

THE FORUM

Service, Love
Couple gives
to site in Nau-
voo. p. 6.



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Trip Deepens Love of Spirit, History

By Greg Clark

For some, it was the awe of sites thousands of years old. For others it was the majesty of towering cathedrals. And for others it was the simplicity of rolling hills and quaint villages.

The trip to England and Wales touched each of the 46 people on a unique tour in a special way. The blend of spirituality, heritage, and growing connections between the long-ago and the present could not be cap-

See England on page 4



A spring trip to England and Wales included a stop at the Salisbury Cathedral, built in 1092.

Family, Church Blend for Harper

By Greg Clark

Kevin Harper calls his family heritage and church heritage “inseparable.”

So perhaps it was inevitable that he would find himself accepting a role on the board of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation.

“As I was digging in my family history... more and more church history kept popping up,” said Harper, who joined the board in the spring of 2017. “I have five different branches of my family tree traced back to the 1840s

See Harper on page 7

Surprise Guests Brighten Day at Liberty Hall

By Greg Clark

Sometimes blessings come when least expected and arrive in the form of strangers. And they always change everyone involved.

Such was the experience of Liberty Hall Site Director Cindi Wilson on an early summer Saturday.

Five tour groups—a veritable stampede by standards in Lamoni, Iowa—took time to examine, study, and enjoy the brightly colored former home of Joseph Smith III. Each guest left with greater knowledge of Community of Christ history and one of its early presidents. Cindi left with a greater appreciation for shared backgrounds among diverse groups, people with humor, and joy in her work.

“I enjoyed the fact that in this one day the groups covered all the different elements of the church—even the ones who didn’t belong to the Restoration,” Cindi said. “They were just... a different faith. To me, we all have the same roots, and I always try to connect people to that starting place. I always learn so much from them, as well. Everyone has something to give.”

Cindi described the groups:

- The first included 20–25 high schoolers from a Community of Christ congregation that was beginning a historic tour. The guests were fresh, and they “were a great bunch of kids.”
- The second tour was a mother, son, and a friend who were attending a Restoration reunion at Graceland.
- A grandfather, granddaughter and great-grandson formed the third group. They were not church members, “but were very interested in the bit of history I told them, and they loved the house.”
- The next group was made of two grandparents and

two children, in the first and third grades. The grandparents had attended the RLDS church, then a Restoration group, and then the Mormon church. “They were a delightful family, and the grandfather was very knowledgeable about the history of the church.”

- The last group was made of interns from the Book of Mormon Foundation. The 12 people—most in the 18–26 age bracket with a few older adults—called in the evening. “We finished the tour just as it was getting dark. A great group of young people. They sang a hymn for me to close the event.”

Cindi especially enjoyed all the youngsters. She told of one boy who asked if any people had died in the house. “He was worried about ghosts. One of the leaders said, ‘It’s OK. They were all church people, so they are all holy ghosts!’”

She said the kids also “got a kick out of the indoor chamber pots and no indoor plumbing.”

Older guests were impressed by how well the home was restored and stories about the family. “One lady loved the quilts and the needlework sampler hanging in...a room.”

Cindi also learned something about herself during the tours.

“I saw my growth in being able to tell the stories of the church and the Smith family. It is becoming something I know, not just what I try to remember.”

She especially enjoyed the faith diversity of the groups.

“I loved all of it! I enjoyed meeting people from all the walks of the church. It has motivated me to study more. ...I was just happy and fulfilled.”



To Schedule A Tour . . .

It’s best for groups like the Mormon interns at the left to call Site Director Cindi Wilson at (641) 442-5519 or leave a message at Liberty Hall (641) 784-6133.

Liberty Hall is open Tuesday through Saturday (10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) and Sunday (1:00–4:00 p.m.). The site opens March 1 and closes following a Christmas Tea in December, about a week before Christmas.

Grant Aids Liberty Hall Library, More

By Greg Clark

A grant obtained earlier this year will mean a bit of sprucing up for Liberty Hall, the Lamoni, Iowa, home to President Joseph Smith III early in church history.

The grant is \$4,350 from the South Central Iowa Community Foundation, which gives money to nonprofit groups to make improvements. Tom Morain, a former board member of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, contacted Liberty Hall and then wrote the grant application.

The funds will enable repairs to Liberty Hall's porch, replace worn curtains, and build shelves to turn a room into a library to honor Alma Blair. The retired Graceland University professor, a former member of the foundation board, donated many of his books to the library.

It will serve as a draw, providing a place where people can study Community of Christ history.

Another group with a long history



A grant will help fund development of a Liberty Hall library.

of supporting foundation properties will do much of the work. The Community of Christ RV Association, which

each year does thousands of dollars of upgrades to historic properties, will perform much of the work this fall.

