

Okinawa Japan Temple Facts



Location: Okinawa-ken, Okinawa-shi
Matsumoto 7-11-32
904-2151 Japan

Announced: April 7, 2019

Groundbreaking: December 5, 2020

Construction Start: February 16, 2021

Public Open House:

Saturday, September 23–Saturday, October 7,
2023 (excluding Sundays)

Dedication: Sunday, November 12, 2023
(Two sessions: 1000 and 1330)

Property Size: 0.55 acres

Building Size: 12,437 square feet
(1155.43 square meters)

Building Height: 105 feet including the spire

Architects: Naylor Wentworth Lund
Architects/Horiuchi Inatomi Architects; Church
Architect: Russell Hansen

Interior Design: Naylor Wentworth Lund
Architects; Church Architects: Kathleen Lewis
and Melanie Jones

Contractor: Nishimatsu Daiyone
Joint Venture

The Okinawa Japan Temple is the 186th operating temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The temple's exterior design reflects Japanese architecture, with floral designs inspired by the annual blossoming of trees in Okinawa and a thumb stop stone detail inspired by traditional shibi Japanese roof tiles. Designed to fit seamlessly into the surrounding landscape, the temple provides a serene environment for Japanese Saints to worship in.

EXTERIOR FEATURES

BUILDING: The exterior design is drawn from traditional Okinawan and Japanese architecture. The segmented arches over the windows are inspired by portals in traditional stone walls, like those at the Shurijo Castle, Nakagusuku Castle, and Sogenji Temple. The decorative floral band that connects the arches alludes to the traditional karamon (gate) found in important Japanese gateways. The structure consists of reinforced concrete with a granite exterior. The stone is Sunset Gold Chinese granite from Wenshang, Shandong Province.

EXTERIOR ART GLASS: Matt McNicholas from MGLM Architects designed the art glass under direction from Michael Thomson, Kathleen Lewis, Russell Hansen and Melanie Jones. The art glass design is inspired by traditional Okinawan bingata stencils and patterns. The art glass was fabricated by Savoy Studios of Portland, Oregon.

LANDSCAPING: To match the tropical location, many native plants adorn the temple, such as fountain palms, sago palms, and Chinese hibiscus. The back of the temple features a Japanese rock garden. MGB+A, located in Salt Lake City, Utah, was the landscape designer for the first stage of the design. D+M, located in Tokyo, Japan, finished the project.

INTERIOR FEATURES

FLOORING: The flooring materials include a combination of stone, porcelain and ceramic tiles, and area rugs. The area rugs adorn the entry and the instruction, celestial and sealing rooms. They were custom designed with Rugs International, headquartered in Cartersville, Georgia. The stone flooring is Branco do Mar limestone from Portugal, and Dekton Sasea ceramic tiles are used in support areas.

CEILINGS AND DECORATIVE PAINTING: The temple's ceilings are constructed using gypsum board with crown moldings. Decorative paint features, including geometric flower patterns, are composed of gold, blue and white.

INTERIOR ART GLASS: The temple's art glass is inspired by bingata artwork, which originates in Okinawa. It is made from three panes of painted glass, each pane painted with a different design, giving the art glass a different appearance depending on whether it is viewed from outside or inside the temple. The outer pane features a green and lavender floral pattern. The center panel is painted with blue and lavender flowers with green leaves, very similar to bingata flowers. The inner panel has a dark blue drape descending from the top of the window.

STAIR HALL: The stair hall was designed as an origami-inspired piece; the second floor folds down to the first floor and appears to float from the adjacent wall. The elements are precisely aligned and paired to make the stair visually as light as possible.

DECORATIVE LIGHTING: Geometric floral and weave patterns are included in the lighting design. The

decorative lighting fixtures were manufactured by Yamagiwa, based in Japan.

BAPTISMAL FONT RAILINGS: The font railings were fabricated in Japan. The railing has a simple, sleek design, with green art glass accents in the corners surrounding the larger glass panels.

WALLS AND MILLWORK: The walls are painted throughout the building. Ordinance rooms have decorative millwork panels, beech wood paneling, stone paneling, and stone window surrounds. The patterning on the paneled walls reflects the grid patterns often found in Japanese architecture and interior design.

DOORS AND HARDWARE: The temple doors are made from stained European beech. Some doors feature an art glass transom and visibility panel. The hardware is brass and has a sleek rectangular design with notched corners.

ORIGINAL ARTWORK: The temple's original artwork includes "Waterfall" by Keith Bond and "Earth Behold Him!" by Joshua Clare.



History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Okinawa Japan



Early baptisms in Okinawa took place in the East China Sea.

The first missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints landed in Tokyo, Japan, in 1901. In 1945, during World War II, American servicemen were the first Church members to arrive in Okinawa. Since then, American and Japanese Latter-day Saints have shared a joint role in Church service and growth in the Ryukyu Islands.

