largely responsible for the acquisition of this property. On November 15, 1975 the long awaited ground breaking ceremony for the new chapel was held. There was a large turn out by past and current ward members. It was a sunny, colder than average day and the opening song was Come, Come Ye Saints. Bishop Gordon W. Romney gave a talk and dedicated the grounds. Everyone got a chance to throw a shovel or two of dirt.

On December 20, the ward held its first building work party. They set up a temporary power system for the contractor and cut up all the trees that had to be cut down for construction. A load of firewood went home with all those who showed up to work. The members thoroughly enjoyed finally getting to work on their long awaited chapel. The electrician and the plumber were ward members and advisors in the Young Men's program. The young men of the Ward spent many

Saturdays and weekday evenings helping them with the plumbing and wiring, and as construction came to an end, anyone who could stay within the lines was invited to paint

It took 15 years of sacrifice and determination by the members of the Princeton Branch and Princeton Ward before their chapel could be built and dedicated. Sister Sari Gruber reflected on this in her talk at the building dedication: "During our building project there was a very special feeling here in the Princeton Ward...one of unity, primarily because a certain insecurity comes with having no building in which to call our own...It did draw us closer, and we did depend on each other more for strength...Now I do not view all these projects and these circumstances as having taken too heavy a toll on the sisters of this ward. Rather they affected our happiness positively and even our health. These were opportunities for growth, for becoming the close friend of a sister as we worked side by side and with having the opportunity for us younger gals at the time to work with some of the ward's more mature and wiser women, and a chance for advice on home management, child rearing, and coping with our very nomadic existence."

The Princeton chapel was dedicated on November 21, 1978 by Elder Ezra Taft Benson, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The closing hymn was "The Spirit of God like a Fire is Burning" by W.W. Phelps, a New Jersey native.

## **Chapter 2 - Works of the Princeton 1<sup>st</sup> Ward**

The Princeton Ward long held an earned reputation of friendliness. Similar to today, most ward members were transplants from other parts of the US and knew first-hand the importance of welcoming and fellowshiping newcomers. Around Thanksgiving of 1969, a member of the church visiting from the west coast made essentially the following comment, "My, this is a fine Ward. The wonderful spirit of all the members can be felt and the friendliness is overwhelming." Bishop Leon McBride related that he met with Bishop Crowther before moving to the Princeton Ward. Bishop Crowther said, "You'll find that Princeton is the friendliest Ward in the Stake." Bishop McBride wrote, "Although I felt his statement was not without prejudice, I now know that the Princeton Ward members are as friendly and united as any in the entire Church." This friendliness appears to persist to this very day.

In 1989 the Princeton Ward was split into the Princeton 1<sup>st</sup> Ward and Princeton 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward. The following accounts<sup>3</sup> are from current members of the Princeton 1<sup>st</sup> Ward. Each narrative describes the acts of love of many ward members who in large part remain anonymous.

The first account is from a history of the Princeton 1<sup>st</sup> Ward written by Sister Malissa Arnold. She has been a member of the Ward since October 29, 1997.

*Sister Arnold:* I think some of the most influential times in this ward have been when we have pulled together in fasting, prayer and services. Very early in our time here, the Ward fasted for the B family as they had a 12 year-old son who was diagnosed with cancer. I remember going to CHOP in Philadelphia to play games with him and watch movies- anything to help him while he was undergoing the long treatments. He had not been baptized, but as the prognosis became dire, he began seeing the missionaries and had a private baptism. He passed away about two weeks later. It was a crushing blow to his faithful mother, and a huge sadness to all of us involved with their family.

Since that first fast that I was a part of, we have had many memorable moments where we have pulled together as a ward family. CK was diagnosed in utero to only have half a heart, and it was unknown if she would survive birth, and what would follow. As the first daughter after two boys of two wonderful parents, there were months of tears, prayer, fasting and support while we waited for this beautiful little girl to be born. She survived birth and had surgery right away, followed by several more procedures. She sometimes seemed delicate and had blue lips due to poor circulation, but she kept growing and improving. I later got to be her nursery leader where she was one of 5 girls all born within a 6 month period to many of our young married friends! They moved back to Utah where her father is a professor at BYU and her mother is an executive with Nu Skin and she is 16 years old! What a blessing it was to fast and serve their family and see her grow up!

