

Becoming Mormon: The Elkton Branch, 1976–81

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ON THE SECOND SUNDAY OF DECEMBER 1976, Cloyd Mullins and his two sons, Lynne Whitney and her four children, Bill and Ellen Lilley and their two small children, a pair of missionaries, and Karl Tippetts of the New Castle (Delaware) Ward bishopric held sacrament meeting in Cloyd Mullins' living room in Elkton, Maryland. They sang hymns accompanied by a recording of LDS hymns, and the missionaries spoke. "One could not help but think of that first meeting 6 April 1830, when the Church was organized and six members were present," said Lynne Whitney. "We were grateful that the many miles traveled every week to and from the New Castle Ward would be lessened. It was fitting that the first sacrament meeting be held in Ann Mullins' home. She had been a faithful member for many years. Though she died a few months before that day, it was said in more than one talk that this meeting was a fulfillment of her hopes, and her spiritual presence was felt." This scene is typical of many that take place each month in Latter-day Saint homes throughout the world. While LDS publications describe growth in millions, what is significant about that growth is the individuals who are part of it. These oral histories of the members of the Elkton, Maryland, branch typify the sacrifice and commitment that contribute to LDS expansion.

Between 1976 and 1981, the Elkton group became a dependent branch, an independent branch, and then a ward. Some converts were baptized, but most growth came as chunks of territory were transferred from the New Castle Ward to the Elkton Branch. Cloyd Mullins

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obtained an old piano from the Wilmington Ward and finished off his basement as a meeting place; but when the branch was organized in 1978, it needed a larger meeting place with classrooms. The branch rented Holly Hall, a pre-Civil War landmark in Elkton, for Sunday meetings, but weeknight meetings were held in homes or with the New Castle Ward twenty-five miles away. When Young Women, Relief Society, and Primary were added to the consolidated Sunday morning schedule in March 1980, the Elkton Branch, with ten new families recently added to its territory, was crowded indeed. The Young Women met in the kitchen, the Relief Society in a storage building. The men stood for priesthood meeting in an eight-by-ten foot room. The members prayed for good weather so that classes could be held outdoors. Then, while visiting his mother-in-law in the hospital, Cloyd Mullins heard that the Assembly of God congregation wanted to sell their church. The Wilmington Stake arranged to rent the building for a year and then to purchase it. The Elkton Branch began meeting there in November 1980, sharing the building for the first year with the Assembly of God congregation. Saints in Newark, Delaware, were added to the Elkton Branch in September 1981, and the Elkton Ward was formed. Cloyd Mullins was released as branch president, and Richard Bushman was called as bishop of the new ward.

Branch members had been proud of their accomplishments, including 90 percent visiting and home teaching during 1978. On 13 March 1979, thirteen members of the branch had made 1,902 fondant Easter eggs, earning \$2058, more than enough to pay the building expenses for the coming year. In May 1979, 75 percent of the branch turned out to plant the welfare garden. For the most part, the members of the Elkton Branch were recent converts to the Church. For them, creating and sustaining this small branch, which eventually covered four hundred square miles, paralleled the metamorphoses they felt in their own lives. Active members were forced by the smallness of the branch to be more involved than they would have been in the New Castle Ward.

In their own words, branch members offer insights into the workings of a small branch.

CLOYD MULLINS

Cloyd Mullins was the first branch president of the Elkton Branch.

We moved to Maryland probably in 1943, maybe '42. I was between six and eight years old. In Maryland, I guess everybody thought they died and went to heaven because we had central heat, we had running water, we had electricity, we cooked on gas. We didn't have to bring wood in at night; all we had to do was just mow a little lawn.

I met my wife, Ann Watson, at school. We started dating real serious in January, and we got married in July. She was seventeen, and I was nineteen. Three days after we came back from our honeymoon to the Eastern Shore, we went to Illinois and I got a job out there.

Chuckie was born the following year. About that time the elders from the Church came around during the day. When I came in from work, my wife said some gentlemen from a church had stopped by to see her and they were going to come back that evening. When they came we just sat around and talked a little bit. The next visit they taught us the first discussion. After the second discussion, I told them I wasn't interested in the church and didn't want to take any more discussions. They asked me if I minded if my wife continued on. I told them, "No. That was her freedom." So she took the lessons, and then she was baptized at the Great Lakes Naval Academy. She must have been nineteen. I went to her baptism. I didn't really want to go, but I thought a lot of her. I really loved her, and I never tried to keep her from doing things she wanted to do. I sat as far as I could in the back.

She couldn't drive at that time, so I would drive her to church. They had rented a little building right beside a park in Waukegan. I drove up in front of that little old shabby building, and there were five or six men and some women standing on the porch. I went on home and said to myself, "Boy she's got herself into some mess." When they started meeting in a town thirteen miles away from Waukegan, I used to drive her over there. It was too far for me to come back home so I would sit out in the parking lot and take care of Chuckie for a couple of hours until she came out.

She never really talked to me about the Church to pressure me, and I wouldn't have listened to her anyway. I had my own habits, and I liked to drink a little bit. She set a good example, and I was proud that she was raising the children in the manner that she was. She believed in going to church; she believed in no drinking, no smoking, no drinking coffee—just different things that I was taught we shouldn't do, but our parents did them. I just never would listen to it. I just couldn't accept Joseph Smith as a prophet.

We moved back to Easton, Maryland, from Waukegan in '59, and Ann was to go to church in Salisbury, seventy miles from home. She would go once in a while, but I never went with her. The home teachers would drive seventy miles one way to visit her. My wife made an agreement with them that a certain week of the month, she would be home on Thursday. When I came in from work, sometimes they would be there. I could see their car way off across the fields, so I'd just go back down to the horse barn until they left. Some nights I'd happen to remember that it was that Thursday they were to show up, so I'd

invite my wife uptown for a sundae or something like that. We'd come back, and there would be a note pinned on the screen: "Your home teachers were here. Sorry we missed you. Maybe we'll catch you the next time."

She'd say, "Oh my goodness, we missed the home teachers." Then we moved to Elkton, and she started going to church more frequently. If anybody came to my house who I thought was from the Church, I'd just back out the lane and wait until the car with Delaware tags had left.