Liberty Hall Becoming Lamoni Hub

By Greg Clark

Liberty Hall is more than a historic site.

The place church President Joseph Smith III once called home today also serves as a community hub in Lamoni, Iowa. Behind the home, a barn renovated in recent years provides a place for multiple gatherings.

For Truly Mothershead, a student from nearby Graceland University, the barn was the perfect place to display her senior art show. Cindi Wilson, Liberty Hall's site director, said the art fit wonderfully with the rustic atmosphere of the barn.

"Her artwork made the barn feel warm and cozy," Wilson said. "As a



An art exhibit is just one example of Liberty Hall becoming a community asset.

thank you to us for letting her use the barn, she made us a barn quilt and attached it to the outside of the barn."

The show was just another way to open the barn to the public.

Among the events Wilson mentioned were a graduation reception, an annual spring event by a men's house at Graceland, and an Easter sunrise ser-

vice and breakfast.

In addition, Wilson said the nearby Bloomington Congregation holds a service at Liberty Hall for Heritage Day. Members use the barn for lunch and an old-fashioned dance.

It all shows that the value of Liberty Hall extends far beyond that found in studying church history.

England

Continued from Page 1

sulized, generalized, or minimized.

Rather those nine days in May blossomed into memories and growing understandings of the journeys by Community of Christ members since the church's earliest days.

"It taught me about how every person has a story," said Todd Davison of Macon, Missouri. "How I perceive an event is filtered through the way I want to tell a story. We had people in the tour group who came from different parts of the church, and we learned together."

The tour, sponsored by the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, was the organization's first to the British Isles. Most travelers were North Americans, but they were blessed by the leadership of three native sons of England: Peter Judd, Andrew Bolton, and Peter Fagg. Judd and Bolton are retired Community of Christ officers; Fagg, the primary guide, is an LDS member with a deep sense of place and Restoration history.

"The tour guide was amazing," said Sue Coleman of Simi Valley, California. "I felt he went above and beyond what he was hired to do."

That meant everything from showing the tour the inspiring Salisbury Cathedral and the grounds at Stonehenge in England to enjoying the Welsh cakes at the Llanelli Congregation in Wales.

The Salisbury Cathedral, which holds one of the four surviving copies of the Magna Carta signed in 1215, was a favorite with many. It was built in 1092. Its 404-foot spire, the tallest in Britain, rises 104 feet higher than the Temple in Independence, Missouri.

Coleman was especially taken with the beauty, grandeur, and detail of the cathedrals. "Without a guide, you might say, 'Oh, that's nice.' But everything had a reason, a purpose for being—on the outside or inside."

But not all the attractions were enormous buildings. Guests learned



Guests enjoyed the view of the countryside from Dunfield House, a home to many reunions and gatherings.

about connections with many of the Restoration's early founders.

"I was really surprised how meaningful to my contemporary church life it was to hear about people from years ago, to make a connection," said Davison. "Ideas meaningful to me were meaningful to them. When historical venue or story are well told it opens me up to the present day."

Next Up

Plans for the next tour in the USA already are taking shape. Scheduled for October 2018, it will carry the theme: "Zion Yesterday and Today: Exploring Community of Christ Attempts at Living in Community."

Former Apostle Andrew Bolton and Barbara Walden, executive director of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, will lead the 10-day event. It will focus on past and current attempts at living in community.

Attractions will include historic Shaker and Harmonist communities and more. For more information, contact Walden at (440) 477-9562 or bwalden@HistoricSitesFoundation.org.

His mother, Phillis Davison, also of Macon, also was impressed.

"I was really, really, *really* glad to see all the places with (author) Parley P. Pratt."

Walden noted the impact in church history made by many others such as Charles Derry, Mark Forscutt, F. Henry Edwards, and Arthur Oakman.

"It was important for me to see the history of the church through the lens of church members from England and Wales. It was a reminder of the importance multiple voices and diverse perspectives are needed in interpreting the past for today's global faith community."

Walden drank in the countryside.

"I was elated to see the beauty of the rolling hills and expansive pastures throughout England and Wales.

"The day that took my breath away was the walking tour of Preston. We began in a public square, where the early missionaries preached. Then we made our way to the site where our first meeting was held. The walking tour ended at the River Ribble, where we heard the story of the first converts literally racing to the river to see who would be the first to be baptized in England."

Coleman talked about one huge estate that had been in the same family for 500 years.

"That's older than our country!" she said. "As homes would become available to buy in the village, this family would buy them up. They wanted to keep it as it was originally. They do have Internet, wifi, telephones— but you don't see the lines.

