

## **Rochester Minnesota Stake Presidents and Patriarchs: 1996-2021**

The Rochester Minnesota Stake Center is located at 2300 Viola Heights Drive near the intersection of Viola Road and East Circle Drive in the northeast section of the city of Rochester and at that time was part of the North America Central Area. The Stake boundaries in 1996 included parts of Wisconsin, Minnesota and a small section of Iowa in the Fairmont Branch. It is interesting to note that the total membership of the Stake at the end of the third quarter of 1995 (end of volume one) was 3,436. In comparison, the total membership at the end of the third quarter of 1996 (Start of Volume two) dropped to 2,845. This is due to the loss of the Faribault and Redwing units in 1996. At the close of 2001, membership of the stake was 3000. In the fourth quarter of 2006, stake membership was at 3,134 members.

### **President Richard A. Robb**

Richard A. Robb continued as Stake President along with Frank L. Odd and Martian S. Robinette as his counselors. It was under President Robb's leadership that a Rochester Stake History was created. This history was completed by Sister Veryl Firl and published in 1995. The stake presidency was released on November 12, 1996.



Front Row L to R: First Counselor Frank Odd, Stake President Richard Robb, Second Counselor Martin Robinette  
Back Row L to R: Executive Secretary Weldon Whipple and Stake Clerk Jim Hoag

## **President Darrell Krueger**

### **Years of Service: November 1996 to December 2004**



L to R: First Counselor Thomas Spackman, Stake President Darrell Krueger, and Second Counselor John Ferrara

Darrell W. Krueger was sustained as the new Rochester MN stake president on November 12, 1996. President Krueger's counselors were Thomas N. Spackman as First Counselor and John R. Ferrara as Second Counselor. In 1998 there were 15 units in the Rochester Minnesota Stake. In the year 2000, there were 14 units with several satellite units and a total of 2,735 members in the stake. On December 5, 2004, President Krueger was released along with his counselors.

In 2022, President Krueger shared the following thoughts of his service as Stake President:

Working as a stake presidency was a great joy. We studied the scriptures together and made all decisions in harmony. We never moved forward unless we were in agreement. We focused on watchcare to start with. We encouraged more fast offerings, more scripture reading and prayer. We focused on and encouraged members to love God. We created new branches in La Crosse, Preston, Dodge City, Albert Lea, New Ulm and Prairie du Chien. We created a new ward, the 4th ward, in Rochester. We promised the sisters in the stake if they would have daily personal worship their lives would be greatly blessed. I went to five training sessions with members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and deepened my understanding of the gospel. We focused on being temple workers and attending the temple. We operated the Chicago temple two different times going for twenty-four-hours night and day, supplying all the ordinance workers and patrons from our stake. We performed 2600 ordinances in one day. There was a lot of travel and God blessed us in our travels. The stake grew in dedication, activity and commitment to God.

Throughout my life I have been blessed with many great and wonderful spiritual experiences. When I travel around the stake and to meetings in St. Paul and other places, I listened to the scriptures and conference talks. Often impressions came to me about the wards and branches and individual members of the stake. I was given direction on my talks and leadership direction. Many of these impressions are so sacred that they should not be shared, but one should be shared and that was what came at the final session of our 24-hour operation of the Chicago Temple. Nancy and I were the officiator and follower. When it came time for the prayer circle, I asked those to come forward that wanted to participate. Everyone in the room stood to participate. The whole room was surrounded. As I knelt to pray, the Spirit of God enveloped the room and each person was individually touched by that Spirit. To me it was a confirmation that our service and sacrifice was accepted by the Lord. The blessings of serving as stake president and the inspiration and guidance I felt will never be forgotten. My heart was filled with love. My mind was enlightened and the Holy Ghost confirmed to me what I should say and do.

### **President Thomas Spackman**

**Years of Service: December 2004 to January 2009**



L to R: First Counselor Robert Foote, Stake President Thomas Spackman and Second Counselor Brian Cragun

On December 5, 2004, Thomas Spackman was sustained as the new Rochester Stake President along with Robert Foote and Brian Cragun as first and second counselors respectively. Due to a new Job in Florida, President Spackman and his counselors were released on January 25, 2009. As a special note, within five months of moving to Jacksonville, Florida, President Spackman was called again to serve as a Stake President of the Jacksonville East Stake.

