

“Out Among the People”

In addition to dedicating four temples in three nations, President Gordon B. Hinckley met with Church members and governmental leaders in Thailand, Australia, New Caledonia, and American Samoa during his trip across the Pacific in June.

President Hinckley said his joy at being among the Saints sustained him through his 17-meeting, 22,000-mile, 47-hours-in-the-air trip. “When you get out among the people you feel a lift and a spiritual power that’s tremendous,” he said in a press conference upon his return.

After the temple dedication in Japan, President Hinckley flew to Thailand, which he had dedicated for the preaching of the gospel in 1961. Bhichit Rattakul, the mayor of Bangkok and a BYU graduate, greeted President Hinckley at the airport. Later, along with prime minister Chuan Leepkai, the mayor expressed appreciation for Church volunteer work in Thailand and gave President Hinckley a key to the city.

President Hinckley then addressed some 2,600 members who had gathered from all over the country to see and hear the first Church President ever to visit Thailand. He encouraged and blessed the members and said he hoped a temple would one day stand in their nation.

On his way to dedicate temples in Adelaide and Melbourne, President Hinckley stopped at the airport in Darwin, Australia, where 250 members were assembled. He shared his testimony and shook hands with these members, some of whom had traveled 1,500 kilometers (932 miles) to meet him.

Following the temple dedications in Australia, President Hinckley made a stop in Noumea, New Caledonia, a remote island nation that also had never been visited by a Church President. “We have 1,400 members there. We had 1,200 of them in a meeting,” said President Hinckley. It was “wonderfully significant to look into the faces of the people and talk with them.”

After the temple dedication in Fiji, President Hinckley traveled to Pago Pago, American Samoa, where a large crowd at the airport gave him a Samoan greeting of leis and kisses. There he spoke to 5,000 members at a local stadium.

After returning from the trip, President Hinckley affirmed, “You can’t look into the faces, light and dark and of all the many nationalities and many cultures and backgrounds, without having a tremendous emotional experience well up within you over what this work is accomplishing.”