"Small houses are nestled together, and there's a place for sheep to be kept. All the original buildings—built with stone—are still there. It was like stepping back in time."

Another highlight was singing "Amazing Grace" at the grave of John Newton, who wrote the hymn. Among other visits were Windsor Castle, Dunfield House, Bath, and six congregations.

Throughout it all was a strong aura of spirituality. This wasn't just a tour; it

was a pilgrimage.

“Everything about it was spiritual,” Phillis Davison said. “It was really neat to see the things and make the stories come alive that I had heard and read about when I was younger.”

The trip deeply affected Coleman.

“I thought I knew a lot about church history, but...seeing the places makes it come alive.

“It gave me a sense of newness as I look at our denomination. It was a deep appreciation. They had the hope of Zion as they understood it.

“It was an awareness of the generations past that have built a faith that we stand on today, and we in turn continue that building process for those who are coming after us. We’re all on the journey together and all have a part.”

Walden spoke for many, saying: “The opportunity to walk where our early missionaries walked, to see the waters where the first converts were baptized, and to hear the history of the church in England and Wales from our British and Welch church members was a deeply meaningful experience for me. The nine days we shared together overseas is something I will treasure for the rest of my life.”

Besides grand cathedrals, increased knowledge, and moving spirituality, tour members savored lesser delights.

“The days just flew by,” Coleman said. “I had time for a cup of tea in England—and that was great!”



Numerous sites provided thrilling sights and experiences for many tour members. Among the stops: Communion at the Denton Congregation (above), a view of a Roman bath in Bath (left), and a visit to Stonehenge, which Bob and Nancy Noffsinger found memorable.



Please Volunteer

Serving as a volunteer at properties supported by the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation is rewarding and can change your life.

For more information, contact Lachlan Mackay at lmackay@CofChrist.org or (217) 453-2246.

Richardsons Find a Hollywood Ending in Nauvoo

By Greg Clark

Don and Evelyn Richardson are movie buffs. They watch with a VCR, use a DVD player, and they enjoy the Hallmark Channel.

They especially like happy endings. Now, they're living one. In retirement from their careers as school counselors, they're a near-perfect fit for the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois.

They first volunteered there in 2009. By 2010 they were hooked. They packed up, sold their home in Osceola, Iowa, and moved into a house on the historic site as full-time volunteers.

"This really was an answer to a prayer," Evelyn said. "We wanted to do something with the church. We were retired and didn't know what to do."

She said a friend from the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation suggested they try Nauvoo. They did, and they loved it.

"We sold everything and moved this way. So when we leave here we have no place to go," Evelyn joked. "That'll be the focus of our next prayers."

Since their arrival, they've done most everything at the site. However, Evelyn spends most of her time at the Red Brick Store, and Don has become an expert tour guide. Both are in their early 70s, and they intend to volunteer as long as their health holds.

David and Laura Bolton, former co-directors at the site, call the Richardsons indispensable.

"They always are willing to step in," Laura explained. "For example they counted all the inventory for the site. Volunteers aren't just important; we couldn't function without them."

David added: "Any time we had questions about how the site runs, the Richardsons were there. I don't think the site would be open without them. Certainly not as much."

The Boltons were especially grateful that Don and Evelyn see their roles as more than selling root beer at the store or answering questions while guiding a tour.

Don is an evangelist, and Evelyn is a seventy. Their ministry plays a key role in their volunteer work. Laura explained: "They bring an incredible spirit to the site."

For Evelyn, that's natural. "I like meeting with the public, sharing my story, hearing their stories. And I like to encour-



age others in their faith and their faith journey."

Don also enjoys meeting people—co-workers and guests, alike. "We have a lot of great people come through here. I enjoy meeting people from around the world. Sometimes we have an opportunity to share a testimony. We've worked with people from the World Service Corps, from French Polynesia, Graceland University, and other countries.

Both Don and Evelyn attended Graceland. It's where they met—and just in time.

"I was engaged to another young man," Evelyn explained. "And when Don came back from serving Uncle Sam (US Army), my fiancé introduced me to him."

Big mistake by the fiancé, big blessing for Don and Evelyn. They've been married 48 years.

The Richardsons cherish their roles at Nauvoo. "We are the only Community of Christ church that some people get to see," Don said. "We are the church with the public."

They find their work and location almost idyllic. "It's hard to put into words unless you have been here," Evelyn said, "but it's the spirit of Nauvoo."

It's a happily-ever-after scenario. If you were making it into a movie script, you couldn't write a happier ending.



Kevin Harper baptizes his daughter (above) and enjoys a church site with his mother, Martha Harper (right).



Harper

Continued from page 1

or 1830s.”