On December 28, 2008, under the direction of President Spackman, a combined meeting of the four Rochester wards was held. A letter was sent out from the Stake Presidency which read in part "...we are very grateful for the faithfulness of the saints in the Rochester wards and the significant growth of the church here. Growth brings both blessings and challenges. Over the past year, we have held several discussions with the four ward bishops about the right time to create a fifth ward to help with meeting space as well as activity and spiritual growth of all members. We feel that the Lord wants us to proceed now..." During this special sacrament meeting, President Spackman stated, "I want to explain why we are here. We have known for over a year that we would need to divide the wards. The wards were growing and there were challenges with space and other aspects. We asked the bishops for their input. There needs to be 300 members in each ward. Last August, we asked the clerks to go through the process of grouping members in each ward into 6-10 groups along major boundaries. As we received this information, we used it to create a model of groupings for 5 wards. The computer gave us a couple of printouts of proposed wards. When we felt we had a pretty reasonable plan, we proposed it to the bishops. We received feedback from them, made modifications and felt it was feasible to create five wards. Then we asked, "Is this what the Lord wants us to do?" When this was resolved in the affirmative, we then went through the process of choosing a new bishop. We sent all of this to the church boundaries committee and the First Presidency and received approval to proceed in the middle of November. I would like to thank the clerks for their help in gathering the information. A five ward directory with maps and meeting times will be handed out at the end of the meeting..."

**What was your spiritual focus for the stake during your tenure?**

Having served as counselor to Pres. Krueger for so many years, and having learned so much from him, the focus started out to be the same: continuing an emphasis on the temple and inviting all to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through the doctrine of Christ and enduring to the end. As we recognized specific needs the focus became more specific for different units.

**Describe the most spiritual experience/s of your service.**

This may sound strange to those who have not participated in such council meetings, but meeting with the stake presidency weekly and counseling together was one of my favorite spiritual activities. We would start out sharing our experiences in reading and

studying the scriptures in the prior week, and then the spirit would take over and we would often teach each other important truths and insights, as they came, about faith, repentance, covenants, the Holy Ghost, the love of God, and so on. Those spiritual promptings would often find their way into upcoming talks, lessons, and teaching as we would attempt to share our discussions with the stake.

We had many good experiences taking the juniors and seniors to Missouri, Iowa, and Nauvoo every other year on a History Trek. One day while we were in Independence, MO, we took a group to visit the Church of Christ temple. The guides were very informative and the youth were respectful, but the feeling was very cold and sterile, and somewhat dark. We then crossed the street to the LDS Visitor's Center and it felt like walking into the light. A young sister missionary took us into a quiet room and spoke to us. As she shared her testimony, the spirit was warm, comforting, and powerful. I don't remember what she said, but I was moved to tears. The contrast was felt by the youth and adults present that day.

Receiving revelation is probably the most spiritual experience anyone can have. In the calling as stake president, that was a requirement whenever a new bishop or branch president was called. If the confirming revelation was slow in coming, which meant that the Lord's timing wasn't yet right. I won't go into the details of any particular leader being called. It was unique and different each time. Often it came in quiet moments after a lot of prayer and pondering. Sometimes it came as a surprise. But there was always an assurance of who should be called.

An early concern of mine, as stake president, was what we would possibly do in any of the smaller branches where leadership experience was limited if the president were to move or become ill. However, in every case where it occurred, the Lord provided a man with a supportive and talented wife who could be called to lead the branch. Sometimes revelation came as we met as a stake council, to help us make decisions about specific directions and plans to move ahead.

The most surprising revelatory experience of my tenure was the precipitating event that led to its conclusion. It happened at the end of a busy work week on a Friday evening when I met one of my work colleagues leaving the hospital. We talked about challenges and future plans. He said, "You need to take that job in Jacksonville that has been open for a year and a half." Elder [David A.] Bednar has described two kinds of revelation. One is like a light switch being turned on in a dark room - sudden. The other is gradual, like the slow dawning of a new day. This experience was the former for me and it was completely unexpected. I instantly knew my friend was right. I had not been thinking about going elsewhere, we didn't really like Florida or Jacksonville; we had just remodeled our condo that was to be our home from which we would go on missions

eventually - all reasons to not go. And it didn't feel right to 'voluntarily' move and be released. However, I knew my friend was right.

It took some time to work through the question with my wife, and some time to work through the issues with my Area Seventy. We had a very large proposal we were already working on - the division of the four Rochester wards to create a fifth ward. However, Sue and I followed the promptings without really knowing the purpose behind them. The rest of the story happened 4 1/2 months after we moved when I was called again as stake president in the Jacksonville East Stake. In retrospect, I have no doubt that the inspiration that came blessed both stakes: Rochester by my departure was given new fresh leadership, and the spiritual challenges in Jacksonville were helped by an outsider coming in with good training and prior experience. And that revelation also blessed our lives in many ways.

I have a very strong testimony that this is the Lord's church and that he is in the details of its workings. Like Nephi who went forth not knowing beforehand the things he should do, if we will follow those sacred promptings we will be led aright.

**As a leader, describe how you have felt the inspiration of the Lord and felt the hand of God guiding your efforts.**

One of the more enjoyable responsibilities of a stake president is coaching and guiding bishops and branch presidents. I loved those relationships and tried to help the bishop/president truly minister to his people. As they would share difficult situations with me, and as we counseled together, we would discern the Lord's guidance in how to move ahead and help the saints. One of the favorite things I taught them, which was given to me by someone else, is that no one should ever leave the bishop's office without hope. Another principle I learned is that no matter what the problem or difficulty a leader is dealing with, the best solution always includes an increase of love.

