

The New York LDS Historian

The Story of the Manhattan Seventh Branch

By Delia Johnson and Joanne Rowland

Organized efforts to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the deaf in Manhattan began in 1987 when sister missionaries, who were called to teach in sign language in New York City, rented a room from Sister Cindy Spencer, a young illustrator living in Washington Heights who supplemented her income with sign language interpretation. Initially, deaf members met with the Manhattan Second Ward.



Members of the Manhattan Seventh Branch, 1991

Marcia Nelson, a member of the Second Ward took it upon herself to learn American Sign Language so that she could assist with interpretation for the Deaf Group. She was called as the first Group Leader for the deaf who, at that time, comprised a "Group" within the Second Ward. Signing missionaries and other members, including Cindy Spencer, Dorothy Rinkowski, and Robin Starkey, provided interpretation. In April 1994, the numbers of deaf members had grown to a point where a separate branch was formed.

Mary Cheese

However, the most important single event leading to growth was a baptism several years earlier. Brother Marion Gorka and one other member were participating in the Manhattan Second Ward when the missionaries met and baptized Mary Cheese. Mary, who had lost her hearing when she was about 16 years old due to an accident, was 65 years old in 1990 when she had a dream and heard a voice tell her that she should be baptized the same way as Jesus was baptized. Soon after the dream, two signing missionaries knocked on her

door. During her discussion with them, she asked "How do you baptize people in your church?" Mary was baptized by immersion into the LDS church on 3 February 1991. For Mary, the baptism itself was an act of courage and faith because she had great fear of water. Cristobel Clarke, Mary's childhood friend and Margaret Dale, Mary's daughter-in-law, were baptized the same time as Mary. Thereafter, Mary introduced to the missionaries many of her friends and members of her Bible Study Class associated with St. Mark's Lutheran Church, the church she had attended for 40 years. During the next year, the Deaf Group grew significantly in both strength and numbers due, in large part, to Mary's influence.

Having lived in the hearing world for the first segment of her life, Mary was able to bridge the gap between the worlds of hearing and deaf. She worked under former Mayor, Ed Koch as an advisory for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She also taught sign language to autistic children. Everyone who knew Mary, loved her. She helped her deaf friends get their children

The New York LDS Historian

is the quarterly newsletter of the New York New York Stake LDS History Committee. This newsletter contains articles about and notices of the research of the Committee.

More detailed research results will be published in our monograph series. Monographs will be announced in future issues of this newsletter.

Current research projects:

- Mormon Visual Artists
- Mormon Life in New York City
- Overview of LDS History in Brooklyn
- Hispanic Latter-day Saints in New York City
- New York Mormons in
 - Business
 - School

If you are interested in volunteering for research, writing, archiving, translating or historical activity planning, please contact Kent Larsen at (212) 927-7932.

The Story of the Manhattan Seventh Branch

(continued from previous page)

into appropriate schools, find appropriate housing, and obtain half-fare bus passes. She had a strong and magnetic personality and she used “King” as her sign name.

On 11 April 1992, approximately one year after their baptisms, Mary and Cristobel took out their endowments in the Chicago Temple during a trip to Chicago to attend a conference for the deaf. Sadly, Mary’s funeral followed two months later. She died on 10 June 1992. Her funeral was held at the Stake Center.

The Chapel was filled with LDS and non-member friends and relatives, both hearing and deaf.

There was a period of several months when Sunday School included an opening exercise and hymn practice. Marcia Nelson taught the entire congregation a few hymns in sign. Marcia recalls, “I can’t tell you how wonderful it was to look out over the congregation and see 200 people signing a hymn together. The deaf members would be in tears as would many of the hearing members. It was incredibly beautiful.”

Branch Presidents

Between its inception in April 1994 and June 1998, there were five successive Branch Presidents called to serve in the Seventh Branch. Pablo Nieves, a hard of hearing member who had been serving in the Elder’s Quorum of the Manhattan First Ward, was called to be the first Branch President. President Nieves served for approximately ten or eleven months and then moved to Utah.

At that point, a young missionary who was deaf, Elder Maldonado, was called as Branch president. He served for four or five months until the end of his mission. He was replaced by another missionary, Elder Garcia who served as Branch President for two or three months before his release from his mission. Then a missionary couple, Elder and Sister Fierstein were called to serve in the branch, Elder Fierstein as the Branch President. They served for about one year and were followed by another couple, Elder and Sister Bonnell who stayed from the fall of 1997 to June 1998.