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<sup>3</sup> Accounts have been edited for length, very minimally for clarity, and sometimes for anonymity.

September 11<sup>th</sup> left most of us reeling...Our church participated in the first day of remembrance on September 13th, and I remember how we gathered at the church building in prayer. Since we lived so close to the city, it was so very real to us, and when we would visit the site, it seemed like a movie set- so unreal. I remember that we had a few emergency workers in our ward that assisted with the wounded.

NW had problems with her heart and it was very serious. She was in and out of the hospital for several months, and eventually required open heart surgery and replacement of one of her valves with a mechanical one. It was a very stressful time for her family, and we were very scared about her health. We had a ward fast, and even a blood drive to assist with her great surgical needs. A few years ago, I got to walk the 5K with her and she was very proud that her health had improved enough to complete it. I love her quick smile, her sweetness and gentleness, and I have so much respect for her and her family. And, if you listen close enough, you can hear the faint clicks of her amazing mechanical valve!!

In 2005, President Hinckley challenged the world to read the Book of Mormon in just 3 months to finish the year. Our ward rose to the challenge and encouraged each other, and challenged each other. That 3 months was truly a stressful time in my family, but that challenge, and feasting on the Book of Mormon as a worldwide and local church gave us an underlying sense of peace and balance. When the time was over, we had a “linger longer” and testimony meeting and all shared our experiences. This is something that I hold dear to my heart.

MJT was a single woman in our ward who was a pillar, landmark and just all around amazing woman. She had grown up in an abusive home and was told how worthless she was as she was growing up. While these feelings haunted and taunted her all her life, it could not be a more inappropriate statement- she knew a little bit about everything, she loved more people in every walk of life than I have ever known, and her talents, humor, wit, sarcasm and creativity knew no bounds. She had been a teacher for 40+ years and had influenced generation after generation of children who loved her and she loved them. In 2006-ish, MJT got several of her vertebrae rebuilt, and we often joked at what was holding her together, and that she was made of tinker toys! While we joked, her situation was very serious, and had medical professionals state that her head could literally no longer be supported by her neck. We prayed and served her at this time and kept her spirits up and her doctor's visits up to date. On October of 2008, after many tests, it was found that MJT had an aggressive cancer that started in her abdomen. In December of 2008, a big group of us celebrated her birthday, and it grew somber as she felt it would be her last. Because MJT was anxious about staying home alone in her large house, a group of us began rotating “sleep overs” and would watch the baseball game, news or night show together, and then sleep on couches and guest beds to keep her company. She grew progressively worse, and our service efforts and prayers increased. She had a house she had lived in for decades and so many things to sort through, and LM, DC, WRP, BS, JK, the Ws, and myself and SEVERAL more people who loved her began the efforts to make the end of her life more comfortable. Her longtime friend and registered Hospice Nurse, JM (at that time she was in 2<sup>nd</sup> ward) set up a hospice rotation with around the clock help and a morphine drip. She died peacefully with JM with her. Three days after she died, (temple) President Carter begged us to do her temple work quickly as he felt strongly impressed that she needed the blessings of being sealed to her family. Knowing her family history of abuse and the spiritual, emotional, mental and even physical scars her family left on her, we were so hesitant to seal her to them. On the way to the temple, we all discussed our fears and hesitations, but also expressed our testimony of the temple and that President Carter knew what he was doing. As we met in the sealing room, there was a nervous excitement about the ordinance that was to be performed. As the blessings started to seal MJT to her parents, all of us were washed with a huge wave of love, and an overwhelming feeling that our earthly understanding of forgiveness, love, and family was very, very limited and that we were doing the right thing. We felt confirmation of her love, and her joy and how healed her heart was, even though she had only passed from this earth a short time ago. I will never regret the time I spent with my ward members serving her as she left this life. Our ward was unified in the joy of her life and sadness of her passing.