**Describe additional information you feel is important.**

I would like to say a few words about my experience working with Pres. Krueger as his counselor, especially related to the experiences in the Chicago Temple. Pres. Krueger was a visionary leader and sometimes it took some explaining on his part to help his counselors catch up. Often his words just couldn't keep up with the pace of his thoughts and he would jump from one idea to another as the thoughts came. Eventually we improved at being able to follow those leaps.

One morning in our presidency meeting he said, "What would you think about running the Chicago Temple for 24 hours, including through the night?" I admit that my initial response was not positive. Too often, for me, I had to work through the night doing surgical cases, and staying up all night in the temple didn't hold much appeal for me. He

was very patient as he walked us through the potential blessings and eventually we became unified in support of the proposal. My specific responsibility was to organize the schedule for workers and patrons so that the experience went smoothly. I received many personal blessings in that assignment.

The calling and training of enough workers was a challenge (we were called Restricted Service Ordinance Workers (RSOWs)), meaning that our service was limited to stake excursions but we were trained to officiate in all ordinances except sealings. Many sacrifices were made by individuals and families both in preparation and in the overnight excursions. In the end, we ran the temple for 24 hours on two separate occasions, about 6 months apart. Many who were there had sacred, memorable experiences.

One of mine occurred about 2 AM. The temple president, Pres. Goodwin, Bro. Charlie Redlin, and I were waiting to go to the veil. Pres. Goodwin looked at his watch and invited us to use the available time to do some initiatory work with him. I remember the sweet stillness and peace as we performed those ordinances together, as if the Lord was there with us in approval of this sacred work.

Not long after our second overnight experience, the policy came that all RSOWs were to be released, and within a couple of years the St. Paul Temple was dedicated. The pattern of the stake in temple service and attendance would never be the same. However, the sacrifice and commitment that Pres. Krueger had envisioned was, in my opinion and that of others, the foundation for the high level of commitment and activity in the stake that has continued for a generation.

**President Robert Foote**  
**Years of Service: January 2009 to October 2017**



L to R: First Counselor Brian Cragun, Stake President Robert Foote and Second Counselor Michael Haddock

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009, President Robert Foote, Brian J. Cragun and Michael G. Haddock were called to serve as the new Rochester Stake Presidency. They would serve until October 29<sup>th</sup> of 2017. President Robert Foote shared the following.

**What was your spiritual focus for the stake during your tenure?**

One of the many things that Elder Neuenschwander taught President Cragun, President Haddock and I was to pay attention to what we said during our remarks in the Sunday morning session of Stake Conference when we were sustained. He instructed us to use our first meeting as a new stake presidency to review our remarks and in them we would discover what our Father in Heaven wanted us to do. Following this exercise, it became very clear to us what our Heavenly Father wanted us to focus on during our tenure as members of the stake presidency: 1) Our Father in Heaven loves us! 2) Our Father in Heaven desires to bless us. (It brings Him great joy and happiness to bless us!), 3) Our Father in Heaven blesses us as we make and keep covenants with Him and receive the ordinances of salvation. Our spiritual focus was on love, blessings, covenants, and ordinances.



## **Describe efforts to help members live the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

- In our personal interviews with members and in our messages delivered in church meetings, we emphasized faith in Christ through testimony, personal experiences, the scriptures, and teachings of modern-day prophets, seers, and revelators.
- We emphasized Christ-centered sacrament meetings and class instruction and discussion using His teachings and closing with a testimony of the Savior.
- We emphasized reverence in our sacrament meetings to invite the Spirit to be present and to influence the members and investigators that were present.
- We emphasized teaching the gospel in the Savior's way with all of our teachers.
- We shepherded our members to the temple.
- We organized a Priest and Laurel church history trek every two to three years where the youth were exposed to the spirit, the faith, and testimonies of the early saints of this dispensation.
- We invited the members to read for at least 5 minutes or two pages each day from The Book of Mormon.
- We invited the members to record the personal experiences that led to their faith in and testimony of the Savior. We invited the members to share these stories with their family members, with the members of the stake (to be included in the stake history), and with their friends and neighbors. We called these “how do you know” or “I believe because” experiences.
- We focused substantial effort to teach, invite, and encourage youth and adults to become more actively engaged in family history and temple work, learning all they could about their ancestors and teaching others to do the same. We reminded them of the promised blessings associated with the service as promised by modern-day apostles.
- We trained the members and ward and branch counsels that the bishop is to delegate all that he can so that he can focus his time and efforts on the youth ages 12-30 years to strengthen their faith and conversion. We trained the High Priest group leadership, Elders Quorum presidencies, Relief Society, and Primary to strengthen marriages and families, focusing on adults aged 30 and older.
- We trained units on mobilizing the ward mission plan as taught to us by Elder Perry. We called the units to the rescue. We engaged in the North American Central Initiative focusing our efforts on prospective elders, part-member families, and unbaptized children aged 9 years or older. We invited all to receive the promised blessings associated with baptism, the Holy Ghost, and the Melchizedek Priesthood. We set goals for convert baptisms, married couples sealed to each other in the temple, and the number of youth and adults who had submitted a family name to the temple for temple work.