This summer, Harper made a little family history himself. He was ordained as a priest at a reunion June 24. The next day he baptized his daughter, Sedona.

Though only 10, she already understands the connection between history and family. “She knows her family goes way back in church history,” Harper said. “She’s getting it. My immediate family is all very active. My siblings and mom are all priesthood members.”

“Mom” also has a connection with church history. For about 10 years she served as site director at Liberty Hall, one of the properties supported by the foundation. She was instrumental in presenting and preserving the Lamoni, Iowa, site, which was the home of Joseph Smith III, a key president in the church’s formative era.

Kevin, 44, was asking his mother a history-related question. She didn’t know the answer, so she referred him to Barbara Walden, executive director of the foundation.

“She recognized my interest in

church history, and she asked if I would be interested in serving on the board. I said it would be an honor. So when a position came up, that’s when I was elected to serve.”

Walden looks forward to working with Kevin to raise awareness and interest in Community of Christ heritage.

“Kevin has a natural passion for genealogy and has discovered the exciting intersection between his family’s history and the history of his faith community,” she said. “His enthusiasm for the past and passion for preserving the historic places that matter make him a perfect addition to our board of directors.”

Kevin sees his role on the board as helping make “sure the sites have what they need for our church’s current mission and connect with people—not just our church but all the different Restoration branches and movements.”

He sees involving children and young adults as the key.

“Children so they have that contact with the historic sites, and the young adults because they’re the ones having

the children. It’s important to make them aware and visit the sites so they can appreciate and learn to love them.”

But history isn’t Kevin’s only passion. He also has shown dedication to his career. He earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Grace-land University and has worked as a registered nurse for many years.

He, his wife, and their two children live in Anthem, Arizona, a location that gives him ample opportunity to indulge in hiking, backpacking, camping, and more.

“We can camp year around—in the winter in the desert, and in the summer in the mountains. We like to travel to all the national parks out here in the West.”

Memorable outings include trips to Colorado, New Mexico, and places in Arizona such as the Grand Canyon. His travels also have included stops at all the church’s historic sites.

In the future he’ll revisit some of them as a board member.

“I hope to continually learn. That’s why I’m so excited and feel so fortunate to be in the same circle as people who love history. ...It’s pretty special stuff. It will change me because I’ll continually learn from them.”

Hymn Festival A Big Hit

Some traditions just sound better every year. So it is with the Emma Smith Hymn Festival at the Kirtland Temple in Ohio.

The July 10 festival, created in memory of Emma Smith’s dedication to hymnody, drew more than 150 people. They represented three Restoration branches.

Seth Bryant, Kirtland site director, called it “very successful” with a “really good service.”

Make a Donation, Aid Preservation

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To help the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation fulfill that mission, call (217) 453-2246 to make a donation.

Another alternative is to send donations to P.O. Box 338, Nauvoo, IL 62354.

You also can donate at www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org.

Volunteers Needed

To volunteer at a historic site supported by the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, call Lachlan Mackay at (217) 453-2246 or email him at lmackay@CofChrist.org.

Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation

P.O. Box 338
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Generosity to Fund Two Resources

By Greg Clark

The generosity of Community of Christ members and friends soon will result in two new educational resources designed to share the church story with people of all ages.

The first resource, *Young Storytellers*, will focus on today's children by using stories from the children of church history. The stories will show how the church long has modeled the Mission Initiatives and Enduring Principles of the church. It's a part of church history that Barbara Walden, executive

director of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, has long believed is essential.

The second resource, *Joseph Smith III and Pursue Peace*, will focus on the life story of Joseph Smith III and his dedication to pursuing peace. Apostle Lachlan Mackay has researched the church's emphasis on peace—and sometimes the lack of it. He'll describe how Joseph Smith III played a critical role in the reemergence of peacemaking as a primary focus of the church. This resource will include lesson plans

geared to Sunday school and reunion classes for young adults and older disciples.

Funding came through an effort at www.gofundmission.org. Fifty-four persons, including several members of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, combined to raise \$3,325. Walden said she hopes similar projects can become "an annual tradition around the birthday of the church."

She thanks the donors and other supporters for their continuing financial support and enthusiasm.

Foundation Loses Dedicated Member Tim Baller



The Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation recently lost a dedicated board member. It also lost a friend who was a good disciple. John T. Baller, often known as Tim, died September 7.

He had served on the board since early in 2012. Another former board member, David Ettinger, ministered at the funeral.

Baller, a cardiologist, was from Sioux City, Iowa. As a church member he had served as a minister, pastor, and district president. As a foundation board member, he expressed a passion for involving young people, urging older adults to volunteer, and raising funds to preserve church heritage.