

### Always Sacred—*Sam Brown*

I first arrived in late August 1990. Two weeks earlier, I had undergone a conversion experience that had jolted me from world-weary agnosticism to a fervent belief in God and the Restoration. Simultaneously I left the rural Rockies and arrived in the former capital of Massachusetts Bay Colony, the town of Cotton Mather, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and the Loeb Classics Press.

That first year will always be sacred to me. Bishop Clayton Christensen's gentle demeanor, deep spirituality, and brilliant mind. The after-church dinner that seamlessly combined soup kitchen and social gathering, the homeless that I met there, the statue at the Episcopal Divinity School across Brattle Street from which Phil Barlow famously drew such strength in the 1980s (see his essay, "The Uniquely True Church," in the anthology he edited, *A Thoughtful Faith* [Centerville, Utah: Canon Press, 1986], 235–58), the Gospel Doctrine classes that Steve Rowley taught in his droll monotone, at once playful and rigorous, the baptismal font behind the kitchen where a trickle of converts shared our community and beliefs, and the Relief Society room where we often met afterwards to celebrate that new life, the institute library where we read uncorrelated books and debated Mormon identity late into Sunday nights, the sacrament hall with its circular window playing the light from shimmering trees across the way, singing Longfellow's plaintive hymns fifty feet from the house where his wife met her own doleful end by fire, the testimonies on fast Sunday brimming with passion and eloquence and fear and glory and uncertainty and conviction, the musician who, when I was ward mission leader, asked me to give him blessings of strength at least twice a month, an impetus to maintain my own spirituality that I don't think he ever fully comprehended, the godparents of all of our children, my wife, Kate Holbrook, many of my dearest friends and favorite people—I know from that ward house.

That church will forever be the emblem of my spiritual home in Mormonism. I am desperately sad to see it go.

### Not Your Typical Mormon Space—*Deborah Theobald*

We drove by the church on the way home today and saw the huge water streams going into the building. The damage will be extensive. I am resolved to work hard to make sure that, when they re-