- We invited the LDS Family Services director to meet with all our Relief Society sisters and answer their questions.
- We taught parents how to talk to their youth about the law of chastity.
- We used welfare case studies to train unit welfare committees.
- We organized a stake Self-Reliance Committee.
- We established JustServe as a way to encourage community service.
- We taught how to institute Family Home Evening, individual and family prayer, and individual and family scripture study in new convert or less active homes and priesthood leadership meetings.
- We taught how to help people overcome pornography in priesthood leadership meetings.
- We taught Internet safety.
- We strengthened the stake youth program: purpose-focused, simplified, family friendly.
- We strengthened and trained stake youth leaders.
- We warned parents during Standards Night activities of dangers that Bishops are encountering with youth.
- We invited youth to pray daily, to read the Book of Mormon for at least 5 minutes each day, to be a good friend, and to live the law of chastity and the Word of Wisdom during our Standards Night activities, Scout Camps, and Young Woman's camps. They committed to this by signing a Title of Liberty.
- We encourage parenting, marriage, and family classes in units.
- In small branches, we stressed simplification.
- We provided training for employment and held an Employment Fair.
- We designated Spanish, Sudanese, and Chinese magnet words and a YSA magnet Ward. When the YSA turn 32, they have the option to stay in the magnet ward.
- We changed boundaries between a large faithful ward in Rochester and an adjacent small struggling branch in Kasson to help better meet the needs of the members of the Kasson Branch.
- At the request of the Stake Relief Society and Young Women presidents, we all met with the bishops and branch presidents to develop a plan for helping the young men and young women transition more successfully into the Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society whether they stay at home in Rochester or go away to school or to work or to the military.
- We emphasized Sabbath observance at church and at home in stake council meetings, ward and branch conferences, ward and branch council meetings, Relief Society training meetings, and in addresses we gave.
- We emphasized personal priesthood interviews and home teaching and visiting teaching as part of our rescue efforts. We focused on improving our reporting mechanisms.

- We invited all young men and women to find at least one deceased relative, prepare their name for temple ordinances, and perform their baptism and confirmation in the temple. Youth were called as family history consultants. The High Priests worked one-on-one with the youth to help them with their family history research. We held a RootsTech/Family History Discovery Day.
- We used the teachings of President Hinckley (WWLT on priorities), Elder Scott (priorities, first things first, daily and weekly planning, lists), Elder Oaks (good better best), Sister Beck (must do, should do, nice to do), Elder Smith (what we can do, what we have the resources to do, what the spirit tells us to do), Preach My Gospel and the Self-Reliance programs on using time wisely, finding balance in life, and priorities.
- We held a special fireside for single adult sisters with a panel discussion.
- YSA magnet ward, multi-stake YSA, mid-SA and SA activities and conferences.
- Standards night messages were reinforced throughout the year at ward and branch conferences, Scout Camp, Young Women's Camp. We gave the youth trinkets as reminders.
- We issued a Stake President's challenge for family history and temple work.
- We counseled with ward and branch councils during our ward and branch conference visits following the pattern for Stake Conferences.
- We visited individuals and families in their homes during our ward and branch conference visits.

**Describe the most spiritual experiences of your service.**

This is a very challenging question to answer. The most spiritual experiences were very sacred. It is still very tender to reflect upon them. Most of them occurred in the privacy of members' homes in the most holy of circumstances. All I can say is that "I know!" I have no doubt. God loves us. He desires to bless us. He blesses us with the richest of blessings through the ordinances and covenants of his kingdom.

**President Randal Thomas**  
**Years of Service: October 2017 to Present**



Sustained in the October 29<sup>th</sup> 2017 fall Stake Conference were President Randal Thomas, Michael Kendrick as First Counselor and Darren Calley as Second Counselor. Both President Kendrick and Calley were serving as bishops. As a fun note, Elder Ringwood of the Seventy gave Bishop Calley the opportunity to sign all three signature slots on his temple recommend: as the Stake Presidency member, as the Bishop and as the patron.

**What is your spiritual focus for the stake?**

The Stake Presidency, since the time we have been called into this responsibility in October 2017, has felt an urgency to help our stake become a Zion people—to build Zion among us—in preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior. We have recognized that the building of Zion by a Zion people will require significant work and change. This work will require that we all become more holy, more giving, and more unified. This work and change have been the focus in all our efforts—in our prayers, ministering, interviews, counseling, communications, talks, conferences, and more.

