

June 5, 2009

L. Tom Perry
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
47 E. South Temple Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84105

Dear Elder Perry,

Recently, you gave a speech at BYU expressing concern about the negative opinions many non-members hold about Mormons. You indicated that the LDS church is hiring public relations people to help change those negative opinions. I am writing to recommend that church leaders change a policy that creates unnecessary animosity.

You observed that "a person's view of the Church is the sum of personal experiences they have had" True enough. You should be aware then that parents of converts are devastated when they are excluded from the temple marriage of their child, the typical result is resentment and anger towards the Mormon Church. As one distraught mother told me, "I used to think highly of Mormons. I defended them when people criticized them. Not anymore." No PR campaign will ever undo the damage done to this woman's opinion of the LDS church by the devastation of being excluded from the marriage ceremony of her own child.

My experience is similar. Prior to our daughter's conversion and temple marriage you would never have heard a negative comment about Mormons or the Mormon Church in our home. All that changed the day we were told to take our breaking hearts and wait outside while the daughter we love and cherish was married to her wonderful husband. Twenty years of parenting was dismissed as irrelevant by the church that claims to support families. The damage done to church's image extends to the opinions of our family and friends. Because of our experience, none of them will ever let a Mormon missionary into their home. They want nothing to do with a church that takes a family event that should only be about love, unity, and joy but instead interjects judgment, division, and pain.

There is a simple solution. Couples could marry outside of the temple followed by a temple sealing; allowing for both an inclusive ceremony and sacred rite. Unfortunately, American LDS couples are discouraged from considering this option by church policy requiring a one year to wait be sealed in the temple. This wait is not church policy in other countries where couples marry civilly first and are later sealed with no wait. Clearly, church doctrine permits this option.

I am not asking that non-Mormons be allowed to attend temple ceremonies (although that was a common practice under Joseph Smith). I am asking that the church do away with the one-year penalty - as has already been done in other countries.

Several years ago, the LDS church ran a series of commercials with the tag line: "Families, it's about time." Yes. It's about time for LDS leaders to put people before policy; to stop insisting that couples force devoted family to wait outside with broken hearts; to encourage couples to build bridges to their non-Mormon family instead of burning them.



THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES
47 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE STREET, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84150-1200

June 10, 2009

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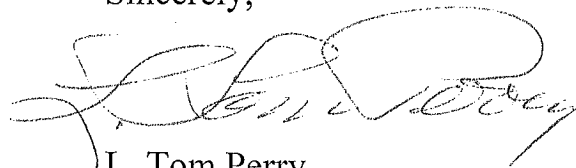
Dear [REDACTED]

From your letter I note that you realize only Church members who have valid recommends and have received their endowment may attend a temple marriage.

A couple may arrange with their bishop to hold a special meeting for relatives and friends who do not have temple recommends. This meeting can provide an opportunity for those who cannot enter a temple to feel included in the marriage and to learn something of the eternal nature of the marriage covenant. Also after a temple marriage, a couple may exchange rings at locations other than the temple.

I do not know if your daughter and her new husband arranged for these events to happen in conjunction with their temple marriage. I am sorry the happy occasion for your daughter made you and other members of your family feel otherwise.

Sincerely,



L. Tom Perry

June 12, 2009

L . Tom Perry
LDS Church
47 East South Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84160

Dear Mr. Perry,

Thank you for your response to my earlier letter.

However, you failed to address the basic question of that letter. You failed to address why LDS leaders do not eliminate the one-year waiting period for those couples who choose to marry outside the temple in order to include their non-member family and are otherwise "temple worthy". This one year wait is not required of couples outside the United States as I'm sure you know. This arrangement allows for both the inclusive ceremony and the sacred rite; it honors both family and the "eternal nature" of the marriage covenant. Clearly, doctrine allows this option.

A "special meeting" with a Bishop could not possibly make a parent who is being excluded from the marriage ceremony of the child they love "feel included ..." A ring ceremony is a hollow substitute designed by Mormons to make themselves feel better about their exclusionary behavior.

The actions of the church in these circumstances creates unnecessary animosity that no public relations campaign can repair. If church leaders continue to insist that couples break the hearts of those who love them it is disingenuous to complain that non-Mormons think poorly of your church. You are reaping what you have sown.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.