Then she became ill. She had a heart stoppage, and we thought we were going to lose her. The attacks kept getting closer together. They called me to come because they didn't think she was going to make it. When I was in the lounge—just any minute I expected them to come out and say she'd passed away—I said a serious prayer (I'd only said three or four in my life). I promised that if she came out of the hospital I wouldn't drink anymore, I wouldn't smoke, I wouldn't drink coffee, and I would start going to church with her regularly. That was on the twenty-seventh of June 1964. Her brother offered me a beer. I refused that beer, and I never touched another drink after that. That was the only promise that I kept of those I made.

I decided to work two jobs until I got the hospital bill paid. It wasn't very long until I had the bills paid off. As soon as I got them paid off, I said, "I'm not going to quit. I'm going to work, and I'm going to make a downpayment for a home."

I was working at Chrysler from 3:30 or 4:00 in the evening until around 11:30 or 12:00 at night. I was working from 8:00 until 2:30 on construction work. Then on the weekends I was working as a security guard. I can remember so clearly how I stepped from the parking lot up to the curb right at the guard gate at Chrysler, and I asked myself, "What in the world am I working for?" I was just exhausted. I started talking to a Baptist boy at work about religion, just to see what he believed in.

My sister had married a Catholic and converted to the Catholic church. When she and her husband saw I was interested, my brother-in-law's uncle started telling me what they believed in. I believed in their doctrine a little more than other doctrines I heard of. My wife never talked to me about church at that time. She was expecting Danny. I would ask her questions. She wouldn't answer me as much as I thought she should. One day as we were leaving my brother-in-law's house, I said, "How about your religion?"

She said, "You're going to have to make your own decision of what religion you want to join. You can't join my religion because of me. You've got to really search out yourself and see which one you really

want and which one you can live.” She had on a green spring coat, kind of checkered. It just seemed that things were really clear to me.

Maybe the next day, this Baptist boy, Joe, was still talking to me. I went over to get some material out of a big wire basket, and it seemed like I was all by myself in that little corner. There was a fork-lift going down with one of those wire baskets on the end, and I just flipped the cigarettes out of my pocket and tossed them in that basket as it went past. I walked back over to Joe. “Joe, I’ve decided what church I’m going to join.”

“He said, “Which one’s that?”

“I’m joining the Mormon church.”

“Do you know they don’t smoke, they don’t drink coffee?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, when are you going to quit smoking?”

I said, “I just quit about five minutes ago.” I don’t remember when I smoked my last one, but I remember when I threw my pack away. I went home and told my wife I was going to join the Church.

I can remember my baptism day very plain because we were all great hunters—my dad, my brothers, my brothers-in-law. My baptism was on the first day of rabbit season. My sisters and brothers and some cousins were going to see me baptized, my father and mother, too. When I went into my brother-in-law’s to pick up my sister, there sat all the rabbit hunters. I was all dressed up, and they asked, “Where are you going? Aren’t you going hunting today?”

My brother-in-law said, “He’s going to be baptized today.”

They were all sitting there drinking beer. One of them said, “There’s nothing wrong with that.” We went on to church. The hunters went rabbit hunting.

All of my family was crying when I was baptized. Sister Arnold came up to me and said, “I never saw so many tears in my life. It was more like a funeral than a baptism.”

I didn’t accept the priesthood for over a year because I didn’t feel that I was worthy. I was just going to church, going to priesthood meeting, sitting there, and that was it. One day, the teacher read out of the scriptures that a person who doesn’t do his duty in the church is—I forget the word, but anyway it was shirking his duty, and he wasn’t looked upon with favor by the Lord. After he finished talking, we sang “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.” Within a week or two I was ordained a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood. From there on the Church just kept meaning a little more to me.

We went to the temple in 1971. Even though my wife had wanted to go to the temple, I don’t think she ever thought we would because it was so far away. I was working seven days a week, ten hours a day

most of the time because the coker had burned at Getty Oil. I told Ann, "When this is over with we're going to take us a vacation out West." She didn't believe that we were going out West until I started preparing a month before we left. I had a little shell camper on the truck. I fixed the boot and put air conditioning in it because of her health. I heard it was real hot out there. When I put the air conditioner in the truck, that's when she really knew that we were going.

When we left, she said, "Which temple are we going to be sealed in?"

I said, "The first one we come to." We were sealed in the Manti Temple in Utah.

When she became ill, she knew she wasn't going to make it like she had before. She said, "I don't want you to pity me or do anything for me that you didn't do before. I want you to be just as natural as you can around me. I don't want you driving me to the hospital for my treatments every day. I don't want you missing work because of me." I wish I had missed work. I wish I had just gone ahead and done what I felt like doing instead of trying to please her by doing what she wanted.

If I hadn't been a member of the Church and hadn't had the gospel after she died, it's hard to tell what I would have done. I probably would have neglected my family. I'd have probably got worse in drinking because I've never found anyone that I wanted to live with since her. She passed away in July of '76. I was really feeling that I had been cheated. We were happy together. I felt she was taken away right in the middle of my life where we could have really started enjoying our lives. I had a better paying job, we had our house settled down, we were making the mortgage payments.

One day Brother Ridge was giving a talk here in our meeting and he read from the Old Testament where God says that "My thoughts are greater than your thoughts. My ways are greater than your ways. My reasons are greater than yours." When Brother Ridge read that passage I kind of accepted her death a little more. A good while after that, I was sitting on the bed feeling sorry for myself. I remembered when I made the promise that I would quit drinking, I had asked the Lord if he would only spare her until Chuckie was out of high school. I never remembered that part of the prayer until then. If I had known that prayer was going to come true, I would have asked for until she was sixty or eighty. When she passed away, the responsibility of my family was on me. I had to do what she expected me to do. Danny was only nine years old. I couldn't neglect him.

Being branch president was an experience. When it was first presented to me, I started to say no. Now that it's behind me, I'm glad I

said yes. I really feel good about that calling. A lot of people think that was the hardest calling that I'll ever have, but I don't think I've had a calling that was easier—even though we had hardships and people who were burdened with their callings, trying to find meeting houses, all the meetings I had to go to, the sacrifices that Danny did for me. He would go with me in the morning, stay from 7:00 until two or three in the evening. He never complained. I think the Spirit was there with him to comfort him. The members in the branch were really strong people, and they were the ones who really did the work in the branch.

I remember the first day we had our meeting here at the house. Lynne Whitney and her children showed up. I was wondering if anybody would show up. I didn't even know how to say the sacrament prayer. I didn't know how to start it off. We have the true gospel, and I think we should practice what we preach a little more. We get on our children for not doing their chores. The Savior has given us responsibilities: do our home teaching, go to sacrament meetings, priesthood meetings, visit the sick, have family prayers, morning prayers. I'm sure he looks down on us, and he thinks probably the same as we think about our children. "Why do I have to keep telling you to do those things?"