Our purpose and some of the principles that have guided us sequentially along the way (so far) have included:

- Purpose: With faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we joyfully and unitedly bind our hearts to His heart through sacred ordinances and covenants, and we invite all of God's children to gather with us and join us in the journey.

- Guiding Principles: As we have been moving along the covenant path together, we have sequentially been impressed to use the following guiding principles to help us keep focused on becoming a Zion people:
  - We're trying to be like Jesus
  - Simplify, fortify, unify!
  - When we are converted, we will strengthen others (A mighty change of heart first, then reach out to others)
    - Feast, Turn, Share, and Serve!
      - Feast until we burn—we feast on the Gospel until we feel the Spirit working within us
      - Burn until we turn—as we feel the Spirit, we seek to undergo a mighty change of heart through the Atonement of the Savior.
      - Share the joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
      - Serve, love, and welcome all of God's children
  - Gather Israel in the strength of the Lord
    - Live, Love, Invite, Unite
      - Live the Gospel of Jesus Christ
      - Love God and all His children
      - Invite all to come unto Christ and receive His joy
      - Unite together with all of God's children on both sides of the veil
  - We trust in the Lord!
    - What will we subtract or add so that we can trust in the Lord more completely?

**As a leader, describe how you have felt the inspiration of the Lord and felt the hand of God guiding your efforts.**

Individually, and collectively, the Stake Presidency has had many experiences in which we have seen the hand of the Lord working in our Stake. We have felt revelation flowing through us as we have sought His guidance and confirming help. We have felt the purifying and uplifting influence of the Holy Spirit as we have administered and ministered in the Lord's work. We have felt His sustaining power during times of difficulty, opposition, and turmoil. We have been blessed to see—in person and also in

our mind's eye—the needs and strengths of the wonderful people throughout the Stake. We have undoubtedly fallen far short of perfection in our service, but we feel the Lord's power and help frequently, for which we are so grateful.

**Describe the most spiritual experience/s of your service.**

We have witnessed a number of sacred, sweet, and miraculous experiences during our time of service in the Stake Presidency. We have been particularly touched by the individuals who are seeking to be “Zion people” as they work for and experience a mighty change of heart by applying the doctrine of Christ in their lives. We have been touched by the miracles experienced by individuals who have participated in the gathering of Israel by preparing for and participating in holy ordinances and covenants, and by preparing themselves to serve as full-time missionaries. We have also been touched by the miracles witnessed in the lives and families of individuals who have overcome great challenges to become more holy, more giving, and more unified.

## **Rochester Stake Patriarchs**

**James Parry**

**Years of Service: April 1978 to November 1996**



Patriarch James E. Parry and his wife, Peggy Parry

In 1996, James Parry was still serving as the stake patriarch with his wife Margaret as the recorder. He would serve from the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 1978 to the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, 1996. He was

called at age 42. However, during this time, he was called as a bishop to serve in the La Crosse Ward for five years from 1981 to 1986. Once he was released as bishop, he was reinstated again as the Rochester Minnesota Stake Patriarch. As recorded in Sister Veryl B. Firl's "A History of the Rochester Minnesota Stake" up through 1995, when Patriarch James Parry was called as bishop, Brother Mark Anderson was called as patriarch. He passed away a year later and then Edward Peterson from the Austin Ward would become acting patriarch until Patriarch Parry would be released as bishop. Patriarch James Parry would be released in November of 1996 and would retire and move to the West.

**Patriarch James Parry shared the following:**

Preparations for the Rochester District to become a stake had been going on for some time under the leadership of James Parry. The reality of becoming such was enhanced by the arrival of the mission president, Douglas Callister, the grandson of Elder LeGrand Richards. President Callister determined that the leadership was here and although the stake would be small, we had been functioning as a stake for some time. The necessary papers were prepared and sent to church headquarters. Following approval of the Rochester Minnesota Stake formation, Elder LeGrand Richards and Elder Paul H. Dunn were assigned to organize the stake. [This paragraph was paraphrased from James Parry's account.]

Elder Richards arrived with President Callister to form the Stake on the 29th of April, 1978. Elder Dunn was ill and did not accompany Elder Richards. Elder Richards, along with his grandson President Callister, interviewed the leadership of the District in preparation for the Lord directing them as to whom was to be the new stake president.