On July 8, 1945, just a few days after the Battle of Okinawa ended, a conference was held for Latter-day Saint servicemen at Nakagusuku Castle, with 180 attendees. Future Church Apostles Neal A. Maxwell and Boyd K. Packer served in Okinawa during this time, and they later spoke about personal spiritual experiences on the islands during the war.

Latter-day Saint servicemen residing in Okinawa in the years following World War II met for regular Church meetings and conferences, often at Kadena Air Base and later at the Camp Kuwae chapel. Okinawa was added to the Japanese Mission on June 23, 1951. Eventually, on Nov. 2, 1952, the Okinawa Servicemen's District was created. Today it is the Okinawa Japan Military District and continues to serve English-speaking Church members in Okinawa.

On Aug. 14, 1955, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith formally dedicated Okinawa for the preaching of the gospel at a special meeting near the Zukeran military base chapel.

American servicemen in Okinawa shared the gospel with local Japanese people even before proselytizing efforts were officially organized. The first Japanese members were baptized Dec. 25, 1955. Their baptisms inspired the mission president to send the first assigned missionaries to Okinawa on April 17, 1956.

In 1956, Latter-day Saint servicemen broke ground for a chapel in Futenma and moved a Quonset hut donated by the military to the site. American and Japanese Church members alike eagerly raised funds for the future building. Eventually, the first full-sized chapel for the Japanese Saints was erected in Naha and dedicated by Elder Gordon B. Hinckley on Oct. 16, 1966.

Military members of the Church in Okinawa continued to fluctuate in the decades after the war due to the transient nature of assignments. However, in 1962 the number of Japanese Church members reached 94 at the Futenma Military Branch and 172 at the new Naha Servicemen Branch. Significant growth continued, and in 1963 there were 134 members in Futenma and 252 in Naha.

Full-time missionaries often served as branch and district leaders in Japanese-speaking congregations until May 7, 1961, when the first Japanese branch president was instated in the Naha branch. Just over a year later, on Nov. 18, 1962, a Japanese member was called as the 12th district president, the first local to fill this role. Under the direction of faithful local leaders, missionary work blossomed.

Church congregations spread to surrounding islands, and congregations were formed in Ishigaki, Miyakojima and Amami Island, where Elder Gary E. Stevenson, future Church Apostle, served as a young missionary in 1975.

On Oct. 23, 1980, the long-awaited Japanese-speaking Okinawa Japan Stake was organized by Elder Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The first stake president had served as the district president for many years. By this time, the number of Japanese Church members had reached 1,873.

The combined synergy and respect between American



American servicemen and Japanese saints worked together to raise money to construct the first chapel in Okinawa.

military district members and Japanese stake members continued, furthering the Lord's work in Okinawa. Unity among American and Japanese Saints has been a continuous theme on the island.

Church leaders have regularly visited Okinawa, including President Gordon B. Hinckley, who came five times as an Apostle between 1960 and 1976. He traveled to Okinawa again in 1996 as President of the Church.

Temple and family history work has always been part of the legacy of the Ryukyu Islands, which were ruled through the centuries by various nations. Valiant men and women from many countries gave their lives, and their spirits instill a sacred urgency for temple work among those who live in Okinawa.

Early Okinawan Saints traveled to Laie, Hawaii, to participate in temple ordinances. Later, the Tokyo Japan Temple was announced in 1975 and dedicated in 1980. This temple, though in Japan, still required a notable sacrifice for members to attend, so Okinawan Saints also served in the Manila Philippines Temple, the Taipei Taiwan Temple, and eventually the Fukuoka Japan Temple, dedicated in 2000.

The former president of the Okinawa stake and of the



Formal missionary efforts in Okinawa were organized in 1956. Elder Leroy B. Anderson (far left) and Elder Sam Shimabukuro (far right) were the first elders called to the island.

Tokyo temple noted that upon hearing the announcement of the Okinawa Japan Temple in April 2019, he "was filled with great joy and gratitude with many of my brothers and sisters. Okinawa is an island which is redeemed by the precious blood of more than 240,000 people during the war. During my tenure as stake president, the cries of the dead, who had already accepted the gospel in the spirit world, were as urgent as the tides of the sea."

The Okinawa Japan Stake and Okinawa Japan Military District now share a combined 5,500 members in 12 congregations. Chapels have been constructed in Nago, Naha, Okinawa, Futenma, Itoman and Ishigaki. As a whole, Japan is home to more than 130,000 Latter-day Saints in over 230 congregations.

The Okinawa Japan Temple, the fourth temple in Japan, was announced on April 7, 2019, by Church President Russell M. Nelson. Ground was broken on Dec. 5, 2020, and the temple will be dedicated Nov. 12, 2023. The temple will serve Church members living in Okinawa and on the surrounding islands.