Bart Worthington, a young single hearing man with extensive experience as a sign language interpreter, served as Counselor to President Nieves. He left the area for a short time but returned to serve as counselor to President Garcia and stayed as counselor to Presidents Fierstein and Bonnell. In June 1998, still single, Bart Worthington, was called as Branch President. Now, married with children, he continues to serve in that position.

Members of the Deaf Branch are not unanimous on whether it was better to



Margaret Dale (l) and Christobel Clarke

The New York LDS Historian

Published by the New York New York Stake LDS History Committee of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

New York New York Stake President

Brent J. Belnap

Committee Chairs

Richard Bushman
Claudia Bushman

Editor

Scott Tiffany

Publisher

Kent Larsen

Committee members:

Darrell Babidge	Jennifer Li
Mark Butler	James Lucas
Tim Davis	Ben McAdams
Fumi Davis	Julie McAdams
James Fry	Glen Nelson
Patricia Fry	Elena Nieves
Anne Knight	Joanne Rowland
Joanne Legerski	Aaron Skabelund

The authors of each article herein are solely responsible for their work. The views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or the sponsors and editors of this publication.

The articles in this newsletter are copyright by their respective authors.

For further information contact Kent Larsen at 212-568-0151.

The Deaf Group

During the time the Deaf Group was part of the Second Ward, the sister missionaries along with Cindy Spencer and Marcia Nelson provided translation in Sacrament meetings and helped to teach separate classes for Sunday School, Relief Society and Priesthood Meetings. Bishop Paul Gunther hired a teacher and invited several members to take a class in American Sign Language. Kamla (Kami) Fennimore was twelve years old at the time and she attended the classes with her mother. Kami continued her efforts after the paid ASL teacher left and the missionaries took over the member teaching. Kami accepted the challenge of learning to sign the Sacrament prayers and on a memorable Sunday, Kami, a 12 year old girl, was voice for the Priesthood ordinance for approximately one fifth of the congregation. It might have gone unnoticed except that Kami’s signing was somewhat slower than the spoken prayers so that the thwacking sound of the deaf group signing their “amen” came at a significant interval beyond the hearing members’ verbal “amen.”

See page 8

Visiting the Deaf Branch Primary Program

By Joanne Rowland

In the fall of 2001, I was serving as New York Stake Primary President and in this capacity I was invited to attend all of the Primary Programs in the Stake. On 18 November 2001 there were five programs presented. Among the Stake Primary Presidency, we covered all of them. The Seventh Branch Sacrament Meeting began at 3:00 p.m. I didn't assign anyone else to attend with me because it was for me, and would have been for them, the fourth Primary Program that day. I'm sorry I made that decision because the Seventh Branch program was worth attending a fourth Sacrament Meeting.

I was acquainted with several members from the days when they were part of the Second Ward and it was not the first time I had visited the Deaf Branch. I had been there in June, along with many other Stake visitors, for the Branch Conference. But going alone, and tired, this Primary Program Sunday, I was especially aware of how wonderfully complicated everything was, from an administrative point of view and how wonderfully accessible everything was, from a spiritual point of view.

I arrived early for the meeting and sat among the other members waiting for the meeting to begin. There was no organ prelude because in the Deaf Branch, who would it be for? I was aware that without an organ prelude stopping, there is no audio signal that the meeting is about to begin. In hearing branches there isn't much attention paid to organ prelude music but when the music stops we begin to pay attention. In the Seventh Branch, President Worthington stood at the pulpit for quite a while until everyone noticed him and ceased chatting to pay attention to his greeting and announcements. As he spoke with his hands, his wife, April, spoke his words with her voice from the midst of the congregation for the benefit of any hearing in the congregation.

Sister Rosemary Morales, the chorister conducted the hymn singing, or perhaps we should say the hymn signing. Hearing members and missionaries sing vocally as they sign the hymns and so a pianist had been called to aid the singing. Because she wasn't a very skillful pianist, there were lots of wrong notes played but she kept the tempo going. In the Deaf Branch, wrong notes played on the piano, or for that matter, sung, aren't a very big problem.

