

## **Holland rededicates Pine Valley Chapel**

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PINE VALLEY - There was once a "fun-loving, active, mischievous boy" from St. George who would sneak in and ring the bell at the Pine Valley Chapel during meetings. That boy returned to the chapel Sunday. And again he rang the bell. ,

·Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had permission this time as he rang the bell to conclude a rededication meeting at the chapel following its recent restoration. The 137-year-old building is said to be the oldest continually operating chapel in the LDS Church.

Holland's own history has strong ties to Pine Valley. Some of his ancestors served as bishops of the Pine Valley congregation, including the founding bishop, William Snow. Snow began serving in 1867, one year before the chapel was completed.

"It's a wonderful personal experience," Holland said of the opportunity to offer the dedicatory prayer. "This is home for us."

As the years progressed, changes came to both the congregation and the building. The congregation started out as a full ward, then became a summer group in the late 1940s. In 2003, the congregation became a year-round branch presided over by Branch President Wendell Gray.

It was also about this time that the restoration of the historic chapel began. The foundation was augmented, new siding and shingles were added and the interior was restored. And to complement the year-round branch, heating, air conditioning and insulation were added to make the building more comfortable.

The small building, however, still could not accommodate all those in attendance for its rededication Sunday. About 100 people sat inside the main chapel, while a few hundred more sat in other rooms or outside the building watching the meeting live on closed-circuit television.

Families sat on blankets on the long, green grass surrounding the building. Kids played on the white picket fence as birds chirped in the slight breeze.

Gray was the first speaker on the program. He spoke of the man who designed the building, Ebenezer Bryce, the namesake of Bryce Canyon. He was a shipbuilder, so the chapel was designed like a boat, only upside down.

"This building was expertly constructed," Gray said.

But Gray said restoration refers to more than just what happened to the building. He said the real miracle is what will happen to the hearts of those in attendance that day.

Lois Fry, who grew up in Pine Valley and once served as a Relief Society president for the congregation, spoke next and talked about the history of the area.

Before Holland spoke, the Pine Valley Branch Choir sang a medley of three hymns focusing on love. The notes seemed to fill the entire town as light poured through the pine trees surrounding the gleaming white chapel.

Holland began by thanking everyone for a "picture-perfect" day.

"Thank you for letting me be with you," Holland said. "The light today is certainly not anything I'm going to provide; the light is in this valley."

Holland's ties to the area and people were obvious as he talked about those in attendance, calling them by their first names and recalling memories of his childhood visits to Pine Valley.

The discovery of Pine Valley by settler Isaac Riddle also played into Holland's remarks. Holland quoted Riddle's description of that discovery: "This is the most beautiful sight I have ever beheld on God's green Earth."

Holland said Riddle was looking for a cow when he discovered the valley. People often find something more valuable when they are looking for something else, he said.

Before he began the dedicatory prayer, Holland told the congregation that he would be the voice for the prayer but he wanted them to join him in their hearts.

"I'd like every one of you to join me and say a little dedicatory prayer of your own," he said.

In his prayer Holland thanked God for the beauty of the area and expressed gratitude for those who settled Pine Valley and their legacy of hard work.

"May we preserve the best of the past, the best of our traditions," he prayed.

Holland called the building a house of worship, a sanctuary and a mountain home and dedicated every part of it unto God.

"More importantly we dedicate ourselves ... that we may be more of what we ought to be," he prayed.

As the meeting officially closed, President J. Robert Rhodes of the St. George West Stake told the story of the "fun-loving, active, mischievous boy" from St. George and invited that boy to pull the bell one more time.