I am so thankful for the friendships forged in this ward through shared joys and heartaches. I love that we can live the gospel and unify to pray, fast and serve those in need, and carve out a community here even though we are very much in the minority in our area. I can truly say that this is the best ward anyone could ever be a part of. My mother calls it the Celestial ward and loves to visit. I love the new young families and the new people we meet. Our bonds are strong as a small congregation in the least Mormon populated state (per capita) in the US! These bonds extend to wherever people relocate after they leave here, and every year, there is a Princeton Reunion held in Utah for former members of the ward.

We have had testimonies grown and shaped here, and unified with our brothers and sisters in the gospel through several trials and occasions. (*End of Account*).

The second account was written by Brother Paul Cuff. He was asked to tell of the recent experiences of Hurricane Irene and Sandy, both of which afforded many service opportunities.

*Brother Cuff* - We moved here from California in 2009 and had no idea that hurricanes affected New Jersey. On Sunday, August 28, 2011, Hurricane Irene made landfall in New Jersey. It was the sixth most costly hurricanes in the United States (now seventh because of Sandy a year later). To my surprise, our immediate neighborhood in Lawrenceville didn't receive much damage. We didn't lose power. But as happens in any storm in this area, many trees fell, knocking out power lines, so power was out just a few blocks away. Some families in the ward had flooded basements. The church building suffered some water damage in the primary room. These issues were dealt with right away, but a large service effort really kicked in to full force over a week later.

From an email the day after the hurricane, I found this: "It passed through here at 7am, and I was still sleeping. We had a bunch of rain on Saturday. The wind wasn't too bad. We could hear it at night, and it was actually quite strong after the hurricane passed through (no more rain though). We didn't lose power or anything, but power is out about a mile from us."

About a week and a half after the hurricane we heard about a "massive clean up effort" that the stake would be part of. Immediately, everything kicked into gear. We sent dozens of volunteers to help all day Saturdays and some Sundays, mostly clearing out basements that had been flooded and damaged (including drywall removal). Some people organized babysitting, and others put on gloves, got tools and went to work. The locations were mostly up north. The first locations were Lincoln Park and Little Falls, NJ. One Sunday, September 18, church was canceled. Instead, a brief sacrament meeting was held with Princeton 2nd Ward at 8am, following which all able volunteers went to work on the clean-up effort until about 4pm. The following Saturday we responded to some similar help requests within our ward boundary. This service effort went on for several weeks.

About a year after hurricane Irene, we were hit by Superstorm Sandy. This hurricane caused the second most damage in US history (second to Katrina) and is the largest diameter Atlantic hurricane on record. Although all of the eastern states were affected, most of the damage came to New Jersey and New York. This storm hit New Jersey on Monday, October 29, 2012. Ironically, it had been downgraded to a tropical storm shortly before strengthening again to a hurricane just before striking New Jersey. I naively thought it was not going to be much of a problem. In the end, we lost power for about a day, as did many in our area (some for nearly a week), but the members of our ward were spared any additional damage to homes. The church building lost power, and church was almost canceled the following Sunday as a consequence, but power was restored in time for normal meeting. A nor'easter storm dropped snow on the area about a week after Sandy, causing problems for those without power.

For our service response to the Sandy cleanup, the church deployed an elaborate Damage Reporting System. As the ward clerk, I was one of the people in our ward who had access to a website where I could review any service requests in the area. There was a phone number, unrelated to the church, that individuals could use to request help. This was a government number, but the information was made available to us to administer service. I remember hearing that the government was impressed with our ability and organization to bring volunteers together and, therefore, quickly tapped into the church as a resource.

Our ward was encouraged by the stake to address needs without our ward boundaries. This took place every Saturday for the next five weeks. My recollection is mostly of cutting and removing fallen trees from yards. I participated in some projects only about two miles from my home. It was a pleasant way to meet members of our community, who were so grateful for the help. Since we had more volunteers than were needed for these local projects, many others went to the coast to clean up flood damage, similar to the clean-up effort for Irene. (*End of Account*).