On this Sunday, a newly baptized member, Natasha Kemp, was confirmed. Priesthood ordinances are very moving when performed in sign language. A team of helpers is required in order to transmit the ordinance to the congregation. Sister Kemp sat on a chair with the invited Melchizedek Priesthood holders forming the Priesthood circle around her. The elder confirming her stood facing her so she could see him signing her blessing. He put his hands on her head at the beginning and at the



Manhattan Seventh Branch Primary Preparing for their Primary

Visiting the Deaf Branch Primary Program

(continued from page 2)

end of the blessing; the rest of the time he used both hands to sign the blessing right in front of her. Another Priesthood holder stood outside the circle facing the congregation and the elder giving the blessing. He mirrored the blessing in order to convey it to the congregation. Another person voiced the blessing for the benefit of hearing members in the congregation. Weeks later when Wellington Feliz was describing to me and Delia how his baby had watched him



A Priesthood Blessing in the Manhattan Seventh Branch

very closely all during the baby's naming blessing, I thought how beautiful to watch the face of the person performing a Priesthood ordinance. The ability to hear makes life in general easier but this experience showed me that hearing is not necessary to feel the power of the Spirit.

The Sacrament prayers were likewise signed and spoken for the benefit of the deaf and hearing members of the congregation.

Then it was time for the Primary Program.

April Worthington, the newly called Primary President, had only begun the Primary in the Deaf Branch a few months before the program. The newly organized Primary consisted of approximately seven children some hearing, some deaf, all different ages and in all stages of intellectual and spiritual development. In planning the program, Sister Worthington had asked me if it was absolutely necessary to perform all of the songs outlined. The song she found most problematic was the one about Latter-day prophets where the whole song is just the names of the modern prophets from Joseph Smith to Gordon B. Hinckley. In order to sign this song, you would have to finger spell every one of those names — some of them are quite long — George Albert Smith and Joseph Fielding Smith, for example. I suggested

she teach the children whatever songs worked well in sign and adapt the program in any way that made sense to her.

Although most of the children in the Deaf Branch are, in fact, hearing children with deaf parents, they are not necessarily skillful themselves in sign language. Sister Worthington had the daunting task of teaching these children to sing and sign the Primary songs so that they could hear them and their parents could see them. She also helped them learn short speeches on the subject of following the prophets and she made them costumes out of vests and dishtowels and so forth to represent the ancient prophets they were talking about. The children performed wonderfully well under her direction.

Children in the deaf community do not learn that silence is indicative of good behavior, it is more difficult to teach children that to whisper or not talk at all is a sign of reverence. These children said out loud whatever was on their minds. Most of the people in the congregation were not aware of a complaining child's voice saying, "What now?" or "Not another song!" Then, having voiced their objections, they went ahead and performed beautifully. It occurred to me that many of the children I had seen that day may have kept similar thoughts to themselves during their programs.

The best part of the Deaf Branch Primary program was how enthusiastically it was received. The parents and other adult deaf members were visibly and audibly gleeful seeing their little ones up there speaking and singing. They giggled and pointed and clapped their hands together and made other enthusiastic noises to express how pleased they were with this Sacrament Meeting. It seemed to me a most generous welcoming of their children into the community of the Saints.

Next year, I will invite all of the Stake Primary Presidency and anyone else I can think of to come to the Seventh Branch with me for the Primary Program. It was a joyous experience.

Branch Members Tell Their Stories

The following quotes and stories about members of the Deaf Branch were gleaned from personal interviews during parties at the Deaf Branch, during a Sacrament Testimony Meeting (June 2, 2002) and a Relief Society Enrichment Night (May 31, 2002) and from Delia Johnson's written essay about serving in the Deaf Branch.

Blanche Adams: "I'm excited to come to church. I continue to be friends with non-members. We need to stay focused on Jesus Christ so we don't fall away."

John Debrow: "There's something I've been thinking about. There is power here in the church. We should be nice to each other – not like in the outside world. I believe this is the right way. I know the missionaries are working to help us become like Father in Heaven."

Patricia Debrow: "I always have a powerful feeling when I go in the temple. I remember the first time, going to get sealed to my husband. The temple looked so different. It was so beautiful and white. Wow. It was a great feeling."

"When the members have Family Home evening in my home, we all enjoy it. We all teach each other. We gather together and read books, have discussions."

Wellington Feliz and his wife Sulekia are the first members of the branch to have their marriage performed in the temple. Their son, Jordi, is the first child in the branch to have been born in the covenant.

