



Jonathan and Kathy Parker

President Parker served October 22, 2006 – October 18, 2015

Interview – November 21st, 2017

I had been serving as the Bishop in the second ward for about four years. I expected to finish my call as bishop there and then get back into the Young Mens program in some call or another. I had no idea I was about to be called as stake president. My wife had some feelings that something might be coming. I didn't. As is the procedure, on the weekend of a change in the Stake President, all the Bishops along with members of the High Council and some others are called in and interviewed by the visiting authority. In this case, we had the blessing of having Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (Quorum of the Twelve) and Elder Jon M. Huntsman (Of the Seventy) as our visiting authority. I had a delightful visit with these wonderful Brethren. The last thing Elder Holland said to me when the interview ended was, "Will you sustain and support the new stake president?" "Yes," I answered, "absolutely!" As I left the Stake Center I felt that I would not be the one that would be called. In fact, I said to those waiting to be interviewed, "It's not me. It's probably one of you."

I had agreed to meet my brothers to winterize the family cabin that afternoon, so I went home, changed my clothes and drove up there, even though President Adams had said, "Brethern, don't leave home. We may have to call you back." Later my wife took the call inviting me to return. "Jon is not here," she said. "He's up at the cabin." Since there is no phone service

there, she had to frantically drive up to the cabin to get me back home. We got home, rushed, changed our clothes and then we drove to the Stake Center. Those good Brethern had waited well over an hour. Lots of embarrassment on my part. When the call was finally extended, I was shell-shocked, almost dumb-founded. Elder Holland excused himself to go make a phone call to check on his wife who had not been feeling well, "When I get back, I need the names of your counselors". I had about 4 minutes. I knelt and prayed for the first time in that office. The inspiration came like lightening. I recommended Weston Innes and Jeff Young to serve as my counselors.

One night I had a rather remarkable dream. I was way out in a forest walking along a rail road track. I could hear the whistle of a train blowing in the distance way off in the distance. The easiest path was to just stay on the tracks, out ahead of the on-coming train. However, the train was coming up hard and fast. I started to run, then sprint. When I realized that the locomotive was right behind me and the whistle was blowing, I heard a small whisper which said, "get off the tracks." So I jumped off the side while this massive train roared on by me. When I awoke I knew what the symbolism of my dream meant. The train was the Willow Creek Stake – filled with all these wonderful, faithful, church-going saints; who are very capable of acting in their callings. They did not need to be constantly monitored. My job was to lead them, but to let them act and be personally inspired in their callings; I was there to encourage, to love, to support in those efforts.

Highlights

When the Draper temple was completed our stake claimed it as our own. We provided lots of people to host at the open house as well as participate in the dedication. It was a time of excitement and fervor within the Stake. We were anxiously engaged with the Temple and still are to this day providing an abundance of Temple Workers.

About 2005 through 2010 we had a single adult ward which became an important part of our stake family. Willow Creek 8th was an interesting ward – with approximately 450 members of record; it drew from 600 to 700 people each Sunday. It was like a stake conference every Sunday. This ward had an older demographic. The average age had crept up to about 31. The church released a new effort by organizing a YSA Stake and wards in the valley. Our Single Adult ward would be part of that new organization. The new YSA ward consisted of members from 18-30 years of age. Our 8th ward had man members that were over this age category and I was very concerned for them. Many made the transition to family wards but, unfortunately, many fell away from activity with the Church. As a result, we requested Church Headquarters to consider the organization of a "Mid-Singles Ward", ages 31-45. This request was refreshed a few more times during our Presidency.

On June 5, 2016 the Draper Single Adult Ward was organized. It consists of Mid-Singles ages 31-45 that live in Cottonwood Heights, Midvale, Sandy and Draper. Members of the Stake

Presidencies of the 28 Stakes represented were present. Rob Campbell was called to serve as bishop with Doug Peterson and Gordon Erickson as his councilors. Meetings began on June 12, 2016 at our Stake Center. They provide a tremendous service to the stake. One of them serves on the high council; another is in the Stake Sunday School presidency. They are a real asset to the stake. Their talents and abilities are a tremendous blessing.

Ward Boundary Changes

One of my concerns was changing demographics in the stake. The Fifth Ward had fewer numbers of young people and diminishing numbers in their primary. It got so bad that families were not moving into 5th ward because those numbers were small. As a presidency we wondered if this was something momentary or if we needed to change the boundaries. We fasted and prayed many times over months for the Lords' direction. We started looking at various potential solutions. We reviewed 23 different plans. We finally dissolved the fifth ward and reassigned members of that ward to the 1, 3 and 6th wards to balance our numbers. Ward boundary changes are hard on the Saints, we get pretty comfortable with our ward families. One of the concerns we had with making these changes was that our Primaries and YW and Aaronic Priesthood organizations would grow. This was the leap of faith in making these changes. Currently, all the wards in the Stake have vibrant Primary, YW and Aaronic Priesthood Quorums with sufficient numbers of children and youth in those organizations. I count this as a great blessing.

Calling and Releasing Missionaries

We sent out a tremendous number of missionaries – One clerk thought that I participated in over 500 missionaries. Every Tuesday night was missionary setting apart night. It was extremely rare that I didn't have missionaries to set apart on Tuesday night. Many times I would set apart 3 that night, and on occasion, I set apart 4 missionaries on Tuesday nights. I also enjoyed the opportunity to set apart our Senior missionaries. They exemplified great faith. Preparing missionaries consumed a lot of my time since they needed each missionary required five interviews over the course of their departure or return. I enjoyed going to their homes and feeling their testimony and excitement. It was a joy to see how their testimonies had been strengthened when they returned. This was a wonderful experience for me. We heard reports of the miracles that occurred as they served. I'm so thankful for the talent, experience, and testimonies of the men and women, both young and old, in this stake.

I appreciate the love and service of my counselors, the Stake clerks and secretaries, members of the high counselors and other Stake leaders. I feel confident that what we did during our tenure was what the Lord wanted us to do for the stake. I am grateful for what I experienced and witnessed as we saw the Lords hand bless the members of this great Stake.

My Release

Elder C. Scott Grow and Elder Kyle S. McKay of the Seventy were assigned to our Stake Conference with the instruction to re-organize the Stake Presidency. Under their direction we prepared and organized the meetings and the interviews. As I look back on these events, I have a continuing testimony of these efforts being directed by the Lord. Each new Stake President, just like Presidents of the Church bring their gifts, their talents, their experience to bless the members. It was time. My time was complete, it was time for President Esplin to help move the work forward for our Stake. I have dearly missed my interaction with these wonderful members of the Stake. I truly love the Saints.