The Draper family very recently moved from the Princeton 1<sup>st</sup> Ward. The following history is composed of emails written by Tom and Susan. Susan recently experienced sudden liver failure and required a liver transplant. The emails included in this history pick up after Susan had been transferred to the Cornell hospital in New York to treat Auto-immune hepatitis

and her health was deteriorating rapidly. Family members and ward members were doing all they could to help. About this account the Draper family wrote: "It is a little scary to share personal details, but if anything in this account can help someone else better cope with the difficulties we all face in life, we are willing to open our hearts. An experience like this strips you to the soul. It is amazing how many 'important' things in life are forgotten when that which we treasure most is threatened."

*Monday, July 14<sup>th</sup>* - Susan was found unresponsive in the bathroom this morning. They moved her to the ICU, where she is in her own room. Her INR jumped to 3.8 and the doctors decided not to do a biopsy due to her fragile condition. We started the paperwork for a liver transplant. Her current MELD score is 29. The max MELD score is 40 and measures how serious the liver is failing. Transplants are given to the sickest patients first, which translates to an average MELD score of 35 in this area. Susan is still in good spirits in her bed. She has been asking the nurses for travel ideas for her brother's family. One of her nurses is Korean, so she was talking all about K-dramas and Korean food. Her veins have become very difficult to put IVs in. One nurse came and failed, so she asked another, who was working at it for about 30 minutes before another nurse came in. The expert finally got it in. The nurses were all laughing with Susan's jokes and her telling them all how pretty they are. She seems stable now. We should know a little more this afternoon. Tom

*Update -- Monday, July 14<sup>th</sup>* - Just met with the liver team. Susan's condition is very serious. Her liver is failing, and failing very fast. The liver team is pushing to get her "Status one" which would completely bypass the MELD score. The average time for a "Status one" candidate to get a liver is two days. She is in dire need of a liver, and they are expediting the process as much as possible. She may be losing consciousness in the next two days and the doctor said that whatever is going to happen is going to happen in the next four days. Tom

*Update -- Monday, July 14<sup>th</sup>* - Dearest family and friends, Prayers are already starting to be answered. Susan was added to the liver transplant database as Status One, probably in record time. The doctors felt that it was very important to get her on and quickly. Bishop Edwards has just called for a special fast on behalf of Susan tomorrow. Susan has asked that we also pray and fast for the donor and his/her family. If Susan does get a liver quickly, it will be because another family has lost a loved one unexpectedly. They also need our thoughts and prayers. Love and tears, The Drapers

*Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>* - After Susan's INR peaked at 4.4 yesterday, it has returned to a more manageable, but high 3.2 today. Susan slept well last night and is still in the ICU. Eleven siblings and parents flew in today. We really appreciate the support of our family. Su said that she always wanted to have a family get together on the East Coast, but this isn't exactly what she imagined. I wish I had more to say, but today was mostly just a day of waiting. Susan is still in Status One waiting for a donor liver. Thank you so much to everyone who fasted today. Su's spirits were the highest I've seen in the last week and she was full of energy and laughing much of the day. Love, The Drapers

*Wednesday, July 16<sup>th</sup>* - Dear friends, The doctors have received notice of a compatible liver available. The donor is a 19 year old young man. The doctors said that this is about as good as it gets for a liver transplant. The operation will likely be tomorrow morning. Please continue to keep Susan and the donor's family in your prayers. Love, The Drapers

*Thursday, July 17<sup>th</sup>* - We are so pleased with how everything has progressed so far. Susan's surgeons reported that everything went according to plan and there were no surprises. They were able to do the surgery in just over 4 hours, despite giving us the 5-12 hour prediction. While many obstacles remain, I feel great relief at reaching this point. Finding a donor and performing the transplant are both areas where a lot of things can go wrong. Susan will likely be unconscious until tomorrow. But they will allow me to be at her side soon. I want to take this time to thank everyone for all the prayers and fasting. On Wednesday, when many of you were fasting for her, Susan's energy levels were the best they had been in over a week. She was doing so well I was worried that they might decide that she didn't need to be Status 1. The doctors assured me otherwise. They said she was in sub-fulminant hepatic failure, and that her liver was like a car engine being run to the extreme without oil. Even though the car is still moving, there is a catastrophic failure of the engine not far away. Susan was truly buoyed up by seeing and feeling the love of her family up close, as well as hearing and feeling the love of her family and friends from a distance. I thank God that he heard and answered our unified prayers on Susan's behalf. We know the road to recovery is not over, but we are joyful of the progress so far and are optimistic for the future, especially with so many friends and family willing to support and uplift my dearest Susan. Gratefully, The Drapers