"A long time ago, I think I was only 7 or 8, I lived in the Dominican Republic. I saw two men and wondered who they were. They had white shirts. Time went by and we moved to Puerto Rico. Again, I saw the same thing, two men in white shirts. Then we moved to New York and again, the same thing, two men in white shirts. It was the third time I had seen the missionaries! My sister saw them and was interested so they came to our house. They taught me about Joseph Smith, ordinances, the Priesthood, all of these things. They finished and asked me if I was ready to be baptized. I said

I had been baptized already. They said, 'No, no. What we mean full baptism by immersion.' I said, 'Okay.' I was baptized and then received the Holy Ghost. About a month later, I almost fell away from the church and wondered what to do. But two good friends, Luis and Frank helped me, really helped. They invited me into their homes and talked with me, told me stories, taught me what to do. I decided to obey the commandments and go to church. I knew it was true.

"My hope for my son is to teach him the gospel. The best way is through example and action. That's how I'll show him. I hope he'll become a missionary and proclaim the gospel and be a good missionary and be a wonderful son . . . We are promised that the three of us, if we have faith and do what's right, we are promised we will have eternal life and attain the Celestial Kingdom and live with our family again. That's what I hope for my son. And that he will see me as a good father, us as good parents.

When asked how many languages they would teach their son, Wellington responded: "First American Sign Language (ASL). Then we'll teach him words. Third, English, and then maybe a little Spanish." When asked if teaching Sign Language was hard, he said "No! He really pays attention and focuses on us. When I sign to him, he is watching everything I do. Even when I'm praying, he's focused, eyes wide open, watching. I'm surprised. I've never seen that before. The first time I saw him watching me so closely was soon after he was born and I was blessing him. His eyes were focused right on me signing. It was a wonderful experience. I really felt the spirit. It was cool."



Wellington Feliz

Branch Members Tell Their Stories

(continued from previous page)

Marion Gorka, was the first deaf member baptized into the Second Ward when Tony Fennimore was Bishop. He currently serves as the Sunday School President in the Seventh Branch. It is his recollection that when the Deaf Branch was formed, a number of members fell away. "All of these people left. I stayed. Cristobel is still here." He says about his conversion, "I looked at other churches. I attended a Lutheran Church. But when I came to this church, it was the nicest. I felt the spirit."



Delia Johnson

Delia Johnson has served as a Stake Relief Society "specialist" working with the Deaf Branch Relief Society. Delia's interest in sign language began when as a child she saw the closed caption sign interpreter on television and after learning from her parents that it was a language for people who couldn't hear, she tried to match the signs with the words she heard Walter Cronkite speaking. Later, her third grade teacher taught the sign language alphabet to the class. Delia taught it to her siblings and they used it to talk with each other during Sacrament Meetings. Delia learned to sign "I want cookie" and then left off her sign language pursuit until many years later when, newly married, she found herself in a ward in Knoxville, Tennessee which included a number of deaf members. Delia and her husband began attending the weekly classes in sign language taught by the missionaries. When she moved to New York City in 1997, she continued studying sign language with the missionaries. Eventually she enrolled in classes at the New York Society for the Deaf.

Delia began attending the Deaf Branch Sacrament Meetings, about a year before she received her calling as Relief Society specialist, just as a way of improving her sign language skills. When she was called as a specialist, she was acquainted with some of the members but still found it difficult to understand what was going on around her. She found support in the Relief Society President, Anne Maldonado and the Education Counselor, Blanche Adams. She recalls, "After a while, the members got used to seeing me around, and it was a thrill when Pat Debrow, the activities chairperson, handed me a flyer inviting me to the next

party. It was an even greater relief to step into the cultural hall at the party and see a couple of people I knew, and to be able to sit next to them, and know they would talk slowly, and explain anything I didn't understand."

While studying with the missionaries, Delia became acquainted with Cedric Penn, who at age 16 was investigating the church. One evening he came to the missionary sign language class. Delia recalls, "The missionaries were late, so he stood up, and started teaching us some signs and telling us about himself. He taught us things that the missionaries never would have thought to teach us. He told us jokes, and signed fairy tales for us. It was a chance to see clear, beautiful sign language in action." When Cedric invited everyone to come to his wrestling match at Lexington High School, Delia took him up on the invitation. "Cedric is a great wrestler and quickly won his match the night I was there. He has traveled as far away as Florida for wrestling matches and I am proud to be his friend."

