



### **Kimo and Kaye Esplin**

In October of 2015, I was surprised that Pres Parker invited me to participate in the interviews scheduled at Stake Conference with Elder Grow to call a new Stake President. I explained to him that I had been asked to move to Houston for my job and also there had been some confidential inquiries by the Brethren to me about serving a mission (however, no call had been extended). In my interview I explained my situation to Elders McKay and Grow who spent nearly all our time asking about other brethren. I was surprised to say the least when I got a call to return that late afternoon with Kaye and was completely overwhelmed when the call of Stake President was extended. However, when given all of 3 minutes to recommend my counselors - and after praying alone with Kaye in the Stake President's office, I knew clearly and immediately who they should be - Kevin Ludlow and Joe Staples, both of whom were serving in the YSA Stake. I didn't know the Ludlow's well - but the impression and confirming spirit was clear as day to me. The revelatory experience in calling my counselors was an assurance to me that in spite of not having a premonition of my call - it was the Lord's will that I serve. I immediately contacted my boss and let him know that I wouldn't be making the move to Houston and that we would need to start a transition process to replace me as CFO.

Almost immediately after receiving to call I started to have feelings about the needs of the Stake. Included in those impressions was a desire to teach and testify of The Prophet Joseph Smith and the restoration. In our first Stake Conferences and other meetings I talked about the Prophet Joseph and it included discussions led by Ron Esplin, Stake Sunday School President, (and my relative).

I also felt a need to create a more interactive environment for our non Sacrament meetings. Somehow, we had members that attended regularly but left our meetings not having felt anything, so when appropriate - we tried to have a portion of our meetings that included discussions. We showed a Bible or other appropriate video and discussed a topic, or came down from the stand and inbred comments on a particular topic. I was amazed at the wonderful contributions and testimonies that were born. In a couple of our meetings we used the online survey tool called 'Kahoot' to start a discussion on various gospel topics.

One of the great blessings that came to our Stake early in my calling was the creation of the Single Adult Ward (ages 31 to 45) that drew from 2 Coordinating Councils - the 28 Stakes of Draper and Sandy. Pres Parker has submitted a request to the First Presidency several years before, but didn't hear back as the

brethren were studying the idea. The submission was made estimating the ward would be approximately 200 in size. The Willow Creek Stake was fortunate to have 7 wards and 4 buildings which left the little chapel on Creek Road with only the 7th ward and a natural place to locate the New SA Ward. However, I felt that it was likely to grow much larger in a short period of time and decided the Stake Center was the only building that could accommodate the parking needs. Bishop Ballif and the 9th ward were wonderful in their willingness to move from the Stake Center even though it meant a much smaller building and a bit further drive. In the first meeting of the 'Draper SA Ward' we sustained Rob Campbell of the 7th Ward as Bishop with just under 200 attending. Now, two years later the ward has a membership approaching 600 active faithful single brothers and sisters and is preparing to be divided. SA members serve at all levels of leadership in the Stake including High Council, Stake Sunday School, Relief Society, Primary and participate regularly in Stake Conference speaking assignments. They have brought with them an energy of service and missionary work as over 50 ward missionaries seek out the less active singles in the 28 home stakes from which they reside. Their meetings - especially fast and testimony meetings - are full of a powerful spirit that strengthens all in attendance.

As we counseled together as a Stake Presidency, one of the hopes we had for our Stake was that our members would take family names to the temple. I had recently done that for the first time (I'm embarrassed to say it had taken me so long to find a family name) and it had greatly deepened my temple experience. We knew that the Albion Family History Center was a significant resource to a neighboring Stake in teaching and facilitating groups including YM/YW classes, Quorums and Relief Societies to find family names. However, the Albion Center was sponsored by 4 Stakes and didn't have room for another. We called Kim Powell as the Stake Family History Leader and he went to work to get us in the door. After much prayer and persuasion, the Willow Creek Stake was invited to participate and is now a significant blessing to many as a place to go to receive help and instruction.

The Westridge Academy (originally known as Boys Ranch located in West Valley) was created by President David O McKay as a school for troubled boys. The church today doesn't sponsor the school which now includes both boys and girls, but is a significant influence at the facility through church service missionaries and branch leadership. In 2018 the Westridge Academy became a part of our Stake and we were given assignment to staff approximately 30 branch and church service missionary positions in it. Those who have attended its meetings or have been called to serve there have found it to be a great way to influence young lives. In the first few months of 2018 we had a conversation baptism, members received patriarchal blessings from Patriarch Sperry and had the youth attend the Jordan River Temple open house.

In December of 2017 President Eyring surprised Kaye and I with a call to preside over the Japan Tokyo mission. We of course were thrilled (and a little scared) to accept the assignment, however, we will miss serving with this wonderful Stake. I will particularly miss visiting with members in the Stake Presidents office - an office that has been consecrated by so many wonderful men and women who have gone before me over nearly 50 years.

As I observed Elder Wakolo and Elder Hansen call President Staples as our new Stake President, I have no doubt they acted under inspiration and called the man whom the Lord had chosen. It will be a privilege to serve under him.