I was over at my sister's house after Ann had passed away. They asked me, "Do you really think that you and Ann are going to be husband and wife in the hereafter?"

I said, "There's not a doubt in my mind. We're going to be married as we are right here."

So my brother-in-law said, "How about me and Lexie?"

I said, "Well, you're going to get just what you believe and what you want. Now how were you married? 'Death do you part,' Ann and I were sealed for time and eternity. There you go. You don't want to be married for time and eternity, or you would do it." There are a lot of people who want what we want, but they don't believe what we teach.

I can understand these people. I think if I had been baptized when Ann was, I don't think I could have been the branch president. I wouldn't have really understood people like I do. The Lord's been good to me. He's given me a lot of experience, and I still had the opportunity to join the Church. I can understand the wife who belongs to the Church and the husband who doesn't. I can accept that husband's ways and his beliefs because I was there once. I can understand what the wife goes through because my wife went through it. I can accept that he doesn't join the Church because he hasn't been converted yet. I have hopes that these brethren will be, because I was.

When my wife moved into Elkton, to our knowledge, she was the only Mormon in the area. I've often thought just how proud she would be if she were here now and could see the activity that there is in Elkton.

LYNNE WHITNEY

Lynne Whitney and her husband moved to Delaware in 1966 with their infant daughter, Elizabeth. The Whitney family's move to Elkton, Maryland, in 1976 contributed to the stake president's decision to organize the Elkton sacrament meeting.

I really was an active churchgoer until I was about nineteen or twenty, then I just really didn't want anything to do with it any more. After we moved out here, I realized I had to start taking the children to church. I couldn't not let them go. Of course, you know the minute you show your face inside the church, they give you a calling.

Nan Johnson, the stake president's wife, knew my family and invited us over one evening for pie and ice cream. I started going to Relief Society a little bit. My neighbor, Genevieve Richards, used to pick me up. I didn't entirely like it. I used to get kind of hostile feelings, but I knew that I couldn't not take the children to church.

Then one day somebody came over and asked me to be the Primary chorister. I had done that when I was in high school, so I said, "Well, yes, I guess I can do that." But I didn't always come. I always had excuses why I wasn't there. I was really just a reprobate. Then I stopped going for a long time. It took quite a few years for me to get back in. I had some bad habits, and I didn't want to change them. I didn't want to cause any conflict in the home. I was afraid of getting totally back into the Church again.

I just slowly started coming around. A wonderful friend helped me a lot. I came to a point in my life where everything was in shambles. There wasn't anything that was going right. That's when I really became converted, because I had to rely totally on the Lord. He helped me get through it and has continued to bless our family. I think I'll never be able to live my life good enough to pay back what he's done for me.

I served in Primary for years and years, and I was learning the gospel right along with the little children. I began to feel a real responsibility to the children—that I had to teach them properly. One time I held up a picture of Jesus in Primary, and I said, "Now this is a picture of Heavenly Father."

They all said, "No. That's a picture of Jesus." They knew more than I did.

I was each of my children's Primary teacher at some time. My husband has been irritated many times because I've been away from him and not been here. But I think we've been married long enough that that doesn't matter any more. I have to be able to do other things, just the same as he has other things that he does in his life. We've matured enough that if it's a problem, it's not a problem for very long. But in the beginning it was a problem. Every time I went to Church, he'd say, "Oh, oh, I know it. I just know you're going to get back into that church. I just know it." Well, he was right.

We adopted Elizabeth in March of 1966 and Stephen in the summer of 1967. All of a sudden I was up at night feeding a baby and washing diapers.

My parents came out to visit when we lived in North Wilmington. We were standing outside waiting for the airport limousine to pick them up when my father said, "Wait a minute. There's something I have to do before we leave. I want you all to go back in the house."

He said, "Lynne, come sit over here. I feel strongly that I must give you a blessing."

This made my mother a little uneasy. I could hear her thinking, "We don't have time to do this now."

He blessed me that I would someday have natural children, and then the limousine came and they were gone. It didn't leave my mind, but I'm not sure that I had a great deal of faith that it would happen. A year later I got pregnant. I called my father and acknowledged to him that I knew I was pregnant because of his blessing. That was the beginning of a lot of things for me.

I was really thrilled with Jane, but I didn't feel any different about her than the others. I was just thrilled to death to have the experience of being pregnant after ten years of marriage. We thought, "Well, this is a nice little family." Then a year later I got pregnant again and had Ben. We had an instant family.

One day Bishop Cross announced that Cloyd Mullins was going to start holding sacrament meeting in his home for those members of the New Castle Ward who lived in Maryland. I took my four children to sacrament meeting at his house. The children enjoyed sacrament meeting because it was very short. We went to New Castle Ward in the morning for Sunday School, then to Cloyd's in the afternoon for sacrament meeting. We weren't really a branch, just experimenting to see if it was possible.

Then the Cherrys were baptized, and the Nielsens moved into the area. We moved down to Cloyd's basement. It was freezing cold in there. When we became a dependent branch, we started meeting in

Holly Hall. The people from below the C & D Canal—the Crowes, the McVickers, the Pierces—were included then.

We had Junior Sunday School, Sunday School, and sacrament meeting. The Young Men and Young Women went to the New Castle Ward for their meetings. We had Primary, but then we had to stop because we didn't have enough people to staff everything. Having home Primary didn't work out. We had a good Junior Sunday School, but we just couldn't do any more. Everybody was just loaded with jobs. I helped with the singing in Junior Sunday School, then I'd run in and do the singing in Sunday School or play the piano. I taught a Sunday School class and a Primary class during the week and helped in Relief Society. It was too much! I was also teaching a Relief Society class in the New Castle Ward during the week for working women.

Then we became an independent branch, and we really got too big for Holly Hall. When we moved into the building we have now, we only filled up a couple of benches. We began to have Primary again in Marcia Nielsen's home. Finally, one day the Bushmans came to church, and I couldn't figure out why they were there. They announced that he was our new bishop, and we've been a ward ever since.

I try not to disagree with anything at Church because I used to disagree so much that I think if I started doing that again I would be *damned*. I would never come out of that. I just don't allow myself to get upset about comments or remarks.

When we had to stop having Primary in the branch, I felt very bad. I bore my testimony and said, "We just have to find a way to have it. We'll find a way, and we'll do it."