Ruby Kemp: "When the missionaries came to visit me at my home, I opened the door and I thought they were the FBI or the cops. I didn't know what to say. I was scared. They had nice ties on; nice hair cuts. Then they showed me their name tags. I said, "Oh! you're from the church!" I said, "Nice to meet you" and I shut the door. The next day, I opened the door for the missionaries. I welcomed them in and we talked. They told me stories and taught me lessons. They taught me about Joseph Smith, Jesus Christ, that Jesus is Heavenly Father's son – I'd never heard that before. I was excited. We discussed all these things and I believed them. I was baptized the evening of June 9, 1991.

"When I went to the temple, I felt the spirit so strongly, I cried and cried. The people showing me around were so happy. In the temple it's restful and peaceful.

"I feel strong. If I don't understand something, I ask a deaf member or hearing member who can help me. I help them, they help me. We discuss back and forth and share with each other. That's what I like. That's why I decided to join. I like the spirit I feel here."

Anne Maldonado: “The missionaries came to my home many, many times and I refused to let them in. The last time they came, they showed me a video tape. The last part of the tape showed Jesus Christ on the cross. Wow, it really touched my heart. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ Then he died. He really did come down to earth to teach us.”

Michelle Ortega: “I went to a Deaf Awareness Week activity at City Hall. I saw my friend Pablo. We were talking and meeting other deaf people. Then I saw two men come up and start talking to Pablo. They had little name tags. I thought they looked like Jehovah Witnesses. Pablo said, “No, No, they’re from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” I met with the missionaries here at the church on the third floor. I was baptized December 25, 1997.

“I remember the first time I went into the temple. I saw the temple and I thought, “Wow!” It was all white and it looked so pure. Everyone was dressed in white and were so friendly. When I went into the Celestial room, I felt like it was my home.”

Alfred Ortiz and his wife Mariza joined the church in 1990. Alfred, recalling Mary Cheese, stated, “I loved Mary. She was a very smart woman, and very good. She tried to get people to come to church. Her best friend was my wife. She always helped us. When she died, I became confused. Then the time of church meetings changed and I had to work. But, really, all this time, I’ve been enthusiastic about the church.”

Alfred expressed his enthusiasm for parties: “I like the parties. They used to have a lot of parties. I remember the cowboy party. I liked it. It was fun. Oh, yes, I won a prize for the cowboy outfit.”

Cedric Penn has been a member for two and a half years. He was 16 when he joined the Church. He turned 19 in May 2002. He attended two years of Seminary at the church without an interpreter and got along with lip reading and writing back and forth. Cedric participated two different years in the Living Nativity at Christmas time playing the role of Wise Man to the Worthingtons’ Holy Family.

Last year he attended a Deaf “Especially for Youth” program at BYU.

Cedric first met LDS missionaries when an Elder came to his school to help with the chess club. Cedric recalled that, “He asked for my address and I gave it to him. He came to visit when I wasn’t home and my family didn’t let him in. That was around 1996 or 1997. Then in 1999, the missionaries came back. I was baptized August 2, 1999. My life has changed and improved.”

Regarding his plans to go on a mission, Cedric responded with some equivocation: “I don’t know. But I know I can do it. If I set the goal, it’s possible. I would be willing to teach people the gospel. I have the strength inside of me. I don’t know whom I would teach. It’s up to the people I would teach to decide for themselves whether to join. God knows. He has a plan. He can see.”

Dorothy Rinkowski, a hearing member, first learned sign from the missionaries. She was asked to act as Deaf Group Leader within the Second Ward after Marcia Nelson was released. About Sign Language, Dorothy says, “If you don’t use sign, you lose it. Sometimes I dream in sign. And it’s perfect sign too!”

Frank Riviera: “When Christ comes, we are all his children, he loves all of us. Even those that offend him. We should show that love to each other because we’re all his children.”

Karen Simone: “Three days ago it was really raining. My three children, my husband and I stayed at a friend’s house while it was raining. The woman upstairs gave us an umbrella. She said we could keep it. We could then go out to eat. It’s the same here. We should all take care of each other, understand Heavenly Father’s plan. We know we’re not alone.”

Luis Viola: “Some think this is the best place in the world. Or Los Angeles, or out West. But the church is the best place. The gospel is the same wherever you go. It’s true doctrine. It’s a church of light, it has authority. I know if you pray you can feel it in your heart.”



