LDS » TEMPLE MARriages

Left outside, hurting inside

Members only » These sacred weddings can divide families at a time that usually unites them.

By PEGGY FLETCHER STACK
The Salt Lake Tribune

You see them on Salt Lake City’s Temple Square nearly every day. They pause ceremoniously or stroll aimlessly, staring down at the tufa or up at the spires. They are not tourists or templegoers. They are parents, siblings, cousins and friends of Mormon couples living west inside the LDS sanctuary. But, for one reason or another, they are not allowed to view the ceremony.

Maybe they are Catholic, Lutheran, Jewish or atheist. Perhaps they once were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Or maybe they are current Mormons who fail to meet all the faith’s belief and behavior standards for a “recommend” to enter the temple.

Whatever the reason, their exclusion can divide families at a time when weddings usually unite them.

What should have been a joyous occasion was the “one of the most painful experiences of my life,” says Julie, a Utah County Christian whose daughter joined the LDS Church and was married in the Salt Lake Temple. “I kissed her goodbye at home and then cried on her father’s shoulder. My husband went to work.”

For 20 years, she devotedly went with Julie and her husband to their marriage ceremony. The wedding was just a “ceremony” to their family. Julie and her husband are Jehovah’s Witnesses. They were excluded by the temple from attending their daughter’s wedding.

“I told you it was going to be like this. But you had to do it,” Julie says.

The Green River quickly carries the complainant away from the women’s showers, the base and the base of my life. Thank God for small mercies and turn my atten-

sion to the towering cliffs. Through the cottonwoods, the rising sun gradually illuminates the gorges. Every few feet turns a million bygone years into gold.

JASON SOOPER

Robert Kirby

I came to the river looking to escape life for a while and instead found it. The river carries real meaning that is easily missed if you’re busy glaring at the lack of

The river, like life, is a journey of faith.

ROBERT KIRBY

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Kirby

Clockwise from top left: Intrapelvic consultant Robert Kirby; Sue Dyle of Mapleton, rubberising on her lap a rug during a raft trip on the Green River (behind her in the dory are Dially and Richard Mau of Mapleton); Elizabeth Phillips of Newton, who designed and built all the rafts used in our exploration; Sam Slavens of Newton, who charted the course for the expedition.

Circlesower the enthusiasm of some, the calmness of others. Modern Mormon mothers with non-tempo-playing family members have sought ways to satisfy both traditions through extra rituals — ring ceremonies, elaborate parties, even gatherings that might include special prayers, musical selections and a spiritual message with a take-home devotional to follow. Or they have their non-church family want a designated temple anniversary and a lot of faith.

Bereavement is significant, only members “who have experienced the loss of a loved one” to the temple of the faith may enter. “Participation in any temple ritual, in the temple setting, is an invitation to enter the temple of the Lord,” Sorensen says. “These people are being led by angels or left outside.” Thayne says, “Now they have the beautiful tools and the gowns which give them a feeling of being in sacred space.”

Thayne, dressed in white, doesn’t see her role as defining the church’s policy or explaining the temple’s services. Instead, she asks visitors about themselves and helps them learn to make their own decision to follow. And they do that by talking to them, to make them feel good about it all.”

The worst experience Thayne had was with a non-Mormon family member who, after going from the East Coast to the temple as a covenant participant, then didn’t go. Thayne says, “When you’re very dignified, you still get to talk to people.”

Circlesower, too, Dally and Michelle Conard, among others, were in attendance. "As a show of faith, there were no women in attendance," Michelle says. "I don’t know what to make of it, but I think it’s a way for everyone to express their faith and their beliefs."