Then another woman got up and said, "I'm sorry that we're not going to have Primary, but when President Mullins says we're not going to have Primary, that means we're not going to have Primary."

One of my sisters who's not very active was here visiting at the time. When we got home she said, "Lynne, didn't that upset you that she said that? That was like saying, 'You shouldn't have said what you said.'"

I said, "No, that didn't upset me." But I think some people feel if a member of the priesthood says something, that's *it*, that's the final word. I think women have a right to express their ideas even though maybe in the end the priesthood will have the final word.

ELLEN LILLEY

Ellen and William Lilley, both natives of Newark, Delaware, were also present at the first meeting held in Cloyd Mullins' home and were active in the Elkton Branch until 1981.

Bill and I were two of the original group who met at Cloyd Mullins' home. We weren't even the Elkton Branch yet. We had lived in Pleasant Hill, Maryland, when the idea was conceived. When they finally brought us all together, we had moved, right over the Delaware line. There were so few priesthood holders out that way that they asked us to help start the sacrament meeting in Elkton.

Bill was convinced sooner than I that what the missionaries had to say was true. Finally, Elder Fenton, the missionary who taught us, said something that really touched me, and I was convinced that what they had to say was true. He asked us if we said prayers.

I said, "Well, yes, but not every day. I've always felt my little problems are not of that much importance. Heavenly Father has so many more important things, to look after." I said "thank you" prayers, for instance, when I saw something in nature that was really beautiful. I was holding Robert who was just three or four months old. I usually had to rock him the whole time we were having the discussions.

Elder Fenton said to me, "You know how much you love that baby. I'm sure you're going to love all the children you have just as much as this one. You're not going to love this one more than the others. That's how our Heavenly Father loves you. Even though there are a lot of children, he's interested in everything that happens to you—not just the extraordinary things—just as you and your husband are interested in everything that's going to happen to your son."

That really struck home. I think that convinced me that what they had to say was true. Bill and I were baptized in October 1973 in the New Castle Ward.

Having been an only child, I had never been around children. I still find it very hard to know how to deal with things. What's normal? What's beyond what I should put up with? That's what I enjoyed about Relief Society. I could get another opinion on all these homemaking things—or at least realize that I was not the only one with a problem. I guess I have a real need for what Relief Society has to offer. It's the only place I've found that I can get that.

I enjoyed being the chorister for Primary, too, because I like to sing. I was a Sunday School teacher, too, of seven-year-olds. That helped me get my mind functioning again. At first I had to write down everything I wanted to say. Then, as time went on, I had to jot down only a word or two. I became more at ease in front of children. It helped me a lot because I am a quiet person. That little push was good for me, and the LDS people, as a whole, are very understanding because they know that their turn to stand up in front is coming. They're not too critical. Church callings showed me that I could do a lot of things I didn't think I could do.

There were a lot of times that I think it really took away from time that I needed to put toward my family. My husband found that it was really too much for him to do. A lot of negative feelings were generated. I think going to the consolidated schedule was for the better, but I did enjoy it when Relief Society was on a weekday. Getting everybody up, dressed, and out the door on Sunday was very hard. When we finally came home, everybody was starved to death and fighting and fussing. Instead of an up feeling, we ended up with a negative experience.

We've been inactive for four years now. The first two years we lived the Word of Wisdom, but gradually we crept back into coffee and tea. When my husband was laid off, we had unemployment insurance and he found a temporary job, but our income was a lot lower than it had been. We did have things stored, because of the teachings of having a year's supply, although it wasn't a full year's supply. It did help us at that time, but we didn't have everything we needed. We did can some and buy bulk goods at sales, but a whole year's supply of everything was too much for me to handle. We have slid from having Family Home Evening, too, but that's another positive thing about the Mormon church — that little push to spend time with your kids doing something together.

I think the home teachers are wonderful. We have not been to church in four years, and our home teacher still comes. My visiting teachers get here a lot, too. They don't always make it, but I understand because I've been on the other end. I know how hard it is. It helps you get to know some of the other members. You might see them on Sunday morning, but actually being in their homes, you get a better idea of what they're really like.

There are a lot of things that I admire about the Mormon church and the Mormon religion — things that I think our society needs and that I need as an individual. I also think there are an awful lot of expectations that are really hard.

My mother had a discussion about churches with another lady where she works. My mother said that her daughter had joined the Mormon church. The lady said, "Oh! I've always admired people that can be in the Mormon church. It's too hard for me. I know I couldn't live that." She was an active member of a church, and religion was important in her life. That's kind of how I feel about it.

I wasn't used to the whole idea that you have to do all these things or you're not going to be sent to the celestial kingdom. Having come into the Church at twenty-five and progressing from there, I feel it is insurmountable, that I'm never going to get there, so why should I even try? I do think there's a lot of love taught in the Mormon church.

Besides the belief that God cares about each one of us, we were very impressed by the concern of the people for each other.

Maybe I need to learn not to shut out but to postpone a lot of the things that we're required to do. I feel going to church should give an uplift so we can get through all the worldly confrontations of the next week. Sometimes, with the Mormon church I feel, personally anyway, a negative input. I feel like I'm being told, "Well, you should be doing this and this, too, and you're not." I guess I just have to learn to deal with it—just to put off some of it for now. Perhaps that's what we're supposed to do, and I hadn't realized that until now.

STEPHEN CHERRY

Stephen and Bonita Cherry were baptized in September 1977 and are considered to be the first converts of the Elkton Branch.

In high school I was president of the Future Farmers of America club, and then I was state vice-president of the FFA. I went to the University of Delaware to study agriculture. After I received my associate's degree, I worked on a ranch in Texas for about a year. It was probably the best time of my single life. I knew I would have to have a lot of money to own my own ranch, so I gave it up and came back. I should have given as much effort to my school work as I did to not making any effort. I was a B student, but I never studied. I'm a good writer, I think, but I'm bad at grammar. When I send a letter out to a bishop or a Young Men's president, it bothers me because I know something's not right in that letter.

When I met my wife, Bonita, I was working on her car at the gas station. I still had the idea of becoming an independent businessman. I worked in a restaurant to see how that was. I didn't like it at all—the hours, the pay, the people. Avon had an excellent reputation as a good place to work. I decided to apply for a job there. I've been working on the loading docks for about seven years. A year ago Avon first approached me about going into management. I was a happy, proud blue-collar worker. I had always been able to speak my mind. Other people looked to me to indicate how to react to a policy decision. About a year ago, I started feeling that I need to start using my mind rather than my body. I have been doing that in my Church responsibilities. About four months ago, I began interviews with the twelve department heads. They were really impressed with the responsibilities I had in Church and in the Boy Scout program. By the end of their interviews, they emphasized that I need not worry about having just an associate's degree because of my church experience.