It had been made known to me by the impressions received from the Lord that I would not receive such a calling even though quite often a district president is retained as the stake president. Several weeks before the interviews I had the distinct feeling that I was to be called as the bishop of the La Crosse Ward. So it was not surprising to me to find that President Lee Johnson had been chosen by the Lord to be the first stake president of the Rochester Minnesota Stake. Elder Richards, after telling me who the new stake president would be, then proceeded in the following manner, "President Parry, you have been the district president for some nine years. We don't keep stake presidents much longer than that. We are calling you to be the patriarch, what do you think of that?" I was overwhelmed, humbled and frightened at the thought of such an awesome responsibility. I was only forty-two years of age, a factor that Elder Richards spent some time discussing. He enlightened me to the fact that his father was called as both a stake president and patriarch at the age of thirty-two. What could I say?

I spent the longest night of my life trying to understand why I was called as the patriarch. Furthermore, the calling of a patriarch is a lifetime calling so why had I had the impression that I was to be called as the bishop of the La Crosse Ward some weeks before? The brethren I had recommended to Elder Richards as possible patriarchs were so much more capable than I (they both subsequently became patriarchs in the stake). They had the maturity and experience to be great patriarchs. I was deeply troubled.

I took little comfort in my father-in-law telling me of the experience he had with Elder Bruce R. McConkie soon after Elder Richards reported to the Quorum of the Twelve about his organizing the Rochester Minnesota Stake. Elder McConkie reported that his son-in-law must be some individual ... to be called as the patriarch. He stated that it was not difficult to find a stake president but a patriarch was different. Once more I felt the pressure of the Lord's call to become a patriarch in the Rochester Minnesota Stake, worthy of listening to the Lord through revelation and then conveying it to a written word in the form of patriarchal blessing.

I felt so inadequate (something that I have now found that every patriarch goes through) that I made a trip to my hometown of Cedar City, Utah and there conversed with an old family friend, who was then serving as the patriarch in the Cedar Stake. He had been the stake president. His wife, before she died, had been my mother's life-long friend. I had grown up with their children and felt comfortable in pouring out my soul to him. He counseled that I was young and that I would have trouble with Satan interfering with the family and blessings. How true this proved to be. Yes, the family was young and with that comes the problems of family interactions. If I was to give a blessing, everything went wrong that week. If no blessings were scheduled then the week was smooth. It was almost predictable. With much prayer and fasting we attempted to keep an even keel and a spirituality that would allow one to function as a patriarch.

I learned too, that the Lord was in charge. At one time a blessing was given in which two records were being made. At the conclusion of the blessing I found that neither recorder had functioned. There was no recorded message. My heart sank ... what was I to do? It came to me, "My son, give the blessing again." I proceeded to respond and gave the blessing again. The blessing was the same one that had been given before. I could only express my love to the Savior for his goodness to me. After that I no longer worried about equipment malfunctioning. After I had served as the patriarch for some three years, the stake presidency, President Johnson, President Rose and President Lowell Harris made an appointment to come to my home on a Sunday. Little did I realize that they had come to call me to be the bishop of the La Crosse Ward. They reminded me that the First Presidency had given their endorsement of my call and that I was to be suspended as a patriarch for the season of being a bishop. In fulfillment of my feelings



prior to becoming the patriarch I now knew that even at that time I was being prepared to be the bishop.

After being released as a bishop, I served in various other capacities, including that of high priest group leader and gospel doctrine teacher. These were joyous assignments to me but it was not long after that the First Presidency once again endorsed my call as the patriarch of the Rochester Minnesota Stake. The assignment continued to hold me in awe. Even now, I still feel so inadequate. My speaking ability is not great and my communications are not always understood. Upon reading blessings given I always felt discouraged at the way some things came out of my mouth. The Lord blessed me with a great helpmate in Peggy. We have become a great team. She understands my weaknesses and has come through her patience to take a recorded message and to transcribe it into what the Lord would have said. Any success that I have ever had as a patriarch I owe to her. Her spirit has been as one with mine as we have fulfilled this assignment over the many years. I have recently been released by choice of the stake president. I no longer look back and say it could have been, but I look back and say that it was. It has been a great experience to be a patriarch. I literally have known the Lord's will pertaining to his children. I am humbled at the thought of how great the young people are of this generation. The fact that the Lord would reveal it to this generation is only an example of why they were reserved to come forth in these, the last days.

I bear testimony of the goodness of the Lord to me and my family. Somewhere we will continue to serve in some way that we might show our Love to the Savior. I am so grateful for his influence.

**Sister Margaret "Peggy" Parry shared the following;**

My conversion story begins with my stalwart pioneer ancestors who joined the Church in England, Denmark or the United States and forged the way for me to be born of goodly parents, Max and Ann Coulam Wheelwright, who also embraced the restored gospel. I have never known anything except devoted activity and participation in Church meetings. Living in Salt Lake City, our home was within walking distance of a meetinghouse and my friends and most of my schoolmates were church members. Seminary was attended as released time from school except for ninth grade when it was before school. I always wanted to participate and do things which were right.

During the late summer after high school graduation and into my first semester at BYU, I decided to seriously read *The Book of Mormon*. I wanted to know for myself that it was true. Combining reading with prayer truly worked. I remember bearing testimony to the truth of Moroni's promise (Moroni 10:4) in December of 1960.

