

# Connecticut's 1st Mormon temple to serve growing church

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By Emily Judd | AP September 28 at 1:14 AM

FARMINGTON, Conn. — The first Mormon temple in Connecticut opens to the public this week and will soon host services for thousands of the faithful from a four-state area.

The new temple in Farmington reflects growing membership for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the East Coast. Another recently constructed temple opened in Philadelphia on Aug. 10.

“Out here on the East Coast, it is a unique challenge to be a member of the church because we are so few and far between. This Hartford temple is going to be a huge beacon of hope and pillar of faith,” said Randy LaRose, a church member who moved from Utah to Connecticut to serve as a chaplain at Yale University.

An estimated 27,000 congregants from Connecticut, Rhode Island, western Massachusetts, and eastern New York are to be served by the temple in Farmington, a Hartford suburb that also was the birthplace of the church's fourth president, Wilford Woodruff.

The 32,000-square-foot structure will be the 155th temple of the LDS church, but only the second in New England. The building is steeped in the history of the church and the local area, with paintings depicting Connecticut landscapes, mahogany wood surfaces and an acorn and leaf motif repeated throughout the building.

The temple opens Friday for public tours that will be offered until Oct. 22. The temple is scheduled for dedication on Nov. 20, after which only church members in good standing will be welcomed.

In Mormonism, temples are dedicated to the religion's highest forms of worship and are less common than meetinghouses, where weekly church services are offered. The Hartford temple has eight rooms related to special ceremonies known as ordinances, including a baptismal room, a sealing room where marriages are performed, and the celestial room, a space for contemplation that features a large crystal chandelier.

“In a temple the focus is on individual worship, not group worship. That's why there are many smaller rooms rather than one large hall,” elder Larry Wilson said.

Drucila Maldonado, a member of the church who lives in Bridgeport, said the new temple will increase the local presence of the LDS church. She has been commuting to the Boston temple every Saturday.

“Now I’m very excited that there is a temple right here. It’s so much closer for me and my three children, compared to the two-and-a-half hour drive to Boston,” Maldonado said.

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