A year after I had our house built, I was working in the yard one day, and noticed Bonita talking to two young people, who I thought might be insurance agents. While Bonita was talking to them, she said, "If you're going to get Stephen interested at all, you're going to have to overcome the fact that he thinks people who go to church are hypocrites. Stress that just because you pray for something, it doesn't necessarily mean you're going to get it." As we sat talking out on the back porch, they hit those points real quick. We found out two years after we joined the Church that Bonita's mom and dad had sent the missionaries to us. They never joined, but her father saw the possibility of this church's helping our relationship. I guess we were baptized four months after the initial visit.

We went to the New Castle Ward at first. About two and a half months after we began receiving instruction, we were told about a meeting over at Cloyd Mullins' on Sunday afternoons. I had envisioned a Bible study group sitting around talking about scriptures. It was a full sacrament meeting with tape recorded piano music and about twenty people. I was sort of surprised.

When the missionaries said that I shouldn't smoke a pipe, I was concerned. I asked to see the bishop, because I really didn't want to stop smoking. It took about three weeks to get the appointment. By that time I knew we were going to join the Church. The appointment was at ten o'clock. I smoked my pipe at nine o'clock. I told Bishop Cross of my concerns about that and tithing. We spoke for a while, and he asked, "Have you stopped smoking?"

I said, "Yes, Bishop, I've stopped." I haven't smoked since. We were ready. We knew the Church was going to be good for us. It wasn't any problem at all to stop smoking. I still have my pipe in the house. Every once in a while I smell it and hold it.

The Elkton Branch was a typical struggling branch. We lost some members because they had so many callings and responsibilities, but it tested our mettle. It made us appreciate our responsibilities. The buck didn't stop at someone else; it stopped at us. The members who stayed really grew from those experiences. I think a lot of those who fell away have regrets, but their pride is in their way. As a ward, we seem to have lost that "buck stops here" attitude. A lot of the parents don't support the youth programs as they should. That's true throughout the stake. The uniqueness of the Elkton Ward is that we have a variety of people, but we're respectful of each other. We appreciate each other. I don't notice that we have cliques. I don't hear much backbiting here in Elkton. We're a good little ward as far as having basic decency towards other human beings.

I remember telling Bonita just before we joined the Church, “I hope I never have to deal with all those young people because I wouldn’t know how to handle that.” My first calling was as the branch clerk. I had an opportunity to sit in on branch presidency meetings but didn’t actually make any decisions. I was called as Young Men’s president about a year after my baptism. The first Sunday, I asked Scott McAlees and Jimmy Andrews, “What does it take to be a good advisor? I have no idea. I want you to tell me.”

They said, “You have to be honest with us and care about us and get us to do things.” I guess that was my basis for my work with the Young Men. When the boundaries were changed, we had more young men. There were six deacons who were terrors. They were soon going to become teachers, and I had to teach the teachers and priests. I went to the Boy Scout Council to see if they had any sort of program for the older boys because these six boys were losing interest in scouting. They said there was a new program called Varsity Scouting and that our district was one of nineteen that had been selected to pilot the program. We chartered the first Varsity Scout Team in the Delmarva Council. We had to play it by ear a lot. It was a nice program because it taught delegation and gave the boys leadership opportunities. We did all kinds of things. We went to Florida. Danny Mullins, Craig Morris, Tommy Young, Bentley Stanton, and Steve Whitney became Eagle Scouts and we re-activated Arvie Wrang. Serge Bushman earned one merit badge with us, but he really earned his Eagle in the New Castle Ward.

The day I was released as Young Men’s president I had an eighteen-month calendar, and I was ready for an easy time because three of the boys had become Eagles, and we were planning all kinds of neat things to do after that. I just didn’t feel that I should be on the high council. It took two years to overcome that insecurity. When President Johnson called me to it, he charged me to develop Varsity Scouting in all the wards and branches. It took three years, but this September every ward had a chartered team. About two weeks ago President Johnson told me, “We called you on the advice of the regional representative. He said that we needed someone in that position who had worked with the program and had been successful.” He knew of my bitterness at being released as Young Men’s president and said, “We gave up one Young Men’s president, but we gained a person who has developed five Varsity coaches.” I’m in the same position now as I was when I propped my feet up on the table and had that eighteen-month calendar.

When I need to do something better, I’ll agonize over it for two or three months, or six months, but then I master it. It’s happened

four times since I joined the Church. The first one was overcoming society and becoming LDS. The next was being branch clerk. I've been a very outspoken person, never very humble. I agonized over some of the things that I saw being done in the branch. Even though I had only been a member for a couple of months, I thought they were wrong. I just woke up one morning and became a branch clerk—the way I felt a branch clerk was supposed to be. That humbled me and has helped me at Church and home, not worrying about every little thing.

The third was agonizing over not having children. That was a four-year torment. Bonita would cry at Mother's Day and Christmas. Near the end, before we got Shiloh, I was the one who was weak and she was strong. I asked for a priesthood blessing. I had exercised all the other options. I knew the journey was just about ended, but I was worn out. I'd only received one blessing, right after the explosion at Avon. When I received a blessing after the explosion, I received miracles and the assurance of the Holy Ghost. Four months later we got word about Shiloh.

The fourth time was this past summer. I felt inferior to the people around me. I agonized over that for a long time. I prayed and went about the normal responsibilities as best I could, even though something was missing. I have never asked to be released. That's not the way out. Then I just woke up one morning without that feeling.

If I had to see my Heavenly Father right now I would say I'm failing miserably in missionary work. I just don't have any desire to do it like I should. I give presentations on Varsity Scouting to civic organizations—Kiwanis, police athletic leagues, Catholic church administrators. The first thing I say is that this is an LDS originated program. All the Delmarva Council knows that Steve Cherry's LDS. I'm spreading the word that way, but I have never given a Book of Mormon to one of my co-workers. I need to sit down and analyze it. This might be the next thing I'll break through on.