There have been many times since then that the Spirit has borne witness to me concerning the truth of particular gospel principles. Such events have always occurred

when I was actively pursuing knowledge or confirmation or as I actively served and participated in living the gospel and carrying forth in my church and family responsibilities.

Jim and I and two young boys moved to La Crosse at the end of August 1967. Three years later Jim was called as president of the Minnesota District, which he was until April 1978 when the district became a full-fledged Stake of Zion and he was ordained a patriarch. During these years of growth and maturation of the saints in southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin, Jim was truly a pioneer and I was his helpmate as well as fulfilling my own callings. We were no longer within walking distance of the ward or stake center. In fact, there was no stake or even a center for the district. Jim's office in our home became the hub for communicating with the saints in this vast area and thousands of miles were driven to make visits and hold leadership meetings.

Through the years we have witnessed tremendous growth of individuals and the church as a whole. We are grateful for the callings and opportunities we have been given to serve. My testimony has been deepened and vitalized as I have met challenges and turned to the Lord daily for support and answers. I am also grateful to the many church members who have blessed my life and the lives of our family. Their influences cannot be measured or even adequately acknowledged. I bear solemn witness that we have Heavenly Parents who love us and desire our return to them. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Savior, Redeemer and Elder Brother through whose name we must do all things. Joseph Smith is the prophet through whom the Lord restored his gospel in its fullness with all ordinances, principles, practices, and authority necessary for our eternal salvation. Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet of God and leads The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints under the direction of Jesus Christ.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living church on the earth. I commit all that I am or have to building up this holy kingdom designed to lead us home to our Heavenly Father. (Peggy Parry, 1 March 1997)

**Patriarch Richard Robb**  
**Years of Service: November 1996 to April 2010**



Richard and Shanna Robb

Richard Robb was called as the new stake patriarch upon his release as the Stake President with his wife Shanna Robb as the recorder at the November 9-10, 1996 Stake Conference. He would replace Patriarch Parry who was nearing retirement and had plans to move West. He would serve for 14 years until the year 2010. He gave over 600 blessings during his time as stake patriarch. He was replaced by Wayne Barrett when he retired from Mayo Clinic to move to Utah. Sadly, he passed away in Utah in 2020.

From the November 1996 Rochester Stake Conference which is recorded in the stake history, we have the following testimony that Patriarch Robb shared:

There may be some of you brothers and sisters who would suppose that I would be comfortable at this. You should repent. I am humbled. I quake. I'm frightened by the new calling. As I sat here and listened to our stake president, the first inkling came to me that perhaps I might be offered a few moments to bear my testimony. The next thought was that the first thing I should tell you is how much I love him and how much I support and sustain him. I have had the privilege to sit with him alone in the stake president's office, on both sides of the desk, and I know he is a man of God and I encourage us to heed his counsel.

I am filled today, brothers and sisters, with a Zion feeling, with a sense of "Stake." I love the teachings of the prophet Isaiah about stakes. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quite habitation, a tabernacle [that] shall

not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious LORD [will be] unto us a place of broad rivers [and] streams. Isaiah 33:20-21. Later Isaiah reminded us [Isaiah 61:1-4] that in a stake of Zion are those [anointed to help exchange our ashes, yours and mine, for beauty, our mourning for garments of praise], and we are at the feet of such people today.

I had the opportunity just briefly last evening to chat with Elder Rosenvall and reminisce a bit about the time several years ago when, for a short period of time, he was called as a regional representative in our region. I remember one intense feeling. I felt what a spirit he had of love for the work and for the gospel and for the Savior and for us. And how remarkable it is, in the Church, that we can fall in love with each other so quickly, that we can care for each other and sustain each other. And it seems to me, brothers and sisters, that that's the purpose of a stake, to become strong, and to provide protection and to help each other along the way. I think that's what our stake president invites us and strongly encourages us to do. He would have us pursue, more directly and rapidly, the spirit of consecration. We need to engage in the pursuit of consecration. And what is consecration? I believe it means complete but voluntary submission to God's will and His ways. And if we are to do that, it means we must do all the things that the Stake President has asked. I think we can start, brothers and sisters, by expanding our vision of who we really are. Remember what the poet said, "Couldst thou in vision see the person God [really meant], thou couldst never more be the person you art, content."

Brothers and sisters, a sacred calling has come to me. I have tried to be introspective and prayerful to prepare for it. I am grateful for the visits of the Spirit. I am thankful to be taught by the Spirit and among those things that I am taught is a greater appreciation and gratitude and love for the things of God's creation. Elizabeth Barrett Browning said: "Every common bush is afire with God, but only those who see it take off their shoes." I am going, brothers and sisters, to become one who takes off his shoes, because I wish to be respectful and reverence the things of Heavenly Father's creation.