*The following excerpt is from an email Susan addressed to her "Loved Ones" - When things started looking scary (a little after Major Nurse Anne arrived) I became more and more out of it. I could not process the reality of the situation. All of a sudden they said I might die because of my liver not working. And at once I had all my siblings and parents showing up their faces at my bedside from around the nation. It was unimaginable. At one point I looked into their faces and realized they had come not to just hold my hand in case I died, but ready to give me their liver if it could keep me alive. And Tom began to tell me about the people on this email list, and tell me words of comfort from random Loved Ones, and that my Church Family had called for a prayer and a fast in the middle of a summer vacation week for me. I have prayed and fasted for others. I have pleaded with Heavenly Father for other's needs. But to be on this side of the love, the well wishes, the extreme faith poured forth from so many... I could FEEL it. It was indescribable. And I was at such a peace that no matter what happened to me, it would be according to God's will. I felt that He was in charge of everything, and I felt so much love and peace there was no room for fear. From that point it felt like everything was pulled along a miraculous trajectory that can't be explained any other way. Even the doctors seemed in awe at how things went from my liver failure to what Tom may have mentioned was what they called "the best liver anyone could ask for". I will never need another birthday or Christmas present again.*

*Epilogue - July 11, 2016 - Nearly a year after our trial, we have moved out to Utah. Our friends in Princeton helped us to the very end with packing the truck and cleaning the house. I love how since so many of us were far from home, we had to step up and be family for each other. That to me is what church is all about.*

Overall, I have no idea how much service was given by the loving members of the Princeton 1st Ward on our behalf. I do know that our children were housed and cared for by the Bagleys for nearly a week before our family arrived. I know that scores of meals were delivered and eaten by my children that I never saw since I was in the hospital. I know that young Derek LeSueur mowed our lawn in our absence, and that 2 acres with a hand push mower is no small feat. I know that laundry was done and the house cleaned multiple times. We had many visitors, both in Princeton and in New York City. Even Stake President Stokes managed to come by and visit Susan. I know that Tom Butler contacted the Warrens, LDS friends of his in Manhattan, who opened their doors to me to crash for the first night without knowing anything about me. I know that Andrew Hernandez brought fresh New York pizza to our nervous family when we were still trying to figure stuff out in the hospital. I know Lynaya Hernandez, our Relief Society President, had five different members call her and tell her that they wanted to be the number one person she contacted if she heard of anything we needed. I know that there is more than I can remember, but I know I will always be grateful. (*End of Account*).

Missionary work in the Princeton 1<sup>st</sup> Ward continues to bear fruit. Many of the current ward members are New Jersey natives and recent converts. They are wonderful people. Sister Deirdra Meagher and Sister Irene Thompson graciously agreed to share their testimonies and conversion stories.

*Sis Meagher - I was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on September 23, 2012 and partook of my endowment on May 7, 2014. My decision to convert from the Roman Catholic Church was a difficult one, as I was strongly grounded in Roman Catholic religion. Over the sixty plus years of my life, I met a significant number of Mormons who advised me of their Church teachings which differed from the Catholic religion. During my earlier years, I was so well grounded in the Catholic religion that I was not open to the movement of the spirit within me. Finally, after I was a full time investigator for at least one and a half years of the Mormon religion, I made a controversial decision, within my family, to convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS. The missionaries, fellow worshipers and Church presidents were always considerate and always welcoming of my investigation. Even a woman missionary, whom I met at Temple Square in August, 2008, kept in touch with me by telephone over the years. Furthermore, the outreach of the other Mormon worshipers to me was extremely commendable and welcoming, and I liked the services of the three meetings on each and every Sunday. I was impressed that anyone in the congregation could speak on a topic of their choice related to Jesus Christ and the religion on one Sunday every month. Before attending the Mormon Church, I had investigated at least a dozen religions. The Church of Jesus Christ of LDS won out and I am very happy with my choice, especially for the direction of the presidents in the Church and the interesting programs they prepare for Church Meetings, as well as other events. There is a significant amount of talent in the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS which is nurtured and developed each and every Sunday, as well as projects during the rest of the week. I am blessed to be able to worship among such giants.*

Since my baptism, I completed much temple work for my genealogy. Worshiping and bringing the completed Temple work to the Temple is truly an experience which I enjoy. I have always said to myself and others at times that if a decision makes sense, it does and always makes more sense as life experiences continue.