I feel that our church is a church on the offense. We score points. We are not trying to play catch-up. Thursday night Ron Adamson and I drove down to Salisbury. We didn't have to, because there are only six Seminary students there. But if we hadn't, we would have been on the defensive because they would have said, "Well, you know, they didn't come." That is my hard core, what keeps Steve Cherry going, testimony. Either I'm on the offense or defense with my family. Do I anticipate things or am I always trying to play catch-up? I have a little book where I write down things to follow up. I can be anywhere when a solution to a problem comes to me. I take my religion very seriously, but I don't let it burden me.

TOM ROBINSON

Tom and Joey Robinson joined the Church in Germany in 1971 when Tom was in the Navy. A boundary change in December 1979 made them members of the Elkton Branch. Tom was made elders' quorum president and Joey the president of the Primary.

Joey and I had a great time overseas. We got to go to Amsterdam, Copenhagen, London, Rome, Venice, Paris, Florence, and the Riviera. I guess the greatest thing that happened to us during our three and a half years in Europe was joining the Church.

Joey worked for the U.S. Army in the accounting office, and one lady with whom she worked was LDS. She invited us over to her apartment. The second time we went, two gentlemen with short haircuts and white shirts and ties who spoke fluent German were there. That in itself intrigued us. They said they sold "life insurance." If anyone inquired about my work, I had to turn in their names for an investigation. When they came by our house three days later, I knew who they were. They came in and said again, "We sell life insurance."

I said, "What kind of life insurance do you sell?"

"Eternal life insurance."

I said, "Is that right? Now that's a different approach than I've ever heard from missionaries."

Then I told them their mission president's name, and I said, "You have 176 missionaries in Germany."

They said, "No, we only have 172."

I said, "That's wrong. Four more came in two days ago." They gave us the discussions, and six weeks later we were baptized in the swimming pool at the Y.

We were very much ready for it. Joey was an Episcopalian and I was a Methodist, but we had come up with a "Robinson Religion," I suppose. We already knew many of the principles which they presented. At the time we got married, Joey and I had asked the rector if we were going to be married just for time? He had said, "Well, those are the words we use, but of course, we don't know what comes after death." We really couldn't get any answers. When the missionaries flipped the chart over and started talking about eternal marriage, that was it—preexistence, earth life, and afterlife, like a light bulb coming on. We were baptized 17 April 1971. There were fifty-three people in our branch, and fifty-three were active. When we came back to the United States in 1973, we were flabbergasted to see twenty-four or twenty-five percent home teaching and thirty-four percent activity.

Our first Sunday in the New Castle Ward, they sang "America the Beautiful." Joey and I stood up and belted it out. The bishop smiled.

Afterwards he walked off the stand and said, "We haven't met, but my name is Bishop O'Day."

I said, "We're really glad to meet you. You're the first bishop we've ever met."

When President Johnson, at that time a counselor in the stake presidency, interviewed me, I said, "Have you ever been in a military branch? We attended a conference in Berchtesgaden, Germany, in the Bavarian Alps for all the LDS members in Europe, Turkey, and Northern Africa. They brought over Brother Hinckley, President Tanner, and Brother Benson. There were 612 of us who had never been in such a large group of Saints. The spirit was so strong that it could have pushed the walls out. To come back to the States and find 138 duds sitting on pews is just amazing. Somebody has got to light some fire under these people." They made me a seventy, ward mission leader, and stake mission president all on one hand raise.

As I was about to go out the front door one night, Joey yelled down to me from the living room, "I hate you. I hate the Church. And I hate you going out as much as you do." That was the low point. I was splitting with the missionaries twice a week, plus home teaching. I really didn't understand why Joey couldn't understand. "I'm doing all these things for the Church. Why are you upset?" She was sitting home with a six-year-old, a four-year-old, a two-year-old, and a two-month-old. Of course she was upset. Slowly, with her help, I began to understand that the Church is going to keep rolling forward with or without me. At first I really didn't understand that I was doing something wrong by spending too much time in the service of the Church.

When the Wilmington Stake was organized, President Johnson became stake president, and I was the stake mission president. I can remember President Johnson once saying at the beginning of our monthly personal priesthood interview, "How many times have you been out this week, Brother Robinson?"

My counselors were on either side of me, and his counselors were on either side of him. I said, "This is the fourth night I've been out this week."

He said, "It's time for the closing prayer." We had a closing prayer, and we went home. That made an impact on me.

I was the New Castle Ward mission leader when Steve Cherry became a member of the Church, and I was his home teacher when he was burned in the fire. Bishop Cross and I went up to give Steve a blessing. He looked like a mummy, and they said there was a good chance he would die; but the bishop blessed him not only that he would live but that every part of his body would be made whole. Today, he's grown new skin on his hands, skin on his face. He and

Bonita had a child! When that blessing was given, I said to myself, “I know he gave it through the Priesthood, and I know we laid our hands on his head,” but I took that one strictly on faith.

There are some times when even though individuals are given callings with the keys and responsibilities of those callings, they don’t act by virtue of the calling that they have. Instead of the Church being run by the spirit, sometimes it’s run by men. I was elders’ quorum president when Elkton became a ward, and I can remember saying, “Brethren, there will be only one person who will chastise this quorum.” Maybe this doesn’t sound humble; but in my estimation, when it comes time for a quorum as a whole to be chastised, that should only come from the president. There were at that time a number of black people investigating the Church, and we had no black members in the ward. The revelation had been received, but there were a number of jokes being told within the quorum that were literally off-color. Right in Church! I chastised the quorum for doing that. I wasn’t going to put up with it. As a quorum president, it was my responsibility to counsel them not to do those things. It’s just like when someone is considered by the high council for a calling, and right away someone brings up, “Well, you know that individual doesn’t pay income tax.” They don’t get a call in the Church. If people continue to do these things after they’ve been counseled, they get released. We don’t wait any longer for them to grow when it’s detrimental to the other members.

JOEY ROBINSON

When I first called my parents and told them we had joined the Church, my mother said, “Oh, they got you, did they?”—like Hare Krishna, or something. Then she said, “Where did I go wrong?”

I didn’t expect that at all. I’d called up with jubilation, and all of a sudden I got, “Where did I go wrong?”

Now, I think my mother admires and agrees with a lot of what we do, but she agrees with it because she thinks it’s a good idea, not because she has a testimony. She doesn’t believe that Heavenly Father and Jesus came to Joseph Smith. One thing she often says is that as a people we live the way we say we’re going to live. It took her a long while to realize that being a Mormon is not just a Sunday religion; it’s a whole routine.

One day after we joined the Church, I was in the PX looking at dresses with my friends from church, and they said, “Oh, but you can’t wear that one with garments.”