At this new season of life for Sister Robb and me, we have the privileges to continue to serve in this stake. I would want you to know that the river of this stake runs through me. It enriches me, strengthens me, nourishes me, and protects me. And I believe that it will also do all those things for you. I am in awe of the responsibilities that have come to me. I don't know how they will be carried out, but I wish to be obedient. I look forward to sometimes being in the singular place and time when Heavenly Father will directly bless and instruct and encourage His child. I would have you know that I will reverence each one of these sacred opportunities. I will prepare for them, and I will truly

try to be worthy to speak those things that Heavenly Father has prepared for each choice child.

I humbly appropriate on this occasion the words of Elder Jeffery R. Holland. When Elder Holland was called to the holy apostleship, he said, "I intend to do all I can to rise to the standard. I will change the person to fit the office. I am determined I won't bring the office down to somehow fit me." I love Jesus Christ. I know that He has carrying power. Again in Isaiah, I am reminded about His shoulders. "For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder." It is interesting and symbolic to me that Isaiah uses the singular: that the government shall be upon His shoulder. I attach significance perhaps to that, that there is a spare shoulder for me and for you. He can and does carry us. I am grateful for the strong shoulders of our Savior.

I confess my dependence on Him. He is the Savior of all the world, indeed of all mankind. He is the Son of God. He is he who speaks to the prophets, and from them we receive direction and guidance and love. I know that Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet. Brothers and sisters, I leave with you my love, my respect, my reverences and my remembrances. I know you, and I am grateful to know you. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."

**Patriarch Wayne Barrett**  
**Years of Service: April 2010 to Present**



Wayne and Tamara Barrett

Wayne Barrett was called in April 2010, and ordained in at the May 2010 Stake Conference. Patriarch Richard Robb was released along with his wife Shanna as the recorder. Patriarch Wayne Barrett is currently serving with his wife Tamara as his scribe. When Patriarch Barrett was called, his wife's official calling had the title of "Typist for the Patriarch." In 2016, the church changed the title to "Scribe for the Patriarch."

**Patriarch Wayne Barrett shared the following;**

My call to serve as the patriarch for our stake was a most humbling experience. When our Stake President (Robert Foote) phoned me to set up an appointment for an interview with me and my wife, in the days leading up to that appointment, my wife and I chatted about what this interview might entail. At one point, my wife casually said, "Aren't the Robbs going to be moving soon? They'll need a new patriarch, won't they?" As soon as she said those words, the Spirit began to tell me that the Lord was going to call me as the next patriarch. I felt guilty and presumptuous of even thinking such a thought, and I tried to push it out of my mind. The Spirit kept gently prompting me with that thought, and I found myself "wrestling with the Spirit" over the coming days. To me, it was impossible for me to be a patriarch! Of all the callings in the Church, the work of a patriarch was something that I literally could not fathom doing. I told the Lord that I'll do any other calling, except that one. Nevertheless, I accepted the call, and I was grateful to have many weeks to prepare before the upcoming stake conference, and then more weeks afterward to prepare before my first blessing appointment.

In contrast to the feelings that I originally had when I wrestled with the Spirit, after I officially began the work of my calling (and continuing till today), I find myself thanking the Lord daily for the privilege of serving Him in this manner! Even though much of the work can be considered solitary in nature, I find it to be a very spiritually fulfilling calling.

As I write this, I have now served for ten years in this position, and as I look back, I consider each patriarchal blessing that I've given to be a miracle. The Lord has been with me step by step and guided me along the way. He has magnified my limited abilities and allowed me to part the veil and see His sons and daughters in the way that He sees them. I testify that each patriarchal blessing is from the Lord. The patriarch simply gives voice to the Lord's blessing.

I love the hours of preparation (the praying, pondering, and meditation) that goes into each blessing. I love the spiritual discipline of always listening for the whisperings of the Spirit in the days leading up to a blessing as the Holy Ghost begins to distill upon my soul the concepts to include in the upcoming blessing. I love to work with my wife as she transcribes the blessings and prepares them for submission, and as we discuss the wonderful things that the Father communicates to His children in each unique blessing.

**Sister Tamara Barrett, Scribe to the Patriarch, shared the following;**

I know with a surety that my husband was called by the Lord to serve as a patriarch. I received this as an impression prior to his call to serve. I am humbled and grateful to serve in the capacity as scribe for the patriarch. This is such a unique and sweet calling, and it is wonderful to serve with my husband in such a sacred work -- not too dissimilar to serving in the temple together, but within the walls of our home. I have learned to a greater degree the love that Heavenly Father has for all of His children, and it gives me reason for hope in the future. I feel that serving as the scribe is a call to love the members of our stake and to welcome them to our home. It has been a blessing to our marriage and family as we work together to create an environment where the Spirit will always feel welcome in our home.