Thank you for all the opportunity being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS. Sincerely, Deirdra M. Meagher

*Sister Thompson* - Late February, 2013 was the first time I had ever encountered any Mormon missionaries. My neighbor had suggested, that they visit me.

It took several attempts to set-up a discussion, finally, we met on March 3, 2013, and had a get to know you talk, I received my first Book of Mormon, they asked if I would read the introduction, I said yes. I was very leery about this "new scripture", I didn't complete the assignment by the next meeting. I was very concerned and afraid about being disloyal to the only scripture I had known and read; The Holy Bible. The more I met with the missionaries, the more curious, and open minded I became about who they were.

After several more meetings, the missionaries invited me to attend the April 7, 2013, General Conference. I was a bit oppositional, to the invitation, as well as afraid and clueless about this church and what to expect, at this "meeting". So that I wouldn't be disappointed, I set my expectations for this first meeting, very low, expecting to gain very little or nothing by attending. To my amazement, as I entered the chapel, a sense of peace and calm, came over me, as if someone whispered to me, "peace be still", you have nothing to fear, you are in a place of love and peace which gave me comfort. When the missionaries met me; I was still struggling with grief, from the loss of a dear friend and both of my parents. I was feeling alone trying to find my way. I was totally amazed at how each talk counseled and consoled me at a time I needed it the most.

The weeks following the general conference, I attended the Sacrament Meetings, Sunday School, and Relief Society meetings. Participating in these activities became my anchors, which have brought me so much peace, calm, and direction; amid the struggles and trials I was facing in my life.

I officially became a member of the Princeton 1st Ward, June 30, 2013. I am continuing to learn how to make the gospel the anchor and joy of my life. (*End of Conversion Stories*)

Conclusion and note from the editor: I am extremely grateful for the assignment to create this ward history. I am humbled by the many stories of sacrifice, love, and conversion. I have learned of the importance of recording my personal and family histories and that a ward united in Christ-like love accomplishes many good works.

## Appendix A

### Approximate periods of service for Branch Presidents and Bishops

Name of Branch President/Bishop	Period of Service	Name of Bishop	Period of Service
Arthur Barlow*	1963	Richard Robertson	1992 - 1997
Victor Bunderson	1964	Gary Carter	1997
Lynn Johnson	1965 - 1968	Randy West	1997 - 1998
Bruce Crowther**	1968 - 1969	Conan Grames	1998 - 1999
Leon McBride	1970 - 1974	Don Bahr	1999 - 2004
Gordon Romney	1975 - 1976	Phil Welch	2004 - 2010
H. Steven Wood	1976 - 1981	Clay Edwards	2011 - 2015
Andre Gruber	1981 - 1987	Bryan Law	2016 - Present
Sterling Johnson***	1987 - 1992		

\*First President of Princeton Branch, \*\*Last President of Princeton Branch, First Bishop of Princeton Ward, \*\*\*Last Bishop of Princeton Ward, First Bishop of Princeton 1<sup>st</sup> Ward

## Appendix B

Historical photos.

A – The groundbreaking ceremony for the Princeton Chapel, November 15, 1975. (left to right: Richard Robertson, Richard Lee, Robert Darnell, Gordon Romney, James Norton, James Delaney, Jack Stahl).

B – Members of the ward at the groundbreaking ceremony.

C – The Rosedale Chapel. <http://www.njchurchscape.com/Lawrenceville-RosedaleChape.jpg> Retrieved on: 7/11/2015.

D – Before the construction project on Route 1 and Alexander Rd in 1995, the meeting house driveway connected with Alexander Road. The address of the meeting house changed from 630 Alexander Rd. to 901 Canal Point Rd., Princeton, NJ. The church property lost 1.19 acres through eminent domain.