I didn’t say anything, but I went to the next one and I said, “Isn’t this one cute?”

It was another sleeveless one, and they said, “Oh yeah, but you couldn’t wear that because of garments.” It went on and on. Finally, I said, “What are you talking about?” It was a shock to me that someone would dictate to me what I could wear. I had a long discussion with the missionaries on that. I said, “Okay, if I have a testimony of the Church, I don’t have a testimony of part of it, and if the Church is true and right, then the things that come from it are true and right.” I’m still not sure I totally understand, but I understand it enough to accept it.

My first Church calling was Sunday School pianist. Of course, I didn’t know how any of the hymns were supposed to sound. I hadn’t taken piano lessons since I was about fourteen. There was a particular week that I practiced and practiced and I just couldn’t get it. I started crying and banging on the piano. Finally, I just asked the Lord to help me. I learned from that that the Lord never said, “Do everything.” He said, “Do all you can do.”

When we came back to Delaware, we lived in New Castle on The Strand, along the river, which was my parents’ second home. They allowed us to pay minimal rent for taxes and water while Tom went to the University of Delaware. We have stayed here because my mother is here, and Tom’s parents are here. Even if Tom were to be offered twice what he makes right now, I wouldn’t move. I just can’t put pricetags on the relationships that my children have with their grandparents. Six years ago after we moved into our house in Bear, they changed the boundaries and put us into the Elkton Branch. I panicked when I knew I was going to be changed to Elkton because I had said so many times to Cloyd Mullins, who was the branch president, “I don’t understand why you don’t have a Primary. You should have a real Primary. Boy if I was there, you’d have one.” I was asked to be Primary president the first week.

I came to a crossroad in my life as far as organizing my Church time and my family time when I was Primary president. I was doing all these wonderful things. We were starting a newsletter for the kids. Half the time the teachers weren’t there so I had to teach, and then I had to play the piano because the music person wasn’t there. So one day, I went in to see Cloyd Mullins. I walked up to the chalkboard, and I drew a line right down like this—Zzzzzip. A little tiny side of the board was on one side, and then all the rest was on the other. I said, “Do you know what that is?”

He said, “What?”

I said, “See that big area right there?”

He said, “Yeah.”

I said, “That’s all the time I spend on Primary. All the time I spend. All the time!” I said, “See that little area right there?”

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "That's the time I have left for myself and my family. I want to be released. I cannot keep doing it."

You know what he said? "Nobody asked you to."

All of a sudden it came to me. I was this great big locomotive chugging down the track of righteousness right to self-destruction. They were righteous things and they were good things, but my life wasn't balanced. From that time on there were several people in the branch who probably thought I was going to become the Devil's Advocate because they'd ask me to do something and I'd say, "Sorry." We wiped out the newsletter. We wiped out everything we didn't need and started over with what we had to have.

At this time, I was spending a great deal of time on losing weight. It dominated my brain. I've never been little. I regret that during my pregnancies with Jenny and Mark I was so big. By the time I was up to 255 pounds, everything was just too hard. I would ask Tom, "Would you go get me a glass of soda," and I'd sit. One day I determined that I want to be here to see my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, whatever. I was killing myself. Tom never complained—never made any hints at all. After I lost twenty pounds, I took a picture to put on my refrigerator, and nobody now can believe that it was me. It took me a while, but I lost about a hundred pounds. It took a tremendous amount of self-discipline. I noticed (it's not something I can stand up in Relief Society and say) that I was much more receptive and spiritual after doing it. The discipline in dieting is only a jump toward disciplining yourself in something else.

Since we came to New Castle, from day one, Tom's always been in leadership positions. We had always done everything together. All of a sudden having him out in the evenings and me sitting home and "supporting" was a whole new thing. People who'd grown up in the Church were used to their father going out or their mother going out; my parents never did that.

One night it came to a head. He was standing down on the landing and I was standing up in the living room. I said, "I can't take this anymore. I can't live with you and I can't live without you, but if something doesn't change, I'm going home."

I can't put my finger right on what happened, but in Family Home Evening he'd say, "I'm going to go home teaching Thursday night, is that okay?" He started planning and keeping a calendar. It wasn't "Oh, yeah! I have to go out tonight."

Tom and I never really had hard, hard times. I remember hearing people say, "I can't go out visiting teaching because I don't have the money for gas." I'd think, "A dollar for gas, come on." Then boom.

DuPont merged two departments, and Tom was out the back door because he was low man on the totem pole. He couldn't find a job right away, so he worked for the National Guard and made several hundred dollars less a month than what we needed. We'd just moved into a new house. I really gained an appreciation for the fact that some people don't have a dollar for gas, some people don't have a dollar to put food on the table. It's been a long time coming out of the big hole that we were in. I think the reason that we didn't is because we did pay our tithing. That's another lesson in self-control.

Being a teenager is probably one of the most traumatic things that ever happened to me. I keep that in mind with Dawn, who will be thirteen in April. As a child, I read a lot of Bible story books, and I thought I wanted to be a minister. Then all of a sudden, I went totally in the opposite direction. My parents had taught me that I should do things because that's what good little girls did. I couldn't see why I couldn't make a choice. That's the way I approached being a teenager. I did things because it was what I wanted to do. Just the reasons, "Well, good little girls don't do that," or "That's just the right thing to do," all of a sudden weren't enough.

That's where I hope that I have an edge with Dawn because we're talking eternity and eternal consequences, soul-binding consequences, not just the only consequences I was ever given.

DEBORAH JOHNSTON

Deborah Johnston moved into the Elkton Ward one week after it became a ward in 1981. She was soon made a counselor in the Relief Society, and a year later became Relief Society president with Joey Robinson as one of her counselors.

I was excited about moving here from California because I was going to be able to see my parents, and the kids were going to get to know their grandparents and my part of the family. The home that we happened to find was in the Elkton Branch. I told Gary, "I grew up in a branch. It doesn't really make any difference to me. They might not have a full program because there aren't as many people, but I turned out fine."

I joined Gary here the week after the branch became a ward. Moving in, I didn't realize that everybody had to learn to know each other. I thought I was the outsider. I found that Elkton Ward was made up of people who had moved here from other places and who had had to make it home. There is a very small group that has been here for a long time.