Marcia Nelson

The Story of the Manhattan Seventh Branch

(continued from previous page)

have the Deaf Group meet as part of the Second Ward or whether it is better to meet separately. Marion Gorka prefers having the Deaf Branch. He says he learns the gospel better when it is taught in American Sign Language. He is of the opinion that when it is taught in English, something gets lost in translation and he is not shy about saying that hearing members are "lousy" at sign language. Alfred Ortiz, on the other hand, is of the opinion that things were better when the deaf and the hearing met together. He says there are too many problems when the deaf are separate.

Activities

Social activities and trips are strongly supported by the deaf members. Several who were interviewed, both hearing and deaf, recall a Second Ward party where square dancing was the activity. A professional caller had been hired. She seemed bewildered by the disorderly way squares were formed with adults and children, hearing and deaf and nobody taking it too seriously. But the members recall the fun of participating together. The deaf members were used to watching and were able to pick up the dance steps fairly easily even though none of them had ever participated in square dancing before. Marcia recalls, "It was a wonderful night of dancing and deaf and hearing alike participated because you didn't really have to talk or sign, all you had to do was smile and dance." A deaf member, Alfred Ortiz, outdid himself in cowboy attire and was delighted to win the "Urban Cowboy" prize.

Parties generally are well attended. When the Deaf Group met with the Second Ward, they met separately every Friday evening socially. As a separate branch, they have parties about every other month. The parties begin Saturday afternoon with members bringing pot-luck dishes. A meal is served about 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. and the party continues for several hours with games following the eating. The Deaf Branch Christmas par-

ties have been memorable partly because of gifts for the children which have been provided by members of the branch.

At Christmas time, the Deaf Branch has participated annually in the Stake Christmas Concert usually signing a Christmas Carol together. The December 2001 Christmas Concert included, as the Seventh Branch contribution, a skit about Rudolf with members playing the parts of Rudolf, the other reindeer who laughed and called him names and Santa. Sean Perry, a member of the Third Ward, directed and choreographed the skit including swing dancing as part of the "shouting out with glee." Members of the Seventh Branch have also participated in the annual Living Nativity staged in the lobby of the Stake Center during the Christmas Season.

In addition to social activities at the church, bus trips have been an important aspect of Deaf Branch activities. Seventh Branch members have gone together to the Hill Cumorah pageant, to a Deaf Conference with the Rochester Deaf Group and have attended member conferences as far away as Chicago and Washington, D.C.

One memorable temple trip is recalled as the trip that left with 49 and returned with 51. Sister Ruby Kemp had prepared a family file and was eager to do the baptisms for her deceased relatives. But on the day of the temple trip, Ruby was late to arrive at the church for the chartered bus to Washington D.C. She was so determined to do the work that day that she and her son managed to get Amtrak tickets to Washington D.C. and then take a taxi from the train station to the temple. While in the celestial room, where he was trying to have a spiritual day with his then fiancé, April, Bart Worthington received an urgent message from Ruby, "don't leave without me, I'm in D.C." President Worthington left his courtship activities to look for Ruby who he found smiling in the baptismal font with other members of the branch doing baptisms for her family file.

Membership Growth, Retention and Leadership Training

When the deaf members were meeting as part of the Manhattan Second Ward, the average attendance at Sacrament Meeting grew from two to about thirty. Through all of the leadership changes, the branch size was always in flux. President Worthington compares it to dieting where you lose a few pounds and then gain them back along with a few more.

Leadership training has an extra level of difficulty because the deaf are unfamiliar with management practices which are routine in the hearing world. If there is to be a Branch Council Meeting with a written agenda, it is possible that those required to attend do not know the meaning of "council" or "agenda" or the concept of a meeting that includes some and excludes others. President Worthington comments, "we do not lack experience with the spirit but we lack the intellectual experience to take the leadership roles and perform them."

There have been consistent new members from baptisms but the average attendance at Sacrament Meeting has continued to hover right around forty-five to fifty-five. In June 1994, when the branch was organized, there were 100 members on the roll. The 2002 membership is 190 with twenty-one Melchizedek Priesthood holders. In 2000, there were three baptisms, in 2002, there were ten. Still the average Sacrament Meeting attendance is about forty-eight. President Worthington estimates that if everyone who still has some contact with the branch came on the same day they would have an attendance of approximately eighty. He is of the opinion that all of the conversions were sincere and that those who are not now active will be back at some point.

[All of the information for this article came from personal recollections of Joanne Rowland and Delia Johnson and from interviews conducted by Joanne with Bart Worthington and by Delia with Marcia Nelson and Dorothy Rinkowski.]