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LDS Conference Center Welcomes the Faithful

by Clair Enlow

Crowds and sacred places have always gone together. Perhaps no major religious group has ever been called to accommodate so many, so well, as the Mormons.



LDS conference center. Photo: Timothy Hursley

Founded in upstate New York only a century and a half ago and based in Salt Lake City, Utah, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) now counts 11 million members around the globe, and expands at the rate of 300,000 per year.

The Salt Lake Temple and its adjoining complex of buildings is their St. Peter's, the home church for the fastest growing religion in the world. This home base is not just a place of pilgrimage and worship. It's for conferences, assemblies, concerts, pageants, and a steady stream of wedding celebrations.

There has never been enough room. But now, in a new conference center that covers most of a 10-acre (4-hectare) block, there is a lot more.

Room for the Multitudes

It's an architectural miracle. In one sweeping auditorium of unprecedented size, 21,000 faithful can sit comfortably and clearly hear the words and see the face of LDS president Gordon B. Hinkley.

Sharing the huge rostrum is seating for the



Visitors swarmed the rooftop park and terraces during the opening festivities.

Photo: Timothy Hursley

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158-member General Authorities and the 352-voice Mormon Tabernacle Choir, all backed by a gleaming 125-rank pipe organ.

For Leland Gray, senior design architect for the church, the effect of seeing the hall filled to capacity is beyond words. "I wanted make sure they all feel at home," he says. "I think we've achieved that."

POPQUIZ

He achieved it with the assistance of Portland, Oregon-based [Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership](#) as design architect and [Auerbach & Associates](#) of San Francisco, which was responsible for theater design and architectural lighting.

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