Years ago, the missionaries came around and taught my mom and dad the gospel. A missionary couple from Idaho wanted them to be

baptized before they went home. My dad said, "Well, if we ever decide, we'll come out to Idaho to be baptized." That sounds like a cop-out, but my mom and dad continued studying. They went to their minister and asked him the questions that they had about the Godhead. They always say it was the minister who convinced them that what the missionaries were saying was right. They went to Idaho and were baptized.

A couple of years later, they went back to Idaho to be sealed in the temple; I was about four years old. We lived in Keyser, West Virginia, when my dad was made president of a branch which met in Cumberland, Maryland. Because my Dad spent more time at Church than he did at home or even at work, we moved to Cumberland, Maryland. I loved the song "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel" when I was a child. We had to make and sell doughnuts to earn more money to build a church. That song always reminds me of the pioneers, and it brings back what I did as a child. I felt I was a pioneer, too.

I wanted to go to BYU because there were only one or two LDS kids in my whole high school. Gary and I were in the same branch. That he was there every Sunday and passed the sacrament impressed me. My major was microbiology, and I wanted to minor in computers. I wanted to work as a lab technician in a hospital, and I knew that they used computers a lot for the testing. But they informed me that if you major in microbiology you have to minor in chemistry. I found that difficult. I liked organic chemistry, but I had to take microbiology twice. I got an A the second time around. I was in classes with all the premed students. I'd finished at the top of my class in high school, but I found BYU a challenge. I was in with a lot of very smart people. I always thought that I would finish college, but Gary and I were married the summer after he graduated. I had completed two and a half years.

I was always determined to marry in the temple. Growing up in the branch, I saw a lot of part-member families, and I knew that I wanted to be married in the temple to someone who was active in the Church. I still feel it would be better not to be married at all than to marry someone who is not active in the Church. My life now is what was my dream: living in a nice home in a suburb with a yard, having children, and having my husband go off to work at a day job. I enjoy making my house clean and presentable, but being Relief Society president conflicts with it. This morning I spent three hours talking to one of the new members. The bishop asked me to find out what her problems are. I brought along the tape recorder, and while I talked with her my three children and the two I babysit sat on the front steps listening to stories.

The spiritual part of being Relief Society president I find difficult. I'm not experienced enough to have all the wisdom and answers for

everybody, but I do enjoy trying to make the organization more functional, to have better socials, better visiting teaching. When the bishop asked me what one thing I wanted to learn from being Relief Society president, I said it was to have . . . love for the sisters. I'm not one to go up and put my arm around somebody, not that I don't think about it, but some people can do that more naturally. Working with people who have problems has made me more understanding. I can see other people's points of view, but when you start understanding everybody's opinion, you sometimes forget where the line is, where the iron rod is. Sometimes I feel wishy-washy. Besides organizing and doing things better, my personal goal is to be more compassionate, to be as the Savior is, to learn what charity really is. It might take a lifetime to accomplish, but I think I'm aware of it now.

Our ward building has an impact on the running of the ward because things aren't so set. I think it's affected me. I used to be a lot more organized, but the library is in the other building and we don't have a Relief Society closet—we share one downstairs with the janitor.

I think maybe the Elkton Ward is a little more laid back, more relaxed about things. Those of us who like to see things cut and dried and organized have had to stand back and take a look at why we're really doing the things we're doing. It's not just paperwork; we're working with people. I've been learning not to take on running this church like a business. We have to work more closely with each other because we don't have the set system and the equipment that make it run smoothly. I think we're a little bit more casual.

Some of that has to do with having been a branch. I've heard people who were in the branch say that everybody in the congregation used to be able to stand up at Fast and Testimony meeting. Well, now sometimes you have to kind of fight for your chance to stand and bear your testimony.

The branch never had supervisors and districts for visiting teaching. The Relief Society president called all the visiting teachers for their reports. Now it's bigger, and it's more organized. Some people say, "Well, it was never done that way before. So why do it?" It's hard to fight against that. We don't have twenty sisters in the ward; we have 150. You can't keep track just by calling them all up every week. I feel I'm just now getting things changed to the way Relief Society should be. I find it hard to have to think of everything that needs to be done to make it organized.

Visiting teaching was easier in California because people were closer together. We went visiting teaching whether or not they wanted us to come. Even if we couldn't get in and we just said, "Hi" at the door, we always got 100 percent. I hear so many times, "Well, I've got a bad

route,” or “They’re difficult,” or “They don’t want to see me.” There are women in “spiritual rags” just like the prophet said. They should have the privilege of wearing the robes that we have. We need to go into those homes, and we need to make the effort. Sure it’s discouraging that they don’t want to accept it, but I don’t think we should take that personally. Would you ask the Lord, “Do you really want me to keep going to visit these people?” Yes, he does. They’re his children. They deserve the knowledge of the gospel. They need that influence, whether they accept it or not. Before I was Relief Society president, I always did it because I was asked to do it and it was my duty, but now I see the purpose.

If we burn out, if it’s not a happy way of life, if after ten years of serving you don’t want to come to church any more, that’s not the way it should be. I don’t know what the answer is because, well, I feel the pressure. I don’t get to do all the things I want to do. But I think we have to realize that the gospel is what’s true. It’s the gospel! That’s why people join the Church.

The experiences of these Elkton Branch members exemplify the interface between individuals and the institution of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As branch members worked to make the branch function, they also transformed themselves into individuals capable of sustaining and operating a church organization. The costs—in terms of time, energy, and family relationships—seemed overwhelming. Some members chose not to continue; others found ways to accommodate the demands of church activity. New converts in the branch anticipated some life changes, such as keeping the Word of Wisdom and accepting other doctrines. But they were less prepared for others, such as accepting the priesthood, wearing temple garments, taking leadership roles in the organization, and spending evenings and weekends doing church work. The life changes which branch members like Stephen Cherry made also led to significant changes in their lives outside of the church.

Baptisms and new families moving into the area continued to swell the membership of the Elkton congregation after it was made a ward in 1981. In January 1988, the Smyrna Branch was created from the southern part of the Elkton Ward and part of the Dover Ward. In November 1989, the Elkton Ward moved into a new building in Newark, Delaware, and became the Newark Ward. In March 1990, the eastern portion of the Newark Ward combined with part of the Wilmington West Ward to create the Christiana Ward. In November 1991, the Rising Sun Branch was organized from the western part of Cecil County, Maryland. The day the new branch was organized, the

stake president asked Lynne Whitney to bear her testimony. She walked to the pulpit from her place behind the organ, smiled, and said, "Everyone should have a branch experience at least once. I'm fortunate to have it twice."

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