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# Questions and Answers about Temple Building

## Why are temples important to Latter-day Saints?

For Latter-day Saints, temples are the most sacred places of worship. We believe they are literally the House of the Lord. We learn things in temples we cannot learn anywhere else, and we make promises in temples we cannot make anywhere else. It's where we get closer to God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Everything we do in the temple takes us back to our Heavenly Father's plan for us and the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Temples are a place for learning, instruction on how to be better husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, children of God. They are a place where sacred covenants are made such as marriages. We believe marriages performed in temples may endure beyond the grave and last forever.

Worship in temples is different than what we typically see on Sundays in our chapels. In fact, temples are closed on Sundays. There are no large congregations meeting in temples as it is only used for sacred ceremonies that involve a limited number of people.

These houses of the Lord also serve as sacred spaces for the community in which they are built. They elevate the quality of the local environment and are appreciated by the communities where they are built—well kept, beautiful well-manicured landscaping, quiet contemplative spaces, that are available for anyone to enjoy.

## From his installation as Church President, Russell M. Nelson has announced more temples to be built. How does the Church respond to feelings that too many temples are being built and are unwelcome in many communities?

Unlike the thousands of chapels (21,000), there are only 350 temples operating, announced or under construction worldwide. It is true that the construction of temples has accelerated in recent years (168 new temples announced in the past six years).

*"The purpose of building more temples is to make them more accessible to members. Every time a new temple is announced, Latter-day Saints living in the area are thrilled they will no longer need to travel long distances to attend the temple."*

The vast majority of temples in the US and around the world have been well received and are very much appreciated by local communities. There are only a handful of cases where some opposition has been expressed. In most cases, once explained and built, temples become beloved assets in the community (ex: Paris—the project began with much opposition and a neighborhood petition—today, we only hear praises and compliments from the neighbors and city officials on what a great addition the temple is to their community).

We work with community leaders, elected officials, developers, as well as our own Church members in any community where a temple is to be built, so the temple will integrate harmoniously in the local environment and culture (in terms of landscaping and design). We aspire to be good neighbors wherever we are.



## To what do you attribute so much opposition to your temple building program?

Opposition might arise for two reasons:

- There might be misinformation or misunderstandings about what a temple is. Once neighbors understand that a temple doesn't bring large crowds, that it has little impact on vehicular traffic, the property will be well-maintained and beautify the community, the objections typically disappear.
- Discussions around the potential impact of the building in terms of obstructing views, height and light. These things are typically discussed with local authorities. We always follow the law and zoning requirements. Reasonable adjustments are always considered.

Opposition to our temples really comes from a vocal minority...representing just a handful of the more than 150 temples currently under construction.

## Do you feel the Church, with its significant temple building program is being discriminated against?

Federal law allows churches to construct sacred buildings. We ask to be treated fairly and overall have experienced success with relatively low conflict in most temple approval situations.

## The Church often seeks changes to zoning guidelines, and if there is pushback, appears to threaten litigation based on the grounds of discrimination.

Temple engineers and architects seek to comply with laws, including those regarding lighting and land use. We want to be good neighbors and bless the community with a building that will beautify and be in harmony with the neighborhood where it is built.

*"While municipalities have laws that may limit a structure's height for residential neighborhoods, state and federal laws grant religious organizations flexibility for houses of worship, like our temple.*

*Discussions regarding "variances" are a normal and expected part of this type of process."*

Many areas where temples are constructed have other places of worship on the same street or nearby. This is a common occurrence.

## Church leaders have mentioned the building itself is subordinate to what transpires inside the building. Why does the church hold so tightly to square footage, or location, or even the height of the spire?

For members of the Church of Jesus Christ, temples are places of reverence and respect, purposely distinct from other places so that people can focus on their relationship with a loving Heavenly Father. These beautiful structures facilitate something personal and heavenly that include architectural features; spires that lift our eyes heavenward, unique lighting, and Christ-centric symbolism all reflecting the reality this is a House of the Lord.

As with synagogues or mosques or temples of other faiths around the world, temples are places where men and women can find peace and purpose in a world where many face uncertainty and conflict.

We take great care in working with leaders in the local community, from location to design.

There is a process. We follow that process.



## **The temple in Paris, France, which opened a few years ago, doesn't even have a spire. (One of four in the Church). Is a spire critical to the structure? If not, why not comply with the local ordinance and lower the height?**

There are only very few exceptions. The spire is an important symbol that points us to heaven.

- Temple structures are typically 30-40 feet high; only the spire is higher. The spire needs to be consistent with the size of the building to provide a harmonious design.
- A spire doesn't create much obstruction to views, they are narrow in design.

## **What about lighting for the temples?**

For all new temples, you will be able to see the temple in the dark as allowed by local code, but the light will not extend beyond our property limits.

## **If the Church doesn't get what it wants, it threatens to sue using federal law. Is that accurate?**

Temple building is not about contention, but about connection. Our goal is to find solutions that are appropriate for the exercise of worship and that convey our wish to be good neighbors. Federal law in the U.S. allows churches to construct sacred buildings. We work together according to this law to build sacred structures in a way that is true to our beliefs and collaborative with our neighbors and friends. We only ask to be treated fairly and that our rights under the law be respected. Overall, we have experienced success with relatively few misunderstandings or delays in most temple approval situations. We are grateful for people who make it possible for our members to worship in peace.

## **Opponents say, "the temple is just too large." Why not modify the size based on local recommendations? Or input?**

The size of a temple is typically proportionate to the size of the land on which it is located and meets the needs of Church members in the area.

The temple incorporates local architecture and themes in its design, so it is complimentary with the surrounding neighborhood. That said, we do work with local officials to determine what meets the needs of the Church as well as the community.

The temple itself is built to the highest standards of construction.

## **How do you determine where to build temples?**

The President of the Church ultimately decides the location of every temple. He takes into account a number of considerations including places that are safe and peaceful, and which are accessible to many Latter-day Saints.

## **Would you say the Church is a "good neighbor" when it comes to building these temples?**

Our goal is always that they will be well received and loved by the community as a beautiful addition to the local landscape.

With temple construction, the Church desires to be a good neighbor and welcomes any questions or concerns about the project. We desire to construct buildings that will be in harmony with their environment and convey beauty, harmony, and dignity.

And we invite all to come and see the temple when it is open to the public prior to its dedication.



## **It seems the Church is going to extreme measures when it comes to the cost to construct temples. Is this the best use of Church funds?**

The center of our faith is Jesus Christ. Temples serve as an expression of our love for God and lie at the very heart of our connection to Him.

We are very grateful to have the resources to build temples as well as many other efforts that bless the lives of God's children.

